

Land at Woodlands Farm, Kiln Green

Ynys Cottage Green Belt Review



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Introduction

Objective

This document has been prepared in support of a 'Permission in Principle' application for the erection of up to 4 dwellings to replace Ynys Cottage and the existing Nissen Hut, on land at Woodlands Farm, Kiln Green, Wokingham.

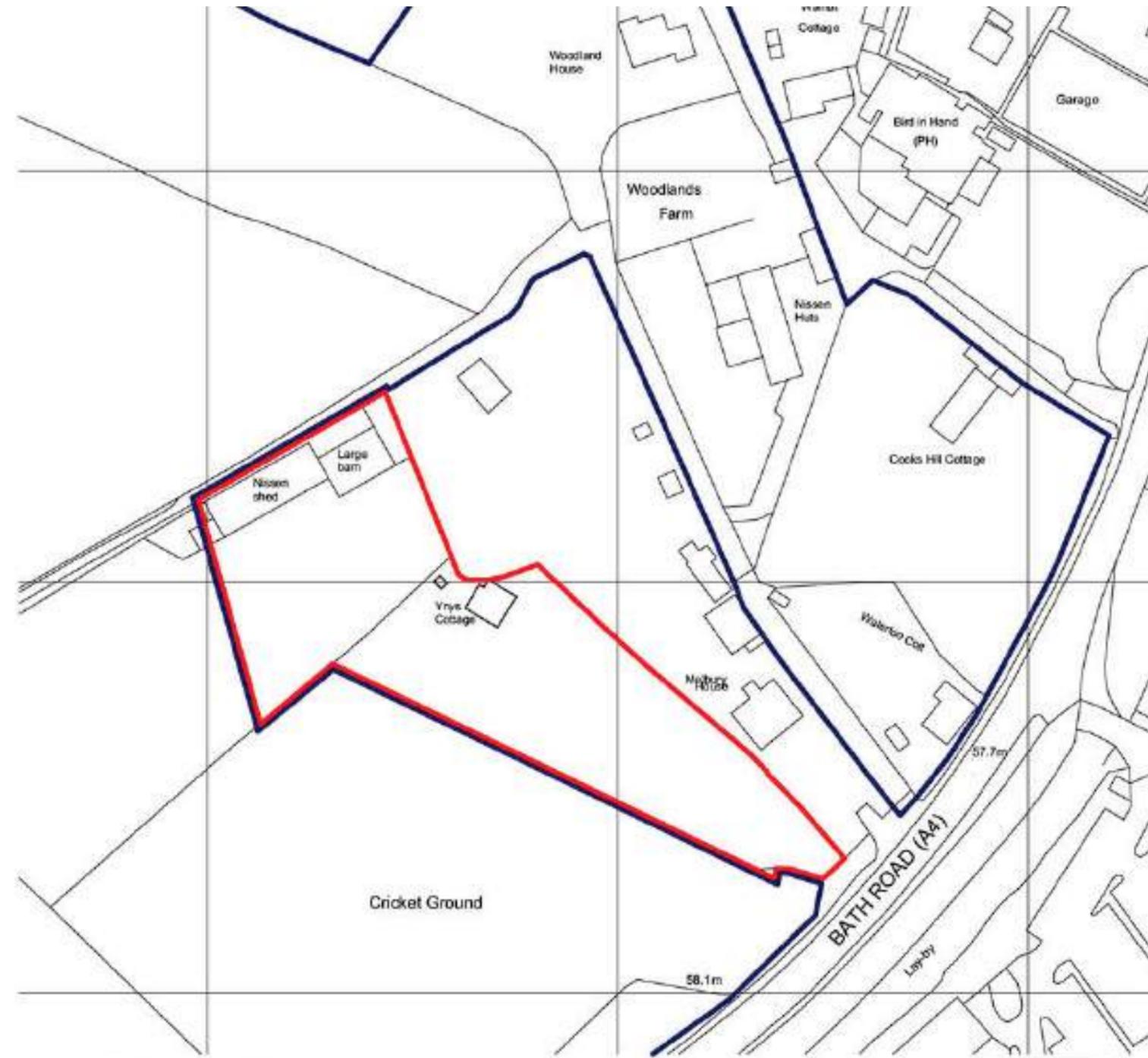
The Richards Partnership has been commissioned to undertake a review of the site's Green Belt credentials against the recently updated NPPF (December 2024) and government guidance on Green Belt "Advice on the role of the Green Belt in the planning system" (updated 27th February 2025).

In light of the changes to the protection and consideration of Green Belt, this assessment considers:

1. If the site is Grey Belt
2. If the introduction of development on the site would fundamentally undermine the purpose of the remaining Green Belt.

Site Location

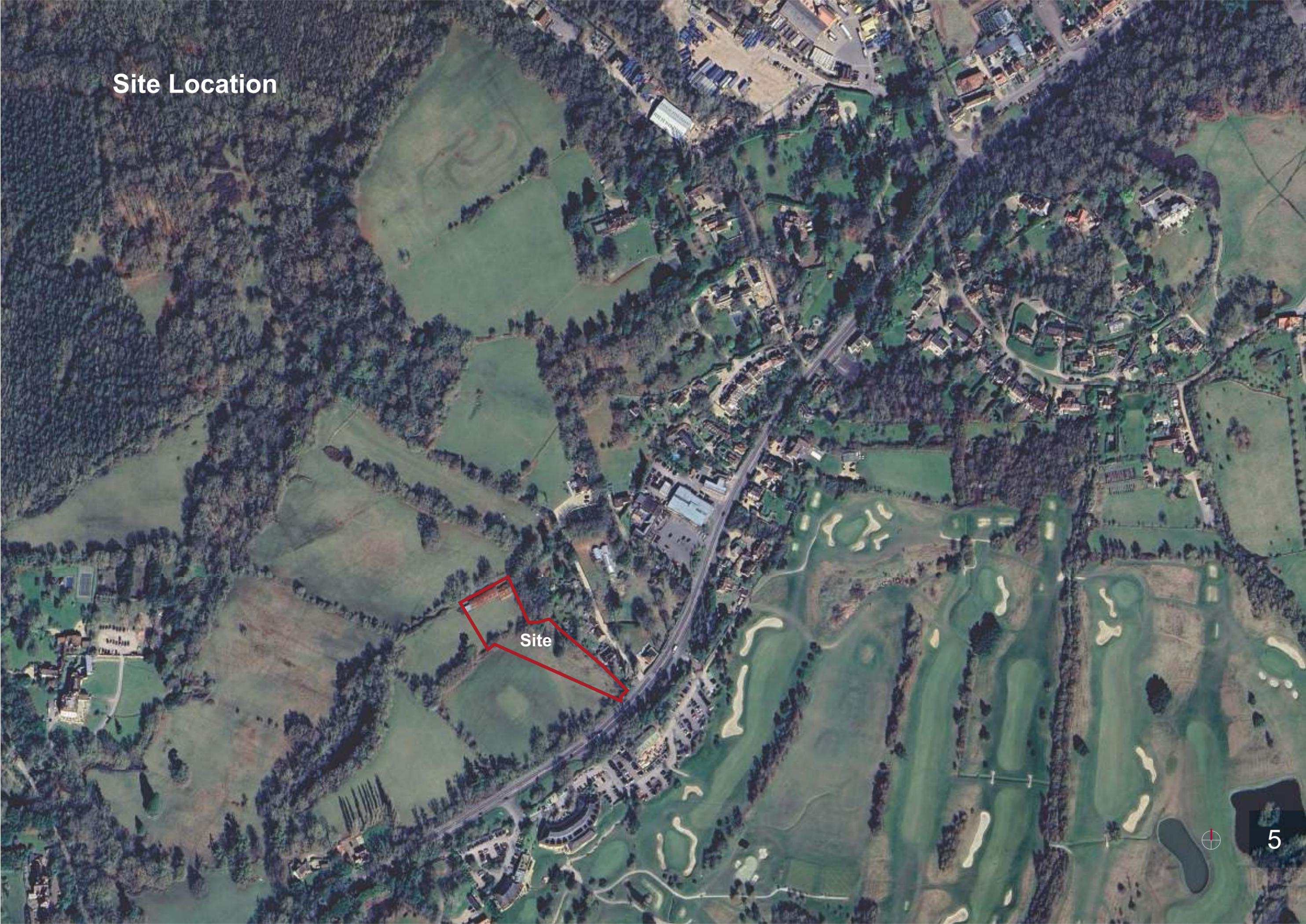
The site is located in the small village of Kiln Green, off the A4 (Bath Road), approximately 4.5km to the west of Maidenhead and 6.5km to the east of Reading. The site comprises a disused residential plot and a Nissen Hut with adjoining large barn. Mulberry House adjoins the site's eastern boundary, Kiln Green Cricket Ground adjoins the site's western boundary and Bath Road adjoins the site's south-eastern boundary. Agricultural land lies to the north.



Location Plan



Site Location



Site



Wokingham Green Belt Evidence Base

Wokingham 2016 Green Belt Review

The site is located within the jurisdiction of Wokingham Borough Council. A combined Bracknell Forest and Wokingham Borough Council Green Belt review was undertaken in 2016 and forms part of Wokingham Borough Council's current evidence base. The objective of the 2016 review was:

"to test the Green Belt against the five purposes set for it in national policy to determine the extent to which it is contributing to those purposes."

The review included a strategic review, considering the role of the Green Belt as part of the wider Metropolitan Green Belt and a refined review of the Green Belt, considering the role of smaller parcels.

The assessment scores parcels for their cumulative contribution to the Green Belt, when assessed against the individual Green Belt purposes.

The Colouring Assessment for Individual Green Belt Purposes and Cumulative Contribution

(Extract from Wokingham 2016 Green Belt Review, Table 2)

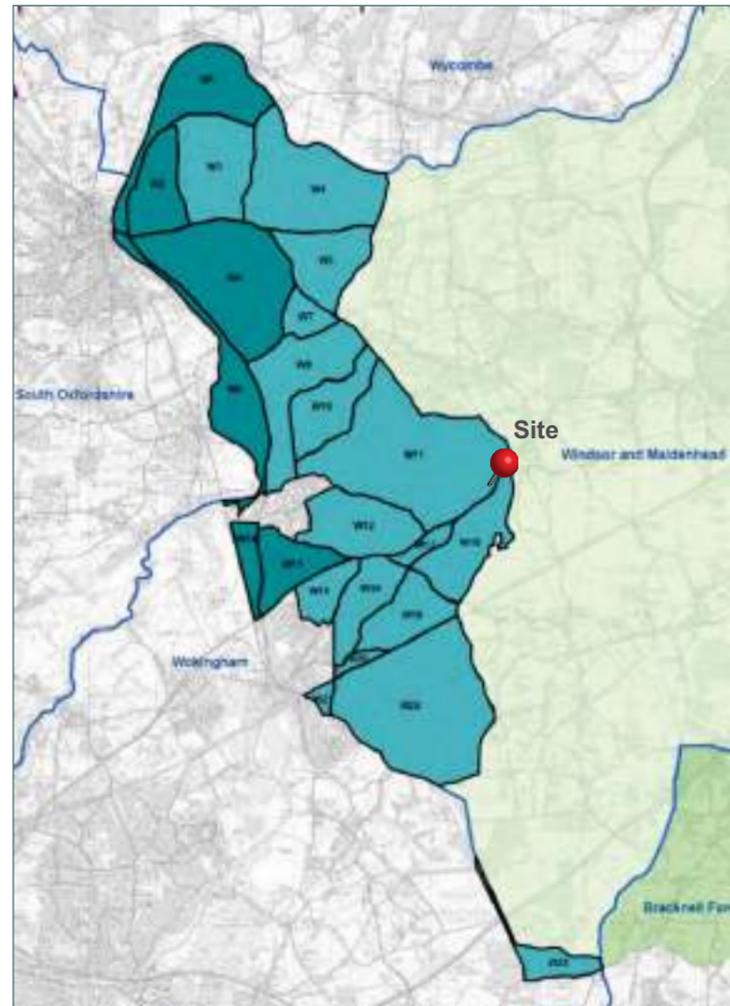
The parcel makes a **Significant Contribution** to (a) Green Belt purpose(s) and release (either in whole or part) is only likely to be considered where particular material planning considerations exist to justify this.



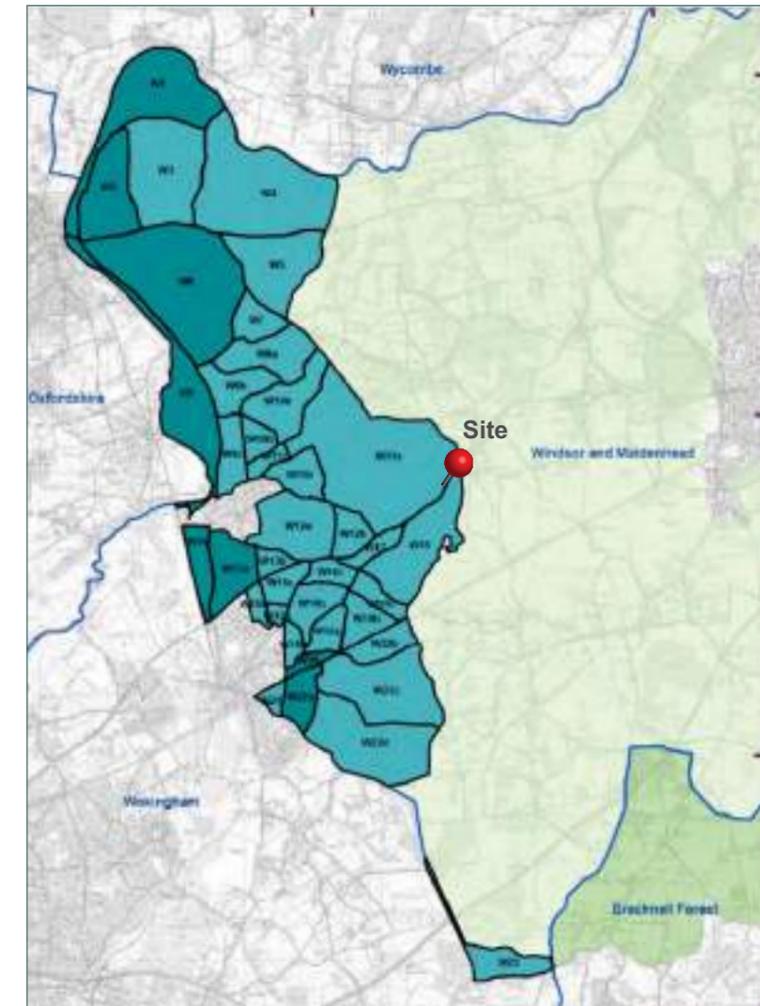
The parcel makes a **Contribution** to (a) Green Belt purpose(s) and release (either in whole or part) would need to be balanced against various material planning considerations.



The parcel makes a **Limited Contribution** to (a) Green Belt purpose(s) indicating that release (either in whole or part) could be considered in the context of other material planning considerations.



Overall Strategic Contribution to the Green Belt
(Extract from Wokingham 2016 Green Belt Review, Figure 5)



Refined Review of the Overall Contribution to the Green Belt
(Extract from Wokingham 2016 Green Belt Review, Figure 7)



Wokingham Green Belt Strategic Parcel W11
(Extract from Wokingham 2016 Green Belt Review, Appendix C)

Scores range from **'Limited Contribution'**, to **'Contribution'** and **'Significant Contribution'**.

The site sits within Strategic Parcel W11 and Refined Parcel W11a. The review scored Parcels W11 and W11a as making a **'Contribution'**.

The 2016 review, assesses the refined parcels against purposes A-D of the Green Belt and scores parcel W11a as follows:

Green Belt Purpose	Score
A: To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	Limited Contribution
B: To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	Limited Contribution
C: To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Contribution
D: To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	Limited Contribution
Overall Contribution to Green Belt Purposes	Contribution



Wokingham Green Belt Refined Parcel W11a
(Extract from Wokingham 2016 Green Belt Review, Appendix C)

The overall score for Parcel W11a is elevated from **'Limited Contribution'**, to **'Contribution'**, due to its role in purpose **C**, To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

Since the 2016 review was prepared, the NPPF has been revised and has introduced the notion of Grey Belt (discussed in further detail on page 12). Supporting guidance on Green Belt, states that Green Belt should be assessed to identify Grey Belt and that assessments should include an evaluation of the contribution an assessment area makes to Green Belt purposes (a), (b), and (d). It is therefore considered that had the 2016 Green Belt review been assessed against current government guidance, Parcel W11a would have scored an overall score of **'Limited Contribution'** to the Green Belt as purpose C would not be included.

Existing Site Conditions

Site Description

The site measures approximately 0.69 Ha and comprises a cottage (Ynys Cottage) with associated outbuilding/shed, a Nissen hut and adjoining large timber framed barn, both clad with corrugated tin sheet.

The site is accessed via a farm track at the northern boundary, which connects with a private shared drive that serves the wider Woodlands Farm holding, and connects with Bath Road. It is considered likely that historically Ynys cottage would have been accessed directly off Bath Road via what is currently a gated access to the adjoining Knowl Hill Cricket Club to the west of the site, which is under the same ownership.

The southern part of the site comprises the curtilage of Ynys Cottage, whereas the northern part of the site comprises part of a small paddock, within which the Nissen hut and adjoining barn are located. The remnants of a post and wire stock fence and brick wall separate the two areas within the site.

The site's northern boundary is defined by a farm track edged with a hedgerow and incidental mature oak trees. The hedgerow is fragmented and gappy adjacent to the northern boundary, but robust and tall further west. The Nissen hut and adjoining barn are located within a few metres of the northern boundary.

The site's eastern boundary adjoins the curtilage of Melbury House, the gardens of which contain numerous large stature trees. There are also several mature oaks and pines within the site along and near the northern half of the eastern boundary which converge to form a closed tree canopy.

The southern end of the site which adjoins Bath Road, tapers in to a circa 12m wide section of close board fence which has become overgrown with scrub.

The southern part of the site's western boundary is open to the adjoining Cricket ground to the west and is defined by a dilapidated post and horizontal wire fence. Aerial satellite imagery shows this boundary was circa 12-15m further to the east until 2017 and the site was more heavily treed.

There is no physical boundary to delineate the northern part of the site's western boundary, albeit the small paddock within which this part of the site is located is contained by field boundary hedgerows, which in parts have grown out to form a tree line.

The Ynys cottage has become heavily overgrown with ivy.

The paddock within which the Nissen hut and barn are located is dominated by thistle, albeit the lack of any woody shrubs within the grassland sward suggest a mowing or hay cutting regime has been maintained.

Defining Previously Developed Land

NPPF Annex 2 Glossary defines Previously Developed Land (PDL) as follows:

“Land which has been lawfully developed and is or was occupied by a permanent structure and any fixed surface infrastructure associated with it, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed). It also includes land comprising large areas of fixed surface infrastructure such as large areas of hardstanding which have been lawfully developed. Previously developed land excludes: land that is or was last occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill, where provision for restoration has been made through development management procedures; land in built-up areas such as residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape.”

The site is considered to comprise two separate parcels; the residential curtilage associated with the disused Ynys cottage and the parcel within which the Nissen hut and adjoining barn are located. The latter is considered to be an agricultural paddock. The former use of the Nissen hut and barn is unclear, albeit considered likely to have been for agricultural use, given its agricultural setting.

Ynys Cottage appears has become heavily overgrown with ivy. Aerial satellite imagery suggests that the structure might have already “blended into the landscape” due to the coverage of ivy over the building's roof, albeit when viewed from ground level, the building's presence is more apparent. The Ynys Cottage (and associated curtilage) element of the site is therefore considered to be PDL.

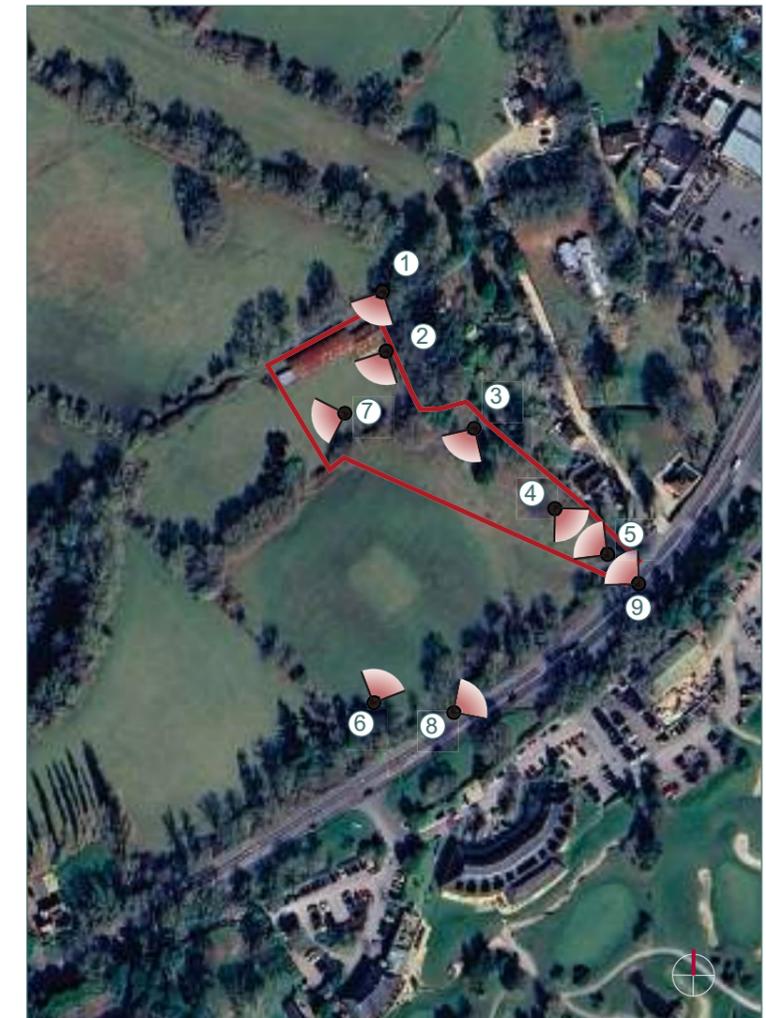


Ynys Cottage

In considering the release of Green Belt land for development NPPF Paragraph 148 states:

“Where it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development, plans should give priority to previously developed land, then consider grey belt which is not previously developed, and then other Green Belt locations.”

Photo Locations Plan





1. View from north-eastern boundary looking towards the Nissen hut and along the north and east boundary



2. View from north-east end of the site looking south-west across the site

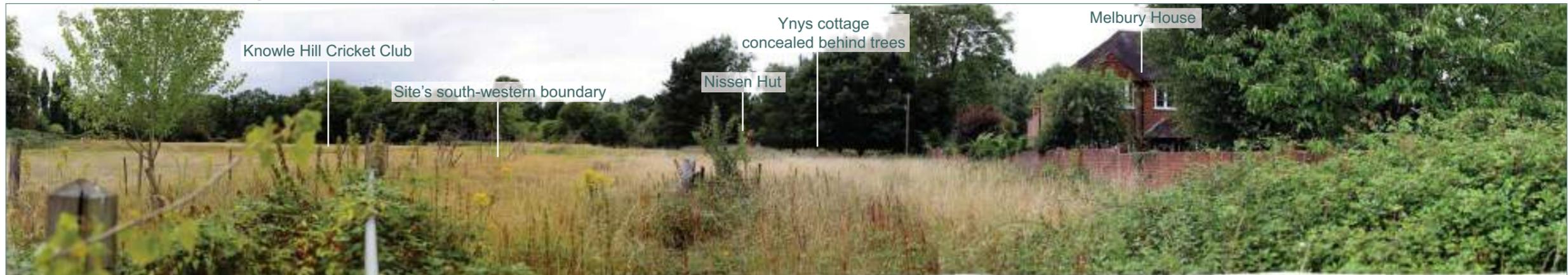


3. View from centre of the site looking south west towards the Knowle Hill Cricket Ground

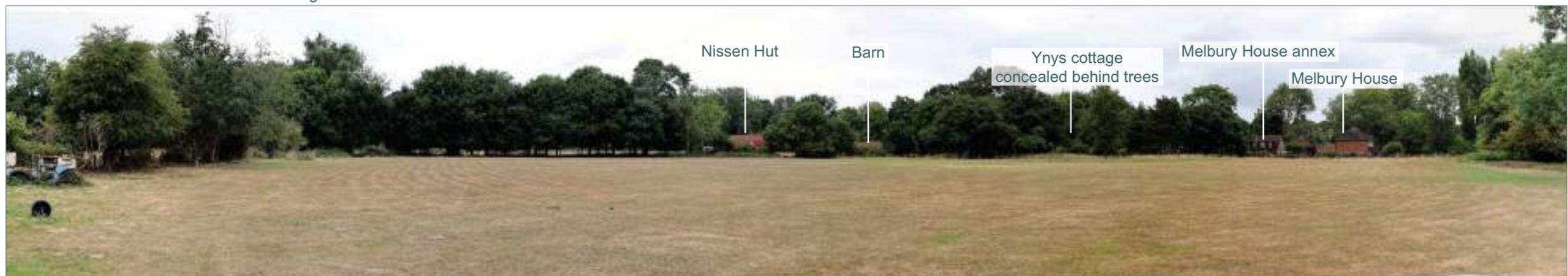
Existing Site Conditions



4. View from south of the site looking south-east towards the boundary with the A4, Bath Road.



5. View from southern end of the site looking north-west across the site



6. View from the Kowle Hill Cricket Ground club house looking north-east towards the site



7. View from the site's north-western boundary looking north west towards Linden Hill



8. View from A4 (Bath Road) looking north-east towards the site's southern boundary



9. View from A4 (Bath Road) looking north-west towards the site's southern boundary.

Grey Belt Assessment

The Introduction of Grey Belt

The role and approach to the assessment of Green Belt has significantly changed since the release of the revised NPPF December 2024. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies and how these should be applied. Sustainable development remains a 'golden thread' running through the NPPF in both plan-making and decision-taking. Paragraphs 142 to 160 are dedicated to defining the role the Green Belt has in creating sustainable development.

Paragraph 143 defines the five purposes for the creation and retention of Green Belt land:

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

The December 2024 NPPF introduced into UK planning policy the matter of "Grey Belt". Grey Belt is defined in the supporting Annex as,

Grey Belt: For the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, 'grey belt' is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, **does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143.** 'Grey belt' excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.

Contribution of Land to Green Belt

The February 2025 Green Belt Guidance provides guidance on how the contribution land makes to a Green Belt should be assessed. This assessment is based on Purposes a), b) and d). Purposes c) Encroachment and e) Urban Regeneration are excluded from the assessment of Grey Belt.

With regards the three Purposes to be considered in any assessment, the guidance provides a table listing characteristics that are considered to provide; '**Strong**', '**Moderate**' and '**Weak/None**' levels of contribution.

The following table considers the contribution the site makes to purposes a, b & d using the criteria, thresholds and terminology provided in the February 2025 guidance.

Purposes	"Illustrative Features" noted in the PPG	Assessment of the Site	Contribution
Purpose A - to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The extent of existing development Physical features in reasonable proximity that could restrict development Proximity to large built up area Would development be an incongruous pattern of development (such as an extended "finger" of development: 	<p>The site is not adjacent to or near to a large built up area. The nearest large built up areas are Maidenhead, approximately 4.5km to the east and Reading, approximately 6.5km to the west.</p> <p>There is existing development on the site in the form of Ynys Cottage, and associated outbuilding.</p> <p>The site is partially contained by physical features that would restrict and contain development, such as, Bath Road to the south, and Melbury House and annex to the east.</p> <p>Knowle Hill Cricket Club to lie to the west and a farm track adjoins the northern boundary.</p> <p>Development would not result in an incongruous pattern subject to appropriate densities, given the site's existing built form and position relative to the adjoining existing dwellings described above.</p>	Weak or None to Moderate
Purpose B - to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Physical Contribution to a gap between towns: Visual Contribution to a gap between towns: 	<p>As described above, the site is located approximately mid-way between a circa 11km gap between the nearest Towns of Maidenhead and Reading. The site measures circa 70m wide at its widest point.</p> <p>The site is not free from development.</p> <p>The site does not make a visual contribution to the separation of towns.</p>	Weak or None
Purpose D - to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Form part of the setting of the historic town: Contribution to the special character of a historic town: Containing existing development: 	<p>The site does not form part of the Historic setting of a town.</p>	Weak or None
SUMMARY: It is considered that the site does not strongly contribute to any of Purposes A, B or D			

Application of Footnote 7

The Green Belt February 2025 Guidance states:

“After consideration of the above criteria, any assessment area that is not judged to strongly contribute to any one of purposes a, b, or d can be identified as grey belt land, subject to the exclusion of land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 to the NPPF (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.”

Footnote 7:

“The policies referred to are those in this Framework (rather than those in development plans) relating to: habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 194) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, a National Landscape, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 75); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.”

The site is not subject to any of the above designations, nor is the site located within Flood Zone 2 or 3.

A small area in the southern part of the site is identified as being at risk of surface water flooding by the Environment Agency. However, we are advised that the layout will be designed to ensure that no development would be located within the area identified as being at risk of surface water flooding.

It is therefore considered that the application of policies relating to footnote 7 do not give rise to a strong reason for refusing or restricting development and that **the site is judged to be Grey Belt.**

Grey Belt Assessment

Impact on the Remaining Green Belt in the Plan Area

In reference to the NPPF Paragraph 155, the Green Belt Guidance (February 2025) notes:

“A Green Belt assessment should also consider the extent to which release or development of Green Belt land (including but not limited to grey belt land) would fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the plan area as whole.

In reaching this judgement, authorities should consider whether, or the extent to which, the release or development of Green Belt Land would affect the ability of all the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan from serving all five of the Green Belt purposes in a meaningful way.”

Accordingly, the following table considers to what extent the release of the site from the Green Belt would affect the ability of the remaining Green Belt to perform all five Green Belt Purposes.

Purposes	Assessment of the site in relation to the remaining Green Belt	Affect on remaining Green Belt
Purpose A - to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	<p>Proximity to large built up area: The site is not adjacent to or near to a large built up area. There would be a significant area of remaining green belt to the west of the site which would be capable of serving this purpose</p> <p>The extent of existing development: There is existing development on the southern half of the site. The remaining Green Belt contains large areas of open, undeveloped land which is better suited to meeting this Green Belt Purpose</p> <p>Physical Features in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development: The site is partially enclosed by physical features including the A4, Bath Road and Melbury House which would curtail sprawl to the south and east. There are physical features in the form of Knowl Hill Cricket Club to the south-west and the farm track along the northern boundary, which could be utilised to re-define the green belt edge and safeguard the remaining Green Belt from sprawl.</p> <p>Would development be an incongruous pattern of development: Development of the site would not result in an incongruous pattern subject to appropriate densities, given the site’s position relative to the adjoining existing dwellings described above and the remaining Green Belt would safeguard against incongruous development pattern from occurring.</p>	Weak or None
Purpose B - to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	<p>Contribution to a gap between towns: The site measures circa 70m wide at its widest and represents a negligible proportion of the circa 11km gap between Maidenhead and Reading. The remaining Green Belt would continue to perform this function.</p> <p>The site is not free from development.</p> <p>Contribution to visual separation of towns: The site does not make a visual contribution to the separation of towns.</p>	Weak or None
Purpose C - to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	<p>Quantum of Previously Developed Land: The southern part of the site comprises a derelict cottage and associated curtilage. This part of the site is considered to be PDL as defined in the December 2024 NPPF Annex 2 Glossary. There are significant tracts of undeveloped open countryside in the remaining Green Belt.</p> <p>Urban context/influences: The site is bounded by built form to the east. Knowl Hill Cricket Club to the west and the busy A4 (Bath Road) to the south, which has an aural influence on the site.</p> <p>Visual contribution/sense of openness: The site is physically and visually well contained by surrounding built form and tree planting within and around the immediate vicinity of the site. The site’s western boundary is open to the west, albeit visually contained by tree planting along the cricket ground’s western boundary and the western field boundary, in which the northern part of the site is located. It is not considered that the site plays a meaningful contribution to the openness of the Green Belt, nor would the release of it have a meaningful effect on the openness of the remaining Green Belt.</p>	Weak or None
Purpose D - to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	The site does not form part of the Historic setting of a town.	Weak or None
Purpose E - to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	As described above, part of the site is considered to be PDL. Furthermore it is not anticipated that development on this site would preclude development of other brownfield sites elsewhere in the Borough.	Weak or None
SUMMARY:	The site represents a diminutive proportion of the wider Wokingham Green Belt. The site is not considered to strongly contribute to any of the five purposes of the Green Belt and the release of the site from the Green Belt is considered to have little to no effect on the overall ability of the Green Belt purposes to be maintained in the remaining Wokingham Green Belt.	

Summary

This document has been prepared in support of a 'Permission in Principle' application for the erection of up to 4 dwellings to replace Ynys Cottage and the existing Nissen Hut, on land at Woodlands Farm, Kiln Green, Wokingham.

The Richards Partnership has been commissioned to undertake a review of the site's Green Belt credentials against the recently updated NPPF (December 2024) and government guidance on Green Belt "Advice on the role of the Green Belt in the planning system" (updated 27th February 2025).

In light of the changes to the protection and consideration of Green Belt, this assessment considers:

1. If the site is Grey Belt
2. If the introduction of development on the site would fundamentally undermine the purpose of the remaining Green Belt.

The site sits within refined parcel W11a of the Wokingham 2016 Green Belt Review. Parcel W11a was found to make a **'Limited contribution'** to three of the four purposes assessed and an overall **'Contribution'** to the Green Belt in the 2016 review. When assessed against current government Green Belt review guidance this would be downgraded to **'Limited Contribution'** overall.

Part of the site which comprises a disused cottage, is considered to constitute Previously Developed Land.

In considering the release of Green Belt land for development NPPF Paragraph 148 states:

"Where it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development, plans should give priority to previously developed land, then consider grey belt which is not previously developed, and then other Green Belt locations."

The site was assessed against current government Green Belt guidance and found to make a **'Weak or None' to 'Moderate'** contribution to purpose a and a **'Weak to None'** contribution to purposes b and d.

In accordance with current guidance, consideration was given as to how release of the site from the Green Belt would affect the ability of the remaining Green Belt to perform against all five Green Belt purposes.

The site represents a diminutive proportion of the wider Wokingham Green Belt and it was found that release of the site from Green Belt would have a **'Weak to No'** effect on the ability of the remaining Wokingham Green Belt to perform against all five Green Belt purposes.

This assessment concludes that **the site is judged to be Grey Belt.**

