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Settlement Gap Review

Winchester City Council

Winchester City Council

Final report

Prepared by LUC

July 2024

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Settlement Gap Review

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Winchester City Council (the Council) has appointed LUC to consider evidence to support the definition of settlement gaps in the emerging Winchester Local Plan 2020-2040. This includes consideration of the potential for alterations of gap boundaries defined in the current Local Plan.

1.2 In Winchester District the preservation of open areas between built-up settlements is a well-established spatial planning tool. These gaps are valued by local communities for the role they play in safeguarding the visual separation and distinct identity of neighbouring settlements.

1.3 In maintaining openness between settlements, gaps also help to conserve the open countryside role as an important amenity for recreation and biodiversity, but their primary focus is on spatial separation. There are other policy tools targeted at other benefits provided by open land, including emerging Local Plan policies NE1 (Protecting and enhancing Biodiversity and the Natural Environment in the District), NE9 (Landscape Character), NE14 (Rural Character) and HE2 (All heritage assets - both designated and non-designated). Village Design Statements also identify valued characteristics of open land.

1.4 The need to review the settlement gaps defined in the current Local Plan was set out in the Local Plan Part 1 (2013), which indicated (at paragraph 9.48) that “any detailed review of the boundaries of these gaps will be undertaken in future Local Plan Part 2 or a Neighbourhood Plan, in accordance with the principles contained in the PUSH Policy Framework for Gaps.” The Local Plan Part 2 (2017) included a partial review of settlement gaps but the Council are now at a stage to be able to undertake a more comprehensive review.

Report structure

1.5 This report starts by outlining the relevant policy context before summarising responses received in relation to Winchester's settlement gaps, received during consultation on the Regulation 18 Local Plan in November and December 2022 (Chapter 2). Chapter 3 sets out the assessment methodology. Chapter 4 summarises the conclusions of the study. Detailed assessments of each of settlement gap are included in Appendix A.

Study area

1.6 The Winchester City Council area is located within Hampshire County covering 250 square miles and has a population of approximately 127,500. It borders Basingstoke and Deane, East Hampshire, Portsmouth City Council, and the boroughs of Eastleigh, Test Valley, Fareham and Havant. Part of the District (approximately 40% of the District) is within the South Downs National Park (SDNP), which is a separate planning authority and has its own Local Plan. This report focusses on assessing seven of the nine existing settlement gap designations:

- Bishop's Waltham – Swanmore – Waltham Chase – Shedfield – Shirrell Heath Gap.
- Denmead – Waterlooville Gap.
- Kings Worthy – Abbots Worthy Gap.
- Otterbourne – Southdown Gap.
- Winchester – Compton Street Gap.
- Winchester – Kings Worthy - Headbourne Worthy Gap
- Whiteley – Fareham – Fareham Western Wards (the 'Meon Gap')

1.7 The remaining two settlement gaps – between Knowle, Wickham and Welborne, and between Winchester and Littleton – have not been assessed.

The Welborne settlement gap has not been included in the Settlement Gap Review because planning permission has already been granted for the Welborne development at Fareham. The land between Welborne and the existing settlements of Fareham, Funtley, Knowle and Wickham is designated as settlement buffers to be used as open green infrastructure, in accordance with Policies WEL5 and WEL29 (Fareham Local Plan Part 3: The Welborne Plan). This existing designation and planning framework ensure that the separation and integrity of these settlements are maintained, making further study of this settlement gap unnecessary at this moment in time.

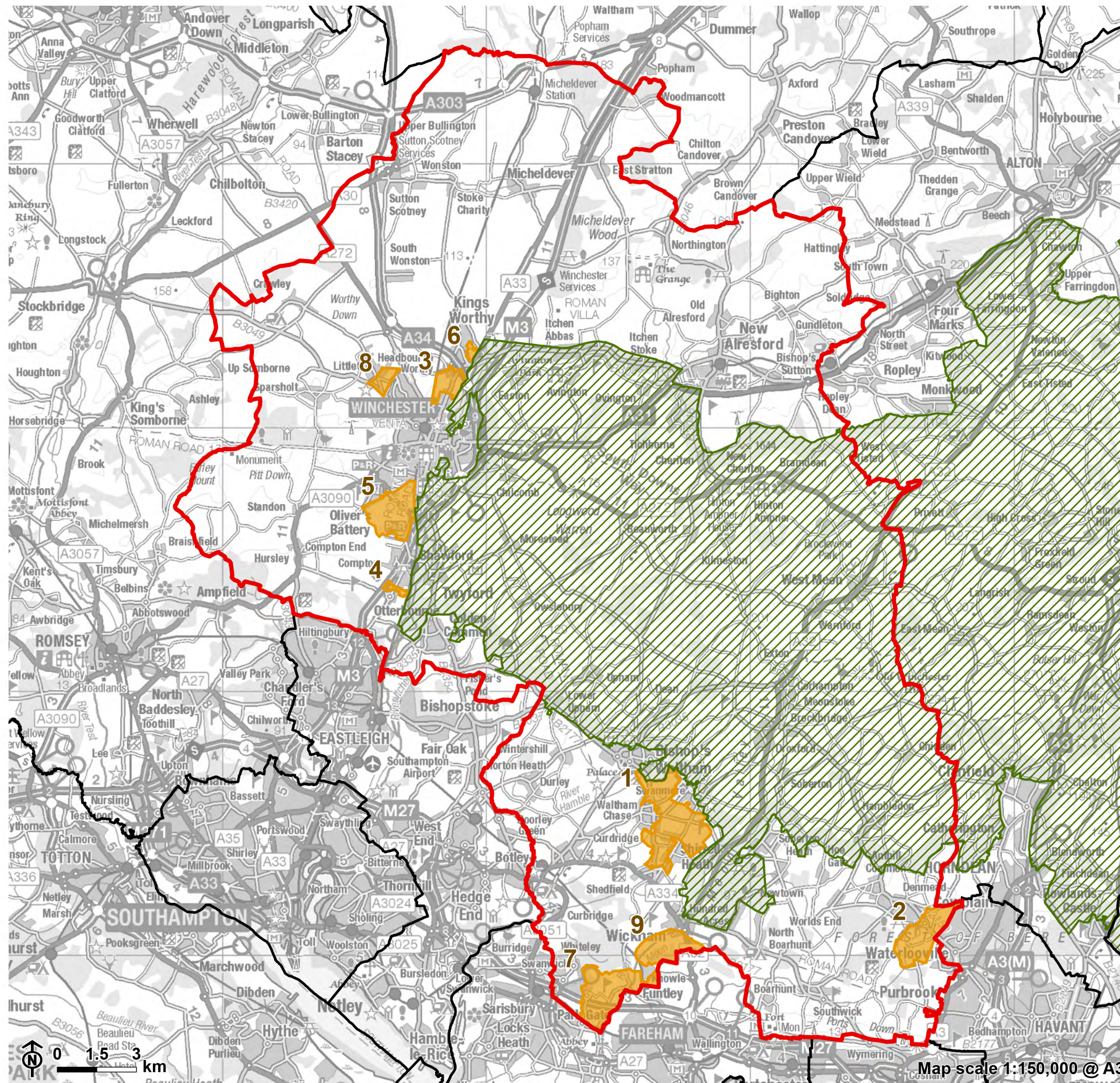
1.8 The Littleton/Winchester settlement gap has not been analysed in the Settlement Gap Review due to the ongoing masterplanning for the Sir John Moore Barracks allocations. This masterplanning process will determine the extent of built development, which will in turn inform any future review of the settlement gap, so analysing the settlement gap now would be premature.

1.9 This study does not encompass consideration of any potential new settlement gaps. Some of the responses to the Regulation 18 consultation (carried out November 2022 – January 2023) suggested other locations for settlement gaps, but on the basis of distance between settlements, extent of current development proposals and the level of protection provided by other Natural Environment policies (see paragraph 1.3 above) the Council does not see a need at present for defining additional gaps.

1.10 The Council will review this position if and when new development proposals are put forward that could inform the need for a new gap to be considered. Site masterplanning proposals would be taken into consideration in these circumstances.

1.11 **Figure 1.1** illustrates the location and extent of the nine existing settlement gaps within Winchester

Figure 1.1: Existing Settlement Gaps Location and Extent



- Winchester District boundary
- Neighbouring District boundary
- South Downs National Park
- Existing Settlement Gap

- 1 Bishop's Waltham – Swanmore – Waltham Chase – Shedfield – Shirrell Heath Gap
- 2 Denmead – Waterlooville Gap
- 3 Kings Worthy – Abbots Worthy Gap
- 4 Otterbourne – Southdown Gap
- 5 Winchester – Compton Street Gap
- 6 Winchester – Kings Worthy / Headbourne Worthy Gap
- 7 Whiteley – Fareham/Fareham Western Wards (the 'Meon Gap')
- 8 Winchester – Littleton Gap
- 9 Knowle – Wickham – Welborne Gap

Chapter 2

Policy Context

2.1 The preservation of open areas of land between built-up settlements is a well-established spatial planning tool in Winchester. This chapter sets out relevant national, regional and local policy and associated guidance.

National policy

2.2 The Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) [[See reference 1](#)] does not provide specific policy on the use of settlement gaps in local plans, nor are settlement gaps explicitly defined within NPPF. There is also no reference to gaps within Planning Practice guidance (PPG). In addition, there are no specific requirements within NPPF to identify settlement gaps as part of the plan-making process and that it falls to individual Local Planning Authorities to determine the most appropriate approach.

2.3 Paragraph 8 of the NPPF sets out three overarching objectives to the planning system, one of which is 'an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land ...'.

2.4 The NPPF states that: "Strategic policies...should make sufficient provision for ...conservation and enhancement of the natural built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure" (paragraph 20). Paragraph 135 states "planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments...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)". Paragraph 180 states that "planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by...protecting and enhancing valued landscapes...(in a manner commensurate with their...identified quality in

the development plan [and] recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside”. Paragraph 181 of the NPPF requires Plans to “distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites”. Paragraph 196 states that strategies within a plan should take into account “the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness”.

2.5 National Planning Practice Guidance builds on the NPPF’s requirements by stating that local plans can include ‘nationally and locally designated landscapes but also the wider countryside. Where landscapes have a particular local value, it is important for policies to identify their special characteristics and be supported by proportionate evidence. Policies may set out criteria against which proposals for development affecting these areas will be assessed. Plans can also include policies to avoid adverse impacts on landscapes and to set out necessary mitigation measures, such as appropriate design principles and visual screening, where necessary. The cumulative impacts of development on the landscape need to be considered carefully’ [\[See reference 2\]](#).

2.6 This guidance is regularly reinforced and elaborated upon by the planning inspectorate through the examination of Local Plans containing local landscape designations. Findings include:

- Supporting evidence should take into account potential new boundary features that may alter the risk of settlement coalescence in future (e.g. major infrastructure [\[See reference 3\]](#).
- Designations to prevent settlement coalescence should only include land that plays a role in maintaining settlement separation rather than other purposes such as protecting the setting of historic environment assets [\[See reference 4\]](#).
- Local designations that preclude certain types or scales of development must be based on evidence, such as a landscape sensitivity study [\[See reference 5\]](#).
- Local designations should be focussed on protecting specific areas or features – not all rural areas outside settlement boundaries [\[See reference 6\]](#).

Regional policy

2.7 Hampshire County Council previously designated Strategic Gaps through various iterations of Structure Plans. The Structure Plans stated that the Strategic Gaps should be reviewed within the next iteration of the plan.

2.8 An update to the Hampshire County Structure Plan (Hampshire County Structure Plan 1996-2011) provided for an additional category of 'Local Gaps', to be defined in local plans. Such gaps were designed to preserve the separate identities of smaller settlements at risk of coalescence with other settlements. These should include no more land than is required to prevent coalescence and the loss of the separate identity of the settlements concerned.

2.9 The Hampshire County Structure Plan Review 2000 confined strategic gaps to those of sub-regional importance, with the 'Meon Gap' being identified in Winchester District. However, other gaps could be carried forward in local plans as local gaps.

Partnership for South Hampshire Guidance

2.10 The Partnership for South Hampshire (PfSH) produced a Policy Framework for Gaps in 2008 [see reference 7] to ensure a consistent approach is taken across the sub-region for designating settlement gaps. The guidance provides the following criteria for use by local authorities to help define and designate settlement gaps:

- 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; and,

- 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.

2.11 The guidance makes it clear that gaps should not be entirely prohibitive of development but that development should only be permitted if:

- It would not diminish the physical and/or visual separation of settlements.
- It would not individually or cumulatively with other existing or proposed development compromise the integrity of the gap.

2.12 In December 2023, the partnership published a Spatial Position Statement to provide a view on “the approach by which the partnership authorities will collectively deliver on the housing and employment requirements set out in National Planning Policy”. One of its ten ‘strategic principals for sustainable growth’ in the position statement suggests that “Local Plans should consider the need for strategic or settlement gaps where they would be important to maintain the character of distinct/separate settlements or visual gaps between settlements”.

Local policy

2.13 A district-wide gaps policy was first included in the 1998 Winchester Local Plan. The policy stated that:

Development which would undermine the appearance or functions of a Strategic Gap will not normally be permitted. The following Strategic Gaps are defined:

- Denmead – Waterlooville
- Winchester – Compton
- Winchester - Kings Worthy/Headbourne Worthy

■ Winchester - Littleton

2.14 Following an update to the Hampshire County Structure Plan, two Local Gaps were defined within the 1998 Local Plan. These included:

- Bishops Waltham – Swanmore – Waltham Chase – Shedfield – Shirrell heath
- Otterbourne – Southdown

2.15 The gaps policy was later reviewed within the 2006 Winchester Local Plan Review. This included the gaps defined within the 1998 strategic gaps policy; 1998 local gaps policy; the Meon Strategic Gap, as defined within the Hampshire County Structure Plan Review 2000; and a new Kings Worthy – Abbots Worthy Local Gap.

2.16 The Winchester District Local Plan Part 1 Joint Core Strategy (March 2013) removed the ‘strategic’ and ‘local’ gap distinction and referred to them as settlement gaps. The Local Plan included Policy CP18 – Settlement Gaps. Policy CP18 carried forward a number of existing settlement gaps as well as defining new gaps, which included an additional gap between the proposed strategic development area North of Fareham (in Fareham Borough) and the settlements of Knowle and Wickham (in Winchester District). The wording of Policy CP18 is provided below:

The Local Planning Authority will retain the generally open and undeveloped nature of the following defined settlement gaps:

- Bishop’s Waltham – Swanmore – Waltham Chase – Shedfield – Shirrell Heath
- Denmead – Waterlooville
- Kings Worthy – Abbots Worthy
- Otterbourne – Southdown

- Winchester – Compton Street
- Winchester – Kings Worthy/Headbourne Worthy
- Winchester – Littleton
- Whiteley – Fareham/Fareham Western Wards (the 'Meon Gap')
- Welborne Gap

Within these areas only development that does not physically or visually diminish the gap will be allowed.

2.17 To protect the individual character and identity of those settlements adjoining the proposed strategic development area at North Fareham, an area of open land is identified as a Gap to be maintained between the strategic development area and Knowle and Wickham (see Policy SH4). Development which would threaten the open and undeveloped character of this area will be resisted and the land should be managed to secure the long-term retention of its rural character.

2.18 The strategic development area mentioned in Policy CP18 will lead to the delivery of around 6000 dwellings to the north of Fareham. Open areas will be included to ensure the separation between the new development and the existing settlements of Knowle and Wickham.

The Emerging Winchester Local Plan

2.19 The Regulation 18 Winchester Local Plan has carried forward the nine settlement gaps previously identified in the Core Strategy, in Policy NE7 – Settlement Gaps currently worded as follows:

The Local Planning Authority will retain the generally open and undeveloped nature of the following defined settlement gaps:

- i) Bishop's Waltham – Swanmore – Waltham Chase – Shedfield – Shirrell Heath
- ii) Denmead – Waterlooville
- iii) Kings Worthy - Abbots Worthy
- iv) Otterbourne – Southdown
- v) Winchester – Compton Street
- vi) Winchester – Kings Worthy/Headbourne Worthy
- vii) Winchester – Littleton
- viii) Whiteley – Fareham/Fareham Western Wards (the 'Meon Gap')
- ix) Knowle, Wickham and Welborne

Within these areas only development that does not undermine the function of the gap and its intended role to define and retain the separate identity of settlements will be permitted.

Any development should not cause harm to the character and landscape of the area. Development which would threaten the open and undeveloped character of these gaps will be resisted and the land should be managed to secure the long-term retention of its rural character.

Relevant Regulation 18 consultation responses received in relation to settlement gaps in the emerging Local Plan

2.20 Regulation 18 consultations on the emerging Winchester Local Plan generated a number of representations on draft Policy NE7 (Settlement Gaps). There is general support for the policy but there were also some comments

calling for the designation of new settlement gaps judged to be sensitive by consultees, but not currently designated as settlement gaps in Policy NE7, and others calling for a review of existing gaps not judged by consultees to be as sensitive as Policy NE7 indicates them to be.

Neighbourhood Plans

2.21 Neighbourhood Plans came into force under the Localism Act 2011 and give local communities the ability to determine where new houses, businesses, shops and community facilities should be located and can allocate sites for development.

2.22 Denmead Neighbourhood Plan is the only 'made' Neighbourhood Plan for which Winchester City Council is the lead planning authority. There is a 'made' Neighbourhood Plan for Twyford but this neighbourhood plan area falls within South Downs National Park so the National Park Authority is the lead planning authority. Hursley Parish Council and New Alresford Parish Council are each in the process of preparing a Neighbourhood Development Plan. The City Council has designated Hursley and New Alresford as Neighbourhood Areas for the purposes of producing a Neighbourhood Plan.

Denmead Neighbourhood Plan 2011-2031

2.23 The Neighbourhood Plan was 'made' as part of the Winchester District Development Plan on 1st April 2015. The Neighbourhood Plan contains a total of eight policies. Policy 1: A Spatial Plan for the Parish reasserts the definition of the settlement gap between Denmead and Waterlooville. The Denmead – Waterlooville Settlement Gap is defined within the proposals map. The gap is recognised as important in helping Denmead keep its rural character. There are a number of buildings within the gap, including an industrial estate, which are allowed to make small alterations to their structure provided that they do not compromise the integrity and nature of the gap. This gap is identified within Policy NE7 – Settlement Gaps of the emerging Winchester Local Plan.

Twyford Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2033

2.24 The Neighbourhood Plan was ‘made’ as part of the Development Plan for the South Downs National Park Authority on the 10th February 2022. Policy LHE1 – Protected Gaps protects the Twyford and Colden Common gap and the Twyford and Shawford gap to prevent settlement coalescence and maintain the identity of Twyford. This gap falls within the South Downs National Park and therefore is not identified within the emerging Winchester Local Plan. A portion of the Twyford and Colden Common gap and the Twyford and Shawford gap fall within the Winchester District Local Plan boundary and therefore help to protect the identity of Shawford and Colden Common. Both Shawford and Colden Common fall within the Winchester District Local Plan boundary.

South Downs National Park Authority

2.25 The South Downs Local Plan 2014 – 2033 was adopted on the 2nd July 2019. The Local Plan covers the whole of the National Park area. Part of the South Downs National Park falls within Winchester District.

2.26 Policy SD25 of the South Downs Local Plan sets out a development strategy that maintains the character of settlements and the countryside. This policy defines settlement boundaries. Outside of settlement boundaries, land is considered as open countryside and therefore development is only permitted in exceptional circumstances. In addition, Strategic Policy SD4: Landscape Character states that development proposals should demonstrate that “settlement pattern and individual identity of settlements and the integrity of predominately open and undeveloped land between settlements will not be undermined”.

2.27 South Downs National Park Authority is currently reviewing the Local Plan and are working towards a Regulation 18 consultation in early 2025.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 This chapter details the methodology used in undertaking the review of the current settlement gaps.

Approach

3.2 There is no specific, recognised guidance for the assessment of settlement gaps. LUC's approach is based on past experience of settlement gaps studies and is consistent with the roles of settlement gaps identified in PfSH's 2023 Spatial Position Statement and the 2008 Policy Framework for Gaps summarised in Chapter 2. The Winchester settlement gaps were appraised using the following approach:

- Define an area of assessment encompassing all land where development has some degree of potential to reduce separation. This includes all land between settlements rather than just the land currently defined as settlement gaps.
- Assess the strength of each gap, taking into consideration its contribution to settlement setting, the degree of physical and visual separation it provides, and the extent of urbanising influences. In doing this, take into consideration the likely impact of allocated and permitted developments (but not unallocated and unapproved proposals), and note any designations which may represent a constraint to development.
- Identify the factors key to preserving settlement separation.
- Comment on whether existing gap boundaries should be altered to either i) include additional land which is potentially necessary for maintaining settlement separation, or ii) exclude land which is not necessary for this purpose, or where the gap as a whole is not considered to contribute significantly to the distinct identity of settlements.

- With reference to the PfSH guidance (see paragraph 2.10 above) that mentions “including no more land than is necessary to prevent the coalescence of settlements”, in making these suggestions it is recognised that there are difficulties in defining what is ‘necessary’. A precautionary approach has been adopted in which suggested alterations may include some land where, subject to the nature of specific proposals, it may be possible to demonstrate that development would not significantly affect the key features identified as being important to settlement separation.
- It is also recognised that the extent to which boundary alterations are warranted is also to a degree dependent on level of development pressure in a particular area, which is a consideration outside of the scope of this study. There may be reasons unrelated to settlement separation which mean that development proposals are unlikely to be forthcoming.

3.3 **Figure 3.1** illustrates the location and names of the seven gaps assessed in the study, including the additional areas currently not designated but considered in the assessment.

Evaluation criteria

3.4 A gap should provide the sense of leaving one settlement and moving through countryside before entering a different settlement. The analysis of gap strength considered settlement setting, physical and visual separation and urbanising influences in order to comment on the extent to which land is distinct from urban areas.

3.5 The analysis included identification of the factors most important to maintaining separation, resulting in suggestions as to what land it is necessary to include in each designated gap in order to prevent significant weakening of the gap.

3.6 This chapter details the methodology used in undertaking the review of the current settlement gaps.

Approach

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- Identify the factors key to preserving settlement separation.
- Comment on whether existing gap boundaries should be altered to either i) include additional land which is potentially necessary for maintaining settlement separation, or ii) exclude land which is not necessary for this purpose, or where the gap as a whole is not considered to contribute significantly to the distinct identity of settlements.
- With reference to the PfSH guidance (see paragraph 2.10 above) that mentions "including no more land than is necessary to prevent the coalescence of settlements", in making these suggestions it is recognised that there are difficulties in defining what is 'necessary'. A precautionary approach has been adopted in which suggested alterations may include some land where, subject to the nature of specific proposals, it may be possible to demonstrate that development would not significantly affect the key features identified as being important to settlement separation.

- It is also recognised that the extent to which boundary alterations are warranted is also to a degree dependent on level of development pressure in a particular area, which is a consideration outside of the scope of this study. There may be reasons unrelated to settlement separation which mean that development proposals are unlikely to be forthcoming.

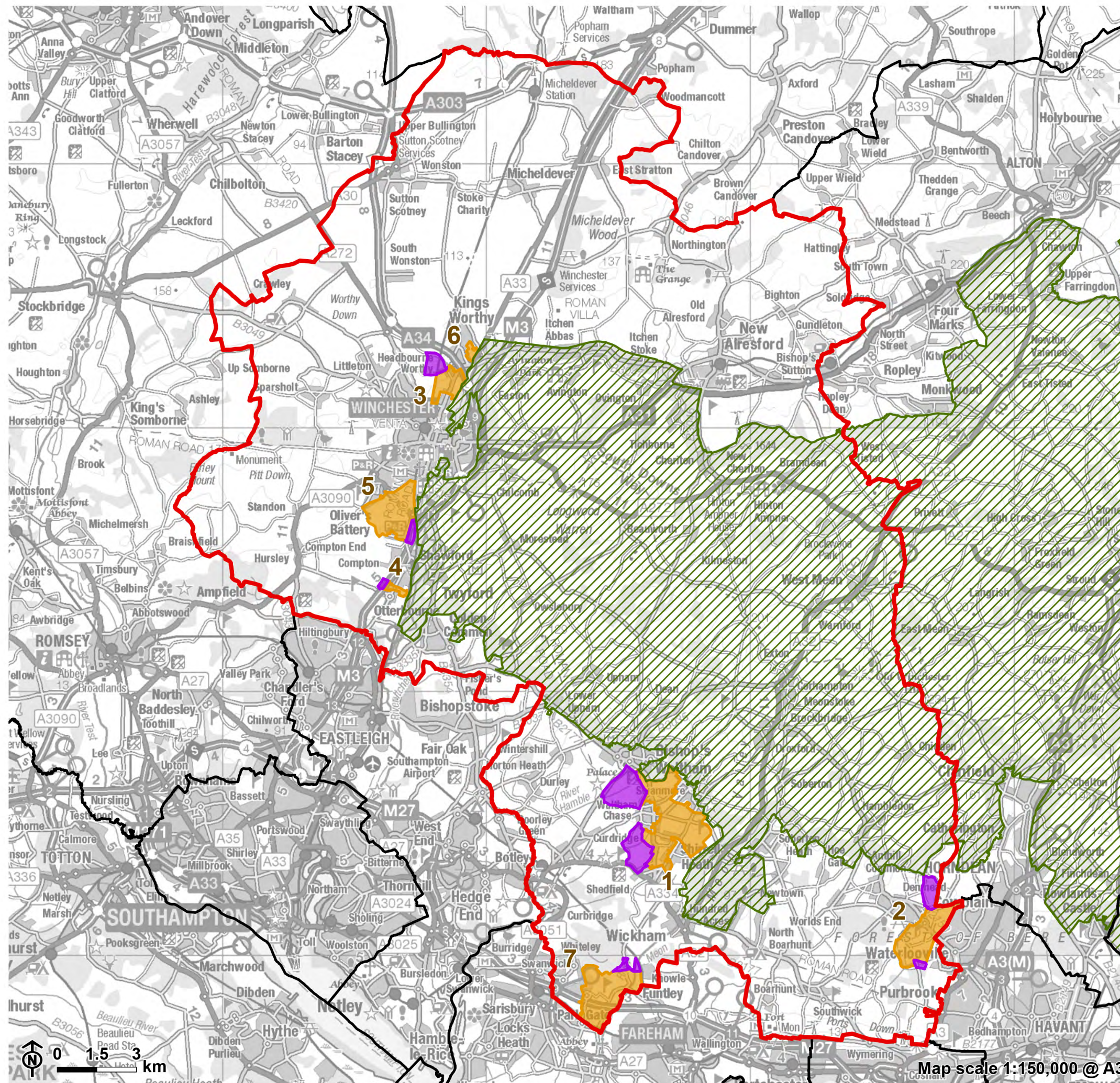
3.8 **Figure 3.1** illustrates the location and names of the seven gaps assessed in the study, including the additional areas currently not designated but considered in the assessment.

Evaluation criteria

3.9 A gap should provide the sense of leaving one settlement and moving through countryside before entering a different settlement. The analysis of gap strength considered settlement setting, physical and visual separation and urbanising influences in order to comment on the extent to which land is distinct from urban areas.

3.10 The analysis included identification of the factors most important to maintaining separation, resulting in suggestions as to what land it is necessary to include in each designated gap in order to prevent significant weakening of distinction between settlements.

Figure 3.1: Assessed Settlement Gaps and Additional Areas



- Winchester District boundary
- Neighbouring District boundary
- South Downs National Park
- Existing Settlement Gap
- Additional assessment area

- 1 Bishop's Waltham – Swanmore – Waltham Chase – Shedfield – Shirrell Heath Gap
- 2 Denmead – Waterlooville Gap
- 3 Kings Worthy – Abbots Worthy Gap
- 4 Otterbourne – Southdown Gap
- 5 Winchester – Compton Street Gap
- 6 Winchester – Kings Worthy / Headbourne Worthy Gap
- 7 Whiteley – Fareham/Fareham Western Wards (the 'Meon Gap')



Map scale 1:150,000 @ A3

3.11 It is important to note that gap strength is not the same as gap importance. A strong gap typically has more scope for development than a weak gap – unless it is so weak that open land within it is not considered important to a settlement’s distinct character – but even in a strong gap there may be little scope for development without compromising features on which that gap strength is dependent. The lists of key separating features can also be used as an ongoing development management tool, to inform judgements as to whether development in a particular location within the gap would significantly affect settlement separation. The evaluation for each gap uses professional judgement to weigh up three aspects of settlement separation:

- Settlement setting.
- Physical and visual separation.
- Urbanising influences.

3.12 The analysis approach for each of these criteria is described in the paragraphs below. The resulting analysis was structured around these criteria, with concluding comments on gap strength, a list of key elements in preserving distinction between settlements, and commentary regarding gap boundaries. The contribution made by a particular landscape element to gap strength will to a degree depend on overall gap strength: a feature which in a fragile, narrow gap may be considered important to separation could be less important if located in a stronger, wider gap.

3.13 Gaps were assessed on the assumption that allocated sites will be developed in accordance with Local Plan policies. Where development has been consented, consideration was given to any masterplans when assessing the role of boundary features in maintaining settlement separation.

Settlement setting

3.14 This considers the extent to which land in the gap contributes to the setting of the settlement(s). Land in a gap is likely to be playing a more significant role

if it forms a distinctive feature in a settlement's setting. This might be a distinctive landform or land use prominent in views to or from the settlement, or on arrival/departure, such as a hill or valley. It might also be a consistent, longstanding boundary that has historically influenced settlement form, such as a river, major road or woodland.

Physical and visual separation

3.15 The assessment of physical and visual separation considers gap size, the nature of land cover, topography and connecting routes between the settlements.

3.16 All other things being equal, a wider gap will provide greater protection against coalescence than a narrower gap, but other factors will affect the perception of separation. A gap is likely to be stronger if:

- There is a strong physical boundary feature that separates it from the settlement edge. The strongest type of boundary feature would be something which forms a physical and visual barrier, such as a woodland. A major road or river would not be visual barrier but could still be strong, consistent edge, forming a barrier to movement. A hedgerow or garden fences would be weaker boundary features. A very visible, strongly defined development edge would not typically be considered a strong boundary to further development, but if it was a consistent boundary over some distance that would increase its contribution.
- It has landforms and/or land cover which give a sense of passing through a landscape which is distinct from the settlements. Landforms and landcover which prevent intervisibility between settlements and also limit urban views from within the gap are likely to provide the strongest separation, but there may still be a sense of separation if land has a distinctive character even though there may be visual openness across much of the gap.
- There are no direct vehicular routes between the settlements. A gap is more readily perceived as being narrow if it can be crossed rapidly, so if

there are no roads, or only indirect links, perception of separation will be greater.

Urbanising influences

3.17 The assessment of urbanising influences considers the extent and character of any existing development within the gap.

3.18 A gap is likely to be stronger if:

- It has little residential or employment development, or if any built development is rural rather than urban in character/form.
- It is not dominated by infrastructure associated with human activity, such as roads, electricity substations, pylons and overhead lines or sewage works. Where there are roads, those with lighting and pavements will typically have a greater association with urban areas than rural lanes that have neither.
- It retains a rural character and is not dominated by land uses typically associated with urban edges, such as horse paddocks or formal recreational facilities.
- It has semi-natural land uses, such as woodland or marshland.

Chapter 4

Settlement Gap Review Summary

4.1 A total of seven out of the nine existing settlement gaps defined within the adopted Winchester Local Plan have been assessed. These are:

- Bishop's Waltham – Swanmore – Waltham Chase – Shedfield – Shirrell Heath.
- Denmead – Waterlooville.
- Kings Worthy – Abbots Worthy.
- Otterbourne – Southdown.
- Winchester – Compton Street.
- Winchester – Kings Worthy / Headbourne Worthy.
- Whiteley – Fareham/Fareham Western Wards (the 'Meon Gap').

4.2 Detailed assessments for each defined settlement gap are set out in Appendix A. The assessment outputs for each gap include:

- Reference to any additions to the existing defined gap in determining the area of assessment.
- Details of any development allocations, or designations that might act as a constraint to development.
- An analysis of the degree of distinction between settlements provided by land in the gap.
- Concluding comments on gap strength and a list of the key characteristics important to the maintenance of the gap.
- Comments on potential changes to gap boundaries.

- Accompanying mapping of each gap, on a 1:25,000 OS base, includes any relevant designations which affect the analysis and/or represent a constraint to development.

4.3 The gap strength summaries, lists of key gap characteristics and comments on gap boundaries are set out below. This is followed by comments on the wording of the settlement gap policy NE7, as presented in the Regulation 18 consultation version of the emerging Local Plan.

Bishop's Waltham – Swanmore – Waltham Chase – Shedfield – Shirrell Heath Gap

Gap strength

4.4 The gaps between Swanmore and Shirrell Heath, between Waltham Chase and Shedfield, and between Bishop's Waltham and Waltham Chase are considered relatively strong, with gap size and the presence of significant woodland or tree cover contributing to separation.

4.5 The gaps between Swanmore and Bishop's Waltham and between Waltham Chase and Shirrell Heath are more moderate in strength, being narrower and having weaker settlement boundaries and/or more urbanising influences in the gap.

4.6 The gap between Waltham Chase and Swanmore is relatively weak, with significant development along connecting roads.

4.7 The narrowest and weakest gap is between Shedfield and Shirrell Heath. The well-treed character of Shedfield, evident on approaching along either High Street, Upper Church Road or Pricketts Hill, means that there is little discernible

change in character, or sense of transition from urban to rural to urban, experienced on passing through the defined gap.

Key characteristics of settlement gap

4.8 The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between Bishop's Waltham and Waltham Chase:

- The tree cover along the River Hamble linking through to The Moors SSSI, forming a southern limit to expansion of Bishop's Waltham, and undeveloped valley landform around it.
- The integrity of the Park Lug as a boundary to south-western expansion of Bishop's Waltham.
- Maintenance of a gap between linear development along the B2177 and the edge of Waltham Chase.
- The small-scale field pattern with well-treed boundaries.

4.9 The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between Bishop's Waltham and Swanmore:

- Maintenance of the gap between the edge of Swanmore and the cluster of buildings that includes Hoe Farm, so that the rural character of the latter is retained.

4.10 The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between Waltham Chase and Swanmore:

- Tree cover that limits the visual impact of development in the settlement gap.
- The retention of field boundaries and agricultural land use.
- The avoidance of further infilling of development along connecting roads.

4.11 The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between Waltham Chase and Shirrell Heath:

- The perception of Solomons Lane and Black Horse Lane as being rural roads, with only limited urbanising influences.
- The undeveloped, well-treed character of the lower valley slopes between Solomons Lane and Black Horse Lane.

4.12 The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between Swanmore and Shirrell Heath:

- The woodland at the core of the gap.
- The distinction in elevation between Swanmore, on lower ground, and the steeper slopes towards the top of Gravel Hill.
- The rural character experienced when crossing through the gap along Forest Road and Bishop's Wood Road.

4.13 The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between Shirrell Heath and Shedfield:

- The tree cover which limits visibility of development.

4.14 The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between Waltham Chase and Shedfield:

- The woodland and tree belts on the northern edge of Shedfield, forming a boundary to the settlement.
- The lack of development visible in views across unhedged fields west of the B2177.
- The small-scale field pattern with well-treed boundaries in the northern part of the gap.
- The containment of development along the B2177 by tree cover, and the retention of open gaps between those areas of linear development.

Potential gap alterations

4.15 Consideration could be given to extending the settlement gap:

- To encompass additional land to the west of the B2177 between Bishops Waltham and Waltham Chase. Waltham Chase is primarily on an east-facing slope so development on the north-west-facing slope would be a significant change in settlement form. Development south of Bishop's Waltham would have less impact on settlement form but would breach a stronger urban edge boundary (Park Lug). As the gap is relatively strong this need not encompass all of the additional area included in the assessment.
- To include the unhedged fields between Shedfield, the B2177 and the Meon Valley golf course, reflecting the visual openness of this area and the consequent likely impact of development. In the absence of any significant likelihood of development it is unnecessary to extend the gap further west to encompass the golf course.

4.16 There is little sense of passing through a gap between distinct settlements when travelling between Shedfield and Shirrell Heath, so this area could potentially be removed from the defined gap.

Denmead – Waterlooville Gap

Gap strength and key characteristics

4.17 Land between Denmead and Waterlooville provides a clear but relatively narrow gap. Development in the urban areas and also in the gap has some localised urbanising impact, but mature, well-treed boundary hedgerows around small fields help to retain rural character. Hambledon Road provides a direct link along which, for vehicular traffic, there is only a fairly brief sense of passing through countryside, so any further development affecting this route would be

likely to weaken the gap. Where field boundaries are weaker and fields are larger – to the south of Piper’s Hill Wood and to the north of Anmore, a wider gap is needed in order to compensate for greater visual openness.

4.18 The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between Denmead and Waterlooville:

- Mature field boundaries around small fields, and several small woodlands, limiting perception of either settlement from the core of the gap.
- The role of overhead lines as a boundary to Waterlooville.
- The lack of direct connecting roads, other than Hambledon Road.
- Retention of remaining open fields alongside Hambledon Road.
- Containment of development in the gap by trees and hedgerows, limiting urbanising influences.

Potential gap alterations

4.19 Although peripheral to the core of the gap, the greater elevation and visual openness of the fields to the north of Anmore means that development here could be widely perceptible, increasing the general level of urbanising influence and more specifically increasing the sense of containment of Anmore.

Therefore, consideration could be given to extending the settlement gap to include some of the additional area included in the assessment, although it would not be necessary to include all of it.

4.20 Consideration could also be given to extending the settlement gap to include land west of the overhead lines north of Sheepwash Wood, adjacent to the emerging Newlands development on the edge of Waterlooville. Expansion of Berewood west of the overhead lines into the fields north of Sheepwash Wood would increase urbanising containment of the fields to the north, where there is more visual openness than is the case further north where fields are smaller and have stronger hedgerows.

4.21 Land between Denmead and Waterlooville provides a clear but relatively narrow gap. Development in the urban areas and also in the gap has some localised urbanising impact, but mature, well-treed boundary hedgerows around small fields help to retain rural character. Hambledon Road provides a direct link along which, for vehicular traffic, there is only a fairly brief sense of passing through countryside, so any further development affecting this route would be likely to weaken the gap. Where field boundaries are weaker and fields are larger – to the south of Piper’s Hill Wood and to the north of Anmore, a wider gap is needed in order to compensate for greater visual openness.

4.22 The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between Denmead and Waterlooville:

- Mature field boundaries around small fields, and several small woodlands, limiting perception of either settlement from the core of the gap.
- The role of overhead lines as a boundary to Waterlooville.
- The lack of direct connecting roads, other than Hambledon Road.
- Retention of remaining open fields alongside Hambledon Road.
- Containment of development in the gap by trees and hedgerows, limiting urbanising influences.

Potential gap alterations

4.23 Although peripheral to the core of the gap, the greater elevation and visual openness of the fields to the north of Anmore means that development here could be widely perceptible, increasing the general level of urbanising influence and more specifically increasing the sense of containment of Anmore.

Therefore, consideration could be given to extending the settlement gap to include some of the additional area included in the assessment, although it would not be necessary to include all of it.

4.24 Consideration could also be given to extending the settlement gap to include land west of the overhead lines north of Sheepwash Wood, adjacent to

the emerging Newlands development on the edge of Waterlooville. Expansion of Berewood west of the overhead lines into the fields north of Sheepwash Wood would increase urbanising containment of the fields to the north, where there is more visual openness than is the case further north where fields are smaller and have stronger hedgerows.

Kings Worthy – Abbots Worthy Gap

Gap strength and key characteristics

4.25 Kings Worthy and Abbots Worthy retain distinct identities in terms of their settlement character and setting but tree cover and the A33 are the key elements forming the small gap between the two settlements. Open, unwooded land in the defined settlement gap doesn't contribute much to the identity of either settlement or to the setting of either of the Conservation Areas.

4.26 The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between Kings Worthy and Abbots Worthy:

- The tree-lined A33, which forms a key separating barrier between Kings Worthy and Abbots Worthy.
- Woodland to the south-west of Abbots Worthy (which lies within the South Downs National Park, outside of the defined Local Gap).
- The woodland in the south-western part of the gap, adjacent to the Kings Worthy Conservation Area.
- Trees along Hinton House Drive, which will be important in visually screening the forthcoming development through Local Plan Policy KW2.

Potential gap alterations

4.27 Consideration could be given to removing the following land from the designated settlement gap:

- The recreational open space north-west of the Eversley Gardens development, which is largely contained by urban development, could be protected through an alternative open space designation.
- Hinton House, which is separated from the core of the settlement gap to the south-east by a belt of trees.

4.28 Proposed development in the south-eastern portion of the gap (KW2) could be removed from the defined settlement gap, but the tree cover that contains it (and lies within the defined site area) plays a significant role in maintaining settlement separation and, unless alternative protection is provided, should remain in the gap. It is anticipated that the development will not have a strong visual relationship with existing dwellings in either Kings Worthy or Abbots Worthy and will not negate the contribution of the woodland block to settlement separation, so it could potentially remain in the gap along with the surrounding trees in preference to removing just the area being built on.

Otterbourne – Southdown Gap

Gap strength and key characteristics

4.29 Woodland retains physical separation between Otterbourne and Southdown to the east of Otterbourne Road, and containment by tree cover is a characteristic of both settlements. Development in the field and nursery forming the western part of the defined gap would narrow an already fragile gap, but merger of Otterbourne and Southdown would not significantly change the semi-rural character or setting of either. Land west of the M3 has stronger separation from both settlements.

4.30 The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between Otterbourne and Southdown:

- The woodland east of Otterbourne Road contributes to the well-treed settings of both settlements.
- The general openness of the land between Otterbourne Road and the M3 doesn't provide a strong sense of separation between distinct settlements but contributes to the semi-rural character of both.

Potential gap alterations

4.31 Development in the area west of the M3 that lies adjacent to the gap would not have any significant impact on perceived separation in the core of the gap, because of the strong boundary role provided by the M3 and associated tree cover. It would only play a more significant separating role, between Compton and Otterbourne, if the latter were to expand westwards along Poles Lane. In the absence of any proposals for such expansion there is no need to extend the defined settlement gap into this area.

Winchester – Compton Street Gap

Gap strength and key characteristics

4.32 The gap between Winchester and Compton Street plays an important role in the rural setting of Winchester, which in turn forms part of the setting of the South Downs National Park, and also the more localised setting of Compton Street. The Bushfield development will have some urbanising impact on the gap but the remaining open area will still provide strong distinction between settlements. The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between Winchester and Compton Street:

- The undulating landform and long views available within and across the gap, maintaining an association with the wider countryside and limiting any sense of urban containment.
- The strong urban-edge boundaries to Winchester provided by landform, land cover and the railway line.
- The visual containment of Compton Street within a valley.
- The strong tree cover containing the transport links along the eastern side of the gap: the railway, the M3, the A4030 Hockley Link, Otterbourne Road and the Park and Ride.

Potential gap alterations

4.33 The Bushfield Camp allocation (Policy W5) will retain separation from the urban edge of Winchester, which has clearly defined boundaries, so this area and its surroundings could potentially remain within the defined settlement gap, but if it was removed the gap would still be relatively strong.

4.34 Woodland between Otterbourne Road and railway line contributes to the screening of urbanising influences (the Park and Ride) and reduces impact on the rural character of land within the existing gap. However, if it is assumed that any development between Otterbourne Road and the railway line would retain the current tree belt boundaries then there is no necessity to add this area to the defined gap.

Winchester – Kings Worthy / Headbourne Worthy Gap

Gap strength and key characteristics

4.35 The weakest part of the gap is between Kings Barton development and Headbourne Worthy where there is a distance of 150m between planned residential development in the former and houses on Wellhouse Lane in the latter. There will be a shorter distance of 100m between Kings Barton and the commercial units south of Wellhouse Lane. Along the western edge of the gap, the railway line and associated tree lines form a clear boundary between Kings Barton development and the gap, but there is no other open land to create separation so the defined gap is playing only a limited role.

4.36 The gap to the south between Headbourne Worthy and Abbots Barton is relatively strong, retaining a rural character that is strengthened by landform and tree cover in and around Headbourne Worthy.

4.37 The following are important in retaining a sense of separation between Winchester and Kings Worthy/Headbourne Worthy:

- Retaining the rural character of the visually open valley that forms a gap between Abbots Barton and Headbourne Worthy, as experienced at Barton Meadows Nature Reserve and from Worthy Road.
- The dispersed character of houses at Headbourne Worthy, the extent of tree cover around the settlement and its orientation around a tributary valley, which give it a distinctive, contained setting and rural settlement character.
- The role of the railway line as a strong boundary feature to development at Kings Barton.

- Retaining the rural character of Wellhouse Lane alongside Kings Barton, which will help to retain a sense of separation from Headbourne Worthy on approach from this direction.

Potential gap alterations

4.38 Where the settlement gap is narrowest, between Kings Worthy and the emerging Kings Barton development, the low-density, rural settlement character of Headbourne Worthy and the boundary definition provided by the railway line are the key separating features. There would be limited benefit in including additional land to the north of Wellhouse Lane. It is noted that the Kings Barton masterplan retains openness in the two narrow fields to the south of Wellhouse Lane west of the railway line, which will aid the perception of settlement separation.

4.39 The settlement gap could be re-defined to exclude land allocated for development under Policy W4: Land west of Courtenay Road within the emerging Local Plan, and the allotments that are located to the south of the allocated site, which will no longer form part of the gap, could be designated as open space.

4.40 Land in the lower valley area to the east of Headbourne Worthy is designated as a SSSI and this designation constrains this area from development. On this basis it is not necessary to include it within the defined gap, although doing so does not cause harm to the purposes of the gap.

Whiteley – Fareham/Fareham Western Wards (the ‘Meon Gap’)

Gap strength and key characteristics

4.41 The core River Meon valley is largely undeveloped and, particularly across the boundary into Fareham Borough, is well-treed. Development in the gap blurs the settlement edge of Fareham between the M27 and Lee Ground Coppice, but woodland blocks help to contain urbanising influence. The gaps between Whiteley and both Fareham and Knowle are strong, and the narrower gap south of the M27 between Titchfield Park and Fareham is also relatively strong.

4.42 The following features within Winchester District are important in retaining a sense of separation between Whiteley – Fareham/Fareham Western Wards (the ‘Meon Gap’):

- The large, wooded areas of Lee Ground Coppice and Hazel Coppice on the edge of Whiteley
- Woodland blocks on the higher valley side west of Fontley Road.
- The limited urbanising influence within the core valley area on the eastern edge of the gap within Winchester District.
- The strong edge to Knowle provided by the railway line, River Meon and associated tree cover.
- The lack of road links west from Knowle.

Potential gap alterations

4.43 Development in the small area of unconstrained land between the north-eastern edge of the defined gap and the extensive woodlands to the north

would potentially be prominent, as this is high ground. It would also potentially weaken the role of the river and railway in forming a boundary to Knowle, even though it would lack transport linkage with it. This area could, therefore, be added to the defined gap.

4.44 Land to the west of the woodlands located between Lee Ground and Fontley Road (Hazel Coppice and Lee Ground Coppice) can be considered to make less contribution to settlement separation than the 'core' gap area closer to the river valley. It is noted that there have been two appeal judgements in relation to land within this part of the settlement gap: APP/L1765/W/17/3175784 (Land off Lee Ground to the East of Whiteley) and APP/L1765/W/19/3243574 (Land adjacent to Lodge Green, Whiteley Lane). In the former case the Inspector considered that the reduction in gap width from development, although small, would be a material impact, whilst in the latter, for a smaller site more isolated from the gap core by housing development (at Skylark Meadows), the Inspector concluded that the land in question made no contribution to settlement separation.

4.45 Whilst we would suggest that all land west of the aforementioned woodlands makes less contribution to settlement separation than land further to the east, and could be developed without resulting in settlement coalescence, there is also some gradation in contribution between the area around Skylark Meadows and land east of Lee Ground, so there is a degree of judgement in determining the extent to which land in a particular location is necessary to the retention of an effective settlement gap. Consideration could be given to removing land from the gap, particularly where development has had a significant impact on rural character, such as in the vicinity of Skylark Meadows. The nature of any particular development proposal may have a bearing on perceived level of impact on settlement separation, so a more precautionary approach might be warranted where there is less notable urbanising influence.

Policy recommendations

4.46 Policy NE7 – Settlement Gaps in the emerging Winchester City Local Plan is currently worded as follows:

The Local Planning Authority will retain the generally open and undeveloped nature of the following defined settlement gaps:

- i) Bishop's Waltham – Swanmore – Waltham Chase – Shedfield – Shirrell Heath
- ii) Denmead – Waterlooville
- iii) Kings Worthy - Abbots Worthy
- iv) Otterbourne – Southdown
- v) Winchester – Compton Street
- vi) Winchester – Kings Worthy/Headbourne Worthy
- vii) Winchester – Littleton
- viii) Whiteley – Fareham/Fareham Western Wards (the 'Meon Gap')
- ix) Knowle, Wickham and Welborne

Within these areas only development that does not undermine the function of the gap and its intended role to define and retain the separate identity of settlements will be permitted.

Any development should not cause harm to the character and landscape of the area. Development which would threaten the open and undeveloped character of these gaps will be resisted and the land should be managed to secure the long-term retention of its rural character.

4.47 It is noted that the proposed policy wording does not include the phrase from the current Local Plan's CP18 gap policy which said that "Within these areas only development that does not physically or visually diminish the gap will be allowed" but instead makes a broader reference, in the first sentence of the final paragraph, to "harm to the character and landscape of the area".

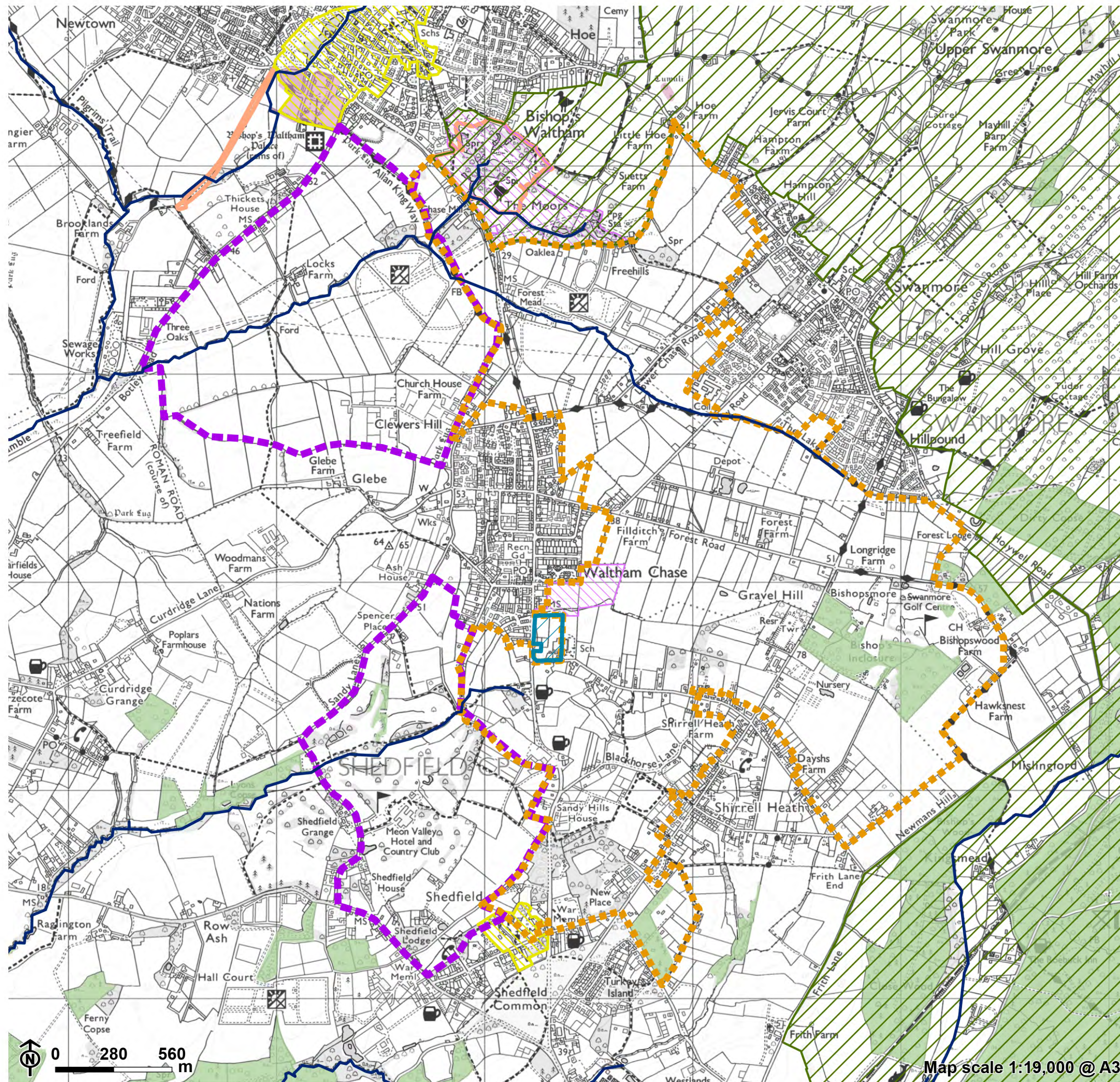
4.48 It is recommended that this sentence be removed, because it is not sufficiently focused on the settlement gap. It could be argued that any development, however minor its impact on settlement separation, could still have some impact on character and landscape. We would not recommend reinstatement of the CP18 wording about not "physically or visually" diminishing the gap because it may be possible for a development proposal to affect these things but still not have a significant adverse impact on settlement separation.

4.49 Furthermore, consideration could be given to referencing Appendix A of this report in the supporting text to Policy NE7, specifically the named key characteristics and sensitivities important to maintaining a sense of separation between neighbouring settlements, as the key factors to be considered when making and determining planning applications within and in the immediate vicinity of each settlement gap. It should be noted, however, that this report only contains key characteristics and sensitivities for seven of the nine gaps.

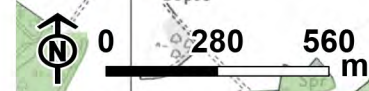
Appendix A

Settlement Gap Assessment

Figure A.01: Bishop's Waltham – Swanmore – Waltham Chase – Shedfield – Shirrell Heath Gap



- Existing Settlement Gap
- Additional assessment area
- South Downs National Park
- River
- Planned developments**
- Policy WC1
- Constraints**
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Local Nature Reserve
- Ancient Woodland
- Scheduled Monument
- Conservation Area



Map scale 1:19,000 @ A3

Bishop's Waltham – Swanmore – Waltham Chase – Shedfield – Shirrell Heath

Context

Relationship to designations

A.1 For the purposes of this assessment the defined Bishop's Waltham – Swanmore – Waltham Chase – Shedfield – Shirrell Heath gap has been expanded to encompass two more areas in which land is considered to make some degree of contribution to preventing the merger of settlements. The first extends the assessment area further west of the B2177 between Bishop's Waltham and Waltham Chase and the second does likewise between Waltham Chase and Shedfield.

A.2 Within the gap, the Waltham Chase Meadows SSSI lies on the eastern edge of Waltham Chase. There are several areas of Ancient Woodland in the south-eastern part of the gap, most notably Bishop's Inclosure to the south of Swanmore Golf Course, and there is a strip of Flood Zone 3 land associated with the upper reaches of the River Hamble. Part of the Shedfield Conservation Area also lies within the settlement gap.

A.3 Bishop's Waltham and Swanmore both lie adjacent to the South Downs National Park boundary, and edge of the settlement gap in between them largely follows the Park edge. Woodlands to the south-east of Swanmore also largely lie within the National Park, as does The Moors SSSI and Local Nature Reserve on the southern edge of Bishop's Waltham.

Relationship with development allocations

A.4 Development allocations in the emerging Local Plan at Swanmore (The Lakes) and Waltham Chase (Morgan's Yard) have been carried forward from the adopted Winchester Local Plan. These are on land that has already been removed from the defined settlement gaps.

Analysis of settlement gap

Settlement setting

A.5 Bishop's Waltham's historic core, a Conservation Area which includes the ruins of Bishop's Waltham Palace, lies alongside the River Hamble but the settlement expanded significantly to the east and west in the 20th century. Although not highly prominent, the low ridge that extends south-west from the town between the two arms of the River Hamble does form an edge to the historic core. However, further to the east land in the gap adjoins more modern development which has extended the settlement onto the south-facing slopes of a tributary of the River Hamble.

A.6 The village of Shedfield has a Conservation Area, centred on the parish church. Tree cover which makes up the northern part of the Conservation Area and also lies within the defined settlement gap, limits its association with the wider gap landscape. The village as a whole has strong containment by trees and woodland.

A.7 Waltham Chase and Swanmore both have little pre-19th century development and grew significantly in the 20th century. They lie on opposite sides of the valley in which the southernmost of the two streams that form the River Hamble emerges, each set beneath higher ground.

Appendix A Settlement Gap Assessment

A.8 Shirrell Heath has developed less since the 19th century, with infill development along a triangle of roads leaving a largely open centre (outside of the defined gap). It lies on high ground to the south of the Gravel Hill and Bishop's Inclosure, with stream valleys (tributaries of the Hamble) to the west and south, and the Meon Valley to the east.

Physical and visual separation

A.9 The Bishop's Waltham – Swanmore – Waltham Chase – Shedfield – Shirrell Heath gap covers an extensive area of land between the five settlements. The role of gap land is considered for each neighbouring pair of settlements:

- Bishop's Waltham and Waltham Chase;
- Bishop's Waltham and Swanmore;
- Waltham Chase and Swanmore;
- Waltham Chase and Shirrell Heath;
- Swanmore and Shirrell Heath;
- Shirrell Heath and Shedfield;
- Waltham Chase and Shedfield.

Bishop's Waltham - Waltham Chase

A.10 Bishop's Waltham and Waltham Chase are approximately 1.2km apart along the B2177. To the east of the road, woodland and wetland in The Moors SSSI and in the National Park forms a strong boundary to Bishop's Waltham.

Appendix A Settlement Gap Assessment

To the west of the road, where recent development has taken place, the urban area fronts onto small fields but its boundary is defined by remains of the Park Lug, a medieval deer park boundary.

A.11 There are no distinctive boundary features on the northern edge of Waltham Chase, but the small fields that typify the wider gap area often have a high frequency of mature hedgerow trees, adding to the generally wooded character of the landscape between the South Downs and the larger urban areas of South Hampshire.

A.12 Land in the gap forms a valley, shallow to the east of the B2177 but becoming more defined to the west. Within the valley the well-treed course of the River Hamble, including a woodland block bridges the gap between the river and The Moors SSSI, is a key separating feature.

Bishop's Waltham and Swanmore

A.13 There is a gap of around 700m along Swanmore Road/Hoe Road between Bishop's Waltham and Swanmore, widening to over 1km away from Swanmore Road. There are no significant boundary features on the edge of Bishop's Waltham but land between here and Hoe Farm lies within the bounds of the National Park, effectively preventing southward expansion of the town which could isolate The Moors SSSI from the rest of the National Park.

A.14 There are no significant boundary features on the edge of Swanmore, but trees and hedgerows within the gap preclude any intervisibility between settlement edges.

Waltham Chase and Swanmore

A.15 This gap is little more than 600m at its narrowest point, and less than 1km along much of the settlement frontage, with several roads providing connections.

Appendix A Settlement Gap Assessment

A.16 Hedgerows and garden boundaries constitute relatively weak boundaries to the east of Waltham Chase. The Lakes forms a consistent road and hedgerow edge along the central part of Swanmore but there are no particularly strong boundary features to denote the urban edge.

A.17 Within the gap, the streams and associated tree cover forming the upper reaches of the River Hamble are less prominent in the landscape than is the case further downstream. Tree cover in the shallow valley prevents any intervisibility of settlements, but there are likely to be views from one settlement to the other from more elevated residential areas further back from the gap edge. The settlement gap widens to the south, where the rising, wooded slopes of Gravel Hill create stronger separation.

Waltham Chase and Shirrell Heath

A.18 There is a 700m gap between Waltham Chase and the northern end of Shirrell Heath, along Solomons Lane, rising to a gap of over 1km to the southern end of the village.

A.19 Neither settlement has prominent boundary features but Solomons Lane follows a ridge dropping down from Gravel Hill, to the south of which a narrow, well-treed valley helps to create some separation.

Swanmore and Shirrell Heath

A.20 The gap between Swanmore and Shirrell Heath along Gravel Hill is over 1km. Neither settlement has a strong boundary but the wooded high ground of Gravel Hill creates strong distinction between them.

Shirrell Heath and Shedfield

A.21 Shirrell Heath and Shedfield are largely linear settlements lying adjacent rather than parallel to each other, but the defined gap between them along High Street is only 230m.

A.22 Dense tree cover where Upper Church Street and Pricketts Hill meet High Street forms a strong edge to Shedfield but the edge of Shirrell Heath is less clearly defined with dwellings and a hotel lying within the gap adjacent to its defined boundary.

Waltham Chase and Shedfield

A.23 Waltham Chase and Shedfield are 1.3km apart along the B2177. Woodland forms a strong boundary to Shedfield, although the defined gap also includes sports pitches. One of these, at the junction of the B2177 and Upper Church Road lies adjacent to houses outside of the defined gap and has a stronger relationship with the settlement than with the wider countryside. There are no strong boundary features to the south of Waltham Chase.

A.24 To the east of the B2177 a shallow, well-treed valley creates some sense of landform distinction between the settlements, to add to the separation created by woodland on the edge of Shedfield. Fields to the west of the B2177 lack the usual well-treed boundaries but a rise in landform midway in the gap prevents any long, urban-influenced views. Beyond this to the west, the tree-lines, fairways and woodland belt of the Meon Valley Hotel, Golf and Country Club provide strong visual screening.

Urbanising influences

Bishop's Waltham - Waltham Chase

A.25 The B2177 between Bishop's Waltham and Waltham Chase has linear development along much of its length, with a pavement connecting the two settlements, but tree cover limits the urbanising influence of this. Development is on one side of the road or the other but not both, so views into open countryside mean that rural character is retained, and there is an open gap between Waltham Chase and the start of the linear development.

A.26 Two solar farms lie within the settlement gap, one to the east and one to the west of the B2177, Although not an urban feature, solar farms can detract from rural character and so have an impact on the perception of a settlement gap; but within this well-treed landscape they do not have any significant detracting influence on the wider gap and cannot be seen from the B2177.

Bishop's Waltham and Swanmore

A.27 Hoe Farm and several other dwellings lie midway between the settlements but these form a small, rural hamlet that doesn't impart any significant urbanising influence.

Waltham Chase and Swanmore

A.28 There is 20th century linear development out from Swanmore along most of Lower Chase Road, but tree cover and glimpsed views across open land mean that character is still relatively rural. There is perhaps a more semi-urban character between New Road, Forest Road, Gravel Hill and The Lakes, where dwellings although low in density are numerous, and to the north/west of New Road, where a skate park and sports pitches adjacent to Swanmore College have a functional association with the urban area.

Waltham Chase and Shirrell Heath

A.29 There are a significant number of dwellings in the relatively small triangle of land between Shirrell Heath, Solomons Lane and the B2177. The valley landform and tree cover helps to contain urbanising influence in much of the area, and the minor roads in this area are narrow and rural in character, but there is a stronger sense of association with the urban area on land between the eastern end of Black Horse Lane and Shirrell Heath.

Swanmore and Shirrell Heath

A.30 Dwellings and commercial uses between the edge of Shirrell Heath and the woodland on Gravel Hill weaken this area's distinction from the urban edge. There are also some houses along Gravel Hill towards the edge of Swanmore but with a lower density these retain a more rural setting.

Shirrell Heath and Shedfield

A.31 A single, small field with a dwelling at either end forms the gap to the east of High Street, whilst beyond trees to the west of the road New Place, a hotel comprising a former country house but also sizeable modern buildings, spans most of the gap.

Waltham Chase and Shedfield

A.32 Two clusters of dwellings along the B2177, one near the Black Horse Lane junction and one closer to the edge of Waltham Chase, have well-treed settings that limit urbanising influence.

Settlement gap function

Gap strength

A.33 The gaps between Swanmore and Shirrell Heath, between Waltham Chase and Shedfield, and between Bishop's Waltham and Waltham Chase are considered relatively strong, with gap size and the presence of significant woodland or tree cover contributing to separation.

A.34 The gaps between Swanmore and Bishop's Waltham and between Waltham Chase and Shirrell Heath are more moderate in strength, being narrower and having weaker settlement boundaries and/or more urbanising influences in the gap.

A.35 The gap between Waltham Chase and Swanmore is relatively weak, with significant development along connecting roads and a lack of significant topographic or tree cover components.

A.36 The narrowest and weakest gap is between Shedfield and Shirrell Heath. The well-treed character of Shedfield, evident on approaching along either High Street, Upper Church Road or Pricketts Hill, means that there is little discernible change in character, or sense of transition from urban to rural to urban, experienced on passing through the defined gap.

Key characteristics of settlement gap

A.37 The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between Bishop's Waltham and Waltham Chase:

- The tree cover along the River Hamble linking through to The Moors SSSI, forming a southern limit to expansion of Bishop's Waltham, and undeveloped valley landform around it.

Appendix A Settlement Gap Assessment

- The integrity of the Park Lug as a boundary to south-western expansion of Bishop's Waltham.
- Maintenance of a gap between linear development along the B2177 and the edge of Waltham Chase.
- The small-scale field pattern with well-treed boundaries.

A.38 The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between Bishop's Waltham and Swanmore:

- Maintenance of the gap between the edge of Swanmore and the cluster of buildings that includes Hoe Farm, so that the rural character of the latter is retained.

A.39 The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between Waltham Chase and Swanmore:

- Tree cover that limits the visual impact of development in the settlement gap.
- The retention of field boundaries and agricultural land use.
- The avoidance of further infilling of development along connecting roads.

A.40 The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between Waltham Chase and Shirrell Heath:

- The perception of Solomons Lane and Black Horse Lane as being rural roads, with only limited urbanising influences.
- The undeveloped, well-treed character of the lower valley slopes between Solomons Lane and Black Horse Lane.

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A.41 The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between Swanmore and Shirrell Heath:

- The woodland at the core of the gap.
- The distinction in elevation between Swanmore, on lower ground, and the steeper slopes towards the top of Gravel Hill.
- The rural character experienced when crossing through the gap along Forest Road and Bishop's Wood Road.

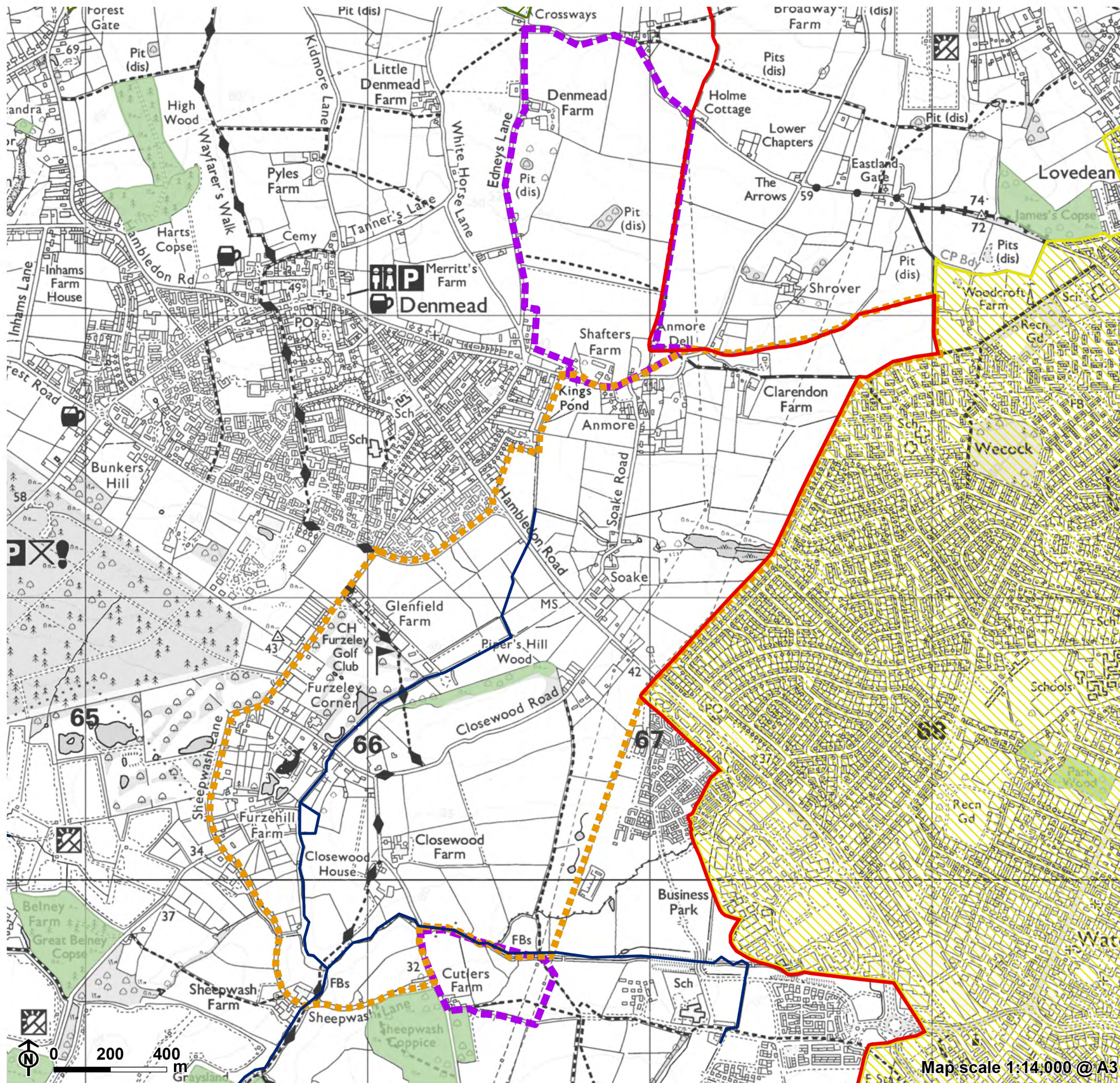
A.42 The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between Shirrell Heath and Shedfield:

- The tree cover which limits visibility of development.

A.43 The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between Waltham Chase and Shedfield:

- The woodland and tree belts on the northern edge of Shedfield, forming a boundary to the settlement.
- The lack of development visible in views across unhedged fields west of the B2177.
- The small-scale field pattern with well-treed boundaries in the northern part of the gap.
- The containment of development along the B2177 by tree cover, and the retention of open gaps between those areas of linear development.

Figure A.02: Denmead – Waterlooville Gap



- Winchester District boundary
- Neighbouring District boundary
- Existing Settlement Gap
- Additional assessment area
- South Downs National Park
- River
- Constraints**
- Ancient Woodland
- Conservation Area

Map scale 1:14,000 @ A3

Denmead – Waterlooville

Context

Relationship with designations

A.44 For the purposes of this assessment the existing Denmead – Waterlooville gap has been expanded to encompass two more areas in which land is considered to make some degree of contribution to preventing the merger of settlements. These are to the north of the hamlet of Anmore and adjacent to the north-western edge of the emerging Newlands development on the southern side of Waterlooville.

A.45 Land in East Hampshire District to the west of Lovedean (which is contiguous with the northern edge of Waterlooville) also makes some contribution to settlement separation, although it is not defined as a Local Gap in either the current or emerging East Hampshire Local Plan.

A.46 There are no sizeable areas of development constraint within the defined gap, just narrow strips of land in Flood Zone 3 associated with the source channels which merge to form the River Wallington, and a narrow strip of Ancient Woodland near Furzeley Corner (Piper's Hill Wood).

A.47 A larger area of Ancient Woodlands, the northernmost element of which is Sheepwash Coppice, lies just to the south of the defined settlement gap. The South Downs National Park adjoins the north-western corner of the extended gap area north of Anmore.

Relationship with development allocations

A.48 There are no significant Local Plan site allocations or development permissions within the gap but the Newlands major development area west of Waterlooville abuts its south-eastern edge.

Analysis of settlement gap

Settlement setting

A.49 Until infill in the 20th century (mostly in the post-War period) Denmead was a collection of hamlets rather than a defined village. One of these, Anmore, still retains a degree of distinction from the urban area and forms part of the defined settlement gap, but as a primarily modern settlement Denmead does not have a distinctive form associated with features in its landscape setting.

A.50 Waterlooville evolved in the 19th century as a small, linear village along the A3, with substantial development – including merger with Horndean to the north and Purbrook to the south – not taking place until the construction of large housing estates in the 1950-60's.

A.51 Land in the gap does not have any distinctive characteristics that contribute to the setting of either Denmead or Waterlooville. The terrain in both settlements and on the land in between is gently undulating, with hedgerows limiting views so that no features beyond the gap fringes contribute significantly to views from or to either settlement.

Physical and visual separation

A.52 There is a fairly consistent gap distance of 850-950m between Denmead and Waterlooville. The intervening relatively flat land comprises mostly small

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fields, many of which have fairly well-treed hedgerow to limit views. There are several areas of more substantial tree cover, such as Piper's Hill Wood, around Billy's Lake, at Anmore Dell and, more peripheral to the core of the gap, at Furzeley Golf Club. There is a gradual rise in landform to the north, toward the South Downs National Park, from which land in the narrower, central part of the gap presents a well-wooded character.

A.53 Aside from the woodland around Billy's Lake, on the edge of Waterlooville, both urban edges are defined for the most part by hedgerows of varying sizes. None of these can be considered to constitute strong boundaries, although Forest Road bolsters the settlement boundary of Denmead to the west/south of the B2150 (Hambledon Road). On the edge of Berewood overhead lines mark the extent of the urban area, beyond which (to the west) a hedge-edged public right of way filters (but does not block) views from and to the town.

A.54 Hambledon Road provides a direct link between the two settlements but other roads within the gap are minor and run along rather than across the gap, linking into Hambledon Road.

Urbanising influences

A.55 The hamlet of Anmore lies in the northern part of the gap, slightly separate from Denmead and set within a well-treed landscape that limits urbanising influence. The absence of a direct road link between Anmore and Waterlooville, limiting traffic movements, also helps to retain rural character.

A.56 Soake is slightly smaller than Anmore but has several large, commercial buildings (Byng's Business Park) which exert some urbanising influence on Hambledon Road. The limited separation along Hambledon Road is reflected in the provision of a pavement along the entire breadth of the gap.

A.57 There is also a cluster of dwellings along Closewood Road, close to its junction with Hambledon Road; tree cover means that these have limited urbanising influence on the gap, but further west Closewood Road sits in a fairly

open landscape from which there are views of Berewood and large-scale commercial development in WaterlooVille.

A.58 To the south of Denmead, low-density development at Furzeley Corner is set in a well-treed landscape and retains a rural settlement character.

Settlement gap function

Gap strength

A.59 Land between Denmead and WaterlooVille provides a clear but relatively narrow gap. Development in the urban areas and also in the gap has some localised urbanising impact, but mature, well-treed boundary hedgerows around small fields help to retain rural character. Hambledon Road provides a direct link along which, for vehicular traffic, there is only a fairly brief sense of passing through countryside, so any further development affecting this route would be likely to weaken the gap. Where field boundaries are weaker and fields are larger – to the south of Piper’s Hill Wood and to the north of Anmore, a wider gap is needed in order to compensate for greater visual openness.

Key characteristics of settlement gap

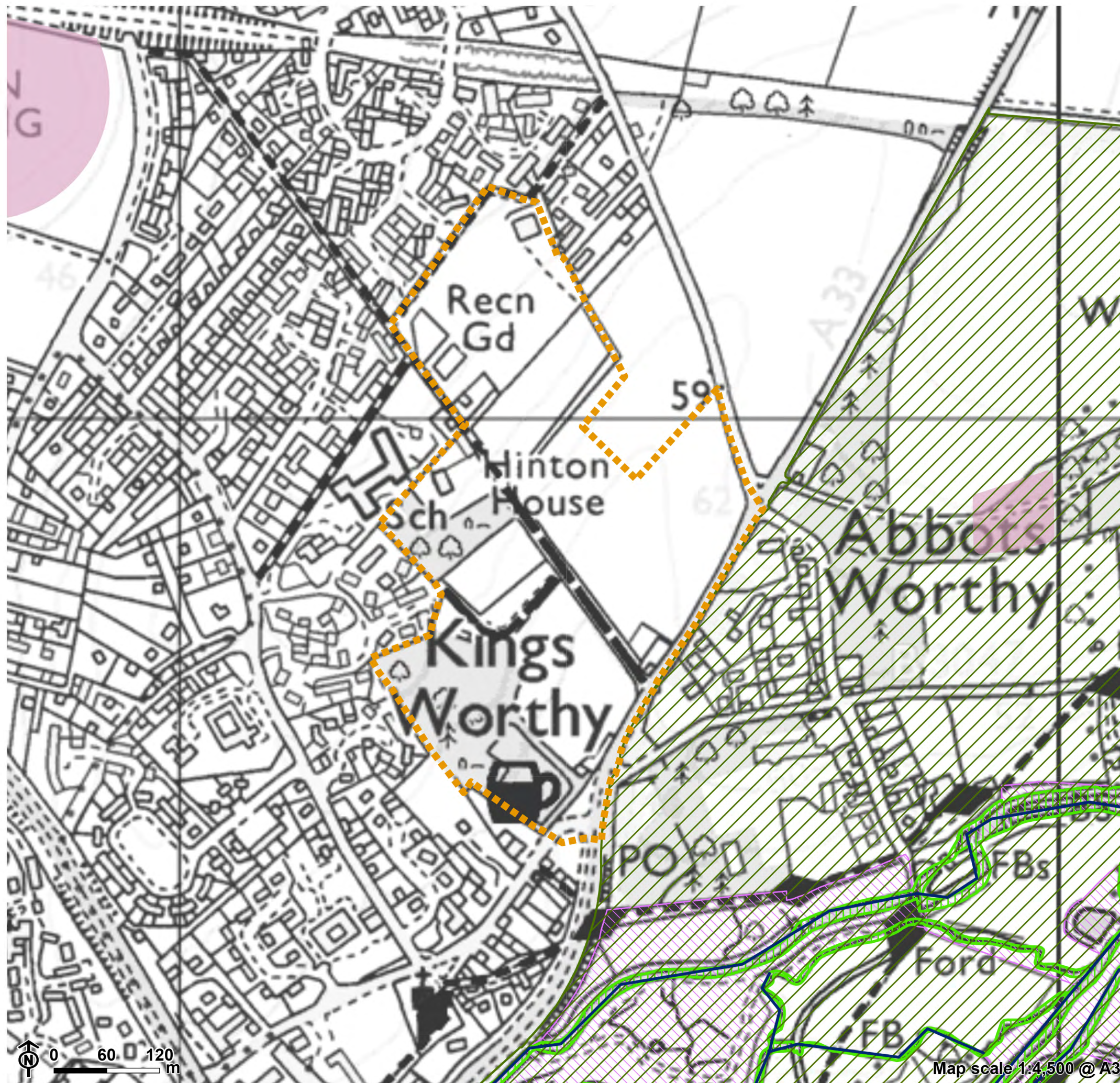
A.60 The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between Denmead and WaterlooVille:

- Mature field boundaries around small fields, and several small woodlands, limiting perception of either settlement from the core of the gap.
- The role of overhead lines as a boundary to WaterlooVille.
- The lack of direct connecting roads, other than Hambledon Road.
- Retention of remaining open fields alongside Hambledon Road.

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- Containment of development in the gap by trees and hedgerows, limiting urbanising influences.

Figure A.03: Kings Worthy – Abbots Worthy Gap



- Existing Settlement Gap
- South Downs National Park
- River

Constraints

- Special Area of Conservation
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Scheduled Monument
- Conservation Area

0 60 120 m

Map scale 1:4,500 @ A3

Kings Worthy – Abbots Worthy

Context

Relationship with designations

A.61 There are no designations within the defined gap that represent an absolute constraint development but the area of woodland forming the south-western part of the gap, north of the Cart and Horses pub, is subject to a Tree Protection Order (TPO).

A.62 The A33 on the eastern edge of the gap, which marks the edge of Abbots Worthy, also defines the edge of the South Downs National Park. It also marks the edge of the Abbots Worthy Conservation Area. The Kings Worthy Conservation Area adjoins the southern edge of the gap.

A.63 The River Itchen SSSI lies to the east and south of the gap just beyond Abbots Worthy.

Relationship to development allocations

A.64 The emerging Local Plan identifies the southern part of the gap for the development of older person's housing through Policy KW2: Land adjoining the Cart & Horses PH. The development would require new access from the A33 Basingstoke Road but also retention of the TPO-protected trees noted above.

Analysis of settlement gap

Settlement setting

A.65 Abbots Worthy is a small, historic settlement which has seen very little growth since the late 19th Century and early 20th Century. The whole of Abbots Worthy is covered by a Conservation Area which contains a large concentration of Listed Buildings, there is a heavy tree-cover within and around the settlement and the SSSI-designated River Itchen lies just to the south. Overall, Abbots Worthy is heavily constrained by its valley floor location, floodplain and woodland belts to the south, south-west and north.

A.66 The tree-lined A33 forms a clear boundary between Abbots Worthy and Kings Worthy but, reflecting the former's focus on the river valley, the Abbots Worthy Conservation Area Technical Assessment doesn't indicate any particular value associated with the area of open space within the gap.

A.67 Kings Worthy is a larger settlement with a small historic centre and a large suburban residential area to the north, the result of significant expansion in the latter part of the 20th century. Its historic centre lies within the lower valley side of the River Itchen, close to Abbots Worthy, but the A34 and a tree belt to the east forms a strong visual and physical boundary between them. The Kings Worthy Conservation Area Technical Assessment indicates that the woodland in the south-western part of the gap makes an important contribution to the visual setting of the Conservation Area.

Physical and visual separation

A.68 There is little more than 200m between the nearest dwellings in Abbots Worthy and Kings Worthy's Conservation Areas, and the KW2 site allocation will introduce development in between the two that will be separated from Abbots Worthy only by the A33 and associated roadside tree lines. However,

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tree cover here and to the east of the A33 form strong visual barriers, and the woodland in the western part of the KW2 site will still form a strong visual and physical boundary to Kings Worthy.

A.69 The gap between Abbots Worthy and 20th century development to the north-west in Kings Worthy was larger, but the recent development of Eversley Gardens has reduced this gap to around 170m. This new urban edge has no significant boundary feature and it also isolates Eversley Park Recreation Ground from the core of the gap. The tree belt to the south of Hinton House also isolates the house from the core gap.

A.70 Although the A33 does provide a road connection point between Kings Worthy and Abbots Worthy but it is not a direct access. The main road and associated tree cover forms a strong and consistent boundary to Abbots Worthy, and so can be considered more of a separating feature than a connecting feature, but seasonal views across the relatively flat and open field through to the new development at Kings Worthy may reduce perceived settlement separation.

Urbanising influences

A.71 Eversley Park falls within the northern part of the gap. The park comprises of formal recreational facilities including a playground and Worthies Sports and Social Club. The park is now largely constrained by existing and proposed new development within Kings Worthy, and so lacks rural character.

A.72 There is also an area of informal recreational greenspace within the southern part of the gap associated with the Eversley Park development. The conversion of this former farmland has also increased urbanising influence.

A.73 On the assumption that the proposed KW2 development goes ahead the tree-ringed field in the southern part of the gap will also lose rural character, although wooded areas will still retain a stronger sense of separation.

Settlement gap function

Gap strength

A.74 Kings Worthy and Abbots Worthy retain distinct identities in terms of their settlement character and setting but tree cover and the A33 are the key elements forming the small gap between the two settlements. Open, unwooded land in the defined settlement gap doesn't contribute much to the identity of either settlement or to the setting of either of the Conservation Areas.

Key characteristics of settlement gap

A.75 The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between Kings Worthy and Abbots Worthy:

- The tree-lined A33, which forms a key separating barrier between Kings Worthy and Abbots Worthy.
- Woodland to the south-west of Abbots Worthy (which lies within the South Downs National Park, outside of the defined Local Gap).
- The woodland in the south-western part of the gap, adjacent to the Kings Worthy Conservation Area.
- Trees along Hinton House Drive, which will be important in visually screening the forthcoming development through Local Plan Policy KW2.

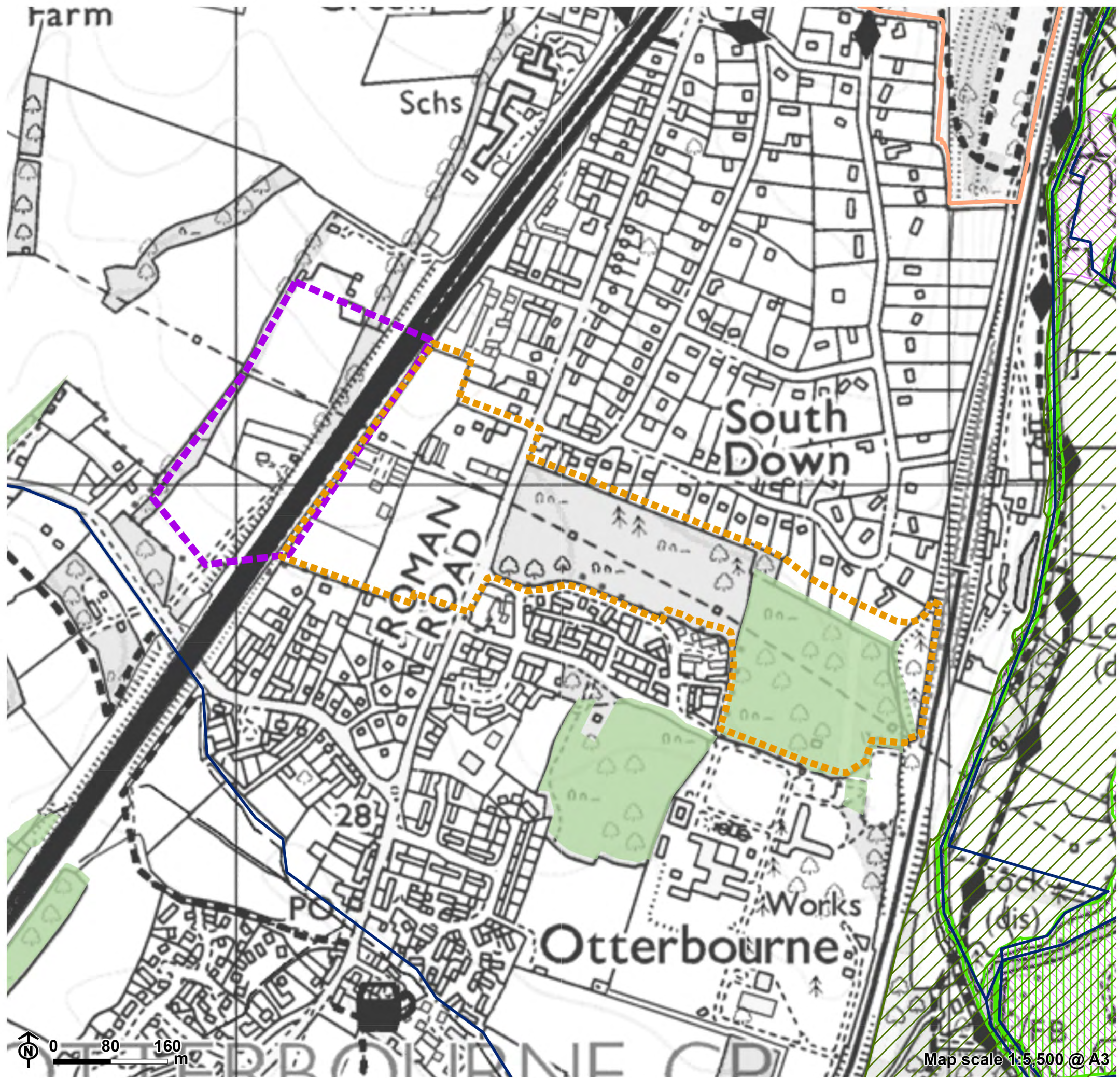


Figure A.04: Otterbourne – Southdown Gap

- Existing Settlement Gap
- Additional assessment area
- South Downs National Park
- River
- Constraints**
- Special Area of Conservation
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Local Nature Reserve
- Ancient Woodland
- Conservation Area

Otterbourne – Southdown

Context

Relationship with designations

A.76 The defined gap between Otterbourne and Southdown is contained between the railway line to the east and the M3 to the west but unconstrained land to the west of the M3 can also be considered to contribute to settlement separation and so has been included in the assessment area.

A.77 To the east of the railway line land slopes sharply down to the valley floor of the River Itchen, which lies within the South Downs National Park. Much of the valley floor is also subject to SAC and SSSI designations, which are considered absolute constraints to development.

A.78 All of the gap to the east of Otterbourne Road is wooded, the eastern half of which is designated as Ancient Woodland (Sparrowgrove Copse). A second block of Ancient Woodland, Oakwood Copse, lies just beyond the southern edge of the defined gap, isolated from it by residential development north of Waterworks Road.

Relationship with development allocations

A.79 There are no significant Local Plan site allocations or development permissions within or adjacent to the gap.

Analysis of settlement gap

Settlement setting

A.80 Southdown is a residential area which largely developed in the mid to the late 20th century as southward expansion of Shawford/Compton. The construction of the M3 gave Southdown a more distinct setting, contained between the motorway to the west, the undeveloped slopes of Shawford Down to the north, the railway and river to the east and woodland (within the settlement gap) to the south.

A.81 The village of Otterbourne was originally centred east of its present-day location, close to where the railway line now runs, but developed in the 19th century along Main Road. The southern part of Otterbourne contains most older buildings, with the northern part representing mostly post-World War 2 expansion.

A.82 The valley of the Otter Bourne passes through Otterbourne before reaching the Itchen Valley but the village isn't centred on this and instead has a more linear form, orientated along Main Road. Woodland along with the motorway and railway give it a largely enclosed character, with land in the gap to the east of Otterbourne Road contributing to this. The field and plant nursery that form the gap between Otterbourne Road and the M3 have no distinctive characteristics that contribute to settlement setting.

Physical and visual separation

A.83 The gap between Otterbourne and Southdown is a relatively small strip of land. At its narrowest point, east of Otterbourne Road, the gap is approximately 150m in width, widening to around 250m to the east and 300m to the west.

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A.84 To the east of Otterbourne Road, woodland forms a clear visual and physical boundary to both settlements, but experienced from Otterbourne Road the gap is brief. The field and nursery plots between Otterbourne Road and the M3 have sufficient perimeter hedging to give visual separation between Otterbourne and Southdown but do not form strong boundary features.

A.85 To the west of the motorway, mature tree belts and tree lines surround large plots around isolated dwellings. These form relatively strong boundaries, isolating the dwellings from Poles Lane (which crosses under the M3 into Otterbourne). There is no linkage between Southdown and the area west of the motorway other than via the Shepherds Lane bridge at the northern end of the settlement.

A.86 Landform does not add any additional sense of separation between the settlements, both of which lie on a gentle, consistent slope up towards Shawford Down. An overhead line passes through the gap, fairly centrally through the woodland but closer to the edge of Southdown across the nursery.

Urbanising influences

A.87 There is only one dwelling in the gap, alongside Otterbourne Road, but the Nursery glasshouses and parking area lie next to this house and opposite residential property on Grove Road, so there is little sense of distinction between this area and the defined settlement edge.

A.88 The narrowness of the gap and the audible containment provided by the M3 limit rural character, but the extent of tree cover in and around both Otterbourne and Southdown means that a semi-rural character prevails within as well in between the settlements.

A.89 Otterbourne Road has pavements on both sides, reducing the sense of passing through a rural area between settlements but offering glimpses through the roadside hedgerow into the open field to the west.

A.90 Although tranquillity is affected by traffic noise, the dwellings to the west of the M3 are too isolated to have an urban character.

Settlement gap function

Gap strength

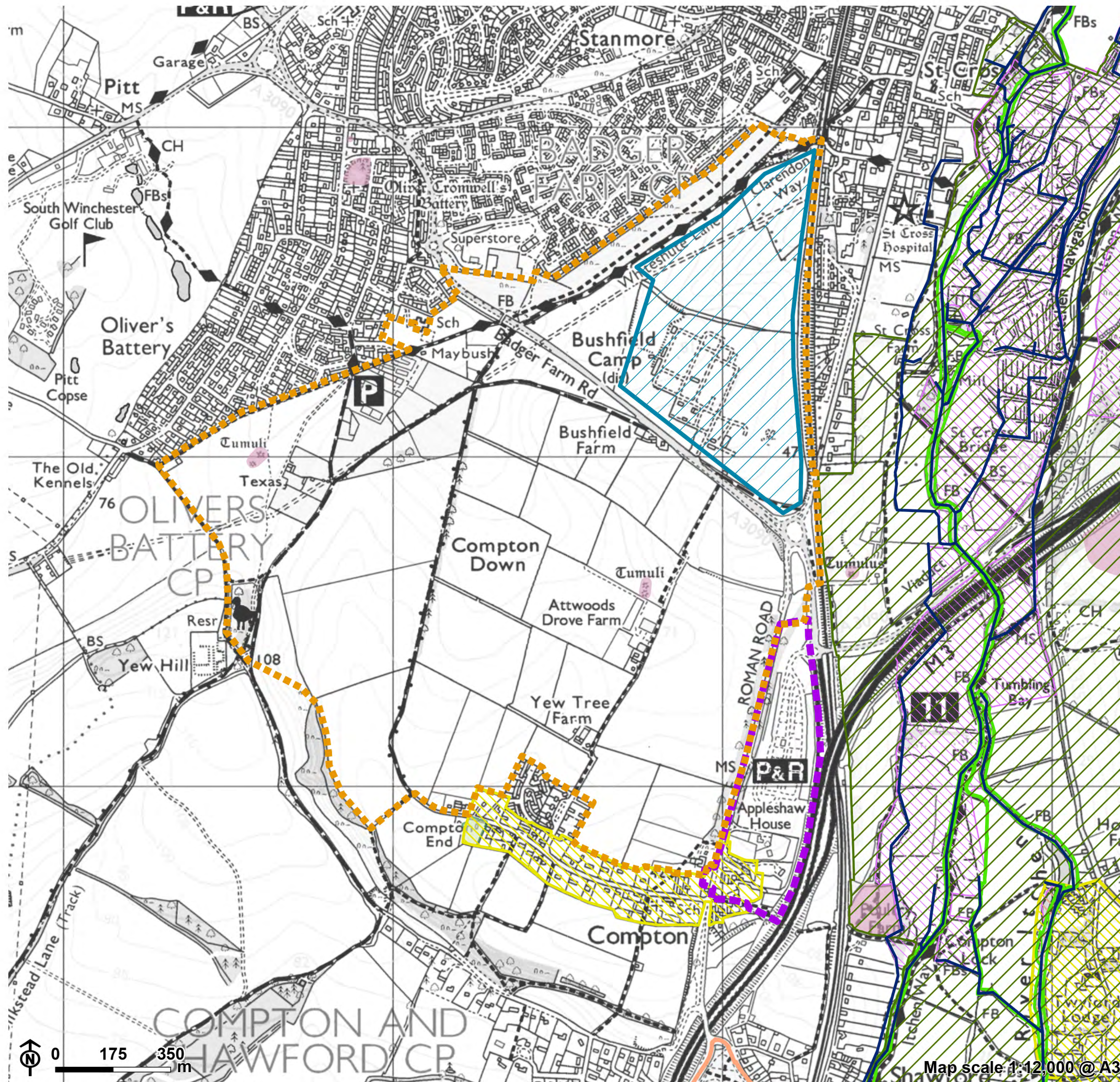
A.91 Woodland retains physical separation between Otterbourne and Southdown to the east of Otterbourne Road, and containment by tree cover is a characteristic of both settlements. Development in the field and nursery forming the western part of the defined gap would narrow an already fragile gap, but merger of Otterbourne and Southdown would not significantly change the semi-rural character or setting of either. Land west of the M3 has stronger separation from both settlements.

Key characteristics of settlement gap

A.92 The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between Otterbourne and Southdown:

- The woodland east of Otterbourne Road contributes to the well-treed settings of both settlements.
- The general openness of the land between Otterbourne Road and the M3 doesn't provide a strong sense of separation between distinct settlements but contributes to the semi-rural character of both.

Figure A.05: Winchester – Compton Street Gap



- Existing Settlement Gap
- Additional assessment area
- South Downs National Park
- River
- Planned developments**
- Policy W5: Bushfield Camp
- Constraints**
- Special Area of Conservation
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Local Nature Reserve
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Scheduled Monument
- Conservation Area

0 175 350 m

Map scale 1:12,000 @ A3

Winchester – Compton Street

Context

Relationship with designations

A.93 For the purposes of this assessment the existing Winchester – Compton Street gap has been expanded to encompass a narrow strip of land between the eastern edge of the gap, the M3 and the A3090 Hockley Link, encompassing South Winchester Park and Ride.

A.94 The gap includes several areas of registered Common Land, forming part of Compton Down, and open access land along the edge of Winchester at Whiteshute Ridge. TPOs apply to belts of trees and individual specimens at Bushfield Camp in the northern part of the gap.

A.95 Pairs of bowl barrows in two locations on Compton Down – one near Oliver’s Battery and the other near the centre of the gap – are Scheduled Monuments.

A.96 To the east of the gap the valley of River Itchen, much of which is in Flood Zone 3 and is SSSI-designated, forms part of the South Downs National Park. The Park boundary is adjacent to the eastern edge of the assessment area, beyond the railway line that runs alongside the M3 Junction 11 and Hockley Link.

Relationship with development allocations

A.97 An existing allocation within the Adopted Winchester Local Plan has been carried forward into the emerging Local Plan through Policy W5: Bushfield Camp. A former army base north of the A3090 (Badger Farm Road), this is a mixed-use allocation which will support the delivery of business and employment space and an education hub. Although the site covers much of the area north of the A3090 only around 20ha is to be developed, leaving most of the area north of the former camp as publicly accessible natural open space.

Analysis of settlement gap

Settlement setting

A.98 The downland slopes between Winchester and Compton, rising up to over 100m on the western edge of the gap, are prominent in panoramic views of the settlement – notably from St Catherine’s Hill across the valley in the South Downs National Park, and from Shawford Down to the south. They are also important in views from the valley floor and from the urban area – such as from the high ground of Oliver’s Battery.

A.99 Although Compton has developed significantly in the 20th century, Compton Street remains a separate, small settlement to the north of the downland ridge which has seen very little expansion since the 19th Century. Largely designated a Conservation Area, it lies in a contained, valley location, with tree cover prominent on all sides except to the north, where open farmland forms a skyline.

Physical and visual separation

A.100 There is a relatively large gap between Winchester and Compton Street, with at least 1.3km between the western end of Compton Street and the large suburb of Oliver's Battery, and between the eastern end of Compton Street and the southern edge of the St Cross suburb.

A.101 Rising up above the adjacent urban edges, Whiteshute Ridge and area around Bushfield Camp form a strong edge to St Cross and to the Badger Farm area of the city, reinforced by scrub woodland on the slopes of Whiteshute Ridge and the railway line along the edge of St Cross. Oliver's Battery has no significant urban edge boundary features, and the gap is also more widely visible from open access land and public rights of way near the urban edge here, but Compton Street's valley location screens it from views from the northern half of the settlement gap.

A.102 Compton Street lacks significant urban edge boundary features, particularly the 20th century development edge on Attwoods Grove and Martins Fields, but the rising downland slopes screen any views beyond the southern half of the settlement gap.

A.103 Within the gap the undulating downland slopes – including a valley landform that extends around the western side of the gap down to Compton Street, and another that runs west to east down to the A3099 junction with Otterbourne Road – contribute to the sense of separation between settlements.

A.104 Otterbourne Road onto St Cross Road provides a direct road link between Compton Street and Winchester but roadside tree cover limits any perception of either settlement until arrival.

Urbanising influences

A.105 The Bushfield Camp site currently has negligible urbanising influence, with few building remnants. Roads through the site are now surrounded by scrub and grassland. Its planned redevelopment (Policy W5) will introduce urbanising influences within the gap but the site masterplan suggests that it will retain a degree of isolation from the edges of Winchester, and so will not negate the current strong settlement boundaries north of the A3090.

A.106 Discounting the temporary influence of the M3 contractor's compound south of Bushfield Camp and the A3090, the only other buildings in the currently defined gap are agriculture-related. The expansive nature of the gap's downland landform, with long views from and up to nearby high ground, help to retain rural character despite proximity to the city.

A.107 The South Winchester Park and Ride, located to the east of the defined gap, is too contained by tree belts to detract from the rural character of the downland slopes to the west, or the contained setting of Compton Street.

Settlement gap function

Gap strength

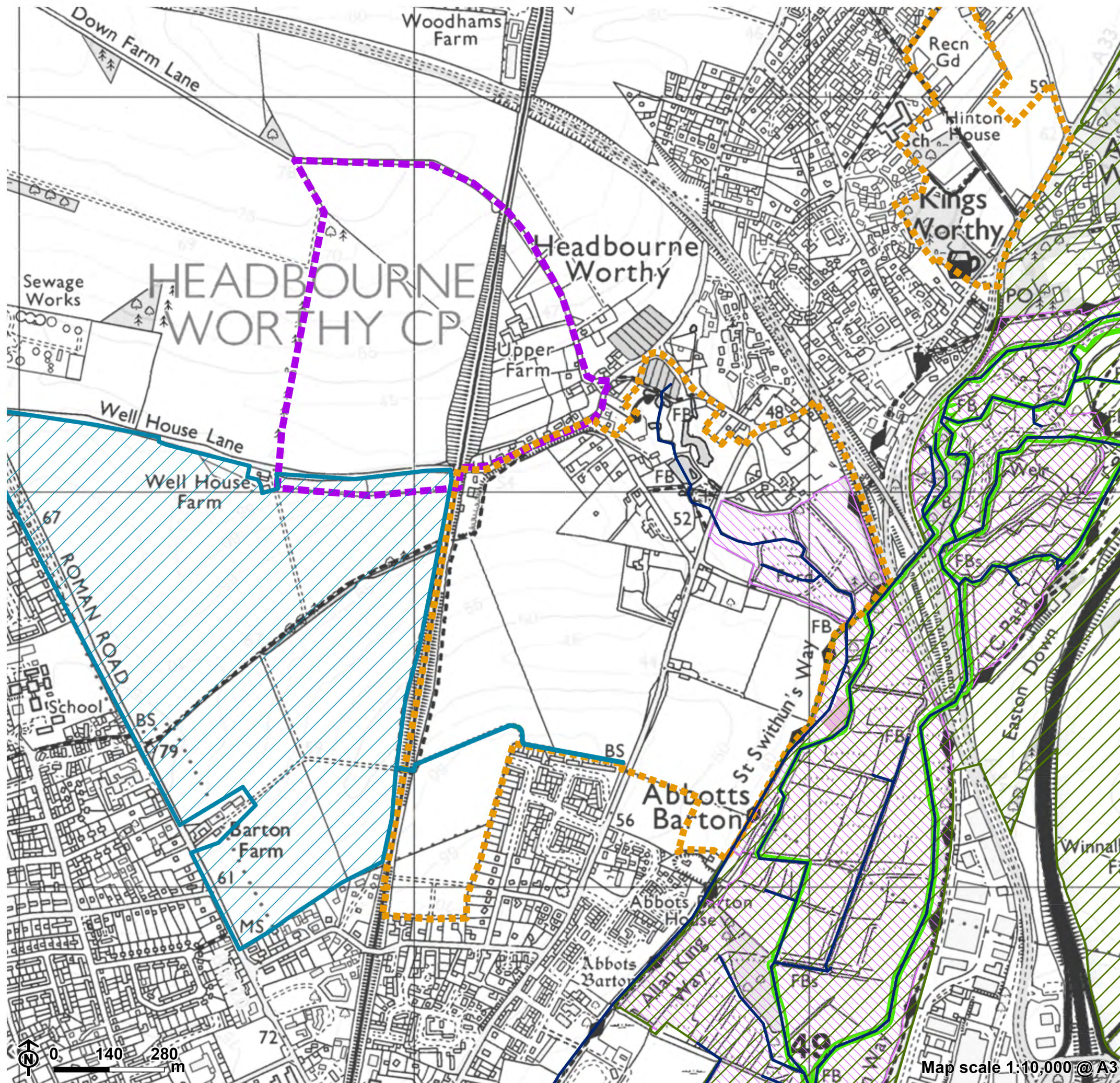
A.108 The gap between Winchester and Compton Street plays an important role in the rural setting of Winchester, which in turn forms part of the setting of the South Downs National Park, and also the more localised setting of Compton Street. The Bushfield development will have some urbanising impact on the gap but the remaining open area will still provide strong distinction between settlements.

Key characteristics of settlement gap

A.109 The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between Winchester and Compton Street:

- The undulating landform and long views available within and across the gap, maintaining an association with the wider countryside and limiting any sense of urban containment.
- The strong urban-edge boundaries to Winchester provided by landform, land cover and the railway line.
- The visual containment of Compton Street within a valley.
- The strong tree cover containing the transport links along the eastern side of the gap: the railway, the M3, the A4030 Hockley Link, Otterbourne Road and the Park and Ride.

Figure A.06: Winchester – Kings Worthy /
Headbourne Worthy Gap



- Existing Settlement Gap
- Additional assessment area
- South Downs National Park
- River
- Planned developments**
- Policy W1: Barton Farm Major Development Area
- Constraints**
- Special Area of Conservation
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Scheduled Monument
- Conservation Area

Winchester – Kings Worthy / Headbourne Worthy

Context

Relationship with designations

A.110 For the purposes of this assessment the existing Winchester – Kings Worthy/Headbourne Worthy gap has been expanded to the north to encompass land between the railway line, Wellhouse Lane and Down Farm Lane. This is due to the proximity of the northern edge of the current gap to the forthcoming development at Kings Barton.

A.111 A tributary stream with associated Flood Zone 3 flows through the northern part of the gap into the River Itchen, the valley of which forms part of the South Downs National Park and defines the eastern edge of the Local Gap. The north-eastern part of the gap includes land within the River Itchen SSSI.

Relationship to development allocations

A.112 Within the emerging Local Plan, land is allocated for residential dwellings through Policy W4: Land West of Courtenay Road. This site lies within the southern tip of the gap to the north of Winchester. Next to this allocated development, allotments are also located within the southern tip of the gap. Therefore, these areas do not contribute to the gap.

A.113 To the west of the gap, beyond the railway line, the emerging development of Kings Barton will form a new suburb to Winchester comprising

approximately 2000 homes. Once fully developed, the site will follow the whole of the western boundary of the existing gap, up to Well House Lane. As part of the development, Barton Meadows Nature reserve has been created on land within the defined settlement gap to the north of the Policy W4 site.

Analysis of settlement gap

Settlement setting

A.114 The majority of Headbourne Worthy comprises of dispersed rural settlement which hasn't developed significantly since the 19th Century. The majority of the development within Headbourne Worthy is on relatively steep slopes of a short valley marked by a number of ponds, strong tree cover and a stream which feeds into the River Itchen (the latter being a key element in the distinctive historic setting of Winchester). This area falls within the defined gap with only a small modern estate on the higher slopes on the northern edge of the settlement treated as part of the defined urban area of Headbourne Worthy.

A.115 Kings Worthy is a large settlement with a small historic centre and a large suburban residential area to the north of the centre. The historic centre of Kings Worthy, covered by a Conservation Area designation, lies within the lower valley side of the River Itchen but the well-treed course of the A34 forms a strong visual and physical boundary to the south and west of the settlement.

A.116 Headbourne Worthy and land in the gap do not form a significant part of the settings of Kings Worthy or Winchester. The terrain within the settlements and on land in the gap contains gently sloping areas of land with areas of tree cover within Headbourne Worthy. The A34 and the strong tree cover along the single carriageway road forms a strong visual and physical separation between Headbourne Worthy and Kings Worthy.

Physical and visual separation

A.117 The north to south gap between the Abbots Barton suburb of Winchester and the defined gap edge at Headbourne Worthy has an approximate distance of 700-900m. However, the development at Kings Barton will bring the expanded edge of Winchester to within approximately 150m of houses on Wellhouse Lane which mark the western edge of Headbourne Worthy, and the southern edge of the existing Local Gap.

A.118 A strong tree belt defines the edge of the Abbots Barton suburb of Winchester, east of Worthy Road. The boundary edge is weaker to the west of Worthy Road. The landform north of Abbots Barton dips into a dry valley, more pronounced to the west of Worthy Road. This valley opens out into the Itchen Valley on the east side of the gap which creates a distinction from Winchester. The tree-lined railway line forms a consistent boundary feature to the Kings Barton development to the west of the gap, although visually it may form less of a barrier towards the northern end of the gap (where there is less tree cover associated with the railway line).

A.119 At Headbourne Worthy there are mature hedgerows and tree boundaries along Wellhouse Land and Bedfield Lane with a well-treed valley floor area in between these two roads. The A34 and associated tree cover forms a strong edge to Kings Worthy. The tributary valley on which Headbourne Worthy is located adds to its distinction from Kings Worthy.

A.120 The eastern part of the gap forms the steeper, lower slopes of Itchen valley which is situated just above the floodplain. However, this physical landform does not add to the distinction from Winchester or Kings Worthy, which both include development on the lower valley sides.

A.121 Worthy Road runs through the centre of the gap providing a direct link between Winchester and Headbourne Worthy. Worthy Road is a tree lined B-road but tree cover is more limited on approach to Headbourne Worthy. This allows a view across most of the gap from just south of Headbourne Worthy, where there is no boundary hedgerow to screen the east of the road, although

there is no intervisibility of settlements. In addition, public views of an open, rural character are available from Barton Meadows Nature Reserve.

Urbanising influences

A.122 The dispersed character of Headbourne Worthy and the extent of the tree cover limit the urbanising influence of development of that part of the settlement that lies within the defined gap. However, some commercial units on the south side of Wellhouse Lane, opposite the end row of houses as you leave the settlement, do introduce some limited urbanising influence alongside the railway line close to the edge of the Kings Barton development area. Houses on the north side of Wellhouse Lane (outside of the gap defined in the emerging Local Plan but within the assessment area) also have some urbanising influence. However, lower density development to the north of this retains a rural, farmstead character/form.

A.123 A pair of Victorian cottages further south in the gap on Worthy Road have a negligible urbanising influence. There is pavement on Worthy Road but it still retains its rural character.

Settlement gap function

Gap strength

A.124 The weakest part of the gap is between Kings Barton development and Headbourne Worthy where there is a distance of 150m between planned residential development in the former and houses on Wellhouse Lane in the latter. There will be a shorter distance of 100m between Kings Barton and the commercial units south of Wellhouse Lane. Along the western edge of the gap, the railway line and associated tree lines form a clear boundary between Kings Barton development and the gap, but there is no other open land to create separation so the defined gap is playing only a limited role.

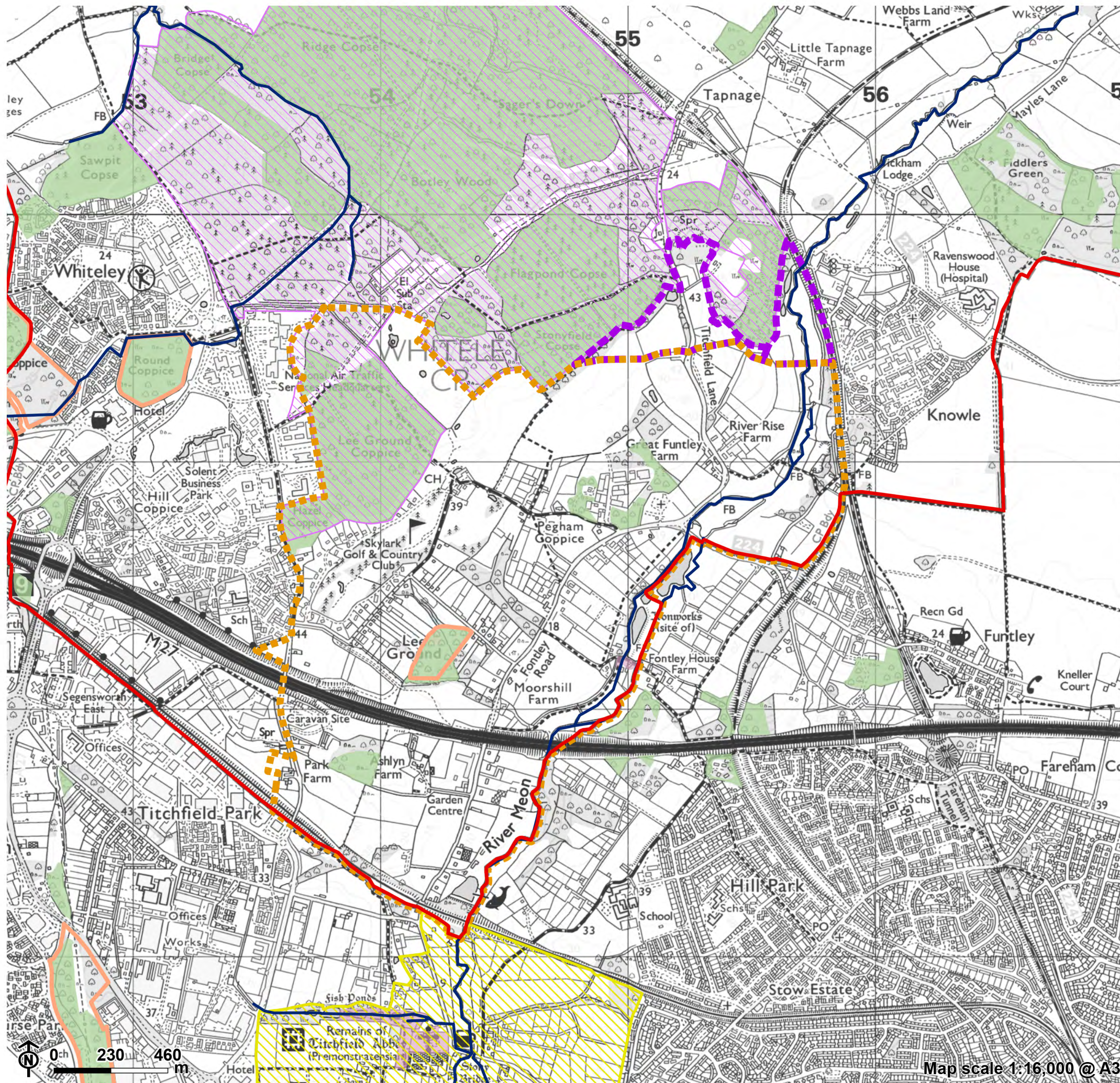
A.125 The gap to the south between Headbourne Worthy and Abbots Barton suburb of Winchester is relatively strong, retaining a rural character that is strengthened by landform and tree cover in and around Headbourne Worthy.

Key characteristics of settlement gap

A.126 The following are important in retaining a sense of separation between Winchester and Kings Worthy/Headbourne Worthy:

- Retaining the rural character of the visually open valley that forms a gap between Abbots Barton and Headbourne Worthy, as experienced at Barton Meadows Nature Reserve and from Worthy Road.
- The dispersed character of houses at Headbourne Worthy, the extent of tree cover around the settlement and its orientation around a tributary valley, which give it a distinctive, contained setting and rural settlement character.
- The role of the railway line as a strong boundary feature to development at Kings Barton.
- Retaining the rural character of Wellhouse Lane alongside Kings Barton, which will help to retain a sense of separation from Headbourne Worthy on approach from this direction.

Figure A.07: Whiteley – Fareham/Fareham Western Wards (the 'Meon Gap')



- Winchester District boundary
- Existing Settlement Gap
- Additional assessment area
- River
- Constraints**
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Local Nature Reserve
- Ancient Woodland
- Scheduled Monument
- Conservation Area

0ch 230 460 m

Map scale 1:16,000 @ A3

Whiteley – Fareham/Fareham Western Wards (the ‘Meon Gap’)

Context

Relationship with designations

A.127 For the purposes of this assessment the existing Whiteley – Fareham/Fareham Western Wards gap has been expanded to encompass two more areas in which land is considered to make some degree of contribution to preventing the merger of settlements. These two areas lie on the northern boundary of the gap adjacent to the settlement of Knowle.

A.128 The southern edge of the gap joins Fareham Borough along the River Meon south of Knowle, then across the railway to the urban edge at Titchfield Park. These adjoining areas in Fareham are defined as a strategic settlement gap, distinguished as a strategic gap (Policy DS2) within the Fareham Local Plan 2037, which together with the gap within Winchester form the ‘Meon Gap’ stretching all the way to Southampton Water.

A.129 The gap includes several small areas of Ancient Woodland but also, on the edge of Whiteley, the Lee Ground/Hazel Coppices Ancient Woodland which in turn forms part of a much larger area of Ancient Woodland and SSSI (Botley Wood and Everett's and Muses Copses) enclosing the gap to the north.

Relationship with development allocations

A.130 The site allocation for Welborne is set out within Local Plan Part 3: The Welbourne Plan and the Fareham Local Plan 2037. The development of land at Welborne will form a new garden community consisting of 6,000 homes and the

delivery of employment space and a new village centre. The site is located solely within Fareham Borough Council on existing farmland between the settlement of Knowle and the A32.

Analysis of settlement gap

Settlement setting

A.131 Whiteley is a new community that was initially developed within the mid-1980s and has since expanded rapidly to include approximately 6,500 homes (some of which are planned), employment areas and a shopping centre. As a modern settlement it lacks historic character but it has a distinct, wooded setting with different sections of the settlement separated by areas of dense woodland. Woodland within the settlement gap contributes to Whiteley's setting.

A.132 Fareham lies to the east of the River Meon and south of the M27. Fareham is a large town that has expanded significantly since the late 19th Century, and in particular in the 1960s. Its historic core is a long way from the modern suburbs that mark its northern-western edge but the Meon Valley nonetheless provides a distinctive setting, with the urban edge stopping at the valley crest. Woodland characterises the steeper valley slopes.

A.133 Knowle was created as a new small settlement in the early years of the 21st century, on the site of a former hospital complex. The tree-lined railway and adjacent River Meon form a distinctive setting to the west of the village.

A.134 To the east of the gap between Knowle and Fareham is the hamlet of Funtley. A strong tree belt along a disused railway line marks the district boundary and limits the visual setting of the settlement.

Physical and visual separation

A.135 There is a gap of around 1.7km between Whiteley and Fareham along the M27, narrowing slightly to 1.6km along the southern edge of the district between Titchfield Park and Fareham. Further north it is a little over 2km from Whiteley to Knowle.

A.136 The urban edge at Titchfield Park is well-treed; the valley landform south of the M27 allows some long views, but the wooded eastern side of the Meon Valley screen Fareham from view.

A.137 To the north of the M27, woodland form a very strong boundary to most of Whiteley but the urban edge is more blurred where houses along Skylark Meadows, surrounding the southern end of Skylark Golf and Country Club, lie within the defined gap to the south of Lee Ground Coppice. However, much of the defined gap within Winchester is on gently undulating land in which the woodland blocks west of Fontley Road have a strong screening impact. Where the valley landform is more pronounced, to the east of Fontley Road, The woodland on the eastern side of the valley screen Fareham and Funtley from view.

A.138 The railway, river and associated tree cover create a strong boundary at Knowle, and there are no road links across the valley.

Urbanising influences

A.139 The central and southern parts of the gap contain a significant number of residential dwellings and commercial buildings, principally along Fontley Road, Lee Ground, Springles Lane and Skylark Meadows. Tree cover helps to screen these buildings but there is still some urbanising influence.

Settlement gap function

Gap strength

A.140 The core River Meon valley is largely undeveloped and, particularly across the boundary into Fareham Borough, is well-treed. Development in the gap blurs the settlement edge of Fareham between the M27 and Lee Ground Coppice, but woodland blocks help to contain urbanising influence. The gaps between Whiteley and both Fareham and Knowle are strong, and the narrower gap south of the M27 between Titchfield Park and Fareham is also relatively strong.

Key characteristics of settlement gap

A.141 The following features within Winchester District are important in retaining a sense of separation between Whiteley – Fareham/Fareham Western Wards (the ‘Meon Gap’):

- The large, wooded areas of Lee Ground Coppice and Hazel Coppice on the edge of Whiteley
- Woodland blocks on the higher valley side west of Fontley Road.
- The limited urbanising influence within the core valley area on the eastern edge of the gap within Winchester district.
- The strong edge to Knowle provided by the railway line, River Meon and associated tree cover.
- The lack of road links west from Knowle.

References

- 1 HM Government (2023) National Planning Policy Framework
- 2 Paragraph: 036 Reference ID: 8-036-20190721
- 3 Fareham Local Plan Examination – The Planning Inspectorate, Report to Fareham Borough Council, May 2015, File Ref: PINS/A1720/429/4
- 4 Canterbury Local Plan Examination. The Planning Inspectorate, Report to Canterbury City Council, June 2017, File Ref: PINS/J2210/429/5
- 5 North Warwickshire Local Plan Examination. The Planning Inspectorate, Report to North Warwickshire Borough Council, December 2015, File Ref: PINS/R3705/429/4
- 6 High Court Judgment between South Northamptonshire Council (claimant) and Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Barwood Land and Estates Ltd (defendants), March 2014 – in particular paragraph 47: Ref [2014] EWHC 573 (Admin)
- 7 PUSH (2008) Policy Framework for Gaps <https://www.push.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Policy-Framework-for-gaps.pdf>

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