

Northumberland Local Plan

Employment Land Site Option Appraisal

Prudhoe Site Option Appraisal

July 2018

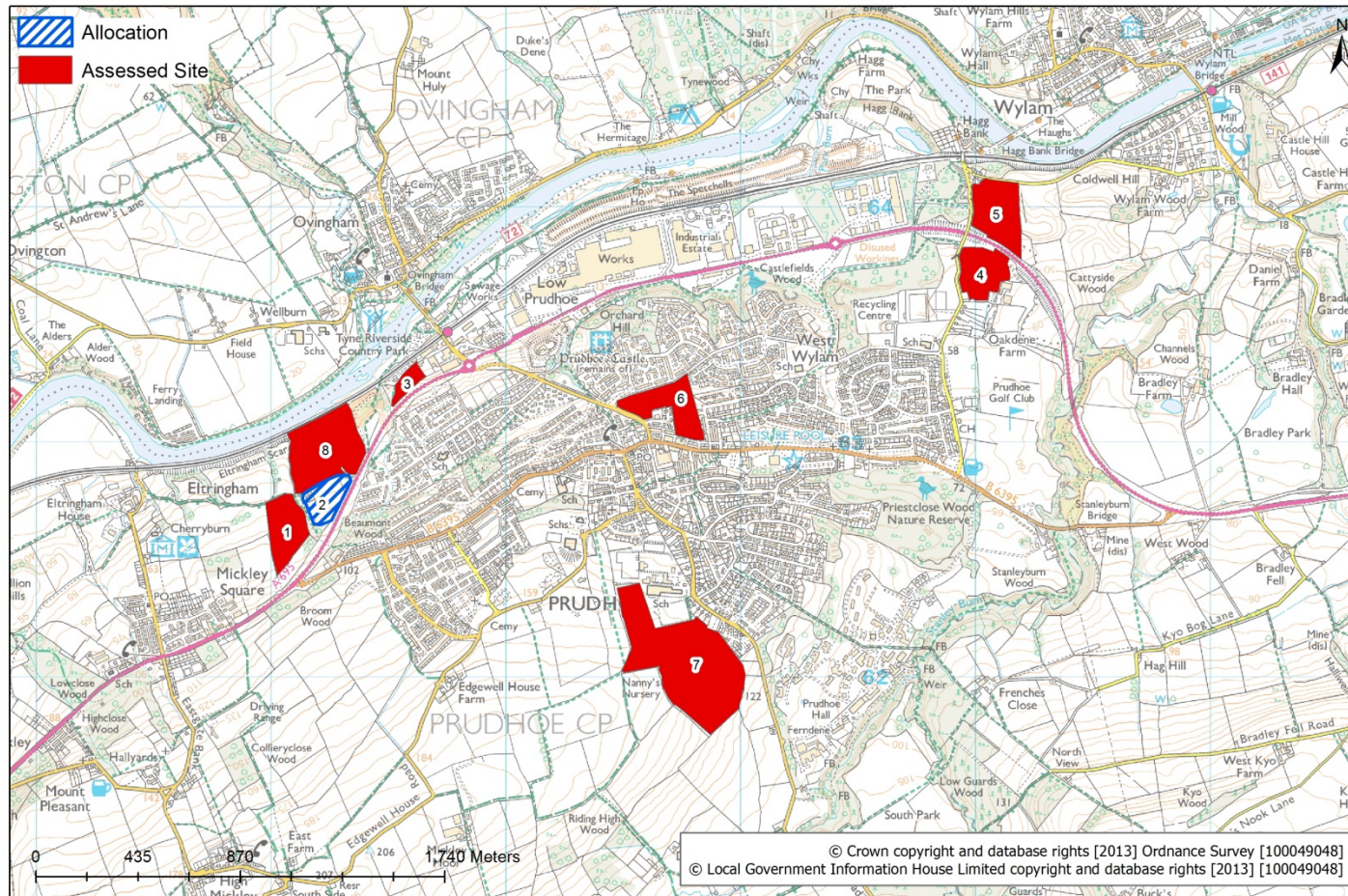
1. Prudhoe

- 1.1 The ELR (2011) concluded the potential need for additional employment land to serve Prudhoe as being 10 to 15 hectares. At the time, it was considered that, as well as available land, this would include a 7ha B1 allocation in the (then) proposed Prudhoe Hospital mixed use site, plus an additional 5ha B-class allocation adjacent to site E17 (the Hammerite site), subject to a Green Belt review.
- 1.2 It subsequently became apparent that the former Prudhoe Hospital site would not be making a contribution towards the town's employment land needs other than in terms of the continuation of health-related uses on part of the land. This decision reflected the viability and deliverability of the site as a whole, the overall availability of sustainable opportunities to meet the Prudhoe's housing need and in terms of the marketability of the site for employment uses.
- 1.3 It had also been determined that a Green Belt review would need to take place around the town, not only to meet Prudhoe's housing quota but also, (reflective of the 2011 ELR conclusion) its employment land needs.
- 1.4 The ELPDS (2015) took on board the lack of availability / marketability of the former Hospital site for employment uses and also took a 'reality check' on the situation in the town, for example comparing the initial ELR's 10-15 ha against the scale of the existing estates and actual take-up rates. This showed that a 10 ha allocation would equate to a 19% increase, while 15 ha would lead to a 28% increase in the amount of industrial land at Prudhoe.
- 1.5 Seen against towns such as Alnwick and Cramlington, where land supply is far less constrained but where take-up has been relatively slow compared with the land available, it could be demonstrated that Prudhoe could realistically expect a take-up of somewhat less than 1 ha per annum. On this basis an allocation of 15 ha for a 15 year plan period was considered to be generous particularly given the town's constraints in terms of the Green Belt, topography and infrastructure.
- 1.6 The strength of the Prudhoe market is illustrated by quite healthy levels of take-up in recent years with 5.14ha developed for b-class uses in the 1999-2014 period, an average of 0.32ha per annum. Large businesses such as SCA hygiene have also invested substantially in their existing operations. The supply of vacant premises is also restrictive with under 1% available as of the 31st March 2015.
- 1.6 The ELPDS also found that, notwithstanding its relative proximity to Tyneside, Prudhoe is not in the ideal location, office demand being stronger to the north of the Tyne, where the A69 corridor provides a quick link to the conurbation. It found rural situations for office conversions to be popular in these commutable zones – maybe more so than a town such as Prudhoe.
- 1.7 Finally, the ELPDS saw a link with the Hexham situation, such that less constrained employment land availability in Hexham could soak up some of the demand from Prudhoe.

- 1.8 Overall, therefore, the ELPDS saw a 10 ha additional land allocation as being more appropriate than the earlier ELR figure.
- 1.9 However, due to the constrained nature of the town, the role of accessible potential rural office locations, the proposed additional land at Hexham and the continued availability of land at Low Prudhoe, a lower additional amount would be appropriate.
- 1.10 The settlement has a distinct employment area to the north which utilises level land, with residential areas south of this. The town is heavily constrained by topography, infrastructure and the River Tyne. No sites were considered to the south of the town, except for one adjacent to Prudhoe Community High School identified through a previous 'call for sites', owing to the steep and undulating topography and the need to access sites via residential areas. Options were focused where land is likely to be level enough for employment development, and where sites can be accessed via the A695.
- 1.11 The following site options were reviewed for Prudhoe, assuming the quantitative need set out above.

Plan of Prudhoe Site Options

Prudhoe



2. Prudhoe Site 1 – Land north east of Mickley Square

Site Area (Ha) - 4.04

Easting - 408,062.124

Northing - 562,628.292

Indicative development mix (Assuming build out of 40% of the site)

Use-class	Site coverage (%)	Floorspace (sq.m)	Employees
B1c	60	9,696	206
B2	30	4,848	135
B8	10	1,616	23

- 2.1 The site is situated north of the A695 Prudhoe Bypass towards its western end. A few hundred metres to the SW is the village of Mickley Square. The site is currently used for mixed arable/pasture agriculture and is sub-divided east west by a mature hedgerow. To the east, (and overlapping onto the site itself) is a substantial area of ancient woodland, to the north runs a farm track and, a short distance to the south, the A695 itself.



Criteria 1: Strategic Road Access

Criteria 2: Local Road Access and Impact

- 2.2 The main access to the strategic road network is over 5km from the site where the A695 meets the A69. Currently, the main access to these fields emanates from the farm track to the north of the site. This emerges at the former Hammerite factory, meaning that there would be a possibility of accessing the site via the existing (former) Hammerite access road. There is also a field gate directly from the A695 slightly to the SW of the site. However the position, close to the eastern end of Mickley Square is on a relatively blind corner with a considerable slope and is very close to the junction with the access road into the town itself and also close to the eastern end of Mickley Square. In addition, the access road would have to traverse a field / woodland that does not form part of the site.
- 2.3 County Highways have confirmed there is no access to the adopted highway and suggest that access would be difficult. Even if a suitable junction onto the A695 could be achieved, it is clear that considerable lengths of new or upgraded carriageway would need to be constructed to provide full access to the site.
- 2.4 The Transport Assessment (2015) looked at four key junctions in the town, the closest of which was the roundabout between the A695 Prudhoe Bypass and Station Road (leading towards the town centre). The study did not predict any significant impacts cumulatively. So it would appear that, were it possible to overcome problems of accessing the A695 from the site, then impacts in terms of that additional volume of traffic on key junctions in the town would not be significant.

Conclusion

- 2.5 The site presents significant problems in terms of accessing the A695 Prudhoe bypass, insofar as new junctions and / or significant length of access road would need to be created. In the unlikely event that these obstacles can be overcome, the impact of the site's development in terms of congestion on the local road network would be unlikely to be unacceptable.

ELR site assessment score	
Criteria 1: Strategic road access	1
Criteria 2: Local road access and impact	1

Criteria 3: Site Characteristics and Development Constraints

Ground conditions

- 2.6 No part of the site is flat. Indeed there is a considerable slope throughout the site from south to north with the average slope being around 1 in 10, although the drop towards the southern end of the site (i.e. from the A695) is considerably more, something which could add further to the cost of accessing the site, were it to come from the SW corner.
- 2.7 While being roughly oblong in shape, the topography means that the site is generally un conducive with developing large footprint buildings.

- 2.8 The site has a history of shallow coal mining and the Coal Authority identifies it as a high risk development area. The site is within the proposed mineral safeguarding area for coal, so it would need to be confirmed whether development of the site would result in material sterilisation.
- 2.9 The site is currently used for mixed arable/pasture farming and is classified as grade 3, which indicates “land with moderate limitations which affect the choice of crops, timing and type of cultivation, harvesting or the level of yield”¹. Subsequent assessment has not been undertaken to determine if the site falls within the A or B subcategory of grade 3. As such development of the site would not result in the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land as per annex 2 of the NPPF.

Biodiversity

- 2.10 The SE corner of site is designated as Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland, being part of Beaumont Wood. This means that this part of the site should be discounted together with a minimum 15m buffer zone to the Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland
- 2.11 In terms of protected species, range of protected species has been recorded locally. A Local Wildlife and Geological site exists approximately 140m west of the site and an SSSI approximately 1km NE. The site may be in the SSSI IRZ, meaning that consultation with Natural England may be required.
- 2.12 A small watercourse/drain less than 10m north of the site could be significant and it should be borne in mind that the River Tyne is only around 250m further north.

Landscape and Green Infrastructure

- 2.13 The northern part of the site falls within the Glacial Trough Valley Floor landscape character type, while the southern part is of type Glacial Trough Valley Sides. Development guidelines discourage new built development from extending onto the valley floor or too far up the valley sides and encourage the creation of strong settlement boundaries. The approach routes that run through the area, (e.g. A695) should be given particular consideration, as should the settings of towns and settlement distinctiveness. All of this militates against development encroaching too far into the area of this site, although the Key Land Use Impact Study does note that limited areas of lower sensitivity below the escarpment that ‘may accommodate infill development’. This last statement is taken to refer to areas that are well-concealed and closer in to the existing built-up area so precluding the majority of this site, which is more exposed and which forms a substantial proportion of the gap area between Prudhoe and Mickley Square.

Flooding and water management infrastructure

- 2.14 The Northumberland Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2015) indicates that there is no risk of fluvial water flooding of the site, and similarly no areas at particular risk of surface water flooding.

¹ Agricultural Land classification of England and Wales, MAFF, 1988

- 2.15 Consultation with NWL indicates that a sewer crosses the site and that they would require it to be diverted or placed within a suitable easement. There is a 225mm diameter sewer which could be utilised as a foul outlet for the site, were it to be developed. However, this should be seen in the wider context of capacity constraints associated at Howdon WwTW which Prudhoe relies on. There is a history of sewer flooding in both Prudhoe and Mickley. While the overall Howdon issue is being tackled strategically, there are likely to be upgrades to the sewer system needed in and around the town and there is a clear need for strong SuDS ('blue infrastructure') approach to any development – particularly relevant to steeply sloping sites such as this.
- 2.16 The Northumberland Water Cycle Study (2015) indicates that the site is within the Kielder Water Resource Area and so there is no issue in terms of water supply.

Archaeology and historic environment

- 2.17 There are no listed buildings within or immediately adjoining the site. However, Cherryburn lies close by to the west and it would need to be investigated how any development on this site could impact on its setting. As far as archaeology is concerned, there will require to be pre-determination evaluation (NPPF para 128) (e.g. assessment, geophysical survey and trial trenching) as there is the potential for unrecorded prehistoric or Iron Age/Roman period activity and garden archaeology. Any mitigation work will depend on the results of such an evaluation.

Rights of way

- 2.18 While no PROWs cross the site, Restricted By-way Route 538/051 passes along the northern side of the site. In addition, footpath 538/030 passes through the ancient woodland area to the east of the site. Depending on how the site would be accessed for vehicles, it would appear that the site could be developed without impacting on public rights of way.

Conclusion

- 2.19 There are a number of characteristics and constraints which would be likely to prevent development of this site for employment purposes. Primary among these are its steeply sloping topography and its key position in the landscape between Prudhoe and Mickley, meaning that development would create an appearance of the settlements merging. The land is beyond an area of Ancient Semi-natural Woodland that creates a natural edge to the SW corner of Prudhoe insofar as it exists north of the bypass. There may be issues in relation to the setting of Cherryburn.

ELR site assessment score	
Criteria 3: Site characteristics and development constraints	2

Criteria 4: Proximity to urban areas, and access to labour and services

Criteria 5: Sustainability and planning factors

- 2.20 Past Sustainability Appraisal work (2015) has shown that for the majority of criteria assessed, the site demonstrated no impact or a positive impact. The agricultural value of the site was identified as a potential constraint, and as the site is 100% greenfield this was considered a more serious constraint.
- 2.21 In terms of accessibility, the clear issues of accessing the site from the road system (as well as for people on bicycles and on foot from nearby residential areas) are picked up as an important sustainability issue, although it is in good reach of bus stops and, to a lesser extent, the rail station in Low Prudhoe.
- 2.22 It is apparent that the site is isolated from town centre type services which employees would be likely to use.
- 2.23 As indicated, the site is relatively unconstrained by ecological, heritage, and the effects of flooding.
- 2.24 The site falls within the existing Green Belt that separates Prudhoe from Mickley Square. Prudhoe itself, including areas relatively close to the site, is inset within the Green Belt, while Mickley Square is washed over with an 'infill boundary'. A Green Belt review is likely to instigate inset areas that coincide with the infill boundaries and any more recent development beyond.
- 2.25 The Northumberland Green Belt Assessment (2015) reviewed the contribution of land parcels around settlements to establish where it would be most appropriate to extend settlements into the current Green Belt, should this be necessary and justified in terms of exceptional circumstances.
- 2.26 The site is in PE16A which makes a high contribution to all of the purposes of the Green Belt. The assessment notes a risk of ribbon development along the A695 and 'non-compact' development down the slope towards Cherryburn. It clearly points to the increased risk of merger between Prudhoe, Mickley Square and Stocksfield. The assessment also notes the very limited opportunities to establish durable boundaries to prevent encroachment into the countryside. Clearly, the woodland to the east of the site and the bypass to the north are examples of this.
- 2.27 It is therefore strongly apparent that the development of this site with large scale buildings would significantly compromise the purposes of having Green Belt in this location.

Criteria 6: Compatibility of adjoining land uses

- 2.28 The site would mainly be surrounded by woodland and agriculture with other residential and employment uses slightly removed or at least separated by woodland or the main road. Any incompatibility issues would relate to operational aspects of the agricultural unit(s) affected

Conclusion

- 2.29 There are strong Green Belt related reasons why this site should not be developed with buildings, especially those of a large scale. Such development would undermine the purposes of having defined Green Belt in the gap between Mickley and Prudhoe in the first place. The location is reasonably accessible by public transport but there are barriers to its easy access by people from nearby housing or by car. Development here would create an employment area in a location that is relatively isolated from other services that the employees and visitors to the site may wish to use.

ELR site assessment score	
Criteria 4: Proximity to urban areas and access to services and labour	3
Criteria 6: Compatibility of adjoining uses	2
Criteria 5: Sustainability and planning factors	3

Criteria 7: Market Attractiveness

Ownership and availability

- 2.30 The site has not been proposed for employment use in the ELR call for sites (2010) or subsequent calls for sites. It is in private farm-related ownership. Operational aspects of the farm would clearly be an issue that could potentially create a barrier to development.

Development costs

- 2.31 As a greenfield site, it is currently un-serviced in terms of utilities and internal roads which would add to the site preparation cost, (notwithstanding that the water authority have noted the presence of a sewer that could be accessed directly). Access has been noted above as a clear, additional cost, whether this is via the existing (former) Hammerite entrance, or the farm gate further to the west. The history of mineral workings, the slope of the site, the need for structure planting (to create a new settlement edge and the possible need for additional agricultural access ways etc. could all add to the development cost.

Market demand

- 2.32 Prudhoe is not in the most marketable part of Northumberland in terms of potential investors in employment use, being located on the other side of the River Tyne from the main east-west Trunk Road (the A69) but has strong market demand for industrial uses. Having said this, the site has some advantages in a more local marketability context, reflecting its position on the main A695 that links Prudhoe and surrounding places with Hexham and Tyneside and Prudhoe's rail access. (Accessing the site itself would need to be addressed however).
- 2.33 While within reach of Prudhoe railway station, it is still a considerable distance away for those on foot and the site is also away from other services that are found typically in larger industrial areas and town centres.

Conclusion

- 2.34 The site is likely to be slow to attract users due to its non-central location away from the trunk road system. Local topographic and access issues, which would add to the cost and ease of development, are also likely to conspire against the site's feasibility as an employment location.

ELR site assessment score	
Criteria 7: Market attractiveness	2

Prudhoe site 1 – Land north east of Mickley Square

Total Score

Prudhoe Site 1	
Total site score	14

3. Prudhoe Site 2 – Land at Eltringham

Site Area (Ha) - 2.51

Easting - 408,239.516

Northing - 562,757.777

Indicative development mix (Assuming build out of 40% of the site)

Use-class	Site coverage (%)	Floorspace (sqm)	Employees
B1c	60	5,950	127
B2	30	2,976	83
B8	10	992	14

- 3.1 This roughly triangular site is situated north of the A695 Prudhoe Bypass between its western end and the existing industrial premises at the former Hammerite works (to the site's north-east). There are residential properties across the A695 to the site's south-east. Its western edge is separated from countryside beyond by a strip of ancient, semi-natural woodland. To its north lies the car park of the former works and, beyond this a row of housing.



Criteria 1: Strategic Road Access

Criteria 2: Local Road Access and Impact

- 3.2 The main access to the strategic road network is over 5km from the site where the A695 meets the A69. Currently, the main access to this large field comes from the farm track to the north of the site, which, in turn is accessed via the former Hammerite factory access point on the A695. Highways
- 3.3 County Highways have confirmed that access would be via the north east corner of the site, from the road that accesses the former factory, coming from opposite the existing plant. There may be a need to upgrade this access to provide for a greater quantum of employment development and any residential development which may also require using this point of access. Pedestrian and cycle connections to the network would be required where appropriate.
- 3.4 The Transport Assessment (2015) looked at four key junctions in Prudhoe, the closest of which was the roundabout between the A695 Prudhoe Bypass and Station Road (leading towards the town centre). The study did not predict any significant impacts cumulatively. So it would appear that, were it possible to overcome problems of accessing the A695 from the site, then impacts in terms of that additional volume of traffic on key junctions in the town etc. would not be significant.

Conclusion

- 3.5 The site presents a clear opportunity to access the A695 Prudhoe bypass using the existing Hammerite junction, although it is clear that some form of upgrade to that junction would be needed, especially if this site, the former factory and its car park were all to be developed (and/or reoccupied). In terms of the wider local road network, the impact of the site's development in terms of congestion etc. would not be significant and therefore most probably acceptable.

ELR site assessment score	
Criteria 1: Strategic road access	2
Criteria 2: Local road access and impact	4

Criteria 3: Site Characteristics and Development Constraints

Ground conditions

- 3.6 No part of the site is flat, with a slope throughout the site from south to north being around 1 in 10. While such a slope can be an issue in terms of ease of development, the slopes are not so severe that they could not be overcome through careful design.
- 3.7 The site has a probable history of shallow coal mining and the Coal Authority identifies it as a high risk development area. There are former mine entrances at the southern end of the site. The site is within the proposed mineral safeguarding area for coal, so it would need to be confirmed whether development of the site would result in material sterilisation.

- 3.8 The site is currently used for pasture and is classified as grade 3, which indicates “land with moderate limitations which affect the choice of crops, timing and type of cultivation, harvesting or the level of yield”². Subsequent assessment has not been undertaken to determine if the site falls within the A or B subcategory of grade 3. As such development of the site would not result in the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land as per annex 2 of the NPPF.

Biodiversity

- 3.9 The southern corner of site abuts an area of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland, being- part of Beaumont Wood. This means that part of the site should be discounted, as a minimum 15m buffer zone to the Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland is necessary.
- 3.10 In terms of protected species, range of protected species has been recorded locally. A Local Wildlife and Geological site exists approximately 350m west of the site and an SSSI approximately 790m NE. The site may be in the SSSI IRZ, meaning that consultation with Natural England may be required.
- 3.11 A small watercourse/drain less than 10m north of the site could be significant and it should be borne in mind that the River Tyne is only around 300m further north.

Landscape and Green Infrastructure

- 3.12 The site falls within the Glacial Trough Valley Floor landscape character type. Development guidelines discourage new built development from extending onto the valley floor and encourage the creation of strong settlement boundaries. The approach routes that run through the area, (e.g. A695) should be given particular consideration, as should the settings of towns and settlement distinctiveness. The contained nature of this field, being between the A695, the former factory, its car park and the ancient woodland, is therefore important in this context. The woodland strip potentially provides a strong boundary from countryside to its west, (such as is called for in the development guidelines).
- 3.13 The land is also likely to be considered part of the limited areas of lower sensitivity below the escarpment that ‘may accommodate infill development’ as set out in the Key Land Use Impact Study.

Flooding and water management infrastructure

- 3.14 The Northumberland Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2015) indicates that there is no risk of fluvial water flooding of the site, and similarly no areas at particular risk of surface water flooding.
- 3.15 Consultation with NWL indicates that a sewer crosses the site and that they would require it to be diverted or placed within a suitable easement. There is a 225mm diameter sewer which could be utilised as a foul outlet for the site, were it to be developed. However, this should be seen in the wider context of capacity constraints associated at Howdon WwTW which Prudhoe relies on. There is a history of sewer flooding in both Prudhoe and Mickley. While the overall

² Agricultural Land classification of England and Wales, MAFF, 1988

Howdon issue is being tackled strategically, there are likely to be upgrades to the sewer system needed in and around the town and there is a clear need for strong SuDS ('blue infrastructure') approach to any development on the site.

- 3.16 The Northumberland Water Cycle Study (2015) indicates that the site is within the Kielder Water Resource Area and so there is no issue in terms of water supply.

Archaeology and historic environment

- 3.17 There are no Listed Buildings within or immediately adjoining the site. It may be that parts of the site, especially the trees surrounding it, would be visible from the parapets of Prudhoe Castle. This will need to be checked in terms of criteria applying to the settings of Listed Buildings. However it is considered that, given the topography, the distance and other intervening development, that, so long as building heights are not too great and materials, colours not too striking, that any impact on the setting would be marginal.
- 3.18 As far as archaeology is concerned, there will require to be pre-determination evaluation (NPPF para 128) (e.g. assessment, geophysical survey and trial trenching) as there is the potential for unrecorded prehistoric or Iron Age/Roman period activity and garden archaeology. Any mitigation work will depend on the results of such an evaluation.

Rights of way

- 3.19 While no PROWs cross the site, Restricted By-way Route 538/051 passes along the northern side of the site. In addition, footpath 538/030 passes through the ancient woodland area to the west of the site. It would appear that the site could be developed without impacting on public rights of way.

Conclusion

- 3.20 There are no completely show stopping barriers to the site's development in terms of local characteristics and constraints. Clearly a number of factors would require investigation, including the former coal-mining issues and the setting of Prudhoe Castle. The topography may also add something to the complexities of developing the land. Protecting the adjacent woodland will reduce the developable area slightly.

ELR site assessment score	
Criteria 3: Site characteristics and development constraints	4

Criteria 4: Proximity to urban areas, and access to labour and services

Criteria 5: Sustainability and planning factors

- 3.21 Past Sustainability Appraisal work (2015) has shown that for the majority of criteria assessed for the site, there was either no impact and or a positive impact. The agricultural value of the site was identified as a potential constraint, and as the site is 100% greenfield this was considered a more serious constraint.

- 3.22 In terms of accessibility, the relatively long distance to the rail station in Low Prudhoe was seen as something of an issue in sustainability terms.
- 3.23 It is apparent that the site is isolated from town centre type services which employees would be likely to use.
- 3.24 As indicated, the site is relatively unconstrained by ecological, heritage, and the effects of flooding.
- 3.25 The site falls within the existing Green Belt. The inset boundary of Prudhoe itself includes the former Hammerite premises and car park to the north and the housing just across the A695 to the south-east. Thus the site forms a tongue of Green Belt extending into the inset area from the south-west.
- 3.26 The Northumberland Green Belt Assessment (2015) reviewed the contribution of land parcels around settlements to establish where it would be most appropriate to extend settlements into the current Green Belt, should this be necessary and justified in terms of exceptional circumstances.
- 3.27 The site is in PE16A which makes a high contribution to all of the purposes of the Green Belt. While the assessment notes a risk of ribbon development along the A695 and 'non-compact' development down the slope towards Cherryburn, as well as increased risk of merger between Prudhoe, Mickley Square and Stocksfield, this particular site is surrounded by inset land and is not considered to contribute as highly as other parts of the site.
- 3.28 The assessment also notes the very limited opportunities to establish durable boundaries to prevent encroachment into the countryside. Clearly, the woodland to the west of the site, (part of which is ancient semi-natural), would be a way of creating a strong boundary. Indeed it would create a straighter edge to the settlement.
- 3.29 It is therefore apparent that the development of this site, while removing a modest area of a high contributing segment of Green Belt, would offer opportunities to create a firm edge to the settlement, while maintaining the overall integrity of this particular land parcel area.

Criteria 6: Compatibility of adjoining land uses

- 3.30 The site abuts other (existing) employment use (assuming the reoccupation of the former factory) and would be compatible in that respect. Some existing houses on the far side of the former Hammerite car park are close by, as are houses across the A695, although the modest buffers that already exist could be enhanced to prevent noise, fumes etc. from reducing residential amenity. Any future use of the former Hammerite car park would have to be considered against the future use of the subject site. Operational aspects of the farm unit and any loss of amenity for those enjoying the adjacent public rights of way would also be a consideration.

Conclusion

- 3.31 Although a modest area of Green Belt in a high-contributing land parcel area would be deleted, there is the opportunity to create a strong edge to the settlement, while maintaining

the overall integrity of the Green Belt. The location is reasonably accessible by public transport notwithstanding its relative distance from a number of services and location across the bypass. Development here would create an employment area on a contained site adjoining a longstanding employment site and relatively close to the main strip of employment uses serving the town. Some care would be needed in relation to existing and potential future housing on adjacent and nearby sites.

ELR site assessment score	
Criteria 4: Proximity to urban areas and access to services and labour	3
Criteria 5: Sustainability and planning factors	4
Criteria 6: Compatibility of adjoining uses	3

Criteria 7: Market Attractiveness

Ownership and availability

- 3.32 The site was not proposed for employment use during in the ELR call for sites (2010) or subsequent calls for sites (2013). It is in private farm-related ownership. It is on the periphery of the farm concerned and the farmer has indicated his willingness to see the land go into a different use. Nevertheless operational aspects of the farm could still be an issue in relation to how any future development takes place.

Development costs

- 3.33 As a greenfield site, the site is currently un-serviced in terms of utilities and internal roads and this would add to the site preparation cost, (notwithstanding that the water authority have noted the presence of a sewer that could be accessed directly). Access from the A695 may well bring an additional cost, as the junction onto the A695 may need some upgrading.
- 3.34 The history of mineral workings and the slope of the site, could also add something to basic development costs.

Market demand

- 3.35 Prudhoe is not in the most marketable part of Northumberland in terms of potential investors in employment use, being located on the other side of the River Tyne from the main east-west Trunk Road (the A69) but has strong market demand for industrial uses. Having said this, the site has some advantages in a more local marketability context, reflecting its position on the main A695 that links Prudhoe and surrounding places with Hexham and Tyneside and Prudhoe's rail access.
- 3.36 While within reach of Prudhoe railway station, it is still some distance away for those on foot and the site is also away from other services that are found typically in larger industrial areas and town centres.

Conclusion

- 3.37 The site may be relatively slow in attracting users due to its non-central location away from the trunk road system and the remainder of the town's main industrial estate. On the other hand, its self-containment and stand-alone nature could also be seen as potentially attractive. Some topographic and site specific issues (e.g. mitigating effects on adjacent ancient woodland) could also add modestly to the cost and ease of development.

ELR site assessment score	
Criteria 7: Market attractiveness	4

Prudhoe site 2 – Land at Eltringham

Total Score

Prudhoe Site 2	
Total site score	24

4. Prudhoe Site 3 – Land west of Low Prudhoe

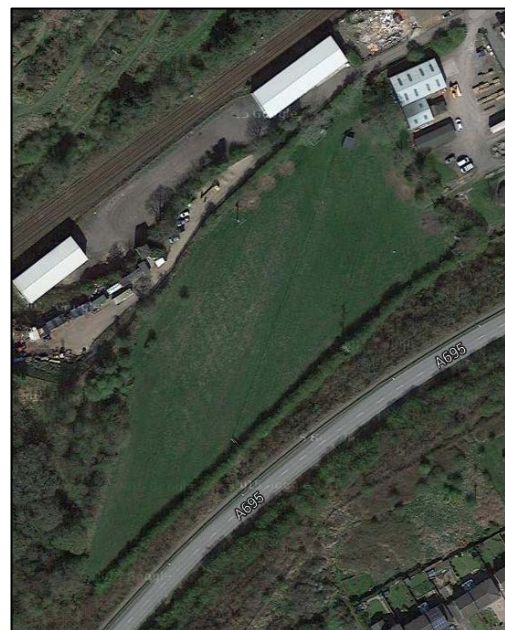
Site Area (Ha) - 0.408

Easting - 408,581.577

Northing - 563,253.008

Use-class	Site coverage (%)	Floorspace (sqm)	Employees
B1c	70	1,142.4	24
B2	20	326.4	9
B8	10	163.2	2

- 4.1 This greenfield site is situated north of the A695 Prudhoe Bypass west of its junction with Station Road. A short distance to the north is the Newcastle to Carlisle Railway Line with an intervening industrial strip with associated buildings. There is also an industrial estate to the east. Across the bypass to the north is an open, partly wooded slope with house beyond stretching up the hill



Criteria 1: Strategic Road Access

Criteria 2: Local Road Access and Impact

- 4.2 The main access to the strategic road network is over 5km from the site where the A695 meets the A69. Access to any future employment area on this field would have to be taken from the road which accesses an assortment of industrial and mixed-use premises and yards to the north and east of the site. This narrow road, which emerges onto Station Road between the level crossing and the Adam and Eve pub, is unadopted, meaning that third party rights of access would have to be secured.
- 4.3 The Transport Assessment (2015) looked at four key junctions in the town, the closest of which was the roundabout between the A695 Prudhoe Bypass and Station Road (leading towards the town centre). The study did not predict any significant impacts cumulatively. So it would appear that, were it possible to overcome issues of accessing the site via the above-mentioned unadopted road, then impacts in terms of that additional volume of traffic on key junctions in the town etc. would not be significant.

Conclusion

- 4.4 The site presents some minor issues regarding the access point but if these can be overcome, the impact of the site's development in terms of congestion on the local road network would be unlikely to be unacceptable.

ELR site assessment score	
Criteria 1: Strategic road access	2
Criteria 2: Local road access and impact	3

Criteria 3: Site Characteristics and Development Constraints

Ground conditions

- 4.5 No part of the site is flat. Indeed there is a considerable slope throughout the site from south to north with the average slope being perhaps around 1 in 6.
- 4.6 Clearly, given the topography, site would be generally uncondusive with developing employment premises and could not viably be facilitated by site levelling
- 4.7 The Coal Authority identifies it as a high risk development area and there are former mine entrances in the immediate area. The site is within the proposed mineral safeguarding area for coal, so it would need to be confirmed whether development of the site would result in material sterilisation.
- 4.8 The site is currently used for pasture farming and is classified as grade 3, which indicates "land with moderate limitations which affect the choice of crops, timing and type of cultivation, harvesting or the level of yield"³. Subsequent assessment has not been undertaken to determine if the site falls within the A or B subcategory of grade 3. As such development of

³ Agricultural Land classification of England and Wales, MAFF, 1988

the site would not result in the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land as per annex 2 of the NPPF.

Biodiversity

- 4.9 While the woodland adjoining the western boundary of the site is not recorded as semi-ancient, it may be that a buffer between it and future development will be required
- 4.10 In terms of protected species, range of protected species has been recorded locally. An SSSI lies approximately 240 m NE. The site may be in the SSSI IRZ, meaning that consultation with Natural England may be required. Some other local wildlife interest lies within 2 kilometres.
- 4.11 A small watercourse (The Otter Burn) is about 45m west of the site and the river Tyne, though separated by the railway embankment, is some 350m to the north.

Landscape and Green Infrastructure

- 4.12 The site falls within the Glacial Trough Valley Floor landscape character type. Development guidelines discourage new built development from extending onto the valley floor and encourage the creation of strong settlement boundaries. The approach routes that run through the area, (e.g. A695) should be given particular consideration, as should the settings of towns and settlement distinctiveness. The contained nature of this field and its combinations of urban and woodland surroundings should mean that development here would not have a significant negative effect in relation to these development guidelines.
- 4.13 The land is also likely to be considered part of the limited areas of lower sensitivity below the escarpment that 'may accommodate infill development' as set out in the Key Land Use Impact Study.

Flooding and water management infrastructure

- 4.14 The Northumberland Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2015) indicates that there is no risk of fluvial water flooding of the site, and similarly only a very low risk of surface water flooding on a small part of the site.
- 4.15 Consultation with NWL indicates that a water main crosses the site and they would require it to be diverted or placed within a suitable easement. NWL also indicate that any foul flows could drain towards the 300mm combined sewer within station road. However, this should be seen in the wider context of capacity constraints associated at Howdon WWTW which Prudhoe relies on. Prudhoe has a history of sewer flooding. While the overall Howdon issue is being tackled strategically, there are likely to be upgrades to the sewer system needed in and around the town and there is a clear need for strong SuDS ('blue infrastructure') approach to any development – particularly relevant to steeply sloping sites such as this.

Archaeology and historic environment

- 4.16 There are no Listed Buildings within or immediately adjoining the site. It is likely that parts of the site would be visible from the parapets of Prudhoe Castle and this may also be the case from parts of the Ovingham Conservation Area (across the river). This will need to be checked

in terms of criteria applying to the settings of Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas. The local topography should dictate that any impact on the setting would be marginal, so long as building heights are not too great and materials, colours not too striking.

- 4.17 As far as archaeology is concerned, there will require to be pre-determination evaluation (NPPF para 128) (e.g. assessment, geophysical survey and trial trenching) as there is the potential for unrecorded prehistoric or Iron Age/Roman period activity and garden archaeology. Any mitigation work will depend on the results of such an evaluation.

Rights of way

- 4.18 Footpath 538/033 cuts the site in half, running diagonally from NE to SW. Bridleway Route 538/032 passes along the northern side of the site. The existence of Public Footpath No 33 (Prudhoe Town) is not considered to be an obstacle to developing the land for employment development, with diversion a possibility, however diversion matters could delay the site coming forward.

Conclusion

- 4.19 There are a number of characteristics and constraints which could restrict the scope of development on the site. Primary among these are its steeply sloping topography which it is considered would prevent employment development. The Right of Way, while not preventing development, could delay matters through any diversion procedures. Coal related considerations could become a factor. Built and natural heritage factors could require some mitigation but there is not considered to be a major likely impact on these assets.

ELR site assessment score	
Criteria 3: Site characteristics and development constraints	1

Criteria 4: Proximity to urban areas, and access to labour and services

Criteria 5: Sustainability and planning factors

- 4.20 Past Sustainability Appraisal work (2015) has shown that for the majority of criteria assessed, the site demonstrated no impact or a positive impact. The agricultural value of the site was identified as a potential constraint, and as the site is 100% greenfield this was considered a more serious constraint.
- 4.21 The site has clear advantages over some other sites in terms of accessibility, being close to the station and adjoining public transport interchange, although the site is somewhat isolated from the town centre itself.
- 4.22 As indicated, the site is relatively unconstrained by ecological, heritage, and the effects of flooding.
- 4.23 The site falls within inset boundary of Prudhoe and so there are no Green Belt related issues to address.

Criteria 6: Compatibility of adjoining land uses

- 4.24 The site adjoins existing industry and warehousing. There is a buffer of other uses between it and the railway. The site is well separated from the houses to the south – by the A695 and some open land. While farmed, the site is somewhat separate from the larger expanse of farmland to the west. Neighbouring woodland is not ancient but a buffer may nevertheless be necessary

Conclusion

- 4.25 There are few issues of sustainability associated with the site's development. Probably the principal issues would relate to the protection of local wildlife that may reside in the neighbouring woods and the distance from the town centre. However there are many factors that would be regarded as positive in sustainable planning terms – not least the proximity of the rail interchange.

ELR site assessment score	
Criteria 4: Proximity to urban areas and access to services and labour	4
Criteria 5: Sustainability and planning factors	4
Criteria 6: Compatibility of adjoining uses	3

Criteria 7: Market Attractiveness, Deliverability and viability

Ownership and availability

- 4.26 The site has not been proposed for employment use in the ELR call for sites (2010) or the SHLAA call for sites (2013). The site is under single private ownership but it is not clear if it is available for employment development.

Development costs

- 4.27 As a greenfield site, it is currently un-serviced in terms of utilities and internal roads which would add to the site preparation cost, (notwithstanding that the water authority have noted the presence of a sewer that could be accessed directly). Access has been noted above as potentially available but with the need for negotiation – something which could add to costs and delay. The topography would reduce options on the arrangement and massing of future development and may preclude the lowest cost forms of industrial or office buildings.

Market demand

- 4.28 Prudhoe is not in the most marketable part of Northumberland in terms of potential investors in employment use, being located on the other side of the River Tyne from the main east-west Trunk Road (the A69) but has strong market demand for industrial uses. Having said this, the site has some advantages in a more local marketability context, reflecting its position on the main A695 that links Prudhoe and surrounding places with Hexham and Tyneside and Prudhoe's rail access. On the other hand, the access into the site could not be direct from the

A695 and would pass a number of older buildings meaning that it would not be directly accessible or necessarily visible from the main road.

- 4.29 The proximity to the bulk of the local employment uses at Low Prudhoe could also be a selling point, although the distance from the town centre services could detract from its attractiveness.

Conclusion

- 4.30 The site is well located in terms of the rail interchange and other industry, although distant from the town centre. In a local context this may attract users, although the slight 'backland' nature of the access to it could be a constraint in marketing terms. However the costs associated with overcoming the site topography would significantly reduce market demand.

ELR site assessment score	
Criteria 5:Market attractiveness	2

Prudhoe Site 3 – Land west of Low Prudhoe

Total Score

Prudhoe Site 3	
Total site score	19

5. Prudhoe Site 4 – Land at Eastwoods Farm

Site Area (Ha) - 3.858

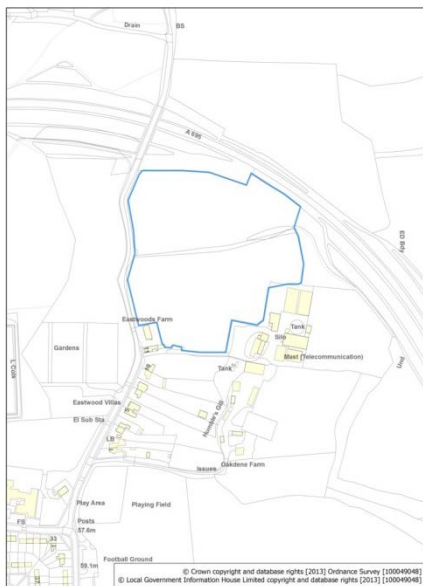
Easting - 411,030.692

Northing - 563,722.923

Indicative development mix (Assuming build out of 40% of the site)

Use-class	Site coverage (%)	Floorspace (sqm)	Employees
B1c	60	9,259.2	197
B2	30	4,629.6	129
B8	10	1,543.2	22

- 5.1 This greenfield site is situated south of the A695 Prudhoe Bypass towards its eastern end. The northern half of the site slopes up from the bypass, while the southern part is a flatter farmer's field and immediately adjoins farm buildings to the south-east of the site. A minor road runs along the site's western boundary, crossing the A695 northwards via a bridge (but not connecting onto it). To the south of the site, this road is lined by houses, while on the other side are allotments and grazing land.



Criteria 1: Strategic Road Access

Criteria 2: Local Road Access and Impact

- 5.2 The main access to the strategic road network is over 5km from the site where the A695 meets the A69. While the site abuts the A695, accessing it directly from this road would not be possible due to the gradients, the curved, fast nature of this stretch of road and the great expense of doing so.
- 5.3 The County Highways suggest that a priority junction onto the road to the west of the site would be the most applicable solution, although there is a note of caution over the gradient and curvature of this road, suggesting that 'extensive works may be required' and that the new junction would have to be 'approximately located in the centre of the western boundary'. Pedestrian, Cycle connections to the network would also be required where appropriate.
- 5.4 One issue is that traffic coming from industrial premises here could be heavy in nature and would need to pass numerous residential properties along Eastwoods Road before reaching the main B6395 road through Prudhoe and, from there, the A695. This places a major question mark over the suitability of access to any future employment allocation here.
- 5.5 The Transport Assessment (2015) looked at four key junctions in the town, the closest of which were the eastern junction between the B6395 road through Prudhoe and the A695, (actually in Gateshead Council's area) and the roundabout between the A695 Prudhoe Bypass and Station Road (leading towards the town centre).
- 5.6 The study did not predict any significant impacts cumulatively, except in relation to the B6395 / A695 junction, where improvements will be needed in the medium to long term as development in the town proceeds. It can be assumed that some of the traffic leaving and entering premises on the site will leave and enter Prudhoe via this B6395 / A695 junction; therefore the site's development could add to the medium to long term traffic impacts on this junction, although the extent of this would need to be tested through modelling.

Conclusion

- 5.7 The site presents some minor significant issues regarding access. While the long term cumulative impact on the aforementioned B6395 / A695 junction will not necessarily be significant, local impacts on residential roads may not be acceptable and providing a safe access into the site from the existing minor road may also prove problematic and expensive.

ELR site assessment score	
Criteria 1: Strategic road access	1
Criteria 2: Local road access and impact	2

Criteria 3: Site Characteristics and Development Constraints

Ground conditions

- 5.8 The upper (southern) part of the site slopes quite gently from south to north. However, the northern field drops steeply towards the A695 with the slope of this second field being perhaps around 1 in 6.
- 5.9 Clearly, given the topography, the northern part of the site would be generally unconducive with developing large footprint buildings.
- 5.10 Perhaps most importantly, in terms of ground conditions, the whole of the northern part of the site and much of its eastern edge is a historic landfill site, which may add to the expense of preparing the land for development.
- 5.11 The Coal Authority identifies a high risk development area close to the southern edge of the site. The site is within the proposed mineral safeguarding area for coal, so it would need to be confirmed whether development of the site would result in material sterilisation.
- 5.12 The site is currently used for arable farming and grazing is classified as grade 3, which indicates “land with moderate limitations which affect the choice of crops, timing and type of cultivation, harvesting or the level of yield”⁴. Subsequent assessment has not been undertaken to determine if the site falls within the A or B subcategory of grade 3. As such development of the site would not result in the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land as per annex 2 of the NPPF.

Biodiversity

- 5.13 Desk based assessment indicates that a range of protected species have been recorded locally. With SSSIs approximately 1.8km NE & 2km W of the site, it may be in the SSSI IRZ, meaning that consultation with Natural England may be required. Some other local wildlife interest lies within 2 kilometres.
- 5.14 A small watercourse runs south to north along the north-eastern edge of the site. There are nearby ponds a few hundred metres NW of the site and the Tyne is a similar distance to the north.

Landscape and Green Infrastructure

- 5.15 The site falls within the Glacial Trough Valley Floor landscape character type. Development guidelines discourage new built development from extending onto the valley floor and encourage the creation of strong settlement boundaries. The approach routes that run through the area, (e.g. A695) should be given particular consideration, as should the settings of towns and settlement distinctiveness. Development of the site would be a clear extension of Prudhoe and would, in part, be visible from the A695 changing the current rural perceptions. Having said this, development would be contained within the line of the bypass –

⁴ Agricultural Land classification of England and Wales, MAFF, 1988

i.e. arguably better related to the settlement than development on its other side would be. It is concluded that there could be some negative effects vis-à-vis these development guidelines.

- 5.16 The Key Land Use Impact Study also notes the semi-rural nature of this part of the eastern edge of the town and recommends that it is sought to 'retain open space functions of the eastern settlement boundary'.

Flooding and water management infrastructure

- 5.17 The Northumberland Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2015) indicates that there is no risk of fluvial water flooding of the site, and similarly only a very low risk of surface water flooding on a small part of the site close to the water course along the eastern side.
- 5.18 A Rising Main runs along the boundary of the Site and NWL may require it to be diverted or placed within a suitable easement. Importantly, NWL state that consideration should be given to a drainage strategy for this site and any adjacent developments to enable all foul flows to be directed towards a particular existing facility, which is some way removed from the site. Surface flows should also be seen in the wider context of capacity constraints associated at Howdon WwTW which Prudhoe relies on. Prudhoe has a history of sewer flooding. While the overall Howdon issue is being tackled strategically, there are likely to be upgrades to the sewer system needed in and around the town and there is a clear need for strong SuDS ('blue infrastructure') approach to any development – particularly relevant to steeply sloping sites such as this.

Archaeology and historic environment

- 5.19 There are no Listed Buildings or structures within the site or nearby.
- 5.20 As far as archaeology is concerned, there will require to be pre-determination evaluation (NPPF para 128) (e.g. assessment, geophysical survey and trial trenching) as there is the potential for unrecorded prehistoric or Iron Age/Roman period activity and garden archaeology. Any mitigation work will depend on the results of such an evaluation.

Rights of way

- 5.21 The nearest public rights of way recorded on the definitive map run west from the north-south road that runs along the west side of the site. As such, there should be no particular issues in respect of PROWs.

Conclusion

- 5.22 While many of the possible showstoppers in terms of characteristics and constraints are absent, there are nevertheless some key constraining factors. The development of the site will take the development of the town into an open strip which provides a characteristic landscape feature along the western side of the settlement and creates a semi-rural feel along the eastern part of the A695 Prudhoe Bypass. Quite a number of protected species frequent this area of countryside. The fact that much of the site overlaps a historic landfill area will also be significant.

ELR site assessment score	
Criteria 3: Site characteristics and development constraints	2

Criteria 4: Proximity to urban areas, and access to labour and services

Criteria 5: Sustainability and planning factors

- 5.23 Past Sustainability Appraisal work (2015) has shown that for the majority of criteria assessed, the site demonstrated no impact or a positive impact. The agricultural value of the site was identified as a potential constraint, and as the site is 100% greenfield this was considered a more serious constraint.
- 5.24 In terms of accessibility, the clear and major issues of accessing the site from the road system (as well as for people on bicycles and on foot from nearby residential areas) are picked up as an important sustainability issue.
- 5.25 It appears that the site is isolated from town centre type services which employees would be likely to use.
- 5.26 As indicated, the site is relatively unconstrained by some factors such as, heritage, and the effects of flooding.
- 5.27 The site falls within the existing Green Belt, the inset boundary running along the C-road that forms the site's western boundary.
- 5.28 The Northumberland Green Belt Assessment (2015) reviewed the contribution of land parcels around settlements to establish where it would be most appropriate to extend settlements into the current Green Belt, should this be necessary and justified in terms of exceptional circumstances.
- 5.29 The site is in PE10 ('Cattyside Wood') and is assessed as making a high contribution to all of the relevant purposes of the Green Belt. The assessment notes that, as well as a risk of leap-frog development from Gateshead, there is a risk of ribbon development along Eastwoods Road on the east edge of the built up area. It goes on to state that development in this LPA would increase the risk of merger between Prudhoe and Crawcrook, (Gateshead) just over 2km to the east. . In terms of the impact on the countryside, it notes that the nature of this section of countryside, (which includes a golf course further north) offers limited opportunities for strong, durable boundaries to prevent encroachment.
- 5.30 It is therefore strongly apparent that the development of this site, especially involving large scale buildings would significantly compromise the purposes of having Green Belt in this location.

Criteria 6: Compatibility of adjoining land uses

- 5.31 The site is removed from existing industrial areas of Prudhoe and, while being of a rural nature, it does lie alongside some housing ribbon development (to its north) and, as far as

traffic emanating from the site is concerned, this would need to go via a residential road – Eastwoods Road.

- 5.32 It is uncertain as to how the use would relate to existing agricultural use. As the Eastwoods Farm buildings lie immediately alongside, there may be issues in relation to operational aspects of the agricultural unit.

Conclusion

- 5.33 The Green Belt status of the land and its high contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt provide a clear reason for preventing large scale development in this location. The relative isolation of the site, albeit within the town, is also a disadvantage, as are the possible effects on residential amenity and operational aspects of farming.

ELR site assessment score	
Criteria 4: Proximity to urban areas and access to services and labour	3
Criteria 5: Sustainability and planning factors	2
Criteria 6: Compatibility of adjoining uses	2

Criteria 7: Market Attractiveness

Ownership and availability

- 5.34 The site has not been proposed for employment use in the ELR call for sites (2010). Part of the land was suggested as a SHLAA site in an earlier iteration of the SHLAA. The site has been brought forward for consideration due to its location adjoining the built-up area of the town. It belongs to Eastwoods Farm which straddles the A695.

Development costs

- 5.35 As a greenfield site, it is currently un-serviced in terms of utilities and internal roads which would add to the site preparation cost. Indeed the Water Authority had identified the need for a strategy for foul drainage for development in this general vicinity. While the site can be accessed from the road system, it would appear that there could be some off-site costs including improvements along Eastwoods Road.
- 5.36 The steep topography on the northern part of the land would reduce options on the arrangement and massing of future development in this area and preclude the lowest cost forms of industrial or office buildings.

Market demand

- 5.37 Prudhoe is not in the most marketable part of Northumberland in terms of potential investors in employment use, being located on the other side of the River Tyne from the main east-west Trunk Road (the A69) but has strong market demand for industrial uses. In addition, while the site may be visible from the main A695, it would not be accessed from that main road, instead

involving a journey through residential streets and a narrow lane. The distance from the town centre services could further detract from its attractiveness.

Conclusion

- 5.38 While linked to the town's built-up area, the local labour market and some services, this site is removed from the main road system and the main services that Prudhoe has to offer. Part of the site is relatively level; however other parts are not and there may be considerable infrastructure costs on and offsite.

ELR site assessment score	
Criteria 7: Market attractiveness	1

Prudhoe Site 4 – Land at Eastwoods Farm

Total Score

Prudhoe Site 4	
Total site score	13

6. Prudhoe Site 5 – Land south of Hagg Bank

Site Area (Ha) - 5.234

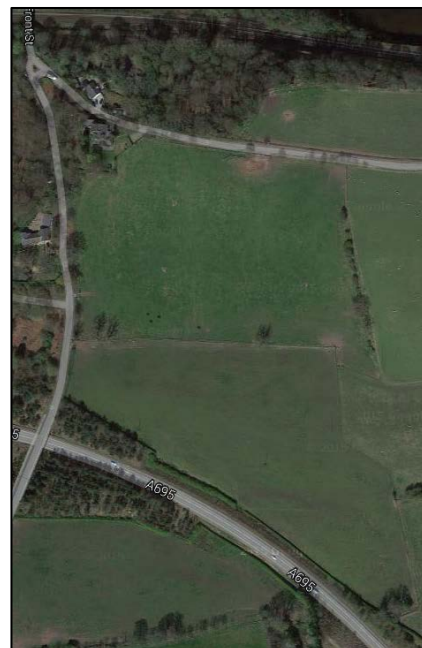
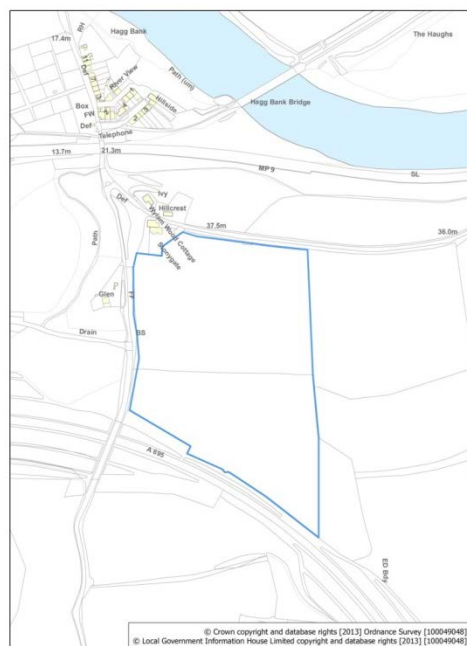
Easting - 411,099.006

Northing - 563,973.978

Indicative development mix (Assuming build out of 40% of the site)

Use-class	Site coverage (%)	Floorspace (sqm)	Employees
B1c	60	12,561.6	267
B2	30	6,280.8	174
B8	10	2,093.6	30

- 6.1 This undulating greenfield site is situated north of the A695 immediately to the east of the lane that leads to Hagg Bank. Along the northern side of the site the lane turns towards Wylam. The Newcastle to Carlisle Railway line lies beyond this lane, and beyond the railway is the River Tyne. To the east of the site, more open fields stretch towards the outskirts of Wylam.



Criteria 1: Strategic Road Access

Criteria 2: Local Road Access and Impact

- 6.2 The main access to the strategic road network is over 5km from the site where the A695 meets the A69. While the site abuts the A695, accessing it directly from this road would not be possible due to the gradients, the curved, fast nature of this stretch of road and the great expense of doing so.
- 6.3 The County Highways suggest that there could be no suitable access onto the narrow lane that edges the site to its west or north.
- 6.4 Even if this could be achieved, traffic coming from industrial premises here could be heavy in nature and would need to pass numerous residential properties along the lane to the south and Eastwoods Road before reaching the main B6395 road through Prudhoe and, from there, the A695. This places a major question mark over the suitability of access to any future employment allocation here.
- 6.4 The Transport Assessment (2015) looked at four key junctions in the town, the closest of which were the eastern junction between the B6395 road through Prudhoe and the A695, (actually in Gateshead Council's area) and the roundabout between the A695 Prudhoe Bypass and Station Road (leading towards the town centre).
- 6.5 The study did not predict any significant impacts cumulatively, except in relation to the B6395 / A695 junction, where improvements will be needed in the medium to long term as development in the town proceeds. It can be assumed that some of the traffic leaving and entering premises on the site will leave and enter Prudhoe via this B6395 / A695 junction; therefore the site's development could add to the medium to long term traffic impacts on this junction, although the extent of this would need to be tested through modelling.

Conclusion

- 6.6 The site presents some significant issues regarding access. While the long term cumulative impact on the aforementioned B6395 / A695 junction will not necessarily be significant, local impacts on residential roads may not be acceptable and providing a safe access into the site from the existing minor road may not be possible.

ELR site assessment score	
Criteria 1: Strategic road access	1
Criteria 2: Local road access and impact	1

Criteria 3: Site Characteristics and Development Constraints

Ground conditions

- 6.7 This is an undulating site with ridge areas at the north-east and south-east of the site, and the lowest point around half way along the western boundary.

- 6.8 Given the topography, the site would be generally unsuited to the development of large footprint buildings.
- 6.9 In terms of ground conditions, the whole of the southern part of the site is a historic landfill site, which may add to the expense of preparing the land for development.
- 6.10 The Coal Authority identifies a high risk development area stretching across the northern part of the site, with former shallow coal working and nearby former mine entrances. The site is within the proposed mineral safeguarding area for coal, so it would need to be confirmed whether development of the site would result in material sterilisation.
- 6.11 The site, currently used for pasture / grazing, is classified as grade 3, which indicates “land with moderate limitations which affect the choice of crops, timing and type of cultivation, harvesting or the level of yield”⁵. Subsequent assessment has not been undertaken to determine if the site falls within the A or B subcategory of grade 3. As such development of the site would not result in the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land as per annex 2 of the NPPF.

Biodiversity

- 6.12 Desk based assessment indicates that a range of protected species have been recorded locally. With SSSIs approximately 1.5km NE & 2km W of the site, it may be in the SSSI IRZ, meaning that consultation with Natural England may be required. Some other local wildlife interest lies within 2 kilometres.
- 6.13 In relation to the habitats of some of the protected species, there are ponds less than 300 metres NW with other ponds only slightly further away to the east; the Tyne is only 130m to the north.

Landscape and Green Infrastructure

- 6.14 The site falls within the Glacial Trough Valley Floor landscape character type. Development guidelines discourage new built development from extending onto the valley floor and encourage the creation of strong settlement boundaries. The approach routes that run through the area, (e.g. A695) should be given particular consideration, as should the settings of towns and settlement distinctiveness. Development of the site would be a clear extension of Prudhoe beyond and possibly visible from the A695 and would significantly alter the character which is currently distinctly rural. It is concluded that there would be notable negative effects vis-à-vis these development guidelines.
- 6.15 The Key Land Use Impact Study also notes the semi-rural nature of this part of the eastern edge of the town and recommends that it is sought to ‘retain open space functions of the eastern settlement boundary’.

⁵ Agricultural Land classification of England and Wales, MAFF, 1988

Flooding and water management infrastructure

- 6.16 The Northumberland Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2015) indicates that there is no risk of fluvial water flooding of the site, and similarly only a low risk of surface water flooding on a small part of the site at its western low point and also close to the A695 at the southern end.
- 6.17 A rising main crosses the site and NWL would require it to be diverted or placed within a suitable easement. Importantly, NWL state that consideration should be given to a drainage strategy for this site and any adjacent developments to enable all foul flows to be directed towards a particular existing facility, which is some way removed from the site. Surface flows should also be seen in the wider context of capacity constraints associated at Howdon WwTW which Prudhoe relies on. Prudhoe has a history of sewer flooding. While the overall Howdon issue is being tackled strategically, there are likely to be upgrades to the sewer system needed in and around the town and there is a clear need for strong SuDS ('blue infrastructure') approach to any development – particularly relevant to steeply sloping sites such as this.

Archaeology and historic environment

- 6.18 There are no Listed Buildings or structures within the site or nearby. However Prudhoe Castle is clearly visible from the north-eastern part of the site and so building here would fall within its setting – something that could limit the scope for development
- 6.19 As far as archaeology is concerned, there will require to be pre-determination evaluation (NPPF para 128) (e.g. assessment, geophysical survey and trial trenching) as there is the potential for unrecorded prehistoric or Iron Age/Roman period activity and garden archaeology. Any mitigation work will depend on the results of such an evaluation.

Rights of way

- 6.20 Footpath 551/014 runs through the northern part of the site diagonally from NE to SW. In addition, Footpath 551/013 follows the lane that coincides with the northern boundary of the site. The former footpath could add an extra constraint to the ease of development of the site – e.g. if diversion procedures are commenced.

Conclusion

- 6.21 This site has several key constraining factors. The development of the site will take the development of the town into an open strip which provides a characteristic landscape feature along the western side of the settlement and creates a semi-rural feel along the eastern part of the A695 Prudhoe Bypass. Not only this but it would take Prudhoe across its bypass and bring an urban character to an area with a rural, rolling countryside character. Part of the site would be visible from Prudhoe castle and prominent commercial buildings could adversely affect its setting. Quite a number of protected species frequent this area of countryside. The fact that much of the site overlaps a historic landfill area will also be significant.

ELR site assessment score	
Criteria 3: Site characteristics and development constraints	1

Criteria 4: Proximity to urban areas, and access to labour and services

Criteria 5: Sustainability and planning factors

- 6.22 Past Sustainability Appraisal work (2015) has shown that for the majority of criteria assessed, the site demonstrated no impact or a positive impact. The agricultural value of the site was identified as a potential constraint, and as the site is 100% greenfield this was considered a more serious constraint.
- 6.23 In terms of accessibility, the clear and major issues of accessing the site from the road system (as well as for people on bicycles and on foot from nearby residential areas) are picked up as an important sustainability issue.
- 6.24 It is apparent that the site is isolated from town centre type services which employees would be likely to use.
- 6.25 Heritage could also be an issue in terms of the site's prominence in views from Prudhoe Castle.
- 6.26 As indicated, the site is relatively unconstrained by some factors such as the effects of flooding.
- 6.27 The site falls within the existing Green Belt, the inset boundary running along the C-road that forms the site's western boundary.
- 6.28 The Northumberland Green Belt Assessment (2015) reviewed the contribution of land parcels around settlements to establish where it would be most appropriate to extend settlements into the current Green Belt, should this be necessary and justified in terms of exceptional circumstances.
- 6.29 The site is in PE09 ('Hagg Bank Bridge') and is assessed as making a high contribution to all of the relevant purposes of the Green Belt. The assessment notes that, as well as a risk of leap-frog development from Gateshead, there is a risk of ribbon development along Eastwoods Road on the east edge of the built up area. It goes on to state that development in this LPA would increase the risk of merger between Prudhoe, South Wylam and Crawcrook, (Gateshead). In terms of the impact on the countryside, it notes that the nature of this section of countryside, offers limited opportunities for strong, durable boundaries to prevent encroachment.
- 6.30 It is therefore strongly apparent that the development of this site, especially involving large scale buildings would significantly compromise the purposes of having Green Belt in this location.

Criteria 6: Compatibility of adjoining land uses

- 6.31 The site is removed from existing industrial areas of Prudhoe and is of a rural nature. While it is not adjacent to housing areas, as far as traffic emanating from the site is concerned, this would need to go via a residential road – Eastwoods Road.
- 6.32 It is uncertain as to how the use would relate to existing agricultural use, suffice it to say that there may be issues in relation to operational aspects of the agricultural unit(s) affected. This is Eastwoods Farm, which is centred on the opposite side of the A695. Disturbance to wildlife using local woodlands, ponds and meadows in this relatively tranquil area could also be a factor.

Conclusion

- 6.33 The Green Belt status of the land and its high contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt provide a clear reason for preventing large scale development in this location. The isolation of the site, is also a clear disadvantage, as are the possible effects on rural aspects including agriculture and habitats.

ELR site assessment score	
Criteria 4: Proximity to urban areas and access to services and labour	2
Criteria 5: Sustainability and planning factors	2
Criteria 6: Compatibility of adjoining uses	2

Criteria 7: Market Attractiveness

Ownership and availability

- 6.34 The site has not been proposed for employment use in the ELR call for sites (2010). Rather, the site has been brought forward for consideration due to its location close to the built-up area of the town. It belongs to Eastwoods Farm which straddles the A695.

Development costs

- 6.35 As a greenfield site, it is currently un-serviced in terms of utilities and internal roads which would add to the site preparation cost. Indeed the Water Authority had identified the need for a strategy for foul drainage for development in this general vicinity. The current way of accessing the site from the road system is considered inadequate and there would be considerable off-site costs including improvements to the lane at the western edge of the site and along Eastwoods Road.
- 6.36 The undulating topography would severely reduce options on the arrangement and massing of future development in this area and preclude the lowest cost forms of industrial or office buildings.

Market demand

6.37 Prudhoe is not in the most marketable part of Northumberland in terms of potential investors in employment use, being located on the other side of the River Tyne from the main east-west Trunk Road (the A69) but has strong market demand for industrial uses. In addition, while the site may be next to the main A695, it would not be accessed from that main road, instead involving a journey through residential streets and a narrow lane. The distance from the town centre services could further detract from its attractiveness.

Conclusion

6.38 While close to the periphery of the town's built-up area, the local labour market and some services, this site is removed from the main road system and the main services that Prudhoe has to offer. There would clearly be considerable infrastructure costs on and offsite.

ELR site assessment score	
Criteria 7: Market attractiveness	1

Prudhoe Site 5 – Land south of Hagg Bank

Total Score

Prudhoe Site 5	
Total site score	10

7. Prudhoe Site 6– Land south of Broomhouse Lane

Site Area (Ha) - 4.586

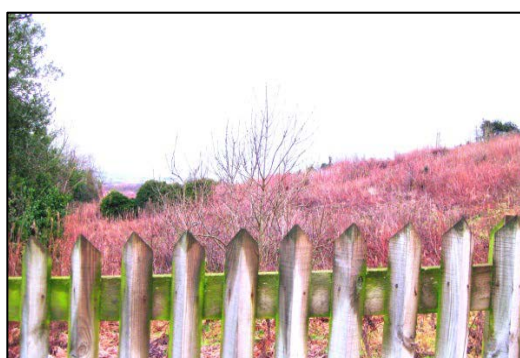
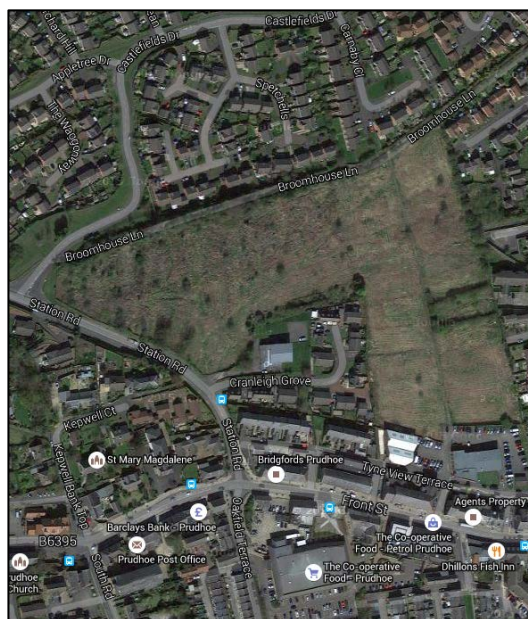
Easting - 409,694.400

Northing - 563,149.403

Indicative development mix (Assuming build out of 20% of the site)

Use-class	Site coverage (%)	Floorspace (sqm)	Employees
B1a	90	8,254.8	687
B1c	5	458.6	10
B8	5	458.6	7

- 7.1 This site is situated close to the town centre of Prudhoe and includes, at its southern extremity, part of the main Front Street frontage, plus backland in a range of uses, before greenfield section of the site (the bulk of its area) dips down northwards towards Brroomhouse Lane“, where recent housing lines the northern boundary. The eastern boundary is the edge of somewhat older housing areas and parts of the western boundary meet Station Road – the main road that links the town centre to Low Prudhoe.



Criteria 1: Strategic Road Access

Criteria 2: Local Road Access and Impact

- 7.2 The main access to the strategic road network is over 5km from the site where the A695 meets the A69. The site already has planning permission and the County Highways advises that the priority access is to the south near the social club. A roundabout would be needed also to the south opposite West and High windward. (Clearly, this assessment assumed that the site would be mixed housing and town centre uses, rather than industry / offices, which could generate traffic of different volumes / types).
- 7.3 The Transport Assessment (2015) looked at four key junctions in the town, including those at either end of Station Road.
- 7.4 The study did not predict any significant impacts in the short to medium term and only minor impacts at these two junctions in the longer term. Developments, such as that which has permission, were assumed to be going ahead and built into the model.

Conclusion

- 7.5 Given that the site has permission, albeit for other uses, it can be demonstrated that access could be provided, with the possibility that further thought will need to be given to any additional heavy goods traffic that may be generated and to the longer term effects that this may have on the junctions at the top and bottom of Station Road bank.

ELR site assessment score	
Criteria 1: Strategic road access	2
Criteria 2: Local road access and impact	3

Criteria 3: Site Characteristics and Development Constraints

Ground conditions

- 7.6 The very top (southern, developed / brownfield) end of the site is relatively flat, as compared with the bulk of the site (the former allotments) where the site slopes south to north at a gradient of about 1 in 7.
- 7.7 Given the topography, the majority of the site's area would be generally unsuited to the development of large footprint buildings – or at least not without significant re-forming of the land.
- 7.8 The Coal Authority does not identify any significant development risks, although coal outcrops along the site's northern edge. The site is within the proposed mineral safeguarding area for coal, so it would need to be confirmed whether development of the site would result in material sterilisation.
- 7.9 The site, awaiting development, is largely disused. The allotments which occupied the greenfield section were relocated some time ago. Some buildings on Front Street and areas

behind, (including a car park), which fall within the site's brownfield area, continue to be in use.

- 7.10 Being urban, the land has no agricultural land classification, although the former allotment use of the greenfield segment of the site will have had implications for the soil quality.

Biodiversity

- 7.11 Desk based assessment indicates that a range of protected species have been recorded locally. With an SSSI approximately 830m NW, it may be in the SSSI IRZ, meaning that consultation with Natural England may be required. Some other local wildlife interest lies within 2 kilometres, although they lie well away from this town centre area.

Landscape and Green Infrastructure

- 7.12 The site falls within the Glacial Trough Valley Sides landscape character type. Development guidelines discourage new built development from extending onto the upper valley sides although it is unlikely that this was intended to apply to the centre of an urban area. Settlement distinctiveness is an important consideration. In this context, it may be questioned whether large scale buildings in this location, where the scale was formerly open and small scale, would necessarily be appropriate.
- 7.13 It is concluded that, while it is difficult to see how many of the development guidelines are applicable in urban locations, there are nevertheless some for which the effects of this form of development could be negative. The Key Land Use Impact Study does not assess areas in the heart of towns.

Flooding and water management infrastructure

- 7.14 The Northumberland Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2015) indicates that there is no risk of fluvial water flooding of the site, and similarly only a low risk of surface water flooding on a very small part of the site where water may settle.
- 7.15 A sewer crosses the site and NWL would require it to be diverted or placed within a suitable easement.
- 7.16 The topography of the town creates issues of surface water run-off and sewer flooding in times of heavy rainfall and this key central site needs careful SuDS planning in this context.
- 7.17 NWL state that discussions with a developer regarding this site have led to the development of a potential drainage strategy for the site being agreed. This states that foul water should be directed towards a particular 225mm combined sewer.
- 7.18 Surface flows, on the other hand, have to be seen in the wider context of capacity constraints associated at Howdon WWTW which Prudhoe relies on. Prudhoe has a history of sewer flooding. While the overall Howdon issue is being tackled strategically, there are likely to be upgrades to the sewer system needed in and around the town and there is a clear need for strong SuDS ('blue infrastructure') approach to any development – particularly relevant to steeply sloping sites such as this. NWL have explained that the drainage strategy would mean

a maximum discharge of surface water of 10 l/s could be accommodated with a particular surface water sewer (within the Broomhouse Lane housing area down the hill to the north) but that this would only accommodate part of the site's potential run-off. The likely greenfield rate from the whole development would be 20 l/s and whilst this could be sent to a particular drain to replicate the existing run off route, the strategy should in fact be to direct it to a watercourse to the north of Framwell Close, (also within the Broomhouse Lane housing area down the hill to the north).

Archaeology and historic environment

- 7.19 There are no Listed Buildings or structures within or adjoining the site. However Prudhoe Castle is clearly within reach of the site and so building here could fall within its setting and would require careful consideration, especially if large prominent buildings would be proposed.
- 7.20 As far as archaeology is concerned, site has already been evaluated but will require to be pre-determination evaluation (NPPF para 128) (e.g. assessment, geophysical survey and trial trenching) as there is the potential for unrecorded prehistoric or Iron Age/Roman period activity and garden archaeology. Any mitigation work will depend on the results of such an evaluation.

Rights of way

- 7.21 While footpaths traverse the site, associated with the allotments, and there are adopted highway areas at the site's upper (southern) end, none is designated as a PROW, the nearest ones being off-site. Notwithstanding this, it would be desirable to maintain roughly north-south and roughly east west routes through the site for pedestrians and cycles.

Conclusion

- 7.22 While many of the key constraining factors have been addressed through previous permissions, some of the considerations could be different for employment uses, such as limitations to the scale of possible buildings; and, were the buildings to be large in scale, how this would affect matters such as the setting of Prudhoe Castle and how the site would drain.

ELR site assessment score	
Criteria 3: Site characteristics and development constraints	3

Criteria 4: Proximity to urban areas, and access to labour and services

Criteria 5: Sustainability and planning factors

- 7.23 Past Sustainability Appraisal work (2015) has shown that, for many of the criteria assessed, the site demonstrated no impact or a positive impact. The agricultural value of the site was identified as a potential constraint, and as the site is 100% greenfield this was considered a more serious constraint – also in terms of the loss of valuable green infrastructure.

- 7.24 In terms of accessibility, highways access is seen as a moderate constraint, notwithstanding the central location.
- 7.25 It is apparent that the site is close to potential employees and town centre services which employees would be likely to use.
- 7.26 Heritage could also be a slight concern issue in terms of the site's proximity to Prudhoe Castle.
- 7.27 There is a clear need to give very careful consideration to drainage as, wrongly planned, this could prove unsustainable, especially if large expanses of hard surface (sometimes associated with employment uses) are involved – or even a re-shaping of the landscape to accommodate large buildings.
- 7.28 The site falls within the Green Belt inset boundary for Prudhoe. Therefore Green Belt issues do not arise.

Criteria 6: Compatibility of adjoining land uses

- 7.29 The nature of Prudhoe town centre is one of mixed uses. As such, it is inevitable that not all uses will be compatible with one another. Employment uses are found in the town centre but certain categories, such as 'B2' uses could be incompatible with neighbouring residential and other sensitive uses, as could be uses that may generate high numbers of HGVs.

Conclusion

- 7.30 Notwithstanding the central (and therefore accessible) location), there are some factors of sustainability – notably drainage and the loss of open land – which could be seen as negative in terms of sustainable planning. Nonetheless, the overall sustainability appraisal would be positive. The other issue would be to ensure that careful consideration is given to compatibility with adjoining uses.

ELR site assessment score	
Criteria 4: Proximity to urban areas and access to services and labour	4
Criteria 5: Sustainability and planning factors	3
Criteria 6: Compatibility of adjoining uses	2

Criteria 7: Market Attractiveness, Deliverability and viability

Ownership and availability

- 7.31 The site has been proposed for employment use in the ELR call for sites (2010) and has also featured in the SHLAA (site 2633) – having permission for housing on much of the site. The site has been retained among those being considered here due to its central location and the availability of land adjacent to the town centre. However there is extant permission on this site for a retail development and it is likely that a revised retail development will be pursued on the remaining available land on the site.

Development costs

- 7.32 Many of the costs associated with development are already known. The partly brownfield nature, the topography, the drainage implications etc. were all part of the consideration in relation to the development that has permission. What is understood is that retail / town centre uses were only considered deliverable if housing formed part of the scheme. Whether employment uses could be delivered without an element of (higher value) housing is therefore questionable, especially if the larger buildings likely to be associated with employment use were to require additional land formation and drainage measures.

Market demand

- 7.33 Prudhoe is not in the most marketable part of Northumberland in terms of potential investors in employment use, being located on the other side of the River Tyne from the main east-west Trunk Road (the A69) but has strong market demand for industrial uses. In addition, while the site may be central to Prudhoe, the town is bypassed by the A695 Blaydon to Hexham road, which may further reduce its attractiveness for certain categories of employment use.

Conclusion

- 7.34 While central in the town of Prudhoe, the site is nevertheless removed from main through routes and, given the topography, neighbouring uses, SuDS requirements and other site-specific additional costs that may arise, there will be some issues surrounding the deliverability of marketable employment use on this site.

ELR site assessment score	
Criteria 7: Market attractiveness	2

Prudhoe Site 6– Land south of Broomhouse Lane

Total Score

Prudhoe Site 6	
Total site score	19

8. Prudhoe Site 7 – Land south of Prudhoe Community High School

Site Area (Ha) - 17.07

Easting - 409,761.993

Northing - 562,064.405

Indicative development mix (Assuming build out of 40% of the site)

Use-class	Site coverage (%)	Floorspace (sqm)	Employees
B1a	30	20,484	1,707
B1c	40	27,312	581
B2	20	13,656	379
B8	10	6828	98

- 8.1 This sloping site is located in open countryside at the southern end of Prudhoe to the rear of Prudhoe High School, which forms part of its northern and eastern boundary. The southern part of the eastern boundary comprises the back gardens of housing on Moor Road and Moor Grange, the remaining (southern and western) boundaries being open fields.



Criteria 1: Strategic Road Access

Criteria 2: Local Road Access and Impact

- 8.1 The main access to the strategic road network is over 5km from the site where the A695 meets the A69. The site is landlocked from the highway and the Highway Authority considers the site difficult to access in a satisfactory way from the existing system of narrow roads in the area.
- 8.2 The Transport Assessment (2015) looked at four key junctions in the town and did not predict any significant impacts in the short to medium term and only minor impacts in the longer term. However it is fair to say that the study was high level and did not look at the more local road network at this southern part of the town. It is well-known that Moor Road has very limited capacity, as only a certain number of new dwellings on the former Prudhoe Hospital site were permitted to be accessed from Moor Road and no 'through road' through the former hospital site was allowed. Therefore, even if a satisfactory access onto the site could be arranged, the type of heavy traffic that could be generated by employment occupying this large expanse of land would be likely to cause major issues on the local road system.

Conclusion

- 8.3 It would appear that providing access to this landlocked site could be difficult and, even if this barrier could be overcome, the impact on the local road network from any HGVs etc. may be difficult to mitigate.

ELR site assessment score	
Strategic road access	1
Local road access and impact	2

Criteria 3: Site Characteristics and Development Constraints

Ground conditions

- 8.4 The site is pasture and grazing land that slopes at around 1 in 20 from SW to NE.
- 8.5 Given the topography, the site would not be ideally suited to the development of large footprint buildings.
- 8.6 Parts of the site have a history surface coal working and there has been a history of shallow mining in the close vicinity to the west. The Coal Authority identifies it as a high risk development area. The site is within the proposed mineral safeguarding area for coal, so it would need to be confirmed whether development of the site would result in material sterilisation.
- 8.7 The site, currently used for pasture / grazing, is classified as grade 3, which indicates "land with moderate limitations which affect the choice of crops, timing and type of cultivation, harvesting or the level of yield"⁶. Subsequent assessment has not been undertaken to

⁶ Agricultural Land classification of England and Wales, MAFF, 1988

determine if the site falls within the A or B subcategory of grade 3. As such development of the site would not result in the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land as per Annex 2 of the NPPF.

Biodiversity

- 8.8 Desk based assessment indicates that a range of protected species have been recorded locally. There is a woodland strip/shelterbelt on the western boundary, extending into N/central part of site. Buffer zones to this woodland may be required.
- 8.9 While the Stanley Burn is around 320m SE of the site and the River Tyne approximately 1.4km NW, the site may be seen as falling into the SSSI IRZ meaning that consultation with Natural England may be required.

Landscape and Green Infrastructure

- 8.10 The site falls within the Glacial Trough Valley Sides landscape character type. Development guidelines discourage new built development from extending onto the upper valley sides. Settlement distinctiveness is an important consideration. In this context, it may be questioned whether an extension of Prudhoe into open countryside in this location would be appropriate.
- 8.11 The area also fringes the Durham Coalfield Pennine fringe landscape type where guidelines look to maintain the separation of villages and towns and the rural character of the countryside between them when planning new development. Most pertinently, the guidelines are to seek to steer extensions to existing settlements away from open or exposed ridgelines which form a setting or backdrop to a settlement, and encourage the creation of strong settlement boundaries.
- 8.12 In the Key Land Use Impact Study, the limited areas to the south of Prudhoe, along Moor Road, are considered to be 'of lower landscape sensitivity' while it points out clearly that, were development to encroach further up the hillside this might compromise the important aim of retaining the open hill top of Mickley Moor.
- 8.13 In conclusion, therefore, development of anything large scale in this location, reaching too far up and away from the existing settlement edge, could therefore compromise important landscape principles in this location.

Flooding and water management infrastructure

- 8.14 The Northumberland Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2015) indicates that there is no risk of fluvial water flooding of the site, and similarly for of surface water flood risk.
- 8.15 NWL advise that the site is surrounded by small diameter foul sewers and it is likely that flows may need to be split between various connection points.
- 8.16 On surface water, NWL advise that detailed consideration would need to be given to its management, there being no obvious outlet within the vicinity of the site. The topography means that the site would certainly need to be looked at in relation to flows and constraints in the town as a whole and the even wider context of capacity constraints associated at Howdon

WwTW which Prudhoe relies on. Prudhoe has a history of sewer flooding. While the overall Howdon issue is being tackled strategically, there are likely to be upgrades to the sewer system needed in and around the town and there is a clear need for strong SuDS ('blue infrastructure') approach to any development – particularly relevant to sloping sites such as this.

Archaeology and historic environment

- 8.17 There are no Listed Buildings or structures within or adjoining the site, with the nearest being well inside the Prudhoe hospital site and nearby housing areas.
- 8.18 As far as archaeology is concerned, while no particular interest has been identified so far, there will require to be pre-determination evaluation (NPPF para 128) (e.g. assessment, geophysical survey and trial trenching).

Rights of way

- 8.19 Bridleway 538/016 cuts the site in half E-W, running along the boundary between the northern two of the three fields that make up the site. This Bridleway then follows part of the boundary on the SW edge of the site and meets Footpath 538/018 which follows a short distance away from (but parallel to) the western edge of the northern part of the site.
- 8.20 Were a diversion of Bridleway 538/016 to be required, this could delay any future development process.

Conclusion

- 8.21 Key issues in terms of constraining factors relate to the encroachment of development – possibly of large scale buildings – up the hillside into a more sensitive ridge area, as well as the issue of draining the site's surface water adequately and the fact that the site is severed by a recognised Bridleway.

ELR site assessment score	
Criteria 3: Site characteristics and development constraints	2

Criteria 4: Proximity to urban areas, and access to labour and services

Criteria 5: Sustainability and planning factors

- 8.22 Past Sustainability Appraisal work (2015) has shown that, for many of the criteria assessed, the site demonstrated no impact or a positive impact. The agricultural value of the site was identified as a potential constraint, and as the site is 100% greenfield this was considered a more serious constraint – also in terms of the loss of valuable green infrastructure.
- 8.23 In terms of accessibility, highways access is seen as a key constraint.

- 8.23 It appears that the site, being on the edge of the town, should be reachable by a pool of potential employees and is also close to certain services. However the distance from the main town centre services should also be taken into account
- 8.24 There is a clear need to give very careful consideration to drainage as, wrongly planned, this could prove unsustainable, especially given the absence of obvious outlet points and the possible nature of any employment buildings (i.e. possible large expanses of hard surface and even a re-shaping of the landscape, in order to accommodate large buildings.
- 8.25 All but the northernmost tip of the site falls within the existing Green Belt. The inset boundary of Prudhoe itself follows part of the site's boundary, where this follows the backs of houses at Moor Road / Moor Grange.
- 8.26 The Northumberland Green Belt Assessment (2015) reviewed the contribution of land parcels around settlements to establish where it would be most appropriate to extend settlements into the current Green Belt, should this be necessary and justified in terms of exceptional circumstances.
- 8.27 The site is in PE13 which makes a medium contribution to all of the purposes of the Green Belt that are relevant in this area, reasoning behind this conclusion including that parts of the boundary on this edge of Prudhoe are well defined by features on the ground; that there is a good distance between Prudhoe and the next nearest settlement in this particular direction; and that there are opportunities to create strong new boundaries such that encroachment into the open countryside can be contained.

Compatibility of adjoining land uses

- 8.28 With residential and school uses both being sensitive to adjacent, potentially polluting development, there may be some limitations on the type of employment development that could be accommodated here. The potential for disruption relating to the woodland strip and adjoining agricultural use is not known, although a buffer strip may be needed in relation to the former.

Conclusion

- 8.29 There are some factors of sustainability – notably drainage and the loss of open land – which could be seen as negative in terms of sustainable planning. Nonetheless, the overall sustainability appraisal would be positive. The other issue would be to ensure that careful consideration is given to compatibility with adjoining uses.

ELR site assessment score	
Criteria 4: Proximity to urban areas and access to services and labour	3
Criteria 5: Sustainability and planning factors	2
Criteria 6: Compatibility of adjoining uses	2

Criteria 7: Market Attractiveness, Deliverability and viability

Ownership and availability

8.30 The site has not been proposed for employment use in the ELR call for sites (2010) but has come forward more recently, as an area of land close to the edge of the built up area, with a potential labour pool. There are uncertainties surrounding the ownership.

Development costs

8.31 As a greenfield site, this is currently un-serviced in terms of utilities and internal roads which would add to the site preparation cost. This would include the additional cost of finding suitable, sustainable outflow opportunities for surface water with wider off-site infrastructure implications. Access has been noted above as potentially unachievable and, even if it were, there could again, be necessary off-site improvements to the local access network. Any necessary buffers relating to the school, housing and/or woodland strips, all of which adjoin the site, could reduce the developable area and hence the profitability of the site.

Market demand

8.32 Prudhoe is not in the most marketable part of Northumberland in terms of potential investors in employment use, being located on the other side of the River Tyne from the main east-west Trunk Road (the A69) but has strong market demand for industrial uses.

8.33 The site itself is away from the centre of the town and even further removed from the main road network. The rail network, while serving Prudhoe, is 2 kilometres from the site. All of these factors will reduce its marketability, as will the site specific factors – topography and its landlocked nature to name but two.

Conclusion

8.34 The site, being away from the strategic road network and the centre of Prudhoe is poorly located in strategic marketability. The development costs could be greater than would normally be the case for a greenfield site due to the problems of achieving satisfactory access, the slope of the site and some incompatibility with adjoining uses.

ELR site assessment score	
Criteria 7: Market attractiveness	1

Prudhoe Site 7 – Land south of Prudhoe Community High School

Total Score

Prudhoe Site 7	
Total site score	13

9. Prudhoe Site 8: Eltringham Works

Site Area (Ha): 4.39 (excluding existing employment site)

Easting: 408260.72

Northing: 562896.94

Indicative development mix (Assuming build out of 40% of the site)

Use-class	Site coverage (%)	Floorspace (sqm)	Employees
B1c	40	7024	149
B2	30	3512	97
B8	20	7024	25

- 9.1 The site is located to the west of Prudhoe, north of the A695. The site is occupied by a number of works and residential properties, with a steep wooded bank falling toward the River Tyne to the north. The assessment has only considered the non-employment parts of the site.



Criteria 1: Strategic Road Access

Criteria 2: Local Road Access and Impact

- 9.2 The main access to the strategic road network is over 5km from the site where the A695 meets the A69. Access to the site is currently taken from a dedicated junction on the A695, the same junction that was used to access the former Hammerite factory.
- 9.3 County Highways have confirmed that access to the site would continue to be taken from this junction, but it may need upgrading or widening to accommodate additional development. Pedestrian and cycle connections to the network would be required where appropriate.
- 9.4 The Transport Assessment (2015) looked at four key junctions in Prudhoe, the closest of which was the roundabout between the A695 Prudhoe Bypass and Station Road (leading towards the town centre). The study did not predict any significant impacts cumulatively. So it would appear that, were it necessary to upgrade or widen the junction to accommodate additional development, then impacts in terms of that additional volume of traffic on key junctions in the town would not be significant.

Conclusion

- 9.5 The site represents a clear opportunity to access the A695 Prudhoe Bypass using the existing Hammerite junction, although it is clear that some form of upgrade to that junction would be needed, especially if this site, the former factory and its car park were all to be developed (and/or reoccupied). In terms of the wider local road network, the impact of the site's development in terms of congestion would not be significant and therefore most probably acceptable.

ELR site assessment score	
Criteria 1: Strategic road access	2
Criteria 2: Local road access and impact	4

Criteria 3: Site Characteristics and Development Constraints

Ground conditions

- 9.6 No part of the site is flat, with a slope throughout the site from south to north. The site's gradient differs significantly between the southern half and the northern half of the site. The former experiences a gradual slope of around 1 in 10. The former Hammerite factory, associated car parking and a small housing development can be found on this part of the site, suggesting that the slope is not so severe that they could not be overcome through careful design. However, the northern half of the site experiences a steep slope down to the River Tyne. Development in this part of the site would not be possible without significant earth movements.
- 9.7 The site has a probable history of shallow coal mining and the Coal Authority identifies it as a high risk development area. There is a former mine entrance to the north and several close to the site's western boundary. The site is within the proposed mineral safeguarding area for

coal, so it would need to be confirmed whether development of the site would result in material sterilisation.

- 9.8 The site is currently used for pasture and is classified as grade 3, which indicates “land with moderate limitations which affect the choice of crops, timing and type of cultivation, harvesting or the level of yield”⁷. Subsequent assessment has not been undertaken to determine if the site falls within the A or B subcategory of grade 3. As such development of the site would not result in the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land as per annex 2 of the NPPF.

Biodiversity

- 9.9 Part of the site to the south constitutes Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland, being part of Beaumont Wood. This means that the affected parts of the site should be discounted and a minimum 15m buffer zone to the Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland implemented as necessary.
- 9.10 A range of protected species have been recorded locally. Woodland within the site represents a deciduous woodland priority habitat. A Local Wildlife and Geological site can be found to the south west of the site. An SSSI can also be found around approximately 750m NE of the site. The site may be within the SSSI IRZ, meaning that consultation with Natural England may be required.
- 9.11 A small watercourse/drain can be found within the site, which may be significant. It should also be borne in mind that the River Tyne can be found immediately north of the site.

Landscape and Green Infrastructure

- 9.12 The site falls within the Glacial Trough Valley Floor landscape character type. Development guidelines discourage new built development from extending onto the valley floor and encourage the creation of strong settlement boundaries. The approach routes that run through the area (e.g. A695) should be given particular consideration, as should the settings of towns and settlement distinctiveness. The visibility of the site on the banks of the Tyne and from the A695, albeit largely concealed by tree cover, is important in this context. The woodland strip potentially provides a strong boundary from countryside to its west (such as is called for in the development guidelines).
- 9.13 The land is also likely to be considered part of the limited areas of lower sensitivity below the escarpment that ‘may accommodate infill development’ as set out in the Key Land Use Impact Study.

Flooding and water management infrastructure

- 9.14 The Northumberland Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2015) indicates that there is no risk of fluvial water flooding of the site, and similarly no areas at particular risk of surface water flooding.

⁷ Agricultural Land classification of England and Wales, MAFF, 1988

- 9.15 Consultation with NWL indicates that a sewer is located in close proximity to the site and that they would require it to be diverted or placed within a suitable easement. There is a 225mm diameter sewer which could be utilised as a foul outlet for the site, were it to be developed. However, this should be seen in the wider context of capacity constraints associated at Howdon WwTW which Prudhoe relies on. There is a history of sewer flooding in both Prudhoe and Mickley. While the overall Howdon issue is being tackled strategically, there are likely to be upgrades to the sewer system needed in and around the town and there is a clear need for strong SuDS ('blue infrastructure') approach to any development on the site.
- 9.16 The Northumberland Water Cycle Study (2015) indicates that the site is within the Kielder Water Resource Area and so there is no issue in terms of water supply.

Archaeology and historic environment

- 9.17 There are no Listed Buildings within or immediately adjoining the site. It may be that parts of the site, especially the trees surrounding it, would be visible from the parapets of Prudhoe Castle. This will need to be checked in terms of criteria applying to the settings of Listed Buildings. However it is considered that, given the topography, the distance and other intervening development, that, so long as building heights are not too great and materials, colours not too striking, that any impact on the setting would be marginal.
- 9.18 As far as archaeology is concerned, there will require to be pre-determination evaluation (NPPF para 128) (e.g. assessment, geophysical survey and trial trenching) as there is the potential for unrecorded prehistoric or Iron Age/Roman period activity and garden archaeology. Any mitigation work will depend on the results of such an evaluation.

Rights of way

- 9.19 While no PROWs cross the site, two footpaths are in close proximity to the site boundary (538/068 immediately to the east, and 538/030 to the south). In addition, Restricted By-way Route 538/051 passes along the site's southern boundary. It would appear that the site could be developed without impacting on public rights of way.

Conclusion

- 9.20 There are several issues relating to topography (particularly in the northern half of the site), protection of ancient woodland and habitats and mine entrances. All of these issues could significantly reduce the developable area of the site and/or add to development costs. Clearly a number of factors would also require further investigation, including mining legacy issues and the setting of Prudhoe Castle.

ELR site assessment score	
Criteria 3: Site characteristics and development constraints	2

Criteria 4: Proximity to urban areas, and access to labour and services

Criteria 5: Sustainability and planning factors

- 9.21 The site is adjacent to Site 2, which was assessed under a previous SA exercise. This found either no impact and or a positive impact. The agricultural value of the site was identified as a potential constraint. Full build out of the site would make use of some PDL and some greenfield, which would represent a moderate constraint.
- 9.22 In terms of accessibility, the relatively long distance to the rail station in Low Prudhoe was seen as something of an issue in sustainability terms.
- 9.23 It is apparent that the site is isolated from town centre type services which employees would be likely to use.
- 9.24 As indicated, the site is constrained by ecology, which would represent a constraint. However, it is unlikely to be affected by heritage or the effects of flooding.
- 9.25 The site is not located in the Green Belt.

Criteria 6: Compatibility of adjoining land uses

- 9.26 The site contains an existing, albeit not currently operational, employment use (a new operator, a chemicals manufacturer, has purchased the site is expected to locate at the site by end 2016). However, some existing houses can also be found to the west of the site car park. In addition, an application for further housing was recently submitted on the site (and subsequently refused). Should intensification of the site bring employment uses any closer to the existing housing on site, any future operators would likely be restricted in order to protect residential amenity (particularly industrial uses), which may discourage operators from locating here. Operational aspects of the farm unit and any loss of amenity for those enjoying the adjacent public rights of way would also be a consideration.

Conclusion

- 9.27 The location is reasonably accessible by public transport notwithstanding its relative distance from a number of services and location across the bypass. Whilst development here would complement an established employment area, current and potential housing on the site is likely to prevent significant intensification of the site, particularly for industrial uses (which would likely be the sector most attracted to this site). Some care would be needed in relation to existing and potential future housing on adjacent and nearby sites.

ELR site assessment score	
Criteria 4: Proximity to urban areas and access to services and labour	3
Criteria 5: Sustainability and planning factors	3
Criteria 6: Compatibility of adjoining uses	2

Criteria 7: Market Attractiveness

Ownership and availability

- 9.28 The site was not proposed for employment use during in the ELR call for sites (2010). However, it was put forward during the SHLAA call for sites (2013) for housing and potential employment. Most of the site is in private ownership, save for the occupied dwellings. Submission of the site through the SHLAA call for sites indicates that the then-prospective, now current landowner wishes to see a higher value use brought forward on the site in tandem with preserving some employment use. This has been confirmed through a recent application for housing on the site (which was refused). Consequently, it is unlikely that the site will be developed for employment uses exclusively.

Development costs

- 9.29 As a PDL site, it is likely to be serviced with the necessary utilities. Some internal roads are also present and areas of hardstanding. This would mean that ordinary site preparation costs (notwithstanding that the water authority have noted the presence of a sewer that could be accessed directly). Access from the A695 may well bring an additional cost, as the junction onto the A695 may need some upgrading, especially if this was a shared employment and residential access.
- 9.30 The history of mineral workings and the slope of the site, could also add something to basic development costs.

Market demand

- 9.31 Prudhoe is not in the most marketable part of Northumberland in terms of potential investors in employment use, being located on the other side of the River Tyne from the main east-west Trunk Road (the A69) but has strong market demand for industrial uses. Having said this, the site has some advantages in a more local marketability context, reflecting its position on the main A695 that links Prudhoe and surrounding places with Hexham and Tyneside and Prudhoe's rail access.
- 9.32 The Eltringham works has attracted other occupiers since Akzo Nobel stopped using the site and this part will likely continue to attract investment. However the constraints on the remainder of the site and the proximity to residential properties would deter investment.
- 9.33 While within reach of Prudhoe railway station, it is still some distance away for those on foot and the site is also away from other services that are found typically in larger industrial areas and town centres

Conclusion

- 9.33 The site may be relatively slow in attracting users due to its non-central location away from the trunk road system. The topography of the site and the presence of residential properties would also deter market demand. It is also considered to be now unavailable for employment development.

ELR site assessment score	
Criteria 7: Market attractiveness	2

Prudhoe Site 8: Eltringham Works

Total score

Prudhoe Site 8	
Total site score	18

10. Prudhoe Total Site Scores

<i>Site reference</i>	Site name	Strategic Road Access	Local Road Access and congestion	Site characteristics and development constraints	Proximity to urban areas and access to services and labour	Sustainability and planning factors	Compatibility of adjoining uses	Market attractiveness	Total site score
1	Land north east of Mickley Square	1	1	2	3	2	3	2	14
2	Land at Eltringham	2	4	4	3	4	3	4	24
3	Land west of Low Prudhoe	2	3	1	4	4	3	2	19
4	Land at Eastwoods Farm	1	2	2	3	2	2	1	13
5	Land south of Hagg Bank	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	10
6	Land south of Broomhouse Lane	2	3	3	4	3	2	2	19
7	Land south of Prudhoe Community High School	1	2	2	3	2	2	1	13
8	Eltringham North	2	4	2	3	3	2	2	18

10.1 The assessment indicates that site 2 is the highest scoring location in Prudhoe. Although site specific issues have lessened some scores, in general sites where access could be provided directly to the A695 Prudhoe Bypassed scored well, followed by the town centre site. The poorest scoring sites tended to be those on the edge of the town that would be difficult or not possible to access from the main road system and would involve access via lanes and/or residential areas. Some of these latter sites were also constrained in terms of sensitive land uses, habitats or settings. Almost all the sites were constrained in some way through the topography of the town and its environs with none being level. Therefore large footprint buildings will be difficult to accommodate without additional site works.