

**Northumberland Sub Regional
Strategic Housing Land
Availability Assessment Draft
Methodology
2008/09**

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document sets out the approach and methodology to be used in preparing Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments (SHLAAs) for the Northumberland sub region. This methodology will be used by all of the local authorities within the sub region to ensure consistency of approach and methodology with the aim being to ensure that each assessment prepared by the local authorities at a district level are capable of aggregation to form comprehensive SHLAAs at Housing Market Area (HMA) levels. The sub regional methodology closely follows the [North East England, Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Regional Implementation Guide, March 2008](#) which accords with PPS3 and DCLG's SHLAA Practice Guidance.
- 1.2 SHLAAs replace Urban Capacity Studies, which were previously required by Planning Policy Guidance Note 3¹; (PPG3) was replaced by Planning Policy Statement 3² (PPS3) in November 2006. The new SHLAA is significantly different from an Urban Capacity Study as it needs to determine if potential housing sites are available and deliverable as well as developable and suitable, and requires the consideration of greenfield sites.
- 1.3 The first part of this document will explain the context and key principles of undertaking a SHLAA, whilst the second section of the document will explain the proposed methodology for undertaking SHLAAs within the Northumberland sub region.

2. Section 1 - Context and Key Principles

What are SHLAAs?

- 2.1 In accordance with Annex C of Planning Policy Statement 3, Local Authorities are now required to carry out a SHLAA, in order to identify future sources of land for housing. The Government view SHLAAs as; "a key component of the evidence base to support the delivery of sufficient land for housing to meet the community's need for more homes"³.
- 2.2 The primary role of the SHLAA is to:
 - Identify sites with potential for housing;
 - Assess their housing potential; and
 - Assess when they are likely to be developed.⁴
- 2.3 Completion of a SHLAA should enable local planning authorities to: identify specific, deliverable sites for the first five years of a plan that are ready for development; identify specific, developable sites for years 6-10, and ideally years 11-15, in plans to enable the five year supply to be topped up.

What are the core requirements of the Assessment?

- 2.4 The following tables set out the minimum requirements, as stated by Government guidance⁵, for producing a SHLAA. Each assessment will be undertaken in accordance with the criteria set out below.

¹ Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 – Housing, ODPM (2000)

² Planning Policy Statement 3 – Housing, CLG (2006)

³ SHLAA Practice Guidance, DCLG 2007, para. 1.

⁴ SHLAA Practice Guidance, DCLG 2007, para. 6.

Table 1 – SHLAA Core Outputs

Government guidance states that each assessment should include:

1	A list of sites, cross-referenced to maps showing locations and boundaries of specific sites (and showing broad locations, where necessary).
2.	An assessment of the deliverability/developability of each site (i.e. in terms of its suitability, availability and achievability) to determine when an identified site is realistically expected to be developed.
3.	Potential quantity of housing that could be delivered on each identified site or within each identified broad location (where necessary) or on windfall sites (where justified).
4.	Constraints on the delivery of identified sites.
5.	Recommendations on how these constraints could be overcome and when.

Table 2 – SHLAA Process Checklist

Government guidance states that each assessment should be undertaken as follows:

1.	The survey and assessment should include key stakeholders, including house builders, social landlords, local property agents and local communities. Other relevant agencies may include the Housing Corporation, and English Partnerships.
2.	The methods, assumptions, judgements and findings should be discussed and agreed upon throughout the process in an open and transparent way, and explained in the SHLAA report. The SHLAA should also include an explanation as to why a particular site or area has been excluded from the assessment.

(Source: Tables 1 and 2, SHLAA Practice Guidance, DCLG 2007)

How will the SHLAA inform future plans?

- 2.5 The assessment will form a critical part of the evidence base for future Development Plan Documents. Once completed the assessment should be regularly kept up to date as part of the LDF Annual Monitoring Report.

Please note that SHLAAs DO NOT represent policy and do not determine whether a site should be allocated or granted planning permission. SHLAAs should provide a comprehensive evidence base, which alongside other information will be used to inform decisions in plan making, including future allocations.

⁵ SHLAA Practice Guidance, DCLG 2007, Tables 1 and 2

3. Section 2 – The Methodology

What is the content of the Northumberland Methodology based on?

- 3.1 The content follows the [North East England, Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Regional Implementation Guide, March 2008](#) which accords with PPS3 and DCLG's SHLAA Practice Guidance. The use of this standard methodology is recommended as: "it will ensure that the Assessment findings are robust and transparently prepared"⁶.
- 3.2 In addition, the SHLAA Practice Guidance goes on to state that, when followed a Local Planning Authority should not need to justify the methodology used in preparing it's assessment (including at independent examination). The Northumberland Local Planning Authorities will therefore conform closely with the standard methodology based upon the outcome of discussions within the Northumberland SHLAA Officer Working Group, the Northumberland SHLAA Partnership Group and guidance from PAS and to meet the requirements of PPS3.

How does the Northumberland Methodology relate to the North East Regional Implementation Guide?

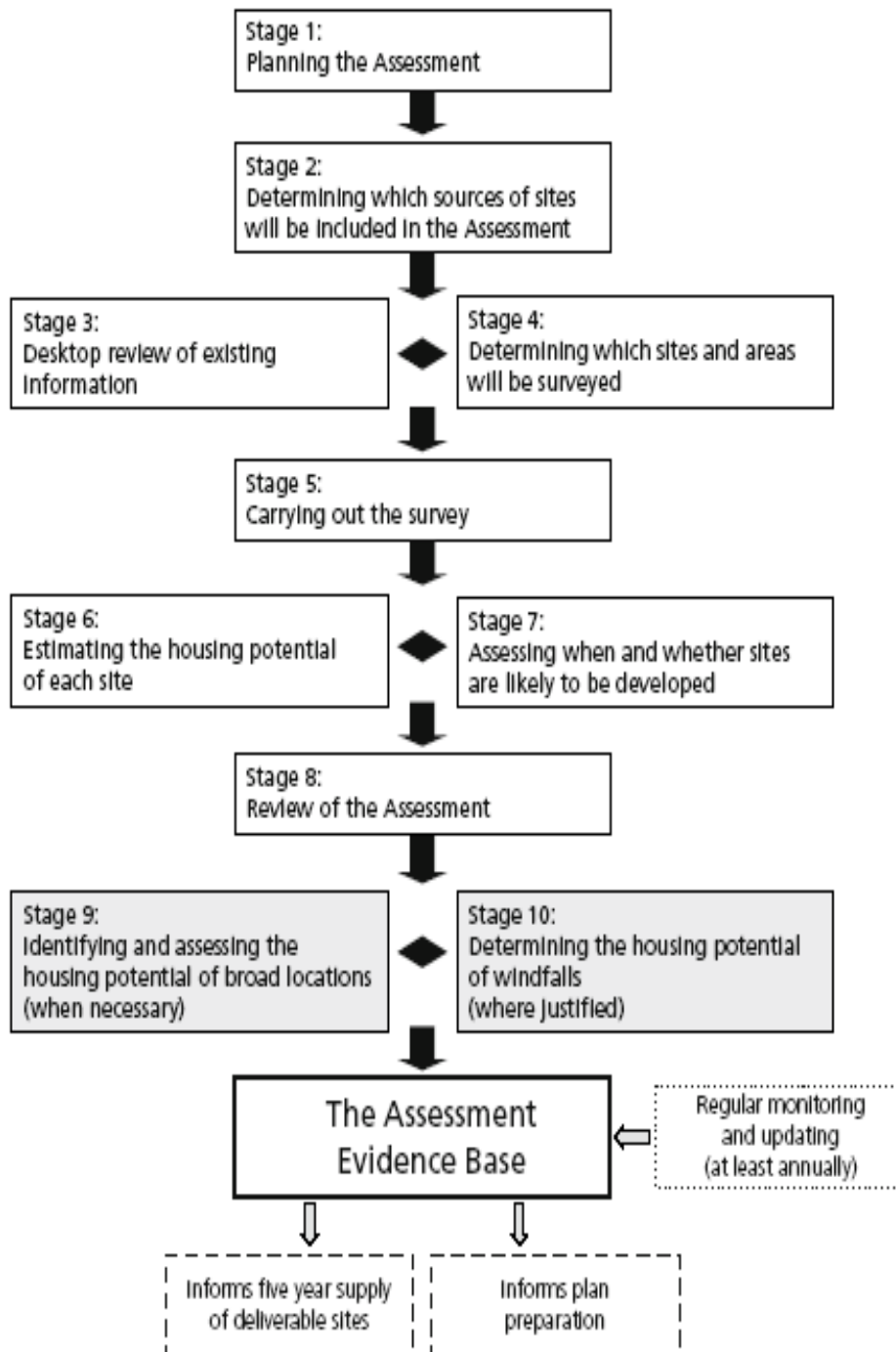
- 3.3 The two documents complement each other. It is considered that the Northumberland SHLAA methodology should follow the regional methodology, which as well as following the SHLAA Practice Guidance, has also been through extensive stakeholder consultation, including a stakeholder event on 5th November 2007.
- 3.4 The Northumberland approach will vary only in the approach taken to completing the database and the design of the database, which will include amendments to be used in conjunction with the Regional Implementation Guide. [The Regional Implementation Guide](#) sets out the vast majority of the implementation framework, with the Northumberland methodology adding to the Regional Implementation Guide to provide an additional framework to meet the specific needs of Northumberland. In addition, there is the need to acknowledge the differing characteristics of the Northumberland sub region compared to the Unitary Authorities of Tyne and Wear. Differences include, scale, population, housing allocation, location within region and rurality.

How will the SHLAA be carried out?

- 3.5 The flowchart below has been set out by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) within the SHLAA Practice Guidance, in order to produce the core outputs for the assessment. Some of the stages can be carried out in parallel. The Northumberland approach will follow this same structure.

⁶ SHLAA Practice Guidance, DCLG 2007, para.15

Figure 1 – The SHLAA process and outputs



Stage 1: Planning the Assessment SHLAA Framework

- 3.6 A collective decision has been taken by all of the Local Planning Authorities in Northumberland that a common methodological approach should be used in undertaking SHLAAs. Within this joint approach each authority will carry out individual assessments which will closely follow the standardised methodology and agreed common working arrangements. For more general background please refer to the [North East Regional Implementation Guide, March 2008](#).
- 3.7 This approach will help to produce consistency in the identification of potential housing sites as well as the estimation of the potential housing sites that could be delivered by each District and across established HMAs. Although following a single methodology, each District will produce an individual SHLAA. In addition, it is intended that in collating the data, housing land will be identified across HMAs as prescribed in the SHLAA guidance.

Northumberland SHLAA Partnership

- 3.8 An important part of producing SHLAAs that are fit for purpose is the involvement of key partners and the formulation of a SHLAA partnership, both of which are strongly advocated within the SHLAA guidance.
- 3.9 The Northumberland SHLAA Partnership will be representative of key stakeholders in the sub region, whose skills, knowledge and expertise in relation to housing and housing delivery will add value to the SHLAA process. The Partnership will consist of representatives from the Northumberland local planning authorities and key stakeholders such as house builders, social landlords, local property agents, and other agencies such as the North East Assembly, Government Office for the North East, the Environment Agency, One North East, English Partnerships, the Highways Agency and local community representatives, amongst others. Whilst a number of stakeholders are already represented on the established NHB, the SHLAA Partnership will involve additional stakeholders to meet the SHLAA guidance and act as a sub group of the NHB.

Northumberland SHLAA Officer Working Group

- 3.10 The Northumberland Development Plan Officers Forum, which represents the six Northumberland District Councils plus the National Park Authority and the County Council has formed a SHLAA Officer Working Group which will be responsible for the management and completion of the SHLAAs. The Northumberland SHLAA Officer Working Group will work closely with the Northumberland SHLAA Partnership in their assessment of potential sites for new housing and in establishing the deliverability and developability of sites put forward for housing developments.

Stakeholder Workshops

- 3.11 A key component of the SHLAAs is the internal and external stakeholder workshops. Northumberland local planning authorities will utilise the internal and external stakeholder workshops in order to gain expert advice on each site's potential, this will ensure that the assessments findings are as robust and accurate as possible. It is intended that the internal workshop (Highways, Education etc) will be undertaken during mid September 2008. The external workshops, at the beginning of October 2008, will utilise the information from the internal workshop and will take two forms, a Northumberland sub regional stakeholder workshop

event, and stakeholder open days - held by individual district councils for informal drop-in consultation.

Stage 2: Determining which sources of sites will be included in the Assessment

3.12 Figure 4 of the SHLAA guidance states that, the assessment should cover the following types of sites:

Sites in the planning process

- land allocated (or with permission) for employment or other land uses which are no longer required;
- existing housing allocations and site development briefs;
- unimplemented/outstanding planning permissions for housing;
- planning permissions for housing that are under construction.

Sites not currently in the planning process

Examples:

- vacant and derelict land and buildings;
- surplus public sector land;
- land in non-residential use which may be suitable for re-development for housing;
- additional housing opportunities in established residential areas;
- large scale redevelopment and re-design of existing residential areas;
- rural settlements and rural exception sites;
- urban extensions; and
- new free standing settlements.

3.13 These potential sources of sites are further set out within [Table 1: Sources of sites to be included and sources of information contained within the Regional Implementation Guide](#). In undertaking the SHLAAs within Northumberland, regard will be had to the types of sites set out in both sets of guidance.

3.14 The SHLAA Practice Guidance goes on to state that; “particular types of land or areas may be excluded from the Assessment, as long as the reasons for doing so are justified and agreed by the members of the partnership”⁷. As well as identifying sources of potential it is equally important to identify areas of search which should be excluded.

3.15 The SHLAAs will seek to examine as many sources of housing potential as possible. The Regional Implementation Guide sets out a series of sites which may be ascribed nil housing potential due to their designations, these are known as [Category 1 “Sites where zero housing potential should be ascribed”](#) and [Category 2 “Designations/uses which affect the development of a site”](#)⁸. The Northumberland methodology will utilise the regional Category 1 and Category 2 designations and provide justified reasons for exclusion of these sites from the assessment, which will be agreed by the partnership.

Stage 3: Desktop review of existing information

3.16 Figure 5 of the SHLAA guidance, sets out the following list of data sources that could be used to identify sites with potential for housing:

⁷ SHLAA Practice Guidance, DCLG 2007, para. 21.

⁸ The North East England, Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Regional Implementation Guide, March 2008, para 5.8 – 5.11.

Sites within the planning process:

- site allocations not yet the subject of planning permission;
- planning permissions/sites under construction;
- site specific development briefs;
- planning application withdrawals and refusals; and
- dwelling starts and completion records.

Other potential sources of information:

- local planning authority Urban Capacity Studies;
- local planning authority Empty Property Register;
- English House Condition Survey;
- National Land Use Database;
- Register of Surplus Public Sector Land;
- Local planning authority Employment Land Review;
- Valuation Office database;
- Local planning authority vacant property registers;
- Commercial property databases;
- Ordnance Survey maps; and
- Aerial photography.

- 3.17 These potential data sources are further set out within [Table 1: Sources of sites to be included and sources of information and Section 6 of the Regional Implementation Guide](#)⁹. As the above mentioned lists provide a range of potential sources, each Authority will use them at their discretion, based on local conditions.

Stage 4: Determining which sites and areas will be surveyed

- 3.18 To reflect Northumberland's mainly rural nature it is considered most appropriate to apply no minimum threshold in the identification of sites. By taking this approach it is considered that a full and realistic picture of housing supply will be achieved. The potential threshold of 5 was considered, however, after reflection it was realised that even a threshold of 5 would fail to consider a large number of smaller sites which in total form a major contribution to rural authorities completion figures. This will allow for the ability to more realistically plan future housing provision if small sites are included within the SHLAAs especially as PPS3 states that no allowance can be made for housing coming forward on windfall sites for at least 10 years of a new plan. Therefore, by including small sites in the SHLAAs, this will ensure that as many potential windfall sites as possible have been taken into account when planning future housing provision.

- 3.19 It is, however, recognised that taking this approach will result in the need to analyse a greater number of sites, which will have time and resource issues. It is hoped that due to the longer time period for completion than previously planned Authorities will be able to complete this level of work. In addition, in determining which sites and areas to be surveyed regard will be had to [Section 7, in particular paragraph 7.3, of the Regional Implementation Guide](#).

Stage 5: Carrying out the Survey

- 3.20 In accordance with the SHLAA guidance, the following characteristics will be recorded for sites :

⁹ The North East England, Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Regional Implementation Guide, March 2008, Table 1 and Section 6.

- site size;
- site boundaries;
- current use(s);
- surrounding land use(s);
- character of surrounding area;
- physical constraints;
- development progress; and
- an initial assessment of whether the site is suitable for housing or housing as part of a mixed use development.¹⁰

3.21 The above will then be combined with further information obtained from a desktop review of each site. The reviews will assess a number of key factors for each site, in order to identify any potential constraints on development, and how/if they could be overcome. The vast majority of this research will be conducted by district council planning officers; however more technical issues such as highways and conservation will be discussed with the relevant agency/department at the internal stakeholder workshops.

Key factors include:

- planning policy;
- previous planning history;
- access/highways;
- landscape/conservation;
- flood risk;
- contaminated land; and
- access to local services.

3.22 Progress will be monitored through the Northumberland SHLAA Officer Working Group and the Northumberland SHLAA Partnership Group as a means of evaluating progress and exchanging ideas and experiences. In addition, as part of the Regional Implementation Guide, a SHLAA database has been developed in which local planning authorities will record site data.

Stages 6: Estimating the housing potential of each site

3.23 Planning Policy Statement 3 makes it clear that; “a minimum of 30 dwellings per hectare (dph) should be used as a national indicative minimum to guide policy development and decision-making, until local density policies are in place”¹¹. There is however scope for individual authorities with a greater understanding of the development potential within their local area to set out average densities for specific settlements. For the purposes of the first stage assessment of sites, it is proposed that a net density of 30 dwellings per hectare is applied to estimate the housing potential for each site.

3.24 With regards to net developable area and density multipliers, the Regional Implementation Guide recommends utilising the indicative net developable area multiplier as set out in “Tapping the Potential” (1999), although Tapping the Potential has now been superseded these ranges are still considered to offer a useful indication of net developable area. For the purposes of the first stage assessment of sites, it is proposed that the guidance contained in the Regional

¹⁰ SHLAA Practice Guidance, DCLG 2007, para.29

¹¹ Planning Policy Statement 3, DCLG 2006 para.53

Implementation Guide; [the density multipliers in Table 2 together with guidance contained in paragraphs 9.1 and 9.4 and 9.5](#), will be utilised to estimate the site yield.

- 3.25 Following the workshops, a far more detailed and site specific calculation of density and yield will be made, which will in turn provide a more accurate representation of the housing potential of each site.

Stage 7: Assessing when and whether sites are likely to be developed

- 3.26 The SHLAA guidance states that; “assessing the suitability, availability and achievability of a site will provide the information on which the judgement can be made in the plan making context as to whether a site can be considered deliverable, developable or not currently developable for housing development”.¹² To be considered as:

- **Deliverable** – a site is available now, offers a suitable location for housing development now and there is a reasonable prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years from the date of adoption of the plan; and
- **Developable** – a site should be in a suitable location for housing development, and there should be a reasonable prospect that it will be available for and could be developed at a specific point in time.

Where it is unknown when a site could be developed, then it should be regarded as **not currently developable**. This may be, for example, because one of the constraints to development is severe, and it is not known when it might be overcome.¹³

- 3.27 To assess a site’s deliverability and developability, Stage 7 of the assessment will incorporate information gathered by the site assessments, a desktop review, and the views gained from discussions with stakeholders. A final conclusion will then be drawn together, from the investigations as outlined within Stages 7a to 7d.

Stage 7a: Assessing suitability for housing

- 3.28 According to the SHLAA guidance; “a site is suitable for housing development if it offers a suitable location for development and would contribute to the creation of sustainable, mixed communities”¹⁴. To assess a site’s suitability for housing development, the Regional Implementation Guide states that the following factors should be considered:

- **Policy restrictions** – such as designations, protected areas, existing planning policy and corporate, or community strategy policy. This is one of the only places where national practice guidance requires consideration of policy issues. Some of these considerations will be covered by categories 1 and 2 outlined in Stage 2 of the regional implementation guide. Sites in settlements/locations, particularly those defined in the RSS and LDF, offer the most sustainable and therefore suitable locations for housing due to their proximity to jobs and services, other sites in the open countryside will, in most instances, be unsuitable. Other considerations will include the proximity to jobs, services and facilities, which is covered by the SHLAA sites database.

¹² SHLAA Practice Guidance, DCLG 2007, para.33

¹³ SHLAA Practice Guidance, DCLG 2007, para.34

¹⁴ SHLAA Practice Guidance, DCLG 2007, para.37

The DPD stage will determine which of the suitable sites are the most suitable. This will have major implications within the rural parts of Northumberland as it will result in the discounting of sites in unsustainable locations.

- **Physical problems or limitations** - such as access, infrastructure, ground conditions, flood risk, hazardous risks, pollution or contamination. Some of these considerations will be covered by categories 1 and 2 outlined in Stage 2 of the regional implementation guide.
- **Potential impacts** - including effect upon landscape features, conservation and biodiversity. Some of these considerations will be covered by categories 1 and 2 outlined in Stage 2 of the regional implementation guide.
- **The environmental conditions** – which would be experienced by prospective residents.

3.29 In assessing the suitability of sites for housing, the Northumberland methodology will have regard to the above mentioned [Regional Implementation Guide, in particular paragraphs .10.4 to 10.6.](#)

Stage 7b: Assessing availability for housing

3.30 The SHLAA guidance considers a site to be available for development; “when on the best information available, there is confidence that there are no legal or ownership problems, tenancies or operational requirements of landowners”¹⁵. When assessing availability for housing, further information will be obtained from the stakeholders, who have submitted site suggestions as part of the assessment. Land ownership details for other sites, will be obtained via desktop reviews, and discussions with external sources where necessary. This information will be supplemented by both the internal and external workshops.

Stage 7c: Assessing achievability for housing

3.31 This stage will essentially make a judgment about the economic viability of a site, and the capacity of the developer to complete and sell the housing over a certain period ¹⁶. The guidance states that, the above will be affected by:

- **market factors** – such as adjacent uses, economic viability of existing, proposed and alternative uses in terms of land values, attractiveness of the locality, level of potential market demand and projected rate of sales (particularly important for larger sites);
- **cost factors** – including site preparation costs relating to any physical constraints, any exceptional works necessary, relevant planning standards or obligations, prospect of funding or investment to address identified constraints or assist development; and
- **delivery factors** – including the developer’s own phasing, the realistic build-out rates on larger sites (including likely earliest and latest start and completion dates), whether there is a single developer or several developers offering different housing products, and the size capacity of the developer.

3.32 In accordance with the SHLAA guidance and the [Regional Implementation Guide \(paragraphs 10.12 to 10.17\)](#), the Northumberland local planning authorities will

¹⁵ SHLAA Practice Guidance, DCLG 2007, para.39

¹⁶ SHLAA Practice Guidance, DCLG 2007, para.40

utilise the internal and external stakeholder workshops in order to gain expert advice on each site's potential. The findings of the workshops will be a key element of the assessment, as it will ensure that the assessment findings are as robust and accurate as possible.

- 3.33 The Northumberland SHLAA Partnership will come to a conclusion for each site based upon the views of both workshops. The Partnership will use its conclusion to determine whether each site is deliverable, developable or not developable. In doing so, the Partnership will need to consider whether some of the identified constraints can be overcome.

Stage 7d: Overcoming constraints

- 3.34 Where constraints have been identified, the assessment will also consider what action would be needed to remove them. Depending on the nature of the constraint, further discussions/advice will be sought from the relevant party. Examples of further action include; the need for investment in new infrastructure, dealing with fragmented land ownership, environmental improvement, or a need to amend planning policy which is currently constraining housing development.¹⁷
- 3.35 It is important that site constraints are identified by the SHLAA in order for remediation on the site to be considered, where possible to enable development. Dialogue between the local planning authorities and the infrastructure and utility providers will be key to identifying any constraints and how these constraints can be overcome.

Stage 8: Review of the Assessment.

- 3.36 In accordance with the SHLAA guidance and the Regional Implementation Guide, once the initial survey of sites and the assessment of their deliverability and developability has been made, the housing potential of all sites will be collected to produce an indicative housing trajectory that sets out how much housing can be provided, and at what point in the future.¹⁸
- 3.37 If any shortfalls within the final projections are identified, then various elements of the scope of the assessment will be revisited. An insufficient number of sites may require previously rejected sites and areas of investigation to be brought forward and included within the assessment. Any additional sites brought forward at this stage would be assessed by the same procedure as the sites originally included.
- 3.38 In accordance with the SHLAA guidance, the SHLAA will be kept up to date on an annual basis as part of the LDF Annual Monitoring Report.

Stage 9: Identifying and assessing the housing potential of broad locations (when necessary)

- 3.39 Broad locations are areas where housing development is considered feasible and will be encouraged, but where specific sites cannot yet be identified. The SHLAA guidance gives examples of broad locations as:

¹⁷ SHLAA Practice Guidance, DCLG 2007, para.42.
The North East England, Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Regional Implementation Guide, March 2008, para.10.18.

¹⁸ SHLAA Practice Guidance, DCLG 2007, para.43.
The North East England, Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Regional Implementation Guide, March 2008, para.11.1 – 11.4.

- **Within and adjoining settlements** – e.g. areas where housing development is or could be encouraged and small extensions to settlements;
- **Outside settlements** – e.g. major urban extensions, growth points, new free standing settlements and eco-towns. The need to explore these will usually be signalled by the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).¹⁹

3.40 In exploring such areas, regard will be had to [Section 12 of the Regional Implementation Guide](#). Where broad locations are identified within SHLAAs, estimates of potential housing supply will be developed having regard to:

- any evidence underpinning the RSS;
- the nature and scale of potential opportunities within the broad locations; and
- market conditions,

Stage 10: Determining the housing potential of windfall (where justified)

3.41 PPS3 is clear that the supply of land for housing should be based on specific sites and where necessary, broad locations. It does, however, recognise that there may be genuine local circumstances where a windfall allowance is justified.

3.42 The SHLAA guidance states that “where a windfall allowance can be justified, this should be based on an estimate of the amount of housing that could be delivered in an area on land that has not been identified in the list of deliverable /developable sites or as part of broad locations for housing development”²⁰. In making some judgement about the level of (unexpected) windfalls there will be a need to come to an informed view on whether the annual rate is likely to remain the same or change, whether the pattern of development is likely to remain the same, grow or decline and whether the current market conditions are likely to stay the same, worse or improve.

3.43 It is intended that the SHLAAs within Northumberland will be sufficiently comprehensive and intensive so as not to require a planned allowance for windfall sites within the first 10 years of land supply, in accordance with PPS3. However, it is acknowledged that regardless of how thorough the SHLAA is, some sites cannot be anticipated and will come forward for housing development. When a windfall site comes forward and planning permission is granted, it will then become part of the housing supply and will be added to the SHLAA database when it is next updated.

4. Final assessment report

4.1 In accordance with the Core Outputs identified within the SHLAA guidance and the Regional Implementation Guide requirements²¹, the final assessment report will deliver a map and accompanying details of all sites in the SHLAA site database. It will also include the following outputs:

- A list of sites considered deliverable;
- A list of sites considered developable;
- A list of sites considered not currently developable;
- A trajectory (graphs and tables) of when sites are expected to come forwards in the next:

¹⁹ SHLAA Practice Guidance, DCLG 2007, para.49.

²⁰ SHLAA Practice Guidance, DCLG 2007, para.51.

²¹ SHLAA Practice Guidance, DCLG 2007, Table 1.

The North East England, Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment Regional Implementation Guide, March 2008, para.14.1.

- Five years
- Six to ten years
- Eleven to fifteen years
- Beyond fifteen years
- A list of sites that were sieved out (e.g. categories 1 and 2, suitability, achievability, availability, contamination, topography or other factors that would prevent or constrain the delivery of housing development) with the justification;
- A list of sites with identified constraints and identified approaches to overcome these.