

Bracknell Forest & Wokingham Green Belt Review

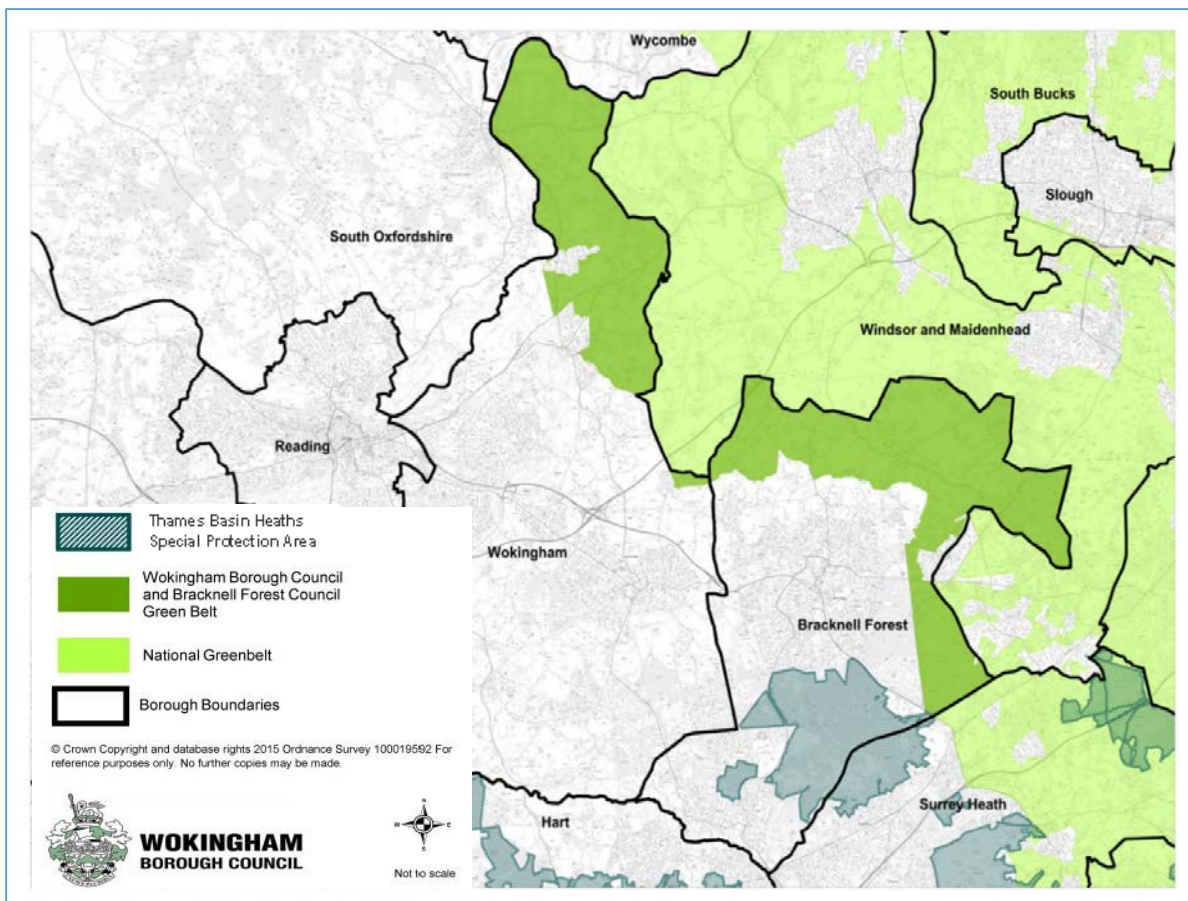
Consultation on Methodology

February 2016

Study Remit

Government policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that the Green Belt should be reviewed as part of the preparation of Local Plans. Bracknell Forest and Wokingham Borough Councils have engaged Amec consultants to undertake a joint review of the Green Belt within their Boroughs to determine whether land within the Green Belt meets the purposes of the Green Belt as set out in the NPPF. This will be the first comprehensive review of the Green Belt undertaken for the Councils.

Figure 1: The Green Belt in Bracknell Forest and Wokingham Boroughs and its sub-regional context



Note: this review does not identify areas of land for development. It is one piece of the evidence base which will be considered together to help inform decisions as part of the preparation of the Boroughs' Local Plans.

Review Methodology

1. Identification of Parcels for Survey

Identification of appropriate parcels for assessment will be through the use of OS maps and aerial photos in the first instance to identify preliminary Green Belt strategic parcels for the purpose of assessment. The parcels do not in any way represent areas to be released from the Green Belt. Well-defined physical features such as roads and rivers will be used to define the parcels. An initial subdivision of the Green Belt across the Boroughs has identified around 50 parcels which will be reviewed as part of the field survey (Figures 2 and 3).

The definition of parcels of land in this way helps to make the assessment exercise manageable. They do not bear any relation to landscape character areas, for example, or areas of ecological importance, although these factors will help to inform judgements made on the contribution to Green Belt purposes.

Figure 2: Draft Parcels for Survey - Bracknell Forest

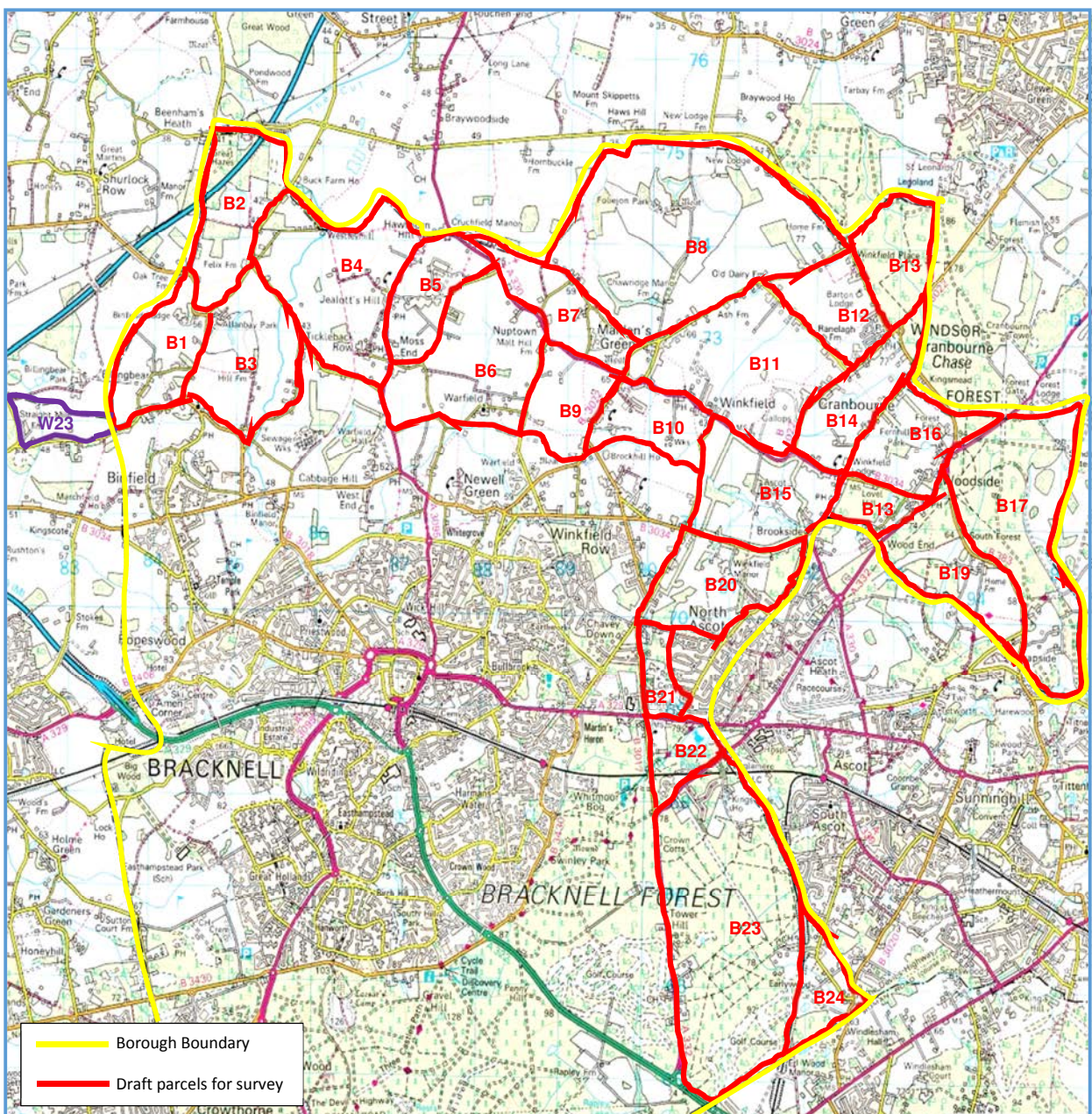
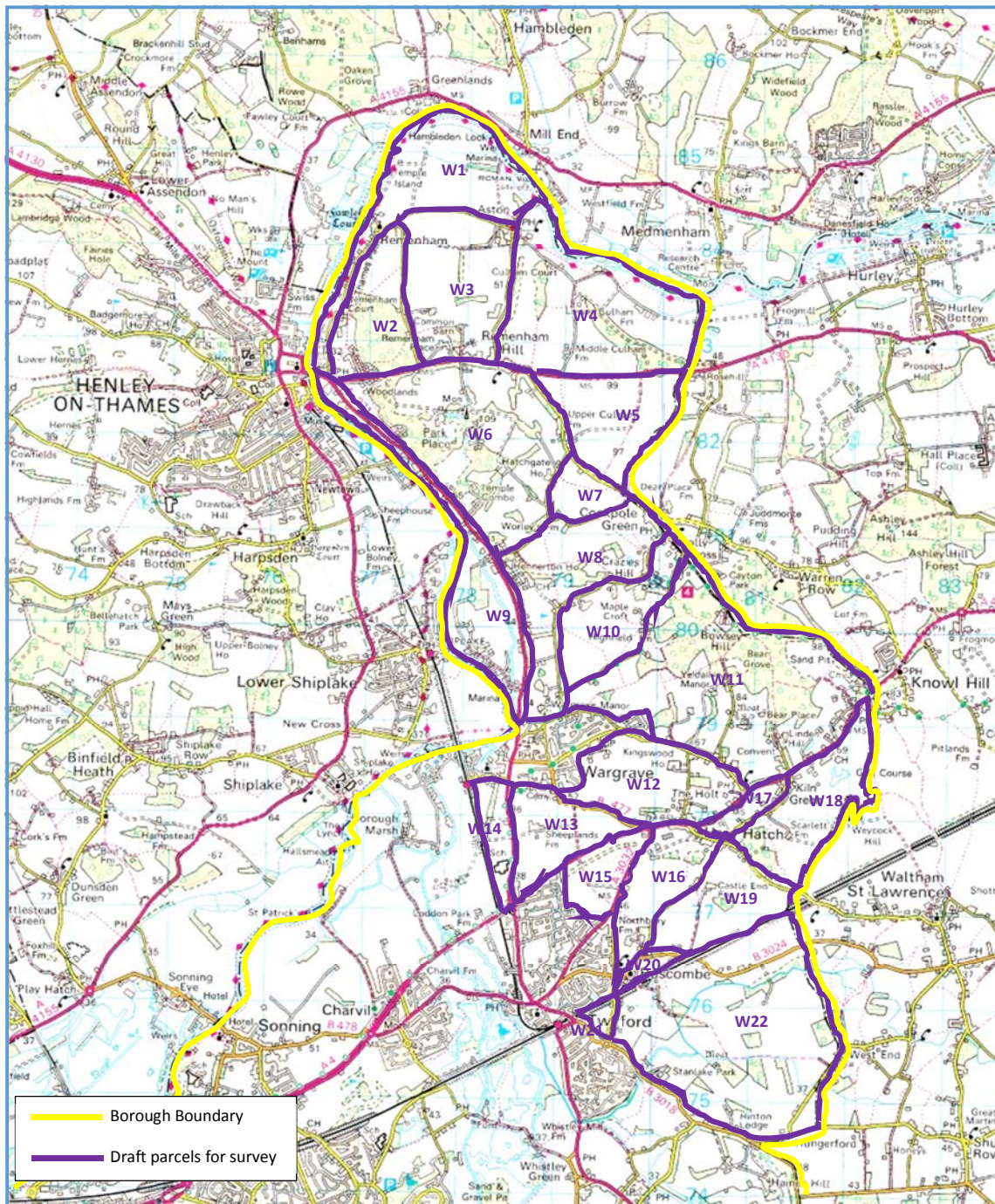


Figure 3: Draft Parcels for Survey - Wokingham



2. Assessment of parcels against Green Belt purposes

The mapping and analysis of each parcel will involve appraising each Green Belt parcel against the five Green Belt purposes set out in national policy and forming a preliminary conclusion on its contribution to those purposes. Particular attention will be paid to both inner and outer boundaries of the Green Belt, and the shared boundaries with adjacent authorities. The definitions set out in Table 1 will guide the assessment, along with a detailed Assessment proforma set out in the Appendix to this Note.

Table 1: Definition of Terms to be Applied in the Review

Green Belt Purpose	Definition
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	Sprawl – spread out over a large area in an untidy or irregular way (Oxford Dictionary online). Large built-up areas – in the context of this study this is Greater London
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging	Neighbouring towns – Bracknell and Ascot Merging – this can be by way of general sprawl (above) or; Ribbon development – the building of houses along a main road, especially one leading out of a town or village (Oxford Dictionary Online). This includes historical patterns of, or current pressures for, the spread of all forms of development along movement corridors, particularly major roads.
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Encroachment – ‘a gradual advance beyond usual or acceptable limits’ (Oxford Dictionary online). The countryside – open land with an absence of built development and urbanising influences, and characterised by rural land uses including agriculture and forestry. Openness – absence of built development or other urbanising elements (i.e. not openness in a landscape character sense which concerns topography and woodland / hedgerow cover).
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	Historic town – settlement or place with historic features identified in local policy or through conservation area or other historic designation(s) – in the context of this study these are Henley-on-Thames and Windsor.
To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.	Where development in open countryside is likely to render previously developed land less attractive to develop,

The fieldwork will assess each parcel in respect of its contribution to Green Belt purposes (notably in respect of the key criterion of openness) along with the robustness of the boundaries which define that parcel in light of the fundamental aim of Green Belt Policy which is to *‘prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the most important attributes of Green Belt being their openness’*. The desk and field study will be undertaken by a team comprising Town Planners and a Landscape Architect.

As part of the assessment of each identified parcel against the five purposes of including land in the Green Belt, the assessment will consider the following:

- Existing land use;
- Proximity and relationship to built-up areas;
- Degree of enclosure/openness;
- Distance and visual connection to historic urban centres/key urban areas; and
- Relationship to the countryside.

Further refinement of parcel size (from that shown in Figures 2 and 3) may be required to help provide a more detailed consideration of these issues in specific areas of the Green Belt.

A simple colouring system (see Figure 4) and accompanying commentary will be used to set out the conclusions for each parcel and to produce maps which summarise the extent to which each parcel fulfils each Green Belt purpose and an overall assessment (a summary matrix and five accompanying maps). This provides a simple tabular and graphical presentation of the character and function of the Green Belt, strategically and locally.

Figure 4: The Colouring Assessment

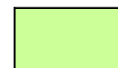
Parcel makes a significant contribution to Green Belt purposes and a boundary review is unlikely to be considered appropriate, although release (either in whole or part) could be considered where strong material planning considerations exist to justify this.



Parcel makes a contribution to Green Belt purposes indicating that the purposes are partially being fulfilled and that the boundary could be revised in light of other planning considerations.



Parcel makes a limited contribution overall to Green Belt purposes indicating that these areas might be considered for Green Belt release, subject to other planning considerations.



3. Village definition and potential for Green Belt extension

National policy requests that particular attention is paid to the settlements ‘washed over’ by Green Belt and whether there could be case for their removal from the Green Belt to allow appropriate development. This study will explore the following existing Green Belt villages in Bracknell Forest in detail:

- Brock Hill
- Cheapside
- Cranbourne (Lovel Road)
- Maidens Green/Winkfield Street
- North Street (Cranbourne)
- Prince Consort Drive
- Church Road Winkfield
- Woodside (Woodside Road/Kiln Lane)

4. Coherence of Green Belt Boundaries

For Bracknell Forest and Wokingham the potential for extension of the Green Belt will be explored, either to create a more coherent and defensible boundary to the existing Green Belt or to take account of patterns of development since the Green Belt was designated. As for the consideration of the potential removal of land from the Green Belt, ‘exceptional circumstances’ would have to be identified.

5. Consultation

A focused consultation is being undertaken and runs from Monday 1 February until 5pm Monday 15 February 2016. Any comments on the proposed methodology for assessing whether Green Belt land within Bracknell Forest and Wokingham Borough Councils meets the purposes of the Green Belt as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework, including:

- initial land parcel definition
- assessment of land parcels (including assessment proforma)
- definition of terms

should be returned to: development.plan@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

If you require further information, please do not hesitate to get in touch with a member of the Development Plan Team by calling 01344 352000 or emailing development.plan@bracknell-forest.gov.uk.

6. Reporting

Any comments made on the consultation will be considered when refining the methodology and the land parcels, and be taken into account as the work progresses. The results of the Review will be

reported through a single document which sets out a plan of the Green Belt in the study area summarising the assessment findings, providing a straightforward graphical and tabular presentation. The study will not identify areas of land for development. The final report will be considered alongside other evidence that forms part of the Council's evidence base when developing the Borough's Local Plans.

Appendix: Parcel Assessment Proforma

Criteria		Assessment (colour and commentary)
NPPF Purposes of the Green Belt		
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the relationship of this land with the existing built-up area? • Is there evidence of ribbon development along transport corridors? • Does the parcel sensibly round-off an existing built-up area to help create good built form? • Is the parcel part of a wider group of parcels that directly act to prevent urban sprawl? • Does the Green Belt prevent another settlement being absorbed into the large built-up area? • What is the physical gap between the settlement edge of the parcel and the urban edge (i.e. is there a broad gap or is it narrow at this point?) • Would potential development represent an outward extension of the urban area, result in a physical connection between urban areas, or lead to the danger of a subsequent coalescence between such settlements? • If released from GB could enduring long-term settlement boundaries be established? 	
To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the parcel lie directly between two settlements and form all or part of a gap between them? • What is the width of the gap and are there significant features which provide physical and visual separation? • Are there intervening settlements or other development on roads which contribute to a sense of connection of towns? • Would potential development in the parcel appear to result in the merging of towns or compromise the separation of towns physically? • Would potential development of the parcel be a significant step leading towards coalescence of two settlements? 	
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there clear strong and robust boundaries to contain development and prevent encroachment in the long term? • Does the parcel have the character of open countryside? What is the nature of the land use in the parcel? Is any of the land previously developed? • Is the parcel partially enclosed by a town or village built up area? • Has the parcel been affected by a substantial increase in the mass and scale of adjacent urbanising built form? • Is there any evidence of significant containment by urbanising built form? • Has there been incremental erosion of the open character of the land on the edge of the settlement (so that it appears as part of the settlement)? 	

Criteria		Assessment (colour and commentary)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there evidence of severance from the adjacent Green Belt? 	
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the parcel make a positive contribution to the setting of the historic town? Measured by :- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can features of the historic town be seen from within the parcel? Is the parcel in the foreground of views towards the historic town from public places? Is there public access within the parcel? Does the parcel form part of an historic landscape that is related to an historic town? 	
Permanence of Green Belt (NPPF paragraphs 83 & 85)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the Green Belt Boundary have long term permanence so that it is capable of enduring beyond the plan period? Are the current boundaries logical? Are there opportunities for the re-definition of the boundary? 	
Sustainable patterns of development (NPPF paragraph 84)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would potential development in this area help to promote sustainable patterns of development? (Note - consider the consequences of channelling development towards urban areas inside the Green Belt boundary, towards towns and villages inset within the Green Belt or towards locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary). 	
Local Role of Green Belt		
Preserving the Character and setting of Villages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the local landform or landscape form part of the setting of a conservation area or village? Does the parcel form part of an historic landscape? 	
Defining Boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the current Green Belt boundary follow a defensible boundary? If not, could a logical rounding off be achieved without harm to the function of the remaining Green Belt? 	
Promoting Positive Use of the Green Belt		
Opportunities for Public Access or to provide access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the degree of existing public access? 	
Opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there existing facilities, or there any relevant policies or proposals leading to opportunities in the parcel? 	
Enhancing landscapes and visual amenity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the parcel form part of the setting of a sensitive landscape (historic or otherwise)? 	
Enhancing biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there any national or local biodiversity designations within the parcel? 	
Improving derelict and damaged land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there any derelict land in the parcel? Is there any potential for enhancement other than through development that would be inappropriate within the Green Belt? 	