

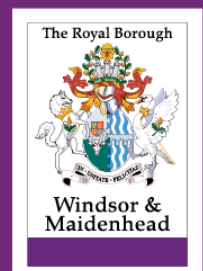
Borough Local Plan

Edge of Settlement Analysis

Part 1

Green Belt Purpose Assessment

Draft methodology
October 2015



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1 Introduction

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 The Council is now taking the detailed step of reviewing existing planning designations (for example employment land, retail need and Green Belt) to meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) that:

1. Plans are positively prepared, and
2. Plans should meet objectively assessed needs unless:
 - the impact of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the Framework as a whole, or
 - specific policies in the Framework indicate that development should be restricted.

1.3 It should be understood that the act of reviewing a designation does not in itself indicate that the designation will change, that is a review can find the existing designation remains valid.

1.4 This assessment forms part of this overall process, specifically considering how land performs against the purposes of Green Belt as defined in 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 performs against the purposes of including land in the Green Belt; and
- Identify those parcels which perform least well against the purpose of including land in the Green Belt.

1.5 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.

1.6 By focusing on land on the edge of those settlements excluded from the Green Belt, this assessment provides in depth analysis of how land performs against the purposes of the Green Belt, in the locations considered to be reasonable and comparatively sustainable compared to other options relating to Green Belt. This is considered to be proportionate and in line with the presumption in favour of sustainable development advocated in the Framework.

Study purpose at a glance

What it will do	What it wont do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyse how parcels of land performs against the defined purposes of including land in the Green Belt • Identify those parcels of land which perform least well against the purposes of including land in the Green Belt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set future development requirements • Amend the boundary of the Green Belt • Indicate whether exceptional circumstances exist which support the alteration to the boundary of the Green Belt • Indicate whether land is suitable for development • Allocate land for development

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

1.7 Having identified those parcels of land which perform least well against the purpose of the Green Belt, 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.

1.8 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 consideration of land supply including possible site allocations within the Borough Local Plan.

History of the Metropolitan Green Belt

1.9 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:

- To check the further growth of a large built up area;
- To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another; or
- To preserve the special character of a town.

1.10 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.

1.11 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⁽¹⁾ in 1974, along with areas in Buckinghamshire and Surrey.

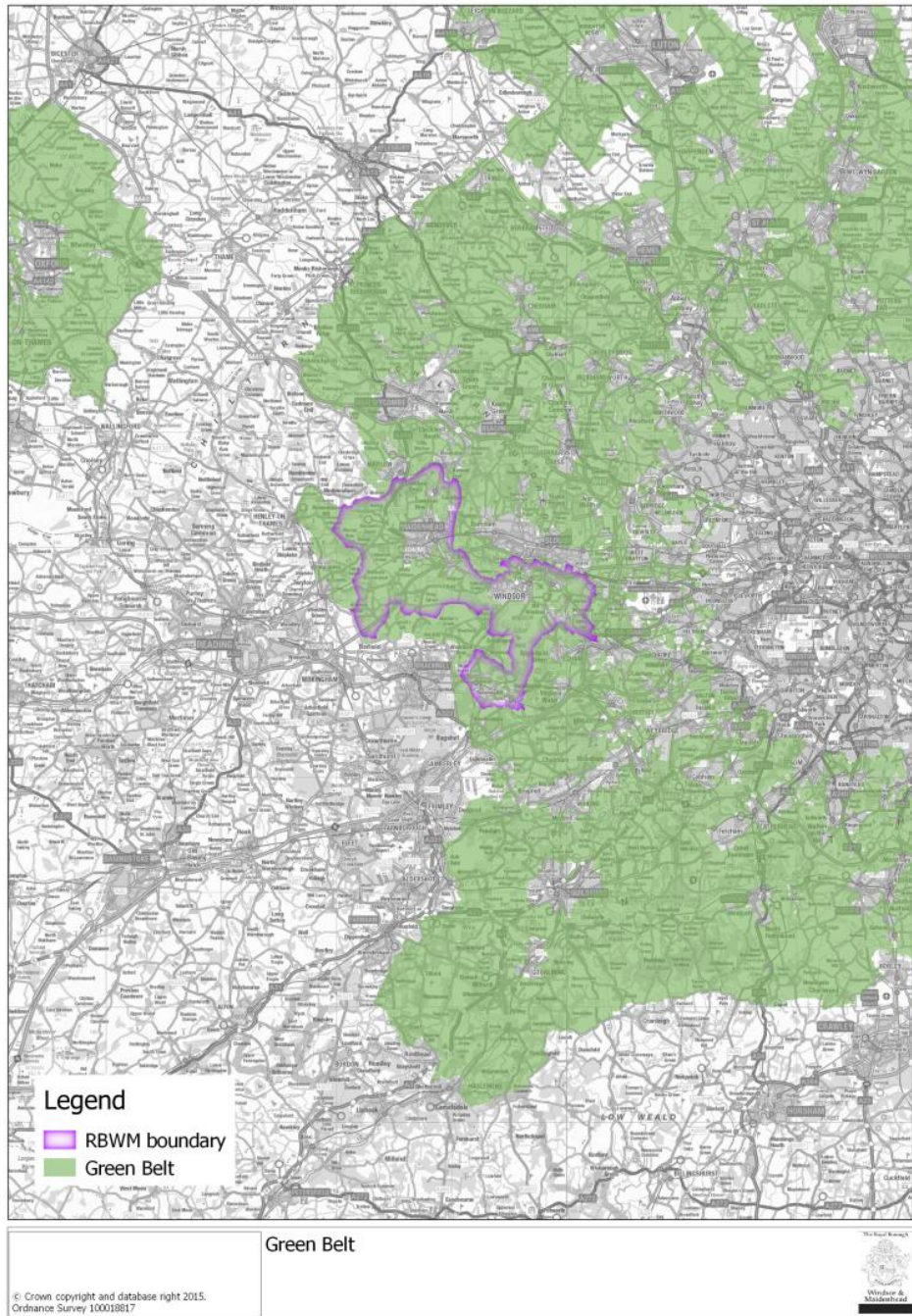
1.12 The area of Proposed Green Belt in central Berkshire remained so on an interim basis pending consideration by the Secretary of State. In 1980, the Secretary of State chose not to confirm a newly promoted Green Belt extension to Reading and not to give formal approval to those areas in central Berkshire which had been treated as Proposed Green Belt.⁽²⁾

1.13 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.

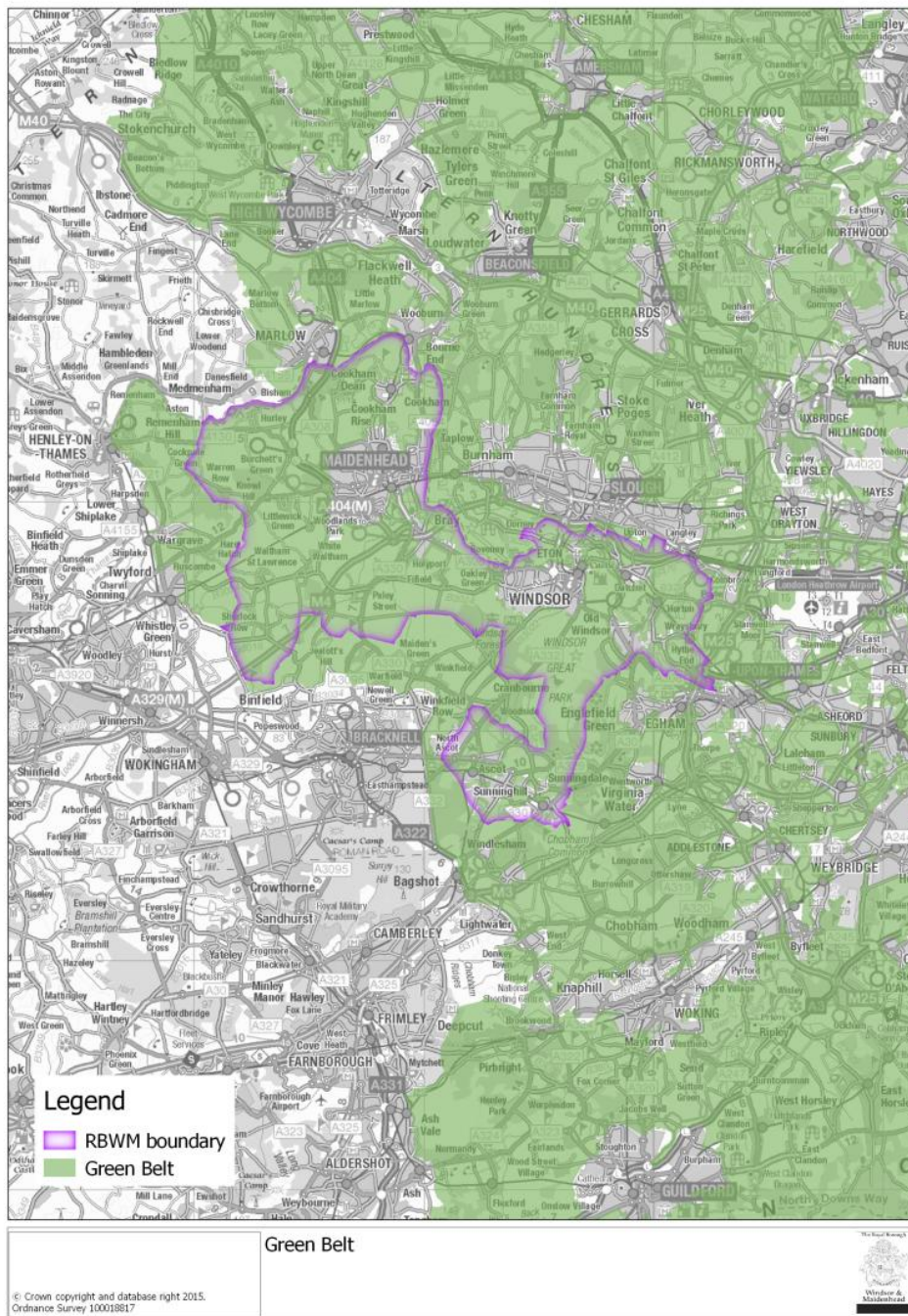
2 Central Berkshire Structure Plan, 1980.

Introduction



Map 1 Green Belt - sub-regional context

Introduction



Map 2 Green Belt - local area context

Policy context and best practice

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.

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⁾

3 NPPF, paragraph 14.

4 NPPF, footnote 9.

5 NPPF, paragraph 17.

6 NPPF, paragraph 79.

7 NPPF, paragraph 80.

8 NPPF, paragraph 81.

9 NPPF, paragraph 83.

10 NPPF, paragraph 84.

11 NPPF, paragraph 85.

Policy context and best practice

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.

ID 3-044-20141006

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.

ID 3-045-20141006

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.

ID 3-034-20141006

Policy context and best practice

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 guidance

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.

Policy context and best practice

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 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.

12 NPPF, paragraph 83.

13 NPPF, paragraph 182.

Policy context and best practice

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

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.

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 (Arup)

The following description is based on a methodology paper published in August 2015. The full study has not been published at the time of writing.

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 reviewed with no land in the Green Belt considered to inhibit planned urban regeneration schemes.

The strategic parcels will be defined using physical features.

Policy context and best practice

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

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.

As a "rule of thumb" parcels which performed strongly against one of the assessment criteria will be judged as unsuitable for further consideration.

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 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.

2.20 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.
- The first four purposes of including land in the Green Belt are now assessed.
- 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.

Policy context and best practice

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:

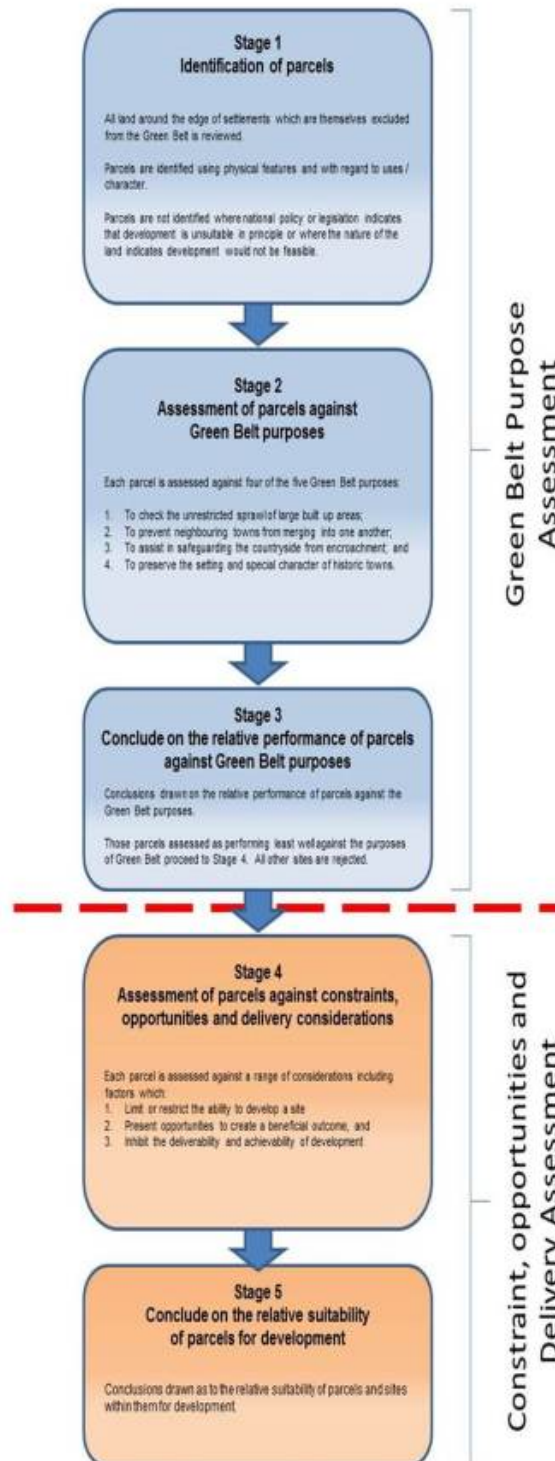
- The assessment should consider each of the purposes of Green Belt.
- The assessment should utilise clear definitions.
- The assessment should use qualitative measures.
- Few settlements are likely to meet the definition of historic towns.
- The purpose of the Green Belt to assist urban regeneration 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.

METHODOLOGY

3.1 An overview of the overall 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.



Methodology

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 exclusion criteria or "hard constraints" which are relevant to the Royal Borough is set out in Table 1 below. A map showing their extent (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.
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.

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.

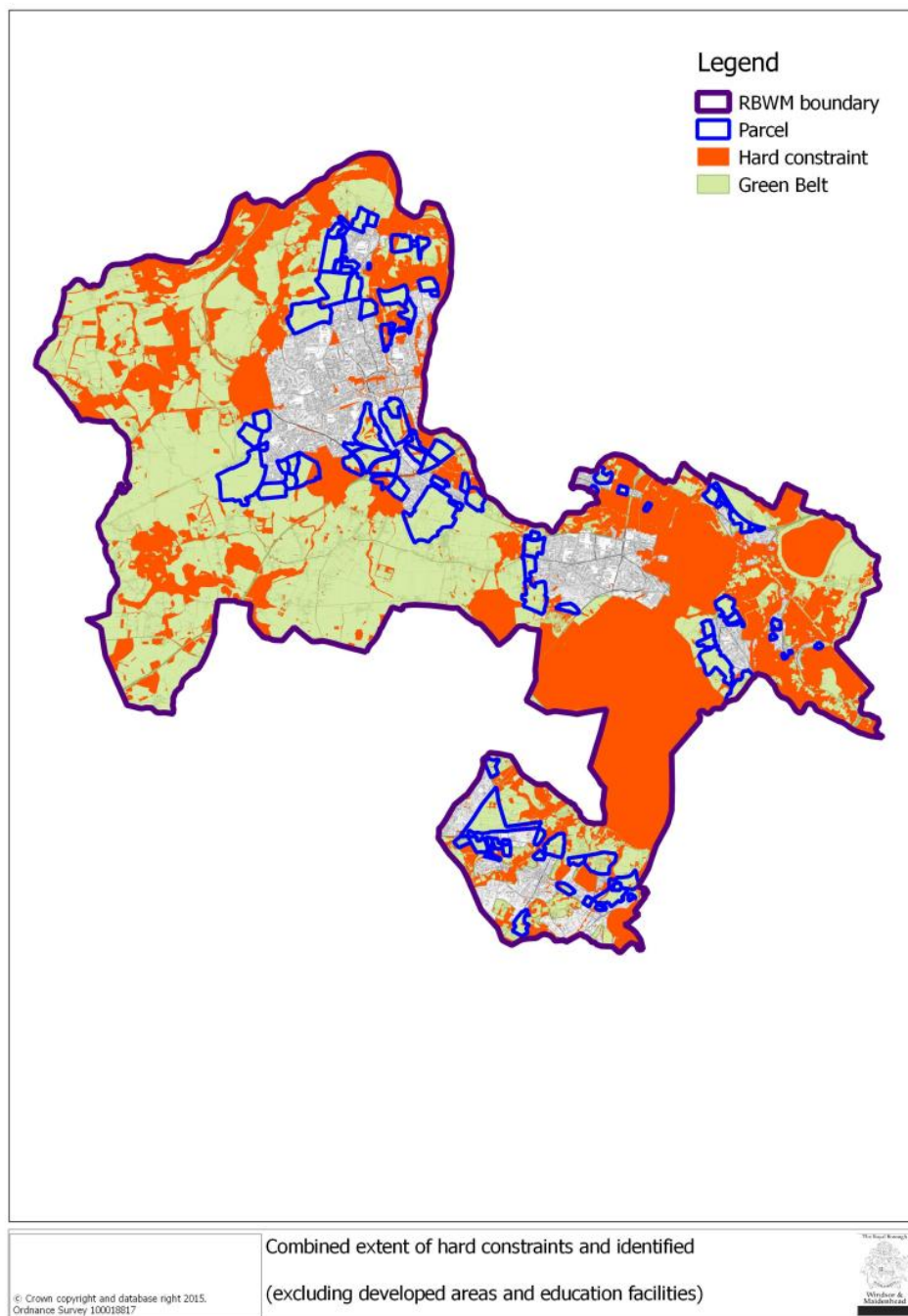
15 NPPF, paragraph 85.

Table 1 Hard constraints		
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	<p>Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990.</p> <p>Development is unlikely to be suitable.</p>	<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.

Methodology

Table 1 Hard constraints		
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 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.

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.



Combined extent of hard constraints and identified parcels

Stage 2: The five purposes of Green Belt

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).

Methodology

3.8 The assessment considered large built up areas to comprise all settlements which are excluded from the Green Belt. This reflects both the extent of the Green Belt as approved and the built characteristics of settlements which was taken into account in designation. 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ascot / North Ascot / South Ascot ● Cookham ● Cookham Rise ● Datchet ● Eton ● Eton Wick ● Maidenhead / Cox Green / Braywick ● Old Windsor ● Sunningdale ● Sunninghill ● Windsor ● Wraysbury 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bagshot (Surrey Heath BC) ● Bourne End / Cores End / Well End (Wycombe DC) ● Bracknell (Bracknell Forest BC) ● Brans Hill (Slough BC) ● Chavey Down (Bracknell Forest BC) ● Egham / Englefield Green (Runnymede BC) ● Flackwell Heath (Wycombe DC) ● Langley (Slough BC) ● Lightwater (Surrey Heath BC) ● Martins Heron (Bracknell Forest BC) ● Marlow (Wycombe DC) ● Newell Green/Hayley Green (Bracknell Forest BC) ● Standwell (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 largely 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.

17 NPPF, paragraph 79.

18 NPPF, paragraph 85.

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 irregular 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 largely 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 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>

2. To prevent neighbouring towns from merging

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, thereby reflecting the extent of the Green Belt as approved. The assessment notes 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 the Royal Borough 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.

Methodology

Table 4 Excluded Settlements	
RBWM	Neighbouring Local Authorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ascot / North Ascot / South Ascot ● Cookham ● Cookham Rise ● Datchet ● Eton ● Eton Wick ● Maidenhead / Cox Green / Braywick ● Old Windsor ● Sunningdale ● Sunninghill ● Windsor ● Wraysbury 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bagshot (Surrey Heath BC) ● Bourne End/Cores End/Well End (Wycombe DC) ● Bracknell (Bracknell Forest BC) ● Brans Hill (Slough BC) ● Chavey Down (Bracknell Forest BC) ● Egham/Englefield Green (Runnymede BC) ● Flackwell Heath (Wycombe DC) ● Langley (Slough BC) ● Lightwater (Surrey Heath BC) ● Martins Heron (Bracknell Forest BC) ● Marlow (Wycombe DC) ● 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bisham ● Burchett's Green ● Horton ● Hurley ● Waltham St Lawrence ● White Waltham 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bishopsgate (Runnymede DC) ● Colnbrook (Slough BC) ● Cranbourne (Bracknell Forest BC) ● Dorney (South Bucks DC) ● Hare Hatch (Wokingham BC) ● 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	A parcel which has a clearly demonstrable role in separating settlements is assessed as making a strong contribution to this Green Belt purpose.

Table 6 Assessment criteria at a glance To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another	
	<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 between the settlements and that which could be achieved should development occur, including consideration of ribbon and sporadic development	<p>A parcel where development would significantly reduce 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>

3. To assist 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
The strength of the existing countryside character, including consideration of sporadic development and other urbanising influences	<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>

Methodology

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

	<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>

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 conservation area designation, noting whether the setting relates to 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 Royal Borough 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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cookham • Datchet • Eton • Windsor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Englefield Green (Runnymede BC) • Marlow (Wycombe DC)

Table 9 Historic Places: Green Belt Settlements	
RBWM	Neighbouring Local Authorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bray • Burchetts Green • Cookham Dean • Holyport • Littlewick Green • Waltham St Lawrence • White Waltham 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dorney (South Bucks DC) • Little Marlow (Wycombe DC) • Taplow (South Bucks DC)

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. On this basis no assessment has been made of parcels with regards to this purpose.

3.27 Notwithstanding the above, for reason of transparency 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. The relevance of these initiatives to whether land is suitable for development is considered in the Edge of Settlement Analysis: Part 2 Constraints, Opportunities and Delivery Assessment.

Methodology

Stage 3: Presenting the assessment

3.28 Each parcel was assessed against four of the five Green Belt purposes via a desk based review and on-site inspections. Observations were recorded relating to regeneration initiatives which links to the fifth Green Belt purpose. 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:

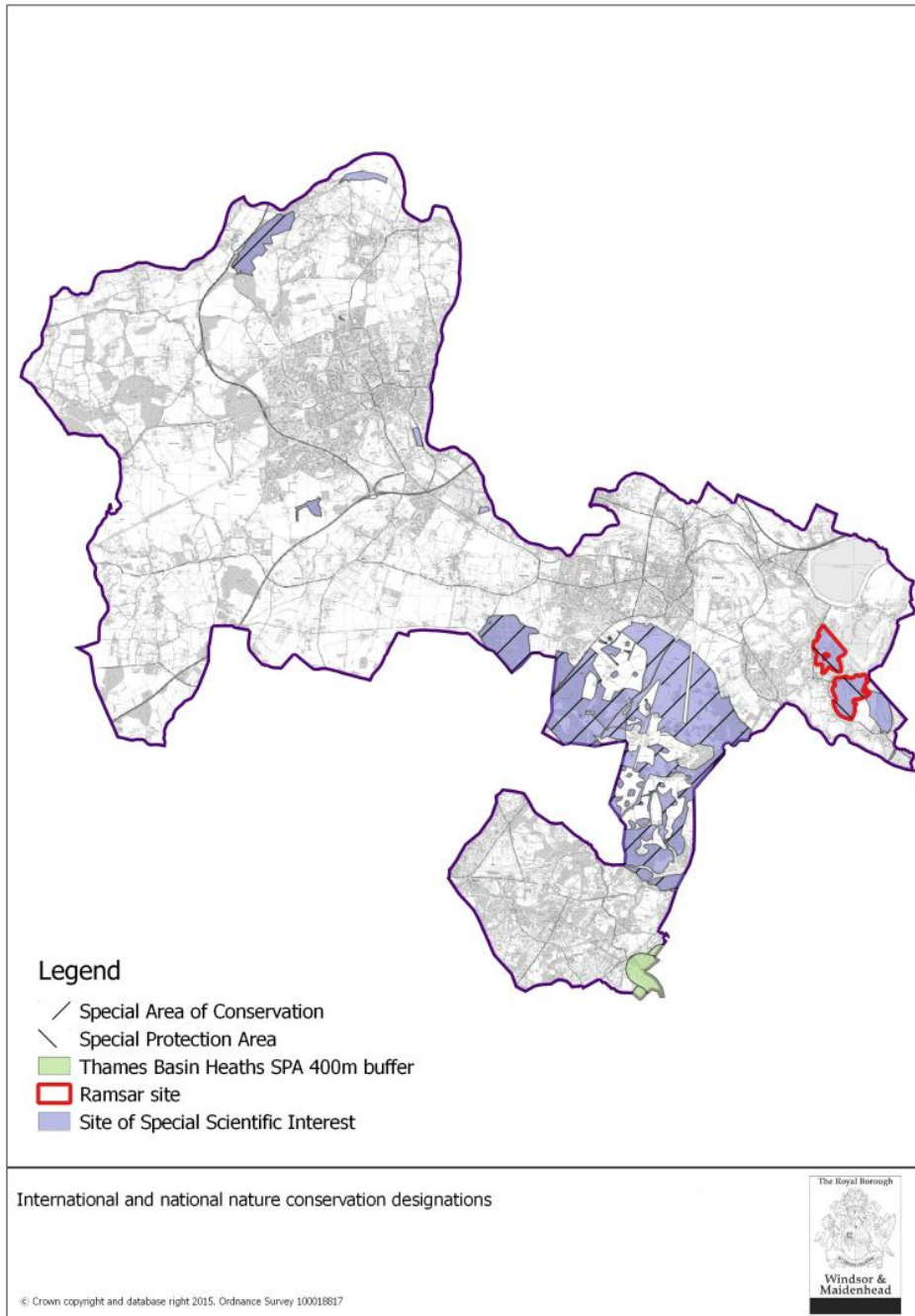
- No contribution
- Limited contribution
- Moderate contribution
- Strong contribution
- Very strong contribution

3.30 It should be noted that each of the Green Belt purposes is considered of equal weight and that aggregation is not appropriate, that is parcels which are assessed as performing a role in fewer of the Green Belt purposes are not automatically less important than those which perform a role in greater number.

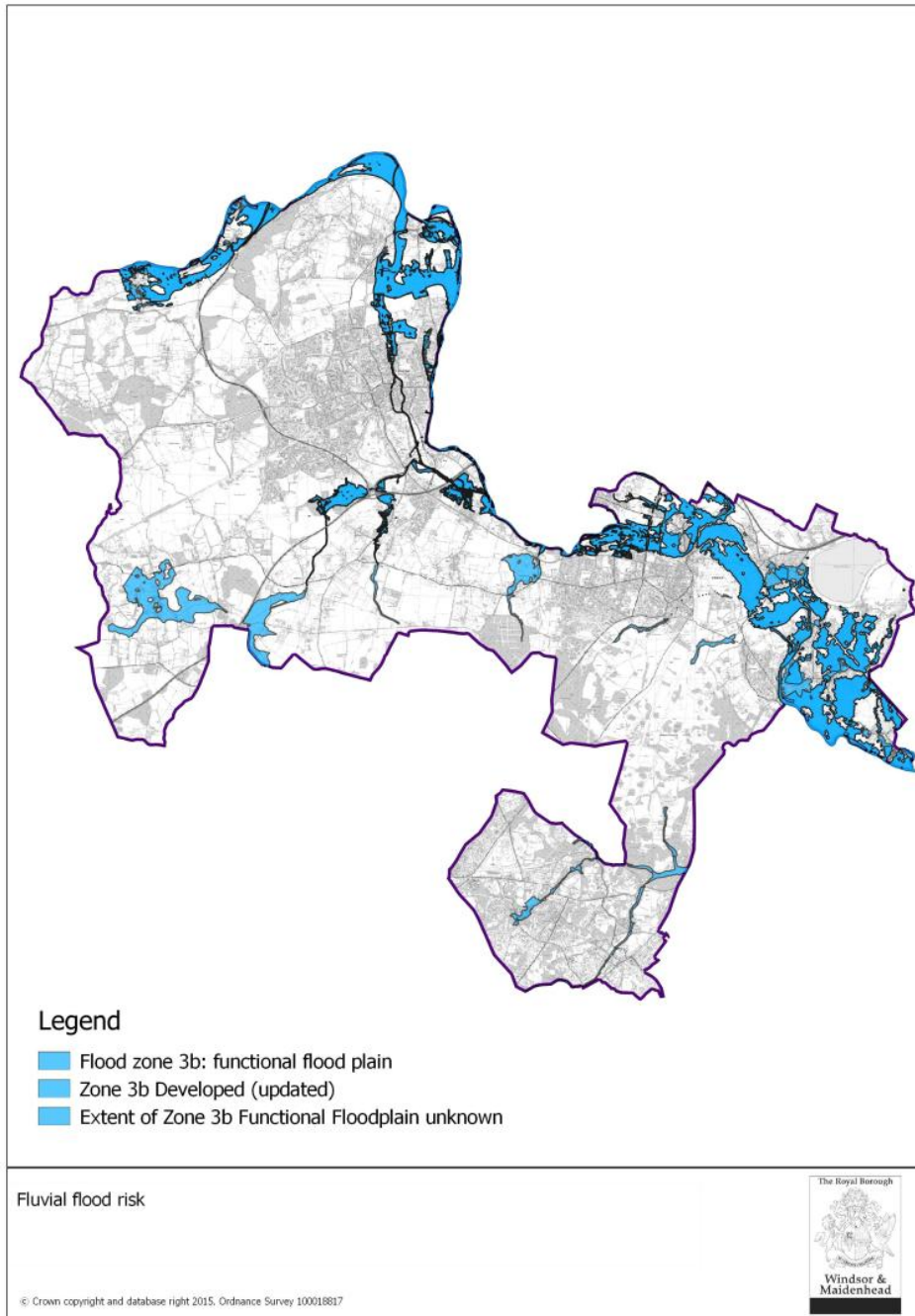
3.31 An overall conclusion for each parcel is provided. In general, parcels which are assessed as performing a stronger role against any of the Green Belt purposes are deemed unsuitable for further consideration through the Edge of Settlement: Part 2 Constraints, Opportunities and Delivery Assessment.

Maps of constraints

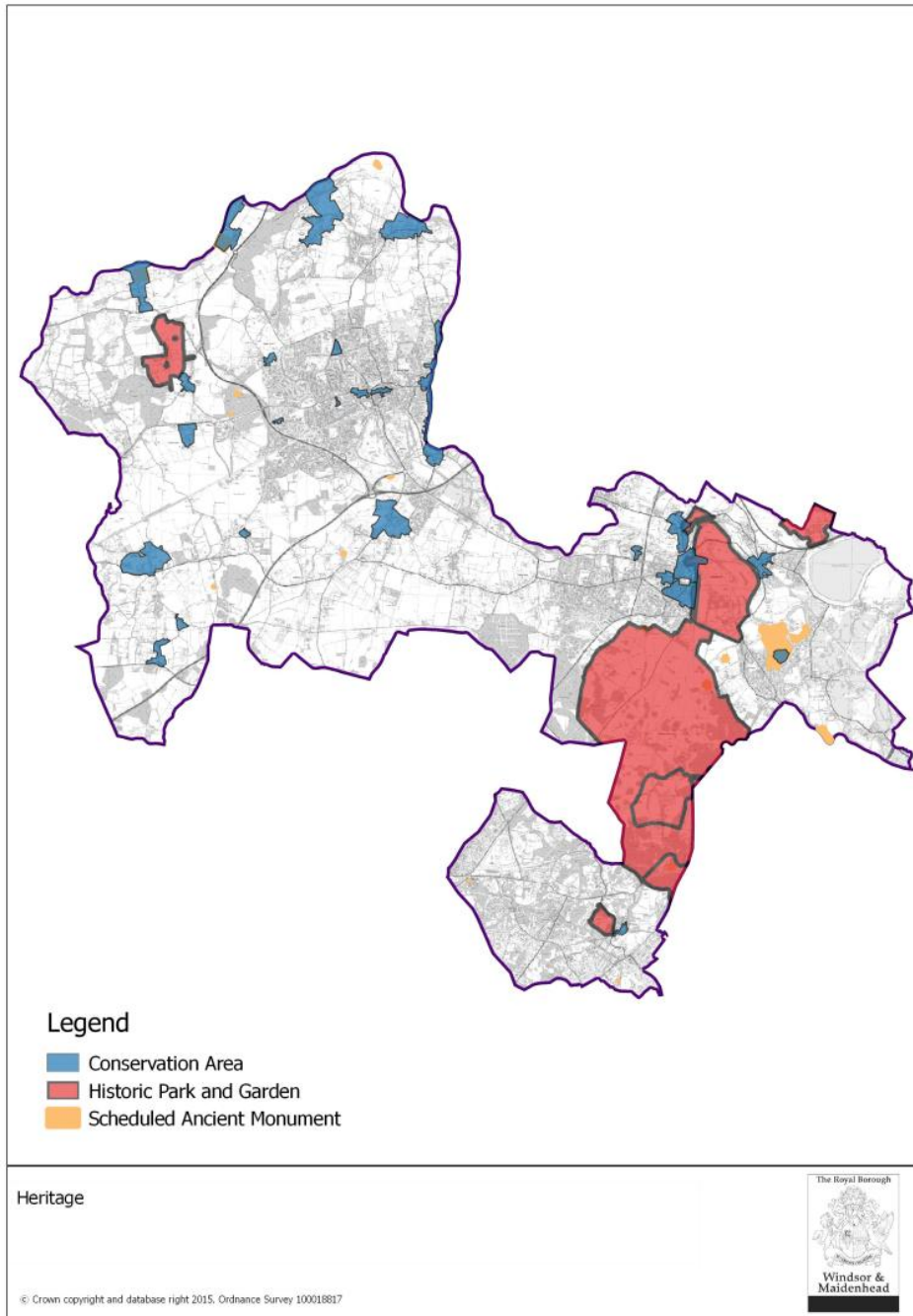
Maps of constraints



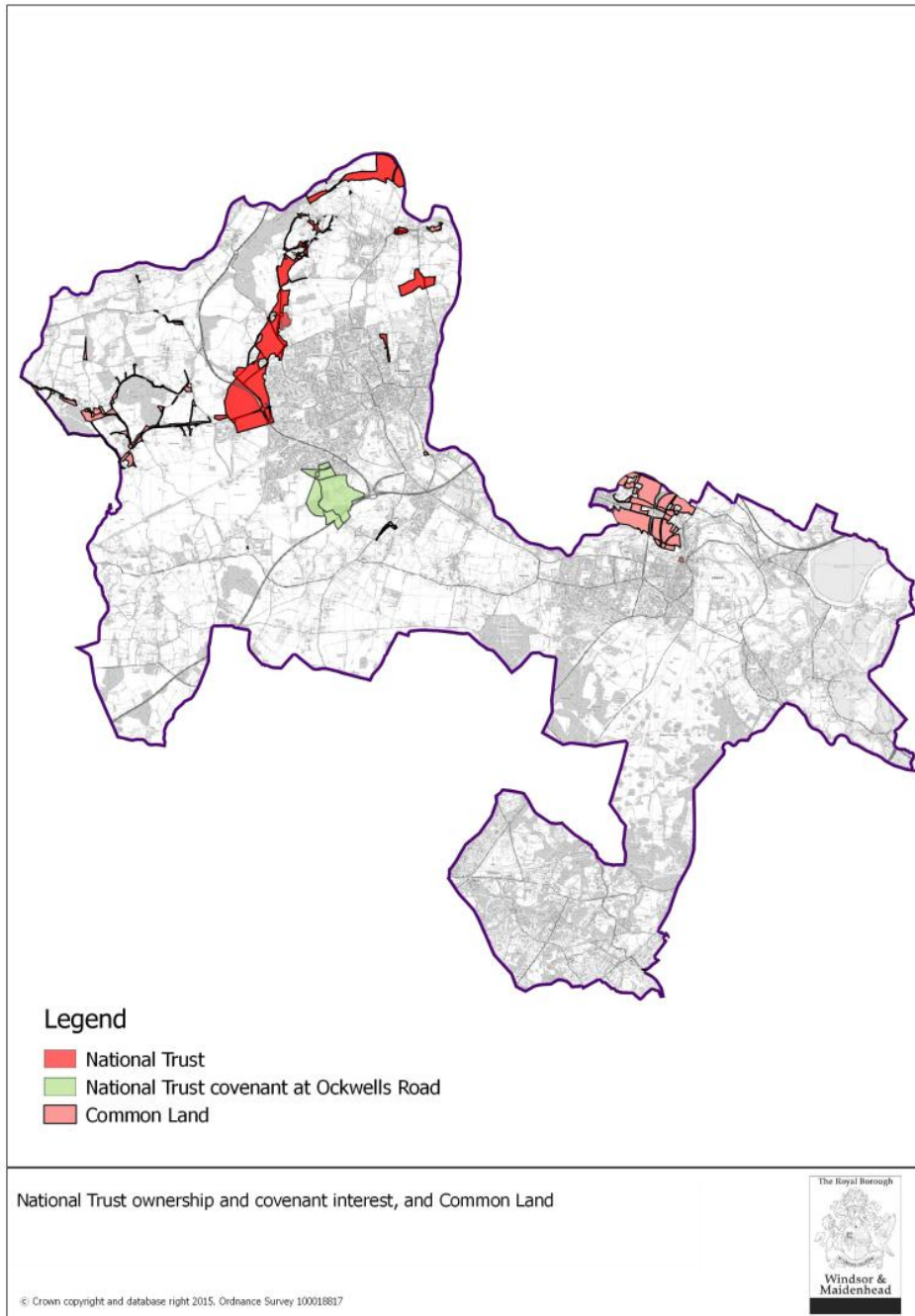
Maps of constraints



Maps of constraints



Maps of constraints



Assessment pro-forma

Assessment pro-forma

B

Parcel reference and name

Location plan

Photographs

To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

Consideration	Assessment
The degree to which the land prevents the irregular 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

B Assessment pro-forma

To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

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

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