



STRATEGIC GREEN BELT REVIEW

August 2016

2016 ADDENDUM: U03 – Land North of Underwood

Following the Preferred Approach Local Plan Consultation (2nd February to 20th March 2016) the Council has amended the supporting text and scores for U03 – Land north of Underwood. Below is a summary of the changes made to this document.

Amendments to supporting text:

For clarification purposes the text below has been deleted from both assessment 1 and 2 of U03 and replaced with revised text.

- ~~Topography of the land means that development is likely to have an adverse impact on the setting of Bagthorpe Conservation Area especially longer views from within the valley to the north. Encroachment of development will erode the rural setting of the Lower Bagthorpe Conservation Area.~~

See revised assessment sheets for U03 for the revised text.

Amendments to scores:

U03 site 1, 2, 3, 6 and 7 were all awarded 5 out of 5 for 'Preserve the setting and special character of historic settlement'. The score of 5 relates to the whole of U03 rather than to the subsites, this was an error. The table below shows the correct scores.

Site reference and amended score
<u>U03 / Site 1</u> Preserve the setting and special character of historic settlement: Score - 2.
<u>U03 / Site 2</u> Preserve the setting and special character of historic settlement: Score - 1.
<u>U03 / Site 3</u> Preserve the setting and special character of historic settlement: Score - 2.
<u>U03 / Site 6</u> Preserve the setting and special character of historic settlement: Score - 1.
<u>U03 / Site 7</u> Preserve the setting and special character of historic settlement: Score - 3.

2021 ADDENDUM:

- The document has been updated to reflect the new paragraph numbers and revised wording of the 2021 NPPF; and
- Four new site assessments around Junction 27 of the M1 Motorway have been undertaken and added in as Appendix 9.

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N.B. If you are viewing this document online the Appendices are contained in separate link.

Green Belt Review

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The provisions of the Planning and Compensation Act 1991 specify that any future reviews of Green Belt boundaries should be undertaken by Local Planning Authorities as part of the Local Plan. This is reinforced by national guidance. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021, paragraph 140, sets out that once established Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified, through the preparation or updating of plan.
- 1.2. The purpose of this document is to set out the approach that has been used in undertaking the review of the Green Belt in Ashfield as part of the Local Plan process.
- 1.3. It provides a means of identifying the most important areas of Green Belt, when assessed against the purposes of Green Belt as set out in national policy – NPPF Part 13 (see paragraph 3.2 of this document).
- 1.4. **This review is a technical exercise and does not determine whether or not land should remain or be excluded from the Green Belt.** It is the role of the District's emerging Local Plan to formally revise Green Belt boundaries and to allocate land for development, where appropriate, having taken into account all relevant planning considerations. This includes whether there are, in the first instance, exceptional circumstances for altering existing boundaries. It is not the role of the review to establish whether exceptional circumstances exist, but should there be a need to alter Green Belt boundaries, for instance to accommodate an established need for new development, the review is intended to inform how this might best be done.
- 1.5. It should be noted that this review represents a snapshot in time. Changes in policy approach, together with future development patterns, may lead to different conclusions in the future on the importance of particular parts of the Green Belt when assessed against the five purposes of including land within it.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. An extensive part of the District of Ashfield lies within the Nottingham - Derby Green Belt including land around Hucknall, land to the south, and east of Kirkby-in-Ashfield; and land surrounding the rural villages of Selston, Jacksdale, Underwood and Brinsley. Appendix 1 shows the extent of the Green Belt in Ashfield District and the areas of land which were considered as part of this review.

- 2.2. The Green Belt boundaries in Ashfield have been established over a long period of time in the following plans:
 - Green Belt Local Plan prepared by Nottinghamshire County Council and adopted in 1989.
 - Ashfield Local Plan, 1995.
 - Ashfield Local Plan Review, 2002.

- 2.3. The review of the 2002 Ashfield Local Plan commenced following Government changes to the plan making system and the adoption of the East Midlands Regional Plan. Since this time there have been significant further changes to the way the Council is required to plan for the future of the District, most notably the Governments shift from Regional Strategies and Planning Policy Guidance Notes and Statements, to the Localism Agenda and the NPPF document.

- 2.4. During this transitional period the Council has taken the decision to produce a new form of Local Plan which will capture the shift to Localism. The Plan, once adopted will be the principal planning document which will set out the policies to protect natural and built assets, guide future development and also to allocate sites for future housing and employment growth.

- 2.5. The Local Plan will primarily focus development in Ashfield towards locations within or adjoining the main urban areas of Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Sutton-in-Ashfield and Hucknall. These are the larger and more accessible towns. However, given the anticipated level of development required to meet the needs of a growing population, it has been necessary to undertake a review of the Green Belt as part of the process of forming Ashfield's new Local Plan.

- 2.6. A Strategic Green Belt Review for the District (excluding Hucknall) was completed in August 2013 as part of the Local Plan process. However, following the submission of the Local Plan to the Planning Inspector in December 2013, it has been necessary to revisit this work.

- 2.7. The Inspector raised concerns in respect of the approach to the Strategic Green Belt review at the Local Plan exploratory meeting on the 11th March 2014 and also in his subsequent letter dated 26th March 2014. The Inspector's main concerns were based around the following questions:
 - Why are areas identified as making a negligible or no contribution to Green Belt purposes been retained as Green Belt?
 - What are the 'exceptional circumstances' to justify the allocation of Green Belt land for housing in preference to sites which are not in Green Belt?

- Is the Council satisfied that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the plan period, if not, safeguarded land should be identified between the existing urban area and the Green Belt to meet longer term needs beyond the plan period (para 143, NPPF).
- 2.8. This report forms part of this additional work undertaken to address these concerns.
 - 2.9. The Inspector's questions have also raised concerns with the other Greater Nottinghamshire local authorities, namely Broxtowe, Gedling and Nottingham City, as they have similar issues to Ashfield. The Council has a Duty to Co-operate with adjoining Local Authorities and as such, Ashfield's Forward Planning Team has worked with these Authorities to prepare a joint Greater Nottingham and Ashfield Green Belt Assessment Framework (The Framework), a copy of which can be seen in Appendix 2. It is considered that a joint approach will provide a more robust evidence base to support the Local Plan.
 - 2.10. [The Framework](#) was subject to consultation in the autumn of 2014. A full copy of the document, comments received and amendments made to the document as a result of comments received can be viewed on the Councils web site. The appraisals within this Green Belt Review are consistent with this shared Framework.
 - 2.11. As already stated, **this review itself does not determine whether or not land should remain or be excluded from the Green Belt.** It is the role of the District's emerging Local Plan to formally revise Green Belt boundaries and to allocate land for development, having taken into account all relevant planning considerations. More detailed work on sites is conducted in the form of a Strategic Housing Land and Employment Availability Assessment (SHELAA) and a Sustainability Appraisal (SA), which assess potential development sites in terms of planning policy, viability, physical site constraints and sustainable development principles.
 - 2.12. If the development needs of the District can be met without Green Belt release, consideration will still need to be given to whether releasing Green Belt land may produce a more sustainable outcome, for instance, with regard to distribution of development or to meet longer term needs beyond the Plan period.
 - 2.13. This Green Belt Review is not intended to identify existing minor anomalies to the Green Belt boundaries. This has been undertaken previously as a separate exercise (see Green Belt Boundary Technical Paper, December 2015 and its subsequent update in 2021).

3. Planning Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 3.1 The NPPF states that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts and stresses that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belt are their openness and their permanence.
- 3.2 The five purposes of including land in Green Belts are:
- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
 - to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;
 - to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
 - to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
 - to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
- 3.3 Paragraph 140 of the NPPF identifies that, once established in Local Plans, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of the Local Plan. At that time, authorities should consider the Green Belt boundaries having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so that they should be capable of enduring beyond the plan period.
- 3.4 Paragraph 142 of the NPPF states that:
- “When drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries, the need to promote sustainable patterns of development should be taken into account. Strategic policy-making authorities should consider the consequences for sustainable development of channelling development towards urban areas inside the Green Belt boundary, towards towns and villages inset within the Green Belt or towards locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary.”*
- 3.5 The NPPF in paragraph 143 provides that when defining boundaries, local planning authorities should:
- ensure consistency with the development plan’s strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development;
 - not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open;
 - where necessary, identify areas safeguarded land between the urban area and the Green Belt, in order to meet longer-term development needs stretching well beyond the plan period;

- make clear that the safeguarded land is not allocated for development at the present time. Planning permission for the permanent development of 'safeguarded' land should only be granted following an update to a plan which proposes the development;
- be able to demonstrate that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the development plan period; and
- define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.

3.6 While the amount of land required to satisfy existing identified housing, employment and associated development requirements are the driving force behind the need to review Green Belt boundaries, in order to ensure any new boundaries can maintain a degree of permanence, they should ideally not be drawn excessively tightly around existing built up areas. Linked to this, future consideration will be given as to the appropriateness of excluding other land from the Green Belt as part of a boundary review to allow for longer term development needs, as advised by Government guidance. This can aid the 'permanence' of new or revised Green Belt boundaries, and prevent the need for further early review of its boundaries. In some cases, this review may recommend that some areas of land may be 'safeguarded', in line with paragraph 143 of the NPPF.

4. The Framework

4.1. Ashfield, Broxtowe, Gedling and Nottingham City Councils have worked jointly to prepare evidence to support their emerging Local Plans, including a Green Belt Assessment Framework. The appraisals in the following appendices are consistent with this shared Framework:

- Appendix 3 – Kirkby and Annesley,
- Appendix 4 – Selston,
- Appendix 5 – Jacksdale,
- Appendix 6 – Brinsley,
- Appendix 7 – Underwood, and
- Appendix 8 – Hucknall.
- Appendix 9 – Junction 27, M1 Motorway

(N.B. If you are viewing this document online the Appendices are contained in separate links.)

Overall Approach

- 4.2. The Strategic Green Belt Review in Ashfield has been undertaken in two stages, as set out below.

Assessment 1

- 4.3. The Green Belt land surrounding all settlements (see Appendix 1) and land around Junction 27 of the M1 Motorway was divided into broad areas (such as north, south, east and west of the settlement) based on their similar characteristics in terms of size, structure and form. The boundaries of these broad areas were chosen using Ordnance Survey maps, topographical maps, historical maps, aerial photographs and professional judgment.
- 4.4. These broad areas were then assessed using both the Assessment Criteria (figure 1 below), and Assessment Matrix (figure 2 below) which are based on the five purposes of the Green Belt as set out in the NPPF (see paragraph 3.2). The assessments were made using Ordnance Survey maps, topographical maps, historical maps, aerial photographs, professional judgment and site visits.
- 4.5. Assessment 1 therefore gives a broad overview of the performance of the Green Belt at a strategic level. The joint Framework enables authorities to remove a stage 1 area from further assessment at this point if it is deemed appropriate. For instance, if the whole area is found to be of significantly high importance in respect of all five purposes of Green Belt, or because no suitable defensible boundaries exist which would allow for part of the area to be removed without significant detriment to the overall purpose.

Assessment 2

- 4.6. The broad areas from Assessment 1 were then divided into smaller sites (where necessary), using defined physical feature such as roads, railways, watercourses, tree belts, woodlands, ridgelines or field boundaries to determine suitable sites for assessment. This was done in the first instance using Ordnance Survey maps, topographical maps, historical maps, aerial photographs and professional judgement.
- 4.7. Sites were then assessed again, using the Criteria (figure 1 below) and Matrix (figure 2 below), in the same way as at Assessment 1. An integral part of Assessment 2 was an on-site appraisal. In some circumstances it was necessary to amend a site's boundary to reflect what was actually on the ground following the on-site appraisal.

Overall Scores

- 4.8. Each site assessed has been given an overall score ranging between 4 (low) and 20 (high). For ease of reference these overall scores are shown on maps which accompany the Green Belt Assessments in Appendices 3 – 8.
- 4.9. It should be noted that whilst a site may have a low overall score, it may score particularly high for one single Green Belt purpose. In these instances, it could be considered to be of sufficient importance on that one single purpose for the site to be retained as Green Belt. This is particularly important for the following Green Belt purposes:
- Check the unrestricted sprawl of settlements.
 - Prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another.
 - Preserve the setting and special character of historic settlements.

Figure 1: Assessment Criteria

NPPF Purpose of the Green Belt	Assessment Criteria
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas ⁽¹⁾	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which the site/location is contained by existing built-up areas, and therefore the extent to which development would 'round off' these areas. • The extent to which the site/location is contained by physical features which can act as defensible boundaries, e.g. motorways, roads, railways, watercourses, tree belts, woodlands and field boundaries. • The extent to which the site/location appears to be visually connected with existing built-up areas, taking into account topographical features.
To prevent neighbouring towns ⁽¹⁾ merging into one another	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which development would reduce the size of the gap between settlements. • The extent to which development would result in the perception of reducing the gap between settlements.
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which the site/location contains inappropriate development. • The extent to which the character of the site/location is 'urban fringe' as opposed to 'open countryside'.
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns ⁽¹⁾	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The degree of harm that may be caused to the setting or special character of the settlement, taking into account designated and non-designated heritage assets such as Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Monuments or important heritage features.
To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	It is considered that all land in the Green Belt assists in urban regeneration to the same extent and therefore no criteria are proposed to distinguish between the values of various sites/locations.

⁽¹⁾ *Note: Because of the nature and locations of the built-up areas in Ashfield and Greater Nottingham, the Councils consider that this purpose should relate to all settlements (rather than only to 'large built-up areas' and 'towns/historic towns'), as listed in the 'Accessible Settlements Study for Greater Nottingham February 2010' (see Appendix 1 in The Framework). Settlements will be considered on the basis of their built form and not on the basis of town or parish boundaries.*

Figure 2: Assessment Matrix

The Matrix provides a grading system for the assessment of sites (as set out in paragraph 5.4 of The Framework – see Appendix 2) and will be used at both assessment stages. Higher scoring sites are generally the most important in Green Belt terms.

(NB. The term ‘site’ is used for consistency and includes broad locations)

Purpose / Impact	★	★★	★★★	★★★★	★★★★★
Check the unrestricted sprawl of settlements	The site has two or more boundaries adjoining a settlement or rounds off an existing settlement. The site is well contained by strong physical features which can act as defensible boundaries and does not extend over topographical features.		The site has two or more boundaries adjoining a settlement but is not well contained and there are weak or no features to act as defensible boundaries.		The site does not adjoin a settlement, or has only one boundary with a settlement, or forms a long limb into open countryside. There are weak or no features to act as defensible boundaries. The site is visually disconnected from any settlement.
Prevent neighbouring settlements from merging into one another	Development would not reduce the size of the gap between settlements, or would result in only very limited reduction.		Development would result in a moderate reduction in the size of a gap between settlements.		Development would result in a complete or virtually complete merging of settlements.
Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	The site includes a large amount of existing inappropriate developments which have caused a significant degree of encroachment.		The site includes some existing inappropriate developments which have caused some encroachment.		The site does not have any inappropriate developments and therefore no encroachment.
Preserve the setting and special character of historic settlements	The site will have no adverse impact on one or more conservation areas or designated or non-designated heritage assets associated with settlements.		The site will have a moderate adverse impact on one or more conservation areas or designated or non-designated heritage assets associated with settlements.		The site will have a significant adverse impact on one or more conservation areas or designated or non-designated heritage assets associated with settlements.
Assist in urban regeneration	It is considered that all sites in the Green Belt assist in urban regeneration. This is not considered to be a matter of difference between Green Belt sites and therefore this Green Belt purpose is not scored as part of the Framework.				

