

Cannock Chase District Council

**Cannock Chase Green Belt
Harm Assessment
Final Report**

Final report
Prepared by LUC
February 2021



Cannock Chase District Council

Cannock Chase Green Belt Harm Assessment

Final Report

Project Number

11047

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 LUC was commissioned by Cannock Chase District Council to undertake an independent assessment of the potential 'harm' of releasing land for development from the Green Belt. This follows on from a strategic Green Belt Study that LUC completed in 2016 which assessed the 'contribution' land makes within the District to the five National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Green Belt purposes. The study will form an important piece of evidence informing the preparation of the emerging Local Plan.

1.2 This report outlines the findings of the assessment of harm.

Study aim and scope

1.3 The overall purpose of the study is to undertake an independent, robust and transparent assessment of the potential harm of releasing Green Belt land within the District in line with national policy, guidance and case law.

1.4 The NPPF states in Paragraphs 135 and 136 that “Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified, through the preparation or updating of plans”.

1.5 Case law, as established in *Calverton Parish Council v Greater Nottingham Councils & others* (2015), indicates that planning judgements setting out the ‘exceptional circumstances’ for the amendment of Green Belt boundaries require consideration of the ‘nature and extent of harm’ to the Green Belt and ‘the extent to which the consequent impacts on the purposes of the Green Belt may be ameliorated or reduced to the lowest reasonably practicable extent’.

Report authors

1.6 This report has been prepared by LUC on behalf of Cannock Chase District Council. LUC has extensive experience of preparing independent Green Belt studies at a range of scales across the country, and has completed similar studies on behalf of over 45 English local planning authorities in the past five years.

Use of study outputs

1.7 The purpose of this Green Belt Harm Study is to provide an assessment of the potential harm of releasing land from the Green Belt for development. The outputs, alongside wider evidence relating to other environmental/sustainability considerations, will inform decisions regarding the relative merits of meeting the Council's development needs in different locations.

1.8 The purpose of the study is not to identify land that is suitable for development, or to set out the exceptional circumstances for releasing land from the Green Belt. That will require the consideration of other evidence beyond the scope of this study.

Report structure

1.9 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2: sets out the national and local policy context, an overview of Green Belt within Cannock Chase and a summary of the previous Green Belt studies that have been undertaken within neighbouring authorities.
- Chapter 3: outlines the methodology that was used to undertake the assessment of harm.
- Chapter 4: summarises the findings of the harm assessment.
- Chapter 5: summarises the next steps to be undertaken in the study.
- Appendix A: presents the settlements parcel and harm assessment maps.
- Appendix B: presents the detailed harm assessments.

Chapter 2

Green Belt Policy and Context

2.1 This chapter provides a summary of national and local Green Belt policy and sets out the context for the West Midlands Green Belt. It also summarises the previous Green Belt study that was prepared for Cannock Chase in 2016 and similar Green Belt Assessments that have been prepared by neighbouring authorities.

National planning policy and guidance

National Planning Policy Framework

2.2 Government policy on the Green Belt is set out in chapter 13 of the adopted National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)¹ Protecting Green Belt Land. Paragraph 133 of the NPPF states that “the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence”.

2.3 This is elaborated in NPPF paragraph 134, which states that Green Belts serve five purposes, as set out below.

The purposes of Green Belt

- 1) To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.
- 2) To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.
- 3) To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

¹ Department of Communities and Local Government (2018) National Planning Policy Framework. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>.

- 4) To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.
- 5) To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

2.4 The NPPF emphasises in paragraphs 135 and 136 that local planning authorities should establish and, if justified, only alter Green Belt boundaries through the preparation of their Local Plans. It goes on to state that “once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified, through the preparation or updating of plans. Strategic policies should establish the need for any changes to Green Belt boundaries having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so they can endure beyond the plan period.”

2.5 When defining Green Belt boundaries NPPF paragraph 139 states local planning authorities should:

- demonstrate consistency with Local Plan strategy, most notably achieving sustainable development;
- not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open;
- safeguard enough non-Green Belt land to meet development needs beyond the plan period;
- define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.

2.6 Current planning guidance makes it clear that the Green Belt is a strategic planning policy constraint designed primarily to prevent the spread of built development and the coalescence of urban areas. The NPPF goes on to state “local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land” (paragraph 141).

2.7 It is important to note, however, that these positive roles should be sought for the Green Belt once designated. The lack of a positive role, or the poor condition of Green Belt land, does not necessarily undermine its fundamental role to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Openness is not synonymous with landscape character or quality.

2.8 Paragraph 143 and 144 state that “inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances... ‘Very special circumstances’ will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.”

2.9 New buildings are inappropriate in the Green Belt. There are exceptions to this which are set out in two closed lists. The first is in paragraph 145 which sets out the following exceptions:

- “buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
- the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;
- the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- limited infilling in villages;
- limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan; and
- limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:
 - not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development, or

- not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.”

2.10 Finally, paragraph 146 sets out other forms of development that are not inappropriate provided they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt. These include:

- “mineral extraction;
- engineering operations;
- local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;
- the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;
- material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation or for cemeteries or burial grounds); and
- development brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.”

Planning Practice Guidance

2.11 The NPPF's Green Belt policies are supplemented by additional National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). The guidance sets out some of the factors that should be taken into account when considering the potential impact of development on the openness of Green Belt land. The factors referenced are not presented as an exhaustive list, but rather a summary of some common considerations borne out by specific case law judgements. The guidance states

openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects². Other circumstances which have the potential to affect judgements on the impact of development on openness include:

- the duration of development and its remediability to the original or to an equivalent (or improved) state of, openness; and
- the degree of activity likely to be generated by development, such as traffic generation.

2.12 The guidance also elaborates on paragraph 138 of the NPPF which requires local planning authorities to set out ways in which the impact of removing land from the Green Belt can be offset through compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of the remaining Green Belt land. The guidance endorses the preparation of supporting landscape, biodiversity or recreational need evidence to identify appropriate compensatory improvements, including:

- “new or enhanced green infrastructure;
- woodland planting;
- landscape and visual enhancements (beyond those needed to mitigate the immediate impacts of the proposal);
- improvements to biodiversity, habitat connectivity and natural capital;
- new or enhanced walking and cycle routes; and
- improved access to new, enhanced or existing recreational and playing field provision.”

2.13 Finally, the guidance offers some suggested considerations for securing the delivery of identified compensatory improvements – the need for early engagement with landowners and other interested parties to obtain the necessary local consents, establishing a detailed scope of

² Two important Planning Appeal judgements (Heath & Hampstead Society v Camden LBC & Vlachos (2008) and Turner v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government & East Dorset District Council (2016)) define openness as having both a spatial aspect and a visual aspect.

works and identifying a means of funding their design, construction and maintenance through planning conditions, section 106 obligations and/or the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Planning Advisory Service Guidance

2.14 Neither the NPPF nor NPPG provide guidance on how to undertake Green Belt studies. However, the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) published an advice note³ (2015) that discusses some of the key issues associated with assessing the Green Belt. Reference to the PAS guidance is included in the Methodology section in Chapter 3 where relevant.

Evolution of the West Midlands Green Belt

2.15 Local authorities in the West Midlands first put forward proposals for a West Midlands Metropolitan Green Belt in 1955⁴. The Green Belt was not formally approved by the Secretary of State until 1975. Today the Green Belt covers over 1500 square kilometres, surrounding the Black Country, Coventry, Birmingham and Solihull, with its edge lying between 10 and 25 kilometres from the built-up area of the conurbation.

2.16 The Green Belt has remained relatively successful in checking the sprawl of Birmingham, the City of Wolverhampton, and Coventry; preventing the merging of settlements; preventing encroachment into the surrounding countryside; and helping to preserve the setting and special character of the historic urban areas. At a strategic level, the Green Belt, tightly drawn around settlements, has helped to encourage regeneration by directing development to brownfield sites within the major urban areas. However, some pockets of Green Belt at the urban fringe have

³ Planning on the Doorstep: The Big Issues – Green Belt,

<https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/green-belt-244.pdf>

⁴ Campaign to protect Rural England: West Midlands (June 2007) What Price West Midlands Green Belts? Available at: www.cprewm.org.uk/resources/housing-and-planning/green-belts/item/2220-what-price-west-midlands-green-belts.

been compromised and degraded by infrastructure projects such as roads and power lines, and other urban intrusions.

The Green Belt in Cannock Chase District Today

2.17 The Green Belt in Cannock Chase District comprises an arc of countryside to the north, north-east, east, south-east and south of the inset main urban area of Cannock, Hednesford and Heath Hayes. This provides separation from other inset settlements, including Rugeley to the north, Burntwood and Brownhills (within neighbouring Lichfield District) to the east, Norton Canes to the south-east, and Great Wryley (within neighbouring South Staffordshire District) to the south.

2.18 Sixty percent of Cannock Chase District is designated as Green Belt, which is testament to area's strategic role as part of the wider West Midlands Green Belt. The Green Belt serves to maintain the openness of the rural-urban fringe, as well as the District's separate urban areas and their identities. The Green Belt is also a crucial feature of the District's overall character and provides a range of multifunctional benefits, including access to the countryside, conservation, recreation, economic and tourism.

2.19 Figure 2.1 shows the extent of the Green Belt in and around Cannock Chase District.

Existing Local Plan

2.20 The Cannock Chase Local Plan (Part 1) 2014 is the current adopted statutory development plan for Cannock Chase District. This comprises the Core Strategy, which contains the strategic context and core policies, as well as the Rugeley Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP). The Local Plan Review work has replaced the Local Plan Part 2 (Site Allocations & Planning Standards) 2016.

2.21 Within the Core Strategy the District Profile (Chapter 2.0) states that the Green Belt is "a crucial feature of the District's overall character" and that "it provides a range of multifunctional benefits ... and serves to maintain the openness of the rural-urban fringe (with the West Midlands conurbation) as well as the District's separate urban areas and their identities".

2.22 The Core Strategy does not include a specific Green Belt policy, however references to the Green Belt are identified in the following policies:

- CP1 – ‘Strategy’, states that the focus of investment and regeneration will be in existing settlements whilst conserving and enhancing the Green Belt. It also states that development proposals at locations within the Green Belt will be assessed against the NPPF and Policy CP14;
- Policy CP3 – ‘Chase Shaping – Design’, outlines a number of key requirements of high-quality design that will need to be addressed in development proposals, including “show[ing] how they form appropriate development within the Green Belt to a design in keeping with its surroundings”;
- Policy CP6 – ‘Housing Land’, states that housing proposals at locations within the Green Belt will be assessed against the NPPF and Policies CP12⁵ and CP14; and
- CP14: - ‘Landscape Character and Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)’, states that development proposals, including those for appropriate development in the Green Belt, must be sensitive to the distinctive landscape character and ensure they do not have an adverse impact upon their setting through design, layout or intensity.

Cannock Chase Green Belt Study 2016

2.23 LUC prepared a Cannock Chase Green Belt Study in 2016 on behalf of Cannock Chase District Council. This was used to develop a clear understanding of how the land in the Cannock Chase Green Belt performed against the purposes of the Green Belt. A total of 65 parcels and five broad areas were identified covering the District.

2.24 The Green Belt Study demonstrated that the majority of the Green Belt in the District continues to serve its purposes very well. It is found that, alongside other national and international designations, it helps to maintain the identity of this part of the West Midlands.

⁵ Policy CP12 - ‘Biodiversity and Geodiversity’ makes no specific reference to the Green Belt.

2.25 The study highlighted that there are variations in the contribution that different parts of the Green Belt make to the purposes 1, 2, 3 and 4. In terms of purpose 5 (encouraging the recycling of urban land), it was concluded that the entire Green Belt has helped to meet this purpose historically and would continue to do so, noting that there remained some significant areas of previously used land in the urban areas.

2.26 There were four areas of Green Belt and non-Green Belt land identified within the study area where infill development would be well contained by existing features within the landscape. These included parcels of land in: Hednesford Hills, Fair Oak Academy, Rugeley, the southern edge of Norton Canes and the Cannock Extension Canal.

Neighbouring authorities' studies

2.27 The following list summarises the Green Belt Studies that have been prepared by Authorities neighbouring Cannock Chase.

Neighbouring authorities' Green Belt studies.

- South Staffordshire District Council, City of Wolverhampton Council, Walsall Council, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, and Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council:
 - In 2019 LUC undertook an assessment of the Green Belt for South Staffordshire District and the Black Country (composed of the authorities for Wolverhampton, Dudley, Sandwell and Walsall). This comprised a Stage 1 assessment, which established the variation in the contribution of designated land to achieving Green Belt purposes; and a Stage 2 assessment, which identified the 'potential harm' of releasing land from the Green Belt.
 - The Study forms an important piece of evidence for the partial review of the Black Country Core Strategy (the Black Country Plan) and the strategic site allocations and individual development plans of the Black Country Authorities and South Staffordshire. Separate reports set out the findings of the Green Belt Assessment for South Staffordshire and the Black Country.

■ Stafford Borough Council

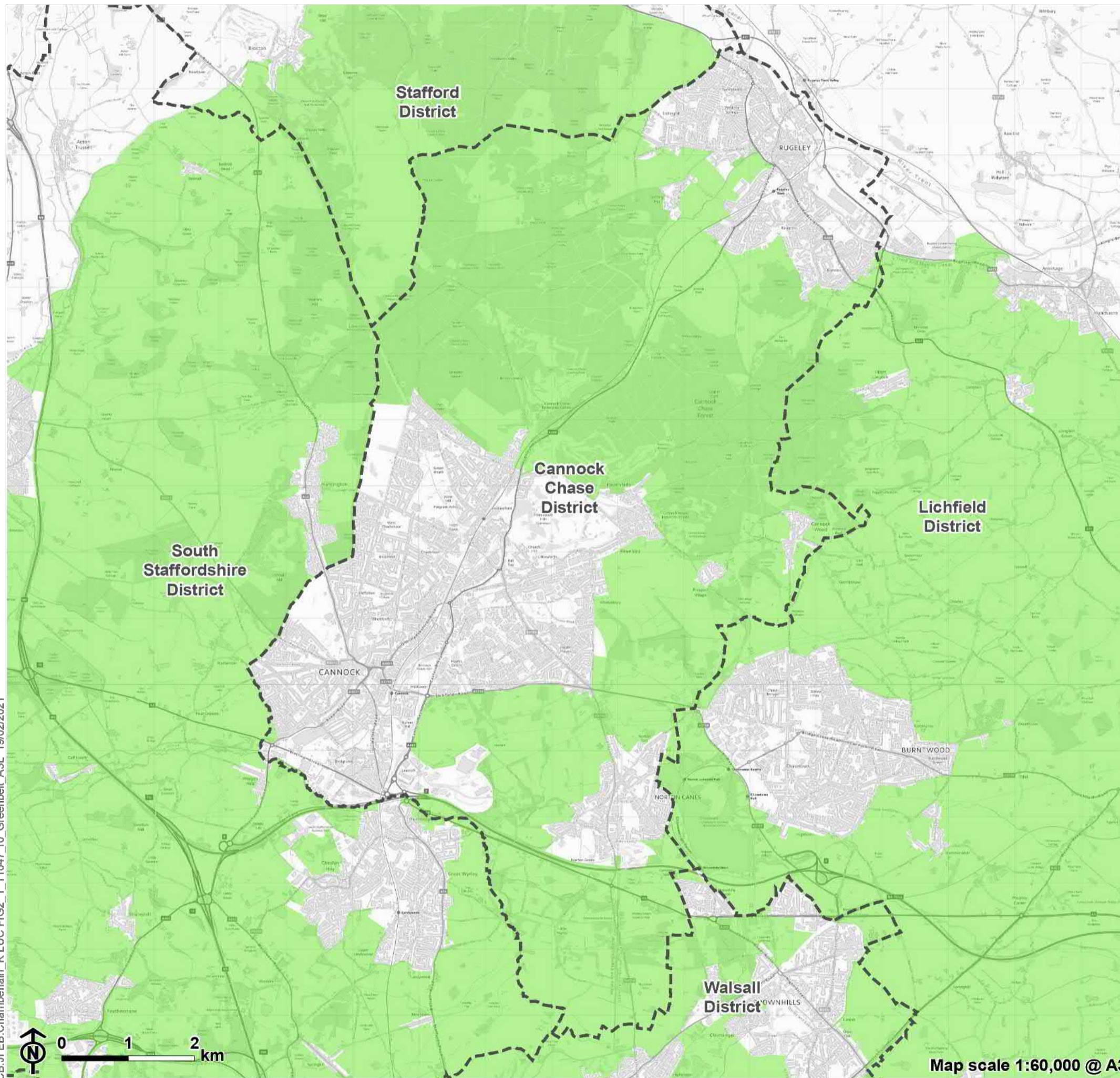
- Stafford Borough Council has not undertaken a review of their Green Belt.
- Stafford Borough’s Local Plan (adopted 2017) has no specific policy which addresses planning considerations for the Green Belt. Paragraph 2.19 of the Local Plan states that there is no need for the Borough to undertake a review of their Green Belt as they have sufficient land available in locations outside of the Green Belt to meet the needs of the Borough.

■ Lichfield District Council

- In September 2019 Lichfield District Council produced a Green Belt Review, the purpose of which was to undertake an independent and robust assessment of areas of land to determine the extent to which they meet the purposes of Green Belt designation as set out within the NPPF.
- The study demonstrated that the majority of the Green Belt within the District continues to serve its purpose well. A majority of parcels and areas were assessed as providing a ‘moderate’ or ‘important’ contribution to Green Belt purposes overall. Alongside their contribution to the national purposes of Green Belt it should be noted that the Green Belt assists in maintaining the identity and geography of the District which can be characterised by a diverse range of settlements separated by wider expanses of open countryside. Of the 112 areas and parcels assessed only eleven were assessed as providing an overall minor contribution toward the purposes of the Green Belt.
- Prior to the 2019 study, several Green Belt Reviews were undertaken, including a Green Belt Strategic Review (2012), two Green Belt Review Supplementary Reports (2013; 2016), and a Supplementary Report Addendum (2017).

Figure 2.1
Extent of Green Belt

- Local Authority boundary
- Green Belt



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Map scale 1:60,000 @ A3

Chapter 3

Green Belt Assessment Methodology

3.1 This chapter sets out the methodology used to undertake an assessment of the variations in harm to the Green Belt purposes that would result from the release of Green Belt land in the District.

3.2 There is no defined approach set out in national planning policy and guidance as to how Green Belt studies should be undertaken. The approach that is being consulted upon in this method statement is based on LUC's extensive experience of undertaking Green Belt studies for over 45 local authorities, several of which have been tested through Examination and found to be robust.

3.3 Chapter 2 sets out the policy context for the study. This contextual information has informed the assessment criteria and the definitions of key terms used in the Green Belt assessment set out below.

3.4 The methodology is based on the NPPF's defined essential characteristics of Green Belts – openness and permanence – and the five Green Belt purposes:

- 1.** To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.
- 2.** To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.
- 3.** To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
- 4.** To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.
- 5.** To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

3.5 In order to undertake an area-based assessment of Green Belt contribution to these essential characteristics and purposes it is necessary to establish which settlements represent the large built-up area, neighbouring towns and historic towns. Alongside more general

definitions of the essential characteristics of Green Belt – openness and permanence – these key settlements terms are defined in the context of Cannock Chase later in the chapter. The definitions draw on national and local planning policy and the associated and guidance set out in Chapter 2.

3.6 Ratings and supporting analysis are provided to show the contribution land makes to each Green Belt purpose and the impact on the integrity of the neighbouring land as a result of its release from the Green Belt. These two considerations are combined to give overall harm ratings. Parcel and sub-parcels are defined to show the variations in harm. These are provided in map form.

3.7 Throughout the methodology, green boxes are included to clarify the method undertaken or highlight evidence, such as policy, guidance and case law, which supports the method of approach.

Extent of assessment area

General extent

3.8 The focus of this study is to assess the harm to the Green Belt purposes of expanding existing settlements. These are the areas within the District where future growth is most likely to be focussed. To achieve this, all of the land adjacent to the urban area and inset rural settlement boundaries within the District and where relevant in neighbouring authorities, has been assessed.

3.9 The following settlements inset from the Green Belt were included in the assessment:

- The main urban area, grouped around Cannock, Hednesford and Heath Hayes, but including other settlements such as Bridgtown, Hawks Green and Wimblebury;
- Rugeley;
- Norton Canes;
- Slitting Mill;

- Cannock Wood; and
- Prospect Village.

Assessment approach

3.10 The extent of the assessment area around each settlement was not predefined but was determined by applying a process that, working out from each inset settlement edge, assesses and parcels land until there is strong distinction (see Step 3 below) from the settlement edge. Beyond these parcels, outer areas are defined, which were subject to a high level contribution assessment. As this study is confined to the consideration of harm associated with expansion of existing inset urban areas, any release of land beyond the inset edge parcels would also result in at least high harm. This is because the release of larger areas clearly has more potential to weaken the integrity of the Green Belt by extending into areas that have a greater distinction from urban edges, by diminishing settlement separation and by diminishing the extent to which remaining open land relates to the wider countryside.

3.11 Green Belt locations identified in the District's "Call for Sites" were not directly assessed in this study. However, overlapping reasonable site options with the variations in harm identified in this study provided an indication of the likely harm of releasing site options in isolation. The assessment of sites is given further consideration in the 'next steps' section.

3.12 The assessment assumed that all land within the urban area and settlements inset from the Green Belt, unless constrained, is 'developed' and is therefore not 'open'. This means it potentially has a containing impact on the adjacent Green Belt. Likewise, the assessment assumed that any land released from the Green Belt would, unless constrained, be 'developed' and would not retain any 'openness'. Openness is defined as a lack of built development.

Consideration of development sites

The Inspector's Letter (M Middleton) to Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council (December 2017) highlighted the need for assessing a wider area than just promoted development sites. The Inspector found the Phase 1 of the review was too strategic to draw out finer grained

variations in Green Belt performance and Phase 2 of the review, although more detailed, failed to assess all potential development sites, and did not examine all potentially suitable areas⁶.

A fine grain assessment of all areas adjacent to inset settlements has been undertaken in this Study to ensure that it provides the correct level of detail to draw out variations in the potential harm of releasing land for development.

Exclusions

3.13 Land covered by an ‘absolute’ constraint to development – i.e. an area within which development would not be permitted – was excluded from the assessment process.

3.14 Absolute constraints, which are shown on Figure 3.1, include the following:

- Special Areas of Conservation.
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
- Ancient woodland.
- Scheduled Monuments.
- Registered Parks and Gardens.
- Common Land.
- Cemeteries.
- Flood Zone 3.

⁶ Examination Document Reference EX39 – https://welhat.gov.uk/media/12878/EX39-Green-Belt-review-note-December-2017/pdf/ED39_Green_Belt_review_note_Dec_2017.pdf?m=636489409149570000

3.15 However, given the prevalence of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, listed buildings, and Conservation Areas across the study area, these designations were not excluded from the assessment, just acknowledged as potential constraints.

3.16 It is important to note that, although these constrained areas were not assessed for harm, any function they may perform as areas of open land and/or as boundary features – which may well have a bearing on the assessment of harm that would be caused from the release of adjacent unconstrained Green Belt land – were taken into consideration.

Exclusion of constrained land

The Inspector's Letter (M Middleton) to Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council (December 2017) noted that there is no need to assess land that is unlikely to ever be developed:

“There are of course sites, which for other purposes are unlikely to ever be developed. I would include the statutory conservation sites, land potentially at risk of flooding, and the major heritage assets in this category but the final choice should be a rational value judgement on the importance of the protection. It nevertheless seems pointless to me to carry out a detailed Green Belt assessment for such sites however they are defined.”⁷

For this reason, this study has not assess the harm of releasing land where development would not be permitted – ie land subject to an absolute constraint.

Relationship with previous Green Belt Assessments

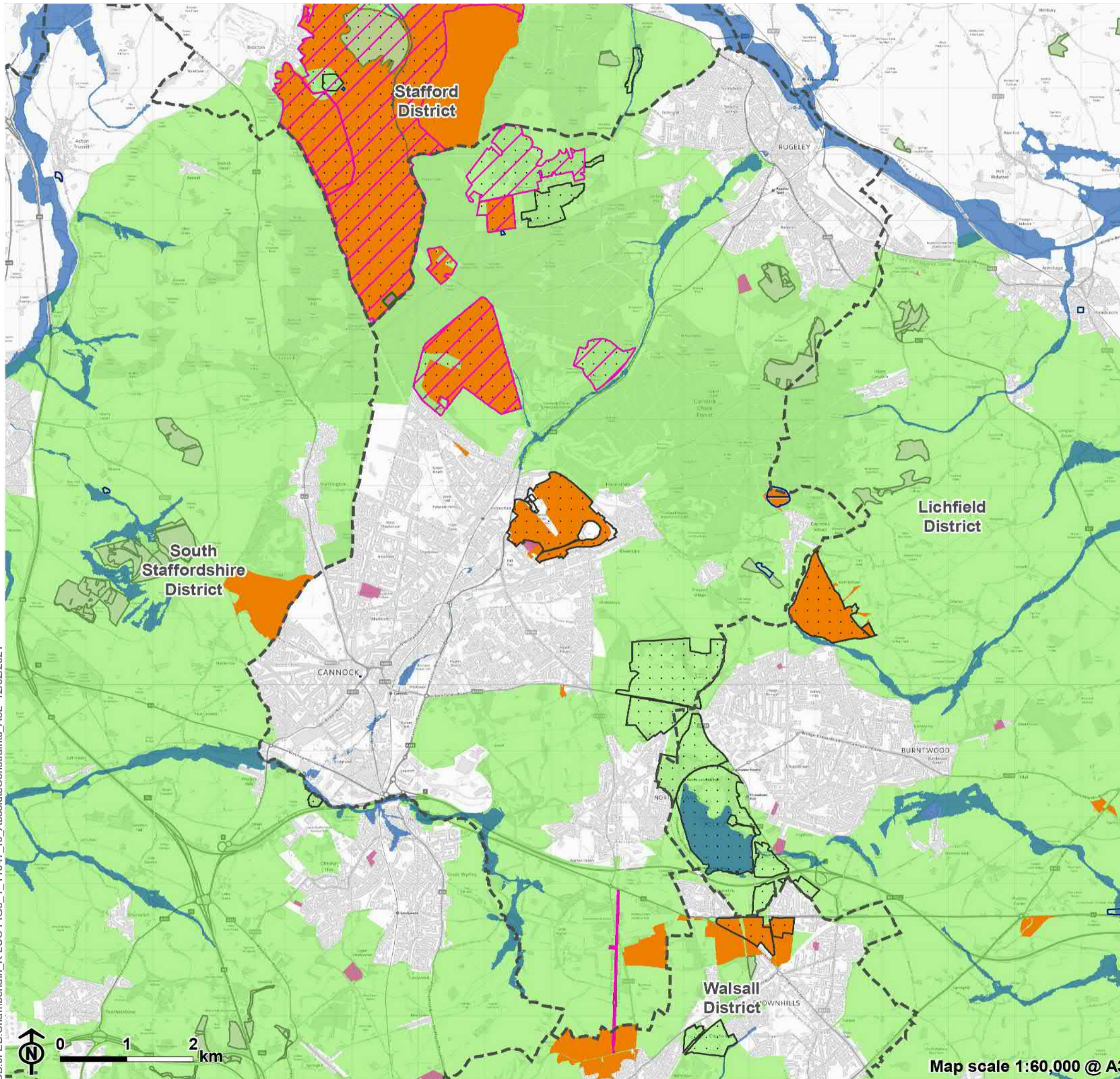
3.17 The previous Green Belt Study was carried out by LUC in 2016 and is summarised in Chapter 2. Since it was prepared, there have been various updates to the NPPF, NPPG, and good practice (in the light of case law and Local Plan Examinations) so some of the definitions

⁷ Examination Document Reference EX39 – https://welhat.gov.uk/media/12878/EX39-Green-Belt-review-note-December-2017/pdf/ED39_Green_Belt_review_note_Dec_2017.pdf?m=636489409149570000

used in this Study e.g. for the large built up area, neighbouring towns differ from the 2016 Study. Clarification was sought from Historic England regarding the definition of historic towns and further details on this are provided in paragraph 3.49.

3.18 The first Green Belt Study prepared by LUC in 2016 included an assessment of the contribution of the Green Belt to the NPPF purposes, whereas this study focused on the variations in potential harm to the Green Belt if land is released. This later study provides a finer grain analysis of the Green Belt and as such has superseded the work undertaken in the earlier Study. In this assessment, parcels were not pre-defined but rather they were determined by the analysis process (and the identification of variations of harm). This means that some differences between the 2016 contribution assessment findings and this Green Belt Study are inevitable.

Figure 3.1
Absolute constraints



- Local Authority boundary
- Green Belt
- Absolute constraints**
- Natural heritage**
- Ancient woodland
- ▨ Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- ▤ Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Cultural heritage**
- ▧ Registered parks & gardens
- Scheduled monument
- Other**
- CRoW registered common land
- Cemetery
- Flood zone 3

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Map scale 1:60,000 @ A3

Harm assessment: steps

3.19 The assessment process that has been applied to the analysis of land adjacent to the edges of each inset settlement is split into six steps, as shown in Figure 3.1. The first four steps involve assessing the 'contribution' of land to the NPPF Green Belt purposes. This includes considering the relevance of the NPPF purposes to any given area of land (Step 1); assessing how open the land is (Step 2); and whether the land is more closely related to the urban edge and/or the wider countryside (distinction – Step 3). Step 4 concludes what the contribution is to the Green Belt purposes and is a product of the analysis of these three steps. This process was carried out for all land adjacent to the edges of inset settlements in and adjacent to Cannock Chase District.

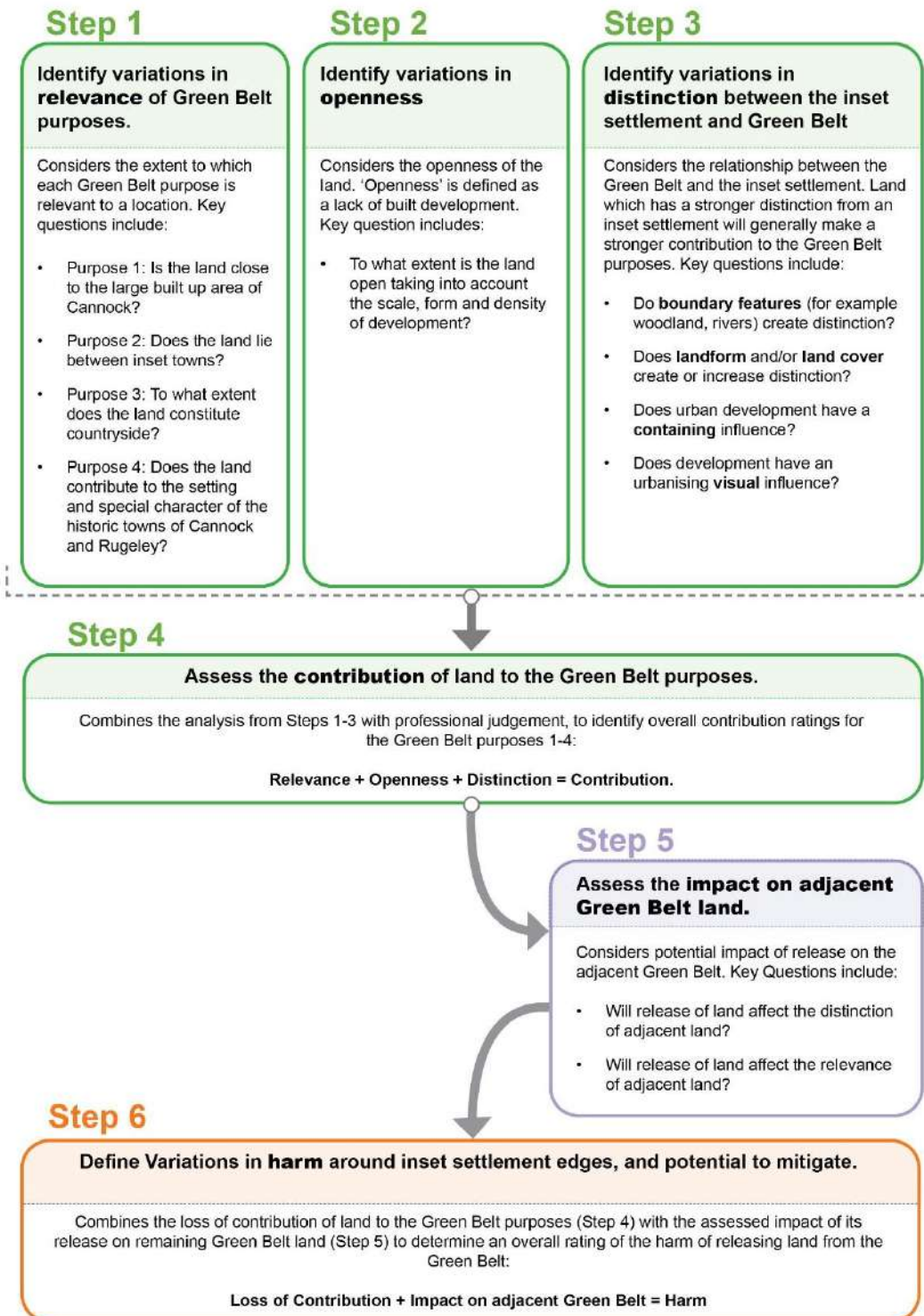
3.20 Step 5 rates the potential impact of the release of land on the adjacent Green Belt.

3.21 Step 6 combines the judgements from Steps 4 and 5 to reach conclusions regarding variations in harm, with sub-parcel areas being defined to reflect any variations within a parcel. It also considers whether there are any opportunities for mitigation to reduce harm.

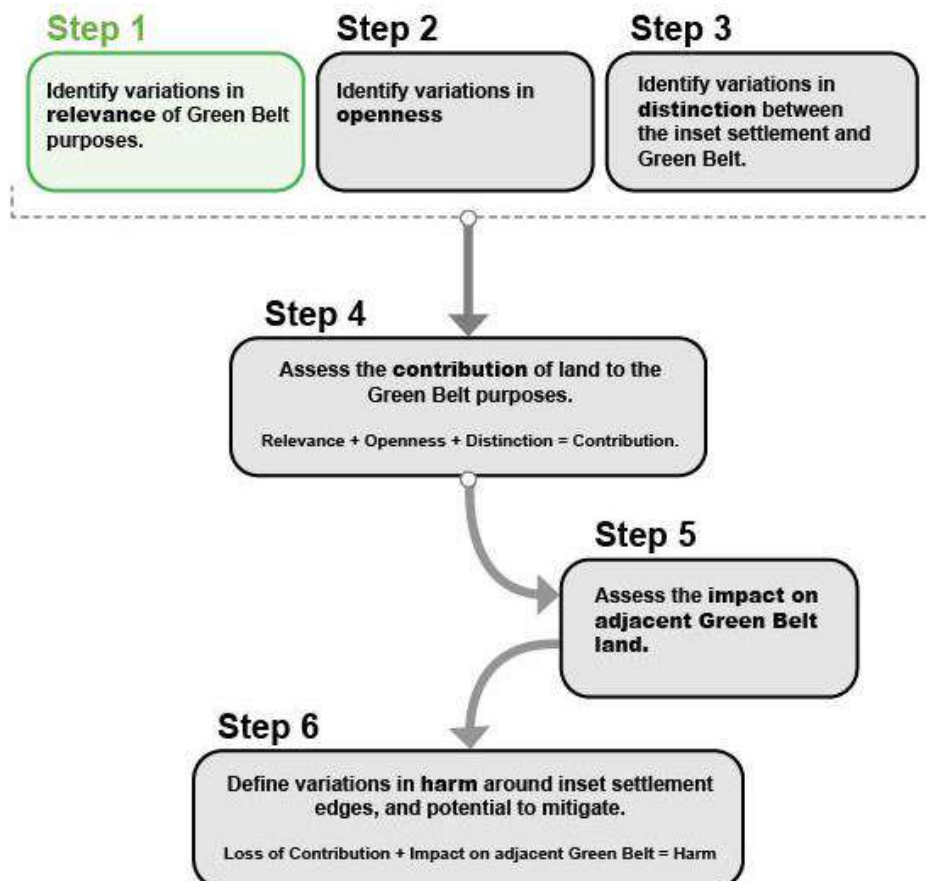
3.22 Working out from the settlement edge, parcels are defined until there is strong distinction from the settlement edge. Beyond these parcels, outer areas are defined, the release of which will constitute at least high harm.

3.23 Each step is explained in further detail below.

Figure 3.2: Summary of harm assessment steps



Step 1: Consider the 'relevance' of each Green Belt purpose



3.24 The first step of the assessment process identifies if the Green Belt land within the assessment areas surrounding each inset settlement has the potential to contribute to any of the NPPF Green Belt purposes based on the location and nature of the land.

3.25 As noted previously, there is no nationally defined approach to how Green Belt studies should be undertaken. However, case law highlights the importance of assessment against the Green Belt purposes within Green Belt assessments.

3.26 There are five Green Belt purposes as defined in paragraph 134 of the NPPF:

1. To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas.
2. To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.
3. To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
4. To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.
5. To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Consideration of Green Belt purposes

The Inspector's interim findings (H Stephens) to Durham City Council (November 2014) clarified that assessments against the Green Belt purposes should form the basis of any justification for releasing land from the Green Belt, and in reviewing land against the purposes Green Belt studies should consider the reasons for a Green Belt's designation⁸.

The Inspector's Letter (L Graham) to Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire Councils (May 2015) emphasised that Green Belt studies should make clear "how the assessment of 'importance to Green Belt' has been derived" from assessments against the individual purposes of the Green Belt and highlighted the importance of revisions to Green Belt boundaries to "take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development, as required by Paragraph 85 [2012 NPPF, paragraph 139 of the 2019 NPPF] [even if] such an exercise would be carried out through the SEA/SA process."⁹

⁸ Interim Report – <http://npf.durhamcity.org.uk/inspectors-interim-report-on-the-county-durham-plan/>

⁹ Examination Letter Reference: CCC/SCDC/Insp/Prelim – <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/media/9238/letter-from-inspectors-to-councils-preliminary-conclusions-200515.pdf>

This Study includes a comprehensive assessment of the harm of releasing land for development in the context of the NPPF Green Belt purposes, with full consideration of the reasons for the Green Belt's designation.

The assessment does not draw conclusions about what land should be released for development as that requires an analysis of wider sustainability factors which the Council will take into account in reaching a conclusion as to whether there are exceptional circumstances to justify the release of Green Belt land.

3.27 The assessment of the relevance of the different Green Belt purposes first requires defining the key elements identified in the NPPF purposes: large built-up areas (in relation to the first purpose), towns (in relation to the second purpose), countryside (in relation to the third purpose) and historic towns (in relation to the fourth purpose).

3.28 The reasons for Green Belt designation in Cannock Chase District, and an understanding of how the Green Belt purposes are interpreted by Inspectors, have helped to inform these definitions.

3.29 The following paragraphs consider these definitions purpose-by-purpose and then set out the factors affecting the degree to which each purpose are relevant in any given location.

Does the land have the potential to play a role with regard to Purpose 1: to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas?

3.30 It is possible to argue that all land within the Green Belt prevents the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas (LBUA), because that is its principal purpose as a strategic planning designation. However, the study requires the definition of variations in the extent to which land performs this purpose. This requires an area-based assessment against this strategic purpose.

3.31 For the purpose of this study, it is necessary to define what constitutes a 'large built-up area', and what is meant by the term 'sprawl'.

Definition of the large built-up area (LBUA)

There is no definition provided in the NPPF for a large built-up area. Green Belt studies in different locations have ranged from considering the large built-up area as just the principal settlement around which the Green Belt was defined, to considering all inset settlement to be large built-up areas.

For this assessment the large built up area is considered to be main urban conurbation of Birmingham and associated towns and urban area of Cannock, Cheslyn Hay, Great Wyrley and Hednesford. This is explained in further detail below.

3.32 The Green Belt within the study area forms part of the West Midlands Green Belt surrounding the West Midlands conurbation comprising Birmingham, Sutton Coldfield, Solihull, and the City of Wolverhampton, Walsall, West Bromwich, Dudley, Stourbridge and Halesowen. The Green Belt prevents the sprawl of this 'large built-up area' into the surrounding countryside. The West Midlands Green Belt also encircles the city of Coventry and the towns of Cannock and Hednesford, Burntwood, Redditch, Bromsgrove, Kidderminster, Albrighton, Shifnal, Aldridge and Brownhills, and it partly encircles the towns of Rugeley, Lichfield, Tamworth and Bedworth.

3.33 While the West Midlands conurbation is made up of a number of settlements, some of considerable size, each often with their own distinct sense of identity, there is a visible continuous urban mass that stretches across the authority areas. All settlements within this main urban area are therefore considered to form part of the large built area. This also includes those settlement areas deemed close enough to the 'core' urban area for development associated with them to be considered to be part of the 'large built-up area', including the towns of Brownhills and Brownhills West which lie adjacent to the Cannock Chase District boundary.

3.34 There is also sufficient contiguity between Cheslyn Hay, Great Wyrley and Cannock and Hednesford for these to be considered a single urban area which, in terms of its overall size, is also large enough to constitute a large built-up area. It is noted that the previous Cannock Chase Green Belt Study (2016) included a much broader definition of the large built up area including ribbon development associated with all inset areas and industrial estates, business

parks and gypsy and traveller sites. The definition of the LBUA has been tightened for this assessment to focus on the major urban areas and to be consistent with the neighbouring Green Belt Studies covering the Black Country, South Staffordshire and Lichfield. There is however no definitive guidance on how the LBUA should be defined.

3.35 Whilst definitions of sprawl vary, the implication of the terminology is that planned development may not contravene this purpose. However, in assessing the impact of releasing land in the context of a strategic Green Belt study, no assumptions about the form of possible future development can be made, therefore any expansion of the large built-up area is considered as having potential to be ‘sprawl’. The extent to which land contributes to Purpose 1 depends on the analysis at Steps 2 and 3 below.

3.36 In Step 1, the assessment determines the extent of the hinterland around the large built-up area within which land can be considered to make a contribution to Purpose 1.

Definition of sprawl

The PAS guidance emphasises in relation to Purpose 1 the variable nature of the term ‘sprawl’ and questions whether positively planned development constitutes ‘sprawl’¹⁰.

The RTPI Research Briefing No. 9 (2015) on Urban Form and Sustainability is also not definitive on the meaning of sprawl, noting “a variety of urban forms have been covered by the term ‘urban sprawl’, ranging from contiguous suburban growth, linear patterns of strip development, leapfrog and scattered development.”¹¹

For the purpose of this assessment, any expansion of the large built up area is considered to constitute sprawl.

¹⁰ PAS Planning on the Doorstep – <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/green-belt-244.pdf>

¹¹ RTPI Research Briefing No. 9 – <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1360966/urban-form-and-sustainability-briefing.pdf>

Assessing relevance of Green Belt Purpose 1

Green Belt land has potential to play a stronger role with regards to Purpose 1 if:

- Land is close to a large built-up area.

Green Belt land has potential to play some role with regards to Purpose 1 if:

- Land is perceived as being within the large built-up area but connected to the wider Green Belt.

Green Belt land has potential to play a weaker role with regards to Purpose 1 if:

- Land is relatively close to a large built-up area, but intervening land provides a strong distinction;
- Land is isolated within the large built-up area.

Green Belt land will not play a role with regards to Purpose 1 if:

- Land is not close enough to the large built-up area for land to be associated with it.

Does the land have the potential to play a role with regard to Purpose 2: to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another?

3.37 The concept of what constitutes a ‘town’ has been widely interpreted in different Green Belt studies, ranging from settlements classified as towns in Local Plan settlement hierarchies, to all urban areas inset from the Green Belt regardless of size.

3.38 The following towns are defined as Purpose 2 towns within Cannock:

- The main urban area, grouped around Cannock, Hednesford and Heath Hayes;
- Rugeley.

3.39 In the neighbouring authorities the following towns are also defined as Purpose 2 towns:

- Burntwood;

- Brownhills;
- Bloxwich.

3.40 This is consistent with the approach adopted in the neighbouring Black Country and South Staffordshire Green Belt Study 2019. Regardless of whether a particular settlement is large enough to realistically be considered a town, it is acknowledged that smaller settlements may lie in between larger ones, such that loss of separation between them may in turn have a significant impact on the overall separation between larger ‘towns’. This was taken into account in the study.

3.41 The concept of ‘merging’ is clearer, but assessing the extent to which land between towns contributes to preventing this is less so. However, it is generally acknowledged that the role open land plays in preventing the merging of towns is more than a product of the size of the gap between them. Recent Green Belt assessments therefore usually consider both the physical and visual role that intervening Green Belt land plays in preventing the merging of settlements.

3.42 Step 3 of the assessment process considers how the degree of distinction between a particular town and adjacent open land affects the level of contribution, but in Step 1 it is necessary to judge the physical and visual relationship between neighbouring towns, to identify the degree to which Purpose 2 is relevant.

3.43 The analysis in Step 1 looks at the separation between towns. Physical proximity is an initial consideration, but both built and natural landscape elements can act to either decrease or increase perceived separation – for example intervisibility, a direct connecting road or rail link or a shared landform may decrease perceived separation, whereas a separating feature such as a woodland block or hill may increase the perception of separation.

3.44 The analysis in Step 1 identifies that land that is juxtaposed between towns makes a contribution to this purpose, and the stronger the relationship between the towns – i.e. the more fragile the gap – the stronger the potential contribution to this purpose of any intervening open land. The relevance of Purpose 2 also reduces with increased distance from both settlements – i.e. where land is judged to become more peripheral to the ‘gap’.

3.45 Where settlements are very close, a judgement is made as to whether their proximity is such that the remaining open land does not play a critical role in maintaining a distinction between the two towns, i.e. that the characteristics of the open land relate more to the towns areas themselves than to the open land in between.

Physical and visual role of preventing merging

PAS guidance, which is commonly referenced in Green Belt studies, states that distance alone should not be used to assess the extent to which the Green Belt prevents neighbouring towns from merging into one another. The PAS guidance also refers to settlement character and the character of land in between as being relevant considerations when looking at retaining separate identities¹².

The 2016 Green Belt Study (as did many earlier Green Belt studies) assessed the physical gap between settlements within Cannock Chase but this Study considers not just the physical proximity of settlements but the visual role that intervening Green Belt land plays in preventing the merging of settlements.

Assessing relevance of Green Belt Purpose 2

Green Belt land has the potential to play a very strong role with regards to Purpose 2 – i.e. gap is very fragile – if:

- Land lies in a gap which is very narrow but which maintains clear separation between neighbouring towns;
- Land lies in a narrow gap between towns, and has no significant separating feature(s);
- Land lies in a narrow gap between neighbouring towns and urbanising development between the two reduces perceived separation.

¹² PAS Planning on the Doorstep – <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/green-belt-244.pdf>

Green Belt land has the potential to play a stronger role with regards to Purpose 2 – i.e. gap is fragile – if:

- Land lies in a gap which is narrow but which maintains clear separation between neighbouring towns and has some significant separating feature(s);
- Land lies in a gap which is narrow, taking into consideration intervening urbanising development, but which has significant separating feature(s) to preserve perceived separation;
- Land lies in a moderate gap between towns, but with no significant separating feature(s);
- Land lies in a moderate gap between towns, but urbanising development between the two reduces perceived separation and increases the fragility of the gap.

Green Belt land has the potential to play some role with regards to Purpose 2 – i.e. gap is moderate – if:

- Land lies in a moderate gap between neighbouring towns, but there are some significant separating feature(s);
- Land lies in a narrow gap between neighbouring towns, but existing urbanising development already links them;
- Land lies in a wide gap between towns, but urbanising development between the two reduces perceived separation;
- Land lies in a gap which is moderate, taking into consideration intervening urbanising development, but which has significant separating feature(s) to preserve perceived separation;
- Land is peripheral to a narrow gap between towns.

Green Belt land has less potential to play a role with regards to Purpose 2 – i.e. gap is robust – if:

- Land lies in a wide gap between neighbouring towns, with some significant separating feature(s);
- Land is peripheral to a moderate gap between towns;
- There is a wide gap between towns. Urbanising development reduces gaps but there are some significant separating feature(s).

Green Belt land will not play a role with regards to Purpose 2 if:

- Land does not lie between neighbouring towns.

Does the land have the potential to play a role with regard to Purpose 3: to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment?

3.46 This considers the extent to which land can be considered to constitute ‘countryside’ on the basis of its usage. It does not consider the impact of development which can be considered to reduce openness (in Green Belt terms), or of development which has a containing urbanising influence, as these are addressed in the analysis at Step 2 and Step 3 respectively.

3.47 Land may through its usage have a stronger relationship with the adjacent built up area and, as a result, not be considered ‘countryside’ to the same degree as other open land, but it is important not to stray from assessing the Green Belt purposes into assessing landscape character, sensitivity or value. Whilst Green Belt land may be valuable in these respects it is not a requirement or purpose of the designation to provide such qualities. Therefore, the condition of land is not taken into consideration: the poor condition of Green Belt land does not necessarily undermine its fundamental role of preventing urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open.

Wide applicability of Purpose 3

PAS guidance presumes that all Green Belt contributes to this purpose to some degree, but suggests that:

“The most useful approach is to look at the difference between urban fringe – land under the influence of the urban area - and open countryside, and to favour the latter in determining which land to try and keep open, taking into account the types of edges and boundaries that can be achieved.”

PAS guidance also highlights that the quality of the landscape of an area should not be a consideration when assessing the contribution of Green Belt to the fulfilment of Green Belt purposes, including Purpose 3. This could be a planning consideration in its own right when seeking a suitable location for development¹³.

The methodology in this study carefully considers the extent to which land within the urban area contains or has an urbanising influence over land in adjacent Green Belt. Care has also been taken to ensure that the assessment criteria focus on the NPPF Green Belt purposes as oppose to wider landscape sensitivity considerations.

Assessing relevance of Green Belt Purpose 3

Green Belt land has the potential to play a stronger role with regards to Purpose 3 if:

- Land use is not associated with the urban area.

Green Belt land has potential to play some role with regards to Purpose 3 if:

- it is characterised by a use which, although it may be ‘appropriate’ within the Green Belt (see Step 2), is more strongly associated with the urban area – e.g. school playing fields, recreation grounds.

¹³ PAS Planning on the Doorstep – <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/green-belt-244.pdf>

Green Belt land will not play a role with regards to Purpose 3 if:

- it is entirely contained within the urban area, and too small to be considered to constitute countryside in its own right.

Does the land have the potential to play a role with regard to Purpose 4: to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns?

3.48 This purpose makes specific reference to ‘historic towns’, not to individual heritage assets or smaller settlements such as villages and hamlets; however Green Belt studies have offered a range of interpretations.

Definition of historic towns considered under Purpose 4

An extract from Hansard in 1988 clarifies which historic settlements in England were considered ‘historic towns’ in the context of the Green Belt purposes. The Secretary of State for the Environment clarified in answer to a parliamentary question that the purpose of preserving the special character of historic towns is especially relevant to the Green Belts of York, Chester, Bath, Oxford and Cambridge . Durham has since been added to this list¹⁴.

This is supported by the PAS guidance which states: that “This purpose is generally accepted as relating to very few settlements in practice.”¹⁵

It is noted that, the Inspector’s interim views (S J Pratt) to Cheshire East Council (October 2014) and further interim views (December 2015) highlighted that with regards to Purpose 4

¹⁴ HC Deb 08 November 1988 vol 140 c148W: Green Belt – https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/written-answers/1988/nov/08/green-belt#S6CV0140P0_19881108_CWA_299

¹⁵ PAS Planning on the Doorstep – <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/green-belt-244.pdf>

the study assessed smaller settlements which “could be criticised as being too detailed for a Green Belt assessment” but was “not necessarily inappropriate or irrelevant”¹⁶.

However, more recent consultation responses from Historic England (e.g. in relation to a 2019 review of the Green Belt around Blackburn) support the view that this purpose is of special importance to the Green Belts around Bath, Cambridge, Chester, Oxford, Durham and York only.

3.49 Previous studies within the Cannock Chase area considered Cannock and Rugeley as historic towns. However, in light of the recent consultation responses from Historic England on other Green Belt studies LUC has undertaken, it was agreed with CCDC that Historic England should be consulted regarding the relevance of Purpose 4 to towns in the Cannock Chase Green Belt.

3.50 Historic England’s response advised that the purpose(s) for first designating the Cannock Chase Green Belt should be established. From a review of the relevant literature it is clear that there was no specific reference to historic towns when justifying the original designation of the West Midlands Green Belt. The Green Belt was devised principally as a means of preventing the outward expansion of the built-up area of the West Midlands into open countryside and of preventing towns and cities from coalescing and losing their separate identities.

3.51 Historic England also stated in their response that the six towns mentioned in parliamentary debate (see green box above) should not be considered an exhaustive list, and that it is not for Historic England to define whether towns are historic for inclusion in the Green Belt Study. Therefore, LUC has undertaken analysis to determine which settlements should be considered ‘historic towns’ in the context of Purpose 4. This involved a three-step filtering process, comprising:

¹⁶ Examination document references PS A017b and RE A021 – <https://cheshireeast-consult.objective.co.uk/portal/planning/cs/library#rea>

- First, identification of the settlements in Cannock Chase and, where relevant, neighbouring administrations (i.e. South Staffordshire District, Walsall District and Lichfield District) that can reasonably be considered, through their size and/or function, to be towns rather than villages.
- Second, consideration of the extent to which any of these towns retain a historic character. To establish this, we drew on Conservation Area designations and appraisals, and assessments carried out as part of the Staffordshire Extensive Urban Survey (2009-2010).
- Third, consideration of the extent to which the special character of historic towns is dependent on a landscape setting to which Green Belt land makes some contribution. The presence of heritage assets, whether or not of sufficient value to warrant designation of a Conservation Area, does not in itself necessarily reflect any significant association with Green Belt land, and Green Belt land which contributes to the value of a Conservation Area may not necessarily have any relevance to the qualities that constitute ‘special character’.

3.52 On the basis of the first two steps above, it was concluded that land around two settlements – Cannock and Rugeley – should be considered for potential contribution to Purpose 4. The box below summarises the analysis used to determine whether any land around either town contributes to historic setting and special character.

Assessing relevance of Green Belt Purpose 4

Cannock

Cannock has origins dating back to the medieval period; a market was established in the 13th Century at around the same time as the extant St Luke's church was constructed. Surviving aspects of the medieval town plan include burgage plots, remnants of timber framing and an historic street pattern based around a broad marketplace, which remains a feature of the town's historic core today.

Cannock's historic character is associated principally with the area covered by Cannock Town Centre Conservation Area, which defines the historic core of the town. The special interest is summarised in the Conservation Area appraisal as:

- "its long history still evident in its spacious layout and distinctive buildings;
- Its mixed, generally small scale, retail/commercial uses and markets;
- Its townscape of diverse building types and buildings/groups of individual interest, harmonised by continuity, mass, scale and materials around an open market place; and
- Its prominent green focal points of bowling green and churchyard enhanced by mature tree planting".

The town is situated to the south and south-west of Cannock Chase, a remnant of the great Forest of Cannock. Whilst arable agriculture accounted for a large portion of the economy of the town during the medieval period, map regression shows that the extent of open fields surrounding the town in the Medieval period is now almost entirely covered by later suburban development. The 19th and 20th centuries saw the main expansion of Cannock, with suburban expansion associated with the development of coal mining. The inner suburbs largely comprise late 19th and early 20th century development; whilst 20th century suburban development was initially concentrated to the south of the town centre, followed by the development of the northern suburbs in the mid-20th century.

Within the Conservation Area appraisal, the historic core's location and setting are described as being well enclosed by later development. The visual relationship of the historic core with the wider surroundings is noted as being limited to views along roads and over rooftops to distant countryside to the west (Green Belt land within neighbouring South Staffordshire District) and to the re-vegetated mound of Poplars tip to the east (Green Belt land within the Cannock Chase District). The latter, whilst a relatively recent intervention, shares some of the visual characteristics of Cannock Chase – that is to say well-vegetated higher ground. Whilst the historic core is generally isolated from the wider surrounding landscape setting, the Conservation Area appraisal notes that Cannock Chase AONB, together with agricultural

land to the south and west (all of which is designated as Green Belt), gives a semi-rural landscape character to the setting of the wider town with small settlements and farmsteads. It is clear that the special character of Cannock is related primarily to the immediate townscape character and setting of its historic core. This is encircled by later 19th and 20th century suburban development which limits its physical and visual relationship with the surrounding Green Belt land within Cannock Chase District. Only the re-vegetated mound of Poplars Tip within the Green Belt to the east has a visual relationship with the historic core, albeit this does not make a significant contribution to the setting and special character of the town. Whilst Cannock Chase and the surrounding agricultural land provides a semi-rural landscape setting to the wider town, the special character of the historic core is not dependent on a landscape setting to which Green Belt land makes a contribution. Therefore, the majority of the Green Belt surrounding Cannock makes a weak or no contribution to its historic setting or special character.

Rugeley

Rugeley is located on the south bank of the River Trent roughly halfway between the cathedral city of Lichfield and the county town of Stafford. The town was first documented in the Domesday Book (1086), and its development has focussed on the main Lichfield-Stafford road (Horsefair, Upper and Lower Brook Street and Market Street). It occupies land that slopes up from the river valley in the east to the forest and heath of Cannock Chase in the west. Waterways and routeways follow the contours between the Chase and the River, and these features have determined the historic layout of Rugeley. This includes the Rising Brook, which flows down from the Chase to the Trent through Elmore Park and the centre of the town.

Rugeley contains several Conservation Areas, but only Rugeley Town Centre and Sheepfair/Bow Street Conservation Areas cover the historic core of the town and lie in proximity to Green Belt land; the others are physically and visually separated from the Green Belt by intervening built development.

The physically compact town centre comprises a curving linear main route, incorporating the irregularly shaped focal points of Brook Square and Market Square, with side streets and passages off this. The townscape is defined by this informal street pattern as well as by a diversity of building types. The streets are enclosed by two and three-storey built forms meaning the town centre is generally inward looking. The Rugeley Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal notes that a significant part of the town centre's immediate setting is comprised of car parking and service areas and larger modern buildings, which isolate the historic core from the rest of the town. This development also creates some physical and visual separation from the Green Belt land to the south-west.

With regard to the wider landscape setting of the town, the Conservation Area appraisal notes that the higher ground of the Cannock Chase AONB, which is also designated as Green Belt land, forms a green setting to the town. This point is also noted within the Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan , which states that the chase is often present as a prominent wooded skyline from settlements. The Conservation Area appraisal also refers to views along a number of the side streets within the historic core towards a backdrop of greenery formed by trees in the distance, which helps to bring the landscape setting into the town. This includes views west from Brook Square towards the mature trees and vegetation in and around Elmore Park.

The Special Interest of Rugeley Town Centre is summarised in the Conservation Area appraisal as being due to:

- “Its long history still evident in its layout and buildings
- Its traditional street pattern of a tightly built up pedestrian town along a winding main street
- Its mixed small scale retail/commercial uses and markets
- Its townscape of diverse building types and buildings/groups of individual interest, harmonised by mass, height, scale and materials

- Its human scale, with visual interest created by irregular frontages, rooflines and design details”

Sheepfair/Bow Street Conservation Area adjoins Rugeley Town Centre to the west and abuts the Green Belt on its south-western edge. This comprises one of the historic built-up areas which developed around the town centre, fulfilling commercial needs along the main route into the town from the north-west and the Chase. Today the area exists as a quiet and attractive largely residential suburb. The area also contains Elmore Park, part of the grounds of the former Hagley Hall. The construction of Western Springs Road (A460) severed what is now Elmore Park from the main area of parkland associated with Hagley Hall to the south-west, an area which is designated as Green Belt.

The Special Interest of Sheepfair/Bow Street is summarised in the Conservation Area appraisal as being due to:

- “Its traditional winding street pattern with development around a historic thoroughfare (and marketplace)
- Its townscape of diverse building types and buildings/groups of individual interest, harmonised by mass, height, scale and materials
- Its human scale, with visual interest created by differing frontages, rooflines and design details and several landmark buildings
- Its green spaces, mature trees, pool and brook in Elmore Park which bring a rural element into the town
- Its historic association with Hagley Hall and grounds, giving strong historic context and potential for archaeology to survive
- Its green spaces adjacent to Elmore Park offer views to attractive old buildings and trees, thereby enhancing the street scene”.

It is clear that the special character of Rugeley is related primarily to the immediate townscape character, rather than through any association with the Green Belt. However, the

setting of Rugeley Town Centre Conservation Area is partially related to a backdrop of greenery formed by trees to the south-west; and the areas of former parkland associated with Hagley Hall form part of the setting to the Sheepfair/Bow Street Conservation Area. As such, the area of Green Belt land in proximity to the historic core is of some relevance to the setting and special character of Rugeley. In addition, parts of the higher ground of Cannock Chase form the wider green setting of the town, albeit at distance. Other Green Belt land around the town generally lacks any direct association with the historic core of Rugeley and therefore does not contribute to the historic setting or special character of the town.

3.53 It is recognised that land defined as Green Belt, and also land not defined as Green Belt, contributes to the historic character and to the setting of smaller settlements and other heritage assets such as listed buildings and scheduled monuments. These attributes do not lie within the scope the NPPF's Green Belt Purpose 4 and this study but are relevant to wider planning considerations and whether the release of Green Belt land in certain locations is justified.

Does the land have the potential to play a role with regard to Purpose 5: to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land?

3.54 Most Green Belt studies do not assess individual Green Belt land parcels against Purpose 5, and either do not rate them or rate them all equally, on the grounds that it is difficult to support arguments that the release one parcel of Green Belt land has a greater impact on encouraging re-use of urban land than another.

Equal contribution of Green Belt to Purpose 5

The PAS guidance states:

“...it must be the case that the amount of land within urban areas that could be developed will already have been factored in before identifying Green Belt land. If Green Belt achieves

this purpose, all Green Belt does to the same extent and hence the value of various land parcels is unlikely to be distinguished by the application of this purpose.”

In other words, it is highly unlikely that development pressures operate at a sufficiently localised level to draw out meaningful judgements on the relative impact of discrete parcels of Green Belt land on Purpose 5¹⁷.

The Inspector’s report (D Smith) to the London Borough of Redbridge (January 2018) notes that with regards to Purpose 5 “this purpose applies to most land” but that “it does not form a particularly useful means of evaluating sites”¹⁸.

However, the examination reports of some planning inspectors, e.g. Cheshire East Council’s Local Plan (2014), have highlighted the importance of assessing all five Green Belt purposes, giving each purpose equal weighting.

For the purpose of this study a parcel by parcel assessment of the contribution to Purpose 5 was not undertaken and a uniform score was applied to all parcels within the study This is explained further below.

3.55 Since the publication of the PAS Guidance and Cheshire East Local Plan Examination Report, the Housing and Planning Act (May 2016) received Royal Assent and the Town and Country Planning Regulations were subsequently updated. Regulation 3 (2017) requires local planning authorities in England to prepare, maintain and publish a ‘Brownfield Land Register’ of previously developed (brownfield) land appropriate for residential development. In addition, the National Planning Policy Framework requires that local planning authorities prepare an assessment of land which is suitable, available and achievable for housing and economic development – a Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA). Together,

¹⁷ PAS Planning on the Doorstep – <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/green-belt-244.pdf>

¹⁸ File reference: PINS/W5780/429/10 – <https://www.redbridge.gov.uk/media/4732/redbridge-local-plan-inspectors-report.pdf>

these evidence bases provide an accurate and up-to-date area of available brownfield land within individual settlements, which can be used to calculate the proportion of available brownfield land relative to the size of each settlement. The Cannock Chase District's latest Brownfield Land Register has been used to calculate the area of brownfield land within the urbanised¹⁹ area of the District.

3.56 Using these evidence bases to inform meaningful judgements on the relative contribution of discrete parcels of land to purpose 5 is dependent on the scale and form of the settlements within and around which Green Belt is defined. For example, it is harder to draw out differences in contribution between parcels around large conurbations containing merged settlements than it is land around different isolated settlements each with their own brownfield land areas.

3.57 Given the nature of the settlement pattern within Cannock, it is not possible to draw a meaningful distinction between the availability of brownfield land within individual settlements. In order that the study appropriately assessed Purpose 5 and affords it equal weighting with Purposes 1-4, an even level of contribution to Purpose 5 was determined for all areas of Green Belt based on the average availability of brownfield land across the District.

3.58 Without a clear range of brownfield land proportions for each settlement across the study area, it was not possible to calculate a tailored set of percentage ranges from which to judge contribution to Purpose 5. There is also no guidance on what percentage of brownfield land enables the Green Belt to play a stronger, or weaker, role in encouraging urban regeneration.

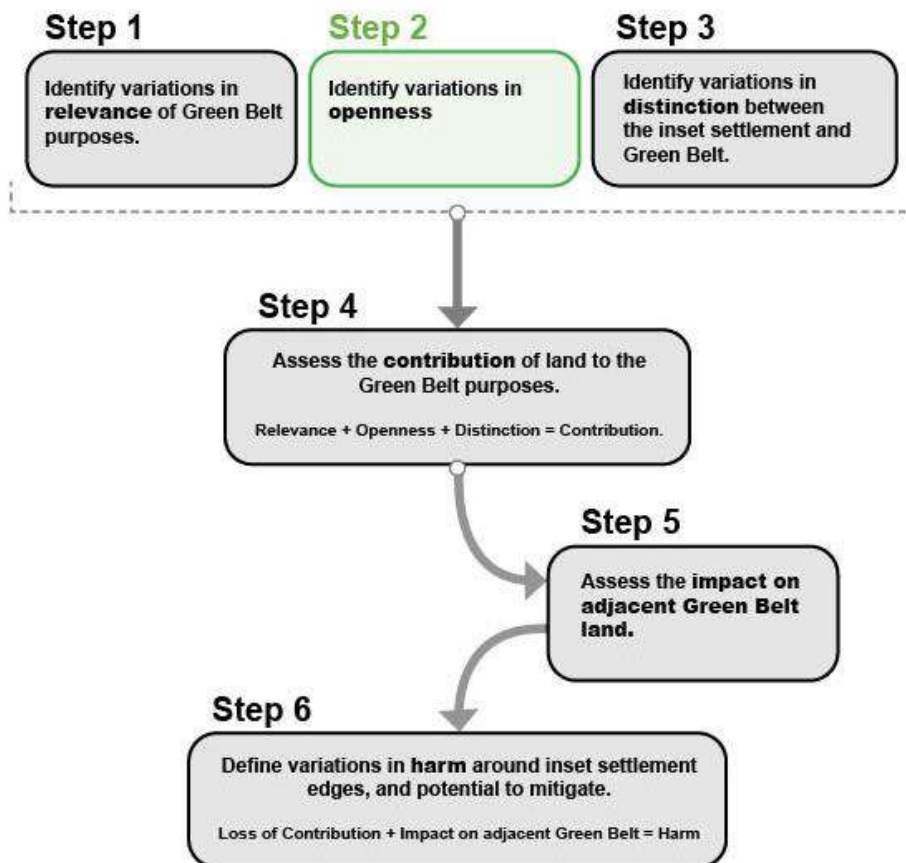
3.59 Cannock Chase Brownfield Register²⁰ contains a record of roughly 76.25ha of brownfield land within the District. In discussions with the Council, it is concluded that the District's Green Belt has and continues to play a significant role in encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land in the urban area before brownfield land in the Green Belt. Consequently, all

¹⁹ The urbanised area constitutes land within the District which does not fall within the Green Belt.

²⁰ Cannock Chase Brownfield Register 2019

Green Belt land within the District is considered to make a Strong contribution to Purpose 5. This is in line with the conclusions reached in the Stage 1 Green Belt Assessment (2016).

Step 2: Identify variations in Green Belt openness



3.60 The NPPF identifies openness as an 'essential characteristic' of the Green Belt, rather than a function or purpose. The presence of 'urbanising development' within the Green Belt can diminish the contribution of land to the Green Belt purposes.

3.61 Green Belt openness relates to lack of 'inappropriate built development' rather than to visual openness; thus both undeveloped land which is screened from view by landscape elements (e.g. tree cover) and development which is not considered 'inappropriate', are still 'open' in Green Belt terms. Visual openness is however still relevant when considering the degree of distinction between an urban area and the wider countryside – this is addressed at Step 3 below.

3.62 The assessment of openness first considers the appropriateness of development. Where development is not ‘appropriate’, it considers the extent, scale, form and density of development, in order to make a judgement on the degree of openness.

3.63 At a very localised scale, any inappropriate development can be considered to diminish openness, but small areas of isolated development have negligible impact in this respect, and are not therefore defined and assessed as separate parcels of land. Any larger areas of Green Belt land which are judged to be developed to an extent that they lack the ‘essential characteristic’ of openness are considered to make no contribution to Green Belt purposes. These are defined and mapped.

Appropriate development

Appropriate development within the Green Belt cannot, according to case law, be considered to have an urbanising influence and therefore harm Green Belt purposes. The Court of Appeal decision in *R (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority) v Epping Forest DC* [2016] EWCA Civ 404 included, at paragraph 20, reference to openness in relation to appropriate development:

“Implicit in the policy in paragraph 89 of the NPPF is a recognition that agriculture and forestry can only be carried on, and buildings for those activities will have to be constructed, in the countryside, including countryside in the Green Belt. Of course, as a matter of fact, the construction of such buildings in the Green Belt will reduce the amount of Green Belt land without built development upon it. But under NPPF policy, the physical presence of such buildings in the Green Belt is not, in itself, regarded as harmful to the openness of the Green Belt or to the purposes of including land in the Green Belt. This is not a matter of planning judgment. It is simply a matter of policy. Where the development proposed is an agricultural building, neither its status as appropriate development nor the deemed absence of harm to the openness of the Green Belt and to the purposes of including land in the

Green Belt depends on the judgment of the decision-maker. Both are inherent in the policy.”²¹

For the purposes of this study, development deemed to be ‘appropriate’ within the Green Belt (as defined in the closed lists within paragraphs 145 and 146 of the NPPF) is not considered to constitute an urban land use, or an urban influence in the countryside. However, what is deemed to be appropriate development in the NPPF has to be carefully considered as developments such as the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments are only considered appropriate as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

Caution is therefore exercised in the application of what is defined as an appropriate use. It is not possible within a Strategic Green Belt study to review each form of development within the Green Belt and ascertain whether it was permitted as appropriate development or not, unless it is clear cut. For example buildings for agriculture and forestry are deemed to be appropriate development regardless of whether they preserve the openness, or conflict with Green Belt purposes. For other land uses such as outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments, a considered view is taken on the extent to which the proposed land use has affected Green Belt purposes, for example by affecting openness, or encroaching on the perception of countryside i.e. the sense of distinction between the urban area and countryside. This is of relevance to the assessment approach for all of the Green Belt purposes.

Examples of land which lacks urbanising influences, and is therefore considered to be open in Green Belt terms:

²¹ Neutral Citation Number: [2016] EWCA Civ 404 –
<https://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Civ/2016/404.html>

- Any land without built form;
- Agricultural/horticultural/forestry buildings (e.g. farms, glasshouses);
- Mineral extraction or engineering operations that preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it; and
- Low density or small-scale rural settlement.

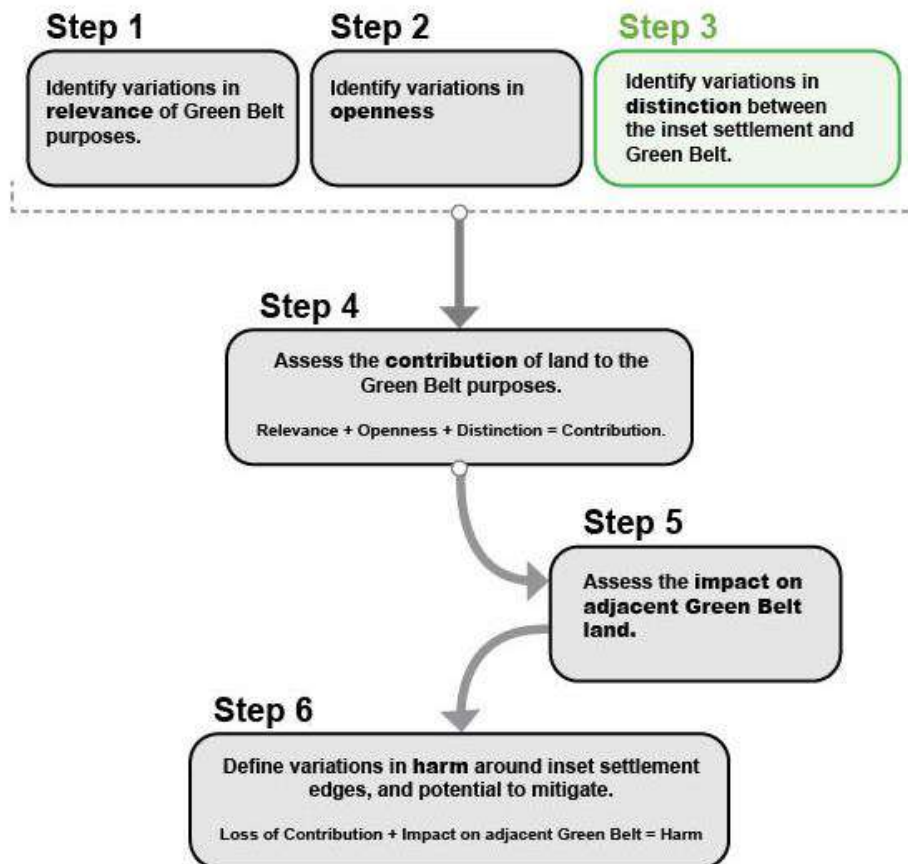
Examples of urbanising development which could potentially reduce Green Belt openness:

- Buildings other than those for agriculture/horticulture/forestry;
- Solar farms;
- Car parks.

Outer areas

3.64 The outer areas of the Green Belt were not assessed with regards to openness and were assumed to be open, as the assessment of these areas was high level and strategic.

Step 3: Identify variations in the distinction between urban areas and the Green Belt



3.65 Having considered in general terms the variations in the relevance of each of the Green Belt purposes, the next step in the assessment process identifies more localised variations in the relationship between Green Belt land and urban development – i.e. whether the land seems like it is part of the urban area or the countryside.

3.66 Land that is more strongly related to urbanising development typically makes a weaker contribution to all of the first three Green Belt purposes, being less likely to be perceived: as sprawl (Purpose 1), narrowing the gap between towns (Purpose 2), or encroaching on the countryside (Purpose 3).

3.67 For Purpose 4 there is no separate consideration of distinction because, contrary to Purposes 1 to 3, land which has a strong relationship with the town is likely to make a greater rather than lesser contribution. Criteria for assessing the level of contribution to Purpose 4 was defined (is assessed) on a bespoke basis for each specific settlement for which the purpose was identified as relevant.

The analysis process

3.68 The process of assessing distinction was carried out on a settlement by settlement basis, for each inset urban area. The analysis was applied as a progression out from each settlement edge, recognising that with distance from that settlement the level of distinction will only increase, not diminish.

3.69 The distinction between land within the Green Belt and developed land considers four interrelated elements, which are considered in the following paragraphs. These are:

- Urban containment;
- Landform and land cover;
- Urbanising visual influence;
- Boundary features.

3.70 Consideration of these elements was combined, using professional judgement, to give a rating on a 4-point scale (weak, moderate, strong and very strong distinction). Supporting text indicates the relevance of each of the 4 elements, and notes any particular weighting applied.

How do boundary features create distinction?

3.71 Consideration is first given to the nature of any physical boundary features. The list below provides an indication of the strength attributed to different types of boundary. Stronger boundary features are considered to have more permanence.

3.72 The initial analysis of land adjacent to an urban area considers only the urban boundary, but progressing further from the urban area, the cumulative impact of multiple boundary features increases distinction.

Strength of boundary features

Strong boundary

- Physical feature significantly restricts access and forms consistent edge.
- For example:
 - Motorway or dual-carriageway; railway;
 - River/floodplain; sharp change in landform.

Moderate boundary

- Clear physical feature and relatively consistent edge, but already breached or easily crossed.
- For example:
 - Linear tree cover;
 - mature, well-treed hedgerow;
 - main road; stream; moderate change in landform.

Weak boundary

- No significant physical definition – edge may be blurred.
- For example:
 - Regular garden/building boundaries or hedgerows;
 - Estate/access road; some development crosses boundary..

3.73 Even in the absence of significant boundary features, distinction from an urban area increases with distance, so this was factored into the judgement. Conversely, if boundary features are close together, their combined impact is diminished by lack of distance to separate them.

Does landform and/or land cover increase distinction?

3.74 Landform and land cover may serve as boundary features, as indicated in the list above, but this may extend into a broader feature which creates greater distinction, for example a woodland, lake or valley.

Does visual openness increase distinction?

3.75 This is not concerned with the scenic quality of views, but the extent to which an absence of visual association with urban areas may increase association with the open Green Belt countryside or, conversely, the extent to which the visual dominance of urban development may increase association with the urban area.

3.76 Caution was used when considering views, recognising that seasonal variations and boundary maintenance regimes can have a significant impact.

3.77 As noted under Step 2, the absence of visual openness does not diminish openness in Green Belt terms; however it is accepted that there is a visual dimension to the perception of openness that can have a bearing on the distinction between urban areas and countryside.

Absence of urban influence and visual impact

Turner v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government & East Dorset District Council (2016) was an appeal heard in the High Court relating to a previous appeal judgement in which a refusal for planning permission in the Green Belt by East Dorset District Council was upheld. The High Court appeal was dismissed, but the judgement concluded that:

“The question of visual impact is implicitly part of the concept of ‘openness of the Green Belt’ as a matter of the natural meaning of the language used in para. 89 of the NPPF... There is an important visual dimension to checking ‘the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas’ and the merging of neighbouring towns... openness of aspect is a characteristic quality of the countryside, and ‘safeguarding the countryside from encroachment’ includes preservation of that quality of openness. The preservation of ‘the setting ... of historic towns’ obviously refers in a material way to their visual setting, for instance when seen from a distance across open fields.”²²

This study considers visual openness in the assessment of whether land is distinct or not from the urban edge.

Does urban development have a containing influence?

3.78 With reference to the variations in openness noted at Step 2 above, the study considered whether existing development to some degree contains an area of open land, thus reducing its distinction from the urban area. Where there is significant containment, development might be considered to constitute ‘infill’ rather than expansion of the urban area.

3.79 Urbanising development could be located within the inset settlement or washed over by the Green Belt. In some cases, land on the fringe of an inset settlement will not currently be developed, but unless the development of such land is constrained by other factors or designations (see paragraph 3.14) the assumption was made that it will be developed, and that it therefore cannot be considered ‘open’.

²² Neutral Citation Number: [2016] EWCA Civ 466 –
<https://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Civ/2016/466.html>

Infill Development

Paragraph 145 of the NPPF notes that ‘limited infilling’ is not inappropriate within the Green Belt²³.

PAS guidance states that development that would effectively be ‘infill’, due to the land’s partial enclosure by development, would have a relatively limited impact in terms of Green Belt contribution²⁴.

This study considers the degree of containment from existing urban development in the assessment of whether land is distinct or not from the urban edge.

Outer areas

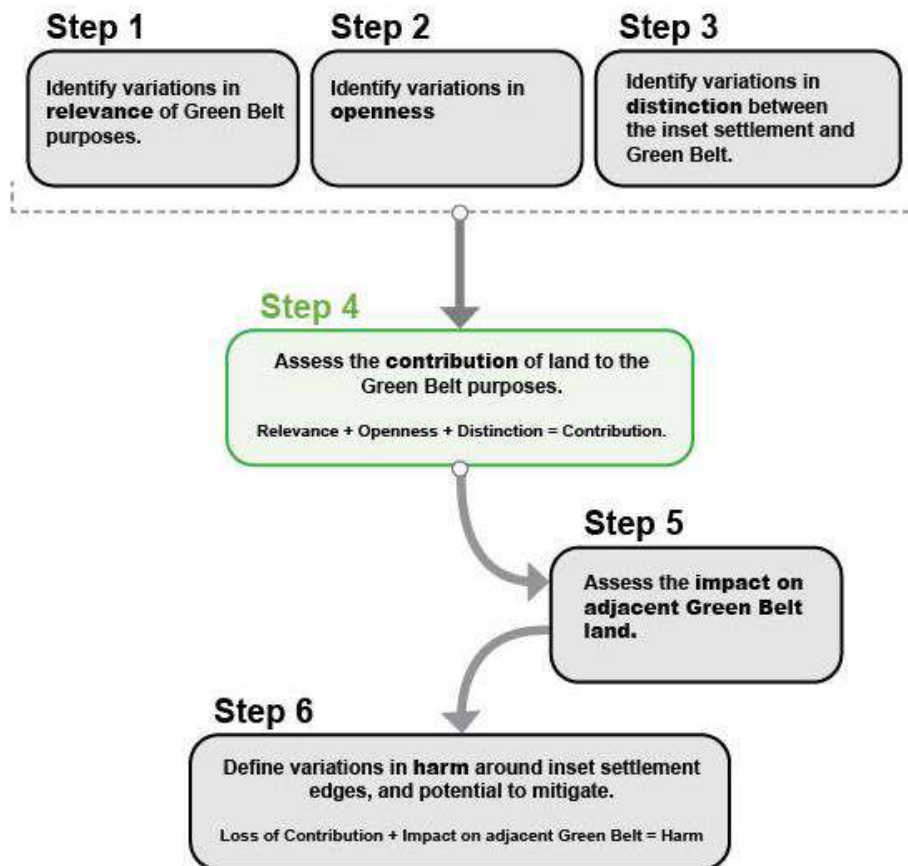
3.80 The assessment of outer areas did not include an additional assessment of distinction as these parcels were defined on the basis of having high distinction from the inset edge.

²³ NPPF: Paragraph 145 –

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/810197/NPPF_Feb_2019_revised.pdf

²⁴ PAS Planning on the Doorstep – <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/green-belt-244.pdf>

Step 4: Assess the contribution of land to the Green Belt Purposes and define parcels



3.81 In this step we considered the analysis in each of the previous steps to identify overall contribution ratings for each Green Belt purpose. Each area of variation in contribution to one or more of the purposes was defined as a parcel, with contribution ratings and supporting analysis.

3.82 For Green Belt Purposes 1, 2 and 3, we consider relevance (Step 1), openness (Step 2) and distinction (Step 3) to arrive at a judgement on the relative contribution of different areas of land. Contribution to the Green Belt purposes was rated on a 5-point scale (strong, relatively strong, moderate, relatively weak and weak/no contribution), in accordance with the criteria lists below. These indicate typical combinations of relevance, openness and distinction, but

professional judgement may result in the addition of particular weight to one of these elements. Supporting text is provided to justify the rating for each of these elements, using consistent terminology for ease of comparison.

3.83 For Purpose 4, in accordance with advice from Historic England, judgements were based on specific analysis of the historic town in question, and its relationship with its Green Belt surroundings, as set out in the criteria list below.

3.84 Standard text is used to indicate that contribution to Purpose 5 is consistent across all of the study area.

3.85 Adjacent to settlements where Purpose 1 is applicable, the assumption was made that the purpose will remain relevant at least until the level of distinction between the large built-up area and open land reaches a strong level. Beyond this the relevance, and therefore the contribution, will diminish.

3.86 In between settlements where Purpose 2 is relevant, contribution will likewise reduce at the periphery of the gap. Unlike Purposes 1 and 2, contribution to Purpose 3 will not diminish with distance from urban areas, and will consequently be high for all land beyond those areas that do not have strong distinction from an urban area.

3.87 Where settlements were relatively close together, an area of land may make a different level of contribution in relation to its distinction from one settlement than it does in relation to other settlements. To map variations in harm across the study area as a whole, the lowest of the contribution levels applicable to an area of land was the one which was considered to apply (which typically, though not necessarily, was the rating associated with the nearest urban area).

3.88 The outer Green Belt was also subdivided, into 'outer areas' to reflect assessed variations in the relevance of each Green Belt purpose. As previously noted, all of these outer areas were determined to have strong distinction from all inset settlements and were assumed to be open. Small, isolated areas of diminished openness, which might affect Green Belt contribution on a very localised scale, were not identified in the outer Green Belt.

Criteria used to inform the assessment of contribution to Purpose 1

Strong contribution to purpose 1

- Land is open and close to a large built-up area. It has at least strong distinction from the inset settlement edge.

Relatively strong contribution to purpose 1

- Land is open and close to a large built-up area. It has moderate distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is relatively open and close to a large built-up area. It has at least strong distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is perceived as being within the large built-up area but is open, has at least strong distinction from the inset settlement edge and is connected to the wider Green Belt.

Moderate contribution to purpose 1

- Land is open and close to a large built-up area. It has weak distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is open and relatively close to a large built-up area, but intervening land provides at least strong distinction; or
- Land is perceived as being within the large built-up area but is open, has moderate distinction from the inset settlement edge and is connected to the wider Green Belt; or
- Land is relatively open and close to a large built-up area. It has moderate distinction from the inset settlement edge; or

- Land is relatively developed and close to a large built-up area. It has at least strong distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is perceived as being within the large built-up area, is relatively open, has at least strong distinction from the inset settlement edge and is connected to the wider Green Belt; or
- Land is isolated within the large built-up area but is open and has at least strong distinction from the inset settlement edge.

Relatively weak contribution to purpose 1

- Land is open and is connected to the wider Green Belt, but is perceived as being within the large built-up area and has weak distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is relatively open and close to a large built-up area. It has weak distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is relatively developed and close to a large built-up area. It has moderate distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is relatively open and is connected to the wider Green Belt, but is perceived as being within the large built-up area and has moderate distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is isolated within the large built-up area but is open and has moderate distinction from the inset settlement edge.

Weak or No contributions to purpose 1

- Land is relatively developed and close to a large built-up area. It has moderate distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is relatively open and is connected to the wider Green Belt, but is perceived as being within the large built-up area and has weak distinction from the inset settlement edge; or

- Land is open but is isolated within the large built-up area and has weak distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is not open; or
- Land is not close to a large built-up area.

Criteria used to inform the assessment of contribution to Purpose 2

Strong contribution to purpose 2

- Land is open, lies in a gap which is very fragile and has at least moderate distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is open, lies in a gap which is fragile and has at least strong distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is relatively open and lies in a very fragile gap between towns. It has at least strong distinction from the inset settlement edge.

Relatively strong contribution to purpose 2

- Land is open and lies in a very fragile gap between distinct towns. It has weak distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is relatively open and lies in a very fragile gap between towns. It has moderate distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is open and lies in a fragile gap between distinct towns. It has moderate distinction from the inset settlement edge; or

- Land is open and lies in a moderate gap between towns. It has at least strong distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is relatively open and lies in a fragile gap between towns. It has at least strong distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is relatively developed and lies in a very fragile gap between towns. It has at least strong distinction from the inset settlement edge.

Moderate contribution to purpose 2

- Land is open and lies in a fragile gap between distinct towns. It has weak distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is relatively open and lies in a very fragile gap between distinct towns. It has weak distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is open and lies in a moderate gap between towns. It has moderate distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is relatively open and lies in a fragile gap between towns. It has moderate distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is relatively developed and lies in a very fragile gap between towns. It has moderate distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is open and lies in a robust gap between towns. It has at least strong distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is relatively open and lies in a moderate gap between towns. It has at least strong distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is relatively developed and lies in a fragile gap between towns. It has at least strong distinction from the inset settlement edge.

Relatively weak contribution to purpose 2

- Land is open and lies in a moderate gap between towns. It has weak distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is relatively open and lies in a fragile gap between towns. It has weak distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is relatively developed and lies in a very fragile gap between distinct towns. It has weak distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is open and lies in a robust gap between towns. It has moderate distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is relatively open and lies in a moderate gap between towns. It has moderate distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is relatively developed and lies in a fragile gap between towns. It has moderate distinction from the inset settlement edge.

Weak or No contributions to purpose 2

- Land is open and lies in a robust gap between towns. It has weak distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is relatively open and lies in a moderate gap between towns. It has weak distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is relatively developed and lies in a fragile gap between towns. It has weak distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is not open; or
- Land does not lie between neighbouring towns.

Criteria used to inform the assessment of contribution to Purpose 3

Strong contribution to purpose 3

- Land is open and land use is not associated with the urban area. It has at least strong distinction from the inset settlement edge.

Relatively strong contribution to purpose 3

- Land is open and land use is not associated with the urban area. It has moderate distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is open but land use is associated with the urban area. It has at least strong distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is relatively open and land use is not associated with the urban area. It has at least strong distinction from the inset settlement edge.

Moderate contribution to purpose 3

- Land is open but land use is associated with the urban area. It has moderate distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is relatively open and land use is not associated with the urban area. It has moderate distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is relatively open but land use is associated with the urban area. It has at least strong distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is relatively developed but land use is not associated with the urban area. It has at least strong distinction from the inset settlement edge.

Relatively weak contribution to purpose 3

- Land is open but land use is associated with the urban area. It has weak distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is relatively open and land use is not associated with the urban area. It has weak distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is relatively open but land use is associated with the urban area. It has moderate distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is relatively developed but land use is not associated with the urban area. It has moderate distinction from the inset settlement edge.

Weak or No contributions to purpose 3

- Land is relatively open but land use is associated with the urban area. It has weak distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is relatively developed and land use is not associated with the urban area, but it has weak distinction from the inset settlement edge; or
- Land is entirely contained within the urban area, and too small to be considered to constitute countryside in its own right; or
- Land is not open.

Criteria used to inform the assessment of contribution to Purpose 4

Strong contribution to purpose 4

Cannock and Rugeley

- Not applicable: No land is considered to have a strong contribution to the setting and special character of Cannock or Rugeley; the special character of the historic town is not dependent on a landscape setting to which Green Belt land makes a contribution.

Relatively strong contribution to purpose 4

Cannock and Rugeley

- Not applicable: No land is considered to have a relatively strong contribution to the setting and special character of Cannock or Rugeley; the special character of the historic town is not dependent on a landscape setting to which Green Belt land makes a contribution.

Moderate contribution to purpose 4

Cannock

- Not applicable: No land is considered to have a moderate contribution to the setting and special character of Cannock; the historic core is surrounded by later 19th and 20th century development and has a limited physical and visual relationship with the wider surrounding Green Belt land.

Rugeley

- Land lies in proximity to the historic core and has a direct visual relationship with it.

and/or

- Land forms or contains features important to the historical and/or visual setting of the historic core.

Relatively weak contribution to purpose 4

Cannock and Rugeley

- Land has some visual relationship with the historic core, but is located at distance and/or with intervening development which diminishes the relationship.

Rugeley

- Land lies in proximity to the historic core and has some visual relationship with it, but with intervening development which diminishes the relationship.

or

- Land lies in proximity to the historic core and has a direct visual relationship with it, but land contains development which detracts from its role.

or

- Land is located at distance but has some visual relationship with the historic core and/or forms part of the wider green setting of the town.

Weak or No contributions to purpose 4

Cannock and Rugeley

- Land is located at distance and/or has no visual relationship with the historic core but forms part of the wider green setting to the town.

or

- Land here does not contribute to its historic setting or special character.

What contribution does land make to purpose 5: to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land?

3.89 As noted under Step 2, all Green Belt land is considered to make a strong contribution to Purpose 5.

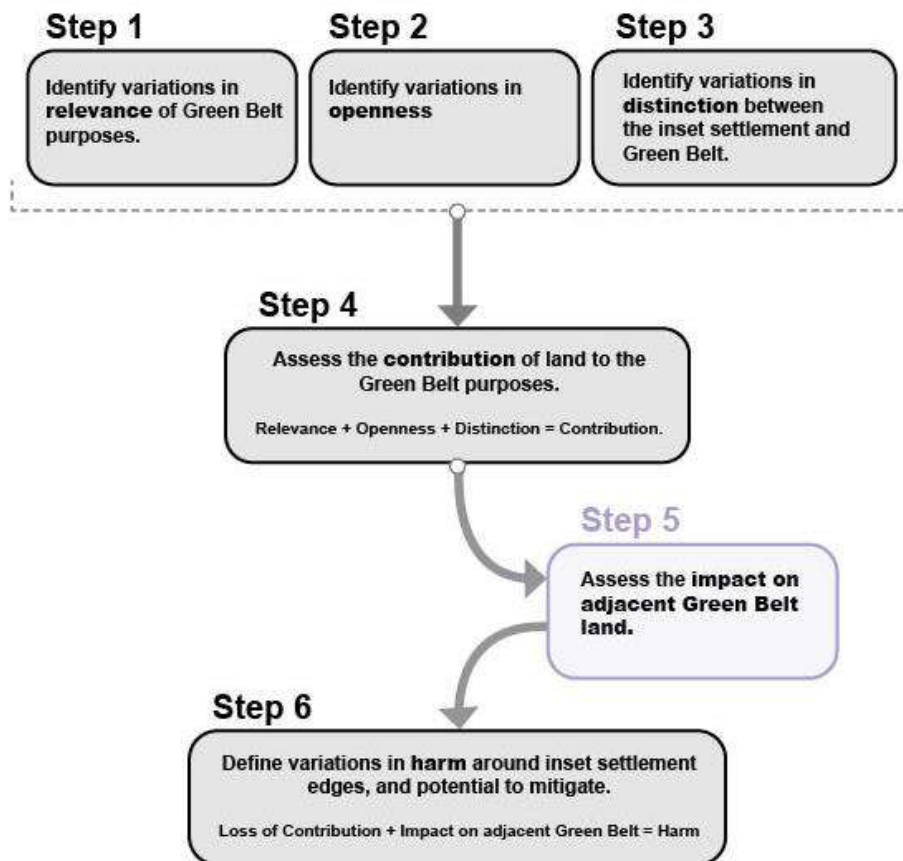
Loss of contribution

3.90 The loss of contribution to the Green Belt purposes as a result of the release of a parcel of land equates to the contribution ratings assessed for that parcel.

3.91 Where release of a parcel would also, in order to form an expansion of the inset settlement, necessitate the release of intervening land, the loss of contribution is that associated with the highest-contributing parcel. If, for example, a potential release includes land that makes a relatively strong contribution to Purpose 3 and land which makes a moderate contribution to Purpose 3, the overall contribution is relatively strong, and there would be a relatively strong loss of contribution were it to be released.

3.92 The loss of contribution to the Green Belt purposes associated with the area released provides a 'base' level of harm, but weakening of the adjacent Green Belt can add to the level of harm. This was considered in Step 5.

Step 5: Assess additional impact of release on adjacent Green Belt

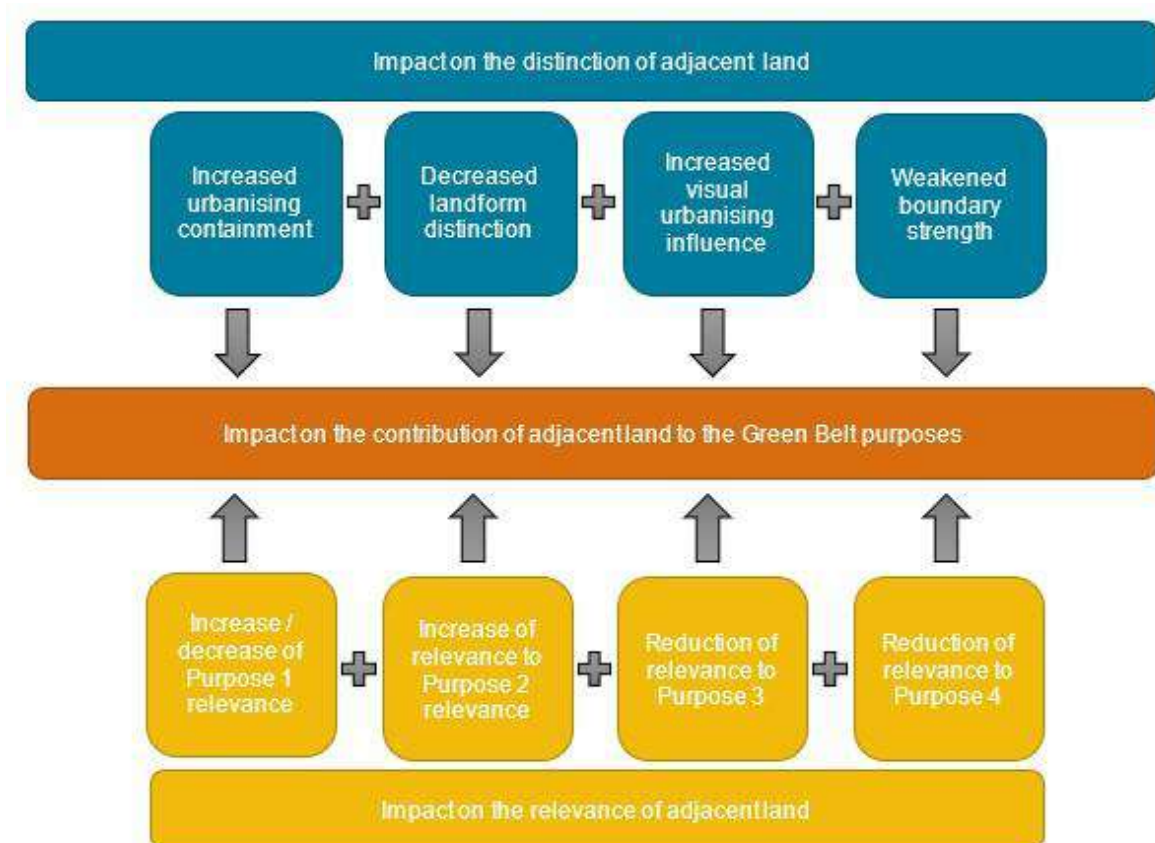


3.93 Adjacent Green Belt land is defined in this study as the land that lies next to and/or in close proximity to land / parcels being assessed for potential release.

3.94 The assessment of the additional impact of the release of land on adjacent Green Belt land considered two factors: the impact on the distinction (from inset areas) of the adjacent land and the impact on the relevance of the adjacent land to the NPPF purposes. The third factor, openness, is not relevant to the assessment of impact on adjacent land as it is assumed that adjacent land will remain open.

3.95 Figure 3.3 illustrates the elements that were considered when assessing the impact of release on adjacent Green Belt land. The paragraphs below explain this in more detail.

Figure 3.3: Variations in impact of release on adjacent land.



Impact on distinction

3.96 Release of land could impact the distinction of adjacent Green Belt land in a number of ways, including:

- Increasing urbanising containment – e.g. land which currently faces onto inset development on one ‘front’ could become partially enclosed by the extended inset settlement area;
- Changing landform distinction – e.g. land on a valley side which is currently distinct from a hilltop settlement could lose distinction if adjacent slopes are released;

- Increasing visual urban influence – land that was previously some distance from the nearest urbanising influences may be in closer proximity, particularly if there is limited visual separation;
- Weakening boundaries – e.g. a release of land crossing a strong and consistent separating feature, such as a railway line, and replacing it with a weaker boundary, such as a hedgerow, would weaken distinction, but moving the Green Belt boundary to a strong and consistent separating feature would maintain the distinction of Green Belt land beyond;

3.97 The weakening of distinction of adjacent Green Belt land from the inset area by the release of a parcel of land will affect the contribution of the adjacent land to Green Belt Purposes, and therefore increase the harm of release of the parcel of land.

Impact on relevance

3.98 The release of land could also affect the extent to which a Green Belt purpose is considered 'relevant' for adjacent land, i.e. the potential for adjacent land to play a role with regard to each Green Belt purpose. Both increases and decreases in relevance can occur, resulting in either an increase or decrease in contribution to the Green Belt purpose, and in either case, as described below, the impact will lead to an increase in potential harm.

3.99 However far the large built-up area (i.e. Cannock) expands, Purpose 1 will be relevant to adjacent Green Belt land, so land that was previously too far away from the inset edges of the large built-up area to contribute to this purpose may become close enough to play a role in preventing its further sprawl. The relevance of adjacent retained Green Belt land to Purpose 1 could also be reduced, with release of land resulting in adjacent retained Green Belt land becoming perceived as being within the large built-up area – ie due to greater containment.

3.100 For Green Belt Purpose 2 – maintaining separation between settlements – the relevance of the purpose was considered to increase as the size of a settlement gap diminishes. In these circumstances, an increase in contribution to Purpose 2 will increase harm.

3.101 The relevance of adjacent retained Green Belt land to Purpose 3 – preventing encroachment on the countryside – would rarely be affected. The release of adjacent land does

not change a parcel's land use, preventing it from being considered countryside. However, release of land could result in adjacent retained Green Belt land becoming contained to the extent that it is too isolated from the wider Green Belt to be considered part of the countryside, or resulting in land uses within adjacent retained Green Belt land becoming associated with the expanding inset area.

3.102 The relevance of adjacent retained Green Belt land to Purpose 4 – protecting the setting and special character of a historic town – could potentially be reduced by adjacent development, if that development changes the relationship between the contributing adjacent Green Belt land and the historic town. This is most likely to take the form of intervening development as a result of release of Green Belt land affecting important views, which would subsequently reduce the relevance and thus contribution of the adjacent retained Green Belt land to Purpose 4.

Assessing the level of impact on adjacent land

3.103 The contribution to Green Belt purposes of adjacent land can be weakened in the ways described above, regardless of whether the adjacent land makes a stronger or weaker contribution to the Green Belt purposes than the release parcel. However, when it comes to considering the level of harm from release of the parcel, it is only the impact on adjacent land that makes a stronger contribution to Green Belt purposes than the land within the parcel that affects the assessed level of harm from release of the parcel.

3.104 This is because weaker contributing adjacent land could be released in conjunction with stronger contributing land without increasing overall harm. Therefore, if the adjacent land is being retained and not released, that cannot increase harm, even if there is an impact on the contribution of weaker performing adjacent land.

3.105 The assessments of impact on adjacent Green Belt make it clear where release would have an impact on land that makes a stronger contribution to the Green Belt purposes (which could therefore increase harm) and where release will affect land which does not make a stronger contribution (and which therefore cannot increase harm).

3.106 Six rating levels for impact on adjacent Green Belt have been used, ranging from major to negligible. The list below provides guidance notes and benchmark examples for ratings of impact on adjacent land, but different combinations can result in different ratings. The list does not provide a comprehensive list of potential combinations.

Guidance notes and examples used to inform the assessment of impact of release on adjacent Green Belt land that makes a stronger contribution to one or more Green Belt purpose.

Major impact

Notes

- The merging of inset settlements that are currently distinct would be considered a major impact, although this would be an impact on Green Belt functionality more than an impact on adjacent Green belt land; or
- A combination of moderate-major impacts.

Examples

1. Release of land would result in the merging of Purpose 2 settlements that are currently distinct. This would be a major impact.

Moderate major impact

Notes

- A change affecting a purpose of higher relevance; or
- A combination of moderate impacts.

Examples

1. Release of land would significantly increase the urbanising visual influence and containment of adjacent land and would breach the strong boundary feature of the motorway. This would be a moderate-major impact.
2. Release of land would result in containment of land located adjacent to the large built-up area, such that it would now be perceived as being within the large built-up area. It would also weaken the Green Belt boundary and increase urbanising visual influence. In combination this would be a moderate-major impact, affecting contribution to Purposes 1, 2 and 3.

Moderate impact

Notes

- A reduction in distinction sufficient to cause a reduction in contribution by two levels (e.g. from strong to moderate); or
- A change affecting a purpose of relatively high relevance; or
- A combination of minor-moderate impacts.

Examples

1. Release of land would result in containment of land located adjacent to the large built-up area, such that it would now be perceived as being within the large built-up area. This would be a moderate impact in terms of relevance of Purpose 1.
2. Release would diminish close range views from Rugeley's historic core. This would be a moderate impact.

Moderate-minor impact

Notes

- A reduction in distinction sufficient to cause a reduction in contribution by one level (e.g. from strong to relatively strong); or
- A limited change affecting a purpose of higher relevance; or
- A combination of minor impacts.

Examples

1. Release of land would increase the urbanising visual influence and containment of adjacent land. This would be a minor-moderate impact.
2. Release of land would reduce the landform distinction of adjacent land and would result in the creation of a robust gap between Purpose 2 settlements that were previously considered too far apart to be 'neighbouring'. This would be a minor-moderate impact.

Minor impact

Notes

- A reduction in distinction, but not enough to cause a reduction in contribution; or
- A limited change affecting a purpose of lower relevance.

Examples

1. Release of land would reduce the landform distinction of adjacent land. This would be a minor impact.
2. Land between Purpose 2 settlements which were previously considered too far apart to be 'neighbouring' would now be considered to form a settlement gap, albeit a robust one. This would be a minor impact.

Negligible impact

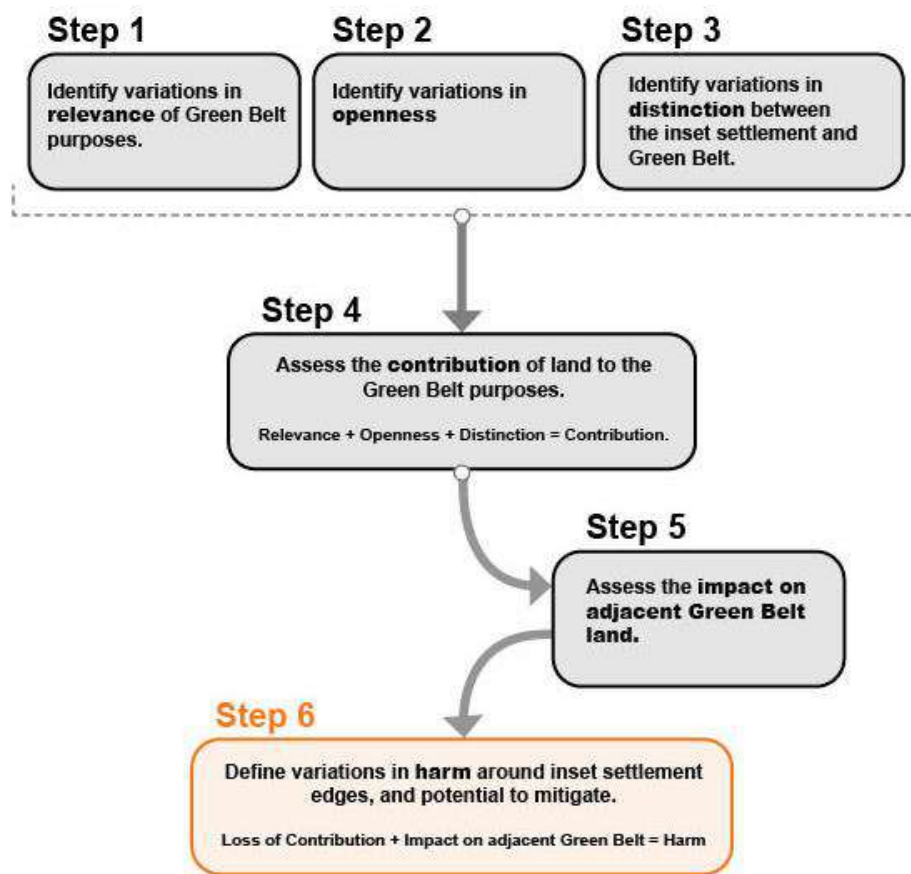
Notes

- Only Green Belt land that does not make a stronger contribution to any purpose would be affected by the release of land; or
- Release of land would result in negligible impact on the distinction of and the relevance of all Green Belt purposes of adjacent Green Belt land.

Examples

1. Adjacent Green Belt land does not make a stronger contribution to any of the Green Belt purposes.
2. Release of land would not impact the distinction adjacent Green Belt land or relevance of this land to Green Belt purposes. This would be a negligible impact.

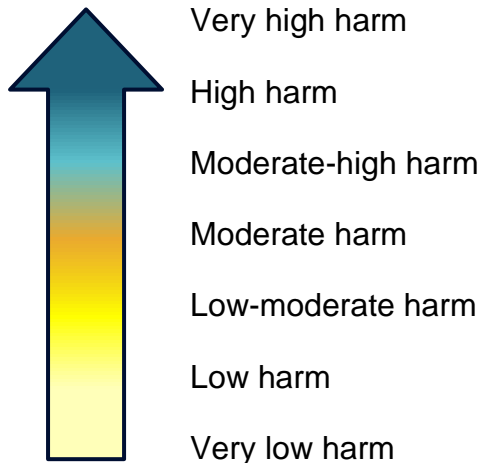
Step 6: Define variations in harm to the Green Belt around the inset edge



3.107 The assessed contribution of land to the Green Belt purposes (Step 4) is combined with the assessed impact of its release on remaining land designated as Green Belt (Step 5) to provide an overall rating of the harm of releasing land from the Green Belt for each of the parcels defined in Step 4.

3.108 Where it was noted that release of a smaller part of a parcel could reduce overall harm by having less impact on adjacent Green Belt land, a separate sub-parcel was defined. Separate release scenarios were not identified for areas of less than 1 hectare.

3.109 Green Belt harm was rated using a seven-point scale ranging from very high to very low harm:



3.110 The list below provides benchmark examples of overall harm ratings, but different combinations will result in different ratings. A stronger contribution to multiple purposes, a *very strong* level of distinction from the inset settlement (resulting in a particular strong contribution to one or more purposes) and a higher level of impact on adjacent land typically increase harm, whilst a weaker contribution and lower impact on adjacent land typically reduce harm. However, professional judgement was used in each individual case to consider how much weight to attach to each contributing element. Clear and detailed justification is provided for all ratings given in relation to how the overall judgement of Green Belt harm is reached.

3.111 Where a release of land would encompass areas with different harm ratings, the overall harm rating will always equate to the highest parcel or part-parcel harm rating.

Benchmark examples used to inform the assessment of overall harm to the Green Belt purposes

Very high harm

- Release of land results in a loss of land which makes a particularly strong contribution to one of the Green Belt purposes, and would constitute at least a minor-moderate impact on adjacent Green Belt land; or
- Release of land results in a loss of strong contribution to one of the Green Belt purposes, and would constitute at least a moderate impact on adjacent Green Belt land; or
- Release of land results in a loss of relatively strong contribution to one of the Green Belt purposes, and would constitute a moderate-major impact on adjacent Green Belt land.

High harm

- Release of land results in a loss of strong contribution to one of the Green Belt purposes, and would constitute a minor-moderate impact on adjacent Green Belt land; or
- Release of land results in a loss of moderate contribution to one of the Green Belt purposes, and would constitute a moderate-major impact on adjacent Green Belt land.

Moderate-high harm

- Release of land results in a loss of strong contribution to one of the Green Belt purposes, and would constitute a minor impact on adjacent Green Belt land; or
- Release of land results in a loss of relatively strong contribution to one of the Green Belt purposes, and would constitute a minor-moderate impact on adjacent Green Belt land.

Moderate harm

- Release of land results in a loss of strong contribution to one of the Green Belt purposes, but would constitute a negligible impact on adjacent Green Belt land; or
- Release of land results in a loss of relatively limited contribution to one of the Green Belt purposes, and would constitute a moderate impact on adjacent Green Belt land.

Moderate-low harm

- Release of land results in a loss of moderate contribution to one of the Green Belt purposes, and would constitute a minor impact on adjacent Green Belt land; or
- Release of land results in a loss of relatively weak contribution to one of the Green Belt purposes, and would constitute a minor-moderate impact on adjacent Green Belt land.

Low harm

- Release of land results in a loss of moderate contribution to one of the Green Belt purposes, and would constitute a negligible impact on adjacent Green Belt land; or
- Release of land results in a loss of relatively weak contribution to one of the Green Belt purposes, and would constitute a minor impact on adjacent Green Belt land.

Very low harm

- Release of land results in a loss of relatively weak contribution to one of the Green Belt purposes, and would constitute a negligible impact on adjacent Green Belt land; or
- Land makes a weak/no contribution to all Green Belt purposes, and its release would have a negligible impact on adjacent Green Belt land.

3.112 The assessment also notes any potential mitigation opportunities to reduce the harm to the Green Belt, through implementing measures which will help maintain the distinction between the remaining Green Belt land and urban areas. The extent to which harm can be reduced will vary from area to area, but potential measures are identified where possible (e.g. opportunities to strengthen boundary features).

3.113 These suggestions do not alter harm ratings, as their potential impact depends on the way in which mitigation is applied, and the timescale over which it becomes effective. This study only provides high level guidance on potential mitigation measures, as which measures are the most appropriate in any given locality will need to be defined in detail as part of the master-planning process.

3.114 Mitigation is only considered in relation to the harm of releasing specific land parcels. The study does not address the NPPF's requirement for consideration of the beneficial use of retained Green Belt land.

Parcelling process

3.115 As previously noted, the study assesses all land surrounding inset settlements, extending out until a high level of harm results. Having defined parcels and sub-parcels to reflect variations in harm to Green Belt purposes around the perimeter of an inset settlement, assessment Steps 1-6 as set out above were repeated for any land beyond the outer boundaries of parcels assessed at less than high harm. This constitutes a combined assessment of the 'inner' parcel already assessed and the land beyond it. The process was repeated either until the high harm level was reached, or land became more clearly associated with another inset settlement.

Harm assessment outputs

3.116 The parcel assessments are grouped by settlement. For each settlement the output comprises:

- an OS map showing the location of the settlement within the area;

- an OS map showing the assessment area parcels around the settlement and any areas of absolute constraint. Each parcel are coded with reference to the settlement – for example RU1, RU2 and so on for land around Rugeley; and
- an OS map showing the assessment area parcels around the settlement, colour-shaded to show variations in harm ratings.

3.117 For each parcel associated with the settlement. the assessment includes:

- an aerial view showing the parcel boundary and location;
- an OS map showing the parcel boundary and any absolute constraints;
- a brief locational description, the size of the parcel (excluding any constrained land that will not be rated for harm);
- commentary on the parcel's openness and on the different elements that contribute to its degree of distinction from the inset settlement;
- rating and supporting text assessing contribution to the Green Belt Purposes;
- an analysis of the potential impact of release on the integrity of adjacent Green Belt land;
- rating and supporting text assessing the overall harm to the Green Belt purposes of release of the parcel, considering loss of contribution to the Green Belt purposes and impact on the integrity of adjacent Green Belt land;
- reference to adjacent parcels which make a weaker contribution to the Green Belt purposes, and which if released alongside release of this parcel would not increase overall harm to the Green Belt purposes;
- comment on potential for a more limited release of land within the parcel as a sub-parcel to limit harm to the Green Belt purposes; and
- comments on potential measures to mitigate harm by strengthening distinction between the urban area and the Green Belt.

3.118 Any potential cross-boundary issues, such as cases where release of land within Cannock Chase would harm the integrity of Green Belt land outside of the District, are addressed within the commentaries accompanying the individual parcel assessments.

3.119 A detailed parcel-by-parcel analysis is not presented for the 'outer areas', but a summary of their 'relevance' and contribution ratings for each defined 'outer area' is presented in a summary table in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4

Summary of Findings

4.1 This chapter sets out the findings of the assessment of Green Belt contribution and harm.

Summary of Contribution Assessment and Harm

Assessment Findings

4.2 The findings of the assessment of contribution to the Green Belt purposes and potential degree of harm to the Green Belt purposes that would result from release of land are summarised by settlement in Table 4.1. Findings of the assessment of contribution to the Green Belt purposes are also presented for ‘outer areas’ of the Green Belt in Table 4.2. The findings of contribution and harm are also presented in the following maps:

- Appendix A Figures A1.1 to A1.9 map the parcels around each of the eight settlements and the outer areas;
- Figure 4.1 to Figure 4.4 illustrate the contribution rations across all Cannock Chase Green Belt land for each purpose, including the ‘outer’ Green Belt areas that lie beyond the parcelled zones around each inset settlement (note: the scale of these maps means that it is not possible to label parcel numbers);
- Figure 4.5 illustrates the potential degree of harm to the Green Belt purposes that would result from release of land around each inset settlement across Cannock Chase (note: the scale of these maps means that it is not possible to label parcel numbers); and
- Appendix A Figures A2.1 to A2.8 illustrate the potential degree of harm to the Green Belt purposes that would result from release of land around each of the eight settlements.

4.3 As noted in the methodology set out in Chapter 3, the outer area assessments all reflect strong distinction from inset settlements, and do not take into account any localised area in which Green Belt openness has been diminished by urbanising built development.

4.4 In each location where alterations to Green Belt boundaries are being considered, a planning judgement is required to establish whether the sustainability benefits of Green Belt release and the associated development outweigh the harm to the Green Belt designation. In light of this, this assessment of harm to the Green Belt purposes does not draw conclusions as to where land should be released to accommodate development, but identifies relative variations in harm to the designation.

4.5 Detailed findings of the assessment of contribution and harm for the parcelled zones around each inset settlement are included in Appendix B, organised by settlement.

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Table 4.1: Green Belt parcels assessment of contribution and harm ratings.

Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Brownhills West	Release of BW1 as an expansion of Brownhills West	33.31	Weak/No	Relatively strong	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Cannock and Churchbridge	Release of CA1 as an expansion of Cannock and Churchbridge	4.61	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Cannock and Churchbridge	Release of CA2 as an expansion of Cannock and Churchbridge	86.95	Strong	Weak/No	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Cannock and Churchbridge	Release of CA3 as an expansion of Cannock and Churchbridge	4.62	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Cannock and Churchbridge	Release of CA4 as an expansion of Cannock and Churchbridge	5.88	Strong	Weak/No	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Cannock and Churchbridge	Release of CA5 as an expansion of Cannock and Churchbridge	13.13	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Cannock and Churchbridge	Release of CA6 as an expansion of Cannock and Churchbridge	43.18	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Cannock and Churchbridge	Release of CA7 as an expansion of Cannock and Churchbridge	2.86	Strong	Weak/No	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Cannock and Churchbridge	Release of CA8 as an expansion of Cannock and Churchbridge	6.08	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Cannock and Churchbridge	Release of CA9 as an expansion of Cannock and Churchbridge	33.62	Strong	Relatively strong	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Very High
Cannock and Churchbridge	Release of CA10 as an expansion of Cannock and Churchbridge	22.44	Moderate	Relatively weak	Moderate	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Low-Moderate

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Cannock and Churchbridge	Release of CA11 as an expansion of Cannock and Churchbridge	1.63	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	No/Very Low
Cannock and Churchbridge	Release of CA12 as an expansion of Cannock and Churchbridge	2.11	Moderate	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Low-Moderate
Cannock Wood	Release of CW1 as an expansion of Cannock Wood	29.02	Weak/No	Weak/No	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Cannock Wood	Release of CW2 as an expansion of Cannock Wood	1.77	Weak/No	Weak/No	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Cannock Wood	Release of CW3 as an expansion of Cannock Wood	1.20	Weak/No	Weak/No	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate
Cannock Wood	Release of CW4 as an expansion of Cannock Wood.	0.97	Weak/No	Weak/No	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Low-Moderate
Cannock Wood	Release of CW5 as an expansion of Cannock Wood.	3.19	Weak/No	Weak/No	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Cannock Wood	Release of CW6 as an expansion of Cannock Wood	2.53	Weak/No	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Cannock Wood	Release of CW7 as an expansion of Cannock Wood.	5.18	Weak/No	Weak/No	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Cannock Wood	Release of CW8 as an expansion of Cannock Wood.	1.76	Weak/No	Weak/No	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate
Cannock Wood	Release of CW9 as an expansion of Cannock Wood	3.20	Weak/No	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Low-Moderate
Cannock Wood	Release of CW10 as an expansion of Cannock Wood	9.22	Weak/No	Weak/No	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Cannock Wood	Release of CW11 as an expansion of Cannock Wood	1.98	Weak/No	Weak/No	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Cannock Wood	Release of CW12 as an expansion of Cannock Wood	2.49	Weak/No	Weak/No	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Cannock Wood	Release of CW13 as an expansion of Cannock Wood	1.25	Weak/No	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Cannock Wood	Release of CW14 as an expansion of Cannock Wood	2.98	Weak/No	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Cannock Wood	Release of CW15 as an expansion of Cannock Wood	6.95	Weak/No	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Cannock Wood	Release of CW16 as an expansion of Cannock Wood	4.06	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Cannock Wood	Release of CW17 as an expansion of Cannock Wood	6.70	Weak/No	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Cannock Wood	Release of CW18 as an expansion of Cannock Wood	10.22	Weak/No	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Cannock Wood	Release of CW19 as an expansion of Cannock Wood	2.91	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Hednesford	Release of HE1 as an expansion of Hednesford	19.28	Strong	Weak/No	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Hednesford	Release of HE2 as an expansion of Hednesford	1.30	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate
Hednesford	Release of HE3 as an expansion of Hednesford	2.05	Strong	Weak/No	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Hednesford	Release of HE4 as an expansion of Hednesford	15.64	Strong	Weak/No	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Hednesford	Release of HE5 as an expansion of Hednesford	1.38	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Hednesford	Release of HE6 as an expansion of Hednesford	3.07	Moderate	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Low-Moderate
Hednesford	Release of HE7 as an expansion of Hednesford	7.28	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Hednesford	Release of HE8 as an expansion of Hednesford	33.15	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Hednesford	Release of HE9 as an expansion of Hednesford	14.30	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Hednesford	Release of HE10 as an expansion of Hednesford	8.92	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Hednesford	Release of HE11 as an expansion of Hednesford	5.54	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Hednesford	Release of HE12 as an expansion of Hednesford	5.69	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Low-Moderate
Hednesford	Release of HE13 as an expansion of Hednesford	3.46	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Hednesford	Release of HE14 as an expansion of Hednesford	4.52	Relatively strong	Relatively weak	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Hednesford	Release of HE15 as an expansion of Hednesford	19.30	Relatively strong	Relatively weak	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Hednesford	Release of HE16 as an expansion of Hednesford	2.31	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate
Hednesford	Release of HE17 as an expansion of Hednesford	6.20	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Very High
Hednesford	Release of HE18 as an expansion of Hednesford	5.75	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Very High
Hednesford	Release of HE19 as an expansion of Hednesford	6.34	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Hednesford	Release of HE20 as an expansion of Hednesford	8.44	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Very High
Hednesford	Release of HE21 as an expansion of Hednesford	4.64	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Very High
Hednesford	Release of HE22 as an expansion of Hednesford	1.06	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Hednesford	Release of HE23 as an expansion of Hednesford	18.54	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Very High
Hednesford	Release of HE24 as an expansion of Hednesford	9.00	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Hednesford	Release of HE25 as an expansion of Hednesford	7.32	Strong	Weak/No	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Hednesford	Release of HE26 as an expansion of Hednesford	14.57	Strong	Weak/No	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Hednesford	Release of HE27 as an expansion of Hednesford	2.61	Relatively strong	Relatively weak	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Hednesford	Release of HE28 as an expansion of Hednesford	14.06	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Low-Moderate
Hednesford	Release of HE29 as an expansion of Hednesford	5.33	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Hednesford	Release of HE30 as an expansion of Hednesford	26.63	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Norton Canes	Release of NC1 as an expansion of Norton Canes	6.27	Weak/No	Strong	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Norton Canes	Release of NC2 as an expansion of Norton Canes	2.89	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Relatively weak	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Low
Norton Canes	Release of NC3 as an expansion of Norton Canes	4.02	Weak/No	Relatively strong	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Norton Canes	Release of eastern part of NC3 as an expansion of Norton Canes	2.65	Weak/No	Relatively strong	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Norton Canes	Release of NC4 as an expansion of Norton Canes	2.96	Weak/No	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Low-Moderate
Norton Canes	Release of NC5 as an expansion of Norton Canes	2.13	Weak/No	Relatively strong	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Norton Canes	Release of southern part of NC5 as an expansion of Norton Canes	1.53	Weak/No	Relatively strong	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Norton Canes	Release of NC6 as an expansion of Norton Canes	1.06	Weak/No	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	No/Very Low
Norton Canes	Release of NC7 as an expansion of Norton Canes	2.44	Weak/No	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	No/Very Low
Norton Canes	Release of NC8 as an expansion of Norton Canes	7.04	Weak/No	Moderate	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Norton Canes	Release of NC9 as an expansion of Norton Canes	3.96	Weak/No	Moderate	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Low-Moderate

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Norton Canes	Release of NC10 as an expansion of Brownhills or Norton Canes	6.98	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Moderate	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate
Norton Canes	Release of NC11 as an expansion of Norton Canes	8.61	Weak/No	Relatively strong	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Norton Canes	Release of NC12 as an expansion of Cannock	1.40	Weak/No	Weak/No	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Low
Norton Canes	Release of NC13 as an expansion of Norton Canes	22.91	Weak/No	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Norton Canes	Release of NC14 as an expansion of Norton Canes	2.00	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Moderate	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Low-Moderate
Norton Canes	Release of NC15 as an expansion of Norton Canes	7.35	Weak/No	Moderate	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Norton Canes	Release of NC16 as an expansion of Norton Canes	5.74	Weak/No	Relatively strong	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Norton Canes	Release of NC17 as an expansion of Cannock	10.72	Weak/No	Moderate	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Norton Canes	Release of NC18 as an expansion of Norton Canes	4.39	Weak/No	Relatively strong	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Norton Canes	Release of NC19 as an expansion of Norton Canes	3.99	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Moderate	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Low
Norton Canes	Release of NC20 as an expansion of Norton Canes	10.88	Weak/No	Relatively strong	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Norton Canes	Release of NC21 as an expansion of Norton Canes	2.76	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Norton Canes	Release of NC22 as an expansion of Norton Canes	9.38	Weak/No	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Norton Canes	Release of NC23 as an expansion of Norton Canes	3.72	Weak/No	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate
Norton Canes	Release of NC24 as an expansion of Norton Canes	11.00	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Norton Canes	Release of NC25 as an expansion of Norton Canes	16.76	Weak/No	Relatively strong	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Norton Canes	Release of NC26 as an expansion of Norton Canes	2.79	Weak/No	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate
Norton Canes	Release of NC27 as an expansion of Norton Canes	2.79	Weak/No	Relatively strong	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Norton Canes	Release of NC28 as an expansion of Norton Canes	3.05	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Norton Canes	Release of NC29 as an expansion of Norton Canes	7.64	Weak/No	Relatively strong	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Prospect Village	Release of PV1 as an expansion of Prospect Village	1.66	Weak/No	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Prospect Village	Release of PV2 as an expansion of Prospect Village	2.28	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Moderate	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Low-Moderate
Prospect Village	Release of PV3 as an expansion of Prospect Village	4.66	Weak/No	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Prospect Village	Release of PV4 as an expansion of Prospect Village	6.51	Weak/No	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Prospect Village	Release of PV5 as an expansion of Prospect Village	2.92	Weak/No	Moderate	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate
Prospect Village	Release of PV6 as an expansion of Prospect Village	1.57	Weak/No	Moderate	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate
Prospect Village	Release of PV7 as an expansion of Prospect Village	10.70	Weak/No	Relatively strong	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Prospect Village	Release of PV8 as an expansion of Prospect Village	4.94	Weak/No	Relatively strong	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Prospect Village	Release of PV9 as an expansion of Prospect Village	44.45	Weak/No	Relatively strong	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Prospect Village	Release of PV10 as an expansion of Prospect Village	9.07	Weak/No	Relatively strong	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Rugeley	Release of RU1 as an expansion of Rugeley	2.67	Weak/No	Weak/No	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate
Rugeley	Release of RU2 as an expansion of Rugeley	4.89	Weak/No	Weak/No	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Rugeley	Release of RU3 as an expansion of Rugeley	9.24	Weak/No	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Rugeley	Release of RU4 as an expansion of Rugeley	10.34	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate
Rugeley	Release of RU5 as an expansion of Rugeley	4.69	Weak/No	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Low-Moderate
Rugeley	Release of RU6 as an expansion of Rugeley	2.54	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Low-Moderate
Rugeley	Release of RU7 as an expansion of Rugeley	12.00	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Rugeley	Release of RU8 as an expansion of Rugeley	15.10	Weak/No	Moderate	Strong	Relatively weak	Equal Contribution	High
Rugeley	Release of RU9 as an expansion of Rugeley	15.75	Weak/No	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Rugeley	Release of RU10 as an expansion of Rugeley	1.40	Weak/No	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Low-Moderate
Rugeley	Release of RU11 as an expansion of Rugeley	2.95	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate
Rugeley	Release of RU12 as an expansion of Rugeley	2.14	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Moderate	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Rugeley	Release of RU13 as an expansion of Rugeley	2.13	Weak/No	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate
Rugeley	Release of RU14 as an expansion of Rugeley	17.46	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Relatively strong	Moderate	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Rugeley	Release of RU15 as an expansion of Rugeley	1.95	Weak/No	Weak/No	Strong	Moderate	Equal Contribution	Moderate
Rugeley	Release of RU16 as an expansion of Rugeley	12.80	Weak/No	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Moderate	Equal Contribution	Low-Moderate
Rugeley	Release of RU17 as an expansion of Rugeley	2.19	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Equal Contribution	Low

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Rugeley	Release of RU18 as an expansion of Rugeley	6.80	Weak/No	Weak/No	Moderate	Moderate	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Rugeley	Release of RU19 as an expansion of Rugeley	1.96	Weak/No	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Relatively weak	Equal Contribution	Low
Rugeley	Release of RU20 as an expansion of Rugeley	8.27	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Relatively strong	Relatively weak	Equal Contribution	Moderate
Rugeley	Release of RU21 as an expansion of Rugeley	10.82	Weak/No	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate
Rugeley	Release of RU22 as an expansion of Rugeley	14.82	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Rugeley	Release of RU23 as an expansion of Rugeley	14.34	Weak/No	Moderate	Strong	Relatively weak	Equal Contribution	High
Rugeley	Release of RU24 as an expansion of Rugeley	1.80	Weak/No	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Rugeley	Release of RU25 as an expansion of Rugeley	2.24	Weak/No	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Rugeley	Release of RU26 as an expansion of Rugeley	22.61	Weak/No	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Rugeley	Release of RU27 as an expansion of Rugeley	2.15	Weak/No	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Rugeley	Release of RU28 as an expansion of Rugeley	125.42	Weak/No	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Rugeley	Release of RU29 as an expansion of Rugeley	2.68	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Rugeley	Release of RU30 as an expansion of Rugeley	5.59	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Rugeley	Release of RU31 as an expansion of Rugeley	8.01	Weak/No	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Rugeley	Release of RU32 as an expansion of Rugeley	0.61	Weak/No	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	No/Very Low

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Rugeley	Release of RU33 as an expansion of Rugeley	11.52	Weak/No	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate
Rugeley	Release of RU34 as an expansion of Rugeley	22.52	Weak/No	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Rugeley	Release of RU35 as an expansion of Rugeley	6.10	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Low-Moderate
Rugeley	Release of RU36 as an expansion of Rugeley	4.19	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Rugeley	Release of RU37 as an expansion of Rugeley	4.98	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Rugeley	Release of RU38 as an expansion of Rugeley	18.38	Weak/No	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Rugeley	Release of RU39 as an expansion of Rugeley	3.97	Weak/No	Weak/No	Relatively weak	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Low
Rugeley	Release of RU40 as an expansion of Rugeley	2.82	Weak/No	Weak/No	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Low-Moderate
Rugeley	Release of RU41 as an expansion of Rugeley	2.46	Weak/No	Weak/No	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Rugeley	Release of RU42 as an expansion of Rugeley	0.77	Weak/No	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Low

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	Release of WI1 as an expansion of Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	1.90	Relatively strong	Moderate	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	Release of WI2 as an expansion of Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	3.53	Relatively strong	Moderate	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	Release of WI3 as an expansion of Cannock	7.42	Relatively strong	Moderate	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	Release of WI4 as an expansion of	14.26	Relatively strong	Moderate	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
	Wimblebury and Heath Hayes							
Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	Release of WI5 as an expansion of Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	8.82	Relatively strong	Moderate	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate
Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	Release of WI6 as an expansion of Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	1.31	Relatively strong	Moderate	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	Release of WI7 as an expansion of Cannock	14.42	Strong	Relatively strong	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Very High

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	Release of the lower north western slopes of WI7, as an expansion of Cannock	10.56	Strong	Relatively strong	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	Release of WI8 as an expansion of Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	3.39	Relatively strong	Moderate	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	Release of WI9 as an expansion of Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	4.73	Moderate	Relatively weak	Moderate	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	Release of WI10 as an expansion of Cannock	8.50	Strong	Relatively strong	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Very High
Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	Release of WI11 as an expansion of Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	4.60	Strong	Relatively strong	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	Release of WI12 as an expansion of Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	11.83	Relatively strong	Moderate	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	Release of WI13 as an expansion of	23.31	Strong	Relatively strong	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Very High

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
	Wimblebury and Heath Hayes							
Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	Release of WI14 as an expansion of Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	5.29	Relatively strong	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Low-Moderate
Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	Release of WI15 as an expansion of Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	3.95	Moderate	Relatively weak	Relatively weak	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Low-Moderate
Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	Release of WI16 as an expansion of	3.61	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
	Wimblebury and Heath Hayes							
Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	Release of WI17 as an expansion of Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	5.59	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	Release of WI18 as an expansion of Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	2.34	Moderate	Moderate	Relatively weak	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate
Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	Release of WI19 as an expansion of	1.33	Moderate	Relatively weak	Moderate	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
	Wimblebury and Heath Hayes							
Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	Release of WI20 as an expansion of Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	1.47	Relatively strong	Relatively weak	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	Moderate-High
Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	Release of WI21 as an expansion of Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	6.80	Relatively strong	Relatively weak	Relatively strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High
Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	Release of WI22 as an expansion of	3.62	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High

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Settlement	Release Scenario	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating	Harm Rating
	Wimblebury and Heath Hayes							
Wimblebury and Heath Hayes	Release of WI23 as an expansion of Cannock	14.20	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution	High

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Table 4.2: Green Belt outer areas assessment of contribution ratings.

Outer Area	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating
OA1	38.58	Weak/No Contribution	Moderate	Strong	Relatively Weak	Equal Contribution
OA1	38.58	Purpose 1: Land is not close enough to the large built-up area to be associated with it.	Purpose 2: Land lies in a wide gap between Hednesford and Rugeley, with some significant separating features.	Purpose 3: Land is countryside.	Purpose 4: Land is located at distance but has some visual relationship with the historic core and forms part of the wider landscape setting of the town.	Purpose 5: All Green Belt land is considered to make an equal contribution to this purpose.
OA2	204.33	Weak/No Contribution	Weak/No Contribution	Strong	Weak/No Contribution	Equal Contribution
OA2	204.33	Purpose 1: Land is not close enough to the large built-up area	Purpose 2: Land does not lie between neighbouring towns.	Purpose 3: Land is countryside.	Purpose 4: The land does not contribute to the setting or special	Purpose 5: All Green Belt land is considered to make

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Outer Area	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating
		to be associated with it.			character of any historic towns.	an equal contribution to this purpose.
OA3	1786.37	Weak/No Contribution	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No Contribution	Equal Contribution
OA3	1786.37	Purpose 1: Land is not close enough to the large built-up area to be associated with it.	Purpose 2: Land lies in a wide gap between Hednesford and Rugeley, with some significant separating features.	Purpose 3: Land is countryside.	Purpose 4: The land does not contribute to the setting or special character of any historic towns.	Purpose 5: All Green Belt land is considered to make an equal contribution to this purpose.
OA4	75.32	Weak/No Contribution	Moderate	Strong	Relatively Weak	Equal Contribution
OA4	75.32	Purpose 1: Land is not close enough to the large built-up area	Purpose 2: Land lies in a wide gap between Hednesford and Rugeley, with	Purpose 3: Land is countryside.	Purpose 4: Land is located at distance but has some visual relationship with the	Purpose 5: All Green Belt land is considered to make

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Outer Area	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating
		to be associated with it.	some significant separating features.		historic core and forms part of the wider landscape setting of the town	an equal contribution to this purpose.
OA5	21.47	Weak/No Contribution	Weak/No Contribution	Strong	Weak/No Contribution	Equal Contribution
OA5	21.47	Purpose 1: Land is not close enough to the large built-up area to be associated with it.	Purpose 2: Land does not lie between neighbouring towns.	Purpose 3: Land is countryside.	Purpose 4: The land does not contribute to the setting or special character of any historic towns.	Purpose 5: All Green Belt land is considered to make an equal contribution to this purpose.
OA6	118.69	Weak/No Contribution	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No Contribution	Equal Contribution
OA6	118.69	Purpose 1: Land is not close enough to the large built-up area	Purpose 2: Land is peripheral to a moderate gap	Purpose 3: Land is countryside.	Purpose 4: The land does not contribute to the setting or special	Purpose 5: All Green Belt land is considered to make

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Outer Area	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating
		to be associated with it.	between Cannock and Burntwood.		character of any historic towns.	an equal contribution to this purpose.
OA7	8.84	Weak/No Contribution	Relatively Strong	Strong	Weak/No Contribution	Equal Contribution
OA7	8.84	Purpose 1: Land is not close enough to the large built-up area to be associated with it.	Purpose 2: Land lies in a wide gap between Cannock and Burnwood, but urbanising development between the two at Prospect Village reduces perceived separation.	Purpose 3: Land is countryside.	Purpose 4: The land does not contribute to the setting or special character of any historic towns.	Purpose 5: All Green Belt land is considered to make an equal contribution to this purpose.
OA8	87.44	Weak/No Contribution	Relatively Strong	Strong	Weak/No Contribution	Equal Contribution

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Outer Area	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating
OA8	87.44	Purpose 1: Land is not close enough to the large built-up area to be associated with it.	Purpose 2: Land lies in a wide gap between Cannock and Burnwood, but urbanising development between the two at Prospect Village reduces perceived separation.	Purpose 3: Land is countryside.	Purpose 4: The land does not contribute to the setting or special character of any historic towns.	Purpose 5: All Green Belt land is considered to make an equal contribution to this purpose.
OA9	10.93	Weak/No Contribution	Relatively Strong	Strong	Weak/No Contribution	Equal Contribution
OA9	10.93	Purpose 1: Land is not close enough to the large built-up area to be associated with it.	Purpose 2: Land lies in a moderate gap between Heath Hayes and Burntwood, but there	Purpose 3: Land is countryside.	Purpose 4: The land does not contribute to the setting or special character of any historic towns.	Purpose 5: All Green Belt land is considered to make an equal contribution to this purpose.

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Outer Area	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating
			are some significant separating features, including Cuckoo Bank and Chasewater and the Southern Staffordshire Coalfield Heaths SSSI.			
OA10	27.55	Weak/No Contribution	Strong	Strong	Weak/No Contribution	Equal Contribution
OA10	27.55	Purpose 1: Land is not close enough to the large built-up area to be associated with it.	Purpose 2: Land lies in a moderate gap between Heath Hayes and Burntwood, but	Purpose 3: Land is countryside.	Purpose 4: The land does not contribute to the setting or special character of any historic towns.	Purpose 5: All Green Belt land is considered to make an equal contribution to this purpose.

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Outer Area	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating
			urbanising development between the two reduces perceived separation and increases the fragility of the gap.			
OA11	8.56	Weak/No Contribution	Relatively Strong	Strong	Weak/No Contribution	Equal Contribution
OA11	8.56	Purpose 1: Land is not close enough to the large built-up area to be associated with it.	Purpose 2: The parcel lies in a wide gap between Cannock and Burntwood to the southwest, but the presence of Norton Canes between the	Purpose 3: Land is countryside.	Purpose 4: The land does not contribute to the setting or special character of any historic towns.	Purpose 5: All Green Belt land is considered to make an equal contribution to this purpose.

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Outer Area	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating
			two reduces perceived separation.			
OA12	73.56	Weak/No Contribution	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No Contribution	Equal Contribution
OA12	73.56	Purpose 1: Land is not close enough to the large built-up area to be associated with it.	Purpose 2: There is a wide gap between Cannock and Burntwood. Urbanising development at Norton Canes reduces gaps but there are some significant separating features, including	Purpose 3: Land is countryside.	Purpose 4: The land does not contribute to the setting or special character of any historic towns.	Purpose 5: All Green Belt land is considered to make an equal contribution to this purpose.

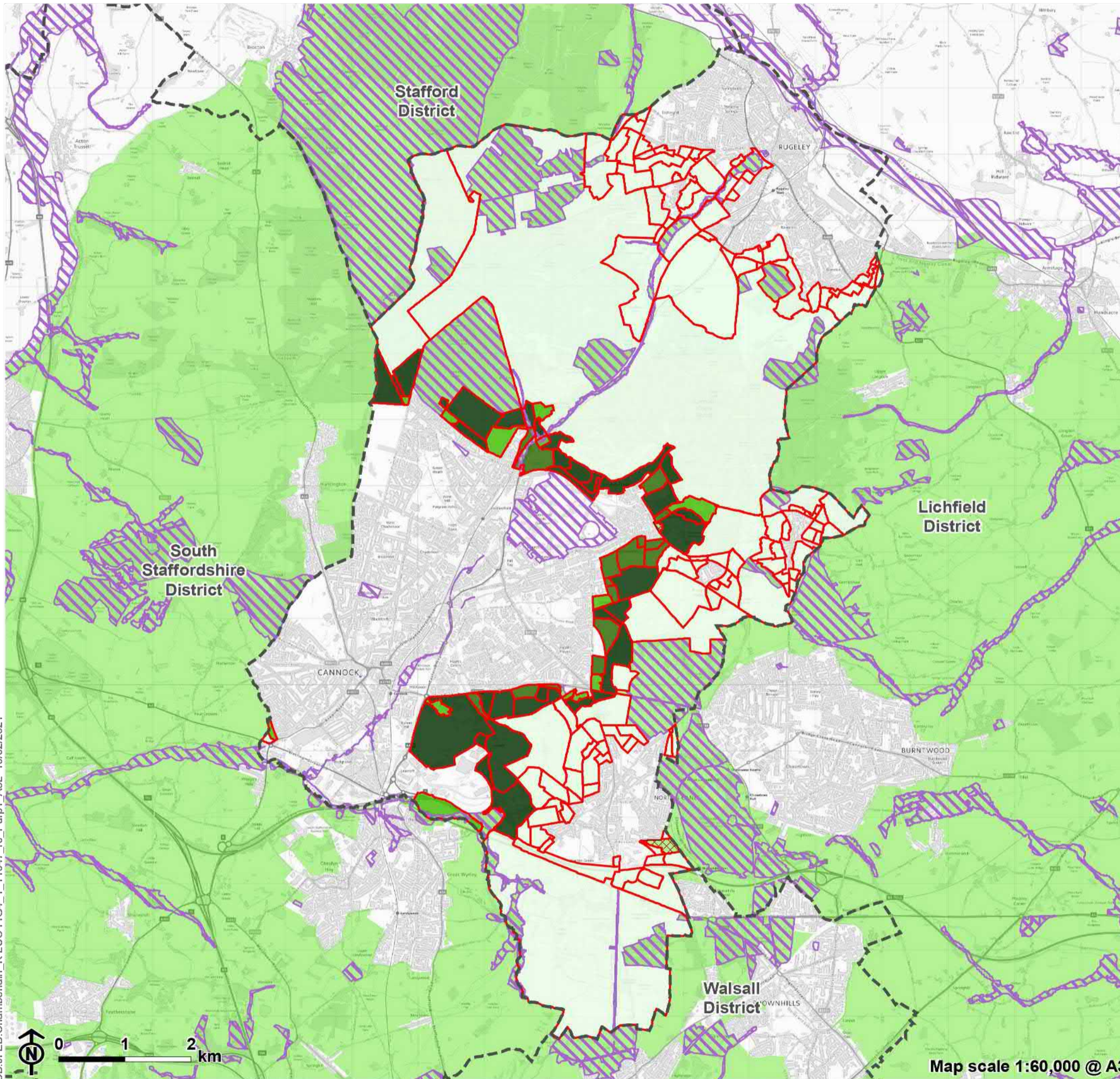
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Outer Area	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating
			Chasewater and undulating land.			
OA13	16.79	Weak/No Contribution	Relatively Strong	Strong	Weak/No Contribution	Equal Contribution
OA13	16.79	Purpose 1: Land is not close enough to the large built-up area to be associated with it.	Purpose 2: Land lies in a wide gap between Cannock and Burntwood, but urbanising development at Norton Canes between the two reduces perceived separation.	Purpose 3: Land is countryside.	Purpose 4: The land does not contribute to the setting or special character of any historic towns.	Purpose 5: All Green Belt land is considered to make an equal contribution to this purpose.
OA14	555.90	Weak/No Contribution	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No Contribution	Equal Contribution

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Outer Area	Area (ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating
		<p>Purpose 1: Land is not close enough to the large built-up area to be associated with it.</p>	<p>Purpose 2: Land lies in a wide gap between Cheslyn Hay/Great Wryley and Brownhills, with some significant separating features including Wash Brook, Wryley Common, and undulating land.</p>	<p>Purpose 3: Land is countryside.</p>	<p>Purpose 4: The land does not contribute to the setting or special character of any historic towns.</p>	<p>Purpose 5: All Green Belt land is considered to make an equal contribution to this purpose.</p>

Figure 4.1
Purpose 1 contribution

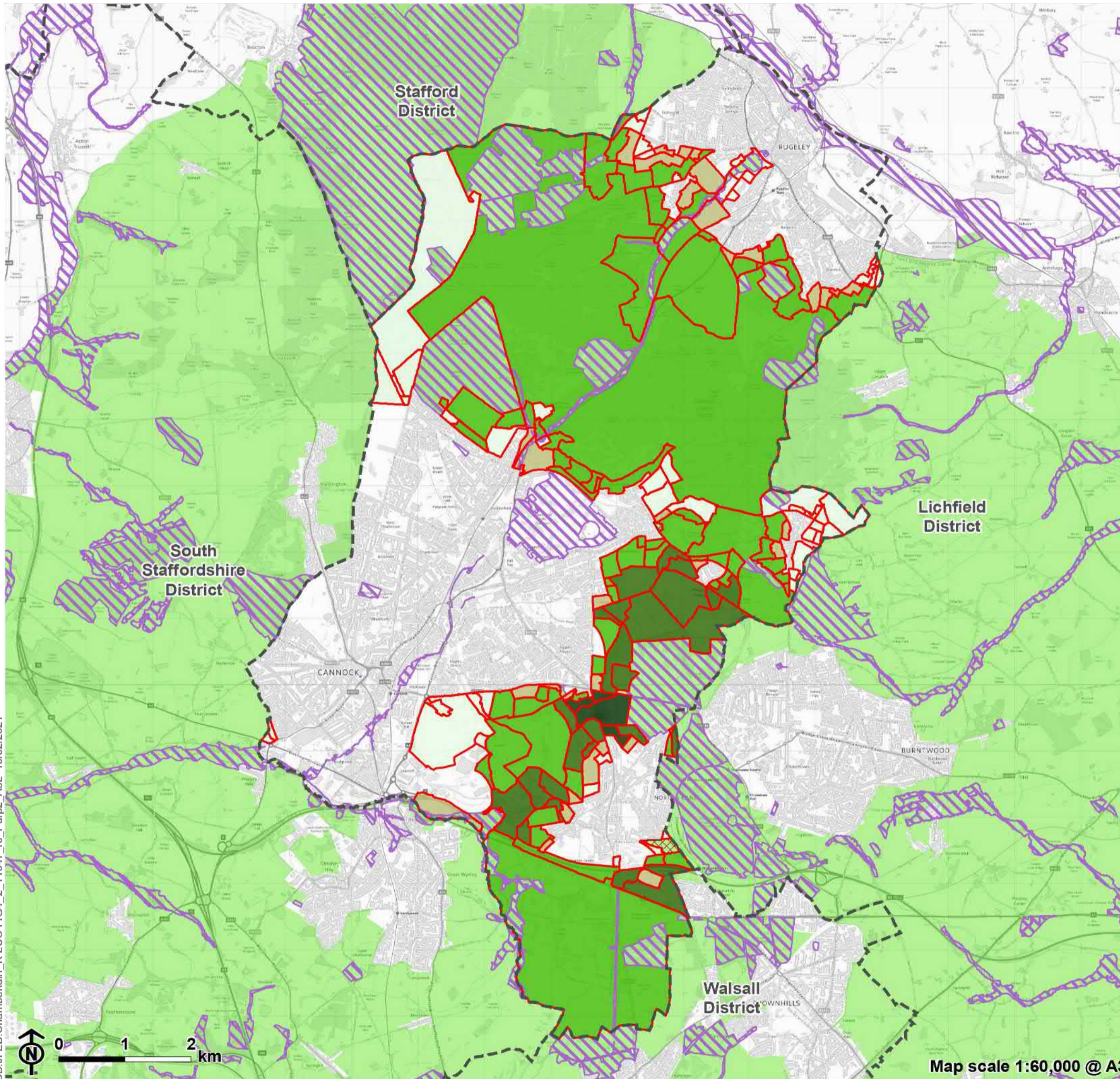


- Local Authority boundary
 - Green Belt
 - Parcel boundary
 - No openness
 - Absolute constraint(s)
- Purpose 1 contribution**
- Strong
 - Relatively strong
 - Moderate
 - Relatively weak
 - Weak/No

CB:JI EB:Chamberlain_K LUC FIG4_1_11047_r0_Purp1_A3L 19/02/2021

Map scale 1:60,000 @ A3

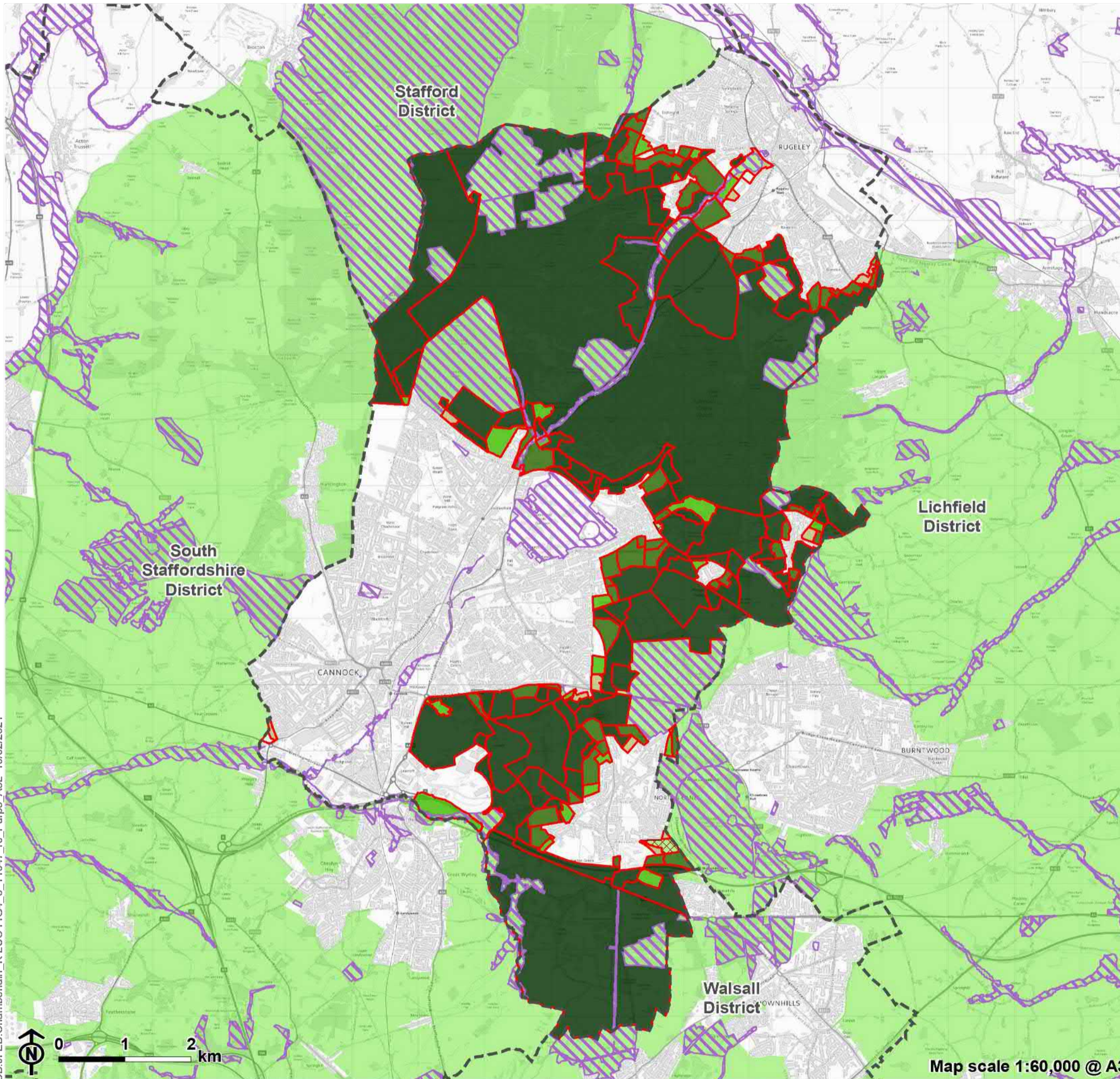
Figure 4.2
Purpose 2 contribution



- Local Authority boundary
- Green Belt
- Parcel boundary
- No openess
- Absolute constraint(s)
- Purpose 2 contribution**
- Strong
- Relatively strong
- Moderate
- Relatively weak
- Weak/No

CB:JI EB:Chamberlain_K LUC FIG4_2_11047_r0_Purp2_A3L 19/02/2021

Figure 4.3
Purpose 3 contribution

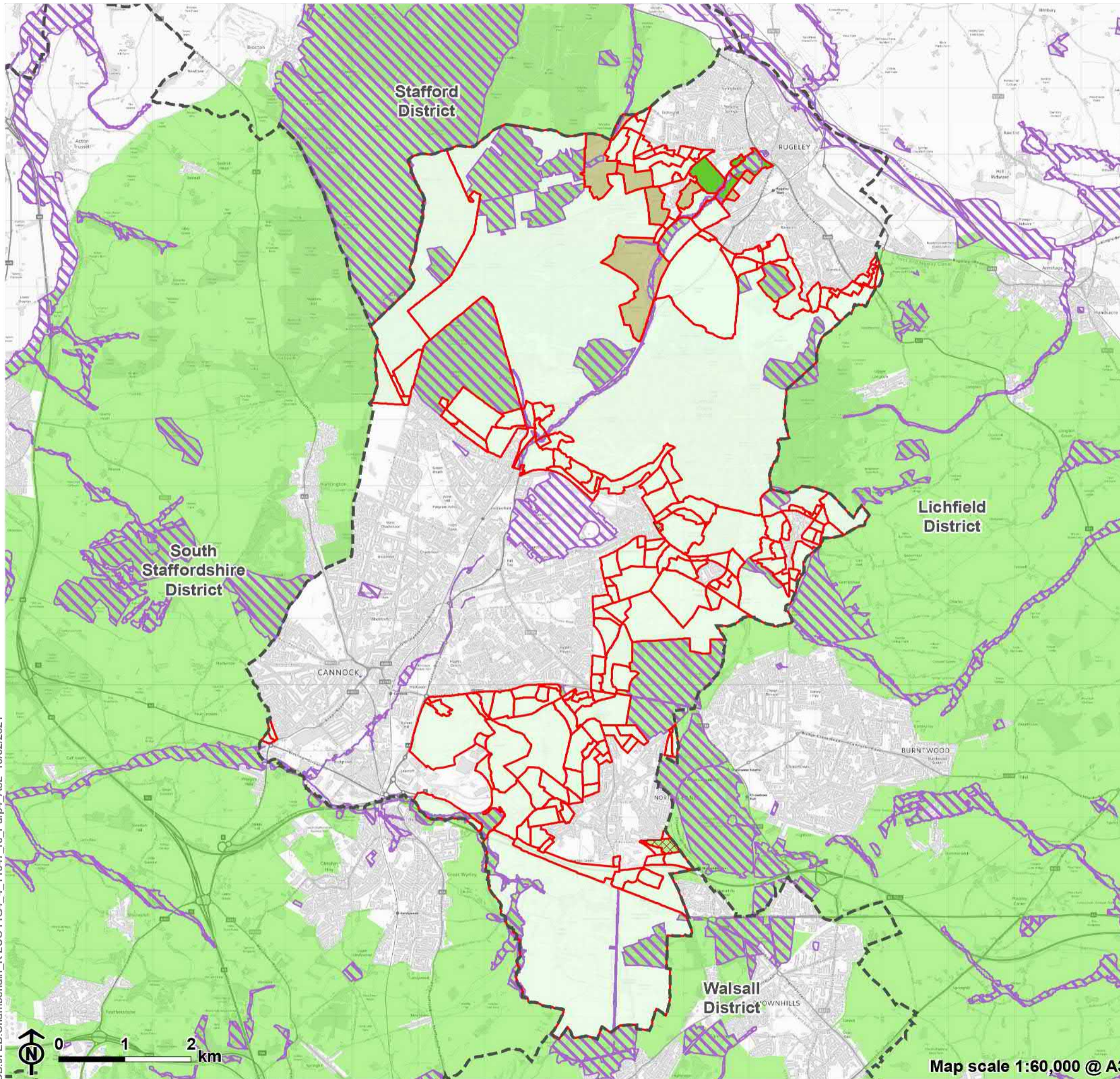


- Local Authority boundary
- Green Belt
- Parcel boundary
- No openness
- Absolute constraint(s)
- Purpose 3 contribution**
- Strong
- Relatively strong
- Moderate
- Relatively weak
- Weak/No

CB:JI EB:Chamberlain_K LUC FIG4_3_11047_r0_Purp3_A3L 19/02/2021

Map scale 1:60,000 @ A3

Figure 4.4
Purpose 4 contribution

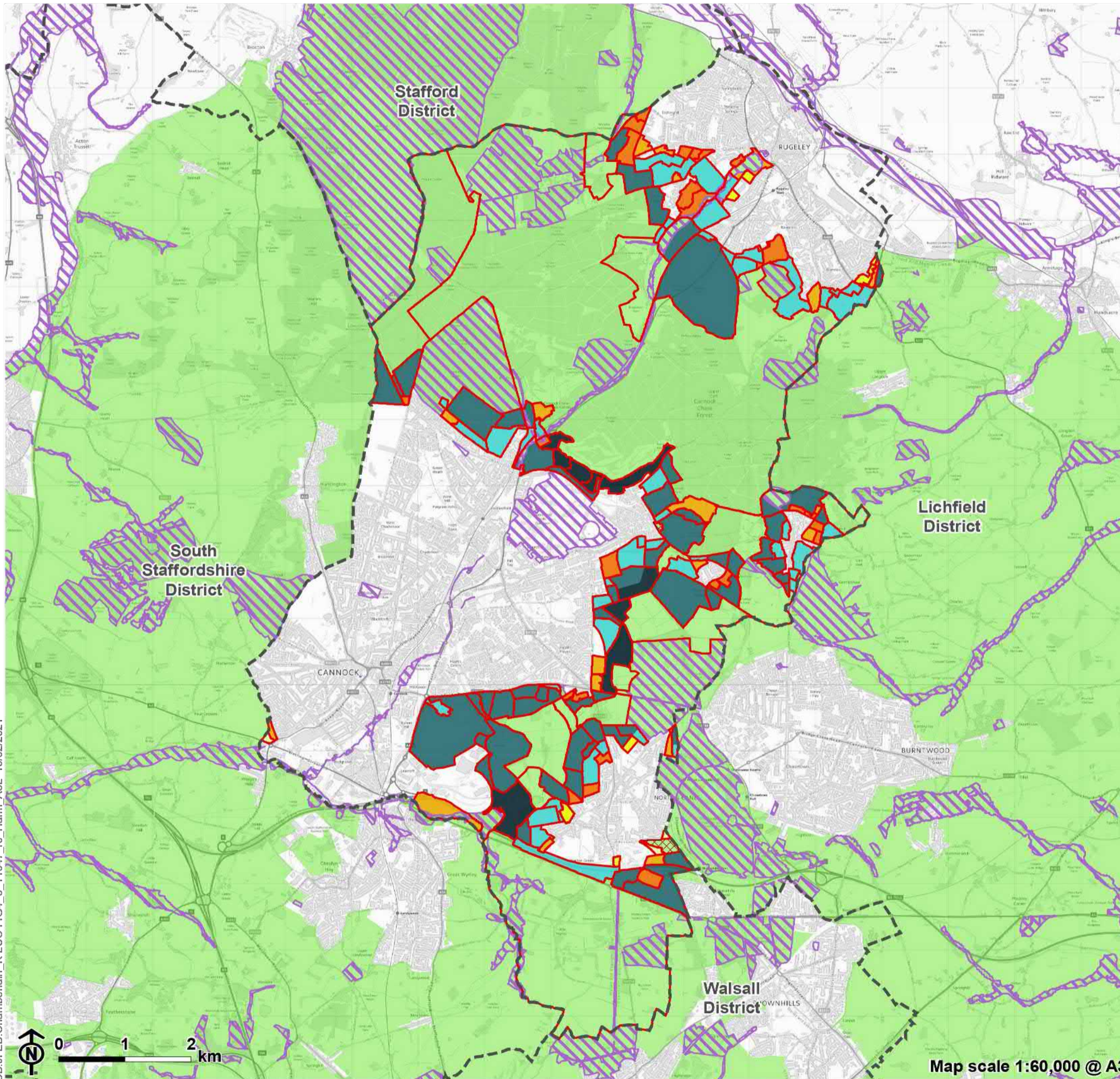


- Local Authority boundary
- Green Belt
- Parcel boundary
- No openness
- Absolute constraint(s)
- Purpose 4 contribution**
- Strong
- Relatively strong
- Moderate
- Relatively weak
- Weak/No

CB:JI EB:Chamberlain_K LUC FIG4_4_11047_r0_Purp4_A3L 19/02/2021

Map scale 1:60,000 @ A3

Figure 4.5
Harm ratings



- Local Authority boundary
 - Green Belt
 - Parcel boundary
 - No openness
 - Absolute constraint(s)
- Harm rating**
- Very High
 - High
 - Moderate-High
 - Moderate
 - Low-Moderate
 - Low
 - No/Very Low

CB:JI EB:Chamberlain_K LUC FIG4_5_11047_r0_Harm_A3L 19/02/2021



Map scale 1:60,000 @ A3

Chapter 5

Making Changes to the Green Belt

5.1 The following chapter sets out the key steps that the Council should consider if there is an identified need to release land from the Green Belt. The chapter also sets out potential generic mitigation measures that could be applied to reduce the potential harm to the Green Belt, if land is released. This is followed by a discussion of the potential opportunities for enhancing the beneficial use of the Green Belt (in line with Paragraph 141 of the NPPF). However, it should be noted that this Chapter does not contain an exhaustive list of enhancement opportunities. In particular if the Council decides to release land from the Green Belt, the Local Plan will need to set out opportunities to enhance the remaining Green Belt to compensate for its loss.

Making changes to the Green Belt

5.2 The NPPF requires changes to the Green Belt to be made through the Development Plan process. If such changes are made, the process should include demonstration of exceptional circumstances, including consideration of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development, i.e. planning for economic growth, housing need, health and wellbeing, accessibility and biodiversity, cultural heritage and climate change resilience.

5.3 A common interpretation of the policy position is that, where necessitated by development requirements, plans should identify the most sustainable locations for growth. This policy position should be maintained unless outweighed by adverse effects on the overall integrity of the Green Belt according to an assessment of the whole of the Green Belt based around the five purposes. In other words, the relatively poor performance of the land against Green Belt purposes is not, of itself, an exceptional circumstance that would justify release of the land from the Green Belt. Conversely, higher performing Green Belt may be appropriate for release where exceptional circumstances are demonstrated.

5.4 Before concluding that 'exceptional circumstances' exist to justify changes to the Green Belt, Paragraph 137 of the NPPF states that local authorities should demonstrate that all other

'reasonable options' for meeting its identified need for development have been considered. In particular local authorities need to consider whether their strategy:

- makes effective use of suitable brownfield sites and underutilised land;
- optimises the density of development in town and city centres and other locations well served by public transport; and
- explores whether other authorities can help to meet some of the identified development requirement.

5.5 Should the Council decide to release land from the Green Belt, careful consideration also needs to be given to the form of the amended Green Belt boundaries. As set out in Para 139 of the NPPF:

"When defining Green Belt boundaries, plans should:

- ensure consistency with the development plan's strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development;
- not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open;
- where necessary, identify areas of safeguarded land between the urban area and the Green Belt, in order to meet longer-term development needs stretching well beyond the plan period;
- make clear that the safeguarded land is not allocated for development at the present time. Planning permission for the permanent development of safeguarded land should only be granted following an update to a plan which proposes the development;
- be able to demonstrate that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the plan period; and
- define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent."

5.6 Further guidance on establishing the necessary 'exceptional circumstances' for making alterations to Green Belt boundaries is set out in the recent High Court judgement: *Compton Parish Council and others v Guildford Borough Council and others* (2019). This involved an

appeal opposed to the principle and extent of land proposed for release from the Green Belt in the Council's submitted Local Plan. The judge concluded:

- “There is no definition of the policy concept of ‘exceptional circumstances’ for altering Green Belt boundaries. This itself is a deliberate policy decision, demonstrating that there is a planning judgment to be made in all the circumstances of any particular case.”
- “The ‘exceptional circumstances’ can be found in the accumulation or combination of circumstances, of varying natures, which entitle the decision-maker, in the rational exercise of a planning judgment, to say that the circumstances are sufficiently exceptional to warrant altering the Green Belt boundary...there will almost inevitably be an analysis of the nature and degree of the need, allied to consideration of why the need cannot be met in locations which are sequentially preferable for such developments, an analysis of the impact on the functioning of the Green Belt and its purpose, and what other advantages the proposed locations, released from the Green Belt, might bring, for example, in terms of a sound spatial distribution strategy.”

Mitigation to reduce harm to Green Belt

The concept of mitigation

5.7 One of the factors weighed up in the judgement of harm resulting from the release of a Green Belt area, is the impact that the loss of openness would have on other Green Belt land. This is assessed by considering how neighbouring land would rate in terms of its contribution to Green Belt purposes were the area in question to be urbanised i.e. would its contribution be weakened? In many cases this is a key factor in the judgement: a site might in itself be small but its development could represent a more significant change than its physical area might suggest if, for example, it resulted in the breaching of a strong boundary feature, or an increase in the built containment of adjacent land.

5.8 There is the potential to reduce harm to the remaining Green Belt by implementing measures which will affect the relationship between the remaining Green Belt land and urban areas. Measures which increase the contribution that land is judged to make to Green Belt

purposes, offsetting to some degree the predicted reduction in contribution, could strengthen the case for release of a particular area. However, any release of Green Belt land will still require 'exceptional circumstances' to be demonstrated.

5.9 Mitigation could apply either to land being released or land being retained as Green Belt. There is an overlap between the latter and the concept of beneficial use of Green Belt land as set out in the NPPF, in that mitigation can also present an opportunity to enhance beneficial use.

Mitigation themes

5.10 The extent to which harm can be mitigated will vary from site to site, but potential measures can be considered under different themes. The Green Belt purposes are considered to relate to the relationship between the land area in question, developed land, and the countryside. This relationship is influenced by: the location of the area; the extent of openness within it; and the role of landscape/physical elements, including boundary features (in either separating the area from, or connecting it to) built-up areas and the wider countryside.

5.11 The list below outlines some mitigation measures that could be considered as part of the planning and development process. Which mitigation measures are the most appropriate will vary, depending on local circumstances and will need to be defined as part of the master planning process. The individual harm assessments in Appendix B include potential indicative mitigation measures for parcels where relevant.

Potential measures to mitigate harm to Green Belt

Mitigation measure

- Use landscaping to help integrate a new Green Belt boundary with the existing edge, aiming to maximise consistency over a longer distance.

Benefits

- Maintaining sense of separation between urban and open land.

Considerations

- A boundary that is relatively homogeneous over a relatively long distance, such as a main road, is likely to be stronger than one which has more variation. Landscaping works can help to minimise the impact of 'breaches' in such boundaries.

Mitigation measure

- Strengthen boundary at weak points – e.g. where 'breached' by roads.

Benefits

- Reducing opportunities for sprawl.

Considerations

- The use of buildings and landscaping can create strong 'gateways' to strengthen settlement-edge function.

Mitigation measure

- Define Green Belt edge using a strong, natural element which forms a visual barrier – e.g. a woodland belt.

Benefits

- Reducing perception of urbanisation, and may also screen residents from intrusive landscape elements within the Green Belt (e.g. major roads).

Considerations

- Boundaries that create visual and movement barriers can potentially have detrimental effects on the character of the enclosed urban areas and the amenity of residents.

Mitigation measure

- Create a transition from urban to rural, using built density, height, materials and landscaping to create a more permeable edge.

Benefits

- Reducing perception of urbanisation.

Considerations

- This may however have implications in terms of reducing housing yield.

Mitigation measure

- Consider ownership and management of landscape elements which contribute to Green Belt purposes.

Benefits

- Ensuring permanence of Green Belt.

Considerations

- Trees and hedgerows require management to maintain their value in Green Belt terms, and the visual screening value that can be attributed to them is more limited if they are under private control (e.g. within back gardens).

Mitigation measure

- Enhance visual openness within the Green Belt.

Benefits

- Increasing perception of countryside.

Considerations

- Although openness in a Green Belt sense does not correspond directly to visual openness, a stronger visual relationship between countryside areas, whether directly adjacent or separated by other landscape elements, can increase the extent to which an area is perceived as relating to the wider countryside.

Mitigation measure

- Improve management practices to enhance countryside character.

Benefits

- Increasing strength of countryside character.

Considerations

- Landscape character assessment can help to identify valued characteristics that should be retained and where possible strengthened, and intrusive elements that should be diminished and where possible removed.

Mitigation measure

- Design and locate buildings, landscaping and green spaces to minimise intrusion on settlement settings.

Benefits

- Maintaining perceived settlement separation by minimising the extent to which new development intrudes on the settings of other settlements.

Considerations

- Analysis of settlement settings, including consideration of viewpoints and visual receptors, can identify key locations where maintenance of openness and retention of landscape features would have the most benefit.

Mitigation measure

- Maintain/create separation between existing washed-over settlement and new inset settlement.

Benefits

- Minimising urbanising influences that could weaken the justification for retaining the washed-over settlement's status.

Considerations

- Ensure that the gap is sufficiently wide to maintain a sense of separation.

Mitigation measure

- Design road infrastructure to limit perception of increased urbanisation associated with new development.

Benefits

- Reducing perception of urbanisation.

Considerations

- Increased levels of 'activity' can increase the perception of urbanisation.

Mitigation measure

- Use sustainable drainage features to define/enhance separation between settlement and countryside.

Benefits

- Strengthening separation between urban and open land.

Considerations

- Need to determine if local topography and ground conditions are suitable.

Beneficial use of Green Belt

5.12 The purposes of the Green Belt do not make any reference to the quality or use of land falling within the designation, but Paragraph 141 of the NPPF, states that:

“Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.”

5.13 Furthermore, Paragraph 138 of the NPPF states that where it has been concluded that it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development, plans should “set out ways in which the impact of removing land from the Green Belt can be offset through compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt land”. This could be achieved through legal agreements in conjunction with the release of land and planning consent for development, or through strategic enhancement initiatives e.g. creation of community woodland.

5.14 The NPPF suggests different types of beneficial use. They relate principally to the environmental quality of the land, but can also, through strengthening boundary/buffer roles and affecting landscape and visual character, affect the contribution of land to Green Belt purposes.

5.15 The updated Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) also endorses the preparation of supporting landscape, biodiversity or recreation evidence to identify appropriate compensatory improvements, including:

- “new or enhanced green infrastructure;
- woodland planting;
- landscape and visual enhancements (beyond those needed to mitigate the immediate impacts of the proposal);
- improvements to biodiversity, habitat connectivity and natural capital;
- new or enhanced walking and cycle routes; and

- improved access to new, enhanced or existing recreational and playing field provision”.

5.16 Some of the mitigation measures listed in the previous section which relate to Green Belt land can also be considered beneficial uses, but there is broader scope for introducing or enhancing uses of Green Belt land that (by adding to its value) will strengthen the case for that land’s future protection. Some examples are provided in the list below.

5.17 Beneficial uses could be achieved through planning conditions, section 106 obligations and/or the Community Infrastructure Levy. The PPG stresses the need for early engagement with landowners and other interested parties to obtain the necessary local consents, establishing a detailed scope of works and identifying a means of funding their design, construction and maintenance.

Potential beneficial uses of Green Belt

Beneficial use

- Improving access

Considerations

- Enhancing the coverage and condition of the rights of way network and increasing open space provision.

Beneficial use

- Providing locations for outdoor sport.

Considerations

- Some outdoor sports can represent an urbanising influence; an emphasis on activities which do not require formal facilities is less likely to harm Green Belt purposes.

Beneficial use

- Landscape and visual enhancement

Considerations

- Using landscape character assessment as guidance, intrusive elements can be reduced and positive characteristics reinforced.

Beneficial use

- Increasing biodiversity

Considerations

- Most Green Belt land has potential for increased biodiversity value – e.g. the management of hedgerows and agricultural field margins, and provision of habitat connectivity, planting of woodland. There may also be opportunities to link enhancements with requirements to deliver ‘biodiversity net gain’ associated with development proposals.

Beneficial use

- Improving damaged and derelict land

Considerations

- Giving land a functional, economic value is a key aspect in avoiding damage and dereliction through lack of positive management, but this needs to be achieved with minimum harm to characteristics/qualities which help it contribute to Green Belt purposes.

5.18 Many of the beneficial uses outlined in the list above could be identified via a Green Infrastructure (GI) Study. This would identify the key opportunities for landscape, access, recreation and biodiversity enhancement within the Green Belt and beyond.

5.19 It is noted however, that Local Authorities may still be able to protect features such as open spaces, leisure facilities, burial grounds and nature conservation sites through other policy approaches / designations.

Conclusion

5.20 This study has assessed the harm to the Green Belt purposes of releasing land for development at the settlement-edges to facilitate the expansion of the Cannock large built-up area and existing inset settlements. The findings of this study will form an important piece of evidence for Cannock Chase District Council's emerging Local Plan.

5.21 However, as outlined above there are other important factors that need to be considered when establishing exceptional circumstances for making alterations to Green Belt boundaries, most notably sustainability, viability and deliverability issues. Whilst the ideal would be to minimise harm to the Green Belt, it may be that the most sustainable locations for development will result in high harm to the Green Belt.

5.22 In each location where alterations to Green Belt boundaries are being considered, planning judgement is required to establish whether the sustainability benefits of Green Belt release and the associated development outweigh the harm to the Green Belt designation. In addition, consideration will need to be given to potential measures to mitigate harm to the Green Belt, as well as potential opportunities to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt.