

**Test Valley Revised Local Plan
DPD
2011 – 2029
Regulation 22 – Submission to
Secretary of State**

**Policy E3:Local Gaps
Topic Paper**

June 2014



REVISED LOCAL PLAN

TOPIC PAPER – POLICY E3: LOCAL GAPS

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this topic paper is to provide context and rationale of Local Gap designations in the Borough and to consider the approach of including a Local Gap policy in the Revised Local Plan.

2 Background

- 2.1 Local Gaps are defined as spatial planning tools designed to shape the pattern of settlements. This mechanism has prevented coalescence between urban areas thus allowing for a clear visual and physical break in the built environment. This has enabled settlements to retain their separate identity and local distinctiveness and has thus prevented the characteristics associated with urban sprawl from occurring. Local Gaps are most common in the South East of England, which often reflects the combination of highest development pressure, and the relatively close settlement pattern in this more highly developed part of England¹.
- 2.2 Areas of undeveloped land protected by Local Gap designations provide a valuable source of green infrastructure which offers important recreational and landscape benefits to the local community as well as nature conservation value. These have been identified in the Council's draft Green Infrastructure Strategy (January 2014).
- 2.3 The principle of Local Gaps has been an important factor when considering planning applications and appeals concerning proposed development within the Local Gap designations.

3 Policy Context

- 3.1 Local Gaps is a long established tool and has been a feature of county and district planning documents for over thirty years.
- 3.2 The principle of Local Gaps has been a fundamental element of planning policy within Hampshire with its origins traced back to the South and Mid Hampshire Structure Plans (1988 & 1989) and then subsequently included within the Hampshire County Structure Plan (1994) and the Hampshire County Structure Plan 1996 – 2011 (Review).

¹ David Hares Landscape Architecture. (2012). Fareham Borough Gap Review: A review of gap policy designations.

- 3.3 Within the Borough Local Plan (2006), Local Gaps are defined under policy SET 05. The policy identifies Local Gaps between:
- Andover & Anna Valley / Upper Clatford;
 - Andover & Enham Alamein / Smannell;
 - Andover & Abbotts Ann;
 - Andover & Weyhill / The Pentons;
 - Ampfield and Valley Park / Chandler's Ford;
 - North Baddesley & Chilworth;
 - Nursling & Southampton
 - Romsey & North Baddesley
- 3.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that Local Plans should 'identify land where development would be inappropriate, for instance because of its environmental or historical significance' (paragraph 157, bullet point 7).
- 3.5 Through the Localism Act 2011, the South East Plan was revoked by the Secretary of State on 25 March 2013. Therefore the South East Plan no longer forms part of the Development Plan.
- 3.6 The Secretary of State Letter regarding the Revocation of Regional Strategies (dated 6 July 2010) gives weight to the evidence base used to inform the preparation of the revoked South East Plan which will be a material consideration when assessing planning applications. The South East Plan included Policy CC6 (Sustainable Communities & Character of the Environment) which referred to the 'actions and decisions associated with the development and use of land will actively promote the creation of sustainable and distinctive communities.' The policy went on to state that this will be achieved 'by developing a local shared vision which represents the character and distinctiveness of settlement and landscape.' This policy didn't provide the basis to define Local Gaps but it did recognise that it is important to retain the distinctiveness of settlements.
- 3.7 The significance of Local Gaps within the South Hampshire sub-region was recognised within paragraph 16.6 of the South East Plan where it stated 'if local authorities in South Hampshire consider the inclusion of Local Gaps to be essential in terms of shaping the settlement pattern, this policy approach will need to be tested through development plan documents'.
- 3.8 Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) produced a Policy Framework for Gaps (2008)² setting out PUSH's position on Local Gap designations. Paragraph 2.3 of the policy framework states that 'PUSH believes that the designation of gaps is essential to help shape the future settlement pattern, so that the two million square metres of new employment floorspace and the

² PUSH. (2008). Push Policy Framework for Gaps:
http://www.push.gov.uk/push_policy_framework_for_gaps.pdf

80,000 new homes 2006 – 2026 can be accommodated but in ways which will avoid the coalescence of settlements and the loss of settlement identity.’

- 3.9 To ensure consistency across South Hampshire and to avoid any proliferation of Local Gaps which could preclude sufficient land being made available for employment and housing development, the PUSH Policy Framework sets out a recommended policy approach for Local Planning Authorities when devising a Local Gap policy and selecting locations for the designations of gaps within Local Plans. The PUSH criteria for the designation of Local Gaps are as follows:
- a) The open nature / sense of separation between settlements cannot be retained by other policy designations;
 - b) The land to be included within the gap performs an important role in defining the settlement character of the area and separating settlements at risk of coalescence;
 - c) In defining the extent of a gap, no more land than is necessary to prevent the coalescence of settlements should be included having regard to maintaining their physical and visual separation.
- 3.10 The PUSH Framework goes on to state that Local Development Documents will identify the location of the gap(s) and include policies to set out the types of development which will be permitted, based on the following principles:-
- a) It would not diminish the physical and / or visual separation of settlements; and
 - b) It would not individually or cumulatively with other existing or proposed development compromise the integrity of the gap.
- 3.11 PUSH produced their South Hampshire Strategy in October 2012³ which provides an up-to-date and robust strategic framework for local plan preparation and other decision-making by PUSH authorities and their partners. The Strategy acknowledges the importance of gaps in maintaining the individual identity and character of settlements as well as being used for new or enhanced recreation and other green infrastructure purposes including acting as green corridors which enable wildlife to move between habitats.
- 3.12 The South Hampshire Strategy has reviewed the Policy Framework adopted by PUSH in 2004 with the Strategy confirming that the approach in that Framework remains relevant and forms the basis for policy 15 as set out below:

³ PUSH. (2012). South Hampshire Strategy:
http://www.push.gov.uk/south_hampshire_strategy_-_updated_dec_2012.pdf

Policy 15: Gaps

The following gaps will be designated by PUSH authorities:-

- between Southampton and Eastleigh/Chandlers Ford
- between Southampton and Hedge End/Bursledon/Netley
- between Fareham and Fareham Western Wards/Whiteley
- between Fareham/Gosport and Stubbington/Lee-on-the-Solent.

The following criteria will be used by PUSH authorities to designate the location of other gaps and to define the boundaries of all gaps:-

- the designation is needed to retain the open nature and/or sense of separation between settlements;
- the land to be included within the gap performs an important role in defining the settlement character of the area and separating settlements at risk of coalescence;
- the gap's boundaries should not preclude provision being made for the development proposed in this Strategy;
- the gap should include no more land than is necessary to prevent the coalescence of settlements having regard to maintaining their physical and visual separation.

Once designated, the multifunctional capacity of gaps should be strengthened wherever possible.

- 3.13 Local Gaps designated around Andover (Northern Test Valley) are important for similar reasons as those gaps defined within Southern Test Valley. Furthermore, Policy CC6 of the South East Plan recognised the importance of retaining the distinctiveness of settlements. The policy replicated the same principles to be applied throughout the Borough to ensure consistency. It is on this basis that Local Gaps have been defined around Andover.

4 Gap Policies in Hampshire

- 4.1 Numerous Local Planning Authorities within Hampshire, including neighbouring planning authorities have reviewed Local Gap designations within their administrative boundaries and have thus implemented a Local Gaps policy within their adopted Core Strategy.
- 4.2 Southampton City Council has a policy within their adopted Core Strategy (2010) relating to protecting and enhancing open space (policy CS 21)⁴. The supporting text of the policy acknowledges the importance of maintaining a clear separation, between the city of Southampton and nearby settlements to

⁴ Southampton City Council. (2010).Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document.

prevent urban sprawl as well as preserving the setting of the city. The Core Strategy sets out, that through the use of Strategic Gaps, land can be safeguarded from development which might damage its open, undeveloped, countryside nature.

- 4.3 In addition, Fareham Borough Council has included Policy CS22 Development in Strategic Gaps within their adopted Core Strategy (2011)⁵. Fareham Borough Council justify that Gaps between settlements particularly between Fareham and the Western Wards and Fareham and Stubbington, help define and maintain the separate identity of individual settlements and have strong local support. Strategic Gaps do not have intrinsic landscape value but are important in maintaining the settlement pattern, keeping individual settlements separate and providing opportunities for green infrastructure/green corridors. In preparing their Core Strategy, Fareham Borough Council have reviewed their approach towards Strategic Gaps and in recognition of continuing pressure for high levels of development has re-affirms the need to maintain gaps within the Borough.
- 4.4 Havant Borough Council Core Strategy (March 2011) has produced Policy CS11 Protecting and Enhancing the Special Environment and Heritage of Havant Borough. Criterion 9 of the Policy states that 'Planning permission for development will be granted for development that maintains undeveloped gaps between the settlements of Emsworth / Havant; Havant / Waterlooville; Havant / Portsmouth; Emsworth / Westbourne and Leigh Park / Rowlands Castle.
- 4.5 Following the adoption of their Core Strategy, Havant Borough Council submitted their Allocations Plan to the Secretary of State (December 2013) which provides justification for the inclusion of Local Gaps within the Borough of Havant. Havant Borough Council recognise that gaps are an integral part of land use patterns in the Borough and thus play a significant role in preventing urban areas of Havant Borough and neighbouring districts merging together and losing their separate identities (Policy AL2: Urban Area Boundaries and Undeveloped Gaps between settlements). The Allocations Plan document specifies that applications to develop land within an undeveloped gap between settlements will need to demonstrate clearly that the proposal will maintain the separate identities of mainland settlements or result in their coalescence. The only exception to this is where development will meet an overriding public need or interest that cannot be accommodated elsewhere in the Borough. The Planning Inspector's Examination Report (7 July 2014) acknowledges that the Council is proposing changes to clarify what is meant by an 'overriding public need' and that the Council will set out a methodology for assessing potential impact on the undeveloped gap. Subject to making these amendments, the Inspector is satisfied that Policy AL2 is clear and effective.

⁵ Fareham Borough Council. (2011). Fareham Local Development Framework: Shaping Fareham's Future.

- 4.6 Post the publication of the NPPF, Winchester City Council have defined, within their adopted Local Plan⁶, that gaps provide a key opportunity to provide green infrastructure around the District, in addition to shaping and maintaining the settlement pattern. They are a valuable tool and the principle of maintaining gaps in these locations is retained. Settlement Gaps where proposed development will only be permitted that does not physically or visually diminish the gap (Policy CP18 – Settlement Gaps). The Planning Inspector's Examination Report (February 2013) did not recommend any modifications regarding Policy CP18 and concluded that with the recommended main modifications the District Local Plan Part 1 satisfies the requirements of Section 20 of the 2004 Act and meets the criteria for soundness in the National Planning Policy Framework. The Inspector also sets out within the Examination Report that the Policy text includes the full criteria set out in the PUSH Policy Framework for Gaps (2008) which will be applied to help ensure a consistent approach across the area.
- 4.7 Draft Plans from other Hampshire Authorities', which include Eastleigh Borough Council, Basingstoke and Deane Council and East Hampshire District Council all propose Local Gaps within their draft plans. New Forest District Council is proposing a policy on Green Infrastructure which includes a criterion relating to protecting the open character of an area which is important to the setting of the settlement ('landscape setting'), including for example, wedges of countryside extending into the settlement.
- 4.8 In recognition of the approaches taken by other Local Planning Authorities in Hampshire with regards to Local Gap designation, the Council has reviewed the Local Gaps currently defined in the Borough in accordance with PUSH Policy Framework for Gaps.
- 4.9 The Sustainability Appraisal accompanying the Revised Local Plan appraised the following two options with regards to retaining separation between settlements:
1. Preferred option – establish Local Gaps to protect against the coalescence of settlements
 2. Do not identify Local Gaps; consider each proposal on its own merits in line with national guidance and countryside policies.

Through the appraisal process the first option performed more favourably based on impact on settlement character considerations including preventing coalescence and place setting. Taking account of this review, the first option is preferred by the Council.

⁶ Winchester District Council Local Plan Part 1 – Joint Core Strategy (March 2013)

5 Recognition of Local Gaps in Appeal Decisions

- 5.1 In considering the principle and individual merits of local gaps, the outcome of Inspectors' decisions at appeals within Test Valley have been taken into account. For instance, the Inspector of the Redbridge Lane Appeal⁷ (03 November 2010) concluded that there is 'substantial objection to the development outside the settlement in the Local Gaps because it would be contrary to policies SET 03⁸ & SET 05, as supported by the strong local views that the Local Gap should be maintained in its present form to avoid undue urbanisation.' However, in this instance the material consideration of the five year Housing Land Supply justified the loss of the Local Gap.
- 5.2 Land at Halterworth Lane and Highwood Lane, Romsey was subject to an appeal following refusal of outline permission for 59 units of residential accommodation within a Local Gap designation (Romsey – North Baddesley).
- 5.3 The Inspector of the Halterworth Appeal⁹ (16 November 2011) recognised the significance of Local Gaps by stating that the proposed development would be in breach of policy SET 05: Local Gaps of the Borough Local Plan and that the development of the appeal site would push development and the urban edge out into the countryside and into the identified gap.

6 Local Gaps

- 6.1 This section of the paper provides a description of the Local Gap designations within Northern Test Valley.

Northern Test Valley

Andover – Abbots Ann – Map 48

- 6.2 The gap extends from Andover in the north to Abbots Ann in the south. Similar to the Upper Clatford - Andover gap, this gap extends over the northern side of the valley which contains the Pilhill Brook. However, the valley is much broader at this point, as it widens east to west. To the north the boundary is defined by the railway line. To the south the boundary follows the Pilhill Brook. The other boundaries of the gap are all defined by roads, including the A303 to the north east. As in the area between Upper Clatford and Andover, this gap it is located within the landscape character area LCT10C Thruxton and Danebury Chalk Downland, which consists of rolling downland and chalk valleys dominated by arable farming.
- 6.3 The gap extends over one side of the valley. The side of the valley is formed by the same rolling slope as the adjacent Anna Valley but here it is much

⁷ 09/01706/OUTS – Outline Permission for residential development of up to 350 dwellings

⁸ Policy SET 03: Development in the Countryside

⁹ 10/00623/OUTS – Outline Permission for residential development of up to 59 units

broader, extending the distance between the A303 and the Pilhill Brook. The open character of the downland landscape is more apparent as the valley widens. The slope is predominantly covered by large scale arable fields which contribute to the open views. A thin line of vegetation follows the brook. The main body of Andover sits at the top of the valley slope behind the A303 to the north east, but some development associated with the Ministry of Defence has extended across the A303 and along the railway line. Further north is the Andover Business Park. Abbots Ann extends up the other side of the valley from the Pilhill Brook. There is limited development within the gap, such as along Farm Road. There are a number of footpaths which cross the gap via Farm Road.

- 6.4 The valley side is rounded and broad. The rolling topography and width of the valley side is effective in preventing intervisibility and coalescence between the two settlements, in the absence of extensive vegetation. Andover sits on the shoulder of the valley, visible on the skyline, from within the gap. Abbots Ann rises up the other side of the valley and the line of vegetation along the Pilhill Brook defines the settlement edge and provides some additional visual separation between settlements. However, views across the valley slope are possible from the middle of the gap as the slope becomes broader, most notably from Farm Road and the footpaths which join it. If development were to extend over the A303, or across the railway line, the urban edge would become more visible as development creeps down the slope, leading to potential coalescence.

Andover – Anna Valley / Upper Clatford – Map 49

- 6.5 The gap extends over the northern side of Anna Valley which is a small chalk river valley, running east-west to the South of Andover. The boundary of the gap to the north is formed by the edge of the A303. Andover sits at the top of the valley slope just the other side of the A303. The gap is wedged shape, widening with the Valley East to west. The edge of Upper Clatford forms the boundary in the south and the gap is bounded by the A343 in the west. It is located within the landscape character area LCT10C¹⁰ Thruyton and Danebury Chalk Downland which consist of open chalk downland dominated by arable farming. The downland consists of rolling rounded hills, interspersed with chalk valleys containing rivers such as the River Anton and the Pillhill Brook, or dry valleys leading down to these water courses. Settlements such as Upper Clatford tend to be located within sheltered chalk valleys.
- 6.6 The sides of the Anna Valley are formed by rolling slopes, which flatten out into water meadows containing the Pillhill Brook and its confluence with the River Anton. Upper Clatford hugs the bottom of the valley to the south of the brook and water meadows. The dense vegetation of the water meadows, which includes wet woodland, helps provide physical separation between Upper Clatford and the A303. As the river valley widens out towards the west, the views become more open across the slopes and the A303 more visible.

¹⁰ Landscape Character Types and Areas

Andover is currently contained by the A303, and the associated vegetation, however, the urban edge of Andover is visible on the skyline from the eastern edge of Upper Clatford, particularly in winter.

- 6.7 The valley side functions as one visual compartment. Andover currently sits on the edge of the valley slope and its visual containment is very reliant on vegetation along the A303 corridor. If development were to extend over the A303 corridor then the urban edge would topple over the valley sides, increasing intervisibility and coalescence between settlements along the open valley slope. The settlement edge of Upper Clatford is well defined by the water meadows. The boundaries of the gap would seem to be the minimum to allow the landscape in between to still function as an effective gap and prevent coalescence. Boundaries are robust and define the settlement edge in both cases.
- 6.8 The Local Gap boundary is proposed to be modified with Wyevale Garden Centre being excluded from the designation. Wyevale Garden Centre is a commercial enterprise that does not meet the criterion of defining a Gap and therefore it is not considered necessary for the land to be included within the Local Gap designation.

Andover – Enham Alamein / Smannell – Map 50

- 6.9 The gap is a semi – circular strip of land between the villages of Enham Alamein and Smannell to the north and Andover to the south. The gap extends over a series of ridges and dry valleys that radiate out from Andover. The boundaries at the western end are defined by a number of footpaths, and at the eastern end by the Roman Road towards St Mary Bourne; Finkley Road. The majority of the gap is located within landscape character area LCT9A North Andover Plateau. The plateau gently slopes towards Andover, and is dissected by a number of dry valleys which also run a predominantly southerly direction towards Andover. Two other landscape character areas influence the landscape of the gap; LCT10F Andover Chalk Downland to the east and LCT8A Tangle and Doles Wood to the North.
- 6.10 The gap covers a series of ridges and dry valleys radiating out from Andover which can be viewed obliquely across from the higher open ground of the chalk downland to the east. The gap is predominantly covered by large or medium scale arable fields separated by tree and hedge lines which tend to follow the lines of the ridges. To the north is the more wooded landscape of Tangle and Doles Wood which contains the settlements of both Enham Alamein and Smannell. The majority of the settlements are located within the valleys, largely screened by trees. Settlements have become linear as they have spread along the roads which follow the valley bottoms.
- 6.11 The Roman Road which forms the eastern boundary of the gap rises steadily across the Andover Chalk downland to give a panoramic view across the valley which contains Smannell. It also provides clear views of the urban edge of Andover but Smannell is screened by the more wooded landscape to the

north. The larger settlement of Enham Alamein follows a similar pattern along the next valley. A ridge separates the two settlements screening Enham Alamein from this viewpoint. However, in the western section of the gap the urban edge of Enham Alamein has crept over the ridge, so that both this and the edge of Andover are visible from within the gap along Hungerford Lane.

- 6.12 The gap does not extend to the existing urban edge of Andover. The open farmland in between at East Anton has got planning permission for an urban expansion to Andover and construction has commenced. This will bring the edge of development up to the mouth of the valley towards Smannell. Development already extends to the mouth of the valley towards Enham Alamein. The visual separation between the villages and Andover is dependent on keeping the undeveloped character of the valley bottoms, and maintaining the urban edge beneath the ridges. Further development along the valley floors or over the ridges would lead to greater intervisibility and coalescence.

Andover - The Pentons – Map 51

- 6.13 The gap extends from Andover in the east and up to Penton Mewsey and Penton Grafton along the north-west boundary. The majority of the gap is located within the landscape character area LCT9A North Andover Plateau.
- 6.14 LCT9A North Andover Plateau gently slopes south towards the edge of Andover. Across the plateau a number of dry gravel river valleys and gentle ridges also run in a predominantly southerly direction. The dry valleys join the main valley of the River Anton, which flows eastwards in to Andover, forming a series of right angle confluences. Penton Mewsey and Penton Grafton sit together at one of these confluences with the River Anton valley. They are located just north of the River Anton valley floor.
- 6.15 The edge of Andover has begun to occupy the southern side of the Anton Valley. The urban edge is contained by a belt of mature vegetation. However, the edge of Andover is on a higher part of the valley than the Pentons, which are much closer to the bottom of the valley floor. The effect of the higher elevation means that although quite well screened, the tops of the industrial buildings at the edge of Andover are clearly visible above the vegetation from Foxcotte Lane, as you exit Penton Mewsey. Any further encroachment along the valley sides will only exacerbate this relationship. The straightness of the Anton Valley provides long views along it. There are some hedgerows, but little in the way of extensive blocks of vegetation to break up those views. Neither variation in local topography or large areas of vegetation is present to provide natural screening.
- 6.16 Penton Corner is a small settlement which sits between Andover and Weyhill, but in view of its modest nature does not significantly alter the undeveloped character of the gap.

- 6.17 In view of the elongated and simple linear form of the landscape features within this part of the character area combined with its overall openness, visual separation is dependent on maintaining the undeveloped character of the farmland between Andover and these villages. There is very little in the way of significant belts of vegetation or variation in topography to provide enclosure or natural screening.
- 6.18 Following the review of the Local Gap designation, proposed modifications have been made to the Local Gap boundary. Land to the south of the A303 has been removed as it is considered that the area does not prevent coalescence between Andover and surrounding settlements. Land to the west of Hanging Bushes Public Right of way has been excluded as well as removing land around the disused Weyhill services on the A303. The Local Gap has not been extended to include high ground up to running track, sports pitches and playing fields around Charlton Sports and Leisure Centre on the edge of Andover as this area is Public Open Space and has been included within the settlement boundary.

7 Local Gaps – Southern Test Valley

- 7.1 This section of the paper provides a description of the Local Gap designations within Southern Test Valley.

Romsey – North Baddesley – Map 52

- 7.2 This gap extends from the edge of Romsey in the west to North Baddesley in the south. The boundary to the north is formed by Highwood Lane and Green Lane. It is almost completely bounded by development on two sides, with the exception of a small area crossing over the A27 which forms a gap between the Industrial Estate along Luzborough Lane, and the western edge of North Baddesley. It is entirely located in the landscape character area LCT3A Baddesley Mixed Farmland and Woodland. This has a relatively flat landscape covered by a mixture of small to medium scale fields and small areas of woodland. The character area tips gently westwards down to the River Test valley.
- 7.3 The gap covers part of a small plateau of regular shaped fields enclosed by hedgerows of variable quality. Within the hedgerows are a number of individual standard trees which provide some enclosure. A few widely spaced farmsteads occupy the gap. The eastern side of the gap is contained by a line of adjoining blocks of woodland around Warren Farm and Scragg Hill. Luzborough Plantation contains views in the south. Romsey has expanded eastwards up the shoulders of the Test River Valley to the edge of this plateau. North Baddesley sits on the plateau, around a confluence of roads.
- 7.4 The flat topography and lack of woodland allows wide views across open fields. Lack of woodland in the gap, means that edges of each settlement is not well contained by natural features. Notably the urban edge of Romsey is

visible from within the gap along Highwood Lane. However, the urban edge sits just below the lip of the plateau and this provides some natural screening. Hedgerow vegetation and standard trees also filter views. Within the small section of the gap which extends south of the A27 the urban edges of Romsey and North Baddesley are visible to each other across a narrow strip of land. As you leave the edge of Romsey at Luzborough Lane, the edge of North Baddesley becomes almost immediately apparent south of the A27.

- 7.5 Visual separation between the two settlements relies on views across the open and undeveloped character of the landscape north of the A27. The urban edge of Romsey sits just below the edge of the plateau screened by the crossing lines of vegetation. If development were to extend up over that edge and across the plateau this screening would become less effective. Intervisibility is already present south of the A27 where the gap is narrow and less robust.
- 7.6 The Local Gap boundary is proposed to be amended to remove land to the north east of Highwood Lane as it is considered that the area does not prevent coalescence given its distance from the settlement of Romsey and North Baddesley. A small cluster of development including Oak Tree Cottage to the north east of Halterworth Lane is proposed to be removed from the Gap boundary and to subsequently form part of the settlement boundary. Land to the south of Botley Road and to the west of Luzborough Lane with the A27 roundabout to the north has been identified as being within the settlement boundary and therefore the area is proposed to be deleted from the Local Gap designation.

North Baddesley - Chilworth – Map 53

- 7.7 This gap is an area of farmland which extends northwest/south-east between North Baddesley and the edge of Chilworth Old Village. As in Ampfield–Chandlers Ford/Valley Park, the gap is located within landscape character area LCT2B North Baddesley and Chilworth Woodland Mosaic, the gently undulating landform formed by a series of valleys and ridges between Ampfield and Chilworth, and covered with a mixture of open areas of arable land and large blocks of woodland.
- 7.8 The gap extends down the ridge from Chilworth, opening out in to the adjacent lower valley area. The ridge is covered by woodland, whereas the valley landscape is one of the collective open areas formed predominantly by arable fields and rough grassland. The edge of the valley is also contained by blocks of woodland. Most notably, a swathe of woodland extends along the northern edge of the gap following the edge of North Baddesley and connecting to the larger block of woodland containing Great Covert to the north east. The boundaries to the north and east follow Castle Lane and Misslebrook Lane, whilst the remaining boundaries are defined by either woodland or settlement edge. North Baddesley sits on the edge of the flatter plateau landscape of character area LCT3A Baddesley Mixed Farmland and Woodland.

- 7.9 Due to the openness of the area between the two settlements and the considerable difference in levels, clear views are possible down across the gap from the edge Chilworth Old Village to the settlement edge of North Baddesley. The belt of woodland along the northern edge of the gap adjacent to North Baddesley, contains the settlement, however, the rooflines of buildings are present in some views. The church at Old Chilworth is just visible above the trees, but the main settlement of Chilworth is well screened by the collective belt of woodland that extends over Chilworth Common. Views from the church provide panoramic vistas across the gap to the landscape beyond. As you drop down towards the valley these views become more contained by woodland, however, open views are still possible across the open farmland to the east.
- 7.10 In view of the openness of the valley landscape and local topography, visual separation between settlements is dependent on the undeveloped character of the land between them. In addition, the belts of woodland contain the settlement edge and provide a wooded setting in each case. If development were to extend beyond the woodland in to the valley area it would lead to an erosion of the settlement settings, as well as increasing intervisibility and visible coalescence. The woodland edges provide robust boundaries, however the woodland belts around Chilworth and Tanners Brook are not currently within the gap. Policy criteria directs us that a gap must be no greater in size than necessary, however guidance suggests boundaries on the ground should still be logical; reasonable and defensible and readily identifiable through existing durable features of the landscape.

North Baddesley – Valley Park – Map 54

- 7.11 The gap extends from Valley Park in the east, towards North Baddesley in the south-west. The boundaries to the north, south and west are formed by roads, Flex ford Road, Castle Lane, and Nutburn Road. It is located within the northern section of landscape character area LCT2B North Baddesley and Chilworth Woodland Mosaic. The northern part of area LCT2B is well wooded but woodland clearance has been carried out more extensively to create groups of fields, forming open areas within the woodland framework. Here the shallow ridges and valleys that shape the gently undulating landform make up a series which run in parallel, predominantly east west between Ampfield and Chilworth. The area is mostly undeveloped with few farmsteads.
- 7.12 The gap extends over a section of ridge and valley between Valley Park and North Baddesley. The ground is slightly higher in the north and west of the gap, where it follows the ridge along Flex ford Road and part of Nutburn Road. Open views extend across the gap from this higher ground. A collection of fields forms an open area alongside Flexford Road and Nutburn Road and this is framed in by a large belt of woodland made up of Great Covert, Hogtrough Wood, Tredgoulds Copse and Sky's Wood. The belts of woodland whilst slightly separate in character, join together to form a significant landscape feature.

- 7.13 Despite views from the higher ground the urban edges of Valley Park and North Baddesley, are well contained due to the robustness of the woodland. Very little development is visible from within the gap, except for the occasional farmstead. From within the urban edges of Valley Park and North Baddesley the impression is one of being within a well wooded setting, and neither settlement has views of the other. The sense of leaving each settlement is distinctive, as you pass almost immediately in to a rural and undeveloped landscape, which is predominantly woodland.
- 7.14 The blocks of woodland act together to provide visual separation between settlements and create a setting for both. Should development result in the reduction of this belt of woodland, or cause it to become more open, it would result in the reduction of the effectiveness of this screening increasing intervisibility between settlements. Potential coalescence would also become more apparent from Nutburn and Flexford Road. The belts of woodland each provide a robust edge to the gap area. Where the landscape is more open, the ridgeline along Nutburn and Flexford Road provides some enclosure from the wider landscape.

Southampton - Eastleigh – Map 55

- 7.15 The South Hampshire Strategy highlights that PUSH authorities will work together to designate a gap between Eastleigh and Southampton. Southampton City Council have identified within their adopted Core Strategy (Policy CS 21) that they will work with neighbouring authorities to protect the Strategic Gaps between Southampton and Eastleigh. In addition, Eastleigh Borough Council proposes within their Revised Draft Local Plan to define a Countryside Gap between Eastleigh and Southampton (Policy S9).
- 7.16 Eastleigh Borough Council has reviewed the extent of the Gap designation between Eastleigh and Southampton within their area. This includes proposals to remove land north of Stoneham from the Gap boundary with Eastleigh Borough Council proposing a strategic allocation for residential development. In recognition of Eastleigh Borough Council's proposed strategic allocation, Test Valley Borough Council has also reviewed the Local Gap Boundary and propose to exclude land at Park Farm, Stoneham from the gap boundary in recognition of the proposed allocation of residential development (Policy COM5: Residential Development at Park Farm, Stoneham).
- 7.17 The current gap extends from Chandlers Ford in the north to the boundary of Test Valley Borough in the south at Stoneham. The gap sits between Chilworth and Eastleigh, where it narrows to just 600m across. The gap is located in the southern section of Landscape Character Area LCT2B North Baddesley and Chilworth Woodland Mosaic. Area LCT2B is a mix of large blocks of woodland, with fields collectively forming open areas contained within the woodland framework. The woodland becomes dense plantations in the south of the character area, along the edge of Southampton. The topography is gently undulating and generally slopes towards the River Test

Valley. The highest areas rise towards Chilworth in the south and Ampfield in the north.

- 7.18 Much of the gap is covered by dense plantation woodland, characteristic of the landscape in the south of LCT2B. The gap hugs the edge of the higher ground towards Chilworth. The plantation woodland (Hut Wood) covers the slopes around Chilworth, forming a dense green wedge which separates the urban edges of Eastleigh and Southampton located on the lower area of the River Itchen valley. The open areas of the gap are limited to edges at the north and south. At the southern end the open area is made up of a golf course and a collection of small fields used for various recreational uses such as archery and cricket. This is changing the nature of this section of the gap to a more urban character. The gap has been reviewed and it is proposed to exclude residential properties located on Bracken Place including the Hilton Hotel from the Local Gap as it is considered that the area forms part of the wider built up area of Chilworth and urban fringe of Southampton.
- 7.19 Due to the extent and density of the plantation woodland, edges of the larger areas of development at Southampton and Eastleigh are effectively screened from within the gap. Some views are possible from the M27/M3 junction and the golf course club house which occupy the higher ground around the edge of Chilworth. The woodland areas have little development within them. This retains a sense of rural remoteness within the gap, even at the centre at its narrowest point. Should development result in the reduction of this belt of woodland or cause it to become more open, this may result in the reduction in the effectiveness of this screening, particularly at the pinch points.

Ampfield - Valley Park – Map 56

- 7.20 This gap is an area of farmland which extends north west / south east between Ampfield and Valley Park. The western boundary is formed by a collection of field boundaries and vegetated features. The gap sits almost wholly in the northern section of landscape character area LCT2B North Baddesley and Chilworth Woodland Mosaic. The northern part of area LCT2B is well wooded but woodland clearance has been carried out to form groups of fields which form larger open areas within the woodland framework. Here the shallow ridges and valleys that shape the gently undulating landform make up a series which run in parallel, predominantly east west between Ampfield and Chilworth. The area is mostly undeveloped with few farmsteads.
- 7.21 The gap cuts across a short section of valley immediately south of Ampfield, covered by open fields and framed by woodland. It extends to include the ridge north of Valley Park. The next valley contains the development of Valley Park, also framed by woodland. The rising ground of the ridge beyond Valley Park contains Chandlers Ford. The Gap boundary is proposed to be modified, with the small cluster of development around Hook Road and Broadgate Farm being identified within the proposed settlement boundary and therefore have subsequently been excluded from the Local Gap designation. The railway line from Chandlers Ford to Romsey dissects the area, but is also well screened

as it runs along the bottom of the valley. The views across the gap are therefore predominantly rural. The village of Ampfield itself sits on the higher ground associated with the adjacent character area LCT4B Michelmersh to Ampfield Wooded Farmland.

- 7.22 As Ampfield sits on slightly higher ground, expansive views are possible across the first valley and the ridges beyond. Views of parts of Chandlers Ford are possible on the more distant ridge; however the development of Valley Park is well concealed in the valley behind the first ridge and its associated woodland. The woodland provides both additional screening and a robust settlement edge to Valley Park. Views back from Eastleigh across the ridges to Ampfield are possible, but Ampfield is screened within woodland. Valley Park is also concealed in the valley within its wooded setting. The woodland surrounding Valley Park effectively screens views out.
- 7.23 Both ridges and woodland act together to maintain visual separation between settlements and provide a setting to each settlement. However, intervisibility is already possible between Eastleigh and Ampfield due to topography. Development beyond the wooded ridges would lead to urban edges extending down the slopes of the intervening open valley, increasing intervisibility between settlements. It would also lead to an erosion of the settlement settings.

Nursling and Southampton

- 7.24 This Local Gap is proposed to be deleted from the adopted Borough Local Plan 2006. In justifying this approach, the three elements of the Gap (north of Hillyfields; north of Brownhill Way; and south of Brownhill Way) have been reviewed. The northern section can no longer function as a gap because it comprises the Redbridge Lane which has planning permission for 350 dwellings. Home Covert is currently defined as a Gap but the SINC designation protects the woodland whilst still forming the same visual separation function.

8 Revised Local Plan & Maps Regulation 18 DPD Public Consultation

- 8.1 The Revised Local Plan Regulation 19 DPD and Maps DPD was subject to public consultation between January – March 2014. The Council has examined the merits of defined Local Gap boundaries and their significant role of preventing coalescence between settlements. The local gap designations have been reviewed and are considered justified for reasons set out within this topic paper. In recognition of the high quality rural setting of Test Valley, it is proposed to include a Local Gap policy and supporting text within the Revised Local Plan as follows:

Policy E3: Local Gaps

Development within Local Gaps (see Maps 48 - 56) will be permitted provided that:

- a) it would not diminish the physical extent and/or visual separation; and**
- b) it would not individually or cumulatively with other existing or proposed development compromise the integrity of the gap.**

Local Gaps have been identified between:

- Andover – Anna Valley/Upper Clatford;**
- Andover – Enham Alamein/Smannell;**
- Andover – Abbots Ann;**
- Andover – The Pentons;**
- Ampfield – Valley Park;**
- North Baddesley – Chilworth;**
- North Baddesley – Valley Park;**
- Romsey – North Baddesley;**
- Southampton – Eastleigh**

The countryside around settlements plays an important role in helping to define their character and in shaping the settlement pattern of an area. The countryside around Andover and in southern Test Valley in particular helps to define the distinct character of the two areas. Andover is separated from a number of small rural communities by relatively narrow areas of countryside. Similarly the relationship and sense of place between Romsey, North Baddesley, Ampfield, Chilworth, Valley Park and the larger urban areas of Southampton and Eastleigh is characterised by their separation with areas of countryside.

The purpose of the policy is not to prevent all development within a local gap. In some circumstances where the proposal is of a rural character, such as agricultural buildings, and has a minimal impact on the purpose of the gap, these may be permitted. Development on the edge of settlements will reduce the physical extent of the gaps and development within the gaps themselves could reduce the visual separation of settlements. The Council will take into account both the individual effects of the proposal and the cumulative effects of existing and proposed development.

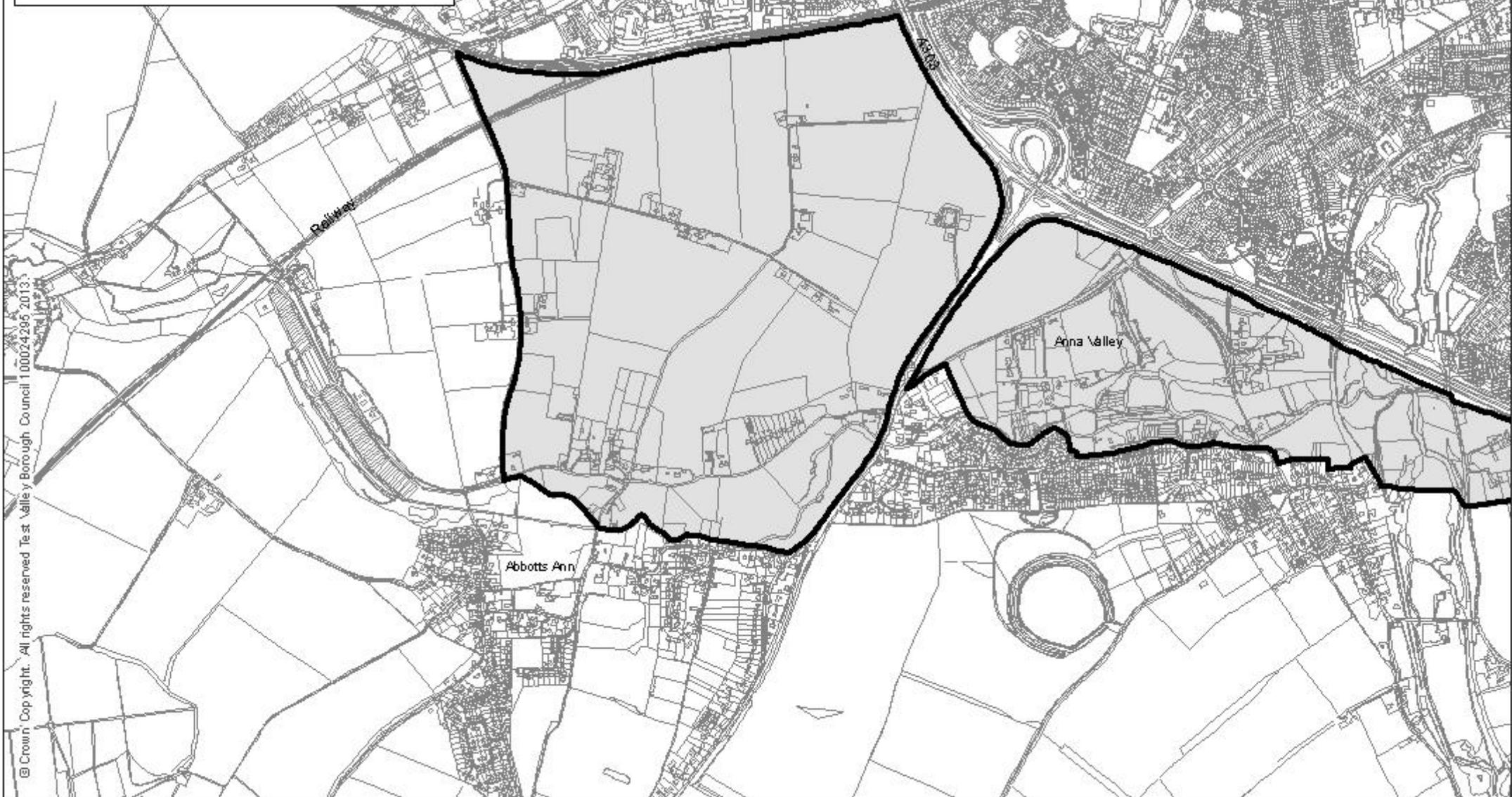
In defining the extent of the gaps no more land than is necessary to prevent coalescence and retain separate identities of settlement has been included.

To ensure that the local gaps can be easily identified, physical boundaries have been used to define their extent. Further justification and details of each of the gaps defined can be found in the Local Gap background paper.

- 9.2 The following maps illustrate the proposed amendments to the Local Gap boundaries, as set out within the Revised Local Plan.

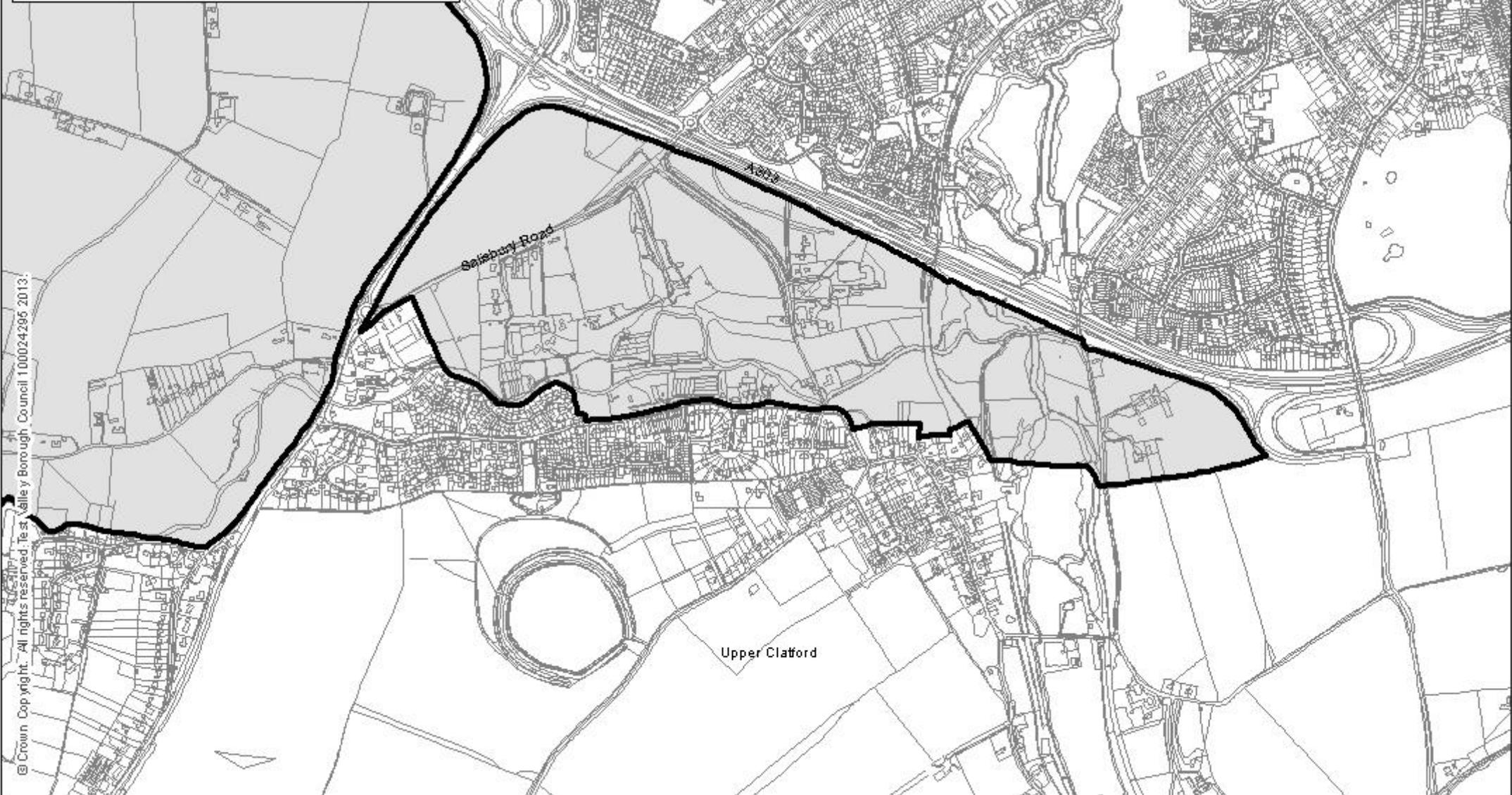
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 Proposed Local Gap



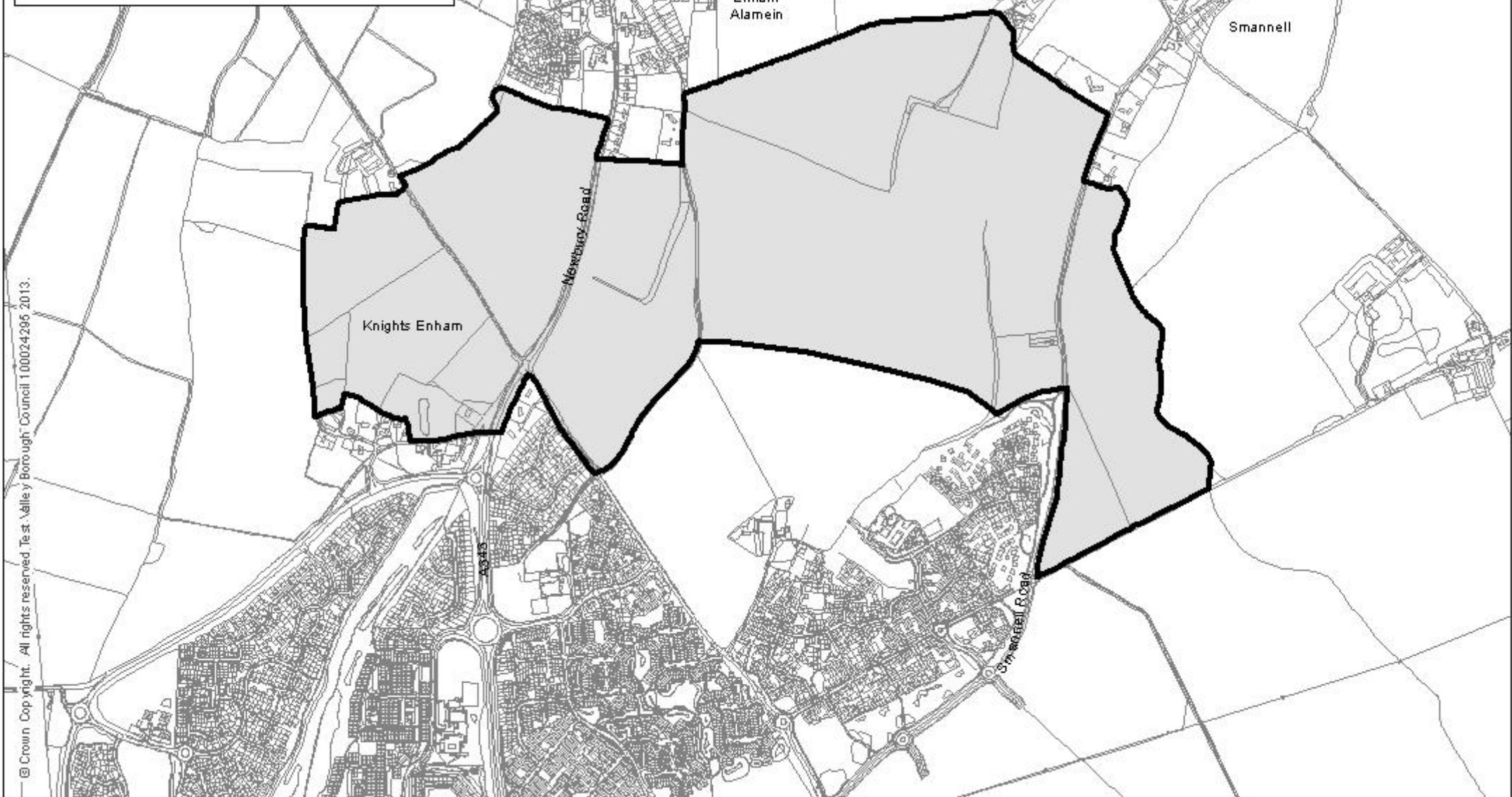
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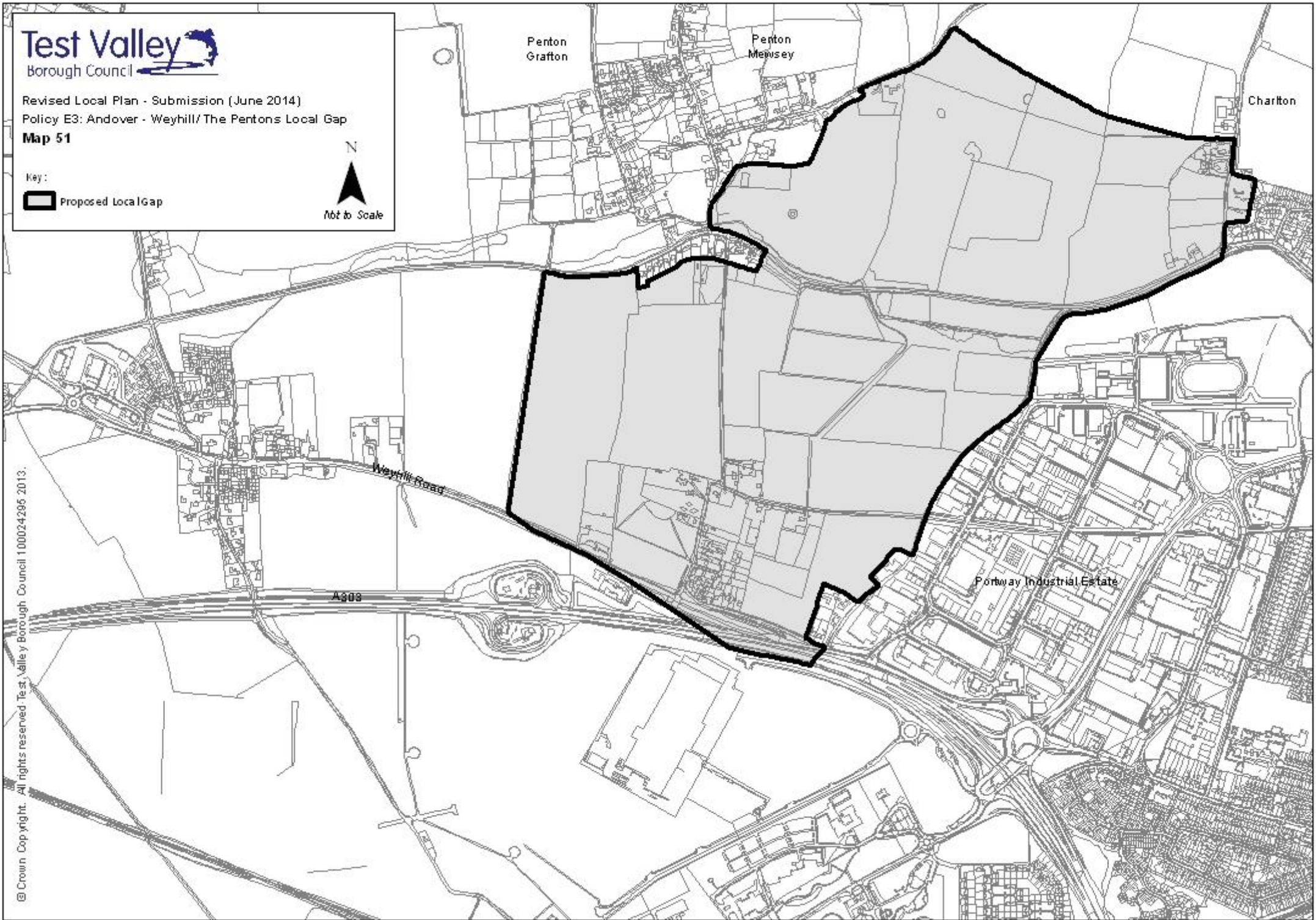
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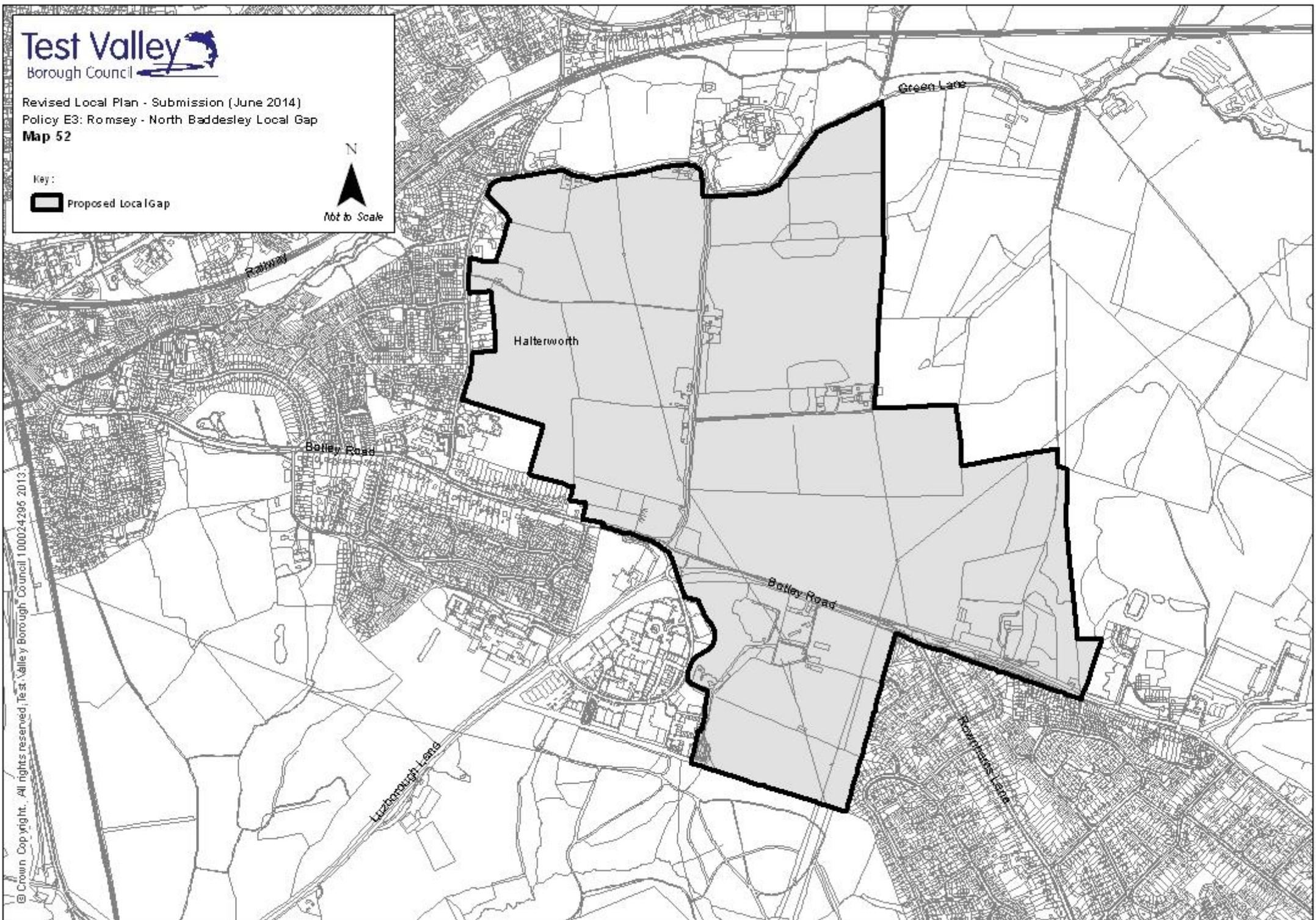
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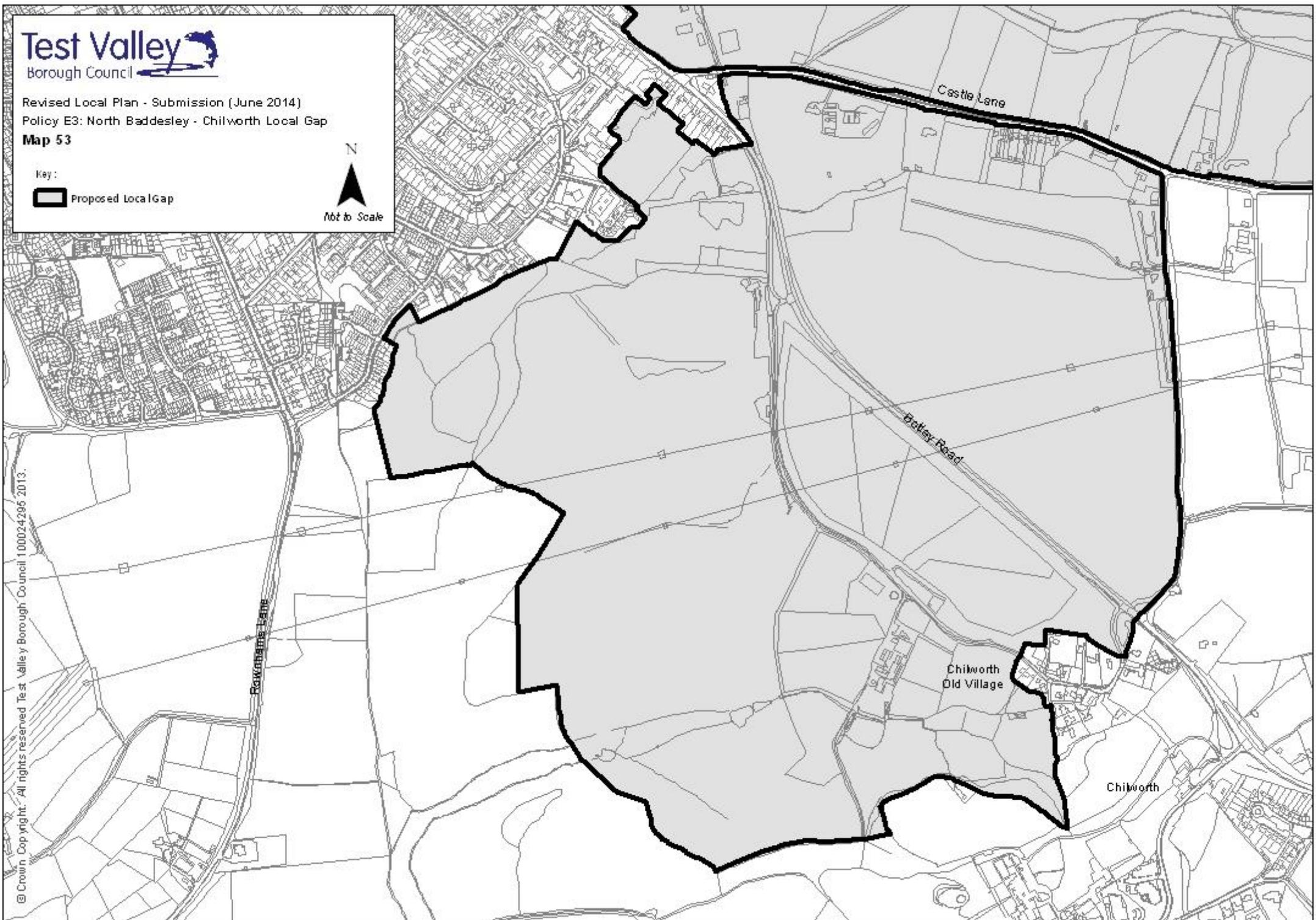
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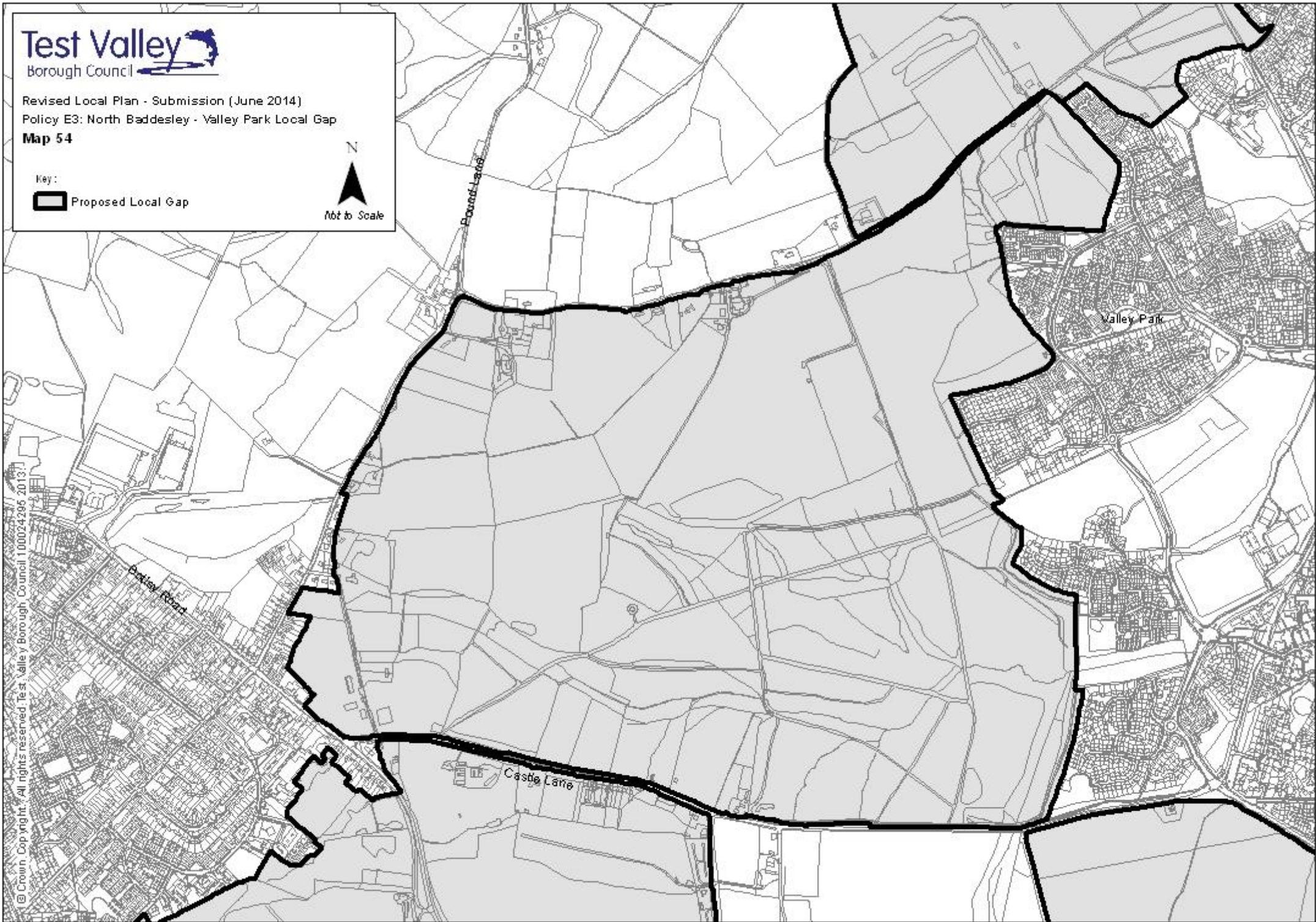
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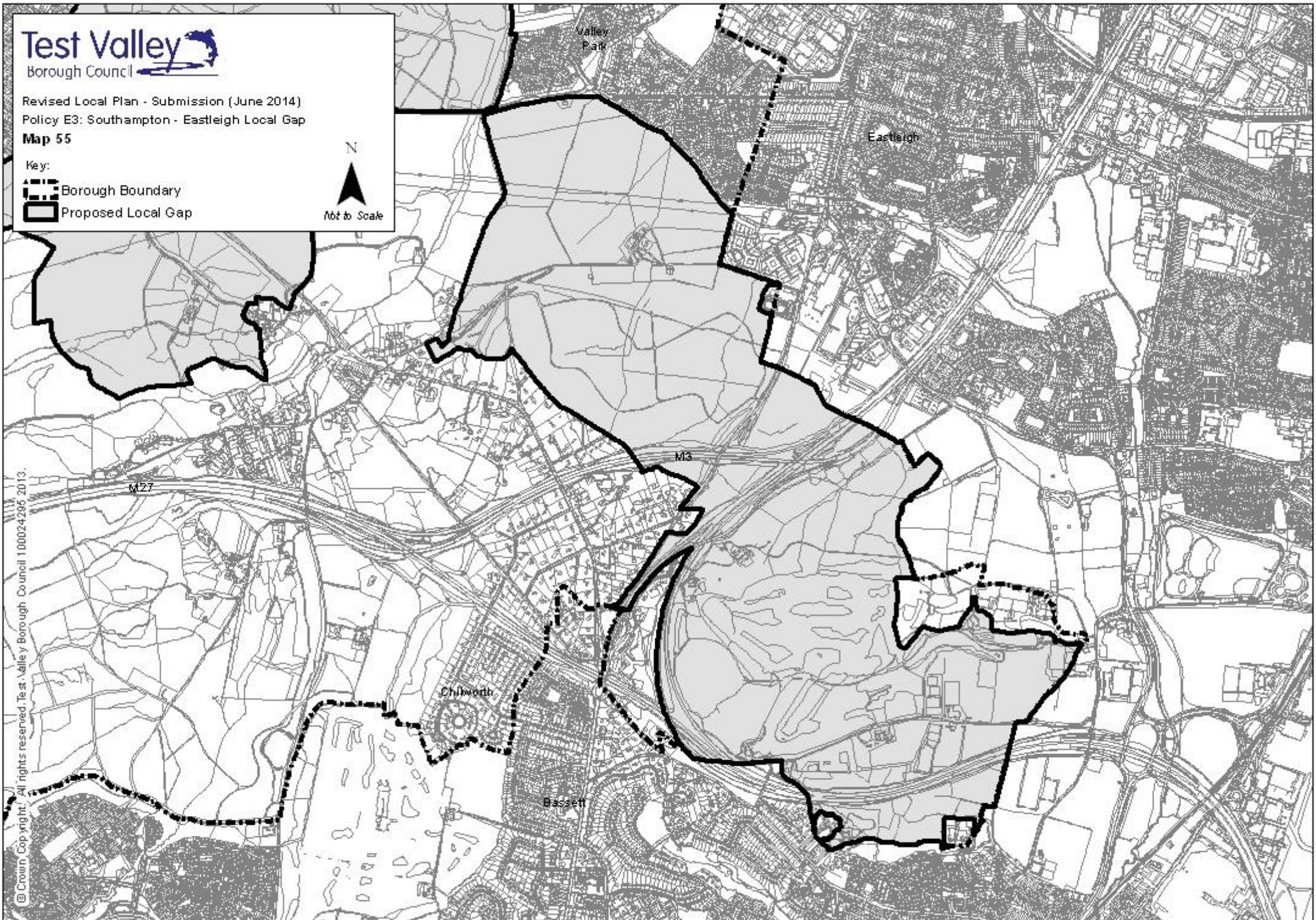


Key:

 Proposed Local Gap



Key:
Borough Boundary
Proposed Local Gap



Key:
 Borough Boundary
 Proposed Local Gap

