

INTRODUCTION

Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (PPS3) requires each local authority to carry out a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) as part of the evidence base and background information of the Local Development Framework process. It is not setting policy but it forms a key component of the evidence base to support the delivery of sufficient land for housing in a long term.

The East of England Plan requires Rochford District to ensure at least 4,600 additional dwellings are built in the District between 2001 and 2021; and another 1,000 dwellings between 2021 and 2025.

As set out in Planning Policy 3: Housing (PPS3), the Local Planning Authority has to:

- identify specific, deliverable sites for the first five years of a plan that are ready for development
- identify specific, developable sites for years 6-10 (ideally years 11-15)
- indicate broad locations for future growth (for years 11-15)
- not include an allowance for windfalls in the first 10 years of the plan

The SHLAA will, as a minimum, fulfil the above requirements in due course. In addition, it is not a one-off study and will be reviewed through the Council's Annual Monitoring Report process.

BACKGROUND

Rochford District Council has recently produced the Core Strategy Preferred Options Document. The Core Strategy will set out the key strategic elements of the planning framework for Rochford district, and detailed housing allocations and numbers will be published in a separate document known as the 'Allocations' document.

In 2007 the Council commenced work on updating the 2000 Urban Capacity Study as part of the evidence base for the Local Development Framework (LDF). The updated document – the Urban Capacity Study 2007 (UCS) – was finalised in July 2007. However, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) issued guidance on producing Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments which superseded previous guidance (Tapping the Potential – Assessing urban housing capacity: towards better practice) in the same month.

In producing the UCS, the Council was aware that previous guidance was outdated and that empirical evidence from within the district showed that the guidance was flawed. As such, the UCS does not follow previous guidance to the letter and fulfils many of the requirements of the new guidance.

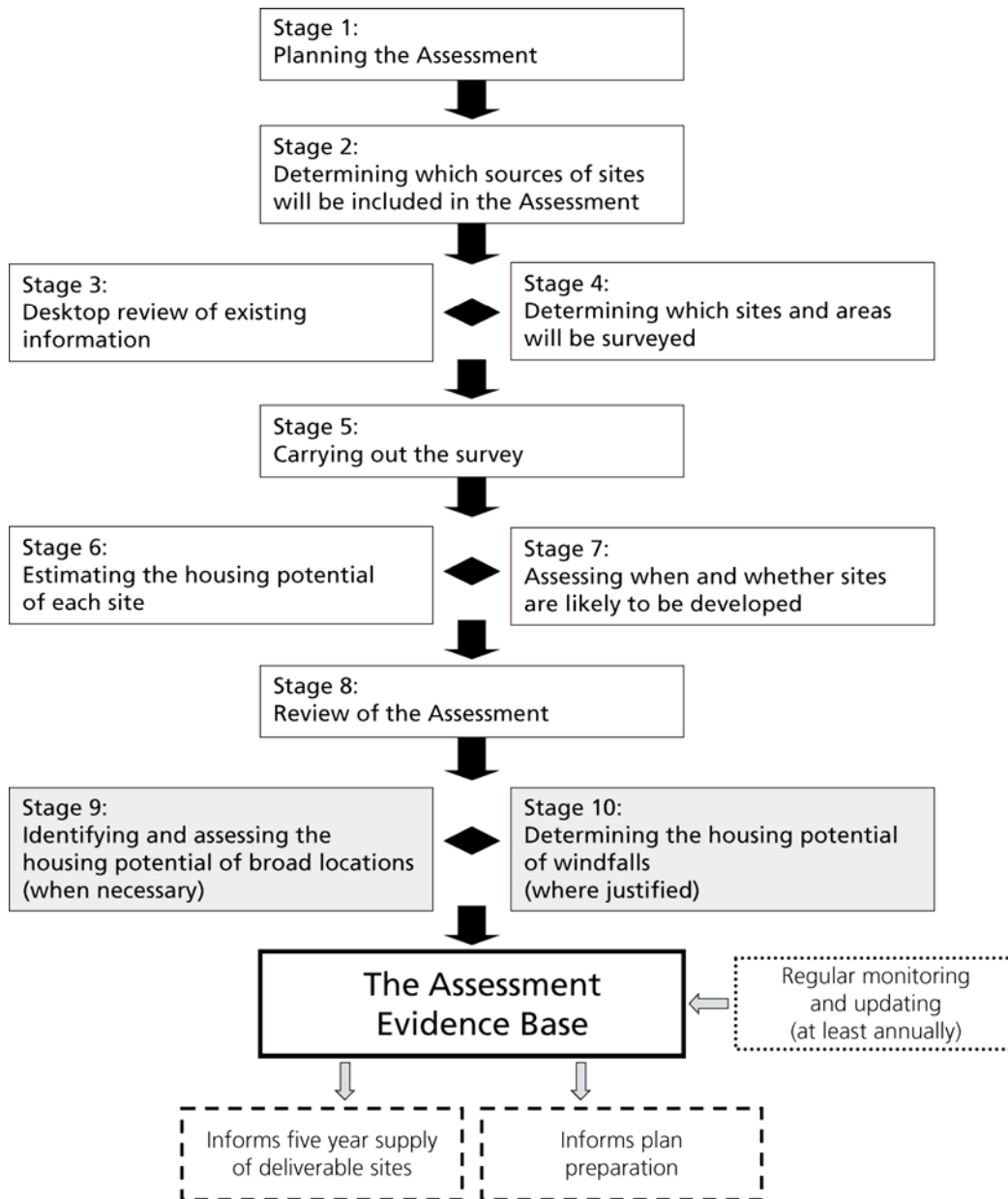
It is a matter of fact that, as guidance on producing assessments, Local

Development Documents etc are being constantly produced and amended, it will not be possible for all of the Council's documents at any one time to be perfectly inline with the most recent guidance on their production.

The UCS examines a variety of possible sources of housing land, assesses their potential, and makes a judgement as to the probability of the site coming forward in the plan period of 2001-2021. While the primary role of a SHLAA is to identify sufficient specific sites for housing, assess their potential and consider whether they are likely to be developable in the next 10 years or, where applicable, more, the Council will therefore use a significant amount of information from the existing Urban Capacity Study (UCS) as the basis for demonstrating the housing capacity, but will develop it further to meet the key requirements set out in the national SHLAA guidance.

METHODOLOGY

This methodology is based on the SHLAA Practice Guidance. The SHLAA has eight main stages, with two optional stages, covering broad locations and windfalls. The stages of the SHLAA are illustrated in Figure 1 below.



STAGE 1: PLANNING THE ASSESSMENT

SHLAA Practice Guidance suggests that local authorities should address 1) the possibility to work with other planning authorities in the housing market area; 2) the possibility to set up a housing market partnership; 3) secure the resource and quality of the work; and 4) produce a work programme and project milestone.

1) Work with other planning authorities in the housing market area

The Council has established a SHMA for the Thames Gateway South Essex (TGSE) sub-region with five local authorities of Basildon, Castle Point, Rochford, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock Thames Gateway. However, due to the incompatible stage and timeframe for each council, Rochford Council will not carry out a joint SHLAA at this time.

2) Housing market partnership

Key partners (Essex County Council, adjoining local authorities, landowners, developers, agents etc.) will have a chance to comment on the draft methodology. The comments received through the consultation process will be taken into account and lead to the production of the final document.

3) Secure the resource and quality of the work

Consultation on the draft methodology and the site visits can be carried out using existing in-house resources.

4) Produce a work programme and project milestone

The Council will not create an individual work programme for the SHLAA, but will be coherent with the timetable set in the Local Development Scheme. The SHLAA document will be finalised prior to the submission of the Core Strategy to the Secretary of State.

STAGE 2: DETERMINING WHICH SOURCES OF SITES WILL BE INCLUDED IN THE ASSESSMENT

The SHLAA practice guidance illustrated a table for the types of sites which should be covered. Sources of sites with potential for housing are listed below:

Sites Included	
Sites in the planning process	Sites not currently in the planning process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • land allocated (or with permission) for employment or other land uses which are no longer required for those uses • existing housing allocations and site development briefs • unimplemented/outstanding planning permissions for housing • planning permissions for housing that are under construction 	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vacant and derelict land and building • surplus public sector land • land in non-residential use which may be suitable for re-development for housing, such as commercial buildings or car parks, including as part of mixed-use development • additional housing opportunities in established residential areas, such as under-used garage blocks • large scale redevelopment and re-design of existing residential areas and town centres. • sites in rural settlements and rural exception sites • urban extensions (if any) • new free standing settlements (if any)

Sites excluded in the table below are either of international/ national/ local importance, not merely due to existing policies designed to constrain development. Other open spaces like playing pitches and allotments will not be excluded in the research of this study, yet the council will seek protection for these sites through other policies.

Sites Excluded
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ramsar sites • Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) • Special Protection Areas (SPAs) • Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) • Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) • Local Wildlife Sites (LoWSs) • Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) • Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) • Ancient Woodlands • Undeveloped land within flood zone 2, 3a and 3b • Roadside Verges

STAGE 3: Desktop review of existing information

Sites that will be covered are listed in stage 2. A desktop review at this stage allows us to work out data sources that may help to identify the sites with potential for housing methodically.

A map will be produced to help outlining potential sites identified below.

Sites in planning process	Purpose	Method/ Documents
Sites allocations not yet the subject of planning permission	To identify sites	Replacement Local Plan; Proposed locations in Core Strategy Preferred Option (CSPO); Responses to the CSPO consultation process; 'Call for sites' exercise; Potential sites identified in informal discussions with developers; Town Centre Area Action Plan; and Retail and Leisure Study
Planning permission / sites under construction	To identify sites	Development Control records; Building Control records Annual Monitoring Reports Urban Capacity Study records
Sites specific development brief	To identify sites and any constraints to delivery	Council records; SHLAA consultation
Appropriate planning application refusals	To identify sites – particularly those applications rejected on grounds of prematurity, or where the reasons for refusal can be overcome	Development Control records after April 2007
Dwelling starts and completion records	To identify the current development progress on sites with planning permission	Council records
Other sources of information	Purpose	Method/ Documents
Urban Capacity Study	To identify buildings and	Urban Capacity Study 2007

	land, and any constraints to delivery	
Empty Property Register	To identify vacant buildings	Consult Economic Development Officer
English House Condition Survey	To identify buildings	See www.communities.gov.uk
National Land Use Database	To identify buildings and land, and any constraints to delivery	See www.englishpartnerships.co.uk/publications.htm
Register of Surplus Public sector land	To identify buildings and land	See www.englishpartnerships.co.uk/rspsl.htm
Employment Land Review	To identify surplus employment building and land	See recommendation in Employment Land Study 2008
Valuation Office database	To identify vacant buildings	See www.voa.gov.uk
Vacant property registers (industrial and commercial)	To identify vacant buildings	Consult Housing
Commercial property databases	To identify vacant buildings and land	Consult Economic Development Officer
Ordnance Survey maps	To identify sites	The Council's GIS system
Aerial photography	To identify sites	The Council's GIS system

STAGE 4: Determining which sites and areas will be surveyed

According to the SHLAA practice guidance, all sites identified by the desktop review should be visited. However, it allows some flexibility on how comprehensive and intensive this is when assessing different areas. The site survey should be used to identify further sites with potential for housing development which were not identified by the desktop reviews.

Different approaches will be used to determine how comprehensive and intensive the survey element of the assessment needs to be.

Sites included in the UCS have already been visited when producing the UCS in 2007. Taking into account that the capacity identified is unlikely to have altered, site visits for those sites will only be carried out if the desktop review identifies evidence showing the condition of the sites included in UCS has

changed. A street-by-street survey will be carried out in certain geographic areas where necessary.

Factors to take into account:

- The nature of the housing challenge – assessments will need to be comprehensive and intensive where the housing market indicators reflect the need to identify more sites for housing.
- The nature of land supply – the survey may need to identify smaller sites in the District where large proportion of housing is expected to be delivered on small sites due to the geographic nature of the District.

Geographic areas

- Development hotspots
- Town centres
- Principal public transport corridors
- Specific locations within settlements - areas identified in Town Centre Master plans

STAGE 5: Carrying out the survey

A checklist will be used to record the characteristics for each site, identifying the feature not included in the desktop review.

STAGE 6: Estimating the housing potential of each site

SHLAA Practice Guidance states that the estimated capacity of each identified site should be guided by existing or emerging Plan policy, particularly the approach to setting housing densities at the local level.

It is suggested in *PPS3: Housing* that LPAs may wish to set out a range of densities across the plan area rather than one broad density range. The Urban Place Supplement to the Essex Design Guide also advises the location of a potential development should determine its minimum or maximum density and some aspects of its form. For instance, the Council would allow higher density schemes within town centre areas, where appropriate; simultaneously, the Council will take into account the historical capacity and predominant character of the rural settlements and address an acceptable level of density for those areas. To ensure that the housing potential for each site is guided both by the plan and by economic viability, stage 6 and 7 will be carried out in parallel as recommended in the practice guidance.

A number of methods will be used to estimate the housing potential of each site in the assessment, including:

- Government, regional and local guidance / policy on assessing appropriate densities for development (including Parish Plans where relevant)
- Physical constraints and topography of sites
- Information provided by landowners and agents
- Land price statistics in the area
- Evidence base work undertaken on Rochford and Hockley town centre Area Action Plans or any other relevant emerging evidence base work.

STAGE 7: Assessing when and whether sites are likely to be developed

The purpose of this Stage is to assess whether a site is **deliverable**, **developable** or not currently developable for housing. The Council will be using an assessment form to help determine the suitability, availability and achievability for each site. In order to provide detail information for each site, professional judgement and comments will be included in the final report.

PPS3: Housing (para. 54) requires all Local Planning Authorities to identify sufficient specific **deliverable** sites to deliver housing in the first five years. To be considered deliverable, sites should be available, suitable, and achievable at the point of adoption of the relevant Local Development Document. These features will be tested in Stage 7a, 7b and 7c in this assessment.

In the long term, PPS3: Housing (para. 55) affirms that Local Authorities should:

- Identify a further supply of specific, **developable** sites for years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15. Where it is not possible to identify specific sites for years 11-15, broad locations for future growth should be indicated.
- Linked to above, identify those strategic sites which are critical to the delivery of the housing strategy over the plan period.
- Show broad locations on a key diagram and locations of specific sites on a proposals map.
- Illustrate the expected rate of housing delivery through a housing trajectory for the plan period.

To be considered:

Deliverable - a site is available now, offers a suitable location for housing development now and there is a reasonable prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years from the date of adoption of the plan.

Developable – a site is in a suitable location for housing development, and there should be a reasonable prospect that it will be available for and could be developed at a specific point in time.

Where it is unknown when a site could be developed, it should be regarded as not currently developable. Whether the constraints can be overcome and what

action would be needed to remove them will be discussed in Stage 7d: Overcoming Constraints.

STAGE 7a: Assessing suitability for housing

A site is suitable for housing development if it offers a suitable location for development and would contribute to the creation of sustainable, mixed communities.

Sites already identified previously in the UCS (2007) and sites with planning permission which provide substantial evidences will be assumed to be suitable. For any other sites, the following factors should be considered to assess a site's suitability for housing, now or in the future:

- **policy restrictions** – such as national and Local Plan designations, protected areas, existing planning policy and Sustainable Community Strategy policy;
- **physical problems or limitations** – such as access, infrastructure, ground conditions, flood risk, hazardous risks, pollution or contamination;
- **potential impacts** – including effect upon landscape features and conservation; and
- **the environmental conditions** – which would be experienced by prospective residents.

For example:

- Air Quality Management Area (AQMA)
- Area of flood risk
- Conservation Area
- Historic Parks and Gardens
- Listed building
- Policies restricting the loss of the existing use
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- Wildlife sites

STAGE 7b: Assessing availability for housing

The practice guidance notes that a site is considered available for development, when, on the best information available, there is confidence that there are no legal or ownership problems, such as multiple ownerships, ransom strips, tenancies or operational requirements of landowners.

The purpose of this stage is to identify the availability of the sites and ensure that there is no legal and/or ownership issue to stopping a potential site being developed.

Sites put forward in the “call for sites” exercise should already have the ownership information included in their proposals. Discussions with

developers and stakeholders will help clarify the ownership issues and provide valuable information of when the site will be available.

Where problems have been identified, then an assessment will need to be made as to how and when they can realistically be overcome.

STAGE 7c: Assessing achievability for housing

According to the practice guidance, a site is considered achievable for development where there is a reasonable prospect that housing will be developed on the site at a particular point of time. This is essentially a judgement about the economic viability of a site, and the capacity of the developer to complete the housing over a certain period. It will be affected by market factors, cost factors and delivery factors.

A residual valuation model may be applied to help assessing the factors mentioned above and determine the economic viability of a site, where the viability is in question.

Taking into account all the issues mentioned, the Council will make a judgment of the suitability, availability and achievability of a site. To ensure the SHLAA is sound and robust, the Council will ensure stakeholders have an opportunity to review the document and submit comments on it prior to its finalisation.

STAGE 7d: Overcoming Constraints

The Council will consult stakeholders and look at the opportunity for future development on the sites which are not currently developable. It notes in the practice guidance that when constraints identified, the assessment should consider what action would be needed to remove them. Action might include the need for investment in new infrastructure, dealing with fragmented land ownership, environmental improvement, or a need to amend planning policy which is currently constraining housing development.

STAGE 8: Review of the Assessment

The assessment will be showing details of the expected delivery of each housing site for the next 5, 10 and 15 year periods. The housing potential of all sites will be collected to produce an indicative housing trajectory that sets out how much housing can be provided and at what point in the future. The information in this SHLAA will inform the Core Strategy DPD and subsequent Site Allocations DPD.

The practice guidance suggests that an overall risk assessment should be made as to whether sites will come forward as anticipated.

If it shows from the result that insufficient sites have been identified, then it will be necessary to investigate how this shortfall should best be planned for. The optional stage 9 and 10 may need to carry out to identify broad housing locations and/or windfall allowance for future housing growth in the District, even though specific sites cannot yet be identified.

SHLAA Assessment form

Site details:

Site details	Site Reference:	
	Site Name:	
	Site Location:	
	Site Map:	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Site Photos:	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Site Area (Ha):	
	Physical Description of Site: including natural features - aspect, slope, water; manmade features – drains, sewers, pylons	
	Greenfield/ Brownfield:	
	Surrounding Landuse(s):	
	Site Owner:	
	Contact Details:	
	Current Use (Residential, Retail, Employment, Industrial, Leisure, Mixed, Gypsy and Traveller Site, etc.)	
	Proposed Use:	
	Adjacent Land Use(s):	

Filter:

Ramsar site <input type="checkbox"/>	SSSI <input type="checkbox"/>	SPA <input type="checkbox"/>	SAC <input type="checkbox"/>	LNR <input type="checkbox"/>
LoWS <input type="checkbox"/>	SLA <input type="checkbox"/>	Ancient Woodlands <input type="checkbox"/>	Roadside verges <input type="checkbox"/>	None of the above <input type="checkbox"/>

Suitability Assessment

Physical problems or limitation	Proximity to Local Services:	Good	Medium	Poor	Justification	
	Public Transport					
	Education					
	Health service					
	Community facilities					
	Leisure					
	Shops					
	Green Space					
	Proximity to Residential Area:					
	Planning Permission/ History (if any):					
	Existing use allocation/designation:					
	Infrastructure					
	Highways Access Required:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>				
	Significant Investment in Existing Foul Sewerage/ Drainage Required:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>				
Significant Investment in Gas Supplies:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>					
Significant Investment in Water Supplies:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>					
Significant Investment in Electricity Supplies:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>					
Significant Investment in walking/public transport required:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>					
Flood Risk						
Zone 1:Low Probability (<0.1% probability of annual flooding)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>					
Zone 2: Medium Probability (1% - 0.1% probability of annual flooding) *Subject to Flood Risk Assessments and Exception test where relevant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>					
Zone 3a: High Probability (>1% probability of annual flooding) *Subject to Flood Risk Assessments and Exception test where relevant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>					
Zone 3b: The Functional Floodplain (>5% probability of annual flooding) *Subject to Flood Risk Assessments and Exception test where relevant	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>					

Potential impact	Topography (Brief explanation of topography of site including aspect i.e. Good condition/ Restrictive/ Poor ground condition)	
	Access	
	Are non-residential uses more appropriate for the site	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
The Environmental Conditions	Within proximity to TPO:	<input type="checkbox"/> If yes, please give details:
	Within proximity to SAM:	<input type="checkbox"/> If yes, please give details:
	Within proximity to Listed Buildings:	<input type="checkbox"/> If yes, please give details:
	Within proximity to AQMA:	<input type="checkbox"/> If yes, please give details:
	Within proximity to Conservation area:	<input type="checkbox"/> If yes, please give details:

Availability Assessment

Ownership problem (e.g. ransom strips)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not known <input type="checkbox"/>
Legal constraints (e.g. covenants, tenancies)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not known <input type="checkbox"/>
Density restriction for sites (flood risk or other topographical issue)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> If yes, please give details:

Achievability Assessment

Potential Capacity	
Estimated appropriate density for area:	
Estimated appropriate capacity for area:	
Would an alternative of housing be more appropriate	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not known <input type="checkbox"/>
Market factors	
Economic viability of existing use of site	High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low <input type="checkbox"/> Not known <input type="checkbox"/>
Economic viability of alternative use of site (in terms of land value)	High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low <input type="checkbox"/> Not known <input type="checkbox"/>
High potential market demand	High <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> Low <input type="checkbox"/> Not known <input type="checkbox"/>
Exceptional works necessary to realise development	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not known <input type="checkbox"/>
Cost factors	
Site preparation costs relating to physical constraints	High <input type="checkbox"/> Average <input type="checkbox"/> Low <input type="checkbox"/> Level to severely affect achievability <input type="checkbox"/>
Exceptional works are necessary	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not known <input type="checkbox"/>
Site has potential to deliver planning obligation	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not known <input type="checkbox"/>
Prospect of funding or investment to address constraints or assist development	Available <input type="checkbox"/> Unavailable <input type="checkbox"/> (if it is required)
Delivery factors	
Phasing of development	
A single developer/ several developers	
Land to be available for development:	0-5 years <input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 years <input type="checkbox"/> 11-15years <input type="checkbox"/> 15+years Not known <input type="checkbox"/>
Year in which first dwelling could be built on site:	
Number of dwellings to be built per year:	
Year in which final dwellings will be completed:	

*

Table D.3²²: Flood Risk Vulnerability and Flood Zone 'Compatibility'

Flood Risk Vulnerability classification (see Table D2)		Essential Infrastructure	Water compatible	Highly Vulnerable	More Vulnerable	Less Vulnerable
Flood Zone (see Table D.1)	Zone 1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Zone 2	✓	✓	Exception Test required	✓	✓
	Zone 3a	Exception Test required	✓	X	Exception Test required	✓
	Zone 3b 'Functional Floodplain'	Exception Test required	✓	X	X	X

Key:

✓ Development is appropriate

X Development should not be permitted