

Potential Creation of a New Settlement at Wisley Airfield

Stage 1: Summary of Environmental Capacity

Wisley Airfield is located to the north east of Guildford Borough approximately 1.4km to the south east of Wisley village, 3.27km to the south west of Cobham, 2.77km to the north west of East Horsley, 0.68km to the north of Ockham, and 1.42km to the north east of Ripley.

Wisley Airfield is situated within land parcel C18 (2*) with C19 (1*) to the north, C17 (3*) to the south east, C12 (2*) to the south, and C11 (2*) to the south west of the airfield. Isolated, and clusters of, residential properties are located at Elm Corner and Wilderness Farm to the north, Hatchford End and Old Lane to the north east and Upton Farm and Bridge End Farm to the south of the airfield. Wisley Airfield is physically and visually separated from the RHS Wisley gardens to the west by the A3 dual carriageway.

(* indicates the Green Belt purposes score for the according land parcel)

Wisley Airfield exhibits the following environmental and physical constraints:

North: The disused airfield is enclosed to the north by woodland within Ockham Common that is designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA), Important Bird Area, Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and Registered Common Land. The 400 metre buffer of the SPA crosses into the disused airfield covering approximately 50ha of land to the north of the disused runway. This land within the 400 metre SPA buffer would not be appropriate for residential development.

East: Ancient Woodland is located to the north east of Wisley Airfield at Hatchford Park.

South: A designated 1 in 100 and 1 in 1000 year floodplain is located to the south west of the airfield following a watercourse near Hyde Lane. A designated Conservation Area is located at Ockham village to the south of the PMDA.

West: The disused airfield is contained to the west by the A3 dual carriageway which separates the land from the RHS Wisley gardens located further to the west. Land to the north west of the airfield includes a waste management allocation / composting facility with an approximate land constraint of 17ha.

Wisley Airfield is located within a local plan Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI). The Guildford Borough Sites of Nature Conservation Importance Surveys (2004 –2007) describes this SNCI as a “*disused airfield with derelict tarmac runway, arable fields, semi-improved grassland and hedgerows. This site is selected for its importance for reptiles, plants and birds. 9 notable Surrey plant species have been recorded on the site. In addition 3 RSPB red list bird species and 7 RSPB amber list bird species have been recorded on the site. The site has an exceptional or good population of a number of reptiles and amphibians.*”

In order for any development proposals to go ahead at Wisley Airfield suitable ecological mitigation and compensation measures would need to be provided for any loss of habitat within the SNCI. Given the nature and scale of development, incorporating notable areas of open space, it is considered likely that appropriate ecological mitigation and compensation measures could be accommodated, but this will require more detailed consideration.

It is understood that the airfield currently covers an area of approximately 115 hectares. This is very similar to the figure of 110 ha referred to in the above methodology as being required to accommodate a sustainable new settlement. However, the airfield also includes an area of approximately 17 ha that relates to an approved composting facility. Whilst the owners' intentions with regards to whether or not the composting facility will be introduced are not known, the area forms part of an allocated site in the Surrey Waste Plan 2008. This also covers an area of 17 ha, and as a result the introduction of an alternative use to this part of the site is likely to be resisted.

It is recognised that the composting / waste facility may make some, albeit very limited, employment contribution to a new settlement, and may be able to incorporate elements of open space within its layout. However on balance, the scale of land lost to the facility, combined with the fact that significant parts of the site cannot accommodate residential development, means that there is doubt as to whether the airfield site, as exists, would be able to deliver an appropriate sustainable new settlement.

Consideration has therefore been given to whether additional land could be introduced to the airfield site, in order to achieve the scale of development necessary to enable a sustainable form of development. In light of the constraints referred to above, and shown on the designations plans, the most viable option for expansion appears to be south east of the airfield within the surroundings of Bridge End Farm. It is not known whether the owners of this land would be willing to include it within potential development proposals and this would need to be explored by the Council before any subsequent decisions on proposed allocations are made.

A Potential Major Development Area (PMDA) has been identified at the following location:

C18-A: The disused Wisley Airfield PMDA is located within the centre of land parcel C18 (2*) that is surrounded by defensible boundaries including woodland at Ockham Common to the north, Old Lane to the east, Ockham Road and Hatch Lane near Bridge End Farm to the south, treebelts and hedgerows following Hyde Lane to the south west, and the A3 dual carriageway to the west of the airfield site. The PMDA at Wisley Airfield can be accessed from a number of locations including the A3 Ripley junction to the west, Old Lane to the east, and Ockham Lane and Hatch Lane to the south of the site.

Approximately 70 hectares of the PMDA lies beyond the SPA 400 metre buffer zone, and is not subject to any other type of constraint that would restrict residential development. Natural England has advised that there may be potential to introduce forms of development other than residential within the 50 hectares of the PMDA located within the 400 metre SPA buffer zone. However, this will require closer assessment in response to specific proposals, to ensure such development (including open space and SANG provision) does not increase the likelihood of people accessing the SPA which lies to the north of the PMDA.

LAND USES	The PMDA primarily consists of Wisley Airfield that includes a disused runway and a large hardstanding area near Elm Lane and Wilderness Farm to the north. The remaining open areas are currently used for arable farmland and include Bridge End Farm and the VOR Navigational Beacon to the south east of the PMDA.
TOPOGRAPHY	The PMDA is generally flat within the disused airfield at approximately 40 metres AOD, however, gently undulates to 35 metres AOD at Elm Corner to the north, and the watercourse following Hyde Lane to the south of the airfield near Bridge End Farm.
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER	The PMDA is located within a landscape that is partly degraded through the construction of the airfield runway and the removal of field hedgerows. The PMDA to the east of Hatch Lane that passes through the centre is characterised by the disused runway and large open arable fields. The PMDA to the west of Hatch Lane is more enclosed by treebelts and woodland within the surroundings of Elm Lane to the north, and Hyde Lane to the south. A large area of hardstanding is located to the north of the disused airfield near Elm Corner.
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS	<i>E2 – Ockham and Clandon Wooded Rolling Claylands (GRA) – “Major transport corridors cross the area causing some visual fragmentation of the landscape and local noise pollution; the A246 along the southern boundary, the A3 through the northern section and the railway across the centre. A network of rural roads run mainly north to south, some lined by settlement and others retaining their rural character and either bounded by woodland belts or with views across open farmland.”</i>

LANDSCAPE VALUE	The PMDA is not subject to any statutory or non statutory landscape designations.
NATURE CONSERVATION	The PMDA is located within a Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) as stated above. A designated Special Protection Area (SPA), Important Bird Area, Local Nature Reserve and Registered Common Land is also located to the north of the disused airfield within Ockham Common. The 400 metre buffer of the SPA includes land to the north of the PMDA generally to the north of the disused runway. Residential development would not be appropriate within the 400 metre SPA buffer, however, it may be suitable for other uses.
CULTURAL HERITAGE	The PMDA is not subject to any statutory or non statutory cultural heritage designations. The eastern most point of the Ockham Conservation Area adjoins the southern-most point of the PMDA.
FLOOD RISK	A 1 in 100 year flood zone is located directly to the south west of the airfield following a tributary near Hyde Lane.
AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION	The PMDA is predominantly located within grade 4 (poor agricultural land) with grade 6 (very poor) land to the north and grade 3 (good to moderate) land to the south of the airfield.
PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY (PROW)	The PMDA is accessible by a number of PROW including tracks, bridleways and public footpaths. A farm track and bridleway known as Hatch Lane crosses the centre of the disused airfield between Bridge End Farm and Wilderness Farm leading to Ockham Common to the north of the PMDA. Other bridleways cross the disused airfield between Hyde Lane and Elm Lane to the east. Public footpaths are located between Ockham Lane and Hatchford End, and between Bridge End Farm and the A3 dual carriageway to the west of the PMDA.
AVIATION	A VOR Navigational Beacon for Heathrow Airport is located to the south west of the disused airfield near Ockham Lane and Upton Farm. The Ockham VOR Safeguarding Map identifies a buffer zone to the south west of the airfield constraining buildings in excess of 10 metres height within this buffer.
OTHER CONSIDERATIONS	Approximately 17ha of Wisley Airfield to the north west is safeguarded under the Surrey Waste Plan 2008 under Waste Policy DC1 as an allocated site for waste management uses identified within policies WD2 and WD5. The PMDA is also within a mineral safeguarding area for concrete aggregate.
<p>Stage 2: <i>Assessing the potential sustainability credentials of a new settlement at the site. This requires assumptions on the potential population that could be accommodated and the resulting potential facilities that could be supported, including reference to potential public transport connections.</i></p> <p>The SPA buffer will result in no new dwellings being able to be introduced to approximately 50 hectares of the site area. Additional constraints associated with the waste allocation, existing woodland and proximity to the Ockham Conservation Area may further limit the location of new housing. However, there is considered to be sufficient remaining area, of approximately 60 hectares, to introduce dwellings at an appropriate density to provide a population in excess of 4,000.</p> <p>A population in excess of 4,000 is likely to be able to support a number of new services and facilities, including a primary school, nursery, healthcare facility, community centre, post office, convenience store, food and drink units.</p> <p>With regards public transport, the site directly adjoins the A3, which currently offers bus routes to Guildford, Cobham, Esher and Kingston amongst other locations. Route 515 currently offers an hourly service connecting to these settlements. There would appear to be potential for the new settlement to be incorporated within this route, and potentially justify an increase in the frequency of the service.</p>	

As a result, the PMDA would offer the opportunity for a sustainable form of development, adhering to Garden City principles, which would be introduced to a largely previously developed site.

Stage 3: *Assessing the potential sustainability scoring for a new settlement at Wisley Airfield with potential facilities that could be supported through population growth.*

At present the Wisley Airfield PMDA C18-A would score very poorly in sustainability terms because there are no facilities and services in place. A new settlement in excess of 4,000 people would however support a number of facilities and services as previously referred to. It is acknowledged that the precise facilities to be introduced, along with their location within the site, will be subject to detailed consideration as plans are drawn up. It is possible that some of those referred to will not be delivered, but other facilities not currently referred to may prove viable. For these reasons it is not considered helpful to provide a specific potential sustainability score for the site, but instead provide a range of scoring that would appear feasible, the centre point of which is based upon the following assumptions.

In accordance with the IHT 'desirable' walking distances identified within Volume II, Table 5.3, the following could realistically be provided:

- Primary School – 500m or less
- Nursery – 500m or less
- Healthcare facility – 500m or less
- Local Centre – 200m or less
- Community Centre – 400m or less

Stage 4: *How will the required scale of development impact upon the purposes of the Green Belt and its openness? Does the site exhibit defensible boundaries that would allow for the inseting of a PMDA from the Green Belt in accordance with the NPPF?*

The site lies within a land parcel that scored 2 (out of 4) in the initial assessment of Green Belt purposes within Volume II. As a result, there are a number of other parts of the borough in which more of the Green Belt purposes are being served by the Green Belt designation. Turning to the five purposes individually;

- **To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas (Purpose 1)**

Due to the airfield site not adjoining the main urban areas within the borough, it does not offer the opportunity for such urban areas to sprawl within it. As a result the Green Belt does not serve this purpose in this location.

- **To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another (Purpose 2)**

Land parcel C18 did not include any settlements, and as a result there was not the potential for development within this part of the Green Belt to result in coalescence between existing neighbouring towns, and the land parcel was not considered to serve this purpose accordingly in Volume II.

It is acknowledged that development of a PMDA at Wisley Airfield might result in development in close proximity to the hamlet of Bridge End. The impact upon Bridge End, and requirement to maintain its current identity and avoid coalescence with any potential new settlement, will need to be given careful consideration when assessing any proposed master plans for development of the site.

The boundary of the PMDA and future careful consideration of the layout of development within it will ensure that this purpose of the Green Belt can be adhered to.

- To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment (Purpose 3)

Due to there being a number of clusters of development within land parcel C18, it was recognised within Volume II that this area of land served this purpose of the Green Belt, with the designation restricting the ability of development to encroach from such clusters.

Some of the development clusters are on the edge of the identified PMDA, and as a result the Green Belt designation continues to perform the purpose of restricting encroachment into the area defined as the PMDA. The allocation of the PMDA would potentially detract from this purpose, by enabling encroachment from such clusters, albeit they are primarily to the north of the PMDA which is subject to SPA restrictions on what can be developed.

It is recognised that some responses to the publication of Volume II have suggested that encroachment in the countryside should relate to the potential to introduce any development to the countryside, without it needing to extend / encroach from an existing cluster of development. If such an approach is taken, the development of the PMDA would of course represent a significant encroachment in the countryside. However, this will always be the case wherever a new settlement is introduced to the Green Belt.

As a result, whilst recognising that this purpose of the Green Belt is currently active in this location, the introduction of a new settlement will be considered to represent an encroachment in the countryside in the vast majority of locations, rather than this particular site being more sensitive than most in terms of this purpose.

- To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns (Purpose 4)

If the precise wording of this purpose is followed, then there are no historic towns in the vicinity of the airfield, and as a result development of it would not conflict with the intentions of the purpose.

However, in consideration of this purpose in Volume II, and in other Green Belt studies, Conservation Areas associated with towns and villages have been used to assess whether there is any likelihood of the purpose being active for a particular area. In this instance Ockham Conservation Area lies to the south of the PMDA, and as a result careful consideration will need to be given to how any development of the PMDA would impact upon the Conservation Area.

Given the considerable area of the PMDA and ability to allocate certain land uses to different parts of it in response to the site's constraints, there is considered to be potential to provide a layout that will ensure that this purpose of the Green Belt is satisfied as part of any development of the PMDA.

- To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land (Purpose 5)

Due to the airfield not lying within an urban area, the development of it will not adhere with this purpose. However, the potential for developing this site and other areas on the edge of existing towns and villages is only being explored through the Green Belt and other studies, due to recognition that there is not sufficient suitable urban land within the borough to accommodate the Council's growth requirements.

Openness is one of the identified essential characteristics of the Green Belt, as referred to within the NPPF. Whilst the existing airfield contains development in the form of substantial areas of

hardstanding, it is inevitable that the introduction of development to accommodate a new settlement will have a notable impact upon the openness of this part of the Green Belt.

Wisley Airfield is considered to be large scale and open in character due its previous airfield land use. However, the PDMA is contained by a number of defensible boundaries in Green Belt terms including woodland at Ockham Common to the north, treebelts following Old Lane to the east, Ockham Road and Hatch Lane to the south, Hyde Lane to the south west, and the A3 dual carriageway to the west of the airfield site. This provides visual enclosure to a certain degree and would minimise harm to the open character of the wider Green Belt across this part of the borough.

With regards to defensible boundaries, the Wisley Airfield PMDA is generally contained by a number of recognisable and permanent boundaries that would permit the provision of new Green Belt boundaries, in accordance with the NPPF as shown on the Stage 4 mapping:

1. Woodland between Elm Corner and A3 dual carriageway
2. 2 Woodland adjacent to Elm Corner
3. Treebelt adjacent to Wilderness Farm
4. Woodland adjacent to Hatchford End
5. Treebelt adjacent to Hatchford End
6. Treebelt adjacent to residential properties on Old Lane
7. Old Lane
8. Treebelt surrounding Ockham End
9. Ockham Lane
10. Hatch Lane
11. Hedgerow to south of airfield
12. Woodland following Hyde Lane
13. Woodland following watercourse to south west of the airfield
14. Woodland between Elm Lane and A3 dual carriageway

Stage 5, Summary Conclusion:

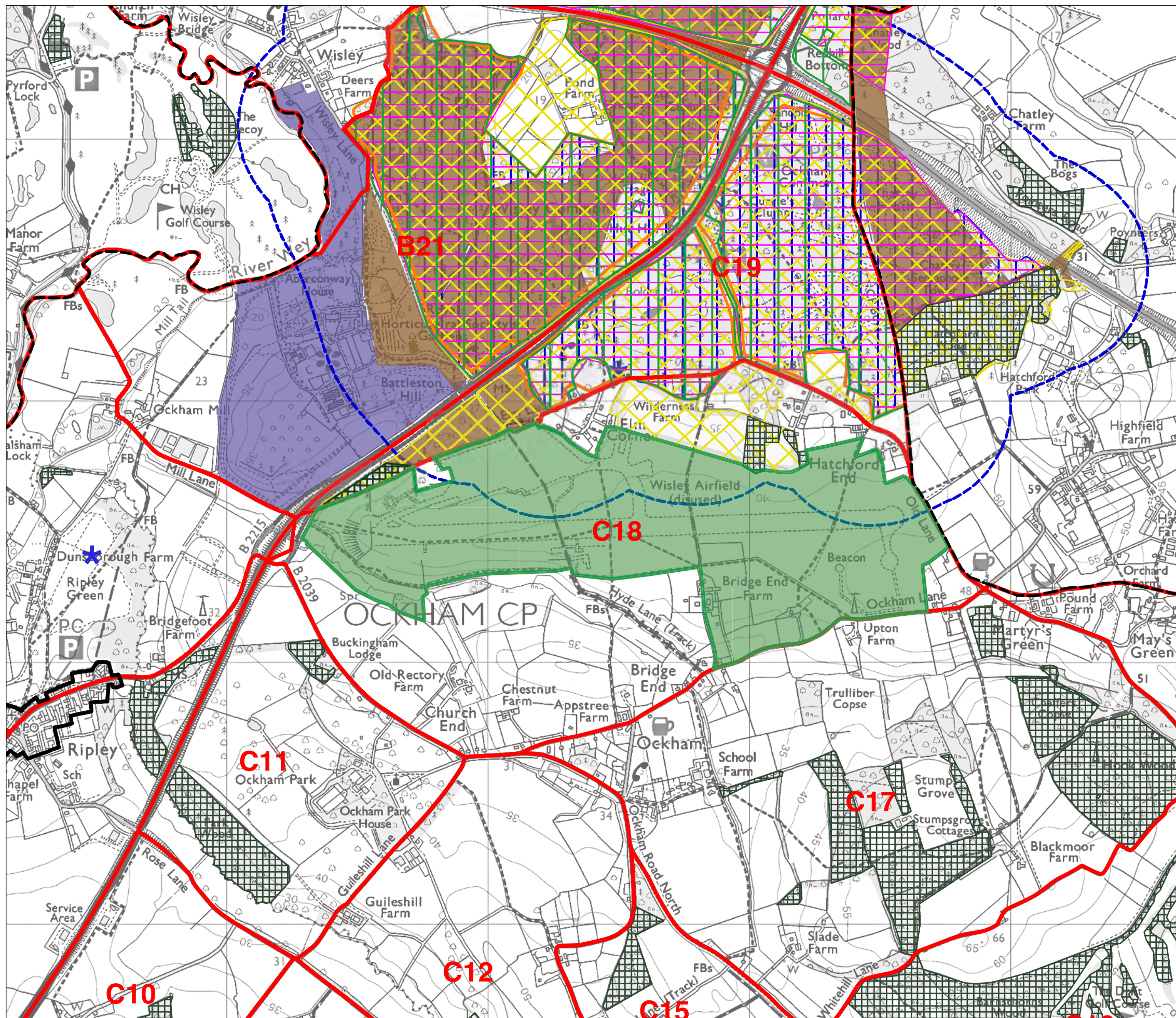
*Does Wisley Airfield offer an appropriate location for the introduction of a new settlement? **Yes***

In summary, it is considered that the Wisley Airfield PMDA, which incorporates some land adjoining the airfield site, does represent an appropriate location for a new settlement, and should be considered alongside other Potential Development Areas (PDAs) and Potential Major Development Areas (PMDAs) identified in the Green Belt Study to accommodate the borough's growth requirements. The reasons are as follows:

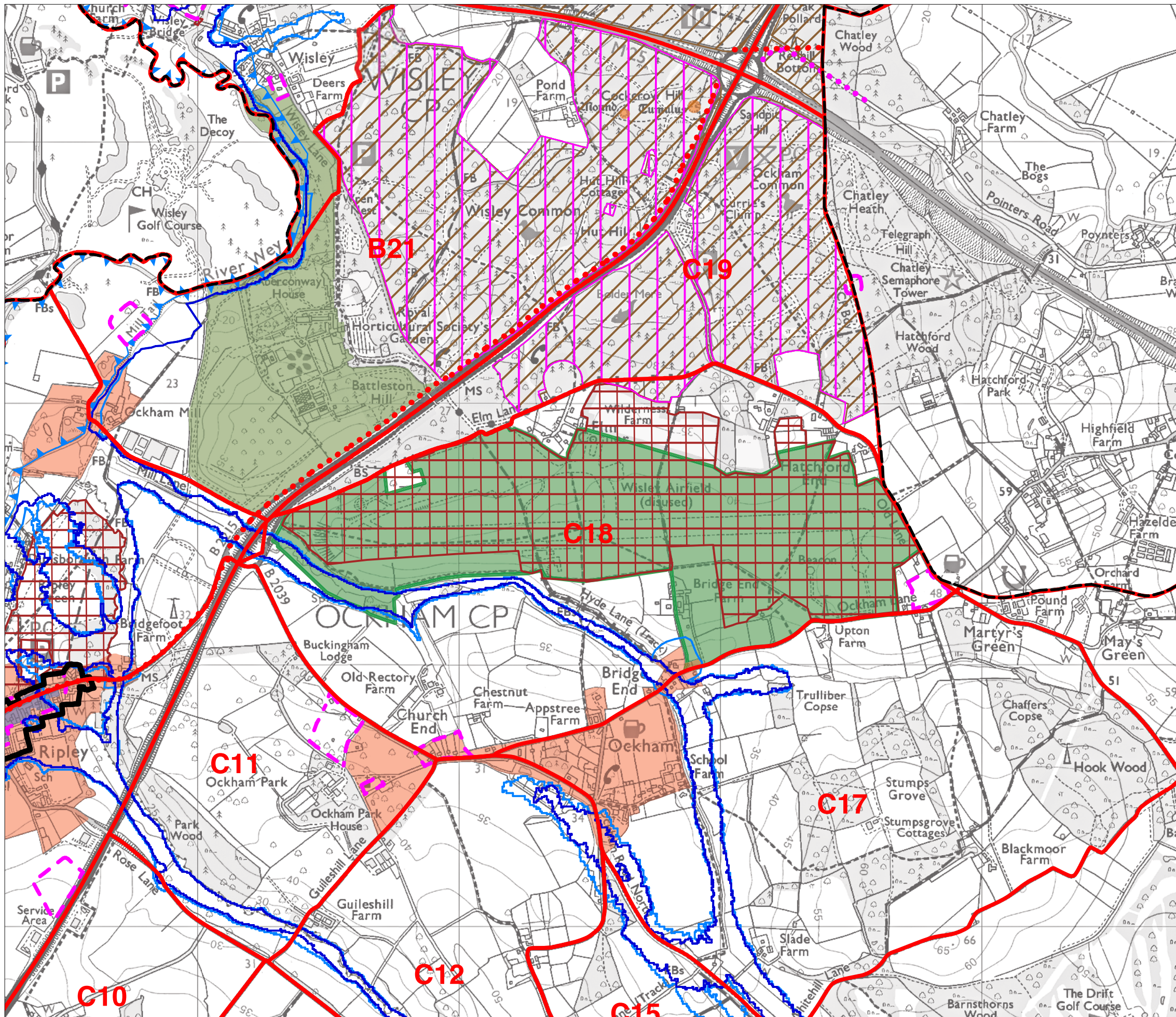
- Whilst the 400 metre SPA buffer and the waste management allocation /composting facility will have implications for how the site can be developed, environmental constraints do not preclude development across much of the site;
- The estimated residential capacity of the PMDA at approximately 1,800 dwellings, and associated population in excess of 4,000, will enable sufficient facilities and services to be brought forward to result in a sustainable development in accordance with the NPPF and Garden City principles. More detailed analysis of the likely population levels and facilities that can be provided may justify the further expansion of the identified PMDA area to include land to the west of Bridge End Farm and north east of Hyde Lane;
- The locations of permanent and defensible Green Belt boundaries within the surroundings of Wisley Airfield would allow for potential Green Belt inseting in accordance with the NPPF; and

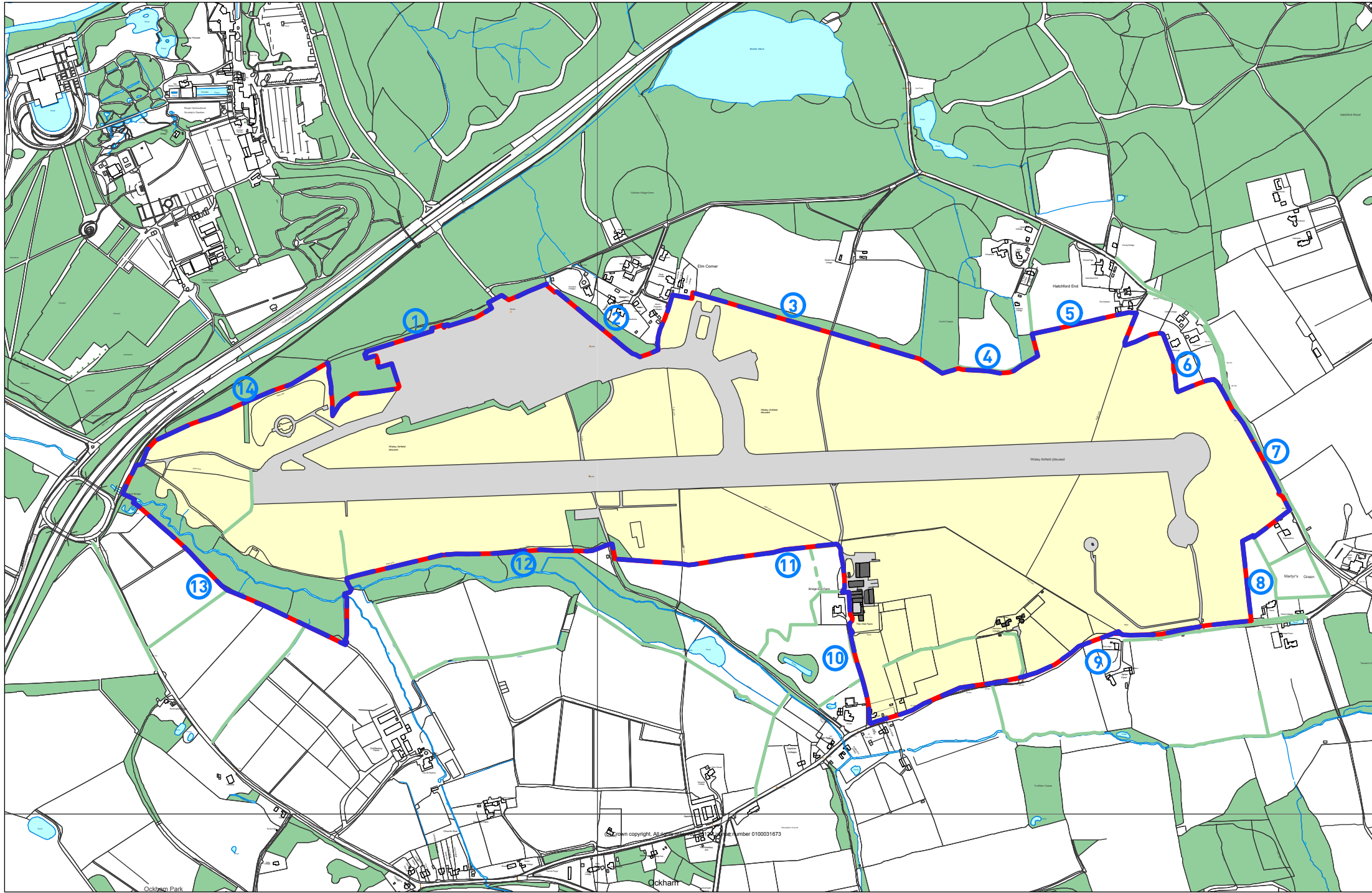
- Development of the site would not conflict with the majority of Green Belt purposes, indicating it does not lie in the more sensitive parts of the Green Belt in this respect. When combined with the previously developed nature of much of the site, and partly enclosed nature of it, this is considered to justify the loss in openness that will inevitably occur with this site, or any other site on which a new settlement is introduced.

Potential creation of a new settlement at Wisley Airfield to the north of Guildford Borough



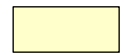

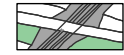



Potential creation of a new settlement at Wisley Airfield to the north of Guildford Borough





KEY

-  PMDA - 126.4ha
-  Development Footprint (within Village Area) - 29.2ha including buildings, highways and railways
-  Open Space Footprint (within Village Area) - 97.2ha including parkland, informal green space churchyards and gardens
-  Defensible Boundary including woodland, hedgerows and tree belts
-  Defensible Boundary including highway and rail infrastructure
-  Green Belt Insetting Boundary - 126.4ha

