

Witley Neighbourhood Plan

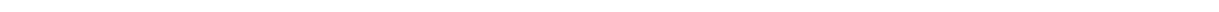
C - Baseline Information Statement

Witley Neighbourhood Plan
Parish Baseline Information Statement

July 2017 (updated February 2019)

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FOR WITLEY NP STEERING GROUP

UPDATED AS A FINAL DOCUMENT BY NEXUS PLANNING IN FEBRUARY 2019



Witley Neighbourhood Plan

Parish Baseline Information Statement

Contents	Page
1. Introduction	1
2. Biodiversity	2
Surrey	2
Waverley Borough	2
Witley Neighbourhood Plan Area	3
3. Human Health	7
4. Water Supply and Flooding	9
Flooding	9
Water quality	10
5. Cultural / heritage assets (including architectural and archaeological)	11
Waverley Borough	11
Witley Neighbourhood Plan Area	11
6. Material Assets (Geology and Waste)	16
Geology	16
Waste	16
7. Soil	19
Waverley Borough	19
Witley Neighbourhood Plan Area	19
Contaminated land	21
8. Landscape	23
Surrey	23
Surrey Hills AONB	23
Waverley Borough	24
Witley Neighbourhood Plan Area	24
9. Air quality	25
Waverley Borough	25
Witley Neighbourhood Plan Area	25

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This updated Parish Baseline Information Statement has been prepared by Nexus Planning, building on the original version prepared by Hamish Robbie for the Witley Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group in 2017.
- 1.2. This Baseline Information Statement was originally conceived to inform the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening Process. However, its purpose is to now provide an overview of key sensitivities in relation to the Neighbourhood Plan including:
- Biodiversity (Section 2);
 - Human health (Section 3);
 - Water supply and flooding (Section 4);
 - Cultural/heritage assets (including architectural and archaeological) (Section 5);
 - Material assets (waste and geology) (Section 6);
 - Population (Section 7);
 - Soil and contaminated land (Section 8);
 - Landscape (Section 9);
 - Air quality (Section 10); and
 - Noise (Section 11).

2. Biodiversity

Surrey

- 2.1. Surrey has a varied geology ranging from acidic sands and gravels to calcareous chalk. This geo-diversity supports a wide range of habitats, each with its associated flora and fauna. The county's natural heritage is unique in several respects; it is England's most densely wooded county (22% compared to a national average of 12%) and supports 13% of the UK's diminished lowland heathland. It also has 3% of its remaining chalk downland, and is drained by two major Thames basin tributaries; the Rivers Wey and Mole.
- 2.2. In the north of the county there are a number of large open water-bodies, the legacy of past minerals extraction as well as water provision to the vast population of London. These habitats contain internationally important populations of fascinating and appealing wildlife and this is recognised in their designation as RAMSAR sites or European Natura 2000 Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SCAs), covering some 5% of Surrey. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSCI) of national importance account for a further 2%. Over 70% of the county is currently protected within the Green Belt, supporting a far higher proportion (4%) of Ancient woodland than anywhere else in Britain.
- 2.3. Surrey is home to 2,170 species of trees, grasses and wildflowers -the highest total in England. On a species-count basis, Surrey is the UK's second richest county for butterflies.
- 2.4. The Surrey Strategic Partnership Plan recognised the importance of Surrey's landscape and habitats in supporting biodiversity as well as attracting tourism and other economic sectors (Surrey Strategic Partnership (2010) Surrey Strategic Partnership Plan). According to the Surrey Nature Partnership, 30% of ecosystem services in Surrey are in decline.

Waverley Borough

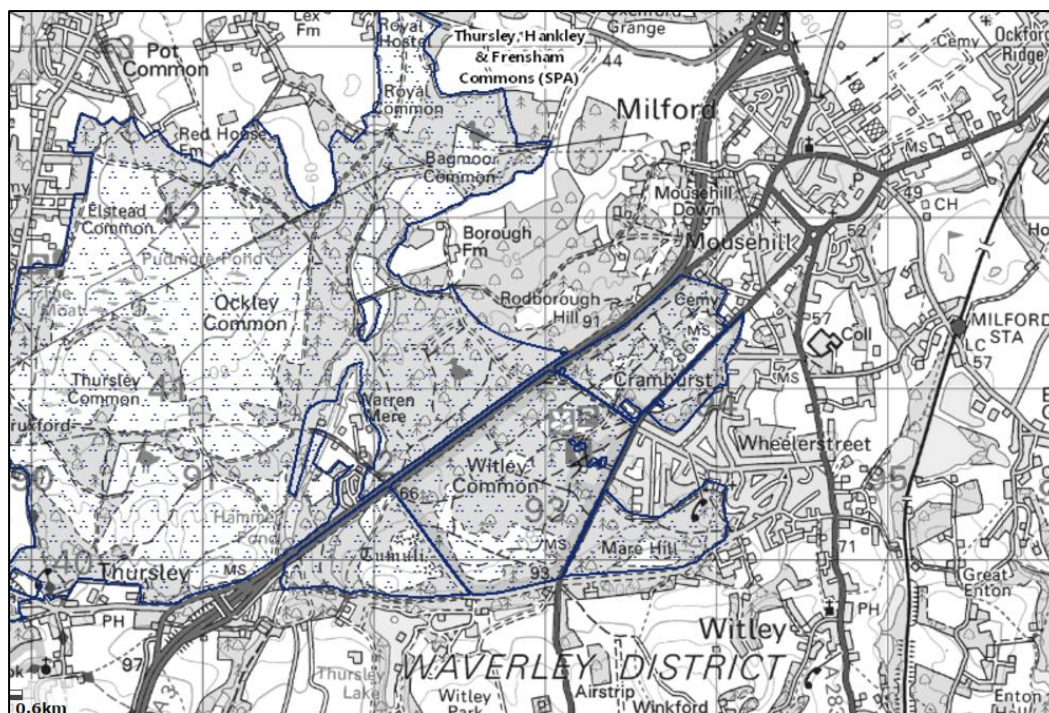
- 2.5. There are three Special Protection Areas (SPAs) within the Borough designated under the European Birds Directive as being of European importance for their populations of the woodlark, nightjar and Dartford warbler: Thursley, Hankley and Frensham Commons (also known as Phase I of the Wealden Heaths SPA), the Hindhead Commons (which form part of Phase II of the Wealden Heaths SPA) and a small part of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA.
- 2.6. Only 80 hectares of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA lies within Waverley, to the north of Farnham, but its zone of influence extends 5km from its boundary and therefore affects development in most of Farnham. The Thames Basin Heaths Avoidance Strategy sets out the Council's approach in seeking to avoid the effect of a net increase in population from new housing developments within 5km of the SPA, and how it proposes to discharge its legal obligations under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. Less formal strategies are also in place to ensure appropriate mitigation of impacts to the other two SPAs.
- 2.7. Some of the areas of SPA are also designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under the European Habitats Directive and/or as an internationally important wetland under the Ramsar convention. Also, a range of other sites are designated as a nationally important Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or locally important Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI). SNCI are Surrey's local sites of nature conservation importance, elsewhere known as Local Wildlife Sites. These are recommended for protection within the planning system by an appointed panel of biodiversity experts and then adopted in local development plan plans.

- 2.8. Waverley's landscape has a distinctive wooded character, representing 31% of its total area. 11.5% of this woodland is classified as Ancient Woodland, and this constitutes the largest area of this type of woodland in Surrey. Canals and river corridors are also of particular biodiversity value in Waverley, with the River Wey and its tributaries, the Wey and Arun Canal, the River Wey and Godalming Navigations, and the River Blackwater all of 'multifunctional' value. Finally, there is a need to explain that work undertaken by the Surrey Biodiversity Information Centre, and coordinated by Natural England, has identified a network of Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) across Surrey that feature, at their cores, high concentrations of important wildlife habitats formerly selected as significant sites for nature conservation. Where appropriate, Surrey's BOAs link with those identified in neighbouring counties to form a South East regional network.

Witley Neighbourhood Plan Area

- 2.9. Significant biodiversity assets within and close to the Witley Neighbourhood Plan area include a number of European, nationally and locally designated sites as indicated in the following maps. These include:

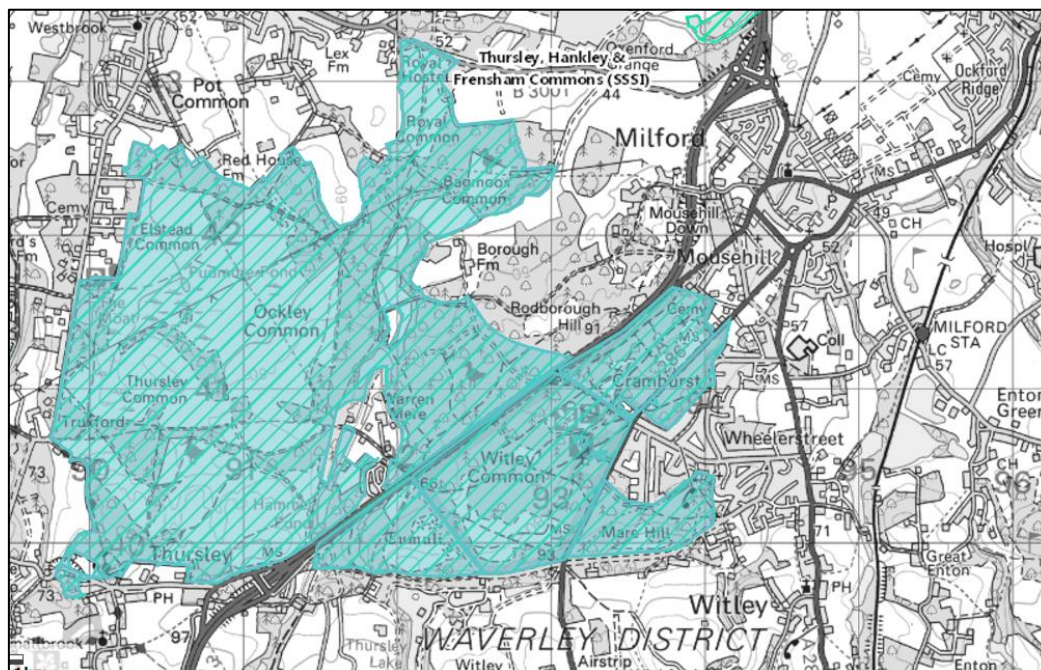
Figure 1: Thursley, Hankely & Frensham Commons SPA



- 2.10. These commons form part of the Wealden Heaths SPA and together incorporate a heath and valley mire complex. Thursley Common is a National Nature Reserve managed by Natural England and Frensham and Witley Commons are managed by the National Trust. A large part of the site is owned by the MoD (Hankley Common and Ockley Common), being regularly used for military activities and informal recreation.
- 2.11. This extensive site represents some of the finest remaining heathland on the Lower Greensand in Southern England. The valley mire on Thursley Common is regarded as one of the best in Britain. The site is of national importance for its bird, reptile and invertebrate populations.
- 2.12. Hankley Common has the most extensive tracts of dry heath, but the habitat is also well represented on the other Commons. Peatland is of greatest value on Thursley Common, but on the other commons is less extensive but still important. The site is one of the richest for

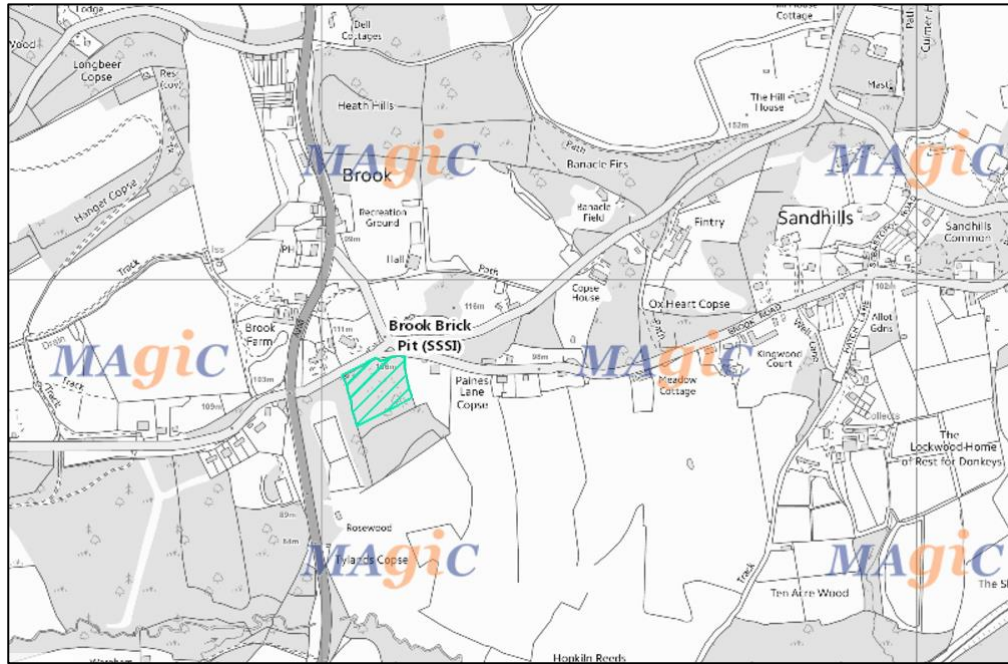
birds in Southern England. Breeding birds specifically associated with the heathland include woodlark, Dartford warbler, and nightjar.

Figure 2: Thursley, Hankley & Frensham Commons SSSI



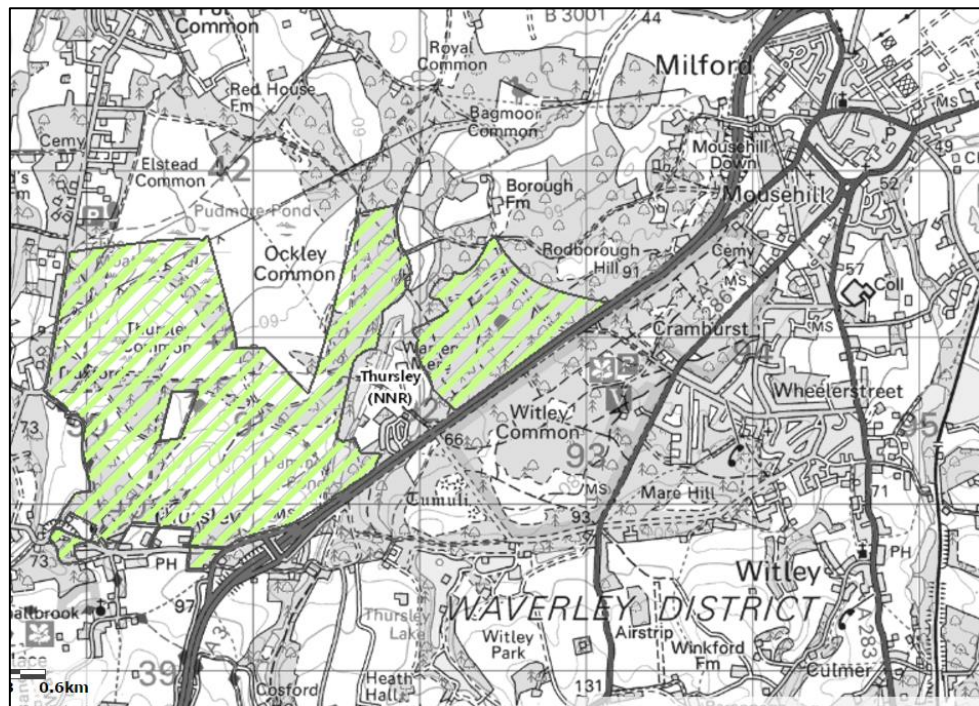
- 2.13. All of the European designated sites within Waverley are underpinned by the Thursley, Hankley and Frensham Commons SSSI.
- 2.14. The latest Natural England condition assessment of Thursley, Hankley and Frensham Commons SSSI determined that 77% of the site was in favourable condition, whilst the remainder was recovering from unfavourable status⁶¹. The improvements predominantly stemmed from the introduction of Higher Level Stewardship schemes, including for wetter habitats and water bodies on the SSSI.

Figure 3: Brook Brick Pitt SSSI



- 2.15. The Brook Brick Pitt SSSI comprises the last remaining exposure of any quality that shows the Atherfield Clay in the western Weald. This Formation is of vital stratigraphic and palaeoenvironmental significance, illustrating the onset of marine conditions in the Aptian of southern England. Of added significance is the recording of a diverse bivalve fauna, which includes the first finding of *Leptosolen* from the Aptian.

Figure 4: Thursley National Nature Reserve



- 2.16. Thursley National Nature Reserve (NNR) is one of the largest remaining fragments of a once more extensive area of heathland in Surrey. Thursley NNR holds extensive areas of open dry heathland, peat bogs, pine and deciduous woodlands. 20 species of dragonflies and

damselflies live around the open ponds and ditches of the reserve. The areas of open water also support the bog raft spider.

- 2.17. In very wet areas, the sphagnum mosses that form the peat bog can be found. Early marsh orchids, bog asphodels, heath milkwort, cotton grass, sedges and rushes complete the rich flora.
- 2.18. The rare marsh clubmoss can be often seen on bare exposed peat alongside 3 different species of the carnivorous plant, sundew
- 2.19. Birds include Dartford warblers, stone chats, long-tailed tits, gold crests, red starts, white throats and wheatears.

Other designations

- 2.20. In addition to the above designations, the Waverley Borough Proposals Map also identifies a number of Sites of Nature Conservation Importance within the Witley Neighbourhood Plan Area.

3. Human Health

- 3.1. The majority of Waverley's residents experience excellent overall health, wellbeing and quality of life.
- 3.2. Waverley is generally a healthy borough. 86% of the population said that their health was 'very good or good' in the 2011 Census.
- 3.3. The death rate for the Guildford and Waverley Clinical Commissioning Group area (CCG) is statistically significantly lower than the national average. In addition, Waverley has a low mortality rate, with a correspondingly high life expectancy, and inequalities in life expectancy related to income levels.
- 3.4. The Borough is well served geographically for doctors' surgeries. However, some village residents do need to travel by car to access their nearest health facility, and there is no accident and emergency facility at any of the hospitals in the Borough. The Accident and Emergency facilities at the Royal Surrey County Hospital in Guildford and the Frimley Park Hospitals are remote from large parts of the Borough. They are only accessible by car and there is a wide use of cross border medical outreach provided by the minor injuries unit at Haslemere Hospital, where some Guildford and Waverley CCG consultations also take place. Many of the health problems experienced are those associated with an ageing population.
- 3.5. Waverley also benefits from outstanding (and in some cases, award-winning) services and a diverse mix of rural and urban environments. The Borough has very low levels of deprivation and scores higher than average on most health indicators, meaning that the overwhelming picture of Waverley is one of a picturesque borough with a healthy, active and affluent population.
- 3.6. However, health and wellbeing challenges do exist. Perhaps most striking is the presence of pockets of relative deprivation and their links with health and wellbeing. For example, there is a considerable life expectancy gap between the most- and least-disadvantaged wards in Waverley. Smoking continues to be the major preventable cause of premature death and disability, and smoking prevalence in Waverley's most deprived wards is higher than local averages. The most deprived wards also have some of the highest levels of mental illness in Surrey.
- 3.7. Mental health in Waverley appears to be a particularly pertinent issue, with Waverley having some of the highest rates of depression and suicide in Surrey. Whilst there are lots of factors that can influence mental health, the Borough does have the lowest connectivity index in Surrey, meaning that residents in Waverley have to travel further in order to see friends and family and to access local amenities, including community groups, their GP and specialist mental health services. It also has a high rate of one-person households and the lowest population density in Surrey. It therefore seems plausible that this combination of low connectivity and social isolation could affect the mental health and emotional wellbeing of residents.
- 3.8. Moreover, the difficulty experienced by some in accessing health services through low connectivity could also influence residents' mental and physical health. This highlights the difficulties within Waverley, which, due to its unique and diverse geography and demographics, may not be easy to overcome.
- 3.9. Waverley has substantially fewer young adults than the English average. Furthermore, the population of residents over 65 and 85 years of age is one of the fastest growing in Surrey and there are increased numbers of residents with neurological conditions such as stroke or dementia. Whilst the absolute number of people aged 85 and over continues to be a small

proportion of the total population, it remains likely that Waverley will have a greater preponderance of residents with developing or developed long-term conditions in the working adult population, as well as greater proportion of frail elderly than the English norm.

- 3.10. Moreover, Waverley and surrounding areas face particular challenges in terms of the high demand and low supply of care workers.
- 3.11. Children and young people in Waverley appear to experience relatively good health and wellbeing compared to the rest of England. Despite this, looking after the health and wellbeing of our families, children and young people remains crucial so that we can help children to have the best start in life, make the most of their opportunities and prevent illness and disability in later life.

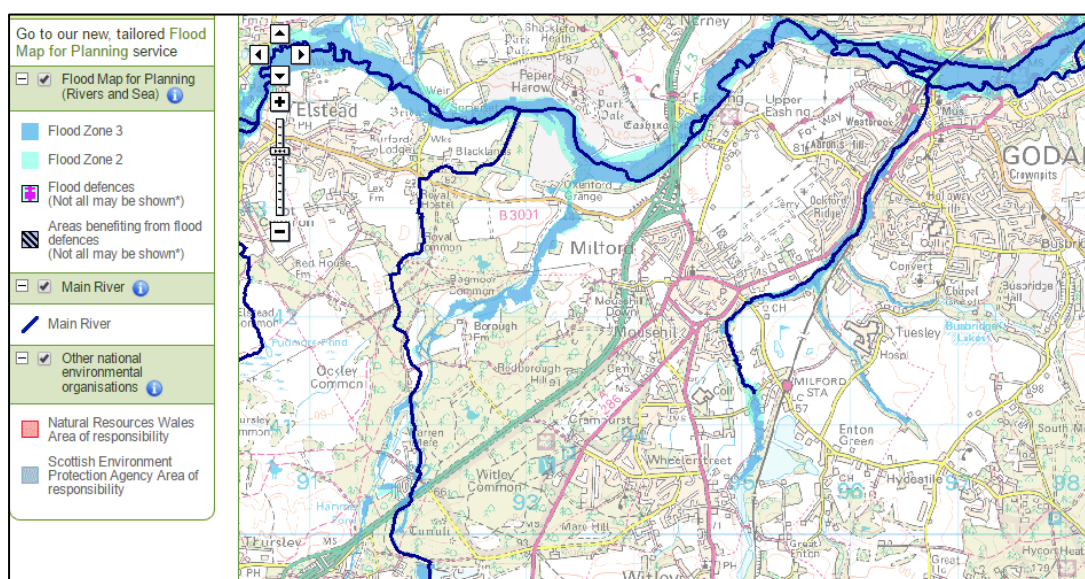
4. Water Supply and Flooding

- 4.1. The Environment Agency has identified Waverley as falling within a wider area of “serious” water stress. In the South East of England, water demand exceeds the volume licensed for abstraction, with the shortfall being met from ground water.
- 4.2. Between 2008 and 2009 average water consumption in Waverley was approximately 160-170 litres per person per day. This compares to a national average of 150 litres per person per day. Due to the expected drop in average occupancy of dwellings by 2026 combined with an increase in use of meters, it is considered that the overall demand for water in Waverley could decrease.

Flooding

- 4.3. The Waverley Borough Council Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) Final Draft Volume 2 Technical Report (July 2015) states that, within Waverley, much of the floodplain is rural and remains undeveloped.
- 4.4. Within Farnham, Godalming, Tilford, Milford and Cranleigh, there is development that extends to the maximum outlines of areas identified as high risk. The SFRA states that it is important that development remains out of the high risk functional floodplain.
- 4.5. Developed areas within Witley Parish that have been identified as high risk from previously reported flood incidents and the SFRA Flood Zones are:
- **Milford:** Station Lane, Jubilee Fields, Lower Millhouse Lane; and
 - **Witley:** Oxted Green, Haslemere Road, Gasden Lane, New Road, Middlemarch.
- 4.6. An extract from the Environment Agency’s Flood Risk Map identifying the areas subject to flood risk in Witley and Milford is provided below.

Figure 5: Environment Agency Flood Risk Map extract



Source: Environment Agency Flood Risk Map

Water quality

- 4.7. The Waverley Borough Council Water Quality Assessment (December 2016) states that the growth areas of Godalming, Busbridge, Hambledon and Witley are all served by Godalming Waste water treatment Works (WwTW) and as such could impact on the Water Framework Directive (WFD) water body Wey (Tilford to Shalford) water body.
- 4.8. Godalming WwTW is located on the main River Wey with several major WwTW upstream, including Farnham, Haslemere and Elstead WwTW. However, no significant upstream impacts were seen on water quality. As such upstream influences are not expected to impact on the growth areas served by Godalming WwTW.
- 4.9. No deterioration of WFD class has been identified for any of the determinants downstream of the WwTW to sample point during the life of the Local Plan due to housing growth. The results indicate that ammonia and BOD will remain at High Status downstream of the WwTWs, whilst phosphates will remain at Moderate Status.
- 4.10. The modelling of the future housing growth indicate that although there will be some deterioration downstream of Godalming WwTW it will be less than the Environment Agency's aspirational 10% threshold. This indicates that water quality should not be a constraint to future housing in the Witley Neighbourhood Plan Area.

5. Cultural / heritage assets (including architectural and archaeological)

Waverley Borough

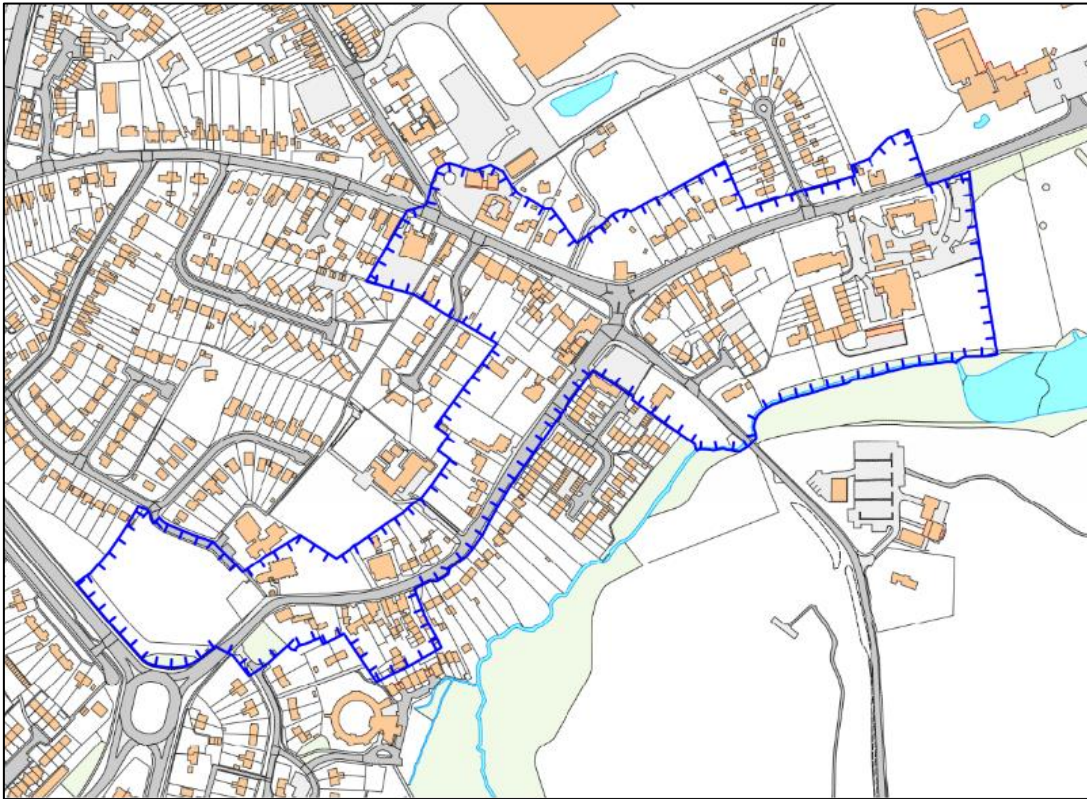
- 5.1. Waverley has a rich historic heritage, with 43 Conservation Areas, some 1800 listed buildings and 590 Buildings of Local Merit. In addition, there are 23 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, together with 11 County defined Sites of Archaeological Importance. There are also eight Historic Gardens, including Farnham Park.
- 5.2. West Surrey contains a substantial number of works from England's best-known architects. Many such examples are in Waverley, built during the nineteenth century for wealthy middle class families seeking country houses. These were the clients for whom the Gothic Revival and later local Arts and Crafts architects, such as Edwin Lutyens, and Harold Falkner designed. The value of the vernacular architecture of the area became apparent at this time and local materials such as Bargate stone and timber framing contribute much to the character of Waverley today, parts of which can be said to be the epitome of the West Surrey vernacular.
- 5.3. Many of the residential parts of Waverley have a distinct semi-rural character. Haslemere and Godalming have wooded hillsides surrounding them, while in Cranleigh there is a much more rapid transition from urban to rural, with common land extending into the heart of the shopping centre. The southern entrances to Farnham have retained their green aspect with the help of long-standing planning policies.
- 5.4. A number of the villages as well as Farnham and Haslemere have produced Design Statements, which seek to identify the principles, design features and quality standards that they value.

Witley Neighbourhood Plan Area

- 5.5. There are four conservation areas within the Witley Neighbourhood Plan Area. These include the following:

Milford Conservation Area

Figure 6: Milford Conservation Area

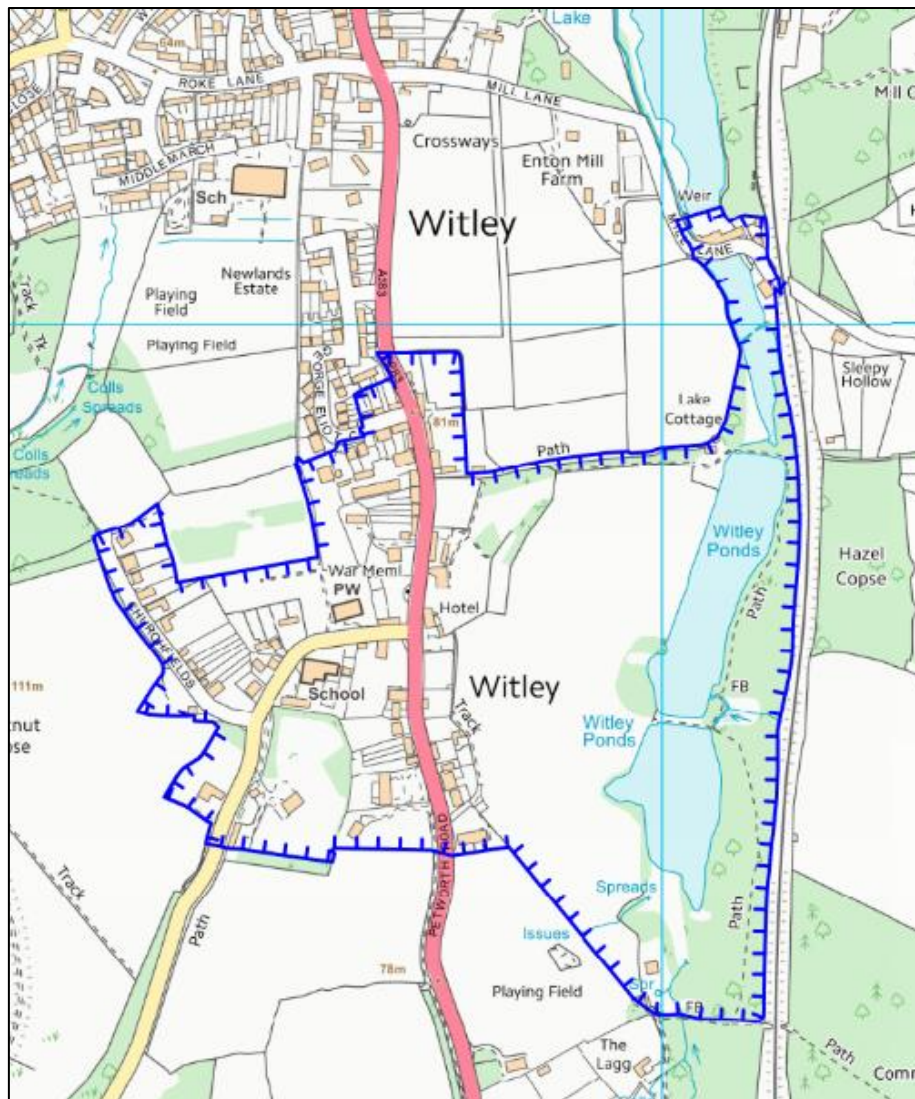


Source: Milford Conservation Area Map

- 5.6. The Milford CA was designated on 25th February 1981 and the Conservation Area appraisal was adopted in January 2014.
- 5.7. The CA of Milford is compact and centres around the junction of Portsmouth Road and Church Road. There is a good mix of residential and commercial properties, which ensures that there is constant activity all day, but the area is also affected by the two busy roads which intersect it. There are 10 listed buildings in the CA, ranging from domestic scale C16th cottages to the C18/19th Milford House, once used as a hotel, which has now been converted to flats. There are examples of properties on Church Road, which sit on generous plots such as Wyndham Lodge and/ or are set back from the street however there are also properties which front directly onto the street, such as Gatton Cottage.
- 5.8. Most properties have historical merit and are large single detached or semi-detached dwellings rather than terraced housing or flats. The green landscape in the CA is most evident on entering the CA from the north east end with a cluster of mature trees at the junction. The roads channel views straight ahead, however there are points, i.e. at the junction and further down Church Road, where the road curves, adding variety to the streetscape and encouraging the viewer to explore further afield. St. John's Church and churchyard also adds to the green landscape and street scene of the CA.

Witley Conservation Area

Figure 7: Witley Conservation Area



Source: Witley Conservation Area Map

- 5.9. The Witley CA was designated on 24th February 1970 and the Conservation Area appraisal was adopted in July 2015.
- 5.10. Witley CA developed along Petworth Road; the main route through from Petworth to Godalming. There are 27 statutory listed buildings in the CA.
- 5.11. The core of the CA is at the junction of Petworth Road and Church Lane, where the Grade I listed building All Saints Church stands amongst the local school and Grade II listed building The White Hart Pub. To the north, a cluster of listed buildings leads up to Lashams, a mid-18th century dwelling. The enclosed 'Miltons Yard' opposite Lashams comprises the only industrial units in the CA. The eastern half of the CA is characterised by the well-maintained private grounds of Witley Manor, the hamlet of Enton Mill and the ponds which connect them.

Wheelerstreet, Witley Conservation Area

Figure 8: Wheelerstreet, Witley Conservation Area

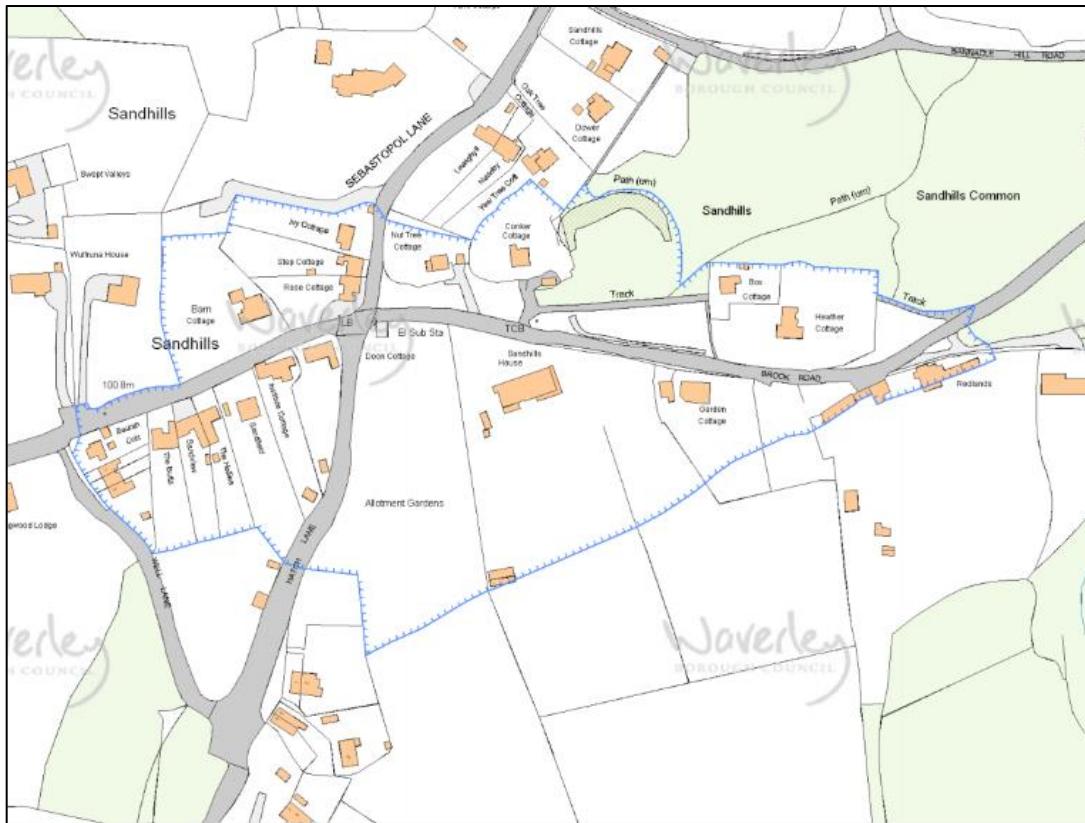


Source: Wheelerstreet, Witley Conservation Area Map

- 5.12. Wheelerstreet, Witley was designated a CA in December 1989 and the Conservation Area Appraisal was adopted in October 2012.
- 5.13. The CA of Wheelerstreet sits on the northern edge of Witley village. This area (Petworth Road and Wheeler Lane) is mainly a residential area and the small conservation area at the junction of these two roads has a positive effect on the area as a whole, due to the attractive listed buildings and varied building types.
- 5.14. The area may well have developed around the original 16th Century “Old Manor” formerly the Old Manor Hotel. The Old Manor plot was divided up; its old barn has been converted into dwellings (Old Barn and Great Barn). The surrounding plots along Petworth Road have also been divided up into generous proportions and many have large single dwellings. Overall, the CA of Wheelerstreet appears to be in good condition and this appraisal should ensure that it does not deteriorate.
- 5.15. Of the 15 buildings within the Wheelerstreet CA, only six have no statutory or local designation.

Sandhills, Witley Conservation Area

Figure 9: Sandhills, Witley Conservation Area



Source: Sandhills, Witley Conservation Area Map

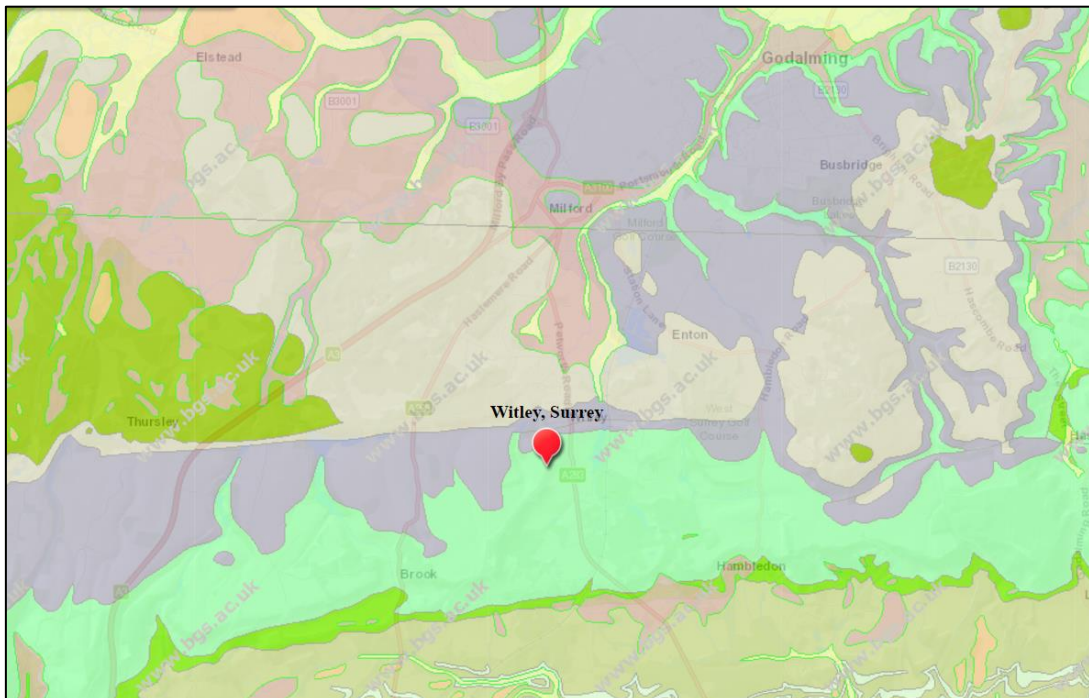
- 5.16. Sandhills, Witley Conservation Area was designated on 17 April 1984. No Conservation Area Appraisal has been prepared to date.
- 5.17. Sandhills lies between Wormley and Brook. At the crossroads and adjacent small open area lies, an attractive grouping of 18th and 19th Century cottages including three 16th Century timber framed listed buildings. This grouping forms the nucleus of the conservation area. It is also an area, which could be considered for an extension to the west of the conservation area, where it has four listed buildings.
- 5.18. The Neighbourhood Plan Area contains 101 listed buildings. This includes one Grade I listed building (Church of All Saints, Church Lane, Witley), four Grade II* listed buildings and 96 Grade II listed buildings.
- 5.19. The Plan Area also includes five scheduled monuments and one listed historic park and garden.
- 5.20. The Plan Area also boasts a number of other heritage features and "buildings of townscape, landmark or local historic merit" which do not meet the Department of National Heritage's current national standards for statutory Listing but are considered worth conserving for their local architectural or historic interest.

6. Material Assets (Geology and Waste)

Geology

- 6.1. According to the online British Geological Society mapping, the geology of the Neighbourhood Plan area is dominated by mudstone, sandstone and siltstone. The extent of these geological areas are shown on the plan below.

Figure 10: Geological soil types in Witley Neighbourhood Plan Area



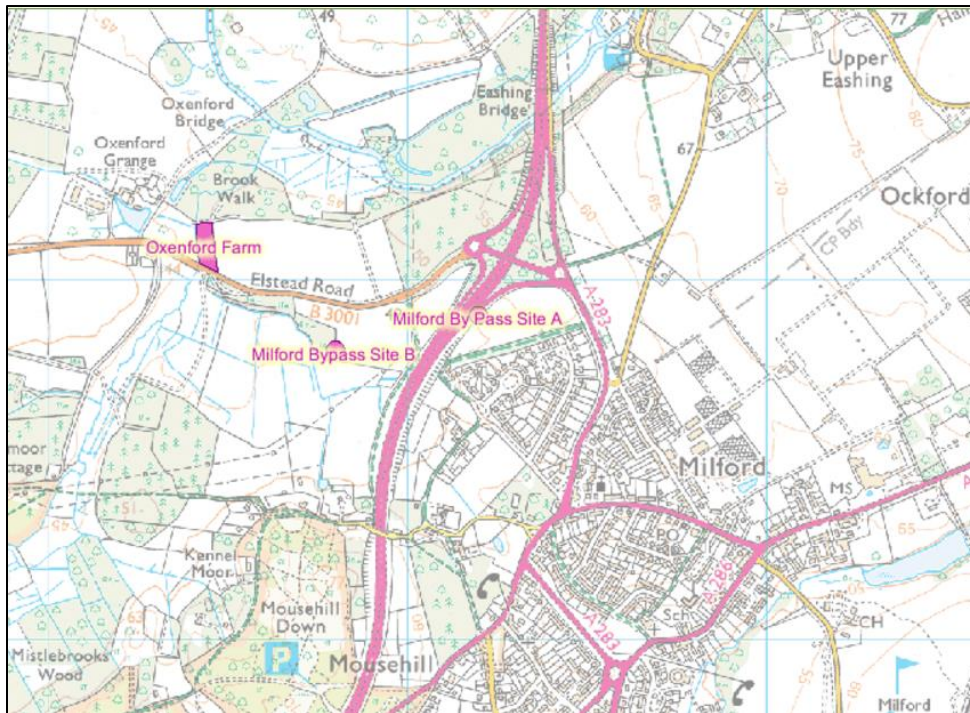
Source: British Geological Survey

Waste

- 6.2. There are several historic waste sites recorded on the Environment Agency's landfill map. These are identified on the plans below and all relate to inert waste.
- Oxenford Farm, Milford Road, Elstead;
 - Milford Bypass Site A;
 - Milford Bypass Site B;
 - Paddock Wood, Wormley, Surrey;
 - Wareham Brickworks, Brook, Witley;
 - Hazlehurst, Haslemere Road, Godalming, Surrey; and
 - Nursery Field, Witley.

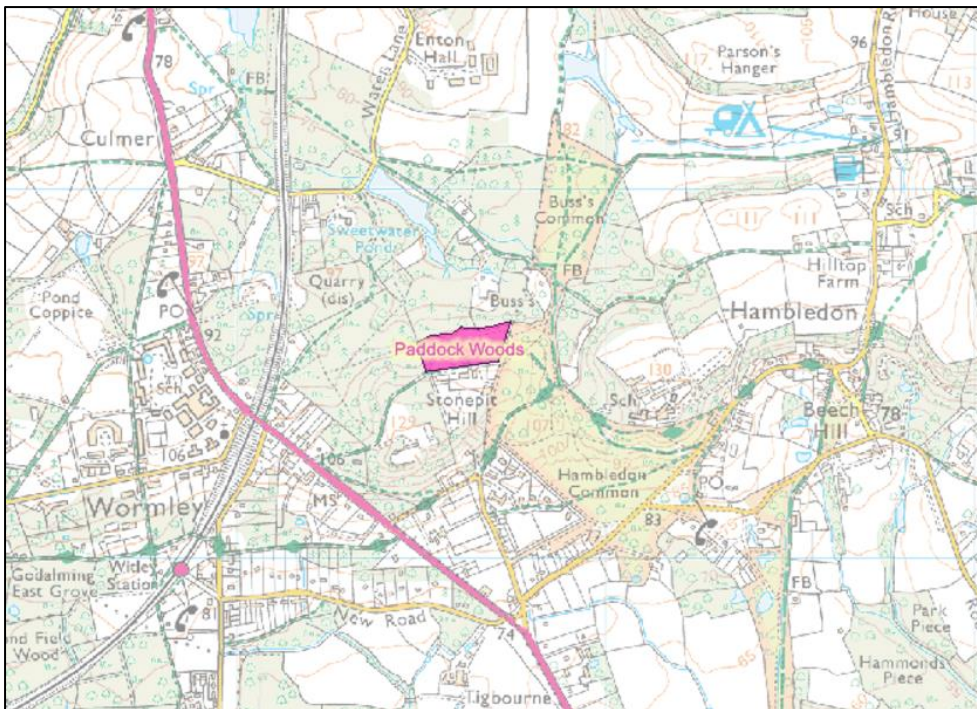
6.3. The locations of these sites are shown on Figures 11-13 below.

Figure 11: Location Map of Oxenford Farm and Milford Bypass Sites



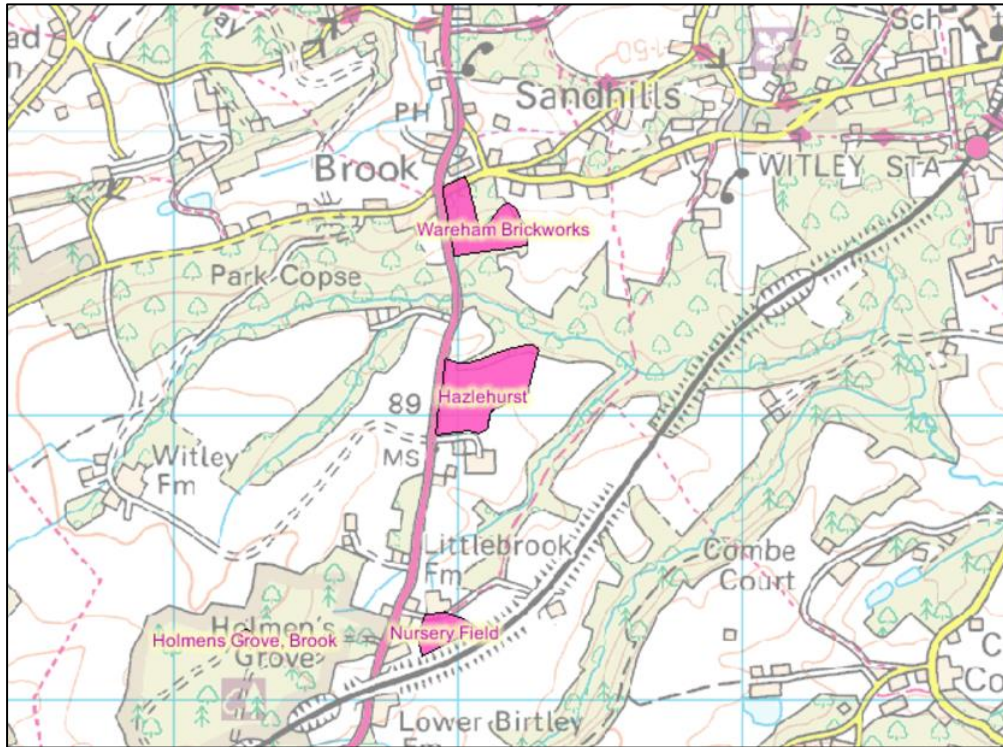
Source: Environment Agency

Figure 12: Location Map of Paddock Wood



Source: Environment Agency

Figure 13: Location map of Wareham Brickworks, Hazlehurst and Nursery Field



Source: Environment Agency

7. Soil

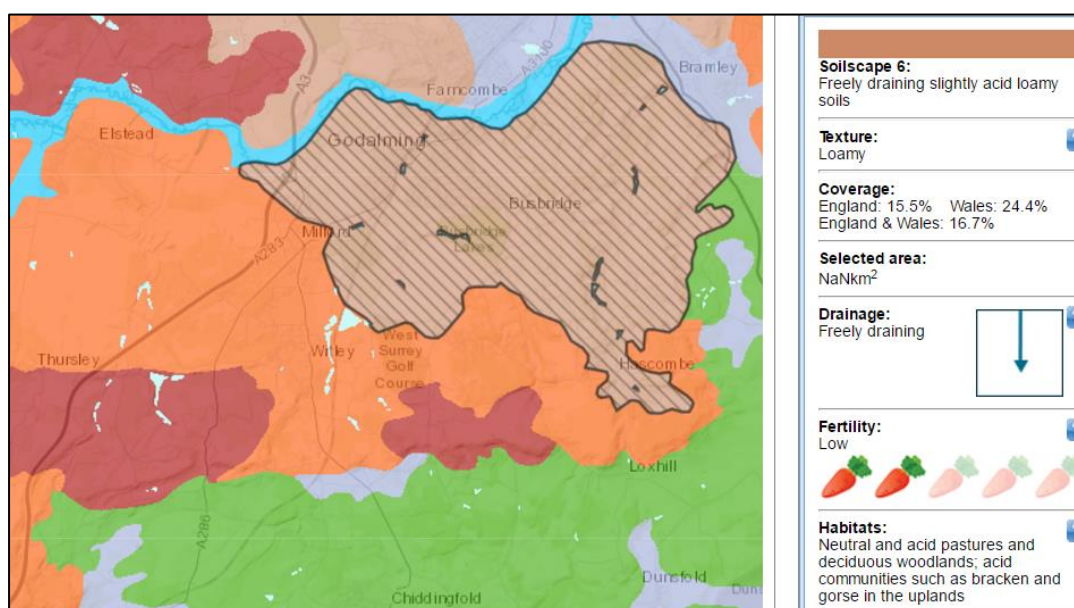
Waverley Borough

- 7.1. Much of Waverley's agricultural land is shown by the 'Agricultural Land Classification - Provisional' dataset (available at magic.gov.uk) to be Grade 3, with smaller areas of lower quality Grade 4 land and just three small patches of higher quality Grade 2 land. There is no Grade 1 (i.e. highest quality) agricultural land.
- 7.2. The "Provisional" dataset is very low resolution, and does not differentiate between Grades 3a and 3b; an important consideration as the National Planning Policy Framework classifies Grades 1, 2 and 3a agricultural land as 'best and most versatile'. In order to establish agricultural land quality with any certainty there is a need to undertake field level survey using the "post 1988 criteria"; however, within Waverley survey data is available for very few sites (and none that are likely in contention for allocation).

Witley Neighbourhood Plan Area

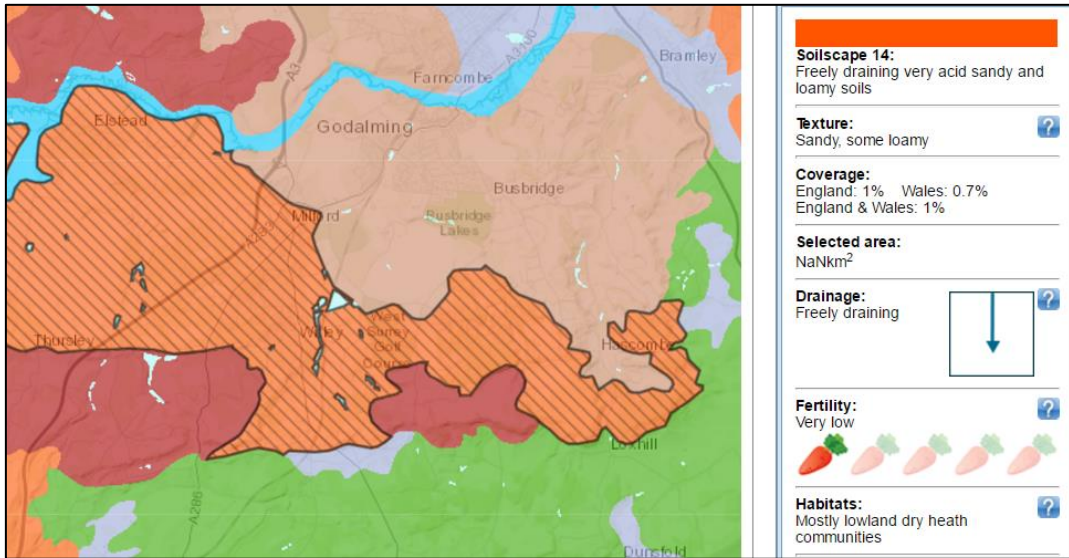
- 7.3. In terms of soil types in the Witley Neighbourhood Plan Area, these include:
- Freely draining slightly acid loamy soils;
 - Freely draining very acid sandy and loamy soils;
 - Freely draining slightly acid sandy soils;
 - Slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils; and
 - Loamy soils with naturally high groundwater.
- 7.4. The extent of these soil types are shown on the plans below.

Figure 14: Freely draining slightly acid loamy soils



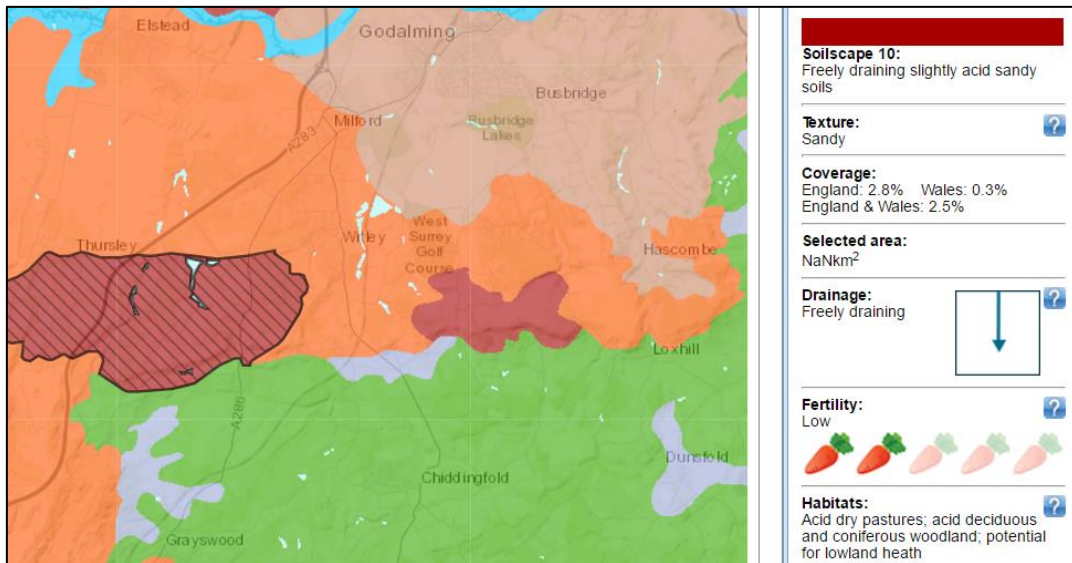
Source: Land Information System (LandIS)

Figure 15: Freely draining very acid sandy and loamy soils



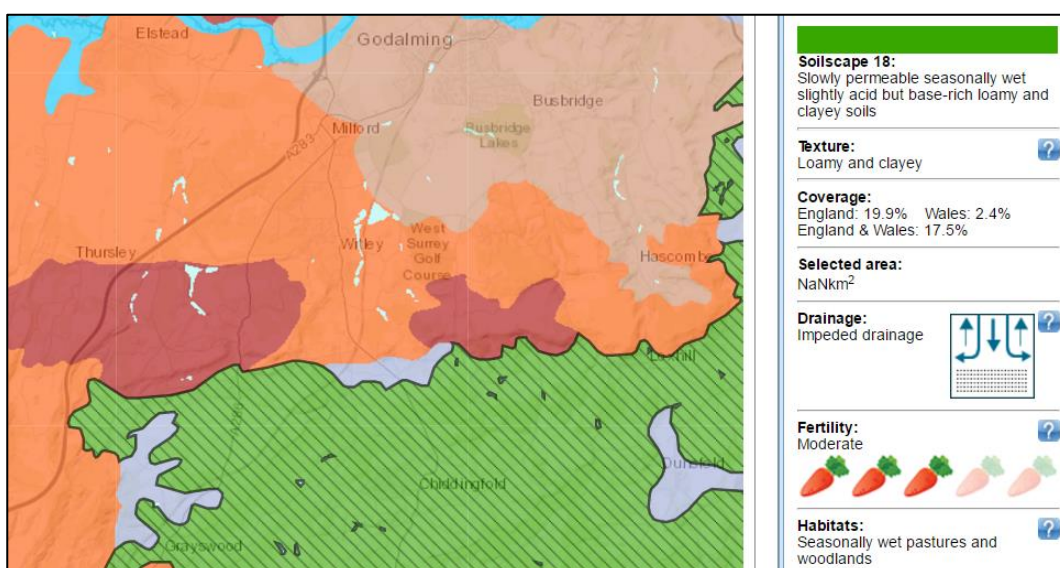
Source: Land Information System (LandIS)

Figure 16: Freely draining slightly acid sandy soils



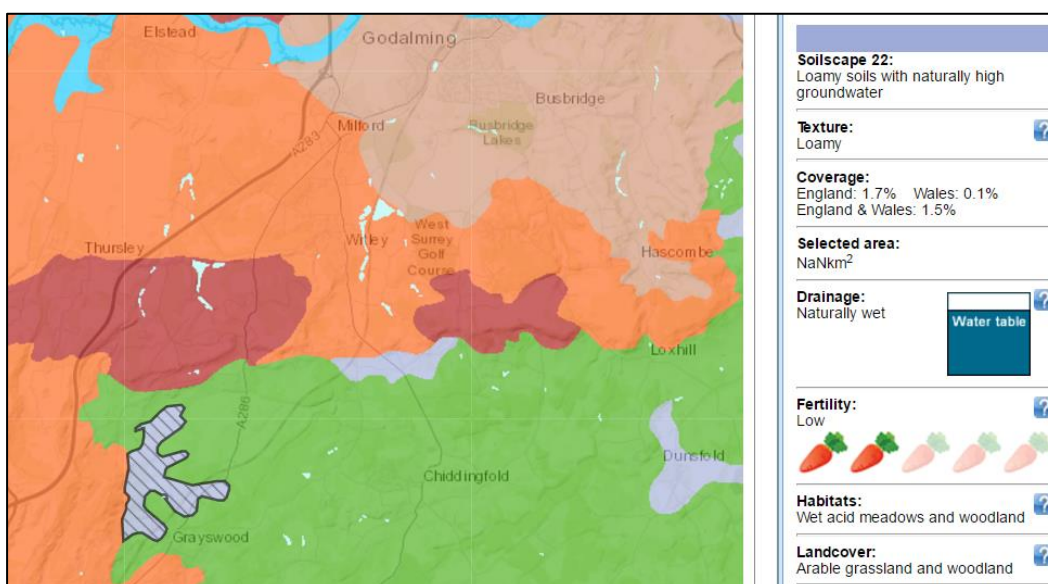
Source: Land Information System (LandIS)

Figure 17: Slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils



Source: Land Information System (LandIS)

Figure 18: Loamy soils with naturally high groundwater

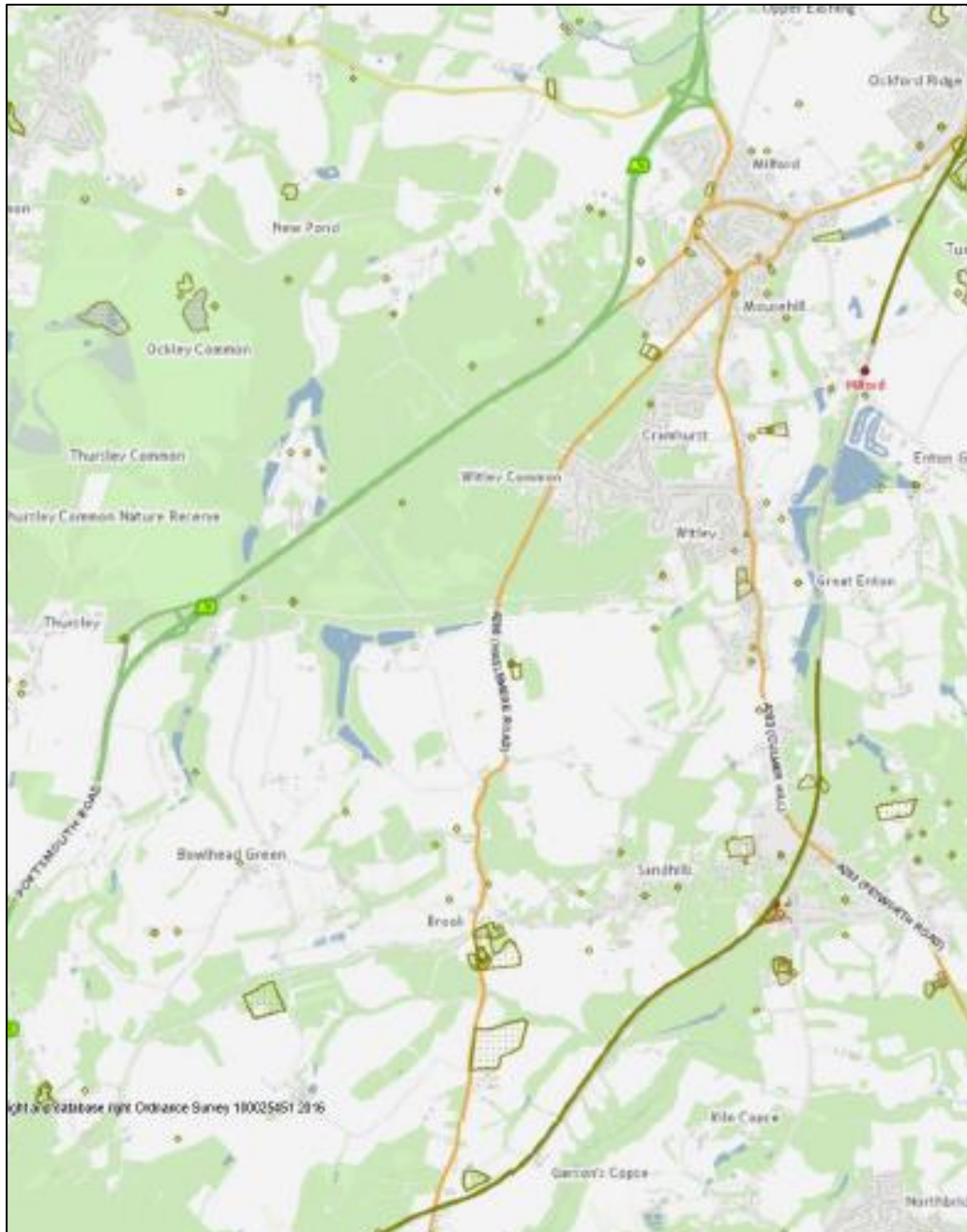


Source: Land Information System (LandIS)

Contaminated land

- 7.5. Waverley Borough Council published a Contaminated Land Strategy in 2012 covering the period to 2017.
- 7.6. Waverley does not have an extensive legacy of heavy industry and most of the significant sites are landfill sites previously exploited for sand or clay and former gasworks. Waverley has a database containing 1,100 sites with potential contamination issues, but the vast majority are likely to be low risk where small to medium areas have been infilled with inert or unknown materials over time.
- 7.7. The following map shows potentially contaminated land sites in and around Witley and Milford.

Figure 19: Potentially contaminated land sites in Witley Parish



8. Landscape

Surrey

- 8.1. Stretching from the Thames Valley in the north, to the edge of the High Weald in the south-east, the county of Surrey contains a wide variety of landscape types. The county includes significant areas of high quality and attractive landscape, with a quarter of the county designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The county includes six of England's National Character Areas: the Thames Valley, Thames Basin Heaths, Thames Basin Lowlands, the North Downs, Wealden Greensand, the Low Weald and High Weald.
- 8.2. The Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty lies at the heart of the Surrey countryside, incorporating parts of the North Downs, the Wealden Greensands and the Wooded Low Weald. The south eastern corner of the county includes a small section of the High Weald AONB.
- 8.3. To the north, the Surrey Hills give way to the Thames Basin, which includes a band of rolling clay lands, areas of sandy heath and farmland, and river valley floor and floodplain. Bordering Greater London to the north, some of these areas have undergone significant change, and continue to face considerable pressure from the capital and its immediate hinterland.
- 8.4. To the south, between the Surrey Hills AONB and the High Weald AONB, the Low Weald dominates the landscape. The Low Weald is deeply rural, sparsely populated and to the west a heavily wooded landscape. Decreasing amounts of woodland are present in the southeast of the county, where the landscape turns to more open Wealden farmland.
- 8.5. Surrey is one of the most densely wooded counties in England, with around 20% woodland cover. A significant proportion of the woodland is identified as ancient (see figure 8). Many areas of the county are protected by nature conservation designations, including Special Protection Areas (SPAs), which require decision making authorities to consider the effects of development on the habitats of migratory and threatened birds found within the SPAs (see figure 7). SPAs are composed of many individual Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and within Surrey include parts of the South West London Water Bodies SPA, the Thames Basin Heaths SPA, and the Wealden Heaths SPA. Large areas of Surrey are also protected for their habitats as Special Areas of Conservation, and these are Thursley, Ash, Pirbright & Chobham, the Mole Gap to Reigate Escarpment, and Windsor Forest & Great Park.

Surrey Hills AONB

- 8.6. The western part of the Witley Neighbourhood Plan Area, located to from the western boundary of Witley and Milford, lies within the Surrey Hills AONB.
- 8.7. The Surrey Hills AONB was one of the first landscapes in the country to be designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1958. It stretches across the county, meeting with the Kent Downs AONB to the east and the 'South Downs' National Park to the south and west. It includes three of England's National Character Areas: the North Downs, Wealden Greensand and Low Weald (see figure 2).
- 8.8. The Surrey Hills AONB lies within one of the most impressive geological features in the British Isles, the Wealden uplift. Between 130-65 million years ago, the landscape of South-East England was gradually inundated by the sea with the deposition of 800-1000m of sedimentary material. Layers of sand, silt, clay and chalk were laid down and compacted into what is now the Wealden clays, the upper and lower greensands and gault clay and chalk. Following a period of uplift (commensurate with the formation of the Alps), the Wealden

dome was raised above the sea. The dome, some 215km long and up to 80km wide and lying on an east-west axis covered large parts of Kent, Sussex and Surrey. In the succeeding 20 million years, the centre of the dome has been eroded to reveal the structure of the present day landscape.

Waverley Borough

- 8.9. The distinctive natural environment in Waverley is generally of a very high quality. Approximately 61% (21,000 hectares) lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt and 31% (10,624 hectares) is designated as Rural Areas beyond the Green Belt. 78% of the borough's countryside is also designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and/or Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV).
- 8.10. The Surrey Landscape Assessment 2015: Waverley Borough has detailed profiles of the various character areas. Much of the northern and western part of the borough is made up from Cretaceous Greensand Hills, while the Wealden Clay underlies the southern part.
- 8.11. Haslemere is highly sensitive, as it is surrounded by the AONB on three sides and the South Downs National Park on the fourth, with only small parcels of land falling outside these nationally designated landscapes. Land to the north and east is also within the Green Belt, and has been found by the recent review to be contributing to Green Belt purposes.
- 8.12. Godalming is constrained by the AONB to the east, with other areas around the town designated as AGLV; also, virtually all land surrounding Godalming is part of the London Green Belt, with the recent Green Belt Review only recommending three relatively small areas (two to the north, and one to the west) for removal from the Green Belt (plus another area to the south east was considered closely, but ultimately not recommended for removal).
- 8.13. Milford and Witley are 'washed-over' by the Green Belt, and constrained to the west by the AONB; however, the Green Belt Review identified some capacity, specifically recommending that the villages should be 'in-set' from the Green Belt and that the boundary should not necessarily extend up to the existing urban edge.

Witley Neighbourhood Plan Area

- 8.14. Witley Parish lies in the southwest corner of Surrey, within the green belt and partly within the Surrey Hills AONB. Witley and Milford along with the rural hamlets of Wormley, Sandhills, Brook and Enton Green all have a distinctive semi-rural character which is valued by the inhabitants.
- 8.15. Aside from its green belt and AONB designations, there are no other landscape designations within the Witley Neighbourhood Plan Area.

9. Air quality

Waverley Borough

- 9.1. Waverley Borough is situated in the south-western corner of Surrey, the Borough is largely rural with four main populations centres; Farnham, Godalming, Haslemere and Cranleigh. Air quality within the Borough is generally very good but there are hotspots of pollution caused by high levels of Nitrogen Dioxide. Road traffic has been recognised as the major pollution source with the greatest effects in the largest towns within the Borough.
- 9.2. Two main trunk roads cross Waverley; the A31 London to Winchester and the A3 London to Portsmouth dual carriageways. The latter includes the site of the Hindhead Tunnel, which opened in August 2011 to relieve serious congestion on the A3 route in the village of Hindhead.
- 9.3. Waverley Borough Council (WBC) declared three Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in 2004, and these were directly attributed to exceedances of the annual mean Air Quality Strategy (AQS) objectives for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) due to traffic congestion. The AQMA in Hindhead was subsequently revoked in 2015 as a direct result of the Hindhead Tunnel project that was completed in 2011. This work incorporated the closure of a section of the road through Hindhead Common and the Devil's Punch Bowl. A majority of this traffic, in excess of 50%, now utilises the A3 rather than the more residential route along the A287
- 9.4. The remaining AQMA's at Farnham and Godalming continue to operate automatic monitors due to the persistent high levels of pollutants, specifically oxides of Nitrogen (NO_x). These problems relate to congestion on heavily trafficked primary routes and poor dispersion of pollutants where roads narrow with tall buildings on either side. Air quality monitoring indicates that overall levels are slightly lower than previous years, with the air quality objective only being breached at three monitoring sites, two sites within the existing AQMA at Farnham, and a further breach at a location outside of the AQMA.
- 9.5. A Borough wide Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) was first developed in Waverley in 2008 and has recently been updated. The AQAP contains measures for consideration or implementation, targeted at reducing local air quality emissions and improving air quality across the whole Borough, but with specific regard for the AQMAs. Many of these actions require the co-operation of partner agencies including, but not limited to, Surrey County Council (SCC), Environment Agency (EA), Public Health England (PHE) and other neighbouring authorities.

Witley Neighbourhood Plan Area

- 9.6. No part of the Witley neighbourhood Plan Area falls within or is subject to an AQMA.