

Safeguarded Land Release Justification Report

December 2020



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Washington is a large urban area with a resident population of circa 65,000 persons and as a planned New Town, Washington is a highly sustainable location with good transport links to the City Centre, Durham, Gateshead and Newcastle. It features as a principal location for jobs and continues to have the strongest employment market within the city. It hosts major national assets including, Nissan Motor Manufacturing UK, a significant automotive supply chain, as well as the International Advanced Manufacturing Park (IAMP). Moreover, the town also has a strong housing market and a wide range of shops and services both within the main town centre at The Galleries and also within a number of smaller local centres. It is therefore recognised that Washington is an inherently sustainable location for housing-led development.
- 1.2 However, despite its sustainable development potential, the town has been constrained by tight Green Belt boundaries and a lack of available land for development over a number of years, which has restricted the sustainable growth of the town.
- 1.3 In order to facilitate development across Sunderland, the Council adopted its Core Strategy and Development Plan (CSDP)¹ in January 2020. The document seeks to address the Council's long-term plan for development across the city to 2033. In relation to Washington, the CSDP designated Land East of Washington as 'safeguard land' suitable to accommodate a sustainable mixed community, as and when the need arises.
- 1.4 Housing land supply has been a longstanding issue within the Washington sub-area and therefore the CSDP sought to release a number of sites from the Green Belt on the edge of Washington and allocate them for residential development, which alongside other development opportunities within the town, would support the town's sustainable growth. The CSDP submission documents proposed to release 8 Green Belt sites in Washington for residential development, totalling approximately 670 dwellings. However, during the Examination of the CSDP, the Inspector recommended several of the sites should be retained as Green Belt and removed as housing allocations. This resulted in a reduction in the housing supply of approximately 340 dwellings in the Washington sub-area and has resulted in only 7% of the Council's future housing land supply now being located within the town.
- 1.5 As a consequence of the above, it has become necessary to review the housing position in Washington to ensure there is adequate supply of potential deliverable and developable housing sites during the plan period to meet identified needs. The Council consider the most effective way of meeting the deficit in Washington is through the early release of the 'safeguarded land East of Washington' (referred to in this document as Washington

¹ <https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/article/15978/Core-Strategy-and-Development-Plan->

Meadows), for an approximately 1,500² homes as part of a sustainable mixed-use development³.

- 1.6 The Draft Allocations and Designations Plan (A&D Plan), currently being consulted upon alongside this Report, which identifies in Policy SP12, North East Washington as an area for regeneration and new development. The policy states that the Council, working with its partners, will:
 - a. create a new sustainable residential community at Land East of Washington (hereafter referred to as Washington Meadows);
 - b. work to secure regeneration and renewal at Sulgrave; and
 - c. work toward re-opening the Leamside Line.
- 1.7 In addition, Policy SS9 of the Draft A&D Plan allocates Washington Meadows as a sustainable urban extension to Washington.

Purpose of the Report

- 1.8 As part of the preparation of the draft A&D Plan, the Council has taken into consideration the supply of housing land within the city and within the Washington area in order to ensure that there is an adequate supply of housing land to meet the overall housing requirement contained within the CSDP and meet the overall objectives of the Plan to support the sustainable growth of Washington. As the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) indicates that safeguarded land can only be released for development through the review of a Local Plan, this included a review of the safeguarded land (land to the East of Washington), in order to determine whether there was any justification for an early release of the this site for development through the A&D Plan.
- 1.9 As part of this process the Council has concluded that there is justification for an early release of the safeguarded land through the A&D Plan and the purpose of this report is to set out the reasons for reaching that conclusion.

Structure of the Report

- 1.10 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:
 - **Chapter 2: Policy Context:** provides a summary of relevant policies at a national and local level;
 - **Chapter 3: Context of the site:** provides an overview of the site's location, setting and neighbouring areas;
 - **Chapters 4 to 6: Strategic Case to release safeguarded land through the Allocations and Designations Plan:** sets out the justification for the early release of the safeguarded land in

² 1,500 is indicative at this stage in plan preparation. Further work is required to determine the capacity of the site.

³ The Safeguarded Land is also referred to as Washington Meadows through the emerging Allocations and Designations Plan.

terms of housing need, additional housing options, sustainability, regeneration and low carbon;

- **Chapter 7: Appropriateness of 'the Safeguarded Land' for future housing development areas:** considers the suitability of the land for residential development in terms of accessibility and sustainability;
- **Chapter 8: Allocations and Designations Plan:-** sets out the proposed policies which would allocate the site for a sustainable urban extension within the Draft Allocations and Designations Plan; and
- **Chapter 9: Conclusion:** Provides a conclusion to the findings of the report.

2. Policy Context

National Policy Framework

- 2.1 The NPPF provides the Government's national planning policy framework for England, which is used to inform the preparation of Local Plans.
- 2.2 At paragraph 11, the NPPF sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development. This requires Local Planning Authorities (LPAs), via Local Plans, to seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area. As part of this, the NPPF gives encouragement for the allocation of larger sites.
- 2.3 Building upon this, at paragraph 72, the Framework identifies that the supply of a large number of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development such as new settlements or within existing villages and towns (such as Washington) provided that they are well located and designed and supported by the necessary infrastructure and facilities. Working with the support of their communities and with other authorities if appropriate, strategic policy making authorities should identify suitable locations for such development where this can help to meet identify needs in a sustainable way. In doing so they should:
 - a. consider the opportunities presented by existing or planned investment in infrastructure, the area's economic potential and the scope for net environmental gains;
 - b. ensure that their size and location will support a sustainable community, with sufficient access to services and employment opportunities within the development itself (without expecting an unrealistic level of self-containment) or in larger towns to which there are good access;
 - c. set clear expectations for the quality of the development and how this can be maintained (such as by following garden city principles) and ensure that a variety of homes, to meet the needs of different groups in the community, will be provided;
 - d. make a realistic assessment of likely rates of delivery, given the lead in times for large scale sites and identify opportunities for supporting rapid implementation (such as through joint ventures or locally led development corporations); and
 - e. Consider whether it is appropriate to establish Green Belt around or adjoining new developments of significant size.

Local Plan – Core Strategy and Development Plan

- 2.4 Sunderland City Council is currently in the process of preparing its Local Plan which consists of three parts:
 - The Core Strategy and Development Plan (CSDP) adopted in January 2020;
 - The Allocation and Designations Plan (A&D Plan); and
 - International Advanced Manufacturing Park Area Action Plan (IAMP AAP) adopted in November 2017.

- 2.5 The CSDP was adopted in January 2020. Through the adoption of the CSDP, Washington Meadows was formally designated as safeguarded land through Policy SS3, which removed the land from the Green Belt and identified it as an area for future growth. The Policy text is provided below.

Core Strategy and Development Plan (CSDP) Policy SS3: Safeguarded Land

Land East of Washington has been removed from the Green Belt and designated as Safeguarded Land.

Planning Permission for the development of Safeguarded Land will not be granted except where the development is temporary or would otherwise not prejudice the ability of the site to be developed in longer term.

- 2.6 The CSDP background text (paragraph 4.52) sets out that, through a plan review, the reassessment of Safeguarded Land will involve the determination as to whether there are prevailing circumstances for releasing some or all the land for development or whether it should be maintained as safeguarded land.
- 2.7 Paragraph 4.53 of the CSDP further adds that the Land East of Washington (Washington Meadows) could accommodate a new sustainable community in the long term but would require a comprehensive approach to ensure that the infrastructure required to make the site sustainable is delivered. Also, it indicates that the Council would give consideration as to whether an early release of the safeguarded land is justified through the emerging Allocations & Designations Plan.

3. Context of the Washington Meadows

North East Washington Context

- 3.1 North East Washington is an area of the city with a significant amount of development potential. The IAMP located to the East of North East Washington, is the premier location for advanced manufacturing and automotive technology. Washington Meadows provides an opportunity to create a new sustainable community delivering approximately 1500 homes for the city. The potential Leamside Line reopening could create sustainable transport connections via metro/rail.

- 3.2 It is important that alongside developing new homes and jobs the Council and its partners invest in and regenerate existing communities, where there is a recognised need for intervention. It is anticipated that Washington Meadows and IAMP will be a catalyst for the regeneration of the wider North East Washington area. The interlinked residential, employment, local centre and transportation proposals of North East Washington will provide existing residents at Sulgrave and new residents of Washington Meadows, business investors and developers with a range of exciting new opportunities, facilities and services. Public and private investment in the area will undoubtedly bring regeneration benefits to Sulgrave.

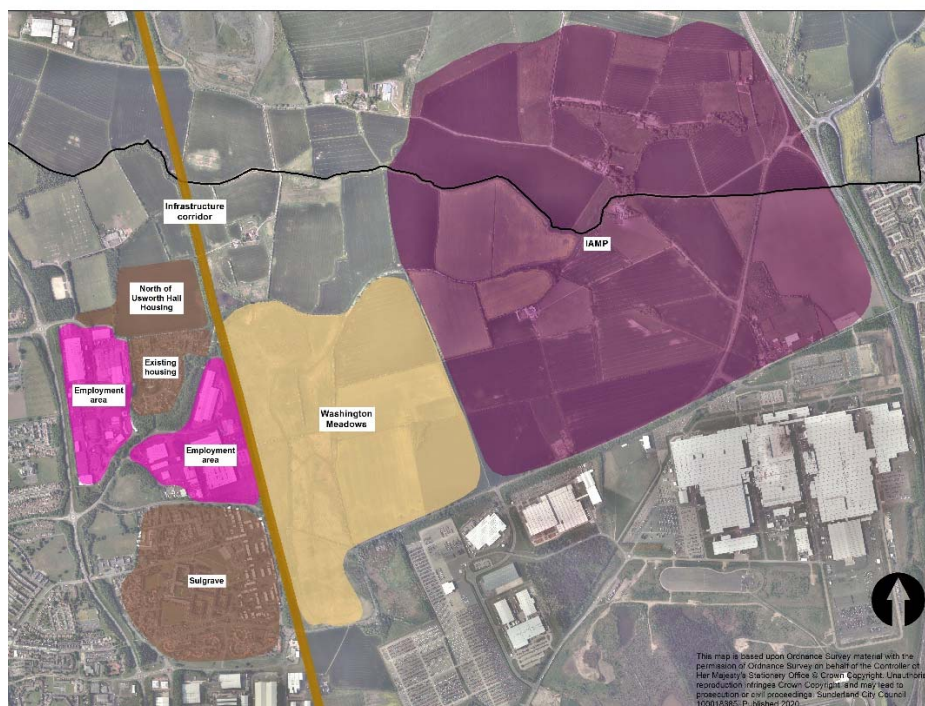


Figure 1 North East Washington

Washington Meadows Context

3.3 Washington Meadows will form a natural extension to the popular Washington town. The site is located on the north eastern edge of Washington close to Nissan and west of the 150ha IAMP. To the north of the site is agricultural land, to the east IAMP, to the south Nissan and Elm Tree Farm Garden Nursery & Tearoom, and to the west of the site is the former Leamside Railway Line. The site is approximately 98 hectares in size.

Washington Meadows – Existing Policy Context

3.4 The adopted CSDP sets out the Council’s long-term plan for development across the city to 2033. It sought to address the lack of development opportunities within the Washington sub-area in order to ensure that Washington could continue to thrive as a sustainable community. Washington is a highly sustainable location, with good transport links to the City Centre, Durham, Gateshead and Newcastle. However, for some time the area has been constrained from development by tight Green Belt boundaries and a lack of available land for development.

3.5 The CSDP submission documents proposed to release eight Green Belt sites in Washington for residential development, providing approximately 670 dwellings. However, during the Examination of the CSDP, the Planning Inspector recommended several of the sites should be retained as Green Belt and not brought forward for residential development. This resulted in a reduction of approximately 340 dwellings in Washington and now results in only 7% of

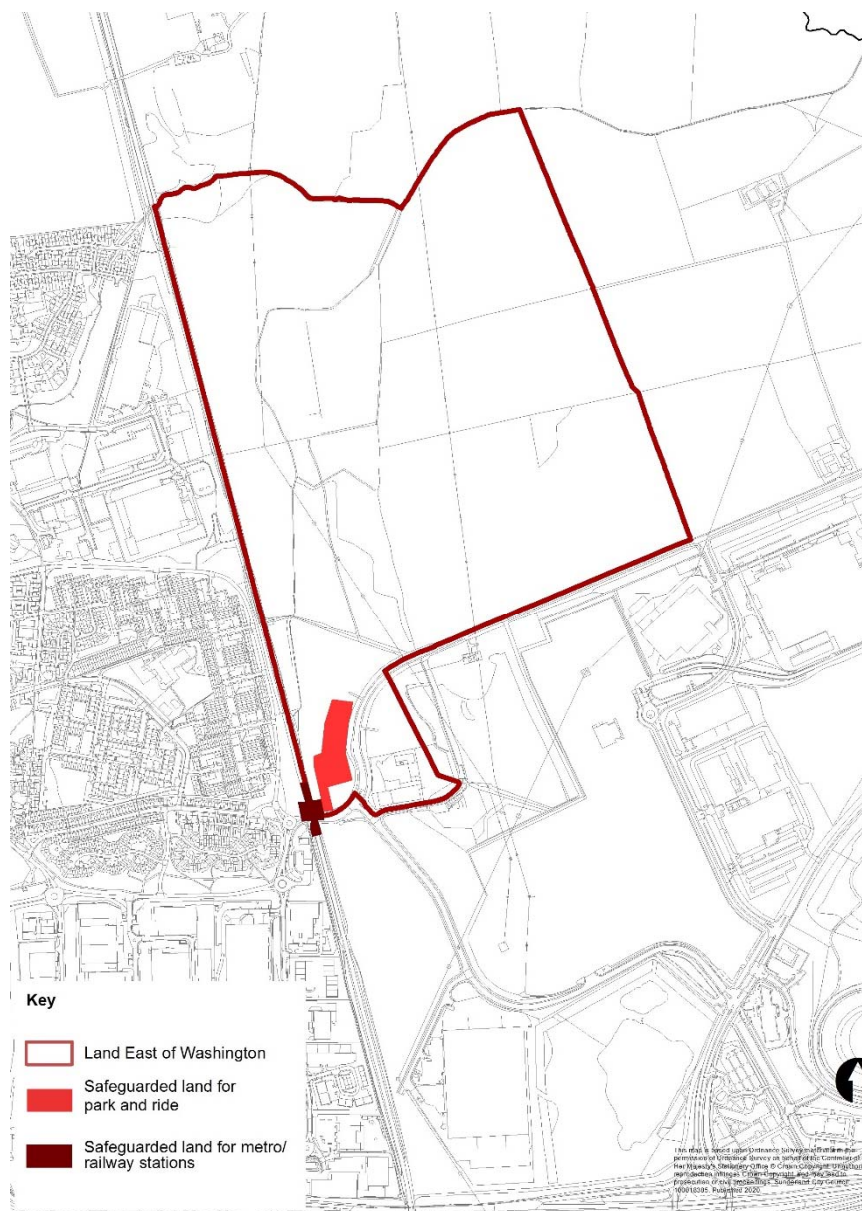


Figure 2 Washington Meadows

deliverable and developable future housing land supply for the city as a whole being located within Washington.

- 3.6 Policy SS3 of the adopted CSDP safeguards Land to the East of Washington (Washington Meadows) for future development beyond the plan period, however the CSDP makes it clear that consideration will be given to an early release of the safeguarded land through the A&D Plan, if required.

4. Release of the Safeguarded Land through the Allocations and Designations Plan – the Housing Shortfall Case

4.1 This section presents the housing shortfall case. It illustrates that based on the city’s existing housing requirements, there is an identified shortfall in housing land supply. It goes on to explain the alternative options which have been considered.

Housing Requirements

4.2 CSDP Policy SP1 identifies a housing requirement of 13,410 dwellings over the 18-year plan period which equates to 745 dwelling per annum. However, an adjustment is needed to account for inevitable site difficulties which may occur in bringing forward some sites due to site lapse, viability fluctuations and new information from detailed site investigations. These factors may result in site delays. As such, best practice indicates a 10% buffer is required to help bolster the supply and guard against under delivery. This is also consistent with the buffer recommended by the planning inspector during the Examination of the CSDP⁴. Once this buffer is applied to the housing requirement, this increases the overall requirement to **14,751 net additional homes**.

Components of Housing Supply

4.3 There are a number of supply sources which contribute to meeting the housing requirement, these are set out in more detail below:

- **Housing completions** - As the plan period commenced in 2015/16 a proportion of this supply has already been met through dwellings which are now complete. The total number of net housing completions as of 31st March 2020 was 3,998 dwellings, as shown in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Year	Completions (net)	Completions (net) which were affordable homes
2015/16	889 dwellings	147 dwellings
2016/17	710 dwellings	177 dwellings
2017/18	880 dwellings	231 dwellings
2018/19	706 dwellings	108 dwellings
2019/20	813 dwellings	111 dwellings
Total	3998 dwellings	774 dwellings

Table 1 Housing Completions (2015-2020)

⁴ See Paragraph 13 of Inspector’s Post Hearings Advice: https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/media/21810/EX18-002-Post-Hearings-Advice-July-2019/pdf/EX18.002_Post_Hearings_Advice_-_July_2019.pdf?m=636993971372630000

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
A - Newbuild Completions	767	725	886	667	617
B – Demolitions	24	38	153	41	6
C - Change of Use Net Change	52	5	115	55	192
D - Conversions Net Change	94	18	32	25	10
TOTALS (A - B + C + D =)	889	710	880	706	813

Table 2 Housing completion (Net) per annum

- **Strategic housing allocations** – The adopted CSDP includes twelve strategic housing allocations and one mixed use allocation. These allocations will contribute 4,240 dwellings to the housing supply overall, however due to the scale of development, the build out goes beyond the plan period on a number of the sites. Consequently, 3,713 dwellings are anticipated to be completed from strategic allocations within the plan period (2015-2033). As a number of these sites have already commenced, some of these completions have already taken place and therefore it is anticipated that 3,587⁵ dwellings are still to be delivered from strategic housing allocations within the remainder of the plan period.
- **Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)** - The SHLAA, identifies sites that are expected to contribute towards future supply. Sites are assessed for their overall housing potential, with realistic assumptions regarding a site’s suitability, availability, achievability and economic viability taken into consideration.

The SHLAA identifies a supply of specific deliverable sites for the next five years of the plan and a supply of specific developable sites for years 6-10 and 11-15 years. Sites which are not considered deliverable or developable are categorised as not currently developable⁶. The SHLAA has identified a total of 7,202 dwellings which are considered deliverable or developable. However, a proportion of this will build out beyond the SHLAA fifteen-year period and the plan period. This results in a total of 6,560 dwellings which are considered deliverable or developable which are anticipated to be completed within the plan period, of which over 2,000 are on sites that are currently under construction. Those sites considered deliverable and developable which are yet to commence are proposed to be brought forward as housing allocations within the A&D Plan.

- **Small Sites** - In addition to the SHLAA housing supply, small housing sites (4 units or less or less than 0.25 hectares) also contribute to the housing supply. These sites do not feature as part of the SHLAA process, as they fall below the minimum size thresholds, however they do provide a reliable source of housing supply. A small site allowance of 50 dwellings per annum is forecast from year 1 onwards and included within the overall housing supply⁷.

⁵ 126 dwellings complete as of 31st March 2020 and accounted for within the 3,998 housing completions.

⁶ Not currently developable refers to when sites have constraints which would prevent delivery of the site altogether or before a particular point in time.

⁷ This approach has been accepted and forms part of the adopted CSDP and the Council’s approved Annual Position Statement.

- **Demolitions** – Consideration has also been given to the loss of housing stock during the plan period. Demolitions for the next five years are largely known through discussions with key stakeholders (16 demolitions). However, for the remainder of the plan period an allowance of 20 demolitions per annum is accounted for, which is based on historic averages⁸.

4.4 Table 3 below sets out the housing supply available over the remainder of the plan period.

Source	Dwellings
Completions 2015/16- 2019/20	3,998
CSDP Strategic housing allocations within the remaining plan period	3,587
Deliverable and Developable dwellings⁹	6,560
Small sites	650
Demolitions	-276
Total dwellings over the plan period (2015/16- 2032/33)	14,519
Requirement (including buffer)	14,751
Shortfall	-232

Table 3 Housing Supply

4.5 When the supply of 14,519, set out in the table one, is set against the requirement of 14,751 this results in a shortfall of **232** dwellings over the plan period.

Alternative options

4.6 In order to address the identified shortfall and ensure the full housing requirement can be met within the plan period, a number of reasonable options have been considered. These are set out in the additional housing options subsection below.

Increasing Site Densities

4.7 In line with the NPPF and to ensure that developments makes optimal use of land, increasing site densities has been considered.

4.8 Those sites which are in close proximity to centres and those that have good public transport access already have high density levels associated with them and consideration has been given to increasing densities further. However, this can cause issues with viability and the higher densities is not always in accordance with what the city needs (e.g. the lack of larger family dwellings identified through the Strategic Housing Market Assessment). Where density levels can be increased, this is encouraged, however this is done in conjunction with developers to ensure a site remains deliverable.

4.9 The density levels of sites within the housing supply range from single figures up to 960 dwellings per hectare (dph). Over half of the sites that make up the supply within the SHLAA

⁸ This approach has been accepted and forms part of the adopted CSDP and approved Annual Position Statement.

⁹ This includes sites currently under construction and considered as deliverable or developable within the SHLAA, but excludes the CSDP allocated strategic sites

fall within a density range of between 30-60 dph. The majority of the sites which have very high-density levels are located within the Urban Core, reflecting their sustainable location¹⁰. As a consequence, it is not considered that a further increase in site density offers an appropriate solution to meeting the identified housing shortfall.

Bringing Forward Lead in Times and Delivery Rates

4.10 The approach to determine delivery rates and lead in times is primarily based on the assumptions which are set in the SHLAA. A standard rate of 30 dwellings per annum is used for a single developer site. It is however acknowledged, that delivery rates for single developer sites maybe higher where there is more market demand for the product on offer. Where developers indicate that a higher delivery rate is possible for their site, this is taken into consideration and reflected in delivery forecasts. Similarly, lower delivery rates in lower market areas are considered where indicated. These assumptions were examined and accepted through the Examination in Public of the CSDP and prepared in alignment with the SHLAA Partnership. As such, it is not considered that the lead in times can be brought forward, nor the delivery rates increased to meet the identified housing shortfall.

Optimising Delivery on Multi Developer Sites

4.11 Where it is known that there are two developers on a site, an assumption is made that housing will be delivered at a rate of 40-50 dwellings per annum (20-25 dwellings per annum each). This assumption is made as two outlets on one site are likely to deliver units at a higher rate overall than a site with only one outlet. However, a broadly similar housing offer is likely to be offered on a dual outlet site and therefore, sale and take up of the units is distributed between the two outlets. Similarly, multi developer sites with three or more outlets, a delivery rate of 20 dwellings per annum, per outlet is assumed. Where developers have indicated higher rates of delivery, this is verified and reflected in the delivery forecasts for a site. It is therefore considered that this has already been optimised as far as practicably possible.

Utilising green spaces/employment land and settlement breaks

4.12 Whilst preparing the CSDP, full consideration was given to identifying the most suitable and sustainable sites across the city. As part of this exercise a review of employment land and Settlement Breaks was undertaken. As a result of these reviews, several potential housing sites were identified and put forward for inclusion in the SHLAA and were removed from employment and Settlement Break designations within the adopted CSDP. The remaining areas should continue to be protected, which was agreed through the recent Examination of the CSDP.

4.13 The Greenspace Assessment (2020) has reviewed all greenspaces for inclusion into the A&D Plan. Where surplus sites have been identified, these have been allocated for housing within the emerging A&D Plan. The Assessment indicates that the remaining areas of greenspace are important for protection and therefore there is no further opportunity to release any additional greenspaces (over and above those already identified for release).

¹⁰ Appendix G of the SHLAA details site density levels, the SHLAA is available here: <https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/article/12801/Allocations-and-Designations-Plan>

4.14 Based on the above, it is not considered utilising further greenspace, employment land and Settlement Breaks is a viable option, as these sources of supply have already been exhausted.

Maximising the reuse of empty homes

4.15 As part of the Council's priorities, a series of implementation measures are in place to ensure that empty properties are continually brought back into use, these include; developing financial assistance packages; use of enforcement powers to enforce property sales, where required; implementation of S215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 orders; and the compulsory purchase of properties.

4.16 An element of funding is committed from S106 contributions, New Homes Bonus and Homes and Communities Agency funding to return empty properties back into use. In addition to this, the Council are actively working with a registered provider to purchase and return empty properties back into use, along with directly purchasing and refurbishing empty properties within the city with a view to rehousing applicants from the Housing Register.

4.17 Notwithstanding the above, the number of properties that these schemes will yield is minimal and as such this method has been discounted and does not contribute to housing supply. Consequently, it is not considered that this offers an appropriate solution to meet the identified housing shortfall.

4.18 The above chapter has demonstrated that the Council has sought to address the identified shortfall through all other realistic sources of housing supply, however these options are not considered appropriate to make up for the identified shortfall. As a consequence it is considered that the early release of the safeguarded land is the most appropriate option to address the identified housing shortfall.

5. Release of the Safeguarded Land through the Allocations and Designations Plan – Maximising Housing Supply In Washington

5.1 This section sets out evidence of the limited supply of deliverable and developable housing land within Washington. It considers that Washington Meadows offers a solution to attempt to redistribute housing growth to support the sustainable growth of Washington.

Land Supply

5.2 The majority of the identified land supply set out within the SHLAA, is located in South Sunderland (43%) and Coalfield (28%). In contrast, there are parts of the city where potential land supply is much lower, with the identified supply in the Urban Core being 12%, North Sunderland being 10% and Washington having the smallest share of deliverable and developable housing land at just 7%. The limited supply of existing deliverable and developable sites is illustrated in Figure 3.

5.3 As illustrated in Figure 3, a number of sites in Washington have been classified, as 'Not Currently Developable'. The vast majority of these are located within the Green Belt, with the remainder being discounted due to their location on designated employment land, important greenspaces or due to viability issues relating to their brownfield status. Further details are included in the SHLAA.

Sunderland SHLAA sites Washington

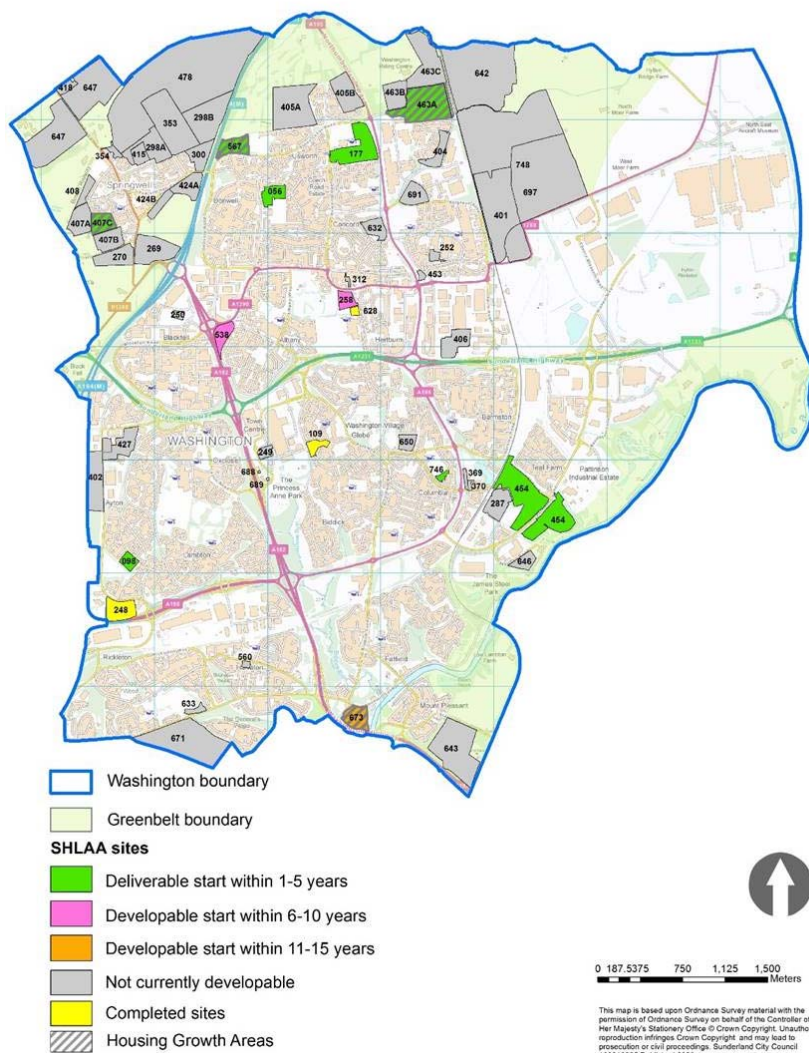


Figure 3 Identified Deliverable and Developable Housing Supply

Delivery in Washington

5.4 Recent housing delivery rates in Washington mirrors the spatial divide of deliverable and developable housing land in Sunderland. For the 2018/19 monitoring period, some 45% of

net additional dwelling completions were in the Coalfield sub-area; and in contrast, the five wards which make up Washington accounted for only 9% of net additional dwelling completions. Furthermore, in 2019/20 Washington made up only 12% of completions despite Washington accounting for 23% of the population of the city. These recent housing completions show a continued longer-term trend with completions prior to the plan period (2007-2015) averaging just 93 net additional dwellings per annum in Washington.

Land availability

- 5.5 The lack of available housing sites in the Washington area can be largely attributed to the presence of the Tyne and Wear Green Belt, which places a heavy constraint on the supply of suitable development land and so locations such as Washington have experienced limited development. Conversely, much of the southern part of the city is not constrained by Green Belt and therefore a significant quantum of housing development has been channelled towards the Coalfield and South Sunderland areas.
- 5.6 It should also be noted that most planned growth is located in the south of the Sunderland Administrative Area, such as at the South Sunderland Growth Area. It is therefore not considered to be sustainable or desirable for all housing growth to take place in this location. The CSDP aims to promote a balanced portfolio of sites across the local authority area to ensure that housing needs are adequately met in all locations, not only in the south of the city. The release of the safeguarded land presents an opportunity to deliver a balanced approach to support the sustainable growth of Washington.

Washington Housing Market and Deliverability

- 5.7 Washington is regarded as one of the more desirable and marketable housing areas within the city. Given the emphasis in the NPPF on identifying a supply of deliverable housing land, it is important that allocated housing sites have a strong prospect of coming forward over the plan period. They must therefore be in locations that are likely to be attractive to the market, which also assists with the viability of a site, particularly as the most recent viability assessment indicates that there should not be a heavy reliance on brownfield sites within the supply due to the majority of these being unviable. In addition, given the constraints to housing delivery in Washington created by the Green Belt and limited land supply, it is likely that there is significant pent up demand for housing which has gone unmet due to the lack of available sites.
- 5.8 The issue of the attractiveness of Washington as a housing location and the need for additional housing development in the town is also reflected in the latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) (2020)¹¹. Through the study, stakeholders recognised that there has been limited provision of new homes in more sought-after areas, with areas such as Washington not having enough housing. In addition, the SHMA indicates that Washington in general (but in particular Washington North) has a shortfall of smaller 1-2-bedroom houses, 4 plus bedroom houses as well as bungalows.
- 5.9 This section has demonstrated the uneven distribution of deliverable and developable of housing supply across the city. In particular, it has illustrated the lack of housing land in

¹¹ https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/media/22569/Sunderland-Strategic-Housing-Market-Assessment-Final-Report-July-2020/pdf/Sunderland_Strategic_Housing_Market_Assessment_-_Final_Report_-_July_2020.pdf?m=637340382154130000

Washington despite it being a sustainable location for housing growth. Consequently, it is considered that the release of the safeguarded land offers an opportunity to help rebalance the housing distribution and maximise the potential of Washington.

6. Release of the Safeguarded Land through the Allocations and Designations Plan – Maximising Regeneration in North East Washington

- 6.1 It is anticipated that Washington Meadows and the IAMP will be a catalyst for the regeneration of the wider North East Washington area. The interlinked residential, employment, local centre and transportation proposals of North East Washington will provide existing residents at Sulgrave and new residents of Washington Meadows, business investors and developers with a range of exciting new opportunities, facilities and services. Public and private investment in the area will undoubtedly bring regeneration benefits to Sulgrave.
- 6.2 The release of the safeguarded land, combined with the nationally significant development of IAMP alongside the potential reopening of the Leamside Line, represents a unique opportunity to maximise benefits and deliver regeneration in North East Washington.

Leamside Line

- 6.3 The former Leamside Line provides opportunities for a range of rail uses including improving connectivity between Washington and Sunderland (by taking in the former Penshaw-Pallion line) and southwards into the Coalfield area (Figure 4).
- 6.4 Since closure of the line in 1991 several studies have considered the issues and opportunities associated with the reintroduction of passenger, freight and high speed trains and the benefits this would offer Sunderland and the North East region. The re-opening of the Leamside Line is supported through the North East Rail Statement, which seeks to implement regional rail improvements over the next fifteen years that deliver economic benefits.

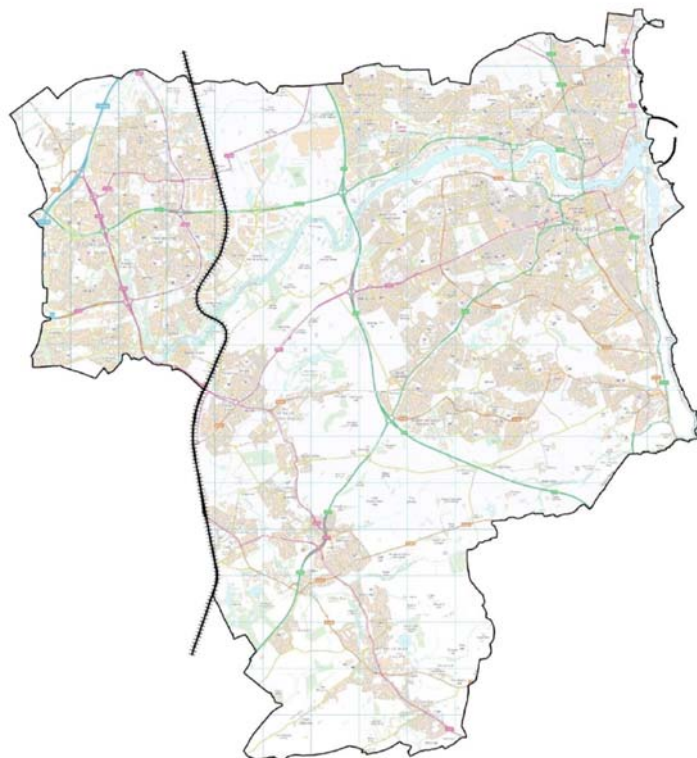


Figure 4 Leamside Line

- 6.5 The Leamside Line provides opportunities to extend Metro operations to Washington and is particularly important to Sunderland as it provides direct access to the East Coast Mainline, which is one of the key arterial rail links South and North. The reopening of the Leamside Line would help to remove freight trains from the East Coast Main Line (ECML) and Durham Coast

Line, increasing capacity for passenger trains and unlocking additional destinations that could be connected with Sunderland.

- 6.6 To protect the Leamside Line, the CSDP safeguarded the route. Its protection is reinforced by the neighbouring local authorities of Newcastle, Gateshead and Durham, who support the line's protection within their respective Local Plans to deliver additional passenger services or freight services should the need arise.
- 6.7 The Council will continue to work with its sub-regional partners and transport infrastructure stakeholders to investigate the potential of this line and will support proposals that benefit the city.

Safeguarding Land for a New Station in Washington Meadows

- 6.8 The Draft A&D Plan identifies land (Figure 2) to be safeguarded for a new railway station and associated car parking. The Council is currently preparing a Rail Study which will consider the feasibility of a new Washington station. The Study will propose an appropriate station location, size and layout.

7. Appropriateness of the Safeguarded Land as a future housing development area

7.1 This chapter considers the appropriateness of the safeguarded land for residential development, by considering if the site is suitable, achievable and deliverable.

Suitability

7.2 In accordance with the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), a site or broad location can be considered suitable if it would provide an appropriate location for development when considered against relevant constraints and their potential to be mitigated.

Site Constraints

7.3 There are a range of constraints which affect Washington Meadows. These constraints are summarised below and illustrated in Figure 5. The Council considers that the constraints identified can be mitigated and therefore consider the site to be suitable.

Connectivity
Two access points required. A bridge will be required over the Leamside Line for both pedestrians and vehicles.
Need for a new estate road through the site.
Strategic road network impacts and cumulative impacts on the local road network.
Land required for a Train Station and car park to serve Leamside Line.
Development buffers required alongside Leamside Line. Will impact on developable area. Potential to be Rail and Metro.
Works will be required to the existing Leamside Line crossing point at Usworth.
Infrastructure/Utilities
Gas pipe through part of the site. A Buffer will be required.
Electricity pylons across the site. A Buffer will be required unless pylons relocated.
Ensuring access to electricity in the area.
Environment
Site is very wet, with a river/stream and ponds within the site boundary.
Flooding is a problem, particularly sensitive to the north-west of the site. Parts of the site are designated within Flood Zones 2 and 3 which will limit developable area.
Environmentally sensitive area in terms of biodiversity, wildlife and habitats. The site is located within a Strategic Wildlife Network corridor and in close proximity to designated Local Wildlife Sites.
Ecological mitigation and biodiversity net gains
Social
Limited access to services and facilities as physically separated from the rest of Washington by the Leamside Lane.
Education facilities may be required.
Retail facilities may be required.

Table 4- Washington Meadows Site Constraints and Opportunities

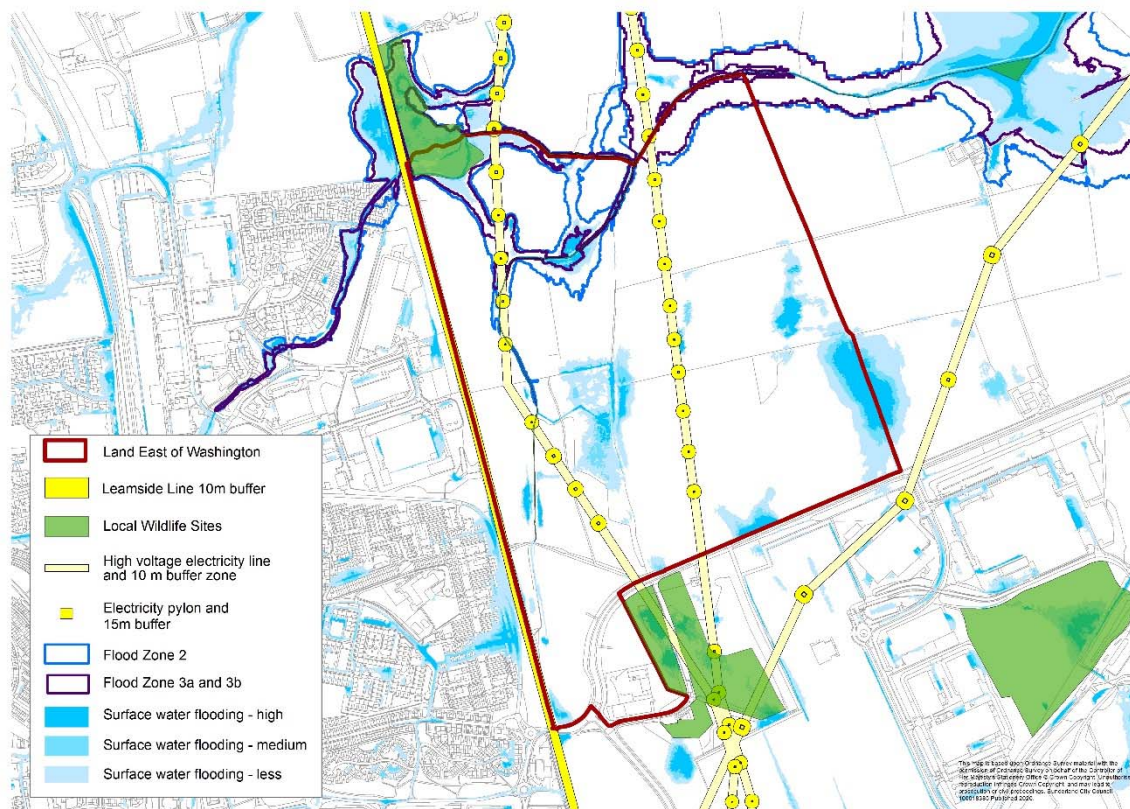


Figure 4 Constraints

7.4 The Council is preparing an evidence base to assess the cumulative impact of development and a suite of technical studies to justify that Washington Meadows is a suitable site. These documents are listed in Tables 5 and 6 below.

<p>Safeguarded Land Justification (this document)</p>	<p>A technical paper setting out the planning case that has been prepared to justify the need to allocate Land East of Washington (Washington Meadows) in the Draft A&D Plan.</p>
<p>Viability Assessment</p>	<p>A high-level Viability Assessment has been undertaken to determine the viability of different typologies of sites across the city which are reflective of the allocations contained within the Draft A&D Plan. This demonstrates that large greenfield site typologies within the Washington area are viable. A more detailed viability assessment will be undertaken for this site once further detailed technical work has been completed and the site-specific mitigation costs are known.</p>
<p>Transport Assessment (TA)</p>	<p>A high-level TA has been undertaken for the Draft A&D Plan. The Council is working with Highways England to determine the impacts the developments could have on the Strategic Highways Network. The Council will also prepare a detailed TA for the area following</p>

	this consultation. This TA will look at junctions beyond the Sunderland administrative boundary if necessary.
Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)	A Level 1 SFRA for the Draft A&D Plan has been prepared. This indicates that the flood risk should be manageable through careful consideration of site layout and design around the flood risk early on in the planning stage.
Education Report	To establish future education capacity, an education report has been prepared. Further work is required to identify specific education requirements as a result of Washington Meadows development.
Infrastructure Delivery Plan	The Draft A&D Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) has been prepared, which identifies the infrastructure requirements to deliver the development in the plan period. The Council will prepare an IDP for Washington Meadows. This will be prepared in parallel to the SPD.
Sustainability Assessment	A Sustainability Assessment for the Draft A&D Plan has been prepared to assess the sustainability of the developments in the plan, including the proposed Washington Meadows allocation.

Table 5- A&D Evidence

Ecology Studies- including Wintering Birds, Breeding Birds, Newts, Brown Hair/Otter and Water Vole/bat activity and Phase 1 Habitat Survey
Rail Study
Transport Assessment
Viability Assessment
Archaeological Assessment
Noise Assessment
Infrastructure Delivery Plan

Table 6- Washington Meadows Evidence

Accessibility

- 7.5 As noted previously, the site is in close proximity to the IAMP which is anticipated to generate 7,850 jobs over the long term across the advanced manufacturing and the automotive sectors. The wider vision of the IAMP is to provide a nationally important and internally respected location for advanced manufacturing and European scale supply chain industries. The IAMP is a sustainable employment location that maximises its links with Nissan and other high value automotive industries as well as the local infrastructure assets, including ports, airports and road infrastructure.
- 7.6 The site is located within 200 metres of the IAMP as well as within 750 metres of Nissan. It therefore offers very close proximity to major employers which further reinforces the sustainability of the site, as its delivery could reinforce more localised commuter flows. The development therefore would help to reinforce the IAMP providing with a sustainable

residential neighbourhood within close access. Consequently, the development would deliver a sustainable form of development.

- 7.7 The A&D Plan has also identified land for a new railway station and associated car park which could link to the reopening of the Leamside Line. This has the potential to boost 'Land East of Washington' to the rest of Tyne & Wear, including Sunderland, Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside and South Tyneside. The Washington Meadows site would provide a critical mass of residents which would support the business case for the re-opening of the Leamside Line.

Sustainability

- 7.8 The sustainability of the site has been considered as part of the Sustainability Appraisal for the Draft A&D Plan. The site demonstrates a number of positive impacts upon the sustainability objectives. The Appraisal concludes that most of the negative impacts identified have been adequately mitigated already through the proposed allocation the Plan, however it did advise that further detail on flood risk mitigation should be addressed through the SPD that is being prepared to support the allocation.
- 7.9 Implementing renewable and low carbon energy is an important part of the response to the challenges of both climate change and security of energy supply. The inclusion of renewable and low-carbon decentralised energy is an important component of meeting carbon targets and will be explored on the safeguarded land.

Availability

- 7.10 A site is considered available for development when, on the best information available (confirmed by the call out for sites and information from land owners and legal searches where appropriate), that land is available for development and there is confidence that there are no legal or ownership problems, such as unresolved multiple ownerships, ransom strips, tenancies or operational requirements of landowners. The PPG states that sites meeting the definition of deliverable should be considered available unless evidence indicates otherwise.

Land Ownership

- 7.11 Washington Meadows is within the ownership of two landowners, as detailed in Figure 6. Both landowners have a keenness to see the area brought forward for residential development, making representations during the preparation of the CSDP and SHLAA process.

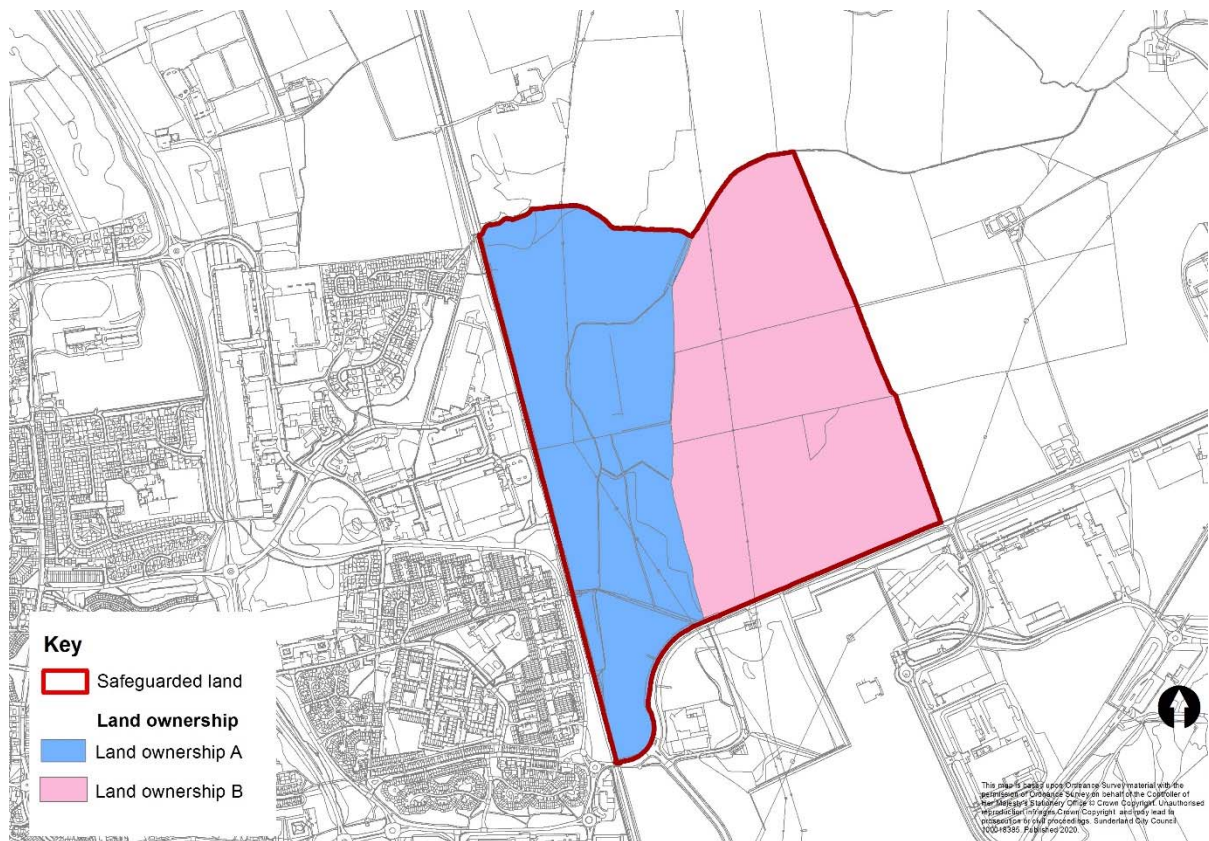


Figure 5 Land Ownership

Achievability

7.12 In accordance with the PPG, a site is considered achievable for development where there is a reasonable prospect that the particular type of development will be developed on the site at a particular point in time. This is essentially a judgement about the economic viability of a site and the capacity of the developer to complete and let or sell the development over a certain period.

7.13 Achievability 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 and capacity of the developer.

7.14 The Council has prepared a Whole Plan Viability Assessment to support the emerging A&D Plan. As part of the assessment, a number of site typologies were modelled across the city including for a Large Greenfield Site typology for the Washington sub-area. The assessment concluded large greenfield sites are typically viable within Washington, however as a strategic

site it was acknowledged that a site-specific viability assessment will be required for the Washington Meadows to better reflect anticipated site-specific costs and requirements. A site-specific viability assessment will be prepared when site-specific infrastructure requirements and costs are known.

Deliverability – Comprehensive Development

7.15 To ensure that Washington Meadows is a sustainable community, the Council will prepare an SPD to guide development. A scoping report for the Land East of Washington (Washington Meadows) SPD has been published for consultation alongside the A&D Plan.

7.16 The SPD will expand upon Draft A&D Policy SS9 and provide further guidance on the comprehensive development of Land East of Washington. The SPD will:

- provide a vision and strategic objectives for the area;
- define key development principles and concepts to enable a strategic approach to delivery;
- provide a masterplan framework, incorporating design parameters and principles to ensure a high standard of design and sustainability;
- identify requirements and provide a broad strategy to deliver supporting infrastructure; and
- form part of the evidence base for the emerging A&D Plan, by demonstrating the site’s suitability and deliverability.

7.17 The SPD will comprehensively cover the following key strategic issues:

Natural Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural Heritage • Landscape Character • GI & Wildlife Corridors • Greenspace
Built Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Built Heritage • Built Form • Listed Buildings • Archaeology
Social Infrastructure	Accessibility to services and facilities including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retail • Health Services • Education
Access & Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gateways & Arrivals • Vehicular Access • Pedestrian Access • Cycle Routes & Access • Public transport - including bus, rail and metro
Utilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gas • Electricity • Renewables

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water
Pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noise
Flood Risk & Drainage	
Contamination	
Infrastructure Requirements and costs	
Phasing and Delivery	

Table 7- Washington Meadows SPD Key Strategic Issues

8. Draft Allocations and Designations Plan

8.1 The Draft A&D Plan proposes a number of detailed site allocations and land use designations for the city, including the proposed allocation of Washington Meadows. The importance of the site is reflected in Policy SP12 of the Draft A&D Plan and Policy SS9 proposes to allocate the site as a sustainable urban extension to Washington. The policies within the draft plan are as follows:

Policy SP12: Allocations and Designations Development Strategy

To support the overall development strategy set out in the CSDP, this plan:

- i. allocates 58 sites for residential development including a strategic allocation at Riverside Sunderland (Policy SS8);
- ii. focuses regeneration and new development at North East Washington. To achieve this:
 - the council and its partners will work to secure regeneration and renewal at Sulgrave;
 - a strategic site at Washington Meadows is allocated to create a new sustainable residential community; and
 - the council working with its partners will work to re-open the Leamside Line.
- iii. allocates the former Houghton Colliery site as a development opportunity and extension to Houghton Town Centre;
- iv. designates heritage assets;
- v. protects the natural environment by designating areas for protection and enhancement;
- vi. identifies land suitable for wind energy development to support a move towards a low carbon future;
- vii. safeguards land for the future expansion of the Metro network, including potential park and ride locations; and
- viii. safeguards Eppleton Quarry to ensure a steady supply of minerals throughout the plan period.

Policy SS9: Washington Meadows

Washington Meadows is allocated as an urban extension to Washington. Development of this new sustainable community should:

- provide a mix of housing types with a focus on larger detached dwellings;
- address impacts and make provision or contributions towards education provision and healthcare where justified and necessary;
- enhance access to local facilities and services, where appropriate;
- deliver 1500 homes¹²;
- provide 15% affordable homes;
- create a new defensible Green Belt boundary to the north of the site;
- maintain wildlife and green infrastructure corridors, limit any impact on the area's landscape character and provide suitable ecological mitigation where appropriate;
- provide greenspace/green infrastructure within the site;
- include vehicle access from the South and West where necessary;
- provide improved public transport connections to the site and provide pedestrian/cycleway connections; and
- avoid development in Flood Zones 2 and 3.

Development must be coordinated and comprehensive and in accordance with the Land East of Washington (Washington Meadows) SPD.

Land within Washington Meadows is identified on the Policies Map to be safeguarded for a potential metro/rail station and car park (Policies ST4 and ST5) to provide improved public transport connections to the site.

- 8.2 The supporting text indicates that the development of the area will be coordinated and comprehensive and in accordance with the Land East of Washington (Washington Meadows) SPD.

¹² 1500 is indicative at this stage in plan preparation. Further work is required to determine the capacity of the site.

9. Conclusion

- 9.1 This document has set out the case for an early release of the safeguarded land (Washington Meadows) through the A&D Plan. It has demonstrated that the safeguarded land is needed in order to:
- Meet the housing supply shortfall over the plan period;
 - Increase the delivery of housing in Washington, given the lack of developable and deliverable sites within the town; and
 - Act as a catalyst to regenerate the wider North East Washington area. Releasing the site, alongside the development of the IAMP and a possible new rail link (via the opening of the Leamside Line) offers a once in a generation opportunity to regenerate North East Washington.
- 9.2 Given the above, it is considered there are prevailing circumstances for an early release of the safeguarded land.
- 9.3 To ensure the release of the safeguarded land meets its potential and realises the Council's and community's aspirations, a comprehensive approach to its development is necessary to ensure that the infrastructure and housing is delivered in a timely manner. The Council is preparing an SPD to facilitate and guide the future development of the area.

