

Wirral Borough Council  
**Green Belt Review**  
Full Report

Revised Final | 28 November 2019

This report takes into account the particular instructions and requirements of our client.

It is not intended for and should not be relied upon by any third party and no responsibility is undertaken to any third party.

Job number 268589-00

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# 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 Overview

In May 2019, Ove Arup and Partners (“Arup”) was appointed by Wirral Council (“the Council”) to undertake a Green Belt Review for the local authority area of Wirral designated by Green Belt.

The Council is working to prepare a new Local Plan which will replace the current Unitary Development Plan (UDP) for Wirral (adopted 2000). The Council previously published a Proposed Submission Draft Core Strategy Local Plan for public consultation in December 2012. Proposed modifications to the submission draft Core Strategy were published for consultation in July 2013 and December 2014. Representations received at the time indicated that the Council needed to re-assess the need for housing and re-consider the future supply of housing land. Further consultation on the Borough’s housing needs and land supply undertaken in August and September 2016 resulted in the Council deciding to undertake a wide-ranging review of development options before deciding on the sites that will need to be included in the Local Plan. The Council consulted on the Development Option Review in September 2018. As part of the review of development options, the Council prepared an ‘Initial Green Belt Review’ which was published for consultation on the methodology in October 2017, with the full report being published for consultation in September 2018. This Review was intended to be an initial high-level review covering the full extent of the Wirral Green Belt and to identify any areas that may, if needed, merit further detailed investigation. The Review was peer reviewed by POS Enterprises (the consultancy arm of the Planning Officers Society) in April 2019 and a number of recommendations were made in relation to the methodology.

The aim of this Green Belt Review is to consider the POS Enterprises recommendations and the consultation responses received from the September 2018 consultation, and provide a new methodology and a finer grain assessment of the Green Belt in Wirral. The Review will represent an objective, evidence-based and independent assessment of how the Green Belt contributes to the five purposes of Green Belt set out in national policy. Should the Council consider that the release of sites is necessary, separate site-specific site selection work will need to be undertaken as part of the Local Plan preparation process. This Review does not consider whether ‘exceptional circumstances’ exist or make any recommendations relating to the alteration or review of Green Belt boundaries or the availability of the sites within the urban area.

## 1.2 Study Area

Wirral’s Green Belt forms part of the wider Merseyside Green Belt. Just under half (45%, 7,317 hectares) of the land area of Wirral is currently designated as Green Belt in the Council’s existing Unitary Development Plan (UDP), adopted in February 2000. The majority of the existing boundary was established by the former Merseyside Green Belt Local Plan, in December 1983.

Figure 1 below shows the Green Belt as currently designated within the local authority boundary and this forms the study area for the Green Belt Review.

Throughout this report reference is made to ‘settlements’ or ‘inset settlements’ – this refers to any town, village, or settlement which is not within the Green Belt. It does not therefore include any settlements or villages which are washed over by the Green Belt. Reference to the ‘urban conurbation’ refers to the contiguous urban area which includes Core Strategy Settlement Areas 1, 2, 3 and 4 encompassing Wallasey, Birkenhead, Bebington, Bromborough and Eastham. Further information on this is provided in Section 4.

Figure 1. The Wirral Green Belt. Source: GIS mapping provided by the Council.



### 1.3 Structure

This report is structured as follows:

- Section 1 introduces the study setting out the purposes of the study, the structure of the report and details the study area.
- Section 2 sets out the history and origins of the Merseyside Green Belt within Wirral and how it has evolved since its inception.

- Section 3 reviews current national policy in relation to Green Belt and reviews the latest guidance on Green Belt Reviews, including the approach taken by the neighbouring authorities. A review of the consultation responses received in relation to the September 2018 consultation on the Initial Green Belt Review is provided with a focus on the method related comments.
- Section 4 sets out the methodology for the Green Belt Review taking into account the findings from the review of policy, guidance and good practice.

## 2 History of the Wirral Green Belt

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### 2.1 Context

The Green Belt in Wirral forms part of the wider Merseyside Green Belt. The present boundaries were originally proposed in the Merseyside Structure Plan 1980 with the detailed boundaries defined and established in the Merseyside Green Belt Local Plan adopted in December 1983. Following an administrative boundary change in April 1993 and through the adoption of the UDP in February 2000 some minor amendments were made to the Green Belt boundary, most notably within the M53 corridor. With the exception of these amendments, the original Green Belt boundary established in 1983 has not changed.

### 2.2 Evolution of the Green Belt Designation

In 1955 the Government advised local planning authorities to prepare Green Belt for their areas and in 1960 and 1961 the former Lancashire and Cheshire County Councils submitted draft proposals for establishing Green Belts in Merseyside and the Wirral. Neither proposal was approved by the then Minister of Housing and Local Government.

The Strategic Plan for the North West published in 1974 set out the Department of the Environment's intention to establish a Green Belt in and around the Merseyside area as a necessary tool to guide urban development in the most desirable direction and protect important tracts of open land.

The Merseyside Structure Plan published in 1980 set out the aim and purpose of establishing a Green Belt in Merseyside (see below) and identified two broad areas of Green Belt as follows:

- (i) In the Wirral Peninsula;
- (ii) To the east of the River Mersey, around the principal settlements and including green wedges into the conurbation.

Paragraph 11.11 of the Structure Plan in relation to the M53 corridor states that:

*“The corridor of land occupied by the M53 between Bidston and Woodchurch is an important break between the built-up areas of eastern and central Wirral. It is a priority area for landscape renewal requiring treatment with the Structure Plan period. It could be that some further development might be allowed in the corridor without changing its character but until a scheme has been prepared, planning permission will not be given, except in very special circumstances, for development other than that which would be appropriate to a rural area.”*

The Structure Plan included a key diagram showing the proposed Green Belt boundary (see Figure 2 below) and notes that the precise boundaries will be defined in the Green Belt Subject Plan.



Figure 2. Key Diagram from the Merseyside Structure Plan 1980



The detailed Merseyside Green Belt boundary was officially defined in 1983 in the Merseyside Green Belt Local Plan. The Green Belt Local Plan applied the same aim and purpose of designating a Green Belt, as set out in the Structure Plan, this stated that a Green Belt is necessary to:

- *“Check the outward spread of the built-up area, direct development into existing towns, and encourage their regeneration;*
- *Ensure that towns and villages keep their individual character; and*
- *Safeguard the surrounding countryside so that its potential for agriculture, nature conservation and recreation and its value as an amenity for townspeople is preserved.”*

Strategic Planning Guidance for Merseyside, issued by the Secretary of State in August 1988, to inform the preparation of Unitary Development Plans in Merseyside, re-stated the importance of the Green Belt for Merseyside and concluded that there was no need for a general review but that the preparation of



Unitary Development Plans provided the opportunity to give precision to the detailed boundaries of the Green Belt where they had not been clearly defined.

In April 1993, following an administrative boundary change, a small area of existing Green Belt at Boathouse Lane in Gayton, originally designated as Green Belt in the former Ellesmere Port and Neston Local Plan, was also included in the Wirral Green Belt.

The UDP (February 2000) made three amendments to the defined Green Belt boundary, as detailed on the Proposal Map;

- Land within the M53 corridor from Leasowe Road to Bidson Moss and South to the A552 Woodchurch Road interchange was to be included to the Green Belt
- Land West of Elm Road in Irby was to be included to the Green Belt
- Residential development at Poulton Green Close in Poulton/Spital was to be removed from the Green Belt

The role of the Green Belt in Wirral, identified in the reasoned justification to UDP Policy GBT1 – Green Belt Boundaries, was to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; and to assist in urban regeneration.

The UDP also designated Major Developed Sites and Infill Villages in the Green Belt. The Infill Villages are listed in Policy GB7;

- *“Barnston Village (Outside the Conservation Area)*
- *Eastham Village (Outside the Conservation Area)*
- *Thornton Hough*
- *Raby Village*
- *Storeton Village”*

The Major Developed Sites are listed in Policy GB9;

- *“Arrowe Park Hospital*
- *Clatterbirdge Hospital*
- *Thingwall Hospital*
- *Wirral Metropolitan Collage – Carlett Park Campus*
- *Pensby Schools”*

The UDP supports urban regeneration across Wirral, referencing the Merseyside Structure Plan’s desire, stating that *“the UDP provides another opportunity to focus attention and give urban regeneration a realistic local expression within land-use planning policy”*.

As noted in the Council's Initial Green Belt Review, over the years since the Merseyside Structure Plan was adopted in 1980, the strongest overall emphasis has been on the promotion of urban regeneration, which, in response to previous consultation, remains the principal focus of the spatial vision and broad spatial strategy of the emerging Core Strategy Local Plan for Wirral.

The latest Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 (RSS, September 2008) was revoked in 2013 but anticipated that future development in the North West, as set out in this RSS, could generally be accommodated without the need for strategic reviews of the Green Belt. It indicated that there was no need for any exceptional substantial strategic change to Green Belt and its boundaries within Merseyside before 2011, and that after this date the presumption would be against exceptional substantial strategic change, subject to strategic studies to inform future reviews of RSS.

## 3 Planning Policy Context

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### 3.1 Overview

The following section sets out the policy context and practice guidance which has shaped the overall approach to the Green Belt Review. National policies which define the role and principles of the Green Belt are set out within the NPPF. The Planning Practice Guidance provide further guidance in relation to the Green Belt.

At a local level, the Unitary Development Plan for Wirral (2000) and the Joint Waste Local Plan for Merseyside and Halton (2013) and the Neighbourhood Plans for Devonshire Park (2015) and Hoylake (2016) comprise the statutory development plan for Wirral. The role of these documents in the evolution of the Green Belt designation has been considered above in the preceding section thus this section briefly provides context on the way in which these documents preserve the Green Belt through their restrictive policies on development in the Green Belt.

As part of the Local Policy section, a brief overview of the purpose of the Initial Green Review (September 2018) is provided including a review of the consultation responses received when the full report was published for consultation in September 2018 as part of the Development Options Review consultation.

### 3.2 National Policy

#### 3.2.1 National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraphs 133 and 134 of the NPPF sets out the role and purpose of the Green Belt in England, as follows:

*“The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. 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 permanence.*

*134 Green Belt serves five 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 specialist character of historic towns; and*
- 5. To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.”*

The NPPF endorses the permanence of Green Belts as an essential characteristic (paragraph 133) and stipulates 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.”* (paragraph 136). The NPPF makes it clear that in revising Green Belt boundaries local planning

authorities should seek to ensure that the boundaries defined will endure over the longer term and that there may be a need to consider whether land should be safeguarded for development beyond the plan period.

Paragraph 138 of the NPPF seeks to align a review of Green Belt boundaries with sustainable patterns of development and LPAs are encouraged to consider the consequences for sustainable development of channelling development towards urban areas inside the Green Belt boundary, towards towns and villages inset within the Green Belt or towards locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary.

With regard to amending Green Belt boundaries, paragraph 139 states that LPAs should:

- *“Ensure consistency with the Local Plan strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development;*
- *Not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open;*
- *Where necessary, identify in their plans 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 a Local Plan review which proposes the development;*
- *Be able to demonstrate that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the development plan period; and*
- *Define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.”*

### 3.3 Planning Practice Guidance

The PPG (2019) at Paragraph 001 on Green Belt considers the factors that can be taken into account when considering the potential impact of development on the openness of the Green Belt. It states:

*“Assessing the impact of a proposal on the openness of the Green Belt, where it is relevant to do so, requires a judgment based on the circumstances of the case. By way of example, the courts have identified a number of matters which may need to be taken into account in making this assessment. These include, but are not limited to:*

- *openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects – in other words, the visual impact of the proposal may be relevant, as could its volume;*

- *the duration of the development, and its remediability – taking into account any provisions to return land to its original state or to an equivalent (or improved) state of openness; and*
- *the degree of activity likely to be generated, such as traffic generation.”*  
[Reference ID: 64-001-20190722, published 22 July 2019]

## 3.4 Local Policy

The Council adopted the Unitary Development Plan in February 2000. Policy URN1 sets out a general presumption against development in the Green Belt with Policy GBT1 outlining the Green Belt boundaries within Wirral and on the proposals map. The Council are currently preparing a new Local Plan and anticipate Regulation 18 consultation from January to March 2020. Currently, there are no draft policies.

### 3.4.1 Initial Green Belt Review

As part of the Development Options Review, the Council prepared an Initial Green Belt Review. Public consultation on the methodology was undertaken from October to December 2017. Following the consultation, the methodology was revised and the full report was published for consultation in September 2018 as part of the Development Options Review consultation.

This Review was intended to be an initial high-level review covering the full extent of the Wirral Green Belt and to identify any areas that may, if needed, merit further detailed investigation. The Review considers both defined land parcels and SHLAA sites. The Review assessed Green Belt land in Wirral in a three-stage process; first against the five purposes outlined in paragraph 134 in the NPPF, second against physical and policy constraints, and third, the likely consequences for sustainable development. The Background Report sets out the background to the review and summarises the methodology providing a commentary on the assessment of the parcels and SHLAA sites against the purpose criteria and the outcomes of the high-level review of the physical and policy constraints. The report identifies a number of sites recommended for further investigation. The Review was peer reviewed by POS Enterprises (the consultancy arm of the Planning Officers Society) in April 2019 and a number of recommendations were made in relation to the methodology. These recommendations have been considered as part of the current Green Belt Review.

## Review of Consultation Responses

This section provides a brief review of the consultation responses received on the Initial Green Belt Review during the September 2018 Development Options Review consultation. These responses are not directly relevant to the current study as they relate to the previous methodology and this Green Belt Review represents a completely new method. However, the responses have been taken into consideration in developing the methodology for the current Green Belt Review.

Consultation responses were received from 155 individuals/organisations with a total of 863 different comments. The Council categorised these comments according to a number of key themes. 28% were site related comments which focused on specific sites or areas of land. These are not relevant for this Green Belt Review which will focus on General Areas and parcels only. Green Belt sites will be considered at a later stage. 15% of the comments related to the principle of Green Belt release. Again, these are not relevant for this Green Belt Review as it is intended to represent an objective, evidenced-based assessment of the Green Belt against the five purposes and it will not consider the principle of Green Belt release. 8% of the comments were categorised as general or other comments, which related to general comments about the Green Belt, the consultation process, and other related studies which the Council has produced.

There were 420 (49%) comments categorised as method related and within this the Council further categorised them according to the separate elements given that the Initial Green Belt Review Method consisted of three distinct stages. Comments relating to Stage 2 and 3 have not been considered as this Green Belt Review only relates to the assessment against the purposes of Green Belt which was covered by Stage 1 of the Initial Green Belt Review. Of the 420 method related comments, 157 (37%) of these related to the Stage 1 method. Arup undertook a review of these Stage 1 comments and a number of key themes were identified.

### **General Method Comments**

There was support for an assessment against the five purposes. A number of comments highlighted that the assessment was too simplistic and lacked sufficient detail both in terms of understanding the assessment criteria and providing meaningful outputs. It was stated that the approach to the overall score was unclear. Some respondents felt that certain purposes should be given more or less weighting than others.

One comment noted that there was no reference to paragraph 81 NPPF (2012) (now paragraph 141 in the revised NPPF 2019) in terms of beneficial Green Belt uses and the study was biased towards including sites for development rather than enhancing Green Belt.

There were a number of comments relating to the Council's proposed approach to boundary corrections and existing developed areas (infill development), predominantly focused on the lack of information as to the criteria to be used. One comment recommended that the Council undertake a review of washed over villages in the Green Belt.

A number of respondents disagreed with the Council's proposed approach of considering the impact on openness and permanence at the site-specific proposal stage and felt that it had been ignored arguing that it should form part of the purpose 3 assessment.

### **Purpose 1 Method Comments**

The majority of the comments relating to purpose 1 disagreed with the approach. It was felt that a mathematical calculation on the level of containment or enclosure

was too simplistic and would not result in a meaningful output. A large number of comments recommended that the strength of existing boundaries should form a consideration for purpose 1. Some respondents identified other factors to be considered as part of purpose 1 including ribbon development, the nature of the urban area, and existing built form in the Green Belt which results in an urban character. One comment noted that no definition of sprawl or large built up area had been provided.

### **Purpose 2 Method Comments**

The majority of the comments relating to purpose 2 recommended that the assessment should be both qualitative and quantitative applying planning judgement rather than a simple assessment on the linear separation between Settlement Areas. It was felt that other factors should be taken into account including the existence of permanent defensible boundaries which could provide separation. Other factors identified which were considered relevant to purpose 2 also included the 'experience' of separation, landscape and visual separation, the presence of existing urban influences, and the size and definition of settlements. One comment stated that the method should differentiate between linear separation and visual separation. Another comment felt that the method gave insufficient information on how the assessment would be undertaken.

A number of comments stated that only 'towns' should be considered as this is specifically mentioned in the NPPF. It was felt that reference should be made to a settlement hierarchy rather than using Settlement Areas. One comment noted that settlements in Cheshire West and Chester had not been considered when assessing purpose 2. Another comment noted that merging had not been defined and the Council had not identified what it considered to be 'strategic gaps'.

### **Purpose 3 Method Comments**

A large number of comments highlighted that 'countryside use' is not defined and no guidance is provided as to how intrusion into the open countryside is assessed. It was felt that further guidance and more specific criteria was required as the current approach is open to interpretation and challenge. A few comments stated that to measure whether an area of land has a countryside use is a flawed method for measuring whether development would encroach into the countryside.

A number of comments stated that the strength and permanence of existing boundaries should be considered for purpose 3. Other factors which were identified as being relevant included existing built form including consideration of height, mass, design and siting of existing buildings/structures; existing adjacent development; physical and visual enclosure; and the potential to create a new and permanent Green Belt boundary. One comment felt that landscape character or quality should be considered whilst another comment stated that landscape quality or character was not relevant to a Green Belt Review.

One comment highlighted that Cheshire West and Chester Council used the criterion of openness for each parcel and this was a useful consideration which Wirral should adopt.

### **Purpose 4 Method Comments**



The main area of contention on purpose 4 was the definition of ‘historic town’. Whilst some comments agreed that the use of Conservation Areas was a reasonable approach in the absence of other guidance, a number of comments stated that purpose 4 is aimed at places such as Chester, York, Bath and Oxford, and Wirral does not have any recognised historic towns. It was felt that the current approach does not accurately reflect the wording of the purpose. A few comments stated that detailed consideration of preserving the significance and setting of heritage assets should only be considered at site allocation stage.

One comment recommended that information to define historic towns could be drawn from the Merseyside Historic Characterisation Project, Wirral Report 2011 and the Cheshire Historic Characterisation 2007 and the Wirral Landscape Character Assessment.

A number of comments felt that further detail was required to understand how the impact on the character or setting of a Conservation Area was to be judged as the current method could be open to interpretation.

### **Purpose 5 Method Comments**

The comments in relation to purpose 5 were very varied. Some respondents disagreed with the Council’s statement that the release of Green Belt is likely to have a negative impact on urban regeneration (paragraph 9.30 of the Initial Green Belt Review Revised Methodology). It was felt this was too simplistic and one comment stated that there was not enough brownfield land to deliver growth aspirations. One comment suggested that until a standardised approach had been decided in the context of the City Region, a blanket approach to purpose 5 was not appropriate.

One comment stated that it is not clear how the measure of ‘proximity to areas of greatest need’ is to be used. Another comment felt that it was unclear why and how the Index of Multiple Deprivation data was being used, whilst another comment supported the use of this data.

Two comments suggested that purpose 5 should be given less weight whereas one comment felt that a blanket high level of contribution to purpose 5 would act as a barrier to sweeping removal of Green Belt sites.

## **3.5 Good Practice Guidance**

Given that the NPPF and PPG does not provide specific guidance on how Green Belt Reviews should be undertaken, the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) has released guidance on how to review Green Belts and this is supplemented by Inspectors decisions and national policy. These provide additional context and guidance for undertaking a study of the Green Belt.

### **3.5.1 “Planning on the Doorstep: The Big Issues - Green Belt” (Planning Advisory Service, Updated February 2015)**

The Planning Advisory Service (PAS) produced a guidance note “Planning on the Doorstep: The Big Issues – Green Belt” in February 2015. This provides

information on Green Belts, with one section focusing on Green Belt reviews. The updated guidance reflects the most recent Inspectors Reports as well as the updated NPPG. The Guidance states that the “...*purpose of a review is for the identification of the most appropriate land to be used for development, through the local plan.*”

The Guidance states that the big issue relating to Green Belt is the “...*maintenance of the purposes of the Green Belt set against the under-provision of housing across many parts of the country, where the capacity to accommodate sustainable development in urban areas is often insufficient to meet the housing requirement.*” The assessment of Green Belt must balance the differing perspectives of the role of Green Belt. The positive role of Green Belt is that it can and has prevented ‘ribbon’ or ‘strip’ development, maintained settlements as distinct and separate, and retained the openness of the landscape on the fringe of significant urban areas. However the Green Belt has also had a negative role in preventing the potentially arbitrary natural growth of settlements.

### **Definition of the Five Green Belt Purposes**

The Guidance considers some ways in which the five purposes of Green Belt can be addressed. It is important to note that at the outset, the guidance states that the five purposes of Green Belt can exclude ‘perfectly reasonable planning objectives’, for example, the strict application of these purposes would mean that the ‘quality of the landscape of an area should not be a consideration when assessing the contribution of the Green Belt to the fulfilment of the purposes.’

The Guidance considers the following:

- Purpose 1: *To Check the Unrestricted Sprawl of large built up areas* – this should consider the meaning of the term ‘sprawl’ and how this has changed from the 1930s when Green Belt was conceived.
- Purpose 2: *To Prevent Neighbouring Towns from merging into one another* – Green Belt is frequently said to maintain the separation of small settlements near to towns, but this is not strictly what the purpose says. Assessment of this purpose will be different in each case and a ‘scale rule’ approach should be avoided. The identity of a settlement is not determined just by the distance to another settlement; instead the character of the place and the land between settlements must be acknowledged. A Landscape Character Assessment is therefore a useful analytical tool to use in undertaking this purpose.
- Purpose 3: *To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment* - the most useful approach for this purpose is to look at the difference between the urban fringe and open countryside. As all Green Belt has a role in achieving this purpose, it is difficult to apply this purpose and distinguish the contribution of different areas.
- Purpose 4: *Preserving the Setting and Special Character of Historic Towns* – this applies to very few places within the country and very few settlements in practice. In most towns, there are already more recent development between the historic core and the countryside.

- Purpose 5: *To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land* - the amount of land within urban areas that could be developed will already have been factored in before identifying Green Belt land. The value of various land parcels is unlikely to be distinguished by the application of this purpose.

The guidance further suggests that land which is assessed as making a relatively limited contribution to the Green Belt, or land that might be considered for development, would be where:

- It is effectively ‘infill’ development;
- It is well contained by the landscape;
- It would cause little harm to the qualities that contributed to the distinct identify of separate settlements;
- It could create a strong boundary with a clear distinction between ‘town’ and ‘country’.

### **Further Areas of Consideration**

According to the PAS Guidance, a Review of Green Belt must also consider the following:

- Landscape should not be a consideration when assessing the contribution of Green Belt to the fulfilling of purposes. This could be a planning consideration in its own right when seeking a suitable location for development.
- A review of the Green Belt boundary could be justified through ‘exceptional circumstances’ of housing or employment land need.
- Sustainable development must be considered throughout the Review process. The Guidance stipulates that ‘based on what is now understood about accessibility, trip lengths and the use of appropriate travel modes for instance, the most sustainable locations for development may now be in Green Belts. Reviews of the Green Belt must take account of paragraph 84 of the NPPF which states that ‘when drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries, local planning authorities should take account of the need to promote sustainable development’.

### **3.5.2 Plan Making Q & A (Planning Advisory Service 2014)**

The Planning Advisory Service continually update their ‘Plan Making Question and Answer’ advice with regard to the Review of Green Belt within Local Plans. The service advises the following:

- Green Belt Reviews should be considered in the context of its strategic role. Meaning that Green Belts should not necessarily be just reviewed for each authority, and could include a joint methodology. Ideally, the Green Belt study should be comprehensive and strategic.

- Green Belt release must be based on robust evidence of need for a Review and a ‘gap’ in provision for which Green Belt release can resolve, must be demonstrated. This should ensure that consideration is offered to meeting housing needs across the housing market area.
- The guidance indicates that focusing on when the Green Belt meets one or more of the Purposes is likely to be a typical approach to a Green Belt review. The guidance suggests that Green Belt Reviews should be tailored to specific local need and are likely to be an iterative process.
- As changes to the Green Belt should be more permanent, it is therefore prudent to consider safeguarded land for two plan lifespans.

### 3.5.3 Inspector’s Local Plan Examination Reports

#### Cheshire East Council Local Plan Strategy Examination

Cheshire East Council provides a number of interesting lessons that are relevant to the current Green Belt Review. These lessons are provided by the Inspector’s views at the different stages of the Local Plan Strategy Examination, as set out below.

##### Interim Views (October 2014)

CEC identified that the exceptional circumstances needed to justify altering Green Belt boundaries are essentially the need to allocate sufficient land for market and affordable housing and employment development.

The Inspector identified several flaws in the overall approach to the Green Belt Assessment, including:

- There were several cases where the Green Belt assessment does not support the release of specific sites from the Green Belt and the review appears to have given greater weight to other factors, such as land ownership, availability and deliverability when preparing and finalising the Plan.
- There is inconsistency in the scale of the parcels assessed, in that, very large tracts of land have been assessed against smaller sites and some very small areas of land have been omitted.
- The review does not consider all the purposes of the Green Belt, omitting the contribution to urban regeneration and preserving the setting and special character of historic towns. Although the latter purpose may apply only to historic towns like Chester, the impact on urban regeneration does not seem to have been assessed.

##### Further Interim Views (December 2015)

Following the Green Belt Assessment Update, the Inspector published his further interim views. Paragraphs 41-46 discuss the Green Belt Assessment Update. The

Inspector noted that the independent two stage assessment of general areas followed by smaller parcels, assessing the relative significance of the contribution of each parcel against the five purposes of Green Belt followed by an overall assessment enabled a comprehensive, consistent and proportionate approach to be taken. He notes that only ‘Green Belt factors’ are assessed without potential areas for development thus providing a key input into the site selection process:

*“...the approach set out in the GBUA seems to reflect national policy and address most of the shortcomings of the previous Green Belt assessment. It provides a set of more comprehensive and proportionate evidence to inform, rather than determine, where the release of Green Belt land may be necessary at the site-selection stage.”* (paragraph 46)

The Inspector dismisses participants concerns relating to boundary definition noting that *“...in most cases, “strong” boundaries have been used, taking account of established physical features and committed new road schemes, where appropriate; the size of most of the larger land parcels has been reduced, with a 5ha indicative threshold for strategic sites, and detailed points about specific land parcels, including the identification of smaller and larger sites, can be reconsidered at the site-selection stage.”*

The Inspector acknowledges the complexity of the process and the involvement of professional judgements. He emphasises the needs for consistency and transparency using available and proportionate evidence:

*“This is a complex process, which needs to be undertaken in a consistent and transparent manner using available and proportionate evidence, involving professional judgements; it was not simply a desk-based study, but one which involved many site visits by CEC’s officers or consultants to confirm the assessments and judgements. More particularly, the GBAU is the only comprehensive evidence which assesses all potential land parcels on an objective, consistent and comprehensive basis.”* (paragraph 44)

In relation to the inclusion of purpose 4, the Inspector comments: *“The assessment utilises a variety of historical evidence, which enables a full assessment of the smaller settlements; this could be criticised as being too detailed for a Green Belt assessment which focuses on the larger historic towns, but is not necessarily inappropriate or irrelevant”*,

He notes that the assessment of purpose 5 *“...largely focuses on brownfield sites within the nearest settlement, and enables a differentiation between settlements to be made and provides a consistent, transparent and proportionate approach to this element of the assessment; the focus on regeneration issues internal to Cheshire East reflects the views of the Greater Manchester authorities . The overall assessment involves matters of judgement, and confirms that each purpose was given equal weighting and provides the reasons for the overall assessment.”*

### Interim Views on the Further Modifications (December 2016)

Following the final round of Examination Hearing Sessions in October 2016, the Inspector published his Interim Views on the Further Modifications required to

make the Local Plan Strategy ‘sound’. The Inspector did not provide any further comments on the Green Belt methodology however reiterated his comments made in December 2015 supporting the approach and methodology taken. The Local Plan Strategy was successfully adopted on 27 July 2017.

### **Cheshire West and Chester Council Local Plan Part One Examination (2014)**

The Inspector supported the approach taken by Cheshire West and Chester Council, stating their Green Belt assessment was *“a comprehensive assessment”*. The Inspector continued to state that the Part Two study *“provides a thorough, objective and robust evidence base”*, supporting the decision of the Council to undertake a further assessment of the Green Belt, following from the Council’s previous initial Assessment (Green Belt Assessment Part One) which identified potential areas which had potential to be removed from the Green Belt. From this assessment, the Inspector concluded that exceptional circumstances do exist to justify changing the Green Belt to deliver housing growth, which was a key objective within the Local Plan.

### **Knowsley Council Local Plan: Core Strategy Examination (2015)**

The Inspector supports the Green Belt approach taken by Knowsley Council, having undertaken a joint Green Belt study with Sefton Council and sharing the same methodology with West Lancashire *“to ensure a consistent approach to Green Belt releases”*. The Inspector further supported the methodology by stating that it is *“fundamentally robust...the approach complies with the framework, in that it achieves an appropriate balance between the aim and purposes of the Green Belt and the need to promote a sustainable pattern of development”*. The Inspector continued to state that the Council had considered alternative options to Green Belt release and a thorough SHLAA to assess the capacity of urban areas to deliver housing sites which has led to the proposed Green Belt sites for development.

Objectors to the Local Plan cited paragraph 14 of the NPPF (2012) which states that local plans are required to meet objectively assessed housing needs unless Green Belt, and other relevant policies, restricts development. The Inspector outlined that while paragraph 79 stresses preventing urban sprawl, paragraph 83 allows changes to be made to Green Belts in exceptional circumstances. The Inspector concluded that the approach taken by the local authority was to promote sustainable patterns of development. Other objectors cited the revised PPG in protecting the Green Belt however the Inspector disagreed stating that the Council’s approach places sustainability *“at the forefront”*. Alternative options had been considered but were found to be less sustainable than Green Belt releases therefore, the Inspector found the Council’s approach to be sound and that the *“principle of the exceptional circumstances test of the Framework is satisfied”*.

### **Sefton Council Local Plan Examination (2017)**

The Inspector stated that Sefton Council had met the requirements outlined in Paragraphs 83 – 85 of the NPPF and that exceptional circumstances do exist to

alter the Green Belt because the requirements were addressed within the Green Belt study. The Inspector continues to state that *“the most sustainable pattern of growth has been achieved”* by using *“a systematic methodology that focuses first on the five purposes of the Green Belt and then considers the other constraints to development”*. It is concluded that *“the approach is fundamentally sound”* despite objections regarding individual parcels and the approach to remove land from the Green Belt.

Objections raised referenced the revised PPG, arguing that the guidance states *“when considering how to meet the identified need, constraints such as Green Belt may restrain the ability of an authority to meet its housing need.”* However, the Inspector concludes that the Council’s approach has sustainability at the forefront.

### 3.6 Neighbouring Authorities

In the interests of Duty-to-Cooperate it is important to understand the approach to the Green Belt taken by the neighbouring authorities of the Council. The only neighbouring authority which is immediately adjacent is Cheshire West and Chester however the other neighbouring authorities of Sefton, Halton, Knowsley, St Helens and Liverpool City Council form part of the wider Merseyside Metropolitan County.

Cheshire West and Chester adopted their Part One Local Plan comprising of strategic policies in January 2015. The Council’s Green Belt Part One Study was completed in 2011 and the Green Belt Technical Site Review report was undertaken by Arup in 2013 and was successful in examination. The Council adopted their Local Plan (Part Two) on 19 July 2019 following submission to the Secretary of State in March 2018. This document covers land allocations and detailed policies.

Halton Council produced a Green Belt Study which was published in early 2015 which considered the green belt around Widnes and Hale only. In November 2017 they published a Green Belt Review covering the whole Green Belt to form part of the evidence base for the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan. The submission draft of the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan is due to be published shortly.

Sefton Council had two phases of its Green Belt studies. The 2013 study is a thorough analysis of Green Belt within Sefton. The 2012 study was completed with Knowsley, establishing a joint methodology between Knowsley and West Lancashire and is considered a complementary study which reviewed the existing Green Belt boundary in Sefton.

Knowsley Council adopted their Local Plan Core Strategy in January 2016 with a Green Belt Technical Report in July 2013. Sefton Council and Knowsley Council also completed a Joint Green Belt Study in November 2012.

St Helens Council is preparing a new Local Plan from 2020 to 2035. As part of the Local Plan’s evidence base, the Council has completed a Green Belt Review



in 2018. The Local Plan was recently consulted on in early 2019 with two previous consultations held in 2016. The Council currently has a Core Strategy Local Plan which was adopted in 2012.

Liverpool City Council has not undertaken a Green Belt Review.

The methodology of the above Green Belt Reviews will be taken into consideration in preparing the method for the current Review, particularly noting the Inspectors' views on the reviews undertaken by Cheshire West and Chester, as noted above. The following sections consider the overall approach to the Review and the approach to boundary definition taken by Cheshire West and Chester, Sefton, Knowsley, Halton and St Helens Councils.

### 3.6.1 Overall Approach Adopted by Neighbouring Authorities

Table 1 below provides an overview of the approach adopted by Cheshire West and Chester, Sefton, Knowsley, Halton and St Helens. Reviews reviewed the extent of the Green Belt in their authority through the division of parcels.

Table 1: Overall approach adopted by neighbouring authorities

LPA and Document Status	Approach Overview	Comments
<p>Cheshire West and Chester Council</p> <p>Local Plan Part One (adopted 29<sup>th</sup> January 2015)</p> <p>Green Belt Study Part One (2011)</p> <p>Green Belt Review (July 2013)</p>	<p>The approach was a two-stage process. Stage 1 was split into three stages of review; sub division of Green Belt land, establish assessment criteria and assess the land parcels. This study then assessed the constraints of 10 key Green Belt areas identified in Stage 1.</p> <p>Stage 2 builds on the 10 Green Belt Areas identified in the Part 1 study. Stage 2 assesses the ten sites to identify land parcels within them and conclude which 'Resultant Land Parcels' could provide appropriate opportunities to be released from the Green Belt.</p> <p>Constraints included flood risk, conservation areas, local historic and natural environmental designations, pedestrian and cycle routes, registered parks and gardens, sports and leisure facilities, local green space, landscape character areas and urban areas. The identified 'resultant land parcels' were then assessed against the</p>	<p>The Inspector stated within their report (2014) that "a comprehensive assessment" has been undertaken and that the part 2 study "provides a thorough, objective and robust evidence base".</p> <p>Overall, the inspector is content with the approach taken by Cheshire West and Chester.</p>

LPA and Document Status	Approach Overview	Comments
	purposes of the Green Belt, excluding purpose 5.	
<p>Halton Council Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (not yet adopted – submission stage) Green Belt Review (November 2017)</p>	<p>The review covered the whole of the Halton Green Belt.</p> <p>Stage 1: this involved defining study parcels using the following criterion: the parcel forms one land use, it exhibits a single character, and where possible has strong permanent physical boundaries which are easily identifiable.</p> <p>Stage 2: the parcels were assessed against a set of identified constraints consisting of show stoppers constraints and restrictive constraints (constraints which could be overcome).</p> <p>Stage 3: this involved an assessment against Green Belt purposes. Purpose 4 and 5 were screened out however an overall assessment is provided.</p> <p>Stage 4: assessment of openness and countryside character.</p>	<p>The study covers the whole of the Halton Green Belt, being of a strategic nature. The review contains a combined Green Belt and constraints assessment.</p>
<p>Knowsley Council Local Plan and Core Strategy adopted (January 2016)</p> <p>Green Belt Technical Report (July 2013)</p> <p>Joint Sefton and Knowsley Green Belt Study: Final Knowsley Report (November 2012)</p>	<p>The 2012 report was conducted in four stages; sub division into parcels, assesses parcels against the five Green Belt purposes, assesses parcels against identified criteria and constraints and assesses each parcel's capacity to contribute to identified needs. The 2012 report has been independently validated by Envision.</p> <p>The 2013 technical report provides Sustainability Appraisals of Green Belt areas, potential mitigation measures, Green Belt areas which should be retained in the Green Belt and identification of 'broad</p>	<p>The Inspector stated within their report (2015) "that the methodology is fundamentally robust" with the studies comply with the national planning policy framework. Overall, the inspector stated that the approach taken achieves a correct balance between the purposes of the Green Belt and sustainable development.</p>

LPA and Document Status	Approach Overview	Comments
	<p>locations' which could be suitable to include within the plan with an assessment of locations against Strategic Objectives of the plan. This was scored from Major Positive, Minor Positive, Neutral, Minor Negative to Major Negative.</p>	
<p>Sefton Council Local Plan adopted (April 2017)</p> <p>Green Belt Study (2013)</p> <p>Joint Sefton and Knowsley Green Belt Study: Detailed Boundary Review of Sefton's Green Belt (November 2012)</p>	<p>Sefton Council had two phases of its Green Belt studies. The 2013 study is a thorough analysis of Green Belt within Sefton. The 2012 study was completed with Knowsley, establishing a joint methodology between Knowsley and West Lancashire and is considered a complementary study which reviewed the existing Green Belt boundary in Sefton.</p> <p>The main, 2013 study was conducted in four stages; sub division into parcels, assesses parcels against the five Green Belt purposes, assesses parcels against identified criteria and constraints and assesses each parcel's capacity to contribute to identified needs. The study also outlines that the 2012 boundary review was a draft conducted to check Green Belt boundaries prior to "the main study" being undertaken.</p>	<p>The Inspector stated within their report (2017) that the methodology "is fundamentally sound" with a "systematic methodology". The inspector felt that all five purposes of the Green Belt had been effectively assessed as well as an additional assessment on constraints on the parcels.</p>
<p>St Helens Council (not yet adopted)</p> <p>Green Belt Review (2018)</p>	<p>The 2018 report follows 3 stages, with stages 1 and 2 having separate A and B tasks within them. Stage 1 identifies Green Belt parcels and sub parcels, assessing them against the five Green Belt purposes. Stage 2 identifies 'prohibitive constraints' within parcels and sub parcels and an assessment of development potential. Stage 3 is a rank and review of results.</p>	<p>The study covers the whole of St Helens Green Belt, being of a strategic nature. The review contains a Green Belt and constraints assessment. The methodology states that this approach complies with the Government Planning Inspector's advice that Green Belt reviews should be comprehensive, not selective from the 2014 Leeds City</p>

LPA and Document Status	Approach Overview	Comments
		Council Core Strategy examination.

### 3.6.2 Approach to Boundary Definition Adopted by Neighbouring Authorities

Reviews emphasise the importance of using physical features that are recognisable and permanent in defining boundaries (Table 2).

Table 2: Approach to boundary definition adopted by neighbouring authorities

LPA and Document Status	Boundary Definition Overview
<p>Cheshire West and Chester Council</p> <p>Local Plan Part One (adopted 29<sup>th</sup> January 2015)</p> <p>Green Belt Study Part One (2011)</p> <p>Green Belt Review (July 2013)</p>	<p>The parcels were identified from the Part 1 study, through a desktop study into well-defined parcels using common features and characteristics of land. Parcels were then manageable and logical. Strong physical boundaries were drawn using road and rail infrastructures and watercourses. Mature hedgerows and embankments were also used as acceptable boundaries.</p>
<p>Halton Council</p> <p>Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (not yet adopted – submission stage)</p> <p>Green Belt Review (November 2017)</p>	<p>Stage 1 involves defining study parcels. The following criterion were applied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form one land use;</li> <li>• Exhibit a single character; and</li> <li>• Where possible, have strong permanent physical boundaries which are easily identifiable.</li> </ul> <p>A desk-based exercise was applied using electronic mapping and aerial photography.</p> <p>Whilst not stated in the section for Stage 1, the following text is included for the assessment of Purpose 1: ‘the following boundaries were considered to be ‘strong’:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landform – valley ridge, river, stream or depression</li> <li>• Vegetation – protected woodland, copse, greenway</li> <li>• Constructed – motorway, adopted highway/roads, railway, canal, buildings with long established line, or parcels directly adjacent to the urban area.</li> </ul>
<p>Knowsley Council</p> <p>Local Plan Core Strategy adopted (January 2016)</p> <p>Green Belt Technical Report (July 2013)</p> <p>Joint Sefton and Knowsley Green Belt Study (November 2012)</p>	<p>Parcel boundaries need to have clearly defined and recognisable features, referencing paragraph 85, referencing the previous version of the NPPF. Three criteria were used to identify parcels; each parcel should have a similar character and land-use, parcels should have a similar impact on openness on the Green Belt and parcels should have durable, significant and strong boundaries. These included roads, railways, rivers and tree belts. Some parcels did not have strong natural or manmade boundaries therefore farm tracks, ditches or drains were used creating weaker boundaries. Parcels were reviewed on site visits, where some were altered.</p>

LPA and Document Status	Boundary Definition Overview
<p>Sefton Council adopted (April 2017)</p> <p>Green Belt Study (2013)</p> <p>Joint Sefton and Knowsley Green Belt Study: Detailed Boundary Review of Sefton's Green Belt (November 2012)</p>	<p>Parcel boundaries utilised roads, rail and watercourses including the Liverpool Canal using a desktop search. Tree belts were also considered suitable as a boundary. The 2013 study states that further away from urban areas there are a lack of roads therefore field boundaries, ditches and drains were used which “are not readily visible from ground level”. The study admits that therefore these parcels may have weaker boundaries. The parcels were also refined through site visits. Parcels were identified using three criteria; each parcel should have a similar character and land-use, parcels should have a similar impact of openness on the Green Belt and parcels should have significant, durable and strong physical boundaries.</p>
<p>St Helens Council (not yet adopted)</p> <p>Green Belt Review (2018)</p>	<p>The Green Belt boundaries of parcels and sub parcels within the review use ‘strong’ or ‘less strong’ boundaries where strong boundaries are not possible. Strong features include waterways, protected woodlands, roads, railways, buildings with strong established lines, policy designations or planning commitments which are likely to create strong boundaries and bunds and depressions greater than 5m in height or depth. Less strong features include headways, lines of trees, fields, ditches, drains, fences, low walls, tracks, temporary roads and buildings with intermittent lines. The methodology references the NPPF quoting that boundaries should be clearly defined with physical features which are recognisable and likely to be permanent. The aim to identify parcels used three criteria; each parcel should have a similar character and land-use, parcels should have a similar impact of openness on the Green Belt and parcels should have recognisable features.</p>

## 4 Methodology

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### 4.1 Overview

As identified previously, there is no single ‘correct’ method for undertaking Green Belt Reviews and thus this methodology has been informed by national policy and guidance. Furthermore, a good practice review of other local planning authorities’ (LPA) Green Belt Reviews which have been tested at examination and adopted is provided at Appendix A. Reference is made to these Reviews in the methodology recommendations for each purpose, set out below. This good practice review extends beyond the neighbouring authorities reported in the above section.

The methodology is considerably detailed in order to ensure transparency in approach and consistency in application. The inclusion of the rationale behind each element of the method is intended to provide clarity and aid consistent application.

### 4.2 Summary of Approach

Following the Inspector’s Interim Views from the Cheshire East Local Plan Examination, Arup advocates a two-stage approach in order to ensure that the whole extent of the Green Belt is considered and assessed. This is summarised below and is illustrated in Figure 3.

#### **Stage 1 – General Area Assessment**

Stage 1 involves dividing the entire Green Belt into large parcels (‘General Areas’) which will then be assessed against the five purposes of Green Belt. The General Areas will be defined using recognisable and permanent boundaries. Further details on the approach to boundary definition are provided in Section 4.3.2.

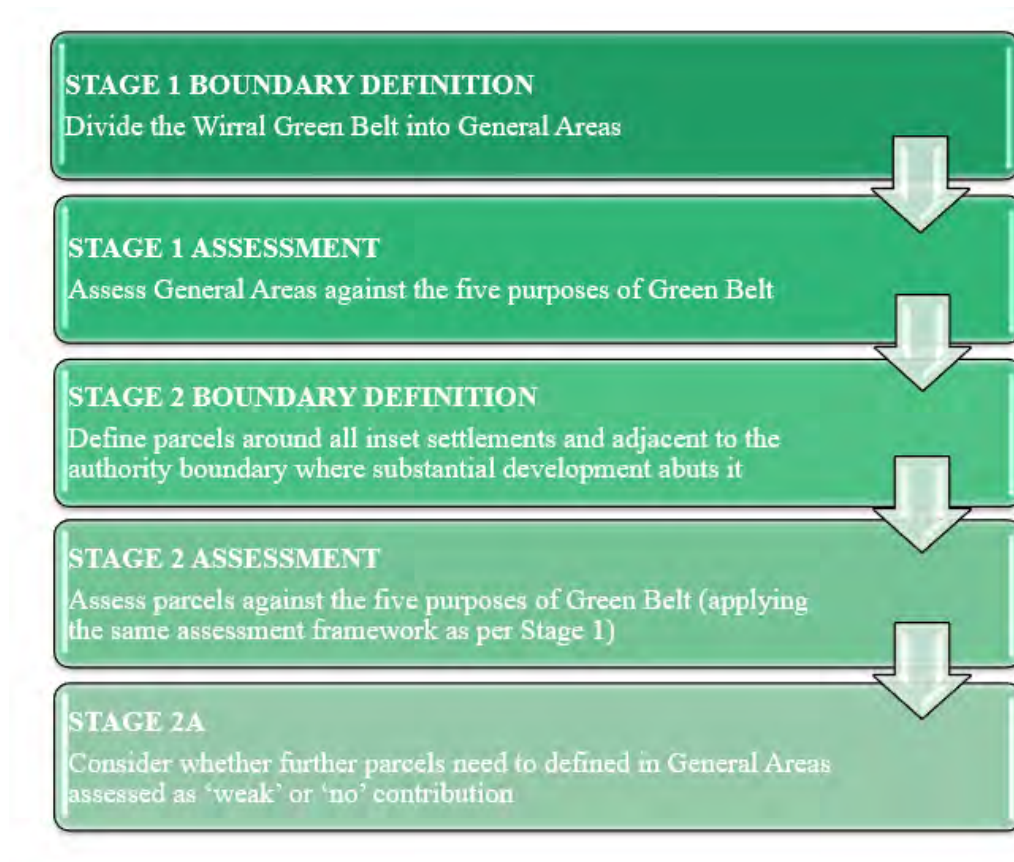
#### **Stage 2 - Green Belt Parcel Assessment**

Stage 2 involves defining smaller Green Belt parcels around settlements on the edge or inset from the Green Belt and assessing these parcels for their contribution to the five purposes of Green Belt.

#### Stage 2A

In relation to those General Areas which perform poorly in Stage 1 (categorised as ‘no’ or ‘weak’ contribution), this stage provides the opportunity to consider whether further parcels need to be defined and assessed to provide an increased understanding of the General Areas’ contribution to Green Belt purposes.

Figure 3. Overview of Approach



## 4.3 Stage 1 Methodology

### 4.3.1 General Area Overview

The PAS Guidance from February 2015 emphasises that Green Belt is a strategic issue. It notes that an assessment of the “...*whole of the Green Belt*” should be undertaken. The use of General Areas therefore represents a holistic approach which helps to take into account strategic thinking and acknowledges the cumulative effect of smaller parcels to Green Belt purposes. It also provides an assessment for more rural areas including villages ‘washed over’ by the Green Belt.

### 4.3.2 General Area Boundary Definition

To ensure coverage of the whole of the Green Belt, the Green Belt will be divided into General Areas using the most recognisable boundaries with the most permanence in order to encompass large areas. In accordance with paragraph 139 of the NPPF, local planning authorities should define boundaries clearly, “...*using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.*” An element of professional judgement will be used to decide how boundaries should be defined linked to the purpose of identifying General Areas.



The neighbouring authority review set out in Section 3 demonstrates that the Cheshire East Green Belt Assessment uses a strong, moderate and weak categorisation of boundaries with the strongest boundaries being defined as motorways, main roads (A and B), and operational railway lines. Other natural and man-made elements can also create strong boundaries and these may be considered if they represent more logical boundaries. The settlement boundary will be used to define the inner extent of the Green Belt and the administrative boundary will be used to define the outer extent. GIS layers of the settlement and administrative boundaries have been provided by the Council. The General Areas will be defined via a desk based approach using Ordnance Survey Maps. Once defined, these will be sent to the Council for review and sign off.

### 4.3.3 General Area Assessment

A desk based assessment of these General Areas will then be undertaken to determine the contribution each area makes to the five purposes of Green Belt, as set out in the NPPF. This will utilise the GIS datasets provided by the Council and the methodology that will be agreed with the Council. The Green Belt Purpose Assessment Framework sets out the methodology for applying the five purposes of Green Belt. This will be applied in assessing the Stage 1 General Areas and the Stage 2 Parcels to ensure a consistent approach was taken. The Assessment Framework is set out in Section 4.4.3 below.

## 4.4 Stage 2 Methodology

### 4.4.1 Parcel Boundary Definition

Green Belt parcels will be defined around all settlements inset and adjoining the Green Belt. National and international designations (Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Ramsar, Special Areas of Conservation, and Special Protection Areas) will be screened out and no parcels will be defined in these areas. The implications for sites which are adjacent to but not within these designations will be considered at site selection stage, if necessary. The settlement boundary will be used to define the inner extent of the Green Belt and parcels will be drawn from the settlement boundary outwards. Only one width of parcels will be defined outwards.

A desk-based analysis will be applied in the first instance using Ordnance Survey maps, with site visits used as a sense check in order to confirm these boundaries. Only existing boundaries will be used. Boundaries relating to proposed development or infrastructure will not be included.

Table 3 shows how parcel boundaries will be defined and reflects Paragraph 139 of the NPPF requiring the use of “...*physical features which are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.*” Durable features will be used in the first instance with parcels drawn from the settlement outwards to the nearest durable feature. Where this results in large expanses of countryside which are not akin to ‘parcels’, less durable features will be utilised in order to enable division of the Green Belt into manageable parcels. This requires an element of

professional judgement as where features occur together, they may constitute a more durable boundary than they would alone. For example, a private road (unmade), a non-protected hedge or a brook (non-wooded and level with surroundings) are all less durable boundaries. However a private road (unmade) with a brook running along one side and a significant hedgerow beyond that could be considered a durable boundary when all features are considered together.

Similar approaches were adopted by the neighboring authorities, outlined in Table 2, identifying both strong and weaker features which were used as parcel boundaries.

Table 3: Proposed Boundary Definition

<p><b>Durable Features</b></p> <p><b>(Readily recognisable and likely to be permanent)</b></p>	<p>Infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motorway</li> <li>• Roads (A roads, B roads and unclassified ‘made’ roads)</li> <li>• Railway line (in use or safeguarded)</li> <li>• Long distance walking paths or cycle routes (e.g. Wirral Circular Trail)</li> </ul> <p>Natural:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water bodies and water courses (reservoirs, lakes, meres, rivers, streams and canals)</li> <li>• Protected woodland (TPO) or hedges or ancient woodland</li> <li>• Prominent landform (e.g. ridgeline)</li> </ul> <p>A combination of a number of less durable features set out below could be deemed to be a durable boundary (e.g a brook along a footpath with hedgerow lining).</p>
<p><b>Less durable features</b></p> <p><b>(Soft boundaries which are recognisable but have lesser permanence)</b></p>	<p>Infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private/unmade roads or tracks</li> <li>• Existing development with wall, fence, hedge or building boundaries (e.g. rear gardens of residential development)</li> <li>• Disused railway line (except where this has been turned into a long distance walking path or cycle route).</li> <li>• Footpath accompanied by other physical features (e.g. wall, fence, hedge)</li> </ul> <p>Natural:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watercourses (brook, drainage ditch, culverted watercourse) accompanied by other physical features</li> <li>• Field boundary accompanied by other natural features (e.g. tree line, hedge line)</li> </ul>

In relation to parcels which extend up to the administrative boundary and the administrative boundary is not marked by durable features, parcels will be drawn beyond the boundary to the nearest durable feature in the neighbouring authority.

Where settlements of neighbouring authorities abut the Green Belt and there is substantial existing development immediately adjacent to the Green Belt, parcels will be drawn from the outer Green Belt boundary inwards to the nearest durable

feature. This is undertaken in the interests of Duty to Co-operate and due to the risk of cross boundary sprawl and encroachment from the neighbouring authority into the Green Belt.

#### 4.4.2 Parcel Assessment

In undertaking the parcel assessment it is necessary to interpret the five purposes of Green Belt as set out in paragraph 134 of the NPPF given that there is no single ‘correct’ method as to how they should be applied.

- *“to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
- *to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another’*
- *to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
- *to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
- *to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.”*

For each purpose a number of criteria have been developed requiring quantitative and qualitative responses and an element of professional judgement. In developing the method, the comments put forward in the consultation responses on the Initial Green Belt Review (as set out in Section 3.4.1) have been taken into consideration. They have been incorporated unless otherwise stated in the ‘Justification for the Approach’ section for each purpose. Methods of data collection (e.g. desk-based analysis or site-based analysis) will be documented against each purpose. A qualitative scoring system was developed for each purpose and for the overall assessment, consisting of a scale of the parcel’s contribution to the Green Belt purpose, these are shown and defined in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Qualitative scoring system to be applied against each purpose and overall

<b>Level of Contribution to Green Belt Purposes</b>
<b>No Contribution</b> – the parcel makes no contribution to the Green Belt purpose
<b>Weak Contribution</b> – on the whole the parcel makes a limited contribution to an element of the Green Belt purpose
<b>Moderate Contribution</b> – on the whole the parcel contributes to a few of the elements of the Green Belt purpose however does not fulfil all elements
<b>Strong Contribution</b> – on the whole the parcel contributes to the purpose in a strong and undeniable way, whereby removal of the parcel from the Green Belt would detrimentally undermine this purpose

As each of the five purposes set out in the NPPF is considered to be equally important, no weighting or aggregation of scores across the purposes will be

undertaken. An element of professional judgement will be utilised in applying the scoring system however the ‘Key Questions to Consider’ for each purpose is intended to break down the purpose in the interests of ensuring a transparent and consistent approach. This is set out in detail below including definitions applying to the purpose and to the approach. Furthermore, the rationale for the score applied and the justification against the criteria will be recorded as part of the assessment.

Prior to undertaking any parcel assessments, all assessors will be fully briefed on the methodology in order to ensure comprehensive understanding of the approach and consistency in assessments.

The above approach of applying a consistent scoring system to each purpose and overall contribution will provide robust and comparative parcel assessments. This approach is based on knowledge from Local Plan Examinations and Green Belt Review good practice.

## Purpose 1: To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas

### Definitions for Purpose 1

Sprawl – “*spreading out of building form over a large area in an untidy or irregular way*” (Oxford English Dictionary)

Large built-up areas – the ‘urban conurbation’ consisting of the contiguous urban area comprising Core Strategy Settlement Areas 1 (Wallasey), 2 (Commercial Core of Birkenhead), 3 (Suburban Birkenhead) and 4 (Bebington, Bromborough and Eastham). This does not include any inset settlements. Within the neighbouring authority of Cheshire West and Chester this includes the Ellesmere Port settlement area.

### Definitions for this Approach

Well connected (or highly contained) – physically connected to the built up area along a number of boundaries, i.e. to be surrounded by high levels of built development. This refers to physical connection only and not functional connection or accessibility.

Open land – land which is lacking of development.

Round-off – where the existing urban area is an irregular shape, will the parcel fill in a gap and / or complete the shape

Ribbon development – a line of buildings extending along a road, footpath or private land generally without accompanying development of the land to the rear. A “ribbon” does not necessarily have to be served by individual accesses nor have a continuous or uniform building line. Buildings sited back, staggered or at angles and with gaps between them can still represent ribbon development, if they have a common frontage or they are visually linked.

## Approach to the Assessment

A desk and field-based assessment will be applied to this purpose.

Key Questions to Consider	Recommended Approach
1. Is the parcel adjacent to the large built up area?	If yes, proceed to Stage 2...  If no, conclude parcel makes no contribution to purpose 1
2. Existing boundary with built up area: Is there an existing durable boundary between the built up area and the parcel which could prevent sprawl?	a. Describe existing boundary between built up area and parcel.  b. If a durable boundary between the parcel and built up area exists, conclude parcel makes a weaker contribution to checking unrestricted sprawl.
3. Spatial connection to built up area: <sup>1</sup>  a. Is the parcel well connected to the built up area along a number of boundaries?  b. Would development of the parcel help 'round off' the built up area, taking into account the historic context of the Green Belt?	a. Describe degree of connection to the built up area. If parcel is well connected (highly contained), conclude makes a stronger contribution to checking unrestricted sprawl (unless part (b) applies).  b. Identify potential for 'rounding off'. If development of the parcel would 'round off' the built up area, conclude parcel makes a weaker contribution to checking unrestricted sprawl.
4. Ribbon development: What role does the parcel play in preventing ribbon development? (may not be relevant in all circumstances)	Describe whether there is existing ribbon development or potential for ribbon development.  If existing ribbon development within parcel and potential for further ribbon development, conclude parcel makes a stronger contribution to checking unrestricted sprawl.
Overall assessment: What level of contribution does the parcel make to purpose 1?	Bring together all conclusions from above to determine overall assessment (taking balanced view)  Apply scoring system:  No / Weak / Moderate / Strong

## Justification for the Approach

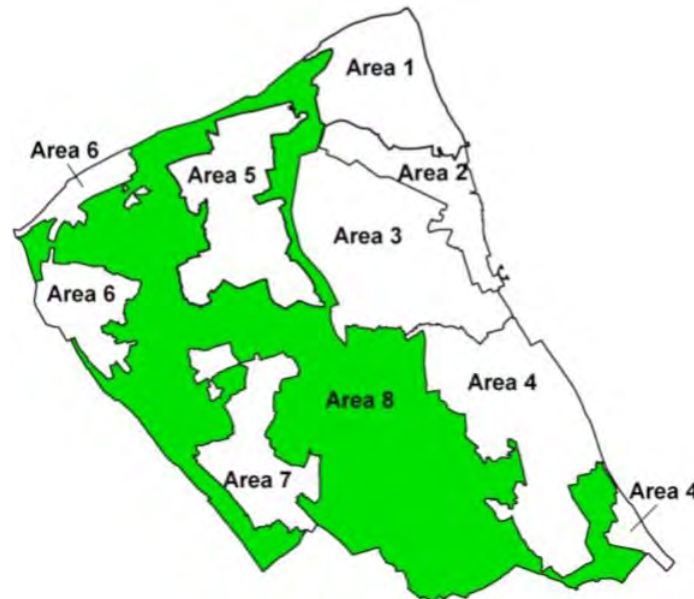
Given that the terminology of the purpose specifically refers to the 'large built-up area' it is important to define this. It is notable that none of the other purposes

<sup>1</sup> This refers to the spatial connection only e.g. the physical connection of the boundaries and not the functional connection or any means of access.

include such terminology and instead make reference to ‘towns’ (see purpose 2 and 4).

The Council’s emerging settlement hierarchy is based on the ‘Settlement Areas’ defined in the Core Strategy Proposed Submission Draft (2012). These Settlement Areas consist of the main of groups of urban settlements and are shown in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3. Core Strategy Settlement Areas. Source: Core Strategy Proposed Submission Draft (2012)



For the current assessment the ‘large built up area’ has therefore been defined as the ‘urban conurbation’ consisting of the contiguous urban area comprising Core Strategy Settlement Areas 1, 2, 3 and 4. These include the following settlements:

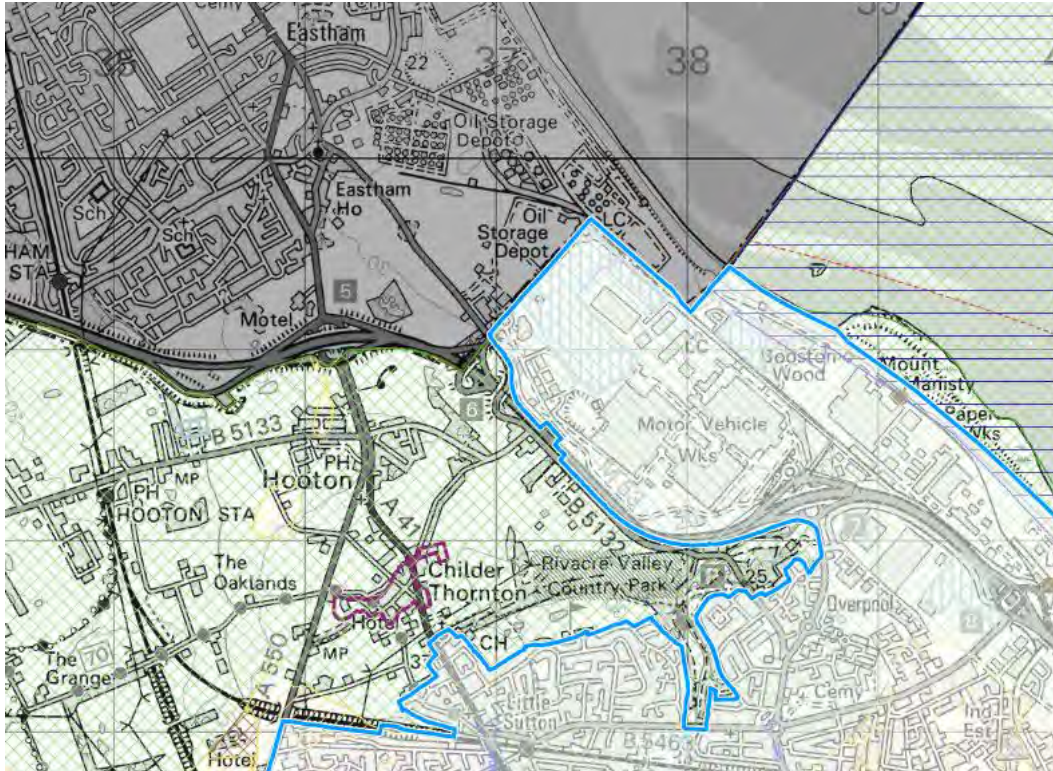
- Settlement Area 1 (Wallasey) - New Brighton, Liscard, Egremont, Seacombe, Poulton and Wallasey Village
- Settlement Area 2 (Commercial Core) - Birkenhead and Wallasey Docklands, Bidston Moss, Valley Road, Birkenhead Town Centre, Hamilton Square, Twelve Quays, Woodside, Hind Street, Monks Ferry and Cammell Lairds
- Settlement Area 3 (Suburban Birkenhead) - Bidston, Beechwood, Claughton, Oxtan, Noctorum, Prenton, Mountwood, Tranmere, Rock Ferry and Rock Park
- Settlement Area 4 (Bromborough and Eastham) - Bromborough, New Ferry, Bebington, Port Sunlight, Brookhurst, Raby Mere, Poulton, Spital, Eastham and Bromborough Pool

Within the neighbouring authority of Cheshire West and Chester, the large built up area has been defined as the Ellesmere Port settlement area given that the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Part One) (January 2015) identifies



Ellesmere Port as one of the four main urban areas. The Ellesmere Port settlement area boundary is shown on Figure 4 below.

Figure 4. Extract of the Ellesmere Port settlement area boundary adjacent to the Wirral Green Belt.  
Source: Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan Interactive Mapping



As the good practice review at Appendix A demonstrates, Bath and North East Somerset also adopted this approach only regarding Bristol and Bath as ‘large built-up areas’. As Rotherham acknowledge in the good practice review, there is an overlap between purposes 1 and 3, thus this approach does not risk any factors being overlooked for the Council’s other settlements and instead it better reflects the terminology and intention of the purpose. Whilst the Cheshire East Green Belt Assessment took a different approach of considering all inset settlements within this purpose, the size and scale of the settlements in Cheshire East was such that this approach was best placed to uphold purpose 1.

The good practice review at Appendix A demonstrates that the focus of this purpose has been on the level of connection of the parcel with the urban area and also the boundary treatment of the parcel in order to understand its vulnerability to the risk of development. St Helen’s Council applied this approach and scored parcels low, medium or high depending on the level of containment with settlements. Similarly, Cheshire West and Chester scored parcels weak, moderate or strong depending on the parcel’s containment with the urban area and the parcel boundary strength.

The approach takes the position that parcels which are well connected to the built up area along a number of boundaries make a higher contribution to preventing sprawl given that it is more likely that development would sprawl out from the

built-up area into the parcel. The exception to this is where development of the parcel could be considered to ‘round off’ the built up area.

In considering the boundary treatment of the parcel, only the boundary with the built-up area is considered within this purpose given that this will indicate the parcel’s vulnerability to sprawl occurring within it. The boundaries adjacent to the open countryside are considered as part of Purpose 3.

Given that the PAS Green Belt Guidance from February 2015 identifies the restriction of ribbon development as a benefit of the Green Belt, the approach incorporates the identification of existing ribbon development within it. The position is taken that the presence of existing ribbon development means that there has already been sprawl into the Green Belt and dependent on the level and potential for further ribbon development, the parcel is likely to make a strong contribution to preventing further ribbon development and thus to this purpose.

## Purpose 2: Prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

### Definitions for Purpose 2

Neighbouring towns – these has been defined with reference to the Core Strategy Settlement Areas and therefore the ‘neighbouring towns’ are defined as follows (it is acknowledged that this includes groups of settlements which would not properly be defined as ‘towns’ under normal circumstances):

- The ‘urban conurbation’ - Settlement Areas 1 (Wallasey), 2 (Commercial Core), 3 (Suburban Birkenhead) and 4 (Bromborough and Eastham).
- Settlement Area 5 (Mid Wirral)
- Settlement Area 6 (Hoylake and West Kirby)
- Settlement Area 7 (Heswall)

Within the neighbouring authority of Cheshire West and Chester, Ellesmere Port has been defined as a ‘neighbouring town’ in accordance with their Green Belt Study Part 1 (2011). Further settlements are defined as ‘neighbouring towns’ within their Green Belt Study however they are not deemed relevant to the current study as they are not adjacent to Wirral.

Merging – combining to form a single entity (Oxford English Dictionary)

### Definitions for the Approach

Openness – the visible openness of the Green Belt in terms of the absence of built development, a topography which supports long line views and low levels of substantial vegetation. Consider both actual distance (the distance between settlement and countryside) and perceived distance (e.g. a wooded area located between a new development and the settlement would not impact the perception of openness from the settlement). Openness should be assessed from the edge of the settlement / inset boundary outwards.

Essential gap – a land gap between two or more towns where development would significantly reduce the perceived or actual distance between towns resulting in the actual merging of the towns or the perceived merging

Largely essential gap – a land gap between two or more towns where limited development may be possible without the perceived or actual merging of the towns.



Less essential gap – a land gap between towns where development may be possible without any risk of the towns merging.

Perceived (distance/merging) – for the purposes of the assessment, perception is considered from an objective view point.

## Approach to the Assessment

A desk and field-based assessment will be applied to this purpose.

Key Questions to Consider	Recommended Approach
<p>1. Would a reduction in the gap between ‘neighbouring towns’ compromise the openness of the Green Belt?</p>	<p>Describe existing gap between the defined ‘neighbouring towns’ and compare to resultant gap if development of parcel were to take place.</p> <p>Existing gap should be described using the following terminology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Essential gap</li> <li>b. Largely essential gap</li> <li>c. Less essential gap</li> </ul> <p>Comparison should consider if a reduction in the gap would lead to the actual or perceived merging of towns. (This is on a case by case basis and not set by distance measurements).</p>
<p>Overall assessment: What level of contribution does the parcel make to purpose 2?</p>	<p>Bring together above factors to determine overall assessment (taking balanced view)</p> <p>Apply scoring system:</p> <p>No / Weak / Moderate / Strong</p>

## Justification for the Approach

The good practice review at Appendix A demonstrates that different authorities take varying approaches to the definition of ‘neighbouring towns’, with some Councils applying purpose 2 to all inset settlements, or applying their settlement hierarchy, whilst others take into account factors such as population or the presence of town councils, amongst other factors.

The Council’s emerging settlement hierarchy is based on the ‘Settlement Areas’ as defined in the Core Strategy Proposed Submission Draft (2012). These Settlement Areas consist of the main groups of urban settlements and these areas will comprise the ‘neighbouring towns’ for the assessment of Purpose 2. These include the following settlements:

- Settlement Area 1 (Wallasey) - New Brighton, Liscard, Egremont, Seacombe, Poulton and Wallasey Village
- Settlement Area 2 (Commercial Core) - Birkenhead and Wallasey Docklands, Bidston Moss, Valley Road, Birkenhead Town Centre, Hamilton Square, Twelve Quays, Woodside, Hind Street, Monks Ferry and Cammell Lairds
- Settlement Area 3 (Suburban Birkenhead) - Bidston, Beechwood, Claughton, Oxtan, Noctorum, Prenton, Mountwood, Tranmere, Rock Ferry and Rock Park
- Settlement Area 4 (Bromborough and Eastham) - Bromborough, New Ferry, Bebington, Port Sunlight, Brookhurst, Raby Mere, Poulton, Spital, Eastham and Bromborough Pool
- Settlement Area 5 (Mid Wirral) - Leasowe, Moreton, Upton, Woodchurch and Greasby
- Settlement Area 6 (Hoylake and West Kirby) - Hoylake, West Kirby, Meols, Newton and Caldy, Birchcroft Road/Rycroft Road and Barn Hey Crescent.
- Settlement Area 7 (Heswall) - Heswall, Gayton, Pensby, Thingwall and Irby

Washed over villages will not be considered as part of purpose 2.

A number of the consultation response comments on the Initial Green Belt Review stated that only ‘towns’ should be considered for this purpose and reference should be made to the settlement hierarchy rather than Settlement Areas. Given that the Council’s settlement hierarchy relates to the above Settlement Areas it is considered appropriate to use this. The good practice review demonstrates that some councils apply purpose 2 to all inset settlements and do not differentiate between cities, towns or villages. This approach is therefore considered to be appropriate.

Within the neighbouring authority of Cheshire West and Chester, their Green Belt Study Part 1 (2011) identifies settlements as ‘neighbouring towns’, including:

- Chester
- Ellesmere Port
- Saughall
- Littleton
- Guilden Sutton
- Christleton

The only relevant ‘neighbouring town’ for the current study is Ellesmere Port given that the remainder are not adjacent to Wirral.

The PAS Green Belt guidance from February 2015 states that a ‘scale rule’ approach of distance between neighbouring towns for purpose 2 is not appropriate given that identity is not always determined by distance. The guidance does however state that a ‘Landscape Character Assessment’ is a useful analytical tool

for use in undertaking this type of assessment. Whilst the approach will not include any landscape character considerations, the consideration of openness includes the perceived openness taking into account land form, topography and vegetation.

The good practice review demonstrates that the approaches adopted by the authorities take into account the sensitivity and integrity of the gap if development of the parcel were to take place. Rotherham and Rushcliffe both categorise the gap in terms of size (e.g. essential, narrow, and wide) whilst Cheshire West and Chester uses a distance categorisation. In light of the PAS February 2015 guidance, the size categorisation is preferred and therefore has been adopted in this approach.

### Purpose 3: To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

#### Definitions for Purpose 3

Safeguarding - Protect from harm or damage with an appropriate measure (Oxford English Dictionary).

Countryside – The land and scenery of a rural area that is either used for farming or left in its natural condition (Oxford English Dictionary and Cambridge Dictionary).

Encroachment - a gradual advance beyond usual or acceptable limits (Oxford English Dictionary).

#### Definitions for the Approach

Durable boundaries – refer to boundary definition in Table 3 above.

Built form – any form of built development excluding buildings for agriculture and forestry (e.g. residential properties, warehouses, schools, sports facilities).

Settlement – all settlements that are inset from the Green Belt and the large built up-areas

Openness – the visible openness of the Green Belt in terms of the absence of built development, a topography which supports long line views and low levels of substantial vegetation. Consider both actual distance (the distance between settlement and countryside) and perceived distance (e.g. a wooded area located between a new development and the settlement would not impact upon the perception of openness from the settlement).

Openness should be assessed from the edge of the settlement/inset boundary outwards, with reference to the matrix set out in Table 5 below.

Strong degree of openness – contributes to openness in a strong and undeniable way, where removal of the parcel from the Green Belt would detrimentally undermine the openness of this part of the Green Belt.

Moderate degree of openness – contributes to openness in a moderate way, whereby removal of part of the parcel would not have a major impact upon the overall openness of this part of the Green Belt.

Weak degree of openness – makes a weak contribution to openness, whereby the removal of the parcel would not impact upon the openness of this part of the Green Belt.

No degree of openness – makes no contribution to the openness of the Green Belt.

Beneficial uses – as set out in paragraph 141 of the NPPF, these include: identifying opportunities to provide access to the countryside; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; and to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity.

## Approach to the Assessment

A desk and field-based assessment will be applied to this purpose.

Key Questions to Consider	Recommended Approach
<p>1. Future encroachment: Are there existing durable boundaries which would contain any future development and prevent encroachment in the long term?</p>	<p>Identify any durable boundaries <i>between the parcel and settlement</i> which would prevent future encroachment <i>into</i> the parcel. If there are durable boundaries between the parcel and settlement, conclude that parcel makes a weaker contribution to safeguarding from encroachment given that development would be contained by the durable boundary and thus the parcel itself plays a lesser role.</p> <p>Identify any durable boundaries <i>between the parcel and countryside</i> which would <i>contain encroachment</i> in the long term if the parcel were developed. If there are durable boundaries between the parcel and countryside, conclude that parcel makes a weaker contribution to safeguarding from encroachment.</p>
<p>2. Existing encroachment:</p> <p>What is the existing land use/uses?</p> <p>Is there any existing built form within or adjacent to the parcel?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe existing land use/uses (e.g. open countryside, agricultural land, residential, mix of uses).</li> <li>Describe any existing built form. If considerable amount of built form within the parcel, conclude that parcel makes a weaker contribution to safeguarding from encroachment.</li> </ul>
<p>3. Connection to the countryside:</p> <p>Is the parcel well connected to the countryside?</p> <p>Does the parcel protect the openness of the countryside?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe degree of connection to the countryside (e.g. along a number of boundaries). If parcel is well connected to the countryside, conclude parcel makes a stronger contribution to safeguarding from encroachment.</li> <li>Describe degree of openness taking into account built form, vegetation and topography using matrix below in Table 5.</li> </ul>
<p>4. Does the parcel serve a beneficial use of the Green Belt (NPPF para 141) which should be safeguarded?</p>	<p>Identify any beneficial Green Belt uses served by parcel, as per NPPF para 141, on a high level basis. If parcel serves 2 or more beneficial uses, conclude parcel makes a stronger contribution to safeguarding from encroachment. Note: if parcel serves 1 or no</p>

	beneficial uses this does not weaken its contribution to purpose 3
Overall assessment: What level of contribution does the parcel make to purpose?	Bring together all conclusions from above to determine overall assessment (taking balanced view)  Apply scoring system: No / Weak / Moderate / Strong

Table 5. Degree of Openness Matrix

Built Form	Long-line views	Vegetation	Degree of Openness
Less than 10%	Open long line views	Low vegetation	Strong degree of openness
		Dense vegetation	Strong-moderate degree of openness
	No long line views	Low vegetation	Strong-moderate degree of openness
		Dense vegetation	Moderate degree of openness
Less than 20%	Open long line views	Low vegetation	Strong-Moderate degree of openness
		Dense vegetation	Moderate-Weak degree of openness
	No long line views	Low vegetation	Moderate degree of openness
		Dense vegetation	Weak degree of openness
Between 20 and 30%	Open long line views	Low vegetation	Moderate-Weak degree of openness
		Dense vegetation	Weak degree of openness
	No long line views	Low vegetation	Weak degree of openness
		Dense vegetation	No degree of openness
More than 30%	Open long line views	Low vegetation	Weak degree of openness
		Dense vegetation	No degree of openness
	No long line views	Low vegetation	No degree of openness
		Dense vegetation	No degree of openness

### Justification for the Approach

The good practice review at Appendix A demonstrates that the focus of this purpose has been on the relationship and connection of the parcel with the open countryside. St Helens and Cheshire West and Chester Councils considered the degree of openness within their assessments. Sefton and Knowsley councils considered appropriate land uses within the parcels and Cheshire West and Chester also considered what Green Belt opportunities are being achieved within the parcels in relation to beneficial Green Belt uses.

This purpose will apply to the large built-up areas, all inset settlements and settlements within neighbouring authorities given that these are all connected to the open countryside.

Given the focus on the open countryside, the ‘degree of openness’ of the parcel is a key factor to consider within the approach, albeit it is one of a number of factors. The matrix above therefore enables an assessment of this to be carried out. The matrix is intended to guide this assessment and it may not strictly apply to all parcels, thus a level of professional judgement must be applied.

Both the matrix and the definition of openness set out in the definition box captures the consideration of both visual openness and spatial openness. Visual openness refers to the perception of openness which may be impacted by topography, views and vegetation. Spatial openness relates to the level of built form and the type of built form (for example agricultural or forestry uses). The case of *Turner* [2016] EWCA Civ 466 confirms that both factors are relevant to the concept of openness. At paragraph 25, Sales LJ states: “*The openness of the Green Belt has a spatial aspect as well as a visual aspect, and the absence of visual intrusion does not in itself mean that there is no impact on the openness of the Green Belt...*” The recently updated PPG at Paragraph 001 on Green Belt also formalises this definition. It states: “*openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects – in other words, the visual impact of the proposal may be relevant, as could its volume*”.

The recommended approach set out above takes the position that parcels which are well connected to the open countryside along a number of boundaries make a higher contribution to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment given the relationship to the countryside. However the presence of existing built form within the parcel can alter this level of contribution. The definition of built form set out above does not include buildings for agriculture and forestry given that these are considered to be appropriate Green Belt uses which do not require their impact upon openness to be considered, according to paragraph 145 of the NPPF.

With regards to the beneficial Green Belt uses set out in paragraph 141 of the NPPF, the position is taken that their presence adds to the contribution of the parcel to this purpose however the lack of such uses does not weaken its contribution to this purpose.

Boundary treatment is considered within the approach given that this indicates the parcel’s vulnerability to encroachment within it and also for development encroaching beyond the parcel boundary into the open countryside should the parcel be developed. One of the consultation response comments to the Initial Green Belt Review suggested that the potential to create a new and permanent Green Belt boundary should be considered as part of purpose 3. This has not been included in the methodology as it is considered that this is more relevant to site selection given that the Green Belt Review is intended to assess the Green Belt’s existing contribution to the purposes.

Another consultation response comment on the Initial Green Belt Review suggested that landscape character or quality should be considered albeit another comment stated it was not relevant. Landscape character or quality considerations

have not been incorporated into the method as these are deemed to be more relevant to the site selection stage.

## **Purpose 4: To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns**

### **Approach to the Assessment**

Apply ‘no contribution’ to all parcels.

### **Justification for the Approach**

The approach to assessing this purpose differs between LPAs. A number of LPAs have chosen to follow the PAS Green Belt guidance from February 2015 which states that the assessment of this purpose relates to very few settlements in reality, due largely to the pattern of modern development that often envelopes historic towns. In practice, this has resulted in LPAs removing this purpose from the assessment. St Helens, Sefton and Knowsley Councils considered historic assets within their parcel assessments however they were taken into account in later stages of their Green Belt Reviews during a constraints stage.

Unlike cities such as Chester and York, settlements within Wirral are not commonly thought of as ‘historic towns’ however given that the interim conclusions drawn by the Inspector regarding the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (December 2014) stated that there were “...*several shortcomings with the evidence itself*”, as the Green Belt Assessment 2013 “...*does not consider all the purpose of the Green Belt, omitting the contribution to urban regeneration and preserving the setting and special character of historic towns*” (para 85), this differs from the advice offered by PAS.

The methodologies in the good practice review in Appendix A which did assess purpose 4 seek to assess the role which the Green Belt plays in preserving the historic core of settlements and the setting of key historic features (such as Conservation Areas, Listed Assets and Key Views). Cheshire West and Chester Council took this approach through three criteria including views into and out of the historic core, openness of the parcel and if the parcel contributes to Chester’s natural and historic environment.

For the purpose of this assessment, ‘historic town’ has been defined using established historic sources consisting of the Merseyside Historic Characterisation Project (MHCP) (2011). This was commissioned by English Heritage in 2003 and was undertaken by the Merseyside Archaeological Advisory Service, based in National Museums Liverpool. The project covered the five local authorities which make up the Merseyside area, Knowsley, Liverpool, St Helens, Sefton and Wirral. It was the first of a number of surveys to develop and explore a methodology for historic landscape characterisation of a large metropolitan conurbation. The MHCP Wirral Report (December 2011) sets out the methodology and findings in relation to Wirral. Appendix 7 of the report describes the methodology for the Historic Settlement Study. The study assessed 42 historic townships within Wirral using accessible sources held within the Merseyside Historic Environment Record. Townships are defined within the study as ‘a group of houses which

formed a unit of local administration'. They would therefore not count as 'historic towns' for the purposes of the Green Belt Review. Appendix 7 of the MHCP Report notes additional work on 'historic towns / other areas' and lists the historic towns as follows:

- Knowsley – Prescot
- Liverpool – City Centre and West Derby
- Sefton – Bootle
- St Helens – St Helens town & Newton-le-Willows
- Wirral – Birkenhead

In accordance with the above, Birkenhead will therefore be defined as a 'historic town' for the purposes of the Green Belt Review. The proforma for Birkenhead in the Historic Settlement Study (December 2011) describes the 'historic core' as follows: "*The settlement was first established on the coastal headland north of Birkenhead pool, the core of the settlement lay between Chester Street and the shore.*" The proforma states that the historic settlement was completely obscured by residential and industrial expansion which engulfed other settlements such as Cloughton and Tranmere. Given the location of the historic core of Birkenhead, it is not considered that the Green Belt plays a role in preserving the setting and special character of this historic town. As such purpose 4 will be assessed as 'no contribution' for all parcels.

In relation to the neighbouring authority of Cheshire West and Chester, for the purposes of this study, and to keep the evidence base proportionate, Neston is identified as a historic town in the Cheshire Historic Towns Survey, however given the settlement boundary of Neston does not extend up to the administrative boundary, no parcels would be considered adjacent to the historic town.

## **Purpose 5: To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land**

### **Approach to the Assessment**

Apply 'moderate contribution' to all parcels.

### **Justification for the Approach**

A number of authorities have chosen to follow the PAS Green Belt guidance from February 2015 which states that the value of various land parcels is unlikely to be distinguished by the application of this purpose and have therefore screened out purpose 5 from the assessment.

In light of the Cheshire East Inspectors' Interim and Further Views, purpose 5 has been included within the methodology, taking a pragmatic approach. This ensures that each of the purposes is considered and given equal weighting in the overall assessment of Green Belt purposes. The approach taken in the Cheshire East Council Green Belt Assessment was to consider the potential for regeneration by looking at the undeveloped brownfield supply set out in the Urban Potential Study, and then comparing this to the total settlement size in order to get a percentage of brownfield urban potential.



The Wirral SHMA and Housing Needs Study (May 2016) considers that Wirral functions as a single housing market area for the purpose of considering housing needs in the context of the Local Plan (paragraph 3.36). As this housing market area functions as one unit, it is not possible to assess whether one parcel makes a greater or lesser contribution to encouraging the development of previously developed land. On this basis, all parcels make an equal contribution to this purpose.

The percentage of brownfield urban potential has been calculated using data from the SHLAA. The dwelling capacity of unconstrained previously developed land in Wirral has been assessed as a percentage of the total number of households in Wirral. Table 6 below shows this calculation. In the Cheshire East Council Green Belt Assessment, thresholds were defined according to the range of the percentages which were calculated as brownfield urban potential across Cheshire East. There is no precedent from other authorities for how such thresholds should be set, as such the same percentage thresholds have been used here, as shown in Table 7 below. According to these thresholds, all parcels would make a weak contribution to purpose 5 however taking into account the historic context of the Green Belt it is considered that the level of contribution should be increased to moderate. This recognises the regeneration priority at the time of establishing the Green Belt and which continues to be a priority today.

Table 6. Brownfield Capacity (for illustrative purposes only)

Housing Market Area	Existing Number of Households <sup>2</sup>	Developable and Deliverable brownfield SHLAA Sites <sup>3</sup> (Number of Dwellings)	Developable and Deliverable brownfield land housing capacity as a % of the existing number of dwellings in the area
Wirral	142,000	1,194 <sup>4</sup>	0.8%

Table 7. Purpose 5 Assessment Thresholds (applied in the Cheshire East Green Belt Assessment Update)

Brownfield Capacity Thresholds	Purpose 5 Level of Contribution
0%	No contribution
>0 – 1%	Weak contribution
>1– 5%	Moderate contribution
>+5%	Strong contribution

<sup>2</sup>As of 2016. Source: ONS, September 2018

<sup>3</sup> Taken from the updated SHLAA data as at 2018 – This consists of developable and deliverable brownfield sites only. This consists of sites which are affected by constraints for which mitigation is considered possible.

<sup>4</sup> This figure excludes 13,521 dwellings with outline consent at Wirral Waters

Given there is no single correct method in assessing purpose 5, this provides a high level view on the role of the Green Belt in encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land. It requires an element of professional judgment and it is important to emphasise that this is a theoretical exercise and there is no guarantee that all parcels will have a blanket role in assisting urban regeneration across the borough. Considerations such as ‘areas of greatest need’ will be taken into account at site selection stage, if relevant.

There were a number of differing suggestions in the consultation response comments on the Initial Green Belt Review including giving less weight to purpose 5, or on the other hand giving more weight to purpose 5 to act as a barrier to Green Belt removal. As set out in Section 4.4.2 above, each of the five purposes is considered to be equally important and therefore no weighting or aggregation of scores of the purposes will be undertaken. The Cheshire East Local Plan Examination Inspector in his Further Interim Views (December 2015) noted in approval that each purpose had been given equal weighting in the overall assessment.

## Overall Assessment

In order to inform decision making, we recommend an overall assessment is included. The purpose of the overall assessment is to consider the outcomes of each of the five purposes and then make a judgement on the overall contribution the parcel makes to the Green Belt. The approach proposed avoids over simplification by using scores, but seeks to balance systematic rigor with professional judgement

The same qualitative scoring system as applied to each of the five purposes is suggested for the overall assessment, as set out below.

Table 7: Qualitative scoring system to be applied to overall assessment

<b>Level of Contribution to Green Belt Purposes Overall</b>
<b>No</b> – the parcel makes no contribution to Green Belt purposes
<b>Weak</b> – on the whole the parcel makes a limited contribution to Green Belt purposes
<b>Moderate</b> – on the whole the parcel contributes to a few of the Green Belt purposes however does not fulfil all purposes
<b>Strong</b> – on the whole the parcel contributes to Green Belt purpose in a strong and undeniable way, whereby removal of the parcel from the Green Belt would detrimentally undermine the overall aim of the Green Belt

In order to ensure a consistent and transparent approach, the following guidance can be used in determining the overall assessment; this seeks to balance a clear and transparent framework with the ability to apply professional judgement:

- No parcels should be assessed as ‘no contribution’ overall unless each of the five purposes is assessed as a ‘no contribution’.
- Where there was a 4 / 1 split – the majority contribution should always be applied, unless the majority is ‘no contribution’ in which case, the overall should be ‘weak’.

Example:

Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	No	<b>Moderate</b>
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Exception:

No	No	No	No	Moderate	<b>Weak</b>
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Where there was a 3 / 2 split – the majority contribution should always be applied unless the ‘2’ contributions are ‘strong’. In this case, the overall would be ‘strong’. The exception to this would be if the majority was ‘no’, in this case the overall would be the minority, unless the ‘2’ was moderate, then the contribution would be weak given that this is between the two levels.

Example:

Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak	Weak	<b>Moderate</b>
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Exception:

Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Strong	Strong	<b>Strong</b>
No	No	No	Weak	Weak	<b>Weak</b>
No	No	No	Moderate	Moderate	<b>Weak</b>

Where there was a 3 / 1 / 1 split – the majority contribution should always be applied unless one of the minority contributions is ‘strong’ and one is ‘moderate’. In this case, professional judgement should be applied (see below). Where the majority is ‘no’, the middle category from the split should be the overall.

Example:

Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Strong	Weak	<b>Moderate</b>
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Exception:

Weak	Weak	Weak	Strong	Moderate	<b>Apply professional judgement</b>
No	No	No	Moderate	Weak	<b>Weak</b>

Where there was a 2 / 2 / 1 split – the contribution to be applied depends on the split and what the minority contribution is. For example where the minority contribution is ‘no’, the lower contribution of the split should be applied. The exception to this is where the minority contribution is ‘strong’, in which case professional judgement should be applied. In addition, where there are 2 ‘strong’ contributions, the overall will always be ‘strong’.

Example:

Weak	Weak	No	Moderate	No	<b>Weak</b>
Moderate	Moderate	Weak	Weak	No	<b>Weak</b>
Moderate	Moderate	No	No	Weak	<b>Weak</b>

**Exception:**

Moderate	Strong	Moderate	No	No	<b>Apply professional judgement</b>
Strong	Strong	Moderate	No	Moderate	<b>Strong</b>

Where 2 purposes are the same and the remaining 3 are all different, application of professional judgement would be required, unless the 2 purposes are ‘strong’ in which case the overall will always be ‘strong’.

**Example:**

Weak	Weak	No	Moderate	Strong	<b>Apply professional judgement</b>
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### **Applying Professional Judgement**

Whilst all five Green Belt purposes should be given equal weighting, the overall assessment is not intended to be a numbers balancing exercise and a certain level of professional judgement must be applied to all of the above guidelines and particularly where one of the purposes is assessed as ‘strong’. In order to do this, it is necessary to refer back to the overall aim and purpose of Green Belt as set out in paragraph 133 of the NPPF:

*“The fundamental aim of the Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belt are their openness and permanence.”*

Paragraph 133 refers to the prevention of ‘urban sprawl’ and keeping land permanently open. These aims are fundamentally subsumed within Purposes 1, 2 and 3 and thus where the development of a parcel would particularly threaten these purposes additional weight should be applied to its contribution to Green Belt purposes. This is a matter for the professional judgement of the assessor but the justification for the assessment should provide a transparent explanation behind their reasoning.

## **4.5 Duty to Cooperate**

The Duty to Cooperate was a principle originally established within the Localism Act 2011 and further detailed within the NPPF and PPG. Paragraph 26 of the NPPF states that effective and on-going joint working is integral to the production of a positively prepared and justified strategy.

Following sign off on the methodology by the Council, the methodology was shared with the following neighbouring authorities:

- Cheshire West and Chester Council

- Halton Council
- Liverpool City Council
- Liverpool City Region Combined Authority
- Knowsley Council
- Sefton Council
- St Helens Council
- West Lancashire Council

The comments received from these authorities were reviewed and where appropriate were fed into the methodology. The responses and amendments made as a result of these comments were logged in a Duty to Cooperate log of amendments.

## 5 Stage 1: General Area Assessment

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### 5.1 Overview

As set out in Section 4.3 of the methodology, the General Areas were defined and assessed against the five Green Belt purposes set out in paragraph 134 of the NPPF:

- *“to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
- *to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another’*
- *to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
- *to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
- *to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.”*

The General Area assessment against these five purposes was carried out using the assessment framework detailed in Section 4.4.2 above.

### 5.2 Definition of General Areas

Section 4.3.2 of the methodology sets out the approach to General Area boundary definition. As set out in the methodology, the entire Green Belt has been divided into General Areas across the following boundaries: motorways, ‘A’ roads and railway lines. This created 46 General Areas (as shown below on Map A). Given that a number of these General Area were more akin to parcels, it was necessary to merge areas taking into account the size of the General Area or the relative character and function of the area, as shown on Map B below. This resulted in 9 General Areas.

Figure 5. General Area Map A

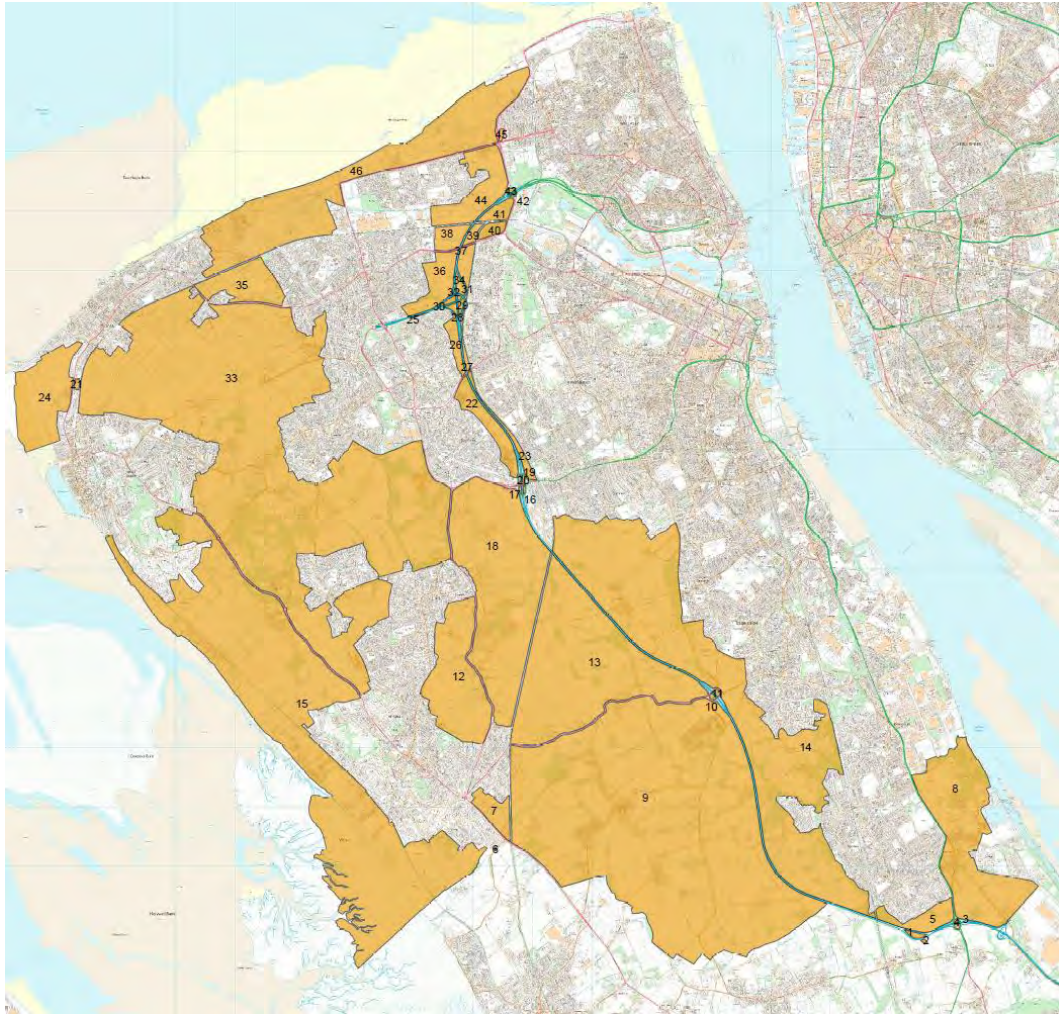
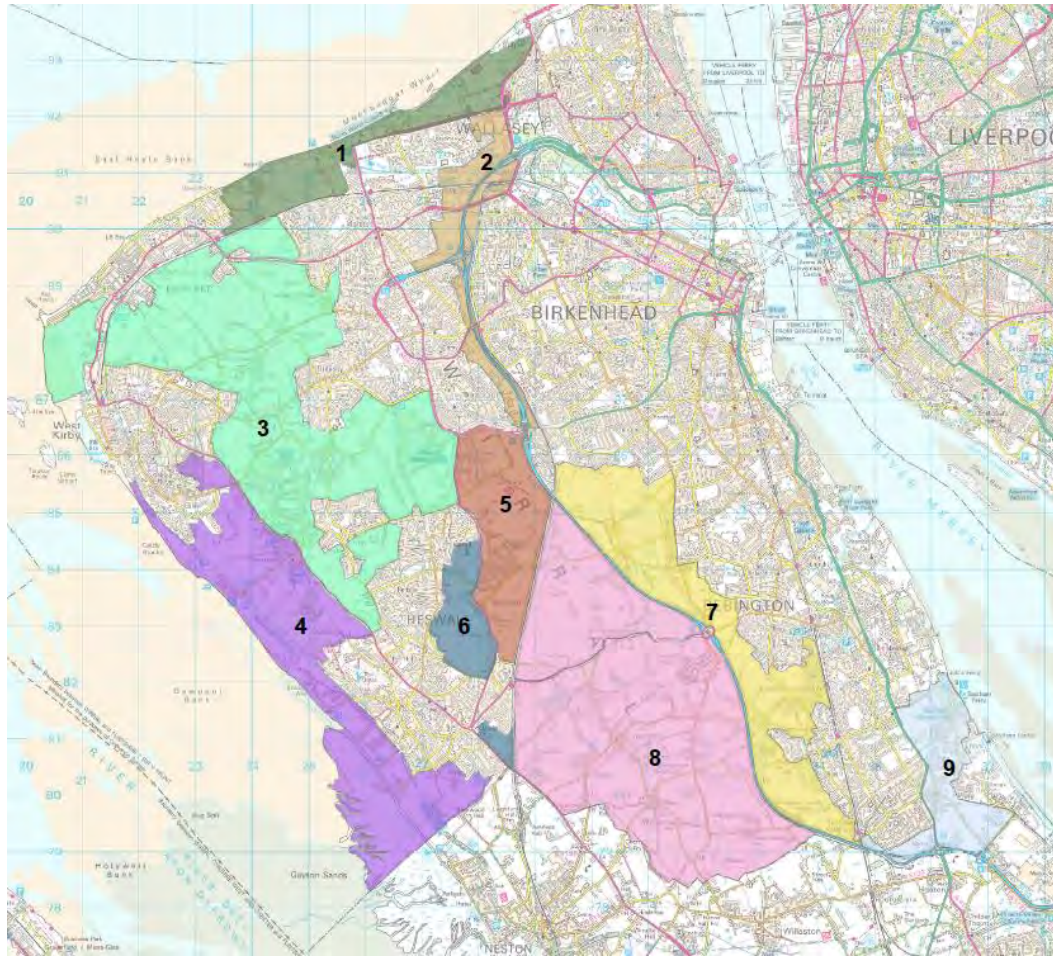




Figure 6. General Area Map B



General Area Map B above represents the final General Area map (both maps are provided at Appendix B). The justification table setting out why General Areas in Map A were merged is provided at Appendix C.

### 5.3 General Area Assessment Findings

The detailed General Area Assessment table can be found at Appendix D. A summary of the assessment findings are detailed in Table 10 below. These findings represent the overall level of contribution of each of the General Areas. Some General Areas may make no contribution to one or a number of the five purposes however in applying the rules set out at the end of Section 4.4.3, the overall assessments are as follows:



Table 10. General Area Assessment Findings – Overall Assessment

Overall Assessment Level of Contribution	General Area Reference
Strong contribution	3, 5, 8
Moderate contribution	1, 2, 4, 7, 9
Weak contribution	6
No contribution	-

In total, 9 General Areas were assessed against the five purposes of Green Belt. The findings of the assessments are:

3 General Areas make a strong overall contribution to the Green Belt;

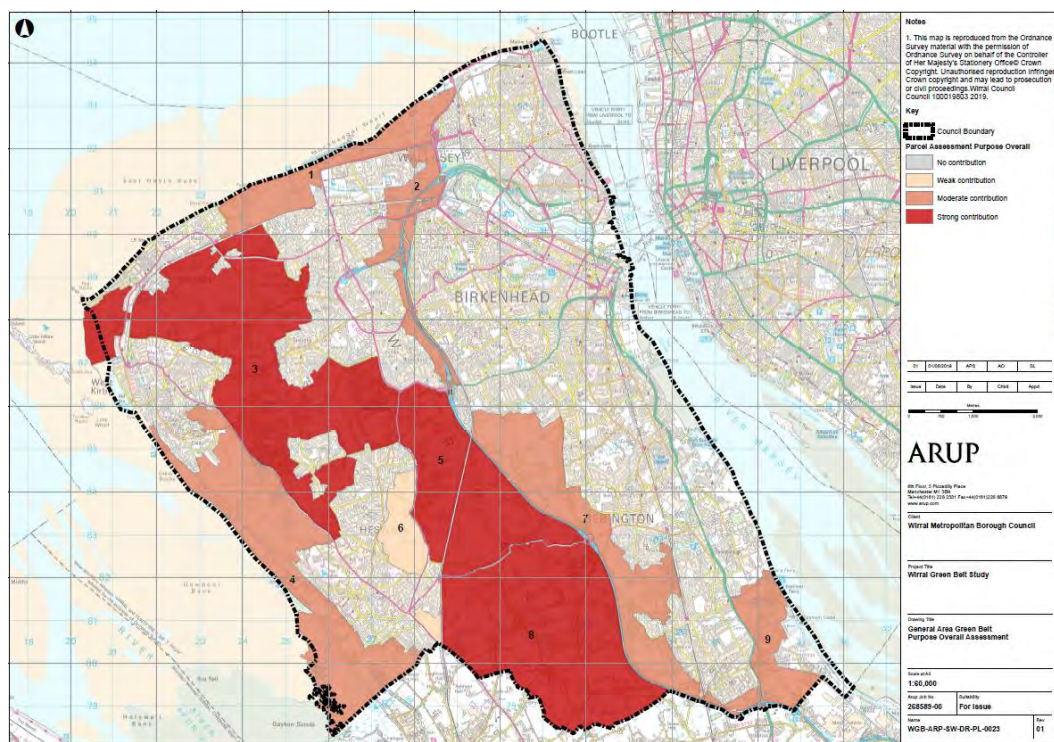
5 General Areas make a moderate overall contribution to the Green Belt;

1 General Area make a weak overall contribution to the Green Belt; and

No General Areas make 'no' overall contribution to the Green Belt.

Figure 7 below provides a map of the overall assessment findings. A larger version of this is also provided in Appendix E.

Figure 7. Chloropleth map of General Area Assessment findings - Overall Assessment



All of the General Areas are located adjacent to an existing inset settlement or the urban conurbation therefore one width of parcels has been defined around them as

part of the Stage 2 assessment, regardless of the Stage 1 outcomes. A second width of parcels has not been defined at this stage. General Area 6 was the only General Area to make a weak contribution to Green Belt purposes and the defined parcels already encompass the whole of General Area 6. Whilst the General Areas which made a moderate contribution to Green Belt purposes do not necessarily lean towards a further width of parcels being assessed, this does not preclude it, should the Council wish to define a second width of parcels in these General Areas.

It is important to reiterate the purpose of the General Area assessment in taking an holistic approach, ensuring that the whole of the Green Belt has been assessed while taking into account the cumulative effect of smaller parcels. The outcomes from the General Area Assessment will not therefore be directly comparable to the later parcel assessment outcomes and it is likely that there will be significant differences in the overall conclusions.

## 6 Stage 2: Green Belt Parcel Assessment

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### 6.1 Overview

As set out in Section 4.4 of the methodology, the Green Belt parcels were defined and assessed against the five Green Belt purposes set out in paragraph 134 of the NPPF:

- *“to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
- *to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another’*
- *to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
- *to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
- *to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.”*

The Green Belt parcels were assessed against these five purposes using the assessment framework detailed in Section 4.4.2 above.

### 6.2 Definition of Green Belt Parcels

Section 4.4.1 of the methodology sets out the approach to Green Belt parcel boundary definition. One width of Green Belt parcels was defined around the urban conurbation and Settlement Area 5, 6 and 7. National and international designations (Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Ramsar, Special Areas of Conservation, and Special Protection Areas, where applicable) were screened out due to the high level of protection these sites have under UK and International Law. In total 100 parcels were defined. The Green Belt parcel maps are provided in Appendix F.

### 6.3 Green Belt Parcel Assessment Findings

The detailed Green Belt parcel assessment table can be found at Appendix G. A summary of the assessment findings are detailed in Table 11 below. These findings represent the overall level of contribution of each of the parcels. Some parcels may make no contribution to one or a number of the five purposes however in applying the rules set out at the end of Section 4.4.2, the overall assessments are as follows:

Table 11. Green Belt Parcel Assessment Findings – Overall Assessment

Overall Assessment Level of Contribution	Green Belt Parcel Reference	Total
Strong contribution	5.6, 5.7, 5.12 6.5, 6.7, 6.10, 6.12, 6.17 7.8, 7.9, 7.20, 7.28	12
Moderate contribution	1.1, 1.2 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.7, 4.14, 4.16 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.14, 5.15, 5.16, 5.17 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.8, 6.9, 6.13, 6.14, 6.18, 6.21 7.6, 7.7, 7.12, 7.13, 7.14, 7.21, 7.22, 7.23, 7.24	42
Weak contribution	1.3, 1.4 2.6 3.4 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.8, 4.9, 4.10, 4.11, 4.12, 4.13, 4.15, 4.17, 4.18, 4.19 5.1, 5.2, 5.8, 5.9, 5.10, 5.11, 5.13 6.1, 6.6, 6.11, 6.15, 6.16, 6.19, 6.20 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5, 7.10, 7.11, 7.15, 7.16, 7.17, 7.18, 7.19, 7.25, 7.26, 7.27	46
No contribution	-	0

In total, 100 Green Belt parcels were assessed against the five purposes of Green Belt. The findings of the assessments are:

12 Green Belt parcels make a strong overall contribution to the Green Belt;

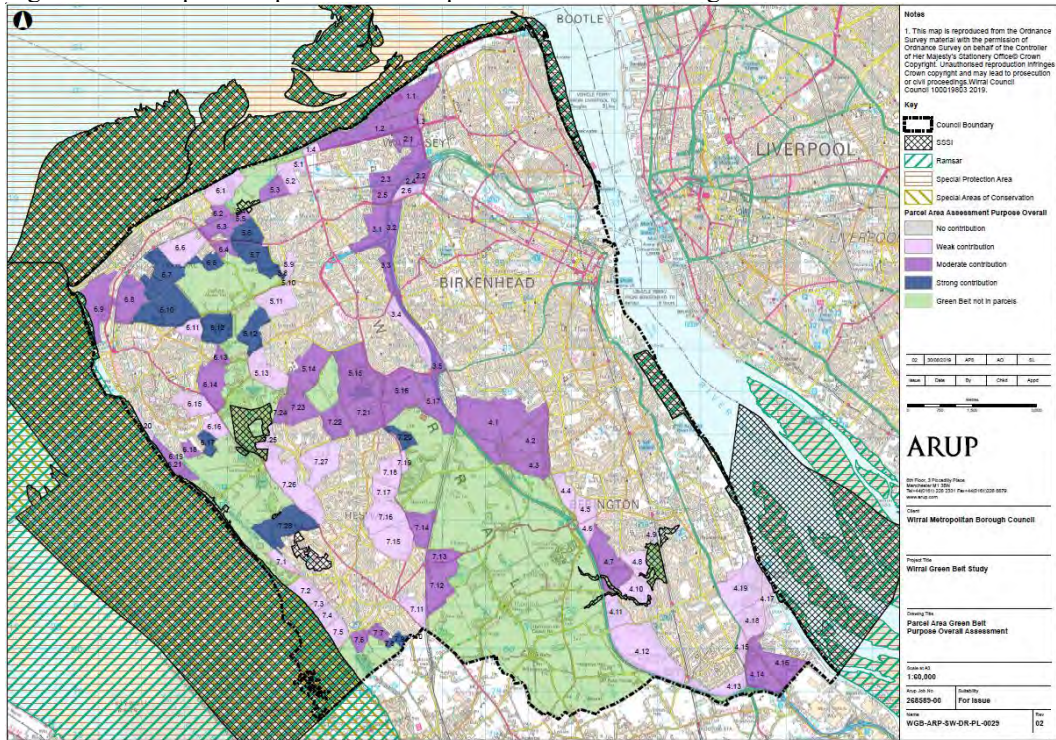
42 Green Belt parcels make a moderate overall contribution to the Green Belt;

46 Green Belt parcels make a weak overall contribution to the Green Belt; and

No Green Belt parcels make 'no' overall contribution to the Green Belt.

Figure 8 below provides a map of the overall assessment findings. A larger version of this is also provided in Appendix H.

Figure 8. Chloropleth map of Green Belt parcel assessment findings



The outcomes from the assessment do not mean that certain parcels should or should not be released from the Green Belt. Should the Council consider that Green Belt boundaries need to be altered, an exceptional circumstances case will need to be developed. The lower performing parcels have the greatest potential to be considered for release, subject to other evidence in the site selection process. Higher performing Green Belt parcels can also be considered for release albeit a stronger exceptional circumstances case will need to be made.



## 7 Next Steps

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Should the Council consider the release of sites in the Green Belt to be necessary, then the Green Belt Review should be used to inform decision making on the selection of the most suitable sites. It should be considered alongside other evidence before any potential sites are identified.

In the first instance it will be necessary for the Council to ascertain their housing and employment land requirements. If it is shown that additional housing and employment land is required beyond the existing supply, the Council could develop a site selection methodology that will enable the Green Belt sites to be fed into it and assist in delivering the housing and employment land supply.

In identifying Green Belt sites for release the Council will need to develop an 'exceptional circumstances' case to justify altering Green Belt boundaries. In developing the 'exceptional circumstances' case it will be necessary to look at the need for development and consider whether these needs can be accommodated without incursions into the Green Belt. The exceptional circumstances case should also consider the impact on sustainable patterns of development if Green Belt boundaries were not altered, as required by NPPF paragraph 138.

The Green Belt Review can assist as part of a site selection process and in developing the exceptional circumstances case. The lower performing parcels will have the greatest potential (in purely Green Belt terms) to form part of the supply of sites where exceptional circumstances exist. Higher performing Green Belt parcels can also be considered for release however a greater case will need to be made for 'exceptional circumstances' which outweigh the benefits of a potential site remaining in the Green Belt. Therefore while the outcomes from the assessment do not rule out the possibility of higher performing parcels being released, the justification and accompanying evidence required would be greater in such circumstances.

If sites for release are different to the Green Belt parcels assessed within this assessment, for example due to land ownership boundaries, then separate Green Belt assessments of these sites are advised to be prepared as part of the exceptional circumstances evidence.

## Appendix A

### Good Practice Review of Methodologies Adopted Elsewhere

## A1 Purpose 1

LPA and Document Status	Purpose 1 Overview
<p>Cheshire West and Chester Council Local Plan Part One (adopted 29<sup>th</sup> January 2015)</p> <p>Green Belt Study Part One (2011)</p> <p>Green Belt Review (July 2013)</p>	<p>The 2011 study had the following criteria with three possible definitions to assess parcels. The 2013 supports the approach, stating it is consistent with government policy creating a suitable base for the stage 2 work.</p> <p>Criteria: How well contained by the urban area is the parcel? Definitions: Not contained – the majority of the parcel is detached from the urban area – development of parcel would be independent of existing built up area Partially contained – between 25 – 50% of the parcel is adjacent to the urban area Well contained – over 50% of the parcel is adjacent to the urban area – development would be an extension of existing built up area</p> <p>Criteria: How strong is the boundary of the defined parcel of land? Definitions: Weak Boundary; one or more features lacking durability, may have large gaps between features, in poor condition, or have no prominent features. Development could lead to future sprawl Moderate Boundary; some durable boundary features, may have some gaps / strong condition issues and few prominent features Strong boundary; one or more durable boundary feature that is intact and well developed. Prominent features in the landscape. Development would be well contained.</p>
<p>Sefton Council Local Plan adopted (April 2017)</p> <p>Green Belt Study (2013)</p> <p>Joint Sefton and Knowsley Green Belt Study: Detailed Boundary Review of Sefton's Green Belt (November 2012)</p>	<p>The Council has outlined how the five Green Belt purposes relate to the Merseyside Green Belt purposes in the 2013 study. Following workshop discussions for the 2012 study, the approach agreed was to measure parcels which were already covered predominately by built form, if potential future development adjacent to settlements could be effectively contained by physical or visual features, not leading to sprawl. Settlements within the district were listed to be considered as urban areas. For other parcels without or minimal built form, parcels were categorised into well contained, partially contained and not contained. Settlements were defined within the methodology. District specific examples of level of containment were included.</p>



<p>Knowsley Council Local Plan and Core Strategy adopted (January 2016)</p> <p>Green Belt Technical Report (July 2013)</p> <p>Joint Sefton and Knowsley Green Belt Study: Final Knowsley Report (November 2012)</p>	<p>In the 2012 study, following workshop discussions, the approach agreed was to measure parcels which were already covered predominately by built form, if potential future development adjacent to settlements could be effectively contained by physical or visual features, not leading to sprawl. For other parcels without or minimal built form, parcels were categorised into well contained, partially contained and not contained. Settlements were defined within the methodology. District specific examples of level of containment were included. Settlements within the district were listed to be considered as urban areas. The 2013 study did not include a Green Belt purposes assessment.</p>
<p>St Helens Council (not yet adopted)</p> <p>Green Belt Review (2018)</p>	<p>The parcel was assessed individually against Purpose 1 and attributed a score of low, medium or high. The Council have outlined settlements that form the 'large built up area' and use the Oxford English Dictionary definition of 'sprawl' to assess the parcels. There was a characteristic for each of the three scores low, medium and high;</p> <p>Low – <i>“The parcel/sub-parcel is well contained and bounded by strong physical features and is either:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>adjacent to a large built up area; or</i></li> <li>• <i>if located further from a large built up area is of insufficient size to create substantial sprawl in its own right. Development here would not lead to unrestricted sprawl.”</i></li> </ul> <p>Medium – <i>“The parcel/sub-parcel is contained and/or bounded by strong physical features to a moderate extent and is either:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>adjacent to a large built up area or</i></li> <li>• <i>if located further from a large built up area is of insufficient size to create substantial sprawl in its own right. Development here may or may not lead to unrestricted sprawl.”</i></li> </ul> <p>High – <i>“The parcel/sub-parcel is poorly contained and only bounded to a limited extent by strong physical features. Development here is likely to lead to unrestricted sprawl”</i></p>

<p>Halton Council</p> <p>Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (not yet adopted – submission stage)</p> <p>Green Belt Review (November 2017)</p>	<p>This was assessed by considering the parcels proximity to, and containment by, the urban area and by evaluating the strength and durability of the current and potential Green Belt boundaries.</p> <p>The following definitions have been used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not Contained - Parcel is detached from the urban area;</li> <li>• Partially Contained - Parcel is adjacent to the urban area, but with less than 50% of the boundary adjacent to development;</li> <li>• Largely Contained - It is adjacent to the urban area, with approximately 50% to 75% of the boundary adjacent to development and is considered to be largely contained;</li> <li>• Contained - Parcel is adjacent to the urban area with the 75% or more of the boundary enclosed by development.</li> </ul> <p>In addition to the consideration of containment, the Council have also considered the ability of the site to round-off the settlement as part of the consideration of encroachment. Where the existing settlement is an irregular shape it has been considered whether the parcel would fill in a gap or complete the shape, or whether the parcel along with any neighbouring parcels could potentially round off the settlement.</p> <p>In order to assess boundary strength and (potential) durability the following boundaries were considered to be ‘strong’:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Landform – valley ridge, river, stream or depression</li> <li>• Vegetation – protected woodland, copse, greenway</li> <li>• Constructed – motorway, adopted highway/roads, railway, canal, buildings with long established line, or parcels directly adjacent to the urban area.</li> </ul>
<p>Cheshire East Local Plan (adopted 27 July 201)</p> <p>Green Belt Assessment Update (July 2015)</p>	<p>Purpose 1: The urban area referred to the settlements within the settlement hierarchy which were inset from the Green Belt .</p> <p>The purpose included consideration of the following key questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Boundary Definition: Would future development be firmly contained by strong or physical features?</li> <li>2. Level of Containment: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Does the parcel protect open land that is well connected or contained by the urban area?</li> <li>B. Would development help “round off” the settlement pattern?</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Ribbon Development: What role does the parcel play in preventing ribbon development?</li> </ol>
<p>Bath and North East Somerset Council Core Strategy</p> <p>(adopted in July 2014)</p> <p>Green Belt Assessment Stage 1 (April 2013), Stage 2 (September 2013)</p>	<p>Purpose 1: It is the view of B&amp;NES Council that Bristol and Bath should be regarded as “large built-up areas” when appraising land parcels. The considerations applied are outlined below. The Green Belt designation in this land parcel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• protects open land contiguous to or within close proximity of Bristol or Bath;</li> <li>• prevents development that would result in another settlement being absorbed into the large built up area; and</li> <li>• prevents sprawl where development would not otherwise be restricted by a barrier (e.g. road, railway, large watercourse).</li> </ul>

<p>Rushcliffe Core Strategy (adopted December 2014)</p> <p>Green Belt Review (June 2013)</p>	<p>Purpose 1: Consider whether development would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Take place outside urban areas</li><li>- Take place in area that cannot be easily linked to existing town centres by public transport; and</li><li>- Impact on accessibility to the open countryside for urban residents</li></ul> <p>A higher score for areas of Green Belt that stop the coalescence of large build up areas on the edge of the district. A lower score for areas that have a wide expanse.</p>
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<p>Rotherham Core Strategy (adopted September 2014)</p> <p>Green Belt Review (April 2012)</p>	<p>Purpose 1 and 3 have been combined as they are considered to be very similar in nature and repetitive.</p> <p>Each parcel was assigned to one of 3 categories:</p> <p>Well contained (WC) / High Urban Influence (HUI):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A parcel must be adjacent to an urban area and bounded by strong physical features such as main roads, railways or tree belts. This would prevent any development within the parcel from encroaching beyond the parcel boundary into the open countryside in neighbouring parcels, and hence if developed would be likely to have a minimal impact on the overall openness of the Green Belt.</li> <li>• Land possesses a semi-urban to urban character and is no longer perceived to be part of the open countryside. Impact upon openness is significant to total.</li> <li>• Land may contain degraded land that provides opportunities for enhancement.</li> </ul> <p>Partly contained (PC) / Medium Urban Influence (MUI)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where only a small part of the parcel is ‘contained’ by the urban area. This category includes parcels that abut an urban area for any part of their boundary, as these parcels may be a suitable location for development, even if the area is currently not physically well-contained by the urban area. Furthermore, the relationship with the urban area may change if an adjoining parcel were to be developed.</li> <li>• Land possesses a semi-rural character and there is already a perception of significant encroachment with significant impact upon openness.</li> <li>• There may be other constraints to further encroachment.</li> </ul> <p>Not contained (NC) / Low Urban Influence (LUI) :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parcels that are ‘not contained’ by an urban area, and are therefore areas where development would lead to urban sprawl, includes parcels that are not adjacent to an urban area. Such parcels are not, by definition, ‘contained’ by an urban area. In the case of parcels that are physically separated from an urban area e.g. by a main road (dual carriageway or motorway) or railway, these are also considered to be ‘not contained’.</li> <li>• Parcel possesses a predominantly open rural character.</li> <li>• There may be limited or no other fundamental constraints to encroachment (such as a strong landscape feature that could assist in fulfilling this purpose by containing development from outlying countryside).</li> </ul> <p>Reference is made to paragraph 141 – beneficial uses of the Green Belt. It is noted that the extent to which land in the Green Belt fulfils these objectives is not a material factor to be taken into account when considering its continued protection as the use of land is not as important as the purposes of including land in the Green Belt.</p>
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## A2 Purpose 2

LPA and Document Status	Purpose 2 Overview
<p>Cheshire West and Chester Council Local Plan Part One (adopted 29<sup>th</sup> January 2015)</p> <p>Green Belt Study Part One (2011)</p> <p>Green Belt Review (July 2013)</p>	<p>In defining ‘neighbouring towns’ the 2011 study noted that the purpose of the Green Belt was to maintain the strategic gap around Chester and Ellesmere Port as well as the rural settlements. Villages were therefore also defined as ‘neighbouring towns’. The neighbouring towns therefore consisted of: Chester, Ellesmere Port, Saughall, Littleton, Guilden Sutton, and Christleton.</p> <p>The 2011 study had the following criteria with three possible definitions to assess parcels. The 2013 supports the approach, stating it is consistent with government policy creating a suitable base for the stage 2 work.</p> <p>Criteria: Would the loss of the area of land from the Green Belt result in a decrease in the strategic gap between Chester urban area and neighbouring towns/villages?</p> <p>Definitions:</p> <p>Removal of the parcel of land from the Green Belt would leave a gap of less than 1 mile between built up areas which could result in cohesion of settlements</p> <p>Removal of the parcel of land from the Green Belt would leave a gap of between 1 and 2 miles between built up areas, cohesion a possibility</p> <p>Removal of the parcel of land from the Green Belt would leave a gap of more than 2 miles between built up areas, cohesion unlikely</p>
<p>Sefton Council Local Plan adopted (April 2017)</p> <p>Green Belt Study (2013)</p> <p>Joint Sefton and Knowsley Green Belt Study: Detailed Boundary Review of Sefton’s Green Belt (November 2012)</p>	<p>The Council has outlined how the five Green Belt purposes relate to the Merseyside Green Belt purposes in the 2013 study. Following methodology discussions, parcels were classified from an essential gap, partial essential gap, narrow gap, wide gap and not applicable between settlements. Parcels were discarded because they were within an essential gap. The 2012 study provided district specific examples of gaps surrounding settlements and areas.</p>

<p>Knowsley Council Local Plan and Core Strategy adopted (January 2016)</p> <p>Green Belt Technical Report (July 2013)</p> <p>Joint Sefton and Knowsley Green Belt Study: Final Knowsley Report (November 2012)</p>	<p>Following methodology discussions, parcels were classified from an essential gap, partial essential gap, narrow gap, wide gap and not applicable between settlements. Parcels were discarded because they were within an essential gap. The 2012 study provided district specific examples of gaps surrounding settlements and areas. The 2013 study did not include a Green Belt purposes assessment.</p>
<p>St Helens Council (not yet adopted)</p> <p>Green Belt Review (2018)</p>	<p>The parcel was assessed individually against Purpose 2 and attributed a score of low, medium or high. The methodology lists the settlements they consider needs to prevent from merging with one another. There was a characteristic for each of the three scores low, medium and high;</p> <p>Low – <i>“Parcel/sub-parcel does not fall within a gap between those settlements listed in paragraph 2.20 or is on the urban edge within a ‘Less Strategic Gap’ i.e. a wider gap where development within the parcel is not likely to impact on the integrity of the gap”</i></p> <p>Medium – <i>“Parcel/sub-parcel is on the urban edge within a ‘Partially Strategic Gap’ i.e. a strategic gap with scope for limited development on one or both sides of the gap without harming its overall integrity (i.e. by ‘rounding off’).”</i></p> <p>High – <i>“Parcel/sub-parcel is on the urban edge within a ‘Strategic Gap’ i.e. an essential gap that needs to be kept open and kept clear of new development to ensure that adjacent settlements do not merge”</i></p>
<p>Halton Council</p> <p>Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (not yet adopted – submission stage)</p> <p>Green Belt Review (November 2017)</p>	<p>All settlements were considered for the purposes of the assessment.</p> <p>The Council have considered the distance measurement between the settlements for each of the sites and the gaps that would remain if parcels were to be developed.</p>
<p>Cheshire East Local Plan (adopted 27 July 2017)</p> <p>Green Belt Assessment Update (July 2015)</p>	<p>Neighbouring towns included all settlements within the settlement hierarchy which are inset from the Green Belt.</p> <p>The purpose included consideration of the following key questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Would a reduction in the gap between the settlements compromise the openness of the Green Belt land?</li> <li>2. Do natural features or infrastructure provide a strong physical barrier or boundary which maintains the presence of the gap between settlements?</li> </ol>
<p>Bath and North East Somerset Council Core Strategy (adopted in July 2014)</p>	<p>The towns that were assessed for purpose 2 were directed by BANES council. Bristol and Bath were defined as towns, as were the other towns that had a town council.</p> <p>The considerations applied are outlined below. The Green Belt designation in this land parcel:</p>

Green Belt Assessment Stage 1 (April 2013), Stage 2 (September 2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• prevents the merger of towns or prevents development that would result in a comparatively significant reduction in the distance between towns; and</li> <li>• prevents continuous “ribbon development” along transport routes that link towns.</li> </ul>
Rotherham Core Strategy (adopted September 2014)  Green Belt Review (April 2012)	<p>The definition of a town for purpose 2 in the Rotherham Green Belt assessment was broadly aligned with the settlement hierarchy. This used the three highest categories – Rotherham urban area, Principle Settlements for Growth and Principle Settlements however one local centre was also used. This assumption implies that the assessment of purpose 2 relates more to land at the higher or broader level between towns rather than to more localised wedges or tongues of Green Belt that lie within the ‘towns.’</p> <p>Each parcel was assigned to one of 4 categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EG : The parcel is within an essential gap, where any further development would reduce the gap between settlements to an unacceptable width</li> <li>• EG (part) : Although these parcels are situated within an essential gap that must be kept open, there may be scope for some development e.g. ‘rounding off’ on one or both edges of the gap without adversely harming its overall openness and the broad extent of the gap.</li> <li>• NG : Narrow gaps were defined as being wider than essential gaps but are still sensitive to development. Potentially more development could be accommodated on the edge of an urban area without leading to neighbouring settlements merging</li> <li>• WG : Wide gaps where development on the urban edge is not likely to impact on the integrity of the gap. Wide gaps are also likely to contain a series of narrower gaps between smaller settlements within them.</li> </ul>

## A3 Purpose 3

LPA and Document Status	Purpose 3 Overview
<p>Cheshire West and Chester Council Local Plan Part One (adopted 29<sup>th</sup> January 2015)</p> <p>Green Belt Study Part One (2011)</p> <p>Green Belt Review (July 2013)</p>	<p>The 2011 study had the following criteria with three possible definitions to assess parcels. The 2013 supports the approach, stating it is consistent with government policy creating a suitable base for the stage 2 work.</p> <p>The focus for this purpose will be on the land uses and opportunities that "positively enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt".</p> <p>(i) Positive opportunities are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing access (to open space / countryside);</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation;</li> <li>• Retain, and enhance landscapes;</li> <li>• Improve damaged and derelict land; and</li> <li>• Visual amenity and biodiversity</li> </ul> <p>Criteria: Are Green Belt opportunities being achieved in the defined area?</p> <p>Definitions:</p> <p>5 opportunities are being achieved 3 or 4 opportunities are being achieved 2 or less opportunities re being achieved</p> <p>Criteria: What percentage of the parcel is covered by development?</p> <p>Definitions:</p> <p>Less than 25% of the parcel is developed Between 25 - 50% of the parcel is developed Greater than 50% of the parcel is developed</p>
<p>Sefton Council Local Plan adopted (April 2017)</p> <p>Green Belt Study (2013)</p> <p>Joint Sefton and Knowsley Green Belt Study: Detailed Boundary Review of Sefton's Green Belt (November 2012)</p>	<p>The Council has outlined how the five Green Belt purposes relate to the Merseyside Green Belt purposes. The 2012 and 2013 methodologies listed appropriate land uses of parcels including agriculture, amenity space and woodland. The openness of the parcel was considered by the absence of inappropriate development (land use does not appear within the appropriate specified land use list) within the parcel. It was considered that a boundary assessment was not required as this was undertaken in a previous stage.</p>



<p>Knowsley Council Local Plan and Core Strategy adopted (January 2016)</p> <p>Green Belt Technical Report (July 2013)</p> <p>Joint Sefton and Knowsley Green Belt Study: Final Knowsley Report (November 2012)</p>	<p>The 2012 methodology listed appropriate land uses of parcels including agriculture, sports, equine uses and cemeteries. The openness of the parcel was considered by the absence of inappropriate development (land use does not appear within the appropriate specified land use list) within the parcel. A boundary assessment was not required as this was undertaken in stage 1 within the 2012 study. The 2013 study did not include a Green Belt purposes assessment.</p>
<p>St Helens Council (not yet adopted)</p> <p>Green Belt Review (2018)</p>	<p>The parcel was assessed individually against Purpose 3 and attributed a score of low, medium or high.</p> <p>Low – <i>“Limited characteristics of the countryside; Substantially affected by existing urban features and/or inappropriate development; Substantial degree of enclosure provided by strong boundary features; Relatively limited sense of openness”</i></p> <p>Medium – <i>“Many characteristics of the countryside; Affected to a moderate extent by existing urban features and/or inappropriate Development; Moderate degree of enclosure; Moderate sense of openness</i></p> <p>High – <i>“Highly characteristic of the countryside; Only affected to a limited extent by urban features and/or inappropriate development; Limited degree of enclosure; Strong sense of openness”</i></p>

<p>Halton Council</p> <p>Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (not yet adopted – submission stage)</p> <p>Green Belt Review (November 2017)</p>	<p>The level of encroachment was measured by considering existing development and what the development was used for. Land use within each of the parcels has been considered and categorised as being in one of three categories these being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Countryside Use’ - include agriculture, equestrian uses, nature, areas used for sport and recreation, amenity space, woodland, parkland, cemeteries and</li> <li>• former landfill sites where used for agriculture or recreational uses.</li> <li>• ‘Partial Countryside Use’ – include sites with mixed uses either containing one or more ‘countryside uses’ in addition to non-countryside uses which include garden centres, office development, sewerage works, sport and recreational club houses.</li> <li>• ‘Non Countryside Use’ being remaining land uses not described under ‘countryside use’ or ‘partial countryside use’ above.</li> </ul> <p>Other infrastructure and development considered to be ‘appropriate’ in the Green Belt for the purposes of this assessment included land used for highways infrastructure and former landfill sites.</p> <p>Visual encroachment includes the views across a parcel, how open those views are and how much they are interrupted by, or lead on to, urban development and how much any urban development affects the ‘countryside feel’ of a parcel. These are important considerations. Parcels were then assessed as making a limited, partial or high level of visual encroachment. The following definitions have been used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High level of visual encroachment – views through the parcel and from the parcel are interrupted by urban development or by non-countryside uses within the Green Belt</li> <li>• Partial visual encroachment – some views through the parcel and from the parcel are considered to be without encroachment from urban development or noncountryside uses</li> <li>• Limited visual encroachment – views through the parcel and from the parcel are considered to be open and without encroachment from urban development.</li> </ul> <p>This section also identifies the landscape character of the area, highlighting which of the landscape character areas the parcel is within and what strength of character that area is considered to have and what condition it is considered to be in. This information has been taken from the Landscape Character Assessment<sup>5</sup>. The Landscape Character Assessment determined the strength of the character of the area using a range of criteria, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An assessment of how characteristic features and elements combine to form a sense of place;</li> <li>• How distinctive and recognisable is the pattern of elements that makes up the character, including both positive and negative elements e.g. consistent use of local building materials;</li> <li>• Presence and quantity of distinctive features; and</li> <li>• Identification of landscapes containing historic patterns and features.</li> </ul>
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<p>Cheshire East Local Plan (adopted 27 July 2017)</p> <p>Green Belt Assessment Update (July 2015)</p>	<p>The purpose included consideration of the following key questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are there strong and robust boundaries to contain development and prevent encroachment in the long term?</li> <li>2. Existing urbanising influences: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. What is the existing land use / uses?</li> <li>B. What is the proximity and relationship to the settlement?</li> <li>C. What is the relationship to the countryside?</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Does the parcel protect the openness of the countryside?</li> <li>4. Does the parcel serve a beneficial use of the Green Belt which should be safeguarded?</li> </ol>
<p>Rushcliffe Core Strategy (adopted December 2014)</p> <p>Green Belt Review (June 2013)</p>	<p>Consider if development would impact on the surrounding rural areas outside of the contained urban areas.</p> <p>Whilst landscape quality is not in itself a Green Belt issue, the impact development would have on the role of smaller scale ridges and key landscape features in providing a backcloth to urban areas could be considered as these features are fundamental to appreciation of the open countryside.</p> <p>A higher score for areas of Green Belt that border an existing settlement on one side; and a lower score for areas that border the</p>

<p>Bath and North East Somerset Council Core Strategy (adopted in July 2014)</p> <p>Green Belt Assessment Stage 1 (April 2013), Stage 2 (September 2013)</p>	<p>For the purpose of this assessment, countryside is taken to mean open land. It is acknowledged that villages are part of the ‘countryside’, but the focus of appraisal under this purpose is on identifying whether the appearance of generally open land in the countryside has been compromised by previous development. The considerations applied are outlined below. The Green Belt designation in this land parcel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• protects countryside that is in use for agriculture, forestry, outdoor sport and recreation, cemeteries and local transport infrastructure (appropriate uses based on NPPF paragraph 89, bullets 1 and 2, and paragraph 90, bullet 3);</li> <li>• protects countryside that is compromised as it contains existing uses that would not now constitute appropriate development (i.e. assumes re-use of brownfield land and existing buildings under NPPF paragraphs 89 &amp; 90 does not apply) or there is damaged or derelict land. For instance, existing employment or utilities development close to an urban area means land could be described as ‘peri-urban’ rather than countryside;</li> <li>• is important to prevent encroachment on the countryside with regard to the topography of land and location relative to existing development.</li> </ul> <p>A. Landscape value and enhancement and visual amenity</p> <p>The considerations applied are outlined below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• part or all of the land parcel is within or forms the setting of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty; and/or</li> <li>• part or all of the land parcel provides the setting for a World Heritage Site, Conservation Area, Scheduled Ancient Monument or listed buildings.</li> </ul> <p>B. Biodiversity value and enhancement. The considerations applied are outlined below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• part or all of the land parcel has a national or local ecology designation.</li> </ul> <p>C. Access and opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation The considerations applied are outlined below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the area has a relatively high concentration of Public Rights of Way; or other forms of outdoor sport and recreation (e.g. golf courses, stables).</li> </ul>
<p>Rotherham Core Strategy (adopted September 2014)</p> <p>Green Belt Review (April 2012)</p>	<p>See Purpose 1 above – purpose 1 and purpose 3 have been combined</p>

## A4 Purpose 4

LPA and Document Status	Purpose 4 Overview
<p>Cheshire West and Chester Council Local Plan Part One (adopted 29<sup>th</sup> January 2015)</p> <p>Green Belt Study Part One (2011)</p> <p>Green Belt Review (July 2013)</p>	<p>The 2011 study had the following criteria with three possible definitions to assess parcels. The 2013 supports the approach, stating it is consistent with government policy creating a suitable base for the stage 2 work.</p> <p>Criteria: Are there any key views into/out of the historic city core?</p> <p>Definitions:</p> <p>Clear sight of key landmarks/assets or features into and/or out of the historic core</p> <p>Partial visibility of key landmarks/assets or features into and/or out of the historic core</p> <p>No key landmarks/assets or features into and/or out of the historic core</p> <p>Criteria: Does the parcel of land contribute towards the openness of the land and its surroundings?</p> <p>Definitions:</p> <p>Area is open with vistas over the adjacent rural landscapes and countryside</p> <p>Partial openness, some views of adjacent rural landscapes and countryside, some restriction</p> <p>Area has limited/no openness, views over the adjacent rural landscapes and countryside greatly restricted</p> <p>Criteria: Does the area contribute towards the historic character and environment of Chester?</p> <p>Definitions:</p> <p>The area makes a significant contribution to the historic character and environment of Chester</p> <p>The area makes a significant contribution to the historic character and environment of Chester</p> <p>The area makes some contribution to the historic character and environment of Chester</p> <p>The area makes no contribution to the historic character and environment of Chester</p>

<p>Sefton Council Local Plan adopted (April 2017)</p> <p>Green Belt Study (2013)</p> <p>Joint Sefton and Knowsley Green Belt Study: Detailed Boundary Review of Sefton's Green Belt (November 2012)</p>	<p>The Council has outlined how the five Green Belt purposes relate to the Merseyside Green Belt purposes in the 2013 study. The 2012 and 2013 methodologies stated that the Council does not contain any nationally recognized historic towns however the second aim of the purpose, to retain settlement's individual characters, can be achieved by checking settlements do not merge with one another. Within parcel assessments, the Council identified historic assets such as listed buildings to be considered in the later assessment stage as a constraint.</p>
<p>Knowsley Council Local Plan and Core Strategy adopted (January 2016)</p> <p>Green Belt Technical Report (July 2013)</p> <p>Joint Sefton and Knowsley Green Belt Study: Final Knowsley Report (November 2012)</p>	<p>The 2012 methodology stated that the Council does not contain any nationally recognized historic towns although the second part of the purpose by retaining each settlement's individual characteristics can be achieved by ensuring settlements do not merge with each other. Within parcel assessments, the Council identified historic assets such as listed buildings to be considered in later constraint assessment stages. The 2013 study did not include a Green Belt purposes assessment.</p>
<p>St Helens Council (not yet adopted)</p> <p>Green Belt Review (2018)</p>	<p>St Helens contains listed buildings, conservation areas and other designated and non-designated heritage assets. However, it was considered that settlements already contain a number of non-heritage designations and settings due to already been affected by modern and industrial development. Consequently, it was decided that parcels cannot be accurately assessed against purpose 4.</p> <p>Where a parcel may contain or within the setting of a significant heritage asset (including a conservation area, listed building or scheduled ancient monument) this was taken into account during Stage 2 of the review.</p>
<p>Halton Council</p> <p>Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (not yet adopted – submission stage)</p> <p>Green Belt Review (November 2017)</p>	<p>Given the lack of nationally recognised 'historic towns' affecting the study area, the methodology concluded that no specific 'parcel by parcel' assessment was required. Heritage issues are included within Stage 2, Restrictive Constraints.</p>

<p>Cheshire East Local Plan (adopted 27 July 2017)</p> <p>Green Belt Assessment Update (July 2015)</p>	<p>Stage 1: Is the settlement a historic town? With reference to the Domesday Book and to the CEC Historic evidence base in terms of the Cheshire Historic Towns Survey.</p> <p>Stage 2: Assess the proximity of the town’s historic elements to the Green Belt by reference to conservation areas. Applying a buffer of 250-500m. If no conservation areas within the buffer the parcel makes no contribution to purpose 4.</p> <p>Stage 3: What role does the Green Belt play in preserving the setting and special character of the historic town? Consider settlement size/scale/form, historic elements, land form/land cover/landscape features, outward and inward views from the settlement and Green Belt.</p>
<p>Bath and North East Somerset Council Core Strategy (adopted in July 2014)</p> <p>Green Belt Assessment Stage 1 (April 2013), Stage 2 (September 2013)</p>	<p>It is the view of B&amp;NES Council that Bristol, Bath, Keynsham, Midsomer Norton and Radstock should be regarded as “towns” when appraising land parcels. Keynsham, Midsomer Norton and Radstock all have Town Councils. The consideration applied is outlined below:</p> <p>The Green Belt designation in this land parcel makes a positive contribution to the setting, or better reveals the significance of a World Heritage Site or Conservation Area where the designation covers all or part of a town.</p>
<p>Rushcliffe Core Strategy (adopted December 2014)</p> <p>Green Belt Review (June 2013)</p>	<p>Consider if the development would impact on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conservation Areas</li> <li>- Setting and character of highly valued historic assets (historic Parks and Gardens, Listed Buildings, scheduled ancient monuments.)</li> </ul> <p>A higher score for areas of Green Belt land that have a clear link with the settlement’s historic core; and a lower score for settlements without a clear historic core, or where the historic core has been subsumed by 20th Century development.</p>
<p>Rotherham Core Strategy (adopted September 2014)</p> <p>Green Belt Review (April 2012)</p>	<p>Rotherham does not contain any nationally recognised historic towns, the setting of which needs to be protected. However, whilst this may be the case, the presence of historic attributes, such as conservation areas or other historic designations, is something which can still be used in consideration of the identity of the settlements defined as “towns” and was therefore used to inform the assessment of Purpose 2 where relevant.</p>



## A5 Purpose 5

LPA and Document Status	Purpose 5 Overview
<p>Cheshire West and Chester Council</p> <p>Local Plan Part One (adopted 29<sup>th</sup> January 2015)</p> <p>Green Belt Study Part One (2011)</p> <p>Green Belt Review (July 2013)</p>	<p>Purpose 5 was excluded from the 2011 and 2013 methodologies.</p> <p>The rationale for this decision in the 2011 study was because there was a difficulty in measuring if development outside of settlements would have a positive or negative impact on regeneration and therefore the success of this purpose.</p> <p>The rationale for this decision in the 2013 study was because development within the urban area is insufficient to meet future needs due to the success of the Green Belt in previous years challenging development into existing settlements. Therefore, the Green Belt has performed purpose 5 well resulting in all parcels having a similar assessment conclusion.</p>
<p>Sefton Council</p> <p>Local Plan adopted (April 2017)</p> <p>Green Belt Study (2013)</p> <p>Joint Sefton and Knowsley Green Belt Study: Detailed Boundary Review of Sefton's Green Belt (November 2012)</p>	<p>The Council has outlined how the five Green Belt purposes relate to the Merseyside Green Belt purposes in the 2013 study. The 2012 and 2013 methodologies stated that no assessment can be made relating to purpose 5. The 2013 methodology states that purpose 5 was considered there <i>"was very little consistent evidence that could be used to indicate whether development was likely to have a positive (complementary) or negatively (adverse) impact"</i>.</p>
<p>Knowsley Council</p> <p>Local Plan and Core Strategy adopted (January 2016)</p> <p>Green Belt Technical Report (July 2013)</p> <p>Joint Sefton and Knowsley Green Belt Study: Final Knowsley Report (November 2012)</p>	<p>The 2012 methodology stated that no assessment can be made relating to purpose 5. The 2013 study did not include a Green Belt purposes assessment.</p>
<p>St Helens Council (not yet adopted)</p> <p>Green Belt Review (2018)</p>	<p>Following the 2015 PAS guidance (Planning on the Doorstep), it was decided that parcels will not be assessed against purpose 5 in the 2018 Review. The methodology states that the Green Belt within St Helens plays an important part in urban regeneration though there is no clear evidence what each parcel or sub-parcel does in supporting this and could be "reliably differentiated".</p>

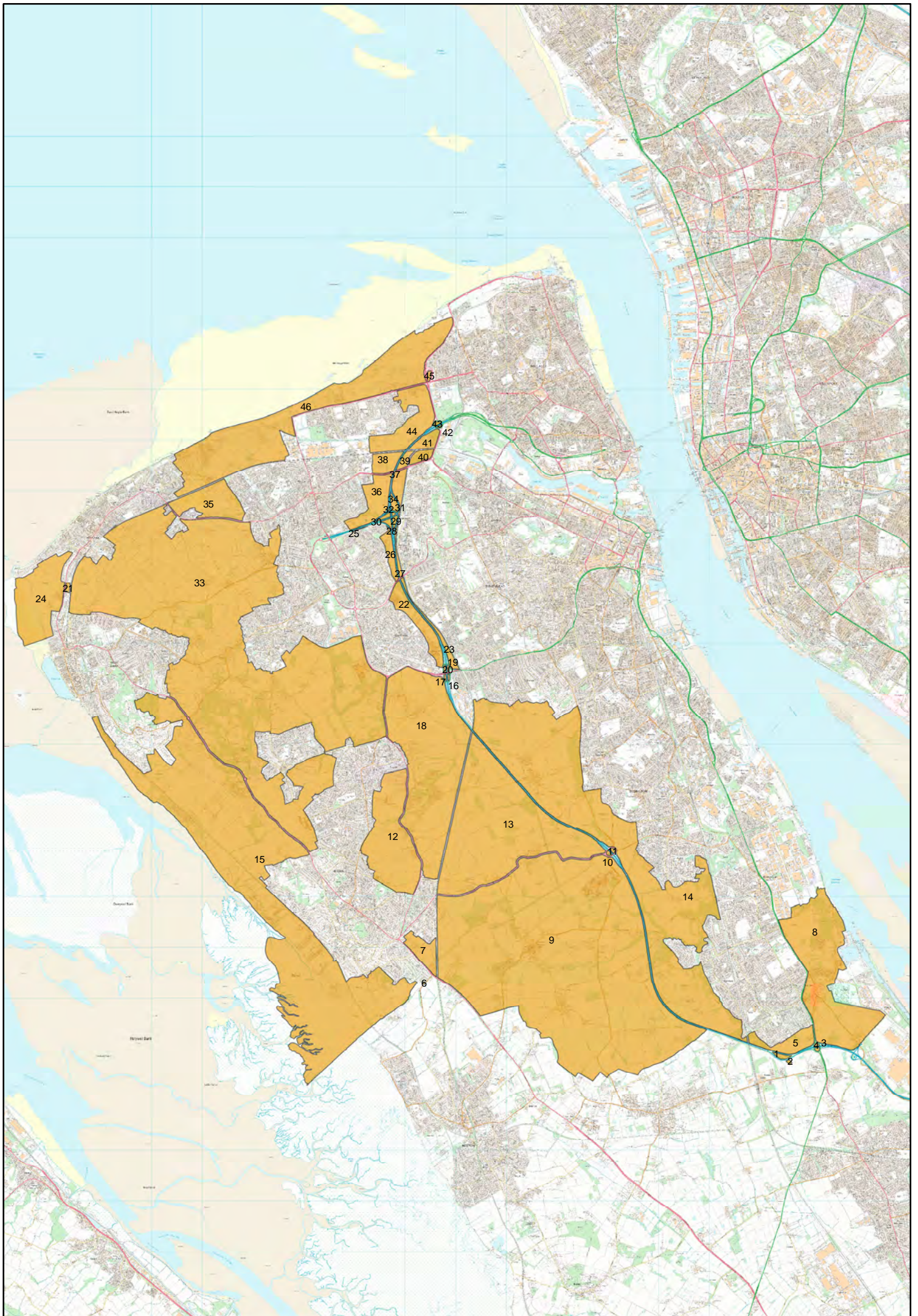
LPA and Document Status	Purpose 5 Overview
<p>Halton Council</p> <p>Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (not yet adopted – submission stage)</p> <p>Green Belt Review (November 2017)</p>	<p>This purpose has been screened out, as it is felt that development of any of the sites in the Green Belt around Widnes and Hale would be likely to have the same level of impact on urban regeneration.</p>
<p>Cheshire East Local Plan (adopted 27 July 2017)</p> <p>Green Belt Assessment Update (July 2015)</p>	<p>Assess the potential for urban regeneration within settlements in Cheshire East and neighbouring authorities by looking at undeveloped brownfield supply and urban potential figures compared to the total settlement size to assess the percentage brownfield development within urban areas. A threshold was then applied relating to the scale of potential urban regeneration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No contribution: Zero urban potential</li> <li>• Contribution: &gt;0 - 1% urban potential</li> <li>• Significant contribution: &gt;1% - 5% urban potential</li> <li>• Major contribution: &gt;5% urban potential</li> </ul>
<p>Bath and North East Somerset Council Core Strategy (adopted in July 2014)</p> <p>Green Belt Assessment Stage 1 (April 2013), Stage 2 (September 2013)</p>	<p>The Bristol and Bath Green Belt is considered to play an important role in encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land, by restricting the availability of greenfield sites. The considerations applied are outlined below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The land parcel adjoins the urban areas, defined as Bristol, Bath, Keynsham, Midsomer Norton or Radstock for the appraisal of this Green Belt purpose.</li> <li>• The land parcel contains land where B&amp;NES Council have experienced development pressure.</li> </ul>
<p>Rushcliffe Core Strategy adopted December 2014)</p> <p>Green Belt Review (June 2013)</p>	<p>Consider if development would impact upon the likelihood of sites within the existing urban area in coming forward, and whether development in the broad location would facilitate the possibility of reusing previously developed land.</p> <p>It is recognised this purpose could only be achieved in combination with the appropriate regeneration/development plan policies. For this purpose, an average value of 3 is used unless more local circumstances identify that the location it is also necessary to have an appreciation of the history of the Nottingham-Derby Green Belt, the original intentions of the designation when it was prepared at the local level and the extent of previous changes, and any specific regeneration issues.</p>

<b>LPA and Document Status</b>	<b>Purpose 5 Overview</b>
<p>Rotherham Core Strategy (adopted September 2014)</p> <p>Green Belt Review (April 2012)</p>	<p>It is the overall restrictive nature of Green Belt that, through its limitation of the supply of other development opportunities, encourages regeneration and re-use of land at a strategic level. It is considered impossible to judge how any given parcel of land within the Green Belt would contribute to the fulfilment of this purpose. This purpose has therefore not been assessed on an area by area basis.</p> <p>This relationship will be determined through the Core Strategy DPD, Sites and Policies DPD or individual planning applications.</p>

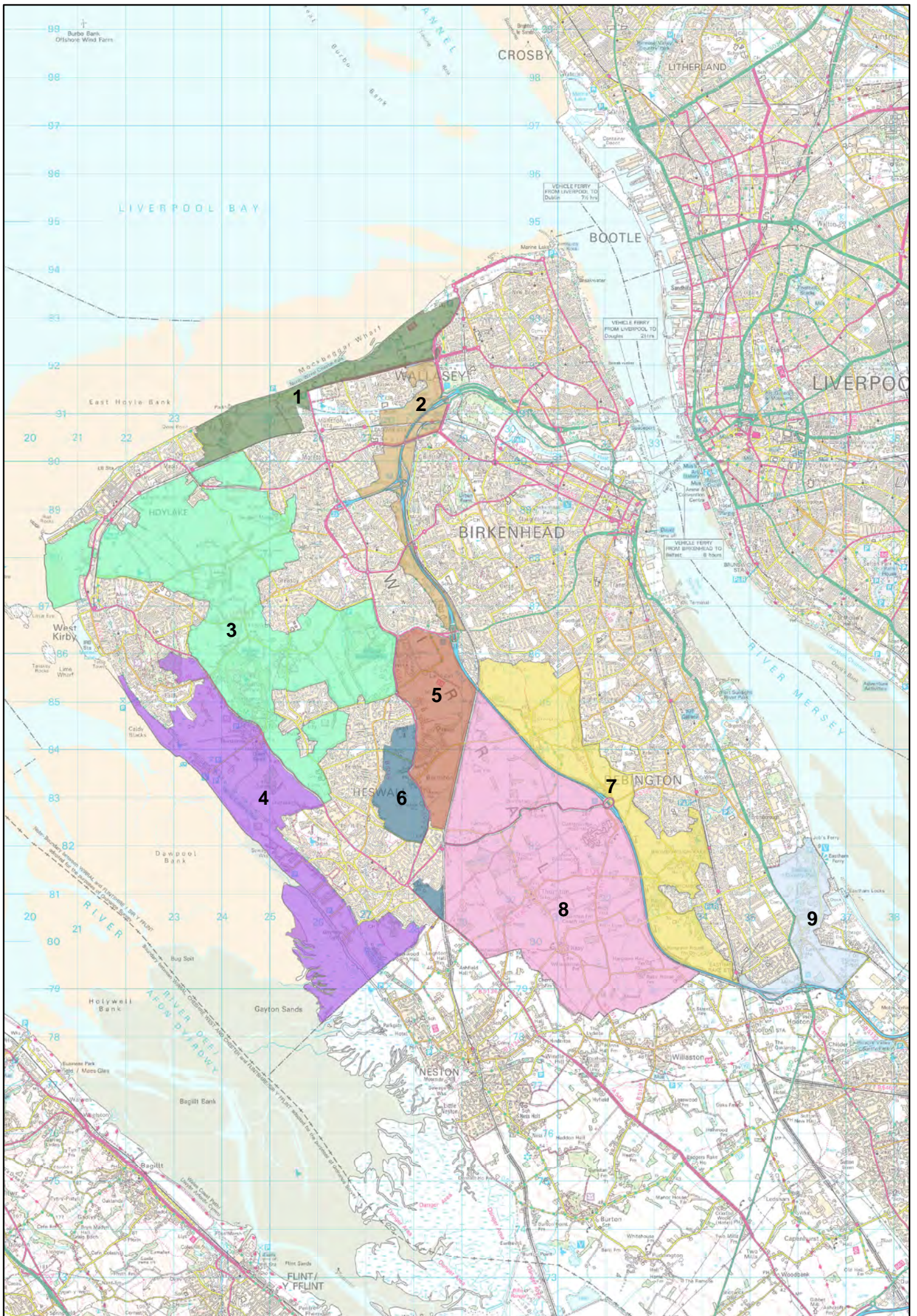
## **Appendix B**

### **General Area Maps**











## Appendix C

### Justification for Merging of General Areas



## C1 Justification for Merging of General Areas

Map B Reference	Comments in relation to Map A	Justification
1	45 and 46 have been merged	46 is a very small area of Green Belt separated by the A554 and within the A551/A554 slip roads. It was therefore logical to merge it with 45.
2	16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43 and 44 have been merged	These General Areas were all merged to create General Area 2 as they all form part of the M53 corridor and therefore share similar characteristics. Many of the areas were very small due to the large number of roads and slip roads within the corridor.
3	21, 24, 33 and 35 have been merged	21 and 24 were merged with 33 as they are both enclosed by Settlement Area 6. They are therefore similar to the north western section of 33. 35 was also merged with 33 as it performs a separation role between Settlement Area 6 and Settlement Area 5. It is therefore similar in this regard to 33.
4	6 and 15 have been merged	15 is a very small area of Green Belt which is detached from the rest of the Wirral Green Belt. It is closest to 6 and therefore it was logical to include it as part of 6.
5	This is the same as 18	It was not necessary to merge this General Area
6	7 and 12 form one General Area	7 and 12 are both enclosed by Settlement Area 7 and are therefore similar in character. It is therefore logical to consider them together.
7	This is the same as 14	It was not necessary to merge this General Area – the M53 represents a strong durable boundary.
8	9, 10, 11 and 13 have been merged	9 and 13 are both similar in character as they both consist of large expanses of open countryside with limited connection to a settlement or the urban conurbation and which are bound by the M53 and railway line. 10 and 11 are very small areas of Green Belt resulting from the M53 slip roads, it is therefore logical to merge these with 9 and 13.
9	1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 8 have been merged	5 and 8 are both similar in character adjoining the urban conurbation and performing a separation role between the urban conurbation and Ellesmere Port. 1, 2, 3 and 4 are very small areas of Green Belt resulting from the M53 slip roads. It is therefore logical to merge these with the adjoining areas.

## Appendix D

### Detailed General Area Assessment Table

General Area Ref (GA Map B)	Purpose 1: to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	Purpose 2: to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	Purpose 3: to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Purpose 4: to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	Purpose 5: to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	Justification for Assessment	Overall Assessment
1	Weak contribution: The GA is adjacent to the urban conurbation along its eastern boundary consisting of the A554 to the south east and Bayview Drive to the north east, both of these are durable and would be able to prevent sprawl into the GA. Given the pattern of the built-up area, development of the eastern section of the GA could constitute 'rounding off' of the settlement pattern. Overall the GA makes a weak contribution to checking unrestricted sprawl due to the durable boundaries and potential for rounding off.	Strong contribution: The GA forms an essential gap between the urban conurbation and Settlement Area 5, and between Settlement Area 5 and Settlement Area 6, whereby development of the whole of the GA would result in the neighbouring towns merging. Overall, the GA makes a strong contribution to preventing towns from merging.	Moderate contribution: The GA is connected to urban conurbation along its eastern boundary and Settlement Area 5 along its southern boundaries. These boundaries are generally durable road and railway line boundaries, which will be able to prevent encroachment into the GA. There is a small section of less durable boundaries consisting of field boundaries with tree line at the end of Bayview Drive. The GA is also connected to Settlement Area 6 along its western boundaries consisting of garden boundaries which are less durable and would not be able to prevent encroachment into the GA. The GA has a limited connection to the countryside along a small section of the south eastern boundary and south western boundary given that the northern boundary consists of the coastline. The south western boundary consists of a railway line which is a durable boundary and could prevent encroachment beyond the GA if the GA were developed. The south eastern boundary is Leasowe Road, which is also a durable boundary. The existing land uses consists of open countryside and some agricultural use. There is some existing built form within the GA including the Wirral Beach Caravan Park and Park Lane Holiday Homes to the west, Wallasey Golf Club, Leasowe Golf Club, Pathan Park and some residential housing to the west, with a hotel and lighthouse to the north. The GA has between 10-20% built form, low levels of vegetation and open long line views and therefore has a moderate degree of openness. Overall, the GA makes a moderate contribution to safeguarding from encroachment due to its moderate degree of openness and limited connection to the countryside and durable boundaries with the countryside.	No contribution: The GA is not adjacent to a historic town and therefore does not contribute to preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.	Moderate contribution: All Green Belt land can be considered to support urban regeneration of settlements within Wirral and it is not appropriate to state that some parts of the Green Belt perform this to a stronger or weaker degree. Therefore all GAs make a moderate contribution to this purpose.	The GA makes a strong contribution to one purpose, a moderate contribution to two purposes, a weak contribution to one purpose, and no contribution to one. In line with the methodology, professional judgement has been applied to evaluate the overall contribution. The GA has been judged to make a moderate overall contribution to the Green Belt. The GA makes a strong contribution to preventing towns from merging as it forms an essential gap between the urban conurbation and Settlement Area 5, as well as between Settlement Area 5 and Settlement Area 6. However, the GA makes a moderate contribution to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment as it supports a moderate degree of openness, it has a limited connection to the countryside, and durable boundaries with the countryside therefore development would be contained and would not threaten the overall openness and permanence of the Green Belt. The GA makes no contribution to preserving the setting and character of historical towns. The GA makes a moderate contribution to assisting in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.	Moderate contribution
2	Weak contribution: The GA is adjacent to the urban conurbation to the east. The eastern boundaries consist of railway lines and roads including the A554 and a small section of the M53 which are durable and would be able to prevent sprawl into the GA. Overall the GA makes a weak contribution to checking unrestricted sprawl due to the presence of durable boundaries.	Strong contribution: The GA forms an essential gap between the urban conurbation and Settlement Area 5 whereby the development of the GA would result in the actual and perceived merging of these settlements. Limited development within the GA would still significantly reduce the gap between the neighbouring towns and result in the perceived merging. Overall, the GA makes a strong	Weak contribution: The GA is well contained by the urban area and settlement with the urban conurbation located to the east and Settlement Area 5 to the west. The western boundary mainly consists of garden boundaries which are less durable, and some sections of durable boundaries consisting of roads (New Hey Road, Carr Bridge Road) and the River Birket which is durable and would be able to prevent encroachment into the GA. The GA is connected to the urban conurbation to the east with a durable boundary consisting of the railway line and road boundaries (Fender Lane, A554) which would be able to prevent encroachment into the GA. The GA is not well connected to the countryside with just a very small section of its southern boundary adjacent to the countryside consisting of A552 which is durable and a small section in the northern boundary consisting the A551. The existing land use consists of mainly agricultural land and open countryside, with some areas of vegetation and dense	No contribution: The GA is not adjacent to a historic town and therefore does not contribute to preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.	Moderate contribution: All Green Belt land can be considered to support urban regeneration of settlements within Wirral and it is not appropriate to state that some parts of the Green Belt perform this to a stronger or weaker degree. Therefore all GAs make a moderate contribution to this purpose	The GA makes a strong contribution to one purpose, a moderate contribution to one purpose, a weak contribution to two purposes and no contribution to one purpose. In line with the methodology, professional judgement has been used to evaluate the overall contribution. The GA has been judged to make a moderate overall contribution. Whilst the GA forms an essential gap between the urban conurbation and Settlement Area 5, whereby development would result in the actual merging of the neighbouring towns, the GA makes a weak contribution to checking the unrestricted sprawl of the urban conurbation due to its presence of durable boundaries which could contain development and prevent it from threatening the overall openness and permanence of the Green Belt. The GA also makes a weak contribution to safeguarding the countryside from	Moderate contribution

		contribution to preventing neighbouring towns merging.	woodland. There is a cluster of existing building along Carr Bridge Road, New Hey Road consisting of schools such as Woodchurch High school, Foxfield School, St Michael & All Angels AC Aided Primary School, along with care homes, community and leisure centres in the south of the GA. There is also a cluster of residential development at Leasowe Road and Bidston Golf Club to the north. The GA has between 10-20% built form, limited long line views due to the being enclosed by settlements and the presence of woodland and dense level of vegetation and therefore has a weak degree of openness, Overall the GA makes a weak contribution to safeguarding from encroachment as the GA has a weak degree of openness and a limited connection to the countryside.			encroachment as it has a weak degree of openness and a limited connection to the countryside. The GA makes no contribution to preserving the setting and special character of historic towns. The GA makes a moderate contribution to assisting urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.	
3	No contribution: The GA is not adjacent to the large built up area and therefore does not contribute to this purpose.	Strong contribution: The GA forms an essential gap between Settlement Area 5 and Settlement Area 6, as well as between Settlement Area 5 and Settlement Area 7, and between Settlement Area 6 and Settlement Area 7 whereby development of the GA would result in both the actual and perceived merging of neighbouring towns. Limited development within the GA would still significantly reduce the gap between the neighbouring towns and result in the perceived merging. Only development in the north western corner and the southernmost point of the GA would not result in any merging. Overall, the GA makes a strong contribution to preventing neighbouring towns from merging.	Moderate contribution: There is a range of durable boundaries between the GA and the settlements. The GA is connected to Settlement Area 5 to the east with durable boundaries consisting of Carr Lane and Garden Hey Road, Arrowe Road, Arrowe Park Road and Thingwall Road, Arrowe Brook and Greasby Brook and garden boundaries which are less durable and would not be able to prevent encroachment into the GA. To the south, the GA is connected to Settlement Area 7 mainly through garden boundaries which are less durable and some roads (Thingwall Road, Irby Road) which are durable and would be able to prevent encroachment into the GA. To the west and north west, the GA is connected to Settlement Area 6 with durable boundaries consisting of the railway line, roads (Carr Lane, Greenbank Road, A540) and garden boundaries that are less durable and would not be able to prevent encroachment into the GA. The GA is connected to the countryside along three boundaries through roads and the railway line which are durable and would be able to prevent encroachment beyond the GA if it were developed. The existing land uses consist of mainly agricultural land and open countryside, with some dense woodland to the south. There is some existing built form in the GA with Arrowe Park Hospital, Arrowe Park Golf Course to the east, Frankby Cemetery, Larton Riding School and some residential buildings to the west. To the south, there is Dawpool C of E Aided Primary School, with Hoylake Municipal Golf Club and Royal Liverpool Golf Club and some residential housing to the north of the GA. The GA supports a strong-moderate degree of openness with less than 20% built form and low vegetation in the majority of the GA, with the exception of the south of the GA where dense vegetation is found. Overall, the GA makes a moderate contribution to safeguarding from encroachment as although it supports a strong-moderate degree of openness, the boundaries with the countryside are durable and could prevent encroachment.	No contribution: The GA is not adjacent to a historic town and therefore does not contribute to preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.	Moderate contribution: All Green Belt land can be considered to support urban regeneration of settlements within Wirral and it is not appropriate to state that some parts of the Green Belt perform this to a stronger or weaker degree. Therefore all GAs make a moderate contribution to this purpose	The GA makes a strong contribution to one purpose and a moderate contribution in two purposes and no contribution in two purposes. In line with the methodology, professional judgement has been applied to evaluate the overall contribution. The GA has been judged to make a strong overall contribution to the Green Belt as it forms an essential gap between Settlement Areas 5 and 6, Settlement Areas 5 and 7 and between Settlement Areas 6 and 7 whereby development of the GA would result in both the actual and perceived merging of the neighbouring towns. The GA therefore makes a strong contribution to fulfilling the fundamental aim of the Green Belt under paragraph 133 of the NPPF in protecting the openness and permanence of the Green Belt. The GA makes no contribution to checking the unrestricted sprawl of the urban area as it is not adjacent to the urban conurbation. The GA makes a moderate contribution to safeguarding from encroachment due to the presence of durable boundaries with the countryside and strong-moderate degree of openness. The GA makes no contribution in preserving the setting and special character of historic towns. The GA makes a moderate contribution to assisting in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.	Strong contribution
4	No contribution: The GA is not adjacent to the large	Moderate contribution: The GA forms a largely	Moderate contribution: The GA is connected to Settlement Area 6 along garden boundaries, footpaths and treeline	No contribution: The GA is not	Moderate contribution: All Green Belt land can	The GA makes a moderate contribution to three purposes and no contribution to two. In line with	Moderate contribution

	built up area and therefore does not contribute to this purpose.	essential gap between Settlement Area 6 and Settlement Area 7 however development of large parts of the GA (particularly the northern and southern sections) would not result in the merging of the neighbouring towns. Development of the whole GA would result in merging. Overall, the GA makes a moderate contribution to preventing towns from merging.	which are less durable and would not be able to prevent encroachment into the GA. To the east, the GA is connected to Settlement Area 7 along a mix of durable and less durable boundaries consisting of roads (Oldfield Drive) and the Wirral Way/Wirral Circular Trail which are durable and would be able to prevent encroachment into the GA, combined with garden boundaries which are less durable and would not be able to prevent encroachment into the GA. The GA is connected to the countryside to the north west and the south. The north western boundary consists of the A540 which is durable and would be able to prevent encroachment beyond the GA if it were developed. The southern boundary represents the administrative boundary which is defined by tree lined field boundaries and is less durable and would not be able to prevent encroachment beyond it if the GA were developed. The remaining western boundary consists of the coastline at Thurstaston and Gayton. The existing land uses consist of mainly agricultural land and open countryside, with some existing built form at Wirral Country Park including the Caravan Sites and Caldys Golf Club in the west and some residential development and a water treatment plant and Heswall Golf Club along the coast line at Lower Heswall. The GA has a strong-moderate degree of openness, with less than 20% built form and low levels of vegetation. Overall, the GA makes a moderate contribution to safe guarding from encroachment due to the strong-moderate degree of openness and mix of durable and less durable boundaries.	adjacent to a historic town and therefore does not contribute to preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.	be considered to support urban regeneration of settlements within Wirral and it is not appropriate to state that some parts of the Green Belt perform this to a stronger or weaker degree. Therefore all GAs make a moderate contribution to this purpose.	the methodology, the GA has been judged to make a moderate overall contribution to the Green Belt. The GA makes no contribution to checking the unrestricted sprawl of the urban conurbation as it is not adjacent to the large built up area and therefore serves no purpose on restricting sprawl. The GA makes a moderate contribution to preventing towns from merging as it forms a largely essential gap between Settlement Area 6 and Settlement Area 7 however development of large parts of the GA (particularly the northern and southern sections) would not result in the merging of the neighbouring towns. The GA makes a moderate contribution to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment as it has a strong-moderate degree of openness and has a mix of durable and less durable boundaries. The GA makes no contribution to preserving the setting and character of historical towns. The GA makes a moderate contribution to assisting in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.	
5	Weak contribution: The GA is adjacent to the urban conurbation along the northern and north eastern boundaries. The GA's boundaries with the urban conurbation consist of roads (A552, M53) which are durable and would be able to prevent sprawl into the GA. Overall, the GA has a weak contribution to checking the unrestricted sprawl due to the presence of durable boundaries.	Strong contribution: The GA forms an essential gap between the urban conurbation and Settlement Area 5, as well as between the urban conurbation and Settlement Area 7, and also between Settlement Area 5 and Settlement Area 7. Development of the whole of the GA would result in the actual and perceived merging of the neighbouring towns. Some limited development in the southern section of the GA would not result in any merging. Overall, the GA makes a strong contribution to preventing towns from merging.	Moderate contribution: The GA is connected to the Urban Conurbation to the north east along the M53 which is durable. It is connected to Settlement Area 5 to the north along the A552 which is durable and could prevent encroachment into the GA. It is also connected to Settlement Area 7 to the west along Barnston Road which is durable and could prevent encroachment into the GA and along a small section of residential properties to the south which is less durable and would not be able to prevent encroachment. The GA is connected to the countryside along its eastern boundary and a section of its western boundary. The eastern boundary is comprised of a railway line which is durable, and the western boundary consists of the A551 which is durable, therefore could prevent encroachment beyond the GA if the GA is developed. The existing land uses consist of mainly agricultural land and open countryside, with some existing buildings consisting of the washed over villages of Landican and Barnston, residential development at Holmwood Avenue, Woodlands Drive and Storeton Lane and the Spire Murrayfield Hospital and some significant woodland. Overall, the GA supports a strong-moderate degree of openness, with less than 20% built form and low vegetation. Overall, the GA makes a moderate contribution to safeguarding the countryside from	No contribution: The GA is not adjacent to a historic town and therefore does not contribute to preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.	Moderate contribution: All Green Belt land can be considered to support urban regeneration of settlements within Wirral and it is not appropriate to state that some parts of the Green Belt perform this to a stronger or weaker degree. Therefore all GAs make a moderate contribution to this purpose.	The GA makes a strong contribution to one purpose, a moderate contribution to two purposes, a weak contribution to one purpose and no contribution to one purpose. In line with the methodology, professional judgement has been applied to evaluate the overall contribution. The GA has been judged to make a strong overall contribution to the Green Belt. The GA makes a strong contribution to preventing towns from merging as it forms an essential gap between the urban conurbation and Settlement Area 5, between the urban conurbation and Settlement Area 7, and between Settlement Area 5 and Settlement Area 7. The GA therefore makes a strong contribution to fulfilling the fundamental aim of the Green Belt under paragraph 133 of the NPPF in protecting the openness and permanence of the Green Belt. The GA has been judged to make a weak contribution to checking the unrestricted sprawl due to the presence of durable boundaries. The GA makes a moderate contribution to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment as it supports a strong-moderate degree of openness and has durable boundaries with the countryside. The GA makes no contribution to preserving the setting and character of historical towns. The GA makes	Strong contribution

			encroachment as it has a strong-moderate degree of openness and predominantly durable boundaries.			moderate contribution to assisting in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.	
6	No contribution: The GA is not adjacent to the large built up area and therefore does not contribute to this purpose.	Weak contribution: The GA forms a less essential gap between the urban conurbation and Settlement Area 7 whereby development of the whole of the GA would reduce the actual gap but not the perceived gap between the neighbouring towns. The gap between the towns is already narrower to the north of the GA. Overall the GA makes a weak contribution to preventing towns from merging.	Moderate contribution: Both parts of the GA are enclosed by Settlement Area 7 adjoining it to the north, west and south along a mix of durable and less durable boundaries. This includes durable road boundaries (Milner Road, Whitfield Lane, Pensby Road, Chester Road) which could prevent encroachment into the GA and less durable boundaries consisting of residential garden boundaries and tree lines which would not be able to prevent encroachment into the GA. The GA is only connected to the countryside along its eastern boundary consisting of the A551 (northern part of the GA) and the railway line (southern part of GA) which is durable and could prevent encroachment beyond the GA if it were developed. The existing land uses consist of mainly agricultural land and open countryside, with some existing buildings consisting of part of the washed over village of Barnston, Heswall Primary School (northern part of GA), Darlington's Industrial Estate (southern part of GA), and residential properties. There are some areas of woodland. The GA supports a strong degree of openness, with less than 10% built form and low vegetation. Overall, both parts of the GA make a moderate contribution to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment as although it has a strong degree of openness, it has a limited connection to the countryside, and has durable boundaries with the countryside.	No contribution: The GA is not adjacent to a historic town and therefore does not contribute to preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.	Moderate contribution: All Green Belt land can be considered to support urban regeneration of settlements within Wirral and it is not appropriate to state that some parts of the Green Belt perform this to a stronger or weaker degree. Therefore all GAs make a moderate contribution to this purpose.	The GA makes a moderate contribution to two purposes, a weak contribution to one purpose and no contribution to two purposes. In line with the methodology, the GA has been judged to make a weak overall contribution. The GA makes a moderate contribution to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment as although it has a strong degree of openness, it has a limited connection to the countryside, and has durable boundaries with the countryside. The GA makes a weak contribution to preventing towns from merging as it forms a less essential gap between the urban conurbation and Settlement Area 7. The GA makes no contribution to preserving the setting and character of historical towns. The GA makes moderate contribution to assisting in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.	Weak contribution
7	Moderate contribution: The GA is adjacent to the urban conurbation along the northern and full extent of the eastern boundary. The GA's boundaries with the urban conurbation are mixed consisting of garden boundaries, field boundaries, treeline, roads (Prenton Hall Road, B5151, Bracken Lane, Brackenwood Road, Peter Prices Lane, Stanton Road, Old Clatterbridge Road, Poulton Royd Drive) and railway line. The road and railway boundaries are durable and could prevent sprawl whilst the other boundaries are less durable and would not prevent sprawl. Given the pattern of the built up area, the development of parts of the	Weak contribution: The GA forms a less essential gap between the urban conurbation and Settlement Area 7 whereby the development of the whole of the GA would reduce the actual gap but not the perceived gap between the neighbouring towns. The M53 retains an element of separation. Overall, the GA makes a weak contribution to prevent towns from merging.	Moderate contribution: The GA is connected to the urban conurbation along a mix of durable and less durable boundaries consisting of a railway line and roads (Prenton Hall Road, B5151, Bracken Lane, Brackenwood Road, Peter Prices Lane, Stanton Road, Old Clatterbridge Road, Poulton Royd Drive) which are durable and would be able to prevent encroachment into the GA, and garden boundaries which are less durable and would not be able to prevent encroachment into the GA. The GA is connected to the countryside to the west and south. These boundaries consist of the M53 which is durable and could prevent encroachment beyond the GA if the GA were developed. The existing land uses consist mainly of agricultural land and countryside, with Prenton Golf Club, Little Storeton and the village of Storeton to the north and Bromborough Golf Club in the south. The GA supports a strong degree of openness with less than 10% built form and low vegetation levels. Overall, the GA makes a moderate contribution to safeguarding against encroachment as although it supports a strong degree of openness, the boundaries with the countryside are durable and could prevent encroachment.	No contribution: The GA is not adjacent to a historic town and therefore does not contribute to preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.	Moderate contribution: All Green Belt land can be considered to support urban regeneration of settlements within Wirral and it is not appropriate to state that some parts of the Green Belt perform this to a stronger or weaker degree. Therefore, all GAs make a moderate contribution to this purpose.	The GA makes a moderate contribution to three purposes, a weak contribution to one purpose and no contribution to one purpose. In line with the methodology, the GA has been judged to make a moderate overall contribution to the Green Belt. The GA makes a moderate contribution to checking the unrestricted sprawl of the urban conurbation due to its mix of durable and less durable boundaries and the potential for rounding off. The GA forms a less essential gap between the urban conurbation and Settlement Area 7, making a weak contribution to preventing towns from merging. The GA makes a moderate contribution to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment as it has a strong degree of openness and durable boundaries with the countryside. The GA makes a moderate contribution to assisting in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.	Moderate contribution

	GA (to the south of Prenton and to the south of Poulton-Spital) could constitute 'rounding off' of the settlement pattern. Overall, the GA has a moderate contribution to checking the unrestricted sprawl due to its mix of durable and less durable boundaries and potential for rounding off.						
8	No contribution: The GA is not adjacent to the large built up area and therefore does not contribute to this purpose.	Moderate contribution: The GA forms a largely essential gap between the urban conurbation and Settlement Area 7 whereby development of the whole of the GA would reduce the actual and perceived gap between the neighbouring towns, but it would not result in them merging, except at the northern tip of the GA. Development in the rest of the GA would not result in merging but would significantly reduce the gap between the neighbouring towns.	Strong contribution: The GA is well connected to the countryside. The GA is connected to Settlement Area 7 along only a small part of its western boundary consisting of a railway line which is durable and could prevent encroachment into the GA. The GA is connected to the countryside along its remaining western, eastern and southern boundaries. The M53 to the east and the railway line to the west represent durable boundaries which would be able to prevent encroachment beyond the GA if the GA was developed. The southern boundary represents the administrative boundary, this is defined by a mix of durable and less durable features including roads, field boundaries and tree lines. It is predominantly less durable and would not be able to prevent encroachment beyond the GA. The existing land use consists of agricultural land and open countryside, with some existing buildings consisting of Clatterbridge Hospital and the washed over villages of Thornton Hough, Raby and Brimstage. The GA has a strong degree of openness, with less than 10% built form and low levels of vegetation. Overall, the GA makes a strong contribution to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment as it has a strong degree of openness, is well connected to the countryside and has a mix of durable and less durable boundaries with settlement Area 7 and the countryside.	No contribution: The GA is not adjacent to a historic town and therefore does not contribute to preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.	Moderate contribution: All Green Belt land can be considered to support urban regeneration of settlements within Wirral and it is not appropriate to state that some parts of the Green Belt perform this to a stronger or weaker degree. Therefore all GAs make a moderate contribution to this purpose.	The GA makes a strong contribution to one purpose, a moderate contribution to two purposes, and no contribution to two purposes. In line with the methodology, professional judgement has been applied to evaluate the overall contribution. The GA has been judged to make a strong contribution to the Green Belt. The GA makes a strong contribution to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment as it has a strong degree of openness, it is well connected to the countryside and has a mix of durable and less durable boundaries with the settlement and countryside. The GA therefore makes a strong contribution to fulfilling the fundamental aim of the Green Belt under paragraph 133 of the NPPF in protecting the openness and permanence of the Green Belt. The GA makes a moderate contribution to preventing towns from merging as it forms a largely essential gap between the urban conurbation and Settlement Area 7. The GA makes no contribution to checking the unrestricted sprawl as it is not adjacent to the urban conurbation. The GA makes no contribution to preserving the setting and character of historical towns. The GA makes a moderate contribution to assisting in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.	Strong contribution
9	Weak contribution: The GA is largely enclosed by the urban conurbation along the northern, south eastern and western boundaries. The GA's boundaries with the conurbation are mixed consisting of field boundaries and tree lines roads (Banksfield Drive, North Road, West Road, M53, New Chester Road, Eastham Rake, Lowfields Avenue, Kingsley Avenue and Thornleigh Avenue), and a section of railway	Moderate contribution: The GA forms a largely essential gap between the urban conurbation and Ellesmere Port within the administrative area of Cheshire West and Chester. Whilst the neighbouring towns have arguably already merged with the Eastham Oil Refinery adjacent to Ellesmere Port, development of the whole of the GA would result in the further	Moderate contribution: The GA is well contained by both the urban conurbation and Ellesmere Port (within the administrative area of Cheshire West and Chester). The GA is connected to the urban conurbation to the north, east and west via a mix of durable and less durable boundaries. To the north, the GA is connected to the urban conurbation by field boundaries and tree lines which are less durable. To the west and east it is connected to the urban conurbation through a mix of roads that are durable and gardens and fields which are less durable. The less durable boundaries would not be able to prevent encroachment into the GA. The GA is connected to Ellesmere Port along part of its southern boundary which consists of West Road which is durable and could prevent encroachment into the GA. A small part of the eastern boundary comprises coastline. The GA has a limited	No contribution: The GA is not adjacent to a historic town and therefore does not contribute to preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.	Moderate contribution: All Green Belt land can be considered to support urban regeneration of settlements within Wirral and it is not appropriate to state that some parts of the Green Belt perform this to a stronger or weaker degree. Therefore all GAs make a moderate contribution to this purpose.	The GA makes a moderate contribution to three purposes, a weak contribution to one purpose and no contribution to one purpose. In line with the methodology, the GA has been judged to make a moderate overall contribution to the Green Belt. The GA makes a moderate contribution to safeguarding from encroachment as it is well contained by the urban conurbation and Ellesmere Port with a moderate degree of openness, limited connection to the countryside and durable boundary with the countryside. The GA makes a moderate contribution to preventing towns from merging as arguably Ellesmere Port and the urban conurbation have already merged however it prevents further merging. The GA makes a weak contribution to checking unrestricted sprawl as	Moderate contribution

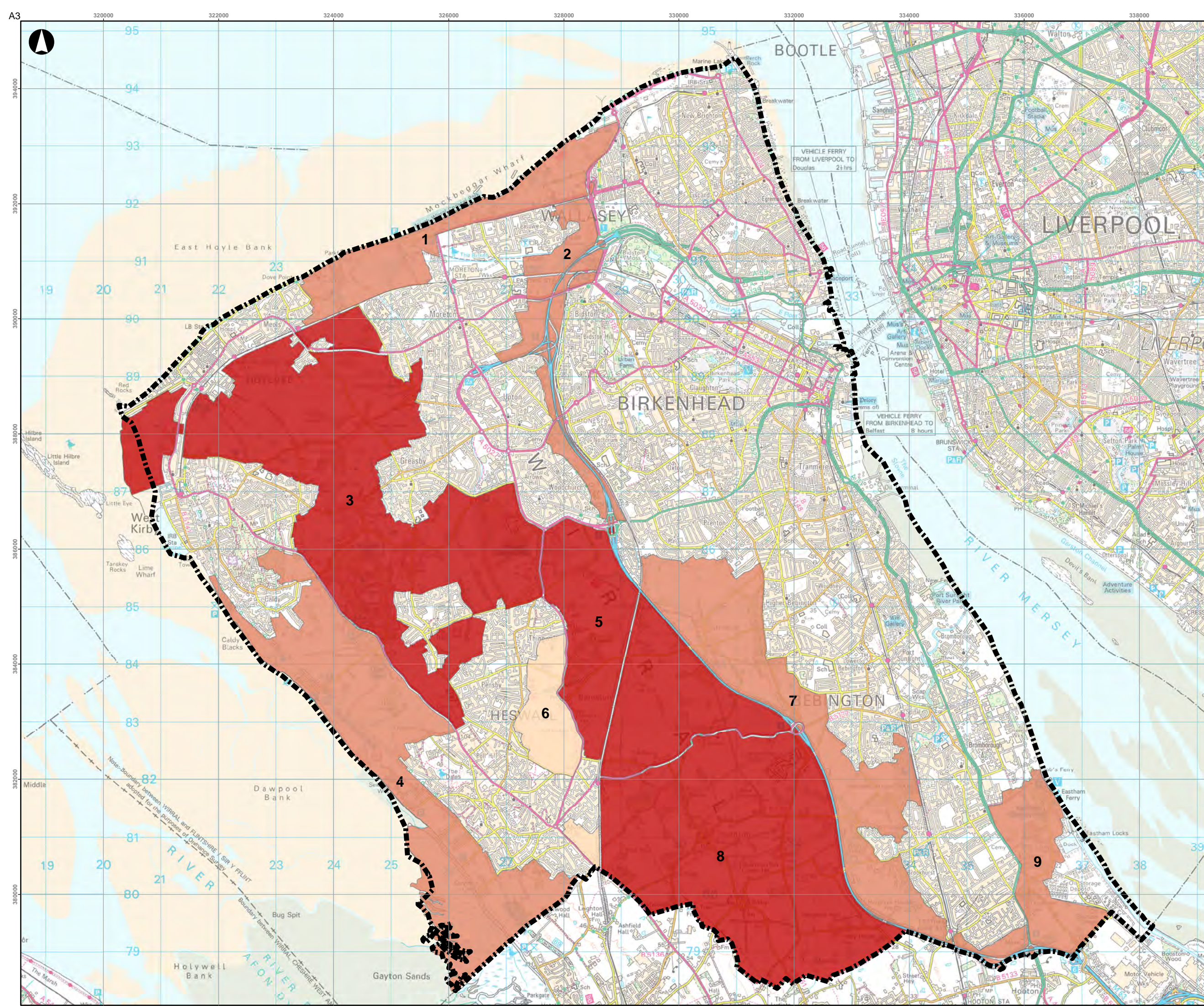
	<p>line. The roads and railway are durable boundaries and could prevent sprawl however the field boundaries and tree lines are less durable and would not be able to prevent sprawl into the GA. Given the shape of the urban conurbation, development of most of the northern section of the GA could constitute rounding off of the settlement pattern. The GA is also connected to the built up area of Ellesmere Port (within the administrative area of Cheshire West and Chester) along its south eastern boundary which consists of West Road which is durable and would be able to prevent sprawl. Overall, the GA makes a weak contribution to checking the unrestricted sprawl due to its mix of durable and less durable boundaries and the potential for rounding off the urban conurbation.</p>	<p>merging of the neighbouring towns. Development of the northern section of the GA would not result in any merging. Overall, the GA makes a moderate contribution to preventing towns from merging.</p>	<p>connection to the countryside along its southern boundary which consists of the M53 and a short south western boundary which consists of a railway line, which are durable and could prevent encroachment beyond the GA if the GA were developed. The existing land uses consist of agriculture, playing fields and open countryside, with built forms such as Eastham Lodge Golf Club, residential housing at Carlett Park and St David's Road, the washed over village of Eastham and a Go-Kart Track to the east, with significant woodland to the north and west of the GA. The GA supports a moderate degree of openness with over 20% built form and low vegetation and limited long line views from the south due to the presence of motorway and woodland. Overall, the GA makes a moderate contribution to safeguarding against encroachment due to a moderate degree of openness, limited connection to the countryside and durable boundary with the countryside.</p>			<p>there is potential for rounding off the urban conurbation. The GA makes no contribution to preserving the setting and special character of historic towns. The GA makes a moderate contribution to assisting in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.</p>	
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## Appendix E

Chloropleth Map of General  
Area Assessment Findings –  
Overall Assessment





**Notes**

1. This map is reproduced from the Ordnance Survey material with the permission of the Controller of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Wirral Council Council 100019803 2019.

**Key**

Council Boundary

**Parcel Assessment Purpose Overall**

- No contribution
- Weak contribution
- Moderate contribution
- Strong contribution

01	01/08/2019	APS	AO	SL
Issue	Date	By	Chkd	Appd

Metres

0 750 1,500 3,000

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Client  
**Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council**

Project Title  
**Wirral Green Belt Study**

Drawing Title  
**General Area Green Belt Purpose Overall Assessment**

Scale at A3  
**1:60,000**

Arup Job No <b>268589-00</b>	Suitability <b>For Issue</b>
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Name <b>WGB-ARP-SW-DR-PL-0023</b>	Rev <b>01</b>
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