

APPENDIX 2

Wiltshire Local Plan Review

Amesbury – Pool of Potential Development Sites

Site Selection Report

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Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to explain how the Council has arrived at a pool of potential development sites from which development proposals needing greenfield land may be chosen.

Context - Wiltshire Local Plan Review

1. The Wiltshire Core Strategy is the central strategic part of the development plan for Wiltshire that sets the legal framework for planning decisions and is the basis that all neighbourhood plans must follow. It covers the period 2006-2026.
2. The Wiltshire Local Plan Review is being prepared to update the Wiltshire Core Strategy with a plan period of 2016- 2036.
3. An important part of keeping the development plan up to date is ensuring that development needs are met. This means accommodating new homes, business and other new uses supported by the necessary infrastructure; and finding land on which to build them.
4. As much as possible of the land needed will be previously developed land. Inevitably, in lots of cases, to meet the scale of need forecast, towns will also expand. A challenging part of planning for the future is therefore managing the loss of countryside by identifying the most appropriate land to develop on the edges of our settlements. This is the focus of this document.
5. This paper documents the stages reached in the site selection process for the settlement and concludes by showing a pool of reasonable alternative sites that could be appropriate for development around the built-up area of Amesbury– a pool of potential development sites. The content of this paper explains how this set of potential development sites has been arrived at. The Council consider these sites to be the reasonable alternatives based on a range of evidence and objectives of the plan that will be further assessed, including through sustainability appraisal.
6. Development proposals can be formulated using sites chosen from this pool. How much land depends upon the scale of need for development forecast over the plan period.
7. At Amesbury the requirement emerging is for an additional 1,635 new homes over the plan period 2016 – 2036. From this overall requirement can be deducted homes already built (2016-2019) and an estimate of homes already committed and in the pipeline in the form of either having planning permission awaiting completion, resolution to grant planning permission or on land allocated for development in the Wiltshire Core Strategy. Taking account of this amount approximately 350 additional homes remain to be planned for over the plan period.
8. How this scale of growth was derived is explained in an accompanying report to this one called the 'Emerging Spatial Strategy'.

Summary of the site selection process

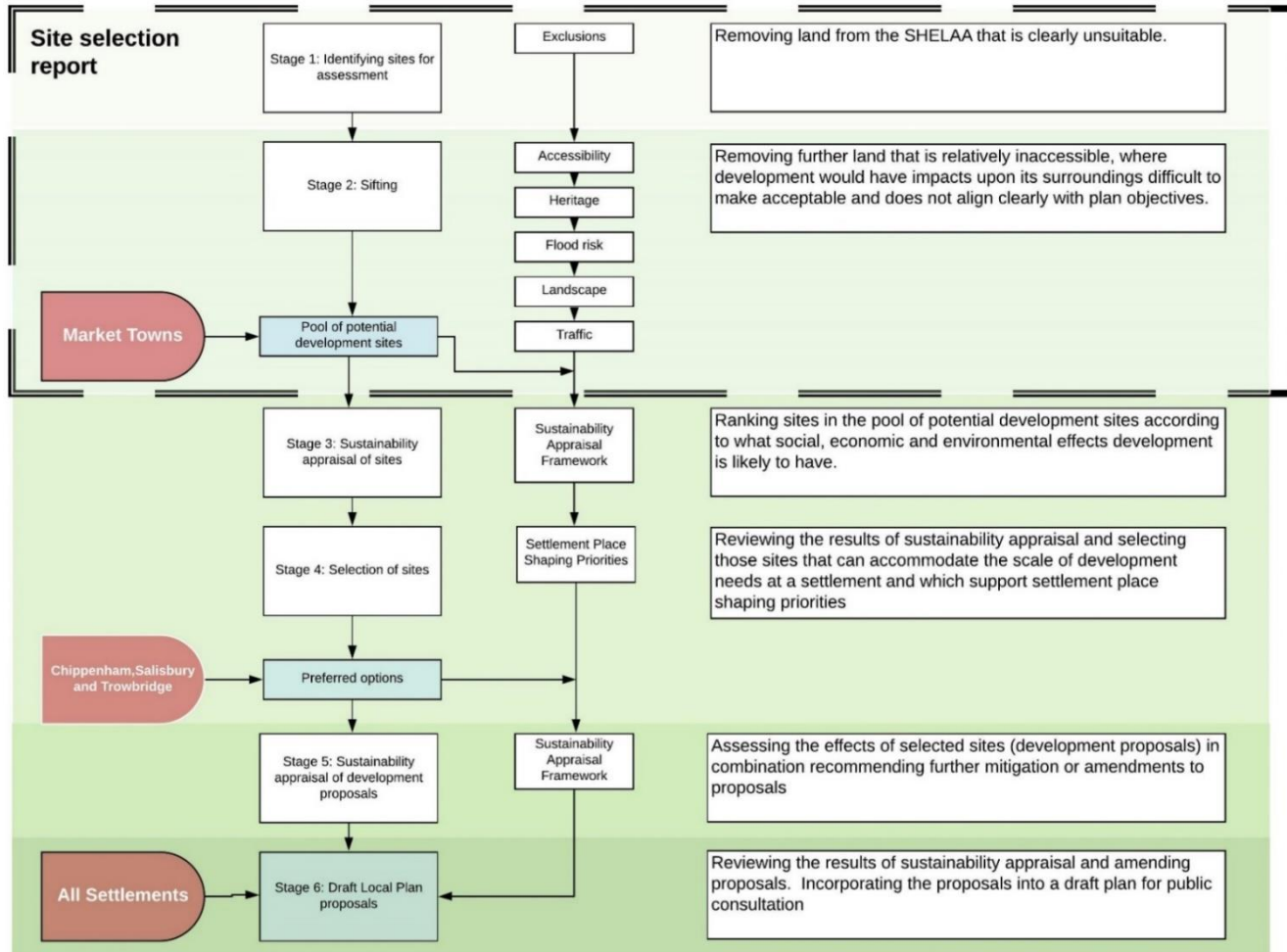


Figure 1 Site Selection Process

The starting point – ‘Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment’

9. Figure one shows the entire site selection process. This document covers stages 1 and 2.
10. The Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment¹ (SHELAA) provides the pool of land from which sites may be selected. The SHELAA is a register of land being promoted for development by land owners and prospective developers. Parcels of land are submitted for consideration for inclusion in Wiltshire Council’s plan, as well as Parish and Town Council neighbourhood plans².
11. Plan preparation and not the SHELAA determines what land is suitable for development as it selects the most appropriate sites.

Stage 1 – Identifying Sites for Assessment

12. This initial stage of the site selection process excludes those SHELAA sites from further consideration that constitute unsuitable land for development.

Stage 2 - Site Sifting

13. A second stage assesses further those sites that have passed through Stage 1 and results in a set of reasonable alternatives for further assessment through sustainability appraisal.
14. Using a proportionate amount of evidence³, more land is therefore removed from further consideration. It can be removed because it is relatively inaccessible and where development would have impacts upon its surroundings that would be difficult to make acceptable.
15. To determine what land to take forward for further consideration and which not, however, also involves considering how much land is likely to be needed and what areas around the settlement seem the most sensible. Such judgements take account of:
 - (i) emerging place shaping priorities⁴ for a community (these outline what outcomes growth might achieve);
 - (ii) the intended scale of growth;
 - (iii) what future growth possibilities there are for the urban area;
 - (iv) what the past pattern of growth has been; and

¹ Information about the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment can be found on the Council website <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/planning-policy-monitoring-evidence>

² Other land, not included in the SHELAA, may possibly be capable of development but because neither a developer nor landowner has promoted the site for development, the site cannot readily be said to be available within the plan period.

³ To meet national requirements, plans must be sound, justified by having an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on *proportionate evidence*³.

⁴ The role and function of place shaping priorities is explained in the settlement statement

(v) what significant environmental factors have a clear bearing on how to plan for growth.⁵

16. It may be appropriate for some SHELAA land parcels to be combined together to create more sensible or logical development proposals. Parcels of land may therefore be assembled together into one site for further assessment. This stage allows these cases to be recorded⁶.

Next Steps in the site selection process

17. The result of this part of the site selection process is a set of reasonable alternative sites. Where greenfield land must be built on to meet the scale of need, land for development proposals will be chosen from this pool. Views on each site are invited alongside a settlement's suggested scale of growth over the plan period (2016-2036) and the plan's priorities for the community. The results of consultation will inform the formulation of development proposals.
18. Each of the sites in the pool of reasonable alternatives will be examined in more detail. They will be subject to sustainability appraisal, stage three. This assesses the likely significant effects of potentially developing each site under a set of twelve objectives covering social, economic and environmental aspects. It helps to identify those sites that have the most sustainability benefits over those with less. It also helps to identify what may be necessary to mitigate adverse effects and what measures could increase benefits of development.
19. The most sustainable sites are those most likely to be suited to development. Sustainability appraisal may recommend sites, but it is also important to select sites that support the plan objectives and strategic priorities for a settlement, in particular. Carrying out this selection of sites is stage 4.
20. Stage 3 sustainability appraisal looked at how each potential development site performed individually. Stage 5 carries out sustainability appraisal looking at development proposals together and what effects they may have in combination. This will lead to amended proposals and more detailed mitigation or specific measures to maximise benefits from development.
21. Development proposals are also subject to more detailed assessments; by viability assessment to ensure that they can be delivered and by appropriate assessment under the Habitats Regulations in order to ensure no adverse effects on Natura 2000 sites. The results of these steps may amend development proposals.
22. Stage 6 therefore draws in the work of viability assessment, habitats regulation assessment and sustainability appraisal to produce proposals that can be published in a draft version of the reviewed Local Plan.

⁵Regulations on the selection of sites allow those preparing plans to determine reasonable alternatives guided by the 'plans objectives' so long as this is explained. This stage does so explicitly.

⁶ Land promoted for development is defined by land ownership boundaries and over what land a prospective developer has an interest. It does not necessarily represent what land is needed for a logical or sensible development proposal. A logical proposal may be smaller or larger or combine different owners' interests.

23. As stated previously, this document only covers stages 1 and 2 in detail. These stages are described further in the following sections.

Stage 1 Identifying Sites for Assessments

24. This stage starts with all SHELAA land parcels on greenfield land at the edge of Amesbury ensures they are appropriate for site selection. Land parcels that are not or could not be extensions to the existing built up area are not included. Figure 2 shows that no land has been excluded at this stage.

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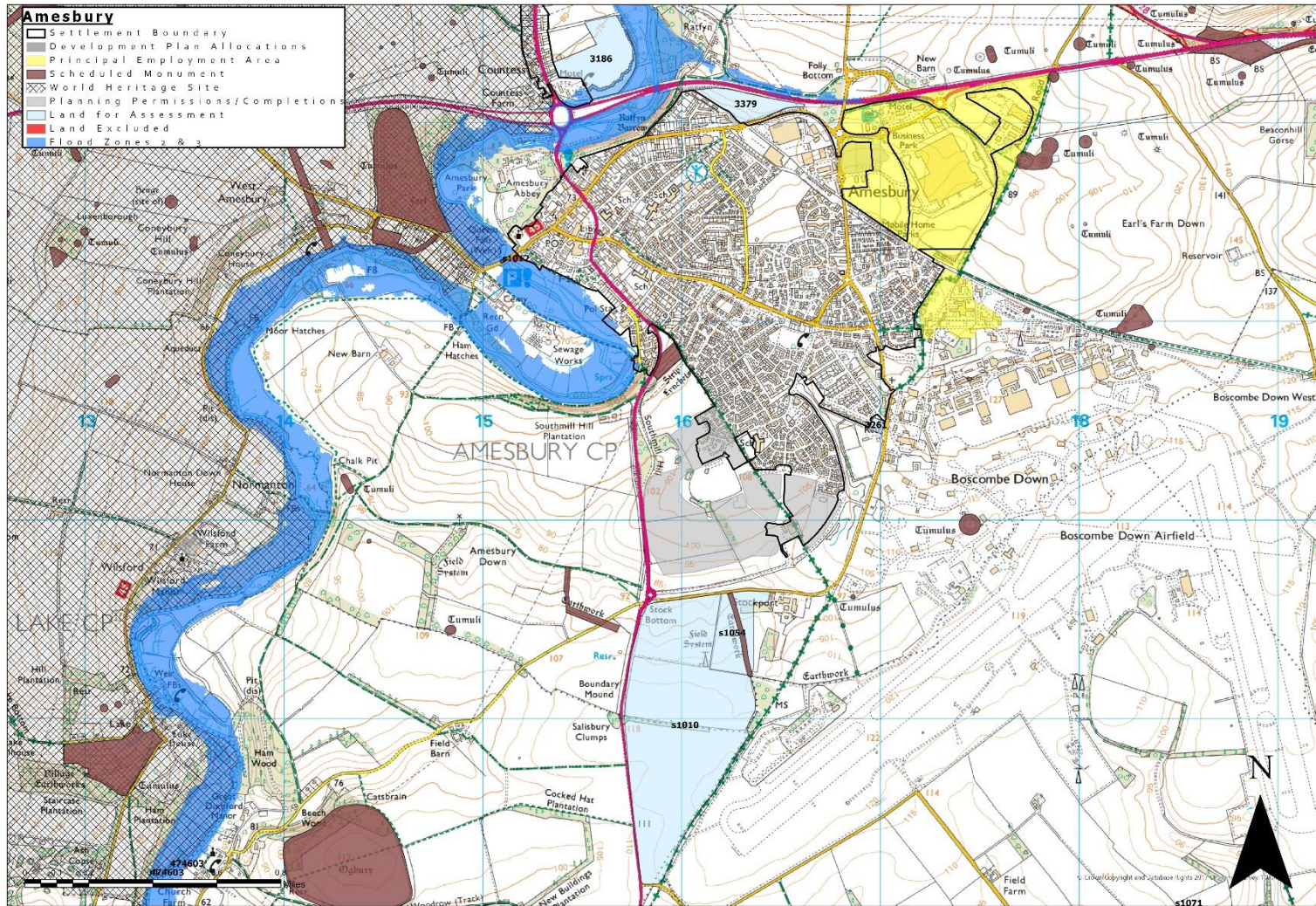


Figure 2 Map showing stage 1 SHELAA land excluded

Stage 2 Site Sifting

Methodology

25. This stage of the site selection process sifts out sites to provide a reasonable set of alternatives for further assessment. There are two parts to this stage of the process (A) accessibility and wider impacts and (B) strategic context.

A. Accessibility and wider impacts

26. Firstly, the individual merits of each site are assessed to understand their strengths and weaknesses in terms of how accessible a site location may be and what wider impacts could result from their development. Sites more likely to have unacceptable impacts or which are relatively inaccessible are less reasonable options.

Accessibility

27. Sites that are relatively inaccessible are much less likely to be reasonable alternatives and may be rejected from further consideration.
28. Accessibility is represented as a heat map of travel times on foot, cycling and public transport to important destinations for residents - the town centre, principal employment areas (including employment allocations), secondary schools and hospital and health centres (including GP surgeries).
29. Sites are categorised overall as low accessibility (red), medium accessibility (amber) or high accessibility (green).

Wider impacts

30. **Landscape:** A site that creates a harmful landscape or visual impact that is unlikely to be successfully mitigated may be rejected.
31. **Heritage:** Assets outside the sites under consideration may be harmed by development. This stage identifies where those assets are, their nature and importance, and assesses the potential for harm that may result from the development of some sites.
32. **Flood Risk:** All land on which built development may take place, by this stage of the selection process, will be within zone 1, the areas of the country with minimal flood risk. Flood risks from all sources are a planning consideration, this step will identify sites where development may increase risks outside the site itself. However, where parts of a site are within flood zones 2 and 3, the whole site can be taken forward if development can reasonably be accommodated outside flood zones.
33. **Traffic:** Developing some sites may generate traffic that causes an unacceptable degree of harm, in terms of worsening congestion. Others may be much better related to the primary road network (PRN). This can lead to other harmful impacts such as poor air quality or impacts upon the local economy.
34. The results of each of these 'wider impacts' assessments are gathered together and categorised as high (red), medium (amber) and low (green) level of effects for each site under each heading.

B. Strategic Context

35. Having gained a picture of the relative strengths and weaknesses of each site, the next step is to draw this information together and decide which ones would be part of a pool of reasonable alternatives and which ones not.
36. Unlike the first part of this stage, this requires judgement about what pool of possible land for development constitutes a set of reasonable alternatives for consideration at a settlement. This must not pre-judge more detailed testing of options but rule out others that are clearly less likely to be characterised as being reasonable options and therefore unnecessary to assess in greater detail at later stages.
37. The distribution and number necessary to provide a reasonable pool of alternative sites can be influenced by each settlement's role in the spatial strategy and the scale of growth to be planned for, by the pattern of growth that has taken place at a town as well as significant environmental factors. This is called the site's strategic context.
38. Whilst the first set of evidence provides information about each individual site, evidence in the form of a settlement's 'strategic context' provides the basis for further reasoning by which some land parcels are selected for further consideration and others rejected. They can indicate future growth possibilities, directions to expand, for an urban area.
39. This strategic context evidence describes the settlement's:
- Long-term patterns of development
 - Significant environmental factors
 - Scale of growth and place shaping priorities
 - Future growth possibilities for the urban area
40. Referring to these aspects, there can be several influences upon whether a site is taken forward for further consideration. Common examples would be:
- The scale of the pool of sites that will be needed. The less additional land is needed the smaller a pool of sites may need to be and so perhaps only the very best candidates need to be considered further.
 - What SHELAA sites may be consolidated into one (and sometimes which ones not). A historic pattern of growth, or the need for a new direction of growth may recommend a SHELAA site is combined with another in order to properly test such an option.
 - A desirable pool of sites might favour a particular distribution or set of locations because it might help deliver infrastructure identified as a place shaping priority for the settlement.
 - Continuing historic patterns or, in response to a significant environmental factor, looking for new directions for growth may recommend a site that helps to deliver such a course.

41. Sometimes these influences will not bear on site selection. In other instances, they may be important.

42. A description of the settlement strategic context for Amesbury is shown in the table below:

Amesbury Strategic Context

Context criteria	Detail
Long-term pattern of development	<p>The historic core of the town developed around the water meadows associated with the River Avon which runs to the north and west of the settlement. Over time the town has grown southwards where there are less environmental constraints, spreading onto the valley hillsides and absorbing part of the military airfield at Boscombe Down. In recent years substantial residential development has taken place to the south, which includes Kingsgate.</p> <p>The town, and surrounding area, benefits from several Principal Employment Areas, including Boscombe Down; London Road; Porton Down; High Post and Solstice Park.</p>
Significant environmental factors	<p>The River Avon is a significant constraint restricting growth to the north and west of the town. Consequently, there are areas of flood risk along the course of the river.</p> <p>The area has rich historic value. Stonehenge World Heritage Site extends to the north and west of the settlement whilst Amesbury Abbey Historic Park and Gardens fringes the northwest of the town.</p> <p>The line of the A303 Trunk Road runs to the north of the town dissecting the main bulk of the settlement from a section of linear development along the A435 to the northwest of the town close to where the A303 and A435 intersect. The A435 continues southward to the west of Amesbury and beyond.</p> <p>The A303 and A435 appear to broadly limit the spread of the current urban area. The land to the west of the A435 gradually slopes away and to the east gently rises.</p>
Scale of growth and strategic priorities	<p>The scale of growth is relatively modest.</p> <p>Strategic priorities include promoting Amesbury as a self-sufficient town encouraging local employment opportunities and encourage tourism linkages between the town and nearby Stonehenge. Developing the town centre to improve the public realm to encourage tourism and spending as well as improvements to infrastructure and transport particularly in relation to the A303 and A345 both of which currently experience congestion and to improve linkages to and from the town. The planned tunnelling of the A303 may relieve some of the issues once constructed. Improvements to recreational facilities.</p>

<p>Future growth possibilities for the urban area</p>	<p>The likeliest future growth possibilities are to the northeast of the town, between the centre and Solstice Park and continuing development to the south.</p> <p>The proportion of additional land needed to meet the scales of growth envisaged at the settlement requires the need to have a pool of possible sites from which to choose.</p> <p>There is SHELAA land being promoted that could continue development to the northeast and south of the town. This pattern reduces conflicts with significant environmental factors located to the north and west of Amesbury.</p> <p>There is SHELAA land outside the broad extent of the urban area (i.e. to the north of the A303) that would set possible precedents. This significant departure from past patterns does not appear necessary because of the relatively modest amount of additional land that appears to be needed.</p> <p>SHELAA sites (S1010 and S1054) adjoin each other and represent a southern extension of the urban area. It would be logical to consider this area comprehensively, to what extent and for what uses the area may be suitable for development.</p>
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Combining sites

43. Assessment may also suggest combining sites together. To be combined land must:
- be a smaller parcel within a larger one, the smaller site will be absorbed and subsequently removed; or
 - abutting each other and not have any strong physical barrier between them, such as a railway, river or road.

Site Assessment Results

44. The following table shows the results of Stage 2. It sets out judgements against each of the SHELAA sites, taking into account both the accessibility and wider impact considerations and strategic context described above. It identifies where it may be appropriate to combine sites and which sites should and should not be taken forward.

45. The map that follows illustrates the results of this stage of the process showing those sites that have been removed and those that should go forward for further assessment through sustainability appraisal.

SHELAA Reference	Site Address	Accessibility	Flood Risk	Heritage	Landscape	Traffic	Stage 2A and Stage 2B - Overall judgement	Taken Forward
3379	Land north of London Road						<p>Site is adjacent to revised settlement boundary.</p> <p>Limited heritage impact identified at this stage but may have potential to impact on Outstanding Universal Value of WHS.</p> <p>No justification for rejecting site at this stage. Take forward for further assessment.</p>	✓
3261	Amesbury Old Reservoir, Stockport Road						<p>Site is adjacent to the settlement boundary.</p> <p>Limited heritage impact identified at this stage but may have potential to impact on Outstanding Universal Value of WHS.</p> <p>The traffic assessment identifies this site as being within 1000m of a congested corridor and there is an increased potential for traffic impacts arising from the development.</p> <p>The site is small, too small to be considered strategic. Therefore, the site should be excluded from further consideration.</p>	✗

SHELAA Reference	Site Address	Accessibility	Flood Risk	Heritage	Landscape	Traffic		Taken Forward
3186	Land to rear of Countess Services						<p>Stage 2A and Stage 2B - Overall judgement</p> <p>Site is adjacent to the settlement boundary but is apart from the main settlement of Amesbury. The site is bounded by the River Avon green infrastructure Corridor. The site is set apart from the main settlement and therefore this could be regarded as urban encroachment into the countryside.</p> <p>Traffic impacts from development of this site unlikely to be an issue because the existing infrastructure, associated with the service station currently on site, has been designed to accommodate a significant volume of vehicle movements.</p> <p>No justification for rejecting site at this stage. Take forward for further assessment.</p>	✓
S1054	Land adjacent Stockport Park						<p>Site is separate from the built form and not adjacent to the settlement boundary. Some heritage impact is identified at this stage as the site incorporates scheduled linear boundary and may possibly impact on setting of scheduled Ogbury Camp. The site is located 1000m away from a congested corridor.</p> <p>The site open to views from the south and west and there is little existing vegetation to act as a buffer to the urban development of Amesbury South. It would be better to maintain the urban edge of Amesbury to the North of Stockport Avenue where there is already an establishing urban edge of planting as part of site S1013 that can be reinforced.</p> <p>Traffic impacts from development of this site are likely to be moderate.</p> <p>This site is not well related to the built up edge and there are landscape constraints but due to the scale of housing requirement remaining to be planned for and the size of the site if considered in conjunction with S1010 potentially enabling mitigation the site is going forward for further assessment.</p>	✓

SHELAA Reference	Site Address	Accessibility	Flood Risk	Heritage	Landscape	Traffic		Taken Forward
S1010	Land at Stock Bottom						<p>Stage 2A and Stage 2B - Overall judgement</p> <p>Site is separate from the built form and not adjacent to the settlement boundary. Some heritage impact is identified at this stage as the site may possibly impact on setting of scheduled Ogbury Camp. The site is located 1000m away from a congested corridor.</p> <p>The site open to views from the south and west and there is little existing vegetation to act as a buffer to the urban development of Amesbury South. It would be better to maintain the urban edge of Amesbury to the North of Stockport Avenue where there is already an establishing urban edge of planting as part of site S1013 that can be reinforced.</p> <p>Traffic impacts from development of this site are likely to be moderate.</p> <p>This site is not well related to the built up edge and there are landscape constraints but due to the scale of housing requirement remaining to be planned for and the size of the site potentially enabling mitigation the site is going forward for further assessment.</p>	✓

The following sites have been combined:

Ref	Reason
S1010 and s1054	These sites abut each other and have no strong physical barriers. Both sites together could form a logical large scale extension to the south of the town.

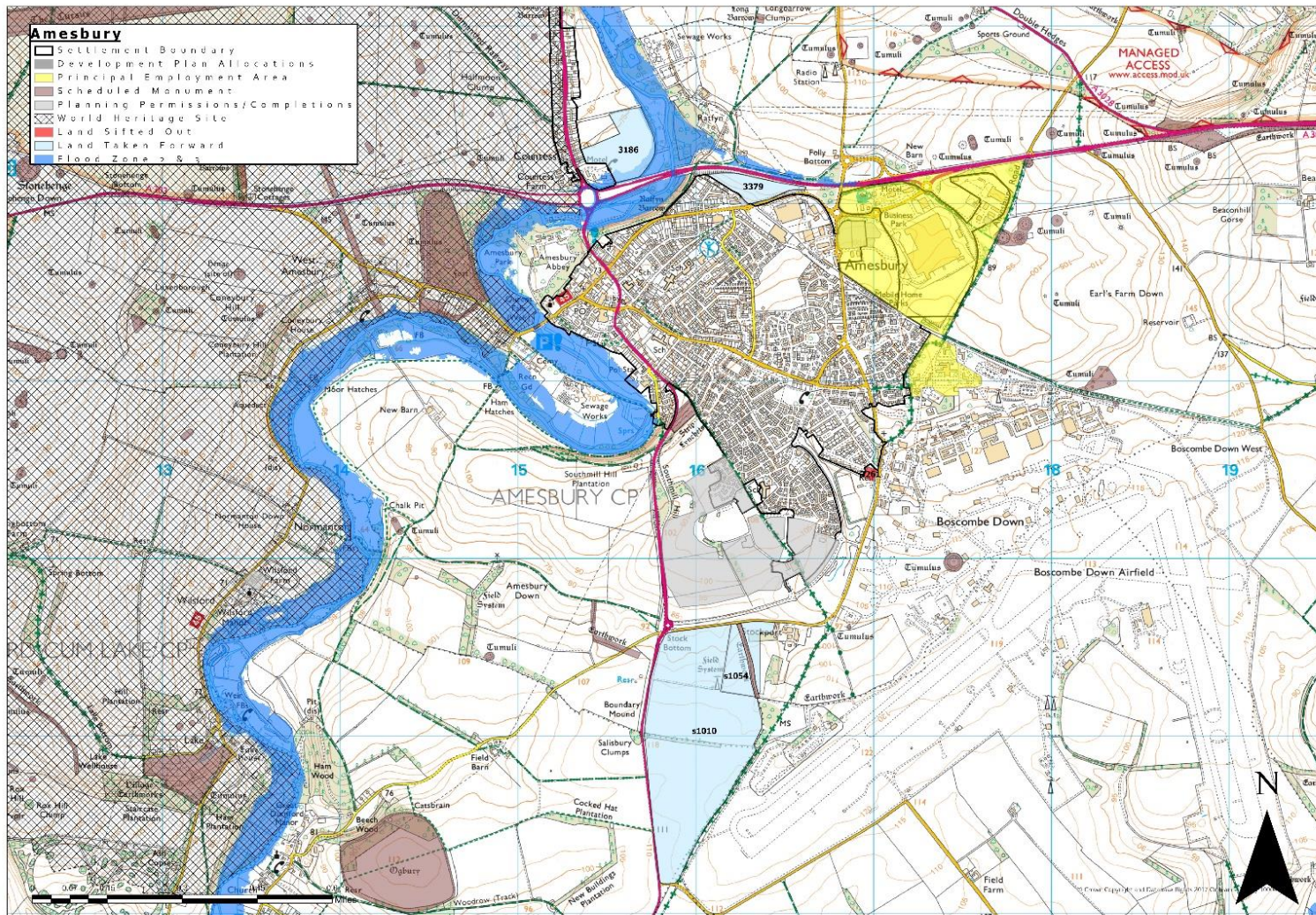


Figure 3 Map showing results of Stage 2 SHELAA land sifting

Conclusion

46. The following map shows the final pool of potential development sites. From these sites may be selected those necessary to meet scales of growth and priorities for the town over the plan period. Only some of the sites, if any, will be developed and not every part of those sites will be developed due to the need to include land for mitigation.

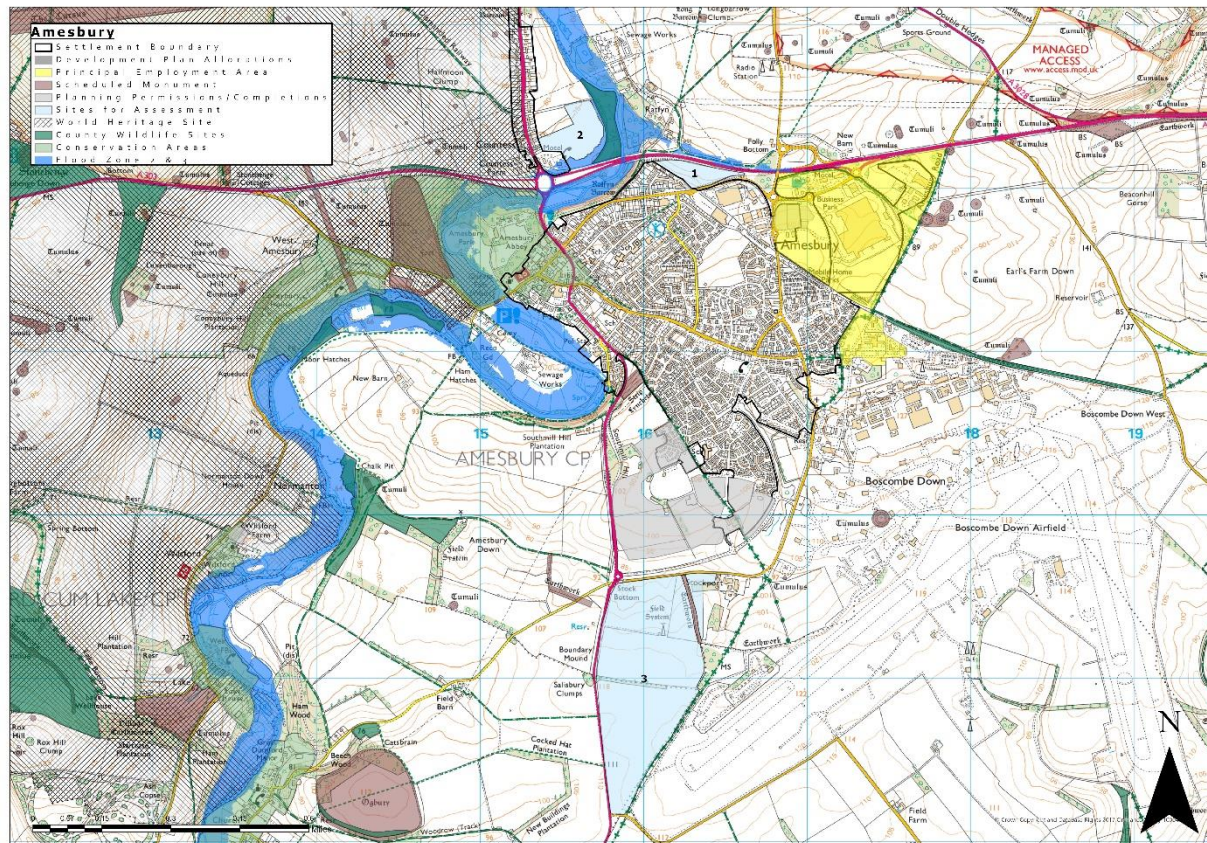


Figure 4 Map showing pool of potential development sites