

Greater Nottingham
Planning Partnership



Preferred Approach: Green Belt Review

Methodology

December 2022



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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Broxtowe, Gedling, Nottingham City and Rushcliffe Councils are working jointly to prepare evidence to support the Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan. As part of this work, the Councils have undertaken a targeted strategic Green Belt Review (“the Review”).
- 1.2 This document sets out the methodology used for undertaking a targeted strategic review of the Green Belt. There is a separate Green Belt Background Paper which provides further information regarding Green Belt policy context, the need for a Review and how Green Belt issues will be addressed as part of the Strategic Plan.

2 Methodology for Review

Approach

- 2.1 The Review updates previous Green Belt assessments undertaken by Broxtowe Borough Council, Gedling Borough Council, Nottingham City Council and Rushcliffe Borough Council for their adopted Local Plans.
- 2.2 The 'Stage 1' Review is targeted in that it focusses on the urban area, key settlements for growth and other villages. As this is a strategic assessment to support a Strategic Plan, it only focusses on locations where strategic development can be accommodated. A separate, 'Stage 2' assessment of specific non-strategic sites and smaller settlements will be undertaken as part of each Council's Part 2 Local Plan reviews.
- 2.3 The Review takes into account changes which have taken place since the previous assessments such as:
 - development on the ground;
 - revised conservation area boundaries; and
 - local plan proposals (housing and employment allocations/sites).
- 2.4 This methodology follows the same broad approach as the previous Green Belt assessments and uses the same assessment criteria and matrix framework. As part of the Review, a consistency check has been carried out to ensure that a consistent methodology has been followed by each Council when carrying out assessments. This is to ensure that a robust and transparent methodology has been followed. This has resulted in some changes to the scoring in areas where there have been no physical changes or allocations since the previous Green Belt Assessments.
- 2.5 The following documents provide further information in respect of the previous assessments, with further detail provided within the Green Belt Background Paper:
 - [Green Belt Background Paper June 2013](#) - prepared to support the preparation of the Aligned Core Strategies prepared by Broxtowe Borough Council, Gedling Borough Council and Nottingham City Council.
 - Rushcliffe's [Green Belt Review \(November 2013\)](#) - consisted of a part 1 review (Strategic Review of the Nottingham-Derby Green Belt within Rushcliffe), together with a part 2(a) review (Detailed Review of the Nottingham Derby Green Belt within Rushcliffe Adjoining the Main Urban Area of Nottingham).
 - [Greater Nottingham and Ashfield Green Belt Assessment Framework \(February 2015\)](#) - informed the Stage 2 site by site assessment undertaken by Broxtowe, Gedling and Nottingham City Councils.
- 2.6 For Broxtowe, Gedling and Nottingham City, the assessments relating to the broad areas were updated as part of the Part 2 Local Plans, following the approach established as part of the Core Strategies and using a joint assessment

criteria and framework. For these authorities, changes made to the previous assessments are highlighted in red text. However, for Rushcliffe, the work undertaken in preparation for the Core Strategy remains the most relevant. The following assessments have therefore been updated as part of the Review:

- [Broxtowe Borough Council Green Belt Review \(2015\)](#)
- [Gedling Borough Council Green Belt Review \(2015\)](#)
- [Nottingham City Council Green Belt Background Paper \(2016\)](#)
- [Rushcliffe Borough Council Green Belt Review \(2013\)](#)

2.7 The purpose of this Review is to assess how well parts of the Green Belt are performing against the purposes set out in paragraph 138 of the NPPF and the conclusions will inform the decisions made about specific sites in the Green Belt through the preparation of the Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan. The results also provide the wider context for more detailed Stage 2 site specific assessments required to support preparation of the Part 2 Local Plans.

Assessment Criteria

2.8 The Assessment Criteria (attached as Appendix A) set out each of the five purposes of the Green Belt (from paragraph 138 of the NPPF) and provide guidance on what to look at when considering whether the area is achieving those purposes. The fifth purpose, assisting in urban regeneration, has not been used as it is considered that all Green Belt land performs this purpose equally.

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

138. Green Belt serves five purposes:

- (a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- (b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- (c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- (d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- (e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

2.9 It is emphasised that this Green Belt Review is focussed on the five purposes of the Green Belt set out in paragraph 138 of the NPPF. Other factors, such as landscape, flooding and nature conservation will be the subject of separate site specific assessments and will be given due weight when making decisions about which sites to allocate for development.

2.10 The Assessment Matrix (attached as part of Appendix A) provides a grading system (based on the Assessment Criteria) to allow broad areas to be assessed relative to one another and identify which are more valuable in Green Belt terms. The Matrix also provides descriptions to help guide the choice of score, although these should be seen as a guide only, as many areas will not fall neatly within them. The Matrix grades each of the purposes out of five where five is the most highly performing in Green Belt terms. Within the Matrix, due to the nature and locations of the built-up areas in Greater Nottingham, the terms 'neighbouring

towns' and 'historic towns' have been replaced by 'neighbouring settlements' and 'historic settlements'. Settlements are considered on the basis of their built form and not on the basis of town or parish boundaries.

Scope

- 2.11 As this is a strategic assessment to support a Strategic Plan, it only focusses on locations where strategic development can be accommodated. This Review has therefore focussed primarily on the edge of the main built-up urban area and key settlements. This follows the approach undertaken as part of the previous Green Belt assessments and reflects definitions of key settlements and other villages within each Council's respective Core Strategies.
- 2.12 Within Rushcliffe, additional 'freestanding' Green Belt assessments have also been undertaken. This is to cover areas of Green Belt which fall outside of the existing assessments, where strategic sites are being promoted for development.
- 2.13 Within Gedling, additional Green Belt assessments have been undertaken to cover areas of strategic Safeguarded Land. Whilst these areas are not currently designated as Green Belt, it was considered helpful to have an understanding of their value in Green Belt terms to inform future decision making, especially where they are being promoted for development.
- 2.14 In essence, the edge of the main built-up urban area and the edge of key settlements have been broken down into a series of 'Broad Areas' for the purposes of this Review. The Broad Areas are areas of similar characteristics in terms of size, structure, topography, land use and vegetation; where possible they have been defined using strong defensible boundaries. They have been identified using a variety of tools including Ordnance Survey maps, aerial photography, topographical maps, professional judgement and planning officers' local knowledge.
- 2.15 The Broad Areas were then assessed against the Assessment Criteria using the Assessment Matrix. This was undertaken using Ordnance Survey maps, aerial photography, topographical information, maps showing the location of designated and non-designated heritage assets, professional judgement and Officers' local knowledge. Each Broad Area was given a score out of five for each purpose listed in the Matrix which were added together to give an overall score for that Broad Area.
- 2.16 Both the identification and assessment of the Broad Areas were undertaken initially as desk-top exercises. Site visits were undertaken where necessary to validate the findings of the desk-top exercises and changes made, where necessary, to the assessments.

Specific Matters

- 2.17 When assessing safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, due regard has been given to paragraphs 149 and 150 of the NPPF which define exceptions to inappropriate development. This may include development which has been granted planning permission. However, historic settlements which are 'washed

over' by Green Belt are not considered to be encroachment when carrying out assessments.

2.18 When assessing the preservation of the setting and special character of historic settlements, the impact on isolated heritage assets, which are not within a settlement, has not been included. However, the impact on these heritage assets will be considered separately as part of the site selection assessments.

2.19 Paragraph 145 of the NPPF states "Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance their beneficial use, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land." This will be considered as part of the site selection process.

Presentation

2.20 The following appendices comprise the strategic Green Belt assessment for each of the participating authorities:-

- Appendix C - Broxtowe Borough Council
- Appendix D - Gedling Borough Council
- Appendix E - Nottingham City Council and
- Appendix F - Rushcliffe Borough Council.

2.21 Each Appendix is further divided into sub sections, each setting out the Green Belt assessment for a discrete part of the Council area. A cross boundary assessment, appraised jointly by Nottingham City Council and Rushcliffe Borough Council, has been undertaken between Clifton and Ruddington.

Results

2.22 The assessment of each Broad Area results in:-

- a score to reflect how well the Broad Area meets each of the purposes of including land within the Green Belt (based on the Assessment Criteria and using the Assessment Matrix as a guide),
- justification text to explain the score given to each purpose, and
- an overall score for that Broad Area, being the sum of the scores for each of the purposes.

2.23 Lower scores mean that a Broad Area is, overall, less valuable in terms of the Green Belt. Whilst a Broad Area may have a low overall score, it may score particularly highly for one single Green Belt purpose. In these instances, it could be considered to be of sufficient importance on that one single purpose for the Broad Area to be retained as Green Belt. This will be considered further as part of making decisions about which strategic sites should be allocated. It should be noted that the assessments only form one part of the site selection process and decisions regarding whether a site is allocated will be dependent on a number of other factors.

- 2.24 A consistency review was undertaken following completion of the assessments. This involved each Council reviewing a sample of assessments and making recommendations where any consistency issues were identified. Any significant alterations to the assessments were then discussed by the Green Belt Working Group.
- 2.25 Discussions have also taken place with neighbouring Councils not involved with the preparation of this Review in areas where the Green Belt crosses local authority boundaries. Broxtowe Borough Council has undertaken a consistency review with Amber Valley Borough Council, Ashfield District Council and Erewash Borough Council. Gedling Borough Council has undertaken a consistency review with Ashfield District Council and Newark and Sherwood District Council. Nottingham City Council has undertaken a consistency review with Ashfield District Council. Rushcliffe Borough Council has not undertaken consistency reviews with neighbouring authorities as the neighbouring authorities are not affected by this Green Belt Review.

APPENDIX A – ASSESSMENT CRITERIA AND ASSESSMENT MATRIX

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

¹ **Note:** Because of the nature and locations of the built-up areas in Greater Nottingham, the Councils consider that these purposes should relate to all settlements (rather than only to 'large built-up areas' and 'towns/historic towns'), as listed in the [Growth Options Study \(Aecom\), 2020 p79](#) . Settlements will be considered on the basis of their built form and not on the basis of town or parish boundaries.

Green Belt Assessment Matrix

Higher scores reflect Broad Areas generally contributing most to the purpose of the Green Belt.

Purpose	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> 1 ←—————→ 5 </div>		
Check the unrestricted sprawl of settlements	The Broad Area has two or more boundaries adjoining a settlement or rounds off an existing settlement. The area is well contained by strong physical features which can act as defensible boundaries and does not extend over topographical features.	The Broad Area has two or more boundaries adjoining a settlement but is not well contained and there are weak or no features to act as defensible boundaries.	The Broad Area does not adjoin a settlement, or has only one boundary with a settlement, or forms a long limb into open countryside. There are weak or no features to act as defensible boundaries. The area is visually disconnected from any settlement.
Prevent neighbouring settlements from merging into one another	Development would not reduce the size of the gap between settlements, or would result in only very limited reduction.	Development would result in a moderate reduction in the size of a gap between settlements.	Development would result in a complete or virtually complete merging of settlements.
Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	The Broad Area includes a large amount of existing inappropriate developments which have caused a significant degree of encroachment.	The Broad Area includes some existing inappropriate developments which have caused some encroachment.	The Broad Area does not have any inappropriate developments and therefore no encroachment.
Preserve the setting and special character of historic settlements	The Broad Area will have no adverse impact on one or more conservation areas or designated or non-designated heritage assets associated with settlements.	The Broad Area will have a moderate adverse impact on one or more conservation areas or designated or non-designated heritage assets associated with settlements.	The Broad Area will have a significant adverse impact on one or more conservation areas or designated or non-designated heritage assets associated with settlements.
Assist in urban regeneration	It is considered that all land in the Green Belt assists in urban regeneration to the same extent and therefore no criteria are proposed to distinguish between the values of various locations.		

APPENDIX B – ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

Settlement:	
Broad Area:	
Has the Green Belt boundary changed since the previous assessment?	
Previous Assessment Score:	

Criteria	Score (out of 5)	Justification
Check the unrestricted sprawl of settlements		
Prevent neighbouring settlements from merging into one another		
Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		
Preserve the setting and special character of historic settlements		
Total		