APPENDIX H

AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION (ALC)

AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION

Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) is based on a national dataset provided by the MAGIC website, which provides authoritative geographic information about the natural environment from across the various government departments. The information covers rural, urban, coastal and marine environments across Great Britain. It is presented in an interactive map which can be explored using various mapping tools that are included. Natural England manages the service under the direction of a Steering Group who represent the MAGIC partnership organisations.

The data can be accessed via the following web link:

http://magic.defra.gov.uk/

The information is produced at a national scale, and aims to illustrate the broad extent of each ALC Grade. Although the dataset clearly has limitations, it is currently the best available information to inform this Green Belt Review. Additionally, the dataset does not differentiate between ALC Grade 3a (which is "best and most versatile") and 3b. Therefore, the Council has taken the precautionary approach and assumed that all land identified within Grade 3 is potentially "best and most versatile".

The vast majority of Green Belt land within the Borough is identified as "best and most versatile", consequently, if the Council took the decision to discount all the land within the "best and most versatile", it would not be able to meet its housing and employment needs for the proposed Plan period and beyond.

Therefore, the Council has balanced the harm that would be caused by the loss of "best and most versatile" against the contribution a parcel or sub-parcel would make in meeting the housing and employment needs of the Borough.

In ranking the parcels and sub-parcels in order the ALC grades were taken into consideration, with Grade 1 ranking the highest, therefore although some sites may have scored the same as other sites, if they had a higher grade of ALC they came lower on the ranking list.