

Assessment of the Hook to Rotherwick Local Gap

Background

This Local Gap was identified in the HDLP 1985, 1989 (1st alteration) and 1993 (2nd alteration). This Local Gap was supported by the Planning Inspectorate and the High Court following a developer appeal.

The Hook to Rotherwick Local Gap is shown in Figure 1.

Summary of landscape analysis against the two Gaps criteria:

(a) The land is predominantly open or undeveloped and provides a sense of separation between settlements

- Predominantly open and undeveloped farmland close to the western boundary of the District.
- The land includes Tylney Hall and Park CA, an important historic landscape character area identified in the Hart Landscape Character Assessment.
- Rotherwick CA in close proximity North of Hook settlement boundary (historic rural village/hamlet)
- Size of Gap reduced by 1.6ha in NE by 2013 consent for 70 dwellings off Reading Road, although minimal visual impact across main body of the Gap
- Land is predominantly rural farmland interspersed with SINC designated ancient natural woodland copses.
- More open character of land south of the Street and Green Lane provides important setting for the Rotherwick Conservation Area
- Strong sense of separation 'between' settlements – brief by car and a 15-25min. walk via the PRow network

(b) The land performs an important role in maintaining the separate identity of settlements at risk of coalescence

- Origins of Hook – small cross roads village in 18th century, growing to a small town by late 20th century
- Significant expansion through 20th century in all directions – exclusively residential north, east and west towards the District boundary
- 20th century suburban edge of Hook moderately screened from Gap by tall but relatively narrow hedgerow
- Reasonable visibility from Ridge Lane through the winter months, and from the Street, Green Lane and the B3349 Reading Road throughout the year
- Development of 70 dwellings off Reading Road north of Hook has encroached into the gap and new build properties are now visible to some properties in Rotherwick.

Conclusion

A Gap is justified between Hook, one of Hart's main settlements, and Rotherwick, an older village with a Conservation Area, C.13 church and 61 Listed Buildings. The historic Grade II* listed Tylney Hall and Parkland Conservation Area is within the Gap.

The proposed extent of the Hook/Rotherwick Gap in the Hart Local Plan: Strategy and Sites is shown in Figure 1.