Hart Local Plan:
Strategy and Sites 2016 - 2032
Topic Paper: Gaps between Settlements
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Introduction

1. The purpose of this paper is to set out the justification for Policy NBE2: Gaps between Settlements in the Hart Local Plan Strategy and Sites 2016-2032.

2. Policy NBE2 identifies eleven Gaps:
   - Yateley/Blackwater/Sandhurst
   - Hawley to Farnborough
   - Fleet to Farnborough
   - Fleet/Church Crookham to Crookham Village
   - Church Crookham to Ewshot
   - Crookham Village to Dogmersfield
   - Eversley to Yateley
   - Eversley Centre to Eversley Cross
   - Odiham to North Warnborough
   - North Warnborough to Greywell
   - Hook to Newnham

3. These Gaps are shown indicatively in the Local Plan on the key diagram, the Policies Map and in Figure 1 below. The precise boundaries of the Gaps will be determined through a separate development plan document or through Neighbourhood Plans.

4. The Hart Local Plan Strategy and Sites document identifies an Area of Search for a planned new settlement at Murrell Green/Winchfield, to be brought forward through a further Development Plan Document. Policy NBE2 makes provision for new Gaps to be defined through that DPD in order to prevent coalescence between existing settlements and the proposed new settlement.
Figure 1: Settlement Gaps
Background

What are Gaps between settlements?

5. The term ‘Gaps’ refers to land between settlements that has been identified as important in helping to define the character of settlements and shaping the settlement pattern in the district. In parts of the district, settlements are close together and gaps prevent their coalescence and help maintain separate settlement identities. Gaps are areas which are predominantly open or undeveloped and, being close to settlements, are often subject to development pressures. Development on the edge of settlements can reduce the physical extent of Gaps and development within them can reduce visual separation between settlements. Both the individual and cumulative effects of existing and proposed developments need to be taken into account as both can have an impact on the physical separation of settlements over time.

6. Gaps are therefore a landscape function to prevent coalescence of distinct and separate settlements, rather than related to landscape quality or protection of landscape character. Gaps also provide green infrastructure and wildlife benefits close to settlements. Many contain Public Rights of Way which are valued highly by residents and can be heavily used. Neighbourhood Plans may define the extent of a Gap or may designate further Gaps.

7. Some development may still take place in Gaps where, for example, under countryside Policy NBE1, development may be permitted for rural exceptions affordable housing, some forms of rural economic development, agricultural workers dwellings, specialist housing, recreation and community facilities. However, such development will not be permitted in Gaps if they adversely impact on the physical separation of, impact on individual settlement identities or lead to the visual coalescence of settlements. Gaps identify specific, targeted areas of countryside where the issue or threat of settlement coalescence must be taken into account when determining a planning application.

8. Gap policies in Hart are longstanding having first been designated through the Hampshire County Structure Plan (Review) 1996-2011 (HCSPR) which identified two Strategic Gaps affecting Hart (Appendix 1). These were delineated in the Hart District Local Plan (Replacement) 1996-2006 (HDLPR), Policies CON 19 and CON 20 on Strategic Gaps (Appendix 2). The HDLPR also designated seven Local Gaps (listed in Policy CON21 on Local Gaps, Appendix 2). The Gaps as defined in the HDLPR are shown in Figure 2 below:
Figure 2: Strategic and Local Gaps as defined in the Hart District Local Plan (Replacement) 1996-2006 (HDLPR)
9. The Panel reporting into the HCSPR Examination in Public and the Hart Local Plan Inspector, both found in favour of Gaps policies. They did however identify particular issues or concerns with certain Gaps, for example whether they were drawn too extensively. Relevant comments are drawn out in the individual Gap assessments in the appendices to this report.

10. The HCSPR was superseded, first by the South East Plan and then the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). However the policies on Strategic and Local Gaps in the HDLPR were saved under provisions in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. It is these policies that are proposed to be replaced by Policy NBE2 in the new Hart Local Plan Strategy and Sites document.

11. The Hart Local Plan Strategy and Sites document no longer distinguishes between strategic and local gaps but instead focusses on identifying gaps between settlements which are required to ensure their separation and protect their identity and character. Only areas essential to achieving this separation are designated as Gaps in the Hart Local Plan: Strategy and Sites document. This has led to particular changes to the areas designated as gaps between Blackwater/Farnborough and Fleet, and to a lesser extent, at Yateley/Sandhurst.

Is a Gaps policy consistent with national policy?

12. Local Plans must be consistent with national policy. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) does not refer to Gaps and as such is not prescriptive on supporting or opposing gaps in principle. It does however state:

> “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;” NPPF paragraph 17 – bullet point 5

The NPPF also states:

> “Crucially, Local Plans should identify land where development would be inappropriate, for instance because of its environmental or historic significance;” NPPF paragraph 157, Bullet point 7

13. Gaps identified in the Hart Local Plan Strategy and Sites document are a tool to help protect the character of different areas by ensuring separation between settlements and helping to maintain their distinct character and identity. They are also an example of areas where development is considered to be inappropriate. This is consistent with the NPPF as it helps provide certainty on where development is unacceptable except in defined circumstances. This is set within the context of a plan that has been positively prepared, i.e. one which seeks to meet identified development needs and promotes sustainable development. As a restrictive policy designation, Gaps are therefore focussed solely on those areas where there is a genuine case for their designation.
14. A High Court Judgment (HCJ)\(^1\) in 2014 underlines the legitimacy of Gap policies in local plans, provided such policies are focused and do not act as ‘blanket ban policies’ outside settlement boundaries. The HCJ states that: “policies designed to protect specific areas or features, such as the gaps between settlements….could sensibly exist regardless of the distribution of housing and other development”.

15. Since the NPPF was published, several Hampshire authorities have had Gap policies in their local plans found to be sound at examination:

- Winchester District Local Plan Part 1 – Joint Core Strategy (adopted March 2013) - Policy CP18: Settlement Gaps
- East Hampshire District Council and South Downs National Park Joint Core Strategy (Adopted June 2014) - Policy CP23 Gaps between settlements
- Test Valley Local Plan (adopted January 2016) - Policy E3: Local Gaps
- Basingstoke & Deane Local Plan (adopted May 2016) – Policy EM2: Strategic Gaps

16. It is clear that under the NPPF gaps are still seen as an important and legitimate tool in managing growth.

**Why do we need Gaps in the Hart Local Plan?**

17. In parts of Hart District, the towns and villages are located close to one another, particularly in the north east and eastern parts of the district. There is a risk that through further development, the separate identity of settlements could be lost through physical or visual coalescence. This issue is identified in the Hart Landscape Character Assessment, 1997. This states:

`This century has also seen the growth and expansion of the county’s main towns and Hampshire continues to experience significant development pressures. Its good communication links with London and the rest of southern England have led to significant pressures for both commercial development and new housing. There has consequently been growth in the size of the district’s settlements, particularly in and around the larger towns of Fleet and Yateley, and pressure for expansion of some smaller villages. Coalescence of settlements and the development of continuous urban sprawl is a real threat in some areas and separation needs to be maintained through the maintenance of important countryside ‘gaps’, such as the Blackwater Valley. Urban fringe areas also commonly suffer from a decline in management and unsightly land uses which detract from the setting of settlements and the character of the countryside areas which surround them.`

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\(^1\) High Court Judgment between South Northamptonshire Council (claimant) and Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Barwood Land and Estates Ltd (defendants) – in particular paragraph 47: Ref [2014] EWHC 573 (Admin); 10 March 2014.
The pressure for development between settlements

18. Previous Structure and Local Plans demonstrate that the threat of settlement coalescence has existed for many years. That threat is on-going and unlikely to go away given current development pressures. To help illustrate this Figure 3 shows sites that have received planning permission, or which have been promoted through the latest SHLAA\(^2\) and are located within Gaps. These sites are listed in Appendix 3.

\(^2\) Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment which shows sites promoted for development through the Local Plan process.
Figure 3: Sites promoted for housing within the Strategic and Local Gaps defined in the Hart District Local Plan (Replacement) 1996-2006
19. In addition, a site within the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHL108 Land at Deptford Lane) lies outside an existing Gap. However, if developed, this would generate concern over the apparent coalescence of North Warnborough and Greywell. This Gap is considered in detail at Appendix 14 where a new Gap is proposed to be designated.

**Figure 4: Land at Deptford Lane, North Warnborough**

![Map of Land at Deptford Lane, North Warnborough](image)

20. In summary, there are significant and on-going development pressures in locations which have been identified over a long time period as vulnerable to settlement coalescence. This justifies the continuing need for a Gaps policy.

**Hart Local Plan Strategy and Sites Objective 14**

21. The Hart Local Plan Strategy and Sites Regulation 19 document identifies the protection of settlements from coalescence as a key Plan objective. Objective 14 states:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective 14: To maintain the separate character and identity of settlements by avoiding development that would result in their physical or visual coalescence.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

22. New Local Plan Policy NBE2 (Appendix 15) will play a key role in ensuring that this objective is met in terms of maintaining the local identity of settlements.
Where are designated Gaps needed in Hart?

23. The Strategic and Local Gaps defined in the HDLPR have been assessed to establish whether a Gap is still needed and whether its extent should be amended. Also, a new Gap has been considered between North Warnborough and Greywell. In this case, the need for a Gap was identified in the Odiham and North Warnborough Neighbourhood Plan (Submission Draft) but was subsequently rejected by the Neighbourhood Plan Inspector.

24. The Gap assessments have been made against criteria which were developed with regard to those used elsewhere in Hampshire (Appendix 4). The rationale and purpose of each of the criteria is shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gaps criteria</th>
<th>Explanation/ comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) The land is predominantly open or undeveloped and provides a sense of separation between settlements</td>
<td>Gaps should be <em>predominantly</em> open or undeveloped, but they need not be <em>entirely</em> open or undeveloped. For example, forms of development associated with the countryside (e.g. farm houses, agricultural buildings, and certain types of infrastructure) may be able to exist within a Gap without undermining its function. Previously developed land can also exist within a Gap. Given the general encouragement to redevelop brownfield land, a Gap designation that washes over such land means that coalescence issues must be considered as part of any development proposal. Gaps should only be designated on land between settlements. They should not cover areas of countryside that do not separate settlements. Nor should they cover existing built up areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) The land performs an important role in maintaining the separate identity of settlements at risk of coalescence</td>
<td>A Gaps policy focuses only on areas where there is a genuine need for the policy i.e. where settlements are close together and where there is a genuine risk that development would threaten physical or visual coalescence. They should not cover large areas of countryside where some development could clearly take place without harm to the separate identity of settlements.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25. When it comes to defining the precise extent of the Gaps either through a future Local Plan or in a Neighbourhood Plan the following criterion should be taken into account:
Gaps criteria | Explanation/ comment
---|---
c) In defining the precise extent of a Gap, no more land than is necessary to prevent the coalescence of settlements will be included, having regard to maintaining their physical and visual separation. | It is important that Gaps are not drawn larger than necessary for the purpose they are intended. To do otherwise could be construed as failing to positively prepare a Local Plan.

26. The assessment of individual Gaps includes consideration of the following:
   - landscape character
   - the sense of arriving/leaving a place
   - landscape features (woodland, river valleys and landform)
   - topography
   - distance
   - existing vegetation and land uses
   - the nature of settlement edges and how they integrate with the adjacent countryside
   - key views (if considered an important factor)

27. The assessments include references to, for example, the Panel's Report into the HCSPR and the Inspector's Report into the HDLPR, where relevant. Reference is also made to any cross boundary Gap issues. The Gaps assessed are listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gap name</th>
<th>Saved Strategic or Local Gap, or proposed new Gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Blackwater Gap between the Blackwater Valley Towns (Aldershot to Yateley and the County boundary.)</td>
<td>Strategic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fleet and Aldershot/Yateley</td>
<td>Strategic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crookham Village to Dogmersfield</td>
<td>Local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eversley to Yateley</td>
<td>Local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eversley Cross to Eversley Centre</td>
<td>Local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fleet/Church Crookham to Ewshot</td>
<td>Local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fleet to Crookham Village</td>
<td>Local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hook to Newnham</td>
<td>Local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odiham to North Warnborough</td>
<td>Local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Warnborough to Greywell</td>
<td>Proposed new Gap</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28. The detailed assessments for each Gap are set out in Appendices 5 to 14. An overall summary of the findings is shown below.
Strategic Gaps
29. The review of the Strategic Gaps concludes that the two saved Strategic Gaps in the HDLPR should be retained in part, focusing specifically on the places where settlements genuinely are close together. The following gaps are to be retained:

- Yateley/Blackwater/Sandhurst Gap - to ensure Yateley and Blackwater remain separated from each other and from Sandhurst on the other side of the County boundary.
- Blackwater Hawley to Farnborough Gap - the area east of Hawley Common SPA and west of the railway line.
- Fleet to Farnborough Gap - focussed on the area south of the M3 motorway and north of the Basingstoke Canal.

Local Gaps
30. The assessment identifies a need to retain all the Local Gaps designated in the HDLPR, albeit with precise boundaries needing to be reviewed through a separate Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan. This will take account of development that has taken place in the Gaps since they were defined in the HDLPR, any outstanding planning permissions, any revisions to settlement policy boundaries and the housing allocation at Hartland Park in the new Hart Local Plan Strategy and Sites.

31. The main changes proposed are:-
   - Fleet/Church Crookham to Crookham Village Gap:
     Land north of Netherhouse Copse is removed from the Gap (as recommended by the Inspector at the Inquiry into the HDLPR in 1998). Development at Grove Farm, North of Netherhouse Copse, requires adequate landscaping to screen the site from Crookham Village to fully maintain the sense of separation.
   - The Odiham to North Warnborough Local Gap will be slightly reduced by the housing allocation at the rear of 4 Western Lane, Odiham. This is a minor incursion into the Gap not resulting in physical or visual coalescence.

New Gap
32. A new Gap is proposed between North Warnborough and Greywell, due to the proximity of the settlements, the landscape, topography and the pressure for residential development at Deptford Lane (see Appendix 14).

Gaps between settlements in the Local Plan Strategy and Sites
33. Therefore, the final list of Gaps between settlements is as follows:

- Yateley/Blackwater/Sandhurst
- Hawley to Farnborough
- Fleet to Farnborough
- Fleet/Church Crookham to Crookham Village
- Church Crookham to Ewshot
Crookham Village to Dogmersfield
Eversley to Yateley
Eversley Centre to Eversley Cross
Odiham to North Warnborough
North Warnborough to Greywell
Hook to Newnham

34. Figure 1 on page 4 shows the indicative location of the Gaps. The precise boundaries will be defined in a separate Development Plan document together with a review of settlement policy boundaries.

35. The Gaps in this paper have all been assessed against a single set of criteria and as such it is not considered necessary to maintain a distinction between Strategic and Local Gaps, as both serve the same function. The distinction between Strategic and Local Gaps is historic, deriving from the HCSPR which has long since been superseded, first by Regional Plans and then the NPPF.

Changes to the Gaps Policy since the Regulation 18 stage

36. In April 2017 the Council consulted on a Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan Strategy and Sites. That Plan included a Gaps Policy (MG6) which contained the same list of Gaps as the new Policy NBE2, with the exception that it also included proposed Gaps between a proposed site allocation at Murrell Green, and the nearby settlements of Hook and Hartley Wintney.

37. The consultation generated significant support for maintaining gaps between settlements. In some cases new Gaps were proposed, in other cases arguments were put as to why particular gaps should be removed or amended, or why the Gaps policy itself should be removed entirely. Others argued that the approach of identifying gaps is inflexible given that new development can be accommodated in gaps without the physical and visual merging of settlements. Concerns were also raised over accommodating the housing requirement and that gaps had been carried over from the adopted local plan without an assessment of their value or extent. A number of responses also requested that the gap boundaries should be defined now rather than be indicative, to give development a clear steer.

38. None of the representations convinced the Council that the Policy needed fundamental changes. The main change over the Regulation 18 Draft Plan is the removal of the proposed Gaps between the site allocation at Murrell Green and its neighbouring settlements of Hook and Hartley Wintney. This is simply because the proposed site allocation at Murrell Green has been removed, so there is no need for Gaps in those locations. Instead the Gaps policy has been updated to refer to new Gaps to be identified through the New Settlement DPD.
Conclusions

39. In Hart there are many places where settlements lie close together and where new
development could result in the physical or visual coalescence of settlements, undermining
their separate identity. An objective of the new Local Plan is to maintain or enhance the
identity of the district’s settlements. Avoiding the coalescence of settlements will help to
achieve that.

40. Gaps provide targeted protection against development over and above that provided by
Policy NBE1 Development in the Countryside and help prevent the physical or visual
coalescence of settlements. They are a legitimate planning tool in the context of the NPPF
as they are used in a focused way as part of a positively prepared plan.

41. The ‘saved’ Strategic and Local Gaps in the HDLPR have been reviewed and a new Gap
considered against the defined criteria. The Gaps are shown indicatively in the Local Plan
Strategy and Sites document and their precise extent will be defined in a further
development plan document or in Neighbourhood Plans.

42. All Gaps are now justified against the same criteria and any development proposals will be
subject to Policy NBE2 in the Local Plan Strategy and Sites document.

43. Finally it worth noting that Policy NBE2 makes provision for new Gaps to be defined
through the proposed ‘New Settlement DPD’. A new settlement is to be planned within
the area of search at Murrell Green/Winchfield and a key objective will be to ensure that
it does not result in coalescence with existing settlements. New Gaps will therefore be
identified where necessary between the planned new community and existing settlements
through that DPD.
Appendices
APPENDIX 1 Hampshire County Structure Plan (Review)
Strategic and Local Gaps

Strategic Gaps

Strategic Gaps are designated to protect those areas of land which, although not necessarily of the highest visual attractiveness, have particular importance as open and undeveloped land. This land is an important element in the structure of the settlement pattern at a strategic level, providing a clear visual and physical break in the built environment. They keep individual settlements separate and distinct. They may also have other important benefits for local communities as areas with recreation, amenity, and/or nature conservation value. Strict control of development is necessary if their importance is to be maintained.

G1 To prevent neighbouring urban areas from merging into one another, strategic gaps, comprising land which has a predominantly open and/or rural appearance, will be maintained between:
- Fareham/Stubbington and Fareham Western Wards/Whiteley (the Meon Gap);
- Fleet and Aldershot/Yateley;
- The Blackwater Valley towns (Aldershot to Yateley) and the County Boundary (the Blackwater Gap);
- Southampton and Eastleigh.

The precise boundaries of these gaps will be defined in local plans with the objectives of preventing coalescence and protecting the separate identity and amenity of the urban areas they separate. Only land necessary to achieve these long-term objectives will be included.

Permission will only be granted for development even in accordance with other policies in the Plan where:
(i) it cannot more suitably be located elsewhere; or
(ii) it would not compromise, individually or cumulatively with other existing or proposed development, the integrity of the gap.

Within the densely urbanised parts of the southern and north-eastern parts of Hampshire there are substantial areas of open or undeveloped land which are of fundamental importance for shaping the settlement pattern. They perform a role in providing extensive breaks in these large and complex built-up areas. In the south, they help to break up the otherwise continuous built-up area with its population of over one million people. In the north-east, the towns are part of an urban area of around 300,000 people, interspersed with open and undeveloped land, which extends on both sides of the county boundary. The Blackwater River runs through a ribbon of open and undeveloped land with narrow strips of land running between the towns either side to the open countryside beyond. These areas are of strategic importance to the separate identity of the settlements and are therefore designated Strategic Gaps.

These gaps all have a long-term importance. Their continuing value as open and predominantly undeveloped countryside depends on retaining their current size and enhancing their character. They are areas which should be protected from built development. Because of their long-term importance, once fixed in local plans, their boundaries should be altered only in exceptional circumstances.
Local gaps

There are many open or undeveloped areas which have importance at a local level, both within the major built-up areas and elsewhere. Local gaps will be identified in local plans where there are areas of locally important open and undeveloped land which separate individual settlements, the identity of which would be lost by their coalescence.

G3 To preserve the separate identities of smaller settlements at risk of coalescence with other settlements, local plans may identify and seek to preserve local gaps between them. The boundaries of local gaps will be identified in local plans having regard to:

(i) the inclusion of no more land than is required to prevent coalescence and retain the separate identities of settlements;

(ii) the development requirements as set out in other policies of this Plan.

Within local gaps, permission will not normally be granted for development which would diminish the gap physically or visually.

The precise boundaries of local gaps will be defined in local plans having regard to the development requirements set out in other policies in this Plan, and will include land which makes an important visual contribution to the setting of a settlement and its identity.
APPENDIX 2 Saved policies relating to Strategic and Local Gaps in the hart District Local Plan (Replacement) (HDLPR) 1996-2006

Strategic Gaps

CON 19 DEVELOPMENT WILL NOT BE PERMITTED WHICH WOULD DIMINISH THE FOLLOWING DEFINED STRATEGIC GAPS PHYSICALLY OR VISUALLY:

i) The Blackwater Gap between the Blackwater Valley Towns (Aldershot to Yateley) and the County Boundary; and

ii) Fleet and Aldershot/Yateley.

Strategic Gaps are designated to protect those areas of land which have particular importance as open and undeveloped land; important in terms of the structure of the settlement pattern at a strategic level and providing a clear visual and physical break in the built environment. They keep individual settlements separate and distinct but may also have other benefits for local communities as areas with recreation, amenity, and / or nature conservation value. Strict control of development is necessary if their importance is to be maintained.

These strategic gaps have a long-term importance and once fixed in local plans their boundaries should be altered only in exceptional circumstances. Within this densely urbanised part of north-east Hampshire, there are substantial areas of open or undeveloped land which are of fundamental importance for shaping the strategic settlement pattern. They perform a role in providing extensive breaks in this large conurbation and their importance is a reflection of their size and extent. In north-east Hampshire the towns are part of a larger urban area of around 300,000 people, interspersed with open and undeveloped land, which extends both sides of the County boundary. In Surrey and Berkshire, development stretches in an almost unbroken crescent, paralleling the River Blackwater, from Farnham to Sandhurst and beyond. Pressures threatening further coalescence are considerable, particularly along the river valley itself. Over the years, development has reduced the amount of open land between the Blackwater Valley Towns. In many, this remaining open land is dominated visually by urban features. Fleet is a large town with a distinct and separate identity, which over recent years has experienced peripheral pressures for development towards the Blackwater Valley Towns. Strategic gaps between these towns and Fleet will help to prevent coalescence in this part of the conurbation.

Attention is drawn to the fact that a number of site-specific proposals occur within the defined strategic gaps. These include sites at DERA, Pyestock and Clarks Farm, Darby Green. These are generally instances where there is already development and the Plan proposals seek to address the development options for each site within the context of the gaps that they fall within.

It should be noted that where gaps cross District boundaries, as is the case with the Fleet to Farnborough/Aldershot gap and the Yateley/Blackwater to County Boundary gap, similar designations exist on the other side of the boundary.

CON 20 WITHIN THE BLACKWATER GAP BETWEEN THE BLACKWATER VALLEY TOWNS AND THE COUNTY BOUNDARY, PERMISSION WILL NOT BE GRANTED FOR DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD DIMINISH THE GAP PHYSICALLY OR VISUALLY, IN ORDER THAT THE SETTING AND SEPARATE IDENTITY OF SETTLEMENTS ON EITHER SIDE OF THE COUNTY BOUNDARY ARE RETAINED. PROPOSALS THAT RETAIN THE OPEN NATURE OF THE BLACKWATER VALLEY, PROMOTE RECREATION AS ITS PRIMARY USE AND HAVE NO DETRIMENTAL EFFECT ON ECOLOGY OR LANDSCAPE WILL BE PERMITTED.

In north-east Hampshire the towns are part of a larger urban area of around 300,000 people, interspersed with open and undeveloped land, which extends both sides of the County boundary. In Surrey and Berkshire development stretches in an almost unbroken crescent, paralleling the River Blackwater, from Farnham to Sandhurst and beyond. Pressures threatening further coalescence are considerable, particularly along the river valley itself. The Blackwater River runs through a thin ribbon of open and undeveloped land with narrow strips of land running between the towns to the open countryside beyond. This open land is of strategic importance to the separate identity of the settlements in the three counties.

The area surrounding the Blackwater Valley has generally seen a rapid rate of development in recent years. The Valley itself therefore performs a valuable role as an open gap between settlements on either side, and provides opportunities
for a wide variety of recreational pursuits. These include both informal recreation such as walking and bird-watching, and more formal activities such as water-sports. The Blackwater Valley Countryside Service works to protect the open space and ecological value of the Valley whilst maximising recreation opportunities.

There are particularly fine views across the River Blackwater from neighbouring Wokingham District, including those from Wokingham’s Blackwater Valley and Farley Hill Areas of Special Landscape Importance.

See also Proposal RUR 31, which covers recreational development within the Valley.

Local Gaps

**CON 21** DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD LEAD TO THE COALESCENCE OR DAMAGE THE SEPARATE IDENTITY OF NEIGHBOURING SETTLEMENTS WILL NOT BE PERMITTED IN THE FOLLOWING LOCAL GAPS:

i) Fleet to Crookham Village;

ii) Fleet/Church Crookham to Ewshot;

iii) Crookham Village to Dogmersfield;

iv) Eversley to Yateley;

v) Hook to Newnham;

vi) Odiham to North Warnborough;

vii) Eversley Centre and Eversley Cross.

Gaps separating smaller settlements are also very important, but their significance is of more local value. They are important in maintaining the separate identities of smaller settlements, providing their setting and preventing coalescence. Any public rights of way within these gaps are usually heavily used and of high value to those living in adjoining settlements. The reduction of gaps can adversely affect the use and amenity of such rights of way, as well as impeding attempts to introduce new or extended footpaths or cycleways.

Local gaps may be subject to more frequent review than Strategic Gaps. Nevertheless, for the period of this local plan, the local planning authority aims to retain protection of all these gaps.
APPENDIX 3 Site promoted for housing development within existing Gaps

The following large sites of 50 dwellings or more, located within existing Gaps as defined in the HDLPR, have received planning permission for residential development:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning Reference</th>
<th>Development Site</th>
<th>Gap affected (as defined in the HDLPR)</th>
<th>Number of dwellings permitted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13/02567/MAJOR</td>
<td>High Ridge Farm, Hook</td>
<td>Hook to Newnham</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14/01817/MAJOR</td>
<td>Hawley Park Farm, Hawley Road, Hawley</td>
<td>The Blackwater Gap on land between Hawley and Farnborough</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14/02281/MAJOR</td>
<td>Land at Moor Place Farm, Moulsham Lane</td>
<td>The Blackwater Gap on land between Yateley and Sandhurst</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/01651/OUT</td>
<td>Land north of Netherhouse Copse, Hitches Lane, Fleet</td>
<td>Fleet to Crookham Village LG</td>
<td>423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14/00504/MAJOR</td>
<td>Land at Watery Lane, Church Crookham, Fleet</td>
<td>Fleet to Crookham Village LG</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following SHLAA sites being promoted for residential development are located in Strategic or Local Gaps as defined in the HDLPR:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHLAA reference</th>
<th>Site name</th>
<th>Gap affected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>013</td>
<td>Land at Moulsham Lane 2, Yateley – excluded (flood zone 3)</td>
<td>Blackwater SG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>017</td>
<td>Land at Darby Green, Yateley – excluded (flood zone 3)</td>
<td>Blackwater SG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>020</td>
<td>Land at Reading Road, Yateley</td>
<td>Blackwater SG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>037</td>
<td>Land at Reading Road 2, Yateley</td>
<td>Blackwater SG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>149</td>
<td>Land east of Mill Lane, Yateley – excluded (flood zone 3)</td>
<td>Blackwater SG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>012</td>
<td>Hill Farm, Leafy Oak Farm, Yateley – excluded (within 400m)</td>
<td>Fleet and Aldershot/Yateley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>021</td>
<td>Linklater Cottages, Blackwater</td>
<td>Fleet and Aldershot/Yateley SG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102</td>
<td>Land at Bramshot Lane, Fleet</td>
<td>Fleet and Aldershot/Yateley SG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>153</td>
<td>Brook House, Fleet</td>
<td>Fleet and Aldershot/Yateley SG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>303</td>
<td>Surplus land at Frogmore Community College, Yateley</td>
<td>Fleet and Aldershot/Yateley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>338</td>
<td>Land at Great Bramshot Farm (south of A327)</td>
<td>Fleet and Aldershot/Yateley SG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>357</td>
<td>Industrial Yard, Sankey Lane, Fleet</td>
<td>Fleet and Aldershot/Yateley SG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>122</td>
<td>Land west of the Fielders, Eversley</td>
<td>Eversley Centre and Eversley Cross LG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHLAA reference</td>
<td>Site name</td>
<td>Gap affected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>247</td>
<td>Land north of Hollybush Lane, Eversley</td>
<td>Eversley Centre and Eversley Cross LG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103</td>
<td>Land adjacent Crosby Gardens, Yateley</td>
<td>Eversley to Yateley LG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>194</td>
<td>Land at Firgrove Road, Eversley</td>
<td>Eversley to Yateley LG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>273</td>
<td>Land between Eversley Road and Firgrove Road, Yateley</td>
<td>Eversley to Yateley LG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>090</td>
<td>Stillers Farm, Ewshot</td>
<td>Fleet/Church Crookham to Ewshot LG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>166</td>
<td>Land west of Ewshot Lane, Ewshot</td>
<td>Fleet/Church Crookham to Ewshot LG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>354</td>
<td>Plot 1, Redfields Court, Ewshot</td>
<td>Fleet/Church Crookham to Ewshot LG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116</td>
<td>Cross Farm, Crookham Village</td>
<td>Fleet to Crookham Village LG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>057</td>
<td>Land adjacent to Queen’s Road, North Warnborough</td>
<td>Odiham to North Warnborough LG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>065</td>
<td>Land at Dunley’s Hill, Odiham</td>
<td>Odiham to North Warnborough LG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>066</td>
<td>Rear garden of 4 Western Lane, Odiham</td>
<td>Odiham to North Warnborough LG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119</td>
<td>Land at the rear of Longwood, Odiham</td>
<td>Odiham to North Warnborough LG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>009</td>
<td>Land off Hop Garden Road, Hook</td>
<td>Hook to Newnham LG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>130</td>
<td>Owen’s Farm, Hook</td>
<td>Hook to Newnham LG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>173</td>
<td>Owens Farm 2, Hook</td>
<td>Hook to Newnham LG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 4 Criteria set by other authorities for designating Gaps

South Hampshire Strategy, October 2012, published by the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) includes the following ‘Gap’ criteria for local authorities in the PUSH area:

The following criteria will be used by PUSH authorities to designate the location of other Gaps and to define the boundaries of all Gaps:

- the designation is needed to retain the open nature and/or sense of separation between settlements;
- the land to be included within the Gap performs an important role in defining the settlement character of the area and separating settlements at risk of coalescence;
- the Gap’s boundaries should not preclude provision being made for the development proposed in this Strategy;
- the Gap should include no more land than is necessary to prevent the coalescence of settlements having regard to maintaining their physical and visual separation.

Once designated, the multifunctional capacity of Gaps should be strengthened wherever possible.

In Hart’s context, the third bullet would not be relevant because Hart is not located within South Hampshire, however all the other criteria could be applied in Hart.

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council has a Strategic Gap Policy in its Local Plan which was found sound in April 2016. A Strategic Gaps Topic Paper, October 2014 set out the criteria for the designation of Gaps in the borough:

a) The land to be included within the gap is open and provides a sense of separation between settlements.

b) The land to be included within the gap performs an important role in defining the settlement character of the area and separating settlements at risk of coalescence (in particular from land allocations in the Local Plan).

c) In defining the extent of a gap, no more land than is necessary to prevent the coalescence of settlements should be included, having regard to maintaining their physical and visual separation.

It can be seen that B&DBC criteria are very similar to the PUSH criteria, with the 3rd bullet from the PUSH criteria being omitted because B&D is outside the PUSH area.
**APPENDIX 5 Assessment of the Blackwater Strategic Gap between the Blackwater Valley Towns (Aldershot to Yateley) and the County Boundary**

**Background**

This Strategic Gap was first identified in the Hampshire County Structure Plan and carried forward into the Hampshire County Structure Plan (Review) 1996-2011 (HCSPR). Over the years, this policy designation has been lost from Local Plans, except in Hart, though this is now being reviewed. In the HDLPR, the part of this Gap in Hart occupies approximately ¾ of the district’s north western boundary. The extent of the saved Gap is shown in Figure 2.

**Summary of landscape analysis against the two Gaps criteria:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(a) The land is predominantly open or undeveloped and provides a sense of separation between settlements</th>
<th>(b) The land performs an important role in maintaining the separate identity of settlements at risk of coalescence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Post-industrial landscape (open cast mineral extraction on river valley floor) comprising multiple lakes; now restored with rural characteristics (high tree populations between lakes resulting in mostly short distance views) – otherwise small scale grazing paddocks and occasional sports pitches prone to high water table</td>
<td>• Most views are short distance due river valley floor topography (flat) with land/causeways between the gravel pits/lakes heavily populated with trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Extent of existing development - long established, generally comprising a small population of well dispersed/scattered small farms and cottages</td>
<td>• Yateley expanded significantly north through late 20th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Completed development at Clarks Farm (DEV 17a) and Yateley Care Village (DEV 22) diminish the sense of separation on routes through and adjacent to the Strategic Gap</td>
<td>• Little or no perception of Sandhurst to the north or College Town to north east (across Berks border)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Appeal upheld for development and SANG NE of Moulsham Lane</td>
<td>• Camberley and Sandhurst have expanded west and south west towards the county boundary in mid to late 20th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strong sense of departure and arrival south to north due to the characteristics of this particular landscape area</td>
<td>• This linear area of the District has limited visual and physical access providing a strong sense of separation from west to east of Gap centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Little or no sense of arrival or departure travelling west to east on A30 to Surrey Heath, Surrey, and vice versa</td>
<td>• Far less so nearer the eastern extent, diminishing to coalescence in the area of Blackwater Railway Station, A30 and River Blackwater bridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Substantial areas of high flood risk have limited development in this area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

Some parts of this gap are not considered necessary to maintain as a Gap designation.

The western section of the Gap, i.e. the area between Longwater Road, Eversley and Mill Lane/Mill Bridge north of Yateley, does not lie between settlements (there is no settlement to the north) and so fails to meet the criteria for designating a Gap.

The ‘middle section’ of the Gap between Mill Lane/Mill Bridge and the Blackwater Business Park is a narrow stretch of open land separating Yateley and Darby Green/Blackwater from each other (north of the B3272) and from Camberley and Sandhurst in Berkshire.

Whilst parts are constrained by flood risk zones, nature conservation designations and SANG, a comprehensive Gap designation throughout this zone is warranted to ensure that development that might otherwise be justified and which could lead to coalescence will not be permitted. This middle section corresponds with the option of a Sandhurst to Yateley/Blackwater Gap identified on the other side of the County boundary in Bracknell Forest’s Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation, June 2016.

The south eastern-most section of the Gap, south of the A30 and east of the railway line, between Hawley and York Town/Camberley is a very narrow section of open land. This land has been designated as a SANG protecting it against development in perpetuity.

Therefore, the Saved Blackwater Gap should be re-focussed on the area between Mill Lane/Mill Bridge and the Blackwater Business Park. This will maintain the separation between Yateley and Blackwater (north of the B3272) and separate Yateley and Blackwater from Sandhurst/College Town. This approach is consistent with Bracknell Forest Council’s proposal for a Sandhurst to Yateley/Blackwater Gap.

As a result of the analysis of the Fleet to Aldershot/Yateley Strategic Gap (Appendix 6), it is proposed that the Yateley/Blackwater/Sandhurst Gap also includes land south of the B3272.

The proposed extent of the Yateley/Blackwater/Sandhurst Gap in the Hart Local Plan: Strategy and Sites is shown in Figure 1.
APPENDIX 6  Assessment of the Fleet and Aldershot/Yateley Strategic Gap

Policy background

In the HDLPR, this Strategic Gap covers an extensive area taking in land between Fleet, Yateley, Blackwater, Cove and Hawley, and land east of Fleet/Church Crookham and Ewshot to the district boundary. The extent of the saved Gap is shown in Figure 2.

Hart’s Local Plan Inspector into the Draft HDLPR suggested that the Gap between Fleet and Yateley was too large, stating “If it was to remain in the Plan, a more detailed study would be required, but it would seem more appropriate to consider a much smaller area, perhaps looking to the A30 corridor from the east of Blackbushe Airport to the edge of Blackwater.”

On the Rushmoor side of the boundary, the Strategic Gap designation was not carried forward into the Core Strategy, 2011. However, the Rushmoor Core Strategy does contain a generic policy requirement to avoid settlement coalescence (Policy CP14-Countryside).

In the south east of Hart, the Gap joins a corresponding Strategic Gap in Waverley Borough, part of a saved Farnham/Aldershot Strategic Gap. However, the Waverley Local Plan Submission Draft (submitted 21st December 2016) proposed to review the Gap, focussing on areas where there is a threat of coalescence between Farnham and Aldershot. This would appear to exclude the area currently designated as Gap between Upper Hale and Ewshot where the SPA effectively serves to prevent coalescence.

Proposed development at Hartland Park, between Fleet and Farnborough

The Hart Local Plan Strategy and Sites document proposes a site allocation for a new community at Hartland Park located within the saved Strategic Gap. There is an extant permission for warehousing on this site.
The site is predominantly previously developed, with an extant planning permission for a warehousing use. The detailed assessment by Adams Hendry Consulting Limited on behalf of the Council, states (with regard to the criteria ‘Potential for settlement coalescence’):

The site is within the strategic gap that separates the towns of Fleet and Farnborough. Given the site’s isolation and seclusion (described above), the visual diminishment of the gap could likely be avoided in planning policy terms if new development were to occupy no more than an area of land equivalent to the previously developed part of the site.

However, the development of the number of residential dwellings of the scale proposed by the landowner would reintroduce a large scale built form into the strategic gap, into an area of previously developed land that has mostly been cleared. If new development were understood to operate as a residential extension of (both) Fleet and Farnborough, that would (by definition) reduce the distinction (in identity terms) between the settlements, thus undermining the purpose of designating land to separate them, and contributing – perhaps significantly – to a longer term process of settlement coalescence. In this regard, it would seem preferable in terms of maintenance of separate identity and the gap, to consider creating a small free-standing settlement on the site, including and capable of supporting a range of local services and facilities, including public transport.
**Summary of landscape analysis against the two Gaps criteria:**

**(a) The land is predominantly open or undeveloped and provides a sense of separation between settlements**

- Large geographic scale, especially in north, extending from the northern District boundary to the southern District boundary, where the Gap is much narrower (approx. 6.1km and 0.6km)
- Large swathes of this area characterised by heathland on MoD training land with permitted public access, much of which is SSSI and/or TBA SPA - little or no existing development in the south
- Commercial and light industrial development, plus the expansion of Farnborough Airfield, expanded west from southern Farnborough to District boundary through late 20th century/early 21st century so physical separation significantly decreased
- Former Research Establishment (now Qinetiq) at Cody Tech Park expanded and intensified through late 20th century/early 21st century further reducing physical separation
- Former MoD research facility at ‘Hartland Park’ located approx. central in south of this area - large brownfield site with extant consent for large scale retail distribution facility with possible forthcoming change of use to residential
- Less than 0.5km of undeveloped land between Hartland Park and the lower, flatter topography of the Pondtail area of Fleet -settlement boundary established since early 20th century – sense of separation in this area of the Gap currently strong, but potentially at risk from residential characteristics if Hartland Park application successful
- Gibraltar Barracks (large scale Army accommodation) + Minley Manor, form an established ‘hub’ of development – recent expansion of accommodation but location at least 1.1km from the nearest settlement, 1.7km at the furthest point.

**(b) The land performs an important role in maintaining the separate identity of settlements at risk of coalescence**

- Immediately east of the District boundary, commercial and light industrial development in the south of Farnborough, plus change to commercial use and expansion of Farnborough Airfield (TAG), has expanded development west from southern Farnborough to meet the District boundary through the late 20th century/early 21st century
- New residential and commercial dev in Cove extended west to District boundary through late 20th century – 1km remaining undeveloped from District boundary to Fleet settlement
- Fleet expanded NE through late 20th century towards district boundary and M3 corridor
- Junction 4A (M3) constructed in late 20th century imposed urban characteristics to otherwise rural area
- Sense of departure: From Fleet (south) – strong, clear line from urban to rural emphasised by crossing the Basingstoke Canal (bridge creates gateway effect); Farnborough (south) - commercial and light industrial development, some dispersed, some more intense, provides much weaker, sense of departure; Cove and Fleet (east to west) - both settlements extended towards each other either side of the east/west mainline railway corridor – physical gap reduced but still sufficient to maintain separate identity; Hawley to Farnborough - sense of departure/arrival weak due to ribbon development east of Hawley Road
Conclusion

The Fleet to Yateley/Aldershot Gap is drawn very extensively in the HDLPR taking in large swathes of countryside (Figure 2).

There is a limited threat of coalescence between Fleet and Yateley/Blackwater due to the distance between the settlements and the presence of protective designations, primarily the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBHSPA) and Historic Parks and Gardens.

Similarly coalescence is unlikely between Church Crookham/Ewshot and Farnham/Aldershot/Farnborough due to the distances involved and presence of the TBHSPA. Waverley Borough Council has taken a similar view by proposing to no longer include land between Farnham and Ewshot.

There is however a case to maintain parts of this Gap at the following locations, where settlements are close together:

- Land between Yateley and Blackwater, south of the B3272 on land north of the TBHSPA. The threat of coalescence is reduced by the presence of the 400m SPA exclusion zone in most of this area, but that does not preclude non-residential development. This is the area discussed by the Inspector for the Inquiry into the HDLPR who concluded that it was more appropriate to consider a much smaller area, perhaps looking to the A30 corridor from the east of Blackbushe Airport to the edge of Blackwater. This part of the Gap is therefore included within the indicative Yateley/Blackwater/ Sandhurst Gap north of the B3272.

- Land between Hawley and Farnborough is a small area of predominantly open land between Blackwater/Hawley in Hart and Farnborough in Rushmoor, including an area north of Fernhill Road, east of Hawley Common (SPA) and west of the railway line. Some of this land will be SANG, in conjunction with the Hawley Park Farm housing development. Given its relatively small size and its importance as open land between Hawley and Farnborough, this area should be included in the indicative Gap (excluding the land permitted for residential development). The Gap includes land between Hawley Road and the railway line where the Gap is very narrow.

- Land between Fleet and Farnborough, south of M3 motorway and north of the A323 between Pondtail and Norris Bridge. This is where the settlements of Fleet and Farnborough are closest and lie outside the SPA designation, although there are a number of SSSIs and SINCs. This area includes Hartland Park. Whilst appropriate to redevelop this brownfield site, maintaining the separation, or perception of separation, between Fleet and Farnborough is achieved through ‘washing over’ the allocation in the new Local Plan. This has ensured the issue of settlement coalescence has been addressed through the planning applications for the site, for example by limiting the visual impact of the development through tree retention, appropriate landscaping and limiting building heights.

The proposed extent of the Fleet to Farnborough Gap in the Hart Local Plan: Strategy and Sites is shown in Figure 1.
APPENDIX 7 Assessment of the Crookham Village to Dogmersfield Local Gap

Background

This Local Gap was first identified in the HDLPR, 1996-2006. The Local Plan Inspector for the HDLPR found that a Local Gap between these geographically close but separate settlements was justified. The Inspector also stated that consideration should be given to extending the Gap to include land south of Pilcot Road.

The extent of the saved Gap is shown in Figure 2.

Summary of landscape analysis against the two Gaps criteria:

(a) The land is predominantly open or undeveloped and provides a sense of separation between settlements

- Existing low density ribbon development occupies southern boundary of the Gap (Pilcot Road in Crookham Village)
- Crookham Village settlement edge exposed to Gap in east although being mostly single storey do not overtly influence
- Very small scale (350m wide along Pilcot Road) comprising parts of two arable fields bisected by one hedgerow – arable/grazing and EdenBrook Country Park SANG lie north of this Gap
- Existing development – one detached dwelling and garden located approx. centre of the Gap
- Character of Gap is open, enhanced by flat topography and clear views from Pilcot Road, comprising 2 arable fields interrupted by one property

(b) The land performs an important role in maintaining the separate identity of settlements at risk of coalescence

- Sense of departure: from Crookham Village and Dogmersfield; Yes but short lived (350m); north side only as existing dev on south side (Pilcot Road and new pavement); seconds by car; a few minutes’ walk; + Gap interrupted in centre by single dwelling, Kiln House and garden
- Sense of arrival: to Crookham Village – graduated due to existing low density, ribbon development on south side of Pilcot Road.
- To Dogmersfield – although undesirable tree species (Leyland Cypress), trees form gateway from Crookham Village Parish to Dogmersfield Parish

Conclusion

A Gap is justified between Crookham Village and Dogmersfield north and south of Pilcot Road.

The proposed extent of the Crookham Village to Dogmersfield Gap in the Hart Local Plan: Strategy and Sites is shown in Figure 1.
## APPENDIX 8 Assessment of the Eversley to Yateley Local Gap

### Background

This Local Gap was first identified in the HDLPR, 1996-2006. The Local Plan Inspector for the HDLPR agreed that Marsh Lane, east of Eversley Cross was the logical western boundary of the Gap (south of the B3272 Reading Road). He also agreed that Crosby Gardens (north of Reading Road adjoining Yateley settlement boundary) should be in the Gap. He disagreed however with the Council’s intention to include land south of Firgrove Road. The Gap was subsequently redrawn with Firgrove Rd providing the southern boundary of the Gap.

The extent of the saved Eversley to Yateley Gap is shown in Figure 2.

### Summary of landscape analysis against the two Gaps criteria:

**(a) The land is predominantly open or undeveloped and provides a sense of separation between settlements**

- North of area dominated by past and ongoing mineral extraction both adjacent and within the Gap; restored to form community sports pitches which present an urban influence to the former purely rural character (abuts Strategic Gap to Berkshire)
- Extent of built form within the gap comprises of 2 former farms, otherwise infrequent, well-dispersed, long established and/or historic
- By road - level topography and high hedgerows enhance sense of being between settlements despite relatively small scale (650m east/west by road)
- Existing development results in some physical and visual erosion across the width of the gap, north and east of Eversley Road
- Field network south of Reading road visible over low hedgerow provides sense of space/separation – less so on north due to more restricted views

**(b) The land performs an important role in maintaining the separate identity of settlements at risk of coalescence**

- Clearly defined sense of departure and arrival from publicly accessible areas
- Eversley Cross settlement edge, via Eversley Road, not perceivable until last third of the Gap
- Yateley settlement expanded west significantly towards Eversley through late 20th century
- Moderately effective hedgerow mitigation to abrupt suburban edge of Yateley in the east, more exposed during winter
- Yateley characterised by mostly 20th century residential development
- Eversley Cross characterised by historic development ref. Eversley Cross CA
Conclusion

The village of Eversley is geographically close (650 metres) to Yateley. Whilst there remains scope for some development to take place adjoining Yateley and Eversley Cross, there is a risk of coalescence if extended too far. A Gap should be shown north and south of Reading Road. The southerly extent should be consistent with the HDLPR as there is no justification to extend it further south.

The proposed extent of the Eversley to Yateley Gap in the Hart Local Plan: Strategy and Sites is shown in Figure 1.
APPENDIX 9  Assessment of the Eversley Centre and Eversley Cross Local Gap

Background

This Local Gap was first identified in the HDLPR, 1996-2006. The Inspector for the HDLPR described this as a relatively narrow Gap, a single field in places, but nevertheless effective in securing the separation of these two parts of Eversley and eminently worthy of protection.

The extent of the saved Eversley Centre/Eversley Cross Gap is shown in Figure 2.

Summary of landscape analysis against the two Gaps criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(a) The land is predominantly open or undeveloped and provides a sense of separation between settlements</th>
<th>(b) The land performs an important role in maintaining the separate identity of settlements at risk of coalescence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Very small scale, narrow width (140m via Reading Road) with level or flat topography (river valley floor)</td>
<td>• Historic character of built form within Eversley Cross CA results in a different ‘sense of place’ than generally 20\textsuperscript{th} century Eversley Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Physical and visual erosion of the already narrow Gap via Reading Road; north side - stabling/equestrian paraphernalia; south side – large scale glass houses/nursery affords minimal sense of separation</td>
<td>• Eversley Cross CA projects further west north of Reading Road with 20\textsuperscript{th} century development opposite on south side resulting in a dilution of local distinctiveness of the CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 150m separation between southern areas of Eversely Cross and Eversley Centre (Sherlock Leas) visually connected by detracting overhead high voltage power lines and pylons</td>
<td>• Settlement edge: generally residential, often well-screened by hedgerows although roofscape visible in some areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rural features, such as hedgerows and grazing paddocks dominated by settlement edge characteristics due to physical and visual close proximity</td>
<td>• Rural characteristics such as tree lined road side, hedgerows visible from the highway etc serve to soften the influence of C20 development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Significantly limited sense of departure and arrival - as such the sense of being ‘between’ settlements may not be perceptible to the general public</td>
<td>• Existing Gap potentially last vestige of separation between these two settlements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

A Gap at this location is included in the Local Plan Strategy and Sites document indicatively both north and south of the Reading Road.

The proposed extent of the Eversley Centre to Eversley Cross Gap in the Hart Local Plan: Strategy and Sites is shown in Figure 1.
# APPENDIX 10 Assessment of the Fleet/Church Crookham to Ewshot Local Gap

## Background

This Local Gap was first identified in the HDLPR, 1996-2006. The Local Plan Inspector for the HDLPR supported this Gap which saw little by way of objection. A SANG associated with the Queen Elizabeth Barracks/Crookham Park site covers part of the Local Gap as defined in the HDLPR.

The extent of the saved Fleet/Church Crookham Gap is shown in Figure 2.

### Summary of landscape analysis against the two Gaps criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(a) The land is predominantly open or undeveloped and provides a sense of separation between settlements</th>
<th>(b) The land performs an important role in maintaining the separate identity of settlements at risk of coalescence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Limited extent of built form within the Gap – Stillers Farm complex/existing small scale ribbon development on Beacon Hill Road, dispersed historic ribbon development south of Gap on Ewshot Lane</td>
<td>• Significant rise in topography from NW to SE (plateau gravel), a characteristic specific to the south eastern area of the District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ewshot and Church Crookham are geographically close with 0.5km (north to south) between settlement boundaries</td>
<td>• Northern extent of Ewshot is strongly characterised by the significant rise in topography whereas changes in topography within Church Crookham are largely insignificant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Robust network of hedgerows connecting to woodland blocks often truncate views providing a greater sense of separation than 0.5km Gap suggests – in terms of receptor perception the meandering country lanes reinforce this</td>
<td>• Distinct contrast between suburban characteristics of Church Crookham and rural village of Ewshot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Perception, rather than actual, of Gap size diminished by Dev 2 allocation at QE II Barracks (part completed)</td>
<td>• Robust network of hedgerows connecting to woodland blocks often truncate views although views to Berkshire available on high ground in the south (now SANG)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The well treed suburban character of Church Crookham/Fleet disguise the extent of built form when viewed from the high ground in the south i.e. limited number of structures are visible above the canopy layer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Conclusion

Church Crookham and Ewshot are geographically close. Except for Crookham Park SANG, there are areas where development could in theory take place and threaten coalescence. Therefore, a Gap is included in the Hart Local Plan Strategy and Sites.

The proposed extent of the Church Crookham/Ewshot Gap in the Hart Local Plan: Strategy and Sites is shown in Figure 1.
APPENDIX 11 Assessment of the Fleet to Crookham Village Local Gap

Background

This Local Gap was first identified in the HDLPR, 1996-2006. The Local Plan Inspector for the HDLPR found a Local Gap between Fleet and Crookham Village to be appropriate.

The extent of the saved Fleet/Crookham Village Gap is shown in Figure 2.

Summary of landscape analysis against the two Gaps criteria:

(a) The land is predominantly open or undeveloped and provides a sense of separation between settlements

- Geographically narrow in the area north of Netherhouse Copse (0.5km), whole of Gap substantial north to south (2.4km) reflecting the southerly direction/progression Fleet and Church Crookham
- Crookham Village settlement boundary narrowly separated (12-22m) from Church Crookham settlement by the corridor of the Basingstoke Canal
- Heavily treed/wooded corridor of the Canal mitigates the extensive southern and western expansion of Church Crookham in late 20th century and early 21st century
- Significantly low level of existing development within - several small scale farms and isolated or dispersed cottages
- Despite development along Hitches Lane (Eden Brook/ new sports centre) the intervening rural landscape character and remaining distance still provide a sense of departure and arrival from either settlement
- More open character of fields immediately north and south of The Street provides important setting for the Crookham Village Conservation Area

(b) The land performs an important role in maintaining the separate identity of settlements at risk of coalescence

- Historic core of Crookham Village generally characterised by single depth development with 18 Listed Buildings backing onto the southern and northern areas of the Gap
- Special historic characteristics of Crookham Village (CA) provides a strong sense of place relative to 20th century dominated Fleet and Church Crookham
- More open character of fields immediately north and south of The Street provides important setting for the Crookham Village Conservation Area
- Fleet and Church Crookham settlements expanded significantly west and south through late 20th century and early 21st century and abut the Canal forming the eastern boundary of the Gap
- Potential forthcoming residential development application for land north of Netherhouse Copse, Grove Farm
- Potential forthcoming Care Home development immediately south of Crookham Village settlement and CA
- Sense of arrival: Despite Church Crookham and Crookham Village being separated by only the Basingstoke
- Southern area of the Gap bounded in the west by the Crookham Village settlement boundary, with rural countryside continuing west from there; Hitches Lane demarcates western boundary of the Gap, with rural countryside and Dogmersfield CA west from there.

  Canal, the narrow historic canal bridge (Grade II) and well-treed character coming from the east into the village provides a strong ‘gateway’.

**Conclusion**

A Gap is justified between Fleet and Crookham Village both north and south of The Street to maintain the separation of the two settlements.

The proposed extent of the Fleet/Church Crookham Gap in the Hart Local Plan: Strategy and Sites is shown in Figure 1.
### APPENDIX 12  Assessment of the Hook to Newnham Local Gap

#### Background

This Local Gap was first identified in the HDLPR, 1996-2006. The Local Plan Inspector for the HDLPR found merit in keeping the old village of Newnham distinct from Hook and supported a Local Gap north of Newnham Road as drawn in the HDLPR.

The Hook to Newnham Local Gap in the HDLPR is shown in Figure 2.

#### Summary of landscape analysis against the two Gaps criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(a) The land is predominantly open or undeveloped and provides a sense of separation between settlements</th>
<th>(b) The land performs an important role in maintaining the separate identity of settlements at risk of coalescence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Geographically small scale located on the western boundary of the District with Newnham, in the Borough of Basingstoke and Deane, immediately west</td>
<td>• Origins of Hook – small cross roads village in 18th century, growing to a small town by late 20th century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Newnham CA in close proximity west of District boundary (historic rural village/hamlet)</td>
<td>• Significant expansion through 20th century in all directions – exclusively residential north and west towards the District boundary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Size of Gap reduced by about 3ha in NE by 2013 consent for 60 dwellings, although minimal visual impact across main body of the Gap</td>
<td>• 20th century suburban edge of Hook moderately screened from Gap by tall but relatively narrow hedgerow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Existing ribbon dev (St John’s Cottages – not within the Gap) abuts Newnham but physically separated from Hook settlement</td>
<td>• Reasonable visibility from Ridge Lane through the winter months, almost fully screened through summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Minimal existing development in remainder of the Gap comprising Owen’s Farm, High Ridge Farm and residential Fairfield in the south</td>
<td>• St. John’s Cottages, within Hook’s settlement boundary but physically and visually associated to Newnham, reduce the perception of the Gap from Newnham Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strong sense of being ‘between’ settlements – brief by car and a 10-15min. walk via the PRoW network</td>
<td>• 2015 Appeal dismissed for Land at Hop Garden Road on the basis, in part, of undue harm on the function of the Local Gap.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Conclusion

A Gap is justified between Hook, one of Hart’s main settlements, and Newnham, an older village in adjoining Basingstoke and Deane Borough, with a Conservation Area and Listed Buildings.

The proposed extent of the Hook/Newnham Gap in the Hart Local Plan: Strategy and Sites is shown in Figure 1.
APPENDIX 13  Assessment of the Odiham to North Warnborough Local Gap

**Background**

This Local Gap was first identified in the HDLPR, 1996-2006.

The Odiham to North Warnborough Local Gap in the HDLPR is shown at Figure 2.

The Inspector for the HDLPR supported a Local Gap in this location.

Similarly the Inspector for the Odiham and North Warnborough Neighbourhood Plan (Submission Draft) also supported a Local Gap similar to that shown in the HDLPR but redrawn to exclude housing sites allocated in the Neighbourhood Plan:

**Summary of landscape analysis against the two Gaps criteria:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(a) The land is predominantly open or undeveloped and provides a sense of separation between settlements</th>
<th>(b) The land performs an important role in maintaining the separate identity of settlements at risk of coalescence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Geographically small scale west of Dunleys Hill between the main body of North Warnborough and western reaches of Odiham</td>
<td>• Tangible sense of the long history of settlement for both settlements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Larger scale east of Dunley’s Hill north of main area of Odiham settlement; north from there – network of fields, Basingstoke Canal and Odiham by-pass with farmland extending north from there to Hook (bisected by M3 corridor)</td>
<td>• The gap comprises a relatively open, farming landscape character on shallow valley side of the River Whitewater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No built form within the defined Gap boundary</td>
<td>• Settlement edge/s: mostly 20th century residential west of Dunleys Hill progressing south from North Warnborough and north from Odiham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Robert May’s comprehensive school projects into western area of the Gap with the school playing fields falling within the Gap boundary, visually diminishing size of the Gap</td>
<td>• 20th century residential progressing east from North Warnborough occupying former western area of Odiham Deer Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Perception of the Gap brief along Dunleys Hill between Odiham and North Warnborough</td>
<td>• 20th century residential dev progress south from North Warnborough towards Odiham and vice versa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Odiham and North Warnborough share similar historic origins - difference in scale between the historic rural market town and similar age historic rural village communicate distinctly different sense of place</td>
<td>• 120m separation between settlements (Robert May’s School, Odiham to Bufton Field, North Warnborough)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The change in topography along Dunleys Hill and settlements of distinctly different character combine to provide a greater sense of separation than there is geographically.

Conclusion

The two settlements have similar historic origins, are functionally related, are close together geographically (particularly in the Dunleys Hill area) but clearly have separate identities. Retaining a Gap between Odiham and North Warnborough is justified, as was the opinion of both the HDLPR Inspector and more recently the Inspector for the Odiham and North Warnborough Neighbourhood Plan.

The Gap in the Hart Local Plan Strategy and Sites document should reflect that shown in the Odiham and North Warnborough NP.

The proposed extent of the Odiham/North Warnborough Gap in the Hart Local Plan: Strategy and Sites is shown in Figure 1.
APPENDIX 14 Assessment of the potential North Warnborough to Greywell Gap

Background

The Odiham and North Warnborough Neighbourhood Plan Submission Draft proposed a Local Gap in this location.

The Inspector that assessed the Neighbourhood Plan considered this new Gap and concluded "Taking account of all the information I conclude that there is insufficient evidence or other information presented in the Plan to justify the designation of an additional Local Gap. At the same time, there is no evidence presented on the extent to which Policies RUR2 and 3 of the Local Plan are insufficient to control development outside the identified settlement boundaries."

A detailed assessment for Land north of Deptford Lane is being promoted through the Local Plan process within the Gap. A site assessment prepared by Adams Hendry Consulting Limited on behalf of the Council, states (with regard to the criteria ‘Potential for settlement coalescence’):

Only a small section of the site adjoins the settlement boundary and development of the site would result in a significant extension of North Warnborough towards Greywell. Although it would be subject to the detailed layout, it is considered that development of the site would erode the existing gap and could give rise to settlement coalescence.

Summary of landscape analysis against the two Gaps criteria:

(a) The land is predominantly open or undeveloped and provides a sense of separation between settlements

- North Warnborough and Greywell are geographically close (0.65km between settlements)
- Small to medium scale rural mosaic of predominantly arable fields, bordered by small scale grazing paddocks and flood meadows of the River Whitewater
- Shallow valley sides and well treed valley floor of the River Whitewater (including trees along banks of the canal as it winds through this area) obscure views to Greywell from North Warnborough
- Occasional, often well mitigated cottages in small clusters – towards the

(b) The land performs an important role in maintaining the separate identity of settlements at risk of coalescence

- More open characteristics on either side of Whitewater Valley are masked from each other by densely vegetated river and canal banks (which is closer to Greywell than North Warnborough)
- Road journey provides greater sense of distance and separation due to rural characteristics of lane (sunken/high hedgerows)
- Both settlements have similar historical date origins whilst maintaining strong individual characteristics (defined in the Conservation Area Statements) mostly due to settlement pattern i.e. North Warnborough – smaller scale origins than Greywell but located between
south near Deptford Bridge as well as in north near the Basingstoke Canal drawbridge (Mill Lane)

- The land that separates provides a distinct and strong sense of being ‘between’ settlements, despite its relative small scale

market town of Odiham so closer proximity likely reason for extensive expansion through 20th century

- Settlement pattern – North Warnborough developed on both sides of the road; dev in Greywell alternates from one side of the road to the other

- Indistinct settlement boundary in north east, north of Tunnel Lane, due to level topography and intervening hedgerows and trees

- North Warnborough settlement boundary to south - apparent but not prominent due to localised dip in topography

- Popular tourist destination, especially during the warmer months

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A new Local Gap between North Warnborough and Greywell is justified. Both settlements have their own character and identity and north of Deptford Lane, are separated by a single open field in agricultural use. The field is the subject of development pressures, being promoted for housing through the SHLAA, albeit the promoters submissions indicate that some open land would be retained to prevent the physical coalescence of settlements. Given this pressure for development, and the open nature of the field north of Deptford Lane, it is considered that a Gap designation is necessary.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The proposed extent of the North Warnborough/Greywell Gap in the Hart Local Plan: Strategy and Sites is shown in Figure 1.
Gaps between Settlements

The countryside around settlements plays an important role in helping to define their character and in shaping the settlement pattern of an area. In some parts of the District the towns and villages are relatively close together.

Gaps are designated to prevent the coalescence of settlements and maintain their separate identity. They can also provide green infrastructure benefits and support wildlife networks close to settlements. Many Public Rights of Way within Gaps are heavily used and of high value to those living in adjoining settlements and the reduction of a Gap can sometimes adversely affect the amenity of such rights of way.

Policy NBE2 Gaps between Settlements

Development in Gaps will only be permitted where it does not lead to the physical or visual coalescence of settlements, or damage their separate identity, either individually or cumulatively with other existing or proposed developments.

The following Gaps have been identified:

i. Yateley/Blackwater/Sandhurst
ii. Hawley to Farnborough
iii. Fleet to Farnborough
iv. Fleet/Church Crookham to Crookham Village
v. Church Crookham to Ewshot
vi. Crookham Village to Dogmersfield
vii. Eversley to Yateley
viii. Eversley Centre to Eversley Cross
ix. Hook to Newnham
x. North Warnborough to Greywell
xi. Odiham to North Warnborough

The Gaps are shown indicatively on the Key Diagram and the Policies Map. The precise boundaries of Gaps will be determined through a separate development plan document or through Neighbourhood Plans.

Additional Gaps will be designated through the preparation of the New Settlement DPD (see Policy SS3).
Development on the edge of settlements can reduce the physical extent of the Gaps and development within the Gaps themselves could reduce the visual separation of settlements. Both the individual effects of any proposals and the cumulative effects of existing and proposed development will be taken into account. Development that would result in a perception of the settlements coalescing and losing their separate identity will be refused.

Not all development is necessarily prevented within a Gap. In some circumstances limited development may be acceptable, for example where the proposal is of a rural character, e.g. agricultural buildings, and has a minimal impact on the purpose of the Gap.

Through Neighbourhood Plans it is open to local communities to define existing and/or designate new Gaps. However, this does not apply where an existing Gap serves to prevent coalescence between settlements that lie in different parishes or Designated Neighbourhood Plan areas. In such circumstances the boundaries will be defined in a separate development plan document, or the respective parishes can jointly prepare a Neighbourhood Plan to coordinate the designation of a Gap.

Additional Gaps may be designated through the New Settlement DPD (see Policy SS3). This is in line with one of the key principles for the new settlement, which is that coalescence with existing communities is avoided and their separate identity retained.