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# Coventry & Warwickshire Joint Green Belt Study

**Coventry City Council, North Warwickshire Borough Council,  
Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, Rugby Borough  
Council, Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwick District  
Council**

Stage 2 Final Report for North Warwickshire Borough Council and Stratford-on-Avon District Council

Prepared by LUC  
April 2016



**Project Title:** Joint Green Belt Study

**Client:** Coventry City Council, North Warwickshire Borough Council, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, Rugby Borough Council, Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwick District Council

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# 1 Introduction

## Purpose of the study

- 1.1 LUC was appointed by six West Midlands councils to undertake a comprehensive assessment of Green Belt land within the administrative areas of Coventry City Council, North Warwickshire Borough Council, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, Rugby Borough Council, Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwick District Council. The study was overseen by a Steering Group comprising officers of these local authorities.
- 1.2 The study assessed the Green Belt against the five purposes of Green Belts, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Its aim was not to identify land for removal from or addition to the Green Belt. Such decisions will need to be taken in the context of wider evidence relating to exceptional circumstances for removing land from the Green Belt (or adding land to it) and the sustainability of spatial development options. The relative performance of Green Belt parcels may form part of such a review.
- 1.3 This Green Belt study complements other studies on other issues, such as housing capacity, biodiversity and landscape, cultural heritage and employment and infrastructure needs. Together, these studies will provide a comprehensive evidence base to appraise and arrive at the most sustainable pattern of development.

## Meeting the Duty to Cooperate

- 1.4 Section 110 of the Localism Act (2011) describes English Local Authorities' 'duty to co-operate'. The duty:
  - Relates to sustainable development or use of land that would have a significant impact on at least two local planning areas.
  - Requires that councils and public bodies '*engage constructively, actively and on an on-going basis*' to develop strategic policies to address such issues.
  - Requires councils to consider joint approaches to plan making.
- 1.5 Paragraph 156 of the NPPF sets out the strategic issues where co-operation might be appropriate, and includes a number of cross boundary issues that are closely linked to Green Belt. The authorities in the sub-region have a close working relationship, demonstrated through previous joint studies and their approach to this Green Belt Review. Efforts have also been made as part of this study to engage and work with authorities in the surrounding HMAs. Contact was made with these authorities to make them aware of this study and consult them on the methodology used.

## Stage 2 report

- 1.6 The Green Belt study was undertaken in two stages. Stage 1 assessed the Green Belt within Coventry City, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough, Rugby Borough and Warwick District. Stage 2, the subject of this report, assessed the Green Belt within North Warwickshire Borough and Stratford-on-Avon District.
- 1.7 This Stage 2 report sets out the context for the study, in terms of the national policy context and the evolution and character of the West Midlands Green Belt. It then describes the study methodology and identifies the parcels of land assessed. Finally, the report sets out the study findings for the Stage 2 authorities, draws overall conclusions and makes recommendations on the next steps.

## 2 Context

### National Green Belt policy

2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) takes forward the previous national Green Belt policy set out in PPG2 (Green Belts). Paragraph 79 of the NPPF states that *'the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence'*.

2.2 This is elaborated in NPPF paragraph 80, which states that Green Belts should serve five purposes, as set out in Box 1 below:

#### Box 1: The purposes of Green Belt

- 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.
- To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

2.3 The NPPF emphasises in paragraph 83 that local planning authorities should establish Green Belt boundaries in their Local Plans which set the framework for Green Belt and settlement policy. It goes on to state that *'once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of the Local Plan. At that time, authorities should consider the Green Belt boundaries having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so that they should be capable of enduring beyond the plan period'*.

2.4 Paragraph 84 of the NPPF indicates that *'when drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries local planning authorities should take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development. They should 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'*.<sup>1</sup>

2.5 National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) on Green Belt says that, once a local planning authority has established its objectively assessed housing need, a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment should be prepared that takes *"account of any constraints such as Green Belt, which indicate that development should be restricted and which may restrain the ability of an authority to meet its need"*.

2.6 Paragraph 85 of the NPPF suggests that Local Planning Authorities may wish to identify areas of 'safeguarded land' between the urban area and the Green Belt to accommodate long-term development needs well beyond the plan period. New boundaries must have regard for the permanence of the designation by redefining boundaries which endure beyond the Local Plan period. New boundaries should be defined clearly, using readily recognisable, permanent physical features.

2.7 Paragraph 82 of the NPPF indicates that, if proposing a new Green Belt, local planning authorities should:

- demonstrate why normal planning and development management policies would not be adequate;

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<sup>1</sup> This NPPF requirement will be met as part of the wider Local Plan preparation process, although the findings of this review will form part of this.

- set out whether any major changes in circumstances have made the adoption of this exceptional measure necessary;
- show what the consequences of the proposal would be for sustainable development;
- demonstrate the necessity for the Green Belt and its consistency with Local Plans for adjoining areas; and
- show how the Green Belt would meet the other objectives of the Framework.

2.8 Current guidance therefore makes it clear that the Green Belt is a strategic planning tool designed primarily to prevent the spread of development and the coalescence of urban areas. To this end, land should be designated because of its position, rather than its landscape quality or recreational use. However, the NPPF states *“local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land”* (Paragraph 81).

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

## Lessons from planning practice

- 2.10 As well as taking account of planning policy guidance, this study acknowledges the key relevant points from recent planning practice. These include:
- Green Belt studies should be “fair, comprehensive and consistent with the Core Strategy’s aim of directing development to the most sustainable locations”. Green Belt reviews should be ‘comprehensive’ rather than ‘selective’.<sup>2</sup>
  - Green Belt studies should be clear “how the assessment of ‘importance to Green Belt’ has been derived” from assessments against the individual purposes of Green Belt.<sup>3</sup> Such assessments against the purpose should form the basis of any justification for releasing land from the Green Belt.<sup>4</sup>
  - In reviewing land against the purposes, Green Belt studies should consider the reasons for a Green Belt’s designation as they are related to the purposes.<sup>5</sup>
  - Green Belt studies should “take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development, as required by paragraph 85 of the NPPF [even if] such an exercise would be carried out through the SEA/SA process.”<sup>6</sup>

## The West Midlands

### Evolution and character of the Green Belt

- 2.11 The Green Belt within Coventry and Warwickshire is part of the larger West Midlands Green Belt. Although local authorities in the West Midlands first put forward proposals for a West Midlands Metropolitan Green Belt in 1955, it was not formally approved by the Secretary of State until 1975. Today the Green Belt covers almost 1500 square kilometres, surrounding the Black Country, Coventry, Birmingham and Solihull.
- 2.12 Generally, the West Midlands Green Belt has prevented the sprawl of Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Coventry, merging of surrounding towns and encroachment into the

<sup>2</sup> *Inspector’s report (A Thickett) to Leeds City Council (September 2014)*

<sup>3</sup> *Inspectors’ Letter (L Graham) to Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire Councils (May 2015)*

<sup>4</sup> *Inspector’s interim findings (H Stephens) to Durham City Council (November 2014)*

<sup>5</sup> *Inspector’s interim findings (H Stephens) to Durham City Council (November 2014)*

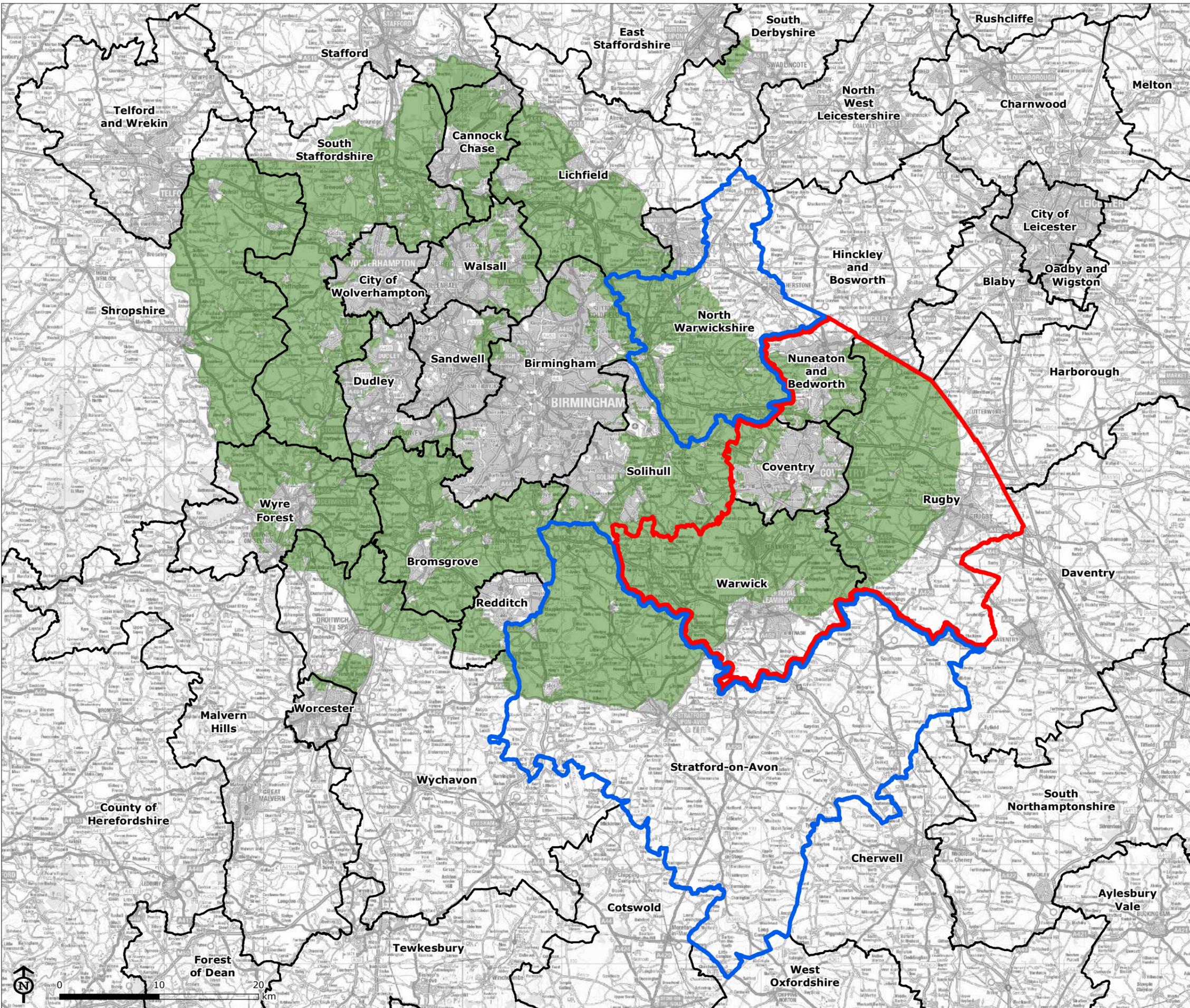
<sup>6</sup> *Inspectors’ Letter (L Graham) to Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire Councils (May 2015)*

surrounding countryside. It has also helped to preserve the setting and special character of the main urban areas, as well as smaller settlements. At a strategic level, the Green Belt, tightly drawn around settlements, has helped to encourage regeneration by directing development to brownfield sites within the major urban areas. However, some pockets at the urban fringe have been compromised and degraded by infrastructure projects such as roads and power lines, and other urban intrusions.

2.13 The current extent of the West Midlands Green Belt is shown in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1  
West Midlands Green Belt and the Study Context

- Local Planning Authority Boundary
- Green Belt
- Stage 1 Local Authorities
- Stage 2 Local Authorities



Map Scale @ A3: 1:375,000



## Housing need and pressures on the Green Belt<sup>7</sup>

- 2.14 The need for new housing, coupled with insufficient sites within existing built-up areas, leads to inevitable pressure to identify land for release from the Green Belt. While this can result in significant local opposition, partly a result of the success of Green Belt policy over the years, local plans can offer opportunities to accommodate development which will help to support local services, provide affordable homes for local people, and potentially improve accessibility.
- 2.15 The Councils within the Steering Group prepared a Joint Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) which reported in November 2013. An Annex to the SHMA was published in September 2014 with a further update in 2015. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the Warwickshire authorities was produced on the back of the 2015 SHMA update to ensure the housing needs of the SHMA are met in full.<sup>8</sup>
- 2.16 Through the Duty-to-Cooperate process the authorities have recognised that Coventry may not be able to provide sufficient land to meet its own housing needs. Work has been undertaken to determine the most robust and appropriate distribution of housing to meet the needs of the HMA in full, whilst also having the least impact on green spaces (including the Green Belt) and supporting the most sustainable forms of development.

## Local Plans

- 2.17 This section contains a brief summary of the current status of the Local Plans within the two Councils involved in Stage 2 of the Green Belt study.

### *North Warwickshire Borough Council Local Plan*

- 2.18 The current North Warwickshire Local Plan was developed between 2003 and 2006 and adopted on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2006. Work is currently in progress on the new Local Plan for North Warwickshire. The Core Strategy was adopted on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2014, replacing some of the saved Policies in the previous Local Plan published in 2006. The Core Strategy contains a vision and strategic objectives for the Borough, as well as Core Policies which form the foundation for directing development over the next 15 to 20 years.
- 2.19 The Council is currently working on a number of supporting Development Planning Documents (DPDs) to support the delivery of the Core Strategy. The Council consulted on the draft Pre-Submission version of their Site Allocations Plan from 26<sup>th</sup> June to 21<sup>st</sup> August 2014 and a Draft Development Management Plan from 1 October to 12 November 2015. The Borough Council intends to combine these plans together and review, where necessary, any policies from the Core Strategy into a new 'Local Plan' for North Warwickshire, which will meet the strategic objectives set out in the Core Strategy and address any growth implications agreed through the Duty to Cooperate and reflected in relevant Memorandums of Understanding. This new Local Plan is programmed to be adopted in 2017 and will bring together the Draft Site Allocations Plan, the Draft Development Management Plan and any revisions required in the Core Strategy.

### *Stratford-on-Avon District Council Local Plan*

- 2.20 Currently, the Development Plan for the District comprises the saved policies of the District Local Plan Review 2006; however, the Council is in the process of preparing a suite of new planning documents in a new Plan to guide development and change in the District up to 2031.
- 2.21 The Core Strategy was submitted to the Secretary of State in September 2014, followed by Examination in Public Hearings in January 2015 and in January 2016. The Examination Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State published an Interim Report in March 2015 and his proposed Main Modifications were published for consultation on 31 March 2016. The Core Strategy is scheduled for adoption by Summer 2016. The Core Strategy is a strategic document that will shape future sustainable development in the District supported by other DPDs, including a Site Allocations Plan and Gypsy and Traveler Plan. Regulation 18 Consultation and a 'Call for Sites' on the Site Allocations Plan and Gypsy and Traveler Plan were conducted in March 2014 and October 2014, respectively. Both supporting DPDs are due for adoption in 2017.

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<sup>7</sup> The contents of this section supersede the contents of the same section in the Stage 1 report.

<sup>8</sup> Memorandum of Understanding relating to the planned distribution of housing within the Coventry & Warwickshire Housing Market Area (HMA), September 2015

## 3 Methodology

- 3.1 The Green Belt study drew on good practice across England and on LUC's experience elsewhere. The method is:
- **Objective** – assessment criteria are based on national planning policy and the performance of parcels of land against these criteria is objectively assessed, ensuring that the justification of each score is clear and as free from value judgements as possible.
  - **Simple and Consistent** – no Green Belt purpose is considered more important than any other in the NPPF so no weighting has been applied in the method.
  - **Focussed** – on the purposes of Green Belt and does not consider the relative values of parcels of land as ecological or landscape assets. While it is important to consider the wider benefits of Green Belt as countryside, these benefits are not an explicit policy objective of Green Belt designation and should only be considered once Green Belt has been defined.
- 3.2 The study considered all existing Green Belt within the Coventry and Warwickshire sub-region. As described in the introduction, this joint Green Belt study was undertaken in two stages. Stage 1 studied the Green Belt within Coventry City Council, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, Rugby Borough Council and Warwick District Council. Stage 2 (the subject of this report) studied the Green Belt within North Warwickshire Borough Council and Stratford-on-Avon District Council.
- 3.3 The method presented below was developed by LUC in conjunction with the Steering Group and in consultation with their wider 'duty to co-operate partners' (i.e. adjoining authorities in surrounding Housing Market Areas (HMAs)). This methodology was applied consistently across the six local authorities involved in the Joint Green Belt Study.

### Defining the context and characterising the Green Belt

- 3.4 The historical context of the West Midlands Green Belt and the spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy of the Boroughs and Districts, as discussed in Chapter 2, were considered before any assessment of parcels.

### Constraints mapping

- 3.5 The Steering Group agreed to exclude the following primary environmental constraints within the study area on the grounds that development within such areas is likely to be inappropriate. These are:
- Internationally designated wildlife sites: Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Ramsar sites, Sites of Community Importance.
  - Nationally designated wildlife sites: Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) or National Nature Reserves (NNRs).
  - Scheduled Monuments.
- 3.6 Locations affected by primary constraints were mapped using GIS data supplied by the local authorities and used to define the edges of parcels of Green Belt for detailed assessment. Although the primary constraints were excluded from parcels, their presence is acknowledged in the assessments and reflected in the judgements so far they are relevant to the five Green Belt purposes.

## Land parcel definition

- 3.7 Green Belt land adjacent to the Stage 2 local authorities' main settlements were divided into parcels for assessment. **Table 3.1** lists the large built-up areas and main rural villages in the Stage 2 study area agreed by the Steering Group to be appropriate for parcelling.

**Table 3.1 List of large built-up areas and main rural villages within the Stage 2 study considered appropriate for parcelling**

North Warwickshire
Ansley; Birmingham; Coleshill; Curdworth; Fillongley; Hurley; Keresley Newlands (Coventry); Kingsbury; New Arley; Old Arley; Shustoke; Water Orton; Whitacre Heath; Wood End; Piccadilly and the Kingsbury Link
Stratford-upon-Avon
Alcester; Astwood Bank; Henley-in-Arden; Redditch; Stratford-upon-Avon; Studley

- 3.8 The selection of settlements identified for detailed assessment reflects the differences in settlement patterns between the Districts.

### Parcel identification method

- 3.9 Land parcels were defined by referring to OS and Mastermap maps and aerial images to identify clear, robust boundaries around areas of the same or very similar land use or character. The following physical features were considered readily recognisable and likely to be permanent and, therefore, potentially suitable for delineating Green Belt boundaries:
- Significant natural features – for example, substantial watercourses and water bodies.
  - Significant man-made features – for example, motorways, A and B roads and railway lines<sup>9</sup>, and established infrastructure and utilities such as sewage treatment works.
- 3.10 Woodland, hedgerows and tree lines were considered to be recognisable but less permanent boundaries; streams and ditches were considered to be both recognisable and permanent but less significant boundaries than those above. However, where appropriate, both were used to define land parcel boundaries.
- 3.11 The now revoked West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy focussed growth in towns and limited growth in villages. In the absence of an agreed alternative spatial strategy, smaller parcels of Green Belt land adjacent to the large built-up areas and the main rural settlements listed in Table 3.1 were identified and assessed. The remaining areas of Green Belt were parcellled into broader areas for assessment.

### *Green Belt land excluded from the assessment*

- 3.12 Two areas of Green Belt land within Stratford-on-Avon District were not assessed – land to the north of Arden Road, Alcester, and Gorcott Hill, north of Mappleborough Green.
- 3.13 These areas were omitted because 'exceptional circumstances' for removing these areas of land from the Green Belt were set out in the District's Core Strategy.<sup>10</sup> The Inspector's Interim Conclusions on the Core Strategy state that the 'exceptional circumstances' identified for both parcels of Green Belt are appropriate to justify their release.<sup>11</sup>

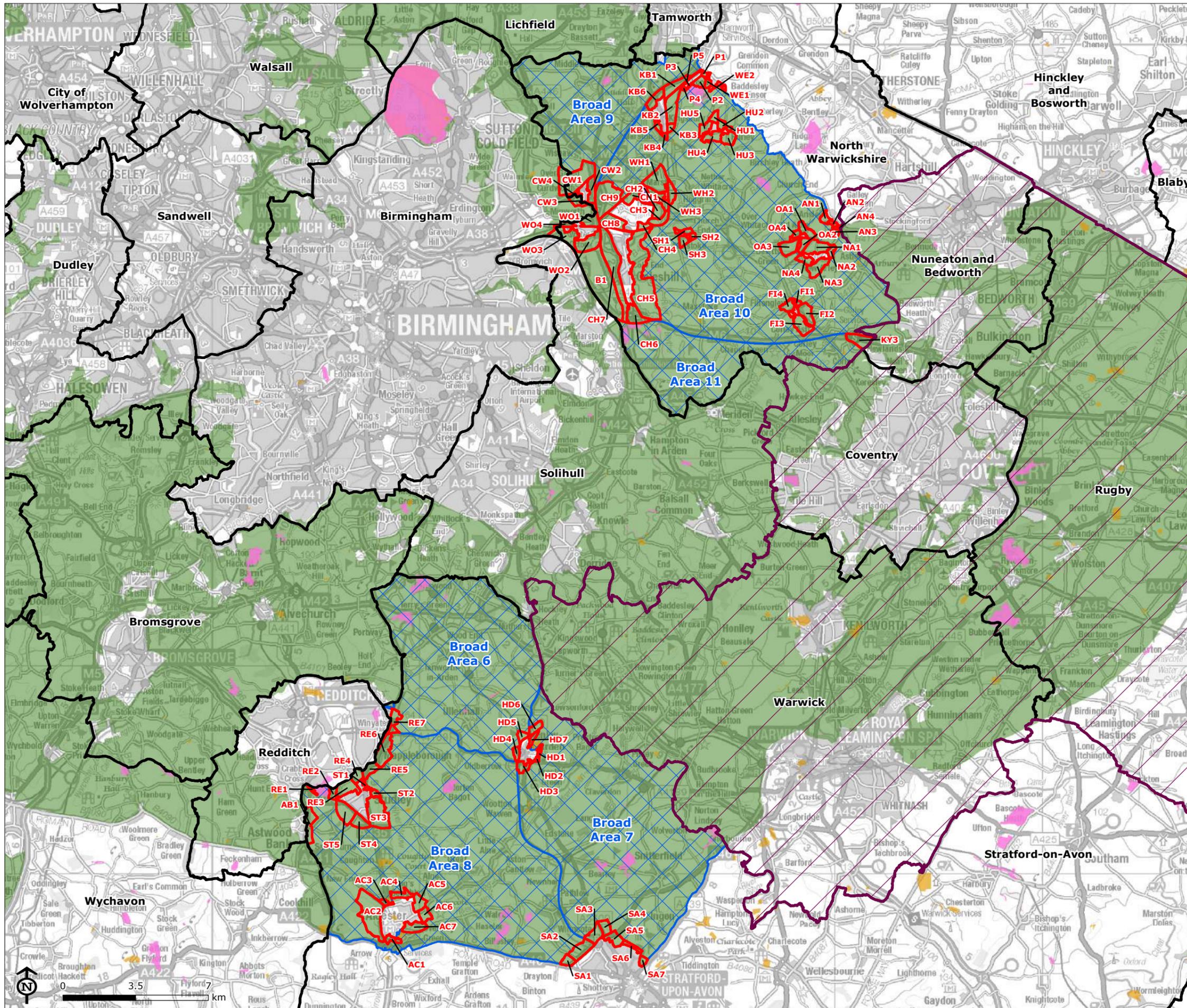
<sup>9</sup> The planned route of High Speed 2 (HS2) has not been used as a significant boundary to define parcels for assessment, nor has its potential proximity to existing urban edges been used to influence judgements. This is due to the fact that construction of the scheme has yet to start and certain details have yet to be finalised.

<sup>10</sup> See paragraph 4.1.6, on pages 67 and 68, of the Core Strategy, June 2015

<sup>11</sup> See paragraphs 137 and 156 of the Inspector's Interim Conclusions on the Stratford-on-Avon Core Strategy, March 2015

*Broad areas of Green Belt remote from the large built-up areas and main rural villages*

- 3.14 Following the identification of parcels of land adjacent to the Stage 2 authorities' large built-up areas and main rural villages, the remaining areas of Green Belt – the largely open and undeveloped countryside between the large built-up areas and main rural villages – were defined as 'broad areas'. As the main body of the Green Belt, these broad areas were assumed to make a considerable contribution to Green Belt purposes. As such, the detailed criteria-based assessment applied to the Green Belt parcels adjacent to the settlements outlined in **Table 3.1** was not used. Instead, a broader descriptive assessment was undertaken, outlining why these larger, more strategic areas of the Green Belt fundamentally fulfil the purposes of this strategic designation in the West Midlands. The separate broad areas were defined using significant linear features, such as motorways and dual carriageways.
- 3.15 **Figure 2** illustrates the parcels and broad areas defined for assessment in Stage 2 of the Joint Green Belt Study.



# Joint Green Belt Study

**Figure 2**  
**Parcels and Broad Areas**  
**Defined for Assessment in**  
**Stage 2**

- District Boundary
- Land Parcel
- Broad Area
- Green Belt
- SSSI
- Scheduled Monument
- Stage 1 Local Authorities

Map Scale @ A3: 1:180,000



## Identifying and consulting on the method

- 3.16 A method statement was produced during Stage 1 of the study in December 2014 setting out the context of the study, the reasoning and method for identifying the land parcels and broad areas and the assessment criteria to be used in the review of the parcels.
- 3.17 The Steering Group consulted with neighbouring authorities on the method to be used in this study in the interests of further fulfilling their 'duty to co-operate' under the Localism Act. A three week consultation was undertaken between the 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2014 and the 12<sup>th</sup> January 2015.
- 3.18 Twenty two neighbouring authorities were consulted. Four neighbouring authorities provided feedback (West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit, Birmingham City Council, Cherwell and South Northants Councils and Lichfield District Council) at Stage 1. The feedback was reviewed and where appropriate taken on board in refining the methodology.
- 3.19 During Stage 2 of the study, the 22 neighbouring authorities were consulted again in January 2016 to give them the opportunity to comment on the parcels and broad areas identified for assessment in Stage 2 of the Study. Two neighbouring authorities provided feedback (Cherwell District Council and Tamworth Borough Council) at Stage 2.
- 3.20 A list of the local authorities consulted and a summary table of the comments received and the Steering Group's response at Stage 2 is provided in **Appendix 3**.

## Assessment

- 3.21 The finalised land parcels and broad areas were assessed against the five purposes of Green Belt.

### Assessment criteria

- 3.22 **Table 3.2** sets out the five Green Belt purposes and the criteria used to assess the parcels against each purpose. It then sets out all the potential scores that can be assigned to each criterion along with some notes on how the judgements associated with each criterion were made. The information in **Table 3.2** helped ensure consistency was achieved throughout the assessment of the land parcels. It also provides a high level of transparency, enabling the assessment to be understood and potentially repeated at a future date by others.
- 3.23 In order to avoid unintentional 'weighting' of any single purpose, the minimum and maximum scores for any purpose are the same (i.e. between naught and four for purposes 1–4<sup>12</sup>). All parcels score four for purpose 5 (to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land). This is on the basis that all Green Belt makes a strategic contribution to urban regeneration by restricting the land available for development and encouraging developers to seek out and recycle derelict / urban sites.

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<sup>12</sup> Purposes 1 and 3 have two criteria; Purposes 2 and 4 have one criterion; all purposes (1-5) have the potential to score 4.

**Table 3.2 Green Belt assessment criteria**

NPPF Green Belt Purposes	Criteria	Score /Value	Assessment method notes
<p>1 To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.</p>	<p>a Does the parcel play a role in preventing ribbon development and/or has the Green Belt within the parcel already been compromised by ribbon development?</p>	<p>If strong role (parcel inhibiting development along two or more sides of a road corridor), 2</p> <p>If some role (parcel inhibiting development along one side of a road corridor), 1</p> <p>If no role (parcel not inhibiting development along a road corridor), 0</p>	<p>Ribbon development is linear development along any route ways where direct access from a development to the road would be possible.</p> <p>Sprawl is the spread of urban areas into the neighbouring countryside, i.e. the outward expansion of settlements into the neighbouring countryside.</p>
	<p>b Is the parcel free from development? Does the parcel have a sense of openness?</p>	<p>If land parcel contains no development and has a strong sense of openness, 2</p> <p>If land parcel contains limited development and has a relatively strong sense of openness, 1</p> <p>If land parcel already contains development compromising the sense of openness, 0</p>	<p>Development means any built structure.</p>
<p>2 To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.</p>	<p>a Is the parcel located within an existing settlement?  If no, what is the width of the gap between the settlements at the point that the parcel is intersected?</p>	<p>If the parcel is within an existing settlement or more than 5 km away from a neighbouring settlement, 0</p> <p>If &lt;1 km away from a neighbouring settlement, 4</p> <p>If between 1 km and 5 km away from a neighbouring settlement, 2</p>	<p>Merging is the joining or blurring of boundaries between two settlements.</p> <p>A straight line is measured at the narrowest point between settlements. The line must pass through the parcel being assessed.</p>
<p>3 To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.</p>	<p>a Does the parcel have the characteristics of countryside and/or connect to land with the characteristics of countryside?  Has the parcel already been affected by encroachment of urbanised built development?</p>	<p>If land parcel contains the characteristics of countryside, has no urbanising development, and is open, 2</p> <p>If land parcel contains the characteristics of countryside, has limited urbanising development, and is relatively open, 1</p> <p>If land parcel does not contain the characteristics and/or is not connected to land with the characteristics of countryside, or contains urbanising development that compromises openness, 0</p>	<p>Encroachment from urbanising influences is the intrusion / gradual advance of buildings and urbanised land beyond an acceptable or established limit.</p> <p>Urbanising influences include features such as roads lined with street lighting and pavements, large areas of hardstanding, floodlit sports fields, etc.</p> <p>Urbanising built development does not include development which is in keeping with the countryside, e.g. agricultural or forestry related development, isolated dwellings, historic schools and churches.</p> <p>Countryside is land/scenery which is rural in character, i.e. a relatively open natural, semi-natural or farmed landscape.</p>
	<p>b Are there existing natural or man-made features / boundaries that would prevent encroachment of the countryside within or</p>	<p>If no significant boundary, 2</p> <p>If less significant boundary, 1</p>	<p>Readily recognisable and permanent features are used to define the borders of Green Belt parcels. The presence of features which contain development and prevent encroachment can, in certain locations, diminish the role of a Green Belt</p>

NPPF Green Belt Purposes		Criteria	Score /Value	Assessment method notes
		beyond the parcel in the long term? (These could be outside the parcel).	If significant boundary, 0	<p>parcel in performing this purpose. The significance of a boundary in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment is judged based on its relative proximity to the existing urban edge of a settlement and its nature.</p> <p>Boundaries are assumed to play a stronger role (and the Green Belt parcel, therefore, a weaker role) in inhibiting encroachment of the countryside when they are located relatively close to the existing urban edge of a settlement because if the Green Belt parcel were released they would represent a barrier to further encroachment of the wider countryside.</p> <p>Where boundaries border the existing urban edge of a settlement, any further expansion of the settlement would breach that boundary and it would play no further role in preventing encroachment of the wider countryside. In these cases, the Green Belt parcel is judged to play a stronger role in preventing encroachment.</p> <p>Boundaries that are more permanent in nature or more difficult to cross are assumed to play a stronger role in inhibiting encroachment of the countryside. Examples include railway lines, rivers, and motorways/dual carriageways. Examples of boundary types that are assumed to play a weaker role include streams, canals, and topographic features, such as ridges.<sup>13</sup></p> <p>Footpaths and minor roads play an even weaker role.</p>
4	To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.	a Is the parcel partially or wholly within or adjacent to a Conservation Area within an historic town?  Does the parcel have good intervisibility with the historic core <sup>14</sup> of an historic town?	<p>If parcel is partially or wholly within or adjacent to a Conservation Area within an historic town <b>and</b> has good intervisibility with the historic core of the town, 4</p> <p>If parcel is partially or wholly within or adjacent to a Conservation Area within an historic town <b>or</b> has good intervisibility with the historic core of the town, 2</p> <p>If parcel has none of these features, 0</p>	<p>The following historic towns are considered in the assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alcester</li> <li>• Birmingham</li> <li>• Coleshill</li> <li>• Henley-in-Arden</li> <li>• Redditch</li> <li>• Stratford</li> <li>• Tamworth</li> </ul> <p>Site visits and topographic mapping are used to inform judgements as to whether land parcels have good intervisibility with the historic core of an historic town.</p>
5	To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging	a The Local Authorities involved in this review are covered by the Coventry and Warwickshire Housing Market Area (HMA) <sup>15</sup> . Defining the area as an HMA reflects the key functional linkages that operate between where people live and work and the household demand and preferences that define the area. As the whole Housing Market Area functions as one unit, this makes it		

<sup>13</sup> The relative permanence of a boundary, although relevant to the assessment of parcels of land against Purpose 3, is not, in itself, directly linked to the significance of its role in inhibiting encroachment of the countryside, e.g. streams, canals and topographic features are permanent but development can relatively easily be accessed from the corridor in which the feature lies.

<sup>14</sup> The historic cores of the historic towns identified by the Steering Group have been defined using the Conservation Areas which sit close to the centre of each historic town.

<sup>15</sup> Coventry and Warwickshire Joint Strategic Housing Market Assessment, 2014

NPPF Green Belt Purposes	Criteria	Score /Value	Assessment method notes
the recycling of derelict and other urban land.			difficult to accurately assess whether one individual parcel considered in isolation makes a more significant contribution than another to incentivising development on previously developed land. What can be said is that all parcels make an equally significant contribution to this purpose and are each given a score of 4.

3.24 The criteria for assessment against purpose 4 (to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns) were considered to be proportionate and appropriate to a Green Belt study, recognising that there are other forms of planning control for the historic environment and separate bodies of evidence (e.g. historic landscape character assessments). The Stage 2 study assessed the contribution of Green Belt parcels to the setting and special character of the following historic towns, which were agreed by the Steering Group:

- Alcester
- Birmingham
- Coleshill
- Henley-in-Arden
- Redditch
- Stratford-upon-Avon
- Tamworth

3.25 Results and notes from the assessment were input to an Access database which is linked to GIS mapping of the Stage 2 study area to help ensure that records of the assessment are easily accessible. The assessment sheets for each land parcel and broad area within the Stage 2 study area are set out in **Appendix 1** of this report.

### Overall scores

3.26 The scores against the criteria were combined to generate a total score for each parcel. The higher the score, the greater the parcel's overall contribution to the Green Belt purposes. The total scores for each parcel are presented graphically in maps in Chapter 4, indicating the overall contribution each parcel makes to the Green Belt purposes.

3.27 While the aggregation of scores across all the purposes is a practical way of understanding the overall and relative contribution of different parts of the Green Belt, the NPPF does not require all the purposes of Green Belt to be met simultaneously. Indeed, even if one purpose is met, a parcel of land could be considered to make a significant contribution to the Green Belt. Therefore, **Appendix 2** contains maps illustrating parcels' relative contribution to each Green Belt purpose to illustrate the considerable contribution that certain parcels are making to individual Green Belt purposes, contributions which can be lost when scores against all five purposes are aggregated<sup>16</sup>. Furthermore, each parcel's score against each of the Green Belt purposes is presented at the end of the assessment sheet for each parcel (**Appendix 1**) so that the contribution the parcels make to individual purposes can be explored.

### Site visits

3.28 The land parcels and broad areas were assessed remotely in the first instance using GIS mapping, OS maps and aerial images. All the land parcels and broad areas were visited (in March 2016) to check their performance against the purposes. Parcels of Green Belt were viewed from the publically accessible road network and public rights of way.

<sup>16</sup> All parcels score 4 for purpose 5. Therefore, no maps have been prepared for purpose 5.

## Reporting

- 3.29 This report represents the final output of Stage 2 of the Joint Green Belt Study. It presents the findings for all parcels and broad areas assessed in North Warwickshire Borough and Stratford-on-Avon District. The results of the assessment for each of the parcels and broad areas in the Stage 2 study area are summarised in Chapter 4 below and outlined in further detail in **Appendix 1**.

## 4 Findings

- 4.1 This Chapter sets out the overall findings of the Stage 2 Green Belt study.
- 4.2 A total of 93 parcels and six broad areas were identified in the Stage 2 local authorities:
- 59 parcels and three broad areas fall wholly or partially within North Warwickshire.
  - 34 parcels and three broad areas fall wholly or partially within Stratford-on-Avon.
- 4.3 A series of maps presents the overall results of the land parcel assessment for each local authority. **Figures 3 and 4** are maps illustrating the overall contribution of individual parcels to the Green Belt purposes in North Warwickshire and Stratford-on-Avon, respectively.
- 4.4 **Appendix 1** contains all the assessment sheets for all 93 parcels and the six broad areas. The assessment sheets contain the detailed judgements behind each score for each criterion against each Green Belt purpose.
- 4.5 As noted earlier, while the aggregation of scores across all the purposes is a practical way of understanding the overall and relative contribution of the Green Belt across the study area, the NPPF does not require all the purposes of Green Belt to be met simultaneously. Therefore, **Appendix 2** contains maps illustrating parcels' relative contribution to each Green Belt purpose to illustrate the contribution that certain parcels are making to individual Green Belt purposes. A strong contribution against one or more Green Belt purposes can be less apparent when scores against all five purposes are aggregated<sup>17</sup>.

### Summary of findings: broad areas

- 4.6 The six broad areas represent the largely open and undeveloped countryside between the large built-up areas and main rural villages within study area. As the 'main body' of the Green Belt (as opposed to the edges), they were considered to make a significant contribution to Green Belt purposes; however, some make a more significant contribution than others.
- 4.7 The following paragraphs highlight the main contributions each broad area makes to the Green Belt purposes and thus the integrity of the wider West Midlands Green Belt.

#### Broad Area 6<sup>18</sup>

- 4.8 Broad Area 6 lies between the historic towns of Redditch to the west, Henley-in-Arden to the east, Hockley Heath and the large urban conurbation of Solihull to the north. The area contains the historic village of Tanworth-in-Arden, including the Grade I listed Church of St Mary Magdalene, which is visible in the surrounding countryside. The Hob Ditch Earthworks Scheduled Monument also sits within the area. Five SSSIs sit within the broad area: Windmill Naps Wood SSSI, Clowes Wood & New Fallings Coppice SSSI, Blythe River SSSI, Merriman's Hill Farm Meadows SSSI and Ullenhall Meadows SSSI. The edge of the Birmingham/Solihull conurbation is three kilometres to the north of the District boundary. This limits the role of this broad area taken as a whole in inhibiting the sprawl of this large conurbation southwards; however, the land to the north of the M40 motorway plays a more significant role in this regard.
- 4.9 Overall, the broad area is considered to make a considerable contribution to all the purposes of Green Belt:
- Checking the sprawl of Redditch, Henley-in-Arden and Hockley Heath.
  - Preventing the merging of Redditch, Henley-in-Arden, Hockley Heath and Solihull.

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<sup>17</sup> All parcels score 4 for purpose 5. Therefore, no maps have been prepared for purpose 5.

<sup>18</sup> Broad Areas 1-5 were identified and assessed at Stage 1 of the study.

- Safeguarding the countryside, including a number of large ancient woodlands, such as Windmill Naps Wood SSSI and Clowes Wood & New Fallings Coppice SSSI.
- Preserving the setting and special character of the historic town of Henley-in-Arden, containing the Grade I listed Church of St Nicholas and Church of St John the Baptist.
- Assisting urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land across the West Midlands.

### **Broad Area 7**

- 4.10 Broad area 7 lies between the historic towns of Stratford-upon-Avon to the south, Henley-in-Arden to the north, and beyond the north eastern edge of the District, Warwick. The area contains several historic villages, including Snitterfield which contains the Grade I listed Church of St James the Great. The area contains a number of scheduled monuments, including Beaudesert motte and bailey castle on the eastern edge of Henley-in-Arden, and several pockets of ancient woodland, including Snitterfield and Bearley Bushes SSSIs. There are also two other SSSIs within the area, Sherbourne Meadows and Oak Tree Farm Meadows.
- 4.11 Overall, the broad area is considered to make a considerable contribution to all the purposes of Green Belt:
- Checking the sprawl of Stratford-upon-Avon to the south and Henley-in-Arden to the north.
  - Preventing the merging of Stratford-upon-Avon and Henley-in-Arden in the long term; however, the eastern half of the broad area makes a less significant contribution to preventing neighbouring towns merging due to Warwick being located some way to the east beyond the significant boundary of the M40.
  - Safeguarding the countryside, including a number of large ancient woodlands.
  - Preserving the setting and special character of the historic towns of Stratford-upon-Avon and Henley-in-Arden. The broad area has excellent views in to the historic cores of both historic towns, with their numerous listed buildings.
  - Assisting urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land across the West Midlands.

### **Broad Area 8**

- 4.12 Broad area 8 lies between the historic towns of Stratford-upon-Avon and Henley-in-Arden to the south east and north east respectively, Redditch to the north west and Alcester to the south. In addition, Studley lies to the south of Redditch in the north western corner of the area. The area contains several historic villages, including Billesley, Coughton and Aston Cantlow, each of which have scheduled monuments and Grade I listed buildings. Woodland dominates the centre of the broad area and there are several large ancient woodlands within the area, including Bannam's Wood, Aston Grove & Withycombe Wood, Copmill Hill and Rough Hill & Wirehill Woods, all of which are designated as SSSIs.
- 4.13 Overall, the broad area makes a considerable contribution to all the purposes of Green Belt:
- Checking sprawl, particularly of Alcester, Redditch, Stratford-upon-Avon and Studley.
  - Preventing the merging of Alcester, Redditch, Stratford-upon-Avon and Studley in the long term.
  - Safeguarding the countryside, including a number of large ancient woodlands.
  - Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns, particularly Alcester.
  - Assisting urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land across the West Midlands.
- 4.14 Directly to the south of Alcester, a small portion of the Green Belt within Broad Area 8 breaches the strong readily recognisable boundary provided by the A46 for the majority of the southern edge of the West Midlands Green Belt in between Alcester and Stratford-upon-Avon. To be consistent with the boundary to the east, it may be more appropriate to redefine the Green Belt boundary by limiting its extent to the northern side of the A46. If this were to occur it may also

be appropriate to exclude the small area of Green Belt in between the A46 and the River Arrow adjacent to the small village of Arrow.

### **Broad Area 9**

- 4.15 Broad area 9 lies between the historic town of Tamworth to the north and the smaller settlements of Kingsbury and Piccadilly to south of the M42 and Cudworth to the west of the M42 and M6 Toll. Sutton Coldfield lies further to the west on the other side of the M6 Toll motorway and A38. The area contains pockets of ancient woodland, a few small Scheduled Monuments and a SSSI at Middleton Pool, adjacent to the Grade II\* listed Middleton Hall. Overall, the broad area makes a considerable contribution to four of the five purposes of Green Belt:
- Checking the southern sprawl of Tamworth; however, the significant boundaries to the south, east and west of the area limit the role of this portion of the Green Belt in preventing the sprawl of Cudworth, Kingsbury, Piccadilly and Sutton Coldfield and preventing the merging of these neighbouring towns in the long term.
  - Safeguarding the countryside, including a number of ancient woodlands.
  - Preserving the setting of the historic town of Tamworth. Pockets of high ground in the eastern half of the parcel, to the south of Tamworth offer long-range views in to the historic core of this historic town, making some contribution to its wider setting in the landscape.
  - Assisting urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land across the West Midlands.

### **Broad Area 10**

- 4.16 Broad area 10 lies between Nuneaton and Bedworth to the east, Kingsbury and Piccadilly to the north, Coventry to the south east and Coleshill in the west. In between these larger settlements are a number of villages – Fillongley, Old Arley, New Arley, Hurley and Shustoke. The broad area contains several Scheduled Monuments and pockets of ancient woodland, two of which are designated as SSSIs: Hoar Park Wood and Kingsbury Wood. There are two other SSSIs within the broad area, Whitacre Heath and the River Blythe.
- 4.17 Overall, the broad area makes a considerable contribution to all of the Green belt purposes:
- Checking the sprawl of Nuneaton and Bedworth, Kingsbury and Piccadilly, Coventry, Coleshill, Fillongley, Old Arley, New Arley, Hurley and Shustoke.
  - Preventing the merging of Nuneaton and Bedworth, Kingsbury and Piccadilly, Coventry, Coleshill, Fillongley, Old Arley, New Arley, Hurley and Shustoke.
  - Safeguarding the countryside which contains several ancient woodlands, SSSIs, historic villages and Scheduled Monuments.
  - Preserving the setting and special character of the historic town of Coleshill, the historic core of which contains the prominent Grade I listed Church of St Peter and St Paul, which is visible across the western half of the broad area.
  - Assisting urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land across the West Midlands.

### **Broad Area 11**

- 4.18 Broad area 11 lies between the large urban areas of Birmingham to the west and Coventry to the east. The area contains the large Grade II\* listed Packington Hall Registered Park and Garden which contains the Grade II\* Old Packington Hall and Packington Hall and the Grade I Church of St James. Corley camp univallate hillfort Scheduled Monument sits in the eastern half of the area. There are several pockets of ancient woodland within the broad area. Two SSSIs sit within the broad area: Coleshill and Bannerly Pools and the River Blythe.
- 4.19 Overall, the broad area is considered to make a considerable contribution to three of the four purposes of Green Belt:
- Checking the westwards sprawl of Coventry towards Birmingham and the eastwards sprawl of the Birmingham towards Coventry

- Preventing Birmingham and Coventry from merging in the long term.
  - Safeguarding the countryside, including a number of ancient woodlands and the Packington Hall Registered Park & Garden.
  - Assisting urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land across the West Midlands.
- 4.20 While the broad area sits between the historic cities of Birmingham and Coventry, it is considered to make a more limited contribution to their setting and special character due to the significant distance and lack of intervisibility between the parcel and their historic cores.

## Summary of findings: parcels adjacent to large built-up areas and main rural villages

- 4.21 **Figures 3 and 4** illustrate the combined scores for each parcel against all the Green Belt purposes. The following paragraphs describe the spatial distribution of higher, mid and lower-performing parcels (in terms of the combined scores).
- 4.22 Generally, parcels which score between 20 and 15 overall are considered to be higher-performing; 14 and 10 mid-performing; and 9 and 4 lower-performing. All parcels score 4 against the fifth purpose of Green Belts, because of the strategic contribution that all Green Belt makes to urban regeneration by restricting the land available for development and encouraging developers to seek out and recycle derelict / urban sites.
- 4.23 It should be noted, however, that a combined score can mask the significant contribution of a parcel to a single Green Belt purpose, or a relatively poor performance across a number of purposes. Further details on the contributions of each parcel of Green Belt to each Green Belt purpose can be found in the reports and maps in Appendices 1 and 2.
- 4.24 There is not a significant difference between the performances of the Green Belt across the two Stage 2 local authorities. Both authorities contain high-performing and low-performing parcels, with the majority of parcels mid-performing.

### Higher-performing Green Belt parcels

- 4.25 Parcels of Green Belt land that sit within the narrowest gaps between the large built-up areas, such as Birmingham, Coleshill, Curdworth, New and Old Arley, Redditch, Studley and Water Orton and/or the settlements that surround them, generally perform well against the Green Belt purposes. These include parcels B1, CH7, CW3, OA2 and FI3 in North Warwickshire and AC1, AC2, AC5, AC6 and AC7, HD3, HD5, HD6 and HD7, RE3 and RE4 and ST4 and ST5 in Stratford-upon-Avon.
- 4.26 Generally, the parcels bordering or in close proximity to the historic towns of Alcester, Coleshill (south of the Hams Hall Distribution Park) and Henley-in-Arden contribute significantly to the purposes of Green Belt, and most have good intervisibility with the historic cores of these historic towns, for example B1, CH5 and CH7 in North Warwickshire and AC1, AC2, AC5, AC6 and AC7, HD1 and HD7 in Stratford-upon-Avon. Generally, such parcels are very open, largely free from development and urbanising influences.
- 4.27 In addition, many of the parcels contain roads which would be at risk from ribbon development and few significant boundaries and urbanising influences. Without the Green Belt designation, the land within these parcels would therefore be vulnerable to encroachment/sprawl – for example B1, CW3, FI2 and FI3, HU2 and HU5, OA2, SH2 and SH3 in North Warwickshire and AB1, AC6, SA5 and ST5 in Stratford-upon-Avon.

### Mid-performing Green Belt parcels

- 4.28 The majority of the parcels within the Stage 2 study area are 'mid-performing', meaning that they score moderately well across all the Green Belt purposes or have a mixture of high and low scores across the five purposes. There is no identifiable spatial pattern to these mid-performing parcels, as their weaker performance is attributable to a range of factors, including the presence of

significant boundaries helping to protect the wider countryside from encroachment and reducing the need for the Green Belt to perform this purpose and developments which compromise the openness of the Green Belt and urbanise the countryside. In other instances, these parcels form part of large gaps between settlements, where the merging of neighbouring towns is less likely in the short and medium term.

### Lower-performing Green Belt parcels

- 4.29 The parcel considered to make the least significant contribution to the Green Belt purposes is parcel AN4. This relatively small parcel on the edge of Ansley is made-up of a large area of hardstanding used as a forecourt for vehicles and a small pocket of woodland. There are no buildings within the parcel so it remains open; however, the parcel sits within the village of Ansley and therefore plays no role in preventing neighbouring towns from merging, the hardstanding used as a carpark represents a significant urbanising influence and the parcel is retained against the existing urban edge of Ansley by the junction of Tunnel Road and the B4112 which runs through the villages. Although the nature of these boundaries is less significant, their close proximity to the existing urban edge of the village makes them significant.
- 4.30 Similar parcels of land adjacent to the settlements of Alcester (AC3), Redditch (RE1) and Kingsbury (KB4) are also considered to make similarly limited contributions to the Green Belt purposes. Parcel AC3 contains farm buildings, a roundabout and industrial and commercial ribbon development along Birmingham Road. Together these developments have compromised the openness of the Green Belt and have an urbanising influence on the countryside within the majority of the parcel. While parcel AC3 sits between Alcester to the south and the village of King's Coughton to the north, the ribbon development within the parcel and the roundabout are considered to have merged Alcester and King's Coughton, limiting the role of the undeveloped Green Belt land within the parcel from maintaining separation between these two settlements.
- 4.31 Parcel RE1 is retained against the urban edge of Redditch by the A448 Road (The Slough); ribbon development to the west along Evesham Road limits the contribution that new development within the parcel would make to narrowing the gap between Redditch and Astwood Bank; and the parcel contains several semi-detached dwellings which compromise the openness of the Green Belt within their immediate vicinity and have an urbanising influence on the countryside.
- 4.32 Parcel KB4 contains relatively open farmland and scrubland retained against the edge of Kingsbury by the River Tame which borders the parcel's south western edge. A railway line borders the parcel's eastern edge. Beyond the river a series of large ponds prevents encroachment of the countryside to the south west. Two distinct pockets of development – a new mixed-use development and some isolated dwellings in the eastern half of the parcel – compromise the openness of the Green Belt within their immediate vicinity and inhibit the potential for further sprawling ribbon development. While the mixed-use development represents the principal urbanising influence within the parcel, the centre of the parcel contains a large roundabout lined by streetlights, which also has an urbanising influence on the countryside within the parcel.
- 4.33 Parcel CH1 represents a relatively low scoring parcel. Roughly 60% of the parcel comprises brownfield land previously developed and used as a power station. Only a few buildings remain on the previously developed site: an old substation sits in the eastern corner of the parcel; and another smaller building sits in the centre of the parcel. In addition, a church sits close to the eastern edge of the parcel. While the majority of the land within the parcel is open, these buildings compromise the openness of the Green Belt within their immediate vicinity. The majority of the brownfield land is hardstanding and several power lines run through the parcel. These features, in combination with the old substation in the eastern corner of the parcel, act as a significant urbanising influence on the countryside within the parcel. Furthermore, the parcel is retained by a railway line to the north and the River Tame to the east, limiting the potential for sprawling ribbon development and inhibiting the encroachment of the countryside to the north of the Hams Hall Distribution Park.
- 4.34 Parcel CH8 is considered to make no contribution to three of the four purposes assessed in this study. The majority of the parcel is made-up of a sewage treatment works. Some commercial development sits in the south western corner of the parcel and a small row of semi-detached dwellings sits close to the southern edge of the parcel. Power lines run through the proportion of

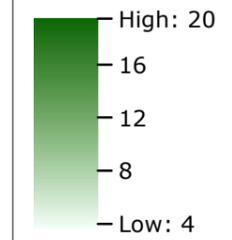
the parcel which has not been developed. These buildings and structures compromise the openness of the Green Belt within the parcel, significantly urbanise what remains of the countryside and limit the potential for ribbon development within the parcel. The parcel is retained by a stream to the north, a railway line to the south, a railway line to the northwest and the M42 to the west. The River Tame runs through the centre of the parcel. Collectively, these significant boundaries help to protect the wider countryside from encroachment.

- 4.35 Parcel WO4 contains no roads emanating from the urban edge of Water Orton, limiting its contribution to preventing the westwards sprawl of the village. The parcel contains a small industrial estate with some large warehouses. The buildings associated with these industrial activities cover a significant proportion of the land within the parcel, significantly compromising the openness of the Green Belt and urbanising a significant proportion of what remains on the countryside.
- 4.36 KB5 to the north of KB4 scores relatively low against the Green Belt purposes. This is primarily due to the fact that the river Tame retains the Green Belt land within the parcel against the urban edge of Kingsbury, limiting the role of the Green Belt in preventing sprawling ribbon development. This significant boundary plays a more significant role in the northern half of the parcel where it lies closer to the urban edge of Kingsbury; in the southern half, the distance between Kingsbury and the river is greater, reducing the significance of the river in protecting the Green Belt from encroachment in this portion of the parcel. Beyond the river a series of large ponds prevent encroachment of the countryside to the south west.
- 4.37 On the opposite side of Kingsbury parcel KB2 also scores relatively poorly, but for different reasons. A significant proportion of parcel KB2 has been developed and industrialised by the Kingsbury Terminal, an oil storage depot and meal recycling facility. These developments have largely compromised the openness of the Green Belt and urbanise the countryside within the parcel.
- 4.38 Parcel P5 represents a thin strip of woodland which is retained against the Kingsbury Link Industrial Estate (next to the village of Piccadilly) by a railway line and two minor roads flanking the parcels north eastern and south western edges. The buildings and infrastructure associated with the estate urbanise the thin strip of countryside within the parcel and compromise its openness. Together, these significant boundaries and developments limit the parcel's contribution to the Green Belt purposes.
- 4.39 Parcel SA1 to the north west of Stratford-upon-Avon represents the lowest scoring parcel adjacent to the historic town. This is primarily due to the significant distance between this portion of the historic town's urban edge and the nearest neighbouring settlements – the hamlets of Walcote and Haselor – which lie roughly 5.2km to the north west. The parcel also contains the Wildmoor Spa and Health Club. The large buildings associated with this development, its large carpark and tennis courts have an urbanising influence on the countryside within the western half of the parcel.
- 4.40 Parcels ST2 and ST3 to the east of Studley score relatively low. This is primarily due to the fact that the distance to the next neighbouring settlement (Henley-in-Arden) is roughly 7.3km, reducing the importance of the Green Belt land within the parcel in maintaining separation between these two neighbouring settlements. ST1 to the north also scores relatively, low, but is primarily due to the fact that the parcel is retained against the urban edge of Studley by the River Arrow which flows close to the existing urban edge of Studley.
- 4.41 Similar to parcels ST2 and ST3, parcel RE6 to the east of Redditch scores relatively low due to the limited contribution the parcel makes to purpose 2. Measured through the centre of the parcel along Hays Lane, the distance between Mappleborough Green on the edge of Redditch to the west and the Henley-in-Arden to the east is roughly 7.5km. However, the parcel also contains a significant proportion of the village of Mappleborough Green, including an area of retail and restaurant buildings at its northern end. The lit residential streets, carparks and commercial buildings have an urbanising influence on the countryside within the western half of the parcel.
- 4.42 None of the parcels described above contributes to the setting or special character of a historic town.

**Figure 3**  
Overall Assessment Findings -  
North Warwickshire

□ District Boundary

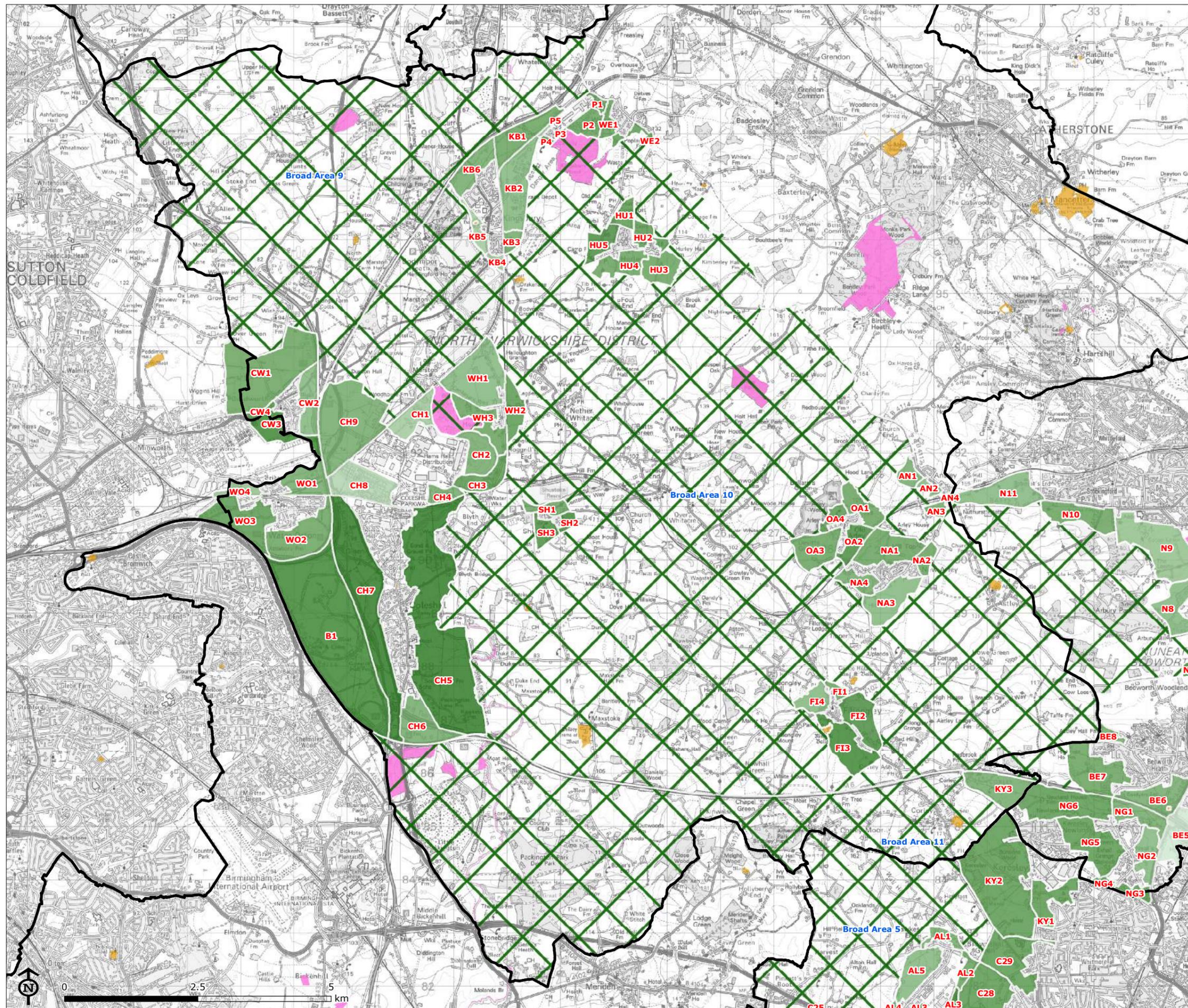
**Overall Performance Against  
Green Belt Purposes**



⊗ Broad Area

■ SSSI

■ Scheduled Monument



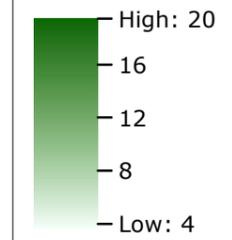
Map Scale @ A3: 1:70,000



**Figure 4**  
**Overall Assessment Findings -**  
**Stratford-on-Avon**

□ District Boundary

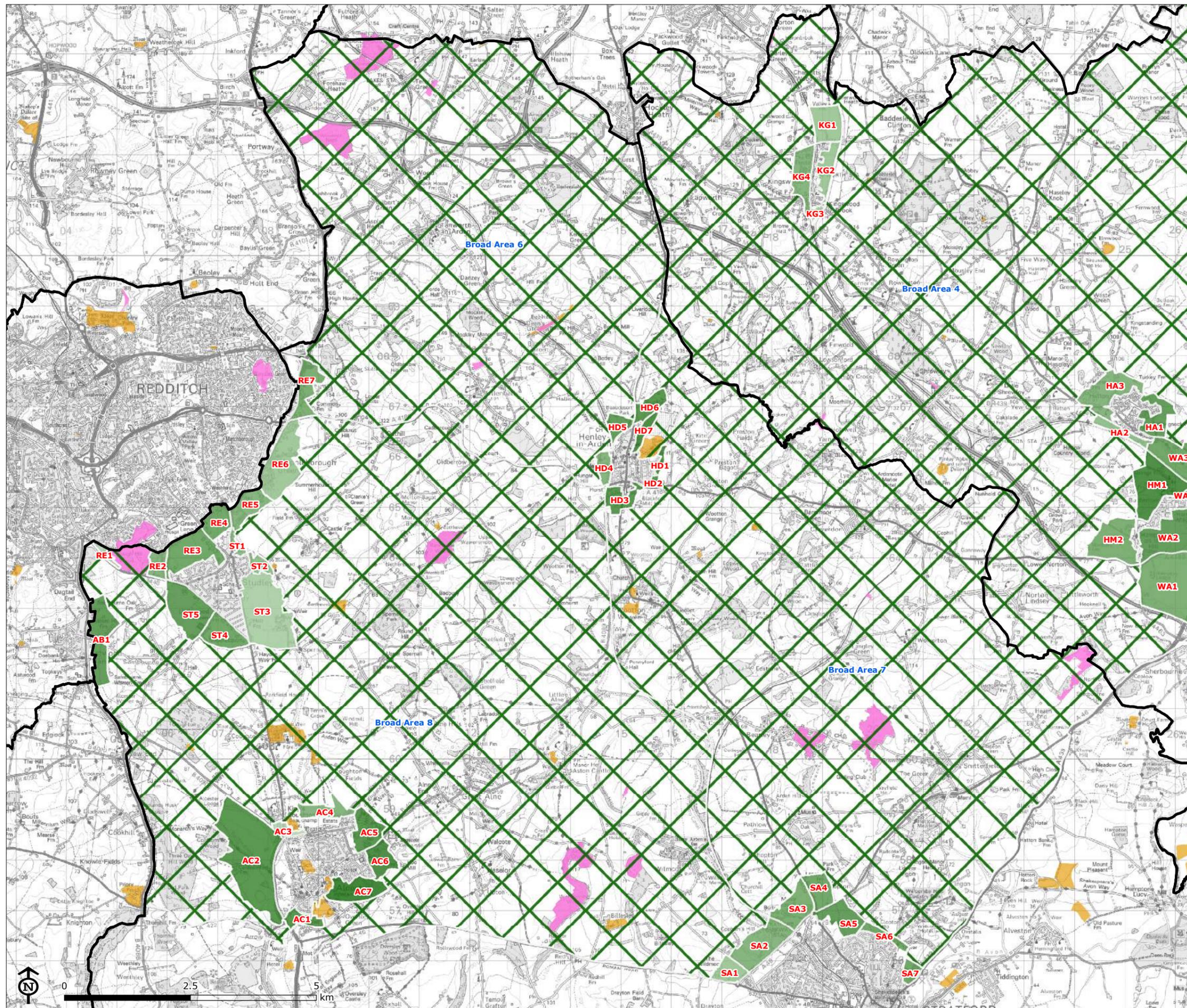
**Overall Performance Against**  
**Green Belt Purposes**



⊗ Broad Area

■ SSSI

■ Scheduled Monument



Map Scale @ A3: 1:74,000



## 5 Conclusions and next steps

- 5.1 This final chapter draws overall conclusions from the study and suggests some next steps, in terms of how the Stage 2 authorities might use the findings in their respective Local Plan preparation.

### Overall performance of the Green Belt

- 5.2 This Stage 2 study has demonstrated that the majority of the Green Belt in North Warwickshire and Stratford-on-Avon continues to serve its purposes very well. In particular it helps to maintain the identity of this part of the West Midlands and to provide opportunities for residents to enjoy the countryside close at hand.
- 5.3 As set out in Chapter 4, there are variations in the contribution that different parts of the Green Belt make to the purposes 1, 2, 3 and 4. In terms of purpose 5 (encouraging the recycling of urban land), it can be concluded that the entire Green Belt has helped to meet this purpose historically and will continue to do so, noting that there remain some significant areas of previously used land in the urban areas.

### Making changes to the Green Belt

#### Helping to meet development requirements

- 5.4 As noted in Chapter 2, the NPPF requires changes to the Green Belt to be made through the Local Plan process. This should include:
- i. demonstration of exceptional circumstances, such as unmet housing or employment land needs, that cannot be met elsewhere; and
  - ii. consideration of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development, considering a range of local, regional and national issues such as economic growth, health and wellbeing, accessibility and biodiversity, cultural heritage and climate change resilience, as well as an assessment against Green Belt purposes.
- 5.5 A common interpretation of the policy position is that, where necessitated by development requirements, plans should identify the most sustainable locations, unless outweighed by adverse effects on the overall integrity of the Green Belt according to an assessment of the whole of the Green Belt based around the five purposes<sup>19</sup>.
- 5.6 In other words, the relatively poor performance of the land against Green Belt purposes is not, of itself, an exceptional circumstance that would justify release of the land from the Green Belt.
- 5.7 We therefore recommend that the Stage 2 authorities continue to cooperate in considering points i) and ii) above as part of their respective Local Plan preparation processes. Subject to this, the lowest performing parcels of Green Belt, or parts of them, could be considered for removal from the Green Belt. These are:
- Parcels AC3, AN4, KB4, RE1 and WO4 – relatively small parcels which contain significant urbanising influences and infrastructure/developments which retain them, limiting the contribution of these parcels of Green Belt in preventing sprawl, merging or encroachment of the countryside.

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<sup>19</sup> Planning on the Doorstep: The Big Issues – Green Belt, Planning Advisory Service (PAS), 2015: <http://www.pas.gov.uk/documents/332612/1099309/Planning+on+Your+Doorstep+-+The+Big+Issues+Green+Belt.pdf/bb5fcd90-fa29-42a0-9dd9-82b27a43f72f>

- Parcels CH1 and CH8, which respectively contain significant areas of brownfield land and a large sewage treatment works. These pockets of urbanised countryside are also retained by significant boundaries which limit the potential for further sprawling ribbon development and inhibit the encroachment of the countryside beyond the parcel.

5.8 Development in significant proportions of these parcels would effectively be 'infill' and would be well contained by existing significant features and the landscape. In defining precise areas for removal, however, the local authorities should seek to minimise any harm to the remainder of the Green Belt by indicating the type of development (in terms of height and density) that would be acceptable in these location.

5.9 With this in mind, the Stage 2 authorities may wish to carry out more detailed/fine grained Green Belt assessment work of land parcels and broad areas, including smaller settlements washed-over by the Green Belt designation. Any further work should draw on the methodology and findings of the Joint Green Belt Review agreed by the cooperating authorities.

### **Safeguarded land**

5.10 As suggested in paragraph 85 of the NPPF, the Stage 2 authorities may also wish to consider the need for 'safeguarded land'. This is land taken out of the Green Belt in one plan period for potential development in the next plan period and protected from development proposals arising in the meantime by policies with similar force to Green Belt.