



Northumberland  
County Council

Northumberland Local Plan  
Draft Plan for Regulation 18 Consultation

# Green Belt Review Technical Paper

July 2018

If you need this information in Large Print, Braille, Audio  
or in another format or language please contact us:

(Telephone) 0345 600 6400

(Typetalk) 018001 0345 600 6400

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Policies STP 8, STP 9 and STP 10 of the Northumberland Local Plan - Draft Plan for Regulation 18 Consultation set out the proposed approach to the Green Belt in Northumberland and identify the revised boundaries of the Green Belt, as defined on the Policies Map. This paper provides a summary of the Green Belt Review process undertaken and outlines the rationale supporting changes that are proposed to the Green Belt.

## 2. Background

- 2.1. Green Belt is a planning designation that was first established in planning law in the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act in order to restrict urban growth. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open, and that a key attribute of land in the Green Belt is its openness<sup>1</sup>.
- 2.2. The NPPF sets out the five purposes of the Green Belt<sup>2</sup>, which are to:
- Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
  - Prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;
  - Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
  - Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
  - Assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
- 2.3. The Green Belt in Northumberland forms part of a wider area of Green Belt designation surrounding the conurbation of Tyne and Wear. The main function of the Green Belt in Northumberland is to prevent the unrestricted sprawl of the Tyne and Wear conurbation by keeping land permanently open.

### History of the Existing Green Belt in Northumberland

- 2.4. Following a government circular<sup>3</sup> in 1955, encouraging areas outside of London to establish Green Belt boundaries, the former County of Northumberland<sup>4</sup> sought to adopt a local Green Belt designation. The North Tyneside Green Belt was subsequently defined through an amendment to the County Development Plan in 1963<sup>5</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Paragraph 79, National Planning Policy Framework (2012) DCLG

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, paragraph 80

<sup>3</sup> Circular 42/55: Green Belts (August 1955) Ministry of Housing and Local Government

<sup>4</sup> County of Northumberland was redefined in 1974, under the Local Government Act 1972

<sup>5</sup> Northumberland County Development Plan: Amendment No. 16 (1963) North Tyneside Green Belt

- 2.5. In 1974, a national reorganisation of local government structures resulted in the redefinition of Northumberland County administrative boundaries to exclude the urban areas of Newcastle and North Tyneside. As the 1963 North Tyneside Green Belt was therefore split between the newly defined Counties, Northumberland County Council resolved in its 1980 Structure Plan to redefine the Green Belt through the Castle Morpeth and Tynedale District Local Plans.
- 2.6. The Tynedale Valley Local Plan (1989) was the first district to redefine the original 1963 Green Belt designation and encompassed a number of amendments including Green Belt release and inseting of previously washed-over settlements. Tynedale District Local Plan (2000) further revised the Green Belt boundaries to reflect changes proposed in the Northumberland Structure Plan (1996). The remaining area of the 1963 North Tyneside Green Belt was superseded by the Castle Morpeth District Local Plan in 2003 and included amendments to boundaries that reflected proposals in the 1996 Structure Plan.
- 2.7. Two extensions to the original Green Belt designation were proposed in the 1996 Structure Plan: an extension to include Hexham, defined in the Tynedale District Local Plan (2000); and an extension into South East Northumberland, defined in the Blyth Valley Local Plan (1999).
- 2.8. A further extension to the Green Belt to include Morpeth was identified in Regional Planning Guidance for the North East (2002), with Policy S5 of the revised Northumberland Structure Plan (2005) defining the general extent. A small part of the extension was defined in detail in the former Wansbeck District Local Plan (2007) and the Blyth Valley Core Strategy (2007).
- 2.9. When the Northumberland Structure Plan was superseded by the North East Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) in 2008, Policy S5 was saved to enable the remaining area of the extension to be defined consistently in Local Plans. As a result of the revocation of the RSS in 2013, the saved Structure Plan Policy S5 was retained by the Government to enable the Northumberland Local Plan to define the detailed boundaries of the Green Belt extension.
- 2.10. The general extent of the Green Belt extension around Morpeth, falling within the former Castle Morpeth District administrative area, remains undefined in adopted policy until the Northumberland Local Plan is adopted.

Morpeth Outer Boundary Review (2013)

- 2.11. The withdrawn Northumberland Local Plan Core Strategy proposed an outer boundary for the Green Belt extension around Morpeth. The methodology used to determine the boundary was set out in the Morpeth Outer Boundary

Review (2013). The review has informed the definition of an outer Green Belt boundary for the Green Belt extension around Morpeth, proposed in the Northumberland Local Plan - Draft Plan for Regulation 18 Consultation.

- 2.12. The Morpeth Outer Boundary Review (2013) can be accessed via the Local Plan Evidence Base and should be read in conjunction with this document.

Green Belt Review (2015)

- 2.13. During production of the withdrawn Northumberland Local Plan Core Strategy, the Council carried out a comprehensive Green Belt Review. The Northumberland Local Plan Core Strategy Green Belt Review (2015)<sup>6</sup> sets out the Green Belt Review methodology and provides the land parcel assessment element of the review process. The land parcel assessment comprises an analysis of how, and to what extent, areas of Green Belt land surrounding settlements contribute towards Green Belt purposes identified in the NPPF. This has helped to inform the Plan process in terms of reviewing current Green Belt boundaries and determining an approach to defining new and revised boundaries.

- 2.14. Although the Northumberland Local Plan - Draft Plan for Regulation 18 Consultation does not propose the same strategic approach to the Green Belt as the withdrawn Core Strategy, the land parcel assessment stands and it has informed decision-making on the proposed boundary in the Northumberland Local Plan.

- 2.15. The 2015 Green Belt review can be accessed via the Local Plan Evidence Base and should be read in conjunction with this document.

Employment Land Site Options Appraisal (2018)

- 2.16. The Employment Land Site Options Appraisal (2018)<sup>7</sup> sets out the rationale for the identification of proposed employment land allocations, including sites within the Green Belt. Whilst this paper sets out the exceptional circumstances identified for releasing land from the Green Belt for employment purposes, the Employment Land Site Options Appraisal identifies the location and extent of sites to be released.

- 2.17. The findings of the Green Belt Review, including the land parcel assessment against Green Belt purposes, formed part of the Employment Land Site Options Appraisal. Although Green Belt was one of the considerations that

---

<sup>6</sup> The document can be accessed via the Evidence base and studies page on the Council's website at <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Planning/Reports.aspx>

<sup>7</sup> The documents can be accessed via the Evidence base and studies page on the Council's website at <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Planning/Reports.aspx>.

informed the identification of sites to release for Employment purposes, other factors, such as environmental constraints, deliverability and sustainability were also taken into account.

2.18. The Employment Land Site Options Appraisal (2018) can be accessed via the Local Plan Evidence Base and should be read in conjunction with this document.

### **3. Approach to the Green Belt in Northumberland**

#### Strategic Approach

3.1. Policy STP 8 of the Northumberland Local Plan - Draft Plan for Regulation 18 Consultation sets out the Strategic approach to the Green Belt in Northumberland. The strategic approach is informed by the NPPF, the North East Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS, 2008) and RPG 1 of the Regional Planning Guidance for the North East (2002).

3.2. The RSS set out a strategic approach to the Green Belt for the North East of England<sup>8</sup>, including locally specific policy requirements for Northumberland. Although this document no longer forms part of the planning policy framework, the principles underpinning its strategic approach to the Green Belt are still relevant and are reflected in Policy STP 8 of the Northumberland Local Plan - Draft Plan for Regulation 18 Consultation.

3.3. The Green Belt approach within the RSS sought to:

- Continue to check the unrestricted sprawl of Tyne and Wear; and
- Continue to safeguard the countryside from encroachment

3.4. Specifically, in relation to Northumberland, the RSS stated that the Green Belt should:

- Prevent the merging of: Newcastle upon Tyne with Ponteland, Newcastle Airport, or Cramlington;
- North Tyneside with Cramlington or Blyth;
- Preserve the setting and special character of Hexham, Corbridge and Morpeth; and
- Assist in urban regeneration in the city-regions by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

3.5. Saved Policy S5, which identifies the general extent of the Green Belt extension around Morpeth, was underpinned by RPG 1 of the Regional Planning Guidance for the North East (2002). Although RPG 1 no longer

---

<sup>8</sup> Policy 9, North East Regional Spatial Strategy (2008)

forms part of the policy framework, the principles set out within it are still relevant as they underpin Policy S5.

3.6. RPG 1 stated that the Green Belt would be extended around Morpeth in order 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.

3.7. The purposes of the Green Belt outlined in the NPPF, and reiterated in the 'Background' section of this document, remain unchanged from superseded national planning policy<sup>9</sup> that was in place at the time of the RSS and RPG1. The NPPF therefore aligns with the local purposes and strategic approach of the Northumberland Green Belt that were set out in the RSS and RPG1.

#### Development in the Green Belt

3.8. In plan making and the determination of planning applications, the overarching principle is that the Green Belt should preserve openness and reflect the purposes of the designation. The NPPF outlines specific requirements for what constitutes appropriate development in the Green Belt and includes a presumption against permitting inappropriate development within the Green Belt, except in very special circumstances. The approach to development in the Green Belt within the Northumberland Local Plan - Draft Plan for Regulation 18 Consultation is established in Policy STP 9, directing the determination of appropriate and inappropriate development towards national policy.

3.9. In response to paragraph 81 of the NPPF, Policy STP 9 includes a criterion supporting beneficial uses of the Green Belt which encourage use for outdoor sport and recreation; enhance landscapes and biodiversity; or improve damaged and derelict land.

---

<sup>9</sup> Planning Policy Guidance 2: Green Belts (2001), ODPM

#### **4. Proposed amendments to the Green Belt**

4.1. The following changes to the Green Belt are set out in the Northumberland Local Plan - Draft Plan for Regulation 18 Consultation and are defined on the Policies Map:

- Defining the Morpeth Green Belt extension  
Detailed boundaries of the Green Belt extension around Morpeth have been defined;
- Insetting washed-over settlements from the defined Green Belt  
The following settlements, previously washed over in the defined Green Belt, have been inset from the Green Belt to improve coherence across the wider Green Belt and allow development within sustainable locations:
  - Broomhaugh
  - Fourstones
  - Mickley Square
  - Newbrough
  - Wall
  - Whittonstall
- Amending minor anomalies in the Green Belt  
Minor amendments to the Green Belt boundary have been made to address anomalies, enabling boundaries to better align more accurately to physical edges;
- Releasing Green Belt to enable development  
Land has been released during the plan period from the Green Belt in Hexham, Ponteland and Prudhoe for employment purposes. Part of the Green Belt release at Hexham includes an element of a sand and gravel extraction site, which is associated with the employment site allocation.

4.2. The following sections of this technical paper will provide a summary of the rationale and process supporting each of the proposed amendments to the Green Belt in Northumberland.

#### **5. Defining the Morpeth Green Belt extension**

##### Green Belt Extension Outer Boundary

5.1. Saved Policy S5 of the revised Northumberland Structure Plan (2005) established the general extent of the Green Belt extension around Morpeth. Parts of this detailed boundary have already been defined in existing



development plans covering the former Blyth Valley and Wansbeck districts. However, the detailed boundaries of the Green Belt extension within the former Castle Morpeth area were not defined as the review of the Castle Morpeth Local Plan did not reach adoption before the Local Government reorganisation in 2009.

- 5.2. Although Policy S5 did not define the detailed outer boundary, the policy provided a description of where the boundary should be defined:
  - 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.
- 5.3. The withdrawn Northumberland Local Plan Core Strategy proposed an outer boundary for the Green Belt extension around Morpeth. The Morpeth Outer Boundary Review (2013), which established a methodology for defining the boundary, can be accessed via the Local Plan Evidence Base.
- 5.4. The Morpeth Outer Boundary Review tested different options for defining the Policy S5 boundary, including variations that aligned with Policy S5 and other options that deviated from Policy S5. Although the Boundary Review identified a 'tighter boundary' as the preferred option, there was significant objection to the proposed boundary as it deviated from the area described in the Policy S5. The Council concluded that it could not demonstrate exceptional circumstances to deviate from the general extent defined in Policy S5. Therefore, the wider 'Policy S5 Option' set out in the Morpeth Outer Boundary Review was proposed later in the Regulation 18 stage of the Core Strategy and remained unchanged in all subsequent versions of the document through to submission.
- 5.5. The Northumberland Local Plan - Draft Plan for Regulation 18 Consultation defines an outer boundary to the Green Belt extension that reflects the boundary previously identified in the withdrawn Northumberland Local Plan Core Strategy and the wider 'Policy S5 Option' set out in the Morpeth Outer Boundary Review.

### Approach to settlements in the Green Belt extension

- 5.6. As part of identifying the detailed boundaries of the Green Belt extension around Morpeth, an appropriate inner boundary to the settlement of Morpeth and its neighbouring settlements needs to be identified through the Local Plan.
- 5.7. The approach to the treatment of settlements within the Green Belt extension around Morpeth has been informed by:
  - Requirements set out in the NPPF;
  - The spatial strategy set out in the emerging Plan;
  - Approach towards settlements in existing Plans;
  - Green Belt review land parcel assessments; and
  - RPG 1 guidance relating to the purpose of the Green Belt extension
- 5.8. Paragraphs 84-86 of the NPPF provide direction on the approach to defining Green Belt boundaries. Aspects which are of particular relevance in establishing an approach to settlements in the Green Belt extension include:
  - Promoting sustainable patterns of development;
  - Not including land which is unnecessary to keep permanently open;
  - Ensuring consistency with the plan for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development; and
  - Including (washing-over) villages within the Green Belt where the open character of a village makes an important contribution to the openness of the Green Belt.
- 5.9. Policy STP 1 of the Northumberland Local Plan - Draft Plan for Regulation 18 Consultation focuses development within settlements where it will help to support the use of local infrastructure and facilities and support economic growth, whilst protecting the countryside and the character of settlements. The spatial strategy directs the majority of development towards Main Towns and Service Centres but supports sustainable growth in more rural areas, allowing for some growth in Service Villages and supporting appropriate growth in other rural settlements.
- 5.10. Within the former Castle Morpeth area, the adopted Castle Morpeth District Local Plan (2003) and the made Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan (2016) currently include settlement boundaries, which are used to inform planning decisions, protect the countryside and direct development to the most sustainable locations. The Settlement Strategy Technical Paper establishes

that settlements with existing boundaries are sustainable locations for development. The role of defined settlements within Policy STP 1 is to continue to inform planning decisions, protect the countryside and direct development to the most sustainable locations.

5.11. The emerging Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan, which proposes a settlement boundary for Longhorsley, has passed independent examination and a referendum on the Plan is due to be held in Summer 2018. The Stannington Neighbourhood Plan, which is also awaiting referendum in Summer 2018, does not define settlement boundaries but does identify Stannington and Stannington Station as settlements which provide services within the Plan area.

5.12. The land parcel assessments included within the Northumberland Local Plan Core Strategy Green Belt Review (2015) provide an assessment of how land surrounding settlements in the Green Belt contributes towards Green Belt purposes. The assessment identified a mixture of high and medium contribution for settlements identified in the Green Belt extension, with the exception of Morpeth where some areas of low contribution were identified.

5.13. As defined within RPG 1 of the Regional Planning Guidance for the North East (2002), which previously underpinned Policy S5, the intended purpose of the Green Belt extension around Morpeth was to:

- Preserve the special setting and character of Morpeth;
- Prevent Morpeth merging with neighbouring settlements;
- Assist regeneration of main settlements and coalfield villages in South East Northumberland beyond the Green Belt; and
- Safeguard the countryside from encroachment.

5.14. In response to the assessment of the requirements made in paragraph 5.7, settlements which currently have boundaries have been excluded from the Green Belt and inset boundaries have been defined. Settlements which have boundaries defined in the Castle Morpeth Local Plan, Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan and the emerging Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan have been inset from the Green Belt. An inset boundary has also been defined for Stannington Station which is recognised within the emerging Stannington Neighbourhood Plan as a growing rural settlement providing some services.

5.15. An inset boundary for the following settlements has been defined:

- Belsay
- Hartburn
- Hebron

- Hepscoth
- Ogle
- Longhirst
- Mitford
- Morpeth
- Pegswood
- Netherwitton
- Stannington
- Stannington Station
- Ulgham
- Whalton

5.16. Any settlement not specifically referred to in this section is washed-over by the Green Belt.

5.17. A number of major developed sites within the Green Belt extension are identified in the Castle Morpeth District Local Plan. While these sites are located within the Green Belt, the Castle Morpeth Plan generally allows limited infill development where this would not have an adverse impact on the openness of the Green Belt. The NPPF does not require the identification of major developed sites; it encourages partial or complete development or infilling of previously developed sites in the Green Belt, whether redundant or in continuing use. That is provided the development would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development. Major developed sites in the Green Belt are therefore not identified in the emerging Northumberland Local Plan.

#### Defining settlement insets within the Green Belt Extension

5.18. As Green Belts are a long term planning tool, their boundaries are required to have permanence beyond the plan period. The Green Belt inset boundaries therefore need to provide for sufficient capacity to meet long-term strategic land requirements and align to durable, easily recognisable physical boundaries that are defensible.

5.19. For settlements where settlement boundaries are currently identified in the Castle Morpeth District Local Plan, Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan and the emerging Longhorsley Neighbourhood Plan, these boundaries have been used as a starting point for defining Green Belt inset boundaries. Neighbourhood Plan settlement boundaries have taken precedence in areas where there is also a settlement boundary defined in the Castle Morpeth District Local Plan.

- 5.20. The emerging Local Plan does not identify settlement boundaries where a Green Belt inset is proposed. The methodology for defining settlement boundaries is set out in the Settlement Strategy Technical Paper.
- 5.21. The existing settlement boundaries help to identify where the built form currently exists and which areas of land are recognised as sustainable locations for development. However, the proposed inset areas also include recent developments, extant planning permissions (and minded to approve applications) and development allocations, where they are made (in the case of Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan) or proposed. Other deviations have been made from the existing settlement boundaries, in line with the NPPF, to align boundaries with recognisable physical features that are likely to be permanent (approach set out in table 5.1) and to exclude land that is unnecessary to keep permanently open.
- 5.22. Stannington Station does not have an identified settlement boundary and the inset boundary has been defined in accordance with the following:
1. Land included within the Stannington Station inset boundary:
    - the main built up area of the settlement;
    - extant planning permissions (there are no minded to approve applications);
    - curtilages of buildings which are contained and do not make an important contribution towards openness;
    - Other land uses which are well related to the settlement and partly enclosed by built development including open space; and
    - Land which is unnecessary to keep permanently open, for example where it contributes towards identifying a stronger physical boundary
  2. Excluded from the inset boundary are:
    - Open spaces, sports and recreational facilities which stand on the edge of the built form of the settlement;
    - Sections of large curtilages of buildings (including gardens) which relate more to the openness of the Green Belt;
    - Isolated development which is physically or visually detached from the settlement; and
    - Agriculture and nurseries
  3. Boundaries have been defined tightly around the area identified in point 1 and have followed physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent (approach set out in table 5.2);

5.23. Table 5.1 demonstrates how the approach to defining the Green Belt extension inset boundaries responds to policy set out in the NPPF<sup>10</sup> regarding definition of Green Belt boundaries. Further detail is provided in Table 5.2, to demonstrate how boundaries were aligned with physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.

Table 5.1

NPPF	Local Plan Approach
Ensure consistency with the Local Plan strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development	Insetting settlements with existing settlement boundaries to allow for development in sustainable locations. Allocations and permitted sites included within inset boundaries.
Not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open	Land parcel assessments demonstrate how land included in the Green Belt contributes towards Green Belt purposes. Inset boundaries based on existing settlement boundaries to allow for development in sustainable locations. Recent development, allocations and permitted sites included within inset boundaries.
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	Land safeguarded for employment needs identified in Morpeth. Sites permitted for housing in Morpeth are anticipated to deliver beyond the plan period. Land beyond the Neighbourhood Plan Settlement boundary is included within the Morpeth inset boundary. The land is not safeguarded for a particular use but could deliver longer-term development needs. Safeguarded housing land therefore not deemed necessary.
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 review which proposes the development	Policy STP 10 states that safeguarded land is not allocated within the plan period and development will only be permitted following the adoption of a replacement Local Plan which proposes such development

<sup>10</sup> Paragraph 85, National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

Satisfy themselves that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the development plan period	Sustainable growth strategy directs development towards Main Towns such as Morpeth. Land safeguarded for employment needs identified in Morpeth. Sites permitted for housing are anticipated to deliver beyond the plan period and land beyond the Neighbourhood Plan Settlement boundary could be considered. Smaller settlements inset to include allocations and permitted development.
Define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent	Inset boundaries were defined to align to defined durable physical features that are likely to be permanent and are logical and easily identifiable. See table 5.2. OS reference points and on-site features were compared to ensure boundaries align with the methodology.

Table 5.2

Boundary Type	Application
Durable boundary aligning physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent: motorway; public and made road; railway line; river, stream, canal or other watercourse; prominent physical feature (e.g. ridgeline); protected or long established woodland/hedge; protected or long established wall; existing development with strongly established, regular or consistent plot boundaries.	Prioritised and applied except where it would result in the inclusion of land within the inset boundary that would relate more to the openness of the Green Belt and risk harming the purposes of the Green Belt. For example, where inclusion of land would risk encroachment into the open countryside.
Softer boundaries which may lack durability or permanence: fences, private/unmade roads; power lines, weakly bounded field boundaries, irregular plot boundaries, intermittent or young tree lines	Applied only where a more durable boundary is not available or where a more durable boundary would result in inclusion of land within the inset boundary that would relate more to the openness of the Green Belt and risk harming the purposes of the Green Belt.
Boundaries based on physical reference	Applied only where there are no durable

<p>points but not following physical edge: boundary connecting 2 or more physical points that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent</p>	<p>or softer boundaries available or where those boundaries would result in inclusion of land within the inset boundary that would relate more to the openness of the Green Belt and risk harming the purposes of the Green Belt.</p>
---	---

Morpeth Inset Boundary

5.24. The approach used to defining settlement insets within the Green Belt Extension, as already established, was applied to the definition of the Morpeth inset boundary. However, additional considerations informed the definition of the Morpeth inset boundary.

5.25. As defined within RPG 1 of the Regional Planning Guidance for the North East (2002), which previously underpinned Policy S5, the intended purpose of the Green Belt extension around Morpeth is to preserve the special setting and character of Morpeth. Morpeth is also identified as a Main Town in Northumberland and therefore provides a sustainable location for development. In the emerging Local Plan, Main Towns will be the main focus for employment, housing, retail and services required over the plan period. Morpeth, as an identified Main Town, is anticipated to continue to provide a sustainable location for development beyond the plan period.

5.26. The inner Green Belt boundary for Morpeth is based on the following principles which provide a rationale for where the boundary deviates from the approach taken towards other inset boundaries:

- The eastern boundary should be drawn tightly to the existing settlement edges to maintain and protect the strong River Wansbeck green infrastructure corridor and setting of Morpeth. In particular, the railway line and River Wansbeck act as strong boundaries, with the Blue Mountains, Parish Haugh area, Wansbeck river valley, Bluebell Woods and the A197 provide strong boundaries in relation to the preservation of the setting of Morpeth;
- Due to the historic setting of the town, the nature conservation, environmental and landscape designations running east west along the River Wansbeck, the western boundary should be tightly drawn to the existing settlement edges. This will protect the strong green infrastructure boundary of Morpeth Common, Athey's Dean, the Borough Woods, the Wansbeck river valley and Scotch Gill Woods as well as the setting of Morpeth;



- The northern boundary should allow for most development to take place to the north of Morpeth, including the previously developed St George's Hospital, Northgate Hospital sites and land up to the Morpeth Northern Bypass, which will provide better access to promote economic regeneration, access to housing and improve social inclusion across South East Northumberland. It therefore contributes positively to the Green Belt purpose of assisting urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of land. The provision of infrastructure is key to the delivery of the strategic site to the north of Morpeth and the overall level of development proposed over the plan period; and
- In relation to the southern boundary, it would allow for approved development at South Loansdean within the plan period, and limited long term development potential, south of the A196 and safeguarded employment land for beyond the Plan period. The preferred southern boundary would retain the rural character of the rising ground to the south and ensuring separation from Clifton and Hepscott.

5.27. The Morpeth Inner Green Belt boundary provides scope for the planned sustainable expansion of the town during the Plan period and also for safeguarded land to meet long term development needs beyond the Plan period. The approach to safeguarded land is set out later in this paper.

## **6. Insetting washed-over settlements from the defined Green Belt**

- 6.1. As the detailed boundaries of the defined Green Belt were revised and defined through different former district Local Plans, the treatment of settlements varies across the designation.
- 6.2. There are a number of settlements in the former Tynedale District area which were washed-over by the Green Belt but had boundaries within which limited infill development could take place. The NPPF advises that settlements should either be within the Green Belt and Green Belt policy applies; or should be specifically excluded from the Green Belt. Where settlements are washed-over by the Green Belt limited infill development is permitted by the NPPF.
- 6.3. The settlements with identified infill boundaries in the former Tynedale area are comparable in terms of scale and sustainability to settlements inset within other former district areas and the proposed inset settlements in the Green Belt extension. This affects the strategic coherence of the Green Belt as a whole and constitutes an exceptional circumstance for the release of Green Belt.

6.4. The following settlements, previously washed over, have been inset from the Green Belt to improve coherence across the wider Green Belt and allow development within sustainable locations:

- Broomhaugh
- Fourstones
- Mickley Square
- Newbrough
- Wall
- Whittonstall

6.5. Infill boundaries in the Tynedale Core Strategy have been used as a starting point for defining inset boundaries. The defined infill boundaries help to identify where the built form currently exists and which areas of land are recognised as sustainable locations for development. However, the proposed inset areas also include recent developments and extant planning permissions. Other deviations have been made from the existing infill boundaries, in line with the NPPF, to align boundaries with recognisable physical features that are likely to be permanent (approach set out in table 5.2) and to exclude land that is unnecessary to keep permanently open.

## **7. Amending minor anomalies in the Green Belt**

7.1. The Green Belt Review assessment has highlighted minor anomalies in the Green Belt boundaries that had been defined in the District Local Plans. In some cases the boundaries do not align to any physical recognisable feature and therefore do not reflect the requirements set out in the NPPF<sup>11</sup>.

7.2. The revised Green Belt, as defined on the Northumberland Local Plan - Draft Plan for Regulation 18 Consultation Policies Map, reflects minor amendments made to the Green Belt to correct the identified anomalies.

7.3. Amendment of minor anomalies in the Green Belt boundary to align more accurately to physical edges have been defined in accordance with the following:

- Aligning to the nearest physically recognisable boundary or physical reference points, except where the change would result in anything more than a minor amendment or would affect the openness of the Green Belt, or the purposes of the designation; and
- Where boundaries cut through buildings or curtilages of buildings, aligning to the curtilage/building where there is a physical boundary, except where the change would result in anything more than a minor

---

<sup>11</sup> Paragraph 85

amendment or would affect the openness of the Green Belt, or the purposes of the designation

## **8. Releasing Green Belt to enable sustainable development**

- 8.1. The NPPF requires that Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances. Where it is considered necessary to alter Green Belt boundaries, this should be undertaken through the preparation or review of a Local Plan. New boundaries need to have permanence enduring beyond the plan period.
- 8.2. The NPPF requires Councils, when preparing or reviewing Green Belt boundaries, to take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development. In doing so consideration should be given to the consequences for sustainable development of directing development towards:
  - Urban areas inside the Green Belt boundary;
  - Towns and villages inset within the Green Belt; and
  - Locations beyond the outer Green Belt.
- 8.3. The Northumberland Local Plan evidence base<sup>12</sup> illustrates that there is capacity to deliver housing requirements, in accordance with the spatial strategy, outwith the Green Belt. There are therefore no exceptional circumstances established to identify land in the Green Belt to be released for future housing development.
- 8.4. At the time of the publication of the Northumberland Local Plan - Draft Plan for Regulation 18 Consultation the Council is consulting on options for the reorganisation of schools in the west of Northumberland, which includes schools in Haydon Bridge and Hexham Partnerships. The outcomes of this consultation are not expected until summer 2018. Following the conclusion of this process, there may be considered to be exceptional circumstances to revise Green Belt boundaries for educational purposes.
- 8.5. An assessment of employment land has been undertaken to ensure that settlements would be provided with sufficient space to allow for the delivery of required future economic development. The Northumberland Local Plan Technical Background Paper: Assessment of Employment Sites, provides an explanation of the assessment and can be accessed via the Northumberland Local Plan evidence base.

---

<sup>12</sup> Housing Site Allocations Selection and Appraisal Technical Paper and the Housing Distribution Technical Paper which can be accessed via the Evidence base and studies page on the Council's website at <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Planning/Reports.aspx>

- 8.6. The evidence base work has highlighted that the defined Green Belt boundaries around Main Towns do not provide sufficient capacity to accommodate the level of growth required to deliver economic development needs. The need to provide land, in the correct places, to deliver the economic development needs in sustainable locations, constitutes exceptional circumstances to release land from the Green Belt.
- 8.7. The Employment Land Site Options Appraisal sets out the rationale for the identification of proposed employment land allocations, including sites within the Green Belt. The appraisal, together with the Northumberland Employment Land Review (2011) and the Northumberland Employment Land and Premises Demand Study (2015)<sup>13</sup> considered the following:
- The employment requirements for the County
  - The level of land required to deliver the proposed employment requirements;
  - Site options for future employment purposes;
  - The suitability (including the Green Belt Review land parcel assessments), availability, achievability and deliverability of each site; and
  - The preferred location for employment land allocations, including changes to the Green Belt boundary to accommodate employment land and land safeguarded for future employment uses beyond the plan period.
- 8.8. The use of this methodology has ensured consistency in approach to the identification of locations to be removed from the Green Belt to allow for sustainable future development.
- 8.9. As a result of the Employment Land Site Options Appraisal the following sites have been identified to be released<sup>13</sup> from the Green Belt for employment uses:
- Hexham: land to the east of the Egger Plant, at Harwood Meadows;
  - Prudhoe: land west of the former Hammerite plant; and
  - Ponteland: land at Prestwick Pit and land at Prestwick Business Park (Part of the area will be allocated and the remaining land will be safeguarded for employment use beyond the plan period)
- 8.10. Part of the Green Belt release proposed at Hexham will allow for sand and gravel extraction prior to becoming available for employment uses. The area of the employment site proposed for extraction forms part of a larger sand and gravel extraction site within the Green Belt. The land is not required for

---

<sup>13</sup> Both documents can be accessed via the Evidence base and studies page on the Council's website at <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Planning/Reports.aspx>

removal from the Green Belt for extraction purposes but it is intended that the land will be made available for employment uses within the plan period. It is anticipated that sand and gravel extraction and restoration of this site would help to stabilise the land prior to development for employment uses and would address a floodplain issue. The Joint Aggregates Assessment for County Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear (2018) and the Northumberland Site Appraisals for Aggregate and Mineral Sites<sup>14</sup> set out the need for aggregate minerals extraction allocations and the appraisal process undertaken for the selection of sites.

## **9. Safeguarded Land**

- 9.1. Green Belt boundaries are intended to endure over the longer term, therefore when reviewing Green Belt boundaries and defining new boundaries it is important to have regard to potential development needs arising beyond the plan period. The NPPF sets out that when defining or reviewing Green Belt boundaries, where necessary, safeguarded land should be identified to meet longer-term development needs beyond the plan period (See table 5.1).
- 9.2. In the defined Green Belt, exceptional circumstances have been identified to release land from the Green Belt for employment purposes. In order to meet long term employment requirements and avoid the need for another review of the Green Belt at the end of the Plan period, it was considered necessary to consider if, and where, land should be safeguarded. The Employment Land Site Options Appraisal sets out the rationale for the identification of proposed safeguarded land released from the Green Belt for employment uses beyond the Plan Period.
- 9.3. Within the Green Belt extension around Morpeth, the inset boundaries have been defined to ensure permanence beyond the plan period. There are sufficient permissions for housing within Morpeth to deliver housing beyond the plan period. The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) demonstrates that permitted sites to the north of Morpeth are anticipated to continue to be built-out beyond the plan period. It has therefore not been deemed necessary to identify safeguarded land for housing in the Green Belt extension around Morpeth. However, there is an identified need for safeguarded employment land in Morpeth, as set out in the Employment Land Site Options Appraisal.

---

<sup>14</sup> Both documents can be accessed via the Evidence base and studies page on the Council's website at <http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Planning/Reports.aspx>

9.4. The following sites have been safeguarded for employment uses beyond the plan period in the Northumberland Local Plan - Draft Plan for Regulation 18 Consultation:

- Area to the west of the Airport Inset boundary
- Area south of Coopies Lane industrial estate

9.5. Policy STP 10 sets out that safeguarded land is not allocated within the plan period and development will only be permitted following the adoption of a replacement Local Plan which proposes such development.

## **Appendix 1: Green Belt Settlement Definitions**

Inset: A term used to describe a town or village that is surrounded by the Green Belt but is not itself covered (or “washed over”) by the Green Belt designation. This means that Green Belt restrictions do not apply within the settlement concerned in the area defined by the inset boundary.

Sprawl - “the increased development of land in suburban and rural areas outside of their respective urban centres... often accompanied by a lack of development, redevelopment or reuse of land within the urban centers themselves”<sup>15</sup>

Washed-over: A term that refers to any village or hamlet or grouping of buildings which is itself part of the Green Belt designation – i.e. 'washed-over' by the Green Belt rather than inset within it – by virtue of their open character and/or important contribution to the openness of the Green Belt. Green Belt restrictions apply within these places with the exception that limited infilling may be permitted within the built-up area, as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including the settlement in Green Belt in the first place.

Infill Boundary - A boundary drawn around part of the built-up area of a settlement that is washed over by the Green Belt, in order to reflect the fact that the area within the boundary contains opportunities for infill development which would not fit the description of 'limited infilling' but which would still be expected to preserve the openness of the Green Belt and not conflict with the purposes of including the settlement in Green Belt in the first place.

---

<sup>15</sup> Cornell University Institute for Social Sciences, Department of Development Sociology, 2010, The Definition of Sprawl, available at [http://cardi.cornell.edu/cals/devsoc/outreach/cardi/programs/land-use/sprawl/definition\\_sprawl.cfm](http://cardi.cornell.edu/cals/devsoc/outreach/cardi/programs/land-use/sprawl/definition_sprawl.cfm)









**Planning Policy**

Northumberland County Council  
County Hall, Morpeth  
Northumberland NE61 2EF

T: 0345 600 6400

E: [planningstrategy@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:planningstrategy@northumberland.gov.uk)

W: [www.northumberland.gov.uk](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk)