Herefordshire Council

1. Introduction

1.1. The following guidance notes have been prepared by Herefordshire Council, in order to assist site promoters in preparing submissions to a Call for Candidate sites.

1.2. Herefordshire Council is preparing a new Local Plan that will guide future development in the county. For the Local Plan to be able to demonstrate that it can meet its challenging growth requirements, the land selected will need to be underpinned by robust evidence that any new development will be deliverable. The council is therefore seeking to gather as much information on land put forward for potential site allocations early on in the plan-making process.

1.3. Therefore, the council is introducing a new procedure for the submission of sites to this process.

1.4. **Site promoters are expected to use the new online platform Herefordshire Council - Consultations, which enables the user to input information directly, including the site location, and to upload any supporting information**. The portal is the most efficient way of submitting your site and includes a map drawing function.

1.5. This guidance note offers advice to site promoters who wish to submit land via this new process and provides clarity on what information is required in each section of the form. It is important to note that the call for sites is an evidence gathering exercise. In accepting submissions, **the council makes no guarantee that any site submitted will be allocated in the Local Plan**.

1.6. Sites submitted previously **prior to the 2025 Call for Sites** will not be automatically carried forward and will need to be resubmitted as Candidate Sites for assessment due to more information being required. Sites submitted during the 2025 Call for Sites will not require resubmission, unless there are boundary changes, or significant new information has become available that could affect their potential.

1.7. As part of this, the council is seeking submissions in particular for land capable of accommodating a new settlement or a large-scale expansion to an existing settlement. Criteria for such sites is set out below in Section 12.

1.8. Promoters wishing for their sites to considered for the Local Plan are **strongly advised** to submit sites for assessment at the **earliest opportunity** so the assessment process can begin. These sites will then be circulated to various council services to provide input on.

1.9. This guidance sets out all the information officers require to make a robust assessment. It is very important that you provide sufficient information for each section of the submission form. You will need to provide a map of the site, which should be produced through the online portal.

1.10. The council will publish a register showing the location and boundaries of all submitted sites and inform site promoters of its publication.

1.11. The responsibility of undertaking relevant technical work to support a site's inclusion in the Plan, including financial costs, resides with the site promoter. It is advisable to include as much supporting information as possible proportionate to the scale and nature of the site. Where site evidence is being prepared, the council should be advised and informed of when it will be available to assist in the assessment of the site.

1.12. If you have any queries, please contact:
- Email: localplan@herefordshire.gov.uk
- Tel: 01432 383299 or 01432 261788

2. Data Protection

2.1. All personal data will be treated in line with our obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). This means your personal data will not be shared. For more information on our privacy policy, please go to www.herefordshire.gov.uk/directory/44/privacy-notices

2.2. By submitting a site to this Call for Sites process you agree to the site and subsequent assessment being published as part of the Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment.

3. Site Submission Form

3.1. Promoters must complete a site submission form for **each individual site**, and for each proposed use on a single site if there is more than one.

3.2. Those who have submitted land to this process before will notice that following some basic details, the form requests different more comprehensive information to that of previous SHLAA and HELAA calls for sites. Details are sought on what the promoter's intended uses are for the site, specifics on availability and any available information on work carried out to demonstrate development viability.

3.3. The form will also allow for a location plan to be plotted directly into the council's mapping system, and for supporting information to be uploaded as part of the submission.

3.4. The form also allows for promoters to provide the supplementary information that was not required in their previous submission to a call for sites, where they have submitted a site before. Invitations will be sent out to those who have previously submitted to do this. It is very important that any submission relating to a site that has previously been identified as

being unsuitable is clearly able to demonstrate how any previously identified deliverability concerns are proposed to be overcome in the submission.

3.5. Contact details will be required for promoters to be kept informed of the HELAA process, along with the promoter's interest in the site (i.e. agent, landowner, developer) and for any other follow up communication if required.

3.6. The promoter will need to plot the site's boundaries on the interactive map. This can be done whether submitting via a PC or laptop/smartphone. Where the boundaries are clearly delineated by existing physical borders such as field boundaries, the system will ensure that the plot keeps as true to these as possible. However, where the area being promoted is less clearly bound, the promoter must ensure the lines are drawn accurately. If a mistake is made, the user can undo and retry.

3.7. On completion of plotting the site, the system will automatically populate a number of fields, which are listed below.

- Site area
- Housing Market Area
- Council Ward
- Parish

3.8. **Please note:** sites that are located directly adjacent to others promoted in the call for sites may be assessed in conjunction with these as one larger area, if deemed appropriate or logical to do so.

3.9. On receiving the site submission, the council's GIS system will also run an analysis of and record any constraints present on or affecting the site. These could include:

- Ancient Woodlands
- National Landscapes
- Local Nature Reserves
- National Nature Reserves
- Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)
- SSSI impact risk zones
- Green corridors
- Local Wildlife Sites
- Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs)
- Water extraction/safeguarding zones
- Priority Habitats
- Environment Agency Flood Zone
- Surface Water Flooding Risk

- River Catchment (for recording where nutrient neutrality may be required of development now or in future)
- Agricultural Land Classification
- Conservation Areas
- Public Rights of Way
- Potential land contamination

3.10. Promoters should note that the recording of any of the underlined constraints will deem the site unsuitable for any further consideration.

3.11. This will be followed by requesting detailed information on the site, set out in the following sections. Please note that it is important that as much evidence is collected as possible at the Call for Sites stage in order to perform robust assessments. Where work has been undertaken to show that any identified constraints can be overcome or mitigated against then these should be provided. **Failure to supply sufficient information that demonstrates this in the following sections will put the site at risk of being rejected from the process at an early stage, on the basis of a lack of clarity and certainty that the site is deliverable.**

4. Proposal Overview

4.1. **Site Name/Address:** If the site has an existing name derived from a planning or SHLAA/HELAA history, then this should be used. If it does not have this, then a name should be used associated with the locality, a nearby address or the site's previous use. If it lies off a named road, then "land to (direction) of (road name)" could be used.

4.2. **Site Area:** This will be generated automatically from the map system. The minimum site size threshold for consideration in the HELAA is 0.25ha, or for residential proposals, of a size capable of accommodating five or more dwellings. For non-residential development, such as employment or retail, the site should be able to accommodate a building with a floor space of 1000 sq m. Sites that do not meet these minimum thresholds will not be considered further in the HELAA, as they are not considered of a sufficient size to form strategic allocations in the Local Plan.

4.3. **Net Developable Area:** This describes the portion of land within the site that is likely to be available for development. Net area typically excludes proposed major roads, and significant areas of open space, Biodiversity Net Gain, public realm and infrastructure that will need to be delivered in association with the development.

4.4. **Relevant Planning History:** If the site has any relevant planning history, please highlight all relevant applications including any relevant site concept proposals undertaken so far. If permissions were granted but have not been implemented, please explain why. If planning permission has been refused, please explain how any concerns are proposed to be overcome. Please provide planning reference numbers where possible. Please note that

sites that have extant planning permissions able to be lawfully implemented do not need to be submitted to the call for sites. Planning applications can be researched on the Council's website: Planning Search – Herefordshire Council

4.5. **Proposed site use(s):** This section will then request the promoter to detail what the site is being proposed for, with the promoter to tick all that apply. These could include but not be limited to:

- Housing
- Employment
- Retail
- Social and community facilities
- Green infrastructure/open space
- Renewable energy
- Minerals
- Gypsy and Traveller site
- Travelling show people plots
- Other

4.6. **Description of proposed uses:** This is for the promoter to give an overview of the proposed use for the site in more detail. The below sets out some examples of what known information would be sought for each development type proposed.

- Housing- How many dwellings, tenure split (including number of affordable homes), types and sizes, development density and any specialist housing.
- Employment or Retail- Description of industry sector, net floorspace, use class(es).
- Social and community facilities- Net floor space, type of facility.
- Renewable energy- Anticipated installed capacity in Mega Watts (MW).
- Gypsy and Traveller site/Travelling show people plots- Number of pitches/plots.

Submissions for sites being promoted for more than one use (mixed use) will be expected to provide specifics on the use split (in ha).

4.7. Where available, the submission should refer to and provide (through the upload facility) any site concepts/master plans/indicative layouts. These should show proposed vehicular access points, any active travel access points and any third-party land that may be required to service the access.

5. Site Characteristics

5.1. **Current land use:** The promoter should specify the approximate percentage of the site that is greenfield and/or brownfield (previously developed) land. The definition of previously developed land can be found in Annex B of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF): National_Planning_Policy_Framework.pdf

5.2. A summary should be provided of the site's current or most recent use. In the case of mixed uses, each should be specified.

5.3. **Neighbouring uses:** The existing uses which border the site should be specified here. This will help the authority to evaluate whether the proposal will have any impact upon the these uses, or vice versa. The compatibility of the proposed land use to its surroundings should be considered, and any proposed mitigation measures should be detailed where that may be deemed necessary.

5.4. **Within, adjacent to or outside existing settlement:** This should accurately reflect the site's location in relation to any existing settlements or built up areas. This helps the authority to determine whether the site is in an appropriate setting for the proposed use.

5.5. **Would development merge settlements:** Indicate whether development of the site would lead to the coalescence of two existing settlements, and/or close any "green gaps" in development.

5.6. **Impact on scale and character of existing settlement:** Would development of the site represent a significant increase to the overall size and, in turn, alteration of the character of an existing settlement.

5.7. **Loss of assets of community, social or amenity value:** If the site currently serves as, or has a facility that is valued by the community for its amenity or social usage, that is liable to being lost or impacted on by being developed, then this should be reflected in the answer given here. Examples of this could be open spaces used for informal recreation, or sports and play facilities. If there is a proposal to make alternative replacement provision on or off-site, then this should be stated.

5.8. **Topography:** The promoter should choose the classification that best describes the topography of the site. The challenges the site's topography may present to developing needs to be considered, and if any significant earth works may be required to make good.

5.9. **Significant features:** This is an opportunity for the promoter to point out any prominent features existing on the site. To offer some examples, these could be hydrological, such as streams or ponds, or vegetation such as established hedgerows or trees. How these could impact, or be incorporated into any development scheme should be considered.

6. Highways and Access

6.1. **Pedestrian and cycle access:** The promoter should confirm here whether or not there are existing suitable pedestrian/active travel links into the site. If not, it should be outlined how these may be created. Any existing Public Rights of Way crossing the site should be highlighted.

6.2. **Vehicular access:** The promoter should confirm whether or not the site can readily provide a suitable access(es) for vehicles taking into consideration the proposed use. This should be indicated where possible on any uploaded plans. If upgrade works will be required to the network serving the site to make an acceptable access, these should be set out here. If third party land is required to achieve access from the public highway, details should be included of any contact made with the third-party landowner and/or any legal agreements reached to illustrate that site access will be deliverable. If the site is proposed to be accessed via a Trunk Road, you are advised to contact National Highways, and provide the result of that consultation with your submission.

6.3. **Access to services:** Accessibility to sustainable transport modes, places of work and education, and essential services are pivotal to determining whether a site is sustainably located. Approximate distances to the nearest public transport links, essential facilities and/or employment (if residential proposal) will be required. For distances to the nearest schools, please use the Herefordshire Council online tool.

7. Utilities

7.1. Promoters should indicate whether the site is readily capable of connection to each of the utility services in the list. If any are marked as a “no”, then the free text section should be used to explain how such services will be provided. If any consultation has taken place with statutory utilities undertakers, then information on this should be provided on the outcome of this.

8. Environment

8.1. **Flood risk:** Where the site is flagged as being affected by flooding risk, the promoter should set out justification for the proposed use in line with PPG guidance: Flood risk and coastal change - GOV.UK. Or, a strategy with proposed mitigation measures should be set out.

8.2. **Ecology:** Where the site is located where it has the potential to impact upon an ecological designation or protected species or habitat, a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) or other relevant ecological assessment that is proportionate to the development proposal should be provided to explain how impact will be managed, and any measures proposed to provide betterment and enhancement. If such an assessment is available in document

form, this can be uploaded. Promoters can check if the site is affected by such designations here: Magic Map Application.

8.3. **Green Infrastructure:** The promoter should detail how the proposed development may enhance ecological connectivity and achieve Biodiversity Net Gain Biodiversity net gain - GOV.UK.

8.4. **Heritage:** Policy HE5 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires development proposals affecting heritage assets to be accompanied by an assessment of the significance of the assets affected (including any contribution made by their setting) and of the potential effect of the proposal on their significance. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is necessary to understand the potential effect of the proposal on their significance. The relevant historic environment record should be referred to in making this assessment, and appropriate expertise employed where necessary.

8.5. If the site is located within a Conservation Area, this will be alerted on the plotting of the site. Promoters can check the presence of any other heritage assets using the Historic England map- Search the List: Map Search | Historic England . Where development of the site could have impacts upon heritage assets on or close to the site, such a description should be provided. Where any Heritage Impact Assessment work has been undertaken, this should be provided via the upload facility.

8.6. **Best and Most Versatile agricultural land (BMV):** National planning policy identifies agricultural land classified as grades 1, 2 and 3a as the Best and Most Versatile (BMV) land, and directs that such land should be conserved wherever possible as a finite resource for the future. Submitters of sites that include BMV land should set out a justification for the development balanced against the loss of the BMV land. Regional mapping of agricultural land grades can be viewed here: Agricultural Land Classification map West Midlands Region - ALC004

8.7. **Contamination:** Where sites are affected by potential contamination issues that could affect development, the promoter should provide details of this where possible. The GIS system will identify these, but any additional information available to the site promoter should be provided here to supplement. Any studies undertaken or mitigation measures should also be detailed here.

8.8. **Any other constraints:** If the site is affected by any other known physical and/or environmental constraints, for example Air Quality Management Areas, Minerals Safeguarding Areas or utilities infrastructure, please detail these and any studies undertaken and any mitigation measures proposed.

9. Site Deliverability

9.1. **Ownership:** Proposers of land must indicate whether they are the sole owners of the site being proposed. For sites jointly owned or owned by a third party, the full contact information of all other site owners and individuals with a legal interest in the site should be provided. Information about the nature of the joint ownership and whether the other owners have been informed about the submission of the site should also be included. If the site promoter does not own the proposed site, or if the additional owners have not agreed to the site's submission, information should be provided on how development of the site will be accomplished. Please outline how any issues arising from site ownership will be addressed to demonstrate site deliverability. This information should be accompanied by a plan in supporting uploads which clearly identifies the parcels of land owned by each party (as well any adjoining land). If the land in question is in public ownership, there should be a clear and demonstrable commitment to develop the site within the Local Plan period.

9.2. **Developer Involvement:** The promoter will need to provide information on whether there is a developer involved in progressing the site, including the status of discussions or any land agreements. If there is no developer on board, please provide plans to engage a developer and information on any marketing being undertaken. The Council recognise some information may be commercially sensitive, and if that is the case, please clearly mark any such information submitted.

9.3. **Legal Restrictions:** If there are any legal restrictions or constraints affecting the potential for the site’s development, please provide details and explain how these will be overcome. These could include restrictive covenants on certain activities or uses, easements to third parties for access, or claw back values which might affect the development of the site. Please provide, where possible, any spatially relevant information e.g. location of ransom strips., on an OS based map.

9.4. **Approximate Delivery Timescale:** The council will need to evidence a delivery trajectory for all allocated sites. Please indicate the anticipated timetable for submitting a planning application(s), and also the expected timeframe for commencement of construction on site. For residential proposals, please provide the approximate number of dwellings that will be constructed per annum, and evidence to support those forecasts, such as the number of outlets proposed on the site, and achieved build rates on similar recent sites.

10. Additional information

10.1. Any further information not requested in this guidance that the promoter wishes to submit in support of the site proposal can be included in the file upload facility or in the free text section at the end of the form.

10.2. The final question of the form will ask the promoter to indicate whether they would be open to the site being considered for a different use if the assessment does not find it suitable for that promoted.

11. Viability Assessment

11.1. A Development Viability Model will be developed in the coming months with the council's consultant, and will be available for use to developers for a small fee to assess site viability. This should provide early indication of the potential financial viability of a site to deliver development in a sustainable manner. It should allow for a profit margin for a developer so that there is sufficient incentive to deliver, and an appropriate land value that is capable of prompting the owner to sell or lease. It should show how the forecast has been reached by setting out a likely revenue from developing, against broad costings. There should be contingency for any possible abnormal costs that may arise. If there is a shortfall, then any "gap-funding" sources of funding should be clearly identified with evidence that they are likely to be secured. The information provided should be meaningful and proportionate to the site's potential significance to the strategy of the Local Plan. Whilst this is not being requested as part of the submission, promoters should be aware that this information may be requested at a later date as the site selection process progresses.

11.2. The Council will require all sites that it intends to take forward for allocation in the Local Plan to be supported by a detailed site-specific viability appraisal, submitted by the site promoter. It will need to consider the proposed development against the latest available emerging policies, evidence and site-specific development requirements. These may differ from the assumptions that are made when providing the initial information in the call for sites submission. The Council will contact all site promoters whose sites are intended to be taken forward for further assessment of potential allocations.

12. New settlements or the larger expansion of existing settlements

12.1. Sustainable options for delivering the council's mandatory growth targets through conventional-sized extensions to existing settlements are becoming increasingly limited, and are unlikely to be sufficient to deliver the scale of development that is required over the Local Plan period. It is therefore becoming increasingly clear that one or more new or large-scale expansions to existing settlements could be required to meet the target.

Ensuring that a new or large-scale expansion to a settlement and its supporting infrastructure is properly planned, designed and resourced takes considerable time.

12.2. With the above considered, delivery of a new or large-scale expanded settlement will likely not be able to commence prior to the end date of the new Local Plan period. Consequently, such developments will need to provide additional flexibility to ensure delivery of current housing targets.

12.3. The location and design of any new or large scale expansions to settlements in Herefordshire will need to be such that they are excellent places to live, built to Garden City Principles, and provide housing that provides for all types of identified need. They will need to be well-connected, with sustainable access to a range of jobs and services. They will need to promote our local economic strengths, enhance the environment and promote healthy and active lifestyles. It will also need to be evidenced that they are deliverable.

12.4. To achieve all of the above, proposals for any new or large scale expansion to an existing settlement will need to ensure that a significant proportion of any uplift in land value from current use is captured to fund the infrastructure to support the new community. It will be essential that the legal framework for this is agreed with councils at an early stage in the promotion of any new settlement or expansion.

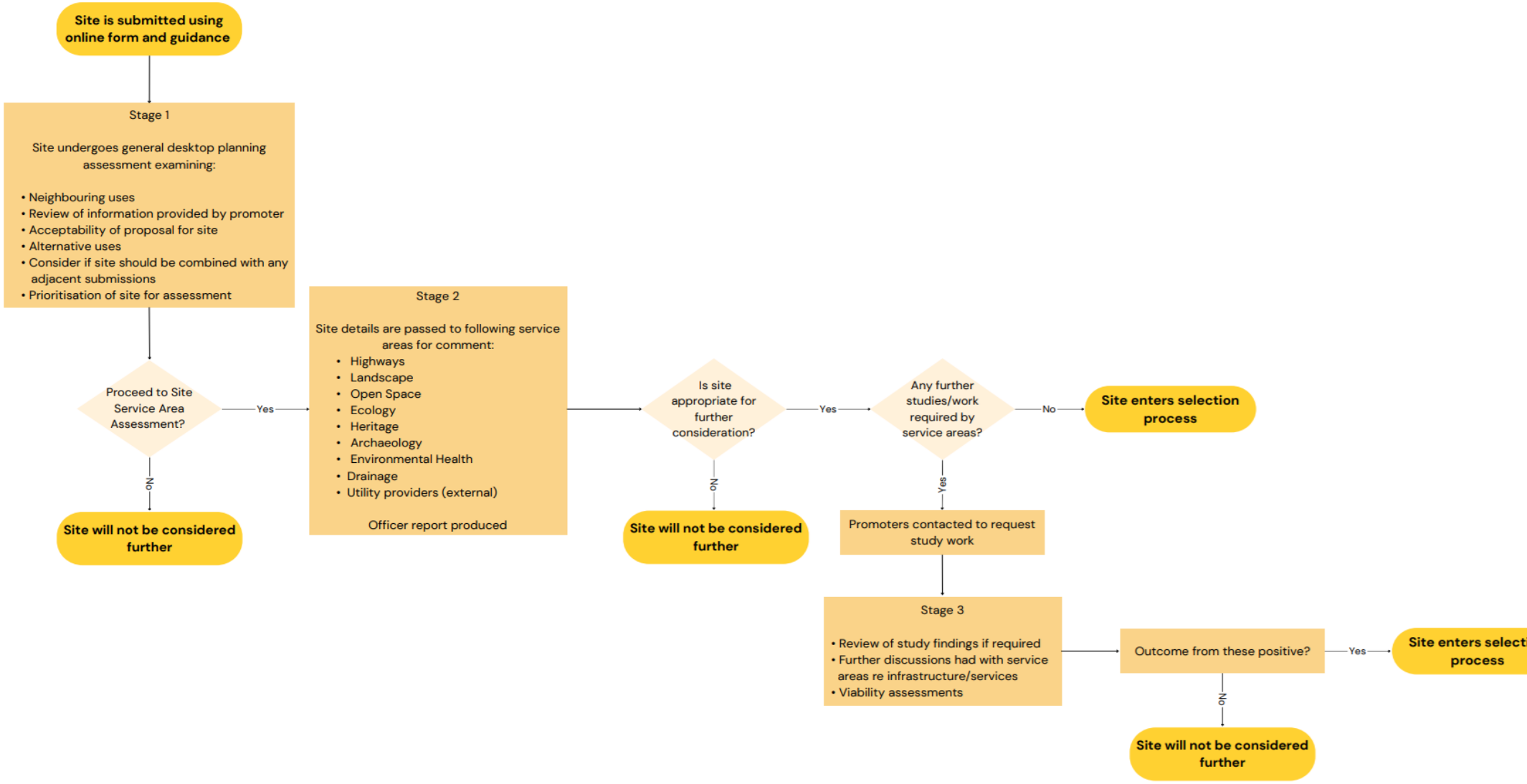
12.5. Particular consideration will be given to locations for new or large-scale expansions to settlements where:

- They are served by more than one mode of transport. For instance, major (A) roads and railway lines.
- They are of a size capable of accommodating in excess of 1,000 new homes and/or 10ha of land for employment uses.
- They are **not** in a National Landscape, an area of flood risk, covered by SSSIs or other statutory ecological designations.

13. Assessment Process

Please see diagram overleaf.

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