



# **Open Land Designations Study**

## **Green Belt Assessment – Main Report**

### **Preston City Council, South Ribble Borough Council and Chorley Council**

**Final report**

Prepared by LUC

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Open Land Designations Study

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

**1.1** LUC was commissioned by the three Central Lancashire local authorities (Preston City Council, South Ribble Borough Council and Chorley Council) to undertake strategic assessments of how land in the area:

- contributes to the Green Belt purposes as defined in paragraph 138 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF);
- demonstrates valued landscape characteristics (including the identification of any areas where landscape quality can be considered of 'above ordinary' value);
- provides landscape settings which are important to the character of settlements; and
- maintains gaps between settlements in the Preston City Council area that are not designated as part of its Open Countryside (policy EN1) area.

**1.2** This document presents LUC's methodology and outputs for the strategic assessment of contribution to the Green Belt purposes. A separate report presents the methodology and findings for the other assessment elements [\[see reference 1\]](#).

## The Central Lancashire Local Plan

**1.3** Central Lancashire covers the geographical areas of Preston, Chorley and South Ribble, which together function as one integrated local economy, housing market and commuting area.

**1.4** The three local planning authorities have a long history of working together to plan for the area's growth needs. In 2012, the three Authorities published a Joint Core Strategy designed to inform the strategic direction of each Council's

more detailed Local Plans, all three of which were adopted two years later in 2015.

**1.5** A review of the adopted Joint Core Strategy and separate Local Plans began in 2018 and a decision was made to start work on the preparation of a new Joint Central Lancashire Local Plan. The new Central Lancashire Local Plan will update the strategic policy objectives in the adopted Core Strategy and consolidate and update the more detailed non-strategic policies in the adopted Local Plans. Local Plan policies of particular relevance to this work are mapped on **Figure 1.1**. These include:

- Preston Local Plan policies:
  - GB1 – Green Belt.
  - EN1 – Development in the Open Countryside.
  - EN4 – Areas of Separation.
  - EN5 – Areas of Major Open Space.
- South Ribble Local Plan policies:
  - G1 – Green Belt.
  - G3 – Safeguarded Land for Future Development.
  - G4 – Protected Open Land.
  - G5 – Areas of Separation.
- Chorley Local Plan policies:
  - BNE2 – Development in the Area of Other Open Countryside.
  - BNE3 – Areas of Safeguarded Land for Future Development Needs.
  - BNE4 – Areas of Separation.

**1.6** This study will form a key part of the growing evidence base for the new Central Lancashire Local Plan.

## Study aims and scope

**1.7** This element of the study provides a proportionate, objective, transparent, comprehensive and consistent assessment of the strategic role and function of Central Lancashire's Green Belt.

**1.8** The assessment of strategic *contribution* has identified broad variations in the role of land in relation to each of the NPPF Green Belt purposes, as defined in the NPPF, defining parcels of land with ratings and supporting text. NPPF policy and the associated Green Belt purposes are outlined in more detail in **Chapter 2**.

**1.9** Legal case law, as established in *Calverton Parish Council v Greater Nottingham Councils & others (2015)* indicates that planning judgments setting out the 'exceptional circumstances' for the amendment of Green Belt boundaries require consideration of the '*nature and extent of harm*' to the Green Belt and '*the extent to which the consequent impacts on the purposes of the Green Belt may be ameliorated or reduced to the lowest reasonably practicable extent*'. As a strategic assessment of contribution to the Green Belt purposes, this study has not considered the impact of the release of specific sites of Green Belt land on the Green Belt purposes, or recommended any areas of land for potential release.

**1.10** However, it is recognised that an understanding of the key components of the consideration of harm to the Green Belt purposes, within different locations within Central Lancashire's existing Green Belt land, will be useful to inform the preparation of the Joint Local Plan. To this end, the study identifies the key characteristics and features in each strategic parcel likely to influence Green Belt harm, and in so doing points towards any locations within each parcel where harm to the Green Belt purposes might be minimised.

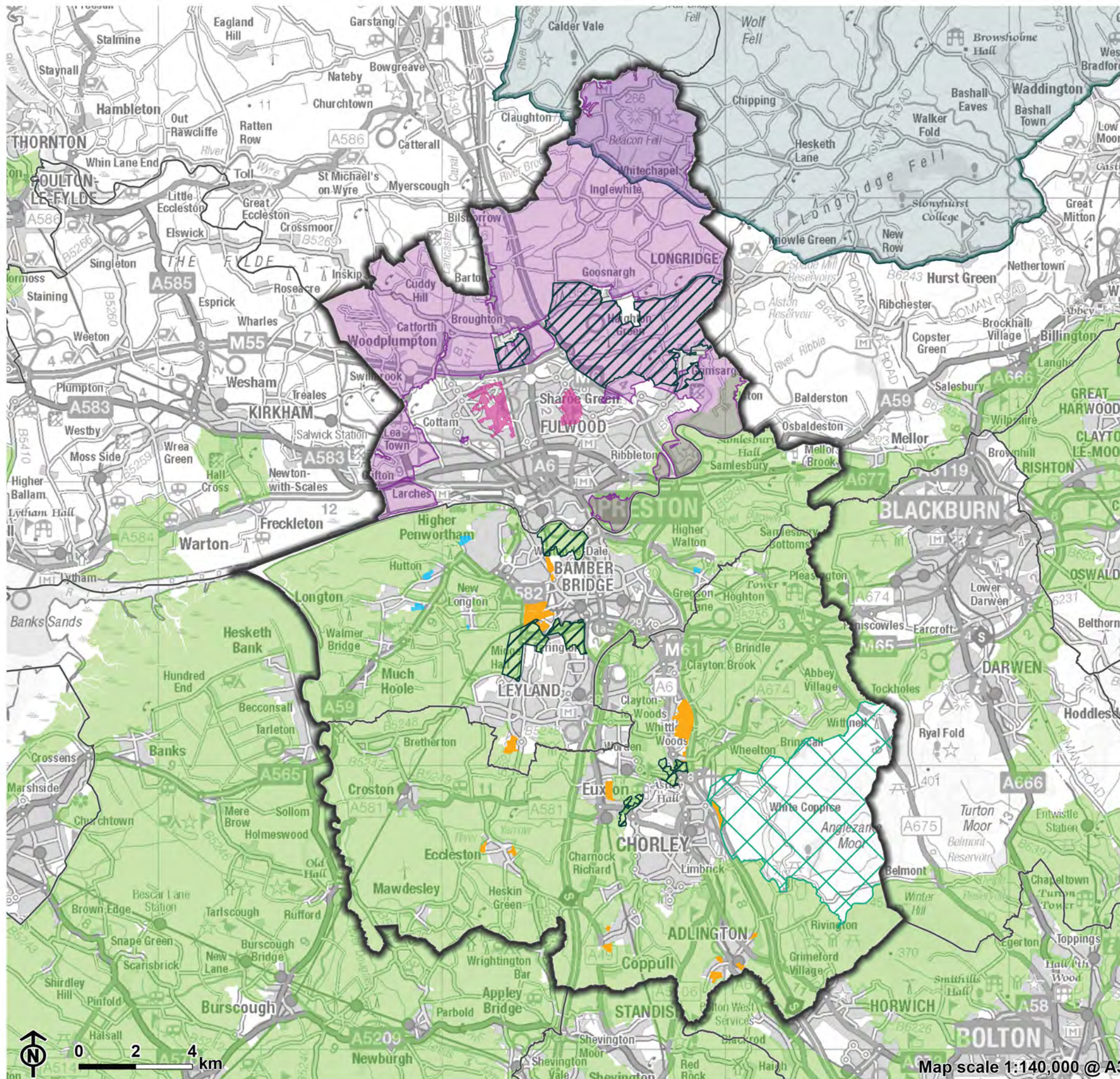
**1.11** The key distinction between the concepts of *contribution* to the Green Belt purposes and *harm* to those purposes relates to the impact that release of land would have on the integrity of remaining Green Belt land. An assessment of

'*contribution*' considers the role that land plays now, whereas an assessment of '*harm*' considers how the loss of contribution of released land, together with any weakening of the remaining Green Belt, would combine to diminish the strength of the Green Belt. In the development of a preferred spatial strategy, relative harm to Green Belt of releasing specific site options will need to be weighed against benefits and the availability of any other reasonable alternatives.

**1.12** In addition to assessing land that is currently defined as Green Belt, the study has assessed areas that are subject to similarly restrictive local designations – namely Preston's EN1 ('Development in the Open Countryside'), South Ribble's G4 ('Protected Open Land'), Chorley's BNE2 ('Development in the Area of Other Open Countryside) and the policies defining land safeguarded for future development needs (G3 and BNE3). This analysis will inform any decisions regarding any potential recommended changes to the current Green Belt extent. There was no assessment of Preston's EN5 policy area ('Areas of Major Open Space'), as this is entirely contained within the built-up area of Preston and so has little potential for consideration as new Green Belt, and no separate consideration of G5 and BNE4 ('Areas of Separation', in South Ribble and Chorley respectively) as these are both defined as Green Belt as well.



Figure 1.1: Open Land Policy Areas



- Central Lancashire boundary
- Local Authority boundary
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (EN6)
- Open Land Policy Areas**
- Green Belt (GB1, G1)
- Areas of Major Open Space
- Areas of Separation (BNE4, EN4, G5)
- Area of Other Open Land (BNE2)
- Open Countryside (EN1)
- Safeguarded land (BNE3, G3)
- Protected Open Land (G4)

Map scale 1:140,000 @ A3

## Method statement consultation

**1.13** Local Planning Authorities have a duty to cooperate [see reference 2] with neighbouring authorities, and with other prescribed bodies, on strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries. Paragraph 20 of the NPPF sets out the strategic topics for which Local Plan strategic policies should be prepared, including population and economic growth and associated development and infrastructure and facilities, climate change and the conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment. All these topics either have a direct or indirect link to land designated as Green Belt or other local countryside designations. Consequently, a method statement was prepared for consultation with the stakeholders with whom the Authorities have a duty to cooperate. These included:

- Historic England.
- Natural England.
- Environment Agency.
- Relevant neighbouring local planning authorities (that is those adjoining the administrative boundaries of Central Lancashire) including Lancashire County Council, Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, Fylde Council, West Lancashire Borough Council, and Wyre Council.

**1.14** The method statement consultation gave an opportunity for the Councils' duty to cooperate partners to review and comment on the proposed approach to the study, prior to the assessment being undertaken. Discounting the comments which did not raise any issues relating to the proposed methodology – which included comments from both Historic England and Natural England – there were three key points raised:

- From Fylde Council: *“There is a clear disparity in the amount of designated Green Belt land between the north and south of Preston. This has and could further push the focus for development disproportionately to areas north of Preston due to the Green Belt that is also present in Chorley. The*

*long-term impacts of this need to be carefully considered, especially in terms of sustainability.”*

- LUC response: this disparity is recognised and is the reason for the methodological approach of including land to the north of Preston (in Open Countryside policy area EN1) in the assessment of land against the Green Belt purposes, even though it is not designated as Green Belt. Evidence as to how this land would contribute to the Green Belt purposes, if it were to be designated, will help to determine potential policy options for the new Central Lancashire Plan.
- From Fylde Council: *“It is well recognised that Green Belt land can have a positive effect on climate change, landscape and biodiversity, access and recreation, health and wellbeing, food and agriculture (not inclusive). These aspects need to be considered thoroughly when assessing the contribution of the Green Belt and the harm that would result from releasing Green Belt land. Reference to essential elements such as health and wellbeing and climate change are limited within the document.”*
- LUC response: although the listed aspects are benefits of Green Belt land that does not mean that non-Green Belt land cannot also deliver such benefits (although clearly the potential benefits could be significantly less in urban areas). LUC’s strategic assessment is focused on the Green Belt purposes as defined in the NPPF, as it is these rather than any secondary benefits that may be derived from Green Belt land that are the start point in the consideration of any potential changes to the designated area. However, if any future consideration is given the potential release of Green Belt land for development purposes, the impacts of this on landscape, biodiversity, recreation and other sustainability considerations will be important factors for the Council to consider. This evidence would then need to be considered in presenting a case for ‘exceptional circumstances’ for any specific proposed release of Green Belt land. Alongside this, the NPPF requires any case for Green Belt release to consider the potential for compensatory improvements to retained Green Belt land.
- From Wigan Council: *“We have no specific concerns with the proposed methodology as LUC have delivered similar studies on Green Belt and landscape for Greater Manchester in support of the Places for Everyone plan which followed similar methodologies. We assume that going forward*

*LUC will make use of the GM studies in identifying any potential cross boundary issues.”*

- LUC response: when assessing strategic contribution to the Green Belt purposes and the potential harm of release of Green Belt land the study will consider the role of urban and open land in neighbouring authority areas as well as in Central Lancashire. In doing this the assessment will make use of LUC’s Greater Manchester Green Belt studies where applicable.

1.15 No changes to the draft methodology were required in response to the above comments.

## Report authors

1.16 This report has been prepared by LUC on behalf of the Central Lancashire Authorities. LUC has completed Green Belt studies at a range of scales for over 50 English Local Planning Authorities in the past ten years. This includes Green Belt studies for the neighbouring authorities of Blackburn and Darwen and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (including Bolton and Wigan).

## Report structure

1.17 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 2** sets out the context for the study, including relevant planning policy in each of the Central Lancashire authority areas.
- **Chapter 3** sets out the methodology for the strategic assessment of Green Belt.
- **Chapter 4** summarises the findings of the assessment.

- **Chapter 5** summarises the next steps in the assessment and reporting process, and how the proposed evidence will be used to inform the new Central Lancashire Local Plan.
- **Appendix A** details the parcel-level assessment outputs.

## Chapter 2

# Study Context

**2.1** This chapter sets out the context for the Green Belt element of the Central Lancashire Open Land Designations Study, including relevant planning policy in each of the Central Lancashire authority areas.

**2.2** The study has assessed land subject to a number of different open land designations other than Green Belt. This is because, in order to inform decisions regarding suitable policies for the new Central Lancashire Plan, it is necessary to consider whether land beyond the currently designated area might make at least as strong a contribution as some current Green Belt land, were it to be designated.

**2.3** National, regional and local policies are considered under the following subheadings:

- Green Belt;
- Safeguarded land;
- Open countryside.

## Green Belt context

### Origins and evolution of the Lancashire Green Belt

**2.4** In 1955 the Government established (through Circular 42/55) the first clear policy on the need for Green Belts in areas outside of London, but it was the North East Lancashire Structure Plan, adopted in 1979, which was the first

planning document to designate Green Belt land within Central Lancashire. The original extent of the Lancashire Green Belt was established "...between Blackburn and Rishton/Oswaldtwistle, Rishton and Great Harwood, Rishton and Clayton-le-Moors, Clayton-le-Moors and Church, Clayton-le-Moors and Great Harwood, Great Harwood/Accrington and Padiham/Burnley" [see reference 3].

The Structure Plan of 1979 identified the main role of the Green Belt as being to protect settlements from coalescing preventing a loss of identity.

**2.5** The detailed boundaries of this original general extent were then refined through subsequent iterations of the Lancashire Structure Plans in the 1980's ending in the adoption of Policy 17 in the 1989 Lancashire Structure Plan which dictated that "...the detailed boundaries of Green Belts will be defined in Local Plans" [see reference 4]. Consequently, the full extent of the Green Belt within the three Central Lancashire authorities has been defined and amended through the 1990s and 2000s. The three Central Lancashire authorities have not undertaken detailed Green Belt reviews. The current extent of the Green Belt within Central Lancashire (illustrated on **Figure 1.1**) stands at roughly 22840 hectares (71.8% of Chorley: 14,560ha; 4.6% of Preston: 660ha and 67.4% of South Ribble: 7,620ha) [see reference 5]. Further details on the policies within the three authorities' adopted Local Plans can be found below.

**2.6** The Green Belt land at the southern edge of Chorley is contiguous with the Greater Manchester Green Belt, the origins and evolution of which is described below.

## Origins and evolution of the Greater Manchester Green Belt

**2.7** From the original Governmental statement published in 1955, there was uncertainty over the exact extent of the areas to be defined as Green Belt within areas such as Greater Manchester. This was due to the rapid economic expansion and rapid rate of house building which was seen in the 1960's [see reference 6]. Population projections for the end of the century during the 1960's were not realised given the later dramatic drop in birth rates and outward

migration in the Greater Manchester area. Continued requirements for large tracts of building land, which were unquantifiable given the uncertainty of future growth levels, meant the size of areas to be included in the Green Belt were not clear.

**2.8** Further difficulty deciding on an appropriate approach for the Green Belt arose with the evolution of the planning system in England towards the new Development Plan system under the Planning Acts of 1947 and 1962, as well as the re-organisation of local government. This latter change resulted in the creation of the Greater Manchester Council (GMC) and 10 metropolitan district councils in the north west in 1974 [see reference 7].

**2.9** A 'patchwork-quilt' of Green Belt policies were inherited by the new authorities; for example the stretch of Green Belt which is in the vicinity of Manchester Airport had been established as part of an amendment to the Cheshire County Development Plan [see reference 8] which considered the Green Belt in the north of the County. As such there was a need to rationalise and bring about consistency in the approach to Green Belt.

**2.10** The broad extent of the Green Belt in Greater Manchester appeared in draft in the 1978 Greater Manchester Structure Plan which was approved by the Secretary of State in 1981. Detailed boundaries were introduced in the Greater Manchester Green Belt Local Plan adopted in 1984 in the form of the Proposals Map. Since that time and following the GMC's abolition in 1986 [see reference 9] these boundaries have been carried forward and, in some cases, amended through individual Local Plans, Unitary Development Plans and the Core Strategies for each of the ten GM districts.

**2.11** One of the aims which emerged in the preparation of the GM Structure Plan was the regeneration of the older urban parts of the conurbation at Manchester and Salford in particular [see reference 10]. This was in addition to the more 'traditional' Green Belt roles of separating urban areas from each other and preventing further suburbanisation of countryside surrounding these areas. The primary purposes of the Greater Manchester Green Belt, were set



out in Policy OL1 of The Greater Manchester Green Belt Local Plan Written Statement and were in line with policy at a national level [\[see reference 11\]](#):

- To check further growth of a built-up area.
- To prevent neighbouring towns from merging.
- To preserve the special character of a town.

**2.12** The purposes were in support of the four main themes of the 1981 GM Structure Plan [\[see reference 12\]](#):

- An emphasis upon urban concentration.
- An attempt to redirect development more towards the central core of the conurbation.
- The maintenance of the regional centre, a theme which is linked to the regeneration of Manchester's and Salford's inner areas.
- Resource conservation and amenity.

**2.13** The Inspector's report on the Greater Manchester Green Belt Local Plan clarified that the Green Belt is one of the policies which can play a major contribution towards implementing these four themes. The Inspector identified that it would be appropriate to adopt an approach which established a buffer of open land between the inner edge of the Green Belt and the built-up area in some areas. In other areas, it would be appropriate to draw boundaries which were tightly defined around existing edges of built-up areas, particularly to prevent the merging of established settlements as supported by the advice of "The Green Belts" booklet. It was hoped that this approach would act as a severe restraint to development, thereby redirecting development towards more urban areas and serving the theme of urban concentration. In these situations the Inspector concluded that the land must fulfil one or more of the three identified primary purposes of Green Belt [\[see reference 13\]](#).

**2.14** The 1981 GM Structure Plan, 1984 GM Green Belt Local Plan and the reviewed and superseded 1986 version of the GM Structure Plan specifically through Policy OL1 identified 26 "general areas" within the Green Belt. Since

1984, alterations to the Green Belt have occurred through individual Local Authority development plans where:

- exceptional circumstances have required amendments (such as the requirement to accommodate the expansion of Manchester Airport);
- additional land has been added to the Green Belt through Local Plans in the 1980's (which was envisaged in the 1984 Plan).

## National Green Belt policy

### Before the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

**2.15** The essential characteristic of Green Belts as permanent, with boundaries only to be amended in exceptional circumstances, was established in 1984 through Government Circular 14/84.

**2.16** In January 1988 PPG (Planning Policy Guidance Note) 2, Green Belts (subsequently replaced in 1995 and further amended in 2001) explicitly extended the original purposes of the Green Belt to add:

- to safeguard the surrounding countryside from further encroachment; and
- to assist in urban regeneration (subsequently replaced in 1995 and further amended in 2001).

**2.17** PPG2 also formally emphasised the need for Local Planning Authorities to use Green Belt policy to promote sustainable patterns of development.

**2.18** In 2012, the Government replaced PPG2 with Chapter 13 of a new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This has since been periodically edited with the latest version being adopted in 2019 [see reference 14] and supplemented by relevant National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG).

## National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

**2.19** Government policy on the Green Belt is set out in Chapter 13 of the adopted National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Protecting Green Belt Land. Paragraph 137 of the NPPF indicates that the government attaches “great importance” to Green Belts and states “*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*”.

**2.20** This is elaborated in NPPF paragraph 138, which states that Green Belts serve five purposes, as set out below.

### The purposes of Green Belt

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

**2.21** The NPPF emphasises in paragraphs 139 and 140 that local planning authorities should establish and, if justified, only alter Green Belt boundaries through the preparation of their Local Plans. It goes on to state that “*once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified, through the preparation or*

*updating of plans. Strategic policies should establish the need for any changes to Green Belt boundaries having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so they can endure beyond the plan period.”*

**2.22** When defining Green Belt boundaries NPPF paragraph 143 states local planning authorities should:

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

**2.23** Current planning guidance makes it clear that the Green Belt is a strategic planning policy constraint designed primarily to prevent the spread of built development and the coalescence of urban areas. The NPPF goes on to state *“local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land”* (paragraph 145).

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

**2.25** Paragraph 147 and 148 state that *“inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very*

*special circumstances... ‘Very special circumstances’ will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.”*

**2.26** New buildings are inappropriate in the Green Belt. There are exceptions to this which are set out in two closed lists. The first is in paragraph 149 which sets out the following exceptions:

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

**2.27** Paragraph 150 sets out other forms of development that are not inappropriate provided they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within Green Belt. These are:

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

**2.28** Finally, paragraph 139 states Green Belts should only be established in exceptional circumstances... and in proposing new Green Belt, local planning authorities must:

- demonstrate why alternative policies would not be adequate;
- set out the major change in circumstances the make the designation necessary;
- communicate the consequences for sustainable development; and,
- highlight the consistency of the new designation with neighbouring plan areas and the other objectives of the NPPF.

## Green Belt Planning Practice Guidance

**2.29** The NPPF's Green Belt policies are supplemented by National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). The guidance sets out some of the factors that should be taken into account when considering the potential impact of development on the openness of Green Belt land. The factors referenced are

not presented as an exhaustive list, but rather a summary of some common considerations borne out by specific case law judgements. The guidance states openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects [see reference 15]. Other circumstances which have the potential to affect judgements on the impact of development on openness include:

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

**2.30** The guidance also elaborates on paragraph 142 of the NPPF which requires local planning authorities to set out ways in which the impact of removing land from the Green Belt can be offset through compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of the remaining Green Belt land. The guidance endorses the preparation of supporting landscape, biodiversity or recreational need evidence to identify appropriate compensatory improvements, including:

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

**2.31** Finally, the guidance offers some suggested considerations for securing the delivery of identified compensatory improvements – the need for early engagement with landowners and other interested parties to obtain the necessary local consents, establishing a detailed scope of works and identifying a means of funding their design, construction and maintenance through

planning conditions, section 106 obligations and/or the Community Infrastructure Levy.

## Planning Advisory Service Guidance

**2.32** Neither the NPPF or NPPG provide guidance on how to undertake Green Belt assessments. However, the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) published an advice note [see reference 16](2015) that discusses some of the key issues associated with assessing the Green Belt. Reference to the PAS guidance is included in the Methodology section in Chapter 4 where relevant.

## Local Green Belt policy

### Central Lancashire Core Strategy (2012) [see reference 17]

**2.33** The adopted Core Strategy does not have a specific Green Belt policy, but contains, at Paragraph 10.13, text that explains the role of the Green Belt:

The Green Belt helps ensure that settlements do not coalesce. No changes are anticipated to the strategic extent of the Green Belt within Central Lancashire. There is a general presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and the very special circumstances needed to justify inappropriate development within it will not exist unless the harm, by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.



## Preston City Local Plan (2015) [see reference 18]

**2.34** The Preston Local Plan applies national Green Belt policy through Policy GB1 (note: the NPPF paragraph referred to in the policy text is paragraph 138 in the 2021 version).

### Policy GB1 – Green Belt

An Area of Green Belt is shown on the policies map. Within that area national policies for development in the Green Belt will be applied.

8.2 Green Belts are areas of countryside and open land defined by local planning authorities to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Green Belt serves five purposes (set out in paragraph 80 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 regenerations, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other land.

8.3 The Green Belt in Preston is mainly confined to the Ribble escarpment and flood plain to the east of the City Centre. It forms part of a larger area of Green Belt south of the River Ribble, extending to Walton-le-Dale and on to Chorley and Blackburn. It was defined in the previous 2004 Preston Local Plan and the boundary has been carried forward unchanged into this plan's Policies Map.

## South Ribble Borough Local Plan (2015) [see reference 19]

**2.35** The South Ribble Local Plan applies national Green Belt policy through Policy G1.

### Policy G1 – Green Belt

The area covered by Green Belt is shown on the Policies Map.

As set out in the NPPF, planning permission will not be given for the construction of new buildings unless there are very special circumstances.

Exceptions to this are:

- a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- b) provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
- c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;
- d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- e) limited infilling in villages, and limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in this Local Plan; or

- f) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development.

There are a number of major developed employment sites within the Green Belt. These sites can be developed within their curtilage.

These major developed employment sites should continue to secure jobs and prosperity without further prejudicing the Green Belt. Such development is considered appropriate in the terms of the NPPF.

10.22 Within the Green Belt, planning permission will only be given for development that is compatible by maintaining its fundamental open nature. The NPPF provides guidance on the types of development appropriate in Green Belt and the circumstances in which such development might be allowed. Policy G1 includes the criteria for appropriate development in the Green Belt.

10.23 Inappropriate development in the Green Belt is that which adversely affects the openness of the land. Planning applications for an inappropriate development would not be in accordance with the objectives of this policy. It will be for the applicant to demonstrate that very special circumstances exist which clearly outweigh the harm that would be caused to the openness of the Green Belt.

10.24 Agricultural uses can be defined as cultivating the ground, including the harvesting of crops, horticulture glass houses, the rearing and management of livestock, tillage, husbandry and farming, horses, kennels and catteries.

10.25 The construction of new buildings in the Green Belt is strictly limited. Such proposals will be considered on their merits having regard to the requirements of the NPPF and Policy G1.

10.26 In principle, the Council will approve extensions or alterations to existing dwellings provided that the end results are not disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.

10.27 The replacement of an existing dwelling may be acceptable provided that the new dwelling is not materially larger than the dwelling it replaces. Equally, changes of use of existing buildings of permanent and substantial construction will be permissible provided that the encroachment of urban uses beyond the existing boundary of the site into the surrounding countryside can be avoided. Further guidance on extensions and replacement dwellings is contained in the Rural Development SPD.

10.28 Certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in Green Belt provided they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in Green Belt. These are:

- mineral extraction;
- engineering operations;
- local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;
- the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction; and
- development brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order.

## **Chorley Local Plan (2015) [see reference 20]**

**2.36** The Chorley Local Plan does not have a specific Green Belt policy, but there are a number of references in other policies to the constraint provided by national Green Belt policy.

## **Local Green Belt studies**

**2.37** Chorley Council, Preston City Council and South Ribble Borough Council have not published reviews of their Green Belt land, but a number of Green Belt studies have been completed in neighbouring local authority areas and a summary of these is provided below.

## **Blackburn with Darwen Green Belt Assessment (2019) [see reference 21]**

**2.38** LUC prepared a two staged assessment of the Borough's Green Belt land in 2019. Stage 1 assessed the whole of the Green Belt in Blackburn with Darwen in terms of its contribution to the five purposes of the Green Belt set out in the NPPF. The Stage 2 study involved a more focussed assessment of the potential harm to the Green Belt purposes of releasing Green Belt land within Blackburn with Darwen to facilitate the expansion of inset settlements. The Study informed the Borough's Local Plan Review.

**2.39** Both stages are based on national Green Belt Policy, specifically the Green Belt purposes. In assessing Green Belt purpose 1, Blackburn, Darwen and the Greater Manchester conurbation, including Bolton, Egerton and Horwich to the south of the Borough were defined as the 'large built-up area'. In assessing purpose 2, Blackburn, Darwen, Greater Manchester, including Bolton, Egerton and Horwich to the south of the Borough and Preston, including the merged settlements to the south as far as Chorley were defined as 'neighbouring towns'.

**2.40** The Lancashire Landscape Character Assessment [see reference 22] identifies the County's historic cores (1100 to 1800) as a landscape character type and refers to Blackburn, Chorley, Darwen and Preston to have notable historic cores and could therefore be defined as historic towns in the study. To establish the extent and significance of the contribution of the Borough's Green Belt to the setting and special character of the Borough's historic towns it was necessary to establish if any of the historic elements of the historic settlements have a physical and/or visual relationship with the Borough's Green Belt land. No physical or visual connections were found, so all Green Belt land in the Borough was judged to make no contribution to Purpose 4.

**2.41** All Green Belt land in the Borough was considered to make the same contribution to Purpose 5, as it was agreed with the Council that it is not possible to distinguish the extent to which each Green Belt parcels delivers against this purpose.

**2.42** Blackburn with Darwen's Green Belt that borders Chorley and South Ribble to the west was found to generally make a moderate contribution to Purpose 1, a weak contribution to Purpose 2 and a strong contribution to Purpose 3.

## Fylde Borough Council

**2.43** Paragraph 7.6 of the Fylde Local Plan to 2032 states '*no strategic review of the Green Belt within Fylde has been undertaken when preparing the Local Plan*' [see reference 23].

## Greater Manchester Green Belt Assessments (2016-2021) [see reference 24]

**2.44** This assessment includes the neighbouring Boroughs of Bolton and Wigan.

**2.45** LUC prepared a strategic Green Belt study for the 10 authorities of Greater Manchester, assessing how the Green Belt performs against the purposes set out in the NPPF. The assessment fed into the preparation of the draft Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF). The study also examined the case for extending the Green Belt in certain locations.

**2.46** LUC subsequently undertook a detailed review of the potential harm of releasing land within the draft GMSF allocations from the Green Belt and exploring what enhancements could be made to remaining Green Belt.

**2.47** Both studies were based on national Green Belt Policy, specifically the Green Belt purposes. In assessing Green Belt purpose 1, all settlements within the main urban area of Greater Manchester were defined as the 'large built-up area'. In assessing purpose 2, all inset settlements, i.e. settlements that do not lie within the Green Belt in Greater Manchester were defined as 'neighbouring towns'. In addition, Adlington was also defined as 'neighbouring town' in the immediate vicinity of Greater Manchester.

**2.48** In assessing purpose 4, the definition of 'historic' reflects the region's industrial heritage and the growth of towns in the industrial revolution. The historic settlements were identified by selecting Conservation Areas that encompass a block of residential settlement and which are located within one of the settlements assessed in Purpose 2. The area of each historic settlement was defined by expanding the corresponding Conservation Area to include any pre 20th century settlement identified in the Greater Manchester Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) project data. It should be noted that any relatively small Conservation Areas that are not surrounded by pre 20th century settlement were not included, nor were Conservations Areas which were comprised of only historic industrial development.

**2.49** The HLC project does not extend beyond Manchester, so for historic settlements beyond the Greater Manchester border, the assessment considered the presence of Conservation Areas.

**2.50** This study did not include a parcel by parcel assessment of Purpose 5, as it was agreed with the Steering Group that it was not possible to distinguish the extent to which each Green Belt parcels delivers against this purpose.

**2.51** The 2016 study concluded that the Greater Manchester Green Belt plays a particularly important role in retaining the identity of the regions settlements by preventing further coalescence and maintaining the openness of the countryside around and within the conurbation.

**2.52** The Green Belt land directly to the north east of Bolton in Broad Areas BT\_BA02, BT\_BA03 and WG\_BA01 were assessed as making moderate to strong contributions to the Green Belt purposes. Notably strong performing attributes included the separating role between the settlements of Adlington and Blackrod and Adlington and Standish (Purpose 2), the areas' strong agricultural and upland fringe character (Purpose 3) and providing a backdrop to historic parts of Bolton, Horwich, Standish and Wigan, contributing to their setting and special character (Purpose 4).

### Ribble Valley Borough Council

**2.53** Ribble Valley Borough Council published a Green Belt Background Paper in 2016 to inform the Borough's Pre-NPPF Local Development Framework [see reference 25]. The paper considered each area of land in turn in order define whether Green Belt boundaries were in need of modification. There is no recent Green Belt Review for the Council that assesses the Green Belt against the five purposes set out in the NPPF. However, the background paper acknowledges the important role the Green Belt land to the east of Mellor Brook, which partially sits within Ribble Valley Borough, in preventing the northward expansion of Blackburn and the merging of the town with Mellor to the north.



## West Lancashire Green Belt Study (2011-2012)

[see reference 26]

**2.54** West Lancashire prepared and published a Green Belt Study for the West Lancashire Local Plan in 2011. The study focussed on assessing the Borough's Green Belt land around the edge of the existing built-up area to determine whether or not the land met the purposes of including land within Green Belt, as set out in National Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 (PPG2).

**2.55** In assessing Green Belt Purpose 1 Skelmersdale / Upholland, Ormskirk / Aughton, Burscough and Appley Bridge (partially within Greater Manchester) were defined and the Borough's large built-up areas of relevance to this Central Lancashire Study.

**2.56** In assessing Purpose 2 all settlements were defined as 'neighbouring towns' with performance determined based on a combination of distance and the function of gaps between settlements. The majority of parcels were assessed as having little or no impact on the buffer gaps between settlements as the Borough is relatively sparsely populated with minimal urban concentration.

**2.57** The proportion of each parcel covered by built development, the presence or lack of countryside uses and the strength of boundary features were the criteria used to assess Purpose 3.

**2.58** A lack of designated historic towns in the Borough and the difficulty in assessing the impact on assets resulted in Green Belt land being considered to make a contribution to Purpose 4.

**2.59** A lack of consistent evidence to indicate whether development was likely to have a positive or negative impact on regeneration priorities meant Purpose 5 was not assessed as part of the Study.

**2.60** The focus of the study on the Green Belt land adjacent to the Borough's built-up areas resulted in no land immediately adjacent to the Central Lancashire authorities being rated in this study.

## **Wyre Green Belt Study (2016) [see reference 27]**

**2.61** Wyre Borough Council commissioned Urban Vision to produce a Green Belt Study for their new Local Plan in 2016. The Study assessed individual parcels of land within the Green Belt and whether they continued to meet the purposes for Green Belt set out in the NPPF and recommendations for potential changes to Green Belt boundaries to correct potential anomalies were made.

**2.62** The Green Belt was initially subdivided into 29 land parcels for assessment based on overall landscape character and specific land use characteristics. The parcels were then assessed against the NPPF Green Belt purposes.

**2.63** Reference was made to the Central and North Lancashire Structure Plan (1983) Policy 8 for the definition of the large built-up area (Purpose 1), neighbouring towns (Purpose 2) and historic towns (Purpose 4), referencing Fleetwood and Cleveleys and Thornton, Poulton-le-Fylde and Blackpool, to the south of Poulton-le-Fylde and north of Staining.

**2.64** To assess Purpose 3, consideration was given to the types of land use to determine the split between "countryside uses" and the amount of built development within each parcel. Agricultural land, woodland and open spaces were defined as countryside uses and dwellings, commercial enterprises (including farm buildings), roads and buildings and hard courts and all-weather pitches associated with sport and recreation were defined as built development.

**2.65** Purpose 5 was not assessed on the grounds that it would be difficult to get robust evidence which would indicate whether development would have a positive or a negative impact on regeneration priorities.

**2.66** None of the Green Belt land in Wye lies in close proximity to the Green Belt in the Central Lancashire Authorities.

## Safeguarded land

### National policy

**2.67** NPPF paragraph 143 details what local planning authorities should do when defining Green Belt boundaries. One of these requirements is '*where necessary, identify areas of safeguarded land between the urban area and the Green Belt, in order to meet longer-term development needs stretching well beyond the plan period*'. Safeguarded land is typically, therefore, located between urban edges and Green Belt land.

### Regional policy

**2.68** There is no reference in the Core Strategy to safeguarding land for potential future development.

### Local policy

#### Preston City Local Plan (2015)

**2.69** The Preston Local Plan does not identify any safeguarded land.

## South Ribble Council Local Plan (2015)

2.70 The South Ribble Local Plan identifies safeguarded land sites through Policy G3.

### Policy G3 – Safeguarded Land for Future Development

Within the borough, land remains safeguarded and not designated for any specific purpose within the Plan period at the following locations:

- S1 South of Factory Lane and east of the West Coast Main Line
- S2 Southern area of the Major Development Site at Pickering's Farm, Penwortham
- S3 South of Coote Lane, Chain House Lane, Farington
- S4 Land off Church Lane, Farington
- S5 Land off Emnie Lane, Leyland

Existing uses will for the most part remain undisturbed during the Plan period or until the Plan is reviewed. Planning permission will not be granted for development which would prejudice potential longer term, comprehensive development of the land.

10.35 Identified Safeguarded Land will remain in its existing use for the foreseeable future and beyond the life of this Plan. It is intended to be kept free from new physical development and to be kept open at least during the Plan period or until the Plan is reviewed.

10.36 The presumption against built development on these sites will assist in directing development towards those areas allocated for development and also ensuring the permanence of the Green Belt. Whilst remaining open, however, such land can accommodate a variety of activities. Types of development which would be allowed on these sites are the same as those which would be generally acceptable in the Green Belt. No development which would prejudice later comprehensive development will be permitted. However, some appropriate minor residential development adjacent to other properties would be considered.

## Chorley Local Plan (2015)

2.71 The Chorley Local Plan identifies safeguarded land sites through Policy BNE3.

### Policy BNE3 – Areas of Safeguarded Land for Future Development Needs

Development other than that permissible in the countryside whether Green Belt or Area of Other Open Countryside will not be permitted on Safeguarded Land as shown on the Policies Map at:

- BNE3.1 East of M61, Chorley
- BNE3.2 Harrisons's Farm, Adlington
- BNE3.3 North of Bond's Lane, Adlington
- BNE3.4 Babylon Lane, Heath Charnock
- BNE3.5 North of Hewlett Avenue, Coppull
- BNE3.6 Blainscough Hall, Coppull

- BNE3.7 East of Tincklers Lane, Ecclestone
- BNE3.8 Between Bradley Lane, 7 Parr Lane, Ecclestone
- BNE3.9 Pear Tree Lane, Euxton
- BNE3.10 West of M61, Whittle-le-Woods
- BNE3.11 South east of Belmont Road & Abbey Grove, Adlington

7.16 In order that the Green Belt boundaries should be long lasting, land between some major settlements and the Green Belt is safeguarded for future development needs beyond the plan period. Paragraph 85 of the Framework states that planning permission for the permanent development of safeguarded land will only be granted following a Local Plan Review.

7.17 This policy identifies Areas of Safeguarded Land and outlines the restrictions on development in such areas that will be pursued over the period of the Local Plan. Development involving the extension of, an existing business for example, will need to take account of the provisions of this policy.

## Open countryside policy

### National policy

**2.72** Aside from Green Belt openness, the NPPF only refers specifically to open space in the context of its recreational role for communities.

**2.73** Paragraph 96 discusses the importance of access to open spaces for sport and physical activity. Paragraph 97 requires that '*Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:*

- *an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or*
- *the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or*
- *the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.'*

**2.74** Paragraphs 99-101 discuss the use of Local Green Space designations to protect valued open spaces in the same way that Green Belt land is protected, but require that:

3. *'Designating land as Local Green Space should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services';*
4. The land in question should be *'in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves';*
5. The land is *'demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife';*
6. It is *'local in character and is not an extensive tract of land'.*

## Regional policy

**2.75** Although not referring specifically to open land, the Core Strategy's principal spatial growth strategy policy, Policy 1, sets out the areas in which growth is to be focused. It lists a hierarchy of the settlement areas to be expanded, list the strategic sites to be allocated, and notes that *'In other places*

*- smaller villages, substantially built-up frontages and Major Developed Sites - development will typically be small scale and limited to appropriate infilling, conversion of buildings and proposals to meet local need, unless there are exceptional reasons for larger scale redevelopment schemes.'*

## Local policy

### Preston City Local Plan (2015)

**2.76** Preston's Policy EN1 applies constraint to development in the open countryside. It is noted that its provisions make no reference to landscape value/quality, only to protecting its openness and rurality. The designation covers most of the local authority area to the north and west of the city.

#### Policy EN1 – Development in the Open Countryside

Development in the Open Countryside, as shown on the Policies Map, other than that permissible under policies HS4 and HS5, will be limited to:

- a) that needed for purposes of agriculture or forestry or other uses appropriate to a rural area including uses which help to diversify the rural economy;
- b) the re-use or re-habitation of existing buildings;
- c) infilling within groups of buildings in smaller rural settlements.



8.4 Most of the countryside within Preston is designated as Open Countryside, with only a small area of Green Belt confined to the escarpment and flood plain to the east of the City. Green Belt will be preserved and protected in accordance with the Framework. It is important that the Areas of Open Countryside are protected from unacceptable development which would harm its open and rural character.

8.5 Information on the re-use, replacement of and extension to buildings within the Open Countryside is contained within the Rural Development Supplementary Planning Document.

8.6 Policy AD1(b) is concerned with proposed developments within the larger villages defined on the Policies Map. Smaller settlements and clusters of buildings are not defined on the map, but are included within the open countryside designation. Proposals within these settlements will be considered against Policy EN1 and Core Strategy Policy 1(f).

## **South Ribble Council Local Plan (2015)**

**2.77** The South Ribble Local Plan applies Policy G4 to a number of relatively small areas of land adjacent to settlements that are inset from the Green Belt.

### **Policy G4 – Protected Open Land**

10.37 The Central Lancashire Core Strategy states there will be no strategic Green Belt review during the Plan period. However the Council wishes to protect valuable open areas of land (where appropriate and shown on the Policies Map) to ensure natural breaks in the built-up areas and settlements. The following policy is to retain the openness and natural character of local areas and to protect the land from development.

Protected Open Land is shown on the Policies Map. There is a presumption against inappropriate development on Protected Open Land. Planning permission will only be permitted where:

- a) It is required for the purposes of agriculture; or
- b) Uses are appropriate to a rural area; or
- c) It involves the re-use of existing buildings.

10.38 Land on the edge of Penwortham, Longton, New Longton, Hutton and Gregson Lane is allocated as Protected Open Land as shown on the Policies Map. This land fulfils a key role in the character, appearance and openness of these settlements, and as such is worthy of protection in its own right.

10.39 The land will be protected from inappropriate development throughout the Plan period. Appropriate development would include agricultural or forestry, recreational activities and other uses appropriate within a rural area, which can be proven to maintain the open character and visual amenity of the land.

## **Chorley Local Plan (2015)**

**2.78** The Chorley Local Plan applies Policy BNE2 to a single, large area of land to the east of the town that forms part of the West Pennine Moors.

### **Policy BNE2 – Development in the Area of Other Open Countryside**

In the Area of Open Countryside, as shown on the Policies Map, development will be permitted provided the applicant can demonstrate that:

- a) It is needed for the purpose of agriculture or forestry or other uses appropriate to a rural area;
- b) It involves the rehabilitation and re-use of existing rural buildings where their form, bulk and general design are appropriate to the character of the surrounding countryside.

7.15 Although most of the countryside within Chorley Borough is designated as Green Belt, some rural areas are not included in the Green Belt. The West Pennine Moors and the associated land to the east of the M61 are excluded from the Green Belt as it is unlikely that Chorley Town will expand and merge with other settlements in an easterly direction. It is important, however, that this area is protected from unacceptable development which would harm its open and rural character. The West Pennine Moors Management Plan (2010-2020) aims to ensure an integrated approach to the management of the area and help secure a sustainable future for this special landscape. The Central Lancashire authorities have jointly prepared a Supplementary Planning Document for Rural Development.

## Chapter 3

# Green Belt Assessment Methodology

**3.1** This chapter sets out the methodology used to undertake the strategic Green Belt assessment element of the Central Lancashire Open Land Designations Study.

**3.2** There is no defined approach set out in national planning policy or guidance as to how Green Belt studies should be undertaken. The approach that was consulted upon in this report is based on LUC's extensive experience of undertaking Green Belt studies for over 50 local authorities, several of which have been tested through Examination and found to be sound.

**3.3** The relevant policy, guidance and case law that has informed the methodology is referenced where appropriate.

## Assessment approach

### Outputs

**3.4** The assessment provides a parcel-by-parcel analysis, with each parcel assessment split into two sections:

- A strategic assessment of the contribution of the parcel to the Green Belt purposes.
- An analysis of key considerations with regard to potential harm resulting from the release of land within the parcel.

**3.5** Although the study introduces the concept of Green Belt harm, that is the impact of Green Belt release on the purposes of the designation, it does not

draw conclusions on the harm of releasing specific site options or recommend what land could be released for development. This requires both a finer-grained scale of Green Belt analysis and the consideration of a wider range of sustainability factors which the Councils will take into account in reaching a conclusion as to whether there are exceptional circumstances to justify the release of Green Belt land.

## Geographical scope

**3.6** The assessment covers all Green Belt land within Central Lancashire. It also considers the extent to which land subject to other open countryside designations contribute to the purposes of Green Belt, were it so designated. This includes Preston's Open Countryside (policy EN1), South Ribble's Protected Open Land (G4), Chorley's Area of Other Open Countryside (BNE2) and the safeguarded land in South Ribble and Chorley (G3 and BNE3). It excludes Preston's Areas of Major Open Space (EN5), which are wholly contained within the urban area. The study area is mapped on **Figure 3.1**. The assessment focuses on identifying strategic variations in the contribution of defined parcels of land to the five Green Belt purposes set out in the NPPF.

**3.7** The following absolute constraints were agreed with the Central Lancashire authorities and are mapped on **Figure 3.2**. The assessment findings in terms of contribution to the Green Belt purposes apply only to unconstrained land within the defined parcels.

- International nature designations: Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA);
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI);
- National nature reserves;
- Ancient Woodland;
- Flood Zone 3b (the functional floodplain);
- Scheduled Monuments;

- Registered Parks and Gardens;
- Open access land (CROW Act).

**3.8** The assessment does not assess land in neighbouring authorities but considers how adjacent land within neighbouring authorities affects the Green Belt performance of land within Central Lancashire, and how release of existing Green Belt in Central Lancashire might harm adjacent Green Belt land in neighbouring authorities.

## Main components of contribution assessment

**3.9** As a strategic study, the Green Belt assessment does not include a fine-grained analysis of all variations in Green Belt performance. However, the core components both of this strategic assessment and any subsequent more detailed assessments are the same and require:

- An analysis of spatial variations in the **function** of the Green Belt, as set out in the NPPF purposes;
- Consideration of the impact of existing development on Green Belt **openness**;
- Consideration of the relationship between built-up areas and Green Belt land (degree of **distinction**). Built-up areas could include land which is inset [\[see reference 28\]](#) from the Green Belt, or located at its outer edge, or washed-over settlements that lack openness. This is distinct from the definition of large built-up areas (considered under Purpose 1 – see below).

**3.10** In this strategic study, contribution ratings have been given using a three-point scale of significant, moderate or limited/no contribution. Ratings typically reflect the fact that most parcels contain at least some open land which does not have a strong relationship with any built-up area and therefore make a strong contribution to Purpose 3 (safeguarding the countryside from encroachment).

## Main components of harm analysis

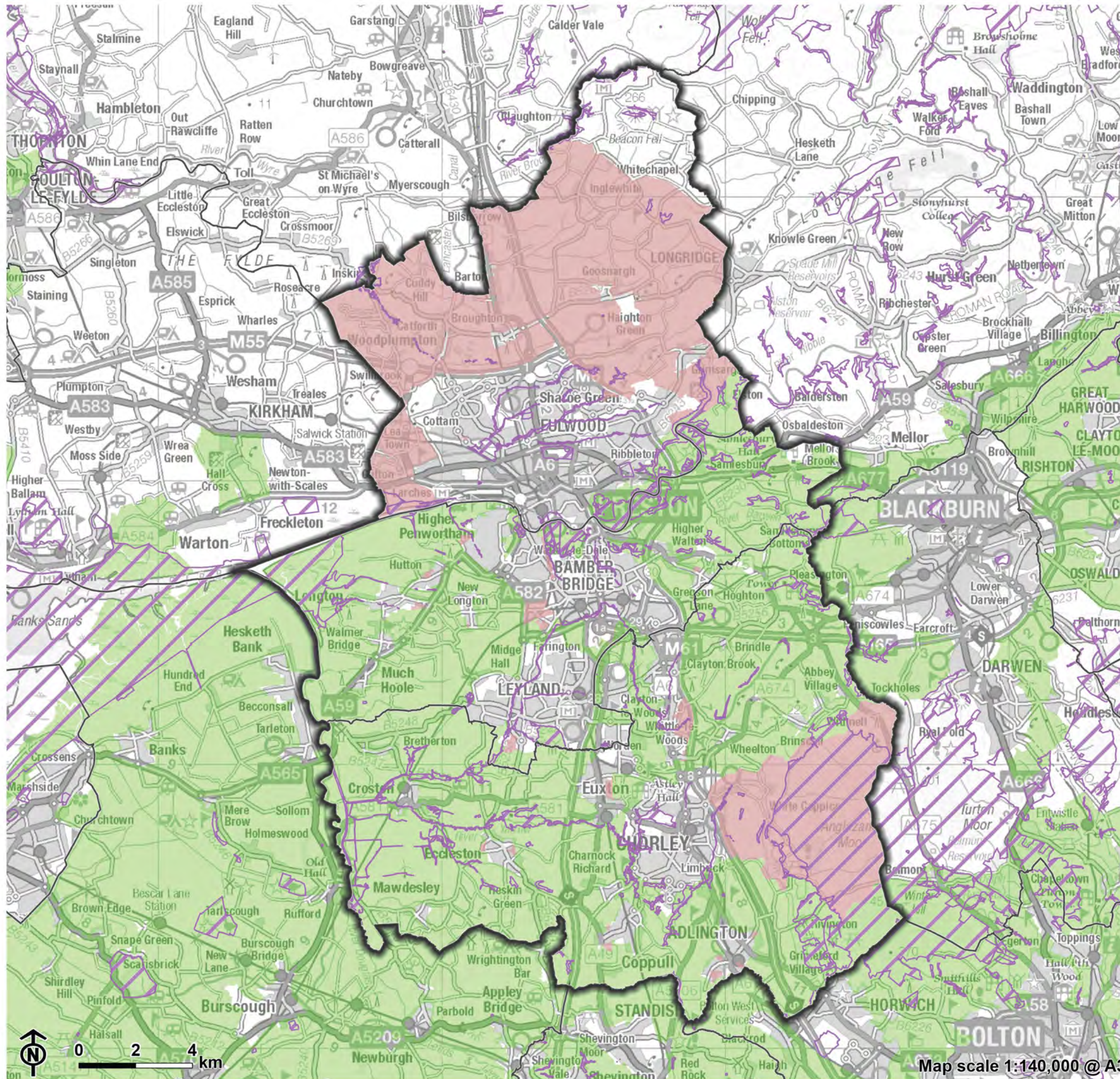
**3.11** The second part of the assessment process, the consideration of potential harm resulting from the release of land, takes the analysis of contribution a step further by considering the implications of the release of land on the Green Belt purposes. Harm to the Green Belt purposes will result from the loss of contribution of land that is released, but also from any impact that release has on the contribution of the remaining Green Belt.

**3.12** To provide meaningful ratings for harm to the Green Belt purposes requires a finer grain of analysis than is appropriate for a strategic study. However, the second part of each parcel assessment offers some consideration of the two principal factors that could influence the potential harm resulting from the release of land:

- The presence of areas within the parcel which, although still 'strategic' in scale (see Paragraph 3.15 below), make a weaker contribution to the Green Belt purposes than the parcel as a whole. Typically, this is because part of the parcel has a stronger relationship with the urban area (and therefore its release may be less likely to be perceived as sprawl, or encroachment on the countryside etc).
- The existence of physical features within the parcel that could form a new Green Belt boundary that would limit the impact of release on the integrity of adjacent Green Belt land.

**3.13** The consideration of harm makes the assumption that any release of land would represent either an expansion of an existing inset urban area, the inseting of a washed-over settlement that lacks openness, or the expansion of the latter.

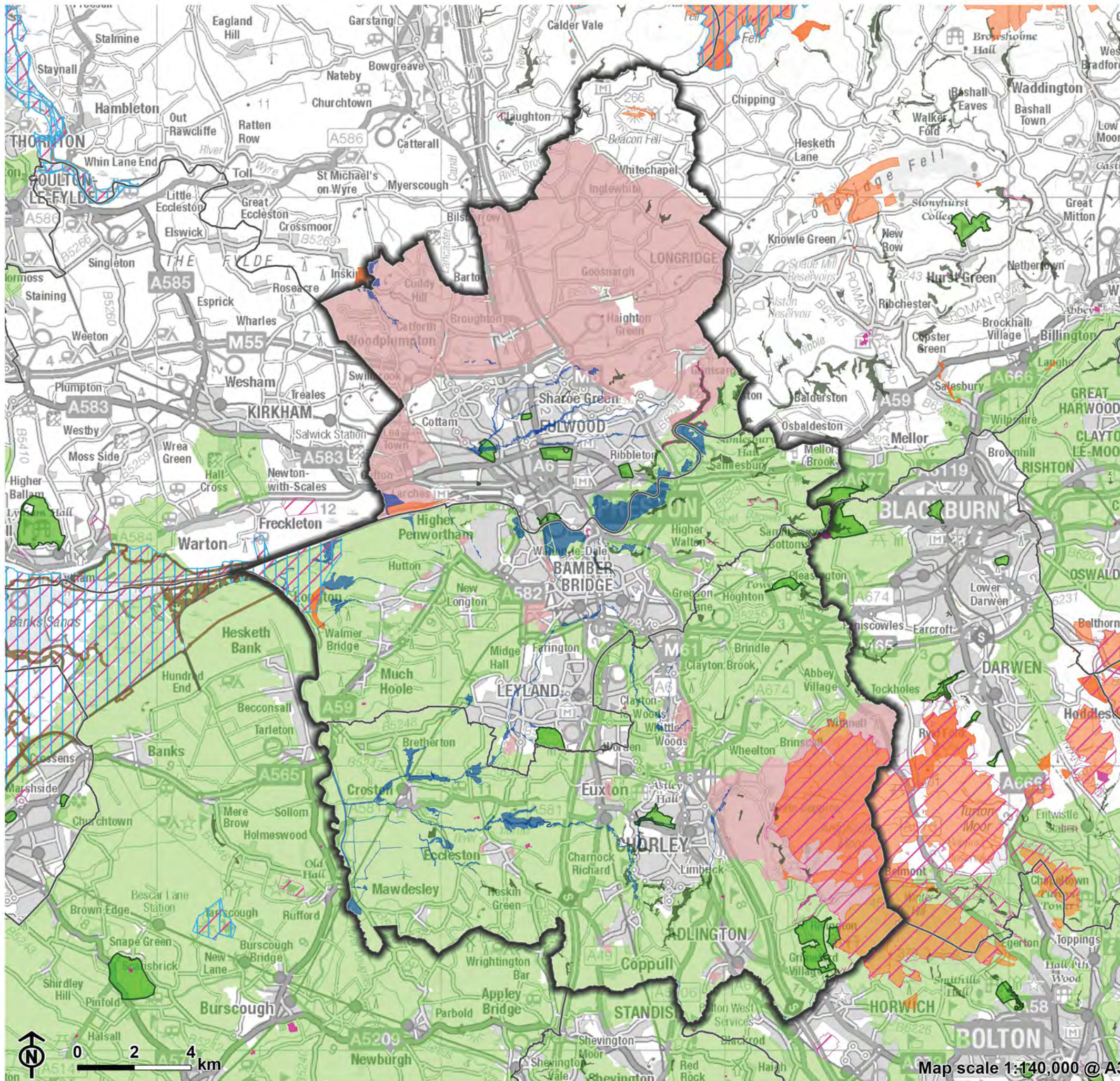
Figure 3.1: Area of Study for Green Belt Assessment



- Central Lancashire boundary
- Local Authority boundary
- Absolute constraints
- Green Belt (GB1, G1)
- Other open land designations (EN1, G3, G4, BNE2, BNE3)



Figure 3.2: Absolute Constraints



- Central Lancashire boundary
- Local Authority boundary
- Green Belt (GB1, G1)
- Other open land designations (EN1, G3, G4, BNE2, BNE3)
- National nature reserve
- Special Areas of Conservation
- Special Protection Area
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- Ancient woodland
- Scheduled monument
- Registered parks and gardens
- Open access land (CRoW Act)
- Flood zone 3b

Map scale 1:140,000 @ A3

## The parcelling process

**3.14** Parcels have not been predefined using promoted sites or existing boundaries, but have instead been the outcome of a consistent, strategic assessment process:

- In the first instance, variations in openness and in Green Belt function with regard to each NPPF purpose were identified and overlaid.
- A guideline minimum parcel size of 30ha was applied.
- A guideline maximum parcel size of 500ha was applied for areas adjacent to inset settlements and a maximum 2000ha area for land remote from inset settlements. Logical landscape elements were used, where available, to subdivide areas.

**3.15** Where settlements are closely spaced or have more of a complex form, the parcels typically are relatively small, but where there is less variation in function they are larger. Although areas of variation below 30ha have not been defined as parcels, the discussion of potential harm that forms the second part of each parcel assessment considers smaller variations – both variations in contribution to the Green Belt purposes and variations in the impact of release on retained Green Belt – down to a size of 10ha. 10ha has been taken in the study as a minimum size for a release of land to be considered ‘strategic’ in scale.

**3.16** The following sections consider: Green Belt openness; Green Belt function; and variations in the strength of relationship between built-up areas and open land (distinction) in more detail. The criteria defined for the assessment of strategic contribution to each of the Green Belt purposes are then set out.

**3.17** The analysis process for identifying factors that have a bearing on the potential harm of releasing Green Belt land in each parcel is also discussed below.

## Green Belt openness and appropriate development

**3.18** The NPPF identifies openness as an ‘essential characteristic’ of Green Belts (along with their permanence) land, rather than a function or purpose.

**3.19** The green box below sets out some explanation to understand the definition of openness, as arguments over this have informed case law. At this strategic scale of analysis it is typically the case that small-scale variations in openness will not be relevant, but there are some larger washed over settlements [see reference 29], or areas of development in fragile gaps between settlements, that may have more of an impact on the Green Belt’s role.

### Openness

The Court of Appeal decision in *R (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority) v Epping Forest DC* [2016] EWCA Civ 404 included, at paragraph 20, reference to openness in relation to appropriate development:

“Implicit in the policy in paragraph 89 [paragraph 149 in the 2021 version] of the NPPF is a recognition that agriculture and forestry can only be carried on, and buildings for those activities will have to be constructed, in the countryside, including countryside in the Green Belt. Of course, as a matter of fact, the construction of such buildings in the Green Belt will reduce the amount of Green Belt land without built development upon it. But under NPPF policy, the physical presence of such buildings in the Green Belt is not, in itself, regarded as harmful to the openness of the Green Belt or to the purposes of including land in the Green Belt. This is not a matter of planning judgment. It is simply a matter of policy. Where the development proposed is an agricultural building, neither its status as appropriate development nor the deemed absence of harm to the openness of the

Green Belt and to the purposes of including land in the Green Belt depends on the judgment of the decision-maker. Both are inherent in the policy.” – Neutral Citation Number: [2016] EWCA Civ 404

Samuel Smith Old Brewery (Tadcaster) and Oxton Farm v North Yorkshire County Council and Darrington Quarries Ltd (2018) involved a challenge to a planning permission for a 6 hectare quarry extension in the Green Belt. Although paragraph 90 of the 2012 NPPF [paragraph 150 in the 2021 NPPF] states that “mineral extraction” is not “inappropriate development” in the Green Belt, it was found that the Council failed to take into account visual impacts when considering whether the proposal would “preserve the openness of the Green Belt” as required in paragraph 90 of the 2012 NPPF. Lord Justice Lindblom found that the council had limited its consideration of the effects of the proposed development on the openness of the Green Belt to spatial impact and nothing more, despite the fact that, on the council’s own assessment of the likely effects of the development on the landscape, visual impact on openness was “quite obviously” relevant to its effect on the openness of the Green Belt. This judgement was subsequently overturned in the Supreme Court (on the application of Samuel Smith Old Brewery (Tadcaster) and others) (Respondents) v North Yorkshire County Council (Appellant) [2020] UKSC 3. Contrary to Samuel Smith Old Brewery (Tadcaster) and Oxton Farm v North Yorkshire County Council and Darrington Quarries Ltd (2018), where visual impact was found not to be an obligatory consideration when assessing Green Belt. It was found that in “a proper reading of the NPPF in its proper historic context, visual quality of landscape is not in itself an essential part of openness for which the Green Belt is protected.” “The concept of “openness” in paragraph 90 of the NPPF is a broad policy concept which is the counterpart of urban sprawl and is linked to the purposes to be served by the Green Belt. Openness is not necessarily a statement about the visual qualities of the land, nor does it imply freedom from all forms of development.”

**3.20** The above case law makes it clear that Green Belt openness therefore relates to a lack of 'inappropriate development' rather than to visual openness; thus both undeveloped land that is screened from view by landscape elements (for example tree cover) and development which is not considered 'inappropriate', are still 'open' in Green Belt terms.

## Absence of urban influence and visual impact

As noted by the Inspector at the Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council Local Plan Examination (2017), openness is not concerned with the character of the landscape, but instead relates to the "absence of built development and other dominant urban influences". – Examination Document Reference EX38.

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

"Openness is open-textured and a number of factors are capable of being relevant when it comes to applying it to the particular facts of a specific case. Prominent among these will be factors relevant to how built-up the Green Belt is now and how built-up it would be if redevelopment occurs...and factors relevant to the visual impact on the aspect of openness which the Green Belt presents.

The question of visual impact is implicitly part of the concept of 'openness of the Green Belt' as a matter of the natural meaning of the language used in para. 89 of the NPPF... There is an important visual dimension to

checking ‘the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas’ and the merging of neighbouring towns...openness of aspect is a characteristic quality of the countryside, and ‘safeguarding the countryside from encroachment’ includes preservation of that quality of openness. The preservation of ‘the setting ... of historic towns’ obviously refers in a material way to their visual setting, for instance when seen from a distance across open fields.” – Neutral Citation Number: [2016] EWCA Civ 466.

**3.21** The visual impact of urban influence on openness is considered as part of the assessment of Green Belt land’s relationship with urban and open land set out below. The influence of inappropriate development on spatial openness depends on the extent, scale, form, density and location of the inappropriate development. While any inappropriate development can be considered to diminish openness, a strategic study focussed on drawing out high-level strategic variations in contribution to the Green Belt purposes can only recognise the influence of notably large pockets of inappropriate development, such as large and or densely compact villages washed over by the Green Belt designation.

## Appropriate development

Appropriate development within the Green Belt cannot, according to case law [[see reference 30](#)], be considered to have an urbanising influence and therefore harm Green Belt purposes. For the purposes of this study therefore, development deemed to be ‘appropriate’ within the Green Belt (as defined in the closed lists within paragraphs 149 and 150 of the NPPF) is not considered to constitute an urban land use, or an urban influence in the countryside. However, what is deemed to be appropriate development in the NPPF has to be carefully considered, as developments such as the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments are only considered appropriate as long as

the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

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

The NPPF's Green Belt policies are supplemented by additional planning practice guidance that sets out some of the factors that can be taken into account when considering the potential impact of development on the openness of Green Belt land. The factors referenced are not presented as an exhaustive list, but rather a summary of some common considerations born out through specific case law judgements. The guidance states openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects. Other circumstances which have the potential to affect judgements on the impact of development on openness include the duration of development and its remediability to the equivalent, or an improved state of, openness, and the degree of activity likely to be generated by development, such as traffic **[see reference 31]**.

**3.22** In some cases, land on the fringe of an inset settlement, outside of the Green Belt, may not currently be developed. Unless the development of such land is constrained by other factors or designations the assumption is made that it will be developed, and that it therefore cannot be considered 'open'.

## **Relationship between built-up areas and open land (Distinction)**

**3.23** Another important consideration in an assessment of Green Belts is the extent to which land can be considered to relate to a built-up area or to the wider countryside (that is the degree of 'distinction' from the built-up area). At a localised level there are areas of land that have a stronger relationship with a settlement than other areas: clearly the distance from the built-up edge is a factor here, but the nature of boundary features, landform and land use and extent of urbanising visual influence also affect this relationship.

**3.24** Land that is related more strongly to urbanising development typically makes a more limited contribution to most of the Green Belt purposes, with development of it being likely to be perceived as being less significant sprawl (Purpose 1), as having less impact on narrowing the gap between towns (Purpose 2) and as having less encroachment on the countryside (Purpose 3).

**3.25** The extent to which Green Belt land relates to a built-up area and to the wider countryside is influenced by:

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

**3.26** These are discussed below:



## Boundary features

**3.27** The location and permanence of physical boundary features can influence the contribution of the Green Belt to the Green Belt purposes. The strength of Green Belt boundaries can increase the sense of separation from the built-up area. Areas with a greater sense of separation (distinction) from the built-up area make a greater contribution to the Green Belt. The examples below provides an indication of the strength attributed to different types of boundary. Stronger boundary features are also considered to have more permanence.

### Stronger boundary

Physical feature significantly restricts access and forms consistent edge.

For example:

- motorway or dual-carriageway;
- railway;
- river/floodplain;
- sharp change in landform.

### Moderate boundary

Clear physical feature and relatively consistent edge, but already breached or easily crossed. For example:

- linear tree cover;
- mature, well-treed hedgerow;
- main road;
- stream;

- moderate change in landform.

## Weaker boundary

No significant physical definition – edge may be blurred. For example:

- regular garden/building boundaries or hedgerows;
- estate/access road;
- some development crosses boundary.

**3.28** The cumulative impact of multiple minor boundary features can be equally significant as a single strong boundary feature.

## Landform and landcover

**3.29** Landform and land cover may serve as boundary features, as indicated in the examples above, but this may extend into a broader feature which creates greater distinction between the built-up area or countryside, for example a woodland, lake or valley. Areas with a greater distinction from the built-up area make a greater contribution to the Green Belt.

## Urbanising visual influence

**3.30** As noted previously, the absence of visual openness does not diminish openness in Green Belt terms; however, it is accepted that there is a visual dimension to the perception of openness that can have a bearing on the distinction between built-up areas and countryside.

**3.31** Dominant views of a built-up area, or dominant views of the open countryside can influence the perception of whether Green Belt is considered

part of the built-up area or open countryside. The presence of 'urbanising development' within the Green Belt can also increase the relationship between Green Belt and a nearby inset settlement.

**3.32** Caution is used when considering views, recognising that seasonal variations and boundary maintenance regimes can have a significant impact. The scenic quality of views is not relevant to Green Belt assessments.

## **Spatial variations in Green Belt function**

**3.33** Each Green Belt purpose targets a different aspect of the relationship between built-up areas and Green Belt land. The applicability of each of the Green Belt purposes to any given area of land depends on the nature of the built-up areas with which that land is associated.

**3.34** For Purpose 1, checking the unrestricted sprawl of the large, built-up areas, it is necessary to define which settlements are 'large, built-up areas'. For Purpose 2, preventing neighbouring towns merging, 'towns' have been defined. For Purpose 3, assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, 'countryside' has been defined, and for Purpose 4 settlements that constitute 'historic towns' to which the Green Belt could contribute to their 'setting and special character' have been named. These important policy terms are defined below alongside the definition of the assessment criteria for each Green Belt Purpose.

## Green Belt Purpose 1 definitions and strategic assessment criteria

### Purpose 1 definitions

**3.35** Green Belt Purpose 1 aims “to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas”. It is possible to argue that all land within the Green Belt prevents the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas, because that is its principal purpose as a strategic planning designation. However, the study requires the definition of variations in the extent to which land performs this purpose. This requires an area-based assessment against this strategic purpose.

**3.36** For the purpose of this study, it is necessary to define what constitutes a ‘large built-up area’ within and in close proximity to the Central Lancashire authorities, and what is meant by the term ‘sprawl’.

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

**3.38** Drawing on Chapter 2, this study defines the Central Lancashire large built-up area as land in between Chorley in the south and Preston in the north, including the contiguous and/or functionally linked settlements of (order north to south): Preston, Penwortham, Walton-le-Dale, Bamber Bridge, Lostock Hall, Clayton-le-Woods, Whittle-le-Woods, Leyland, Euxton and Chorley. Blackburn together with the contiguous town of Darwen is also defined as a large built-up area.

**3.39** This approach is consistent with the approach taken in recent neighbouring Green Belt Studies, namely in Blackburn with Darwen to the east and Greater Manchester to the south.

**3.40** In assessing the impact of releasing land in the context of a strategic Green Belt study, no assumptions about the form of possible future development can be made, so the role an area of land plays is dependent on its relationship with a large built-up area.

**3.41** Land that, if developed, would clearly constitute an extension of a large built-up area makes the strongest contribution to preventing its sprawl, and the greater the distance from a large built-up area the lower the likelihood Green Belt land is likely to fulfil the function of Purpose 1.. However, it is recognised that a smaller inset settlement, although distinct from a large built-up area, may have a strong enough relationship with it for expansion of the smaller settlement to be considered detrimental to this purpose. This is particularly the case if expansion of a smaller settlement would narrow the immediate gap to the large built-up area, but there are also settlements further from the large built-up area that, as a result of intervening urbanising development, can still be considered to have an association with the large built-up area.

**3.42** When considering at the second stage of the assessment process the harm of releasing Green Belt land, it should be recognised that Purpose 1 is to some degree relevant to any expansion of a large built-up area, however far that extends.

## Purpose 1 strategic contribution assessment criteria

**3.43** A judgement has to be made as to the extent of the zone around the large built-up area within which any new development would be associated with the large built-up area. This considers the strength of the relationship between urban areas and open land (that is degree of distinction), and distance from the large built-up area. Criteria for the assessment of strategic contribution to Purpose 1 are as follows:

## Significant Contribution

- Open land that is close enough to have a relationship with the large built-up area but is not contained by it, and which includes at least some land with strong distinction from it; or
- Open land that has some distinction from urban development, and which maintains separation between the large built-up area and a smaller settlement, preventing the latter from being perceived as part of the former.

## Moderate Contribution

- Open land that is not contained by the large built-up area but which lacks strong distinction from it; or
- Open land which is largely contained by the extents of the large built-up area, but which retains a clear link to the wider Green Belt.

## Limited Contribution

- Land which lacks a relationship with the large built-up area, where new development would not be associated with it; or
- Land which is wholly or largely contained within the large built-up area, and which lacks clear connectivity with the wider Green Belt; or
- Land that lacks openness.

## Green Belt Purpose 2 definitions and strategic assessment criteria

### Purpose 2 definitions

**3.44** Green Belt Purpose 2 aims “to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another”. The concept of what constitutes a ‘town’ has been widely interpreted in different Green Belt studies, ranging from settlements classified as towns in Local Plan settlement hierarchies to all urban areas inset from the Green Belt regardless of size.

**3.45** Regardless of whether a particular settlement is large enough to realistically be considered a town, it is acknowledged that smaller settlements may lie in between larger ones, such that loss of separation between them may in turn have a significant impact on the overall separation between larger ‘towns’.

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

**3.47** Both built and natural landscape elements can act to either decrease or increase perceived separation. For example, intervisibility, a direct connecting road or rail link or a shared landform may decrease perceived separation, whereas a separating feature such as a woodland block or hill may increase the perception of separation.

**3.48** This study identifies that land that is juxtaposed between towns makes a contribution to this purpose, and the stronger the relationship between the

towns – i.e. the more fragile the gap, the stronger the potential contribution to this purpose of any intervening open land. Physical proximity is the initial consideration; however, where settlements are very close, a judgement is made as to whether their proximity is such that the remaining open land does not play a critical role in maintaining a distinction between the two towns, i.e. that the characteristics of the open land relate more to the towns' areas themselves than to the open land in between. Where this is the case, the impact of release of land for development on Purpose 2 may be reduced.

**3.49** Core Strategy Policy 1: Locating Growth in the adopted Central Lancashire Core Strategy identifies the hierarchy of settlements in Central Lancashire. Preston and the South Ribble urban area including Penwortham, Lostock Hall, Bamber Bridge and Walton-le-Dale are highest, followed by the key service centres of Leyland/Farington, Chorley and Longridge. A list of urban local centres is also included covering Adlington and Coppull directly to the south of Chorley and Clayton Brook/Green, Clayton-le-Woods, Euxton/Buckshaw and Whittle-le-Woods in between and merging Preston with Chorley. Although to an extent contiguous and functionally linked, the Green Belt is playing a role in maintaining separation between these settlements, so they are recognised as towns to which Green Belt Purpose 2 is relevant.

**3.50** In addition, drawing from the settlement hierarchies and relevant Green Belt studies of neighbouring Blackburn with Darwen, Greater Manchester, Fylde, Ribble Valley and Wyre, the following settlements outside the study are considered to be significant and close enough to be defined as Green Belt towns for this study:

- Blackburn and Darwen to the east in Blackburn with Darwen.
- Blackpool in Blackpool.
- Fleetwood, Poulton-le-Fylde, Cleveleys, Thornton and Normoss and Garstang in Wyre.
- Greater Manchester, including Bolton, Horwich, Standish and Wigan to the south.
- Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley in Ribble Valley.



- Lytham St Anne, Kirkham and Wesham and Freckleton and Warton in Fylde.
- Skelmersdale with Up Holland, Ormskirk with Aughton and Burscough in West Lancashire.
- Southport in Sefton.

**3.51** There is no separate assessment of gaps between settlements that are not considered to be towns, although the role of smaller areas of urbanising development, including villages and hamlets, in reducing perceived rural separation between towns is considered. The notable smaller settlements that fall within and in close proximity to gaps between towns in the study area include: Barton, Broughton, Goosnargh and Grimsargh in Preston; Bilsborrow and Catterall in Wyre; Clifton and Newton in Fylde; Coup Green, Gregson Lane, Higher Walton, Hutton, Longton, Mellor Brook merged with Samlesbury Aerodrome, New Longton, Walmer Bridge with Much Hoole in South Ribble; Banks, Hesketh Bank/Tarleton, Newburgh, Parpold and Rufford in West Lancashire, Abbey Village, Bretherton, Brindle, Brinscall, Charnock Richard, Croston, Eccleston, Houghton, Wheelton and Higher Wheelton and Withnell in Chorley; Alston and Mellor and Mellor Brook in Ribble Valley; Belmont and Pleasington in Blackburn with Darwen; and Blackrod in Wigan. These settlements are too small to be considered ‘towns’ in their own right.

### Purpose 2 strategic contribution assessment criteria

**3.52** The criteria for the assessment of strategic contribution to Purpose 2 focus on the perceived size of the gap between towns, taking into consideration the presence of physical features which create separation and features which diminish it, including the presence of intervening urbanising development.

**3.53** The size of the towns in question also forms part of the consideration of the Green Belt’s role in maintaining separation.

**3.54** Criteria for the assessment of strategic contribution to Purpose 2 are as follows:

## Significant Contribution

- Open land lies within a gap between towns which is narrow in relation to the size of the settlements; or
- Open land lies in a gap between towns which is moderate in relation to the size of the settlements, but which lacks significant separating features, or which is diminished by intervening development.

## Moderate Contribution

- Open land lies in a gap which is moderate in relation to the size of the settlements, and which has significant separating features; or
- Open land lies in a wider gap between towns but which lacks significant separating features, or which is diminished by intervening development; or
- Open land lies in a narrow gap between towns, but the settlements are already connected to a degree that limits the role of Green Belt in preventing coalescence.

## Limited Contribution

- Open land lies in a wide gap between towns, with significant separating features; or
- Open land is too contained by the built form of a town to be considered to lie within a gap between towns; or
- Land lacks openness.

## Green Belt Purpose 3 definitions and strategic assessment criteria

### Purpose 3 definitions

**3.55** Green Belt Purpose 3 is “to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment”. An assessment of Purpose 3 requires consideration of the extent to which land constitutes ‘countryside’ on the basis of the general usage of the term.

**3.56** Some open land may, through its usage, have a stronger relationship with the adjacent built-up area and, as a result, not be considered ‘countryside’ to the same degree as other open land.

**3.57** Equally, land largely contained by development but may nonetheless retain, as a result of its use, size and/or countryside character. Also, contribution to Purpose 3 does not necessarily equate to extent of built development, as development that is rural in form may often not be considered to detract from countryside character.

**3.58** Given this assessment is focussed on identifying strategic variations in contribution to the Green Belt purposes, the vast majority of minor variations in land use, particularly at the urban edges of the urban areas are too small to be recorded. However, notable pockets of semi-urban land uses are referenced as potential areas of greater variation in contribution in the parcel assessment proforma.

**3.59** It is important for the purposes of the assessment not to stray into assessing landscape character, sensitivity or value; whilst Green Belt land may be valuable in these respects it is not a requirement or purpose of the designation to provide such qualities. Therefore, the condition of land is not taken into consideration: any Green Belt land found to be in poor condition may

perform well in its fundamental role of preventing encroachment by keeping land permanently open.

## Purpose 3 strategic contribution assessment criteria

**3.60** The criteria for the assessment of strategic contribution to Purpose 3 considers whether land has uses which associate it more with the built-up area than with countryside, or urbanising development which diminishes openness, or sufficient urbanising influence to limit the extent to which development would be perceived as encroachment on the countryside. Criteria for the assessment of strategic contribution to Purpose 3 are as follows:

### Significant Contribution

- Open land use is not associated with the urban area and urbanising development within the parcel, within inset settlements or beyond the Green Belt's outer edge does not have a significant influence.

### Moderate Contribution

- Land use, although open, is associated with the urban area; or
- Urbanising development within the parcel has some impact on countryside character; or
- The parcel lacks strong distinction from inset settlements or settlements beyond the Green Belt's outer edge.

### Limited Contribution

- Open land is too contained by built form, or too developed in its own right, to be considered part of the countryside; or
- Land that lacks openness.

## Green Belt Purpose 4 definitions and strategic assessment criteria

### Purpose 4 definitions

**3.61** Green Belt Purpose 4 is "to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns". This purpose makes specific reference to 'historic towns', not to individual historical assets or smaller settlements such as villages and hamlets.

**3.62** An extract from Hansard in 1988 clarifies which historic settlements in England were certainly considered 'historic towns' in the context of the Green Belt purposes. The Secretary of State for the Environment clarified in answer to a parliamentary question that the purpose of preserving the special character of historic towns is especially relevant to the Green Belts of York, Chester, Bath, Oxford and Cambridge [see reference 32]. Durham has since been added to this list.

**3.63** It has been LUC's experience through consultation with Historic England on several Green Belt study method statements, that Historic England do not consider the list on towns quoted in Parliament to necessarily be exclusive, so this assessment takes the approach of identifying settlements classed as towns and considering whether any have settings or special character to which land within the Green Belt makes a contribution.

**3.64** Clearly there are historic aspects to towns and smaller settlements within the study area, but the important aspect in terms of contribution to this purpose is that there needs to be a significant relationship between Green Belt land and

historic aspects of a settlement's setting, such that some degree of special character results. Many towns have designated conservation areas, but these are commonly focused on historic buildings and spaces within towns, with any views of the Green Belt countryside being incidental rather than key to special character.

**3.65** The Lancashire Landscape Character Assessment [\[see reference 33\]](#) identifies the County's historic cores (1100 to 1800) as a landscape character type. The character assessment identified Chorley, Preston and Leyland as the only towns to have historic cores within Central Lancashire. In addition, the neighbouring settlement of Blackburn to the east was also identified as having a historic core. Following the publication of the Lancashire Landscape Character Assessment, the County Council began work on an extensive programme of historic town surveys in between 2000 and 2006, including Chorley, Leyland and Preston and the neighbouring towns of Blackburn, Darwen and Longridge. Several other historic towns were surveyed and reported on, including Blackpool, Lytham St Annes and Ormskirk among others, but these settlements are considered to be too far for land in the study area to contribute to their setting and special character. In addition to the historic towns listed above, Greater Manchester to the south is also defined as a historic town by virtue of the fact that it contains historic cores and is defined as a town in relation to the assessment of Purpose 2.

## Purpose 4 strategic contribution assessment criteria

**3.66** The connection between a historic town's historic character and the wider countryside does not have to be physical; indeed, successive waves of development often isolate core historic areas from the surrounding countryside, meaning it is often more a visual connection. This visual connection can be defined through movement through the area, or views into or out of the settlement. Criteria for the assessment of strategic contribution to Purpose 4 are as follows:

## Significant Contribution

- The land and its openness makes a key contribution to the characteristics identified as contributing to a historic town's special character or setting, including key approach routes or key historic assets which have an association with the historic town's special character.

## Moderate Contribution

- The land and its openness makes a contribution to the characteristics identified as contributing to a historic town's special character or setting, but at a notable distance.

## Limited Contribution

- Land contributes little or no role in the setting of a historic town and does not contribute to its special character, either by virtue of a lack of visibility with the historic town or an association with modern development which diminishes its role.

## Green Belt Purpose 5 definitions and assessment criteria

**3.67** Green Belt Purpose 5 is “to Assist in Urban Regeneration by Encouraging the Recycling of Derelict and Other Urban Land”. Most Green Belt studies do not assess individual Green Belt land parcels against Purpose 5, and either do not rate them or rate them all equally, on the grounds that it is difficult to support arguments that the release of one parcel of Green Belt land has a greater impact on encouraging re-use of urban land than another.

## Contribution of Green Belt to Purpose 5

The PAS guidance states:

“...it must be the case that the amount of land within urban areas that could be developed will already have been factored in before identifying Green Belt land. If Green Belt achieves this purpose, all Green Belt does to the same extent and hence the value of various land parcels is unlikely to be distinguished by the application of this purpose”.

In other words, it is highly unlikely that development pressures operate at a sufficiently localised level to draw out meaningful judgements on the relative impact of discrete parcels of Green Belt land on Purpose 5. – PAS Planning on the Doorstep.

The Inspector’s report (D Smith) to the London Borough of Redbridge (January 2018) notes that with regards to Purpose 5 “this purpose applies to most land” but that “it does not form a particularly useful means of evaluating sites ” – File reference: PINS/W5780/429/10

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

**3.68** Since the publication of the PAS Guidance and Cheshire East Local Plan Examination Report, the Housing and Planning Act (May 2016) received Royal Assent and the Town and Country Planning Regulations were subsequently updated. Regulation 3 (2017) requires local planning authorities in England to prepare, maintain and publish a ‘Brownfield Land Register’ of previously



developed (brownfield) land appropriate for residential development. In addition, the NPPF requires that local planning authorities prepare an assessment of land which is suitable, available and achievable for housing and economic development. Together, these evidence bases provide an accurate and up-to-date area of available brownfield land within individual settlements, which can be used to calculate the proportion of available brownfield land relative to the size of each settlement.

**3.69** Using these evidence bases to inform meaningful judgements on the relative contribution of discrete parcels of land to Purpose 5 is dependent on the scale and form of the settlements within and around which Green Belt is defined. For example, it is harder to draw out differences in contribution between parcels around large conurbations containing merged settlements.

**3.70** Given the main urban area runs spreads from Preston to the north to Chorley to the south, a meaningful distinction between the availability of brownfield land across the study area cannot be determined.

**3.71** In the absence of any clear guidance on what percentage of brownfield land enables the Green Belt to play a stronger, or more limited, role in encouraging urban regeneration, a uniform level of contribution to Purpose 5 has been determined for all areas of Green Belt.

## Key considerations with regard to the potential harm of the release of Green Belt land

**3.72** The assessment of levels of contribution made by strategic-scale land parcels has identified major spatial variations in the role of the Green Belt, but it is recognised the parcels resulting from this analysis do not necessarily correspond with the areas that are likely to be considered for release from the Green Belt.

**3.73** Some parcels contain smaller areas which if released would still be large enough to accommodate strategic development and that could result in reduced harm. There are two factors which, separately or in combination, serve to limit harm to the Green Belt purposes:

- A stronger relationship with built development, as a result of a combination of the factors: Green Belt boundary features, landform and land cover, and urbanising visual influence. This diminishes the harm associated with the loss of contribution of the released land.
- A stronger degree of separation from the wider Green Belt, as a result of the presence of landscape elements can minimise the impact of release on the relationship between remaining Green Belt land and a revised Green Belt boundary. The avoidance of significant impact on the Green Belt's function in relation to each purpose is also important.

**3.74** Areas making a weaker contribution to the Green Belt purposes than the parcel as a whole have been identified by asking the following questions:

- Considering the combination of factors discussed in Paragraphs 3.23 - 3.32 above (Green Belt boundary features, landform and land cover, and urbanising visual influence), does land adjacent to any urban edges in the parcel have a less than strong distinction from the urban area?
- Would a release of land that did not encompass land that has a strong distinction from the urban edge amount to greater than 10ha? If so, what alternative Green Belt boundary features exist?
- Would an identified alternative Green Belt boundary result in either:
  - No significant weakening of the contribution of adjacent retained Green Belt land (for example land which currently has strong distinction from the urban edge would still have strong distinction); or
  - A knock-on weakening of the contribution of adjacent retained Green Belt land for example land which currently has strong distinction from the urban edge would now only have moderate distinction); or
  - A major weakening of the contribution of adjacent retained Green Belt land (for example land which currently has strong distinction from the

urban edge would now only have weak distinction; or a strong boundary which is consistent over a sizeable distance, such as a river of motorway, would be breached)?

- Regardless of the above, would expansion of the urban area have an adverse impact on the function of a Green Belt purpose? For example, even if a strong alternative boundary feature exists, release of land out to it could result in a significant loss of separation between two towns (affecting the function of Purpose 2).

**3.75** For example, land that has a degree of containment by built development, whether inset or washed over, has more potential for release without significant impact on the integrity of adjacent Green Belt land than land which is uncontained. Similarly, an area of land which has a strong visual and physical boundary separating it from the wider Green Belt is more likely to be able to accommodate development without a significant knock-on weakening of the remaining Green Belt than is the case with land that has a weaker outer boundary.

**3.76** This initial consideration of harm does not give assessment ratings. It provides commentary to:

- Summarise, with reference to the assessment of contribution, which Green Belt purposes are likely to be the most significant considerations when determining the potential for release of land for development;
- Indicate whether there might be substantial areas within a parcel that make a weaker contribution to one of more purposes, or which could be released with less impact on the wider Green Belt, with reference to any key landscape elements that have a bearing on these judgements.

**3.77** These findings will help to inform any discussions regarding areas that may need to be considered in a more detailed assessment of harm, should any release of land potentially be required (see Next Steps in Chapter 5).

## Sources of evidence

**3.78** This strategic assessment of spatial designations has been a principally desk-based study based on the use of detail mapping, aerial views and 'street view' photography. However, visits have been made in order to inform our general understanding of the spatial relationship between settlements and countryside, and to assist with any specific judgements regarding the degree of openness in washed-over settlements.

## Chapter 4

# Assessment Findings

4.1 This chapter summarises the findings of the Green Belt assessment.

## Assessment outputs

4.2 Variations in strategic contribution have been identified in accordance with the criteria set out in Chapter 3. The variations in relation to each Green Belt purpose have been overlaid to identify strategic parcels by which the assessment outputs are organised. The reference numbers for parcels which are wholly or principally in the Green Belt are prefaced with a 'P' and those which are wholly or principally in other open countryside areas are prefaced with an 'N'.

4.3 Each parcel assessment includes:

- A map to show the parcel's context, and to identify any statutory constraints to development;
- Ratings and supporting analysis setting out the contribution to each of the five Green Belt purposes; and
- An overview of key considerations regarding potential harm to the Green Belt purposes associated with the strategic-scale release of land, identifying any particular physical features beyond which release might mark an increase in harm.

4.4 Where appropriate, reference points (labelled A, B, and so on) have been added the maps in order to aid understanding. These points are references in the analysis text in order to identify stated locations, or to indicate areas where land might make a weaker contribution to one of more Green Belt purposes than the parcel as a whole, or which could potentially be released with reduced

impact on the wider Green Belt. They should not be interpreted as proposals for the release of Green Belt land.

**4.5** Assessment proformas for each defined parcel are included in Appendix A.

## Summary of findings

**4.6** Table 4.1 below lists the ratings for strategic contribution to the Green Belt purposes for each of the defined assessment parcels.

**4.7** **Figure 4.1** shows the parcels that were defined to reflect variations in strategic contribution. Overview maps **Figures 4.2 to 4.5** illustrate strategic variations in contribution to each of the first four Green Belt purposes across the Central Lancashire area. As set out in the assessment methodology, no Green Belt land in Central Lancashire is considered to contribute to Green Belt Purpose 5 (the recycling of derelict and other urban land), so these findings are not mapped. **Figure 4.6** combines the contribution ratings for Purposes 1-4 to illustrate how many Green Belt purposes each parcel contributes towards. The variations in contribution are summarised in the paragraphs following Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1: Ratings for strategic contribution to the Green Belt purposes**

Parcel	Location	Purpose 1	Purpose 2	Purpose 3	Purpose 4	Purpose 5	Highest contribution
P1	Chorley Council, between Whittle-le-Woods and Chorley	Significant	Significant	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	3 Significant
P2	Chorley Council, east of Whittle-le-Woods	Significant	Moderate	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	2 Significant
P3	Chorley Council, east of Whittle-le-Woods and north east of Chorley.	Limited / no	Moderate	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
P4	Chorley Council, between the West Pennine Moors and the inset villages of Brinscall, Withnell and Abbey Village	Limited / no	Moderate	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
P5	Chorley Council, north of the villages of Brinscall, Withnell, Abbey Village and High Wheelton	Limited / no	Moderate	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
P6	Chorley Council, between Clayton-le-Woods / Whittle-le-Woods and Blackburn	Limited / no	Moderate	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
P7	Chorley Council and South Ribble Borough Council, between Bamber Bridge and the settlements of Higher Walton and Gregson Lane	Significant	Moderate	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	2 Significant
P8	Chorley Council and South Ribble Borough Council, east of the villages of Higher Walton and Gregson Lane	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Limited / no	Equal	3 Moderate
P9	Chorley Council, between Bamber Bridge and Blackburn	Limited / no	Moderate	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant

## Chapter 4 Assessment Findings

Parcel	Location	Purpose 1	Purpose 2	Purpose 3	Purpose 4	Purpose 5	Highest contribution
P10	South Ribble Borough Council, between Walton le Dale and the M6	Significant	Moderate	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	2 Significant
P11	South Ribble Borough Council and Preston City Council, southeast of Preston	Significant	Moderate	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	2 Significant
P12	South Ribble Borough Council, southeast of Preston	Limited / no	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
P13	Chorley Council and South Ribble Borough Council, between Preston and Blackburn	Limited / no	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
P14	South Ribble Borough Council, west and south of Samlesbury Aerospace Enterprise Zone and south of the A677	Limited / no	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
P15	Chorley Council, southwest of Euxton	Significant	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	2 Significant
P16	Preston City Council, to the east of Preston and the M6	Significant	Moderate	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	2 Significant
P17	Chorley Council and South Ribble Borough Council, between Whittle-le-Woods and Clayton-le-Woods and Leyland and Buckshaw Village	Limited / no	Significant	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	2 Significant
P18	Chorley Council and South Ribble Borough Council, between Clayton-le-Woods, Leyland, Clayton-le-Woods and Buckshaw Village	Limited / no	Significant	Moderate	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
P19	Chorley Council, east of Buckshaw Village	Limited / no	Limited / no	Limited / no	Limited / no	Equal	All limited / no



## Chapter 4 Assessment Findings

Parcel	Location	Purpose 1	Purpose 2	Purpose 3	Purpose 4	Purpose 5	Highest contribution
P20	Chorley Council, southeast of Chorley and to the east of the M61	Significant	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	2 Significant
P21	Chorley Council, between Euxton and Chorley	Moderate	Significant	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	2 Significant
P22	Chorley Council, between Euxton and Buckshaw Village and Chorley	Limited / no	Significant	Moderate	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
P23	Chorley Council, south of Leyland with Euxton lying to the east	Significant	Significant	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	3 Significant
P24	Chorley Council and South Ribble Borough Council, adjacent to the south of Leyland, extending southeast to the M6 close to Euxton	Significant	Moderate	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	2 Significant
P25	Chorley Council, northeast of Adlington, to the east of the M61	Limited / no	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
P26	Chorley Council, between Adlington and Horwich	Limited / no	Significant	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	2 Significant
P27	Chorley Council, between Chorley and Adlington	Significant	Significant	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	3 Significant
P28	Chorley Council, between Coppull and Adlington	Limited / no	Moderate	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
P29	Chorley Council, between Adlington and Chorley	Significant	Moderate	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	2 Significant
P30	Chorley Council, southwest of Chorley with the settlements of Charnock Richard and Coppull lying to the west and southwest respectively	Significant	Significant	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	3 Significant

## Chapter 4 Assessment Findings

Parcel	Location	Purpose 1	Purpose 2	Purpose 3	Purpose 4	Purpose 5	Highest contribution
P32	Chorley Council, southwest of Adlington	Limited / no	Moderate	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
P33	Chorley Council, south of Coppull	Limited / no	Significant	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	2 Significant
P34	Chorley Council, west of Chorley	Significant	Moderate	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	2 Significant
P35	Chorley Council, west of Chorley	Limited / no	Moderate	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
P36	Chorley Council, west and southwest of Coppull	Limited / no	Moderate	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
P38	Chorley Council, northeast and east of Eccleston, extending south to the edge of Coppull	Limited / no	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
P40	Chorley Council, south and southwest of Eccleston	Limited / no	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
P41	Chorley Council and South Ribble Borough Council, southwest of Leyland	Significant	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	2 Significant
P42	Chorley Council, south of HMP Garth and Wymott, east of Croston and north of the River Yarrow.	Limited / no	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
P43	Chorley Council, south of Croston and to the southeast of Eccleston	Limited / no	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
P44	Chorley Council, in the northwestern corner of the Borough, between the River Douglas to the west and the railway line to the east	Limited / no	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
P45	South Ribble Borough Council, west and northwest of Moss Side (Leyland)	Significant	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	2 Significant

## Chapter 4 Assessment Findings

Parcel	Location	Purpose 1	Purpose 2	Purpose 3	Purpose 4	Purpose 5	Highest contribution
P46	South Ribble Borough Council, east and southeast of Walmer Bridge and Much Hoole	Moderate	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
P47	South Ribble Borough Council, the southwest of Longton and west of Much Hoole	Limited / no	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
P48	South Ribble Borough Council, northwest of Leyland and to the north of Moss Side Industrial Estate	Significant	Moderate	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	2 Significant
P49	South Ribble Borough Council, east, north and south of New Longton, and adjoining Penwortham to the northeast	Significant	Moderate	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	2 Significant
P50	South Ribble Borough Council, between New Longton, Hutton, Longton and Walmer Bridge	Moderate	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
P51	South Ribble Borough Council, north of Longton and northwest of Hutton	Moderate	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
P52	South Ribble Borough Council, west of Penwortham	Significant	Moderate	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	2 Significant
P53	South Ribble Borough Council, between Leyland and Lostock Hall	Limited / no	Significant	Moderate	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
P54	South Ribble Borough Council, south of Preston	Limited / no	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Equal	3 Moderate
P55	South Ribble Borough Council, between Penwortham and Preston	Limited / no	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Equal	3 Moderate
P56	Chorley Council, north of Horwich	Limited / no	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant

## Chapter 4 Assessment Findings

Parcel	Location	Purpose 1	Purpose 2	Purpose 3	Purpose 4	Purpose 5	Highest contribution
P57	South Ribble Borough Council, northwest of Longton and Hutton	Not assessed	Not assessed	Not assessed	Not assessed	Equal	Not assessed
P58	Chorley Council, west of the Feniscowles suburbs of Blackburn	Significant	Moderate	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	2 Significant
P59	Chorley Council, south of Coppull	Limited / no	Moderate	Moderate	Limited / no	Equal	2 Moderate
P60	South Ribble Borough Council, southwest of Longton and west of Walmer Bridge and Much Hoole	Moderate	Limited / no	Moderate	Limited / no	Equal	2 Moderate
P61	South Ribble Borough Council and Preston City Council, east of Preston and the M6	Limited / no	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
P62	South Ribble Borough Council, between Leyland and Lostock Hall	Moderate	Significant	Moderate	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
N1	Chorley Council, east of Chorley and the M61	Significant	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	2 Significant
N3	Chorley Council, between Chorley and the West Pennine Moors	Limited / no	Moderate	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
N4	Chorley Council, between Chorley and Darwen	Not assessed	Not assessed	Not assessed	Not assessed	Equal	Not assessed
N5	Preston City Council, west of Preston	Significant	Moderate	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	2 Significant
N6	Preston City Council, west of Preston	Significant	Moderate	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	2 Significant
N7	Preston City Council, northwest of the Cottam suburbs of Preston	Significant	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	2 Significant

## Chapter 4 Assessment Findings

Parcel	Location	Purpose 1	Purpose 2	Purpose 3	Purpose 4	Purpose 5	Highest contribution
N8	Preston City Council, northwest of Preston and to the north of the M55	Limited / no	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
N9	Preston City Council, north of Preston	Significant	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	2 Significant
N10	Preston City Council, north of Preston	Limited / no	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
N11	Preston City Council, north of Broughton and south of Bilsborrow	Limited / no	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
N12	Preston City Council, north of Preston	Limited / no	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
N13	Preston City Council, north of Preston	Not assessed	Not assessed	Not assessed	Not assessed	Equal	Not assessed
N14	Preston City Council, north of Preston and to the east of the M6	Significant	Moderate	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	2 Significant
N15	Preston City Council, north of Preston to the west of Goosnargh	Limited / no	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
N16	Preston City Council, northeast of Goosnargh and northwest of Longridge	Limited / no	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
N17	Preston City Council, between Goosnargh/Whittingham and Longridge	Limited / no	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
N18	Preston City Council, northeast of Preston	Significant	Significant	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	3 Significant
N19	Preston City Council, west and north of Grimsargh	Significant	Significant	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	3 Significant
N20	Preston City Council, east and southeast of Grimsargh	Limited / no	Moderate	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant

## Chapter 4 Assessment Findings

Parcel	Location	Purpose 1	Purpose 2	Purpose 3	Purpose 4	Purpose 5	Highest contribution
N21	South Ribble Borough Council, west of Lostock Hall	Significant	Moderate	Moderate	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
N22	Chorley Council, east of Whittle-le-Woods, with the M61 lying to the east.	Significant	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	2 Significant
N24	Chorley Council, between Brinscall and the West Pennine Moors SSSI	Limited / no	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
N25	Chorley Council, southeast of Abbey Village and north of the West Pennine Moors SSSI	Limited / no	Limited / no	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant
N27	Preston City Council, between Longridge and the northeast of Preston	Limited / no	Moderate	Significant	Limited / no	Equal	1 Significant

## Contribution to Purpose 1

**4.8** There is a very clear pattern of contribution to Purpose 1 – checking the unrestricted sprawl of a large, built-up area. Preston, Chorley and the intervening settlements together form a large, built-up area (the Central Lancashire urban area), so most land on the outer fringes of this area is, at a strategic scale, playing a significant role in preventing its sprawl. This applies to the ‘open countryside’ (policy EN1) area to the north of Preston, and also Chorley’s ‘other open land’ (BNE2), as much as to the Green Belt.

**4.9** Land adjacent to the Feniscowles suburb of Blackburn also makes a significant contribution to Purpose 1, as Blackburn together with Darwen is also a large, built-up area.

**4.10** Open land separating the settlements between Preston and Chorley that make up the large built-up area makes only a limited contribution to Purpose 1, due to its weak connectivity with the wider Green Belt. Development within these areas would be considered to be infilling in gaps within the large, built-up area rather than sprawl expanding it.

**4.11** Beyond the parcels adjacent to Central Lancashire urban area and Blackburn there are two chains of settlements that are sufficiently linked by urbanising development for their expansion to have some association with the large built-up area. These are the settlements extending west from Penwortham out to Much Hoole, and east from Bamber Bridge out to Hoghton. Although development here would not constitute direct expansion of the large built-up area, land which is preventing significant expansion of these settlements, including the loss of remaining separation between them, is making some contribution to preventing the perception of sprawl associated with the Preston-South Ribble-Chorley conurbation.

**4.12** No other land is assessed as contributing to Purpose 1 because development remote from either Preston-South Ribble-Chorley or Blackburn

would have sufficient separation not be considered sprawl of either large built-up area. However, it should be recognised that more substantial expansion of the Preston-South Ribble-Chorley urban area or of Blackburn beyond the immediately adjacent parcels would still have a significant impact on this purpose.

## Contribution to Purpose 2

**4.13** There are three areas where land makes a significant contribution to preventing the merger of neighbouring towns. Although land between the settlements that make up the Central Lancashire large built-up area makes only a limited contribution to preventing expansion of that area as a whole, the settlements that make up the area still retain a degree of distinction as separate towns. Where these gaps are fragile, such as between Bamber Bridge and Leyland, and between Chorley and Whittle-le-Woods or Euxton, contribution at a strategic scale is significant. It is only where land is very isolated within the urban area, and lacking association with the wider Green Belt, that strategic contribution to Purpose 2 is weaker, despite gaps being narrow. This is the case between Penwortham / Lostock Hall and Preston.

**4.14** The second area where some strategic parcels make a significant contribution to Purpose 2 is to the south of Chorley. There are relatively narrow gaps between Chorley and Adlington, between Adlington and Horwich, between Chorley and Coppull and between Coppull and Standish. In some areas there are physical separating features which reduce contribution, or land lacks a strong enough distinction from the adjacent urban edge for it to be considered to be making a strong contribution, but where this is not the case the contribution to Purpose 2 is significant.

**4.15** The third area in which land rates as significant for Purpose 2 is in the open countryside (EN1) area between Preston and Longridge. The urban area of Preston has expanded beyond the M61 here, and intervening development at Grimsargh and a lack of Green Belt protection for land within Ribble Valley Borough further weakens the gap.



**4.16** Much of the land on the western fringe of the Central Lancashire urban area makes a moderate contribution to Purpose 2, being peripheral to the gaps between towns within the main urban area. To the east of Central Lancashire urban area the gap to Blackburn is relatively wide, but main roads and rail weaken perceived separation so land here also makes a moderate contribution to this purpose.

**4.17** Further to the west of Central Lancashire urban area, and to the north of Preston away from the gap to Longridge, there are no other towns close enough for land to make more than a limited contribution to Purpose 2.

## Contribution to Purpose 3

**4.18** The fact that most of the Green Belt has only a weak relationship with urban development, meaning that there is a strong distinction between urban and open land, has resulted in most Central Lancashire Green Belt land making a significant contribution to Purpose 3 – protecting the countryside from encroachment.

**4.19** With the exception of the distinctive Cuerden Valley area to the west of Clayton-le-Woods, the narrow areas of Green Belt separating settlements within the Central Lancashire urban area have too much urbanising influence, and too little connectivity with the wider countryside, to make more than a moderate strategic contribution to Purpose 3. There is one strategically parcel, Buckshaw Village, which lacks openness and therefore makes no contribution to this or any other Green Belt purposes.

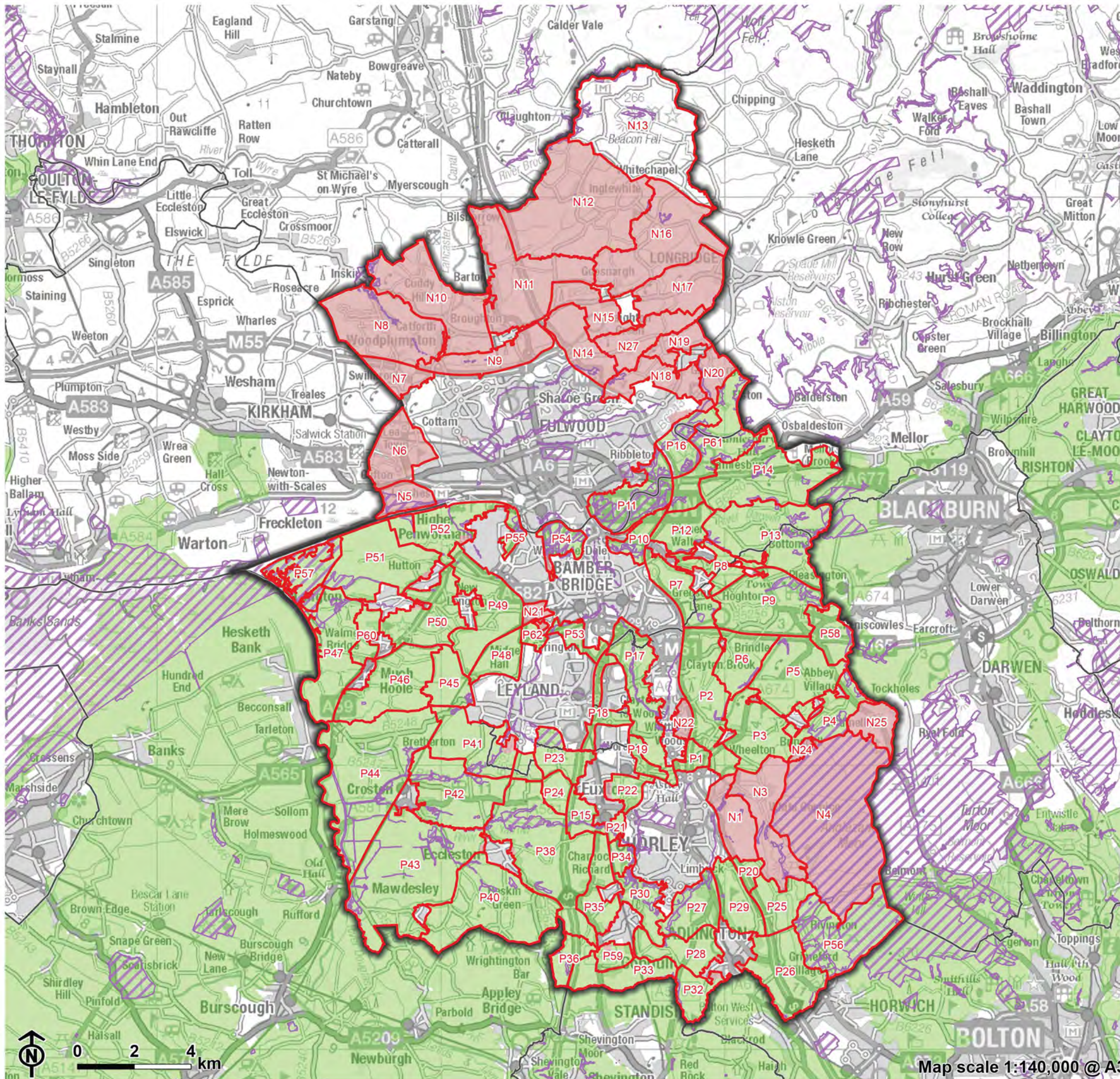
**4.20** Beyond the Central Lancashire urban area there are several other strategic parcels where urbanising influence, from proximity to inset settlements and/or from the presence of significant washed-over urbanising development, limit the contribution to this purpose to moderate. This is the case in the area between Higher Walton, Coup Green, Hoghton and Gregson Lane, and south of Coppull, and in areas to the west of Longton, Walmer Bridge and Much Hoole.

## Contribution to Purpose 4

**4.21** As stated in the assessment methodology chapter, there needs to be a significant relationship between Green Belt land and historic aspects of a settlement's setting, such that some degree of special character results. Many towns have designated conservation areas, but these are commonly focused on historic buildings and spaces within towns, with any views of the Green Belt countryside being incidental rather than key to special character.

**4.22** On this basis, only two parcels were found to make more than a limited contribution to Purpose 4: Parcels 54 and 55, located between Preston and Lostock Hall / Penwortham. Land in the former area which forms part of the distinctive low-lying floodplain of the River Ribble is mostly in Flood Zone 3a, and therefore constrained from development, but unconstrained land in the southeast of the parcel included wooded higher ground which forms a visual backdrop to the river valley in views from the edge of Preston. Land in Parcel 55 is also well-treed and forms an undeveloped visual backdrop to the river. However, in both cases the limited strength of relationship with historic parts of the city, and limited degree to which it has a bearing on the city's character, limits the level of contribution to moderate.

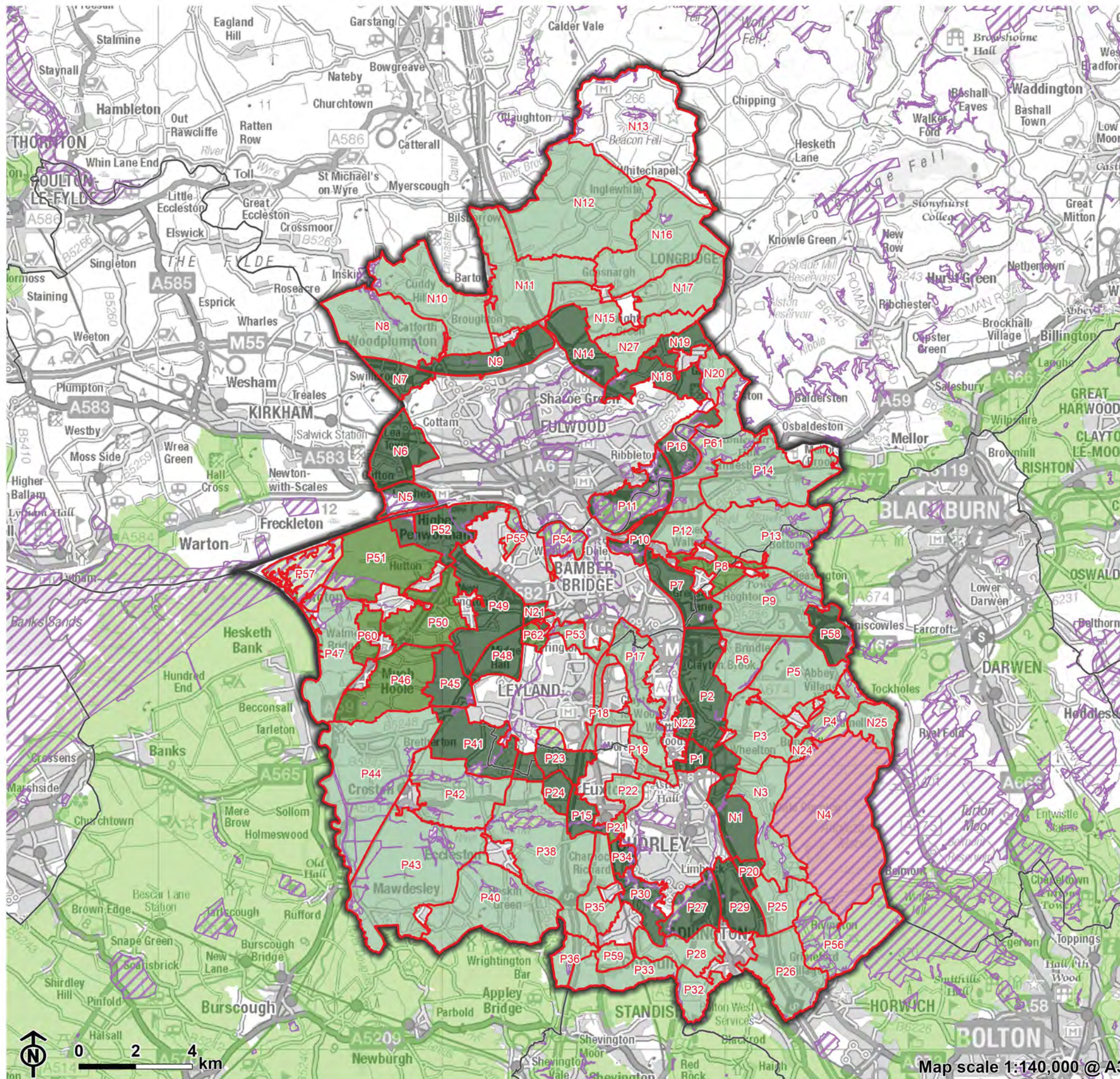
**Figure 4.1: Contribution assessment parcels**



- Central Lancashire boundary
- Local Authority boundary
- Assessment parcel
- Absolute constraints
- Green Belt
- Other open land designations (EN1, G3, G4, BNE2, BNE3)

Map scale 1:140,000 @ A3

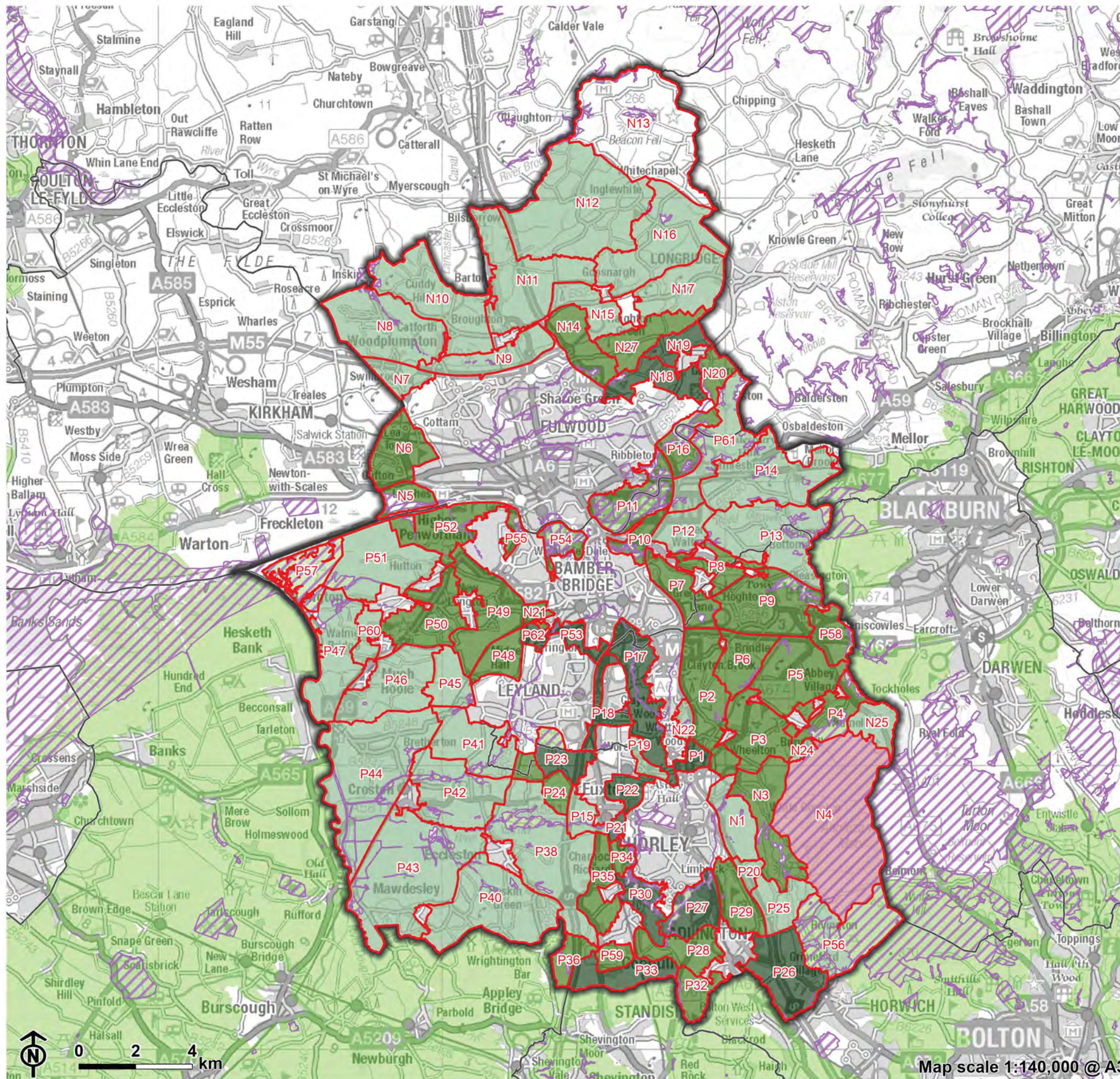
**Figure 4.2: Green Belt Purpose 1 contribution to checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas**



- Central Lancashire boundary
  - Local Authority boundary
  - Assessment parcel
  - Absolute constraints
  - Green Belt
  - Other open land designations (EN1, G3, G4, BNE2, BNE3)
- Contribution rating**
- Limited / no contribution
  - Moderate contribution
  - Significant contribution

Map scale 1:140,000 @ A3

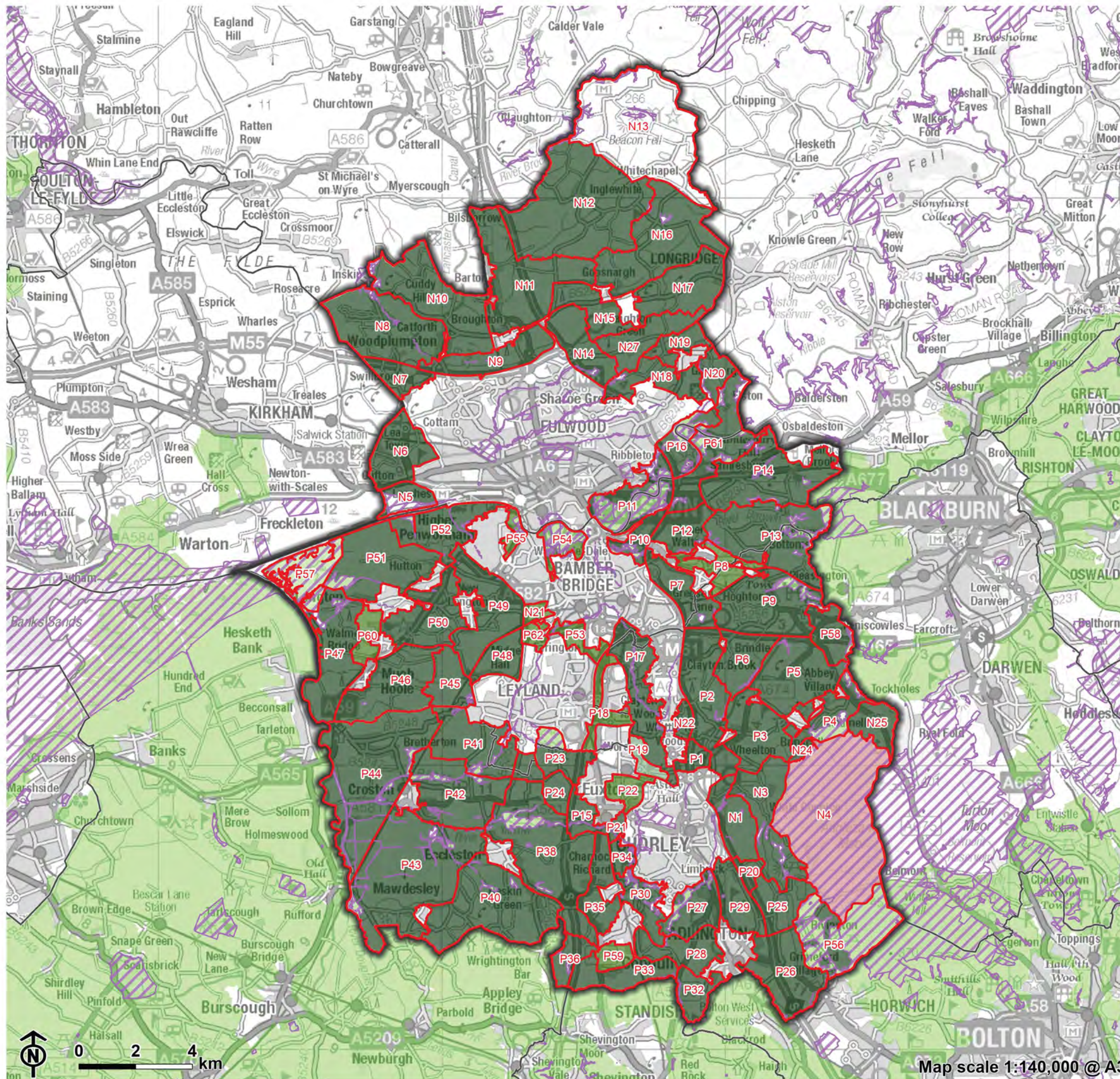
**Figure 4.3: Green Belt Purpose 2 contribution to preventing neighbouring towns from merging into one another**



- Central Lancashire boundary
  - Local Authority boundary
  - Assessment parcel
  - Absolute constraints
  - Green Belt
  - Other open land designations (EN1, G3, G4, BNE2, BNE3)
- Contribution rating**
- Limited / no contribution
  - Moderate contribution
  - Significant contribution

Map scale 1:140,000 @ A3

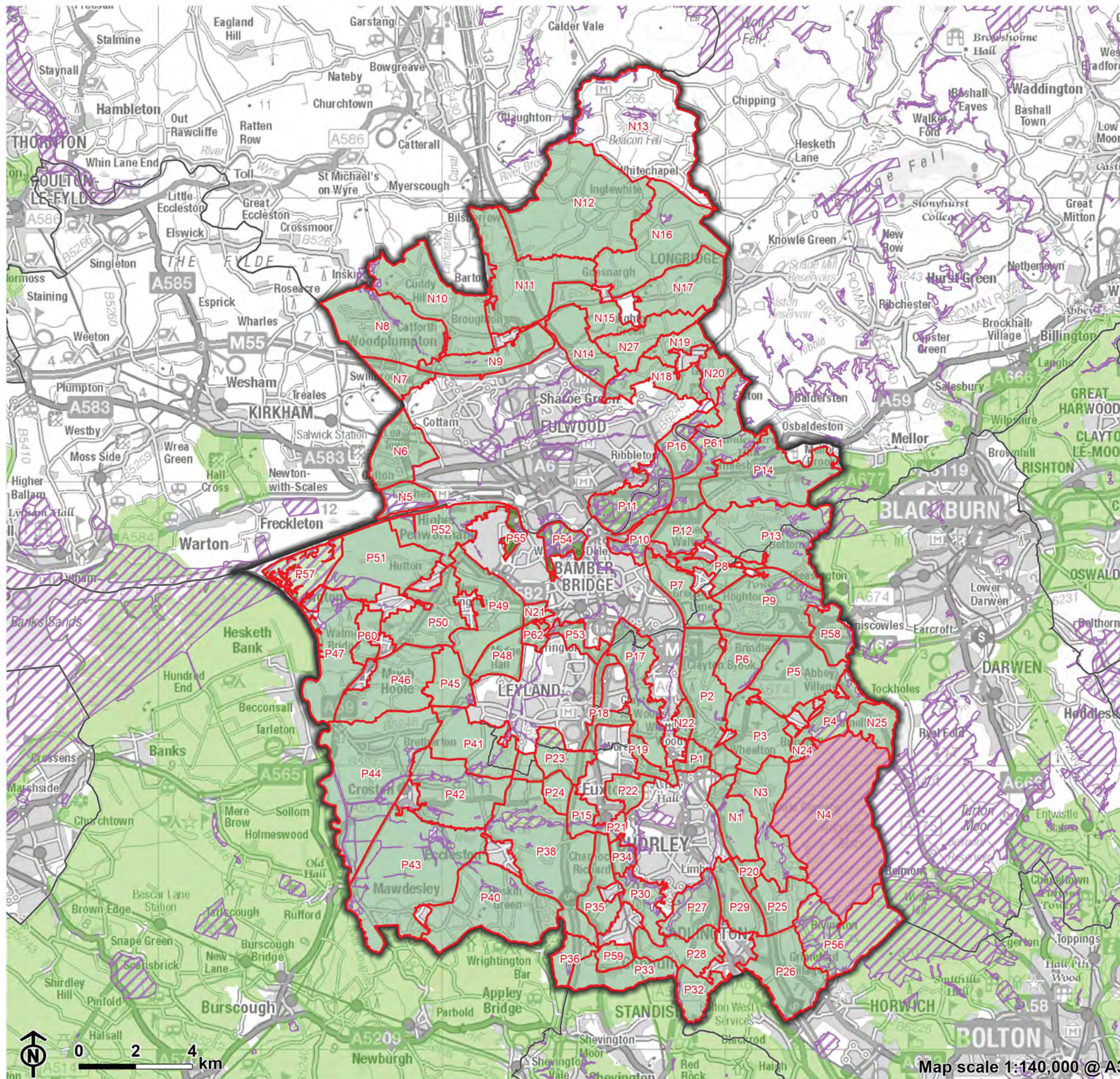
**Figure 4.4: Green Belt Purpose 3 contribution to assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment**



- Central Lancashire boundary
  - Local Authority boundary
  - Assessment parcel
  - Absolute constraints
  - Green Belt
  - Other open land designations (EN1, G3, G4, BNE2, BNE3)
- Contribution rating**
- Limited / no contribution
  - Moderate contribution
  - Significant contribution

Map scale 1:140,000 @ A3

**Figure 4.5: Green Belt Purpose 4 contribution to preserving the setting and special character of historic towns**



- Central Lancashire boundary
  - Local Authority boundary
  - Assessment parcel
  - Absolute constraints
  - Green Belt
  - Other open land designations (EN1, G3, G4, BNE2, BNE3)
- Contribution rating**
- Limited / no contribution
  - Moderate contribution
  - Significant contribution

Map scale 1:140,000 @ A3

## Variations in Overall Contribution

**4.23** Figure 4.6 combines the contribution ratings for Purposes 1-4 to illustrate how many Green Belt purposes each parcel contributes towards. Whilst it is recognised that land doesn't have to serve multiple Green Belt purposes to be playing a significant role in constraining development, it is reasonable to assume that land which makes a significant contribution to multiple purposes will often represent a stronger constraint. However, this will not necessarily be the case, and in some instances a parcel's significant contribution to a single Green Belt purpose may be strong enough for it to be considered more important than a parcel which makes a significant contribution to more than one purpose.

**4.24** Considering the purposes in combination, there are three areas where there are parcels that, at a strategic scale, make a significant contribution to Purposes 1-3:

- On the periphery of the Central Lancashire urban area between Leyland and Euxton and between Whittle-le-Woods and Chorley, where land is preventing outward expansion of the large, built-up area into countryside but is also close enough to be playing a significant role in maintaining gaps between towns within the Central Lancashire urban area.
- To the south of Chorley, where landform and land cover give Green Belt land strong distinction from Chorley, and where expansion into those areas would significantly affect the narrow gaps to Adlington and Coppull to the detriment of both Purpose 1 and Purpose 2.
- To the northeast of Preston, within the open countryside (EN1) area. If this area was Green Belt it would be preventing sprawl of the large, built-up area, maintaining separation from Longridge (which is weakened by intervening urban development at Grimsargh) and preventing encroachment on the countryside.



**4.25** Most other strategic parcels around the outer edges of the Central Lancashire urban area make a significant contribution to Purpose 1 and Purpose 3. Away from these urban fringes most parcels make a strong contribution only to Purpose 3. The exception is land at the southern edge of Chorley Borough and land west of Fensicowles (Blackburn) which also makes a significant contribution to Purpose 2.

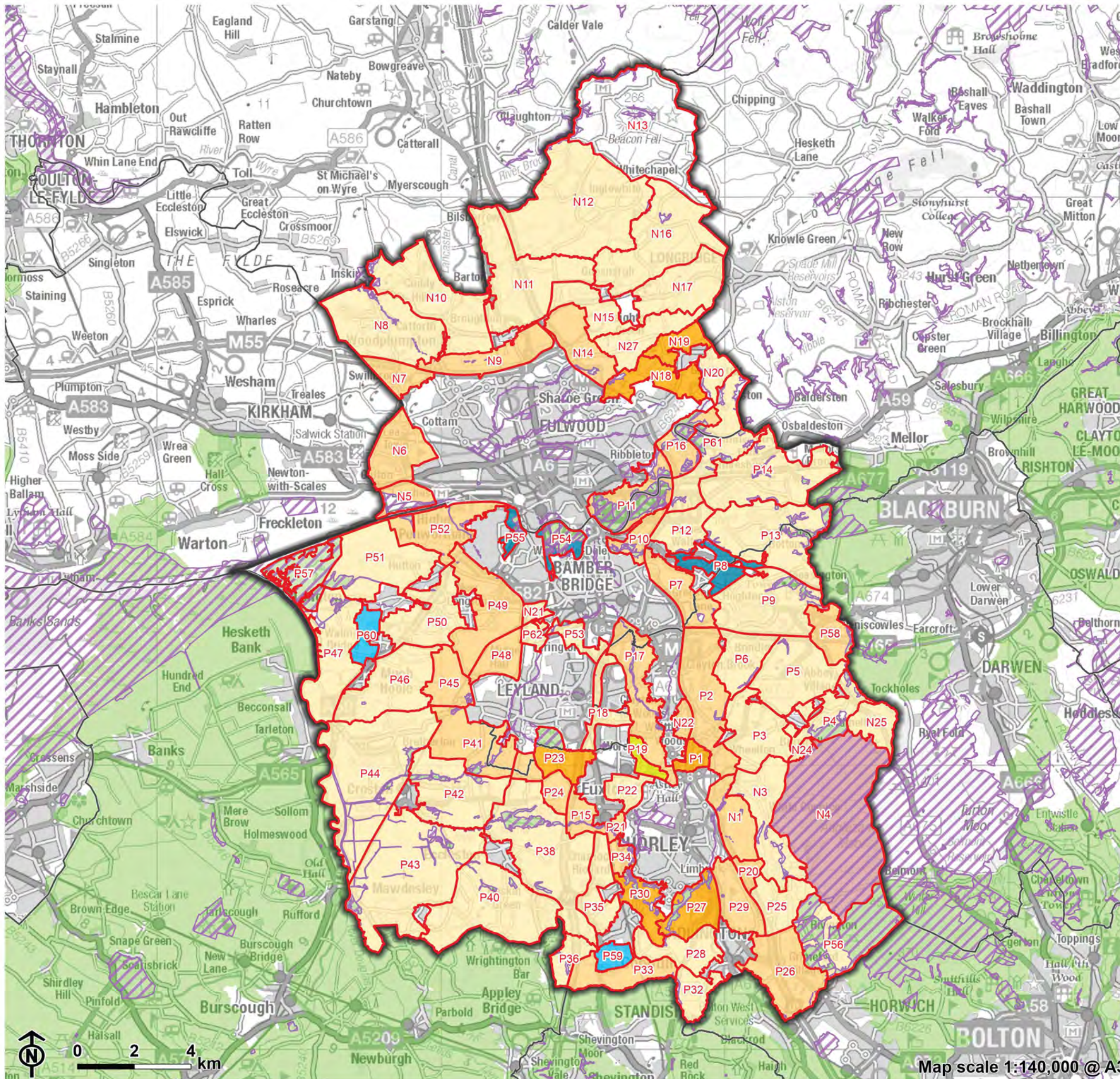
**4.26** There are only a few strategic parcels that do not make a significant contribution to at least one purpose: these are parcels to the south of Preston that are too contained to make a significant contribution to Purpose 2, and the areas affected by urbanising development that are noted under the Purpose 3 summary. Of these, the area between Preston and Lostock Hall that contributes to Purpose 4 makes a moderate contribution to three purposes, and the others make a moderate contribution to both Purpose 2 and Purpose 3.

**4.27** There is only one area of urbanising development, at Buckshaw Village (Parcel 19), that is large enough to define as a strategic parcel. This parcel's lack of openness means that it makes no contribution to any of the Green Belt purposes.

**4.28** At a broad, strategic scale, there is no evidence that the extensive open countryside areas – the EN1 'open countryside' to the north of Preston and the BNE2 'other open countryside' to the east of Chorley) – would make less of a contribution to the Green Belt purposes than is the case for land within the existing Green Belt. Instead, the area to the northeast of Preston in particular stands out as being one of the few locations in which land rates significant for its contribution to three of the Green Belt purposes.

**4.29** The other non-Green Belt open land designations, safeguarded land (G3 and BNE3) and 'protected open land' (G4), are all too small to constitute strategic parcels in their own right, but any weaker contribution or limited impact on adjacent Green Belt land is discussed in the summary of potential harm below.

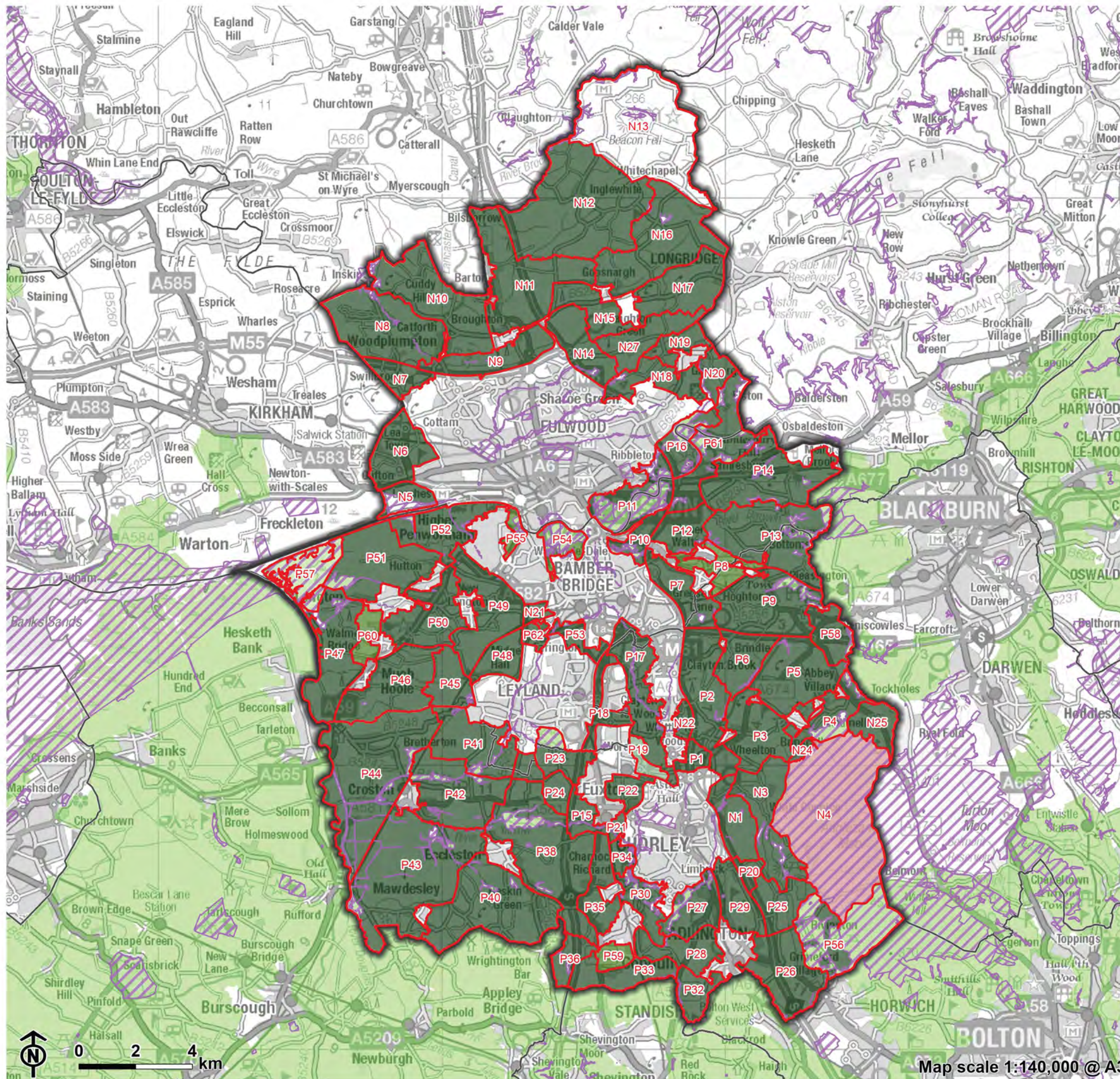
Figure 4.6: Highest contribution to Green Belt purposes



- Central Lancashire boundary
  - Local Authority boundary
  - Assessment parcel
  - Absolute constraints
  - Green Belt
  - Other open land designations (EN1, G3, G4, BNE2, BNE3)
- Highest rating (Purpose 1-4)**
- Four significant ratings
  - Three significant ratings
  - Two significant ratings
  - One significant rating
  - Four moderate ratings
  - Three moderate ratings
  - Two moderate ratings
  - One moderate rating
  - Four limited / no contribution

Map scale 1:140,000 @ A3

Figure 4.7: Highest contribution to Green Belt purposes



- Central Lancashire boundary
  - Local Authority boundary
  - Assessment parcel
  - Absolute constraints
  - Green Belt
  - Other open land designations (EN1, G3, G4, BNE2, BNE3)
- Highest rating (Purpose 1-4)**
- Limited / no contribution
  - Moderate
  - Significant

Map scale 1:140,000 @ A3

## Summary of potential harm

**4.30** At a strategic scale there is little Green Belt land that doesn't make a significant contribution to at least one purpose, and in many cases there is also limited scope for strategic-scale release of sub-parcel areas without causing higher levels of harm to at least one Green Belt purpose. The principal areas where any strategic release is likely to cause the greatest harm are:

- Parcels lying in the more fragile settlement gaps, such as those retaining distinction between towns within the Central Lancashire urban area.
- Parcels that are separated from the Central Lancashire urban area by motorways – the M55 to the north and M6 and M61 to the east – or prominent landform and land cover – the Yarrow Valley to the south and west of Chorley.

**4.31** Although, as a strategic-scale assessment, the study has not considered the harm of Green Belt release in detail, the parcel assessments give some indication of the potential for releases that could demonstrate some limiting of harm. The individual parcel assessments have identified a number of areas where some degree of variation in harm, for areas greater than 10ha in size, can be found.

### Within the Central Lancashire urban area

**4.32** Scope for strategic expansion in the spaces between the settlements that form the Central Lancashire large built-up area is very limited, given the narrowness of gaps, but there are a few locations where impact on Purpose 2 would be limited – for example adjacent to Walton-le-Dale (in parcel P10) and on safeguarded land at Pear Tree Lane (in parcel P22), Lostock Hall (in parcel P54) and Farington Moss (parcel N21).

## On the outer edges of the Central Lancashire area

**4.33** Although typically the Central Lancashire urban area is fairly well contained by major roads and sloping landforms, there are a few locations on its outer fringes where weaker boundaries and urbanising visual influence mean that strategic-scale development could be limited to land that doesn't make a significant contribution to any Green Belt purpose. Any such development will still constitute sprawl of a large built-up area as well as encroachment on the countryside, and will typically cause a knock-on weakening of adjacent Green Belt land. Examples are areas to the south of Leyland (in parcels P23 and P24) and in the Open Countryside (EN1 policy area) to the west of Preston (in parcels N5, N6 and N7).

**4.34** In a few instances there are locations around the Central Lancashire urban area fringes where land makes a significant contribution to the Green Belt purposes but impact on the wider Green Belt would be limited by landscape elements which provide strong boundary containment. This is the case to the southwest of Euxton (in parcel P15), to the east of Whittle-le-Woods (the safeguarded parcel N22) and between Preston and the M6 (in parcel N18).

**4.35** There are several locations where land adjacent to the Central Lancashire urban area makes a less than significant contribution to the Green Belt purposes and also could be released without much impact on the wider Green Belt. The principal example is land in Preston's Other Open Countryside (EN1) that lies between the urban edge and the route of Preston Western Distributor Road (in parcels N6 and N7).

## Adjacent to other towns and villages

**4.36** Where settlement gap weakening can be avoided, there are locations adjacent to Adlington and Coppull, the smaller towns to the south of Chorley, where smaller strategic areas could be released without affecting land which makes a strong contribution to any purpose. Usually this will result in a knock-on weakening of adjacent Green Belt land, but there is stronger containment

between Adlington and the M61 (in parcel 26) and in the safeguarded areas that are more enclosed by the inset settlement edge.

**4.37** In terms of harm to the Green Belt purposes, the release of land adjacent to some of the smaller inset settlements, where narrow settlement gaps are not a concern, offers more scope for limiting impacts. In such instances, the prevention of encroachment on the countryside (Purpose 3) is the only purpose that would be affected, and there are several locations in which such a release could either be limited to land which lacks strong distinction from the settlement, or which could be contained by a boundary feature that would limit the impact on the contribution of adjacent Green Belt land to a minor level, or in a few cases both of these. The principal locations where both the above would apply are in areas where villages are close together: this is the case in the area between Higher Walton, Coup Green, Gregson Lane and Hoghton (parcel P8), between Brinscall and Abbey Village (parcel P4), and between Longton, Walmer Bridge and Much Hoole (in parcel P60, where washed-over development also has an urbanising impact). It is recognised that the loss of separation between villages might be a concern, but purely in terms of the NPPF Green Belt purposes it is gaps between towns that are more of a concern.

**4.38** Many other smaller settlements have some adjacent land which doesn't make a significant contribution to any Green Belt purpose; examples are Charnock Richard (in parcel P35), Croston (in parcels P42 and P43) and Goosnargh (in parcels N15 and N16).

### Land with limited openness

**4.39** Aside from Buckshaw Village, the only full parcel which lacks openness (parcel P19), the only sizeable area of urban development is to the west of Longridge (in parcel N17). Elsewhere there are areas with quite extensive washed-over development which, although typically linear in form and so reducing openness in a limited area, have an urbanising influence that affects adjacent open land. This is the case, for example, between Longton and Walmer Bridge (in parcel P60).

## Chapter 5

### Next Steps

**5.1** The study will be used by the Central Lancashire authorities alongside other pieces of evidence to shape Green Belt and associated open countryside and settlement setting policy. This may include establishing the necessary exceptional circumstances for making alterations to the designation's boundaries (if required), including the exploration and definition of strategic extensions to the Green Belt and the identification of preferred site options and reasonable alternatives for release within the existing designation.

**5.2** Further detailed Green Belt and landscape assessment work will be required to inform this process if any sites/ areas within the Green Belt are proposed for release, or if new Green Belt is proposed. If any sites are proposed for release from the Green Belt, further work will also be required setting out how any harm to the Green Belt could be minimised and how the remaining Green Belt will be enhanced in line the requirements set out in paragraph 142 of the NPPF:

*"Where it has been concluded that it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development, plans should .....also set out ways in which the impact of removing land from the Green Belt can be offset through compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt land." .*

# References

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- 2 Section 110 of the Localism Act (2011)
- 3 North East Lancashire Structure Plan (1979)
- 4 Lancashire Structure Plan (1989)
- 5 Local Planning Authority National Green Belt Statistics 2019/20, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.
- 6 Entec for the Manchester Airport Group (2010) Local Development Framework Evidence Base.
- 7 Local Government Act 1972.
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- 9 Local Government Act 1985.
- 10 Bury Council (2013) Bury Local Plan Environment Topic Paper.
- 11 Former Ministry of Housing and Local Government (1955) Circular 42/55.
- 12 GMC (1981) Greater Manchester Structure Plan: Approved Written Statement.
- 13 GMC (1982) The Greater Manchester Green Belt Local Plan Report of the Inspector.
- 14 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government published an edited version of the National Planning Policy Framework for consultation on the 30th of January 2021 with minor edits. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/national-planning-policy-framework-and-national-model-design-code-consultation-proposals>
- 15 Two important Planning Appeal judgements (Heath & Hampstead Society v Camden LBC & Vlachos (2008) and Turner v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government & East Dorset District Council (2016)) define openness as having both a spatial aspect and a visual



## References

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aspect. However, in February 2020 the Supreme Court overturned the Court of Appeal Ruling on the case of Sam Smith v North Yorkshire County Council and Darrington Quarries Ltd (2018), and in doing so asserted that openness does not imply freedom from all forms of potential development and that visual impact is not an obligatory consideration when assessing Green Belt openness. Further details are set out in Chapter 2 and in the case law section below.

- 16** Planning on the Doorstep: The Big Issues – Green Belt. Available at: <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/green-belt-244.pdf>
- 17** Central Lancashire Core Strategy, 2012. Available at: <https://centrallocalplan.lancashire.gov.uk/media/1032/central-lancashire-core-strategy-july-2012-v1.pdf>
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- 19** South Ribble Local Plan, 2015. Available at: <https://www.southribble.gov.uk/article/1134/Current-policies-and-guidance#South%20Ribble%20Local%20Plan%202015>
- 20** Chorley Local Plan, 2015. Available at: <https://chorley.gov.uk/localplan>
- 21** Blackburn with Darwen Green Belt Assessment, 1019. Available at: <http://blackburn-darwen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Green-Belt-Assessment.pdf>
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- 23** Fylde Local Plan To 2032, 2018. Available at: <https://new.fylde.gov.uk/resident/planning/planning-policy-local-plan/adopted-local-plan-to-2032/>
- 24** Greater Manchester Green Belt Assessments, 2016-2021: <https://www.greetermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning-and-housing/places-for-everyone/supporting-documents//?folder=\07%20Greener%20Places#fList>

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- 26** West Lancashire Green Belt Study, 2011-2012. Available at:  
<https://www.westlancs.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/the-local-plan/the-local-plan-2023-2040/evidence-base/green-belt-study-2011.aspx>
- 27** Wyre Green Belt Study, 2016-2018. Available at:  
<https://www.wyre.gov.uk/downloads/download/114/environment-evidence>
- 28** The term ‘inset settlement’ is used throughout this report to refer to any settlement that is surrounded or partially enveloped by Green Belt land.
- 29** The term ‘washed over’ refers to development which lies within the Green Belt, rather than being inset from it.
- 30** This is set out in case law where the Court of Appeal addressed the proper interpretation of Green Belt policy in R (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority) v Epping Forest DC [2016] EWCA Civ 404.
- 31** National Planning Practice Guidance  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>
- 32** Hansard HC Deb 08 November 1988 vol 140 c148W 148W; referenced in Historic England (2018) response to the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan – Green Belt Review – Stage 3.
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