



RESOLUTION

**Suspension of Grey Belt Assessment for Sites on Land Around Villages,
Pending an Evidence-Based Local Plan**

Agreed by the Full Council at a Meeting on 20 October 2026

West Horsley Parish Council notes that:

- The current “grey belt” test does not include land around villages within Purposes A, B or D thereby failing to take account of village merging, setting or character—a fundamental flaw of the grey belt test. Almost all sites on land around villages are therefore now being classified as grey belt regardless of the contribution they make to Greenbelt purposes. This pattern is national in character and not just limited to Surrey.
- Purpose C of the NPPF ‘assists in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment’. If it was added to the grey belt assessment this could afford villages a level of protection by preserving green gaps.
- Whilst a designation of grey belt is not intended as an approval to develop, the emerging evidence clearly shows that once a site is labelled grey belt, even when rejected by a local council for other robust planning reasons, around three quarters of major residential grey belt appeals are allowed.
- Assessments carried out to date have not yet considered whether the cumulative effect of individual and combined grey belt development would fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Greenbelt across the area — work that is dependent on the local authority first establishing its preferred spatial strategy as part of a considered, evidence-based Local Plan.
- Planning applications relying on grey belt status may nonetheless be submitted by developers and determined now, ahead of that strategic work being completed by the new unitary authorities, leaving ancient villages exposed to piecemeal decisions taken without the benefit of the full evidence base a Local Plan is intended to provide and undermining the role of the unitary in determining spatial development strategy.

West Horsley Parish Council therefore resolves to:

1. Call upon His Majesty's Government to agree the immediate suspension of grey belt assessment for land around villages, pending completion of a full spatial strategy as part of a considered, evidence-based Local Plan.
2. Write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and the area's Members of Parliament to communicate our adoption of this resolution.
3. Circulate this resolution to parish councils within its area and Guildford Borough Council, inviting them to adopt a resolution in similar terms.

Signed: _____
Elaine Best, Chairman of the Parish Council

Date: 20 October 2026