

Farnham Neighbourhood Plan

Green Belt Boundary Review

September 2014

Introduction

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

As part of an emerging strategic evidence base, Waverley Borough Council has undertaken a Green Belt Review part of which is around Farnham
www.waverley.gov.uk/downloads/download/1781/waverley_green_belt_review-august_2014

Part 1: Strategic Assessment of Green Belt Purposes, August 2014 considered the potential areas for consideration around Farnham were:

- Land to the south west of Farnham around Rowledge (segments G, H and I).
- Land to the north east of Farnham around Compton (segment A).
- Land to the north east of Farnham around Badshot Lea (segment B).

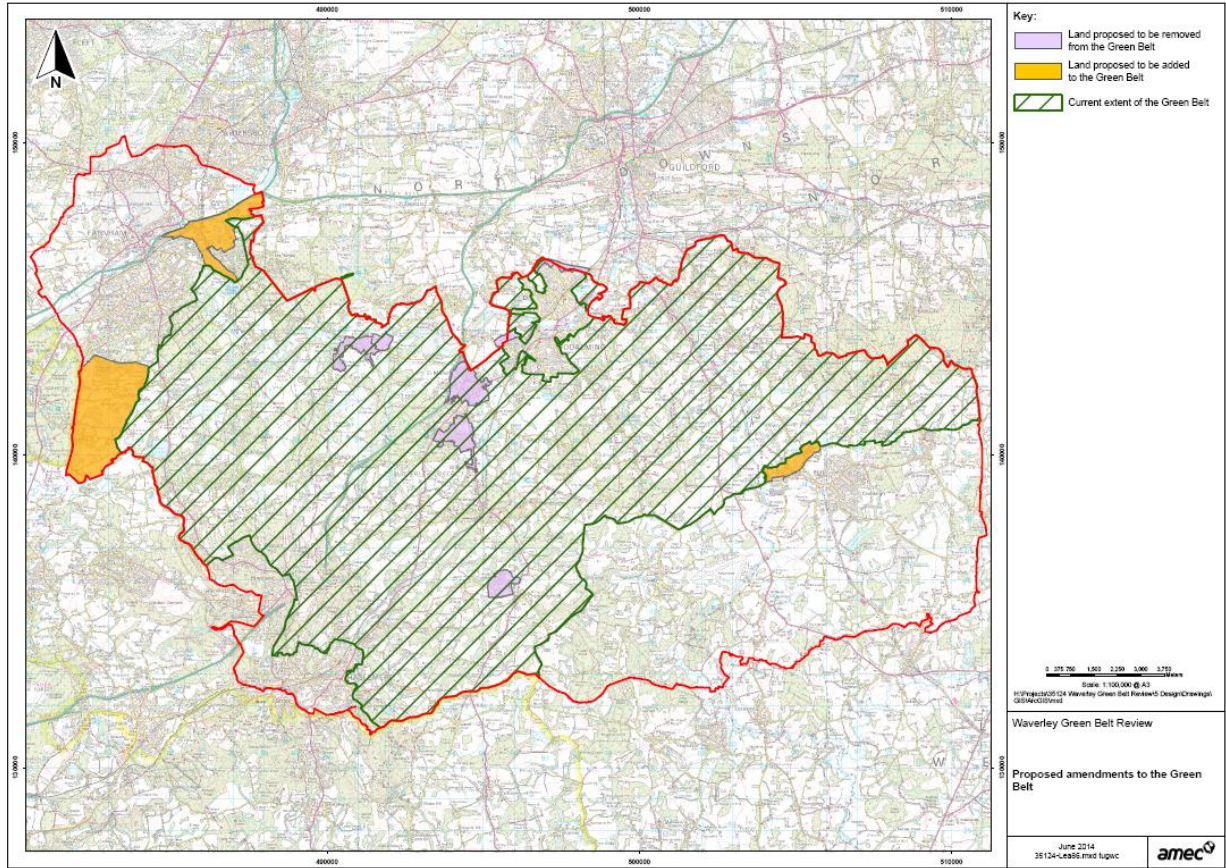
The Part 1 Review was strategic in nature and explored the performance of the Green Belt designation against NPPF criteria in isolation from other potential factors to be considered.

Part 2 considered detailed land parcels and boundaries against a range of other aspects of the evidence base including housing market studies, landscape, infrastructure and sustainability considerations. This part of the study concluded that detailed Green Belt boundaries could not and should not be identified until the level of development, likely densities, sustainable development considerations and land-take is known and until other elements of the evidence base have been completed.

Proposed Amendment to the Green Belt Boundary

The Green Belt Review proposes additional land be included in the green belt, including to the south and south east of Farnham as shown on the map below. The Neighbourhood Plan includes this proposal for consultation.

Recommended changes to Green Belt boundaries in Waverley Borough



Additional potential Green Belt - Land to the north east of Farnham around Badshot Lea (parts of segments A and B in the Study)

The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. Other than openness, the designation is not about the character of the landscape.

Green Belt serves five purposes:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.

The NPPF states that new Green Belts should only be established in exceptional circumstances, for example when planning for larger scale development such as new settlements or major urban extensions. If proposing a new Green Belt, local planning authorities should:

- demonstrate why normal planning and development management policies would not be adequate;
- set out whether any major changes in circumstances have made the adoption of this exceptional measure necessary;
- show what the consequences of the proposal would be for sustainable development; demonstrate the necessity for the Green Belt and its consistency with Local Plans for adjoining areas; and
- show how the Green Belt would meet the other objectives of the Framework.

The Green Belt Review does not propose an extension of the Green Belt to the north of the A31 east and north of Badshot Lea to protect the gap with Aldershot. The review's analysis focusses on the whole land around Badshot Lea but the Town Council considers that, within this substantial area, there is an area which performs all five purposes of the Green Belt (see Map below):

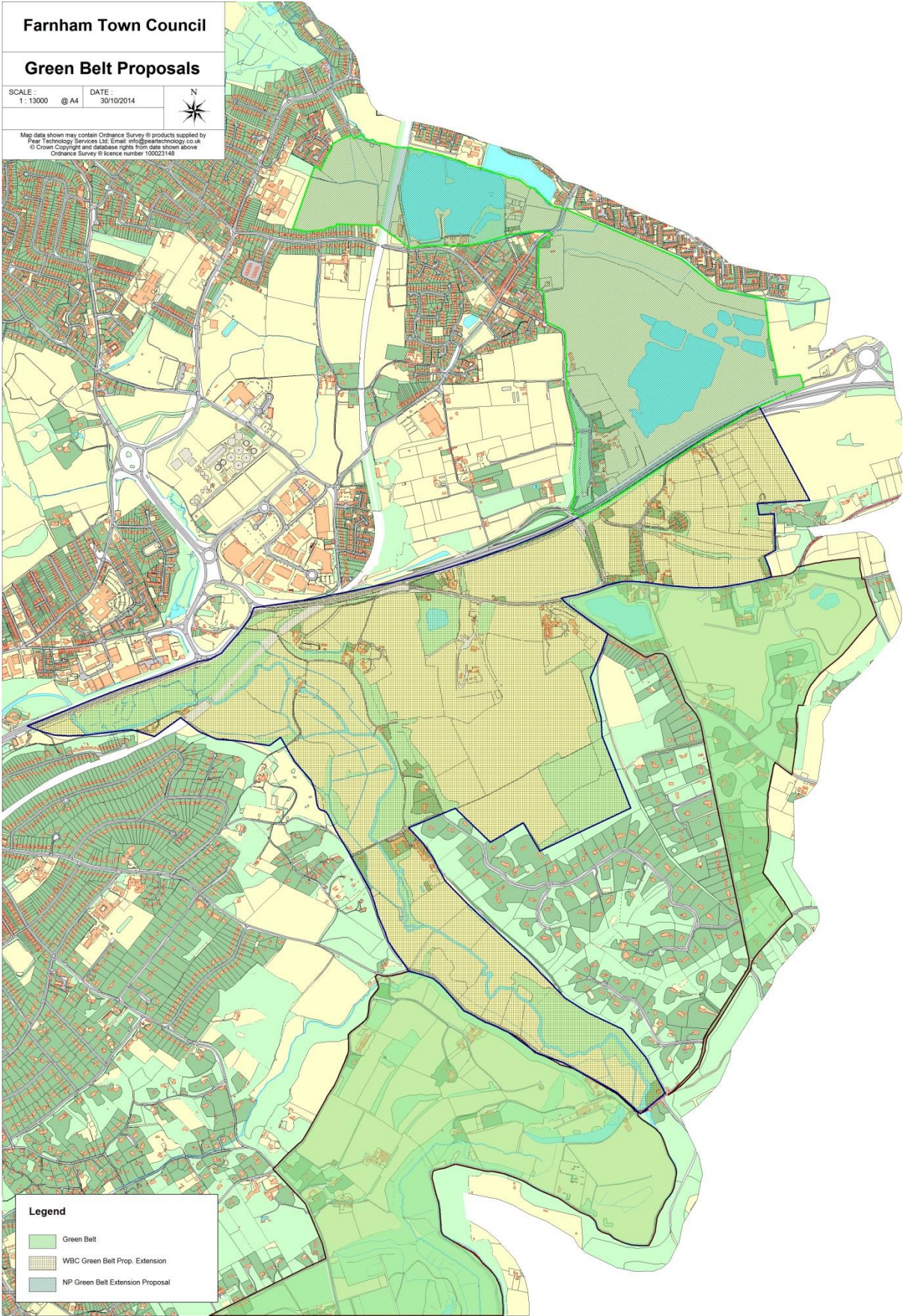
Farnham Town Council

Green Belt Proposals

SCALE: 1:13000 @ A4 DATE: 30/10/2014



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Legend

- Green Belt
- WBC Green Belt Prop. Extension
- NP Green Belt Extension Proposal

The substantial area to the east and north of Badshot Lea shown on the map above performs all five purposes of the Green Belt (see Map below):

Check unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

The proposed area has a significant role in limiting the sprawl of both Farnham and Aldershot into the narrow gap which now separates these large built up areas. Designation as Green Belt would keep the land permanently open.

Prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

The proposed area has a significant role in preventing the neighbouring towns of Farnham and Aldershot from merging into one another. Further development will narrow the gap between the towns and the designation as Green Belt would maintain the existing limited separation which now remains. Any further development in the narrow gap would cause the merging of the two towns.

Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

The proposed area would have a role in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The land is generally open in character comprising former gravel works and limited vegetation. The land has low landscape value but is considered sensitive to development particularly in the narrow gap with Aldershot and there are opportunities for enhancement of access. The A31 is not perceived as a significant separating boundary between the additional potential Green Belt land and the proposed Green Belt to the south. Designation should be made on the basis of whether the area as a whole fulfils Green Belt purposes.

Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

Farnham is an historic town based originally around the castle, with medieval layout and later Georgian development. The proposed area forms part of the north eastern setting of the town and is prominent from the entrance to Farnham along the A31.

Assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

Within Farnham there are opportunities for town centre redevelopment, the regeneration of brownfield sites and other redevelopment and infill opportunities. The presence of the Green Belt helps to focus on such opportunities and making the best use of previously developed land.

Opportunities to plan positively for beneficial use

Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.

There are significant opportunities in the proposed area for environmental enhancement of a landscape in poor condition with a degraded structure. There is an opportunity to provide access to the countryside and biodiversity improvements around the disused gravel site.

Strategic Planning

When defining boundaries, the NPPF states that local planning authorities should ensure consistency with the Local Plan strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development and satisfy themselves that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the development plan period.

The decision about Green Belt designation is part of the strategic planning of the area. Whilst there may be potential for some development at Badshot Lea, this should not be at the expense of preventing the unrestricted sprawl of Farnham and Aldershot or the merging of the two settlements.

The Green Belt Review does not propose an extension of the Green Belt to the north of the A31 east and north of Badshot Lea, although for the reasons set out above the option is consulted on as part of the draft Neighbourhood Plan.