

Strategic Land Availability Assessment:
Employment. Update June 2015

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1 Executive Summary

1.1 A Strategic Land Availability Assessment (hereafter “SLAA” or “Assessment”) is a study undertaken at a local level which aims to identify specific sites where new development can be located. The purpose of this SLAA is to identify sites for employment use.

1.2 The SLAA forms part of the evidence base for the Local Plan and will be used to inform the selection of sites to be allocated for employment development. This SLAA covers Stevenage Borough and assesses employment land availability over the period 2011-2031. This is the third version of the employment SLAA for Stevenage, following reports published in 2013 and 2014.

1.3 Section 2 provides further information on the study. This includes how sites have been assessed in this SLAA.

1.4 Section 3 details the amount of employment provision already in the planning process. It identifies an alternate land supply position of 5 hectares / 29,000m² that should be included when calculating potential employment supply across the plan period.

1.5 Section 4 presents the results of the SLAA assessment. This details the individual stages of assessment; availability, suitability and achievability. Previously discarded sites have only been re-assessed for their suitability, where new information has been provided. Eight sites or broad areas are considered to be suitable, available and achievable for potential future employment use.

1.6 Section 5 provides floorspace and jobs estimates for each of the positively assessed sites.

1.7 Section 6 reviews the findings of the Assessment in light of the information contained in the previous sections. Specific sites which could together accommodate approximately 98,000m² new floorspace have been identified to 2031. When these are added to existing employment land supply, around 127,000m² floorspace could be delivered in Stevenage over the period 2011-2031. This would use around 22 hectares of land. These findings are summarised below.

Table 1 Identified land supply 2011-2031

	Site area (ha)	Floorspace (m ²)
Existing supply	5.0	28,900
SLAA sites	17.4	98,000
Total	22.4	126,900

1.8 Section 7 summarises the main findings of the Assessment.

2 Introduction & Background

What is a Strategic Land Availability Assessment?

2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) says that local planning authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area. This includes future business needs.

2.2 Strategic Land Availability Assessments (SLAAs) identify sites that could be used to meet these development needs. This SLAA aims to identify locations in Stevenage that can contribute towards a new target for employment provision in the Borough. A separate SLAA has been completed to identify potential sites for new homes.

2.3 Within the context of this report, employment provision refers to B-class uses⁽¹⁾ and includes:

- B1a - offices;
- B1b - research and development;
- B1c - light industry;
- B2 - general industry; and
- B8 - storage and distribution.

2.4 This SLAA forms part of the evidence base for the Local Plan and will inform the selection of sites to be allocated for employment use. It assesses the availability of land for employment development over the period 2011-2031. This timeframe is consistent with that being used for the emerging Local Plan.

2.5 The Assessment contains the following core outputs;

- A list of sites, cross-referenced to maps showing their locations and boundaries;
- Assessment of the deliverability / developability of each identified site to determine when it can realistically be expected to be brought forward;
- Estimates of the potential quantity of employment provision that could be delivered on each identified site; and
- Constraints on the delivery of identified sites.

2.6 It should be noted that inclusion of any named site in this study does not bind the Council to the allocation of that site for development in future Development Plan Documents. The SLAA provides an illustration of the available sites which could be used to ensure employment targets are delivered and a high-level estimate of the amount of employment provision that could be delivered. Its conclusions and recommendations will be used to inform the decision making process the Local Plan is prepared. This will identify sites for future development.

1 As set out in the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Order 2010

Methodology

2.7 This Assessment provides an update to the previous Employment SLAAs⁽²⁾. The first SLAA was used to inform the first consultation on the new local plan in 2013⁽³⁾. Among other matters, this consultation sought opinions on the scale and nature of employment provision that should be made in the future. It identified a number of potential sites that could be used to meet these identified needs. An updated SLAA was produced in 2014 to take account of responses to the consultation and to review the assessment of site availability.

2.8 The previous Employment SLAAs considered and rejected a number of sites on a variety of grounds. These included, but aren't necessarily limited to:

- Sites that were explicitly declared unavailable for employment development;
- Sites considered unsuitable for employment development due to physical and / or policy constraints;
- Sites that were considered unlikely to deliver a material net change in employment floorspace⁽⁴⁾; and
- Sites that had not been promoted within the last three years or where the landowner was unknown.

2.9 These sites have not been reconsidered in this iteration of the SLAA unless new information has come to light or landowners have expressly requested re-appraisal. Please refer to earlier versions of this study for more information on these sites.

2.10 Beyond this, the SLAA follows broadly the same methodology as the previous study

- Identification of sites / capacity already within the development process (Section 3);
- Identification of those sites to be considered by the SLAA, including:
 - Consideration of site availability;
 - Consideration of site suitability; and
 - Consideration of site achievability (Section 4);
- Estimates of potential yields (Section 5);
- A review of the studies findings (Section 6) and conclusions (Section 7)

2.11 A base date of April 1st 2015 to identify sites within the development process.

2.12 A minimum site threshold of 0.25ha has generally been adopted. Sites of 0.25ha are generally considered capable of delivering 1,000m² employment floorspace⁽⁵⁾, which is considered to be major employment development. These are the sites that will make a valuable contribution towards any new Local Plan target. Smaller sites are more difficult to identify, and the inclusion of

2 Strategic Land Availability Assessment: Employment (Stevenage Borough Council (SBC), 2013); Strategic Land Availability Assessment: Employment Update June 2014 (SBC, 2014)

3 Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031: First consultation, June 2013

4 For example, where existing employment floorspace would be replaced or redeveloped as part of any scheme

5 See section 5 for an explanation of plot ratios

these can lead to too many sites being put forward for assessment. This does not necessarily mean that these sites do not have development potential. Sites outside of the scope of the SLAA can still come forward as windfall development sites.

2.13 Sites below this threshold are only considered on a discretionary basis where a higher density of development might be feasible and a yield of 1,000m² of more might be reasonably anticipated. This is most likely to occur with sites within or adjacent to identified centres.

2.14 Within the main document, site areas are generally presented rounded to the nearest 0.1 hectares while floorspace is generally rounded to the nearest 100m². All figures have been rounded independently meaning some numbers may not sum exactly within the presented tables.

3 Quantifying the employment floorspace requirement

3.1 The new Local Plan will cover the period from 2011-2031. At the time of writing, no target has been set through the plan for employment provision within the Borough. This means that it is not possible to quantify an extant land or floorspace requirement.

3.2 However, it is important to make sure the SLAA still presents results for the whole plan period. This means taking into account development which has already occurred or been granted planning permission since April 1 2011. This SLAA uses a cut-off date of 1 April 2015 for the identification of completions and planning permissions. This is consistent with the Council's monitoring of new development which is measured on a financial year basis. All figures are net.

3.3 Since 2011, the amount of employment land and floorspace has remained broadly stable with gains being marginally outweighed by losses.

3.4 Permission has been granted for schemes which would result in the net gain of approximately 9 hectares of employment land. This includes sites that are currently under construction and those that are yet to start (including outline permissions and schemes with a resolution to grant permission). A further 13 hectares arises from the unimplemented allocations within the current District Plan for employment provision at Stevenage West and the remaining land West of Gunnels Wood Road.

3.5 The total level of employment completions and identified supply stands at 21 hectares of land. If fully implemented, this would deliver 95,100m² of new floorspace. The sites which form this supply are shown in Appendix 1⁽⁶⁾.

3.6 The largest single component of this supply is the remaining phases of the Bioscience Catalyst Development on the GlaxoSmithKline complex at the southern end of the Gunnels Wood Employment Area. This accounts for almost 50,000m² of floorspace and 10 hectares of land.

Table 2 Net completions and employment land supply at 1 April 2015: Development monitoring

		Site area (ha)	Floorspace (m ²)
Net completions April 1 2011 to March 31 2015		-0.3	-700
Land supply commitments	Sites under construction, with extant permission or resolution to grant at April 1 2015	8.5	43,700
	Unimplemented District Plan allocations	13	52,100
Subtotal		21.2	95,100

3.7 However, for the purposes of the SLAA, it is considered appropriate to discount this initial finding for a number of reasons:

6 As set out in that Appendix, not all site areas are included in calculations of land supply. The floorspace arising from the unimplemented District Plan allocations is an estimate.

- The unimplemented District Plan allocations relate to the last local plan adopted in 2004. A new plan is now being prepared. These sites should be considered on an equal basis with all other (prospective) employment sites to ascertain whether they are still appropriate and meet the relevant tests for allocation. It should not simply be assumed that these sites will be 'rolled forward' into the new plan. This is consistent with advice in the NPPF⁽⁷⁾. These sites are discounted and, where they meet the requirements of our methodology, reassessed as part of this SLAA. This affects:
 - The unimplemented allocation at Stevenage West (48,000m² or 12ha). This was based on a much larger scheme, including land within North Hertfordshire, which will now not come forward in the form originally envisaged.
 - The unimplemented allocation West of Gunnels Wood Road (4,100m² or 1ha).
- A further local plan allocation - the former Kodak site in Gunnels Wood gained planning permission and has been partially redeveloped. The remainder of the planning permission therefore remains technically extant until such time as it is implemented. However, our employment baseline study considered there was no realistic prospect of the site being delivered in the short term. This is therefore excluded and reconsidered as a potential future site in the subsequent sections of this report (10,100m² or 2.3ha); and
- Two schemes that have received a resolution to grant planning permission are considered unlikely to come forward in their current form:
 - A comprehensive scheme for the Town Centre, which includes an allowance for 7,500m² of office space (and a proxy land estimate of 1ha); and
 - The redevelopment of Park Place, which would result in the loss of 3,400m² (no associated land allowance).

3.8 These changes lead to an alternate supply position for the purposes of this SLAA. This assumes the availability of 5 hectares of land and the delivery of around 29,000m² of new floorspace.

Table 3 Net completions and employment land supply at 1 April 2015: Alternate SLAA position

		Site area (ha)	Floorspace (m ²)
Net completions April 1 2011 to March 31 2015		-0.3	-700
Land supply commitments	Sites under construction, with extant permission or resolution to grant at April 1 2015	5.3	29,600
	Unimplemented District Plan allocations	0	0
Subtotal		5.0	28,900

7 Paragraph 22 of the NPPF states that planning policies should avoid the long-term protection of sites allocated for employment use where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for that purpose.

4 SLAA Results

4.1 The previous SLAA identified a total of 11 suitable, available and achievable sites that were considered to satisfy the relevant criteria for inclusion. These have formed the initial list of sites for this update.

4.2 Some sites have been merged to reflect land ownership/development potential. This leaves a total of 8 sites being carried forward from the previous SLAA⁽⁸⁾:

Table 4 Suitable, available and achievable sites from the 2014 SLAA

2014 SLAA ref.	2015 SLAA ref.	Site name	Site area (ha)
125	125	Stevenage Leisure Park	8.1
138	138	Staples, Fairlands Way	0.5
611a	611a	Land West of North Road	5.9
618 & 622	618	Land south west of J8	9.2
612, 627 & 628	612	Land West of Stevenage	89.0
V1	V1	Former Kodak site	2.2
V2	V2	Land at MBDA	1.0
V5	V5	Leyden House	0.6
		Total	116.5

4.3 Since the last update in 2014, three sites that were previously excluded from the SLAA have been resubmitted and proposed for employment use:

Table 5 Previous SLAA sites resubmitted for consideration

Ref	Address 1	Site area (ha)	Commentary
128a	Swingate surface car parks	0.9	Previously part of larger site (128: Town Centre West). This site was excluded because its development was unlikely to create a 'net change' in employment provision. These smaller sites do not accommodate existing employment uses and therefore would result in a net change.
128b	Stevenage Leisure Centre	1.4	
142	The Plaza	0.4	Previously excluded because it had not been promoted within the last 3 years. Landowner has now confirmed availability.

8 There are some differences in site areas compared to previous iterations of the SLAA due to the re-mapping of sites for accuracy.

4.4 The Council effectively operates a rolling 'call for sites'. Where enquiries are received, landowners and agents are encouraged to submit their sites for formal consideration through the Council's SLAAs. The previous SLAAs have comprehensively considered a number of sites across the Borough. As such, no additional sites were submitted or found via officer searches for the purposes of this report.

4.5 The total number of sites to be considered in this update to 11. A breakdown of the 'Long List' of sites by type and ward is shown in the tables below. Tables and maps detailing the long-listed sites are shown on the subsequent pages.

Table 6 Site breakdown by type

Site type	No. of sites	Site area (ha)
Within employment area	3	3.8
Within designated centre	5	11.3
Edge / out-of-town opportunity	3	104.1
Total	11	119.2

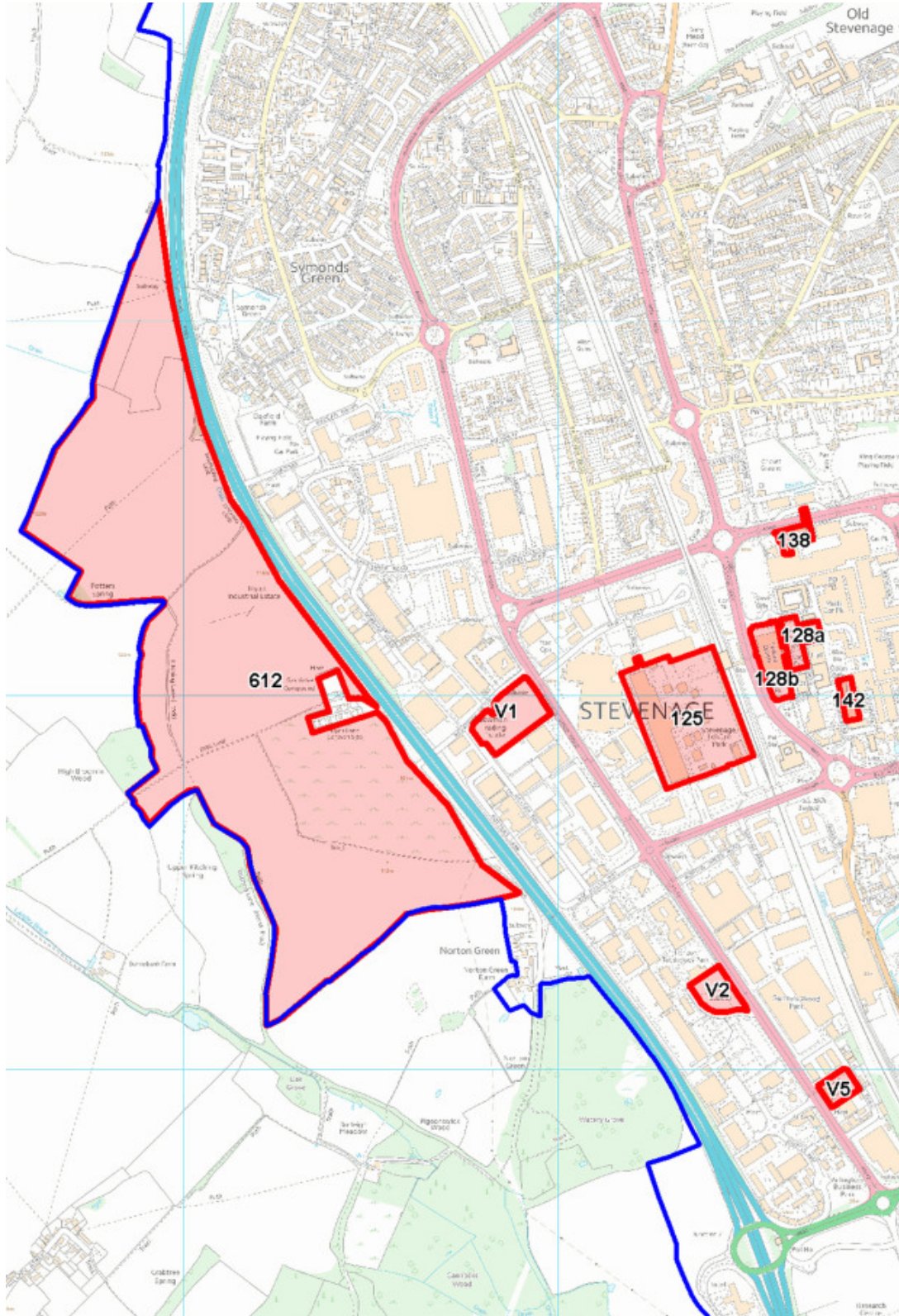
Table 7 Site breakdown by ward

Ward	No. of sites	Site area (ha)
Bedwell Ward	5	11.3
Roebuck Ward	2	1.6
Symonds Green Ward	2	91.2
Woodfield Ward	2	15.1
Total	11	119.2

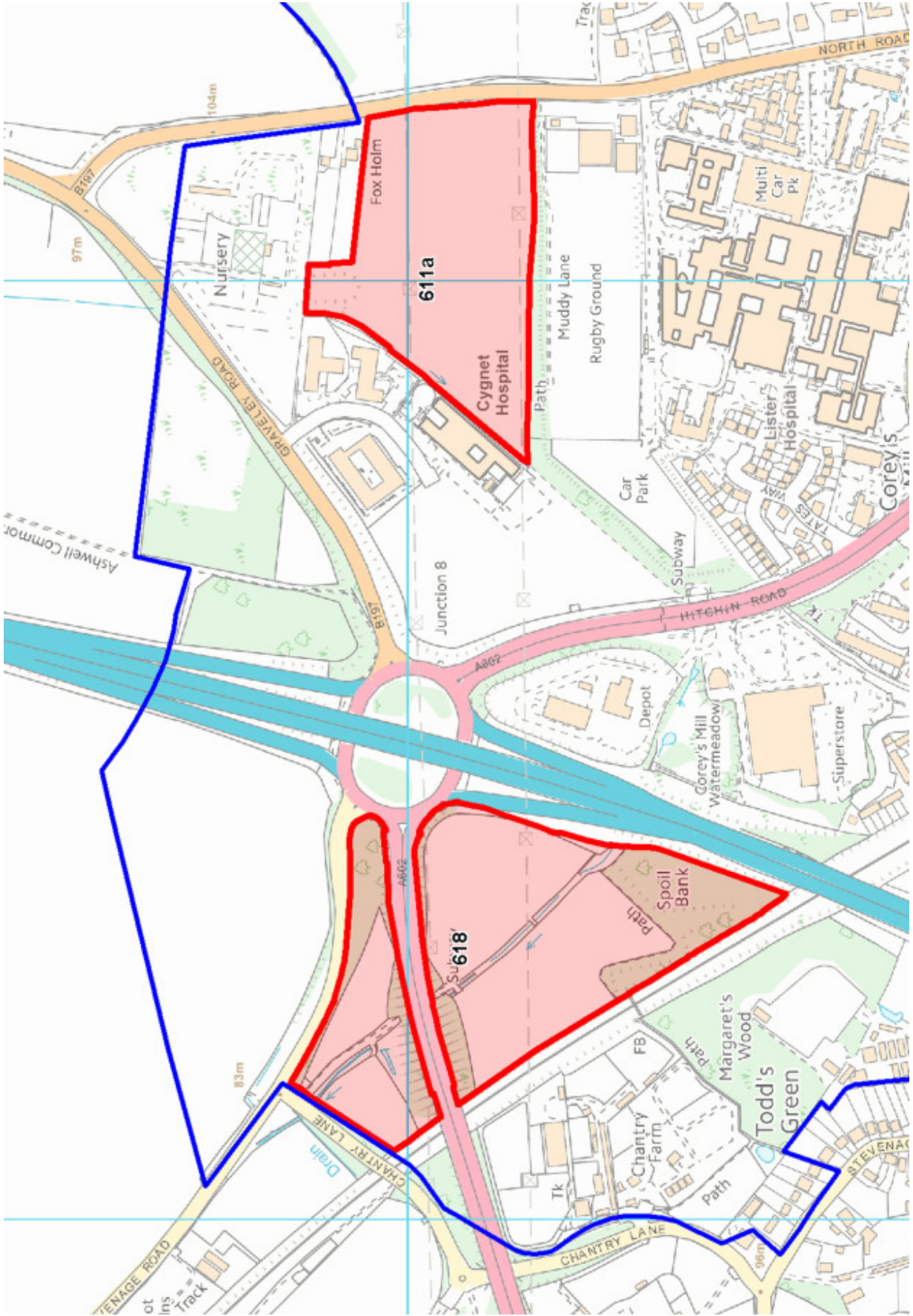
Table 8 Long list of sites for SLAA update

Ref	Address 1	Address 2	Ward	Site Area
125	Stevenage Leisure Park	Kings Way	Bedwell Ward	8.2
128a	Swingate surface car parks	Swingate	Bedwell Ward	0.9
128b	Stevenage Leisure Centre	London Road	Bedwell Ward	1.4
138	Staples	Fairlands Way	Bedwell Ward	0.5
142	The Plaza	Town Square	Bedwell Ward	0.4
611a	Land West of North Road	North Road	Woodfield Ward	5.9
618	Land south west of J8		Woodfield Ward	9.2
612	Land West of Stevenage		Symonds Green Ward	89.0
V1	Former Kodak site	Bessemer Drive/Caxton Way	Symonds Green Ward	2.2
V2	Land at MBDA	Gunnels Wood Road	Roebuck Ward	1.0
V5	Leyden House	Leyden Road	Roebuck Ward	0.6
Total				119.2

Picture 1 Long list of sites (central and west)



Picture 2 Long list of sites (north)



SLAAs are required to test prospective sites against three key criteria to determine whether it is appropriate to carry them forward for consideration in the local plan process:

- **Suitability:** The ability of the site to reasonably accommodate development of the type being considered by the SLAA having regard to site characteristics, the existence or otherwise of policy constraints, neighbouring uses, access etc.;
- **Availability:** Whether a site is available for development now with a realistic prospect of delivery in the next five years or, for longer-term prospects, there is a reasonable prospect that the site is available; and
- **Achievability:** Whether the site is financially viable, or could be viably developed at the point envisaged⁽⁹⁾.

A site matrix containing the detailed assessment of sites is contained in Appendix 2. The results are summarised below.

From this point in the assessment forward, sites within the town centre area (excluding the Leisure Park, as a specific scheme has been drafted for this site), have been dealt with slightly differently. Regeneration of the town centre is the key priority of Stevenage Borough Council. The council recently commissioned the Stevenage Central Town Centre Framework⁽¹⁰⁾, which aims to promote and guide redevelopment within this area. Accordingly, it is necessary to look at this central part of the town comprehensively and to use the Framework findings to inform this work. Therefore, the specific sites in this area have been subsumed into a wider consideration of this broad area. This encompasses sites 128a, 128b, 138 and 142.

It is acknowledged that the submitted sites do not necessarily exactly align with the areas identified for employment development in the framework (insofar as specific sites are identified). Equally, some areas within the Framework have not been specifically promoted for employment development. However, the Framework envisages a wide range of mechanisms and interventions to ensure delivery of its vision over an extended period. This includes further negotiation with land owners and, where necessary and appropriate, land assembly and acquisition. The inclusion of the town centre in this broader sense is considered justified in this context.

This has the effect of reducing the number of sites / areas under consideration from 11 to eight.

Suitability

All eight sites have been tested for their suitability in previous iterations of the SLAA. This included a comprehensive assessment against a range of potential policy constraints as well as consideration of the physical characteristics and relationship with surrounding land uses. All were considered to be broadly suitable for employment development.

9 Derived from advice in NPPF footnotes 11 and 12 (acknowledging that this is framed in relation to prospective housing sites).

10 David Lock Associates, 2015

All of the sites have been reviewed as part of the preparation of this SLAA. There have been some minor alterations to the analyses, reflecting (inter alia) the emergence of more recent schemes and proposals. However, there are been no changes which materially alter the overall conclusions on suitability drawn in the previous SLAAs. No sites has been discarded at this stage.

The previous SLAAs should be referred to for further information on the appraisal of site suitability and the findings in relation to these sites.

Availability

All of the sites have been submitted to us directly by their landowners and specifically promoted for employment use. This reflects the approach in the 2014 SLAA update which took a stricter approach to the test of availability. The first version of this SLAA in 2013 had only required a general willingness to develop for any purpose to be included.

All eight sites are therefore considered to be available for potential redevelopment.

Achievability

Government guidance states that the test of achievability is essentially a judgement on the economic viability of a site and the capacity of the developer to complete and sell the development over a certain period. At the time of writing, a full plan viability study is being undertaken for the Council⁽¹¹⁾ and will be published in due course as part of the plan's evidence base.

It's findings in relation to employment will help to inform the selection of sites in the draft local plan.

Notwithstanding this, the sites have been subject to a high-level assessment of likely achievability. This takes the form of a qualitative assessment based on the information gathered throughout the assessment and takes into account a range of factors including, but not necessarily limited to:

- potential significant costs, such as the provision of new infrastructure to obtain access;
- Other potential schemes / land uses for which the site is being considered or promoted;
- general messages about the market attractiveness of sites in and around Stevenage;
- the length of time site has remained vacant (where applicable); and / or
- the necessity for / likelihood of other nearby sites to be developed and potential impact.

Landowners of all sites assessed to be suitable, available and achievable within the last SLAA were asked to provide more detailed information regarding their sites and to demonstrate that they can and will be delivered within the plan period. The feedback received has helped to inform the assessment of achievability and has been used to estimate the employment potential of these sites, where appropriate.

The majority of sites were assessed in the previous SLAA. Unless circumstances have changed, sites have not been reassessed. A summary assessment of the sites is shown below. The detailed assessments can be seen as part of the site matrix contained in the appendices.

11 Whole Plan Viability Study including Community Infrastructure Levy (HDH Planning, 2015 (forthcoming))

One site is considered to have **good** delivery prospects. This is the land to the west of North Road (611a). There is a willing public landowner who has actively promoted the site for potential employment use. There is potential to form access from the existing road frontage while it is considered possible to design a scheme around the other known constraints on the site. Following recent communication with the landowner, the Council remains satisfied that the landowner could deliver the site for employment purposes.

Six sites or areas are considered to have **moderate** delivery prospects. These sites generally have no significant physical constraints but may be subject to other factors such as being medium- or long-term vacant, promoted for multiple potential uses and / or needing to be considered as part of a wider package of measures or sites. This includes the town centre.

The remaining site is currently considered to have **low** delivery prospects. Although there is a willing landowner, significant investment would be required to deliver an acceptable scheme; access and land characteristics would make the site difficult to deliver. Further information has been requested from the landowner to inform site selection for the local plan.

Notwithstanding these points, these sites are all considered to have broadly demonstrated their achievability to a sufficient level to be carried forward to the estimates of employment potential (yield). This is set out in the following section.

Table 9 Delivery prospects of the suitable, available and achievable SLAA sites

Ref	Address 1	Delivery prospects
125	Stevenage Leisure Park	Moderate
-	Town Centre	Moderate
611a	Land West of North Road	Good
618	Land south west of J8	Low / speculative
612	Land West of Stevenage	Moderate
V1	Former Kodak site	Moderate
V2	Land at MBDA	Moderate
V5	Leyden House	Moderate

5 Estimating the employment potential of each site

5.1 Having assessed all of the sites for suitability, availability and deliverability, it is necessary to determine the extent to which these sites might be able to contribute to future employment requirements.

5.2 Where (draft) schemes or proposals have been generated for sites, these have been used to inform estimates. For the remaining sites, generic ratios have been used in line with best practice guidance. The assumptions for these sites may be refined as the local plan develops. However, it is considered to be a suitably transparent approach to calculation at this point for SLAA purposes.

5.3 Where necessary or appropriate, the overall site areas have been reduced to a net site area to take account of constraints and / or other land use proposals.

5.4 The approach taken for each site is summarised in the table below.

Table 10 Approach to determining employment potential of SLAA sites

Ref	Site	Approach to determining employment potential
125	Stevenage Leisure Park	Indicative scheme submitted by landowner.
128a	Swingate surface car parks	<i>Subsumed into wider consideration of town centre area</i> Based on parameters set out in Stevenage Central Town Centre Framework. Proxy land area calculated based upon 200% plot ratio.
128b	Stevenage Leisure Centre	
138	Staples	
142	The Plaza	
611a	Land West of North Road	Ratios based on net site area which takes identified constraints into account.
618	Land south west of J8	Ratios based on net site area which takes identified constraints into account.
612	Land West of Stevenage	Indicative scheme submitted by landowner.
V1	Former Kodak site	Ratios based on gross site area as no significant constraints identified.
V2	Land at MBDA	Ratios based on gross site area as no significant constraints identified.
V5	Leyden House	Ratios based on gross site area as no significant constraints identified.

5.5 None of the sites for which ratios are used are located centrally, or in designated centres. The prospective floorspace has been calculated by applying a ratio of 40% to the gross or net site area (as applicable). This is in line with previous practice guidance ⁽¹²⁾ and the approach the Council's Employment & Economic Baseline Study took to non-central sites ⁽¹³⁾.

5.6 The table on the following page provides the final assessment of suitable, available and achievable sites includes floorspace estimates. The detailed rationale for the estimates on each individual site is set out in the appendices.

12 Annex D of Employment Land Reviews: Guidance Note, ODPM, 2004

13 Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners, 2013

Table 11 Final list of suitable, available and deliverable sites

Ref	Address 1	Ward	Site Area (ha)	Net area (ha)	Floorspace (m ²)
125	Stevenage Leisure Park	Bedwell	8.1	0.3	5,500
-	Town Centre	Bedwell	3.2(14)	1.5	30,000
611a	Land West of North Road (2)	Woodfield	5.9	5.0	20,000
618	Land west of J8	Woodfield	9.2	4.4	17,600
612	Land West of Stevenage	Symonds Green	89.0	2.4	9,600
V1	Former Kodak site	Symonds Green	2.2	2.2	8,800
V2	Land at MBDA	Roebuck Ward	1.0	1.0	4,000
V5	Leyden House	Roebuck	0.6	0.6	2,500
		TOTAL	119.2	17.4	98,000

Ref	Address 1	Suggested use	Land type	Delivery prospects
125	Stevenage Leisure Park	B1a	Previously developed	Moderate
-	Town Centre	B1a	Previously developed	Moderate
611a	Land West of North Road (2)	B1, B2, B8	Greenfield sites outside urban area	Good
618	Land west of J8	B1, B2, B8	Green Belt	Low / speculative
612	Land West of Stevenage	B1, B2, B8	Greenfield sites outside urban area	Moderate
V1	Former Kodak site	B1a	Previously developed	Moderate
V2	Land at MBDA	B1, B2, B8	Previously developed	Moderate
V5	Leyden House	B1, B2, B8	Previously developed	Moderate

Note: Figures in **bold** for each site are the basis for calculating the estimates in other categories in accordance with the ratios described above. Figures in *italics* are the resultant estimates.

14 Site area of submitted sites

6 Reviewing the Assessment

6.1 The previous sections identify specific sites in Stevenage that can be considered for new employment provision. The level of provision each of these sites is likely to achieve has also been assessed, and is illustrated in Table 12 (on the previous page).

6.2 It is estimated that the total employment floorspace that could be achieved by developing all of the specific sites identified through this assessment comes to 98,000m². This would use around 17ha of land (net). Adding in the identified supply from Section 3, the potential new floorspace over the whole plan period rises to more than 125,000m² on more than 22 hectares of land.

Table 12 Potential for employment delivery

		Net site area (ha)	Floorspace (m ²)
SLAA sites	Good	5.0	20,000
	Moderate	8.0	60,400
	Low / speculative	4.4	17,600
Subtotal		17.4	98,000
Identified supply (alternate SLAA position)		5.0	28,900
Total potential employment provision 2011-2031		22.4	126,900

6.3 The NPPF is clear that authorities should plan proactively to meet the identified development needs of business. As the employment targets for Stevenage have yet to be defined, it is not currently possible to compare the findings of the SLAA to identify the surplus / deficit.

6.4 However, to assist in policy development, a number of alternative scenarios have been reviewed, based on the release and use of different land types for employment. These figures should help in the weighing up of policy objectives. It will help to determine whether or not existing policy designations, including Green Belt, should be reviewed to accommodate future employment requirements.

6.5 The site assessments categorise each of the sites / areas considered into one of three different land types. It is assumed that, in developing draft policies and allocations for the local plan, sites will be selected sequentially as follows:

1. Previously developed land
2. Greenfield sites outside of the urban area
3. Green Belt land

6.6 In line with the principles of sustainable development, the Local Plan should prioritise the use of previously developed land, with the release of Green Belt land through the plan-making process only being allowed in exceptional circumstances. These categories align with those

discussed in the housing SLAA. However, no 'Greenfield sites within the urban area' were assessed to be suitable, available and deliverable for employment use, so this category has been removed from the analysis of these results.

6.7 The following table identifies the levels of employment provision that could be achieved between 2011-2031 from the SLAA sites. The cumulative totals illustrate the level of floorspace that could be delivered by sequentially developing the different land types.

Table 13 Maximum potential for employment delivery

		Previously developed		Greenfield ex. Green Belt		Green Belt	
		Site area (net ha)	Floorspace (m ²)	Site area (ha)	Floorspace (m ²)	Site area (ha)	Floorspace (m ²)
Prospects	Good			5.0	20,000		
	Moderate	5.6	50,800	2.4	9,600		
	Low / speculative					4.4	17,600
	TOTAL	5.6	50,800	7.4	29,600	4.4	17,600
Cumulative total		5.6	50,800	13.0	80,400	17.4	98,000

6.8 If only the previously developed sites were to be developed, around 51,000m² floorspace could be delivered. This represents more than half the total floorspace identified on SLAA sites. The majority of this floorspace would be offices, located within the Town Centre or the Leisure Park.

6.9 Adding greenfield sites outside of the urban area, increases the yield to around 80,000m² floorspace from 13ha of land. Allowing all undeveloped sites to be allocated through the plan, including those within the Green Belt (an additional 4.4ha), could allow for just under 100,000m² floorspace to be delivered.

6.10 As well as ensuring sufficient employment land supply is available, it is important to provide an adequate choice of site types, to meet the needs of different employment sectors. The potential split between office and industrial floorspace cannot be easily calculated for the SLAA sites, as sites are often suitable and capable of accommodating various different land uses, or may be suitable for providing mixed use schemes.

6.11 However, the SLAA results show that the sites identified specifically for office use could potentially deliver around 44,000m² of floorspace on around 4 hectares of land. The remainder of sites could deliver around 54,000m² on 13 hectares of land. The most appropriate balance of uses for these sites will need to be considered.

7 Conclusions

7.1 This SLAA examines the potential availability of employment sites within the Stevenage Borough Council area and has been conducted in line with the most recent government guidance.

7.2 The supply of employment provision over the periods 2011-2031 has been considered.

7.3 The SLAA identifies that a maximum of just under 100,000m² employment floorspace could be delivered over this period from the new sites identified. This would use sites totalling nearly 20ha of land. Adding in permitted supply, brings this total to more than 125,000m². When reviewing the SLAA results, sites have been broken down into land types to explore the implications that would arise from sequentially allocating sites.

7.4 At this stage, employment targets for the new local plan have not been finalised. As such, it is not currently possible for this SLAA to identify either:

- The residual requirement for land allocations once permitted supply has been taken into account; or
- The presence of any surplus or deficit in the identified supply.

7.5 Additionally, some site capacities have been estimated using high-level and broad-brush assumptions. This approach is consistent with previous guidance on land reviews and is an accepted approach in the determination of future employment needs. However, as the plan is developed, it may be necessary to consider site-specific circumstances in more detail to inform any targets that are set for any allocated sites.

7.6 These issues will need to be considered further as the plan is developed through a further iteration of this SLAA or other supporting evidence.



Appendices

Strategic Land Availability Assessment: Employment. Update June 2015

Appendix 1: Sites already in the planning process

Application reference	Address	Employment land area*	Outstanding floorspace (m2)		
			Gain	Loss	Net
Sites under construction					
06/00290	Former Kodak Site	2.2	10,059	0	10,059
11/00530/EOT	Land At Norton Road	0.0	1,709	0	1,709
12/00463/FP	Cromer House	0.0	2,808	0	2,808
12/00577/FPM	3, 4, 5 And 6 Ditchmore Lane	-0.1	0	238	-238
13/00443/CPA	Brickdale House	-0.1	0	1,210	-1,210
13/00456/FP	Astrium	0.0	712	0	712
14/00328/CPA	Six Hills House	-0.9	0	6,613	-6,613
Detailed permission not started					
10/00118/FP	Pyramid House	0.0	223	223	0
11/00701/FPM	Plot 2000	1.0	3,770	0	3,770
12/00100/FPM	Abel Smith House	0.0	0	813	-813
12/00507/FP	Land at Leyden Road	0.1	438	0	438
13/00020/FP	Astrium	0.0	712	475	237
13/00072/FPM	Units 6 & 7, Gunnels Wood Park	0.0	2,702	2,702	0
13/00125/FP	30 High Street	0.0	0	44	-44
13/00516/FP+ (13/00366/CPA)	Tudor House Court	0.0	0	180	-180
14/00043/FP	Brickdale House	0.0	0	474	-474
14/00053/FPM	The Wine Society	0.0	8,704	0	8,704
14/00220/CPA	Southgate House	-0.2	0	4,680	-4,680
14/00247/FP	Unit K	0.0	0	210	-210
14/00284/FP	10 Market Square	0.0	0	47	-47
14/00347/FPM	3 Argyle Way	0.0	1,648		1,648
14/00428/FP	Land adj to Enterprise Rent-a-Car	0.0	0	170	-170
14/00467/FP	Belvue House & Cinnabar Café	0.0	0	520	-520
14/00553/CPA	DuPont (UK) Ltd	-2.0	0	6,647	-6,647
14/00702/CPA	Bank House	-0.2	0	1,792	-1,792
14/00705/CPA	Brickdale House	-0.4	0	9,695	-9,695
14/00715/CPA	Antelope House et al	-0.5	0	4,500	-4,500
15/00032/CPA	Londis	0.0	0	128	-128
Outline permission or resolution to grant					
05/00621/OP	GSK	9.7	49,679	0	49,679
07/00810/OP	Town Centre	1.0	7,500	0	7,500
10/00130/FPM	Park Place	0.0	0	3,404	-3,404
11/00337/OPM	GSK	0.0	3,556	0	3,556
14/00178/OPM	Vincent Court	-1.0	0	5,750	-5,750
Subtotal		8.5	94,220	50,515	43,705
Local Plan allocation					
ALLOCATION	WEST OF GUNNELS WOOD ROAD (part)	1.0	4,080		
ALLOCATION	West of Stevenage	12.0	48,000		
Total		21.5	146,300	50,515	95,785

*This is the figure used for purposes of employment land supply monitoring and will not necessarily related to the 'red line' site area. Not all sites are (fully) included in calculations of land supply: Extensions to existing premises, changes of use and losses of upper floor premises are normally excluded and are recorded as zero values in this table; Site areas for partially complete or mixed use schemes may be pro-rated or otherwise reduced.

Appendix 2: Site assessment - summary matrix

Site Details					Suitability			
Ref	Address	Ward	Land type	Site Area	Site description	Significant constraints identified	Suitable?	Suggested use(s)
125	Stevenage Leisure Park	Bedwell Ward	Previously developed	8.1	Large edge-of-centre site occupied by low density 'warehouse-style' leisure development with substantial surface car parking. Surrounded by employment area on three sides with railway line and station to the east. Surrounding buildings up to 4 storeys equivalent.	Potential contamination from previous land uses	Yes	B1a
128a	Swingate surface car parks	Bedwell Ward	Previously developed	0.9	Three adjoining surface car parks in town centre. Surrounding buildings up to six storeys in height.	Setting to Conservation Area	Yes	B1a
128b	Leisure Centre	Bedwell Ward	Previously developed	1.4	Large theatre / leisure complex with adjoining car park and delivery areas. Approximately 4 storeys equivalent in height. Adjoins ring road to west and surface car parking on remaining three sides.	Re-provision of existing uses	Yes	
138	Staples	Bedwell Ward	Previously developed	0.5	Edge-of-town style retail unit and associated parking. Situated to rear of large supermarket and adjacent to town centre ring road.	Integration with surrounding building layouts	Yes	
142	The Plaza	Bedwell Ward	Previously developed	0.4	Town centre site containing various retail and leisure uses. 3 storey equivalent in height. Adjacent to, though slightly stepped back from town square. Surrounding buildings up to six storeys in height.	Adjacent to Conservation Area	Yes	
611a	Land West of North Road (HCA)	Woodfield Ward	Greenfield sites outside urban area	5.9	Large, irregular shaped greenfield site. Site slopes broadly from north-east to south west. Two sets of power lines cross the site from east to west. Two-storey residential to the north, rugby club to south (up embankment) and health facilities (up to four storeys) to west. Site frontage onto North Road.	Local Rural Area policy designation Partially in area of flood risk High voltage electricity pylons traverse site	Yes	
618	Land south west of J8	Woodfield Ward	Green Belt	9.2	Two adjoining sites separated by embanked dual carriageway. Southern site surrounding by major roads and railway. Bisected by water course. Area of woodland at south-east of site. Site slopes significantly from north-east to south-west. Pylon lines present across the site. Access via narrow bridge under A602. Smaller land parcel to north slopes from east to west with frontage access.	Green Belt policy designation Partially in area of flood risk Significantly constrained access to larger site Woodland wildlife site and potential contamination Topography	Yes	B1, B2, B8

Site Details					Suitability			
Ref	Address	Ward	Land type	Site Area	Site description	Significant constraints identified	Suitable?	Suggested use(s)
612	Land West of Stevenage	Symonds Green Ward	Greenfield sites outside urban area	89.0	Significant area of predominantly undeveloped land to the west of the A1(M). Some constraints in small areas of site or adjacent to its boundaries. Existing underpasses provide access.	None	Yes	B1, B2, B8
V1	Former Kodak site	Symonds Green Ward	Previously developed	2.2	Cleared site within Gunnels Wood Employment Area used for car parking. Frontage onto Gunnels Wood Road and Bessemer Drive. Surrounding buildings up to approximately 4 storeys equivalent in height.	Potential contamination from previous land uses	Yes	B1a
V2	Land at MBDA	Roebuck Ward	Previously developed	1.0	Cleared site within Gunnels Wood Employment Area used for car parking. Access from link road within MBDA premises. Surrounding buildings generally 2-3 storeys in height.	Potential contamination from previous land uses	Yes	B1, B2, B8
V5	Leyden House	Roebuck Ward	Previously developed	0.6	Low-rise building currently in use as day centre. Frontage onto Gunnels Wood Road with access from Leyden Road. Surrounding buildings generally 1-2 storeys in height	Reprovision of existing use Potential contamination from previous land uses	Yes	B1, B2, B8

Appendix 2: Site assessm

			Yield calculations			Available?	Achievable?	Prospects
Ref	Address	Reason	Net area	Constrained floorspace	Comments			
125	Stevenage Leisure Park	Previously developed site in highly accessible, central location. Suitable for redevelopment as part of a comprehensive, mixed use scheme. Possibility to significantly intensify use of site.	0.3	5,500	Floorspace estimate based on draft scheme. Proxy land area calculated based on 200% plot ratio as per NLP study method for central office sites.	Yes	Yes	Moderate
128a	Swingate surface car parks	Previously developed sites in highly accessible, central location. Suitable for redevelopment as part of a comprehensive, mixed use scheme. Possibility to significantly intensify use of sites.	1.5	30,000	Estimate based on land use budget contained in Stevenage Central Framework. Figures discounted to allow for proposed phasing of implementation beyond plan period and need to stimulate market to delivery. Proxy land area calculated based on 200% plot ratio as per NLP study method for central office sites.	Yes	Yes	Moderate
128b	Leisure Centre							
138	Staples							
142	The Plaza							
611a	Land West of North Road (HCA)	Site generally suitable for employment development, though existing policy designation would need to be reviewed. Pylons and areas of flood risk could limit development but relevant guidance recognises that parking and storage appropriate under power lines whilst employment uses would not necessitate exception test for flood risk. Site area 'netted off' to take these constraints into account.	5.0	20,000	Based on 40% ratio applied to reduced, net site area of 5 hectares to take account of constraints on site.	Yes	Yes	Good
618	Land south west of J8	Part of larger site could be suitable for low-intensity employment development, subject to identified constraints. Green Belt designation would need to be reviewed though site is visually well contained by surrounding roads and railway.	4.4	17,600	Net site area reduced to 4.4 hectares, representing that part of the southern site considered broadly developable. 40% ratio assumed although site most likely to be suited for low-intensity storage or distribution uses.	Yes	Yes	Low / speculative

Ref	Address	Reason	Yield calculations			Available?	Achievable?	Prospects
			Net area	Constrained floorspace	Comments			
612	Land West of Stevenage	Site generally suitable for development. Employment most likely as an ancillary component of a comprehensive scheme.	2.4	9,600	Net site area reduced to 2.4 hectares following landowner submissions. Estimated floorspace based on 40% ratio.	Yes	Yes	Moderate
V1	Former Kodak site	Cleared site located within existing employment area.	2.2	8,800	Floorspace calculated by applying 40% ratio to whole site. Given the site's relatively accessible location, offices considered most appropriate.	Yes	Yes	Moderate
V2	Land at MBDA	Cleared site located within existing employment area.	1.0	4,000	Floorspace calculated by applying 40% ratio to whole site. A range of B-class uses would be suitable on this site.	Yes	Yes	Moderate
V5	Leyden House	Located within existing employment area though existing use would need to be re-provided.	0.6	2,500	Floorspace calculated by applying 40% ratio to whole site. A range of B-class uses would be suitable on this site.	Yes	Yes	Moderate

