Edge of Settlement Analysis
Draft Borough Local Plan
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Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
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## Contents

1. Introduction .......................................................... 1
2. Methodology .......................................................... 5
3. Area Analysis ................................................................ 22
   - Area 1A Cookham Rise - Area north and west of Cookham Rise .......... 22
   - Area 1B Cookham Rise - Area west of Whyteladyes Lane ...................... 24
   - Area 2 Maidenhead - Area north of Furze Platt Road .......................... 30
   - Area 3A Maidenhead - Area around Spencers Farm; East of Cookham Road .......... 32
   - Area 3B Maidenhead - Area east of Spencers Farm .............................. 36
   - Area 3C Maidenhead - North of Maidenhead Court .............................. 38
   - Area 3E Maidenhead - Area north of Summerleaze Road ..................... 40
   - Area 3F Maidenhead - Area west of Sheephouse Road ......................... 42
   - Area 4A Cox Green - West of Cox Green; North of the Railway Line .......... 47
   - Area 4B Cox Green - West of Woodlands Park; South of the Railway Line .......... 52
   - Area 4C Cox Green - South of Woodlands Park .................................. 57
   - Area 4D Cox Green - South of Cox Green; East of Woodlands Park .......... 59
   - Area 5A Maidenhead - Area including Maidenhead Golf Course .......... 61
   - Area 5B Maidenhead - Area west of A404M ...................................... 66
   - Area 5C Maidenhead - Triangle M4, A308(M) and Ascot Road .............. 70
   - Area 5D Maidenhead - Area north of Kimbers Lane ............................ 75
   - Area 5E Maidenhead - Area south of Harvest Hill Road and east of Kimbers Lane ........ 79
   - Area 6A Maidenhead - Braywick, Stafferton Way .............................. 85
   - Area 6B Maidenhead - Area east of A308 Bray Wick .......................... 89
   - Area 7A Land west of Holyport - Area between Ascot Road and Holyport Road .......... 91
   - Area 7B Maidenhead/Holyport - Area south of A308 ........................... 95
   - Area 7C Maidenhead/Holyport - Area east of Gays Lane and south of Stroud Farm Road .......... 97
   - Area 7D Maidenhead - Area between A308 and Bray Lake .................. 99
   - Area 7E Maidenhead - Area between Monkey Island Lane and Bray Lake .......................... 101
   - Area 8A Windsor - Area north of A308, south of Maidenhead Road ........ 103
   - Area 8B Windsor - Area south of A308, east of Oakley Green Road and north of Dedworth Road ......................................................... 107
   - Area 8C Windsor - Area south of Dedworth Road and west of Broom Farm Estate .......... 112
   - Area 9A Windsor - Area at Lower Farm & St Leonard's Farm/west of Wilton Crescent ........ 116
   - Area 9C Windsor - Area north and east of Legoland .......................... 118
   - Area 10A Datchet - Area south of M4, north of War Memorial ............ 120
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area Code</th>
<th>Area Name</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10B</td>
<td>Datchet - Area north of Churchmead School</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11A</td>
<td>Wraysbury - Area south of Old Ferry Drive</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11B</td>
<td>Wraysbury - Area south of the Drive</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11C</td>
<td>Wraysbury - Area south of Waylands</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11E</td>
<td>Wraysbury - Area east of St Andrew’s Close</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11F</td>
<td>Wraysbury - Area around Tithe Farm</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12A</td>
<td>Old Windsor - Area north of Church Road</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12B</td>
<td>Old Windsor - Area west of Old Windsor and north of Crimp Hill</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12C</td>
<td>Old Windsor - Area west of Burfield Road</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13A</td>
<td>Ascot - Area east of Winkfield Road</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13B</td>
<td>Ascot - Area east of Cheapside Road and south of Silwood Close</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13C</td>
<td>Ascot - Area south of High Street</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13D</td>
<td>Ascot - Area north of London Road / east and west of Church Lane</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13E</td>
<td>Sunningdale - Area around Tittenhurst Park</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13F</td>
<td>Sunningdale - Area north of Bedford Lane</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13G</td>
<td>Sunningdale - Area south of the A30 London Road</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13H</td>
<td>Sunningdale - Area part of Sunningdale Golf Course</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13I</td>
<td>Sunningdale - Area around Lynwood Care Home</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13J</td>
<td>Sunningdale - Area east of Hancocks Mount and south of the railway</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13K</td>
<td>Sunningdale - Area around Charters School/south of Charters Road</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13L</td>
<td>Sunningdale - Area east of Bagshot Road around Broadlands Farm</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13M</td>
<td>Sunninghill - Area around St Mary’s School/east of Coronation Road</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 Interim Conclusions ........................................................................................................... 185
1 Introduction

1.1 The aim of this Housing: Edge of Settlement Analysis is to assess the potential for development of Green Belt land adjoining our settlements. This study forms part of the evidence base for the emerging Borough Local Plan and will be used alongside other studies to inform policy options and choices. The council is required to positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of the area (NPPF, paragraph 14). This study considers land that abuts an existing settlement (that is itself excluded from the Green Belt) on at least one edge and tests its suitability for release for development against a range of criteria.

1.2 The key objectives of this study are:

- To provide an analysis of the contribution of specific broad areas of land adjoining excluded settlements to the purposes of the Green Belt;
- To recommend broad areas of land to be included for subsequent public consultation.

1.3 As a consequence of this study a number of areas in the Green Belt have been identified for public consultation through the Borough Local Plan.

1.4 The report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2: Methodology - a summary of the research process that was followed including summary maps indicating the initial broad areas that were assessed, maps showing those areas that were rejected during the assessment of primary considerations and maps showing areas for public consultation
- Chapter 3: Area Analysis - 52 individual broad area assessments
- Chapter 4: Interim Conclusions - including a list of 23 areas to go forward for public consultation.

Background

1.5 The following background explains the context within which this analysis work has been undertaken.

1.6 The extent of the Green Belt in the Royal Borough is set out in the following map.
National Planning Policy Framework

1.7 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the government’s policy on planning and sustainable development including the context in which the Borough Local Plan must be prepared.

1.8 The Framework requires (at paragraph 157) that local plans should:

- positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area;
- meet objectively assessed development 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 NPPF taken as a whole; or
  - Specific policies in the NPPF indicate the development should be restricted.\(^1\)

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\(^1\) For example, those policies 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 Authority); designated heritage assets; and locations at risk of flooding or coastal erosion.
1.9 The NPPF also sets out 12 principles that should underpin plan-making and decision-taking. These include the principle that planning should:

- Proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs. Every effort should be made objectively to identify and then meet the housing, business and other development needs of an area, and respond positively to wider opportunities for growth.

1.10 To boost significantly the supply of housing, local planning authorities should use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plans meet the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area, as far as consistent with the policies set out in the NPPF, including the identification of key sites (paragraph 47).

1.11 The level of housing provision delivered by the Local Plan must be based on evidence. Local planning authorities are expected to demonstrate a clear understanding of housing needs in their area primarily through two studies:

1. Through a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) there should be an assessment of housing need across the housing market area and identification of the scale and mix of housing and range of tenures that are needed.
2. Through a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) there should be an assessment of the availability, suitability and viability of land to meet housing need.

Housing Requirements and Objectively Assessed Needs

1.12 Since March 2013, through the RBWM SHMA, the Council has sought to measure the potential development requirements in the borough through further analysis of the 2011 Census and demographic data; an assessment of economic scenarios on the borough; and the potential need required for other housing to meet more likely demographic and economic scenarios within the context of the housing market area.

1.13 The SHMA’s projected housing requirement for the housing market area(2) is the equivalent of 5,394 households or 5,589 household spaces per annum of which 672 households or 701 household spaces would arise per annum within the Royal Borough.

Potential Housing Supply

1.14 Housing supply is made up of housing completions and extant planning permissions, allocated sites within a development Plan (in the case of RBWM, the Maidenhead Town Centre Area Action Plan), non-allocated identified sites (sites that have been promoted to the council that are considered by the landowner to be available for future development), and an anticipated supply from windfall sites of less than 0.25 hectare.

1.15 Great importance has been placed to ensure sites with development potential are maximised. In order to achieve this, through the preparation of the Borough Local Plan:

- there has been a continued approach for an open call for site suggestions;
- refused, withdrawn and lapsed planning permissions have been revisited;
- RBWM owned sites have been examined;
- current employment designations have been considered;
- challenging constraints such as flooding have been reviewed; and
- existing developed sites in Green Belt have been reviewed.

1.16 Thus within the context of the components of housing supply including the SHLAA and as an output in relation to the considerations in paragraph 1.14 above, the Council has assessed the amount of housing that can be shown to be deliverable on existing developed sites across the borough. This shows a capacity of around 7,415 dwellings can be delivered in the period 2011/12-2029/30 without intruding on areas where the NPPF indicates that development should be restricted. This equates to around 390 dwellings per year. This capacity is made up of:

- 370 dwellings which have been completed
- 1,866 dwellings for which planning permission has been granted

2 includes all adjoining local authorities plus Reading Borough Council
Introduction

- 733 dwellings on sites designated for housing within the Maidenhead Town Centre Area Action Plan
- 2,237 dwellings on sites which are proposed to be allocated within the Borough Local Plan where the NPPF advises that development is not restricted
- 431 dwellings on sites which are considered developable but not proposed to be allocated within the Borough Local Plan
- 1,778 dwellings on small sites under 0.25 hectares which have not been identified

1.17 Whilst taking all these component parts of supply together results in a potential housing supply of 7,415 dwellings over the plan period, there is still a gap of just under 6,000 household spaces compared to the projected housing requirement. Thus clearly other mechanisms (such as the Royal Borough’s constraints) need to be examined in order to see whether this gap in provision can be legitimately reduced, and this study seeks to establish whether there is any potential for development occurring on land adjoining settlements excluded from the Green Belt. In seeking to achieve this aim, the study allows for the impact of potential development on the edge of the borough’s settlements to be objectively considered. It assists the Borough Local plan preparation process by showing where potential development would be considered unacceptable based on national and/or local considerations and indicates locations where the acceptability of development is more finely balanced by drawing on earlier work. As such, this report should be read in conjunction with the following other background studies:

- Green Belt Boundary Study (Proposals for New Green Belt Land) 2009
- Green Belt Purpose Analysis 2013
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) 2009
- Landscape Character Assessment 2004
- Townscape Character Assessment 2010
- Open Space Study 2008
2 Methodology

2.1 This section sets out the approach taken in assessing land on the edge of settlements. The methodology ensures that areas are comprehensively assessed in a structured, transparent and consistent manner taking account of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and local characteristics.

2.2 The approach involved three stages which are set out in detail later in this section. At stages 1 and 2, land subject to significant constraints or assessed as being unsuitable for development is rejected and not considered further. An overview of the methodology is provided below.

### Overview of Methodology

**Stage 1:** Land that is assessed as unsuitable because of strategic constraints is dismissed at Stage 1 and is not considered further. A series of maps are provided demonstrating the extent of these constraints (see Maps 2-7).

**Stage 2:** For land that passes to Stage 2, individual maps are provided (see Section 3 of this report), that indicate the broad area annotated with a black line boundary. These maps also include land that has been promoted to the Council through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) (shown as a red line boundary, filled with diagonal red lines).

Figure 1 Key

At Stage 2 the assessment results in one of three possible conclusions:

- Pass
- Reject
- Pass in part / Reject in part

Areas that pass, or pass in part, are then assessed against criteria in stage 3. Where an area is only passed in part, a new map is provided in order to illustrate the area proceeding to stage 3. Amended maps also have the black line boundary of the area and show land promoted through the SHLAA. The reasons for rejecting an area/ part of an area is provided at the end of stage 2.

For the avoidance of doubt: a 'pass' at Stage 2 means only that an area is assessed as being suitable for further consideration and for public consultation, in other words, for it to pass to the next stage of consideration, Stage 3, and; it does not mean an area has completed the assessment process and is or should necessarily be considered suitable for development.

**Stage 3:** Land that is subject to Stage 3 is reviewed against further detailed criteria. No conclusions are drawn at this stage. The information gathered will be used to inform the public consultation.

### Stage 1: Strategic Constraints and the Identification of Areas

2.3 Land subject to a strategic constraint is rejected as unsuitable for development and therefore undeliverable. Strategic constraints are considered to be:

**Environmental:**

- Special Protection Areas
- Land within 400m of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
Methodology

- Special Areas of Conservation
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- Wetlands of international Importance (Ramsar sites)
- National Nature Reserves
- Functional floodplain (floodzone 3b), where it land cannot be accessed from the existing excluded settlement.\(^3\) as set out in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
- Woodlands \(^4\)

**Infrastructure:**

- Airport Public Safety Zones
- Strategic Priority Transport Projects

**Ownership:**

- The Crown Estate
- National Trust landholdings or land over which they hold a restrictive covenant\(^5\)

**Settlement Gaps:**

- Gaps between settlements excluded from the Green Belt of less than 1km (as identified in the Green Belt Purpose Analysis). In the Ascot area, the locally identified gaps from the proposed Neighbourhood Plan were used instead. \(^6\)

**Heritage Assets:**

- Conservation Areas, Historic Parks and Gardens and Scheduled Ancient Monuments

**Other:**

- Existing extensively developed areas\(^7\)

2.4 Large areas of land across the borough are rejected as unsuitable for development and not considered further as part of the study.

2.5 Stage 1 applied the 15 constraints, and maps 2 to 7 demonstrate the extent to which large areas of land are considered unsuitable for development. These constraints were chosen to reflect national and international guidance and regulations and also ownership. For example Special Protection Areas (SPA) are protected by a European Community Directive which is transposed into UK law by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (commonly referred to as the Habitat Regulations). Preventing neighbouring settlements merging into one another is one of the purposes of Green Belt set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, paragraph 80).

\(^3\) Land in the functional floodplain may therefore be within a wider broad area

\(^4\) Where there is extensive coverage across the area.

\(^5\) There is a restrictive covenant on land around Ockwells Manor which is not shown on map 4.

\(^6\) The Green Belt Purpose Analysis gaps were not used for the Ascot area since the existing settlement pattern results in much of the area having gaps of less than 1km.

\(^7\) Residential gardens are included within the definition of developed areas.
Methodology

Map 2 Environmental Constraints
Methodology

Map 3 Infrastructure Constraints
Map 4 Ownership
Methodology

Map 5 Gaps between Settlements - Windsor and Maidenhead areas
Methodology

Map 6 Local Gaps - Ascot (as identified in the Proposed Neighbourhood Plan)
2.6 Residual areas of land that were not subject to strategic constraints were subsequently defined (refer to maps 8 and 9). Due to the large extent of some of the areas that were not subject to Stage 1 constraints, further subdivision of the area was considered appropriate. This sub-division was done using physical features such as roads, paths, water edges, mature hedges or tree lines, in order to assist in Stage 2 of the analysis. As a result 52 identified broad areas were defined for further investigation as illustrated in maps 8 and 9.
Methodology
Stage 2 Assessment

2.7 The 52 broad areas not subject to Stage 1 strategic constraints were subject to further assessment using the 7 criteria listed below.

- Contribution to gaps between settlements and defensibility of boundaries\(^8\)
- Countryside character and topography of land
- Agricultural land classification Grades 1 and 2\(^9\)
- Local nature designations and Ancient woodland
- Heritage assets and their settings (not covered in Stage 1)
- Pollution, including potential contamination
- Minerals safeguarding zones

2.8 The Stage 2 criteria ensured a range of further development constraints were assessed based on guidance set out in the NPPF.

2.9 The NPPF advises that two of the main purposes of the Green Belt is to 'assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment' and 'to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another' (paragraph 80). Therefore this Stage 2 assessment looks at the broad area's contribution to gaps between settlements and the strength of new boundaries from further encroachment. It should be noted that the study only considered the strength of potential new boundaries, not those already abutting the existing settlement.

2.10 The NPPF states that Green Belt boundaries should be defined having regard to their intended permanence. This Stage 2 assessment of boundaries has been informed by the Green Belt Boundary Study 2009 (proposals for new Green Belt land) which set out an order of preference for boundaries as set out below:

- A road edge, typically the road should be included within the settlement unless a more logical line would include the road in the Green Belt,
- A building line that provides a straight logical line and clearly represents the edge of the urban area,
- A pathway, stream, ridge, car park, playground or other physical feature,
- An ownership boundary marked by physical features such as a hedgerow or fence line,
- In the absence of any features to follow on the ground, a straight line between two permanent features.

2.11 In principle, any change to boundaries should not result in a less defensible boundary than currently exists.

2.12 The NPPF states that the design of new development should 'respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings'. Therefore the assessment looks at countryside character and topography.

2.13 The NPPF states that poorer quality agricultural land should be used in preference to that of higher quality land.

2.14 The NPPF states that wildlife protection should be 'commensurate with their status and give appropriate weight to their importance and the contribution that they make to wider ecological networks'. Therefore the assessment looks at local nature designations and ancient woodland.

2.15 The draft National Planning Guidance states that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource which should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.

2.16 New development should not be put at unacceptable risk from pollution.

2.17 Minerals resources of local importance should not be needlessly sterilised by non-mineral development.

2.18 These criteria may not wholly inhibit development and it is important to consider whether the likely impact of any potential development in these broad areas could be mitigated, or whether irreversible harm would occur.

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8 The strength of potential new boundaries having regard to bullet point 5 of paragraph 85 of the NPPF.
9 The NPPF classifies Grades 1, 2 and 3A as Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land (BMVAL) which should be avoided, and Grade 3B is not. It is unknown whether land classified as Grade 3 is Grade 3A or not, so therefore Grade 3 cannot be treated as a primary consideration and should proceed to detailed analysis where necessary.
2.19 As a result of Stage 2 of the 52 broad areas, 29 areas were rejected because it was considered that development of these would result in unacceptable impacts. Maps 10 and 11 show the 29 areas that were rejected at Stage 2 and the 23 areas that were considered suitable to advance to the next stage for review.
Map 11 Stage 2 pass and reject - Windsor and Ascot
## Methodology

### Stage 3 Assessment

2.20 At Stage 3, 23 areas were assessed against the 11 criteria listed below.

1. Green Belt and countryside setting  
2. Settlement and townscape character  
3. Historic environment  
4. Biodiversity  
5. Flood risk - if in area of flood risk sites will be sequentially tested  
6. Other environmental considerations  
7. Resources  
8. Infrastructure  
9. Highways and Accessibility  
10. Sustainability  
11. Availability

2.21 The assessment undertaken in Stage 3 builds on the assessment undertaken in Stage 2, and ensured that the development potential of areas was fully explored. Considering both new and existing criteria in more detail, enabled a full assessment of the areas. Thus some factors appeared in both Stage 2 and Stage 3, with additional detail added and discussed more fully. Review of areas at Stage 3 also incorporated evidence from other studies available, including the Townscape Character Assessment, Open Space Study, Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Landscape Character Assessment.

2.22 Where relevant other professionals were consulted. These included: Highways, Archaeology, Education, Arboriculture officers and Thames Water. In the context of infrastructure and highways only, it was necessary to provide the consultees with an approximate dwelling capacity of each area, to estimate potential impact that development could have. The assessments covered the whole area and not land promoted inside them.

2.23 The impacts of potential development are discussed to help inform public consultation on the areas. It should be noted that the potential development area/ future site allocations could be smaller than the areas being considered in Stage 3, due to for example the availability of land. The public consultation will enable land owners to confirm the availability or otherwise of land in these areas. Areas for public consultation are defined in maps 12 and 13.

### Areas proceeding to consultation

2.24 The areas for public consultation are listed below and are defined on maps 12 and 13. Summary maps showing areas that are recommended to go forward for consultation against those that have been rejected are included in Chapter 4: Interim Conclusions.

- 1B Area west of Whyteladyes Lane, Cookham Rise  
- 3A Area around Spencers Farm; East of Cookham Road, Maidenhead  
- 3F Area west of Sheephouse Road, Maidenhead  
- 4A Strip of land west of Cannon Lane, Cox Green  
- 4B Area south of railway and north of Breadcroft Lane, Cox Green  
- 5A Area including Maidenhead Golf Course

10 A sustainability assessment was undertaken for the broad areas as part of the Sustainability Appraisal accompanying the Borough Local Plan. This document is available to view as part of the consultation.  
11 Land owners/agents were contacted to establish availability of promoted land  
12 New criteria/information include: Historic Environment: archaeology; Biodiversity: habitat characteristics, areas of ecological value nearby but outside the broad area; Resources: source protection zones (SPZ); Infrastructure: waste water capacity and waste water works, waste and recycling plants, school places, open space; Highways and Accessibility: Highways includes issues such as access points, visibility splay grade, road widening, upgrading of roundabouts; Accessibility includes proximity to facilities and services: shops, health, leisure, schools (less than 1km = good access) and proximity to bus routes, cycle routes and the strategic highway network. Calculations were undertaken based on linear distance from the nearest edge  
13 http://www.rbwm.gov.uk/web/pp_evidence_base.htm
Methodology

- 5B Area west of A404M, Maidenhead
- 5C Triangle M4/A308(M)/Ascot Road, Maidenhead
- 5D Area north of Kimbers Lane, Maidenhead
- 5E Area south of Harvest Hill Road, Maidenhead
- 6A Stafferton Way, Braywick
- 7A Land west of Holyport - Area between Ascot Road and Holyport Road
- 8A Area north of A308, south of Maidenhead Road, Windsor
- 8B Area south of A308, east of Oakley Green Road and north of Dedworth Road, Windsor
- 8C Area south of Dedworth Road and west of Broom Farm Estate, Windsor
- 11A Area south of Old Ferry Drive, Wraysbury
- 11B Area south of the Drive, Wraysbury
- 11C Area south of Waylands, Wraysbury
- 11E Area east of St Andrew’s Close, Wraysbury
- 11F Area around Tithe Farm, Wraysbury
- 12A Area north of Church Road, Old Windsor
- 12B Area west of Old Windsor and north of Crimp Hill, Old Windsor
- 13C Area south of Ascot High Street
Methodology

Map 12 Areas for consultation - Maidenhead
Methodology

Map 13 Areas for consultation - Windsor and Ascot
3 Area Analysis

Area 1A Cookham Rise - Area north and west of Cookham Rise

Area Description

3.1 The area lies to the north of Lower Road and Burnt Oak, Cookham Rise. The area is approximately 26.5 ha in size.

Stage 2 Assessment

Gaps and boundaries

3.2 Development of the area could lead to coalescence with nearby Cookham Dean, changing the identity of both distinct settlements. The Cookham VDS states that rural gaps “are a major factor in creating the open appearance of Cookham Dean” (page 57).

3.3 The area has limited defensible boundaries; for the most part demarcations take the form of open fencing and vegetation, although there is Hillgrove Wood in the north west and the narrow roads have high hedges running parallel. Development across the area would not relate to the existing settlement.
Countryside setting and topography

3.4 The area lies to the north of Cookham Rise and is characterised by open farmland, hedges and mature trees. It is considered that development to the north of Cookham Rise could therefore harm the setting of the area and appearance of the countryside and surrounding landscape.

3.5 The topography of the surrounding area is such that the area slopes northwards and in the west, westwards. Development would not be seen against existing buildings so would visually intrude into the countryside character. The Cookham VDS states that “Hillgrove Wood, off Bradcutts Lane, provides a backdrop to the open area between Cookham Dean and Cookham Rise.”

Agriculture

3.6 The east of the area is classified as Grade 3 agricultural land, with a sliver in the far east classified as Grade 4. The remainder of the area is classified as Grade 2. According to national guidance, Grades 1, 2 and 3A are classified as Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land (BMVAL) and Grade 3B is not. Development might therefore lead to the loss of some BMVAL.

Nature conservation and ancient woodland

3.7 The area is not designated for its ecological value.

3.8 The north west of the area abuts ancient woodland, consequently the north west of the area is within a 500m buffer of ancient woodland, however development is unlikely have an impact with the site being separated from the woodland by a road.

Historic environment

3.9 There are no known heritage assets in the immediate area, although the area is adjacent to a Conservation Area in the east.

Pollution

3.10 The area is constrained by contamination buffers to the north west and north east and consequently land in this area would be subject to remediation measures.

Minerals

3.11 There are no mineral workings in the area.

Stage 2: Conclusion

Reject.

Unacceptable adverse impacts of development have been demonstrated through assessment of the Stage 2 criteria. Development would harm openness of the Green Belt, the separation of Cookham Rise from Cookham Dean.

14 Cookham VDS, Page 18.
15 An ancient woodland buffer protects ancient woodland from intensive land uses. Many ancient woodlands are very small and have become increasingly isolated from other woodlands. This increases vulnerability to disturbances. The small size also means the woodlands are vulnerable to impacts from adjoining development. Ancient woodland over 2 hectares is recorded on Natural England’s provisional inventory which is supplemented in this Borough by TVERC data showing probable ancient woodland under 2 hectares. The Local Planning Authority is required to consult the Forestry Commission on any development application within 500m of an ancient woodland.
Area Description

3.12 The area lies to the west side of Whyteladyes Lane, Cookham Rise. The area is approximately 6.27 ha in size.

Stage 2 Assessment

Gaps and boundaries

3.13 The area lies on the edge of Cookham Rise, between it and Cookham Dean. The boundary is formed by tracks and hedges/fences. Whilst being located between two settlements, the limited depth of the area would not lead to a significant reduction in their separation. At its closest point the gap is around 400m.

Countryside setting and topography

3.14 The area is characterised by open grassland, a cricket pitch to the north and mature hedges.

3.15 The land rises from Cookham Rise to Cookham Dean in the order of 20m to 45m. The area does not extend to the point where the increase becomes more marked, meaning development would be viewed against the existing housing on Whyteladyes Lane.
Agriculture

3.16 Most of the area is classified as Grade 3 agricultural land, with land towards the north classified as Grade 2. Accordingly development in the north may lead to the loss of Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land.

Nature conservation and ancient woodland

3.17 The area has no designations for ecological value.

3.18 The area is partly within a 500m buffer of ancient woodland however development is unlikely have an impact with the site being separated from the woodland a road and field. There there are few trees on or adjoining the area itself.

Historic environment

3.19 There are no known heritage assets in the immediate area.

Pollution

3.20 A very small piece of land north west of the area is classified as being within a potential contamination buffer owing to former quarrying of sand & clay, operation of sand & gravel pits.

Minerals

3.21 There are no mineral workings in the area.

Stage 2: Conclusion

Pass in part

Unacceptable adverse impacts of development have not been demonstrated through consideration of the Stage 2 criteria in the south of the area.

Reject in part

Adverse impacts have been demonstrated through the assessment of Stage 2 criteria in the north of the area. The land is classified as Grade 2 Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land.
Planning History / Background

3.22 Part of the area was subject to an outline planning application (13/00834) in March 2013, for the construction of 23 affordable housing units. The application was refused on the basis that there was no signed planning obligation, the site was not within a recognised settlement in the Green Belt, and would result in an outward expansion of the existing settlement boundary into the Green Belt, which should only be revised through a Local Plan review.

Green Belt and Countryside Character

3.23 The area lies on the edge of Cookham Rise, between it and Cookham Dean. Whilst being located between two settlements, the limited depth of the area would not lead to a significant reduction in their separation. However, the site has clear boundaries which could act to avoid the future encroachment of development.

3.24 The area falls within farmed chalk slopes (11c) landscape character area. The landscape is influenced by the adjacent village of Cookham Rise, with visible views of the settlement. The landscape is characterised by a mosaic of large scale mixed arable, pasture and woodland landscapes. Remnant hedgerows, trees and ecologically rich grassland form both landscape features, biodiversity and contribute to a strong aesthetic character. The Landscape Character Assessment considers the condition of the landscape overall to be ‘good-declining’, with the settlement of Cookham Rise and continued expansion of Maidenhead’s northern edge seen as increasingly impacting long distance views from this locality. The area is shown in the study to have a low capacity for change.
3.25 Whist the landscape is open in character, the area does not extend westwards to the point where the increase levels becomes more marked. Development from someone’s perspective from within the countryside would therefore be viewed against the existing housing on Whyteladyes Lane.

**Settlement and Townscape Character**

3.26 Cookham Rise has a compact development form. The area would continue this pattern, being closely related to the existing settlement edge.

3.27 The adjacent settlement is predominantly post-war in character, comprising two storey dwellings (terrace and semi-detached dwellings) in a linear layout along Whyteladyes Lane. The Cookham VDS states "Whyteladyes Lane is completely residential with many areas of green and notable rural views at almost every point. The view westwards is to green spaces at the top of Cookham Dean" and along Whyteladyes Lane "two long red brick terraces are to be found, possessing considerable architectural interest" (page 48). Whyteladyes Lane saw piecemeal development in the early twentieth century. To the north west of the sub-area lie the pitch, practice areas and club house of the Cookham Dean Cricket Club. The Cookham VDS also states that “glimpses of green” are seen between and beyond properties and from numerous vantage points throughout the settlements. Green hillsides curve to the east and west.” (page 10). As such it would require careful design to achieve a development that relates well to adjacent properties and the rest of the settlement.

3.28 The area is adjacent to five different townscape character areas, Inter War Suburbs (8A), Leafy Residential Suburbs (13A), Post War Suburbs (to 1960) (9A), Post War Residential Flats (11A) and Victorian Villages (5A). The townscape assessment recommends some strategic principles are considered for future development within the area. This includes:

- the retention of the compact, contained village form;
- the maintenance of the distinction between the two settlements (Cookham and Cookham Rise) including the associated role of The Moor and Poundfield;
- the conservation of long views across The Moor and to the Cliveden Estate, including those views from The Moor and more elevated land as at Poundfield and in Cookham Dean;
- to consider the appearance of Cookham Rise in views from Cliveden and the elevated chalk landscape, as well as from the edge of The Moor;
- the conservation of the eastern approach from The Moor, the western approach at the junction with the Maidenhead Road and the railway station and gateways into the historic core of Cookham Rise.

3.29 The character of any development in relation to the adjacent settlement would therefore require careful consideration to enable integration with the current built form, and to carefully consider the impact on views from other areas to Cookham Rise.

**Historic Environment**

3.30 There are no known heritage assets in the immediate area.

3.31 The area has archaeological potential being situated on a gravel terrace known to have been favoured for settlement and other activities throughout the Prehistoric period. The Berkshire Historic Environment Record notes several Prehistoric artefacts found nearby, as well as a possible Roman road, and given the previously undeveloped nature of the area, archaeological deposits are likely to survive well. Therefore an archaeological desk-based assessment would be required at an early stage, and field evaluation is likely to be needed prior to determination of any planning application, to ensure that any impacts on important remains can be mitigated, either through preservation in situ or “by record” (through careful excavation, recording and analysis).

**Biodiversity**

3.32 None of the area itself or land adjoining it is designated for its ecological value. Whilst within 500m of an ancient woodland, development would be unlikely to have any impact as the site is separated from the woodland by road and field.

3.33 The area to the west and north this is semi-improved neutral grassland, and to the west cultivated/disturbed arable land.

3.34 There are Berkshire Protected species within the area.
Area Analysis

Flooding

3.35 The area is considered to be at low risk of flooding being located within floodzone 1 (less than 1 in 1000 chance of flooding (<0.1%) in any year.

Other Environmental Considerations

3.36 There are no known pollution issues in the area.

Resources

3.37 Most of the area is classified as Grade 3 agricultural land. According to national guidance, Grade 3A is classified as Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land (BMVAL) and Grade 3B is not. It is unknown whether this area is Grade 3A or 3B and therefore a cautious approach must be applied, and the higher classification used. Development might therefore lead to the loss of BMVAL.

3.38 The area is located in proximity to a groundwater Source Protection Zone (SPZ). Whilst within the inner protection zone, residential development is considered unlikely to cause an adverse impact on water quality. Activities which might lead to pollution would be unsuitable.

Infrastructure

3.39 Thames Water have advised that there have been a number of issues with the sewerage network in the immediate vicinity to this area. The network is believed to have sufficient capacity for the existing dwellings, however this may not be the case if additional dwellings are built. Further investigations and impact studies would be required and a Drainage Infrastructure report would be likely required to ensure sufficient capacity is brought forward ahead of any development. Whilst these issues are not deemed insurmountable, in the event of an upgrade to Thames Water assets being required, up to three years lead time will be potentially necessary for the delivery of the infrastructure.

3.40 Development of the area should be acceptable in terms of school places and existing capacity in the Cookham area, although it may make it more difficult for children from outside the area to get a place in one of the village primary schools in the future. If a larger number of homes were built, it may be necessary to extend existing schools to increase provision.

3.41 Cookham Dean Cricket Club occupy land immediately to the north of the area, but there would be no loss of community recreation facilities in the area being considered.

3.42 According to the Open Space Strategy the wider Cookham area, located in the northern parishes of the borough, has the greatest total amount of open space provision when balanced against the recommended local standard for each typology. This equates to a total of nearly 90 hectares of open space above the recommended minimum total level of provision. A significant proportion of this total amount of open space comprises natural and semi-natural greenspace. The study states that this natural and semi-natural greenspace mitigates against the shortfalls in other open space provision such as parks and gardens or children’s play provision. Notably Cookham has two allotments, and whilst the area appears to have limited sports pitch provision, there are accessible pitches outside the borough boundaries.

Highways and Accessibility

3.43 The area is served by Whyteladies Lane, a classified un-numbered road in Cookham Rise. There are two existing access points to the area 1) access to The Whyte House to the south which joins the public highway at an acute angle and 2) a field gate access off a car parking area located some 250 metres north of the Lesters Road junction with Whyteladies Lane. Most of the traffic likely to be generated by the development of this area is likely to be from the south and accordingly the surrounding highway network is considered suitable to accommodate such traffic.

3.44 There is enough space and the road alignment is such for available visibility to exceed the minimum required visibility splays. Development could require Transport Assessment and a Residential Travel Plan. Although the area has local highway issues, suitable mitigation measures can be sought to overcome these issues.

3.45 The area is approximately 800m away from the nearest existing local centre. The nearest health facilities area within approximately 500m.
3.46 The area is approximately 800m away from Cookham train station, the area is within 1.4km of the national cycle route, and is within 70m of a bus route along Whyteleaves Lane.

Sustainability Appraisal

3.47 The area was scored -1 when assessed against sustainability objectives.

Availability

3.48 Part of the south east of the area has been promoted (SHLAA ref: WM CO 0017), though the promoted land continues south outside of the assessment area.
Area Analysis

Area 2 Maidenhead - Area north of Furze Platt Road

Area Description

3.49 The area lies to the north of Furze Platt Road, Maidenhead. The area is approximately 80.7 ha in size.

Stage 2 Assessment

Gaps and boundaries

3.50 The area lies in an important local gap between the Maidenhead and Cookham settlements; the gap is approximately 1.3km at its closest point.

3.51 The area has defensible boundaries. The area could create a logical boundary along from the excluded settlement to its east and south.

Countryside setting and topography

3.52 The area is characterised by open farmland, mature woodlands and hedges with hills beyond to the north west. Development of the area could harm the setting of the area owing to its open character, and the topography of nearby areas is such that it could bring the bulk of the urban settlement visually closer to villages beyond Maidenhead.
Agriculture

3.53 The area is classified as Grade 2 Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land (BMVAL). Development might therefore lead to loss of BMVAL.

Nature conservation and ancient woodland

3.54 None of the area itself is designated for its ecological value, however a Local Wildlife Site abuts the area to the north east. There are a number of Berkshire protected species in the broad area.

3.55 Whilst the area itself does not contain ancient woodland, there is ancient woodland beyond the boundary to the north, and whilst Cannon Court Wood abuts the area to the north east, it is separated by Hindhay Lane. Whilst large parts of the area are therefore within a 500m buffer development is unlikely to have an impact with the site being separated from the woodland by a road.

Historic environment

3.56 There are no heritage assets in the immediate area.

Pollution

3.57 There are potential issues with contamination in the west and centre of the area. The southern part of the broad area also lies in a noise buffer zone owing to the A-road.

Minerals

3.58 There is an existing minerals quarry in the area, with the area safeguarded as a preferred minerals aggregates site.

Stage 2: Conclusion

Reject.

Adverse impacts of development have been demonstrated through the assessment of the Stage 2 criteria. Development would harm the openness of the Green Belt, the separation of Maidenhead with Cookham Dean and Cookham Rise, and sterilise a mineral resource. The land is also classified as Grade 2 Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land.