



TEST VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL: LOCAL GAPS ASSESSMENT

Final report by Stephenson Halliday an RSK
Company with RSK ADAS
For Test Valley Borough Council
December 2023

Contents

1	Introduction and purpose of this report	1
1.1	Background, purpose and scope of this report	1
1.2	Structure of this report	4
2	Study Methodology	5
2.1	Key stages, assessment framework and criteria	5
3	Spatial Planning Context	10
3.1	Review of relevant National and Local Planning Policy: Criteria for Local Gap designation	10
3.2	Changes with potential to affect the Local Gaps in Test Valley: Review of relevant planning applications	14
3.3	Commentary on the strength of Local Gaps as a policy protection approach: Relevant appeal decisions	16
3.4	Other Local Authority case studies: Review and benchmarking exercise in relation to relevant Local Gaps	19
4	Assessment of the local gaps and recommendations	26
	Andover - Anna Valley - Upper Clatford	27
	Andover – Enham Alamein – Smannell	30
	Andover – Abbots Ann	34
	Andover – Weyhill – The Pentons	37
	Ampfield – Chandlers Ford	40
	North Baddesley – Chilworth	44
	North Baddesley - Valley Park	48
	Romsey – North Baddesley	52
	Southampton – Eastleigh	55
5	Summary and next steps	60

Document history

	Name	Date	
Author	A Tempany, A Hodgson, D Haigh, J Gay	June 2023	December 2023
Technical Reviewer	A Tempany	June 2023	December 2023
Approved	D Leaver	July 2023	December 2023

1 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

1.1 Background, purpose and scope of this report

- 1.1.1 Stephenson Halliday an RSK Company was commissioned in 2022 by Test Valley to undertake a Landscape and Local Gaps Assessment, to inform the development of the evidence base for the emerging Test Valley Borough Local Plan. The commission involved the development of two separate but related studies:
- A landscape sensitivity study of residential and mixed use development in relation to potential sites being considered in the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) and assessed at Stage 5 of the site assessment process, for the emerging Local Plan, and for potential residential, mixed or employment use. This includes guidance as to how the potential change scenario (residential and mixed use development) may or may not be able to be accommodated in landscape terms.
 - An assessment of the efficacy and the effectiveness of the existing Local Gaps designated in the extant and emerging Local Plan, together with recommendations for Test Valley Borough Council's (TVBC's) consideration as to how the Local Gaps should be addressed in the emerging Local Plan.
- 1.1.2 This report addresses the second item set out above. The recommendations within it have been designed to take account of those in the Landscape Sensitivity Study, and vice versa – a joined-up approach. The two reports have been authored by the same assessment team, with the same team members visiting the Local Gaps and many of the landscape assessment sites, to ensure a consistent and integrated approach to study findings.
- 1.1.3 Where relevant the sections in this report contain summaries of main points and key recommendations, for ease of access for the reader.
- 1.1.4 Local Gaps are essentially a strategic planning function concerned with maintaining the separation, individual identity and settings of individual settlements. However, given the sensitive and high quality landscape and natural environment context of much of the rural landscapes of Test Valley Borough (including protected landscapes), landscape matters have also, where relevant, guided the development of the criteria for the assessment of the local Gaps in this report. Criteria across this and the Landscape Sensitivity Study have been integrated as seamlessly as possible, so that they can mutually inform one another and create efficiencies for the Local Plan evidence base and Test Valley's planning policy team going forward.

Spatial scope of the study

- 1.1.5 The spatial scope of the study encompasses a review of the existing Local Gaps designated in the extant Test Valley Local Plan 2029. The existing Local Gaps are shown in Figure 1.1 overleaf.

Figure 1.1: Existing Local Gaps in Test Valley Borough - North

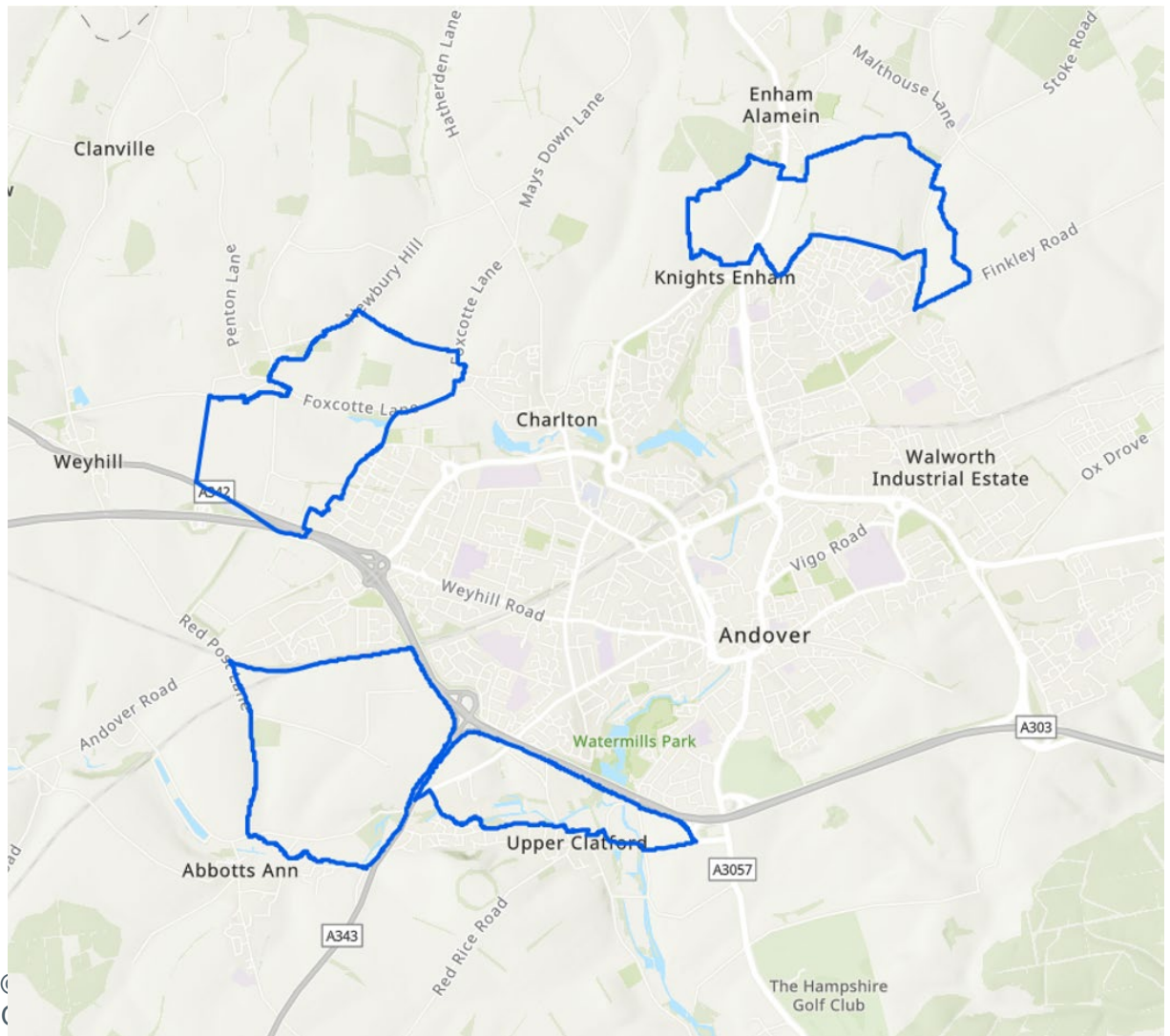
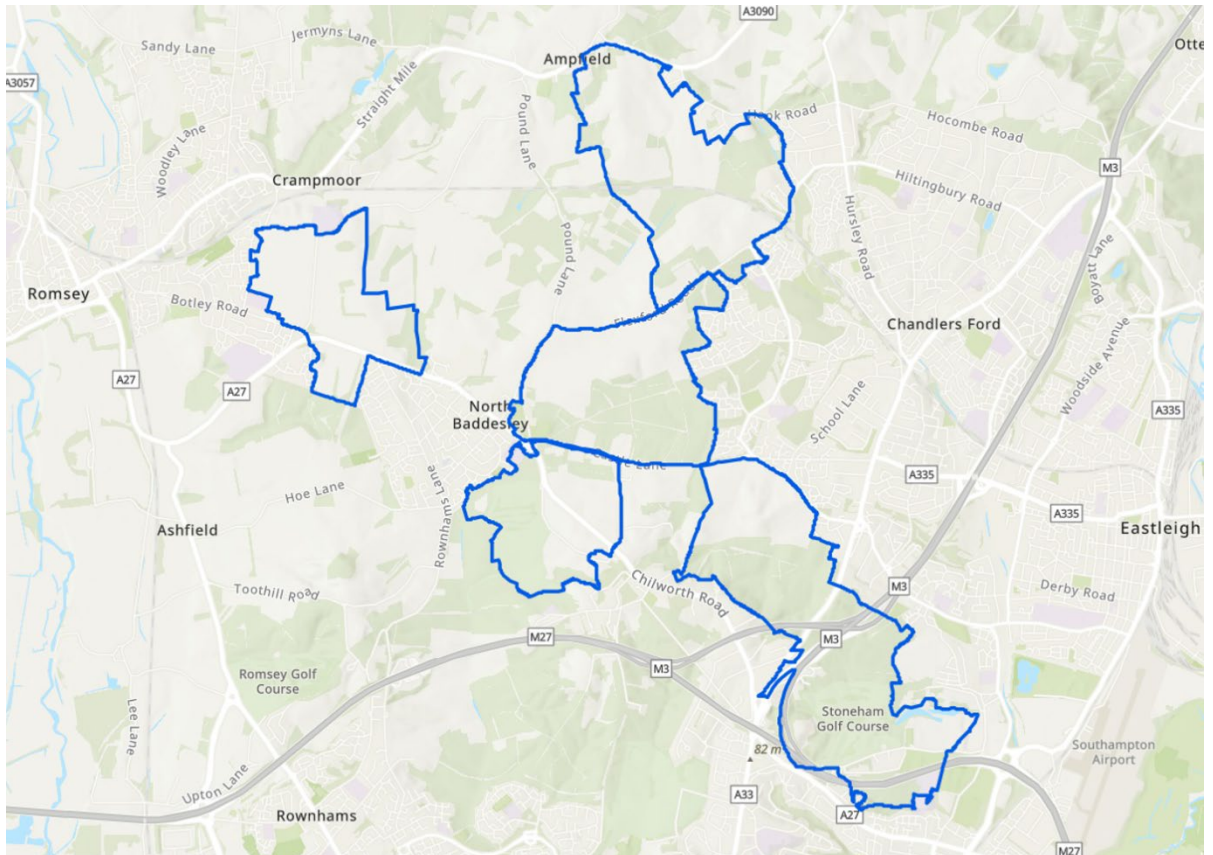


Figure 1.2: Existing Local Gaps in Test Valley Borough - South



© Crown copyright, All rights reserved. 2022 License number 100020565 | Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2022

1.2 Structure of this report

1.2.1 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Section 2: Study methodology.
- Section 3: Spatial planning context.
- Section 4: Assessment of Local Gaps.
- Section 5: Summary and next steps.

2 STUDY METHODOLOGY

2.1 Key stages, assessment framework and criteria

2.1.1 The key stages in the methodology are summarised in Figure 2.1 below and the assessment framework and criteria are discussed in the remainder of this section.

Figure 2.1: Summary of study methodology



2.1.2 **GIS data gathering and GIS analysis project assembly:** Available and relevant spatially referenced data was collated in GIS to inform a detailed desktop assessment in relation to existing and proposed Local Gaps. The following data were collated and reviewed for this stage:

- Green infrastructure and open space studies and strategies.

- Settlement development patterns.
- National and local planning policy and potential site allocations.
- Approved planning applications within the existing Local Gap areas (past three years).
- Cultural heritage, ecological and environmental designations.
- Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) data.
- Geology, landform (topography), hydrology, flood plains, soils and landcover.
- Land use, Public Rights of Way (including open access land, registered common land and data from Local Transport Plans/definitive PRoW map, settlement patterns and enclosure.

2.1.3 Policy context review: In line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Local Planning Authorities are required to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing against its housing requirements. The purpose of the five-year housing land supply is to provide an indication of whether there are sufficient sites available to meet the housing requirement for the next five years. This, alongside other NPPF policies and the National Planning Practice Guidance, has increased the potential for development in areas previously considered unsuitable by the Council where there could be a lack of a demonstrable five year housing supply. Even where a five year housing supply can be demonstrated, the changing policy context has put pressure on Councils to produce robust, thorough evidence to support its policies, particularly those that may be restrictive to certain forms of development. This applies particularly to local policies such as Green Gaps, but also to other related policies and designations such as Open Space and consideration of landscape sensitivity and protected landscapes.

2.1.4 In this context, it is imperative that this study enables planning officers to assess the suitability of future planning applications for developments within Local Green Gaps and support the Council at appeal where the Council consider that developments are inappropriate.

2.1.5 This part of the work was undertaken in two parts:

- A review of relevant national and local policy along with any relevant evidence/background material.
- A focused review of Local Gaps across up to three comparable Local Authority case study areas, with particular reference to those that have informed recently adopted Local Plans. Where relevant, Planning Inspectorate decisions on these policies were consulted and reviewed, as appropriate. These included decisions in Test Valley, elsewhere in Hampshire and further afield, as relevant and appropriate.

2.1.6 The policy review was used to inform the definitions and purposes of the existing and proposed Local Gaps in policy terms. These definitions and purposes helped form the basis for defining detailed criteria to establish

defensible boundaries to the Local Gaps. A checklist was developed for the assessment of the relevant parcel/s so designated, to provide a robust and transparent methodology for reviewing the Gaps and defining recommendations.

2.1.7 Development of assessment criteria: Robust, locally specific assessment criteria were defined to understand settlement and settlement edge character and for the contribution made by the Local Gaps, for testing in the field. A clear and concise assessment proforma was developed to support the gathering of data in the field.

2.1.8 The analysis considered the following physical and experiential elements and attributes in relation to each Local Gap and as part of the evidence baseline in setting out principles for each Local Gap for TVBC to consider and take forward, as appropriate:

- Key features.
- Land use.
- Vegetation cover.
- Public Rights of Way and access.
- Areas and features that provide separation between existing settlements.
- Historic edges to settlements.
- Existing soft edges to settlement.

2.1.9 The following questions were also posed in relation to each Local Gap within the assessment:

- Does it penetrate the urban areas?
- Does it allow access to the countryside and green spaces?
- Is it a strategic greenway providing important green infrastructure resource?
- To what extent does it prevent the coalescence of settlements?
- Is it in close proximity to two or more settlements?
- To what extent does it maintain a strategic gap?
- Does it have any Public Rights of Way / other areas of public access running through it?
- Does it have a high amenity, landscape or biodiversity value?
- Does it have a prominence in the wider landscape such that development would harm the sense of openness in the wider context?

- Does it form an established / valued historic edge to settlements?
- How does it contribute to maintaining the separate identity of the settlements?
- To what extent does the gap prevent inter-visibility between settlements?

2.1.10 The process of interpretation and analysis was undertaken using professional judgment aided by GIS information. This process was consistent, transparent and auditable so that any subsequent decisions made can be understood and justified in future. No grading or point system or thresholds were applied, as areas would either meet the criteria or they would not.

2.1.11 Where appropriate and depending on the findings from the Local Gap assessment, consideration was next given to draft definition of defensible boundaries, for testing through the field survey. This considered the following physical features to aid recommendations in respect of draft boundary definition, where potential changes were merited and justified:

- Roads.
- Railway lines.
- Rivers or streams.
- Hedgerows, walls and fence lines.
- Prominent physical features such as ridgelines.
- Relative position of existing built up area.

2.1.12 **Fieldwork, reporting and recommendations:** This stage used the assessment proforma in the field to gather data and evidence in relation to the existing Local Gaps, to test the baseline gathered in the above desk study, to confirm boundaries and identify opportunities with respect to enhancement, integration and mitigation potential. Field survey was supported by the taking of geo-located digital photographs as part of the evidence base.

2.1.13 The field survey was used to evaluate the performance and relative strength/weakness of the Local Gaps against their purposes of designation, providing the evidence for boundary review. The process also reflected on where extents of Local Gaps could be potentially considered for extension, reduction or removal as appropriate by TVBC in future, weighing up all other relevant factors.

2.1.14 The aim of the field survey was to systematically and consistently collect information that would:

- Describe the Local Gaps.
- Identify aesthetic and perceptual qualities that would not be evident from the desk study.
- Assist decisions on the definition of boundaries.

- Verify the desk study information.
- Provide an understanding and appreciation of the condition of the features within the landscape and an understanding of the causes of change.

2.1.15 The findings from the above task were then collated into draft and final iterations of this Technical Report, to support the Local Plan evidence base.

3 SPATIAL PLANNING CONTEXT

3.1 Review of relevant National and Local Planning Policy: Criteria for Local Gap designation

National policy context

- 3.1.1 Local Gaps are a local planning designation and function and are not generally covered specifically within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) July 2021¹ in the way that related but different strategic planning tools such as Green Belts are. However a number of paragraphs within the NPPF support the identification and protection of Gaps as an approach to spatial planning and planning in the countryside in and around towns, either specifically or implicitly. These are as follows:

NPPF Paragraph 73

- 3.1.2 This forms part of the NPPF's suite of policy statements and advice in relation to planning for housing allocations and housing supply and states, inter alia, the following of relevance to Local Gaps:

'The supply of large numbers of new homes can often be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns, provided they are well located and designed... Working with the support of their communities, and with other authorities if appropriate, strategic policy-making authorities should identify suitable locations for such development where this can help to meet identified needs in a sustainable way'.

Paragraph 73 furthermore notes, inter alia, that in undertaking this, strategic decision makers should have regard to consideration of potential scope for net environmental gain and the consideration of potential need for spatial planning approaches to protect settlement identity. In this instance the NPPF refers specifically to Green Belt, although there is by extension a relationship to consideration of complementary planning approaches here, such as Strategic or Local Gaps.

NPPF Paragraph 85

- 3.1.3 This notes, inter alia, that development areas i.e. outwith existing settlement boundaries should be *'sensitive to their surroundings'*, and that the *'use of previously developed land and sites that are physically well related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist'*.

NPPF Paragraph 120

- 3.1.4 This paragraph forms part of the NPPF's discussion of making effective use of land through the development process and is of partial relevance to some of the environmental and

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

functional opportunities relating to Local Gaps, stating, inter alia, that planning policies and decisions should:

a) encourage multiple benefits from both urban and rural land, including through mixed use schemes and taking opportunities to achieve net environmental gains – such as developments that would enable new habitat creation or improve public access to the countryside;

b) recognise that some undeveloped land can perform many functions, such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, cooling/shading, carbon storage or food production.

NPPF Paragraph 130

- 3.1.5 This states, inter alia, that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character including built environment and landscape setting. By implication this considers aspects of the urban and rural interface at the edge of towns and cities and through 'setting' the individual identity of settlements, thereby relating to aspects of Local Gap criteria.

Local policy context

- 3.1.6 The primary focus of this discussion of the spatial planning policy context for Local Gaps is at the local authority level. Local Gaps have been widely used in Local Authority jurisdictions over the last thirty years or so, particularly in the south-east of England where development pressures and competing land uses and competition for resources are high and there is consequently a need for a commensurate level of protection. Strategic Gaps, Local Gaps and Countryside Gaps have a wide history of use in Hampshire dating back to the County Structure Plan of the 1990s. They are used in many of the individual districts within the county to guide the direction of growth in Local Plans and to designate areas of countryside and open land which are strategically important in defining settlement edges, settings and in maintaining the separation between individual settlements. Notable examples in this context apart from Test Valley Borough include Eastleigh Borough Council and Fareham Borough (as discussed in the case study review below), plus Havant Borough and Southampton City Council. Such boroughs often share similarities in the context of large, expanded urban areas/clusters of towns and 'conurbations' in the context of often high quality countryside, and where potential physical and perceptual settlement coalescence can be an issue, and where such a policy mechanism has historically been an appropriate means of protection.

In the above context, other similar local authorities across England have embodied a 'Local Gap' approach to their spatial planning and some notable examples of these are discussed further in section 3.3 of this report.

- 3.1.7 In Test Valley Borough, the current approach to protection in the extant Local Plan² is that of Local Gaps. The extant Local Plan notes that the Local Gap concept is well established in the borough and that the approach has been supported by communities for a number of years. The policy wording for this and relevant parts of the supporting justification are set out below:

Box 3.1: Local Plan Policy E3: Local Gaps:

Development within Local Gaps will be permitted provided that:

- a) it would not diminish the physical separation and/or visual separation; and
- b) it would not individually or cumulatively with other existing or proposed development compromise the integrity of the gap.

Local Gaps have been identified between:

- Andover – Anna Valley/Upper Clatford (see inset maps 1, 7 and 11);
- Andover – Enham Alamein/Smannell (see inset maps 1 and 19);
- Andover – Abbots Ann (see inset maps 1 and 7);
- Andover – The Pentons (see inset maps 1 and 42);
- Ampfield – Valley Park (see inset maps 3, 8 and 9);
- North Baddesley – Chilworth (see inset maps 3 and 6);
- North Baddesley – Valley Park (see inset map 3);
- Romsey – North Baddesley (see inset map 3); and
- Southampton – Eastleigh (see inset maps 3, 5 and 6).

- 3.1.8 As such the current policy approach is one based on positive wording and which is criteria or evidence based, in line with both the NPPF and the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Tests of Soundness. The test is for potential development to demonstrate that it would not adversely affect criteria a) and b) in Box 3.1 above.

- 3.1.9 In the reasoned justification for policy E3, the following points are of relevance:

- At paragraph 7.27 of the Local Plan, the importance of the Local Gaps in defining an area's character and helping shape settlement pattern is noted. In this context, the importance of the countryside around the large town of Andover and in Southern Test Valley is noted in terms of its contribution to the distinct character of the two areas. Paragraph 7.27 notes that Andover is separated from a number of small rural communities by often relatively narrow bands of countryside. The relationship and sense of place between Romsey, North Baddesley, Ampfield, Chilworth, Valley Park and the

² TVBC, January 2016, Adopted Local Plan 2011-2029

larger urban areas of Southampton and Eastleigh is characterised by the separation provided by areas of countryside.

- At paragraph 7.28, the Local Plan notes that the intent of the policy is not to prevent all development within Local Gaps but rather to maintain the principle of the designation and its criteria. In this context the reasoned justification notes that some proposals which have a rural character and have an over-riding need for a countryside location may be permitted (such as agricultural development) and/or where development would have minimal visual impact upon the Local Gap. The reasoned justification also notes that settlement-edge development will reduce the physical extent of the gaps and that any development within the gaps themselves would have the potential to reduce the visual separation of settlements. In such cases proposals are to be considered on their individual merits, considering both individual and cumulative effects.
- In terms of the definition of the extent of Local Gaps and their boundaries, at paragraph 7.29 the reasoned justification notes that no more land will be included other than that which is necessary for the purposes of preventing coalescence and maintaining the separate identities of settlements.

3.1.10 The detail underpinning the designation of the areas as Local Gaps and the definition of their boundaries is set out in a supporting Local Gaps Topic Paper³, which also describes the characteristics, boundaries, qualities and planning histories (including any revisions) of each of the Local Gaps designated in the borough. Key messages of relevance from this Topic Paper are as follows:

- Reference to the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) Policy Framework criteria for identification and designation of Local Gaps, specifically where:
 - The open nature / sense of separation between settlements cannot be retained by other policy designations.
 - 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 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.

3.1.11 The PUSH Policy Framework also notes the situations under which appropriate development may come forward within Local Gaps. These are as per criteria a) and b) in relation to Test Valley Local Plan Policy E3, as described above.

³ Test Valley Borough Council, 2014, Test Valley Revised Local Plan DPD 2011 – 2029 Regulation 22 – Submission to Secretary of State. Policy E3:Local Gaps Topic Paper

3.2 Changes with potential to affect the Local Gaps in Test Valley: Review of relevant planning applications

- 3.2.1 A focused review has been undertaken of developments coming forward (either consented or in the planning system, or the subject of recent appeals) with the potential to affect the integrity of the Local Gaps, to provide context for the assessment and recommendations. This also partly demonstrates the flexibility of approach contained within the existing Local Gaps policy, i.e. that it can enable the right type and form of development, where it is appropriate both to its context and to maintaining the integrity of the Local Gap.
- 3.2.2 From the review, the developments of relevance to the Local Gaps are set out in table 3.1 overleaf.

Table 3.1: Review of relevant planning applications in the Local Gaps

Location and application reference	Details
Land adjacent to Trodds Copse - Reference: 20/00488/RESS	<p>Care village development on land adjacent to Trodds Copse SSSI and ancient woodland, within the easternmost part of the Ampfield-Chandlers Ford Local Gap, adjacent to the north-western edge of Chandlers Ford. An extremely small incursion into the Local Gap, visually and physically contained by Trodds Copse to the immediate west and north-west.</p> <p>The application was approved in December 2020 and the development is being built out at the time of writing.</p>
Land south-west of Misslebrook Copse - Reference: 22/03346/FULLS	<p>Land at Misslebrook Lane, North Baddesley, proposed for Battery electrical storage system (BESS), with substation, transformer stations, site accesses, internal access tracks, security measures, access gates, other ancillary infrastructure and landscaping and biodiversity enhancements. Located within a small part of the North Baddesley – Chilworth Local Gap.</p> <p>The planning application was validated in January 2023 and is awaiting determination at the time of writing.</p> <p>A solar farm was also consented north of Botley Road, within the Local Gap. Whilst the 'temporary' nature of the use for that and for battery storage sites is potentially a consideration to an extent, in reality such developments are often re-consented at the end of their operational life. The localised extent of development and the compatibility of use with a greenfield, open, landscape context are probably more material in this respect.</p>
Land east of Abbey Enterprise Centre, Romsey - Reference: 22/03069/OUTS	<p>Proposed extension of Abbey Park Industrial Estate for B1, B2 and B8 purposes. The site occupies a localised part of the Romsey-North Baddesley Local Gap, surrounded by large blocks of mature woodland to the south. To the north of the proposed site and to the north of the A27 lies a solar farm.</p> <p>The planning application was validated in November 2022 and is awaiting determination at the time of writing. It should also be noted that this site is one which is being assessed for the Local Plan under the site assessment process.</p>

- 3.2.3 As identified in paragraph 3.1.9, the Local Plan identifies that the intent of Policy E3 is not to prevent all development and allows for development if it corresponds with the policy tests. This is the case with the approved development for a barn in proximity to the Abbey Enterprise Centre.

3.3 Commentary on the strength of Local Gaps as a policy protection approach: Relevant appeal decisions

- 3.3.1 The following relevant appeal decisions were reviewed in relation to the function, purpose and effectiveness of Local Gaps, as part of the evidence gathering for this study. Where relevant and informative for this report, the Inspector's commentary in his/her decision has been drawn out below, identifying issues of relevance for consideration in Test Valley Borough. It should be noted that these decisions and commentaries have been used only to objectively illustrate points to inform future consideration of approaches in Test Valley Borough, and no opinions are expressed as to the decisions documented below.

Redbridge Lane, Test Valley Borough, November 2010

- 3.3.2 In this appeal in relation to a now-deleted Local Gap in the borough, in relation to planning application reference 09/01706/OUTS, in respect of an outline planning application for a residential development of 350 dwellings in a Local Gap, the Inspector concluded that there is *'substantial objection to the development outside the settlement in the Local Gaps because it would be contrary to policies SET 03 (Development in the Countryside) & SET 05, as supported by the strong local views that the Local Gap should be maintained in its present form to avoid undue urbanisation.'*
- 3.3.3 In spite of the Inspector's acknowledgement of the value of the Local Gap, the five year Housing Land Supply was a material consideration, such that it justified the loss of the Local Gap in this instance.

Land at Halterworth Lane and Highwood Lane, Romsey, November 2011

- 3.3.4 This appeal, in relation to planning application reference 10/00623/OUTS, in respect of the refusal of an outline planning application for 59 dwellings in the Romsey-North Baddesley Local Gap had the following outcome:
- 3.3.5 The Inspector recognised the significance of the Local Gaps by stating that the proposed development would be in breach of policy SET 05: Local Gaps of the Borough Local Plan by virtue of the fact that the development of the appeal site would push development and the urban edge into the countryside and the Local Gap. The refusal to grant planning consent was therefore upheld.

Land at Botley Road, West End, 2016

- 3.3.6 This appeal, reference APP/W1715/W/15/3139371 was in relation to the refusal to grant planning consent for a development of 100 dwellings on land at Botley Road. In this case the appeal was allowed, largely due to the absence of a five year housing land supply. In reaching their decision the Inspector had regard to Local Plan policies in the then extant Local Plan (now superseded) including Policy 2.CO in relation to the safeguarding of Strategic Gaps.

- 3.3.7 The Inspector noted that *‘The gap covering the appeal site was considered by the Inspector who dealt with objections to the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan Review (2001-2011). He considered that this land was an important part of the gap. Following my detailed assessment of the site and surroundings, I demur from that conclusion. The land has a very limited practical role in separating the two settlements, for the reasons I have given, and the M27, far from merging the settlements, acts as a substantial visual and perceived barrier that reinforces rather than reduces separation. The gap may look narrow on plan, but the perceived gap following the completion of the development would to all practical purposes remain the same both visually and in terms of its contribution towards maintaining the separate identity of the settlements and preventing coalescence’.*
- 3.3.8 Moreover the Inspector also drew a comparison with the Bubb Lane Appeal (see below). He noted that the circumstances of the two appeals were very different and that in the case of Bubb Lane *‘the Inspector concluded that a change from open rural land to suburban development in a sensitive location between settlements would be a dramatic and adverse alteration to the landscape and would thwart the aims of planning policy to retain the separate identity of settlements. That site was more clearly in open countryside, and was much larger. It was nothing like as well enclosed, being on a slight rise with wider visibility. Development there would have had a much more noticeable impact on the countryside, the landscape and the strategic gap; it would have been seen as an intrusion into the gap’.*
- 3.3.9 The observations made by the Inspector above point to a need to consider carefully the physical, landscape and visual characteristics of land within Gaps as they relate to the functional purposes and integrity of such Gaps. Particularly relevant observations above in the context of Test Valley Borough include the relative perception of a Gap on the ground in comparison to its physical scale on maps, and how the integrity of a Gap may be maintained having regard to the physical and perceptual characteristics within it.
- 3.3.10 It should also be noted that this appeal decision was in relation to a previous iteration of the Local Plan.
- 3.3.11 The above examples cover a series of past issues arising from proposals to develop in Local Gaps in Test Valley. They are of relevance to the baseline understanding for this study, but by including them we are not endorsing or disagreeing with the decisions made. The following examples provide useful case studies from other local authorities.

Land at Andover Garden Centre, Salisbury Road, 2016

- 3.3.12 In this appeal (Reference APP/C1760W/16/3151438) in relation to the proposed extension of a garden centre car park, the Inspector considered two principal matters. These were i) the appropriateness of the countryside location for development and ii) the effect of the proposal on the Local Gap and the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
- 3.3.13 In this instance, the Inspector concluded that whilst the development would not materially affect the Local Gap or its integrity and would not have a material adverse impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, the appellant had not provided sufficient evidence for the need for the development to be located in the countryside. For this reason alone he concluded that the appeal be dismissed.

Land at Roundabouts Copse Road, North Baddesley, November 2016

- 3.3.14 In this appeal (Reference APP/C1760W/15/3139873), concerning the refusal to grant planning permission for up to 33 dwellings in a Local Gap, the Inspector noted the short distance and time needed to travel between the two settlements relevant to the site. She also noted the importance of preserving the integrity of the Local Gap in the context of its sensitivity to incremental development. The Inspector concluded that the proposed development would materially and unacceptably diminish the physical settlement separation and would, by virtue of its visual impact, also diminish visual separation and thereby compromise the integrity of the gap as a whole. For these reasons she considered the development contrary to Local Plan Policy E3. The Inspector's decision was that the appeal be dismissed.
- 3.3.15 Some examples of appeals in relation to other relevant development proposals in other local authorities outside of Test Valley Borough are set out below.

Land East of Newgate Lane East, Fareham, Hampshire, November 2022

- 3.3.16 This appeal (Reference APP/A1720/W/22/3299739) was in respect of an outline planning application for 375 dwellings on a greenfield site. The Inspector concluded, inter alia, that such a scale of development in this location and context, would harm local character and the integrity of the Strategic Gap and associated physical and visual separation between the settlements. For this and other reasons, he concluded that the appeal be dismissed.

Land at Bubb Lane, Hedge End, 2016, 2017

- 3.3.17 This appeal, reference APP/W1715/W/16/3153928, concerned refusal to grant planning consent for development of land at Bubb Lane, Hedge End for up to 200 dwellings. Material to the case was, inter alia, Local Plan Policy 2.CO which stated that planning permission will not be granted for development which would physically or visually diminish a strategic gap. In the 2016 Appeal the Inspector noted that the weight afforded to such policies would be affected by their status as relevant policies for the supply of housing. However, following the judgement of the Supreme Court, the Inspector in the 2017 appeal noted that *'it is clear that the weight to be attached to conflict with policies 1.CO and 2.CO should no longer be affected simply on the basis of their having some effect on housing land supply'*. Furthermore, in the context of policy compliance with the NPPF, the Inspector noted the following: *'As for policy 2.CO, it, too, is consistent with the fifth core principle. The case put to this inquiry is that the gap is most valued for its openness rather than for any other inherent quality. I agree, therefore, that it could also be argued to be in line with the expectation in NPPF paragraph 157, that Local Plans should identify land where development would not be appropriate. From those local residents who addressed the inquiry, it was quite clear to me that the approach of maintaining gaps between settlements draws strong support from the local community in principle. A policy to maintain settlement gaps is also the corollary of making sure that development is in the right place, as noted by the Inspector in the Test Valley Local Plan examination'*.
- 3.3.18 The Inspector also noted the appellant's reference to a number of recent planning permissions in the area in respect of land in the Strategic and Local Gaps, and the associated need for review of the function and area of the Gaps in light of development

pressures. Notwithstanding this issue the Inspector noted that the Gaps continue to demonstrate a ‘*clear planning purpose*’ and could reasonably be expected to continue to form part of the approach to planning in the area in future. The observations made under paragraph 3.3.8 above are also of relevance in this connection.

Land at Hamble Lane, Bursledon, Eastleigh Borough, July 2018

- 3.3.19 This appeal, reference C1/2017/3339, was taken to Judicial Review and was in relation to the Secretary of State’s refusal to allow the appeal in respect of permission for residential development of 225 dwellings plus care home facility on land at Hamble Lane, Bursledon, within the e Bursledon, Hamble, Netley Abbey Local Gap (Policy 3.CO within the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan then in force.
- 3.3.20 In the original appeal, the Inspector found one of the key issues to be ‘*the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the countryside and its role in separating settlements*’ and noted that there was ‘*no doubt that a development of this scale would diminish the Local Gap both physically and, to some degree, visually, contrary to policy 3.CO ...*’, and that ‘*[in] these respects it would not comply with the development plan*’.
- 3.3.21 In the context of Policy 3.CO in relation to the Local Gap, the Secretary of State noted that careful consideration had been given to ‘*the Inspector’s analysis at IR93-100 on the matter of whether Policy 3.CO would be out of date through no longer meeting the development needs of the Borough, and whether there is justification for reducing the weight applied to that policy. The Secretary of State acknowledges that its weight should be reduced because he has found it to be out-of-date, but taking into account its consistency with the Framework, its role in protecting the Local Gap and the limited shortfall in housing land supply, he concludes that he should still afford significant weight to Policy 3.CO*’.
- 3.3.22 This appeal was subsequently allowed in Judicial Review. This was largely in respect of matters in relation to five year housing supply.

3.4 Other Local Authority case studies: Review and benchmarking exercise in relation to relevant Local Gaps

- 3.4.1 Three geographically close and similar Local Authorities in Hampshire which have also embodied similar ‘gap’ approaches to settlement setting and countryside protection have been benchmarked and reviewed, with key findings presented below. A summary of findings in relation to other Local Authorities more widely in the south-east of England using a gaps approach to protection is also set out at the end of this section.

Examples from elsewhere in Hampshire

- 3.4.2 The focus of this section of the review has been on LPAs where Local Plans have been made and Gaps designated subsequent to the drafting of Test Valley Borough’s Local Gaps Topic Paper in 2014. Accordingly, the approaches in Eastleigh Borough, Fareham Borough and Basingstoke and Deane have been reviewed in this exercise.

Eastleigh Borough

- 3.4.3 The Adopted Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-36⁴, adopted in April 2022, contains the following policies in relation to the countryside, with specific reference to Settlement Gaps:
- Strategic Policy S6: Protection of Settlement Gaps: This policy states that: *‘Development within a Settlement Gap as set out in the policies map will be permitted provided that: a. it would not undermine the physical extent and/or visual separation of settlements; and b) it would not have an urbanising effect detrimental to: i. The character of the countryside; or ii. The separate identity of the adjoining settlements.*
- 3.4.4 The reasoned justification underpinning this policy notes, inter alia, the following matters of relevance, and goes into relative detail in the matter of broad ‘design principles’ for the potential visual appearance of appropriate new development with Settlement Gaps:
- ‘The Borough’s countryside performs an important role in separating and providing a setting for the Borough’s settlements. Maintaining the individual identities of the Borough’s communities is an important priority for the Borough Council. The most obvious way of achieving this is keeping them physically separate from each other and from Southampton.... The Council considers that designating areas between settlements as settlement gaps to be kept free of urbanising development is the best way of preventing further loss of local identity. Following a review of the boundaries of settlement gaps and consideration of the extent of land required to prevent coalescence of settlements, the Council has defined a number of such gaps... Any new development within a settlement gap should not physically and/or visually undermine the gap between settlements. Any new development including the intensification or redevelopment of existing activities within gaps should seek opportunities to enhance the function of the gap. Consideration will be given to how the proposed siting, design, colours, materials and any storage of materials, lighting, boundary treatment, landscape features, landscape improvements and/or appropriate long term management arrangements serves to ensure the proposed development meets the criteria in policy S6’.*
- 3.4.5 In the context of future policy approaches to Local Gaps in Test Valley Borough, the design and lighting aspects identified above are potentially useful considerations, particularly in the context of facilitating improved design for recreation development proposals which may come forward in Local Gaps in future.

Fareham Borough

- 3.4.6 The Fareham Borough Local Plan 2037⁵, adopted in April 2023, notes in its Development Strategy at section 3 that two Strategic Gaps of long standing have been established in the Meon Valley and between the settlements of Fareham and Stubbington. Whilst it notes that the Strategic Gaps have been retained in the new Local Plan, they have been re-focused to address the prevention of settlement coalescence, and to support the retention of settlement identity. An independent evidence base study was commissioned to support the review, notably a Technical Review of Areas of Special Landscape Quality and the Strategic Gaps’. The review also had regard to relevant recent appeal decisions in relation to the strength and

⁴ Eastleigh Borough Council 2022, Adopted Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2016-36

⁵ Fareham Borough Council 2021 Fareham Borough Local Plan 2037

function of Strategic Gaps in this context. The Examining Inspector for the Local Plan noted the findings of the Technical Review, specifically with regards to the fact that the Technical Review *‘determined that the two existing gaps continue to play an important role in preventing settlement coalescence and have strong sub regional agreement for their designation’*.

- 3.4.7 The Adopted Local Plan consequently has the following policies with regard to protecting the separation between, and individual identity of, settlements within the Borough. The Local Plan was found to be sound in the Inspector’s Report of March 2023⁶, as was Policy DS2, with only minor re-drawing of the boundaries recommended as a Minor Modification (and with the extension of the Local Gap around Funtley, in light of urban extension, also supported by the Examining Inspector), with no change to the substance of the policy:
- Policy DS2: Development in the Strategic Gaps: This states the following: *‘In order to prevent the coalescence of urban areas and to maintain the separate identity of settlements, Strategic Gaps are identified as shown on the Policies map between the following areas: 1) Fareham / Stubbington and the Western Wards (Meon Gap), 2) Fareham / Bridgemary and Stubbington / Lee-on-the-Solent (Fareham Stubbington Strategic Gap). Development proposals will not be permitted where they significantly affect the integrity of the gap and the physical and visual separation of settlements or the distinctive nature of settlement characters’*.
- 3.4.8 The reasoned justification supporting and introducing this policy states, inter alia, the following points of relevance:
- ‘The review of the Strategic Gap designations within the Borough has considered it important to retain the Strategic Gaps in the Borough. The Meon Gap plays a vital role in helping to maintaining the separation of Titchfield from settlements to the west and east of the valley, preventing sprawl from both Fareham and Titchfield Common/Titchfield Park and protecting the countryside setting of Stubbington. The Meon Gap is also identified to be of strategic significance to the South Hampshire sub-region by the PUSH Spatial Position Statement (2016) as it demarks the boundary of the Portsmouth and Southampton Housing Market Areas’*.
- 3.4.9 The reasoned justification further notes that whilst the Strategic Gaps do not necessarily have intrinsic landscape value per se, they are important in maintaining settlement pattern, defining settlement character and in the provision of green infrastructure opportunities.
- 3.4.10 It also notes that the principle of major development within the Gaps is not established and that it is for development proposals to demonstrate how they could be delivered in a manner consistent with the tests set out in the policy. The reasoned justification also observes that as part of this there will be a requirement for information on settlement identity, location and scale of the proposed development along with details of how the design of edge treatments could maintain the physical and visual separation of settlements.

⁶ https://www.fareham.gov.uk/pdf/planning/local_plan/FarehamLP-InspectorsReport-FINALv2merged.pdf Accessed 27th April 2023

Basingstoke and Deane

- 3.4.11 The Adopted Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan 2011-2029⁷ has the following policy protection in relation to Gaps:

Policy EM2: Strategic Gaps. This states that:

'In order to prevent coalescence of built up areas and to maintain the separate identity of settlements, the generally open and undeveloped nature of the following gaps will be protected:

- *Basingstoke – Oakley*
- *Basingstoke – Sherborne St John*
- *Basingstoke – Old Basing*
- *Basingstoke/Chineham – Bramley/Sherfield on Loddon*
- *Tadley-Baughurst*

Development in gaps will only be permitted where: a) It would not diminish the physical and/or visual separation; and b) It would not compromise the integrity of the gap either individually or cumulatively with other existing or proposed development; or c) it is proposed through a Neighbourhood Plan or Neighbourhood Development Order, including Community Right to Build Orders'.

- 3.4.12 The reasoned justification supporting the policy states, inter alia, the following points of relevance:

'A clear gap between settlements helps maintain a sense of place for both residents of, and visitors to, the settlements on either side of the gaps. When travelling through a strategic gap (by all modes of transport) a traveller should have a clear sense of having left the first settlement, having travelled through an undeveloped area and then entered the second settlement'.

- 3.4.13 And that:

'Small scale development that is in keeping with the rural nature of the gaps will not be prevented, provided that it is appropriately sited and designed to minimise the impact on the openness of the gap and subject to other policies of this plan'.

- 3.4.14 The reasoned justification finally notes that the definition of the Strategic Gaps on the Local Plan Proposals Map was supported by evidence-based assessment, and that the primary mechanism for implementation of the policy is through the Development Management process, i.e. advice on, and determination of, relevant planning applications.

⁷ Basingstoke and Deane Borough May 2016 Adopted Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan 2011-2029

- 3.4.15 The Basingstoke and Deane Issues and Options Public Consultation Document published in autumn 2020 indicated at paragraph 9.3.2 that the policy *'has been effective in preventing coalescence and it is proposed that the approach is retained in the Local Plan Update. However, some of the gap boundaries may need to be updated in light of the new evidence base, policies set out in Neighbourhood Plans and also new site allocations included in the Local Plan Update'*.

Examples from Local Authorities across England

- 3.4.16 Some other examples of Local Authorities across England using a Gaps policy approach to protection of countryside and settlement identity have been scoped as part of this exercise. Some notable examples are summarised in Table 3.2 overleaf.

Table 3.2: Results of scoping study in relation to Gaps protection used by a sample of other England LPAs

Local Authority area, relevant policies/proposed policy approaches and intent
<p>North Somerset</p> <p>Proposed approach:</p> <p>North Somerset Local Plan 2038, Strategic Gaps Topic Paper, March 2022 (Local Plan status: Emerging. Currently in development following Preferred Options Consultation in 2022, with the Local Plan shortly to be published for independent Examination by the Secretary of State):</p> <p>Within this Topic Paper, North Somerset set out their position as follows:</p> <p><i>‘Strategic gaps can play an important role in maintaining the local character and distinctiveness of the settlements, and the sense that they are separate places. Identification and protection of strategic gaps will help to prevent their erosion by incremental development which would be detrimental to the settlements’ separate identities, character and/or landscape setting. Such protection is particularly important where the erosion could potentially cause coalescence of the settlements. Strategic gaps provide a different stronger dimension to countryside policies in specific areas where there is potential for harm which might be less significant elsewhere. In those areas reliance on countryside policies alone would be unlikely to provide sufficient protection against the reduction or loss of such important gaps to development, particularly in the long term. While such policies provide some control of development in the countryside, they often allow for exceptions. Without the added protection of strategic gap designation, there is a significant risk that incremental development would eventually erode the gaps, with the detrimental effects identified above. Strategic gaps are consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 130 which states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments ‘c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities)’. Protection of strategic gaps is compatible with this by helping to keep settlements separate and respecting the fact that they have historically grown as separate places, typically with their own local character. Also strategic gaps help maintain the landscape setting of the settlements’.</i></p>
<p>Bracknell Forest Borough</p> <p>Proposed approach:</p> <p>Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan Issues and Options, Section 9.1 Gaps or Separation between Settlements (Local Plan status: Emerging. The Local Plan is under Examination, with the post-Hearings letter by the Examining Inspector published in January 2023):</p> <p>Within this Bracknell Forest Borough note the following:</p> <p><i>‘Gaps’ or separation areas preserve the physical and visual separation between settlements. They are a function of land which prevents coalescence of distinct and separate settlements. Designation of a gap does not refer to landscape quality or character, or its protection.... Whilst the Council has not yet made any decisions about the precise boundaries of ‘gap’ areas, a policy approach needs to be developed to delineate the extent of gaps on the Policies Map, and an associated Development Management Policy relating to development within defined ‘gap’ or separation areas’.</i></p>

Local Authority area, relevant policies/proposed policy approaches and intent

Cheshire East Council

Approach:

Cheshire East Council Local Plan Strategy 2010-2030 (Local Plan status: Adopted July 2017): Policy PG5: Strategic Green Gaps:

This states the following:

'The purposes of Strategic Green Gaps are to: i. Provide long-term protection against coalescence; ii. Protect the setting and separate identity of settlements; and iii. Retain the existing settlement pattern by maintaining the openness of land'.

The Policy goes on to expand as follows:

'Within Strategic Green Gaps, Policy PG 6 'Open Countryside' will apply. In addition, planning permission will not be granted for the construction of new buildings or the change of use of existing buildings of land which would: i. Result in erosion of a physical gap between any of the settlements named in this policy; or ii. Adversely affect the visual character of the landscape; or iii. Significantly affect the undeveloped character of the Green Gap, or lead to the coalescence between existing settlements'.

4 ASSESSMENT OF THE LOCAL GAPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1.1 This section presents the assessment of the Local Gaps from north to south, applying the assessment criteria defined in the previous section of this report, and supported by concise recommendations as to the integrity, functionality and boundaries of the Local Gaps.
- 4.1.2 The Local Gap assessments are presented in the following order, in the remainder of this section of the report:
- Andover - Anna Valley - Upper Clatford.
 - Andover - Enham Alamein - Smannell.
 - Andover - Abbots Ann.
 - Andover – Weyhill - The Pentons.
 - Ampfield - Chandlers Ford.
 - North Baddesley - Chilworth.
 - North Baddesley - Valley Park.
 - Romsey - North Baddesley.
 - Southampton - Eastleigh.
- 4.1.3 For each Local Gap an assessment (desk and field-based) was carried out against the criteria presented under paragraphs 2.1.8 – 2.1.9 and 2.1.11 above. The findings from the application of these criteria are presented in relation to each individual Local Gap in the remainder of this section.

ANDOVER - ANNA VALLEY - UPPER CLATFORD

Site ID and name: Andover - Anna Valley - Upper Clatford

Location and context:

This Local Gap is located to the south/south-west of Andover, between Andover to the north and Upper Clatford to the south.

The location and context of the Local Gap are shown on the aerial photograph below (with part of the Andover - Abbots Ann Local Gap also shown to the immediate west, on the left hand side of the image):



© Crown copyright, All rights reserved. 2022 License number 100020565 | Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2022

Physical features

Key elements

At the borough level, the majority of this Local Gap falls within the Test Valley [Landscape Character Type \(LCT\) 5. River Valley Floor](#)ⁱ and within the 5H Pillhill Brook Valley Floor LCA. Relevant key valued characteristics of this LCA represented in the Local Gap are:

- Shallow valley, with a small scale intimate riparian landscape character.
- Mixed vegetation character with predominantly undeveloped areas of woodland, scrub, pasture and marsh grassland.
- Poplar, willow and alder lined watercourses.
- Watercress beds and the partial enclosure of land within parliamentary field systems.

	<p>The physical landscape characteristics referenced above are associated mainly with the Pillhill Brook which follows a meandering course through the Local Gap. In addition, other key elements of the Local Gap include a degree of scattered, very low density residential development throughout the Local Gap, plus some commercial development including a farm shop and development associated with sports facilities (tennis courts).</p>
Land use	<p>Land use within the Local Gap is predominantly given over to pastoral fields, with some arable cultivation. There are also occasional groups of houses and commercial buildings in the southern part of the Local Gap.</p>
Vegetation cover	<p>Vegetation cover is defined by small to medium scale pasture fields with linear belts of trees and hedgerows delineating field boundaries and along the Pillhill Brook. There is one larger arable field in the northern part of the Local Gap.</p>
Public Rights of Way and access	<p>Two PRowWs link Andover with Upper Clatford in the eastern part of the Local Gap and one permissive path links to Abbots Ann in the western part.</p>
Areas and features that provide separation between existing settlements	<p>The belts of tall linear vegetation create an intimate landscape. Built form is seen through glimpses in this vegetation. This built form reduces the sense of separation between settlements. The open arable field to the northern part of the Local Gap however increases the sense of physical and perceptual separation in this area of the gap.</p>
Historic edges to settlements	<p>The southern edge of the Local Gap forms part of the historic southern edge of Upper Clatford. This is characterised by the curtilage of properties along the northern end of the settlement. The northern edge of the Local Gap (A303 corridor) has formed the historic southern edge of Andover.</p>
Existing soft edges to settlement	<p>The edge of the settlements are lined with hedgerows and trees.</p>
Evaluation	
Does the Local Gap penetrate the urban areas?	<p>No, it sits on the edge of the settlement.</p>
Does the Local Gap allow access to the countryside and green spaces?	<p>Yes, PRowWs within the Local Gap allow access to the wider countryside and green infrastructure network, as well as connecting Andover with Upper Clatford.</p>
Is the Local Gap a strategic greenway providing important green infrastructure resource?	<p>Yes, the green corridors and Pillhill Brook are important as part of the strategic green and blue infrastructure network.</p>
To what extent does the Local Gap prevent the coalescence (merging) of settlements?	<p>The gap physically and perceptually prevents the settlements of Andover merging with Upper Clatford and is effective in this function.</p>

Is the Local Gap in close proximity to two or more settlements?	Yes, Andover to the north and Upper Clatford to the south.
To what extent does the Local Gap maintain a strategic gap?	The Local Gap forms an important gap between Andover and Upper Clatford and as such is of strategic significance in maintaining the separate identity and character of the settlements.
Does the Local Gap have any Public Rights of Way / other areas of public access running through it?	Yes, there are several PRoW within the Local Gap, along with one permissive path, as noted above.
Does the Local Gap have a high amenity, landscape or biodiversity value?	The tall linear belts of vegetation created a treed backdrop to the landscape and have a high amenity value. Pillhill Brook and associated riparian landscape features also have amenity and biodiversity value at a local level.
Does the Local Gap have a prominence in the wider landscape such that development would harm the sense of openness in the wider context?	No. Due to the intimate landscape structure and landscape 'mosaic' of much of this Local Gap, there is not a particularly strong relationship with the wider landscape. The gap forms a wedge between the two settlements which is only connected to the wider landscape to the west. The vegetation along the A343 corridor separates the Local Gap from the wider landscape to the west.
Does the Local Gap form an established / valued historic edge to settlements?	The southern edge of the gap forms part of the historic southern edge of Upper Clatford. The northern edge of the gap (A303 corridor) forms part of the historic southern edge of Andover.
How does the Local Gap contribute to maintaining the separate identity of the settlements?	Whilst the tall vegetation provides a treed backdrop to the gap, the amount of built form within the Local Gap does create some degradation of the sense of openness between the settlements.
To what extent does the Local Gap prevent inter-visibility between settlements?	The Local Gap prevents inter-visibility between Andover and Upper Clatford, primarily due to the density, disposition and maturity of vegetation within much of it.

Potential defensible boundary features

These include roads, hedgerows, walls, fence lines and the relative position of existing built up areas and their associated mostly well-defined edges.

Recommendations:

The vegetation within the existing gap creates an intimate and distinctly different landscape to the settlement edges of Andover and Upper Clatford. Existing built form within this gap is relatively contained although does degrade the sense of separation between the settlements. To maintain the integrity of the Local Gap any further development should be limited, in view of the potential for cumulative development issues which could erode the integrity of the Local Gap. Consideration could potentially also be given to extending the gap to the south/south-east (open, mixed farmland) to limit the potential for coalescence between Andover and Upper Clatford in the future.

ANDOVER – ENHAM ALAMEIN – SMANNELL

Site ID and name: Andover - Enham Alamein - Smannell

Location and context:

The Local Gap is located to the north of Andover, between Andover to the south and Enham Alamein to the north. The location and context are shown on the aerial photograph below. The Local Gap boundary was re-drawn to take in a large extension to the gap to the east, including the East Anton Playing Fields and a large area of land wrapping around the associated East Anton Local Plan Allocation. This boundary re-drawing took place through the Adopted Local Plan process.



© Crown copyright, All rights reserved. 2022 License number 100020565 | Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2022

Physical features

Key elements

At the borough level, the Local Gap falls entirely within [Landscape Character Type \(LCT\) 9. Semi Enclosed Clay Plateau Farmlandⁱⁱ](#) and within the 9A North Andover Plateau LCA. Relevant key valued characteristics of this LCA represented in the Local Gap are:

- Complex plateau landscape with dry river gravel valleys and gentle ridges.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive views from the network of public rights of way and lanes running through the area including to undeveloped skylines of ridges and wooded horizons. • Rural character of lanes criss-crossing the landscape. <p>In addition to these key landscape characteristics, other key elements within the Local Gap include the wood fringed playing fields serving the East Anton Major Development Area which lies immediately to the south of the Local Gap.</p>
Land use	Land use is predominantly arable cultivation throughout except for the East Anton playing fields and associated young woodlands.
Vegetation cover	Vegetation cover is defined by open arable fields with linear belts of trees and hedgerows delineating field boundaries. Variations include amenity grassland to the East Anton playing fields and young woodland planting within Harmony and Diamond Woods.
Public Rights of Way and access	Several PRoW radiate out from Andover into the wider countryside including two restricted byways. There is open access within Harmony and Diamond Woods.
Areas and features that provide separation between existing settlements	Open arable land within a dry chalk valley provides an important gap between Andover and Enham Alamein (along Newbury Road) and between Andover and Smannell (along Smannell Road). Open rolling arable land provides a similarly important gap between East Anton and Finkley Manor Farm.
Historic edges to settlements	The northern edge of the Local Gap forms part of the historic southern edge of Enham Alamein. This edge is made up of historic hedgerows and blocks of woodland, which separated the settlement from the more open arable land beyond. The Local Gap does not form part of an historic settlement edge to Andover.
Existing soft edges to settlement	The edges of the settlements are lined with hedgerows, trees, woodland or public open spaces.
Evaluation	
Does the Local Gap penetrate the urban areas?	No, it sits on the edge of the settlement.
Does the Local Gap allow access to the countryside and green spaces?	Yes, PRoW allow access to the Local Gap and the wider countryside beyond the settlement. The gap also contains recreational areas including the East Anton playing fields and Harmony and Diamond Woods.

Is the Local Gap a strategic greenway providing important green infrastructure resource?	Yes, the green corridors are important as part of the strategic green infrastructure network as are the Harmony and Diamond Woods.
To what extent does the Local Gap prevent the coalescence of settlements?	The Local Gap physically and perceptually prevents the settlements of Andover (including East Anton) merging with Enham Alamein, Smannell and the hamlet around Finkley Manor Farm. It is effective in this function, although the Local Gap has been compressed due to the presence of the East Anton MDA on the skyline in the south/south-east.
Is the Local Gap in close proximity to two or more settlements?	Yes, the Local Gap lies within close proximity of Andover (including East Anton), Enham Alamein, Smannell and the hamlet around Finkley Manor Farm. The East Anton MDA is visible on the skyline from the southern approach to Enham Alamein.
To what extent does the Local Gap maintain a strategic gap?	The Local Gap provides critical separation between Andover (including East Anton) and Enham Alamein, Smannell and the hamlet around Finkley Manor Farm.
Does the Local Gap have any Public Rights of Way / other areas of public access running through it?	Yes, there are several PROW and public open space areas within the gap, including the East Anton playing fields and Harmony and Diamond Woods.
Does the Local Gap have a high amenity, landscape or biodiversity value?	The open arable landscape has a high amenity value and the linear belts of trees and Harmony and Diamond Woods have biodiversity value.
Does the Local Gap have a prominence in the wider landscape such that development would harm the sense of openness in the wider context?	Yes, the open arable landscape within the Local Gap has an important visual relationship with the adjacent North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) to the north and the arable landscape to the west.
Does the Local Gap form an established / valued historic edge to settlements?	The Local Gap forms part of the historic southern settlement edge of Enham Alamein.
How does the Local Gap contribute to maintaining the separate identity of the settlements?	The contribution to separate settlement identity is particularly realised through the visual containment created by the rolling chalk landform and the ridge and valley system, particularly the dry valley between Andover and Enham Alamein.
To what extent does the Local Gap prevent inter-visibility between settlements?	The gap (including vegetation) largely prevents intervisibility between Andover (noting the points about East Anton locally defining the skyline above) and Enham Alamein, Smannell and the hamlet around Finkley Manor Farm.

Potential defensible boundary features

These include hedgerows, walls and fence lines, and the relative position of the existing built up area. Whilst the northernmost edge of the East Anton MDA perceptually encroaches upon the Local Gap, the landscape integration

provided by the dense and establishing woodlands provided as part of the masterplan for the MDA are effective in reducing this.

Recommendations

The large scale development on the ridgeline to the south at Picket Twenty is very prominent on the horizon from the southernmost part of the Local Gap, viewed from the Roman Road at Finkley Road, as are the associated large industrial sheds. Whilst the focus of this Local Gap is on land to the north of the railway line, consideration could also usefully be given, in light of the visual prominence of the development at Picket Twenty, to how separation between the edge of East Anton and the hamlet around Finkley Manor Farm is maintained, with regard to future pressures for development, in relation to both East Anton and Picket Twenty, to the south of the railway line. This consideration should have regard to the findings in the relevant site landscape sensitivity assessments in the parallel Landscape Sensitivity Study.

ANDOVER – ABBOTTS ANN

Site ID and name: Andover – Abbots Ann

Location and context:

This Local Gap is located to the south of Andover beyond the A33, between Andover to the north and Abbots Ann to the south. The location and context of the Local Gap are shown on the aerial photograph below. A small part of the Andover - Anna Valley - Upper Clatford Local Gap is shown to the east, in the right hand part of the image below.



© Crown copyright, All rights reserved. 2022 License number 100020565 | Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2022

Physical features

Key elements

At the borough level, the majority of the Local Gap falls within [Landscape Character Type \(LCT\) 10. Open Chalklandsⁱⁱⁱ](#) and within the 10C Thruxton and Danebury Chalk Downland. Relevant key valued characteristics of this LCA represented in the Local Gap are:

- An elevated gently undulating area of very open chalk downland, dominated by arable farming; provides opportunities and experiences for long views with big expansive skies and wide views.
- A few isolated woodlands and shelter belts.

In addition to the above key landscape characteristics, scattered farmsteads and occasional dispersed dwellings form the other key elements of the Local Gap.

Land use	Land use is predominantly arable cultivation throughout with some small pasture fields and block of woodland.
Vegetation cover	Vegetation cover is defined by open arable fields with linear belts of trees and hedgerows delineating field boundaries. Variations include some smaller scale pasture fields and blocks of woodland in the southern part of the gap.
Public Rights of Way and access	Two PRowS (one of which is a byway) run across the Local Gap linking Abbots Ann with Anna Valley in the central and southern parts of the gap.
Areas and features that provide separation between existing settlements	The open arable land within the Local Gap provides important physical and visual separation between Andover and Abbots Ann.
Historic edges to settlements	The southern edge of the Local Gap forms part of the historic southern edge of Abbots Ann, much of which is also defined by the Pillhill Brook (partly also in the adjacent Andover: Anna Valley/Upper Clatford Local Gap) with its surrounding pastoral fields and historic hedgerows. The Local Gap does not form part of an historic settlement edge of Andover.
Existing soft edges to settlement	The edges of the settlements are lined with hedgerows and trees.

Evaluation

Does the Local Gap penetrate the urban areas?	No, the gap sits on the edge of the Andover and Abbots Ann.
Does the Local Gap allow access to the countryside and green spaces?	Yes, PRow within the Local Gap allow access to the open arable landscape from Abbots Ann and Anna Valley.
Is the Local Gap a strategic greenway providing important green infrastructure resource?	Yes, the green corridors and woodland are important along with the Pill Hill Brook which makes up the southern boundary of the gap. These form part of the strategic green and blue infrastructure network.
To what extent does the Local Gap prevent the coalescence of settlements?	The gap physically and perceptually prevents the settlements of Andover merging with Abbots Ann and is effective in this function by virtue of its scale and intact/homogenous character of arable fields and hedgerows.
Is the Local Gap in close proximity to two or more settlements?	Yes, Andover lies to the north and Abbots Ann to the south. The edge of Abbots Ann is visible from the southern part of the gap.
To what extent does the Local Gap maintain a strategic gap?	The Local Gap provides critical separation between Andover and Abbots Ann and is therefore of strategic importance in this respect.

Does the Local Gap have any Public Rights of Way / other areas of public access running through it?	Yes, there are two PRoW running through the central and southern parts of the gap.
Does the Local Gap have a high amenity, landscape or biodiversity value?	The open arable landscape of the gap has a high amenity value and the linear belts of trees and river have biodiversity value.
Does the Local Gap have a prominence in the wider landscape such that development would harm the sense of openness in the wider context?	Yes, development on the open arable landscape would harm the sense of openness prevalent in the Local Gap, as well as the sense of separation between the settlements and the open landscape to the west and the Abbots Ann Conservation Area to the south.
Does the Local Gap form an established / valued historic edge to settlements?	The Local Gap forms part of the historic northern settlement edge of Abbots Ann.
How does the Local Gap contribute to maintaining the separate identity of the settlements?	Within the Local Gap the contribution to separate settlement identity is particularly realised through the pasture fields along the brook to the south and the rising arable landform in the central and northern parts of the gap.
To what extent does the Local Gap prevent inter-visibility between settlements?	The gap (particularly the rising landform) largely prevents intervisibility between Andover and Abbots Ann.

Potential defensible boundary features

These include roads, railway lines, rivers or streams, hedgerows, walls and fence lines and the relative position of existing built up areas, as well as the generally well defined edges in relation to these.

Recommendations

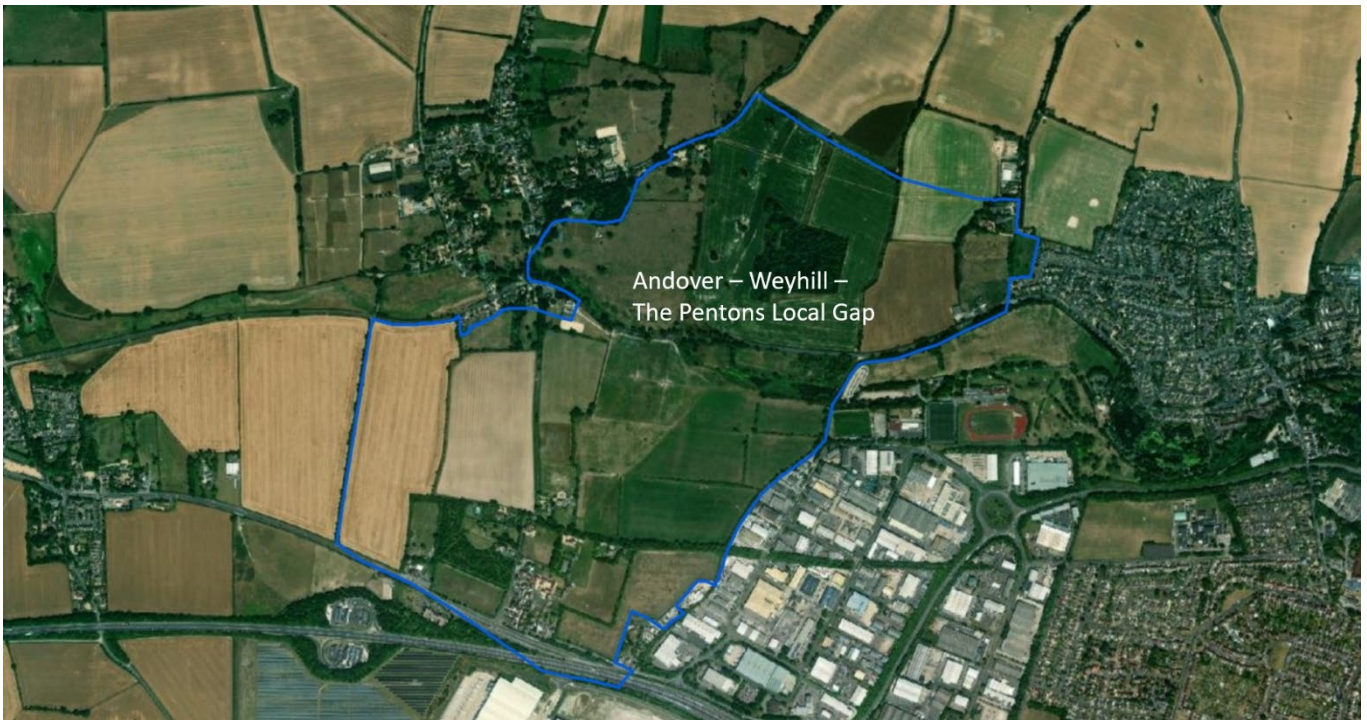
This Local Gap is particularly effective in separating the two settlements, noting in particular the openness of the arable landscape. Consideration should therefore be given to how the strong sense of separation between the settlements is maintained and potentially reinforced, with regard to any future pressures for development.

ANDOVER – WEYHILL – THE PENTONS

Site ID and name: Andover - Weyhill - The Pentons

Location and context:

The Local Gap is located to the west of Andover, between Andover to the south-east and Penton Grafton / Penton Mewsey to the north-west. The location and context of the Local Gap are shown on the aerial photograph below.



© Crown copyright, All rights reserved. 2022 License number 100020565 | Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2022

Physical features

Key elements

At the borough level, the majority of the Local Gap falls within [Landscape Character Type \(LCT\) 9. Semi Enclosed Clay Plateau Farmland^{iv}](#) and within the 9A North Andover Plateau LCA. Relevant key valued characteristics of this LCA represented in the gap are as follows:

- Well hedged mix of mainly pasture associated with settlements.
- Mixed historic landscape displaying good survival of early post-medieval field systems.
- Significant influence from the historic country houses parklands.
- Rural character of lanes criss-crossing the landscape.
- Close relationship between parkland and settlements.

In addition to the above, other key elements of the gap are the mansion of Penton Park and its associated parkland, a small handful of scattered, larger residential properties in the northern part of the gap, plus a small hamlet at Penton Corner in the south.

Land use	Land use is defined by a mix of arable cultivation and pasture. There is a small hamlet of properties around Penton Corner covering the southern quadrant of the gap.
Vegetation cover	Vegetation cover is defined by a mix of larger arable fields and smaller to medium scale pasture fields with linear belts of trees and hedgerows delineating field boundaries. Variations include standard field trees and blocks of woodland at the northern end around Penton Grafton and Penton Mewsey.
Public Rights of Way and access	Several PRow cross the Local Gap, running along established tracks and roads, with none in open fields. These include byways and a long-distance route the 'Brenda Parker Way'. The majority of these routes run either in a north-south or east-west direction.
Areas and features that provide separation between existing settlements	The undeveloped and vegetated nature of the land along the roads and tracks that run between the settlements contribute to the physical and perceptual sense of separation.
Historic edges to settlements	The northern edge of the gap forms part of the historic southern edge of Penton Grafton and Penton Mewsey. This is characterised by historic hedgerows and the curtilages of properties on the edge of the settlement. The Local Gap does not form part of an historic settlement edge at Andover.
Existing soft edges to settlement	The edge of the settlements are lined with hedgerows, trees, woodland or public open spaces.
Evaluation	
Does the Local Gap penetrate the urban areas?	No, it sits on the edge of the settlement.
Does the Local Gap allow access to the countryside and green spaces?	Yes, PRow within the Local Gap allow access to the wider countryside beyond the settlements as well as linking them.
Is the Local Gap a strategic greenway providing important green infrastructure resource?	Yes, the green corridors and routes are important as part of the local and strategic green infrastructure network.
To what extent does the Local Gap prevent the coalescence (merging) of settlements?	The gap physically and perceptually prevents the settlements of Andover merging with Penton Grafton and Penton Mewsey. It is effective in this function by virtue of the combination of the scale of landscape elements and the disposition of vegetation.

Is the Local Gap in close proximity to two or more settlements?	Yes, Andover, Penton Grafton and Penton Mewsey all lie within relatively close proximity, with the edges of the settlements visible from within the Local Gap.
To what extent does the Local Gap maintain a strategic gap?	The Local Gap provides critical separation between Andover and Penton Grafton and Penton Mewsey. The Local Gap is essential to maintaining the historic and rural character of The Pentons and associated Conservation Area. It therefore fulfils a strategic function.
Does the Local Gap have any Public Rights of Way / other areas of public access running through it?	Yes, there are several PRoW within the gap running into the wider landscape and between the settlements.
Does the Local Gap have a high amenity, landscape or biodiversity value?	The predominantly pastoral landscape has a more intimate quality within the core of the Local Gap, contrasting with the more open arable areas on the edges, and enhancing local amenity and biodiversity value.
Does the Local Gap have a prominence in the wider landscape such that development would harm the sense of openness in the wider context?	Yes, the landscape has an important relationship to the designed landscape of Penton Park. The ridgeline to the south, on which the ancient Holloway 'The Harroway' is located, is also visually prominent.
Does the Local Gap form an established / valued historic edge to settlements?	The Local Gap forms part of the historic southern settlement edge of Penton Grafton and Penton Mewsey.
How does the Local Gap contribute to maintaining the separate identity of the settlements?	The contribution to separate settlement identity is particularly realised through the visual containment created by the intimate pastoral landscape of the Local Gap. There is a definite and marked transition between the more modern Andover and the historic rural settlements of Penton Grafton and Penton Mewsey.
To what extent does the Local Gap prevent inter-visibility between settlements?	The gap prevents intervisibility between Andover and Penton Grafton and Penton Mewsey, primarily by virtue of the vegetation within it.

Potential defensible boundary features

These include hedgerows, walls, fence lines and the relative position of existing built up areas and associated settlement edges.

Recommendations

Vegetation structure within the existing gap contributes to the sense of separation between Andover, Weyhill and The Pentons, particularly noting the transition from the modern edge of Andover to the historic, smaller scale settlements of Penton Grafton and Penton Mewsey. Existing built form within this gap has degraded the function of the Local Gap in the southeast, although the ridgeline to the north of this, on which the ancient vegetated holloway 'The Harroway' is located, is also critical in defining a sense of separation, physically and visually. Consideration could therefore be given to amending the Local Gap boundary in the southeast of this gap, to the south of and below the ridgeline on which 'The Harroway' is located.

AMPFIELD – CHANDLERS FORD

Site ID and name: Ampfield - Chandlers Ford

Location and context:

This Local Gap is located between the town of Chandlers Ford to the east and the village of Ampfield to the North.

The location and context of the Local Gap are shown on the aerial photograph below. A small part of the adjacent North Baddesley - Valley Park Local Gap is shown in the southernmost part of the image below.



© Crown copyright, All rights reserved. 2022 License number 100020565 | Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2022

Physical features

Key elements

At the borough level, the majority of the Local Gap falls within [Landscape Character Type \(LCT\) 2: Pasture](#) and Woodland

Associated with Heathland and within LCA 2b North Baddesley to Chilworth Wooded Mosaic. Relevant key valued characteristics of this LCA include:

- Pockets of gently undulating pasture and arable fields within a strong framework of hedgerows and woodland cover.
- Large areas of assarting present within the northern portion of this character area, many of a small scale intimate character.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodland and generous woodland belts provide containment to suburban residential development extending from Southampton and Chandler's Ford. • Views are generally short, mostly to the next field boundary or woodland edge with some long views in the vicinity of Ampfield looking southwards across open countryside. • Pattern of fields separating Ampfield and Chandler's Ford / Valley Park / North Baddesley. <p>In addition to the above, other key elements include the vegetated railway corridor which bisects the Local Gap east-west.</p>
Land use	Land use is predominantly grazed pasture with some equine uses and amenity turf production.
Vegetation cover	Vegetation cover is provided by an intricate network of mature woodlands and hedgerows which delineate fields of open pasture historically assarted from woodland. The expansive ancient woodland of Trodds Copse SSSI forms a key part of the landcover in the east of the Local Gap. There are glimpsed views into the Local Gap, between blocks of vegetation, from local roads and lanes.
Public Rights of Way and access	There is no public access to the Local Gap, and public highways are limited to those at the periphery of the gap.
Areas and features that provide separation between existing settlements	The substantial woodland blocks, including Trodds Copse, Broadgate Plantation and Clothiers Copse, at the periphery of Chandlers Ford, together with the vegetated railway corridor are important in providing a sense of separation between the Conservation Area at Ampfield and Chandlers Ford.
Historic edges to settlements	<p>The northern part of the gap forms part of the edge of the Conservation Area at Ampfield, and the woodland belt here is effective in separating later development from the wider landscape.</p> <p>The Local Gap does not form part of the historic settlement edge of Chandlers Ford, as the settlement has been much expanded.</p>
Existing soft edges to settlement	Settlement edges are defined by blocks of woodland, hedgerows and scattered mature trees. There has been some mid-20 th Century development along Hooks Road, where edges are more exposed.
Evaluation	
Does the Local Gap penetrate the urban areas?	No, it sits on the edge of the settlements.
Does the Local Gap allow access to the countryside and green spaces?	There is no public access.

Is the Local Gap a strategic greenway providing important green infrastructure resource?	Yes, the patchwork of semi-natural habitats make valuable contributions to the strategic green infrastructure network, connecting Ampfield Wood and the wider rural landscape in the north. The vegetated rail corridor also provides a strategic green corridor (wildlife) between Romsey and Chandlers Ford.
To what extent does the Local Gap prevent the coalescence (merging) of settlements?	The gap provides substantial separation between the settlements of Chandlers Ford and Ampfield, partly by virtue of the mature vegetation within it.
Is the Local Gap in close proximity to two or more settlements?	Yes, it lies in close proximity to Chandlers Ford and the Conservation Area at Ampfield.
To what extent does the Local Gap maintain a strategic gap?	The substantial sense of separation created by the gap is strategically important in maintaining the historic rural character of Ampfield.
Does the Local Gap have any Public Rights of Way / other areas of public access running through it?	There is no public access to the Local Gap.
Does the Local Gap have a high amenity, landscape or biodiversity value?	The open arable landscape has a high amenity value. The degree of woodland cover, grazed pasture and mature hedgerows with trees and the designated ecological interest at Trodds Copse SSSI provide considerable biodiversity value.
Does the Local Gap have a prominence in the wider landscape such that development would harm the sense of openness in the wider context?	Yes, whilst the landscape structure is small-scale and visually intimate in many places, the patchwork of fields combined with the complex interplay of landscape elements results in a sense of physical openness that is prominent between the settlements.
Does the Local Gap form an established / valued historic edge to settlements?	The Local Gap forms part of the historic southern settlement edge of Ampfield. The field patterns here are small-scale and closely represent those from the 19th Century parliamentary enclosures. A substantial tree belt in the north western corner of the gap forms a defensible boundary to Ampfield.
How does the Local Gap contribute to maintaining the separate identity of the settlements?	The extent and area of the Local Gap, combined with the rolling topography and woodland cover provide a high degree separation to the settlements and therefore contributes to their separate identities.
To what extent does the Local Gap prevent inter-visibility between settlements?	The rolling topography and level of woodland cover within the gap provides a high degree of visual containment, often restricting intervisibility between settlements.

Potential defensible boundary features

These include the substantial woodland block to the south east of Ampfield and the woodland blocks (including Trodds Copse, Broadgate Plantation and Clothiers Copse) to the north west of Chandlers Ford. The vegetated rail corridor also provides a defensible boundary.

Recommendations

The vegetation within the existing gap creates an intimate and distinctly different landscape to the settlement edges of Ampfield and Chandlers Ford. To maintain the integrity of the Local Gap future development should be limited. Consideration could be given to amending the Local Gap at the edge of Chandlers Ford, reflecting the recent development (care village) that has taken place south-east of Trodds Copse. Removing this small part of the Local Gap would not undermine the strategic intent or purpose underpinning it, given that this land is now developed and is strongly contained from the wider gap by the density of the vegetation within Trodds Copse. Similarly the small parcel of land at Green Pond Lane is effectively contained by woodland from which it was assarted and is therefore visually separate from the wider gap.

NORTH BADDESLEY – CHILWORTH

Site ID and name: North Baddesley - Chilworth

Location and context:

This Local Gap is located between North Baddesley to the north and Chilworth to the south. The location and context are shown in the aerial photograph below, with a small part of the North Baddesley – Valley Park Local Gap shown in the northernmost part of the image.



© Crown copyright, All rights reserved. 2022 License number 100020565 | Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2022

Physical features

Key elements

At the borough level, the Local Gap falls within [Landscape Character Type \(LCT\) 2: Pasture and Woodland](#)

[Associated with Heathland](#) and within LCA 2b North Baddesley to Chilworth Wooded Mosaic. Relevant key valued characteristics of this LCA include:

- Pockets of gently undulating pasture and arable fields within a strong framework of hedgerows and woodland cover.
- Large areas of assarting present within the northern portion of this character area, many of a small scale intimate character.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodland and generous woodland belts provide containment to suburban residential development extending from Southampton and Chandler's Ford. • Pattern of fields separating Ampfield and Chandler's Ford / Valley Park / North Baddesley. <p>In addition to the above landscape characteristics, other key elements within the Local Gap include the golf course at Chilworth Golf Club, overhead pylons across the centre of the gap and historic routeways and a sunken lane / holloway.</p>
Land use	This is a working landscape with a mix of land uses, including recreational uses (golf course / driving range / equestrian) and agriculture (both arable and grazed pasture), and overhead lines for electricity transmission.
Vegetation cover	Within the gap woodland cover is limited to that on the northern edge, and the golf course provides some younger plantation copses and belts. Mature tree belts and woodlands surround the gap.
Public Rights of Way and access	There are no public rights of way within the Local Gap. The A27 and an un-named lane traverse the centre of the gap.
Areas and features that provide separation between existing settlements	The golf course, woodland block immediately west of the Local Gap (Calveslease Copse) and fields within the Local Gap provide important separation between North Baddesley and the Conservation Area at Chilworth Old Village.
Historic edges to settlements	The southern part of the gap forms part of the Conservation Area at Chilworth Old Village. The gap does not form part of a historic settlement edge at Chandlers Ford.
Existing soft edges to settlement	Settlement edges are defined by woodland blocks and there are a number of mature trees at the edge of Chilworth Old Village.
Evaluation	
Does the Local Gap penetrate the urban areas?	A small part of the gap encroaches into North Baddesley.
Does the Local Gap allow access to the countryside and green spaces?	<p>There are no public rights of way within the gap. Whilst Chilworth Golf Club is a private, membership subscription 18-hole golf course (circa 120 acres of green space), the flood-lit driving range is open to the public.</p> <p>There is a riding school and stables at Manor Farm.</p>

Is the Local Gap a strategic greenway providing important green infrastructure resource?	The gap comprises of a narrow swathe of landscape between the urban conurbation of Southampton and the smaller outlying settlement. It therefore makes a valuable contribution to the strategic green infrastructure network, particularly to Calveslease Copse which connects to a large, wooded area along the M27 corridor.
To what extent does the Local Gap prevent the coalescence of settlements?	The gap provides effective separation between the settlements of North Baddesley and Chilworth Old Village.
Is the Local Gap in close proximity to two or more settlements?	Yes, North Baddesley and the Conservation Area at Chilworth Old Village both lie in close proximity to the Local Gap.
To what extent does the Local Gap maintain a strategic gap?	The recreational and working agricultural landscape that separates Chilworth Old Village from North Baddesley is important to the rural setting of Chilworth and therefore has a strategic function.
Does the Local Gap have any Public Rights of Way / other areas of public access running through it?	There are no public rights of way within the Local Gap. The A27 and an unnamed lane traverse the centre of the gap.
Does the Local Gap have a high amenity, landscape or biodiversity value?	The landscape has some amenity value as a result of the driving range, 18-hole golf course and equine stabling/paddocks. Some landscape and biodiversity value is provided by the intact cultural pattern, setting of the conservation area and mature woodland blocks, part of which is ancient woodland.
Does the Local Gap have a prominence in the wider landscape such that development would harm the sense of openness in the wider context?	No, whilst there is a sense of openness due to the recreational and working landscape, the mix of uses combined with busy A27 and overhead lines bring human and urbanising influences, with an associated degree of clutter. The lower lying parts of the gap are less prominent.
Does the Local Gap form an established / valued historic edge to settlements?	The Local Gap forms part of the historic northern settlement edge of Chilworth Old Village. The field pattern and approach to the village has remained largely unaltered since the late 19th Century.
How does the Local Gap contribute to maintaining the separate identity of the settlements?	The physical area of the Local Gap, combined with the gently rising topography and woodland cover contribute to the separate identity of the settlements.
To what extent does the Local Gap prevent inter-visibility between settlements?	Due to vegetation and landform, there is a high degree of visual containment within the Local Gap, with restricted intervisibility between settlements.

Potential defensible boundary features

These include the large woodland block to the south of North Baddesley (Calveslease Copse, which defines much of the Local Gap's western boundary). The scattered mature tree line that defines the edge of Chilworth Old Village also provides a defensible boundary.

Recommendations

The vegetation within the existing gap creates a contained and distinct rural and recreational landscape between the settlement edges of Chilworth and North Baddesley – a strong sense of leaving the settlement and entering the countryside and vice versa. Existing built form within this gap is small scale and does not degrade the sense of separation between the settlements. To maintain the integrity of the Local Gap any further development should be limited

To strengthen the function of the Local Gap, consideration could be given to amending the Local Gap to incorporate the substantial woodland blocks (Calveslease Copse / Home Copse / Buxey Wood) to the west and south, which would be consistent with the wooded character of the gap. Consideration could also be given to reviewing the extent of the gap in the north-west, in relation to the small, contained area of land between North Baddesley and the woodland north of the golf course.

NORTH BADDESLEY - VALLEY PARK

Site ID and name: North Baddesley – Valley Park

Location and context:

This Local Gap is located between North Baddesley to the west and Valley Park to the east. The location and context are shown in the aerial photograph below.



© Crown copyright, All rights reserved. 2022 License number 100020565 | Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2022

Physical features

Key elements

At the borough level, the Local Gap falls within [Landscape Character Type \(LCT\) 2: Pasture and Woodland Associated with Heathland](#) and within LCA 2b North Baddesley to Chilworth Wooded Mosaic.

Relevant key valued characteristics of this LCA include:

- Pockets of gently undulating pasture and arable fields within a strong framework of hedgerows and woodland cover.
- Large areas of assarting present within the northern portion of this character area, many of a small scale intimate character.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Woodland and generous woodland belts provide containment to suburban residential development extending from Southampton and Chandler's Ford. Pattern of fields separating Ampfield and Chandler's Ford / Valley Park / North Baddesley. <p>In addition to the above other key elements include large scale blocks of mixed and plantation woodland, recreation grounds and allotments, small scale fields with urban fringe influences in places, light industrial facilities to the north west and residential properties to Flexford Road, as well as the historic Baddesley manor house and its associated grounds.</p>
Land use	This is a working agricultural landscape with a mix of uses, including commercial forestry, amenity turf production, arable and livestock farming.
Vegetation cover	A large part of the gap is covered by coniferous plantation (ancient, replanted woodland) and deciduous woodland, whilst the remainder consists of a patchwork of fields bordered by hedgerows and mature trees.
Public Rights of Way and access	A PRoW traverses the centre of the gap, connecting North Baddesley and Valley Park. Two other short sections of PRoW extend from each of the settlements, connecting to the public highways surrounding the Local Gap.
Areas and features that provide separation between existing settlements	The dense coniferous woodland and vegetated field boundaries, combined with undulating topography provide an important separation function between North Baddesley and Valley Park.
Historic edges to settlements	The northern part of the gap forms part of the edge of the historic settlement of North Baddesley, with associated Grade II listed buildings and their garden walls. The Local Gap does not form part of the historic settlement edge of Valley Park.
Existing soft edges to settlement	Settlement edges are defined by woodland blocks, hedgerows and mature trees.
Evaluation	
Does the Local Gap penetrate the urban areas?	The western corner of the gap locally encroaches into the settlement at North Baddesley.
Does the Local Gap allow access to the countryside and green spaces?	Yes, there is a connection between the settlements and with the wider PRoW network, albeit limited. There is an allotment and recreational ground at the edge of North Baddesley, the latter has a number of facilities including skate park, sports pitches, pavilion and play equipment.

Is the Local Gap a strategic greenway providing important green infrastructure resource?	The gap comprises of a narrow swathe of landscape between North Baddesley and Valley Park. It connects to the wider rural landscape to the north, and therefore makes valuable contributions to the strategic green infrastructure network, nature recovery potential and ecosystem services.
To what extent does the Local Gap prevent the coalescence of settlements?	The dense coniferous woodland and vegetated field boundaries, combined with undulating topography, provide an important separation function between North Baddesley and Valley Park.
Is the Local Gap in close proximity to two or more settlements?	Yes, North Baddesley and Valley Park lie in close proximity to the gap.
To what extent does the Local Gap maintain a strategic gap?	Due to the scale and disposition of the physical landscape elements which make up the gap (topography and large scale woodland planting), the gap is strategically important in maintaining separation between the settlements.
Does the Local Gap have any Public Rights of Way / other areas of public access running through it?	A PRoW traverses the centre of the gap, connecting North Baddesley and Valley Park. Two other short sections of PRoW extend from each of the settlements, connecting to the public highways surrounding the gap.
Does the Local Gap have a high amenity, landscape or biodiversity value?	The PRoW allow access to the wider area and due to their limited density, they have high amenity value. Biodiversity value is also high as a result of the large area of ancient, replanted woodland and due to the green infrastructure connectivity, the gap has to the wider rural landscape to the north. Some landscape value is also provided by the intact cultural pattern and setting of Baddesley Manor.
Does the Local Gap have a prominence in the wider landscape such that development would harm the sense of openness in the wider context?	The large scale blocks of woodland allied to undulating topography give the Local Gap a prominence in the wider landscape.
Does the Local Gap form an established / valued historic edge to settlements?	The northern part of the gap forms part of the historic settlement edge of North Baddesley, and contributes to its setting and that of a number of Grade II listed buildings, including Baddesley Manor, its grounds and garden walls.
How does the Local Gap contribute to maintaining the separate identity of the settlements?	The extent of the gap and the scale of its landscape elements, combined with the undulating landform and woodland cover, make a valuable contribution to the separate identity of the settlements.

To what extent does the Local Gap prevent inter-visibility between settlements?

The scale of the woodland planting within the gap provides a high degree of visual containment in places, restricting intervisibility between settlements.

Potential defensible boundary features

These include the mature woodland blocks along the western edge of Valley Park and also the woodland Blocks and tree belts that border the farmland to the north and east of North Baddesley.

Recommendations

The woodland vegetation within the existing gap creates a contained and distinct rural landscape with strong sense of separation between the settlement edges of North Baddesley and Valley Park. Existing built form within this gap is small scale and does not degrade the sense of separation between the settlements. To maintain the integrity of the Local Gap any further development should be limited.

Consideration could be given to amending the Local Gap in the very western-most part of gap around the eastern edge of North Baddesley, due to the presence of urbanising elements such as the recreation ground, and considering that existing woodland provides a strong visual and physical buffer to the wider Local Gap.

ROMSEY – NORTH BADDESLEY

Site ID and name: Romsey – North Baddesley

Location and context:

This Local Gap is located on the eastern edge of Romsey, separating the town from North Baddesley to the south-east. The location and context of the Local Gap are shown on the aerial photograph below.



© Crown copyright, All rights reserved. 2022 License number 100020565 | Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2022

Physical features

Key elements

At the borough level, the Local Gap falls with [Landscape Character Type \(LCT\) 3: Mixed Farmland and Woodland – Medium Scale](#), and within LCA 3A: Baddesley Mixed Farmland and Woodland. Relevant key valued landscape characteristics of the LCA are as follows:

- Predominantly rural character with mixed farmland.
- Trees, woodland and hedges create a sense of enclosure and intimacy and provide strong containment to the settlement edge of Romsey and North Baddesley.
- Hedgerows are a locally important feature but their quality is very variable and they are sometimes absent resulting in large open areas.

In addition to the above landscape characteristics, other key elements are scattered dwellings and farmsteads, and a large solar array in the

	southern part of the Local Gap. Light industrial units are apparent to the south/south-west, with the interface with Romsey's settlement edge to the west. Pylons are also a feature.
Land use	Land use is varied within this Local Gap, comprising of mixed agriculture, turf production and a solar array.
Vegetation cover	Predominant vegetation cover outwith the open arable and pasture fields includes occasional relatively small scale blocks of broadleaf and mixed woodland, mainly in the eastern part of the Local Gap. These link to a wider and more expansive network of woodlands and assarted fields to the east, and they partly reflect that wider landscape pattern. Well treed hedgerows associated with parliamentary enclosure field boundaries and hedge lined lanes otherwise define vegetation cover elsewhere in the gap.
Public Rights of Way and access	In the western part of the gap an east-west orientated PRow connects Romsey with Highwood Lane which bisects the gap north-south. There is otherwise no access to the gap.
Areas and features that provide separation between existing settlements	The mature vegetation to settlement edges (with the exception of parts of Halterworth Lane, where the settlement edge character is more open) contributes to the sense of separation, as does the layered landscape created by treed hedgerows and small blocks of woodland within the gap.
Historic edges to settlements	Due to the 20 th century expansion of both Romsey and North Baddesley, the Local Gap does not have interface with historic settlement edges.
Existing soft edges to settlement	As described above, the majority of the settlement edges are well treed, often characterised by mature vegetation and by garden boundary vegetation.
Evaluation	
Does the Local Gap penetrate the urban areas?	No, it does not penetrate areas of settlement.
Does the Local Gap allow access to the countryside and green spaces?	Access to the countryside is facilitated to a very limited degree within this Local Gap, by virtue of the east-west orientated PRow which bisects the western part of the gap, connecting Romsey with Highwood Lane. There is otherwise no access to the wider countryside from the gap.
Is the Local Gap a strategic greenway providing important green infrastructure resource?	At present the strategic value of this is limited, due to the relative absence of green access links. Many structural landscape features within the gap, such as hedgerows, shaws and occasional woodland blocks provide opportunities for green infrastructure connectivity, and could, with enhancement, have potential for strategic value.

To what extent does the Local Gap prevent the coalescence of settlements?	The gap's scale and sense of openness is important in preventing settlement coalescence. However features such as the pylons and the large solar array perceptibly limit this quality in places.
Is the Local Gap close proximity to two or more settlements?	Yes, Romsey and North Baddesley adjoin the Local Gap.
To what extent does the Local Gap maintain a strategic gap?	The strategic importance of the Local Gap has been eroded in the south by cumulative developments both adjacent to the gap (light industrial development to the immediate south west) and within it (the solar array which is adjacent to the light industrial development).
Does the Local Gap have any Public Rights of Way / other areas of public access running through it?	Only one PRow traverses the gap, and this is the east-west route connecting Romsey with Highwood Lane.
Does the Local Gap have a high amenity, landscape or biodiversity value?	The mix of land uses described above and associated landscape clutter limit the amenity value of the Local Gap. The landscape structure provides a degree of local level biodiversity value.
Does the Local Gap have a prominence in the wider landscape such that development would harm the sense of openness in the wider context?	This expansive area of predominantly open land is relatively prominent in the wider landscape albeit perceptibly influenced by urbanising features due to weak settlement edge integration and the presence of pylons and the solar array.
Does the Local Gap form an established / valued historic edge to settlements?	The settlement edges are established but partly eroded as described above. The gap does not form part of the historic settlement edge due to the level of 20 th century settlement expansion.
How does the Local Gap contribute to maintaining the separate identity of the settlements?	Whilst the gap's scale and openness are important in prevent coalescence, its contribution to separate settlement identity has been weakened in places due to the erosion created by the developments within it.
To what extent does the Local Gap prevent inter-visibility between settlements?	The mature trees to the settlement edges and the tree and hedgerow lined A27 which links the two settlements are effective in limiting intervisibility, as is the inter-layered landscape created by occasional woodland blocks and the treed hedgerows within the gap.

Potential defensible boundary features

These include tree lined field boundary hedgerows, the tree lined Highwood Lane and A27 and tree and garden boundary vegetation lined settlement edges.

Recommendations

Vegetation structure within the existing gap contributes in part to the sense of separation between Romsey and North Baddesley, particularly noting woodland and treed settlement edges in the south and east. Past settlement expansion and exposed settlement edges has weakened the function of the Local Gap in places. Consideration could be given to amending the Local Gap boundary in the west of this gap, where the existing settlement edge has eroded the rural character. Highwood Lane creates a natural boundary within the gap, by virtue of its mature

treed/wooded character. Amending this part of the Local Gap would not undermine the strategic intent or purpose underpinning it, as the inter-layered field boundary hedgerow vegetation at and beyond Highwood Lane helps reinforce the perceptual qualities of the gap.

SOUTHAMPTON – EASTLEIGH

Location and context:

This Local Gap encompasses an extensive swathe of mixed and plantation woodland and land associated with the historic Fleming estates at Chilworth and North Stoneham. The gap is bisected by the arc of the M27 which broadly follows the boundary of the former North Stoneham Park and separates Southampton and Eastleigh. The location and context of the gap are shown on the aerial photograph below.



© Crown copyright, All rights reserved. 2022 License number 100020565 | Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2022

Physical features

Key elements

At the borough level, the Local Gap falls within [Landscape Character Type \(LCT\) 2: Pasture and Woodland Associated with Heathland](#) and within LCA 2b North Baddesley to Chilworth Wooded Mosaic.

Relevant key valued characteristics of this LCA include:

- Pockets of gently undulating pasture and arable fields within a strong framework of hedgerows and woodland cover.
- Wooded character of Chilworth.
- Large areas of assarting present within the northern portion of this character area, many of a small scale intimate

	<p>character.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodland provides containment to golf courses and aids in reducing their potential landscape and visual impact. • Woodland and generous woodland belts provide containment to suburban residential development extending from Southampton and Chandler's Ford. <p>In addition to the above landscape characteristics other key elements include the M27 corridor and the overlay of suburban recreational uses upon the former parklands at North Stoneham, including golf course, driving range, football and rugby pitches and angling club occupying the lakes associated with the lost mansion at North Stoneham.</p>
Land use	Land uses are varied across the gap, from mixed farmland to the northernmost extents, to forestry, transport infrastructure and extensive recreational provision, as described above.
Vegetation cover	This Local Gap is extensively covered by mature and established commercial forestry and estate woodlands, apart from open fields at Velmore Farm in the north. These woodlands include the extensive woodlands from Chilworth down to the M27 corridor and the historic estate woodland at Home Wood, which marks one of the few surviving significant elements of the former designed landscape at North Stoneham.
Public Rights of Way and access	Other than PRoWs in the north-west quadrant which link to Chilworth, there is very little formal access within this Local Gap, with much of the access to the recreational provision at North Stoneham being based on membership only.
Areas and features that provide separation between existing settlements	This is mainly provided by the extensive mature woodlands described above and by the undulating topography associated with the remnant North Stoneham Park.
Historic edges to settlements	The woodlands in the north-west form part of the setting of the historic wooded settlement at Chilworth. The large oval form of the old North Stoneham estate within the arc of the M27 effectively follows the line of the historic deer park and later parkland which historically provided separation between Southampton and Eastleigh. This edge has however become increasingly blurred in the later 20 th century and early 21 st century, due to modern residential development at North Stoneham and the development of large scale settlement fringe recreational infrastructure within the old North Stoneham Park.
Existing soft edges to settlement	Soft edges and tree lines define the interface with Eastleigh along Templars Way. Substantial woodlands generally define settlement edges elsewhere.
Evaluation	
Does the Local Gap penetrate the urban areas?	The Local Gap does not penetrate the urban area.

Does the Local Gap allow access to the countryside and green spaces?	As described above, there is very limited formal access to the countryside within the gap. This is provided by a sparse PRoW network in the north-west, linking to Chilworth. The other recreational provision is largely membership only.
Is the Local Gap a strategic greenway providing important green infrastructure resource?	Yes, the estate woodlands and remnants of North Stoneham Park include Home Wood are strategically important parts of the green infrastructure network.
To what extent does the Local Gap prevent the coalescence of settlements?	Due to the scale and density of woodland, the Local Gap is very effective in preventing settlement coalescence.
Is the Local Gap close proximity to two or more settlements?	Yes, the Local Gap is fringed by Chilworth, Eastleigh and greater Southampton.
To what extent does the Local Gap maintain a strategic gap?	By virtue of its historic function as planned and managed landed estate (and associated legacy features of this) and the scale and density of the forestry and estate woodland, the Local Gap has a valuable strategic function in defining setting and individual identity of adjacent settlements.
Does the Local Gap have any Public Rights of Way / other areas of public access running through it?	As described above, the PRoW network is very limited, focusing on Chilworth in the north-west only.
Does the Local Gap have a high amenity, landscape or biodiversity value?	The amenity and landscape value of woodlands such as Home Wood and the other estate woodlands is high, as is the wooded setting the Local Gap provides for Chilworth. Ancient woodlands in the southern part of the old North Stoneham Park and to the south of the M27 elevate biodiversity value within the gap.
Does the Local Gap have a prominence in the wider landscape such that development would harm the sense of openness in the wider context?	The woodlands of the Local Gap are a highly prominent feature.
Does the Local Gap form an established / valued historic edge to settlements?	Yes, for Chilworth in particular, by virtue of the wooded setting it creates, as described above.
How does the Local Gap contribute to maintaining the separate identity of the settlements?	The principal contribution the gap makes in this respect is through its scale and the expansive nature and disposition of woodlands throughout the gap.

To what extent does the Local Gap prevent inter-visibility between settlements?

The Local Gap is extremely effective in restricting intervisibility between the settlements, by virtue of the woodland planting within it.

Potential defensible boundary features

These include the tree planting to Templar Way, Eastleigh, the woodlands, scattered trees and field boundary hedgerows around Chilworth and the densely wooded M27 corridor.

Recommendations

The woodland vegetation within the existing gap creates a contained and distinct rural landscape with strong sense of separation between the settlement edges of Chilworth and North Stoneham. Existing built form within this gap is small scale, associated with agricultural and recreational land uses, and does not degrade the sense of separation. The Local Gap provides valuable settlement setting and separation functions.

Consideration should therefore be given to how the strong sense of separation between the settlements is maintained, with regard to future pressures for development, and ensuring that any future recreational development and its design/lighting do not impinge upon the integrity of the gap. The northernmost parcel of land within the gap at Velmore Farm is visually separated from the wider gap by the density and depth of the estate woodlands which wrap around it, and could be considered for further review for this reason. This is due both to the level of containment afforded by the surrounding woodland and much flatter landform, and this area's relationship to areas of settlement to the north and north-east, which result in an entirely different character to the rest of the land in the gap.

5 SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

- 5.1.1 This report presents an objective, evidence and criteria-based assessment of the performance of the existing Local Gaps in Test Valley Borough. Where appropriate the report should also be read in conjunction with the parallel Landscape Sensitivity Study.
- 5.1.2 The opinions and recommendations put forward in the report are those of Stephenson Halliday an RSK Company. Future Local Gap boundary review, designation and de-designation is a matter to be considered 'in the round' by Test Valley Borough Council, weighing up other factors in the planning balance. This report provides one of the layers of evidence for that decision-making in future.

-
- ⁱ Test Valley Borough Council/Terrafirma Landscape Architects, 2018, *Test Valley Landscape Character Assessment*
ⁱⁱ *ibid*
ⁱⁱⁱ *ibid*
^{iv} *ibid*