

Action Note: Changes to the Green Belt since the Merseyside Green Belt Local Plan

The present boundaries of the Green Belt in Wirral were broadly established in December 1983 in the Merseyside Green Belt Local Plan [examination document GB2], to implement the intentions of the Merseyside Structure Plan December 1980 (section 11, page 96).

In Wirral, the only area where boundaries were not set by the Merseyside Green Belt Local Plan was in the M53 Corridor between Woodchurch and Bidston, which was identified as an area of degraded landscape in the Merseyside Structure Plan (Policy 10.71, page 90) and as an area where special policies will be applied pending completion of local studies (Policy 11.12, page 99 and Figure 71) (WBC034, page 65, paragraph 6.1 and page 75, paragraph 6.61 and following also refer).

The relevant policies in the Merseyside Structure Plan were included in an Appendix to the Merseyside Green Belt Local Plan (GB2, page 13).

The Deposit Draft UDP proposed a firm boundary for an addition to the Green Belt in the M53 Corridor, in response to the Secretary of State's Strategic Guidance for Merseyside (August 1988) (UDP page 13, paragraph 1.47 refers).

The UDP Inspector's Report considered this in some detail, including the background to its designation (WBC035, Chapter 7, pages 120-123 paragraphs 7.1-7.15 refer), with proposed site-specific boundary amendments considered in subsequent pages (WBC035, paragraphs 7.16 to 7.61 refer).

The final boundary approved by the UDP Inspector (UDP Proposal GB1/1, 320.9ha, refers) differed from that proposed by the Council in the Deposit Draft UDP through the exclusion of land at Bidston Hill, to the south and east of Fender Lane A553 and A554 (which was instead designated as Urban Greenspace – under UDP Proposals GR2/8 to GR2/12); and through the deletion of sites at Old Birkonians in Noctorum and at Fender Farm in Moreton, which were instead allocated for housing (under UDP Proposal HS/1, 12.90ha, 250 units; and UDP Proposal HS1/6, 4.06ha, 90 units, UDP, page 56, which have since been built out).

Two further boundary amendments were also included in the UDP:

- the removal of a Green Belt site in Poulton Spital, which had been granted planning permission for housing on appeal in the mid-1980s; and
- a small alteration to the boundary at Elm Road in Irby due to the loss of a boundary feature (a culverted watercourse).

UDP pages 77 to 79 - Proposal GB1- Amendments to Green Belt Boundary - and Proposal GB1 - Reasoned Justification paragraphs 7.1 to 7.11 refer.

The Wirral UDP also included a small area of existing Green Belt at Boathouse Lane, Gayton (0.25ha) which was designated as Green Belt in the Ellesmere Port and Neston (excluding Mersey Marshes) Local Plan adopted on 14 June 1993, following an administrative boundary change in April 1993 (UDP, page 280, paragraph A3 refers).

The final changes are set out in the Annex attached, which can also be viewed at <https://ww3.wirral.gov.uk/udp/oneudp1.asp?id=GB1>.

No other changes have been made to the Green Belt in Wirral since the adoption of the Merseyside Green Belt Local Plan in December 1983 and no further change to Green Belt boundaries has taken place since the adoption of the Wirral UDP in February 2000.

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Proposal GB1 - Amendments to the Green Belt Boundary

1. The area of the M53 Corridor from Leasowe Road in the north, through Bidston Moss, and south to the A552 Woodchurch Road interchange, as shown on the Proposals Map, shall be included within the Green Belt.

2. Land to the west of Elm Road in Irby, as shown on the Proposals Map, shall be included within the Green Belt.

3. The area of residential development at Poulton Green Close in Poulton/ Spital, as shown on the Proposals Map, shall be excluded from the Green Belt.

Reasoned justification:

1. M53 CORRIDOR

7.5 Strategic Guidance referred to the need to give precision to the detailed boundaries of the Green Belt where those have not yet been clearly defined. This is also echoed in PPG2 - Green Belts (1995), which refers to the need to ensure that the definition of detailed boundaries is completed. In Wirral, the only area where boundaries were not set by the Merseyside Green Belt Local Plan was in the M53 Corridor and Bidston Hill. Strategic Guidance therefore provides the justification for the exceptional circumstances required to alter the adopted Green Belt boundary by its extension into the M53 Corridor.

7.6 The area known as the M53 Corridor was identified in the Merseyside Structure Plan as an important break between the built-up areas of eastern and central Wirral, to be treated as if it were Green Belt. Merseyside County Council identified the Corridor as a priority area for landscape renewal requiring treatment within the Structure Plan period. Because of its condition the Corridor was not included in the Green Belt, pending an appraisal of the wider needs of the area and a scheme for landscape renewal.

7.7 The most recent Government advice is that landscape quality is immaterial in assessing the possible Green Belt function of an area of land. Given this and the Inspector's view at the Merseyside Green Belt Local Plan Inquiry that the Corridor performed a separation function between the urban areas, extension of the Green Belt into the Corridor

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area has now been proposed.

7.8 The Corridor separates the various townships in the centre of the Borough including Moreton, Upton, Woodchurch and Leasowe from those in the eastern half, such as Bidston, Beechwood and Noctorum. This separation function has not diminished, and the UDP provides the opportunity to give long-term protection to the area. This follows the consideration of the area's wider requirements for new development.

7.9 Only limited areas of the Corridor are suitable for development without affecting its function in separating the eastern and central townships. The principal areas are the sites at Noctorum Way in Noctorum (Proposal HS1/1), to the north of Claremount School in Moreton (Proposal HS1/3) and to the east of Fender Farm in Moreton (Proposal HS1/6) which are allocated for residential development. Other areas are constrained by the presence of the Bidston-Wrexham railway line and the M53 Motorway which hinder local access across them, have poor ground conditions, are in areas liable to flooding or are Sites of Biological Importance.

2. ELM ROAD, IRBY

7.10 The Merseyside Green Belt Local Plan of December 1983 showed the boundary of the Green Belt to the south west of Elm Road, Irby as following the line of a stream, tributary of the Arrowe Brook. This stream has been part culverted and its line to the south west of Elm Road is now less distinct. The Green Belt boundary now follows the western edge of Elm Road.

3. POULTON GREEN CLOSE

7.11 The only major development allowed in the Green Belt since 1983, contrary to generally accepted policy, has been that for thirty-one dwellings at Poulton Green Close off Poulton Royd Drive in Poulton/ Spital. Planning permission for the site was granted following a Public Inquiry in August 1986 and the dwellings were completed in August 1988. The land does not now perform a Green Belt function.