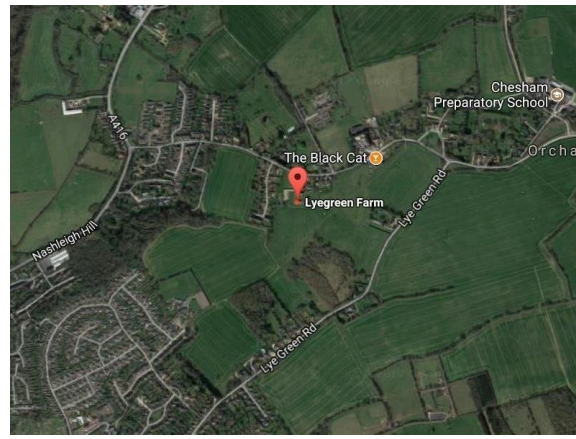


Green Belt - a review of methodology of site selection & appraisal of GB sites



A review by BNG of the Green Belt Assessment process and a critique of the methodology that selected the Lye Green site NE of Chesham for allocation in the Local Plan.

BACKGROUND:

1. 2. A review of the Evidence Base and the Green Belt Assessment methods has been undertaken by Phillip Plato MRICS on behalf of BNG. This involved a review of the Part 1 & Part 2 Green Belt Assessments that have been presented by Chiltern & South Bucks District Councils as justification for selecting certain Green Belt sites for development.
1. 3. The review reveals that the site NE of Chesham at Lye Green has been incorrectly promoted for removal from Green Belt designation due to several errors, oversights and flawed assertions.
1. 4. Numerous sites within the Green Belt were initially assessed as part of the Emerging Local Plan in a Part One Green Belt Assessment covering the whole of Bucks County which was undertaken by ARUP in March 2016. This Part 1 Assessment attempted to identify initial sites for removal from Green Belt by undertaking a quantitative and qualitative assessment of Green Belt areas in the county scored against the five stated Purposes of retaining land in the Green Belt.
1. 5. Namely, purposes number:
 1. To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas:
 2. To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another:
 3. To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment:
 4. To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns:
 5. To assist in urban regeneration when encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
2. 1. REVIEW OF ASSESSMENT PROCESS: - ARUP explained that for the Purposes of the Part One Assessment, the **First Purpose** of Green Belt designation was appraised against two related questions.
Namely;
 - “Is the land at edge of large built up area?” (which should be answered Yes or No), &
 - “Does the site prevent outward sprawl into Open Land and serve as barrier in absence of another durable boundary?” – (scored on scale of 1 to 5)

2. 2. ARUP also explained that the fifth and final Purpose listed above was not quantified or considered in the Part One Assessment as this has by implication already been influencing non Green Belt land and it is impossible to ascertain how much one parcel may or may not influence the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Figure 4.2: Criterion Scores

Overall Strength of General Area against criterion	Score	Equivalent Wording
	0	Does Not Meet Purpose
	1	Meets Purpose Weakly
	2	Meets Purpose Relatively Weakly
	3	Meets Purpose
	4	Meets Purpose Relatively Strongly
	5	Meets Purpose Strongly

2. 3. All the other purposes (apart from those numbered 1 & 5) were then rated to each site.
2. 4. The fourth Purpose relating to the special character of historic towns was accepted to relate to very few settlements in Buckinghamshire but proximity to listed building or other historic features and the impact on the setting then influenced the score against that criteria.
2. 5. The Part One Assessment concluded by identifying 36 areas that had been assessed against the NPPF Purposes of Green Belt which the Buckinghamshire Authorities "may" wish to take forward into a Part Two Assessment, including consideration whether "*exceptional circumstances*" existed to justify any alteration to the Green Belt boundary.
2. 6. Of these 36 areas, 8 areas were designated as Recommended General Areas (or RGA's for whole General Areas being recommended for further consideration,) whilst some 28 further areas were designated as Recommended Sub Areas (RSA's) "*where there is clear scope for sub-division to identify weakly performing 'sub-areas'.*" Lye Green was identified as an RGA (specifically RGA3).
2. 7. Para 6.1.1 of the Part 1 Green Belt Assessment clarified that the various District Authorities **MAY** wish to take all these sites forward for further consideration including assessing whether exceptional circumstances might exist for their removal from Green Belt designation
2. 8. Para 6.1.2 then explained that Recommended General Areas (RGA's) although rated "medium" in the Part One Green Belt assessment or which scored "*strongly scoring against the NPPF purposes, have particular characteristics or synergies with neighbouring weaker General Areas, which might lend themselves to further consideration in Part 2*".
2. 9. Before reaching this conclusion, ARUP explained in Para 4.4.3 that each area had been assessed for each of the 4 (out of 5) stated purposes within the NPPF for Green Belt inclusion, using both qualitative and quantitative measures. A score out of five was attributed for each purpose (Figure 4.2), where 1 equals least fulfils purpose and 5 equals most fulfils purpose. If a General Area was considered to have no contribution to a specific purpose, a statement was added to the pro-forma to this effect and no score (a score of zero) was attributed.

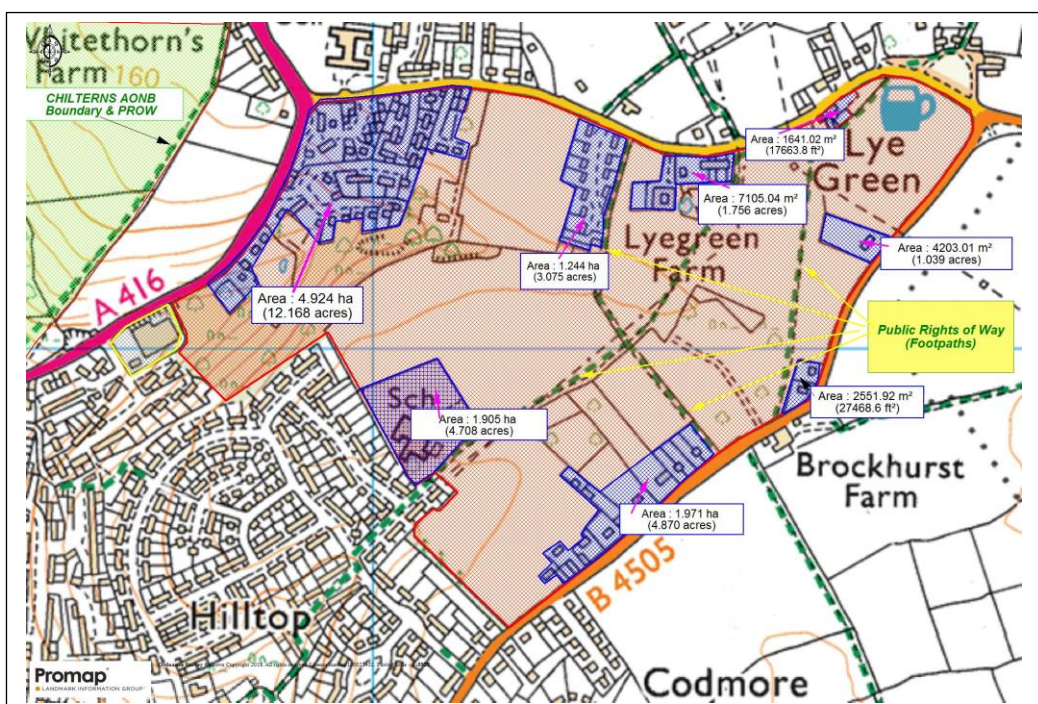
2. 10. **ARUP stressed in Para 4.4.4 that it was important to note that each of the NPPF purposes is considered equally significant, thus no weighting or aggregation of scores across the purposes was undertaken.** As such, a composite judgement was necessary to determine whether, overall, General Areas were meeting Green Belt purposes strongly or not.
2. 11. A rule of thumb was applied, whereby:
- any General Area scoring strongly (ie: 4 or 5) against the criteria for one or more NPPF purpose was judged to be meeting the purposes strongly overall and therefore this area deemed unsuitable for further consideration in Part 2 of the Green Belt Assessment, except where a possible sub-division was identified;
 - a General Area fulfilling the criteria to a lesser extent (ie: scores of 2 or below) across all purposes was deemed to be weaker Green Belt and was recommended for further consideration in the forthcoming Part 2 Green Belt Assessment.
2. 12. The Lye Green site northeast of Chesham (numbered initially as site 13A in the ARUP Part One report) was categorised as performing “medium” overall with specific scores under the ARUP appraisal against the NPPF Purposes for Green Belt land as follows:
- **Assessment Purpose 1 (A)** - is land at edge of large built up area – “**pass**”.
 - **Assessment Purpose 1 (B)** - does the land prevent outward sprawl into open land and/or serve as barrier in the absence of another durable boundary? – **Scored “3”** (ie meets purpose).
 - **Assessment Purpose 2** - does the land prevent the merging of towns or the erosion of any existing gap between neighbouring settlements including ribbon development along transport corridors? – **Scored “1”**. (ie: meets purpose weakly)
 - **Assessment Purpose 3** - does the land safeguard the countryside from encroachment i.e. does it protect the “openness” – **Scored “2”**. (ie: meets purpose relatively weakly)
 - **Assessment Purpose 4** - does the land preserve the special character and setting of historic towns? – **Scored “0”**.
2. 13. ARUP concluded to rate the land northeast of Chesham at Lye Green overall as “medium” in terms of its performance against NPPF Green Belt criteria.
2. 14. Using ARUP’s own rule of thumb, it seems strange that the Lye Green site # 13A was recommended for further consideration in light of the fact that it did not score “2” or below across all criteria (namely it scored a “3” against Assessment Purpose # 1(b)).
2. 15. However, as will be demonstrated below, if the Lye Green site # 13A had been subjected to the “*further consideration*” as ARUP recommended, including a more thoughtful review of the Part One assessment, it would have been apparent that the scores against Assessment Purposes numbered 2 & 3 should have both been reviewed upwards thereby removing the Lye Green site # 13A from any further consideration for removal from Green Belt designation.
2. 16. In terms of **Assessment Purpose # 2**, the definition of a “*neighbouring settlement*” may be significant. The Part One Assessment makes it clear in paragraph 2.3.3 that the Purpose does not strictly suggest maintaining the separation of small settlements near to towns and that “*landscape character assessment is a useful analytical tool for this type of assessment*”. Significantly, Lye Green is not listed as a settlement in the Part One Green Belt study albeit the methodology therein refers to “*washed over Green Belt settlements*” and the Green Belt Part One study proposals map only recites Botley and Ley Hill as “*Green Belt settlements*” despite the fact that the Green Belt Part One study cross refers to the current Chiltern Local

Plan Policy GB5 where Nashleigh Hill/Lycrome Road (Chesham) are afforded that status. There is also a footnote on page 56 of the Part One Green Belt Assessment stating that *“Chesham includes the settlement of “Nashleigh Hill/Lycrome Road (Chesham) identified in Chesham Local Plan Policy GB5 considered part of Chesham for the Purpose of this assessment”* and this may be an oversight on behalf of ARUP as the Lye Green site only scored “1” in respect of the assessment of Purpose 2.

2. 17. Accordingly, BNG contend this is a mistake that could easily be made on any high level desktop review and that Lye Green is a recognised settlement both in the Local Plan and by road signs as well as by the community and despite the references in The Part One study the Green Belt settlements shown on the proposals map which show Botley and Ley Hill but not Lye Green.
2. 18. In terms of **Assessment Purpose # 3**, ARUP indicate that any site which has less than 10% “built area” upon the land should score a “3”.
2. 19. BNG have undertaken a review of the Part One Green Belt Assessment. The scoring undertaken by ARUP in terms of Assessment 1(A) and 1(B) is not contested (ARUP scored it with a “pass” in terms of whether the land is located at the edge of a large built up area and similarly scored it “3” in terms of whether it would prevent outward sprawl onto open land or was a barrier and whilst one might argue the second criteria could be scored as “4” this would be a subjective judgement.).
2. 20. However, it is felt that ARUP have made an oversight in terms of the scoring of Assessment Purpose #2. The absence of recognition of Lye Green as a Green Belt settlement (whereas Botley and Ley Hill are so recognised) and the self-evident fact that Lye Green would become absorbed if development were to go ahead, must render the score of “1” as inappropriate if this fact is recognised.
2. 21. The fact that Lye Green is already recognised both in the current Adopted Local Plan and by road signs and members of the community, needs to be highlighted. Given that ARUP expressed concern about the need to restrict merging or protecting other gaps involving Green Belt settlements, if the appropriate status of Lye Green was recognised then accordingly it would score “3” (ie: meets the purpose) under the assessment of the second Purpose. **If the subsequent Part Two Assessment of Green Belt had been correctly undertaken by Chiltern and South Bucks District Council, this should have been recognised.**
2. 22. In terms of the assessment of the Third Purpose, the Part One Green Belt Assessment in paragraph 4.423 suggests that the general area was assessed by reference to Ordnance Survey base maps and aerial photography to undertake an “openness assessment”. It would appear therefore as though the openness assessment was not conducted by a physical site survey and although there is a suggestion that site visits were subsequently undertaken, it is unclear whether Lye Green was physically visited and assessed.
2. 23. ARUP stated in paragraph 4.425, that the general area was scored initially on the basis of “percentage of built form”. The Part One Assessment then includes a tabulated explanation for the scoring of the Purpose 3 assessment. Interestingly, it was explained in this table that any area that contains less than 10% of built form and/or possesses a strong unspoilt rural character will score “4” and that any site containing between 10% and 20% of built form and/or which possesses a largely rural open character would score “3” (ie: meets purpose). The Lye Green site scored “2” which according to ARUP’s criteria means they felt a site contains between 20% and 30% built form and/or that it possesses a semi urban character.

2. 24. Given the inconsistency of this assessment to the comments in the subsequent Landscape Capacity Assessment undertaken by Terra Firma Consultancy in November 2017, BNG have undertaken their own assessment of the site using an Ordnance Survey digital mapping service called ProMap within which there is the capability of measuring boundaries and site areas with a digital measurement tool. A copy of the site plan with the whole of Preferred Option Site outlined and hatched/shaded in red is copied later herein but with existing settlement areas edged/hatched in blue. It is noted that the areas of existing development at Lye Green are of relatively low density including particularly Brushwood School, Deer Park Walk and Henry Mash Court as well as other large houses with sizeable gardens relative to the overall gross square footprint of the buildings thereon.
2. 25. The definition of “built form” as used in the Part One Assessment is unclear but if one takes built form to mean the boundary of existing areas of development (such as the boundary of the school ground rather than the school building and including the many large gardens surrounding certain larger homes on the site) then the total percentage of built areas represents **20.06%** of the site area.
2. 26. It seems perverse that 0.6% could make the difference between the site scoring “2” or “3” in terms of the assessment of Assessment Purpose 3. **However, it is clear that even if one generously includes all the gardens and fields surrounding the houses at Lye Green as “built form” it is marginal at best to suggest that the Purpose 3 assessment scoring of “2” is fair or accurate especially as one large area in that assessment is represented by school playing fields.**
2. 27. Conversely, the ProMap was used to measure the built areas on a gross external basis (i.e. measuring just the buildings and excluding all gardens, playing fields and open areas surrounding the residential units on the site) and the calculation of “built areas” using such a method then falls to 0.07%. Accordingly, BNG have concluded that the site is predominantly open, providing good clear views across the countryside and as such the area performs well in terms of the Assessment Purpose # 3.

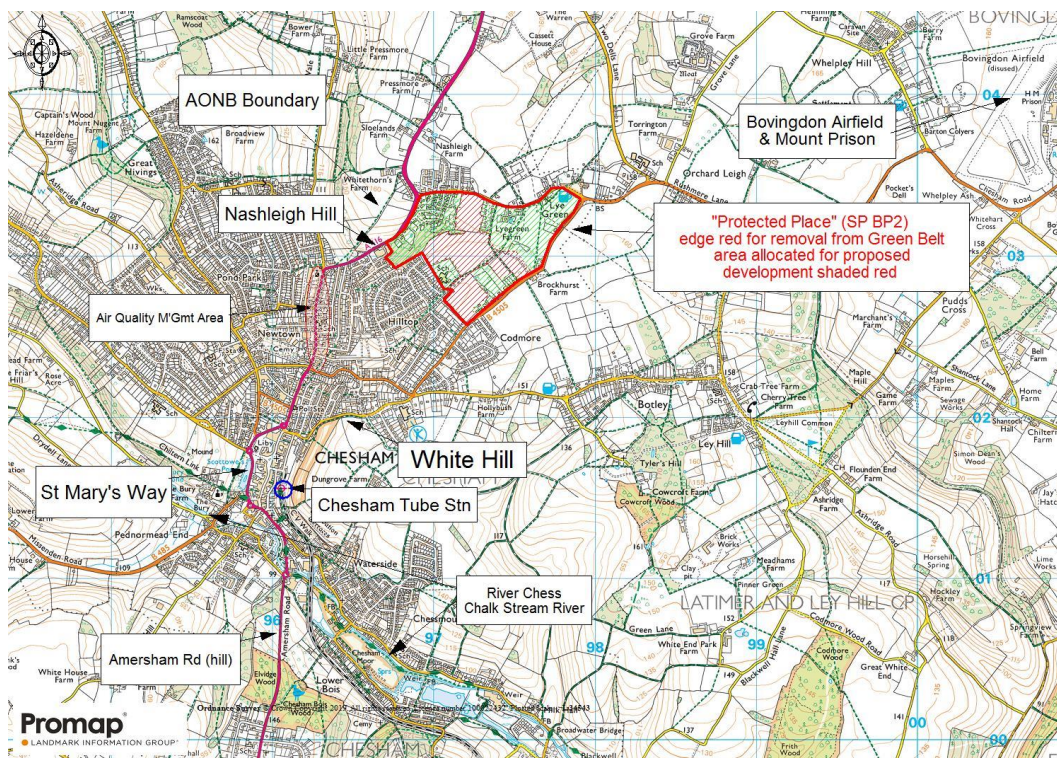
ProMap Analysis :



2. 28. This view appears to be shared by the subsequent Landscape Capacity Assessment undertaken by Terra Firma Consultancy in November 2017 whose report points to the open nature of the land including its views into & from the nearby AONB.
2. 29. The Part Two Assessment of Green Belt has not been undertaken by ARUP but rather by Chiltern and South Bucks District Council planning department. This contrasts with Wycombe and Aylesbury Vale where ARUP undertook the Part Two Assessment.
2. 30. It is noted that in the Part Two Assessment undertaken for Wycombe District Council, ARUP stated that when reviewing any site brought forward from the Part One Assessment, that ***“sites which perform moderately or strongly (3-5) are generally considered inappropriate for removal from Green Belt”***. It goes on to say that where a score of 3 is given to any one of the Purposes the overall summary of the site’s performance is identified to be a “medium” score.
2. 31. However, in the **Part Two Green Belt Assessment** undertaken by Chiltern and South Bucks District Council there appear to be notable inconsistencies between the methodology used by ARUP and indeed between the stated purpose of the Part Two Assessment compared to what was actually reported upon. It should also be noted that from this point it becomes difficult to follow sites through the appraisal process due to changing reference numbers and labels. ***Accordingly, any review is complicated by the paper chase the reader has to engage in to follow any individual site through the appraisal process.*** This is contrary to the guidance offered in the decided case of R (Calverton Parish Council v Nottingham City Council) [2015] EWHC 1078 (Admin).
2. 32. Specifically, the Chiltern and South Bucks Part Two report has a stated Purpose and objective of undertaking a *“more detailed assessment”* and to establish whether *“exceptional circumstances”* exist and where it seeks to identify a revised Green Belt boundary in accordance with NPPF requirements, to *“evaluate and score it against the NPPF Purposes and present clear and fully justified conclusions on its performance.”* ***However, in relation to the Lye Green site NE of Chesham, and indeed all other RGA sites brought forward from the Part One study, this does not appear to have been done and the scoring merely recited the ARUP scores from the Part One Assessment.***
2. 33. The Part Two Assessment undertaken by Chiltern and South Bucks included a Green Belt Purpose assessment proforma which in respect of the Lye Green site has an opening statement on the proforma that in terms of Green Belt Purpose assessment that this site is *“an ARUP recommended general area:”* and goes on to state that ***“Green Belt Purpose Assessment is therefore not required”***. **This is clearly incorrect considering the foregoing.**
2. 34. The proforma then stated under the sub heading of exceptional circumstances assessment, that there is a good fit with the spatial strategy as it *“fits option C”*, namely, to promote built area extensions to various towns including Chesham. This seems vague and self-serving.
2. 35. In response to the question on the proforma whether the site would satisfy sustainable development criteria, the proforma suggests that the development could have a moderate adverse impact on cultural heritage (objective 1) and landscape (objective 2) which could affect the setting of the AONB which lies immediately to the west of the proposed area.

2. 36. The rest of the proforma's assessment of sustainable development under the exceptional circumstances assessment is similarly vague but as to the extent there would be conflict with the purposes and integrity of the Green Belt as set out in the NPPF, the proforma states that there would be "*limited conflict with Green Belt Purposes*" without much further justification.
2. 37. However it then states "*the area could be regarded as preventing the outward sprawl of Chesham*" but goes on to suggest that a new outer Green Belt boundary reflected by the roads around the Lye Green site would itself prevent sprawl and the joining of Chesham with Berkhamsted but curiously then goes on to suggest that at a local level it would also prevent sprawl with the local Green Belt settlement of Botley but makes no reference to Lye Green or the threat that would be posed to Orchard Leigh, Ashley Green etc. This illustrates that the oversight previously referred too by ignoring Lye Green or the general area of Nashleigh Hill/Lycrome Rd (which the prevailing Local Plan/Core Strategy recognises) as a settlement has prejudiced the assessment of the Lye Green site NE of Chesham.
2. 38. The proforma continues, "*in terms of the wider Green Belt objectives the area currently makes limited contribution to opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation or biodiversity*". The proforma has clearly ignored the fact that the site has excellent access to public rights of way and is crossed by a series of well-trodden footpaths used by ramblers, dog walkers, D of E participants and local residents. The fact that the land has since been listed as an **Asset of Community Value** the definition of which in the Localism Act 2011 is that the land improves the "*wellbeing*" of the community (including health, physical & mental wellbeing). **Accordingly, this designation is clear evidence that the Lye Green site has been misjudged is out of date and needs to be reappraised.** Research reveals that most Green Belt land does not afford public access and even where it does, access is normally restricted just to one or two public rights of way. At Lye Green there are already several Public Rights of Way across the land and a Definitive Map Modification order has been made to have SIX further paths added to the Definitive Map. In addition, over 30 residential properties that border the fields at Lye Green have rear garden gates that are used by residents to access the land. Many of these may have acquired prescriptive rights. **As such this land actually makes a very strong contribution to outdoor recreation where the evidence shows that hundreds of local people have habitually used the land for decades and most do not even have to cross a road to access it.**
2. 39. The Part Two Green Belt Assessment proforma concludes by stating that exceptional circumstances may apply and asserts that the area is in a sustainable location outside of the AONB. This is an astonishing conclusion given that there are clearly issues of sustainability and whilst the site may be outside the AONB, it is in sight of it as referred to in the Landscape Capacity Assessment undertaken separately by Terra Firma Consultancy.
2. 40. The absence of any review of the ARUP scoring is inappropriate and renders the conclusion of the Part Two proforma flawed. Even then, the inconsistency of methods between Chiltern & South Bucks and the neighbouring authority is stark. **In Wycombe District Council, no site was taken forward for consideration if it had a score in any one criterion of 3 or more.**
2. 41. Given that ARUP recognised that Landscape Capacity Assessment as an important tool in assessing land for this purpose, BNG would have expected the Part Two Green Belt assessment undertaken by the council to have either required an earlier Landscape Capacity Assessment to be undertaken by Terra firma Consultancy or to await conclusion of the Part Two Assessment until the LCA was done in November 2017.

2. 42. The LCA report makes numerous references to the potential for loss of visual separation of settlements and openness if the Lye Green site were it to be developed and the consequential erosion of the rural setting. Consequently, BNG have concluded in the face of these comments and their aforementioned review of the “*built areas*” on site, that **the assessment of Purpose 3 undertaken by ARUP is clearly mistaken** and that the absence of any review of these scores in the Part Two Assessment by Chiltern and South Bucks District Council has further compounded the error. When combined with the lack of earlier reference to the Landscape Capacity Assessment BNG contend the overall assessment of the Green Belt site at Lye Green is fundamentally flawed.
2. 43. Given that the LCA document refers to the Lye Green site as providing “*important separation of the settlements specifically Chesham and Lye Green*” and refers to the visual sensitivities of the site specifically the limited tree cover and relative openness and the peacefulness and rural qualities of the site which could be affected by further development, this might have prompted the Council to reconsider rather than to embark & persist with their “*direction of travel*” that since 2016 seems to have become fixated on releasing land from Green Belt merely to satisfy its Objectively Assessed Housing needs, a sentiment which was expressed in the Part Two Assessment and which was openly criticised by ARUP as a critical friend in the Annexes of that same Report. (see attached in this Annex)
2. 44. As is shown in the OS Plan below, the site at Lye Green is unusual in that some 59 ha are proposed to be removed from Green Belt designation yet only 22.9ha (circa 38%) is being allocated for development under SP BP2. The red outline shows the area being proposed for removal from Green Belt with the shaded red area being the extent of the proposed development under policy SP BP2



2. 45. As the BNG evidence shows, (see paragraphs 2.25 to 2.27 and previous OS Plan earlier), circa 20% of the site proposed for removal from Green Belt designation is already represented by existing homes, gardens or a school with playgrounds meaning that **42% of the site being removed**

from Green Belt designation is not needed for development in this Local Plan anyway. Once the Green Belt designation is lost, the remaining 42% of the site will come under threat from all types of further development pressure.

2. 46. Even if some development were regarded as acceptable, the scale of development proposed by Policy SPBP2 is excessive and inappropriate and the Council's were advised as much by their third-party professional consultants¹ who proposed a significantly smaller scheme for this site when conducting a Landscape Capacity & Character Assessment. Their advice was the site should not be considered for much more than 100 homes as outlined in their illustrative plan copied below;

Landscape Capacity Assessment for Green Belt Development Options in the emerging Chiltern and South Bucks Local Plan

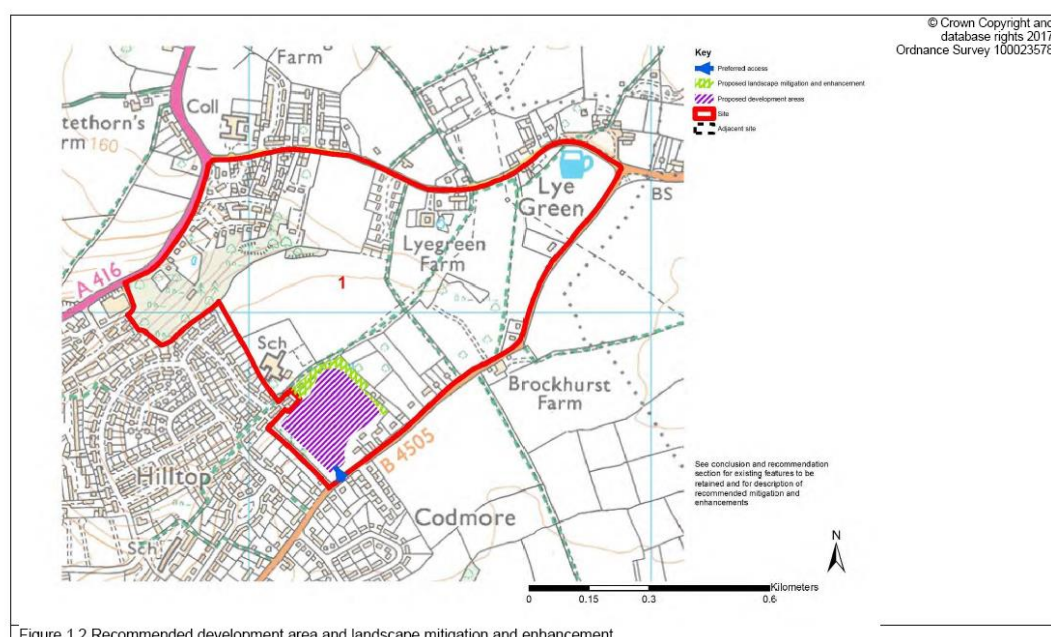
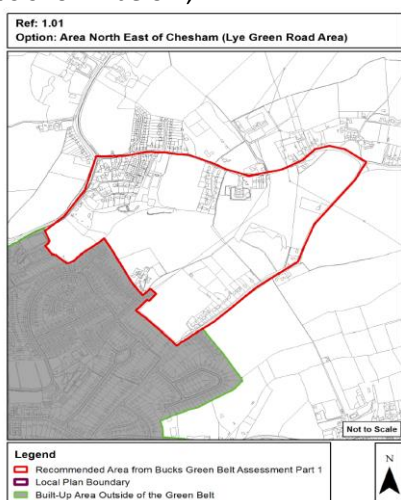


Figure 1.2 Recommended development area and landscape mitigation and enhancement

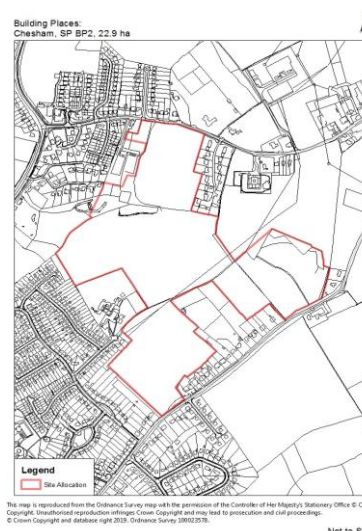
The terra firma Consultancy Ltd

2. 47. This is in stark contrast to the proposals the LPA have drafted when preparing the Local Plan as shown below;



Extract Plan on left shows area to be removed from Green Belt. –

Plan on right shows area earmarked for housing



¹ Terra Firma Consultancy – Landscape Capacity Assessment 2017

3. 1. REVIEW OF CONSISTENCY IN SITE SELECTION FROM SCORES ISSUED - BNG have then attempted to review the “scores” of other sites that were ranked similarly to the Lye Green site.
3. 2. This exercise reveals inconsistency between sites of similar scores moving forward in the process. It also reveals some sites with weaker scores to those of Lye Green (even without a review) NOT moving forward for consideration for removal from Green Belt. These observations negate the purpose of trying to undertake a quantitative and qualitative assessment in the Part One Green Belt Assessment.
3. 3. The process of reviewing the scores of other sites was made very difficult due to the confusing changes in site reference numbers between parts 1 & Parts 2 involving RSA numbers, RGA numbers, site parcel numbers and other references. Indeed, other documents in the Council’s Evidence Base often had other reference numbers for the same sites too and the process is very much a paperchase.
3. 4. However, BNG have focused mainly upon the table produced by ARUP in January 2016 summarising its findings.
3. 5. This has been replicated in part on the following pages to illustrate the inconsistencies in how Chiltern & South Bucks have progressed sites compared to those in other areas as well as to further illustrate inconsistencies with other sites that are themselves with the combined Districts;

General Area	Local Authority	Area (hectares)	Scoring					Recommended for further consideration? Where are Gen Areas 21 (RSA1), 7a (SA2), 8b (RSA 3), 9a (RSA4) 9g (RSA5), 43b (RSA – 14), 58a (RSA19 & 20), 60 & 67 (RSA 21)?
			Purpose 1		Purpose 2 Prevents towns or settlements merging	Purpose 3 Prevents encroaching countryside - maintains Openness	Purpose 4 Preserves character & setting historic towns	
			(a) Edge or large GB area?	(b) Prevents sprawl?				
8f	Chiltern	447.5	PASS	3+	1	3	0	No - DID NOT PROGRESS - Yet only 1 criteria scored higher than Lye Green unadjusted and only by 1 point
8g	Chiltern	165.0	PASS	3+	1	3	0	No – DID NOT PROGRESS – Yet only 1 criteria scored higher than Lye Green unadjusted and only by 1 point
9e	Aylesbury Vale / Chiltern / Wycombe	1580.7	PASS	3	1	5	0	No – DID NOT PROGRESS – Only 1 criteria scored higher than Lye Green unadjusted, probably on size re Criteria #3.
9f	Chiltern / Wycombe	879.3	PASS	0	3	4	0	No - DID NOT PROGRESS
10c	Chiltern	200.9	FAIL	0	3	3	1	No - DID NOT PROGRESS NOTE failed 1a & b but scored 3 on criteria 3 – Does this make sense?
13a	Chiltern becomes RGA-3 LYE GREEN SITE	57.8	PASS	3	1	2	0	Yes (whole parcel) LYE GREEN SITE (unadjusted scores)
14a	Chiltern	755.1	FAIL	0	1	5	0	No - Only 1 criteria scored higher than Lye Green unadjusted probably on size re Criteria #3 but notably FAILED on 1a
15	Chiltern / Dacorum becomes RSA- 6	313.2	FAIL	0	3	3	0	Yes (Botley area)
33b	Chiltern	203.5	FAIL	0	1	5	0	No – Did not progress to Part 2? YET COMPARE WITH LYE GREEN??
38a	Chiltern / Three Rivers becomes RSA - 12	399.3	PASS	3+	5	3	0	Yes (east of Chesham Lane, north of Rickmansworth Lane and west of Brawlings Lane) – WHY DID THIS PROGRESS COMPARED TO SAY 10c?
40a	South Bucks	91.7	FAIL	0	3	4	0	No - Did not progress to Part 2? Yet scores are poor + failed 1a?
44a	Chiltern / South Bucks - becomes RSA - 15	229.0	PASS	3	3	3	1	Yes (far north-east of the parcel north of Hogtrough Wood) - WHY DID THIS PROGRESS COMPARED TO SAY 10c of 44b below?
44b	Chiltern / South Bucks	133.3	PASS	3	3	5	0	No DID NOT PROGRESS– Why did this not progress compared to 44a above?
47a	Chiltern / South Bucks becomes RSA - 16	81.0	PASS	3	3	2	1	Yes (whole parcel) - Why did this site progress compared to 44a above?
47b	Chiltern / South Bucks becomes RSA - 17	384.0	PASS	3	3	4	1	Yes (area west of Beaconsfield Golf Course) – This site scored better than 47a yet still progressed?

57b	Chiltern / South Bucks	17.3	PASS	3	1	3	1	No - Did not progress to Part 2? Yet only 1 point different to 13a at LYE GREEN?
63	South Bucks	195.6	FAIL	0	5	2	0	No - Did not progress to Part 2? - NOTE failed 1a & b but scored 3 on criteria 2 – Does this make sense?
65a	South Bucks becomes RGA - 7	23.8	FAIL	0	3	2	0	Yes (whole parcel)
65b	South Bucks	269.5	FAIL	0	3	3	0	No - Did not progress to Part 2? – Compare with 65a above and site 66 below though?
66	South Bucks becomes RSA - 22	245.9	FAIL	0	3	2	0	Yes (settlement of Denham)
74	South Bucks becomes RSA – 23 & 24	538.0	FAIL	0	3	3	0	Yes (east of parcel around Iver Heath and Pinewood)
75	South Bucks	229.4	FAIL	0	3	4	0	No DID NOT PROCEED BUT COMPARED WITH SITES 66 & 74 ABOVE?
79	South Bucks / LB Hillingdon	229.9	PASS	3	3	3	0	No - Did not progress to Part 2? – yet scored only 1 point more than 13a at LYE GREEN
87a	South Bucks	57.1	FAIL	0	3	5	0	No did not progress ?? Yet see 87b below with same scores that did!
87b	South Bucks becomes RSA 29 & RSA 30	228.2	FAIL	0	5	3	0	Yes (far north between Wood Lane and Swallow Street, and south-east between Iver and Ridgeway Trading Estate)
99	South Bucks / Slough	295.6	PASS	3	5	3	0	Yes (area bounded by Richings Park, Old Slade Lane and Poynings Way) – Why did this progress given scores???

OTHER COMPARISONS:

Site 12 at Wycombe scored Pass, 3+, 1, 2 & 0 (Medium) – similar (109Ha) NOT CARRIED FORWARD – ALSO NOT LISTED IN ARUP PART 1 TABLE?

Site 17 at Wycombe scored Pass, 3+, 1, 3, & 0 (Medium) - (159.6 Ha) NOT CARRIED FORWARD – ALSO NOT LISTED IN ARUP PART 1 TABLE?

NOTE: NO SITES CARRIED FORWARD IN WYCOME AREA PROGRESSED DUE TO DECISION THAT ANY SITE WITH A CRITERIA SCORE ABOVE 3 WAS PERFORMING GREEN BELT FUNCTIONS>

CONCLUSION:

- The assessment of Green Belt purposes numbered 2 & 3 undertaken by ARUP in the Part One Green Belt Assessment contained some errors and oversights and the Lye Green site should not have been shortlisted as an RGA for further consideration of removal from Green Belt designation.
- The Appraisal process is a complex “paperchase” involving numerous changes of site reference numbers often involving the same site.
- The Part One assessment gave the Lye Green site a score of “pass”, “3”, “1”, “2” & “0” rated as “medium” overall in terms of its performance against NPPF Green Belt criteria.
- It is contended that without the errors made in the Part One assessment of the second & third criteria, the scores should have been more accurately represented as “pass”, “3”, “3”, “3” & “0”. This would have removed the site from further consideration.
- The absence of any review of these Part One scores in the Part Two Green Belt Assessment by Chiltern and South Bucks District Council has further compounded the errors of the Part One exercise.
- A further update of the scores to reflect its status as an Asset of Community Value should also have removed the site from any further consideration despite the earlier errors in assessment.
- Even then, the inconsistency of method between neighbouring authority is stark. In Wycombe District Council, no site was taken forward for consideration if it had a score in any one criterion of 3 or more.
- The Part Two Green Belt Assessment has also failed to identify or specify “exceptional circumstances” to justify modification of the Green Belt boundary NE of Chesham
- When combined with the lack of earlier reference to the Landscape Capacity Assessment which subsequently affirm the openness of the Lye Green area and its visual sensitivity, and the fact the land has subsequently been shown to be an Asset of Community Value and makes a significant contribution to outdoor recreation and community wellbeing, BNG contend the overall assessment of the Green Belt site at Lye Green is fundamentally flawed and requires review.
- Furthermore, there are no exceptional circumstances to remove this site from Green Belt designation, especially given the principle landowners reluctance to sell and the questions regarding deliverability this raises combined with the constraints the numerous footpaths and easements place on the land.

Appendix 1: Critical Friend Comments (13-Sept-2016) on Draft Methodologies

A. Draft Green Belt Assessment Part Two Methodology published by Aylesbury Vale DC and Wycombe DC, July 2016				
Arup Comments				CDC/SBDC Officer Response
A1	Section 1.0	Introduction (general comment)	The introduction, whose purpose is to set the scene for the assessment and establish its primary objectives, feels a little unstructured and, at times, unclear. The first paragraph, which ultimately sets the tone for the study, focuses immediately on the issue of the county's objectively assessed housing need. While this is clearly a key issue for the districts in their forthcoming plan-making, it feels premature to introduce this issue up front and would appear to undermine the assured objectivity of the overall assessment (introduced in para. 1.9). We would suggest that the section is restructured to focus initially on the 'story so far' (i.e. the Arup study), before introducing Part 2 and the objectives for this workstream. This would demonstrate more clearly the logic chain.	Noted. Section 1 of the Chiltern and South Bucks Part Two report addresses these points by explaining the background and relationship with the Part One report and by setting out the purpose and objectives of the Part Two Assessment.

A2	Para 1.1	Objectively Assessed Housing Need (OAHN)	As highlighted above, while this is clearly a key driver for the Study, there are risks in framing the work solely around the issue of meeting OAHN. Legally, it is not clear whether meeting housing need would alone would constitute the exceptional circumstances required to bring about the release of Green Belt. Indeed, in para 2.1.11 of the Arup report (and para 2.6 of this report) Paragraph 044 of the PPG is referenced, which would appear to suggest not. In <i>Calverton PC v Nottingham CC & Ors</i>, the Council were able to demonstrate exceptional circumstances for a substantial release of Green Belt by showing that other options for development had been explored and rejected (“the limited availability of alternative sustainable sites” and the tightly drawn inner boundary of the green belt around Nottingham being key cited factors) and demonstrating that the proposed release “paid regard to the purposes of the green belt, the nature and quality of the proposed impingement, and the issue of sustainability”. We would suggest that, while the issues around OAHN are highlighted in the Study, the need to find land for housing is not cited quite so emphatically in the report in order to maintain a sense of neutrality/objectiveness.	Noted. Section 1 of the Chiltern and South Bucks Part Two report addresses these points by summarising National Planning Policy and National Planning Practice Guidance which reiterates the importance of the Green Belt and clarifies how Green Belt may affect the ability of an area to meet housing need.
A3	Para 1.1	London Metropolitan Green Belt	We do not feel that the reference to ‘London Metropolitan Green Belt’ is entirely helpful, given much of the Green Belt in Buckinghamshire was not designated in the original Metropolitan Green Belt. Furthermore, the wording somehow implies that the Green Belt is somehow ‘owned’ or imposed by London, when this is not the case. We would suggest the use of the term <i>Green Belt in Buckinghamshire</i> where relevant.	Noted. The term London Metropolitan Green Belt is not used in the Chiltern and South Bucks Part Two report. The term ‘Green Belt in Buckinghamshire’ is used where relevant.
A4	Para 1.10	Further consideration	It might be helpful at this point to more clearly set out what this ‘further consideration’ would entail (for example, is the performance of sub areas against the purposes being reconsidered, or are any other factors being taken into account?).	Noted. Section 1 of the Chiltern and South Bucks Part Two report addresses this point by listing the objectives of the Part Two Assessment. In addition, Section 3 explains the approach to Green Belt purpose assessment in Part Two.

A5	Para 3.1	Assessment process for taking land out of the Green Belt	Again, we would suggest that this statement feels quite assumptive. Presumably as this is an evidence base document no decisions would be reached in the Study about which areas would be taken out of the Green Belt, more this document provides the evidence that would be required in order to do this through the Local Plan process. We assume that the Council would wish to weigh up options assessed through this report against others identified through the wider site selection process before any decision is reached on which areas are definitively proposed for release. As such, we would suggest that this reference is toned down.	Noted. The Chiltern and South Bucks Part Two report explains that the findings from the Green Belt Part Two Assessment will be considered alongside other elements of the evidence base as part of the local plan options appraisal process. That is the point at which consideration is given to the question of whether potential harm to the Green Belt is outweighed by exceptional circumstances in the context of consideration of a broader range of options.
A6	p.7	Flow Chart 1	While we recognise the merits of the proposed iterative process, and understand why this approach is taken, we do not believe the diagram provided is entirely helpful in explaining this. We would suggest that a flowchart with feedback loops and outflows (where sites could be removed from the process) would be more effective in showing the logic for the process.	Noted. The Chiltern and South Bucks Part Two report includes a flow chart which seeks to demonstrate more effectively the iterative nature of the assessment process.
A7	p.7	Flow Chart 1	Further to comment A6, we are concerned that the flowchart is rather simplistic in its approach to assessments that may require inputs from other evidence. For example, we believe that in developing exceptional circumstances broader considerations would have to be taken into account beyond performance against the NPPF purposes and site suitability/availability/achievability. We would suggest that these inputs are shown on the diagram.	Noted. The Chiltern and South Bucks approach to exceptional circumstances is designed to reflect the duty to achieve sustainable development and other key objectives such as planning positively to meet development needs where possible. It is a balanced framework encompassing a range of local and wider, more strategic considerations. The Chiltern and South Bucks Part Two report includes a flow chart which seeks to demonstrate this.

A8	Section B, paras 3.6-3.7	Defining the site boundary	We have concerns about sub areas being removed from the assessment process prematurely as a result of this assessment, particularly given the boundary features identified for consideration in para 3.6 does not feel exhaustive. We would suggest that this list is reviewed and/or expanded to take into account the differing scale of this Study compared with Part 1. Furthermore, we believe that ruling out sites where a complete and strong defensive boundary cannot be identified would not be robust and could lead to challenges where sub areas might otherwise be identified as suitable/available/achievable through the HELAA assessment. We suggest that a greater element of professional judgement should be employed in cases where only limited mitigation would be required to ensure a readily recognisable boundary can be identified. This would be in line with legal advice that other clients have received in relation to the potential to create new boundaries and enshrine the requirement to do so in planning policy or SPDs such as development briefs. Furthermore, we suggest that this assessment is used to identify how preferential a sub area would be for potential release rather than ruling areas out in a blanket fashion.	Chiltern and South Bucks Districts consider it important that a consistent approach to boundaries is taken in Parts One and Two of the Green Belt Assessment. However adopting the Part One approach in Part Two does not preclude the use of professional judgement where only limited mitigation would be required to identify a readily recognisable boundary that is likely to be permanent. In addition, the Chiltern and South Bucks Part Two report states that further consideration may be given to the potential to create new Green Belt boundaries as part of the overall decision-making process for site allocations as part of the new local plan.
A9	Section C, para 3.8	Exceptional circumstances	The current phrasing of this section would appear to imply that the relative level of constraint on a site may be used to justify exceptional circumstances for release. In line with comment A7, we would like to highlight that the development of an exceptional circumstances case is likely to encompass a wide range of wider, more strategic considerations, and would therefore suggest that this reference is removed and any methodological discussion of exceptional circumstances is confined to Stage 2.	Noted. The Chiltern and South Bucks Part Two report does not include a section referring to the HELAA. The Chiltern and South Bucks approach to exceptional circumstances is designed to reflect the duty to achieve sustainable development and other key objectives such as planning positively to meet development needs where possible. It is a balanced framework encompassing a range of local and wider, more strategic considerations.
A10	Section C, para 3.9	Typo	Typo – ‘exceptional circumstances’, not ‘exception’.	-

A11	Stage 2, para 3.10	Exceptional circumstances case	We believe, in line with previous comments, that exceptional circumstances cannot be solely framed around providing more houses. We would suggest that a more balanced framework is established in order to support the development of such a case, encompassing considerations such as sustainable development and the broader spatial vision for the district(s).	Noted. See response to comments A1 & A9.
A12	Stage 3	Methodology	This section discusses the 'wider impacts' of removing land from the Green Belt. It would be helpful if these impacts were articulated in further detail (for example, is this limited to the NPPF purposes or wider factors such as landscape?).	Noted. Section 3 of the Chiltern and South Bucks Part Two report explains the importance of understanding the wider strategic context as part of the assessment process.
A13	3.11	Typo	Typo – 'cumulative' instead of 'cumulate'	-
A14	p.10/11	Flow Chart 2	We are unsure why the NPPF purposes would not be considered in cases where development is already present. While this may be the appropriate approach, the implication is that the NPPF is not considered relevant to developing a case for release, which we believe could leave the methodology open to question.	A number of the areas in Chiltern and South Bucks Districts recommended for further consideration by the Part One Assessment have very limited or no additional development potential. It is considered that the Part One Assessment provides sufficient information on performance against Green Belt purposes in these cases. Section 3 of the Part Two report for Chiltern and South Bucks lists and describes the relevant areas.
A15	Category 4	Methodology	While we note that this section may not be applicable in the South Bucks/Chiltern context, we are concerned that this section provides little clarity on the practical approach to designating new Green Belt and simply quotes policy. We would expect this section to be developed out in further detail.	-
A16	Appendix 2	Identified areas for the Stage 2 assessment	We are happy that the map reflects the output from the Part 1 report, but note that there is nothing illustrating the additional areas that the local authorities have identified for further assessment. We suggest that a new map is produced to illustrate all of the areas under consideration.	Noted. The Chiltern and South Bucks Part Two report includes a map showing all areas of land falling within the scope of the Part Two Assessment in the two Districts. The areas of land are also listed in the Part Two report. Also see response to comment B1.

B. Notes by Chiltern and South Bucks District Councils to Supplement the Draft Buckinghamshire Part Two Methodology				
Arup Comments				CDC/SBDC Officer Response
B1	Para 5	Selecting the correct pro forma	We are not clear by what mechanism development potential has been assessed in order to decide whether to complete Pro Forma 1 or 2. Please could this be explained clearly here. (Further comments are provided on the pro formas in section C).	The Chiltern and South Bucks Part Two report explains that Pro Forma 1 (relating to the RGAs and RSAs with limited or no development potential) has only been used in very few cases. They are all instances which are either existing built areas, have an implemented planning permission for substantial built development or comprise public open space. What they therefore have in common is no or very limited further development potential within the defined RGA/RSA areas. It is considered that the Part 1 Green Belt purpose scoring provides sufficient information for these areas. Pro Forma 1 has been used only in the following cases: • Botley (Ref 1.02) – Green Belt settlement with a particularly urban character. • Tatling End (Ref 1.17) – Green Belt settlement. An area of significant encroachment with an inherently semi-urban character. • Denham (Ref. 1.18) – Green Belt settlement. Quite densely built-up with an inherently semi-urban character. • Land north of Iver including Pinewood Studios (Ref. 1.19) – The land with planning permission for expansion of Iver Studios. Development is under construction. • Taplow Riverside Area (Ref. 1.23) – The Green Belt settlement of Taplow Riverside which has a high proportion of built form and the Mill Lane MDS which has planning permission for demolition of existing buildings and structures and construction of 141 dwellings, 40 senior living apartments etc. Development is under construction. • Burnham (Ref. 1.24) – An urban park.

B2	Para 8	Reviewing Arup findings	We assume that this refers the need to adjust the purpose scores accordingly for the sub area versus the General Area score from the Part 1 assessment? If this is the case, we suggest that this is brought out more explicitly (as the current wording implies that there may be scope to review the Part 1 assessments themselves, which may undermine the robustness of the wider Study).	The Arup assumption is correct. The Chiltern and South Bucks Part Two report explains that there is no scope to review the Part One assessment; the purpose of the review is to consider whether the purpose scores should be adjusted for the sub area only.
B3	Paras 10-11	Exceptional circumstances	We concur with the overall approach and believe that this broadly addresses the identified shortcoming in the Draft Buckinghamshire methodology (see comment A11), though we would suggest this framework could be developed further. We believe that the proposed focus on developing sustainable development options would be broadly compliant with the NPPF. We would suggest that the third consideration cited (Green Belt criteria) could focus not just on performance against the parcels, but also a wider consideration of potential harm to the Green Belt in terms of strategic integrity and the potential for harm to the broader purpose of the wider Green Belt as identified in the Part 1 assessment. We believe this is subtly different to the cumulative approach described in the Draft Buckinghamshire methodology (Part 3). We note that this would appear to be consistent with the proposed pro-forma template 1 – if this is the case, please bring this out more clearly in the methodology note. In line with previous comments, our view is that a robust exceptional circumstances case must be developed at the strategic level, and while site specific considerations would be an important factor (as highlighted in para 10) we believe that it would be helpful to highlight the need to consider these wider factors.	The Chiltern and South Bucks Part Two report explains that the question in each pro forma relating to the wider strategic function of the Green Belt is intended to consider potential harm to the Green Belt in terms of strategic integrity and the broader purpose of the wider Green Belt. The need to consider the role of wider Green Belt factors as part of the exceptional circumstances case is also explained in Section 3 (Methodology) of the Part Two report.

C. Pro Forma to Supplement the Draft Buckinghamshire Part Two Methodology				
Arup Comments				CDC/SBDC Officer Response
C1	Pro forma 1	Part 3	Given the wording in the NPPF states that Green Belt boundaries can only be amended in exceptional circumstances, we are not clear what considerations would be made here. Please could this be set out more clearly in the pro forma. We assume that this could encompass boundary anomalies for example.	This is intended to deal with circumstances such as boundary anomalies and where there is a case for consideration of the creation of new Green Belt boundaries that will endure for the long-term as a result of the redevelopment of Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt. This is explained in Section 3 (Methodology) of the Chiltern and South Bucks Part Two report.
C2	All pro formas	General comment	Please refer to comment A8 on the definition of boundaries. We suggest that this should be a factor to weigh up in the overall decision making process rather than an arbitrary way of filtering sites, and believe that some of the considerations around spatial fit with the local plan options may be a more effective way of filtering sites (i.e. site is in a more/less favoured strategic option).	The list of boundary features used in the Part Two Assessment is consistent with the NPPF and with the Part One Assessment. It is considered important to ensure consistency of approach; introducing new features risks inconsistencies between the Part One and Part Two Assessments. The assessment process does not however preclude the use of professional judgement where only limited mitigation would be required to identify a readily recognisable boundary that is likely to be permanent. This is explained in Section 3 (Methodology) of the Part Two report. The Part Two report also explains that further consideration may be given to the potential to create new Green Belt boundaries as part of the overall decision-making process for site allocations as part of the new local plan.

C3	All pro formas	General comment	We note the reference in the Draft Buckinghamshire methodology to the assessment of areas in line with the HELAA methodology, as well as consideration of wider constraints. We note that there is no section within the proposed pro formas for this assessment and would wish to confirm if this would be undertaken in a separate pro forma. If so, it may be helpful to provide a summary of the conclusions from this assessment.	The HELAA assessment and consideration of wider constraints form separate strands of work to be considered alongside the findings of the Green Belt Assessment Part Two. To make this relationship clearer, the conclusions in Part Two relating to exceptional circumstances are couched in terms that exceptional circumstances <i>may</i> exist rather than that they definitively do exist. A definitive conclusion on exceptional circumstances cannot be drawn until the Part Two findings have been considered alongside other elements of the evidence base as part of the options appraisal process.
C4	All pro formas	General comment	We suggest that a section is added for site visit photographs which might assist in illustrating the assessment (e.g. boundary assessment), as well as a map.	A map is included in each pro forma.