

Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils Emerging Local Plan (2014 – 2036)

Green Belt Development Options Appraisal

Post Preferred Green Belt Options Consultation

November 2017



Chiltern
District Council

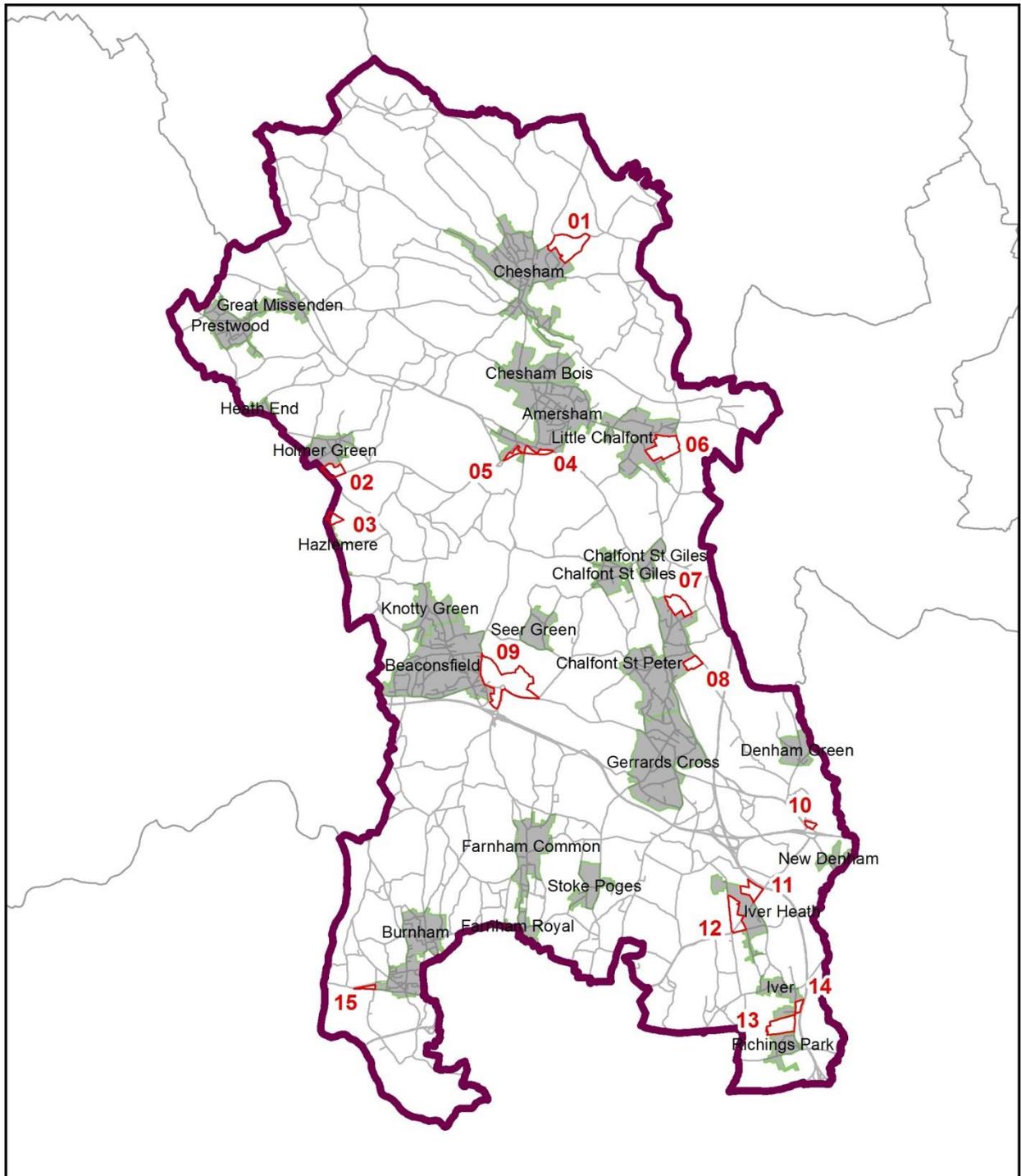


South Bucks
District Council

Strategic Green Belt Options

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Legend

-  Identified in Green Belt Preferred Options Consultation
-  Local Plan Boundary
-  Built Up Area Outside of the Green Belt

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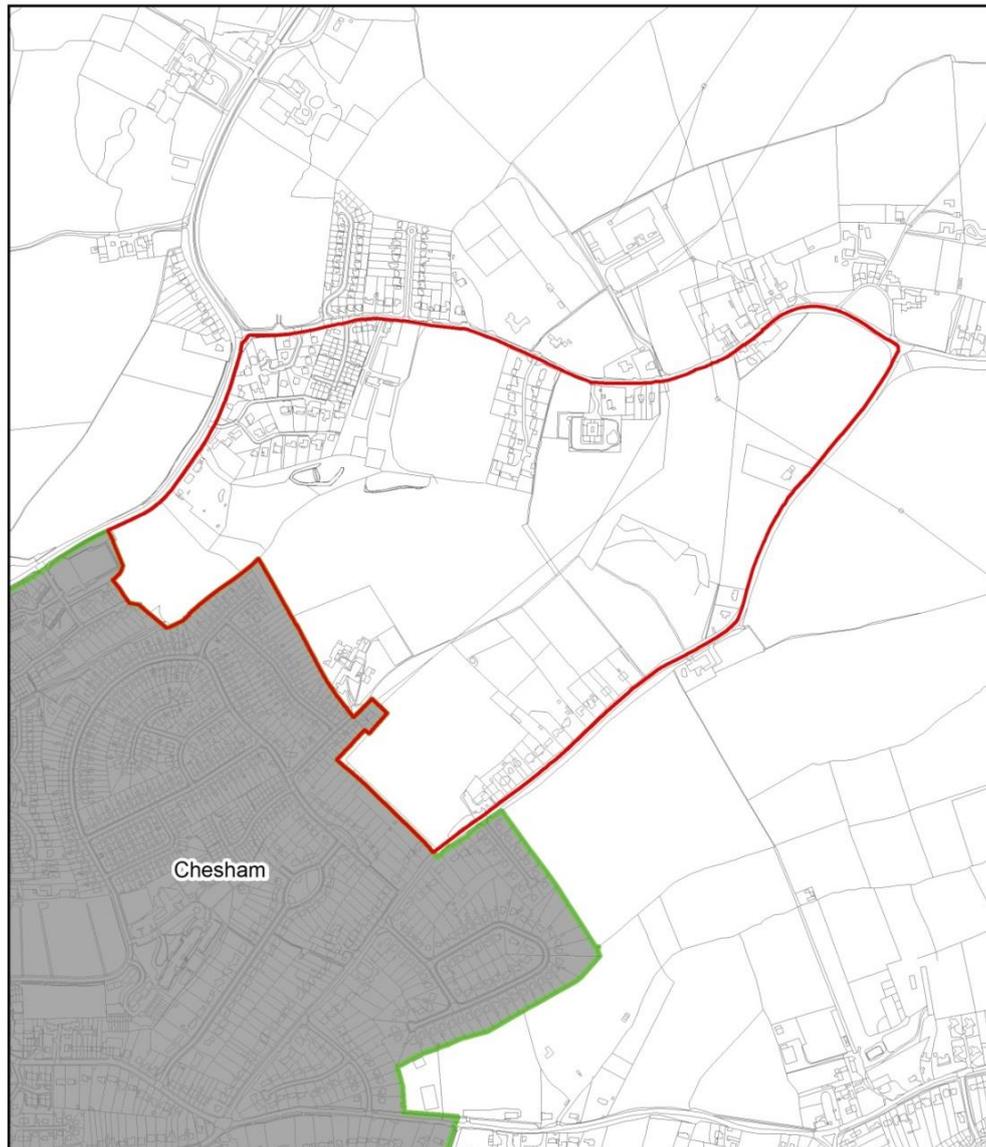
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Green Belt Development Options Appraisal

Option 1: North East of Chesham

Consultation Proposition Summary: The developable area is estimated at 26.1 ha. The option to comprise residential development (900 dwellings at 35 dwellings/Ha and 40% affordable), associated infrastructure (including enlarged primary school), open space, possibly a local centre and potentially Gypsy and Traveller accommodation. Consideration should also be given to scope to include specialist accommodation for elderly people close to local amenities and open space and self-build housing.



Legend

-  Identified in Green Belt Preferred Options Consultation
-  Local Plan Boundary
-  Built-Up Area Outside of the Green Belt



Not to Scale

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Evidence Base To-date	Summary of Findings
<p>Summary reasons for Inclusion as an Option for testing</p>	<p>Chesham is one of the main towns in the plan area and a likely significant generator of development need. As such Chesham is considered an important sustainable focus for future development. The Town is also in need of investment in its town centre and to assist employment restructuring and regeneration of its aging employment building stock.</p> <p>However Chesham has limited deliverable development opportunities within the plan period and is constrained from development opportunities around much of its border by the Chilterns AONB and Green Belt.</p> <p>The Green Belt Assessment Part 1 identified an area to the north east of Chesham for further consideration, an area which also corresponded to one of the few areas outside of the Chilterns AONB. As such an option was identified in the Issues and Options Consultation and tested further through the draft Green Belt Assessment Part 2. This concluded that exceptional circumstances could exist to remove an area from the Green Belt at North East Chesham subject to further evidence base work. Green Belt Preferred Option 1 was identified on this basis.</p> <p>In progressing the Green Belt Assessment Part 2 the methodology introduces a Green Belt buffer test. The North East Chesham option falls outside this buffer but is continuing to be tested as the buffer is based on existing circumstances without taking into account the above considerations or scope to mitigate/address sustainability concerns through new development. As such the option remains a reasonable option for testing within the context for the emerging Local Plan. Continued testing is supported by the Green Belt Preferred Options Sustainability Appraisal after mitigations.</p>
<p>Green Belt Preferred Options Consultation</p>	<p>Overall: The Councils received 380 objections for this option (12.55% of all representations). Of the 380 objecting representations the following issues were the most frequently raised:</p> <p>Traffic - 289 (76.05%) Education - 221 (58.16%) Health (Hospitals and GPs) - 192 (50.53%) Infrastructure - 190 (50.00%) Green Belt - 179 (47.11%) Public Transport - 169 (44.47%) Pollution - 146 (38.42%) Sewerage - 143 (37.63%) Parking - 99 (26.05%) Biodiversity - 89 (23.42%) Flooding - 73 (19.21%)</p> <p>In response to what should be sought from development, the most frequently stated improvements were (number of respondents indicated in brackets):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements to school provision (31); • Infrastructure improvements (26); • Road improvements (24); and • Healthcare Provision (21). <p>Key Duty to Co-operate Organisation's Summary Comments.</p> <p><u>Natural England</u> - Only minor visual impacts may result from the development and that potential biodiversity impacts if not appropriately managed.</p> <p><u>Environment Agency</u> - Given existing issues arising in Chesham: i.e. Vale Brook Culvert drainage capacity and surface water issues the option should not allow surface water to drain downhill and westwards into the catchment of the Vale Brook Culvert. Any additional surface water could potentially have a negative</p>

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	<p>effect on the River Chess and water environment in Chesham.</p> <p><u>Historic England</u> - The grade II listed 'White House' and the grade II listed Brockhurst Farm and granary are located just to the south-east of the option. Their settings should be respected and buildings retained.</p> <p><u>NHS Chiltern Clinical Commissioning Group</u> - Primary care services will be required to expand/be modified in order to cope with the population and demographic growth.</p> <p><u>Buckinghamshire County Council</u> - Concern over whether exceptional circumstances to release the land from the Green Belt exist for this option. Mitigation against traffic would need to be properly considered. Parking may be an issue. Moderate ecological sensitivity due to presence of Biological Notification Site and Biological Opportunity Areas on the site.</p> <p>Other Key Consultees Summary, including Parish/Town Councils and land owners.</p> <p><u>Chilterns AONB Conservation Board</u> - Although outside the AONB it is within the setting of the Chilterns AONB. An assessment should be carried out to examine the impacts on the Chilterns AONB. In this case the Chilterns Conservation Board considers that there will be: impacts on traffic; increased recreation pressure; abstracting water from chalk streams could impact the River Chess; and lead to increased pressure on water infrastructure.</p> <p><u>Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils Environmental Health</u> - Due to the presence of the Chesham Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) on Berkhamstead Road/Broad Street it is essential that infrastructure is in place to enable travel to and from the railway station using sustainable means. Funding will be required to mitigate any adverse effect.</p> <p><u>Chesham Town Council</u> - Do not believe that exceptional circumstances exist for the release of the site from the Green Belt. Development would have adverse impacts on traffic; increase potential for flooding; impact sewage treatment works; increase abstraction of water from the River Chess; result in the absorption of Lye Green into Chesham; not deliver sufficient affordable homes or specialist accommodation for older people; not deliver sufficient employment opportunities; result in urban sprawl, impact the AONB; and negatively impact wildlife.</p> <p><u>The Chesham Society</u> - Housing provision to be delivered as part of the option should be situated within the built-up area of the town, and as a result have limited impacts on the traffic generated in the area. An alternative is their vision for Chesham Town Centre.</p> <p><u>Geltex Properties Ltd</u> - Promoting the site for development, exceptional circumstances exist for the release of the site from the Green Belt and it can deliver a wide range of benefits.</p> <p><u>Countryside Properties</u> - Support the option coming forward for development</p> <p><u>Henry Mash Court Management Ltd</u> - Objecting to the proposal wholly disproportionate and can only exaggerate existing deficiencies in infrastructure, public transport and the possible undermining of public health.</p> <p><u>Deer Park Walk Management Ltd (Brown Not Green Campaign)</u> - There is a lack of exceptional circumstances to release the land from the Green Belt; challenges the Green Belt Assessment and Green Belt Development Options Appraisal document and development would have a significant impact on the town. The</p>

Evidence Base To-date	Summary of Findings
	<p>Councils should first look to build on brownfield sites before Green Belt sites. Includes a 1,455 signature petition in objection to the option.</p> <p><u>Plato Investments</u> - Strongly object as it would harm the setting of Listed Buildings; cause harm to landscape; result in a loss of habitats of principle importance; significant highway issues; poor public transport; increase pollution in an area with existing air quality problems; and result in coalescence of Chesham with the nearby historic village areas of Lye Green and Orchard Leigh. Exceptional circumstances do not exist for the release of the site.</p> <p><u>The Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust</u> - Identified a number of Biological Notification sites and potential habitats which should be protected; each should have at least 50m buffer from development. If the site is found to be developable it is likely that on-site compensation would be needed to compensate for impacts on wildlife.</p>
Follow Up Duty to Co-operate Discussions	The County Council has been requested to clarify the reasons for their concerns.
Landscape Assessment (subject to comments from Natural England and where relevant Chilterns AONB)	<p>Development is constrained by the need to protect the separate identities of the settlement of Lye Green and Chesham, protect the setting of the AONB and retain characteristic views across the site. Need to conserve the woodland blocks, trees and hedgerows for their ecological and landscape value, protect the setting of nearby listed buildings and protect the rural character of Lye Green Road. Within these constraints, a reduced part of the site could be considered further for residential development. Some parts of site are more visually contained and influenced by surrounding built form including field in the north western corner. Recommended mitigation and enhancement is a combination of orchard planting, native woodland planting along the margins of the adjacent woodland block, graded down to native shrubs and long grass margins, including links between the settlement and the wider PROW network and contributing to the wider green infrastructure. A strong planted edge should be provided adjacent to the open fields, reflecting the positive character and depth of existing appropriate strong landscape edges in the area and linking with wider countryside. Hedge and tree planting should be incorporated adjacent to the back gardens of the houses off Lye Green Road. A maximum height of approximately 8.5m (two storeys) should be a limit to any new development within the site</p>
Wildlife Survey (where relevant)	Woodland block north of Hill Top estate is a Biological Notification Site. Recent review of BNS sites has not been able to access site to see if worthy as Local Wildlife Site but considered unlikely to be of sufficient quality.
Infrastructure	<p>Transport: Phase 2 of the local transport modelling work has tested mitigation requirements for Chesham. These will need to be subject to further testing with a lower level of housing at this option following the Landscape Assessment.</p> <p>Primary Education: The County Council as Education Authority provided comments on the proposals for Chesham as part of their consultation response to the Green Belt Preferred Options Consultation. This considered the impacts on education infrastructure arising from 900 new dwellings on the NE Chesham Option plus HELAA sites. Based on this, BCC identified a need for a 1.6ha site within the NE Chesham option to either facilitate expansion of existing primary schools, or the provision of a 1.5 Form of Entry (FE) primary school including pre-school, to be future proofed to 2FE. In addition to the provision of land, standard financial contributions toward primary education infrastructure would be required.</p> <p>BCC have been asked to consider the impact from a lower growth scenario (based on the Landscape Assessment of 115 new dwellings) and dwellings arising from HELAA sites. Based on this lower growth scenario BCC advised a likely generate 0.5FE demand, which would make expansion of primary education facilities difficult as schools are only likely to agree to expand by a</p>

Evidence Base To-date	Summary of Findings
	<p>whole form of entry. They have also noted that higher density HELAA sites are unlikely to produce the same pupil yields as family housing. Potential options to meet additional demand are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Expansion of Brushwood Junior School, which may require additional land within the NE Chesham Option, ii) The provision of a 1FE primary school including pre-school on a 1ha site within the NE Chesham Option, although the limited scale of housing would likely result in a surplus of places and insufficient developer funding to build the school thus requiring BCC to secure additional funding. iii) Expansion of Our Lady's RC Catholic School, which could also meet demand arising in Amersham due to its location. However the school is on a constrained site and there is a risk that insufficient Chesham parents would meet faith based admissions criteria. Some parents may also not wish to enrol their children at a faith-based school. iv) Expansion of Ley Hill School, although this is likely to increase home to school travel distances v) Expansion of Ivingswood Academy. <p>These options would be subject to the agreement of the relevant school governing bodies and feasibility studies to assess the schools suitability for expansion.</p> <p>Health: The CCG consider that Chesham is one of the more preferable locations for development, however they also note that the development of Option 1 (as 900 new dwellings) would require primary care services to expand or undergo modification in order to cope with population and demographic growth. Financial contributions from developers towards health infrastructure would likely be required. CCG view on a lower growth scenario of 115 new dwellings plus HELAA sites is waited.</p> <p>Other: Affinity has advised that there are no strategic limitations on drinking water supply for the level of growth planned.</p> <p>Waste water – Based on the level of growth in the Green Belt Preferred Options, Thames Water advised that strategic drainage infrastructure for the waste water network is likely to be needed to meet demand. In addition the waste water treatment works in the area may need minor upgrades to meet demand and this process can take between 18 months to 3 years.</p> <p>Flood risk – The existing condition of the Chesham Culvert is a key infrastructure limitation and the option and local Plan policies will need to ensure that new development does not place unacceptable strain on it and that a scheme to restore the culvert is necessary.</p> <p>Surface water flooding is a significant issue for this option and it will need to be designed so that the site is self-contained in terms of its drainage impacts so as to avoid downstream impacts on the sensitive water environment and culvert of Chesham. It may be possible to secure a site design which helps to mitigate existing potential for surface water flows downhill into the town.</p>
<p>Green Infrastructure (subject to on-going evidence base work and policy requirement for amenity and recreational space</p>	<p>Retention of all good and moderate quality tree cover over the site including field tree groups. Retention of other vegetated areas where they contribute to landscape and biodiversity value. Restoring lost field boundaries, orchards and connecting woodland. Long-term management of woodland blocks. Retaining legibility and setting of PROW network and creating additional links. Conserve rural character of Lye Green Road and Lycrome Road. Seek to improve urbanising boundary treatments to school.</p>

Evidence Base To-date	Summary of Findings
including children play space)	
Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople	Accommodation needs remain within the plan area following the updated needs assessment for which urban extensions continue to need to be considered to provide pitches / culturally suitable accommodation.
Deliverability (not including Viability)	<p>Land Owner(s): Parts of the Option are being promoted by some landowners/developers however not all landowners are supportive. Unless this position changes comprehensive development is unlikely without Council intervention. At this point in time evidence suggests that landowner consensus does not exist and so the Preferred Option as set out in the Consultation Document is unlikely to be deliverable.</p> <p>Timing: The Housing Delivery Study for Buckinghamshire report concludes that due to the uncertainties surrounding willingness of landowners and likely need for the entire site to come forward recommends assuming that no homes are delivered in by March 2033. If issues are resolved then development could expect an annual delivery rate of up to 70 dwellings per annum once commenced.</p>
Preferred Options Sustainability Appraisal	The Option will deliver medium beneficial outcomes for delivering new housing and health facilities. Impacts on the economy, transport and climate change adaptation will deliver low beneficial outcomes. Impacts on cultural heritage, landscape, natural resources, pollution and waste are measured as low adverse effects and medium adverse effects for biodiversity and climate change mitigation.
Conclusion	<p>Remove from the Green Belt as safeguarded land.</p> <p>A residential development proposal to be held back from development until the following criteria are met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comprehensive development capable of being secured in accordance with an approved development brief reflecting as far as possible the development option set out in the Green Belt Preferred Options consultation. Development to include an appropriate amount of affordable housing, mix of house types to reflect need and other specialist housing needs at the time of release (e.g. accommodation for elderly people, Gypsy and Travellers and self-build and custom build opportunities). <p style="text-align: center;"><u>and</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Either evidence that expected vehicle use generated by the development will not detrimentally contribute to air pollution within the Berkhamstead Air Quality Management Area or a development proposal with the ability to secure measures to alleviate or mitigate against any harmful impact. <p>Alternatively the site can be released for development in accordance with a proposal in a made neighbourhood plan.</p> <p>Necessary infrastructure, such as expansion of Brushwood Primary School or advance landscaping/groundworks, can be considered for being bought forward in advance of the release of the wider area for development if required to help meet wider community needs or as part of advanced delivery (e.g. early establishment of structural landscaping).</p> <p>The development brief to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A proposed open space framework to secure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Wherever possible retention of woods, trees and hedgerows b) New strategic landscaping and open space to provide a satisfactory

Evidence Base To-date	Summary of Findings
	<p>buffer to the Chilterns AONB/countryside</p> <p>c) A clear visual open space separation between any development and Lye Green with the open space being characteristic of the surrounding countryside</p> <p>d) Wider benefits such as recreation and amenity space and a net gain in biodiversity (e.g. through habitat management/enhancement and biodiversity off-setting)</p> <p>e) Retention of existing public rights of way within landscaped corridors and retaining views to the countryside;</p> <p>f) Ability to secure measures to ensure the framework continued protection and management.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secured pedestrian and cycle connectivity with adjacent areas and wider connectivity, including with passenger transport, with the town centre and railway station. • Timely delivery of sufficient and necessary infrastructure, including sustainable transport measures to seek to minimise car use, possible expanded primary school and a Sustainable Urban Drainage system. <p>The scale of residential development likely to be needed to secure the necessary development outcome and supporting infrastructure will mean that the Landscape Assessment recommendation may have to be compromised with mitigations through careful design, layout, landscaping and open space management, potentially extending beyond the area to be removed from the Green Belt. In addition where compromises occur compensatory benefits will need to be considered.</p> <p>Subject to the right development proposal there is considered to be some scope for compromise. For example given the need to accept character change from countryside to built-form, that public rights of way character in the site will need to change over a short length which could be mitigated to minimise the impact and that landscaping need not be limited to within the site. In order for development to proceed the scope the landscape assessment concerns will need to be addressed through an agreed development brief.</p> <p>The scale of development is to be less than the indicative 900 dwellings identified in the Green Belt Preferred Options Consultation but likely to be more than the 115 dwellings recommended in the Landscape Assessment however the resultant scale of development is considered to be insufficient to be able to viably support a new local centre.</p>