

Woking Green Belt Review

Method Statement

On behalf of **Woking Borough Council**

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Document Control Sheet

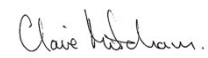
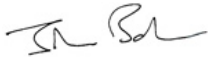
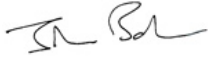
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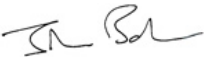
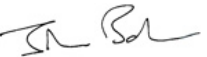

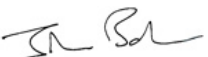


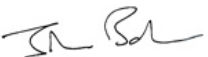
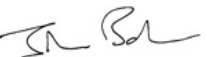
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1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Peter Brett Associates and Enderby Associates have been commissioned to undertake a review of the Green Belt around Woking Borough. The purpose of this work is to review the land beyond the existing urban area with a view to identifying areas of land suitable for housing, and which could accommodate Gypsy and Traveller sites for the plan period (up to 2027) and beyond to 2040. Specifically, the purposes of the study are to:

- Carry out a review of the Green Belt around Woking Borough to identify suitable, sustainable and deliverable sites to deliver approximately 550 homes at an average density of 30 dph.
- Identify potential additional sites to be safeguarded for residential development between 2027 and 2040; approximately 40 hectares of land.
- As part of this work, identify potential suitable sites for Gypsies and Travellers and for travelling showpeople. (to accommodate 19 pitches for the period up to 2027 and a further 9 pitches on land to be safeguarded to 2040).
- Provide advice about where a defensible Green Belt boundary should be drawn, taking into account that sites that will be recommended for release for development up to 2040.

1.1.2 Our overall approach to the task is to combine an assessment of the suitability of areas of land for removal from the Green Belt, with an assessment of the sustainability of these areas. This recognises the priority that the NPPF gives to the importance of sustainable development, as well as the importance of Green Belt considerations. The essence of the approach is to:

- Identify locations according to sustainability criteria, with particular emphasis on locationally specific issues such as accessibility, relationships with existing communities, regeneration opportunities and environmental issues.
- Carry out a parallel exercise of considering the contribution that land parcels make to the achievement of the purposes of Green Belt, insofar as the purposes are relevant, locationally specific and distinctive.
- Combine the outputs from the two assessments to identify preferable locations, most usually by choosing the most sustainable locations provided these are not outweighed by the significance of the effect their development would have on the integrity of the Green Belt as a whole.

1.1.3 We will undertake a process whereby the land around Woking is reviewed in a series of stages. At each stage, areas of land will be eliminated from consideration, to leave the most sustainable and deliverable sites at the end of the process that are most acceptable in Green Belt terms. These stages of work are as follows:

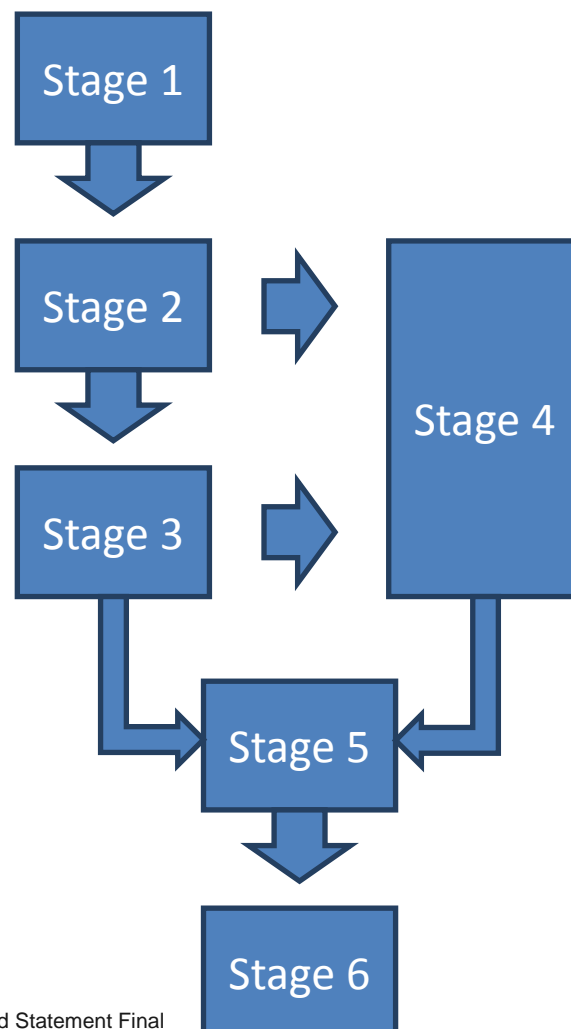
- **Stage 1. Sieve / Overview.** At this stage of the process, the entire Green Belt around Woking will be considered. Environmental constraints will be considered, and any strategic areas that cannot be considered for development will be excluded from the study.
- **Stage 2. Review of Green Belt and Sustainability.** Areas remaining following stage one will be divided into parcels and assessed in two parallel processes. The first will assess each parcel against Green Belt purposes, and the second will assess each one against a

series of sustainability criteria. At the end of the process, a series of parcels which are most and least suitable as areas of search will be identified.

- **Stage 3. Deliverability.** This stage will focus only on the most acceptable parcels identified in Stage 2. This assessment will consider individual sites where they are being promoted by landowners / developers. Elsewhere, it will continue to consider more strategic parcels of land. It will consider whether sites / parcels are suitable, available and achievable. This stage will also identify potential yields for sites.
- **Stage 4. Gypsy and Traveller Work.** This part of the work is identified as a separate stage. However the work will be carried out at the same time as the work for stages 2 and 3, and we will be looking at the potential for additional pitches at existing sites and the potential for the parcels identified for housing to accommodate Gypsies and Travellers.
- **Stage 5. Identify sites, safeguarded land and new Green Belt boundary.** This stage will identify preferred sites for housing, areas which could accommodate Gypsy and Traveller sites and safeguarded land based on the results of the work in previous stages. It will then identify a new Green Belt boundary to remain until 2040.
- **Stage 6.** Reporting. A draft report will be produced by 30th September, followed by a final report.

1.1.4 The flow chart below summarises the different stages of work.

Woking Green Belt Review: Stages of work



2 Stage 1. Sieve / Overview

- 2.1.1 This stage will involve a desk based review, including a review of key documentation and mapping analysis to identify strategic environmental and landscape designations. In particular it will include consideration by an ecologist of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA and identify what restrictions this places on development in different parts of the Borough.
- 2.1.2 The following strategic level constraints will be considered at this stage:
- Thames Basin Heaths SPA and 400m exclusion zone
 - Strategic areas at risk from flooding
 - Common land
 - Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
 - Conservation Areas.
- 2.1.3 An initial site visit will also enable us to get a general understanding of the landscape character of the countryside around Woking. This will enable us to identify any areas of land which cannot be considered for development from a constraints point of view.
- 2.1.4 An interim report will be produced which identifies any areas unsuitable for development and explains how these conclusions have been reached.

3 Stage 2. Review of Green Belt and Sustainability of land parcels

3.1.1 The area of land remaining within the study following Stage 1 will be subdivided into parcels based upon its broad landscape characteristics and the definition of recognisable boundaries. The parcels will be identified on a plan and the same parcels will be used to assess both Green Belt and Sustainability criteria. This will allow the two assessments to be brought together to identify areas suitable for removal from the Green Belt. For each assessment a matrix will be used to assess how each parcel performs against a series of criteria.

3.2 Green Belt Assessment

3.2.1 The criteria to be assessed will be as follows:

- Green Belt Purpose 1: To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas
- Green Belt Purpose 2: To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another
- Green Belt Purpose 3: To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment
- Development potential – Landscape character and sensitivity to change

3.2.2 We do not propose to assess Green Belt Purposes 4 and 5. Purpose 4 relates to preserving the setting and special character of historic towns. This is generally taken to mean entire towns or cities that are considered to be historic, rather than small areas on the periphery that might have Conservation Area status or other historic designations. This purpose is not mentioned in paragraph 5.1 of the Core Strategy, which identifies the purposes which are relevant in Woking. Purpose 5 is to assist in urban regeneration. This will not be assessed as it is the overall restrictive nature of the Green Belt that encourages regeneration, not the restriction that it places on specific areas of land.

3.2.3 Our analysis also considers landscape character and its sensitivity to change and is based primarily on 'on site' analysis, there being no published landscape character work that covers the Borough at a sufficient scale to inform the analysis.

3.2.4 The principal feature of the methodology is the recognition of 'Critical' Green Belt purposes. These exist where a single purpose is so fundamental to the retention of areas of land in the Green Belt that this purpose alone justifies the removal of those areas from the search process.

3.2.5 Our previous work has found that it is extremely difficult to assess specific areas (or parcels) of land in terms of performance in respect of Green Belt purposes – they are simply too generalised, reflecting the strategic nature and aims of Green Belt policy, which is essentially a 'blunt tool'. To allow more detailed analysis of the way in which areas of land fulfil Green Belt purposes it is necessary to examine them in further detail.

3.2.6 For each purpose (and also for the development potential criteria relating to landscape and environmental constraints) four categories have been defined against which the performance of each purpose may be defined for given parcels of land, based upon that area's ability to accommodate a strategic level of development.. These are shown in Appendix A and explained below. This is the approach we intend to adopt on this study.

- 'Critical importance' to Green Belt Purpose – where land is 'Fundamental' to the purpose, justifying its continued retention and protection within Green Belt.

- 'Major importance' to Green Belt Purpose – where land is of 'Major' importance to the Green Belt purpose, and where development would conflict substantially with it.
- 'Moderate importance' to Green Belt Purpose – where land is of 'Moderate' importance to the Green Belt purpose, and where development would conflict significantly with it.
- 'Slight/Negligible' importance to Green Belt Purpose – where land is of 'Minor/Negligible' importance to the Green Belt purpose, and where development would have limited/negligible conflict with it.

3.2.7 The parameters that we propose for defining the 'categories' of each purpose are outlined further below.

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

- 3.2.8 The sense of permanence provided by Green Belt is fundamental to the limitation of sprawl and it is the case that the wholesale restriction that the Green Belt places upon development ensures that the outer expansion of the urban areas remains heavily constrained limiting 'sprawl'. However, well located and planned urban extensions are unlikely to constitute 'sprawl' (a term that is based on negativity suggesting the unplanned, uncontrolled spread of development).
- 3.2.9 By virtue of the definition land that follows the periphery of the large urban area is likely to contribute most significantly to this purpose as it is that land that provides the boundary and zone of constraint to urban expansion. The contribution that land makes to this purpose 'falls away' progressively with distance from the urban edge.
- 3.2.10 Upon examination it may be that the periphery of Woking has areas where the urban area has expanded to boundaries that are poorly defined. Such boundaries give the perception of a 'poor fit' within the landscape setting and allows poorly designed development to have an extensive influence over adjoining land beyond, with consequential effects on landscape character and the perception of the town and its setting. The Purpose therefore has a direct relationship with Purpose 3 (Safeguarding of the countryside).
- 3.2.11 Such examination will also identify areas where the urban edge is reasonably well-defined by landscape features which in turn provide containment and thereby reduce or avoid the perception of 'sprawl'. Thus, by an examination of the physical and visual attributes of the town's fringes it would be possible to determine whether further peripheral growth would be contained or not and whether it would therefore accord or conflict with this purpose.
- 3.2.12 There are also likely to be areas around the town where land creates a very strong, defined threshold between the edge of the urban area and the outlying countryside beyond. Such thresholds provide strong physical and visual containment of the urban area and protect the land beyond. These areas would be assessed as being 'Critical' to the containment of the urban area, where there are no other similar areas that lie further from the urban edge that could fulfil a similar function in respect of this purpose if urban expansion were to take place. Because of their (usually) close relationship to existing development, such areas may have a variable landscape character and may not be entirely rural. Given the strategic containment that these areas provide, land that lies between them and the urban edge may be considered to be less important to this purpose.
- 3.2.13 Elsewhere there may be areas where such thresholds are much less defined but the land nevertheless still provides a good level of containment around the urban edge, ensuring a reasonable 'fit' of the urban area within its landscape context; these areas would be categorised as being of 'Major' importance. There may be other locations, further from the urban edge that have the potential to perform a similar function if the urban area were to expand.

- 3.2.14 The 'Moderate' category would apply to land that does provide some containment to the urban area but where the settlement has a poorly defined edge, and urban related uses may affect the character of the land beyond. There may be other constraints (such as a major road) that provide an arbitrary boundary (in landscape terms) to the urban edge. In these circumstances the existing Green Belt boundary would not limit the influence of the urban area on adjoining land.
- 3.2.15 If it is found that the edge of the urban area is poorly contained and has a badly defined edge in relation to landscape features, or there is a predominance of degraded land, the parcel would be categorised as being of 'Minor/Negligible' importance with respect to this purpose as the perception of 'sprawl' is already apparent. In such locations there may be opportunities arising from development that would create a revised Green Belt boundary that provides greater containment, a better 'fit' for development, and one that respects landscape character.

Purpose 2: To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another

- 3.2.16 The primary function of this purpose is clear – it is to prevent towns merging. However, it raises questions about whether closing the gap between towns (such as Guildord or Chobham) without them merging would be acceptable and whether the merger with other of other smaller settlements that are not towns, are strictly covered by this purpose.
- 3.2.17 For this strategic assessment we shall assume that larger towns should remain separate with a clear physical and visual distinction between them such that they retain their separate identities and setting. We shall also work on the basis that, despite the strict definition of the purpose that appears to exclude them, significant smaller settlements would also be relevant to the purpose although the Council's view on this would be welcomed. The review of the performance of parcels of Green Belt against this purpose will therefore be informed by landscape and visual assessment to determine the nature and capacity of the intervening land to accommodate a strategic level of development.
- 3.2.18 In parcels where such development is likely to result in physical coalescence, or at the very least a clearly recognisable perception of merging that would erode the distinct separate identity and character of either/both settlements, the land would considered to be 'Critical' to this purpose and its retention in Green Belt would be regarded as being of paramount importance.
- 3.2.19 In parcels where there is no significant existing inter-visibility between towns, and where more limited (but not strategic) development may be accommodated without causing merger or the perception of merging, its retention within Green Belt would be considered to be of 'Major' importance to this purpose. However, in such areas development may lead to a substantial reduction of the separation between other smaller settlements, or potential for them to merge.
- 3.2.20 The performance of the parcels against this purpose will reduce with the increase in distance between towns, as not all of the land is likely to be important to maintaining separation. Where a strategic level of development may be accommodated without compromising this purpose the parcels would be categorised as being of 'Moderate' importance to the purpose. However, smaller settlements may be subject to a significant reduction in physical and visual separation, or potential merger as a result of such development.
- 3.2.21 Where parcels do not lie directly between two towns it would be adjudged as being of 'Slight/Negligible' importance, as strategic development could be accommodated without being in conflict with this purpose. As above, smaller settlements could potentially be affected in the same way as the above two categories.

Purpose 3: To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

- 3.2.22 Any Green Belt land around the periphery of the town may be said to fulfil this purpose. It is the overall restrictive nature of Green Belt policy that protects the surrounding countryside by preventing development and directing it towards existing settlements.
- 3.2.23 Whilst the quality of the landscape is not a reason for designating land as Green Belt, the search for the most appropriate locations for any significant development should be informed by landscape character assessment. By applying this approach in connection with this purpose it follows that, all other things being equal, parcels that have a strong unspoilt rural character should be afforded particular protection via this purpose, in contrast with those parcels that possess a semi-urban character and where encroachment has already occurred. Such areas may offer the potential for repair and/or enhancement through a well-considered approach to development. Any urban extension may be considered as an 'encroachment' into countryside. This is where consideration of landscape character and the potential ability of the landscape to accommodate change fulfil an important role.

Purpose 4: To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

- 3.2.24 Any land around a town or city may be said to contribute to its setting. However, the intention of this purpose is to protect land that makes a particular contribution to those defining features of historic towns (although many towns have historic origins).
- 3.2.25 For the purposes of this assessment (and based upon para. 5.1 of the Core Strategy which does not make reference to purpose 4) it is not considered that, in terms of this purpose, Woking would be regarded as a 'historic town'. However, the consideration of landscape character and setting will be taken account of as part of the general character assessment of parcels.
- 3.2.26 The Council's view of this approach is sought.

Purpose 5: To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict land

- 3.2.27 It is the overall restrictive nature of Green Belt that, though its limitation of the supply of other development opportunities encourages regeneration and re-use of land. It is therefore impossible to judge how any given parcel of land would contribute to the fulfilment of this purpose. However, it may be possible to draw broad conclusions about where the release of Green Belt land for development may assist with, or provide a catalyst to the regeneration of adjoining parts of the urban area (by improving access, or providing improved employment opportunities for example). These issues would be considered as part of the sustainability work.
- 3.2.28 Following the assessment against the 3 purposes, and landscape character, the work will identify areas that are fundamental to Green Belt purposes (critical importance) (i.e. areas which have least capacity for change), and areas which have potential for removal from the Green Belt. Parcels of land which perform one critical green belt purpose will be considered less suitable than those which perform several major purposes. This is clarified in Appendices A and C.

3.3 Sustainability Assessment.

- 3.3.1 In order to identify the most sustainable locations for urban extensions, suitable indicators must be identified which can provide a good measure of the different elements of sustainability. Based on our considerable experience in this area of work and consideration of both the NPPF and the Woking Core Strategy, we have developed a series of criteria which measure key factors influencing the potential sustainability of particular locations for

development. They relate to the principle of development on a site, rather than specific proposals. Particular issues that vary with different locations are accessibility, environmental constraints, and opportunities for enhancing or supporting existing communities.

Strategic Accessibility

- 3.3.2 The assessment will measure the relative accessibility of parcels of land around Woking, rather than their absolute accessibility. Relative accessibility is determined by how easy it is for residents to get around and undertake the activities that form part of their daily lives. It takes into account all forms of movement including walking, cycling, public transport and private car travel, and needs to consider local accessibility as well as journeys to high trip generators such as town centres or other major shopping, leisure and employment areas.
- 3.3.3 This assessment will therefore consider the following:
- Accessibility to Woking Town Centre, any other main employment / shopping areas (to be agreed with the Council).
 - Propensity to walk and cycle in existing adjacent communities
- 3.3.4 Accessibility to main centres will be measured in terms of distance, bus journey times, rail facilities, access to park and ride sites (if the latter exist), and private car journey times. Distances will be measured from a postcode as close as possible to the land parcel, to a central postcode within the town centre (or other destination area). They relate to actual distances travelled rather than 'as the crow flies'.
- 3.3.5 The propensity to walk and cycle will be influenced by a number of factors, including the layout and design of development at any new urban extension and the layout and design of areas of the existing town. This element will be assessed using census data based on the percentage of people who cycle or walk to work in existing adjacent urban areas.
- 3.3.6 For each measure of accessibility assessed, the results will be presented in tables with the highest level of accessibility shaded the lightest green colour, and the lowest level of accessibility shaded the darkest colour.

Environmental Constraints

- 3.3.7 Absolute constraints are considered at a strategic level in Stage 1, and large areas of land sieved out of the process. However, smaller areas of land subject to the same constraints will exist within assessment parcels, and these will continue to be considered throughout the process. Consideration of environmental constraints is an integral part of sustainability analysis. This element will include consideration of the following:
- Does the area contain best and most versatile agricultural land?¹
 - Does the area contain known mineral resources?²
 - Is the area at risk of flooding?
 - Does the area contain steep slopes?
 - Does the area contain contaminated land?³

¹ This will use Natural England's ALC data.

² Subject to confirmation on availability of data from the County Council.

³ Subject to availability of information on potentially contaminated land from Woking Borough Council.

- Is the area subject to or adjacent to land with statutory biodiversity designations?
- Is the area subject to or adjacent to land with statutory historic environment or cultural designations?
- Does the area provide potential for continuation / Enhancement of an existing Green Infrastructure Network.
- Are there strategic mitigation requirement (i.e. in relation to the Thames Basin Heaths SPA which differ from other areas.

3.3.8 Appendix B sets out how these criteria will be considered.

Local Communities

3.3.9 Communities around the edge of an urban area are able to benefit to a greater or lesser extent from adjacent new development within the Green Belt. Factors which are relevant include existence of local centres which could be supported by additional development and the potential level of connectivity to those centres. The criteria to be considered will be:

- Is there an existing local centre which could be supported by new development?
- Are there existing community facilities (such as schools or a health centre) which could serve new development?
- Is there potential for high levels of local connectivity though existing road connections into the adjacent urban area?
- Are there physical barriers to connectivity such as roads, railways, rivers or canals?

3.3.10 The relationship with existing facilities including the potential relationship with local communities is complex. New development can also provide new shopping and community facilities which could benefit local communities. However we have excluded the potential for this from our assessment as it would tend to weight the assessment in favour of areas where larger sites can be provided. We would also note that there is some overlap between this part of the assessment and the walking and cycling parts of the accessibility assessment; in particular because it is likely that walking and cycling will increase with greater connectivity into the adjacent urban area.

3.4 Identify areas of search

3.4.1 Following the completion of the Green Belt Assessment and the Sustainability Assessment, the results will be brought together and the relative suitability of land as an area of search for removal from the Green Belt will be identified. The table in Appendix C shows the criteria which will be used in identifying the relative suitability of land parcels.

4 Stage 3. Deliverability

4.1.1 The parcels identified as having most suitability for removal from the Green Belt will then be considered in terms of their deliverability, in particular the likelihood that they will come forward for development, any particular constraints, and their capacity to deliver sites for housing and Gypsies and Travellers

4.2 Are sites suitable, available and achievable?

4.2.1 During the early stages of the review, the Council will undertake a call for sites for housing and other land. The results of this work will be used to identify which of the parcels still under consideration are being promoted for development, and hence available. Where specific sites are being promoted these will be identified, and this may involve the sub-division of previously considered parcels of land.

4.2.2 Site visits will be carried out at this stage, to consider issues of suitability, and achievability along with the potential capacity of each site.

4.2.3 Much of the work relating to the suitability of sites for development will have been carried out during Stage 2. However, issues of access into specific sites, whether sites are greenfield or brownfield, and constraints such as flood risk and topography will also need to be considered at this stage.

4.2.4 A stakeholder workshop will be held at this stage to discuss the potential for identified sites and parcels of land to deliver housing and other development. Potential yields for each site will also be reviewed.

4.2.5 Viability assessments will also be carried out on a representative sample of locations.

4.3 Identifying site yields

4.3.1 This part of the work will involve considering the mix of uses on the site, the overall capacity for development, and housing yields. Some of this work will be undertaken concurrently with the work in stage 4.3 above.

4.3.2 In terms of the potential mix of uses for specific sites, early contact will be made with the education department on the likely need for new schools to support existing and new neighbourhoods around the edges of the urban area.

4.3.3 The location and size of the sites will also be considered, along with the intentions of the landowners, and a judgement made on whether the sites should accommodate only housing, or whether part of the sites will need to deliver community or local shopping facilities. The existence of local facilities nearby will be a relevant issue here.

4.3.4 The broad developable area to be used for housing will then be identified based on the need for other uses, physical constraints such as topography, flooding and Green Infrastructure requirements.

4.3.5 A yield for each site will then be identified. This will be based on an appropriate density level (the Council seeks an average net density of 30 dph), and draft yields will be discussed as part of the Stakeholder workshop identified under 4.2.

5 Stage 4 Gypsy and Traveller Locations

- 5.1.1 As part of our work to review the Green Belt, we will also consider opportunities to accommodate sites for Gypsies and Travellers within the Green Belt. This part of the work will run concurrently with stages 2 and 3. It will be done through developing an understanding of where the need for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation is in the borough and the identification of suitable general locations. It will include recommendations on the criteria to be used in identifying specific sites, suitable sites, and whether existing sites in the Green Belt can provide further pitches. Regard will be given to the scale of provision that will make a site unmanageable when looking at the potential for existing sites to expand.
- 5.1.2 The review of potential locations for Gypsy and Traveller sites will include the following:
- A desk review of existing sites
 - The identification of criteria that sites would need to satisfy in order to be suitable for Gypsies, Travellers and travelling showpeople
 - The identification of suitable general locations using constraints mapping and information on existing and historic sites
 - Site visits to existing sites within the Green Belt to consider whether these can provide further pitches
 - A meeting with the Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Officer and any appropriate representatives of the Gypsy and Traveller community to identify views on suitable general locations, what makes a good site, and potential sites.
 - Assessment of the potential of parcels of land identified in Stage 3 to accommodate sites for Gypsies and Travellers, and Travelling Showpeople.
 - Inclusion of agents representing Gypsies and Travellers at the stakeholder workshop
 - Identification of suitable sites
- 5.1.3 This work will not provide a full Gypsy and Traveller Site Assessment for the Borough. It will consider the potential of parcels of land that come forward through the Green Belt Review for Gypsies and Travellers, along with the potential of existing sites. We would also note that, as with sites for housing land, opportunities for sites for Gypsies and Travellers should first be looked at from within the urban area, and only when insufficient land can be identified here, should an authority look to provide sites on Green Belt land.

6 Stage 5. Identify Sites, Safeguarded Land and New Green Belt Boundary.

- 6.1.1 This stage of the work will first identify and map the housing sites recommended through the Green Belt review, and set out the housing numbers that can be achieved on these sites. It will also confirm which of these sites have potential to accommodate Gypsy and Traveller sites.
- 6.1.2 Where there are more sites identified than is needed to deliver housing numbers to 2027, additional sites will be identified as safeguarded land (approximately 40 hectares of land). Where there are competing sites, the criteria to be used for identifying which land will come forward within the plan period will include:
- Sites which are closest to the urban area
 - Sites which are considered most suitable in terms of the Green Belt and sustainability assessments
 - Sites which can provide particular benefits to the existing local community in some way for example by providing new schools in areas of need, or where they have the potential to enhance the environment through provision of improved Green Infrastructure.
- 6.1.3 If there are insufficient sites identified for housing in the plan period, and to provide for safeguarded land beyond this, 'next best' areas of land may need to be identified.
- 6.1.4 As part of the identification of sites and Safeguarded Land for removal from the Green Belt, a review of the boundary around the town will be undertaken, and a new boundary to remain until 2040 will be identified. The identification of this boundary will draw on the landscape character work and seek to identify a boundary which will stand the test of time and naturally encompass the urban area.
- 6.1.5 The boundary review will also consider historic anomalies around the Borough (i.e. beyond the identified parcels / sites for removal), and we will liaise with Development Control officers to identify where there may be need for amendment.

7 Stage 6. Reporting

7.1.1 We will report regularly to the Council, including both verbal and written reports. The reporting schedule we envisage is as follows:

- Written interim report following Stage 1
- Results of Green Belt Assessment and Sustainability Assessment to be sent in the form of matrices following Stage 2, with subsequent discussion on the implications with Council officers
- Ongoing discussions with officers as preferred sites emerge, in particular relating to preferred mix of uses and site capacity, and as part of the Stakeholder workshop
- Draft report (including non-technical Executive Summary) to be sent to the Council by 30th September, and presentation to Members of the Council.
- Meeting with officers to discuss draft report and receipt of one set of comments summarising one view from the Council
- Final report to be provided in early November.

7.1.2 In addition, we expect to discuss issues with Council officers as necessary throughout the project using phone and email as means of communication.

7.1.3 The final report will record the results of each stage of the process and include:

- A clear explanation of the role and purpose of the work
- The method statement, included as an appendix
- Discussion on the continuing role of Green Belt in Woking and its relationship with Green Belt in neighbouring authorities, and a summary of the way Green Belt is dealt with in the Core Strategy in relation to development requirements over various stages of the plan period.
- Analysis and findings from each stage of the study
- Recommendations on parcels or sites which are most suitable for removal from the Green Belt to provide for the identified level of housing to 2027 (550 homes) along with recommendations on whether these areas can accommodate Gypsy and Traveller sites.
- Recommendations for areas that could provide Safeguarded Land up to 2040.
- The location and rationale for the redrawing of the Green Belt Boundary
- Mapping information and database schedules. giving information on each parcel of land assessed in stage 2 and each site assessed in stage 3.

Appendix A Green Belt Evaluation Criteria

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING GREEN BELT PURPOSES

1. To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		
<p>Critical importance to Green Belt Purpose Continued inclusion within Green Belt of paramount importance</p>	Critical	<p>Land where development would conflict fundamentally with Green Belt purpose.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The land provides a distinct, well-defined threshold between Woking/other large built up area(s) and open land beyond, and provides strong containment that prevents the perception of 'sprawl'. • There is no alternative strong physical/landscape boundary(s) further from the edge of the town that would perform a similar role in containing growth and ensuring a 'good fit' for development - strategic level of development would lead to perception of uncontained growth. • The land may/may not be affected already by the existing physical/visual presence of the town/other large built up areas and may have a varied character.
<p>Major importance to Green Belt Purpose Continued inclusion within Green Belt of major importance</p>	Major	<p>Land where development would conflict substantially with Green Belt purpose.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The land contains the town/large built up area, although its character may be influenced by it. • Strategic level of development has potential to create perception of poorly contained growth, although other limited physical/landscape boundaries may exist further from the urban edge that could define and contain growth and prevent the perception of 'sprawl' (although these may require reinforcement to achieve a well-defined limit to development and a new Green Belt boundary).
<p>Moderate importance to Green Belt Purpose Continued inclusion within Green Belt of moderate importance</p>	Moderate	<p>Land where development would conflict significantly with Green Belt purpose.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The land provides some containment of the urban area although it is significantly influenced by its presence and related features/land uses leading to a poorly defined edge, or it may be distant/remote from the urban edge and therefore contribute less to the purpose (other land closer to the urban edge performs the function of containment).
<p>Slight/Negligible importance to Green Belt Purpose Continued inclusion within Green Belt of minor/negligible importance</p>	Slight/ Negligible	<p>Land where development would have limited/negligible impact on this purpose of Green Belt.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The land is physically and visually dominated by/related to the town and already perceived to be part of/or closely related to the urban area, giving a poorly defined edge and perception of 'sprawl'. • Development may allow opportunities for enhancement of degraded land and the definition of a stronger long-term Green Belt boundary.

2. To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another (see * Note below)		
<p>Critical importance to Green Belt Purpose Continued inclusion within Green Belt of paramount importance</p>	Critical	<p>Land is fundamental to physical separation of neighbouring towns.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any reduction in extent would result in physical coalescence, or a perception of merging that would erode the distinct separate identity and character of either/both settlements.
<p>Major importance to Green Belt Purpose Continued inclusion within Green Belt of major importance</p>	Major	<p>Land provides important contribution to separation between neighbouring towns.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no significant inter-visibility between the towns currently. Some limited development may be possible without causing merger or perception of merging, although the area is unlikely to be able to accommodate a strategic level of development (although intervening smaller settlements may be affected substantially by reduction of separation, merger, or inter-visibility).
<p>Moderate importance to Green Belt Purpose Continued inclusion within Green Belt of moderate importance</p>	Moderate	<p>Land provides only moderate contribution to separation between neighbouring towns.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land is part of a substantial gap between neighbouring towns with separate identities. Land where well planned strategic levels of development would not result in merger or a perception of merging as a consequence of inter-visibility (although intervening smaller settlements may be affected significantly by reduction of separation, merger or inter-visibility).
<p>Slight/Negligible importance to Green Belt Purpose Continued inclusion within Green Belt of minor/negligible importance</p>	Slight/ Negligible	<p>Land does not lie between two towns and makes very limited contribution to separation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic level of development would have no impact on this Green Belt purpose., although smaller settlements may be affected by reduction in separation, merger, or inter-visibility depending on their proximity to the urban edge.

* NOTE: Towns are taken to be cities/towns, and other large defined villages (including those settlements referred to specifically in local policy interpretation of Green Belt) – it does not include small villages/hamlets.

3. To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		
<p>Critical importance to Green Belt Purpose Continued inclusion within Green Belt of paramount importance</p>	Critical	<p>Retention of the countryside is fundamental to the purpose of retaining land within Green Belt.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land possesses a strong, unspoilt rural character which Green Belt designation protects. • There may be no other fundamental constraints to encroachment (such as a strong landscape feature that could assist in fulfilling this purpose by containing development from outlying countryside).
<p>Major importance to Green Belt Purpose Continued inclusion within Green Belt of major importance</p>	Major	<p>Retention of the countryside is of major importance to the purpose of retaining land within the Green Belt.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land possesses a predominantly rural character. • There may be other minor constraints (such as a landscape feature) that would limit encroachment but where the Green Belt provides important protection.
<p>Moderate importance to Green Belt Purpose Continued inclusion within Green Belt of moderate importance</p>	Moderate	<p>Retention of the countryside is moderately important to the purpose of retaining land within the Green Belt.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land possesses a semi-rural character and there is already a perception of significant encroachment. • There may be other constraints to further encroachment.
<p>Slight/Negligible importance to Green Belt Purpose Continued inclusion within Green Belt of minor/negligible importance</p>	Slight/ Negligible	<p>Retention of the land is of very limited/no importance to the purpose of retaining land within the Green Belt.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land possesses a semi-urban character and is no longer perceived to be part of the open countryside. • It may contain degraded land that provides opportunities for enhancement.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Development Potential - Landscape Character and Sensitivity to Change		
<p>Little/No Capacity for Change Landscape highly sensitive to change.</p>	<p>Little / None</p>	<p>Land has predominantly strong unspoilt rural character that is highly sensitive to change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land consists of an uncontained exposed open area where the impact of development would extend over a wide area, or where there may be little/no potential to mitigate the adverse effects of changes. • Strategic level of development likely to have substantial adverse impacts on landscape character and/or substantial adverse impacts on landscape features that are considered to be important to the setting of the town.
<p>Low Capacity for Change Landscape sensitive to change.</p>	<p>Low</p>	<p>Land has predominantly intact rural character and is sensitive to change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land may be poorly contained area (such as elevated land) where changes could extend over a wide area and there may be limited potential to mitigate the adverse impacts of the changes. • Strategic level of development likely to have significant adverse impacts on landscape character and/or significant adverse impacts on landscape features that are considered to be important to the setting of the town.
<p>Moderate Capacity for Change Landscape capable of accepting some change without undue harm.</p>	<p>Moderate</p>	<p>Land of either unexceptional character with significant detracting elements, or area with stronger character that benefits from significant physical/visual containment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land capable of accommodating significant change without undue harm to wider landscape character and/or landscape features that are considered to be important to the setting of the town.. • There may be potential for some enhancements to landscape character in weaker areas.
<p>High Capacity for Change Landscape capable of accommodating substantial change.</p>	<p>High</p>	<p>Land with weakly defined character/degraded land.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land capable of accommodating substantial development without adverse impact on wider character and/or landscape features that are considered to be important to the setting of the town. • There is likely to be substantial potential for landscape enhancement.



Appendix B Environmental Constraints

Sustainability Criteria - Environmental Constraints		
Absolute Constraint	Absolute	Land with/adjacent to <u>statutory international/national designations</u> or flood risk that is/are likely to prevent most development. Little/no strategic development potential.
Major Constraint	Major	Land with <u>statutory regional/local designations</u> or flood risk that is/are likely to restrict strategic development potential substantially (depending upon extent within area).
Minor Constraint	Minor	Land with <u>local non-statutory constraints</u> , or where statutory regional/local designation(s), or flood risk affect only small part of area, and are unlikely to impose significant restriction(s) on development potential. Such constraint(s) are likely to be capable of being accommodated within development and/or compensated by mitigation.
Negligible/No Constraints	None	Land with <u>negligible/no known environmental constraints</u> on development potential.

Appendix C Identification of Areas of Search

IDENTIFICATION OF AREAS OF SEARCH (based on analysis of Green Belt purposes and landscape character/sensitivity)

Most suitable land as an Areas of Search = Land that does not perform any Critical Green Belt Purposes;
Land with no Absolute or Major Environmental Constraints;
Land with a High/Moderate capacity to accommodate change.

Where land does not perform any Critical Green Belt purposes and does not have any Absolute or Major environmental constraints, the most suitable land as an Area of Search will be those areas that are in the most sustainable location and have the greatest relative potential to accommodate change.

Relative Suitability of Land as Area of Search			
Very Low Suitability	Very Low	Area performs one or more Critical Green Belt purpose(s) and is Fundamental to Green Belt. Land that is within/adjacent to designated national landscape (i.e. an Absolute constraint) with Little/No capacity for change. Low sustainability rating	Very low suitability as area of Search
Low Suitability	Low	Area does not perform any Critical Green Belt purposes, but one or more Major purposes. Part of area may be affected by Absolute or Major Environmental Constraints Area may have a Low to Moderate capacity for change. Low – Medium sustainability rating	Low suitability as Area of Search
Moderate Suitability	Moderate	Land performs no Critical Green Belt purposes, but one or more Major purposes. Large part of area free of Absolute or Major Environmental Constraints Area has a Moderate/High capacity for change. Moderate sustainability rating	Potential longer-term Area of Search
High Suitability High Development Potential so removal from Green Belt recommended.	High	Area does not perform any Critical Green Belt purposes and no more that two Major purposes. No Absolute or Major Environmental Constraints Area has a Moderate/High capacity for change. High sustainability rating	Potential Area of Search

