

Report for: ACTION
Item Number: 7



Contains Confidential or Exempt Information	Part 1
Title	Edge of Settlement Analysis including (Part 1 Green Belt Purpose Assessment and Part 2 Constraints, Opportunities and Delivery Assessment): Draft Methodology in light of Preferred Options Consultation
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For Consideration By	Local Plans Working Group
Date to be Considered	30 June 2015

Report Summary

The purpose of this report is to seek the views of Members on draft methodologies used to assess how land contributes to the purposes of Green Belt and whether land is more or less suitable for development.

The draft methodologies are proposed to be the subject of consultation with other local authorities under the Duty to Cooperate. The draft methodologies would also be made available on the council's website.

1. Details of Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION: That the Local Plans Working Group:

- 1. Notes the content of this report and agree that the draft methodologies go forward for public consultation on the timescales indicated.**

2. Reason for Recommendation and Options Considered

Introduction

- 2.1 The Duty to Cooperate places a legal requirement on local planning authorities and public bodies to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis to maximise the effectiveness of Local Plan preparation in the context of strategic cross boundary matters. The Duty is reflected in the National Planning Policy Framework paragraphs 178 to 181. At examination the council will be required to demonstrate how it has complied with the Duty.
- 2.2 Green Belt is a strategic planning policy. In addition the number of homes and jobs needed in an area is also a strategic matter.
- 2.3 There is no definitive list of actions that define effective cooperation. Notwithstanding this, consulting on study methodologies is being seen as a key element. There is also a benefit from agreeing common methodologies where suitable.
- 2.4 To ensure the robustness of the methodology used to date to assess the suitability of land on the edge of settlements, it is proposed that the council seek views from neighbouring local planning authorities on the following:
 - Edge of Settlement: Part 1 Green Belt Purpose Assessment (see Appendix A)
 - Edge of Settlement: Part 2 Constraints, Opportunities and Delivery Assessment (see Appendix B)
- 2.5 The methodologies represent an evolution of that used to support the Borough Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation (January 2014) and take into account guidance published by the Planning Advisory Service (“Planning on the Doorstep: The Big Issues – Green Belt” January 2014), and studies published by a number of local authorities. The methodologies have been prepared with the support of Green Balance who are retained to assist the council to stay abreast of the national planning policy position.

Appendix A:
Draft Green Belt Purpose Assessment

Edge of Settlement Analysis

Part 1

Green Belt Purpose Assessment

Draft Methodology

1.0 Introduction

Purpose of the study

- 1.1 This assessment is the first part of a process which considers the suitability of land on the edge of settlements which are themselves excluded from the Green Belt for development. The form of development considered is major residential or commercial development.
- 1.2 This part of the process specifically considers how land contributes to the purposes of Green Belt as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Maps showing the extent of Green Belt in the Royal Borough and the wider region can be found below. In broad terms the assessment will:
- Assess how individual parcels of land contribute to the purposes of Green Belt; and
 - Identify those parcels which make a comparatively lower contribution to the purpose of the Green Belt.
- 1.3 This assessment complements a strategic level Green Belt Purpose Analysis (November 2013) which considered all land designated Green Belt within the Royal Borough. With reference to this strategic level study, the options of establishing a new settlement and the significant expansion of an existing settlement that would alter the existing settlement hierarchy were both rejected by the council through the sustainability appraisal process as unreasonable development options.
- 1.4 By focusing on land on the edge of those settlements excluded from the Green Belt, this assessment provides in depth analysis of how land contributes to the purposes of the Green Belt, in the locations considered to be reasonable and comparatively sustainable compared to other options relating to Green Belt.

Edge of Settlement Analysis: Part 2 Constraints, Opportunities and Delivery Assessment

- 1.5 Having identified those parcels of land which make a comparatively lower contribution to the purpose of the Green Belt, the second part of the process will continue to consider further indicators of their suitability. This second part of the process is detailed in the Edge of Settlement Analysis: Part 2 Constraints, Opportunities and Delivery Assessment.
- 1.6 The outcome of the second part will identify those areas which are more or less suitable for development. This information will be used to inform site allocations within the Borough Local Plan.

History of the Green Belt

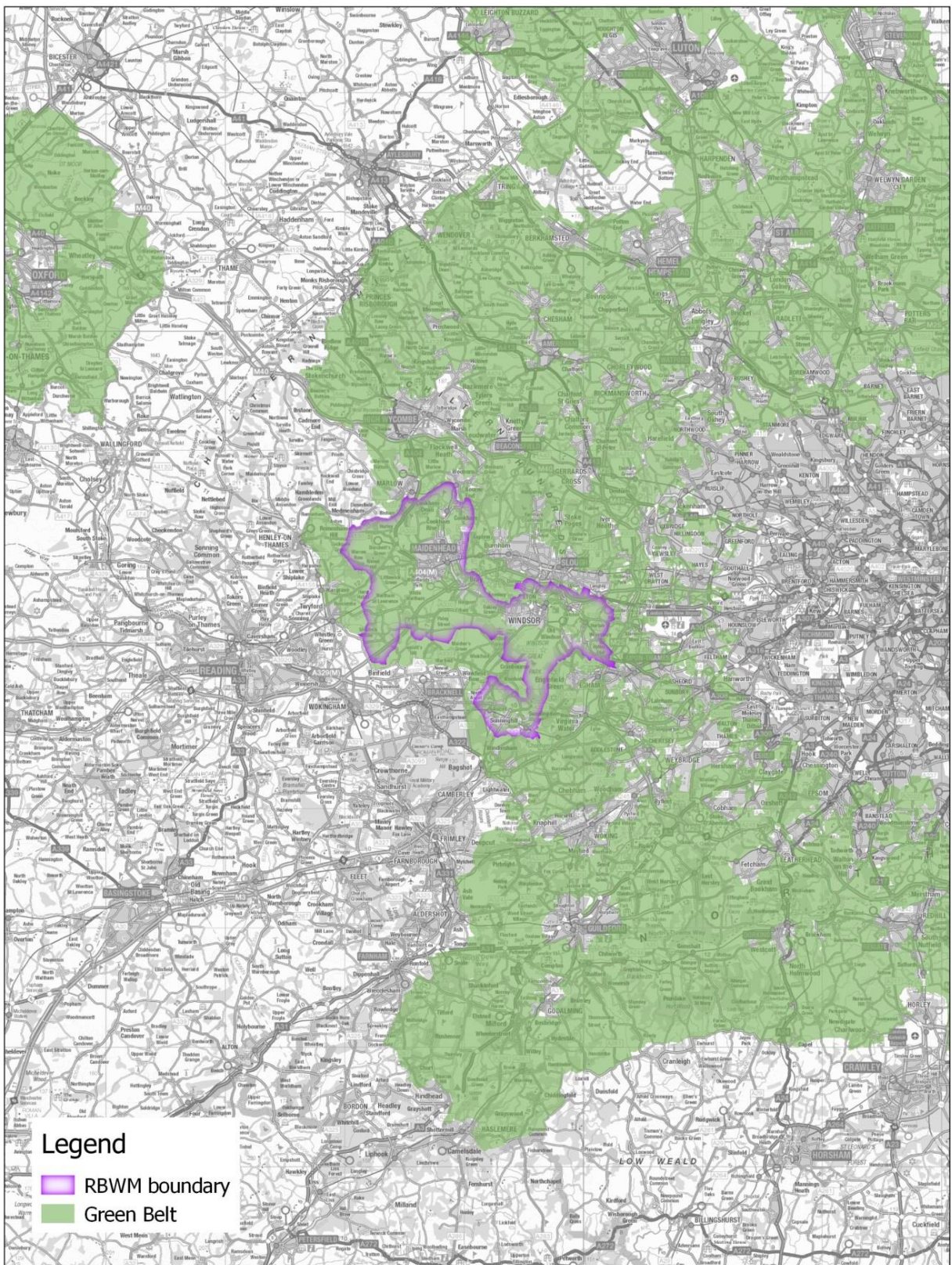
- 1.7 The Green Belt in the Royal Borough forms part of the Metropolitan Green Belt. The reasons for designating a Green Belt were first set out by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government in 1955, when they were stated to be:
1. To check the further growth of a large built up area;
 2. To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another; or
 3. To preserve the special character of a town.
- 1.8 The Metropolitan Green Belt was the first to be established in the 1950s and the 1960s to cover an area extending as far west as Wokingham. At this time almost all of the Green Belt in Berkshire was not “Approved Green Belt” – Green Belt which had been formally approved in development plans by the Minister of Housing and Local Government, but “Proposed

Green Belt” which was treated (with the agreement of the government) as if it had been approved pending a final decision by the Minister.

- 1.9 The area of Proposed Green Belt in east Berkshire, including the land in the Royal Borough, received the formal approval of the Secretary of State for the Environment in 1974, along with areas in Buckinghamshire and Surrey.¹
- 1.10 The area of Proposed Green Belt in central Berkshire remained so on an interim basis pending consideration by the Secretary of State. In 1980, the Secretary of State chose not to confirm a newly promoted Green Belt extension to Reading and not to give formal approval to those areas in central Berkshire which had been treated as Proposed Green Belt.²
- 1.11 Within Berkshire, detailed boundaries to the Green Belt were confirmed in the Green Belt Local Plan for Berkshire (1985). The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Local Plan (1999) made a small number of minor adjustments to provide more rational and defensible boundaries. In addition, at Sunningdale the boundary was rationalised following the transfer of land from the neighbouring Surrey Heath Borough Council and Runnymede Borough Council to the Royal Borough.

¹ Berkshire County Development Plan, 1974.

² Central Berkshire Structure Plan, 1980.



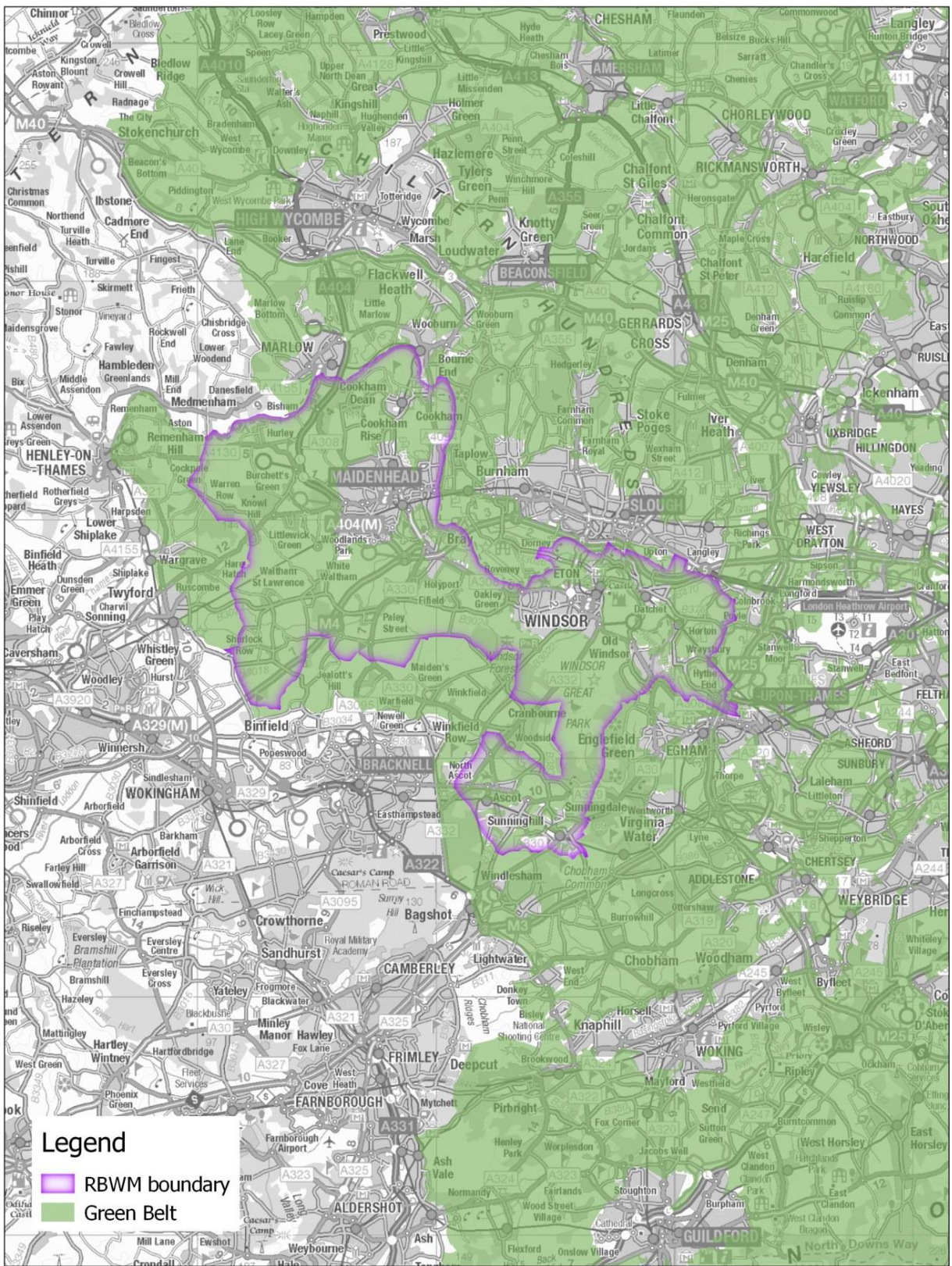
Legend

- RBWM boundary
- Green Belt

Green Belt

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Green Belt



2.0 Policy context and best practice

National Planning Policy Framework

- 2.1 In England, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) sets out the government's policy on planning including the context in which Local Plans must be prepared. Being consistent with national policy is one of the tests against which Local Plans are examined.
- 2.2 At the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development which for plan making means that local planning authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area. Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change, unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole; or specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted.³ Examples of specific policies in the Framework which restrict development include land designated Green Belt.⁴
- 2.3 The Framework outlines 12 core planning principles. Amongst these principles is that planning should take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it.⁵
- 2.4 The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.⁶ Green Belt is identified to serve five purposes:
1. To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
 2. To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
 3. To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
 4. To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
 5. To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.⁷
- 2.5 Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, for example looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.⁸
- 2.6 The Framework sets out that once Green Belt boundaries have been established they should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of the Local Plan.

³ NPPF, paragraph 14.

⁴ NPPF, footnote 9.

⁵ NPPF, paragraph 17.

⁶ NPPF, paragraph 79.

⁷ NPPF, paragraph 80.

⁸ NPPF, paragraph 81.

2.7 Importantly the Framework acknowledges the permanence of Green Belt boundaries and the need for them to endure beyond the plan period.⁹ The need to promote sustainable patterns of development is also acknowledged.¹⁰

2.8 When defining boundaries, local planning authorities should:

- ensure consistency with the Local Plan strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development;
- not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open;
- satisfy themselves that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the development plan period; and
- define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.¹¹

2.9 Local planning authorities may also identify areas of “safeguarded land” in order to meet longer-term development needs beyond the plan period.

National Planning Practice Guidance

2.10 The government has published National Planning Practice Guidance (the Guidance) to expand and clarify policy within the Framework. The Guidance is an online resource and subject to being updated. The following boxes contain paragraphs from the guidance note “Housing and economic land availability assessment” which are considered to be relevant; however the Guidance does not provide any specific advice on how to undertake Green Belt analysis.

Do housing and economic needs override constraints on the use of land, such as Green Belt?

The National Planning Policy Framework should be read as a whole: need alone is not the only factor to be considered when drawing up a Local Plan.

The Framework is clear that local planning authorities should, through their Local Plans, meet objectively assessed needs unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, or specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted. Such policies include those relating to sites protected under the Birds and Habitats Directives, and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Heritage Coast or within a National Park or the Broads; designated heritage assets; and locations at risk of flooding or coastal erosion.

The Framework makes clear that, once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of the Local Plan.

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⁹ NPPF, paragraph 83.

¹⁰ NPPF, paragraph 84.

¹¹ NPPF, paragraph 85.

Do local planning authorities have to meet in full housing needs identified in needs assessments?

Local authorities should prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment to assess their full housing needs.

However, assessing need is just the first stage in developing a Local Plan. Once need has been assessed, the local planning authority should prepare a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment to establish realistic assumptions about the availability, suitability and the likely economic viability of land to meet the identified need for housing over the plan period, and in so doing take account of any constraints such as Green Belt, which indicate that development should be restricted and which may restrain the ability of an authority to meet its need.

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In decision taking, can unmet need for housing outweigh Green Belt Protection?

Unmet housing need (including for traveller sites) is unlikely to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and other harm to constitute the “very special circumstances” justifying inappropriate development on a site within the Green Belt.

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Ministerial Statements

- 2.11 Letters from the Department for Communities and Local Government to the Planning Inspectorate or general statements from ministers have clarified or reaffirmed aspects of national Green Belt policy.
- 2.12 Nick Boles MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Planning), in a letter to the Planning Inspectorate in March 2014 reaffirmed the government’s commitment to maintaining key protections for the countryside and, in particular, for the Green Belt. The letter draws attention to the Framework being clear that a Green Belt boundary may be moved only in exceptional circumstances and reiterates the importance and permanence of the Green Belt, that the special role of Green Belt is recognised in the framing of the presumption in favour of sustainable development, and that a local planning authority could adjust the Green Belt boundary through a review of the Local Plan.
- 2.13 Brandon Lewis MP, Minister of State for Housing and Planning, in a letter to the Planning Inspectorate in December 2014 reinforced the importance of Green Belt in setting housing targets by indicating that councils will need to consider Strategic Housing Market Assessment evidence carefully and take adequate time to consider whether there are environmental and policy constraints, such as Green Belt, which will impact on their overall final housing requirement.

Planning Advisory Service

- 2.14 The Planning Advisory Service published guidance “Planning on the Doorstep: The Big Issues – Green Belt” in January 2014. The guidance highlights that any analysis of Green Belt should involve an assessment of how the land still contributes to the five Green Belt purposes. It also acknowledges that there are planning objectives that are not addressed in

the five Green Belt purposes, for example landscape value, accessibility and environmental assets.

- 2.15 The guidance sets out a number of considerations which should be taken into account when undertaking any analysis. These are set out in the following boxes.

To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas

The terminology of 'sprawl' comes from the 1930s when Green Belt was conceived. Has this term changed in meaning since then? For example, is development that is planned positively through a local plan, and well designed with good masterplanning, sprawl?

To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another

Green Belt is frequently said to maintain the separation of small settlements near to towns, but this is not strictly what the purpose says. This will be different for each case. A 'scale rule' approach should be avoided. The identity of a settlement is not really determined just by the distance to another settlement; the character of the place and of the land in between must be taken into account. Landscape character assessment is a useful analytical tool for use in undertaking this type of assessment.

To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

Presumably all Green Belt does this, making the purpose difficult to use to distinguish the contribution of different areas. The most useful approach is to look at the difference between urban fringe – land under the influence of the urban area - and open countryside, and to favour the latter in determining which land to try and keep open, taking into account the types of edges and boundaries that can be achieved.

To preserve the setting and special qualities of historic towns

This purpose is generally accepted as relating to very few settlements in practice. In most towns there already are more recent development between the historic core and the countryside between the edge of the town.

To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

With this one, it must be the case that the amount of land within urban areas that could be developed will already have been factored in before identifying Green Belt land. If Green Belt achieves this purpose, all Green Belt does to the same extent and hence the value of various land parcels is unlikely to be distinguished by the application of this purpose.

- 2.16 In addition to the above, the guidance reinforces that Green Belt is a strategic policy and hence a strategic issue in terms of the Duty to Cooperate and that in order to make a change to the Green Belt boundary in the Local Plan there have to be "exceptional circumstances."¹² It further draws attention to the level of housing which a Local Plan needs to plan for is

¹² NPPF, paragraph 83.

determined, in part, by whether there is an unmet requirement from a neighbouring authority.¹³

Other Local Planning Authority Experience

- 2.17 This assessment only considers land within the Royal Borough, however as noted in the Planning Advisory guidance Green Belt is a strategic policy. It is important therefore to understand how nearby local planning authorities are approaching Green Belt issues, and the methodologies employed in any analytical work.
- 2.18 The boxes below provide a summary of completed or emerging studies undertaken since the release of the Framework in 2012 for the Metropolitan Green Belt.

Dacorum Borough Council, St Albans City and District Council and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

Green Belt Review Purposes Assessment (November 2013) (Sinclair Knight Merz)

Assessed strategic parcels against the first four Green Belt purposes:

1. To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
2. To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
3. To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; and
4. To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.

The fifth purpose of assisting urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land was not assessed.

The strategic parcels were defined using physical features.

A series of questions were defined and used to assess the contribution of parcel to each Green Belt purpose and local Green Belt objectives. The level of contribution is summarised as significant, partial and limited/no contribution. Each Green Belt purpose was considered equally significant.

The assessment was undertaken in two stages: a desk-top review and on-site inspections. The consideration of contribution focuses on urban form, landscape characteristics and urbanising influences.

Parcels contributing least to the Green Belt are identified and recommended for further analysis including wider issues such as infrastructure capacity, sustainability and landscape.

Runnymede Borough Council

Green Belt Review: Methodology and Assessment (December 2014) (Arup)

Phase 1 assessed strategic parcels against the first four Green Belt purposes:

1. To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
2. To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
3. To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; and
4. To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.

¹³ NPPF, paragraph 182.

The fifth purpose of assisting urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land was not assessed.

The strategic parcels were defined using physical features.

A series of criteria were defined and used to assess the contribution of parcel to each Green Belt purpose. The level of contribution is scores from 1 (weak or very weak) to 5 (strong or very strong). Each Green Belt purpose was considered equally significant.

The consideration of contribution focuses on urban form, the nature of boundaries, landscape characteristics including the level of built-form and urbanising influences.

Phase 2 considered absolute constraints to development (constraints that are likely to be a significant impact on the potential for development), and non-absolute constraints (constraints that are likely to limit or influence the type, form or location of development).

Following consideration of constraints the strategic parcels were redefined.

Parcels contributing least to the Green Belt and not unreasonably affected by constraints are identified.

Aylesbury Vale District Council, Chiltern District Council, South Bucks District Council and Wycombe District Council

Buckinghamshire Green Belt Assessment (currently unpublished) (Arup)

The following description is based on a draft methodology as described at a workshop and is therefore subject to change. This section will be updated when further information is available.

Phase 1 assessed strategic parcels against the first four Green Belt purposes:

1. To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
2. To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
3. To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; and
4. To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.

The fifth purpose of assisting urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land was not assessed.

The strategic parcels will be defined using physical features.

A series of criteria were defined and used to assess the contribution of parcel to each Green Belt purpose. The level of contribution is scores from 1 (weak or very weak) to 5 (strong or very strong). Each Green Belt purpose was considered equally significant.

Borough Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation (January 2014)

- 2.19 The council undertook the Borough Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation from January to March 2014. Consultees were not specially asked to comment on the methodology used to assess the suitability of areas in the Green Belt for housing. The consultation nonetheless provided an opportunity for interested parties to submit comments. A summary of comments is provided below.

- Greater clarity is needed on the methodology
- A common methodology should be used across all local authorities
- The assessment of Green Belt should consider all land in the borough not just land on the edge of excluded settlements
- The methodology should consider how land contributes to creating sustainable patterns of development
- The release of land on the edge of some settlements (e.g. Maidenhead) should be favours over others
- Land owned by the Crown Estate should not be considered a strategic constraint, Crown land should be considered like other ownerships
- Support for heritage assets being a strategic constraint
- More work is required to assess potential impacts on heritage assets
- Land in the function floodplain should be rejected
- All land that floods should be rejected
- Locations within Flood Zone 3a and 2 should not be excluded from further consideration and should be considered through the application of the sequential and exceptions tests
- The assessment of Green Belt is not comprehensive of all purposes of including land in the Green Belt
- The assessment of gaps should take into account the visibility and function of the gap, not just its size
- The assessment of gaps should consider those between all settlements and not just excluded settlements
- The application of constraints appears inconsistent
- The assessment should consider access to services and facilities.

2.20 Comments regarding the treatment of the Crown Estate and the assessment of how land contributes to the purposes of the Green Belt are addressed in this assessment. The remaining comments addressed in the Edge of Settlement Analysis: Part 2 Constraints, Opportunities and Delivery Assessment.

- 2.21 In response to comments the council has amended the methodology, notably:
- Clarity and transparency of the methodology has been improved.
 - Ownership by the Crown Estate is no longer viewed as a constraint to the delivery of development.
 - All five purposes of Green Belt are now assessed in a single stage.
 - The separation of all settlements is considered, noting whether they are excluded or within (washed over by) the Green Belt.
 - The separation of settlements considers qualitative measures.

Summary: Policy Context and Best Practice

2.22 The Framework emphasises the importance and permanence of Green Belt. Five purposes of Green Belt are clearly defined with the Local Plan process confirmed as the only opportunity for boundaries to be reviewed. Neither the Framework nor the Guidance detail how a review process should be conducted. Each local authority is thereby required to establish a methodology which is appropriate to the local context.

2.23 The Planning Advisory Service published guidance is helpful in setting out key parameters to consider in any methodology. The key points to note are:

- The assessment should consider each of the purposes of Green Belt.

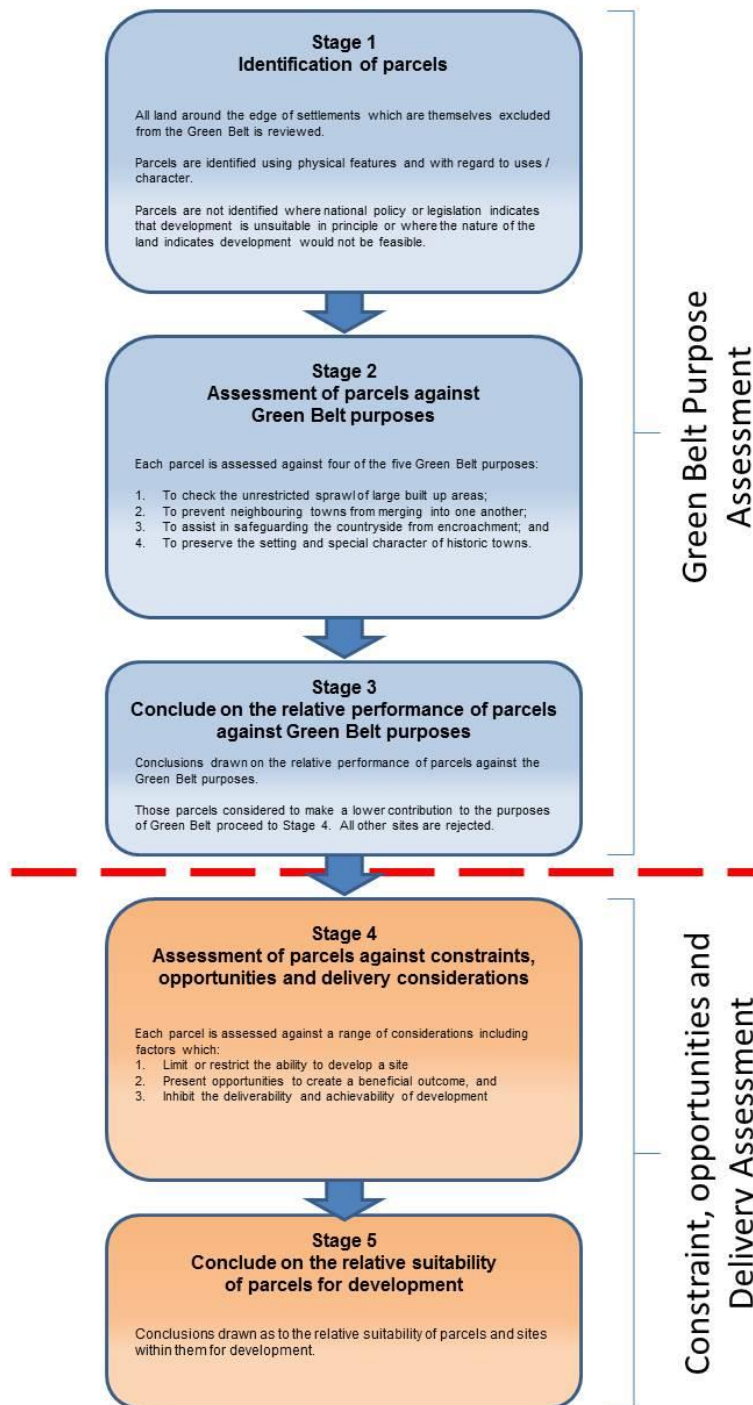
- The assessment should utilise clear definitions.
- The assessment should use qualitative measures.
- Few settlements are likely to meet the definition of historic towns.
- The purpose of the Green Belt to assist urban regeneration is unlikely to distinguish between land parcels.
- There are planning objectives that are not addressed by Green Belt policy.

2.24 As Green Belt is a strategic issue it should be considered collaboratively with other local authorities. Whilst the alignment of plan programmes means some authorities might not be looking to undertake such work, engagement under the Duty to Cooperate will enable studies undertaken at different times to be broadly consistent.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 An overview of the methodology used to assess the suitability of land for development is set out in the figure below. The following section sets out the approach used in Stages 1 to 3.

3.2 The methodology used in Stages 4 and 5 can be found within the Edge of Settlement: Part 2 Constraints, Opportunities and Deliverability Assessment.



Stage 1: Identification of parcels

- 3.3 The scope of the assessment was to consider all land on the edge of those settlements which are themselves excluded from the Green Belt.¹⁴ To ensure a comprehensive assessment all areas of land were considered regardless of whether it has been promoted by the landowner as being available for development.
- 3.4 The starting point for the assessment was to identify parcels of land. Green Belt policy states that when defining boundaries local planning authorities should define these using physical features which are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.¹⁵ On this basis parcels were identified through a desk-based exercise using the following criteria:
1. Each parcel should be of similar use or exhibit similar characteristics.
 2. Boundaries should be aligned to natural physical features wherever possible.
 3. Boundaries should not split woodland or other significant areas of trees, or existing settlements or other areas of housing.
- 3.5 To improve efficiency, parcels were not identified within areas where national policy or legislation indicates development would be unsuitable in principle, or where the nature of the land indicates development would not be feasible or deliverable. A list of these “hard constraints” which are relevant to the Royal Borough is set out in Table 1 below. A map showing the extent of hard constraints (excluding existing developed areas and education facilities) and the identified parcels can be found below. Maps showing the extent of individual constraints can be found in Appendix A. In total 99 individual parcels of land were identified.

Table 1: Hard constraints		
Constraint	Reasoning	Application
Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	The Conservation of Habitat and Species Regulations 2010. National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 118.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential parcels which would be wholly within the extent of the SAC have not been defined. • Parcels which extend partly into the SAC are defined with its presence noted in subsequent analysis.
Special Protection Area (SPA)	The Conservation of Habitat and Species Regulations 2010. National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 118.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential parcels which would be wholly within the extent of the SPA have not been defined. • Parcels which extend partly into the SPA are defined with its presence noted in subsequent analysis.

¹⁴ Alternative theoretical approaches such as the establishment of a new settlement or proposing development that would alter the existing settlement hierarchy were rejected as being unreasonable alternatives through the sustainability appraisal process.

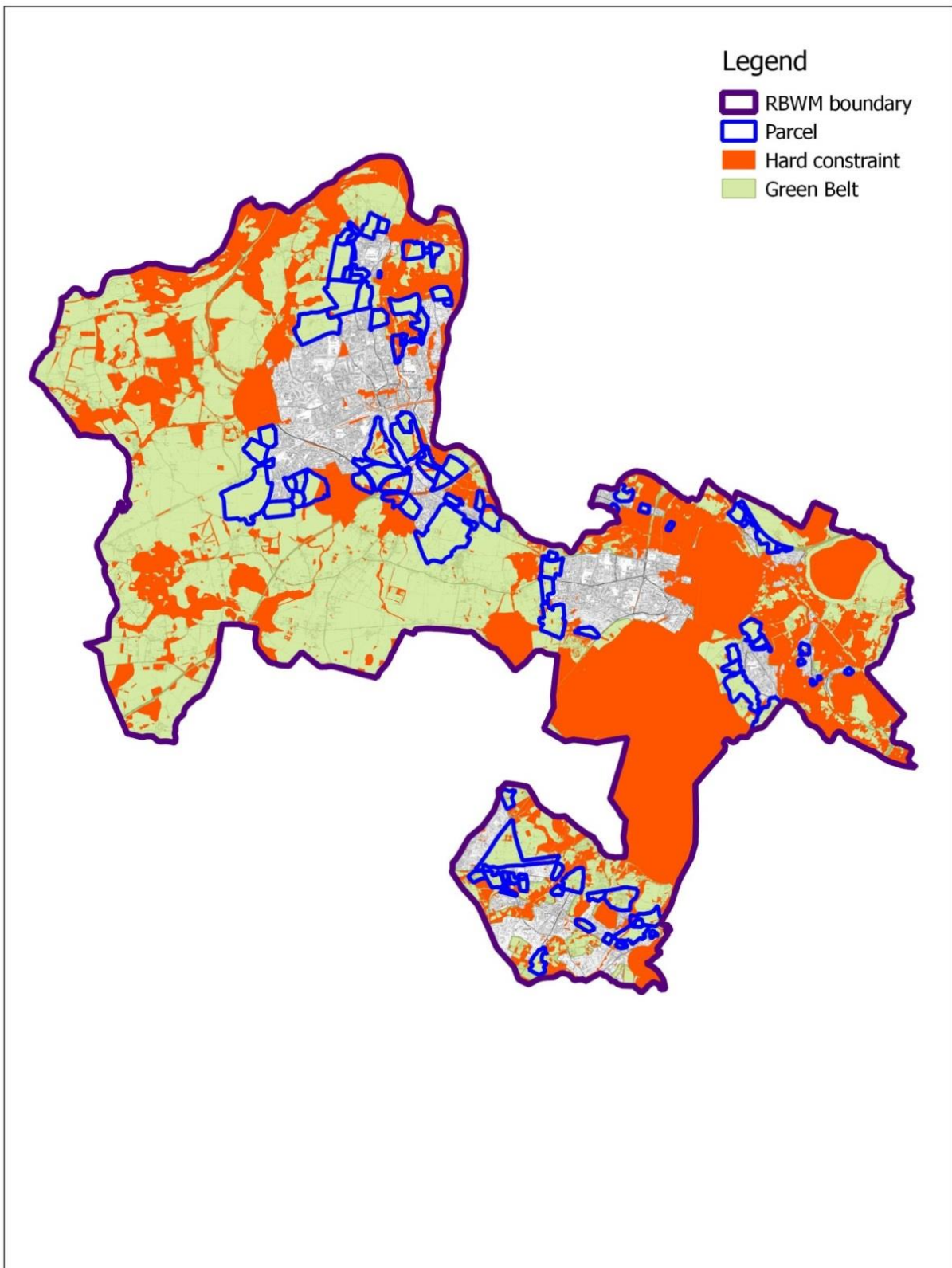
¹⁵ NPPF paragraph 85.

Land within 400m of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area	National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 118.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential parcels which would be wholly within the extent of the 400m buffer around the TBH SPA have not been defined. • Parcels which extend partly into the extent of the 400m buffer around the TBH SPA are defined with its presence noted in subsequent analysis.
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 118.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential parcels which would be wholly within the extent of the SSSI have not been defined. • Parcels which extend partly into the SSSI are defined with its presence noted in subsequent analysis.
Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites)	National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 118.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential parcels which would be wholly within the extent of the Ramsar site have not been defined. • Parcels which extend partly into the Ramsar site are defined with its presence noted in subsequent analysis.
Flood Zone 3B (functional floodplain)	Technical Guidance for the National Planning Policy Framework, Table 1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential parcels which would be wholly within the extent of the functional floodplain have not been defined. • Parcels which extend partly into the functional floodplain are defined with its presence noted in subsequent analysis.
Airport public safety zones	Development is unlikely to be suitable due to safety concerns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential parcels which would be wholly within the extent of the safety zone have not been defined. • Parcels which extend partly into the safety zone are defined with its presence noted in subsequent analysis.
Strategic priority transport projects	Development is unlikely to be deliverable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential parcels which would be wholly within the extent of a strategic priority transport project have not been defined. • Parcels which extend partly into the extent of a strategic

		priority transport project are defined with its presence noted in subsequent analysis.
Common Land	The Commons Act 2006.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential parcels which would be wholly within the extent of common land have not been identified. • Parcels which extend partly into areas of common land are defined with its presence noted in subsequent analysis.
Historic Parks and Garden	National Planning Policy Framework paragraphs 126 and 132.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential parcels which would be wholly within the extent of the Historic Park and Garden have not been defined. • Parcels which extend partly into the Historic Park and Garden are defined with its presence noted in subsequent analysis.
Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM)	National Planning Policy Framework paragraphs 126 and 132.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential parcels which would be wholly within the extent of the SAM have not been defined. • Parcels which extend partly into the SAM are defined with its presence noted in subsequent analysis.
Conservation Area	Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990. Development is unlikely to be suitable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential parcels which would be wholly within the extent of the Conservation Area have not been defined. • Parcels which extend partly into the Conservation Area are defined with its presence noted in subsequent analysis.
National Trust ownership or covenant interest	Development is unlikely to be deliverable. ¹⁶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential parcels which would be wholly within areas owned by the National Trust or where the organisation holds a convenient restricting development have not been defined. • Parcels which extend partly into these areas are defined

¹⁶ The National Trust has the benefit of restrictive covenants on land at Ockwells Manor, Ockwells Road, Maidenhead. The covenant prevent development without their consent. The National Trust actively defend the covenant.

		with its presence noted in subsequent analysis.
Woodland	Development is unlikely to be feasible. National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 118 (ancient woodland).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodland and other significant treed areas have been excluded from potential parcels. • Its edge would be considered for the boundary for adjoining parcels.
Waterbody	Development is unlikely to be feasible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water bodies have been excluded from potential parcels. • Its edge would be considered for the boundary for adjoining parcels.
Developed area	Development is unlikely to be deliverable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing developed areas which do not afford a realistic opportunity for planned further development have been excluded from potential parcels. • Its edge would be considered for the boundary for adjoining parcels.
Education facility	Development is unlikely to be deliverable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parcels which contain education facilities with no plans for their relocation have not been defined. • Its edge would be considered for the boundary of adjoining parcels.



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Combined extent of hard constraints and identified
(excluding developed areas and education facilities)



Stage 2: The five Green Belt purposes

1. To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas

- 3.6 The first Green Belt purpose seeks to protect against the uncontrolled expansion of large built up areas. What constitutes a large built up area is not defined.
- 3.7 The Green Belt in the Royal Borough forms part of the Metropolitan Green Belt which surrounds London. There is no doubt that London constitutes a large built up area. Avoiding the outward sprawl of London is achieved not simply by constraining the growth of London at its margins but equally by constraining settlements in the Green Belt themselves growing so that they progressively erode the countryside around London (and possibly join up with London).
- 3.8 The assessment considered large built up areas to comprise all settlements which are excluded from the Green Belt as their status was based on their built characteristics. A list of excluded settlements within the Royal Borough and those referenced in surrounding authorities is provided in Table 2. Settlements are only listed where they are within 5km of a defined parcel.

Table 2: Large Built up areas	
RBWM	Neighbouring Local Authorities
Ascot/North Ascot/South Ascot	Bagshot (Surrey Heath BC)
Cookham	Bourne End/Cores End/Well End (Wycombe DC)
Cookham Rise	Bracknell (Bracknell Forest BC)
Datchet	Brans Hill (Slough BC)
Eton	Chavey Down (Bracknell Forest BC)
Eton Wick	Egham/Englefield Green (Runnymede BC)
Maidenhead/Cox Green/Braywick	Flackwell Heath (Wycombe DC)
Old Windsor	Langley (Slough BC)
Sunningdale	Lightwater (Surrey Heath BC)
Sunninghill	Martins Heron (Bracknell Forest BC)
Windsor	Marlow (Wycombe DC)
Wraysbury	Newell Green/Hayley Green (Bracknell Forest BC)
-	Stanwell (Spelthorne DC)
-	Stanwell Moor (Spelthorne DC)
-	Slough/Burnham (Slough BC and South Bucks DC)
-	Staines-upon-Thames (Runnymede BC and Spelthorne DC)
-	Trumps Green Runnymede DC)
-	Virginia Water (Runnymede BC)
-	Windlesham (Surrey Heath BC)
-	Wooburn/Wooburn Green (Wycombe DC)

- 3.9 The assessment has adopted the definition of sprawl to be “spread out over a large area in an untidy or irregular way.” The assessment of this purpose considers two matters:

1. The parcels relationship with the adjoining settlement and any others in proximity
2. The extent to which the parcel serves as a barrier to development

3.10 The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open.¹⁷ However the extent to which land contributes to this aim is dependant on its relationship with the wider settlement:

1. A parcel which protrudes into the open Green Belt, or extends an existing protrusion, makes a strong contribution to preventing sprawl by preventing the inefficient spread of the built up area.
2. A parcel which is enclosed by the existing settlement so that it has a limited connection to the wider Green Belt would make a lesser contribution to preventing sprawl as development could retain a compact form of settlement.

3.11 Green Belt policy states that when defining boundaries local planning authorities should define these using physical features which are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.¹⁸ A strong boundary makes a strong contribution to preventing sprawl compared to weaker boundary. Readily recognisable boundaries which are likely to be permanent include built features such as roads, railway lines and property enclosures, and landform features such as rivers and streams, woodland. Softer boundaries which lack durability might include field boundaries and tree lines.

Table 3: Assessment criteria at a glance To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas	
Consideration	Comment
The degree to which the land prevents the inefficient spread of the built up area	<p>A parcel which has a clearly demonstrable connection to the wider Green Belt is assessed as making a strong contribution to this Green Belt purpose.</p> <p>A parcel which has a weak connection to the wider Green Belt, for example by virtue of being enclosed by the existing settlement, is assessed as making a limited contribution to this Green Belt purpose.</p> <p>In making the assessment consideration has been given to the relationship with other land in the Green Belt and to the adjoining settlement (and any nearby where relevant), the presence of built development (including sporadic and ribbon development) and the visibility of the land.</p>
The strength of the existing boundary and that which could be achieved should the boundary be amended	<p>A parcel which provides a clearly defined boundary is assessed as making a strong construction to this Green Belt purpose.</p> <p>A parcel which provides a weak boundary is</p>

¹⁷ NPPF, paragraph 79.

¹⁸ NPPF, paragraph 85.

	<p>assessed as making a limited contribution to this Green Belt purpose.</p> <p>In making this assessment consideration has been given to the durability or permanence of the feature defining the existing boundary and that which might be achieved.</p>
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2. To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another

- 3.12 The second Green Belt purpose is to protect the identity of places through the prevention of coalescence. Green Belt policy does not define what is meant by towns or whether the gap between smaller settlements should equally be considered.
- 3.13 The Royal Borough is characterised by a number of separate and distinct settlements, each with their own identity and character but related by an attractive countryside setting which includes royal parkland, forests and woodlands, the Thames river valley and farmland. There has been a degree of coalescence between settlements particularly along major transport routes.
- 3.14 The assessment of this purpose considered the separation of all settlements, noting whether the separation relates to:
1. settlements which are excluded from the Green Belt (Excluded Settlements); or
 2. settlements which are washed over by the Green Belt (Green Belt Settlements).
- 3.15 The extent to which land contributes to separation has been assessed. All land between settlements makes some contribution to preventing towns from merging, with parcels which are clearly visible making the most significant contribution. It should be noted that the presence of built form within a gap may increase the contribution of the parcel, as further development would act against separation. Parcels which are enclosed by the existing settlement would make a lesser contribution to separation.
- 3.16 A list of excluded settlements and Green Belt settlements within RBWM and those referenced in surrounding authorities is provided in Table 4 and 5. Settlements are only listed where they are within 5km of a defined parcel.

Table 4: Excluded Settlements	
RBWM	Neighbouring Local Authorities
Ascot/North Ascot/South Ascot	Bagshot (Surrey Heath BC)
Cookham	Bourne End/Cores End/Well End (Wycombe DC)
Cookham Rise	Bracknell (Bracknell Forest BC)
Datchet	Brans Hill (Slough BC)
Eton	Chavey Down (Bracknell Forest BC)
Eton Wick	Egham/Englefield Green (Runnymede BC)
Maidenhead/Cox Green/Braywick	Flackwell Heath (Wycombe DC)
Old Windsor	Langley (Slough BC)
Sunningdale	Lightwater (Surrey Heath BC)
Sunninghill	Martins Heron (Bracknell Forest BC)
Windsor	Marlow (Wycombe DC)

Wraysbury	Newell Green/Hayley Green (Bracknell Forest BC)
-	Stanwell (Spelthorne DC)
-	Stanwell Moor (Spelthorne DC)
-	Slough/Burnham (Slough BC and South Bucks DC)
-	Staines-upon-Thames (Runnymede BC and Spelthorne DC)
-	Trumps Green Runnymede DC)
-	Virginia Water (Runnymede BC)
-	Windlesham (Surrey Heath BC)
-	Wooburn/Wooburn Green (Wycombe DC)

Table 5:
Green Belt Settlements (washed over by Green Belt)

RBWM	Neighbouring Local Authorities
Bisham	Bishopsgate (Runnymede DC)
Burchett's Green	Colbrook (Slough BC)
Horton	Cranbourne (Bracknell Forest BC)
Hurley	Dorney (South Bucks DC)
Waltham St Lawrence	Hare Hatch (Wokingham BC)
White Waltham	Myrke (Slough BC)
-	Poyle (Slough BC)
-	Richings Park (Slough BC)
-	Taplow (South Bucks DC)
-	Winkfield (Bracknell Forest BC)

Table 6:
Assessment criteria at a glance
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another

Consideration	Comment
The degree to which the land prevents the coalescence of settlements	<p>A parcel which has a clearly demonstrable role in separating settlements is assessed as making a strong contribution to this Green Belt purpose.</p> <p>A parcel which has no demonstrable role in separating settlements is assessed as making no contribution to this Green Belt purpose.</p> <p>In making this assessment consideration has been had to the physical distance between settlements, the visual perception to which the land contributes to the separation of settlements, and the character of the land and the level of openness (including the presence of built development).</p>
The strength of the existing separation	A parcel where development would

<p>between the settlements and that which could be achieved should development occur, including consideration of ribbon and sporadic development</p>	<p>significant reduces the physical or perceived separation between settlements is assessed as making a strong contribution to this Green Belt purpose.</p> <p>A parcel where development would not reduce the physical or perceived separation between settlements is assessed as making no contribution to this Green Belt purpose.</p>
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3. To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

- 3.17 The third Green Belt purpose considers the impact on the countryside. What constitutes countryside is not defined.
- 3.18 The note issued by the Planning Advisory Service suggests all land in the Green Belt contributes to this purpose. They advise the most useful approach is to look at the difference between urban fringe (land under the influence of the urban area) and open countryside, taking into account the type of edges and boundaries that can be achieved.
- 3.19 On this basis the assessment considered the openness of the Green Belt and the extent to which land has resisted encroachment from past development. Openness refers to the extent to which land can be considered open from the absence of built development and urbanising influences rather than from a landscape character perspective where openness might be defined through topography and the presence/absence of woodland, hedgerows and built development.
1. A parcel which displays a strong or largely rural character makes a significant contribution to preventing safeguarding the countryside by preventing encroachment.
 2. A parcel which displays an urban character or semi-urban character makes a more comparatively lower contribution to safeguarding the countryside.

Table 7:
Assessment criteria at a glance
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

Consideration	Comment
<p>The strength of the existing countryside character, including consideration of sporadic development and other urbanising influences</p>	<p>A parcel which displays an unspoilt rural character is assessed as making a strong contribution to this Green Belt purpose.</p> <p>A parcel which displays an urban or semi-urban character is assessed as making a limited contribution to this Green Belt purpose.</p> <p>In making the assessment consideration has been given to the strength of character and urban influences (including the presence/absence of built development, and the type of uses found within and adjoining the parcel).</p>

<p>The strength of the existing boundary and that which could be achieved should the boundary be amended</p>	<p>A parcel which provides a clearly defined boundary is assessed as making a strong construction to this Green Belt purpose.</p> <p>A parcel which provides a weak boundary is assessed as making a limited contribution to this Green Belt purpose.</p> <p>In making this assessment consideration has been given to the durability or permanence of the feature defining the existing boundary and that which might be achieved.</p>
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4. To preserve the setting and special qualities of historic towns

- 3.20 The fourth Green Belt purpose seeks to protect the setting of historic settlements by retaining the surrounding undeveloped land or the landscape context. Green Belt policy does not define what is meant by towns or whether the smaller historic places should equally be considered.
- 3.21 As advised in the note issued by the Planning Advisory Service, this purpose is relevant to few places in practice as in many instances more recent development is likely to have occurred between the historic core area and the Green Belt.
- 3.22 Within the Royal Borough there are a number of historic places where land in the Green Belt makes a strong contribution to their setting. This most notably includes the towns of Windsor and Eton.
- 3.23 The assessment of this purpose considered the setting of all historic settlements as defined by a conservation area designation, noting whether the setting relates to a settlements which are excluded from the Green Belt (Excluded Settlements) or settlements which are washed over by the Green Belt (Green Belt Settlements). Whether a conservation area represents a historic settlement is informed by whether it relates to the core area. Conservation areas relating to a non-core area are not considered relevant to the assessment. The extent to which land contributes to setting has been assessed with regard to both the immediate context and longer distance views.
- 3.24 A list of historic places within RBWM and those referenced in surrounding authorities is provided in Table 8 and Table 9. Places are only listed where they are within 2km of a defined parcel.
- 3.25 For the avoidance of doubt, the assessment of this purpose has not considered the setting of individual listed buildings, scheduled ancient monuments and historic parks and gardens. The impact of development on these features is considered under detailed constraints, alongside impacts on conservation areas which do not relate to the core area of a settlement.

**Table 8:
Historic Places: Excluded Settlements**

RBWM	Neighbouring Local Authorities
Cookham	Englefield Green (Runnymede BC)
Datchet	Marlow (Wycombe DC)
Eton	-
Windsor	-

**Table 9:
Historic Places: Green Belt Settlements**

RBWM	Neighbouring Local Authorities
Bray	Dorney (South Bucks DC)
Burchetts Green	Little Marlow (Wycombe DC)
Cookham Dean	Taplow (South Bucks DC)
Holyport	-
Littlewick Green	-
Waltham St Lawrence	-
White Waltham	-

**Table 10:
Assessment criteria at a glance
To preserve the setting and special qualities of historic towns**

Consideration	Comment
The degree to which land contributes to the setting of a historic place	<p>A parcel which has a clearly demonstrable connection to the historic settlement or its setting is assessed as making a strong contribution to this Green Belt purpose.</p> <p>A parcel which has no demonstrable connection to a historic settlement or its setting is assessed as making no contribution to this Green Belt purpose.</p> <p>In making the assessment consideration has been given to views from and to the settlement (including whether they are unspoilt or unobstructed), the character of the land and the level of openness.</p>

5. To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

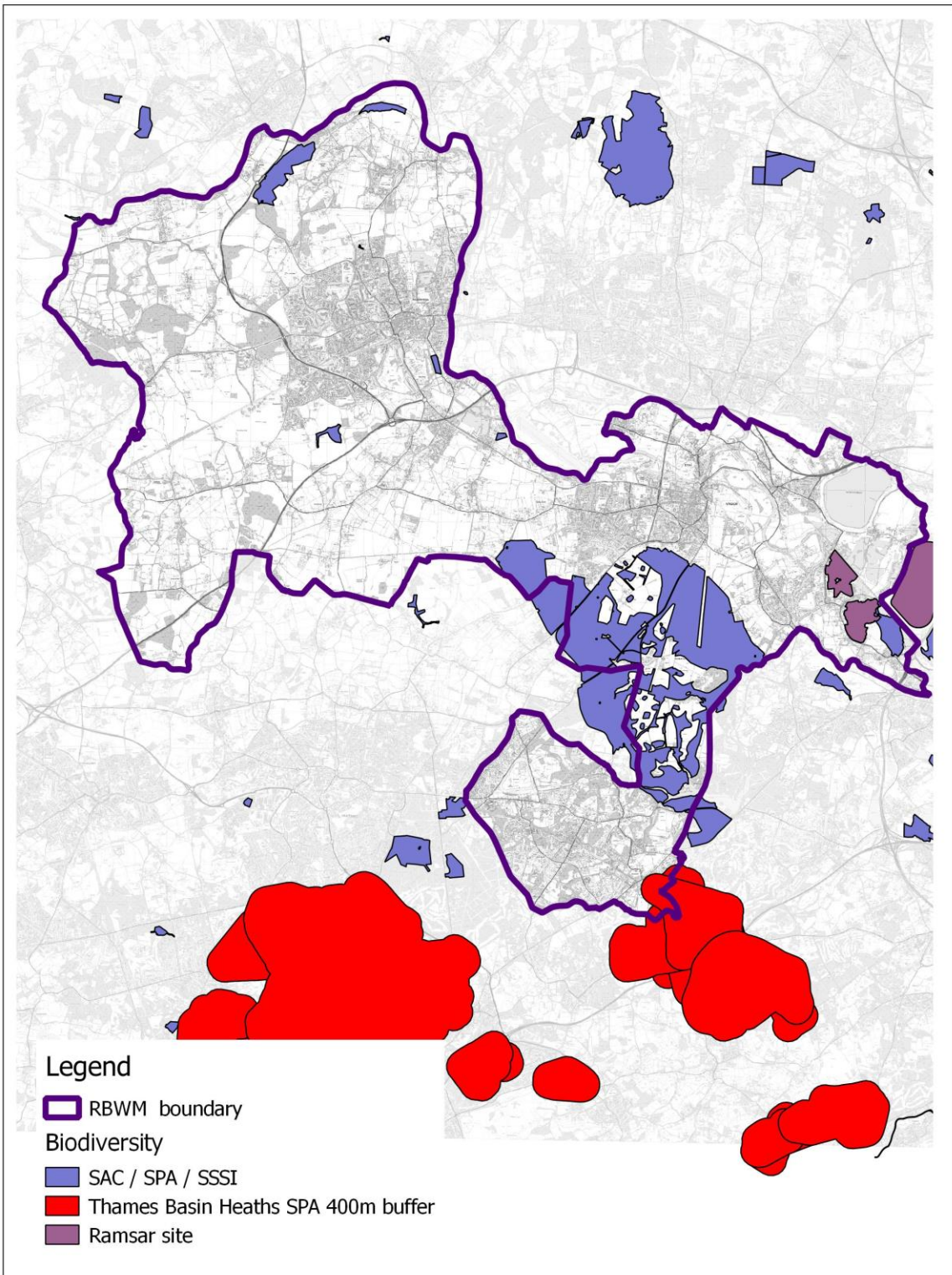
3.26 The fifth Green Belt purpose is to assist in urban regeneration by restricting the availability of land in other areas. The note issued by the Planning Advisory Service suggests that land in the Green Belt will achieve this purpose to the same extent. Any assessment will not therefore enable a distinction between different land parcels.

- 3.27 On this basis no assessment has been made of parcels with regards to this purpose. Notwithstanding this, for completion the study highlights parcels which are relevant to regeneration initiatives supported in existing development plan policy, namely those at Maidenhead town centre and Ascot High Street. Regeneration opportunities are considered in the Edge of Settlement Analysis: Part 2 Constraints, Opportunities and Delivery Assessment.

Stage 3: Presenting the assessment

- 3.28 Each parcel was assessed against four of the five Green Belt purposes. A pro-forma was prepared to capture information on each parcel in a consistent and transparent way. A copy of the pro-forma can be found in Appendix B.
- 3.29 The results of the assessment for each Green Belt purpose has been categorised as:
- a) No contribution
 - b) Limited contribution
 - c) Moderate contribution
 - d) Strong contribution
 - e) Very strong contribution
- 3.30 An overall conclusion for each parcel is also provided. It should be noted that parcels which is assessed as contributing to a greater number of Green Belt purposes are not automatically more important than those which contribute to fewer.

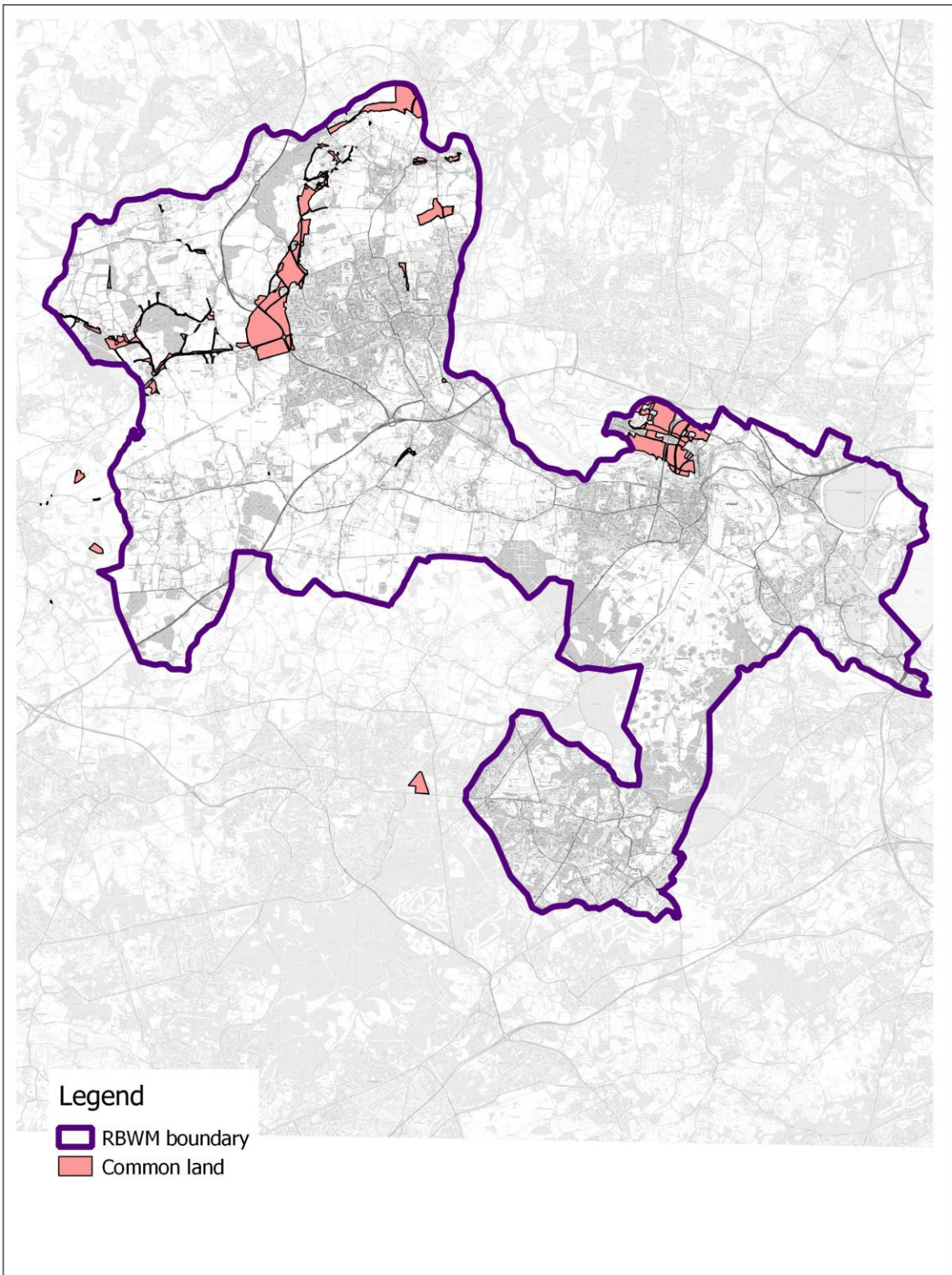
Appendix A Maps of Constraints



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Ordnance Survey 100018817

Biodiversity

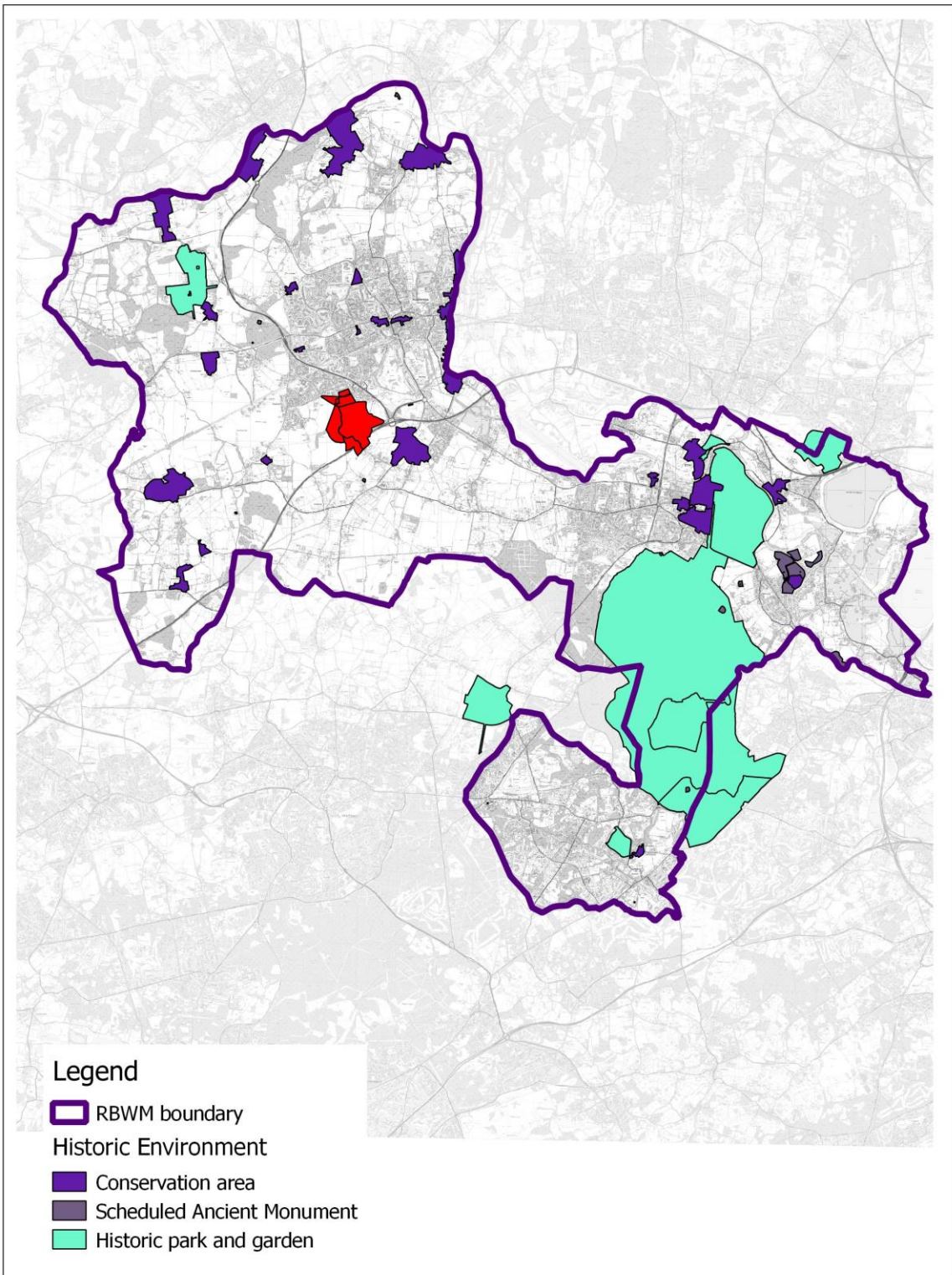




Common lane

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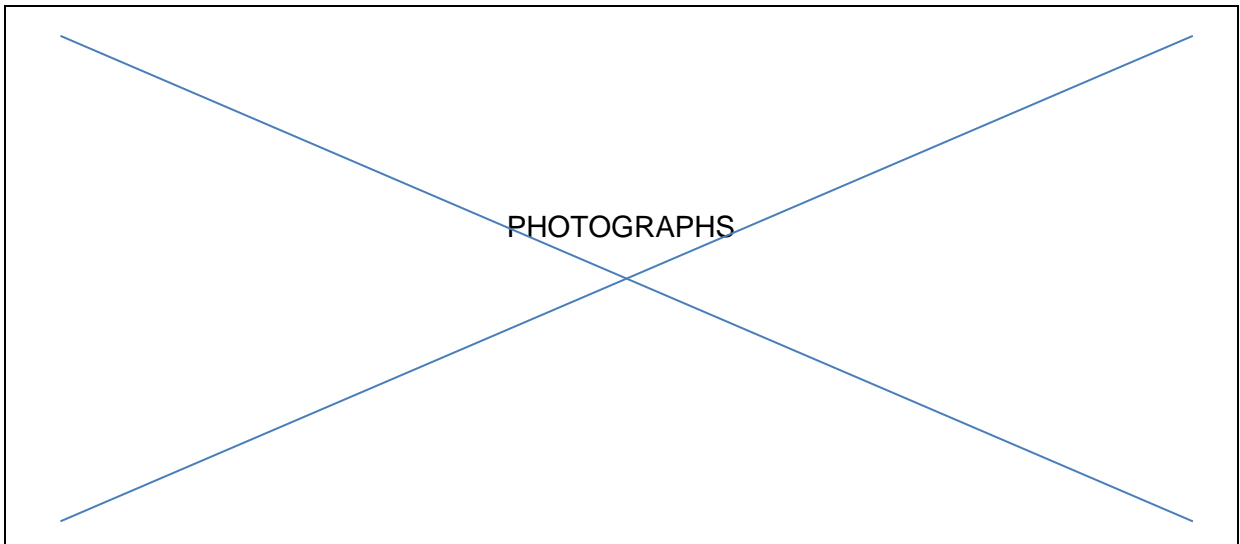
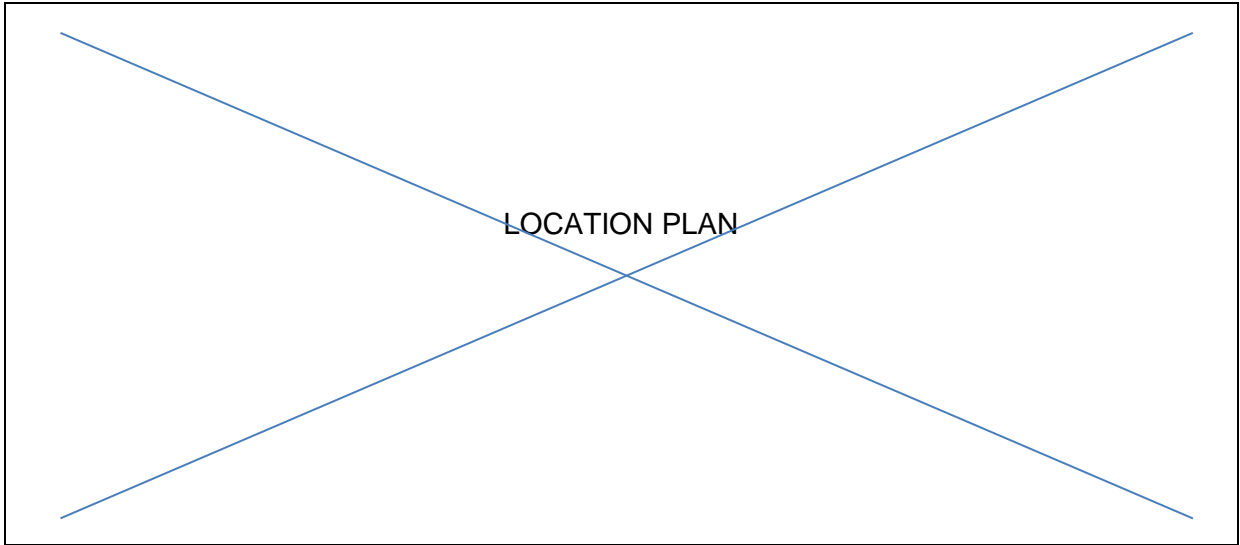
Heritage environment

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Appendix B
Assessment Pro-forma

Parcel Reference and Name



To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	
Consideration	Assessment
The degree to which the land prevents the inefficient spread of the built up area	
The strength of the existing boundary and that which could be achieved should the boundary be amended	
Conclusion	

To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	
Consideration	Assessment
The degree to which the land prevents the coalescence of settlements	
The strength of the existing separation between the settlements and that which could be achieved should development occur, including consideration of ribbon and sporadic development	
Conclusion	

To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	
Consideration	Assessment
The strength of the existing countryside character, including consideration of sporadic development and other urbanising influences	
The strength of the existing boundary and that which could be achieved should the boundary be amended	
Conclusion	

To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	
Consideration	Assessment
The degree to which land contributes to the setting of a historic place	
Conclusion	

To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land (OBSERVATION ONLY)	
Proximity to regeneration initiatives supported in existing development plan policy	

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Overall conclusion

Appendix B:
Drat Constraints, Opportunities and Delivery Assessment

Edge of Settlement Analysis

Part 2

Constraints, Opportunities and Delivery Assessment

Draft Methodology

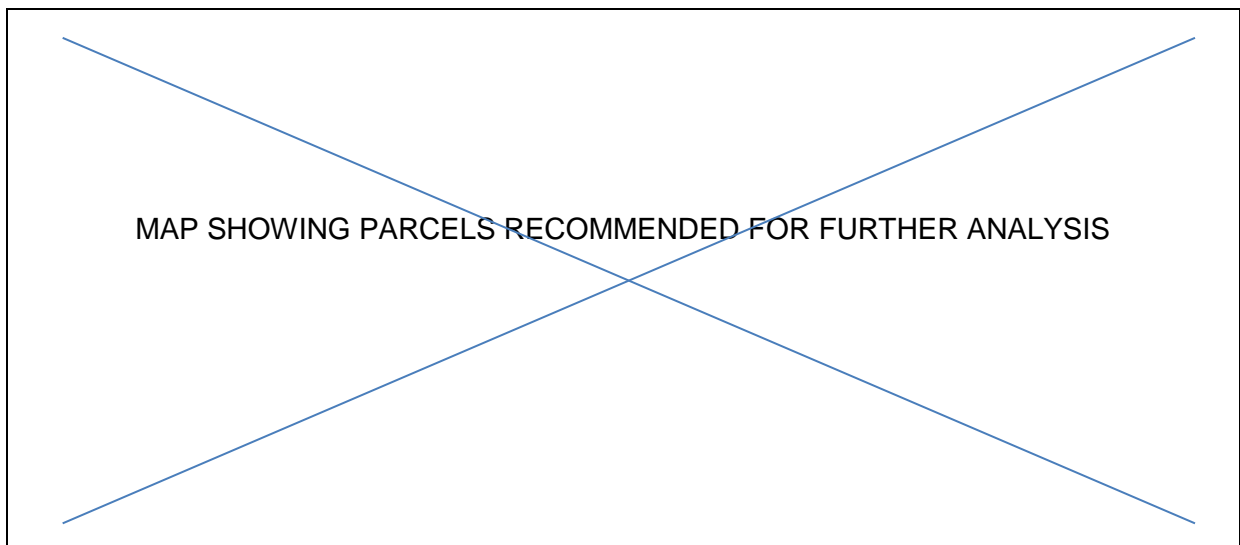
1.0 Introduction

Purpose of the study

- 1.1 This assessment is the second part of a process which considers the suitability of land on the edge of settlements which are themselves excluded from the Green Belt for development. The form of development considered is major residential or commercial development.
- 1.2 This part of the process specifically considers the development potential of those land parcels which have been assessed as contributing less to the purposes of Green Belt as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). In doing this the assessment considers a wide range of factors including constraints, opportunities and matters which affect delivery.
- 1.3 The outcome of this assessment will identify those areas which are more or less suitable for development. This information will be used to inform site allocations within the Borough Local Plan.

Edge of Settlement Analysis: Part 1 Green Belt Purpose Assessment

- 1.4 The Edge of Settlement Analysis: Part 1 Green Belt Purpose Assessment formed the first part of the process which considered the suitability of land on the edge of settlements by specifically considering how land contributed to the purposes of Green Belt as defined in the Framework.
- 1.5 The outcome of this first study was to identify those parcels of land which make a comparatively lower contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt. Having identified these areas, this Edge of Settlement Analysis: Part 2 Constraints, Opportunities and Delivery Assessment continues to consider the wider suitability of the site.
- 1.6 In total [NUMBER TO BE INSERTED] parcels were recommended for further analysis. A map showing these parcels is provided below.



2.0 Policy context

National Planning Policy Framework

- 2.1 In England, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) sets out the government's policy on planning including the context in which Local Plans must be prepared. Being consistent with national policy is one of the tests against which Local Plans are examined.
- 2.2 At the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development which for plan making means that local planning authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area. Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change, unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole; or specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.¹⁹ Examples of specific policies in the Framework which restrict development include sites protected under the Birds and Habitats Directives and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space; designated heritage assets; and locations at risk of flooding.²⁰
- 2.3 The Framework outlines 12 core planning principles.²¹ Amongst these principles are that planning should
1. Take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it;
 2. Support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change, and encourage the reuse of existing resources, including conversion of existing buildings, and encourage the use of renewable resources (for example, by the development of renewable energy);
 3. Contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. Allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework;
 4. Encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value;
 5. Promote mixed use developments, and encourage multiple benefits from the use of land in urban and rural areas, recognising that some open land can perform many functions (such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, carbon storage, or food production);
 6. Conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations; and
 7. Actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable.
- 2.4 In addition to establishing the core planning principles, the Framework sets out detailed policy on a wide range of matters. A summary of the policy relating to Green Belt is provided in the Edge of Settlement Analysis: Part 1 Green Belt Purpose Assessment. A summary of

¹⁹ NPPF, paragraph 14.

²⁰ NPPF, footnote 9.

²¹ NPPF, paragraph 17.

those matters which are considered to be relevant to this study is provided in Section 3.0 Methodology, Appendix A and Appendix B.

National Planning Practice Guidance

2.5 The government has published National Planning Practice Guidance (the Guidance) to expand and clarify policy within the Framework. The Guidance is an online resource and subject to being updated. The following guidance is considered relevant to this study.

1. Climate change
2. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment
3. Flood risk and coastal change
4. Hazardous substances
5. Health and wellbeing
6. Land affected by contamination
7. Land stability
8. Light pollution
9. Minerals
10. Natural environment
11. Noise
12. Open space, sports and recreation facilities, public rights of way and local green space
13. Transport evidence base in plan making and decision taking
14. Tree Preservation Orders and trees in conservation areas
15. Viability
16. Waste
17. Water supply, waste water and water quality

2.6 Given the information from this study will be used to inform site allocations, it is important to note that for a site to be considered available for development there must be confidence that it can be delivered. Generally only land that is controlled by a developer or landowner who has expressed an intention to develop, or the landowner has expressed an intention to sell can be considered available.²² The land must also be capable of being developed in a timely fashion.²³

National Planning Policy for Waste

2.7 The National Planning Policy for Waste (2014) builds upon the Waste Management Plan for England which sets out the Government's ambition to work towards a more sustainable and efficient approach to resource use and management. Amongst other matters, the guidance advocates meeting needs for the management of waste streams including the adequate provision for waste disposal.

Borough Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation (January 2014)

2.8 The council undertook the Borough Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation from January to March 2014. Question 20 asked how important consultees considered a range of factors to be in considering the suitability of areas in the Green Belt for housing. The results are presented and summarised below.

2.9 In summary, factors considered most important to respondents were:

- Flooding;

²² NPPG, Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment, ID 3-020-20140306.

²³ NPPG, Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment, ID 3-021-20140306.

- Prominence from within the Green Belt; and
- Wildlife.

2.10 The least important factors were:

- Minerals extraction; and
- Environmental quality.

Table 1:
Results of Question 20 of the Borough Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation January 2014

Factor	Importance (%)				
	1 Low	2	3	4	5 High
Avoiding areas which are more distant from services and facilities	9.3	11.3	18.0	18.0	43.3
Avoiding areas with higher quality agricultural land	6.7	4.7	18.0	16.0	54.7
Avoiding areas which are more important for wildlife	3.3	4.0	14.6	17.2	60.9
Avoiding areas which are visually more prominent within the Green Belt	4.6	6.0	16.6	9.9	62.9
Avoiding areas which are at higher risk of flooding	1.3	0.6	7.6	10.8	79.6
Avoiding areas which are visually more prominent from within historic areas	3.5	4.2	20.8	22.9	48.6
Avoiding areas where gravel or sand could be extracted in the future	19.6	17.6	25.0	14.9	23.0
Avoiding areas with lower environmental quality such those affected by noise	13.2	16.6	21.9	13.9	34.4

2.11 Consultees were not specifically asked to comment on the methodology and its application. The consultation nonetheless provided an opportunity for interested parties to submit comments. A summary of comments is provided below.

- Greater clarity is needed on the methodology
- A common methodology should be used across all local authorities
- The assessment of Green Belt should consider all land in the borough not just land on the edge of excluded settlements
- The methodology should consider how land contributes to creating sustainable patterns of development
- The release of land on the edge of some settlements (e.g. Maidenhead) should be favoured over others
- Land owned by the Crown Estate should not be considered a strategic constraint . Crown land should be considered like other ownerships
- Support for heritage assets being a strategic constraint
- More work is required to assess potential impacts on heritage assets
- Land in the function floodplain should be rejected
- All land that floods should be rejected
- Locations within Flood Zone 3a and 2 should not be excluded from further consideration and should be considered through the application of the sequential and exceptions tests

- The assessment of Green Belt is not comprehensive of all purposes of including land in the Green Belt
- The assessment of gaps should take into account the visibility and function of the gap, not just its size
- The assessment of gaps should consider those between all settlements and not just excluded settlements
- The application of constraints appears inconsistent
- The assessment should consider access to services and facilities.

2.12 Comments regarding the treatment of the Crown Estate and the assessment of how land contributes to the purposes of the Green Belt are addressed in the Edge of Settlement Analysis: Part 1 Green Belt Purpose Assessment. The weight to be attached to other factors will be assessed on a site by sites basis within this study.

2.13 To support the Borough Local Plan process, the council has identified sustainability objectives. These are used to identify the sustainability implications of policy options, helping to ensure that overall the plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. A list of the sustainability objectives is provided below.

Table 2 Sustainability Objectives
1. Ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent and affordable home (SOC1)
2. Reduce and manage the risk of flooding and the resulting detriment to people, property and the environment (ENV1).
3. Contribute to reducing the effects of climate change through reducing emissions of greenhouse gases, and ensure that the borough is prepared for its impacts (ENV2)
4. Protect and improve the health and well-being of the population and reduce inequalities in health (SOC2)
5. Encourage increased engagement in cultural and sporting activity across all sectors of the community (SOC3)
6. Reduce poverty and social exclusion and close the gap between the most deprived areas and the rest (SOC4)
7. Improve accessibility to key services and facilities (SOC5)
8. Reduce air pollution and the proportion of the local population subject to noise pollution (ENV3)
9. Conserve and enhance biodiversity (ENV4)
10. Conserve and enhance the historic environment and cultural heritage (including architectural and archaeological heritage), its setting and access to it (SOC6)
11. Conserve and enhance the countryside and the landscape (ENV5)
12. Conserve and enhance local environmental quality and distinctiveness, including townscape character (ENV6)
13. Promote high quality design and sustainable construction (ENV7)
14. Improve travel choice, reduce the need for travel by car and shorten the length and duration of (EC7)
15. Ensure the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed, and reusing buildings (ENV8)
16. Ensure the prudent use and sustainable management of man-made and natural resources (ENV9)
17. Increase energy efficiency, and the proportion of energy generated from renewable resources in the borough (ENV10)
18. Conserve and enhance soil quality (ENV11)
19. Ensure high and stable levels of employment (EC1)

20. Sustain and promote economic growth and competitiveness (EC2)
21. Encourage smart economic growth (EC3)
22. Sustain and promote the visitor economy and its attraction (EC4).
23. Raise educational achievement levels and develop opportunities for everyone to acquire skills needed to find and remain in work (EC5).
24. Manage waste more sustainably by using treatment techniques higher up the waste hierarchy (ENV 12)
25. Conserve and improve water quality and quantity in water courses including groundwater and to achieve sustainable water resource management (ENV13)
26. Prevent and reduce crime and disorder, and the fear of crime (SOC7)
27. Promote and support the rejuvenation of Maidenhead town centre (EC6)

Summary: Policy Context

2.14 The Framework, the Guidance and other national policy documents identify a wide range of factors that should be considered when assessing which sites are more or less suitable for development. Neither the Framework nor the Guidance detail how such an assessment should be conducted. Each local authority is thereby required to establish a methodology which is appropriate to the local context.

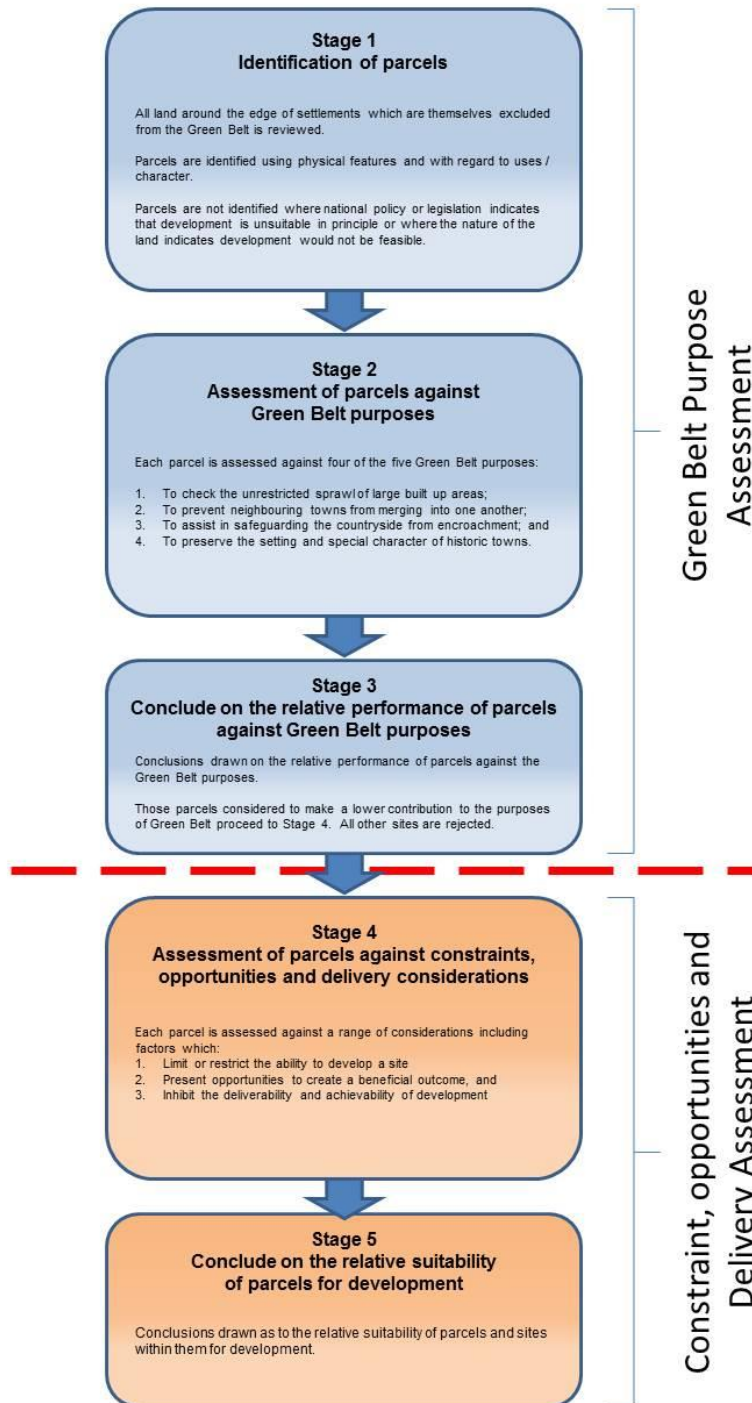
2.15 Key points to note are:

- The assessment should consider whether land is 'available' for development and whether it is 'achievable'. The Framework and Guidance clearly advise that only land which is known to be available and achievable can be considered suitable for development and potential allocation.
- The assessment should consider opportunities which arise from development as well as factors which prevent or inhibit development. The Framework clearly identifies area where development should be restricted.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 An overview of the methodology used to assess the suitability of land for development is set out in the figure below. The following section sets out the approach used in Stages 4 and 5.

3.2 The detailed methodology used in in Stages 1 to 3 can be found within the Edge of Settlement Analysis: Part 1 Green Belt Purpose Analysis.



Stage 4: Constraints, opportunities and delivery considerations

- 3.3 As outlined in Section 2, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development which for plan making means that local planning authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole; or specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted.
- 3.4 In deciding how to allocate sites, the Framework instructs that allocations of land should prefer land of lesser environmental value, however from the presumption it is clear that consideration can be given to both constraints and opportunities presented by sites. The definition of sustainable development and the sustainability objectives also acknowledge that sustainability is a balance between social and economic needs and environmental impacts.

Constraints

- 3.5 Constraints are factors which limit or restrict the ability to develop a site. In some instances constraints will prevent development, whilst in others they might limit or influence the type, form or capacity of a site.
- 3.6 Parcels were not identified where national policy or legislation indicates development would be unsuitable in principle at stage 1, or where the nature of the land indicates development would not be feasible or deliverable. Further details can be found in the Edge of Settlement Analysis: Part 1 Green Belt Purpose Analysis.
- 3.7 The assessment of constraints has considered factors within the following themes:
- Flooding
 - Biodiversity
 - Landscape
 - Heritage
 - Land use compatibility
 - Resources
 - Access and highways
 - Infrastructure
- 3.8 Further explanation of these factors is provided in Appendix A.

Opportunities

- 3.9 Opportunities are beneficial factors. These might be the result of existing factors such as accessibility of a site to facilities, or they might be created through development itself such as in the case of the provision of a new community facility.
- 3.10 At an urban design level, good planning places the right things in the right places, supporting these with well related infrastructure and routes to move between places.
- 3.11 Drawing from the Framework, Guidance and the Borough Local Plan process to date, including the sustainability appraisal, the assessment of opportunities has considered the following beneficial factors:
- The potential to improve the setting of a heritage asset
 - The potential to create or improve public access to a heritage asset
 - The potential to remove unneighbourly uses

- The potential to remove eyesores
- The potential to create or improve public rights of way
- The potential to expand employment locations
- The potential to re-use of previously developed land
- The potential for mixed use development
- The potential to provide or improve community facilities
- The potential to support the regeneration initiatives at Maidenhead town centre and Ascot High Street
- The level of accessibility to existing services and facilities, including consideration of their capacity

3.12 Further explanation of these factors is provided in Appendix B.

Deliverability considerations

3.13 Notwithstanding the potential sustainability credentials of a site, to allocate a site for development it must be 'available' and 'achievable'.

3.14 The Guidance indicates that for a site to be considered available for development there must be confidence that there are no legal or ownership problems, such as unresolved multiple ownerships, ransom strips tenancies or operational requirements of landowners. This will often mean that the land is controlled by a developer or landowner who has expressed an intention to develop, or the landowner has expressed an intention to sell.²⁴

3.15 A site may be considered achievable for development where there is a reasonable prospect that the particular type of development will be developed on the site at a particular point in time. This is essentially a judgement about the economic viability of a site, and the capacity of the developer to complete and let or sell the development over a certain period.²⁵

Stage 5: Presenting the assessment

3.16 Each parcel was assessed against the constraint, opportunities and delivery considerations. A pro-forma was prepared to capture information on each parcel in a consistent and transparent way. A copy of the pro-forma can be found in Appendix C.

3.17 An overall conclusion for each parcel is also provided. This recommends whether the parcel, or part of the parcel, is more or less suitable for development. This information will be used to inform site allocations within the Borough Local Plan.

²⁴ NPPG, Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment, ID 3-020-20140306.

²⁵ NPPG, Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment, ID 3-021-20140306.

Appendix A:
Summary of constraint considerations

Summary of constraint considerations

A1 The following pages provide a summary of constraint considerations

Flooding

A2 Flooding is a significant constraint to development, either in principle or with regards to the layout and design considerations. The floodplain of the River Thames covers a significant area of the borough due to the relatively flat topography. In addition large areas are recognised to be at risk of groundwater and other forms of flooding.

A3 The Framework advises that inappropriate development in areas of flood risk should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk. Where development is necessary it should be made safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere.

A4 Essential infrastructure and water compatible uses are the only compatible within Flood Zone 3b Functional Floodplain (following the application of the exceptions test).²⁶ More vulnerable developments, which include dwellings, are compatible in Flood Zones 3a High Probability (following the application of the exceptions test), 2 Medium Probability and 1 Low Probability.²⁷

Biodiversity

A5 Biodiversity designations are a significant constraint to development, either in principle or with regards to the layout and design considerations. The borough has a number of areas recognised for the international and national importance in addition to numerous areas which are of local importance.

A6 National legislation and the Framework advise that planning permission should not normally be granted for development which is likely to have an adverse effect on the integrity of a European site (Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection Area)²⁸ and that Ramsar sites (Wetlands of International Importance) should be protected similarly.²⁹ In addition, planning permission should not normally be granted for development which is likely to have an adverse effect on a Site of Special Scientific Interest (either individually or in combination with other developments).³⁰

A7 With regards to the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, Natural England advice is that the recreational impacts which result from residential development cannot be mitigated within 400m of the designation. Beyond this development can be permitted provided appropriate mitigation is in place. Sustainable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) is one mitigation mechanism. The Framework advises that sites identified as compensatory measures for adverse effects on European sites should be given the same protection as the European sites themselves.³¹

A8 Ancient woodland is an area that has been wooded continuously since at least

²⁶ Technical Guidance for the National Planning Policy Framework, Table 1.

²⁷ Technical Guidance for the National Planning Policy Framework, Table 1.

²⁸ The Conservation of Habitat and Species Regulations 2010.

²⁹ NPPF, paragraph 118.

³⁰ Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and NPPF, paragraph 118.

³¹ NPPF, paragraph 118.

1600 AD. The Framework advises that planning permission should not normally be granted for development which results in the loss of deterioration of irreplaceable habitats including ancient woodland and aged or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland.³²

- A9 A significant number of trees across the borough are protected by Tree Preservation Orders. These orders are used to protect selected trees and woodlands if their removal would have a significant impact on the local environment and its enjoyment by the public. In addition to trees the council has had a duty to protect important hedgerows in the countryside.

Landscape

- A10 The Framework highlights the importance of protecting and enhancing valued landscapes and the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.³³
- A11 The borough's landscape and countryside are highly valued. This includes the River Thames corridor which flows through the borough for around 25 miles. The council's Landscape Character Assessment describes and classifies the landscape, and is used to inform the sensitivity of the landscape to change.

Heritage

- A12 The borough has a rich heritage some of which relates to the area's long association with the Crown. Areas of historical significance are protected through being designated as conservation areas, scheduled ancient monuments or registered parks and gardens. Individual buildings are protected through being listed. The local sites and monuments record indicates where archaeological finds have been uncovered in the past and can be used to indicate further archaeological potential.
- A13 The Framework recognises that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance.³⁴ Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting. Substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of designated heritage assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, grade I and II* listed buildings, grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, should be wholly exceptional.³⁵

Land use compatibility

- A14 It is important to consider whether or not new development would be compatible with existing or proposed developments. Key considerations will relate to the potential impact on potential future occupiers from matters such as odour, noise and air quality.
- A15 Within the borough areas which are subject to environmental impacts relate to the main road and train routes. Vehicle emissions have also lead to the designation of four Air Quality Management Areas where particular pollutants will be higher than recommend levels. These include Maidenhead town centre and one centres on Royal Windsor Way which forms the main vehicular route from the M4 motorway into Windsor. Additionally, the council is aware of numerous sites where past or current activities may have resulted in some degree of contamination. The Framework acknowledges that the effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, the natural environment or general amenity, and the potential

³² NPPF, paragraph 118.

³³ NPPF, paragraph 17 and 109.

³⁴ NPPF, paragraph 126.

³⁵ NPPF, paragraph 132.

sensitivity of the area or proposed development to adverse effects from pollution, should be taken into account in decisions.³⁶

- A16 There is an extensive network of footpaths, bridleways and other routes throughout the borough. The presence of a public right of way does not necessarily preclude development but it would form an important consideration in considering the layout and design of any proposal.
- A17 Common land may loosely be defined as land where certain people hold beneficial rights to use land that they do not own. National legislation restricts the kind of works that can be carried out on commons.³⁷ Due to their nature and legal legislative framework common land is not suitable or available for development. Within the borough, common land can be found in proximity to Eton and Eton Wick, between northwest Maidenhead and Cookham Dean, the river frontage at Cookham, and between Maidenhead and Cookham.
- A18 The borough is home to a number of visitor attractions, including Windsor Castle, Legoland, Windsor, Ascot Racecourse, and Windsor Racecourse. These contribute to over 7 million people visiting the borough each year. The council wishes to support the continued success and evolution of the borough's distinct visitor economy.

Resources

- A19 The Framework identifies that the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land should be taken into account.³⁸ It states that local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality. Best and most versatile agricultural land comprises land in grades 1, 2 and 3a of the Agricultural Land Classification.³⁹
- A20 Within the borough, there are relatively small pockets of grade 1 around Datchet and Wraysbury, and between Maidenhead and Windsor. A significant area of grade 2 land lies to the west and north of Maidenhead. In addition there are large swathes of grade 3 land within the borough predominantly forming an extensive band running south of Maidenhead and Windsor. This will include areas of both grade 3a and grade 3b land.
- A21 The Environment Agency has identified a number groundwater Source Protection Zones within the borough. These have been identified to protect aquifers and groundwater flows including boreholes used for the public drinking water supply. The protection of groundwater from pollution, particularly potable water supplies is recognised by the Framework⁴⁰ and the Guidance.
- A22 There are five preferred areas for waste management and four preferred areas for minerals extraction/processing within the borough. All waste sites are safeguarded. The council has a list of those sites which are safeguarded by this policy.
- A23 The Minerals Safeguarding Area aims to husband the identified mineral resource to minimise unnecessary sterilisation of mineral deposits and should be considered for more significant forms of development within this area. Primary aggregates are a limited resource and permitted waste management capacity in the area is limited and so consideration should be given to the potential loss of mineral resource, processing or management facilities in the

³⁶ NPPF, paragraph 120.

³⁷ The Commons Act 2006.

³⁸ NPPF, paragraph 112.

³⁹ NPPF, Annex 2 Glossary

⁴⁰ NPPF, paragraph 109 and 156.

area. Consideration will be given to the nature of the existing use and whether such a facility is specialist in nature (and relied upon locally or nationally) and whether the impacts of its loss can be accommodated by other permitted sites.

Access and highways

- A24 The Framework recognises that all decisions should take account of whether safe and suitable access to a site can be achieved.⁴¹

Infrastructure

- A25 The capacity of the utilities services and existing infrastructure is an important factor in determining the suitability of locations for development. The utility services include water, wastewater treatment, drainage, gas and electricity. The importance of providing infrastructure to support development is recognised throughout the Framework.
- A26 All areas of the borough are within a school catchment area. The council monitors the number pupils attending school and estimate how this might change in the future. This provides an indication of where capacity issues (either surplus or shortage of school places) exist.
- A27 The Framework recognises that important role played by community facilities in social interaction and in creating healthy and inclusive communities.⁴² Decisions should guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services.

⁴¹ NPPF, paragraph 32.

⁴² NPPF, paragraph Section 8.

Appendix B:
Summary of opportunity considerations

Summary of opportunity considerations

B1 The following pages provide a summary of opportunity considerations

Heritage

B2 The presence of a heritage asset can be a constraint to development. There may be circumstances where development can be used to improve the significance of a heritage asset. This may be through achieved through physical actions such as the removal of unsympathetic development or by actions which allow greater appreciation such as providing public access.

Unneighbourly uses

B3 On occasion, uses can become established which are detrimental to the quality of the environment and cause a detrimental impact to other uses. One example would be a noisy activity in proximity to residential properties.

B4 Through the assessment process, the council wishes to ensure that new development is appropriately sited so that a nuisance does not occur. In most instances this is likely to mean avoiding planning for homes in proximity to existing activities which are considered to have an unacceptable detrimental impact. Notwithstanding this, there may be instances where the redevelopment of an existing unneighbourly use would benefit of the local environment.

Eyesores

B5 Eyesores are unsightly buildings or land. Development may present the opportunity to remove such sites, putting the land to beneficial use.

Public rights of way

B6 The presence of an existing public right of way is a factor which will be taken into account when assessing the suitability of sites, and the layout and design of any proposal.

B7 In addition to the existing network, the council wishes to also take into account the possible creation of new links which would result in improved access to the countryside to the benefit of residents.

Employment locations

B8 The presence of an existing employment estate or similar provides an opportunity for the efficient expansion of business premises.

Previously developed land

B9 The Framework prioritises the re-use of previously developed land (brownfield land), providing it is not of high environmental quality, over land which has previously been undeveloped (greenfield land).⁴³ This is identified as one of the core planning principles.

B10 Previously developed land is defined as “land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed

⁴³ NPPF, paragraph 17 and 111.

that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill purposes where provision for restoration has been made through development control procedures; land in built-up areas such as private residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously-developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape in the process of time.”⁴⁴

B11 Within the Green Belt, the Framework supports the limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development.⁴⁵

Accessibility

B12 The location of a site in terms of links to public transport and services and facilities is a dimension of sustainable development. The Framework recognises that plans should support pattern of development which, where reasonable to do so, facilitates the use of sustainable modes of transport⁴⁶ and that all decisions should take account of whether safe and suitable access to a site can be achieved.⁴⁷ Key facilities should be located within walking distance of most properties.⁴⁸

B13 National guidance within Manual for Streets advocates that walkable neighbourhoods are typically characterised by having a range of facilities within 10 minutes (up to about 800m) walking distance, but emphasises that the propensity to walk is also influenced by the quality of the walking experience. The document “Guidelines for Providing for Journeys on Foot” (IHT 2000) contains guidance on acceptable walking distances.

CIHT Provision for journeys on foot			
	Town centres	Commuting / School / Sightseeing	Elsewhere
Desirable	200m	500m	400m
Acceptable	400m	1000m	800m
Preferred Maximum	800m	2000m	1200m

Mixed development

B14 Larger scale residential developments provide an opportunity to promote a mix of uses in order to provide opportunities to undertake day-to-day activities including work on site.

Community facilities

B15 The Framework recognises that important role played by community facilities in social interaction and in creating healthy and inclusive communities.⁴⁹ Decisions should guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services. Development may also create an opportunity to provide new or improved facilities.

⁴⁴ NPPF, Annex 2 Glossary.

⁴⁵ NPPF, paragraph 89.

⁴⁶ NPPF, paragraph 30.

⁴⁷ NPPF, paragraph 32.

⁴⁸ NPPF, paragraph 38.

⁴⁹ NPPF, paragraph Section 8.

B16 As outlined above, the Framework recognises that key facilities such as primary schools and local shops should be located within walking distance of most properties.⁵⁰ Larger scale residential developments provide an opportunity to provide new facilities on site or to fund improvements to existing facilities.

Regeneration initiatives

B17 The Framework supports the identification of priority areas for regeneration.⁵¹ Development in proximity to these areas provides an opportunity for investment which could improve vitality and viability.

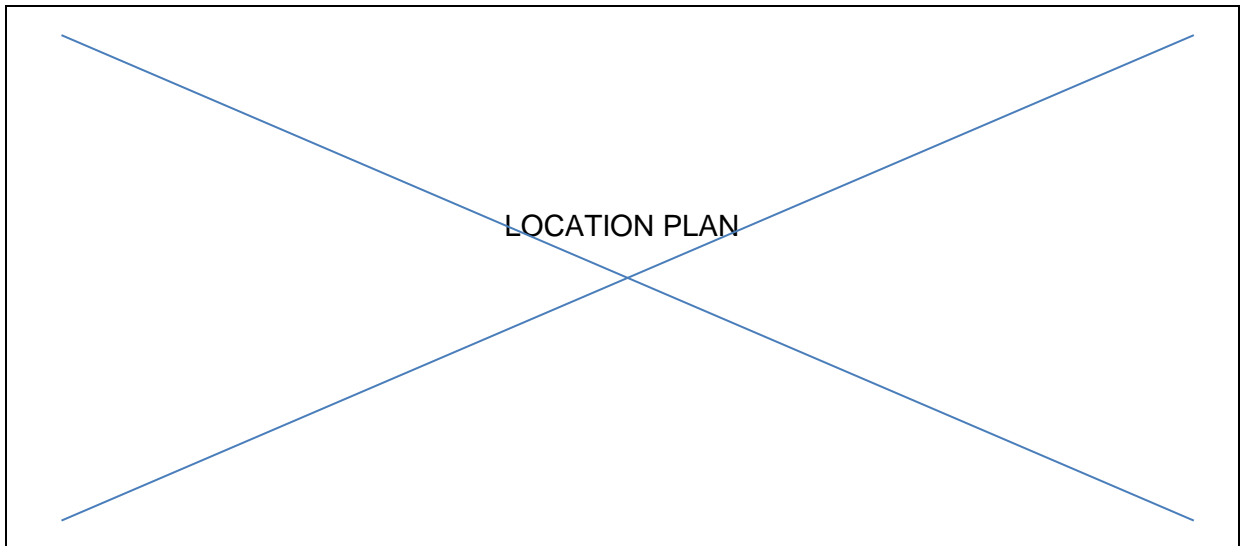
B18 Within the borough there are two regeneration initiatives supported in existing development plan policy, namely those at Maidenhead town centre and Ascot High Street.

⁵⁰ NPPF, paragraph 38.

⁵¹ NPPF, paragraph 21.

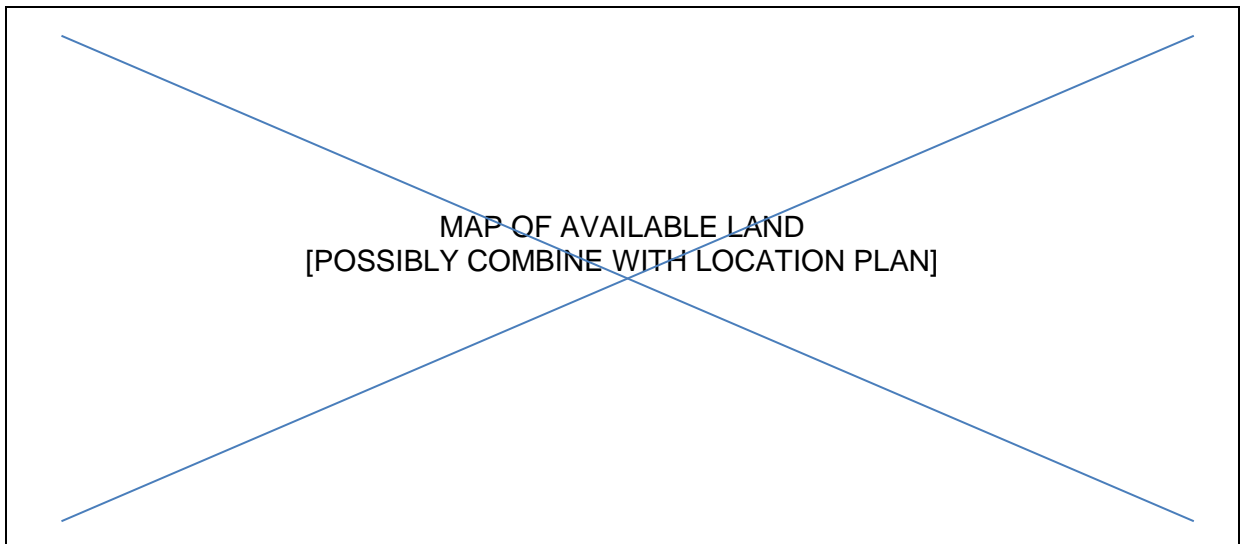
Appendix C: Assessment Pro-forma

Parcel Reference and Name



Implementation

Implementation	Availability	
	Deliverability	



Flood risk

Flood zone	FZ3b	
	FZ3a	

	FZ2	
	FZ1	
	Flood defences	
	Flood storage	
	Groundwater	
	Surface water	
	Safety	

Biodiversity		
Biodiversity	SAC	
	SPA	
	Ramsar	
	SSSI	
	TBH SPA buffer	
	SANGS	
	Ancient woodland	
	LNR	
	RIGS	
	LWS	
	Priority habitat	
	Protected species	
	TPO	
	Hedgerows	

Landscape and Townscape		
Landscape	Character	

	Topography	
	Eyesores	
	River Thames corridor	

Heritage		
Heritage	Conservation areas	
	Registered parks and gardens	
	Local listed parks and gardens	
	SAM	
	Listed buildings	
	Locally listed buildings	
	Archaeology	

Land use compatibility		
Land use compatibility	Noise	
	Contamination	
	Air quality	
	Public rights of way	
	Common land	
	Visitor attraction	

Resources		
Previously developed land	PDL	
Agriculture land quality	Grade 1, 2	
	Grade 3a and 3b	

	Grade 4 and 5	
Water	SPZ	
	Water stress	
Minerals	Safeguarded area	
	Preferred area	
	Existing site / facility	
	Safeguarded site	
Waste	Safeguarded site	
	Preferred area	
	Existing site / facility	

Access and highways		
Access and highways	Accessibility (to jobs, services and facilities)	
	Site access	
	Road network	

Regeneration and Economy		
Employment	Proximity to existing employment location	
Mixed use	Potential for mixed use development	
Regeneration	Maidenhead town centre	
	Ascot High Street	

Infrastructure		
Utilities	Electricity	
	Gas	

	Water	
	Sewage	
Schools	Schools	
Open space	Play facility	
	Sports facility	
	Parks and gardens	
	Amenity space	
	Allotment	
	Cemetery	
Community facility	Community facility	

Summary of constraints, opportunities and deliverability

~~MAP OF AREA CONSIDERED MORE SUITABLE FOR DEVELOPMENT~~