



Email: [info@ottershawforum.com](mailto:info@ottershawforum.com) Website: [www.ottershawforum.com](http://www.ottershawforum.com)

# Ottershaw Neighbourhood Plan Evidence Base

## Local Gap and Green Corridor Study

### **PURPOSE:**

To identify and justify any areas of open land between the Ottershaw main settlement area and its neighbouring settlements and make recommendations for neighbourhood plan policy, to prevent their physical or perceptual coalescence.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

This Local Gap Study has been prepared under the direction of the ONF Steering Committee by the Environment Working Group as part of the evidence base for the Ottershaw Neighbourhood Plan.

Its purpose is to provide an objective assessment of the remaining open and semi-open land separating Ottershaw from surrounding settlements, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023) and Runnymede Local Plan (2020).

The study responds to community concern that incremental development could erode the distinct identity of Ottershaw. Maintaining these physical and visual separations is considered key to preserving the area's wildlife corridors, rural setting, landscape character, and sense of place.

### **2. POLICY CONTEXT**

#### **2.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023)**

The NPPF emphasises the importance of planning policies that protect the character and distinctiveness of settlements.

Relevant sections include:

- **Paragraph 20(d):** Local plans should “set out a clear strategy for enhancing the natural and built environment, including protecting valued landscapes.”
- **Paragraph 85:** Planning policies should “recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.”
- **Paragraph 106:** Transport and development should avoid coalescence that increases urban sprawl or reduces accessibility to open countryside.

- **Paragraph 144:** In Green Belt areas, one of the five purposes is *“to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.”* Although not all land within the Ottershaw Neighbourhood Area is designated Green Belt, the same principle of maintaining settlement separation remains valid for local gap designations.

## 2.2 Runnymede Local Plan (Adopted 2020)

- **Policy SL19: Settlement General Policy** supports the maintenance of open land that contributes to the separation of settlements.
- **Policy EE1: Landscape** seeks to conserve and enhance the character and setting of settlements, including open areas that contribute to local distinctiveness.
- **Policy EE9: Green Infrastructure** promotes the retention of undeveloped land contributing to green connectivity and openness between settlements.
- **In combination**, these policies provide a local framework that supports the definition of “Local Gaps” in Neighbourhood Plans.

## 2.3 Surrey Local Nature Recovery Strategy (Draft 2025)

The emerging LNRS data identifies the corridor between Ottershaw and Chertsey South as a key biodiversity opportunity area (woodland and hedgerow enhancement). This dual ecological and visual function strengthens the case for its protection.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The following approach has been applied:

1. **Desktop Review** of aerial photography, Runnymede Borough Council GIS layers, Green Belt boundaries, other OS mapping, RBC Green & Blue Infrastructure SPD and the Surrey Landscape Character Assessment.
2. **Field Survey (2024–25):** Visual appraisal of key gaps from publicly accessible viewpoints.
3. **Analysis of Settlement Edges** Gap analysis to determine the extent to which development has encroached towards neighbouring areas.
4. **Assessment of Function:** Each gap has been assessed against three criteria:
  - (A) Physical separation;
  - (B) Visual openness;
  - (C) Contribution to settlement identity and countryside setting.
5. **Recommendations** for policy wording and indicative boundary definition (to be confirmed by Runnymede BC during the plan-making process).

Note: For the discounted areas, only a limited desktop analysis was conducted as detailed scoring was not required.

#### **4. GAP CRITERIA.**

The following criteria were used to identify and categorise gaps:

##### **Category 1 - Strategic Gaps**

**Purpose:**

To maintain clear separation between Ottershaw and larger settlements of Chertsey, Woking and Addlestone).

**Characteristics:**

- Wider expanses of open countryside, often multi-parish or cross-boundary (typically. 650metres or more).
- Typically coincide with **Green Belt** or major landscape designations.
- Critical to the overall spatial structure of the borough.
- May also support biodiversity corridors, floodplain functions, or green infrastructure.

##### **Category 2 – Local Gaps**

**Purpose:**

To maintain separation between Ottershaw and distinct settlements or neighbourhoods within a single parish or district, where the distance is narrower and the threat of coalescence is more pressing or immediate.

**Characteristics:**

- Narrower bands (often 200–400 m to a maximum of 650m).
- Include fields, woodland belts, paddocks, or allotments that define settlement edges.
- May not all be Green Belt but are locally valued for openness and views.
- Important for maintaining settlement identity and preventing “urban creep”.

##### **Category 3 – Functional or Visual Gaps**

**Purpose:**

To protect short or partial visual breaks that contribute to perception of separation, even if physical distance is small.

**Characteristics:**

- Often experienced along approach roads or public rights of way.
- Openness or topography creates a visual distinction between settlements.
- Development in these locations risks giving the impression of continuous urban form.

##### **Category 4 - Ecological or Green Infrastructure Gaps**

**Purpose:**

To reinforce ecological connectivity and multi-functional green space between settlements. Wider connectivity is shown at Appendix A-11.

**Characteristics:**

- Overlap with Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs), LNRS Priority Areas, SANGs, or floodplains.
- May double as recreational or habitat corridors.
- Their open character contributes both to visual separation and ecological resilience.

**Category 5 – Residual or Transitional Gaps****Purpose:**

To identify remaining fragments of open land under development pressure that still make a tangible contribution to separation.

**Characteristics:**

- Often small-scale parcels between built edges.
- May not qualify as full Local Gaps but merit inclusion in policy wording to avoid further erosion.

**Note: For the purpose of this study only categories 1 and 2 have been analysed although characteristics from the other 3 categories have been referenced where relevant.**

**4. GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE.**

The study has been tasked with assessing all potential gap areas between the Ottershaw main settlement boundary and the boundary of the neighbourhood area using the wider urban boundaries surrounding the neighbourhood area as the full extent of the study. This is to ensure that the full scope and significance of the areas can be measured. The study area is shown at Appendix A-2.

**5. CONTEXT: SETTLEMENT PATTERN**

The Ottershaw Neighbourhood Area (NA) lies between Chertsey in the north, Rowtown and Addlestone in the east, New Haw and Woodham in the south and the more distant settlements of Woking and Chobham in the south west, and Longcross in the West (appendix A-10).

The NA comprises a largely wooded and low-density settlement surrounded by pasture and mature woodland. Key open areas include:

- The A320 corridor separating Ottershaw and Chertsey South;
- The Hare Hill area and to the east forming part of the separation from Rowtown/Addlestone;
- Open fields and hedgerow systems north of Murray Road and Spinney Hill maintaining separation from Chertsey South and Addlestone.
- Timber and Ether Hill with Queenwood providing green connectivity into the Thames Basin & Heahs SPA and separation from Longcross and Chobham.
- A mix of parkland, woodland and farmland providing separation from Woking, New Haw and Woodham and green connectivity into other areas.

## 6. IDENTIFICATION OF GAPS

The following 6 areas were identified as logical Gaps of significance (Appendix A-2).

**Coalescence.** Coalescence buffer zones are shown at Appendix A-9. In particular this shows the increased risk and importance of the areas to the north and east of the Ottershaw main settlement area. The basis of this information is drawn from the RBC 2017 Green Belt Study.

### Gap 1: Ottershaw – Chertsey South (Appendix A-3)

- **Location:** As shown on Appendix A-3.
- **Function:** Provides the western segment of the primary physical and visual separation between Ottershaw and the southern edge of Chertsey urban area. Links with the Thames Basin & Heath's G&BI corridor to the south west (Appendix A-11) and runs towards Thorpe and the River Thames in the north.
- **Character:** A mixture of managed woodland, grassland, parkland, a landscaped business area and SANG, forming an important ecological and landscape corridor.
- **Relevant Designations:**
  - **Within Site:** LP2030 Allocation Sites SL13, Green Belt, Botleys Mansion (Grade II listed), Silverlands (Grade II), Medieval Moated Archaeological Site (nr St Peter's Hospital), Homewood Park SANG, TPO 226, 244, 138, 4, 424, 439, 38, Chobham and South Heaths SNCI, Hardwick Park & Hardwick Court Farm Area of High Archaeological Potential, Fan Grove & Hardwick Court Farm SNCI, Fan Grove ancient woodland.
  - **Nearby:** No2 Chobham Rd (Grade II), Murray House Façade (Grade II), Ether Hill and Queenwood & Chertsey Common SANG, Queenwood BOA, Chobham and South Heaths SNCI, TPO 6, 97.
- **Assessment:**
  - **Physical Separation:** Strong. Only a small number of built forms in the main within the landscaped business area in the central segment of the gap. Typical width 800m (100m gap between buffers near A320 – see Appendix A-9).
  - **Visual Openness (Appendix B):** High, limited by some tree cover to the north but open across most of the area. Historic assets of Foxhills Manor to the north west and Botleys Mansion embedded within Homewood Park SANG.
  - **Contribution to Identity:** Very high – defines Ottershaw's north western edge and marks its transition to the urban spread of Chertsey South which has recently be heavily developed along its boundary.
- **Vulnerability:** Very High: Risk from housing and business/commercial development, ancillary development linked and/or adjacent to A320 or associated infrastructure expansion.

**Recommendation:** This area should be defined as a **Strategic Local Gap** in the Neighbourhood Plan, referencing its dual function as visual buffer and biodiversity corridor. See Appendix A.

## **Gap 2: Ottershaw – Addlestone /Chertsey (Appendix A-4)**

- **Location:** As shown on Appendix A-4.
- **Function:** Provides open rural land forming transition between the Ottershaw settlement edge, Chertsey South and Addlestone’s urban edge.
- **Character:** Undulating rural landscape with embedded ancient woodland, parkland (incl golf course)grassland, and open paddocks. One embedded farm and one school. Straddles the M25 to the east.
- **Relevant Designations:**
  - **Within Site:** Green Belt, TPO 97, 16, Murray House Façade (Grade II), Spinney Wood SNCI, Medieval Moated Site (archaeological), Addlestone Cemetery & chapel.
  - **Nearby:** Wheelers Green (Grade II), Botleys Mansion (Grade II), Murray House Façade (Grade II), No2 Chobham Rd (Grade II), SANG adjacent to St Peter’s Way (under construction), Hare Hill SANG, TPO 38, 48, 221, Hare Hill SANG.
- **Assessment:**
  - **Physical Separation:** Very Strong – Addlestone’s edge is defined by the floodplain and road corridor. Chertsey South developments under LP2030 to the north have already significantly reduced the gap to the edge of St Peters Way. Typical width 700-750mm (>50m gap between buffers – see Appendix A-9)
  - **Visual Openness:** Very High. Views from A320, Murray Road, Spinney Hill and PRow underline openness. Historic views of Foxhills and Botleys Mansion. View to the north impacted by LP2030 Chertsey South developments. (see Appendix B, views 2, 3, 4, 9, 13).
  - **Contribution to Identity:** High: Essential to Ottershaw’s rural northern approaches. In addition leafy, treelined approaches with species rich hedgerows along both the A320 and the B3121 routes.
- **Vulnerability:** Very High – Risk from housing development. There are 4 sites promoted for development covering approx. 50% of the area. (ref SLAA 2021). A320/M25 infrastructure works will also intrude spatially and visually and have a 30-50year lifespan for recovery.

**Recommendation:** This area should be defined as a *Strategic Local Gap* in the Neighbourhood Plan referencing its dual function as visual buffer and biodiversity corridor. Maintain existing openness; integrate into the Neighbourhood Plan's Green Infrastructure network and discourage any development that would visually connect Ottershaw with Addlestone to the east or Chertsey South to the north. See Appendix A-9/10.

### **Gap 3: Ottershaw – Rowtown/New Haw (Appendix A-5)**

- **Location:** As shown on Appendix A-5.
- **Function:** Maintains a narrow but critical open break between the built edge of Ottershaw (to the west, Rowtown (to the east) and New Haw (to the south east). Links to the Wey Valley Blue/Green corridor to the east. See Appendix A-11.
- **Character:** Predominantly pasture and paddock with mature hedgerows; some visual permeability due to topography. Straddles the River Bourne flood plain. Wooded SANG including TPOs to the north.
- **Relevant Designations:**
  - **Within Site:** Green Belt, River Bourne and Halls Farm, 2 SNCI. (River Bourne/Wey Navigation) River Wey & Tributaries BOA, Brox Copse and Great Wood ancient woodland, TPO 287, 384, 221, 427. Barn at Bousley Farm (Grade II), 4 sites of Area of High Archaeological Potential (largest nr Halls Farm), Hare Hill & Franklands SANG.
  - **Nearby:** Birch Wood ancient woodland, Old Thatched Cott (Grade II), Walton Leigh LGS.
- **Assessment:**
  - **Physical Separation:** Moderate – only 250–300 m at narrowest point. (buffers overlap extensively – see Appendix A-9). The gap has been reduced in part by the LP2030 Ottershaw East development (Broxborough Park), SL2 (Brox End) and SL18 (2 parts of-Central Vet Labs). Views fragmented by the topography. Good access across the gap via PRowS. Bisected by roads. Wooded SANG to the north and Flood areas/BOA to south.
  - **Visual Openness (appendix B, views 7, 8 & 13):** Moderate. Views across open fields are key to sense of rural separation.
  - **Contribution to Identity:** Very High – if developed to any further degree, Ottershaw, Rowtown and New Haw would effectively merge and the Green/Blue corridor lost.
- **Vulnerability:** High – pressure from infill development and domestic curtilage extensions. There are 15 sites in this area promoted for development (Ref SLAA 2021).

**Recommendation:** This area should be defined as a *Local Gap (High Sensitivity)* in the Neighbourhood Plan with policy protection against any form of built development other than essential green infrastructure. See Para 7 below.

#### **Gap 4: Sheerwater and Woodham (Appendix A-6)**

**Location:** As shown on Appendix A-6.

#### **Function:**

The area functions as a local–strategic separation zone preventing the outward expansion of Woking and Sheerwater towards Ottershaw and Rowtown.

It also provides a green and blue infrastructure corridor via the River Bourne, supporting ecological connectivity and flood management.

In landscape terms, the gap helps to define the northern edge of Woking, preserving the sense of transition from suburban to countryside character along the A320 approach and Woodham Lane.

#### **Character:**

The character is predominantly open and rural, with a very low density of scattered dwellings, a patchwork of pasture, golf course, riparian woodland, and a mix of low-density and open residential fringes.

The land is largely undeveloped, with linear woodland belts and hedgerows that limit long-distance views while retaining perceptual openness.

Key features include:

- Green and blue corridor associated with the River Bourne floodplain,
- Transitional urban-edge woodlands north of Woodham Lane, and
- Small woodland clusters forming a visual and acoustic buffer to the A320.

This landscape is largely private land accessible from local roads, maintaining a perceptible rural break between settlements.

#### **Relevant Designations:**

##### **Within Site:**

- Metropolitan Green Belt (Runnymede and Woking Boroughs)
- Flood Zone (River Bourne corridor)
- Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA): River Bourne Corridor
- Great Wood, Birch Wood and Brox Copse ancient woodland.
- TPO Woodland mainly along edge of A320.
- Birch Wood SNCI.
- Old Farmhouse (Grade II).

- Broxborough SANG
- Thames Basin Heaths SPA 5km Zone of Influence
- Area of High archaeological Potential, Anningsley Park Farm.

**Nearby:**

- Woking Borough Green Infrastructure Network (Basingstoke Canal)
- Timber Hill, Chaworth Copse and Ottershaw Chase SANG.
- Christ Church, Chertsey Lodge and Barn at Bousley Farm (Grade II).
- TPO woodland along edge of A320.

**Assessment:**

**Physical Separation:** Strong–Moderate. The area retains a distinct physical break between the northern urban edge of Woking/Sheerwater and the southern extent of Ottershaw, with the A320 acting as a partial boundary but not an impermeable barrier. Open land, tree belts, and floodplain meadows collectively provide a meaningful buffer that limits visual and physical coalescence.

**Visual Openness (Appendix ?):** Moderate–High. The visual sense of openness varies: near the A320, screening vegetation reduces long views, but central and eastern sections retain wide views across open land towards Sheerwater and Bousely Rise. Overall, the landscape contributes positively to the perceived separation between urban and rural settings.

**Contribution to Identity:** High. This gap is critical to maintaining Ottershaw’s rural edge and Woking’s defined northern boundary. It provides a visual and functional distinction between the more urbanised environment of Woking/Sheerwater and the lower-density, village character of Ottershaw and Rowtown. Loss of openness here would significantly erode the sense of individual settlement identity.

**Vulnerability:** Moderate–High. While Green Belt policy provides baseline protection, the area remains vulnerable to pressure from infill and urban-edge redevelopment, particularly associated with Woking’s housing demand (New Zealand Golf Club) and A320 corridor improvements.

Changes in land management (e.g., enclosure, hardstanding, or flood attenuation works) could incrementally reduce openness and visual separation if not sensitively designed.

**Recommendation:**

Designate as a ***Strategic Local Gap (High Sensitivity)***.

- Purpose: To prevent coalescence between Woking/Sheerwater and Ottershaw, safeguard openness, and maintain the rural transition north of Woking.
- Policy Reference: Supports NPPF (2023) para. 144(b) — preventing neighbouring towns from merging — and Runnymede Local Plan Policy EE1 (Green Belt).
- Actions:

- Retain full Green Belt status.
- Include in the Ottershaw Neighbourhood Plan as a Local Green Infrastructure Corridor.
- Coordinate with Woking Borough Council and Surrey County Council to ensure landscape enhancement and floodplain management align with Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) priorities.

### **Gap 5: Woking/Horsell (Appendix A-7)**

**Location:** As shown on Appendix A-7

**Function:**

This gap performs a strategic separation and environmental buffering role.

It prevents the physical and visual merging of Woking with Chobham and Mimbridge, and acts as a transitional green corridor along the Bourne valley river system. The area also serves as an important ecological link between Ottershaw Woods, Chobham Common, and the Bourne Valley green and blue Infrastructure Network.

The gap’s openness provides an essential visual and perceptual break when travelling along both the A320 and A319 corridors reinforcing the distinction between the built form of Woking and the rural hinterland of Chobham and Ottershaw.

**Character:**

The character is predominantly rural and open, composed of pasture fields, hedgerows, wooded edges, and small watercourses.

The southern part includes some protected heathland, pastoral farmland and riparian vegetation near the River Bourne, while the northern portion transitions into a more wooded heathland and semi-natural open space.

Built form is minimal and very sparse confined mainly to isolated dwellings, smallholdings, and farmsteads near Mimbridge and the Chobham Road, the Anthony’s settlement, Ottershaw Park Estate and the more recent industrial facility of Maclarens.

The landscape character aligns closely with the Surrey Landscape Character Area “Chobham to Woking Heaths and Commons”, noted for its high scenic quality and biodiversity interest.

**Relevant Designations:**

**Within Site:**

- Metropolitan Green Belt (Runnymede and Woking Local Plan Policies EE1 & CS6)
- Flood Zones associated with the River Bourne.
- Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) — particularly along riparian corridors and woodland belts
- Woking Heaths and River Bourne Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA). Covering a large part of the Gap 5 area.
- Ottershaw Chase SANG.

- Ottershaw Park Ancient Woodland.
- Horsell Common Special Protection Area (SPA).
- Public Rights of Way (connecting to the A320 and A319 corridors)

**Nearby:**

- Chobham Common SSSI, SAC & NNR (approx. 1 km north-west)
- Ottershaw Neighbourhood Area boundary (east and southeast)
- Woking Green Infrastructure Network (Core Strategy Map)
- Thames Basin Heaths SPA Zone of Influence.
- Great Wood Ancient woodland.
- High density of TPO woodland (within neighbourhood area).
- The Mansion, Ottershaw Park, Chertsey Lodge and Christ Church (Grade II).

**Assessment:**

**Physical Separation:** High. The area maintains a clear and uninterrupted physical break between Woking’s northern edge and the southern edge of Chobham/Mimbridge and Woking/Ottershaw. Both the A320 and A319 provide robust infrastructure boundaries that reinforce the gap’s definition. There is no physical continuity of built development across the corridor, and its open fields and tree belts are clearly perceived as countryside.

**Visual Openness (Appendix A-7):** High. Extensive views exist across the open landscape from both major roads and from footpaths and bridleways within the gap. Despite occasional woodland belts, the sense of rural openness is strong and highly perceptible when travelling north from Woking or Chobham. This openness is essential to the visual identity of the northern approach to Woking and the southern gateway to Chobham and Ottershaw.

**Contribution to Identity:** High. The gap preserves the distinct settlement character of Woking as an urban centre and Ottershaw and Chobham as rural village settlements. It supports the Green Belt purpose of preventing coalescence (NPPF 2023 para. 144(b)) and enhances the legibility of the urban–rural edge. Loss of this gap would visually merge the two settlement patterns, eroding both Woking’s northern boundary and Ottershaw and Chobham’s countryside setting.

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**Vulnerability: High.** While safeguarded by the Green Belt, this corridor is vulnerable to incremental urban-edge pressures, such as road widening, infrastructure schemes, or piecemeal redevelopment of farmsteads. The Fair Oaks Airport site has already been brought forward under previous Woking Borough development plans and remains a risk. Area. SLAA 355, North of Bramshill Manor is also at risk of development. Intensification of land uses near the A320 or A319 — e.g., car storage, equestrian facilities, or large-scale landscaping — could erode the sense of openness if not carefully managed.

Ecologically, the area is sensitive to fragmentation of habitats and hydrological changes linked to development runoff.

**Recommendation:** Designate as a *Strategic Gap (High Sensitivity)*.

- **Purpose:** To maintain permanent and perceptible separation between Woking/Horsell and Ottershaw and Chobham/Mimbridge, and to protect the rural and ecological integrity of the Green Belt landscape north of Woking.
- **Policy References:**
  - NPPF (2023) – Para. 144(b) (preventing neighbouring towns merging).
  - Runnymede Local Plan Policy EE1 and Woking Core Strategy CS6 – Green Belt protection.
  - Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) Priority: Heathland and riparian corridor restoration.
- **Actions:**
  - Retain full Green Belt designation.
  - Recognise as a Strategic Local Gap in the Ottershaw and Northern Woking Local Gap Framework.
  - Promote landscape and habitat management projects to maintain openness and strengthen ecological connectivity between River Bourne and Chobham Common.
  - Consider low-impact public access enhancements (e.g., rights of way maintenance) to reinforce public understanding of the gap’s role and value.

### **Gap 6: Longcross. (Appendix A-8)**

**Location:** As shown on Appendix A-8.

**Function:** The area functions as a critical separation corridor between the built edge of Ottershaw and Longcross Garden Village. It maintains the western rural setting of Ottershaw, preserves the perception of openness along the A319 and B386 corridors and provides a buffer to the urbanising influence of the Longcross Garden Village site. The gap also performs an important landscape and ecological linkage function south of the M3 corridor, connecting Foxhills Golf Course, Queenwood SNCI, Ether Hill and Queenwood SANG and woodlands adjacent to Chobham Common into the Thames Basin and Heaths SPA to the west.

**Character:**

The character is predominantly rural and semi-natural, defined by:

- Woodland blocks, mature tree belts, and hedgerows enclosing open fields;
- Areas of grassland and managed wooded parkland associated with Foxhills and Queenwood Golf courses.

- Pockets of heathland restoration and semi-improved grassland along Longcross Road.

There are very few built intrusions, apart from scattered dwellings and farmsteads. The landscape presents a high degree of visual containment, with filtered views through woodland but a strong sense of undeveloped countryside when viewed from both the A319 and Longcross Road.

#### **Relevant Designations:**

##### **Within Site:**

- Metropolitan Green Belt (Runnymede Borough Local Plan Policy EE1)
- Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) – Woodland and semi-natural grassland south of Longcross Road
- Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA). Chobham and south Heaths BOA.
- Public Rights of Way (linking Ottershaw Park and Longcross Road corridors)
- TPO fringing roads.
- Areas of High Archaeological Potential/Scheduled Monuments. Bowl Barrows at Flutters Hill and Pipers Green Stud.
- Chobham Common National Nature Reserve, Special Area of Conservation and SPA.
- Monks Walk and Queenwood SNCI.

##### **Nearby:**

- Longcross Garden Village Development (Policy SL7) immediately to the north
- Ancient Woodland nr Hersham Farm.
- Queenwood SNCI.
- Trumps Farm, Ether Hill and Queenwood SANG.
- Lychgate, Longcross Church.

#### **Assessment:**

**Physical Separation:** High. This area provides a continuous and perceptible open land buffer separating Ottershaw from the Longcross development zone.

There is no physical continuity of built development, and topography, woodland, and agricultural land ensure clear physical distinction between settlement edges. The A319 corridor also reinforces the southern boundary and aids in maintaining a coherent spatial gap.

**Visual Openness (Appendix 8):** Moderate–High. Although much of the gap is wooded or visually enclosed, its open interior fields and parkland deliver a clear sense of rural openness. The Longcross Road ridgeline provides intermittent views across open countryside to the south, enhancing the visual perception of separation from Ottershaw.

Filtered long-distance views from Foxhills Road, the A319 and Accommodation Road reinforce the undeveloped character of the gap.

**Contribution to Identity:** High. This gap is fundamental to maintaining the distinct identity of Ottershaw, ensuring the village remains visually and spatially separate from Longcross and the more dispersed settlements toward Chobham. The landscape's mature wooded character also contributes strongly to Ottershaw's green setting and the perceptual boundary of the Neighbourhood Area. Loss of openness here would visually merge Ottershaw with new development at Longcross, undermining both settlement identity and the Green Belt's core purpose.

**Vulnerability:** High. The principal vulnerability arises from Longcross Garden Village expansion pressure and potential transport or infrastructure interventions along the A319 and Longcross Roads. Incremental erosion from estate-related uses, car parking, or ancillary development could fragment the landscape and weaken openness. Biodiversity value is also sensitive to edge effects from lighting, noise, and hydrological change associated with surrounding development.

**Recommendation:**

Designate as a ***Strategic Local Gap (High Sensitivity)***.

- **Purpose:** To protect the western rural setting of Ottershaw, maintain physical and visual separation from the Longcross Garden Village area, and safeguard the integrity of the Green Belt and ecological corridor linking Queenwood, Foxhills, and Chobham Common.
- **Policy References:**
  - NPPF (2023) – Paragraph 144(b): preventing neighbouring towns from merging.
  - Runnymede Local Plan Policy EE1 – Green Belt protection.
  - SL7 (Longcross Garden Village) – Strategic site boundary and mitigation requirements.
  - North Surrey Heathlands LNRS – Connectivity enhancement priority.
- **Actions:**
  - Retain Green Belt designation in full.
  - Designate as a Strategic Local Gap (High Sensitivity) in the Ottershaw Neighbourhood Plan.
  - Manage landscape character through woodland edge restoration, hedgerow reinforcement, and low-intensity land management.
  - Monitor development proposals around Longcross and Foxhills Road to prevent incremental encroachment.
  - Explore ecological enhancement opportunities consistent with the LNRS and Surrey Nature Partnership objectives.

## 6. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Gap	Adjacent Settlements	Key Land Use	Current Protection	Separation Value	Risk Level
1	Ottershaw –Chertsey South	Managed Woodland Grassland (SANG)	Green Belt	Very High	Very High
2	Ottershaw- Chertsey South/Addlestone	Pasture.	Green Belt	Very High	Very High
3	Ottershaw-Rowtown	Pasture, SANG, woodland	Green Belt	High	High
4	Ottershaw-Sheerwater/Woodham	Pasture,Woodland/parkland	Green Belt	Strong-Moderate	Moderate-High
5	Ottershaw-Woking/Horsell	Pasture, woodland.	Green Belt	High	High
6	Ottershaw-Longcross	Pasture, woodland, parkland.	Green Belt	High	High

## 7. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

It is proposed that the following policy wording should be incorporated into the Ottershaw Neighbourhood Plan together with a context statement to justify the inclusion. (which can also be drawn from this study):

### **Policy: Local Gaps Between Settlements and Green Corridors**

**Development within the designated *Local Gaps* (as shown on the Policies Map Below) will only be supported where it would not:**

- **Lead to the physical or visual coalescence of Ottershaw with neighbouring settlements (Chertsey South, Rowtown, Woking, New Haw, Addlestone , Longcross);**
- **Result in a significant reduction of the open or rural character of these gaps; or**
- **Adversely affect landscape quality, biodiversity corridors, or key public views.**

**Proposals that reinforce these gaps through the inclusion of landscape enhancement, woodland planting, or enhanced biodiversity connectivity will be supported.**

### **Neighbourhood Plan Proposed Justification:**

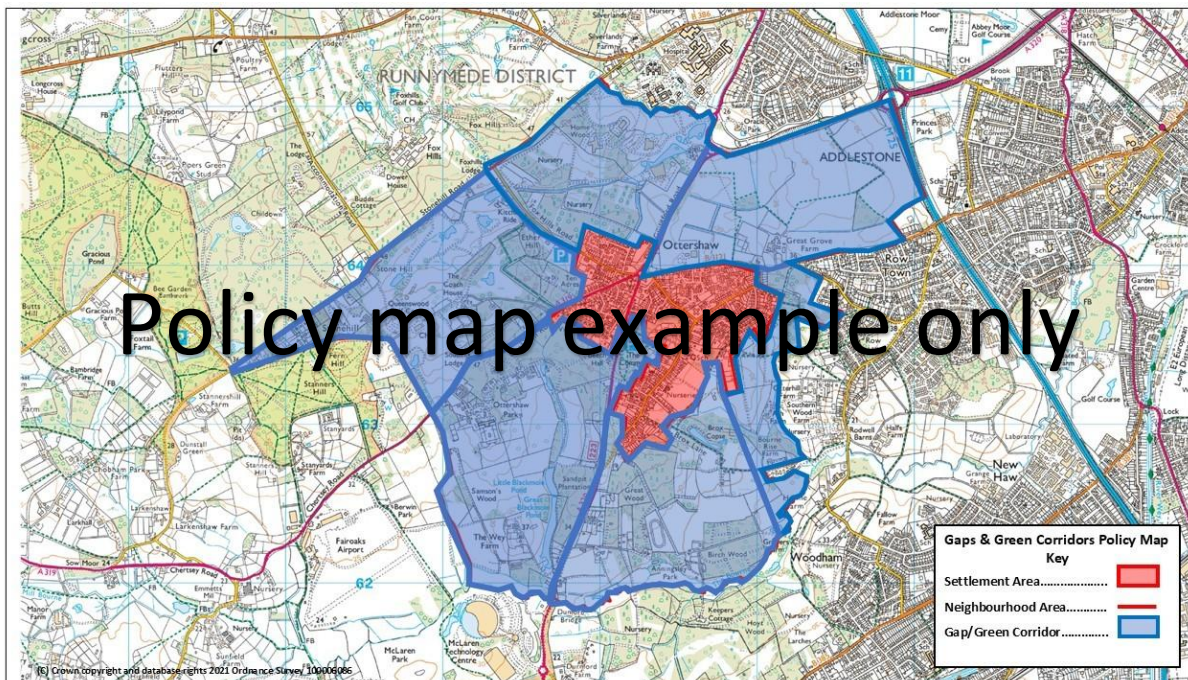
The following is proposed as a justification for the neighbourhood plan.

### **Gaps and Green Corridors**

Ottershaw is a village of unique appeal, much of this being due to its location and relative remoteness from surrounding urban areas. Its main settlement has grown gradually over many years in most cases this being infill rather than growing outwards. Development to surrounding towns and infrastructure has already impacted the areas around its main settlement area. Community concern was for retaining identity and the rural nature of the area. An element of separation was considered essential to ensure this is achieved.

As a result, the ONF Steering Committee commissioned a gap study to identify any key gaps essential to this and the protection of habitat and to provide policy recommendations. This study is included in the evidence base.

The study has identified three key areas for which it recommends policy should apply. These areas have been identified as either Strategic Local Gaps (Gap 1 & 2) or Local Gap (High Sensitivity) (Gap 3). As the same policy applies to each of these areas gaps have been shown as one contiguous area in the policy map below.



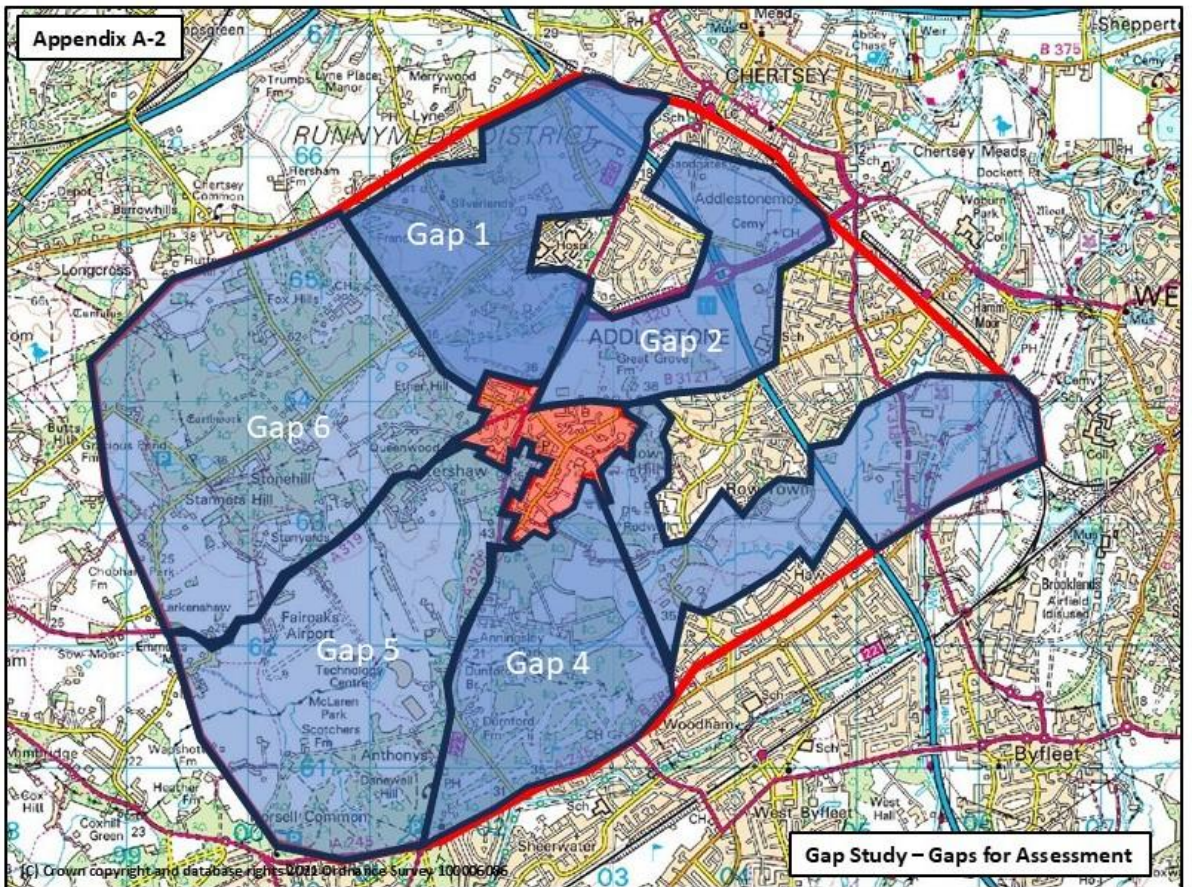
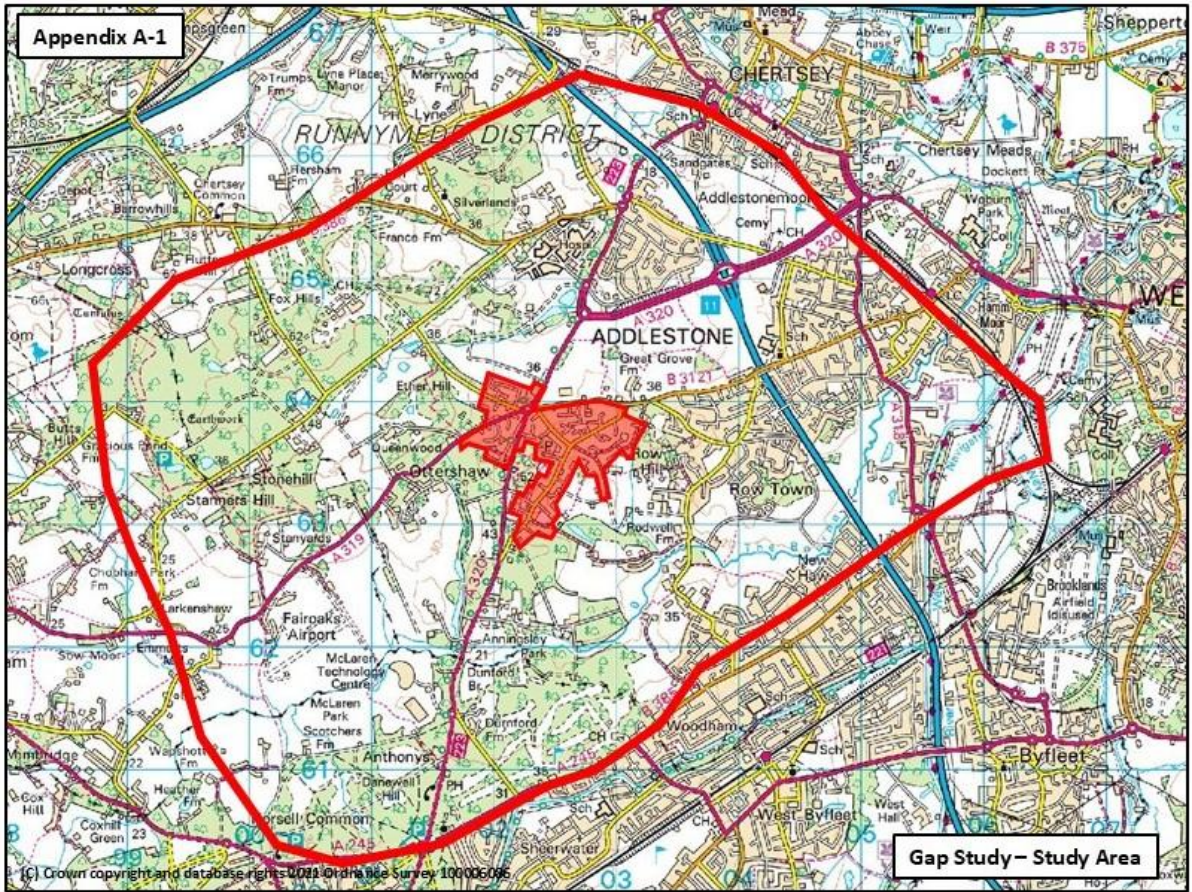
## 8. CONCLUSIONS

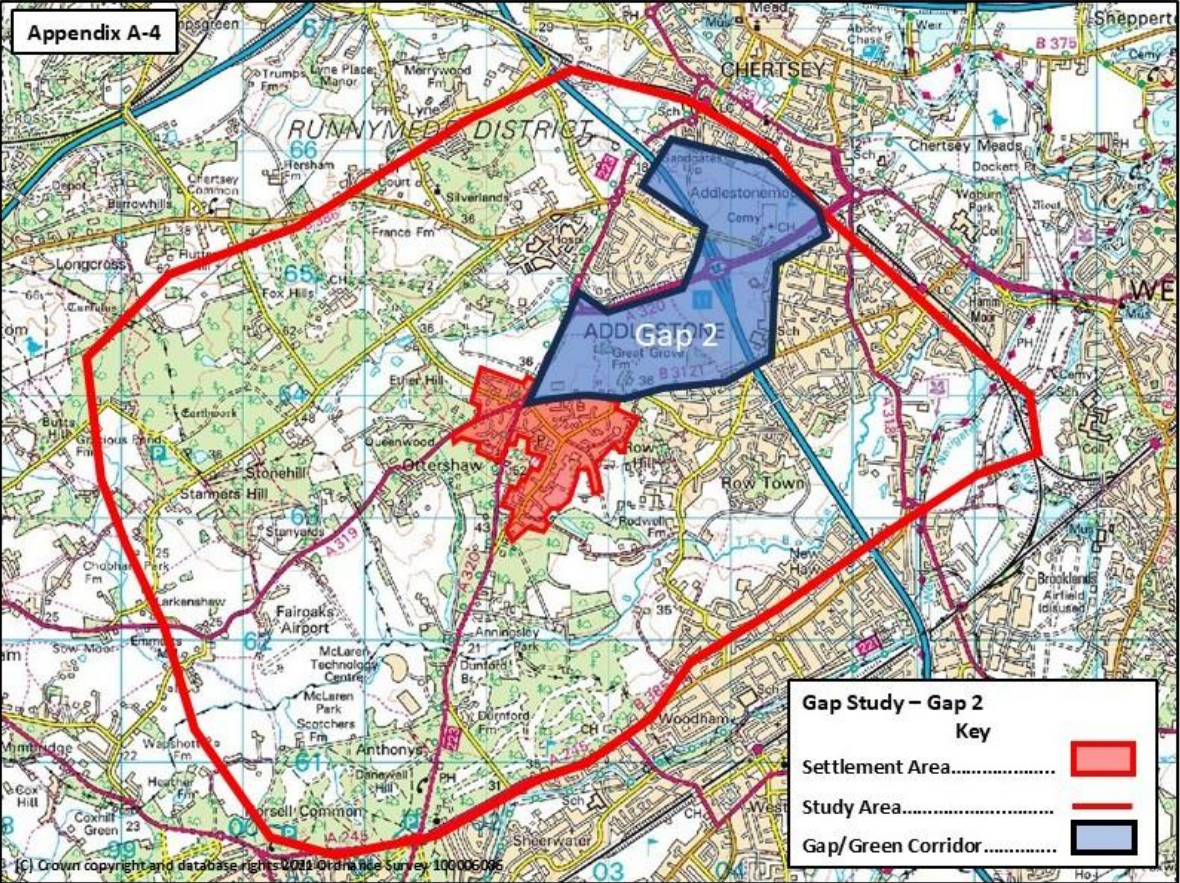
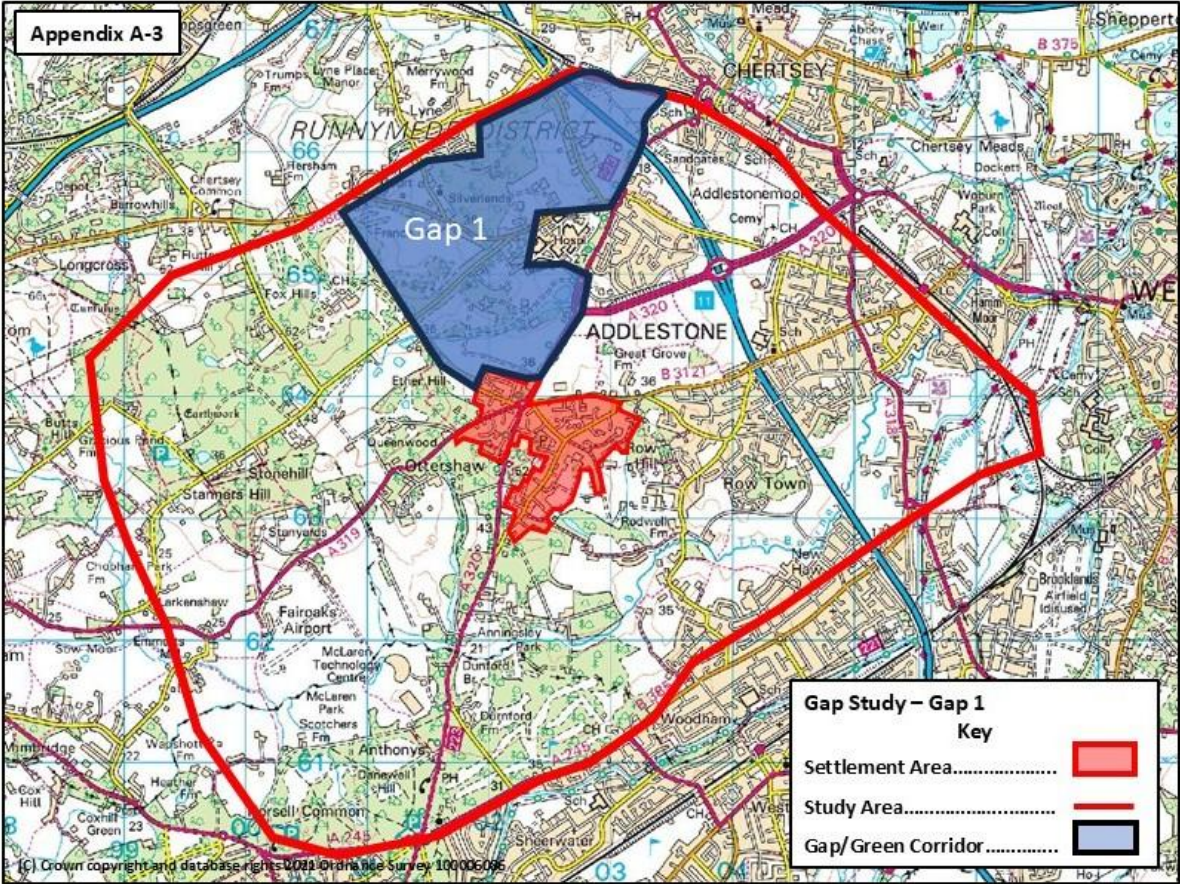
The assessment confirms that the open areas separating Ottershaw from adjacent settlements to the north and east perform an essential role in maintaining distinct community identity, landscape character, and biodiversity connectivity.

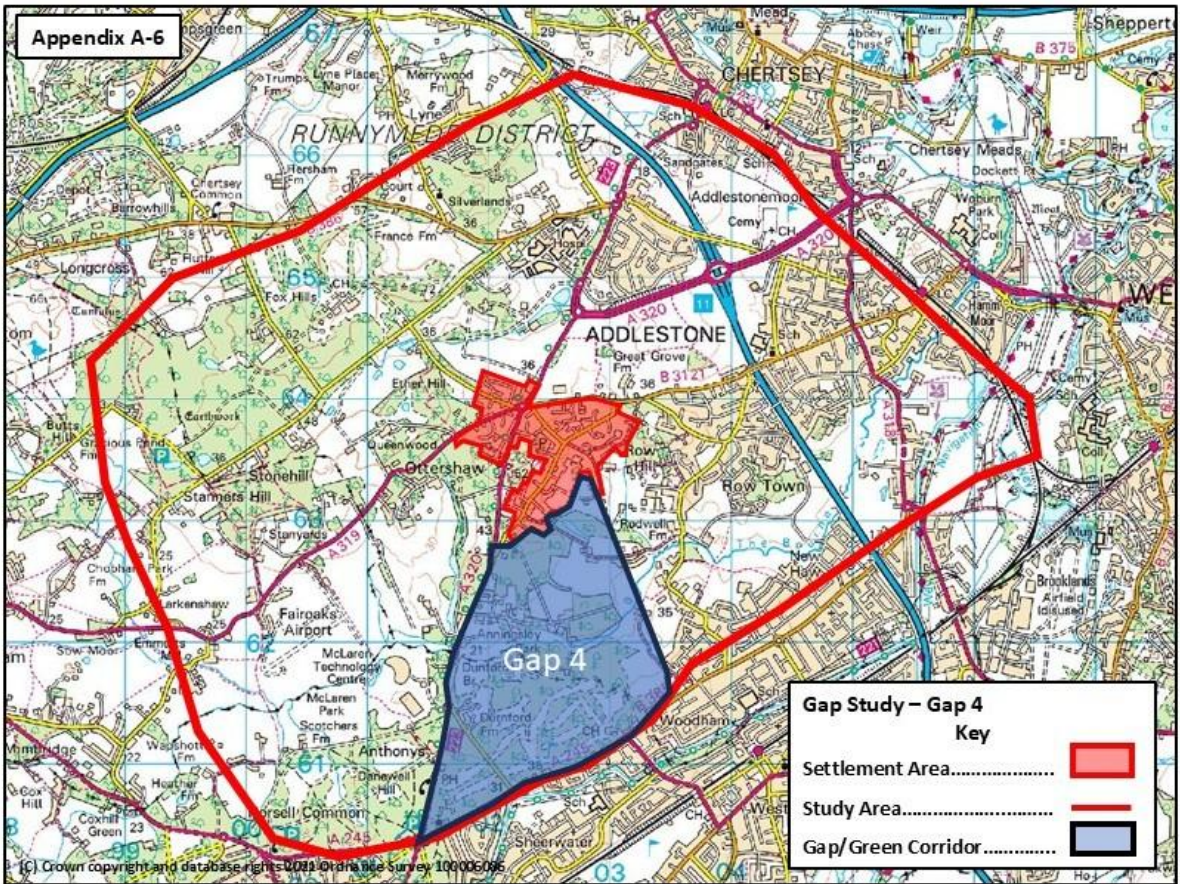
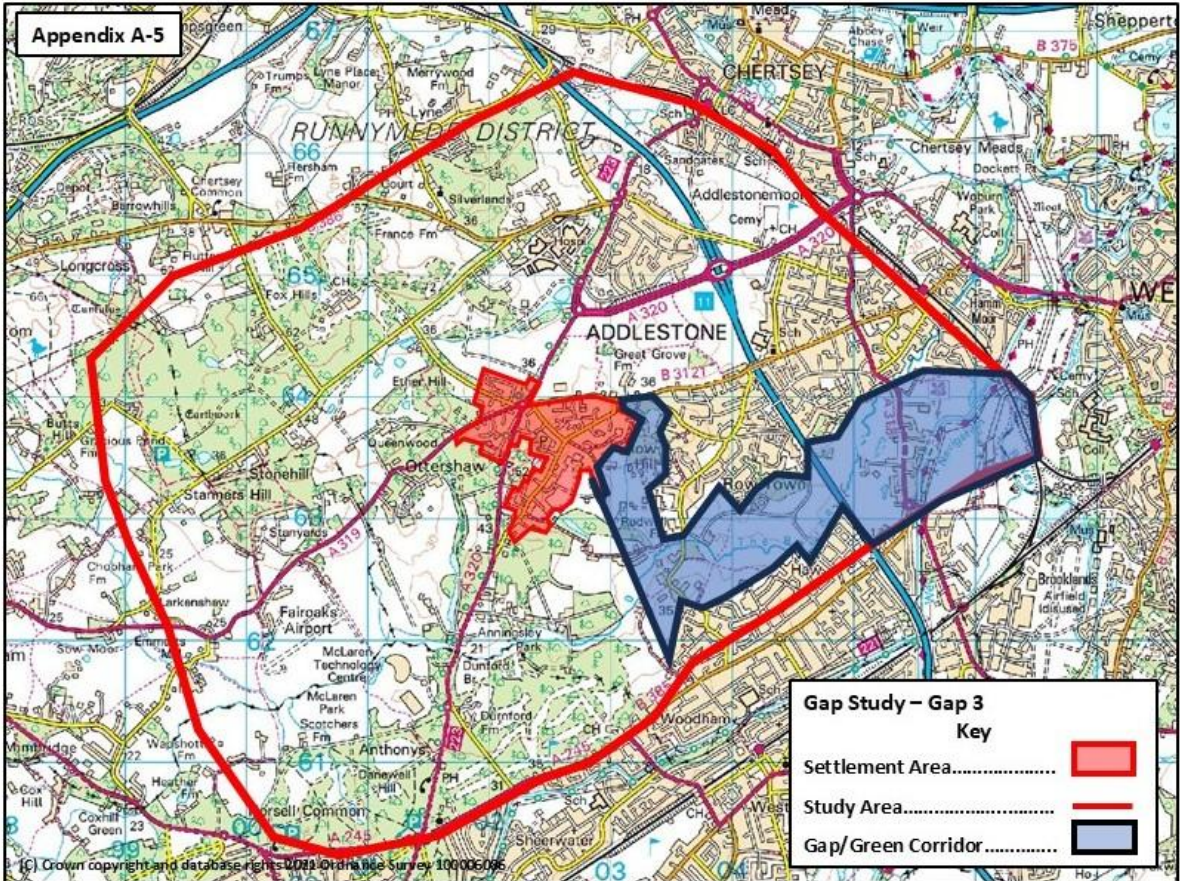
Given the incremental pressures of urban edge development and infrastructure expansion, designation of Local Gaps within the Neighbourhood Plan is fully justified and consistent with both the NPPF (2023) and Runnymede Local Plan (2020).

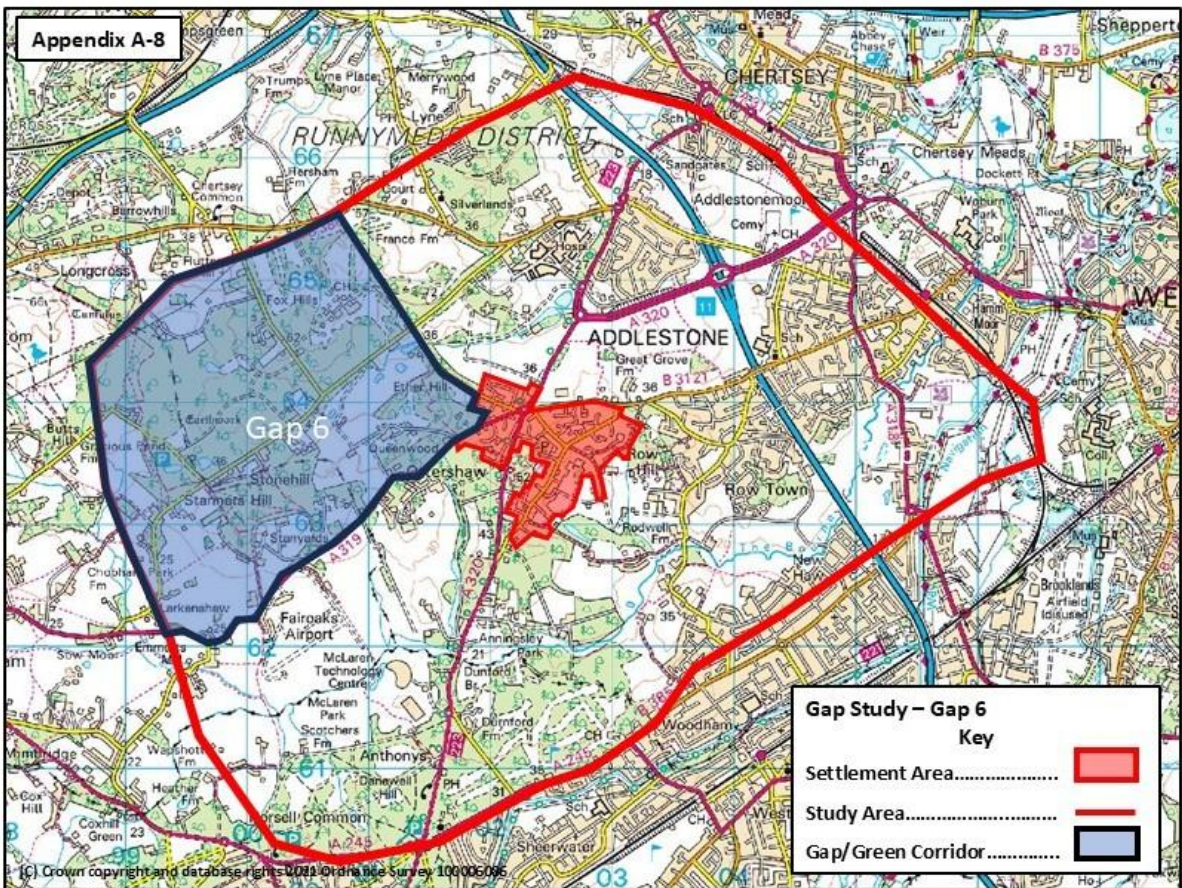
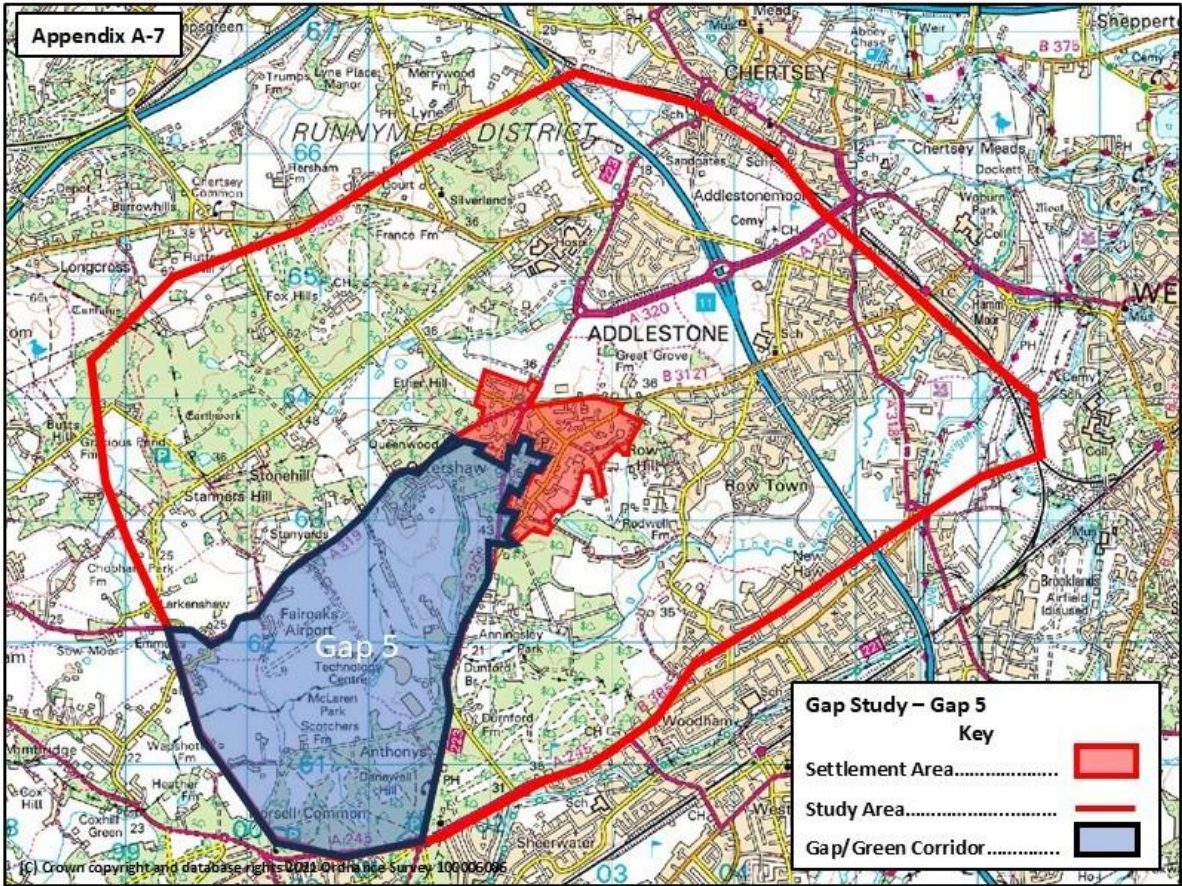
Appendices:

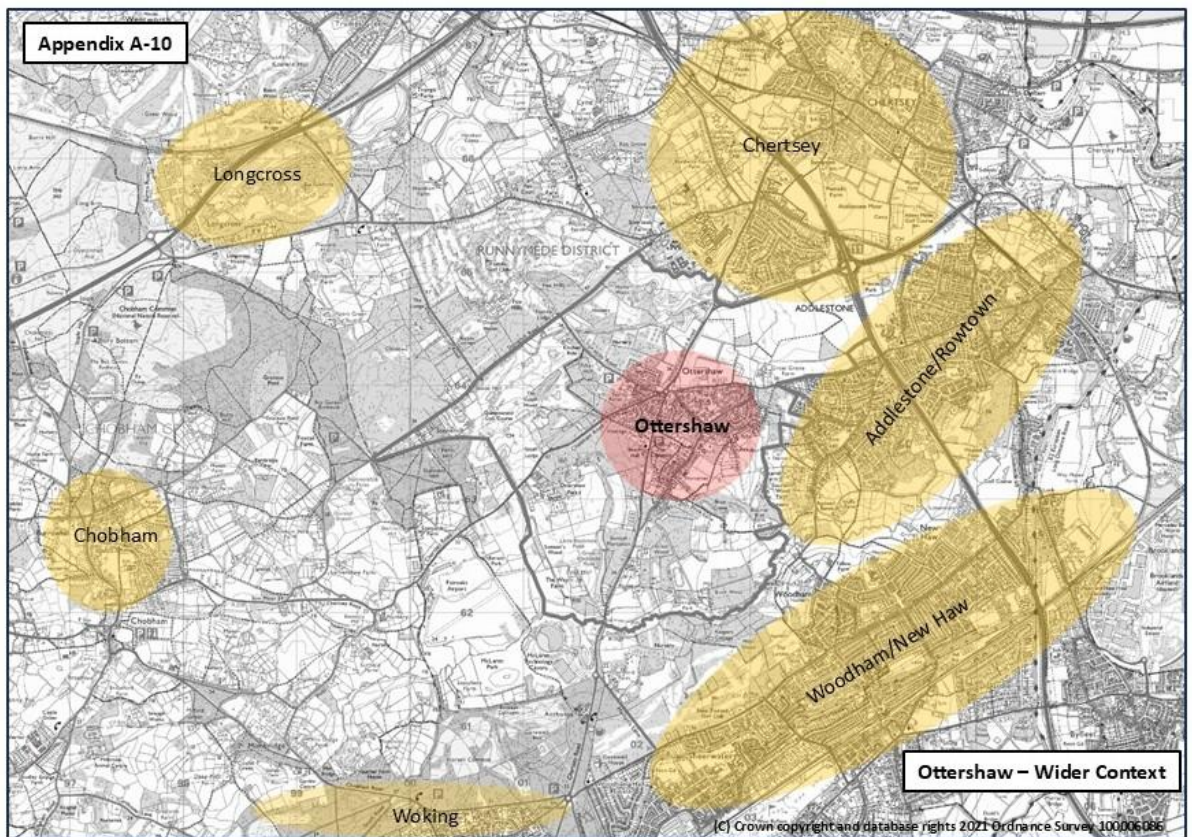
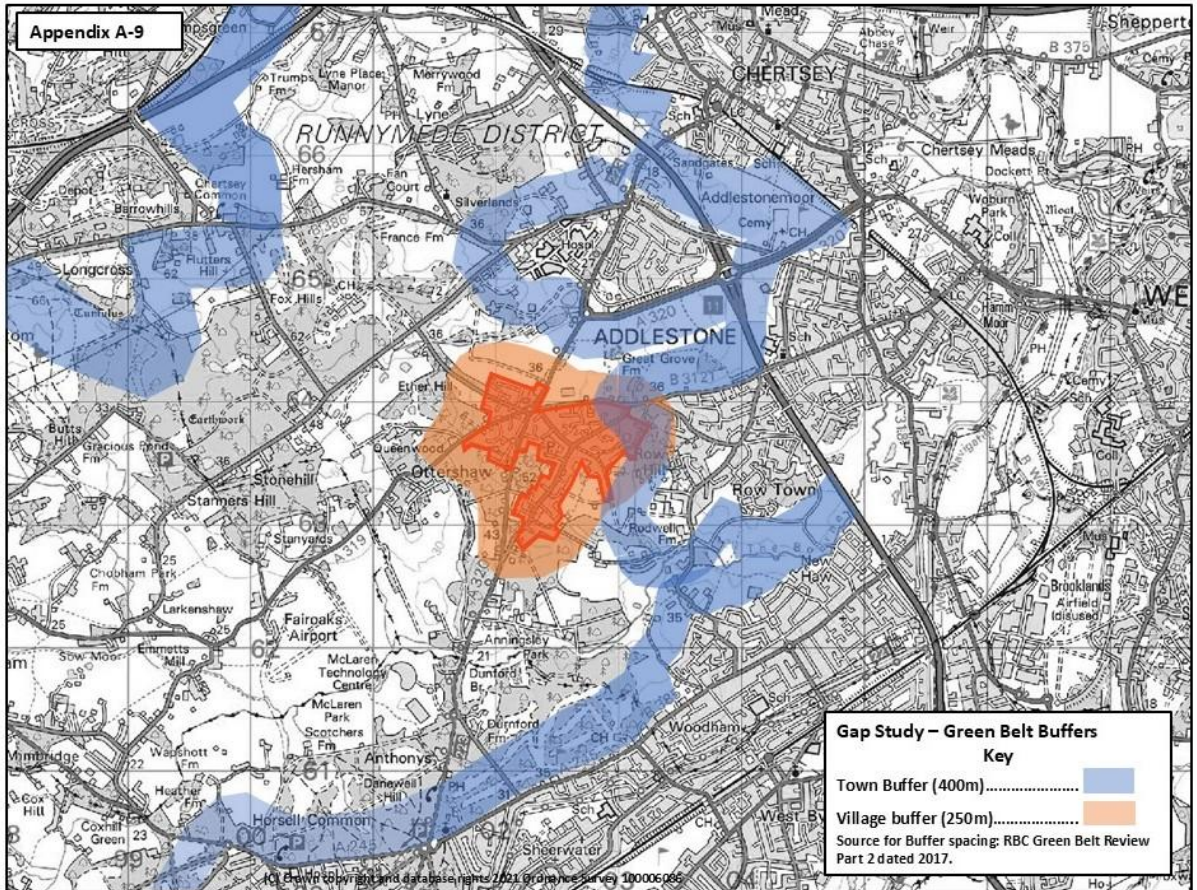
A Study Maps



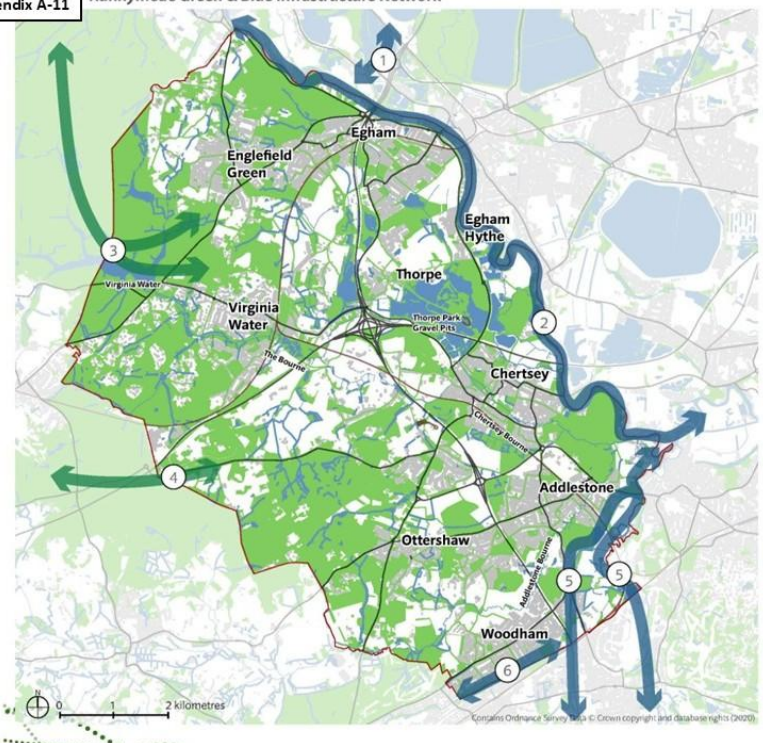








**Appendix A-11 Runnymede Green & Blue Infrastructure Network**



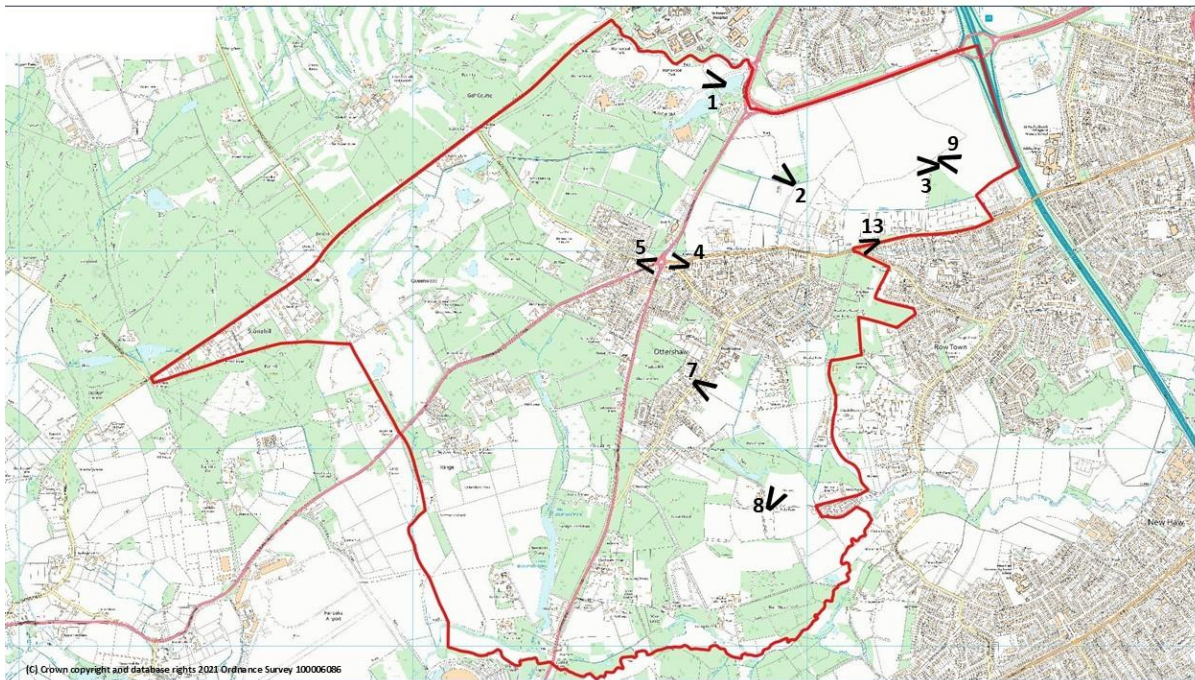
- Green Infrastructure
- Blue Infrastructure

**GBI Corridors**

- ① Colne Valley Regional Park blue/green corridor
- ② River Thames & Runnymede Meadows blue/green corridor
- ③ Windsor Great Park green corridor
- ④ Thames Basin Heath green corridor
- ⑤ Wey Valley blue/green corridor
- ⑥ Basingstoke Canal blue/green corridor

Note: the Green & Blue Infrastructure Network map is illustrative only. It is intended to represent a high level spatial framework for the strategic planning and management of Green and Blue Infrastructure Assets at the local level. The map is based on current available data.

## Appendix B: Context Views (extracts from Neighbourhood Plan)



View 1-Homewood Park: Historic rural parkland aspect taking in Botleys Mansion.



View 2-Great Grove Farm: Rural view across farmland onto woodland with Foxhills Mansion in distance



View 3-Great Grove Farm: Rural view across farmland towards Lyne onto woodland.



View 4-Historic view across Ottershaw towards Old dairy and forge.



View 5-View towards village centre and Great Grove Farm.



View 8-Rural landscape looking north towards Rowtown from East end of Brox Lane.



View 9-Great Grove Farm. Rural view looking east towards Addlestone. St Pauls Church in distance.



View 13-Looking along Spinney Hill towards Murray Road, Great Grove Farm on right.