

Northumberland Local Plan
Core Strategy

**Morpeth Outer Green Belt Boundary
Report**

Published October 2013

Purpose of the Report

1. This report sets out the background, methodology and emerging approach in relation to defining the detailed outer Green Belt boundaries for the extension around Morpeth.
2. This report seeks to define the most appropriate boundary by testing a range of alternatives, which will seek to safeguard the countryside from encroachment, protect the setting and special character of Morpeth and prevent settlement coalescence in south east Northumberland while assisting in urban regeneration.
3. Member input has been sought on the methodology, assessment and the emerging options for the outer Green Belt boundary.

Background

4. The general extent of the Green Belt in Northumberland is already established. However, the Core Strategy will be required to establish the detailed boundary of the Green Belt around Morpeth. This report considers the methodology and approach to defining the outer boundary.

Draft Methodology

STEP 1	Define broad Outer Green Belt policy context
STEP 2	Core Strategy progress to date and considerations from consultations
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STEP 4	Constraints Mapping: Identification and mapping of relevant strategic constraints individually and collectively to show total constraint
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STEP 7	Brief summary of the landscape, topography and cultural influences of each sector relationship to existing Green Belt
STEP 8	Assess appropriateness of suggested boundaries as realistic alternative options for a Green Belt extension
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STEP 10	Justify boundary approach
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STEP 12	Prepare and finalise detailed boundary
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Background Assessment and approach to consideration of the Outer Green Belt

STEP 1

Define broad Outer Green Belt policy context

National Policy

5. The NPPF supports the use of Green Belt to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open, as set out in previous national guidance, and sets out five purposes in paragraph 80:
 - to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
 - to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
 - to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
 - to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
 - to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
6. NPPF requires that Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, the boundaries needing to have permanence enduring beyond the plan period.

Role and Purpose of the established Northumberland Green Belt

7. The role and purpose of the Green Belt in the North East was set out in Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) in 2002. The policy included the following points in relation to the role of the Tyne and Wear Green Belt in Northumberland which aimed to:
 - safeguard the countryside from encroachment and check the unrestricted sprawl of Tyneside and Wearside;
 - check urban sprawl and prevent merging of various settlements including: Newcastle upon Tyne with Ponteland, Newcastle International Airport, or Cramlington; and North Tyneside with Cramlington or Blyth;
 - preserve the settings and special character including Hexham and Corbridge; and
 - thereby assist the regeneration of the urban areas contained by, and coalfield areas that lie beyond, the Green Belt.
8. The RPG also confirmed the principle of the extension of the Green Belt around Morpeth, and confirmed that the purpose of this was to:
 - protect the countryside around Morpeth from encroachment;
 - prevent the sprawl and coalescence of the town and neighbouring smaller settlements;
 - protect the character of the historic town; and
 - focus development on priority areas for regeneration.
9. Priority areas for regeneration were seen as urban areas within the Green Belt and the SE Northumberland coalfield beyond the Green Belt.
10. Policy S5 of the Northumberland Structure Plan (2005) established the general extent of the Green Belt extension around Morpeth, of which the detailed boundary was defined in the former Blyth Valley and Wansbeck Districts through subsequent Local Plan policy.

11. Subsequently the North East of England Plan Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) replaced RPG1 and policies across the region including all those in the Northumberland County and National Park Joint Structure Plan First Alteration (2005), with the exception of Structure Plan Policy S5. This was retained as stand-alone policy in the interests of maintaining a satisfactory strategic planning framework for the preparation of Local Development Documents.
12. RSS highlighted that the role of the Green Belt was to continue to safeguard the countryside from encroachment and check the unrestricted sprawl of Tyne and Wear. Specifically, in relation to Northumberland it stated that it should:
 - Prevent the merging of: Newcastle upon Tyne with Ponteland, Newcastle International Airport, or Cramlington; North Tyneside with Cramlington or Blyth;
 - Preserve the setting and special character of Hexham, Corbridge and Morpeth;
 - Assist in urban regeneration in the city-regions by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land; and
 - Maintain the broad extent of the Green Belt with detailed boundaries to be defined in relevant Local Development Frameworks, around Morpeth.
13. Although the RSS has now been revoked, Policy S5 of the Northumberland Structure Plan remains in place because it enables the extension of the Green Belt around Morpeth and so plays an important role in preserving the cultural and environmental heritage of the local area.

Structure Plan Policy S5 - Background

Saved Structure Plan Policy S5

An extension to the Green Belt will extend from the existing boundary northwards to lie:

- to the west of Netherwitton, Hartburn and Belsay;
- north of Longhorsley and west of Widdrington Station, excluding the Stobswood Opencast site;
- east of Pegswood;
- west of Ashington, Guide Post, Bedlington and the A1068; and
- east of Bothal, Hepscott, Nedderton and Hartford Bridge.

Precise boundaries, including those around settlements, should be defined in Local Plans having particular regard to the maintenance of the role of Morpeth as defined in Policy S7 and to the sequential approach in Policy S11.

14. There has always been much debate about defining detailed boundaries around Morpeth. The Structure Plan Examination in Public (EiP) Panel Report (2004) states that as part of the examination there was “significant debate... about how far the extension should extend in various directions”.
15. The boundary that was initially proposed in the draft First Alteration was:

“to the east of the A696, Belsay, Hartburn and Netherwitton; south of Longhorsley and road C117, and south and west of Widdrington Station; east of Pegswood and west of the East Coast Mainline; west of Ashington, Guidepost, Bedlington and the A1068; east of Bothal, Hepscott, Nedderton and Hartford Bridge.”
16. As part of the examination, the main issues considered were:

- to the north whether to include Longhorsley and the Stobswood open cast near Widdrington Station; and
 - to the west whether to include Netherwitton, Hartburn and Belsay.
17. Apart from some need for clarification there was general satisfaction with the proposed boundaries to the east.
 18. To the north, in relation to Longhorsley, the EiP Panel Report considered that, while robust local policies would afford some protection against development pressure, a Green Belt would guarantee permanent openness of the land around the village. However it was considered that Green Belt washed over the Stobswood open cast site would impede remediation and potential regeneration benefits.
 19. To the west, the EiP report concluded there was general agreement at that time that Belsay, with its proximity to Newcastle and the tightness of the existing Green Belt around Ponteland, was subject to development pressure. Whether this is still the case is hard to demonstrate because, while the existence of the established Green Belt extension may have deterred some developers, there is no clear evidence for measuring the effect of having applied Green Belt principles across the 'general extent' of the proposed Green Belt. The EiP report highlighted that views were divided as to whether the small villages of Netherwitton and Hartburn should be included. The EiP report concluded that while these villages are further from the main commuting routes in to Morpeth and Tyneside and were to a degree protected by robust Local Plan policies, they might in the long term become more attractive propositions.

Emerging Northumberland Core Strategy

20. The Northumberland Core Strategy, once adopted, will be the overarching spatial plan for the County, guiding future development and land use planning decisions to 2031. The Core Strategy aims to;
 - maintain and create sustainable communities throughout Northumberland; to support health, social and cultural well-being for all including responding to the needs and opportunities created by an ageing population and protect; and
 - enhance Northumberland's distinctive and valued natural, historic and built environment.
21. Northumberland's Green Belt, adjoining that in North Tyneside, Newcastle, Gateshead and County Durham delivers a number of Core Strategy objectives;
 - to place sustainable development and responsible future economic growth at the heart of planning decisions in Northumberland.
 - to manage the prudent use of Northumberland's natural resources, including minerals, energy, land, existing built fabric and water while producing less waste and minimising adverse impacts on communities and the environment.
22. The role of the Green Belt in relation to the Northumberland Core Strategy is to help direct development to the most sustainable locations whilst ensuring that development requirements can be met within and beyond the plan period.

STEP 2

Core Strategy progress to date and considerations from consultations

23. The Council's Core Strategy Issues and Options Consultation Document, May 2012, set out two options for the detailed outer boundary, which followed the wording of the Policy S5 boundary as closely as possible. The consultation responses indicated a majority supported the proposed options, particularly the furthest west option (option 2), but there was also significant debate through the consultation as to whether the Green Belt is 'new' or 'an extension'. Some responses suggested that the extension required justification as new Green Belt in accordance with NPPF paragraph 82 and questioned why normal development management policies are not adequate to control development. However, the Council believes that the extension around Morpeth is not new Green Belt, it was established through regional policy, culminating in the saved Northumberland Structure Plan Policy S5. Therefore, through the Core Strategy the Council is currently defining boundaries as described in NPPF paragraph 85 and does not need to demonstrate a requirement for new Green Belt.
24. Other Issues and Options consultation responses expressed concerns over the effect on sustainable development and housing delivery and suggested that the Green Belt extension around Morpeth was unnecessary, would restrict rural economic activity, diversification and tourism development and threaten economic viability.
25. The majority of the local population however, were supportive of the Green Belt approach in order to safeguard rural character and distinctiveness and to prevent harmful encroachment and merger with neighbouring settlements.
26. The Council is currently carrying out population and economic growth modelling to project where and how much development land is required over the plan period. Given the strategic importance of the extension of the Green Belt around Morpeth, a number of alternative detailed boundary options are being explored which it is considered will still fulfil the NPPF objectives of Green Belt and the main principles of the S5 policy.
27. The boundary of the Green Belt extension around Morpeth will also have regard to phase two of the A1 to South East Northumberland Strategic Link Road, the Morpeth Northern Bypass. One of the purposes of the road being to provide better access to promote economic regeneration and improve social inclusion.

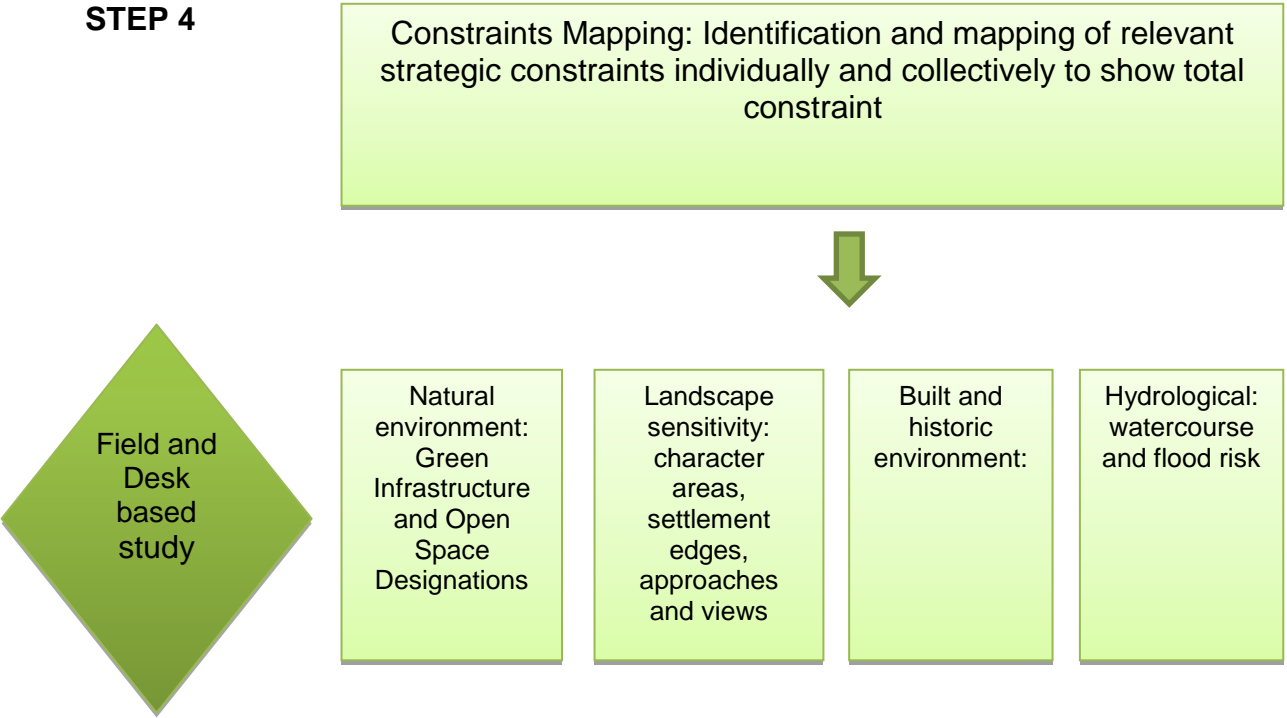
STEP 3

Explanation of Approach

28. The options for the outer boundary that were consulted upon as part of the Issues and Options consultation followed the general extent defined within adopted policy. Given the length of time that has elapsed since adoption of Policy S5 and the work that is informing the emerging Core Strategy, it was concluded that a range of alternative boundary options to policy S5 should be

tested against the established purposes of Green Belt and the vision for the emerging Core Strategy. This report provides explanation of this approach including both detailed methodology and the assessment used in order to reach a conclusion.

- 29. An alternative tighter outer boundary option to that set out within Policy S5 has been proposed to enable an assessment as to whether this can deliver the long established purposes of the strategic extension around Morpeth. In addition, given the difference in distance and scale between the Policy S5 and tighter boundaries, a ‘medium option’ has also been considered.
- 30. All boundary options proposed have been assessed against relevant local and national criteria and ultimately following assessment a preferred approach; either a continuation of policy S5 or an alternative tighter outer boundary around Morpeth will be consulted upon as part of the next round of engagement on the Core Strategy.



- 31. The map in Figure 1 shows all the natural and built environmental constraints that have been considered in defining and assessing potential outer Green Belt boundaries.

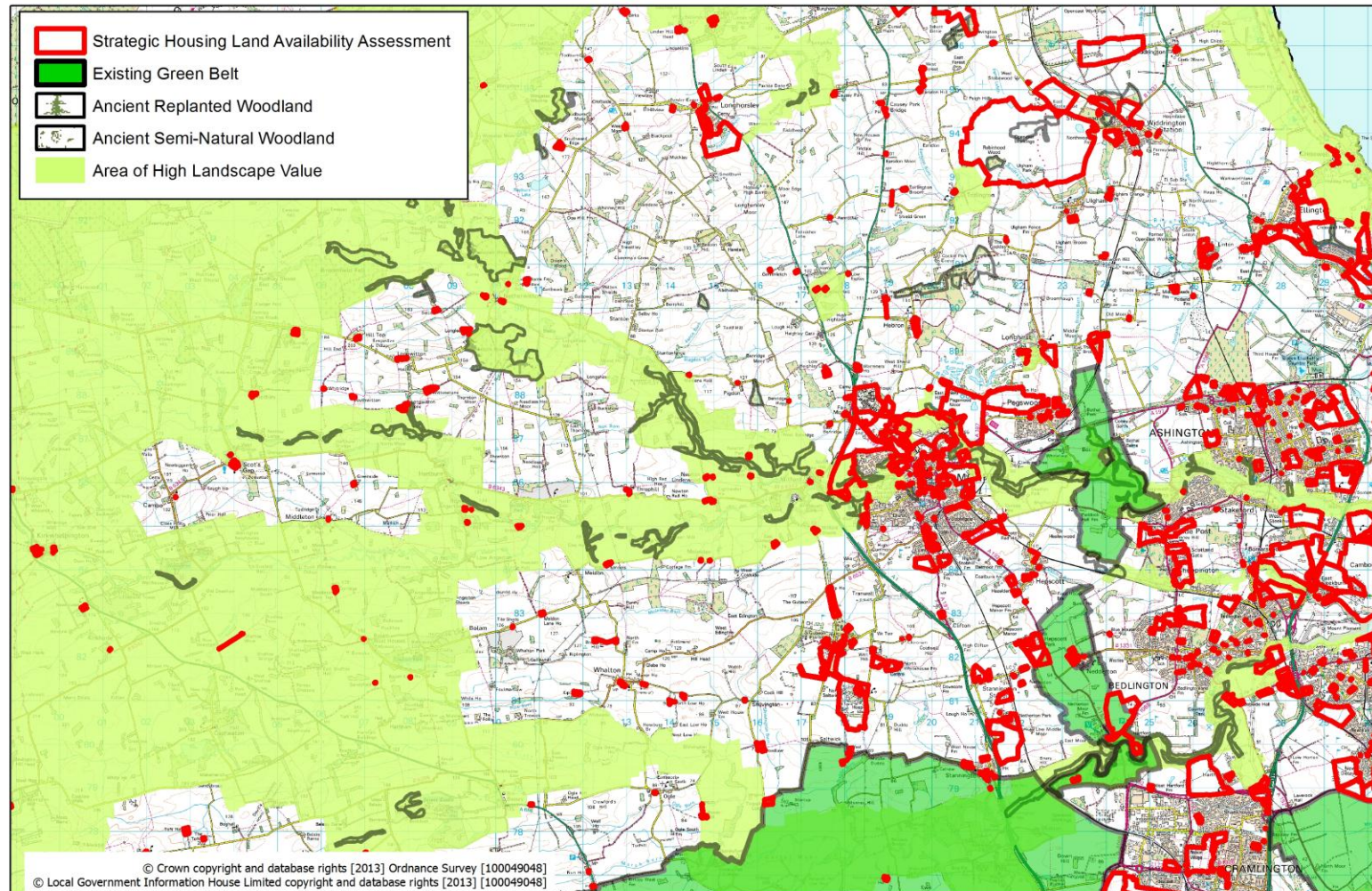


Figure 1: Total Constraint Mapping

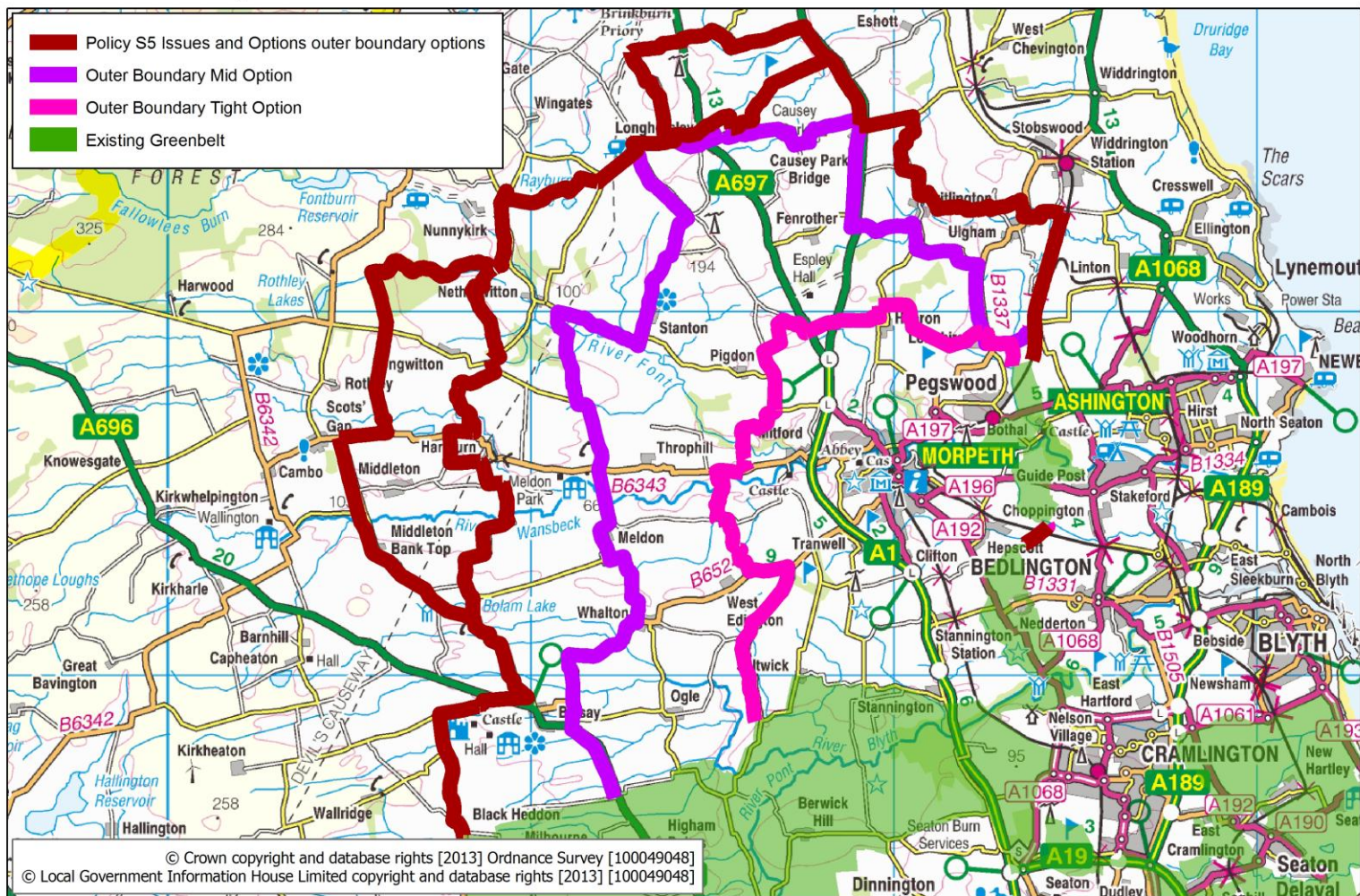


Figure 2: Outer Green Belt Boundary Options



Image 1: Policy S5 boundary option following well defined boundary along B6309 near western junction with existing Green Belt

STEP 5

Define draft alternative boundary options

1. Policy S5 option1
2. Policy S5 option2
3. Medium option
4. Tighter option.

32. Figure 2 shows the initial draft boundary options, listed above, that are tested in this report.
33. Having regard to the purposes of the Northumberland Green Belt, the outer boundary options were defined to:
 - protect the countryside around Morpeth from encroachment;
 - prevent the sprawl and coalescence of the town and neighbouring smaller settlements;
 - protect the character of the historic town; and
 - focus development on priority areas for regeneration
34. Having regard to NPPF paragraph 85, the Green Belt extension outer boundary options were defined clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent. To establish well defined boundaries the proposed outer boundaries mainly followed B and C class roads that

matched the description in the policy text. However to maintain the general direction, for example where crossing a river or to provide reasonable separation near settlement boundaries, in some areas the proposed boundary followed unclassified roads, private tracks or field boundaries.

35. The description of all boundary options has been considered in four sections – southern, western, northern and eastern. The southern sector included land south and south west of Morpeth that lies immediately adjacent to the existing Green Belt, which the extension was to join and therefore no boundary was defined in the south sector but western, northern and eastern boundary options are defined below.
36. It should be noted that the descriptions below of the Policy S5 boundary options appear to be more detailed but this merely reflects the fact that the Policy S5 boundaries would encompass a larger geographic area than the other options and therefore the boundary itself is longer.

Policy S5 option 1

37. The west boundary of the existing Green Belt follows the B6309 “west of Netherwitton, Hartburn and Belsay” turning north onto ‘B’, ‘C’ and private roads, crossing the Hart Burn at Wittonstone. From ‘C’ roads between Longwitton and Netherwitton the route leaves the road to follow field boundaries and a bridleway past Bellion to just north of Netherwitton and onto Longhorsley.
38. “North of Longhorsley”, the northern boundary follows field boundaries parallel to the Linden Burn before re-joining ‘C’ roads to just south of Burgham and onto the A1. Turning onto ‘C’ and unclassified roads past Earsdon and “west of Widdrington Station, excluding the Stobswood Opencast site” the boundary follows field boundaries north of Ulgham to meet the B1337.
39. “East of Pegswood; west of Ashington, Guide Post, Bedlington and the A1068; and east of Bothal, Hepscott, Nedderton and Hartford Bridge” the eastern boundary follows B and C roads to meet the East Coast Mainline Railway and the existing Green Belt at Brocks Hill. From that point the eastern boundary follows the west edge of the Green Belt defined in the Wansbeck Local Plan however it was necessary to define a small part of the eastern boundary between the River Sleekburn and Hepscott Burn, along a short length along the Hepscott Burn, also a Civil Parish boundary and the former Wansbeck District boundary.

Policy S5 option 2

40. In order to optimise the use of enduring boundaries and to provide a wider buffer between the edge of the Green Belt and the settlements of Hartburn, Netherwitton and Longhorsley, Policy S5 options 2 suggests alternative western and northern boundary options, which was intended to make more use of roads. However in order to follow roads for the full length of the western boundary it would be necessary to cross into the former Alnwick District, for example from Scot’s Gap to Rothley, however Green Belt extension was only ever discussed in relation to the former Castle Morpeth Borough and there is no historic justification for extending the Green Belt into the former Alnwick District. Therefore in these circumstances the Policy S5 option 2 boundary sections

follow stream and field boundaries that make up the legally defined Civil Parish and former District boundaries.

41. The western option 2 boundary diverges from option 1 just south of Bolam Lake, heading northward onto the B3643 near Scot's Gap. While every attempt was made to follow roads it is still necessary for the boundary to cross water courses and so just over 1km east on the B6343 option 2 turns north onto a track which crosses the Hart Burn just north west of Hartburn Grange. The option 2 boundary then heads northwards and follows field and wood boundaries that mark the boundary between Rothley and Netherwitton Parishes and the former Castle Morpeth western boundary. From there the option 2 boundary follows the Ewesley Burn eastward along the boundary between Netherwitton Parish and Nunnykirk Parish to the north and, still following the Parish and former District boundaries, the option 2 boundary converges with option 1 just north of Netherwitton.
42. The northern boundary option 2 follows roads that remain entirely within the former Castle Morpeth District. From the junction of the C1136 just west of Longhorsley with an unclassified road that heads north past Viewlaw, option 2 follows the unclassified road north to its junction with the C135 before crossing the A697 and continuing east on the C133 and C134 to the A1. Option 2 follows the A1 south for just over 1km before converging with Option 1 as it emerges just south of Burgham Park.

Medium Option

43. This boundary follows a shorter route than the Policy S5 options described above and the western section of this boundary option starts where the A696 emerges from the existing Green Belt near Belsay. Passing east of Belsay this boundary option follows C roads past Whalton and Meldon and onto Netherwitton.
44. The northern section of the mid option boundary, from east of Netherwitton, follows C roads through Stanton to just west of Longhorsley and on through the village. Emerging on the east side of the village the northern mid option boundary follows C and unclassified roads through Causey Park to meet the A1. Following the A1 this boundary option turns east onto C roads past Tritlington and onto Longhirst on the B1337. From here the boundary meets the and on the C125 to meet the East Coast Mainline Railway and the edge of the existing Green Belt, defined by the former Wansbeck District Council.
45. The eastern mid option boundary, having mainly been defined by former District boundaries, remains the same as the Policy S5 boundary proposed through the Core Strategy Issues and Options.

Tighter Option

46. The western section of the tight option boundary joins the existing Green Belt on C roads just north of Kirkley Hall college campus to meet the B6524 north of Gubeon and Tranwell Woods. Following field boundaries between East Edington and West Coldside to cross the Rivers Wansbeck and Font, this option follows a short section of unclassified road east of Molesden and along the Molesden Burn to the River Wansbeck. Following a track from the river this

option follows the B6343 eastward before joining another track to Newton Park via a ford on the River Font at Newton Mill.

47. Through further consultation detailed definition of the boundary options may give rise to alternative routes over certain sections for example from Gubeon, to avoid the less distinctive field boundary and watercourses, this section could follow the B6524 to the C149 junction, through Mitford and onto the B6343. However, northwards from this point, there are no obvious boundary alternatives by road to cross the Font valley and this option might have to be disregarded as it would bring the outer edge of the Green Belt within clear view of the edge of Morpeth. In another example, from Newton Park this boundary option might either follow the C road to Benridge Moor from where it would either double back north of Heighley Gate Garden centre to the A697 via Whinney Lane or, parallel with Heighley Gate, it might cross fields along a footpath and field boundaries to Lough House and Whinney Lane.
48. The northern tight boundary follows the C road from the A697 to the A1 at Hebron, following field boundaries north of the church and onto a short section of unclassified road north of the settlement, so that Hebron would be included in the Green Belt. At the Hebron Reservoir this boundary option follows a track on the south edge of a block of woodland and across a golf course to join the B1337 just north of Longhirst. Following Longhirst's existing, eastern settlement boundary this option boundary joins the C road before following the Brocks Burn southward to meet the existing Green Belt just north east of Pegswood.
49. The eastern tight option boundary, having mainly been defined by former District boundaries, remains the same as the Policy S5 boundary proposed through the Core Strategy Issues and Options.



Image 2: Hebron from ridgeline to north of Morpeth

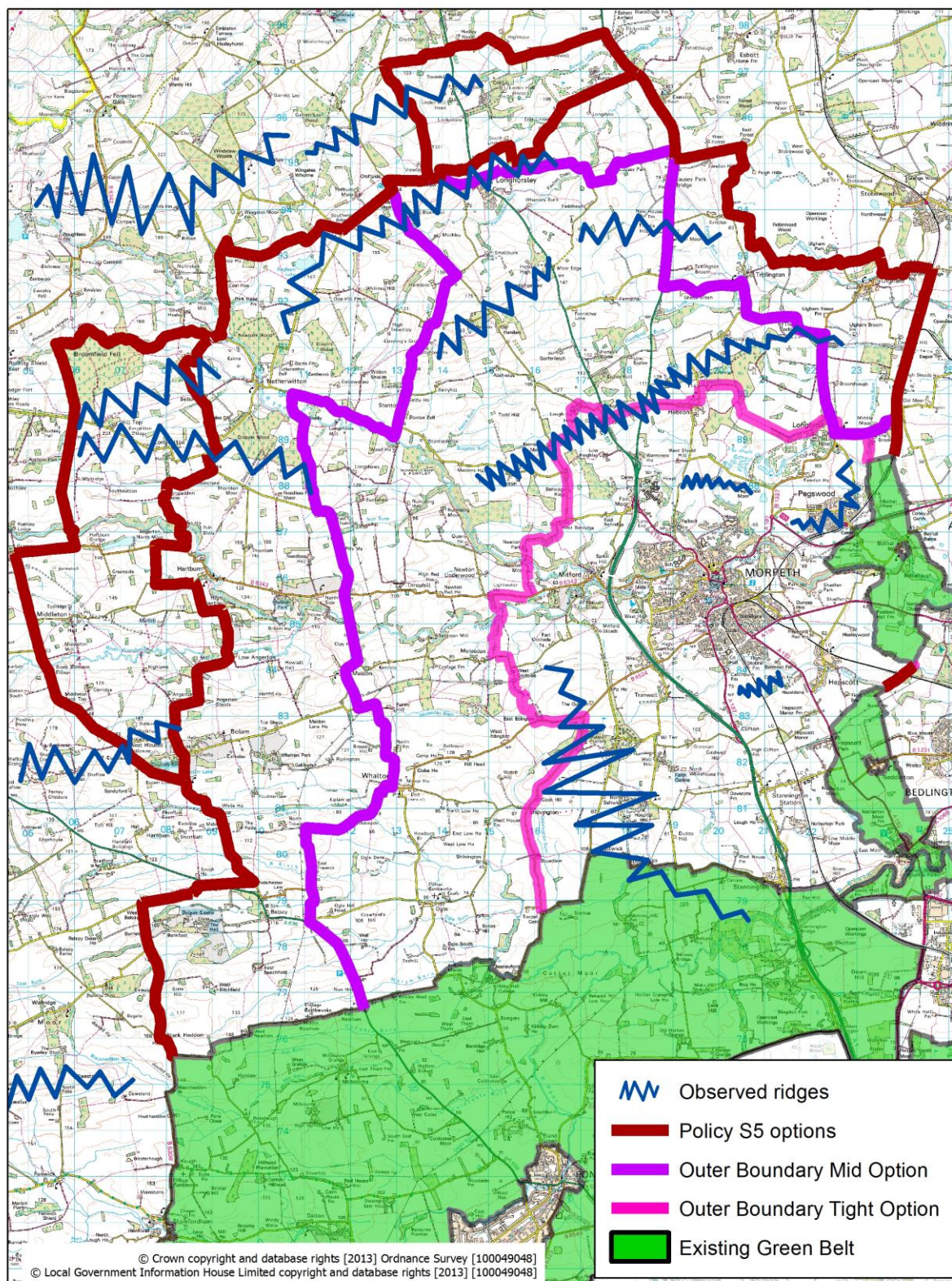


Figure 3: Field Survey

STEP 6

Field Survey and desk based assessment of boundary options

1. Policy S5 options
2. Medium option
3. Tighter option

50. Following desk top study of Ordnance Survey maps a number of visits were made along potential outer Green Belt boundary routes and photographs of the western Policy S5 options, from April 2011 and June 2013, are used in this report. Figure 3 is a composite map showing topographical observations from field surveys and Ordnance Survey maps.

Policy S5 options

51. Field survey during 2011 in the western sector, showed that the mainly 'rolling lowland farmland'¹ landscape character area around Belsay is not open but comprises an intimate landscape characterised by fields and estate woodlands. There are occasional longer views but those of Morpeth are blocked by woodland along the River Wansbeck or by a ridge of higher land from Mitford to Saltwick, as shown in Image 3 looking east across Belsay. The Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment, 2010, defines the area around Hartburn as 'lowland farmed ridges' specifically the 'Longwitton Ridge', which has an undulating landform that varies between exposed and sheltered areas. It became evident from field survey that views of Morpeth from this are also obscured, however there are some open views north across the river valleys, as shown in Image 4.
52. As discussed in Step 5 above, it was intended that boundary routes should follow roads wherever possible but the field survey demonstrated that suitable routes across watercourses are limited. The 'broad lowland valley' landscape character area of the River Font, near Netherwitton, forms a lower undulating landscape from where views of Morpeth are obscured by the start of the 'Wingate Ridge' and the 'lowland rolling farmland' landscape character area, which forms a ridge from Pigdon past Heighley Gate.
53. The northern Policy S5 boundary options follows routes just north of Longhorsley and Linden Hall/Burgham, which are characterised by two ridges, between 100 and 120 metres above sea level. From field survey it is clear that the views from Longhorsley towards Morpeth are obscured by the higher ridge of Longhorsley Moor, 140-190 metres above sea level.
54. Crossing behind the Longhorsley Moor ridge the northern Policy S5 boundary moves across between Ulgham and Widdrington Station onto the 'coastal coalfield farmland' character area, which as the name suggests is more closely related to open views across the coastal plain than to Morpeth in the River Wansbeck valley. However it should be noted that the coalfield farmland landscape character flows over Pegswood to meet the north east edge of Morpeth.

¹ Northumberland Landscape Character Assessment, Part A Landscape Classification, prepared for Northumberland County Council by Land Use Consultants, August 2010



Image 3: Policy S5 boundary option looking east across Belsay to the Mitford to Saltwick ridge



Image 4: open view across Font valley from near Longwitton

Medium option

55. This option was identified to provide an intermediary choice, not as extensive as the Policy S5 options or as close to Morpeth as the tighter option. The western mid option boundary lies within the same 'lowland rolling farmland' character area as the Policy S5 route and travelling in the undulating landscape it is difficult to orientate oneself between the small settlements such as Whalton and Meldon, which this option cuts through. While this option is closer to Morpeth, long views are still obscured by the Mitford to Saltwick ridge discussed in relation to the Policy S5 option and shown in Image 5.

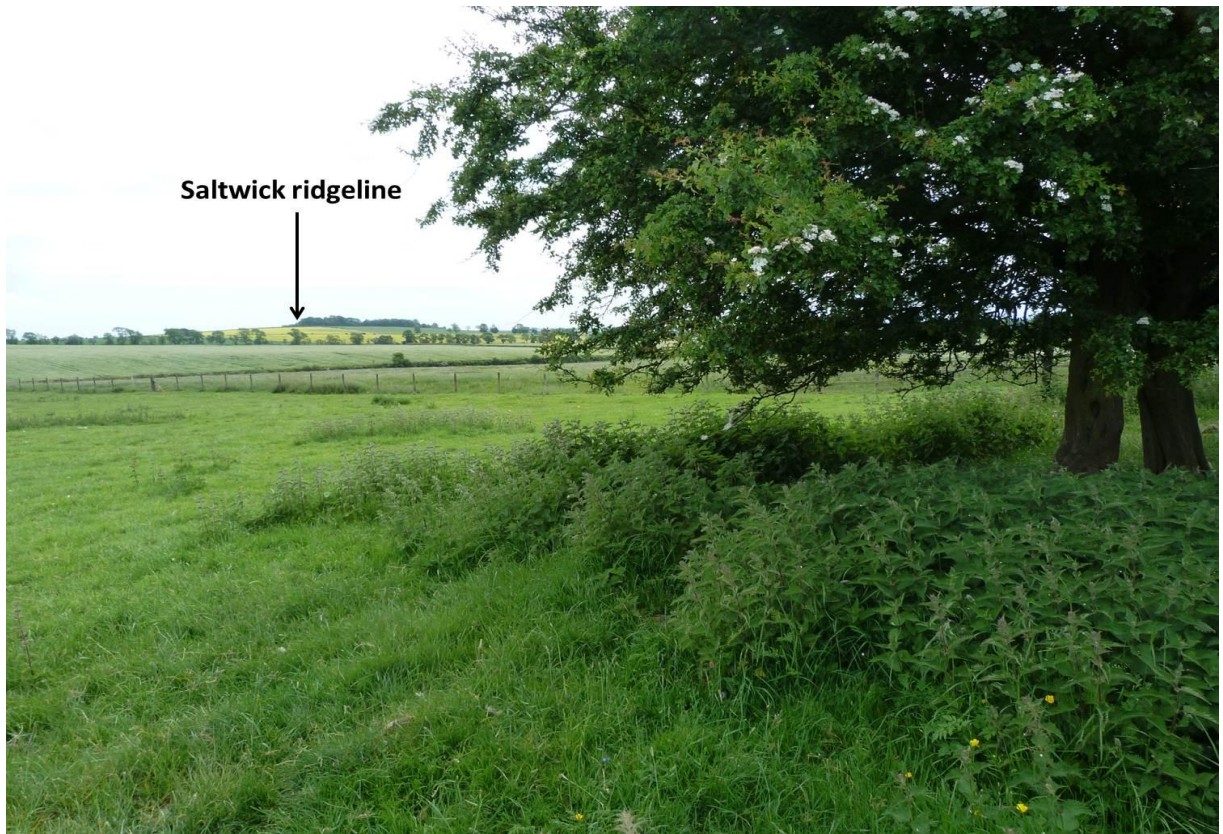


Image 5: Medium option boundary looking east towards Saltwick ridge



Image 6: view from ridgeline at Heighley Gate out towards Morpeth

The mid option crosses into the 'broad lowland valley' landscape character area of the River Font, near Netherwitton, slightly closer to Morpeth than the Policy S5 options. However, due to the undulating landscape, views of Morpeth are still obscured by the start of the

‘Wingate Ridge’ and the ‘lowland rolling farmland’ landscape character area, which forms a ridge from Pigdon past Heighley Gate, shown in Image 6.

- 56. Image 8. The northern mid option emerges from behind the ridge to meet the tighter option discussed below and the existing Green Belt east of Longhirst.
- 57. The medium option passes through the middle of the rural hinterland of Morpeth and, a boundary along this route does not functionally relate to any topographical features or landuse changes.



Image 7: Looking north from Morpeth bypass route towards Espley, Hebron and Cockle Park ridgeline



Image 8: Cockle Park ridge from north

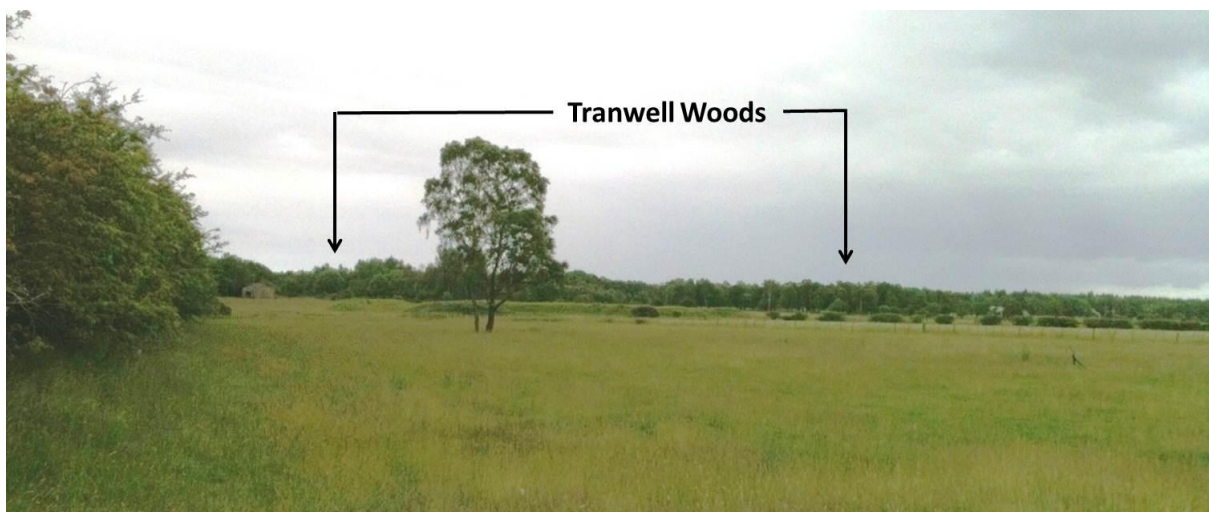


Image 9: Looking east to the woods between Tranwell Airfield and Morpeth

Tighter option

58. The map in Figure 3 includes the findings of a field survey work carried in June 2013 and a number of photographs taken then are used in this report.
59. The western tighter option boundary, which meets the existing Green Belt west of Saltwick lies in the same 'lowland rolling farmland' character area as the other options and just behind the Mitford to Saltwick ridge that obscures views into Morpeth. Unlike Morpeth, the Tyne and Wear conurbation is clearly visible, stretching out along the horizon from near Saltwick. The land between this ridge and Morpeth is open with no other visual constraints other than the A1 trunk road embankments.



Image 10: the B6524 into Morpeth past the pharmaceutical factory

60. The field survey looked at Gubeon and Tranwell and found that the view towards Morpeth, across the former airfield at Tranwell, were obscured by the continuation of the ridge and by woodland plantations at Tranwell. However closer to Morpeth between Tranwell and Glororum the views opened up with the pharmaceutical factory clearly visible as shown in Image 9 and Image 10.
61. Outside the tighter option boundary at West Edlington and on the boundary at West Coldside the longer views, contained by rising land at The Gubeon, were found to be oriented towards the north and therefore not related to the setting of Morpeth. However closer to Morpeth, within the tighter boundary near Mitford Steads and on the B6524 the views showed a much clearer relationship to the lower land around, and setting of, Morpeth as shown in Image 11.



Image 11: Tighter boundary option looking across the A1 from near Mitford

62. Tributary burns and the Rivers Font and Wansbeck converge at Mitford, which is similar in character to the topography of west Morpeth, however the wooded river valleys obscure the view of Morpeth from this 'broad lowland valley' landscape character area.
63. To the north the tighter boundary option rises onto another clearly defined ridge, which, like the Mitford to Saltwick ridge, forms a lip of the valley floor bowl that Morpeth sits in. The ridge which stretches from Pigdon past Heighley Gate and Hebron to Cockle Park, provides long views towards Morpeth and defines the openness of the countryside around the town. The long views into Morpeth are shown in Image 6 from Heighley Gate and Image 2 from Hebron and the obscuring effect of this ridge is shown from view points around Cockle Park, outside the tighter boundary. From these viewpoints outside the boundary, the longer views also show a clear link with the coastal area and Lynemouth rather than with Morpeth to the south as shown in Image 12.



Image 12: north east from The Cockles to Lynemouth

64. The final section of the tighter boundary crosses what appears as a plateau of reclaimed land around Longhirst before meeting the existing Green Belt north east of Pegswood. The openness of this area around the north of Morpeth is demonstrated from the viewpoints across to Morpeth from Pegswood and the across the proposed Morpeth northern bypass, with the ridge at Hebron in the background as shown in Image 7.

STEP 7

Brief summary of the landscape, topography, cultural, social and economic influences of each sector and relationship to existing Green Belt

1. South sector
2. East sector
3. North sector
4. West sector

65. The sectors above all refer to Figure 3. Having looked at landscape character, topography and views in relation to Green Belt outer boundary options in some detail, this step summarises the landscape and topography on a sector by sector basis and provides an opportunity to combine cultural, social and

economic influences. It also addresses the relationship of each sector to existing Green Belt.

South sector

66. The south sector includes the settlements of Saltwick, West Duddo, Tranwell, Glororum, Clifton, Hepscott Park, Stannington Station, Stannington and Netherton Park as well as a few isolated farm steadings and a major mixed development under construction at the former St Mary's Hospital. Around the settlements the sector is characterised by randomly enclosed 20th century fields² and a sense of openness is provided by the lower lying, undulating terrain in the 'lowland rolling farmland' and 'coalfield farmland' landscape character areas. The Key Land Use Impact Study identified part of this sector as being of higher landscape value and identified a ridge line between Morpeth and Clifton.
67. The sector is separated from Bedlington to the east by a narrow section of existing Green Belt defined by the former Wansbeck District Council and to south it is separated from Tyne and Wear conurbation by existing Green Belt defined as far as Stannington and the River Blyth by former Castle Morpeth and Blyth Valley Borough Councils. With the caveat that settlements such as Stannington may require an inset boundary, it is intended that Green Belt extension should meet existing Green Belt along the length of the south and east edges of this sector. This is the closest sector to the Tyne Wear conurbation and Green Belt and is perceived as having potential for urban sprawl to impact on the setting of Morpeth. The need to preserve the special character and setting of Morpeth and prevent settlement coalescence in south east Northumberland suggests that the Green Belt should extend over most of this sector. Therefore this sector was discounted as a search area for an outer Green Belt boundary as the whole sector is appropriate for inclusion in the Green Belt.

East sector

68. The east sector includes the settlements of Hepscott and Pegswood as well as one or two isolated farm steadings and around the settlements the sector is again characterised by randomly enclosed 20th century fields³, lying in the 'coalfield farmland' landscape character area. This sector has a sense of openness but the terrain is more undulating and includes steeper slopes of the River Wansbeck's wooded valley. The Key Land Use Impact Study identified part of this sector as being of higher landscape value and identified a ridge line between Morpeth and Pegswood.
69. This is the narrowest sector around Morpeth, which is separated from Ashington by a narrow band of open land and existing Green Belt, defined by the former Wansbeck District Council around the small historic settlement of Bothal. With the caveat that Pegswood is likely to require an inset boundary to allow appropriate development, it is intended that Green Belt extension should meet existing Green Belt along the length of the east edge of this sector with a short length of new boundary being defined to join two existing blocks of Green

² Northumberland County Council, (unpublished) Draft Historic Landscape Character

³ Northumberland County Council, (unpublished) Draft Historic Landscape Character

Belt. This sector is perceived as having potential for urban sprawl to impact on the setting of Morpeth and even merger with Morpeth. The need to preserve the special character and setting of Morpeth and prevent settlement coalescence in south east Northumberland suggests that the Green Belt should extend over most of this sector. Therefore, other than for a short length of new boundary for connectivity reasons, this sector was discounted as a search area for an outer Green Belt.

North sector

70. The larger north sector includes the settlements of Longhirst, Hebron, Ulgham, Tritlington and Longhorsley, many hamlets clustered around farm steadings and a number of businesses including golf clubs, hotels and garden centres. The historic landscape shows a wide range of field patterns around the settlements and lies in the 'coalfield farmland' and 'lowland farmed ridges' landscape character areas. The proposed Morpeth Northern Bypass will follow one such ridge close to the north of Morpeth. While much of the countryside in this sector has developed naturally through land use and farming practices, parts of the 'coalfield farmland' landscape is characterised by extensive areas of land reclaimed from open cast coal mining, for example the Longhirst golf courses. At any one point within the north sector there can be a great sense of openness but the characteristic ridges provide a south-west to north-east grain across the countryside that visually separates the outer parts of the sector from Morpeth and its setting.
71. Unlike the south and east sectors the north sector does not provide separation from other urban areas and is the sector furthest away from existing Green Belt however there is potential pressure from development interests such as renewable energy and tourism development. Therefore the need to protect the countryside from encroachment, whilst avoiding the sterilisation of rural growth potential and to preserve the special character and setting of Morpeth suggested that this was an appropriate search area for an outer Green Belt boundary.

West sector

72. The most extensive sector to the west of Morpeth extends to the outlying settlements of Belsay, Hartburn and Netherwitton and closer settlements of Ogle, Whalton, Meldon, Molesden and Mitford. The sector also includes many hamlets clustered around farm steadings, some rural businesses and a number of private, historic estates. The parkland associated with many of these estates adds significantly to the diversity of the historic landscape, which lies mainly in the 'lowland rolling farmland' and 'broad lowland valley' landscape character areas but extends west of Belsay to the 'lowland farmed moor' character area. At any one point within the west sector there can be a sense of openness but the characteristic undulating landforms, plantation woodlands and wooded valleys, as well as a marked ridge between Mitford and Saltwick, visually separates the outer parts of the sector from Morpeth and its setting.
73. The sector is separated from Ponteland and Newcastle upon Tyne to the south by a section of existing Green Belt defined by the former Castle Morpeth Borough Council. Unlike the south and east sectors the west sector does not provide separation from other urban areas however there is potential pressure

from development interests such as renewable energy and tourism development. Therefore the need to protect the countryside from encroachment, whilst avoiding the sterilisation of rural growth potential and to preserve the special character and setting of Morpeth suggested that this was an appropriate search area for an outer Green Belt boundary.

STEP 8

Assess appropriateness of suggested boundaries as realistic alternative options for a Green Belt extension.

74. All of the Green Belt extension outer boundary options, discussed above, would fulfil the NPPF the purposes of the Green Belt: checking the 'unrestricted sprawl' of Newcastle into Northumberland; preventing 'neighbouring towns' such as Morpeth and Bedlington from 'merging into one another'; assisting 'in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment' preserving 'the setting and special character' of the historic town of Morpeth; and assisting 'in urban regeneration' by helping to focus development in South East Northumberland beyond the Green Belt. The Core Strategy consultation responses show that most people are supportive of the use of Green Belt approach to safeguard rural character and distinctiveness and to prevent urban sprawl and the coalescence of neighbouring settlements.
75. All of the Green Belt extension outer options also contribute to fulfilling one aim of the Core Strategy: 'to protect and enhance Northumberland's distinctive and valued natural, historic and built environment.' However in relation to the inclusion of villages in Green Belt, NPPF is clear that 'other means' or 'normal development management policies' should be used unless it is necessary to protect a village's contribution to the openness of the Green Belt.
76. The other Core Strategy aim is: 'to maintain and create sustainable communities throughout Northumberland...' and the outer boundary options fulfil this aim to varying degrees. This aim was based on objectives referring to 'responsible economic growth', meeting 'objectively assessed development needs' and the 'prudent use of Northumberland's natural resources'. The need to respond to such growth needs were reflected in concerns, expressed through the Issues and Options consultation, that the Green Belt extension around Morpeth might restrict rural economic activity, diversification and tourism development and threaten economic viability.
77. The alternative outer boundary options have been assessed to ensure that the policy approach within the Core Strategy is based on up to date and robust evidence. The alternative tighter options recognise that the general protection and enhancement of 'Northumberland's distinctive and valued natural, historic and built environment' can be met by normal development management policies.
78. With regard to the Policy S5 boundary options, both of which include the settlements listed in the Policy, there appear to be no significant topographical advantages between the two options. However in recognition of the greater support for the more extensive 'option 2', that will be taken forward in this report for testing in addition to the medium and tighter option.

79. Given the requirement for clearly marked boundaries following roads and other landmarks, as discussed earlier in this study, there are limited options for defining boundaries around the Morpeth area. From topographical and landscape character analysis it is considered that there is less visual justification for medium option, which would include a significant swathe of land that due to undulating landform, wooded valleys and high ridges closer to Morpeth, would not contribute to the openness of the Green Belt. While the medium option does not include the extensive area included in the Policy S5 options, neither does it provide a practical boundary for the development of appropriate, sustainable growth in the hinterland of Morpeth.

STEP 9

Provide detailed testing of three options for outer Green Belt.

80. Step 9 is an important step in the determination of an outer Green Belt. It assesses the three options for the outer Green Belt (S5, Medium and Tighter) against broader planning Green Belt policies. The assessment has been done against the NPPF setting out: the fundamental aim of the Green Belt, the five purposes of Green Belt, the presumption in favour of sustainable development including the three dimensions economic, social and environmental, the principles for establishing Green Belt and the process for defining boundaries. In addition to this the options have also been tested against the emerging Core Strategy vision and development strategy for the Central Delivery Area, as set out within the Preferred Options document.
81. Appendix 1 sets out the detailed testing of the three options for the outer Green Belt. The assessment for each option and a comparison of the three options has been carried out against all of the above assessment criteria. The assessment does not suggest a preferred option rather it provides an objective assessment which can be used to determine the merits of each of the three options.

Step 10

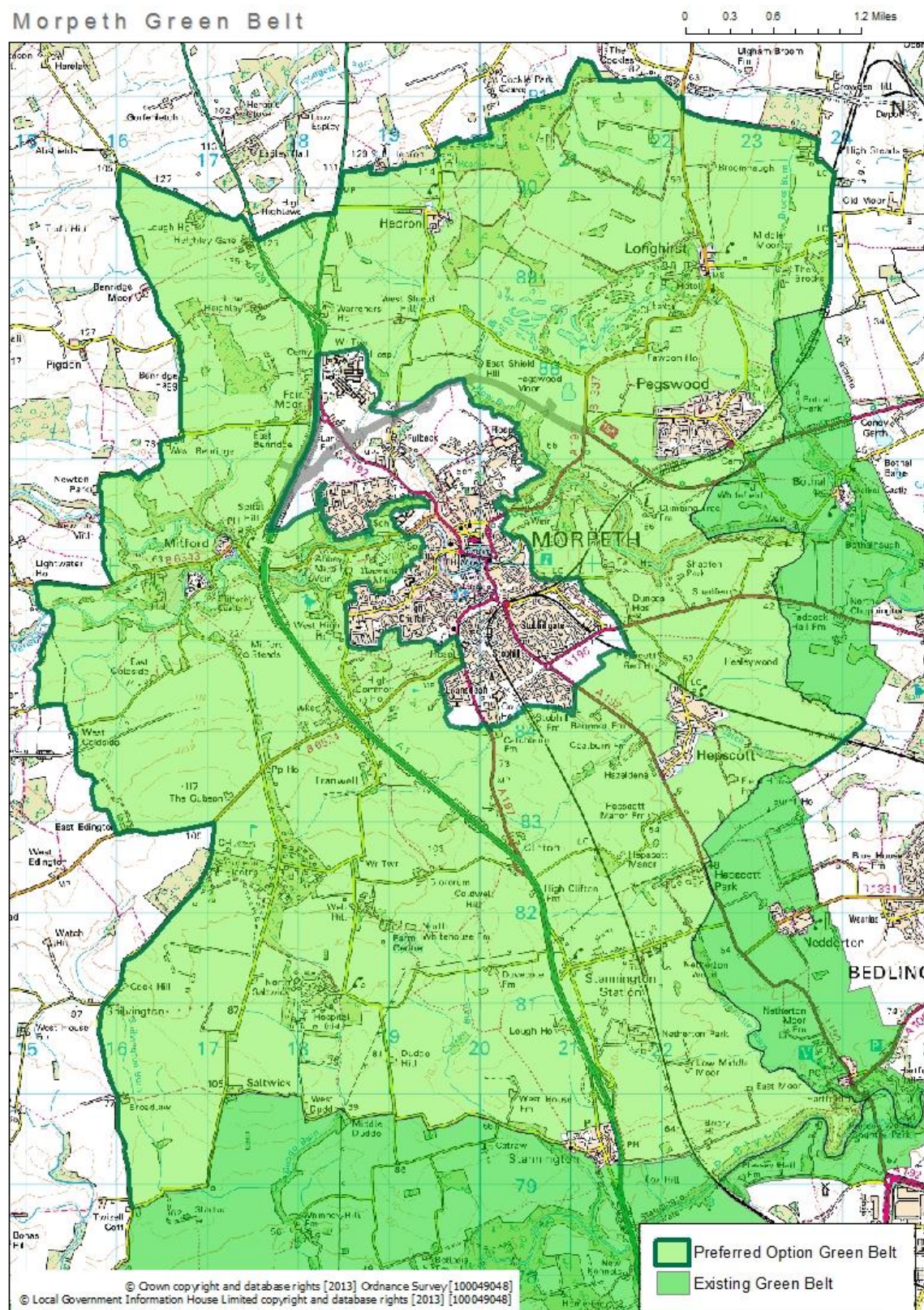
Justify boundary approach.

82. It is important to consider that the Green Belt in Northumberland forms part of a regionally strategic policy to direct development to regional centres and sustainable locations as part of a regeneration strategy. Therefore the determination of the outer boundary should be considered within this context and not used to overcome or manage local issues which could possibly be dealt with more appropriately by local policies in conjunction with the NPPF. The extension of the outer boundary will play a key role in the development strategy for Northumberland and in particular the Central Delivery Area.
83. The results of the detailed testing identifies that all three boundary options would meet the Green Belt objectives and purposes as set out in NPPF as well as deliver the long established purposes of the strategic extension of the Green Belt around Morpeth. All three boundary options would restrict sprawl from Tyneside and also prevent the merger of Morpeth with neighbouring towns in

South East Northumberland as well the smaller settlements of Pegswood, Hepscoth, Stannington, Clifton, Tranwell, Mitford, Hebron and Longhirst. They would also safeguard the countryside in these areas from encroachment and preserve the special character of the historic town of Morpeth. All options would assist in promoting urban regeneration and encourage recycling of derelict and urban land.

84. The testing of the three options highlights that the S5 and medium options would restrict sustainable development in rural areas and thereby not support the development of a diverse and strong rural economy. Whereas the tighter boundary option would allow for appropriate sustainable development in smaller rural settlements to take place, thereby supporting the development of a diverse and strong rural economy in accordance with the vision for the Core Strategy. Development beyond the Green Belt boundary would be controlled through the use of both national and local policies which would restrict inappropriate development in the open countryside and seek to protect its character.
85. Following consideration of the detailed testing of the three options, as set out in Appendix 1, and a Member site visit on 3 September 2013, it was determined that the Tighter Boundary Option as shown in Figure 3 was the most appropriate option for the Outer Green Belt Boundary when tested against the nationally established purposes of the Green Belt and the vision of the emerging Core Strategy.
86. Following further field work, including the Member site visit and further consideration of the delineation of the preferred tighter boundary minor changes to the boundary shown in Figure 3 were made. The changes relate to the northern boundary which has been revised and moved slightly north at Hebron and Cackle Park. The revised boundary follows road, ridge and tree lines which are physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent. This new boundary is considered to be stronger in that it includes more of the Hebron ridgeline than the previously suggested tighter boundary. The revised preferred Outer Green Belt boundary is shown in Figure 4 below in conjunction with the Morpeth Inner Green Belt Preferred Boundary Option.

Figure 4 – Morpeth Inner and Outer Green Belt Boundary Preferred Options Map



STEP 11

Discuss and consult on preferred option

87. The preferred Outer Green Belt boundary will be subject to consultation as part of the Northumberland Local Plan Core Strategy Preferred Options for Housing, Employment and Green Belt. Consultation on this document will take place from 31 October 2013 to 2 January 2014.

STEP 12

Prepare and finalise detailed boundary

STEP 13

Determine Outer Boundary

Appendix 1 – Step 9 detailed testing of three options for outer Green Belt

Broad assessment criteria	Detailed assessment criteria	'Policy S5' boundary (2004 Structure Plan)	'Medium' option (Core Strategy 2013)	Tighter boundary (Core Strategy 2013)	Comparison of options (S5, medium & tighter)
<p>NPPF paragraph 79 “The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their Openness and their permanence.”</p>	<p>The principle of: keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their Openness and their permanence.</p> <p>(urban sprawl covered below)</p>	<p>S5 would ensure openness covering a large area beyond Morpeth, and due to the extent of the boundary, permanence would not be an issue.</p>	<p>Medium option would also ensure openness for an area roughly half as large in size as option S5, but still significant giving very strong permanence.</p>	<p>The tighter option would ensure openness through the designation of Green Belt policy covering a far smaller area. It is considered that this boundary does provide sufficient permanence due to the strength of its definition and also the fact that development needs well beyond the plan period can be provided within the Inner Green Belt boundary. Local and NPPF policies beyond the Green Belt would be needed to protect openness and manage development.</p>	<p>All Green Belt options provide permanence due to reasons of extent and also strength and character of boundary. The protection of openness of the S5 and medium options comes from the scale of Green Belt coverage, but beyond the tighter boundary local and national policies would be required. The appropriateness of including land within Green Belt to purely preserve openness needs to be considered against the other principles of Green Belt and the development strategy. It is also relevant to consider if the Green Belt designation is required to protect all of the land covered by some of the options.</p>
<p>NPPF paragraph 80 Green Belt serves five purposes: ● to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;</p>	<p>“to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas”</p> <p>“to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one</p>	<p>All options would protect unrestricted sprawl as they all cover the areas around the largest built up area of Morpeth as well as the areas to the south of Morpeth that are urban in character.</p> <p>All options would prevent neighbouring towns merging, in particular preventing Morpeth from merging with Newcastle upon Tyne, North Tyneside and the towns in the south east Northumberland coalfield regeneration area.</p>			

Broad assessment criteria	Detailed assessment criteria	‘Policy S5’ boundary	‘Medium’ option	Tighter boundary	Comparison of options
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; • to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; • to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and • to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.” 	another”				
	“to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment”	<p>All options would assist in safeguarding the rural hinterland of Morpeth from encroachment and would prevent Morpeth from merging with the smaller settlements of Pegswood, Hepscott, Clifton and Mitford. However the S5 option would protect a greater area from such encroachment.</p> <p>All options would assist in safeguarding the rural hinterland of Morpeth from encroachment and would prevent Morpeth from merging with the smaller settlements of Pegswood, Hepscott, Clifton and Mitford. However the medium option would protect approximately half of the S5 Green Belt area from such encroachment. Areas outside the medium option not protected by Green Belt policy would need to be protected with other policies based on sustainable development principles.</p> <p>All options would assist in safeguarding the rural hinterland of Morpeth from encroachment and would prevent Morpeth from merging with the smaller settlements of Pegswood, Hepscott, Clifton and Mitford. Areas outside the tighter options, not protected by Green Belt policy would need to be protected with other policies based on sustainable development principles.</p>			
	“to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns”	All options would preserve the special setting and character of the historic town of Morpeth. However the S5 option would also preserve the setting and special character of its rural hinterland and many large rural settlements.	All options would preserve the special setting and character of the historic town of Morpeth. The medium option would also preserve the setting and special character of its rural hinterland and some smaller rural settlements.	All options would preserve the special setting and character of the historic town of Morpeth by ensuring no visual impact within a number of topographical ridgelines around the town and also that all key gateways or approaches are protected.	This is probably the key purpose of the Green Belt extension as the openness and character of land around Morpeth as the main town needs to be retained. It is however that all options do preserve the character and openness of land around and feeling part of the identity of Morpeth, and also the urban conurbation. It could be argued that S5 and the medium options go well beyond the extent required in order to preserve character and openness.
	“to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land”	All options would assist in promoting urban regeneration in conjunction with wider development strategy by ensuring that development can be directed towards major settlements South East Northumberland.			

Broad assessment criteria	Detailed assessment criteria	‘Policy S5’ boundary	‘Medium’ option	Tighter boundary	Comparison of options
<p>NPPF paragraph 14 “At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking. For plan-making this means that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local planning authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area; • Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change, unless: <p>– any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or</p> <p>– specific policies in this Framework indicate</p>	<p>“At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development...”</p>	<p>All options would help to deliver sustainable development by directing development to existing main urban areas and the Tyneside conurbation, whilst restricting inappropriate development in Morpeth’s rural hinterland. ‘Leapfrogging’ of development beyond the Green Belt is least likely in this option.</p>	<p>All options would help to deliver sustainable development by directing development to existing main urban areas and the Tyneside conurbation, whilst restricting inappropriate development across a band of Morpeth’s rural hinterland. However the medium option would allow appropriate sustainable rural development over an area approximately equal to half the S5 option Green Belt coverage.’ Leapfrogging’ of development beyond the Green Belt is proportionately more likely in this option than the S5 option but such development would need to be limited by other non-Green Belt policies and planning principles.</p>	<p>All options would help to deliver sustainable development by directing development to existing main urban areas and the Tyneside conurbation, whilst restricting inappropriate development across a narrow band of Morpeth’s hinterland. However the tighter option would allow appropriate sustainable rural development in a significant part of the S5 option Green Belt coverage., ‘Leapfrogging’ of development beyond the Green Belt is proportionately more likely in this option than the S5 and medium options but such development would need to be limited by other non-Green Belt policies and planning principles.</p>	<p>All approaches would protect key urban areas and areas under most development pressure from harm to land most in need of protection through Green Belt designation. S5 followed by Medium would give the greatest protection for land from development; however it could potentially prevent certain forms of sustainable development taking place. The tighter option would not include more rural areas further from main towns and the conurbation as Green Belt. The tighter option would allow for a more flexible and lenient approach to the delivery of appropriate and sustainable forms of development over a larger rural area.</p>
	<p>“local planning authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area;”</p>	<p>This option allows for development needs in main settlements and those settlements that are windows within the Green Belt to be met However rural development needs outside of such settlements could be harder to meet due to the more restrictive nature of Green Belt policy.</p>	<p>This option allows for development needs in main settlements and those settlements that are windows within the Green Belt to be met. Rural development in the rural hinterland within the Green Belt in this option could be harder to meet due to the more restrictive nature of</p>	<p>This option allows for development needs in main settlements and those settlements that are windows within the Green Belt to be met. This option could allow for more rural development needs to be met than by the other two options.</p>	<p>All approaches could meet development needs and opportunities within larger and broadly sustainable settlements. However only the tighter could be able to positively meet the majority of more rural development needs, as the main rural areas would not be covered by Green Belt.</p>

Broad assessment criteria	Detailed assessment criteria	‘Policy S5’ boundary	‘Medium’ option	Tighter boundary	Comparison of options
development should be restricted.”			Green Belt policy. However more rural development needs could be met in a number of larger villages within the Morpeth Hinterland.		
	“Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change...”	This option may meet objectively assessed needs but may not provide sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change in the largest rural area due to the more extensive coverage of Green Belt policies.	This option may meet objectively assessed needs further from Morpeth but may not provide sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change across a band of country closer to Morpeth due to more extensive coverage of Green Belt policies.	This option is most likely to meet objectively assessed needs with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change, particularly in Morpeth’s rural hinterland not covered by Green Belt policy.	The tighter could allow for more flexibility to adapt to change, particularly in more rural areas not covered by Green Belt policy. With regard to the Medium Option, the prevention of development to meet such needs in the area covered by Green Belt compared to the area not covered by Green Belt beyond the tighter boundary could be questioned as both areas are similar in character until larger villages are reached. S5 offers less flexibility as the approach could only be altered through a review of the plan.
	“...any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole...”	This option would provide the greatest area of protection against the adverse impacts of not delivering objectively assessed needs. However the benefits of this protection may be outweighed, by the failure to realise objectively assessed needs due to	This option would provide a significant area of protection against the adverse impacts of not delivering objectively assessed needs. However this may be outweighed, over approximately half of the S5 Green Belt area, by the potential economic and social benefits that may be	This option would not provide such a large area of Green Belt policy environmental protection and would therefore be able to deliver objectively assessed needs. Other policies would be needed to protect from adverse environmental impact. However this may be	With the caveat that environmental impacts are avoided or managed on balance S5 could perform better as it could meet social and economic needs whilst preventing the negative impacts of not meeting these needs. This is central to the Core principles of the NPPF. S5

Broad assessment criteria	Detailed assessment criteria	'Policy S5' boundary	'Medium' option	Tighter boundary	Comparison of options
		such restrictive policy.	derived from such development.	outweighed, over a significant part of the S5 Green Belt area, by the potential economic and social benefits that may be derived from such development.	and to a lesser extent the medium option could primarily restrict the majority of development which it could be argued would have the benefit of protecting the environment.
	"...specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted."	This policy would restrict development inappropriate within the Green Belt in all areas. It could be questioned if this would also restrict some desirable forms of sustainable development	The main approach could be restrictive, however not as restrictive as S5.	Although core policies and principles from the NPPF and developing local policies would be in place to manage development, such policies (in non Green Belt areas) would not guarantee protection of development to the same extent as land covered by Green Belt designation.	S5 would be more restrictive to development, with the medium option also taking a similar approach. It could be argued that development could be being restricted in areas where unsustainable development would already be restricted due to core planning principles within the NPPF and local policies.
NPPF Paragraph 7 "There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • economic role • social role • environmental role"	"Economic role - contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating	S5 could compromise the economic roles of the rural economy.	Medium could also have the potential to compromise the rural economy, but to a lesser extent than S5.	Tighter could allow for the economic role to be met within the main town of Morpeth as well as in the more rural areas. The rural economy is of importance to the character of Northumberland and requires support.	The Tighter option supports the economic role more strongly, particularly so in rural areas when compared with the other options which could restrict the potential economic role of such areas.

Broad assessment criteria	Detailed assessment criteria	‘Policy S5’ boundary	‘Medium’ option	Tighter boundary	Comparison of options
	development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure”				
	“Social role -supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being”	S5 could be seen to retain the existing social character of the area and particularly the existing character. This is the view of many local residents following consultation and comments received to planning applications. Such an approach could do little for the communities’ future social role which could be compromised by restrictions to development. This could be particularly evident in the larger villages within the Morpeth Hinterland, many of which are currently struggling to retain services and facilities.	The impact of the medium option would not be significantly different to the tighter option.	Through the allowance of more appropriate development including appropriately located and needed forms of development (including housing) the social role of the area beyond the Green Belt could be better supported than by the other options.	S5 and to a far lesser extent the Medium option would retain the existing or historic social role, however the Tighter option could do more to support communities and ensure the health, vibrancy and functionality of areas in the future. The medium option would also have a similar role as it does not include the many of the main centres of rural population within its Green Belt boundary.
	“Environmental role - contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate	S5 would do most to protect the environmental role through its larger Green Belt coverage.	Green Belt designation in conjunction with local and national policies could provide protection.	The tighter boundary by virtue of its smaller Green Belt coverage could not provide as much environmental protection through green belt however the important role of NPPF and local policies will also be significant. Environmental enhancement could however come as a result	S5 would do most to protect the environmental role through its larger Green Belt coverage. The importance of local and national policies in addition to Green Belt policies will also be a significant factor for both the medium and tighter option.

Broad assessment criteria	Detailed assessment criteria	'Policy S5' boundary	'Medium' option	Tighter boundary	Comparison of options
	and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy."			of development facilitated by a smaller Green Belt.	
NPPF paragraph 82 "The general extent of Green Belts across the country is already established. New Green Belts should only be established in exceptional circumstances, for example when planning for larger scale development such as new settlements or major urban extensions. If proposing a new Green Belt, local planning authorities should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate why normal planning and development management policies would not be adequate; • set out whether any major changes in circumstances have made the adoption of this exceptional measure necessary; • show what the consequences of the proposal would be for 	"If proposing a new Green Belt, local planning authorities should..."	The Green Belt extension is not new Green Belt because it was established through Policy S5. However the NPPF approach to new Green Belt is considered below to optimise definition of appropriate detailed boundary options.			
	"...demonstrate why normal planning and development management policies would not be adequate"	This option would insure that a large area is protected by Green Belt designation. Part of the previous justification for the extent of this option was due to development pressure and also to preserve the openness and character of land adjoining rural villages such as Longhorsely. Since the definition of policy S5 it is now considered that the NPPF in conjunction with local policies could be used to manage development pressure in the outer areas of the policy designation. In order to follow the S5 approach there would be the need to demonstrate why normal policies are not adequate.	The coverage of this option beyond the tighter option covers an area which is very rural and agricultural in character and does not include any large settlements within it. Due to this it could be argued that Green Belt policies would not be required in addition to normal planning and development policies which would seek to prevent inappropriate development due to core planning principles.	A tighter area closer to the conurbation and the main settlement of Morpeth would benefit from Green Belt designation due to the level of development pressure and the impact that any development pressure in such a location would have on openness as a result of Sprawl. Although unlikely without such a policy to prevent it merger could also be a concern. Beyond this Green Belt boundary it is considered that normal development management policies would be adequate, but would need to be drafted appropriately.	The current S5 and also the Medium options have not demonstrated why normal planning and development management policies would not be adequate. Reasons given for the extent of policy S5 at the EIP included development pressure, the need to retain openness and character around larger outlying villages and the need for permanence of boundary. The tighter option would require the use of normal planning and development management policies beyond the proposed Green belt designation.
	"...set out whether any major changes in circumstances have	No "exceptional measures" have been taken because the Green Belt extension is not new.			

Broad assessment criteria	Detailed assessment criteria	‘Policy S5’ boundary	‘Medium’ option	Tighter boundary	Comparison of options
sustainable development; • demonstrate the necessity for the Green Belt and its consistency with Local Plans for adjoining areas; and • show how the Green Belt would meet the other objectives of the Framework.”	made the adoption of this exceptional measure necessary”				
	“...show what the consequences of the proposal would be for sustainable development”	The potential for sustainable rural development could be reduced.	Consequences would be somewhere between the other two options.	It may have a positive effect on rural sustainable development whilst also focusing the majority of development to Morpeth and protecting the land under most pressure around Morpeth and closer to the conurbation.	The key difference would be that the tighter option could give more scope for sustainable rural development.
	“...demonstrate the necessity for the Green Belt and its consistency with Local Plans for adjoining areas”	It could be argued that the S5 option is including land which might not need to be covered by Green Belt, it could also be argued that the extension, although large includes land which is not significantly different in character to land not covered by Green belt	The necessity of Green Belt beyond the tighter boundary would need to be demonstrated, as would the difference in the character of land covered by the Medium and S5 areas.	It is considered that the extent of the designation is necessary.	It is considered that Green Belt is required in this broad area however the necessity of the extent of this Green Belt needs to be determined.
	“...show how the Green Belt would meet the other objectives of the Framework”	S5 would protect the environment whilst also focusing development into main settlements.	Medium would protect the environment whilst also focusing development into main settlements.	Tighter would protect the character of Morpeth whilst allowing for sustainable development in rural areas.	It is important that a balance of objectives is reached, the main differences are the degree to which strong preservation policies would be applied and also the degree to which sustainable rural development would be allowed.

Broad assessment criteria	Detailed assessment criteria	'Policy S5' boundary	'Medium' option	Tighter boundary	Comparison of options
NPPF paragraph 85 "When defining boundaries, local planning authorities should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure consistency with the Local Plan strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development; • not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open; • where necessary, identify in their plans areas of 'safeguarded land' between the urban area and the Green Belt, in order to meet longer-term development needs stretching well beyond the plan period; • make clear that the safeguarded land is not allocated for development at the present time. • Planning permission for the permanent development of safeguarded land should only be granted following a Local Plan 	"...ensure consistency with the Local Plan strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development"	This option would direct development to main settlements and protect character and openness around these settlements but it could prevent sustainable rural development.	This option would direct development to main settlements whilst also preventing development around Morpeth.	This would allow for and direct development to main settlements whilst retaining character and also allowing for sustainable rural development.	All options broadly direct development to main settlements and protect character however the tighter option could allow for more sustainable rural development.
	"...not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open"	S5 includes the largest area of land. The openness of this area is vast and on this basis it could be argued that it is somewhat unnecessary.	Although half as tight as S5 this option still includes a very large extent of land and retains openness of an area that differs significantly in character and feel from Morpeth.	This option includes only land where there is the necessity to do so in order to meet Green Belt principles within a Northumberland context.	The extent of the tighter option is fully necessary however it could be argued that the extent of the other options is unnecessary and that the proposed extent of the Green Belt is to deal with local issues rather than the purposes of Green belt.
	"...where necessary, identify in their plans areas of 'safeguarded land' between the urban area and the Green Belt, in order to meet longer-term development needs stretching well beyond the plan period"	This is an issue which is more relevant and will be dealt with in the determination of the Inner Green Belt for Morpeth.			
	"...make clear that the safeguarded land is not allocated for development at the present time. Planning permission for the permanent development of	This is an issue which is more relevant and will be dealt with in the determination of the Inner Green Belt for Morpeth.			

Broad assessment criteria	Detailed assessment criteria	‘Policy S5’ boundary	‘Medium’ option	Tighter boundary	Comparison of options
<p>review which proposes the development;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • satisfy themselves 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.” 	<p>safeguarded land should only be granted following a Local Plan review which proposes the development”</p>				
	<p>“...satisfy themselves that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the development plan period”</p>	<p>It is considered that there is a good degree of permanence of all boundaries. This is even taking into account development that could be required on land within and adjoining the settlement of Morpeth beyond a 40yr period. The permanence of the outer boundary is strongly linked to the inner boundary providing a sufficient supply of land thus ensuring the permanence of the inner boundary and preventing development pressure beyond the outer boundary</p>			
	<p>“...define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.”</p>	<p>The boundary of S5 is defined using mainly C roads, field boundaries and footpaths. The audit trail and justification for the original S5 boundary is not clear, and the strength of the physical features used is not great with the character of land on either side of the boundary not differing greatly.</p>	<p>The medium boundary is determined using predominantly C roads and field boundaries and footpaths, this boundary in particular would not seem to differentiate areas of different character nor would the boundary appear to be that significant.</p>	<p>The tighter boundary is defined using C and B roads but importantly in addition to this boundaries are further strengthened by using landscape features including strong ridgelines and woodland both natural and planted. Due to this the boundaries are considered strong, visible and readily recognisable looking both outwards from Morpeth (and likely core Green belt areas) and also inwards from the wider hinterland.</p>	<p>It is considered that all boundaries have a strong degree of permanence however the Tighter boundary is stronger and more readily recognisable as it combines natural landscape and man made features. The S5 and medium boundary provide permanence and would be under less pressure due to their wider boundaries.</p>
Core Strategy Vision	<p>By 2030 Northumberland’s diverse communities will be healthy and</p>	<p>S5 would strongly protect the unique and varied qualities of the natural environment. Green belt</p>	<p>The performance of the medium option is more similar to that of S5 but is less restrictive with Green</p>	<p>The tight Green Belt designation would support the development of a diverse and strong rural</p>	<p>All options would contribute to achieving the overall vision, however the balance of approach does vary</p>

Broad assessment criteria	Detailed assessment criteria	'Policy S5' boundary	'Medium' option	Tighter boundary	Comparison of options
	resilient and set within a diverse and strong economy. The County's significant resources will be utilised in a sustainable way and the unique and varied qualities of the natural, historic and built environment will be protected and enhanced	designation could however hinder the development of a diverse and strong economy.	Belt covering a smaller area.	economy beyond the tighter boundary. It is still considered that the tight boundary in conjunction with national and local policies could protect the character of the natural and historic environment.	slightly. In simplistic terms S5 would offer stronger Green belt protection over a larger area whilst the tighter option could better support a diverse and strong rural economy.

Core Strategy Development Strategy	<p>To deliver sustainable development across the Central Northumberland Delivery Area, the following core strategic planning principles apply:</p> <p>The main towns of Morpeth, as a key hub for education, healthcare, housing, employment and retail, will be the main focus for future development and regeneration;</p> <p>Additional large scale development and growth will be focused on key locations in Morpeth;</p>	This would strongly direct development to Morpeth whilst also preventing many forms of development close to Morpeth. Windows would be required in the Green belt to ensure an appropriate scale of development in further settlements. Isolated development and development in the Green Belt could be prevented.	The balance would be similar to S5 but would allow the potential for development particularly around larger settlements within the Morpeth hinterland, subject to local policies. Isolated new development could be controlled through the use of local policies, beyond the Green Belt.	This option would direct development to Morpeth, whilst allowing for appropriate developments in smaller rural settlements. Development in the Green Belt could be prevented and local policies could manage and control isolated development in the open countryside.	All of the options would help to direct development and regeneration to Morpeth. This would be the most significant role of Green Belt in its use as a strategic tool. The balance of restrictive policies to prevent harm to areas proposed to be covered by the Green Belt compared with the allowance of appropriate sustainable development varies across the options. The role of local policies will be an important factor within the developing Core Strategy which will shape development.
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Broad assessment criteria	Detailed assessment criteria	'Policy S5' boundary	'Medium' option	Tighter boundary	Comparison of options
	<p>Development in other settlements will be supported where it: is of an appropriate scale for the size of the settlement; maintains or enhances local services and facilities, including those outside the particular settlement</p> <p>Isolated new development in the open countryside should be avoided unless there are special circumstances</p> <p>Inappropriate development, which is harmful to the Green Belt will not be permitted, except in very special circumstances;</p>				
Summary	General principles within a Northumberland context	Policy S5 provides for the largest extent of Green Belt to include the majority of larger villages within the Morpeth hinterland. This approach is supported by the majority of resident respondents to the Core Strategy, although it was considered reasonable to	The medium option was tested in order to potentially provide an option combining the best elements of S5 in terms of environmental protection and also benefits in terms of delivering sustainable development which are more akin to the Tighter	The tighter boundary sought to deliver on the principles of Green Belt through the provision of a tight boundary protecting land most in need of Green Belt protection and then seeking to manage development beyond this boundary through the use	It is worth considering that the Northumberland Green Belt forms part of a regionally strategic policy to direct development to regional centres and sustainable locations as part of a regeneration strategy. Therefore the determination of the outer

Broad assessment criteria	Detailed assessment criteria	‘Policy S5’ boundary	‘Medium’ option	Tighter boundary	Comparison of options
		<p>assess alternative options. The strength of this option is the level of Green Belt protection provided for a larger area, which could guarantee the maximum level of protection, but in doing so this could harm the delivery of sustainable development within rural areas. Although it is important to ensure permanence of boundary it has been suggested and could be argued that the extent of Green Belt is excessive in order to meet the objectives and purposes of Green Belt particularly when development in many parts of such a wide area could be managed through local polices and the core principles of sustainable development.</p>	<p>option. Unfortunately this option failed to provide the environmental protection of S5 particularly to the majority of larger outlying villages, but this policy also included a relatively large area of land beyond core areas most in need of Green Belt protection, land which could then have reduced potential for sustainable rural development.</p>	<p>of local polices and the principles of the NPPF. The role and extent of the Inner Green Belt boundary for Morpeth, the overall development strategy including how small scale sustainable developments in rural areas and isolated developments are dealt would also be very relevant in conjunction with the NPPF. If a suite of such documents could provide a similar level of environmental protection with greater flexibility to adapt to change and deliver sustainable rural development, then this should be considered.</p>	<p>boundary should be considered within this context and not used to overcome or manage local issues which could possibly be dealt with more appropriately by local polices in conjunction with the NPPF. The extension of the outer boundary will play a key role in the development strategy for Northumberland and in particular the central delivery area. Ultimately the three options all attempt to meet the same broad objectives of Green Belt within a Northumberland context. Each option differs in terms of the balance which is given to meeting differing objectives and the final preferred option will therefore be the option that best supports the strategy for Northumberland.</p>