



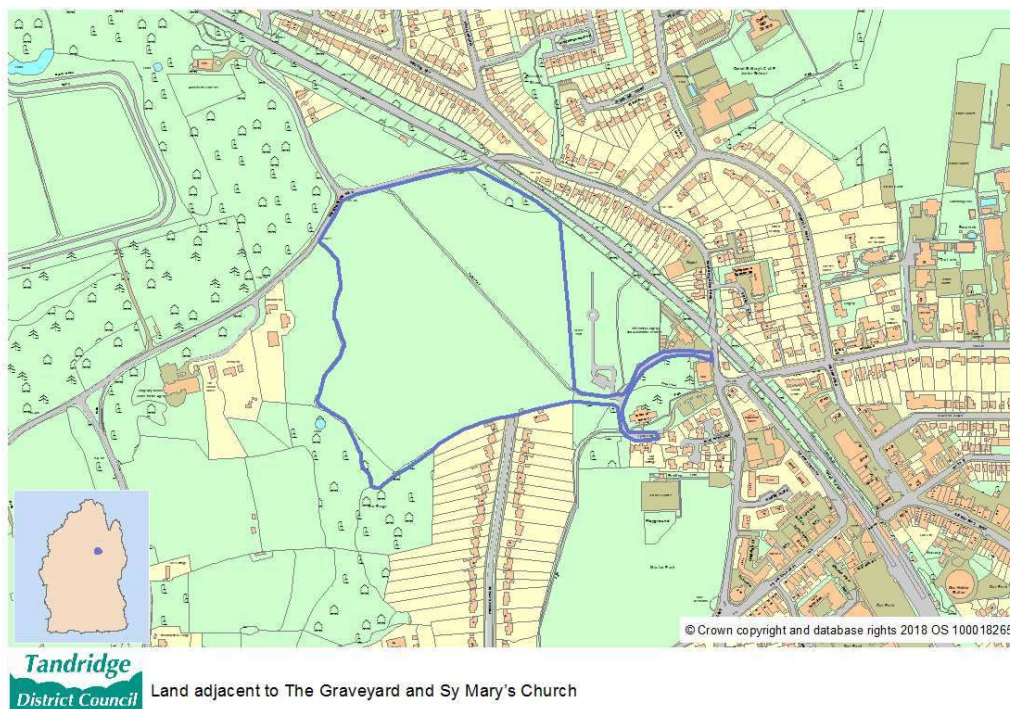
Our Local Plan

Green Belt Assessment (Part 3): Appendix 1 (2018)

OXT 007 – Land adjacent to The Graveyard and St. Mary's Church, Oxted

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EXTENT & LOCATION OF SITE



Proposed Development: Residential, 250 units

Spatial Strategy

Is the site strategy compliant?

The site is undeveloped land located on the edge of the built-up area of Oxted, a sustainable settlement designated as Tier 1 in the Council's Settlement Hierarchy and identified as a preferred location for development as part of the spatial strategy. Accordingly, the Council consider that the site is strategy compliant and would have a significant role to play in achieving sustainable.

Green Belt Assessment

Does the Green Belt Assessment recommend that the GB in this location should be retained/or further considered in terms of exceptional circumstances?

The site has been considered through the Green Belt Assessment Part 1 as part of GBA 017 and through Part 2 as part of AFI 053. The Green Belt evidence concludes that the parcel plays an effective role in checking urban sprawl as development is contained within the urban boundary. The parcel is also considered to effectively assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, and plays only a minor role in preventing the merging of settlements as there is a considerable distance between Oxted and the next nearest town, and the towns of Old Oxted and Oxted have merged. Part 2 confirms the above points and concludes that it should not be considered further.

What is the nature and extent of the harm to the Green Belt if the site is developed?

Given that the Green Belt in this location serves the purposes of preventing sprawl and assists in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, development in this location is likely to result in harm to the ability of Green Belt in this location to continue to serve these purposes. In addition, there is potential for harm to the ability of the wider Green Belt to meet the Green Belt purposes.

To what extent can the consequent impacts on the purposes of the Green Belt be ameliorated or reduced to the lowest

Given the strong contribution to openness and the Green Belt purposes in this location, it is considered that a major housing development of 250 units would cause significant harm to openness and increase encroachment. Whilst a sensitively designed scheme may reduce impact, harm is unlikely to be outweighed.

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	reasonably practicable extent?	
	Other evidence base considerations	
	Does the ecology evidence consider the site is ecologically suitable?	The ecology evidence has determined that this site is Ecologically Suitable for housing development (8.8ha). However woodland pockets and landscape corridors would need to be protected and buffered. Access to east restricted due to mature hedgerows and woodland. If primary vehicular access can be gained from Barrow Green Lane, then the site would be ecologically suitable. Should this site be allocated, the developable yield and area are likely to be amended to reflect the constraints.
	Does the landscape evidence consider the site has capacity to accommodate development in the landscape?	With moderate sensitivity and value, site is judged to have a medium landscape capacity for housing development. The site would potentially be suitable in landscape terms for limited housing proposals, but would need to take into consideration views and the site's contribution to the setting of the surrounding landscape, including the AONB, and demonstrate no adverse impacts on the setting of the existing landscape and settlement. It would also need to be of a form and scale that is closely related to the existing settlement and could include woodland and hedgerows to replicate the local landscape pattern, which would also reduce visual impacts.
	Does the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities Assessment consider that the site is surplus provision or can facilities be re-provided elsewhere?	Not applicable as the site is not existing open space. However, the population resulting from proposed development on this site would generate demands for open space. These would need to be considered against existing provision in the parish and result in policy requirements for on or off-site provision, if the site is allocated.
	Does the Sustainability Appraisal consider that the site is a sustainable location?	It considers that the site can provide sufficient housing, has satisfactory access to GP surgery, schools, the surrounding countryside, employment opportunities and public transport. The site is unlikely to adversely affect the guidelines of the Surrey Landscape Character Assessment. In addition the site is classified as urban under the Agricultural Land Classification system. However, there is potential for the site to conflict with the Landscape Character Area (LCA) guidance which states the development should 'conserve and enhance the landscape setting to villages and edge of settlement' but the effect of development would depend largely on the sensitivity of the design to the local townscape. The site is within close proximity to SNCIs and Ancient Woodland and its development may adversely affect them as a result of predation from domestic cats, noise and light pollution, litter, or increased disturbance from people. The provision of buffer zones and the careful siting of development would help mitigate some of these adverse effects. It is greenfield and its development would be expected to lead to the loss of soil. The site is adjacent to the Grade I listed Church of St Mary the Virgin and as such would need to be designed to conserve and enhance its setting. Land in the Greensand Valley Landscape Character Area.
	Is the site sequentially preferred? Would development of this site increase flood risk or impact on water quality?	The site is within Flood Zone 1, it has a low risk of surface water flooding but a risk of groundwater flooding to surface and subsurface assets; as such it is not sequentially preferred. It is within Groundwater Source Protection Zone 3, with an increased risk of groundwater contamination and within the high risk zone for groundwater vulnerability. In order to mitigate its effects, it would be necessary to

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	Is the proposed development of the site likely to result in harm that would be difficult to mitigate and/or provide opportunities for community benefit?	<p>regulate and monitor water quality and SUDs would be required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodiversity enhancement opportunities, comprising the strengthening and extending of hedgerow network, habitat creation to reconnect standalone oak with other habitats, creation of ponds and creation of species diverse grassland. • Diversion of public right of way. • Community Infrastructure Levy eligible/potential contributions or on-site provision of infrastructure
	<p>Discussion</p> <p>Are there exceptional circumstances that would outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and justify Green Belt release?</p> <p>Having considered (i) the acuteness/intensity of the objectively assessed need for housing, (ii) the inherent constraints on supply/availability of land prima facie suitable for sustainable development and (iii) the consequent difficulties in achieving sustainable development without impinging on the Green Belt (Calverton principles (i) to (iii)) in the main report, as well as the reasonable options set out in the draft NPPF 2018, it is evident that development within the Green Belt is necessary.</p> <p>In light of the above, housing development on this site would make a contribution of 250 units which would help meet the district’s housing need in the short term, consistent with the principles of sustainable development. Furthermore, the site comprises undeveloped land located on the edge of a Tier 1 settlement and as such is in a preferred location on sustainability grounds, being within close proximity to a GP surgery, schools, countryside, employment and public transport. In addition, the site is considered, in principle, suitable for development from a landscape and ecology perspective subject to mitigation measures. Other potential adverse effects such as the impact upon the setting of listed buildings, surface water flooding and groundwater contamination could similarly be adequately mitigated.</p> <p>However, the development of the site would impact on the ability of this site to serve two of the Green Belt purposes i.e. preventing sprawl and safeguarding from encroachment and would result in the loss of openness. Its impact could be minimised by siting it in the most visually contained section of the site, in addition to using sensitive design, buffers and landscaping, but given its scale, even with all these measures, its impact would still be significant particularly as the site links into the wider rural landscape. Moreover the existing railway line, which forms the existing settlement boundary in this location, provides a strong and defensible boundary that should be retained to protect the settlement form in this location. No other equally robust and defensible boundary has been identified and as such it would impact upon the wider Green Belt’s ability to continue to serve these purposes. In addition its development would involve the diversion of a footpath which currently runs through the site.</p> <p>The development of this site would attract CIL, and as such would contribute towards infrastructure needed to support the growth of the district. Its development would also provide opportunities to enhance the site’s biodiversity.</p> <p>Having considered all of the factors set out in section 3 of the paper “Green Belt Assessment Part 3: Exceptional Circumstances and Insetting” it is considered, as a matter of planning judgement, that this site does not justify the exceptional circumstances necessary to recommend amendment of the Green Belt boundary.</p>	