



# Value My Land

**Maximising Returns for Landowners**

## **What is a HELAA or SHLAA?**

**A Practical Guide for Landowners**

How councils assess land for future development, what inclusion or rejection means and how to respond.



**Value My Land**

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# What is a HELAA or SHLAA?

A Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment, usually shortened to HELAA, is a council evidence document used to identify and assess land that may contribute to future housing, employment or mixed-use development. Some councils use related names such as SHELAA, SLAA or Land Availability Assessment.

A Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, or SHLAA, is the earlier housing-focused term that still appears in many council evidence bases. For a landowner, the individual site record can reveal the authority's current view on suitability, availability, achievability, indicative capacity, constraints and likely delivery timing.

**Inclusion in a HELAA or SHLAA does not allocate land or grant planning permission. It records the council's evidence-based assessment at a particular point in time.**

## Why do councils prepare land availability assessments?

Councils need a consistent evidence base showing which sites could potentially help meet future development needs. The assessment informs plan-making, but later policy choices determine which sites, if any, should be allocated.

- Identify potential housing, employment and mixed-use sites
- Assess whether sites appear suitable, available and achievable
- Estimate indicative capacity and delivery periods
- Identify constraints, infrastructure requirements and evidence gaps
- Inform Local Plan options, site selection and land-supply work

## Where does it sit in the planning process?

Call for Sites → HELAA / SHLAA assessment → Local Plan site selection and consultation → potential allocation → planning application

[Read the full online HELAA / SHLAA Guide](#)

# Why Landowners Should Read the Site Assessment

The most useful part of a HELAA or SHLAA is usually the individual site record. It may show the boundary used by the council, the proposed use, indicative capacity, delivery period and the reasons why the site has been included, reduced, deferred or rejected.

Those assumptions can shape later Local Plan decisions and influence how developers or promoters view the land. An incorrect boundary, outdated ownership position or unsupported access conclusion should therefore be identified early.

## Inclusion is encouraging, but limited

A positive assessment can indicate that the council considers development potentially suitable in principle, subject to constraints or further work. It does not establish that the site will be selected for allocation, that the recorded capacity is achievable or that planning permission will be granted.

## A negative conclusion is not always final

A site may be discounted because of access, flood risk, landscape, ecology, heritage, infrastructure, uncertain availability, viability or timing. Some findings may be decisive; others may rely on incomplete or outdated information that can be addressed through proportionate evidence.

## Treat the assessment as a dated evidence source

Policies, ownership, site boundaries, access solutions, infrastructure and technical evidence can change. Check whether the latest assessment accurately records the current position and whether a fresh submission or representation is required.

**The site reference alone is not the outcome: read the boundary, capacity, constraints and suitability, availability and achievability conclusions.**

**Check Current HELAA / SHLAA Submission Routes in England**

## Different Names, Similar Planning Purpose

Councils do not all use the same title. The methodology, assessment date and individual site conclusion matter more than the label, and older documents can remain relevant when researching a site's planning history.

|                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                             |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>HELAA</b><br>Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment. Usually covers potential housing and employment sites.       | <b>SHLAA</b><br>Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. The earlier housing-focused term, still widely used in council evidence.                    |
| <b>SHELAA</b><br>Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment. A combined housing and employment assessment.     | <b>SLAA / LAA</b><br>Strategic or general Land Availability Assessment. The precise scope should be checked in the council's methodology.                   |
| <b>Site Assessment</b><br>Some Local Plans use a site-assessment stage without relying on the traditional HELAA or SHLAA title. | <b>Earlier Assessment</b><br>Historic assessments can show previous boundaries, capacities and constraints, but their conclusions may no longer be current. |

### What will the council assess?

- Site boundary, proposed use and relationship to the settlement
- Suitability having regard to policy, access and environmental constraints
- Availability, ownership, tenancies and control of essential land
- Achievability, viability, infrastructure and market delivery
- Net developable area, indicative capacity and density
- Likely delivery period and phasing
- Evidence gaps, mitigation and matters requiring further work

The council should apply its published methodology consistently, but the landowner should check that the facts and assumptions are correct for the individual site.

# How a Potential Site Is Assessed

The published methodology should explain the stages, thresholds and assumptions used. A landowner should compare the site record with that methodology and identify any material error or unsupported judgement.

**1. Identify the site** — Land may be submitted by an owner, developer or promoter, carried forward from an earlier assessment or identified by the council. The red-line boundary should match the land genuinely available.

**2. Apply initial filters** — The council may screen out sites below a size threshold or affected by overriding constraints. Mapping, designation, access and ownership assumptions should still be checked.

**3. Review suitability** — The authority considers policy, location, access and physical or environmental constraints, including whether an appropriate form and scale could be acceptable after mitigation.

**4. Confirm availability** — Ownership, tenancies, third-party land, covenants, the owner's intentions and the likely release date may affect whether the site can realistically come forward.

**5. Consider achievability** — Market demand, abnormal costs, infrastructure, planning obligations, delivery partners and lead-in periods may influence viability and the likelihood of development.

**6. Estimate capacity and timing** — The council normally identifies an indicative use, net capacity and delivery period rather than treating the whole landholding as developable.

**A credible assessment should distinguish between a genuine planning constraint, missing evidence and an assumption that can be tested or corrected.**

**Suitable, Available and Achievable Sites**

# Evidence That Can Improve or Correct an Assessment

A landowner does not always need a full planning application package. The most useful evidence is targeted at the specific reason for uncertainty, reduction or rejection.

|                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Accurate Boundary &amp; Ownership</b><br>Provide a clear red-line plan and title information, including any land required for access, drainage or infrastructure. | <b>Access &amp; Movement</b><br>A preliminary highways review can test safe access, visibility, pedestrian links and any required improvements.                 |
| <b>Constraints &amp; Opportunities Plan</b><br>Map flood risk, trees, habitats, heritage, utilities and topography to define a realistic development area.           | <b>Flood Risk &amp; Drainage</b><br>Clarify flood zones, surface-water constraints and a credible drainage approach where these affect capacity or suitability. |
| <b>Landscape, Ecology &amp; Heritage</b><br>Proportionate appraisal can show how sensitive features, views, habitats and asset settings should shape the scheme.     | <b>Availability Statement</b><br>Confirm owner intentions, occupation, tenancies, third-party interests and a realistic release date.                           |
| <b>Delivery &amp; Viability</b><br>For larger or complex sites, explain phasing, infrastructure, abnormal costs, likely delivery partners and market demand.         | <b>Planning &amp; Sustainability Case</b><br>Relate the site to the settlement, services, development needs, spatial strategy and competing alternatives.       |

The strongest evidence answers the council's stated concern and explains how it changes suitability, availability, achievability, capacity or timing.

# What Does Inclusion in a HELAA or SHLAA Mean?

Inclusion can improve the visibility of a site and focus the next stage of promotion, but it has limited legal and policy effect unless the land progresses through the Local Plan and planning application processes.

**1. Site recorded** — The council identifies the land within its evidence base and assigns a site reference or mapped entry.

**2. Potential assessed** — The authority considers whether development may be suitable, available and achievable for a stated use and period.

**3. Constraints identified** — The site record may highlight access, flooding, landscape, ecology, heritage, infrastructure or ownership matters requiring further work.

**4. Capacity and timing estimated** — The council records an indicative yield and delivery period based on high-level assumptions.

**5. Site may enter plan options** — The land can be considered when the authority compares growth locations and prepares its spatial strategy.

**6. Allocation remains separate** — The Local Plan must compare alternatives, consult and complete examination before any allocation is adopted.

**7. Planning permission remains necessary** — Detailed design, technical evidence, infrastructure and planning obligations normally require a separate application and decision.

**HELAA or SHLAA inclusion is an assessment milestone — not an allocation, planning consent or guarantee of land value.**

**Read: [Call for Sites Guide](#)**

**Read: [Local Plan Allocation Guide](#)**



## What If the Site Is Reduced, Rejected or Excluded?

A negative or reduced conclusion can result from an unsuitable location, access concern, flood risk, landscape or heritage sensitivity, infrastructure limitations, uncertain ownership, lack of availability, unrealistic capacity or doubts about viability and timing.

The first step is to identify the precise reason and the evidence relied upon. Some findings may be well founded; others may arise from an incorrect boundary, outdated information, desktop assumptions or a failure to consider a different scale or layout.

### A focused response can include:

- Checking the published methodology and mapped site boundary
- Correcting factual, ownership or availability information
- Commissioning targeted evidence on the stated constraint
- Revising capacity, access or the development concept
- Submitting an update or Local Plan representation at the appropriate stage
- Monitoring plan progress, infrastructure and competing allocations

### Continued promotion matters

A site may become more important if development needs change, other allocations prove undeliverable, infrastructure is funded or new evidence addresses an earlier concern. A response should explain what has materially changed rather than simply repeat the original submission.

**A poor or outdated assessment should be understood and tested — not automatically treated as the end of the site's prospects.**



## How Can HELAA or SHLAA Affect Land Value?

Inclusion in a land availability assessment does not itself create consented development value. It may, however, strengthen market awareness where the record supports a realistic prospect of future development.

Developers and promoters often review these assessments when identifying opportunities. The wording of the conclusion, policy stage, recorded capacity, delivery timing, competing sites and unresolved constraints can all influence the level of interest.

### The value outcome is site-specific

A positively assessed settlement-edge site may attract hope value, while a heavily constrained or long-term site may not. Access, infrastructure, affordable housing, abnormal costs, market conditions, planning risk and agreement terms all remain important.

### Understand the planning position before selling

A landowner should distinguish existing-use value, hope value and consented development value before agreeing terms. Selling without understanding the assessment and next plan stage can transfer the benefit of future planning progress to a purchaser.

**The important question is not simply whether the site is listed, but what the council accepts, what remains disputed and what planning progress could realistically follow.**

**Find Out What Your Land May Be Worth**

# How Value My Land Can Help

Value My Land can review the published assessment entry alongside the wider planning, policy and physical context of the land. The aim is to identify what the council accepts, what may be inaccurate and which next step is proportionate.

|                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Find the Relevant Evidence</b><br>We identify the latest HELAA, SHLAA, SHELAA or site-assessment document, site reference and current Local Plan stage. | <b>Check Recorded Assumptions</b><br>We review the boundary, use, capacity, constraints, delivery period and suitability, availability and achievability conclusions. |
| <b>Site &amp; Policy Review</b><br>We consider settlement relationship, policy, access, flooding, ecology, landscape, heritage and infrastructure.         | <b>Evidence &amp; Correction Strategy</b><br>We identify targeted work that may correct an error, address a constraint or support a revised capacity.                 |
| <b>Local Plan Representations</b><br>We can respond at the relevant consultation stage and explain why the site should be reconsidered or progressed.      | <b>Promotion Strategy</b><br>Where appropriate, we plan the route from assessment through allocation, planning permission and eventual sale.                          |

## Promotion Agreements

Where we enter into a Promotion Agreement, we fund and manage the agreed planning process at our own cost and risk. If planning permission is not secured, the agreed promotion costs are written off. Our remuneration is based on a pre-agreed share of the sale proceeds and becomes payable when the land is sold in accordance with the agreement.

The landowner retains ownership and control of the land throughout the promotion process. Because our return is linked to the sale proceeds, our objective is aligned with maximising the value achieved for the land.

[Request a Free HELAA or SHLAA Review](#)



# Should Your HELAA or SHLAA Position Be Reviewed?

If your land is included, reduced, rejected or missing from a land availability assessment, contact Value My Land for a free, no-obligation initial review of the recorded planning position and next steps.

**Telephone: 0800 061 4006**  
**Email: [info@valuemyland.com](mailto:info@valuemyland.com)**  
**[www.valuemyland.com](http://www.valuemyland.com)**



**Value  
My Land**

## **Delivering Sustainable Development**

Further reading: [HELAA / SHLAA Guide](#) | [England HELAA / SHLAA Tracker](#) | [Call for Sites Guide](#) | [Local Plan Allocation Guide](#)  
[valuemyland.com/what-is-a-helaa-or-shlaa](http://valuemyland.com/what-is-a-helaa-or-shlaa)

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