

SEFTON COUNCIL GREEN BELT STUDY



JUNE 2013

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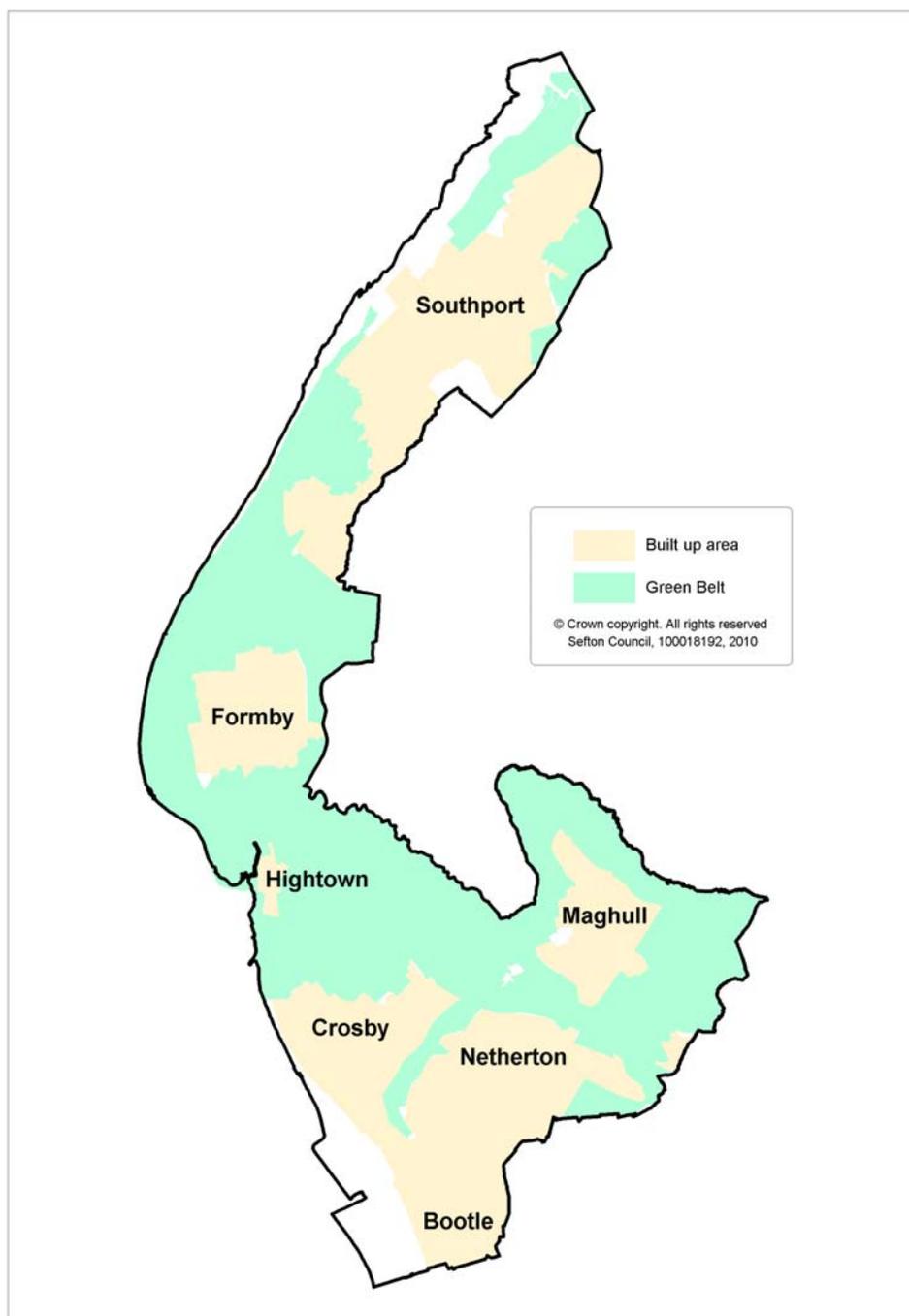
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1. Introduction

The need for the Study

- 1.1 National planning policy (the National Planning Policy Framework¹) states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Paragraph 14 states the ...”Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid changes”... Paragraph 16 states this includes policies for housing and economic development.
- 1.2 Section 9 deals with the Green Belt. Paragraph 83 states that Green Belt boundaries should only be reviewed in exceptional circumstances when a Local Plan is being prepared. Local authorities should consider the boundaries having regard to their long term permanence so that they do not need to be reviewed again at the end of the plan period.
- 1.3 When the Council began the preparation of its Core Strategy (now known as the Local Plan), it realised that it would not be able to meet its future housing or employment needs within the urban area. Knowsley and West Lancashire Councils were also in as similar position, so the three Local authorities collaborated to prepare a common methodology². This was designed so that it could also be used by other LAs in the sub-region should they also need to review their Green Belt boundaries.
- 1.4 This Study represents the first thorough review of any of the Merseyside Green Belt in Sefton since the Green Belt was adopted in 1983. Its purpose is to identify areas where development should not be permitted because those areas should be kept permanently open in order to prevent urban sprawl, and areas where development could be accommodated.
- 1.5 The Study does not identify land for development. It is the role of the emerging Local Plan to determine how much land is needed, and where, in the Green Belt to meet the identified needs required by the Preferred Option.
- 1.6 Sefton and Knowsley Borough Councils also carried out a detailed review of the existing Green Belt boundary³ as a separate but complimentary task. This assessed whether the current Green Belt boundaries were drawn consistently, and whether they are still relevant today. This report is called the Detailed Boundary Review of Sefton’s Green Belt.
- 1.7 This document takes account of the changed planning context arising from the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework in March 2012, and the revocation of the Regional Strategy in May 2013, comments made during the Core Strategy Options consultation, and up-dated technical information that is now available.

Figure 1.1 The extent of Sefton's Green Belt



Consultation

- 1.8 Consultation on both the draft Sefton Green Belt Study and draft Detailed Boundary Review took place for 12 weeks from 23rd May – 12th August, 2011. This coincided with consultation on the Sefton Core Strategy Options paper and a number of other related studies which formed part of the Local Plan evidence base. As part of the Core Strategy Options consultation letters were sent to everyone living within 50 metres of an area identified in the Green Belt Study as having “development potential”.

- 1.9 As a result of the combined consultation over 2,500 individual responses were received, as well as 11 petitions contained about 7,000 signatures relating to land in the Green Belt. These included petitions against the development of Grade 1 agricultural land, and supporting Core Strategy 'Option One' – urban containment. A copy of the results of the consultation can be found at <http://www.sefton.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=7763> .
- 1.10 Only a few comments received related to the draft Green Belt Studies. None disagreed with the methodology used, although a few disagreed with how it had been applied and the conclusions reached for specific sites. One person felt that sub-dividing the Green Belt into parcels would lead to the creeping erosion of the Green Belt as it failed to take account of the cumulative impact if land in individual parcels were developed.
- 1.11 Comments were received relating to the decision to identify Little Crosby village and Crosby Hall as separate parcels; to the lack of weight given to 'quality of life' issues such as views across open farmland; and that the draft Study did not exclude Grade 1 agricultural land as a prohibitive constraint..
- 1.12 Whilst Natural England generally supported the approach taken, it felt that the Study should set out how it had taken account of land which has significant ecological links with land in the designated areas. They recommended that such areas should be treated in the same way as priority habitats and Local Wildlife Sites for the purposes of this Study. These areas will be identified in the Ecological Framework for the Liverpool City Region. As this has not yet been completed, the Council considers that these matters can only be properly assessed as part of the Ecological Assessment that would accompany any planning application to develop sites should the land be subsequently allocated for development in the emerging Local Plan.

The Study Methodology

- 1.13 The draft Studies were independently assessed by Envision, consultants specifically appointed to validate the draft Methodology, the work carried out by the two Councils at each stage of the Green Belt Study's preparation, and the Detailed Boundary Review. The validation process included two Stakeholder workshops to test the draft Methodology. Envision also scrutinised the work carried out at the completion of each stage. As a result, some minor changes were made to the original Methodology and these were included in Sefton and Knowsley's draft Studies.
- 1.14 The aim at each stage of the Studies was to identify areas which did not contribute to the openness of the Green Belt. Areas were ruled out of consideration for development if they should be kept open in order to maintain the integrity of the Green Belt, as were areas that were not suitable for development.
- 1.15 These included an assessment of:
- the importance of each parcel in meeting a Green Belt purpose as set out in the Framework; or

- whether the development of a parcel would be so adversely affected by any of the identified constraints that it should not be considered for development; or
 - whether any development in a parcel would be so unsustainable that its development should not be promoted.
- 1.16 Whilst the methodology has not changed significantly, it has been updated to take account of:
- the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) in March 2102, which replaced the national planning policy context outlined in chapter 2 of the draft Study;
 - the revocation of the Regional Strategy on 20th May, 2013, which is referred to in chapter 2 of the draft Study;
 - updated information relating to agricultural land, flood risk, and information from landowners about their intentions relating to the availability of their land should it be required as part of the Council's emerging Local Plan (Stage 3);
 - the Sustainability Appraisal /Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA / SEA) of the emerging Local Plan;
 - the screening of the draft site allocations and policies under the Habitat Regulations 2010 (HRA); and
 - the Council's consideration of comments received in response to the public consultation in 2011.
- 1.16 The Study was carried out in four stages:
- Stage 1 – sub-division of the Sefton Green Belt into logical parcels for the purposes of assessment
 - Stage 2 – assessment of every parcel against the five purposes of including land in the Green Belt
 - Stage 3 – assessment of the remaining parcels against a range of identified constraints and accessibility criteria; and
 - Stage 4 - assessment of how the remaining parcels could contribute to meeting identified needs in each settlement area, including assessing an indicative capacity for each of the pool of sites with potential to meet development needs arising in each of Sefton's five settlement areas, if required.
- 1.17 Parcels which were considered as not being suitable for potential future release at the end of each stage were not considered at any subsequent stage.
- 1.18 The draft Green Belt Study assessed the whole of Sefton's (and Knowsley's) Green Belt in order to ensure that all areas were considered equally. There has not been a 'call for sites' exercise as this could imply that the Study was

‘developer-led’. The draft Study did not made any assumptions about any landowner’s intentions in respect of whether any area of land may be available for development, if required. Discussions with people owning potential sites have now taken place, and, as a result, a few of the areas that were identified as having potential have been deleted from consideration where the owner has confirmed that the land will not be made available, for development.

- 1.19 The Study identifies a number of parcels or parts of parcels around all of the main urban areas and the largest village (Hightown). These have the potential to meet some of our future housing or employment needs, if needed by the Local Plan, which would have the least impact on the overall openness and integrity of the Green Belt. The Study does not make any recommendations about which sites should be developed.

Relationship with Sefton’s emerging Local Plan

- 1.20 Whilst the Green Belt Study identifies areas that are potentially suitable for development, it does not make any decisions about where or how much development. The Green Belt Study is part of the evidence base upon which the Local Plan will draw, in order to make these decisions.
- 1.21 Because the draft Green Belt Study is not needs-based, the capacity of the areas identified as being potentially suitable for development exceeds the amount of land that may be required by the emerging Local Plan. The Local Plan will decide how much land is needed where, and which areas best meet its spatial strategy and objectives and should therefore be taken forward.

Format of the Study

- 1.22 The draft Study comprises this written document and a ‘Schedule of site records’ containing every ‘parcel’ of land which has been assessed. They indicate either the stage of the assessment process any individual parcel was discarded from further consideration during the Study, including the reasons why; or the prospective uses and an indicative capacity of development that may be realised from the parcel if it is identified for development in the emerging Local Plan.

2. The planning policy context

- 2.1 The planning framework has changed considerably since the draft Green Belt Study was published in May 2011.
- 2.2 Firstly, the National Planning Policy Framework⁴ replaced many of the documents which formed Government policy including most of the Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPGs) and Planning Policy Statements (PPSs) and numerous letters to Chief Planning Officers, bringing together national planning policy in a single document. This has meant that references to all the revoked documents, including PPG2: Green Belt, have had to be replaced with references to the relevant paragraphs of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 2.3 Secondly, the Regional Strategy for the North West of England was revoked in May 2013, the Government first having announced its intention to remove this layer of planning policy in May 2010. This has meant that the requirements set out in Policy RDF4 'Green Belts', including the concept of strategic and non-strategic Green Belt release, no longer apply.
- 2.4 Instead, local authorities must demonstrate that they have complied with Section 110 of the Localism Act. This new duty requires Councils and public bodies to 'engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis' to develop strategic policies.
- 2.5 When the draft methodology was prepared it was anticipated that the Local Plan would have progressed to a stage that it had identified options that the results of the draft Green Belt Study could be measured against. Sites identified as having potential for development in this Study will be assessed during the preparation of the Local Plan once it has been established how much development is required in the Green Belt to meet identified needs.
- 2.6 As sites with more capacity were identified at the Options stage than were likely to be required under the Local Plan's Preferred Option, all the potential sites have been assessed using a 'traffic light assessment' (which has been independently assessed by AMEC), and have been the subject to Sustainability Appraisal and assessment under the Habitat Regulations. The results of these assessments are published separately on the Council's webpage www.sefton.gov.uk/localplan .

National planning policy context

- 2.7 Government policy relating to the Green Belt is set out in Section 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework 'Protecting Green Belt land'.
- 2.8 Paragraph 79 reiterates that, as set out in PPG2, the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open, and that the essential characteristics of a Green Belt are its openness and its permanence.
- 2.9 Local authorities with Green Belts in their area are required to establish Green Belt boundaries in their Local Plans which set the framework for Green Belt and settlement policy (paragraph 83). Once Green Belt boundaries have

been established, they should only be altered where exceptional circumstances exist, through the preparation or review of a Local Plan. The revised boundaries should be capable of enduring beyond the Plan period (i.e. after 2030 for the Sefton Local Plan).

- 2.10 When reviewing Green Belt boundaries, local authorities are required to take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development (paragraph 84). They should consider the consequences for sustainable development of channelling growth towards urban areas inside the Green Belt boundary and towards towns and villages inset within the Green Belt. (There are no locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary in Sefton so the third option specified in this paragraph does not apply).
- 2.11 Paragraph 85 sets out 6 criteria that local authorities should consider when defining Green Belt boundaries. The Council considers that these apply equally when Green Belt boundaries are being reviewed. These are to:
- 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 review which proposes the development;
 - 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.
- 2.12 It is clear from this that local authorities are able to make changes to existing Green Belt boundaries where exceptional circumstances exist in order to meet needs in their Local Plan.
- 2.13 Currently two villages – Sefton and Hightown – are ‘inset’ into the Green Belt in the UDP, with the remainder ‘washed over’ by the Green Belt. The emerging Local Plan proposes that Sefton should no longer be identified as an ‘inset’ village, but that Ince Blundell and Little Crosby should be, in addition to Hightown. The character of these villages will be protected by other policies in the Local Plan, including conservation area or other development management policies.

The Merseyside Green Belt

- 2.14 The Merseyside Green Belt was approved in 1983. Its key purposes were to channel development into the existing urban areas and assist urban regeneration of the urban core. Since the creation of Merseyside's Green Belt it has not been reviewed at a sub-regional level, although minor changes have been approved in the constituent local authorities' individual Unitary Development Plans (UDPs).
- 2.15 At the time the draft Green Belt Study was prepared, regional policy for the Liverpool City Region was contained in the Regional Strategy (RSS)⁵. This formed part of the adopted Development Plan, but was revoked in May 2013. The Study has been adapted to reflect these necessary changes.

Local Planning Context

- 2.16 At the local level, the Green Belt has remained largely unaltered since its inception in 1983. The only exceptions to this are a few minor changes to the detailed boundary. Two areas were removed from the Green Belt in the Sefton Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 1995⁶ as they no longer performed a Green Belt function, but two areas were added to the Green Belt at this time. No changes were made when the current UDP was adopted in 2006.
- 2.17 The approved planning framework for Sefton is contained in the Sefton UDP which was adopted in 2006. This reflected national and regional Green Belt policy and confirmed that there was no need for any Green Belt release, although it did not rule out that there may be a need to review the boundary after 2011.
- 2.18 The Council is currently preparing its Local Plan. This will set out the amount of development needed in Sefton to 2030, and establish new, permanent Green Belt boundaries. It will replace the UDP once it has been adopted.
- 2.19 Since the draft Green Belt Study was initially completed and validated in August 2010, consultation on the Core Strategy Options took place in 2011. The Local Plan Preferred Option is due to be approved in June 2013, which will be followed by 12 weeks consultation from July – September. Our intention is that the Local Plan will be adopted in 2015, following submission and examination in 2014.

3. Stage 1 – Identification of parcels

The Detailed Boundary Review of Sefton’s Green Belt

- 3.1 When work commenced on Stage 1 of the draft Study, it became apparent that not all of the Green Belt boundaries established in 1983 were still appropriate. In a few cases, this was as a result of further development that had occurred on the edge of the urban area since the Green Belt was established in 1983. This meant that the area no longer contributed to the openness of the Green Belt as it exhibited a similar land use and character to the adjacent urban area. In order to address these and other anomalies, a review of the existing Green Belt boundaries was carried out in order to ensure that they were correctly drawn before the main Study was carried out.
- 3.2 This assessment constituted the draft ‘Detailed Green Belt Boundary Review’. The draft was published as a separate document⁷, and was also consulted on for 12 weeks in summer 2011. Two comments were received. The changes were approved by the Council in February 2012 (see paragraphs 3.4 and 3.5).
- 3.3 Three areas were identified in the Detailed Boundary Review where development had taken place which were attached to and were identical in character to the adjacent urban area. The Review recommended that these areas should be included as part of the adjacent ‘Primarily Residential Area’ (PRA) when the Local Plan Policy Map is updated. These areas were also identified as individual parcels in the main Green Belt Study, because they exhibited a distinct character to the adjacent Green Belt areas, and would be discarded at the end of Stage 1 because they were already fully developed. The three areas were:

Figure 3.1 - Areas which should be included in the urban area

S159	63 - 85 Moss Lane & 2 Pitts House Lane, Southport
S160	56 - 78 Crowland Street, Southport
S161	127 - 133 Pinfold Lane, Ainsdale

- 3.4 Two comments were received as a result of the consultation, relating to the proposed boundary at the West Lancashire Golf Course, Formby (Green Belt parcel S028) and land at the western end of the ‘primarily residential area’ (PRA) shown on the Proposals Map at Spencers Lane, Melling.
- 3.5 Whilst a revised boundary between the Green Belt and the PRA was agreed at Formby Golf Links (S028), the suggested change at Spencer’s Lane, Melling (S153) was not accepted because the new boundary would not create a more robust, clear and well-defined boundary than the one it would replace. These changes are included in the Detailed Boundary Review.

Identification of sections

- 3.6 The draft Methodology indicated that the first Stage of the Green Belt Study would be split into two. Firstly, the whole of the Merseyside Green Belt would be sub-divided into sections that would be assessed against each of the five purposes of including land in the Green Belt (paragraph 80 of the National

Planning Policy Framework), and then each section would be subdivided into parcels for more detailed assessment.

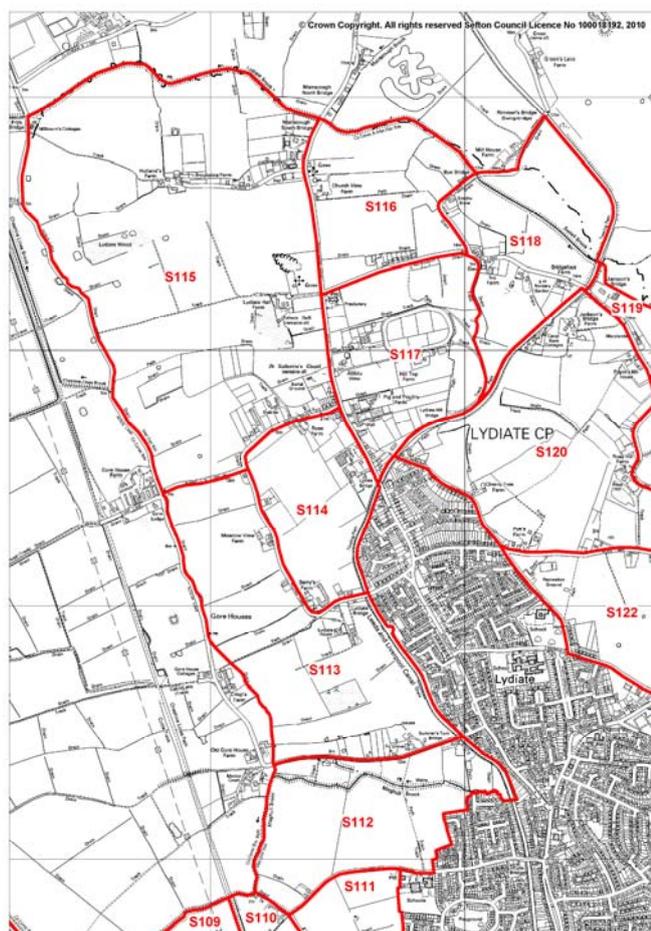
- 3.7 However, once work started on sub-dividing the area into sections it became apparent that this would not work. There were two reasons for this.
- 3.8 The first is based on the geography of Sefton. Although the areas between settlements could be sub-divided into sections that broadly performed in a similar way in relation to each individual purpose, the whole of any proposed section did not perform in the same way against all of the five purposes of including land in the Green Belt.
- 3.9 Secondly, it proved difficult to state categorically which section any area of land should be in, especially for areas further away from any settlement, or near to more than one settlement. In many cases, the proposed sections overlapped and performed differently in relation to each Green Belt purpose around a number of settlements.
- 3.10 As the draft methodology indicated that no sections would be discarded from the Study at the end of this process, we concluded that this sub-division was unhelpful, and that the Stage 2 and subsequent analyses could be better undertaken if the smaller areas of land (Green Belt parcels) were assessed against each Green Belt purpose. This would allow the variety of interactions to be assessed for each parcel against each purpose. Consequently, the first part of the draft Stage 1 Methodology (i.e. dividing the Green Belt into sections around settlements) was not undertaken.

Identification of parcels

- 3.11 Having concluded that the sub-division of the Green Belt into 'sections' was impractical, the Green Belt was sub-divided into 'parcels', in accordance with the draft Methodology .
- 3.12 The Framework states, at paragraph 85, 6th bullet, that Green Belt boundaries should be clearly defined using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent. Envision, the consultants who validated the draft Study suggested that we should also identify parcels on the basis of land use and character.
- 3.13 Parcels were therefore identified using the following criteria:
- Each should be of similar character and land-use;
 - Each should have a similar impact on the openness of the Green Belt; and
 - Each should be clearly defined by durable, significant and strong physical boundaries wherever possible.
- 3.14 Parcel boundaries were initially identified in the office, using electronic mapping & aerial photos. This was followed by a visit to every parcel in May 2010.

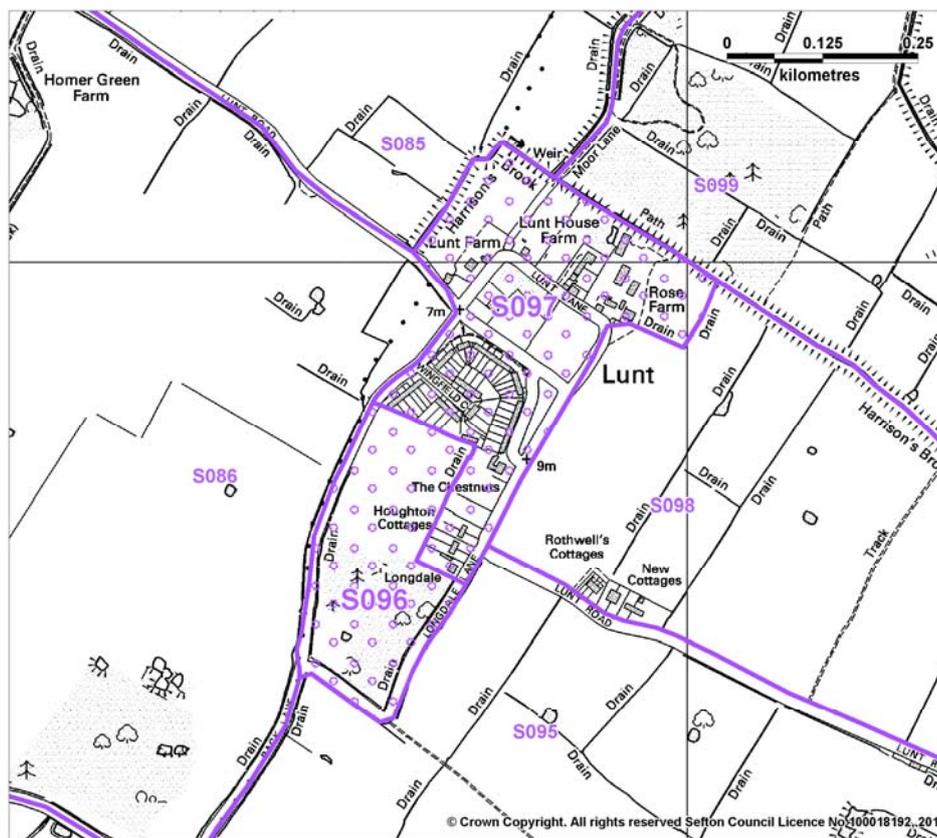
- 3.15 The vast majority of parcels were identified with strong and robust boundaries. Wherever possible, strong physical features such as roads, railways, rivers, the Leeds & Liverpool Canal and tree belts were used.
- 3.16 However, in a few cases this was not possible. In the West Lancashire mosslands (to the east of Southport and adjacent to the River Alt) in particular, there is a lack of roads and other permanent physical features that could be used to form strong, robust boundaries. For example, many field boundaries comprise ditches and drains which are not readily visible from ground level. Therefore some parcels, particularly those away from urban areas, have weaker boundaries such as farm tracks and ditches.
- 3.17 In one case (between parcels S060 and S083), the size of the parcel that would have resulted if the area had been considered as a single parcel would have meant that we had a single parcel that was too large to analyse because different parts of the parcel performed differently in relation to different settlements and constraints. The area was therefore sub-divided using a straight line between Searchlight Plantation and the River Alt, because of the absence of any physical feature on the ground that could be used to delineate the parcels.
- 3.18 The following sample shows the parcels to the north of Lydiate by way of illustration.

Figure 3.2 - Map Showing Identification of Parcels NW of Maghull



- 3.19 In the case of our smaller villages and hamlets such as Lunt, Ince Blundell, Little Crosby and Melling, villages that were ‘washed over’ by the Green Belt in the Unitary Development Plan (UDP)⁸, a parcel boundary was drawn around the edge of the village to create a ‘village envelope’. This was comparable with the way the ‘inset’ villages of Hightown & Sefton were already defined on Sefton’s UDP Proposals Map⁹. However, in the case of Little Crosby, following further work on the preparation of the Sefton Local Plan, the parcel boundary for Little Crosby was altered to more accurately separate the village from Crosby Hall and its rural hinterland.
- 3.20 Hamlets that were more dispersed in character and had no continuous edge, such as Homer Green & Carr Houses, were included within the larger parcels that surrounded them. This approach was also applied to groups of buildings in the Green Belt such as farms, industrial buildings and isolated small ‘ribbons’ of housing, which were not considered to be parcels in their own right. In effect they were treated in the same way as blocks of woodland located in a parcel, because they had a similar impact on breaking up the openness of the parcel.

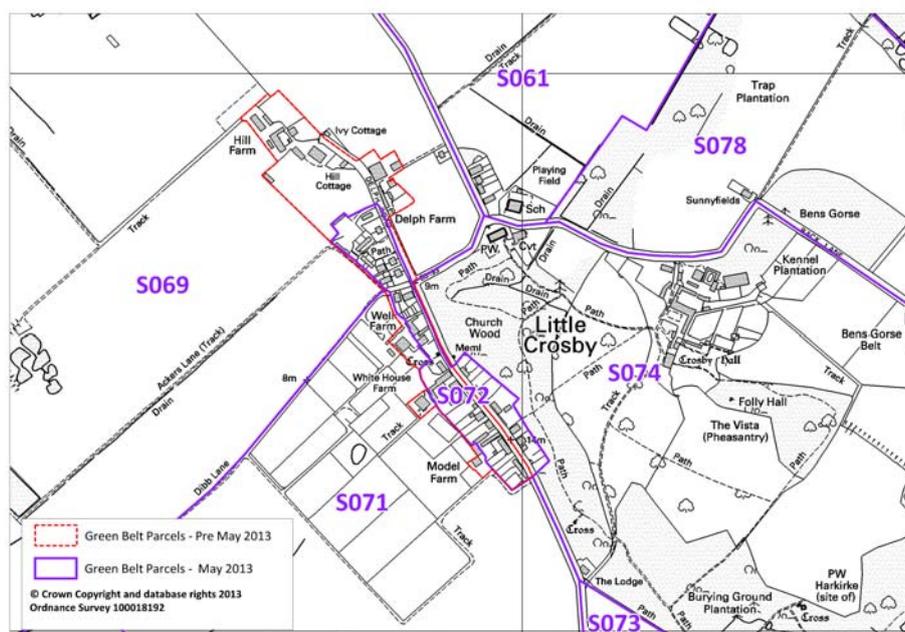
Figure 3.3 – Parcel identification and smaller villages



- 3.21 At the time the draft Study was undertaken there was no guarantee that the Thornton – Switch Island link road (Brooms Cross Road) had the funding to be built, or that a compulsory purchase order (CPO) to acquire the necessary and would be successful. The road has now been granted planning permission, has funding and the CPO has been confirmed, so that work on

construction is likely to commence before the end of 2013. As a result, the Green Belt parcels in its vicinity have been re-drawn to take account of the road, as this will function as a robust and permanent feature in the landscape for years to come. This has resulted in some of the parcels in this area being re-numbered.

Figure 3.4 – Revisions to parcel boundaries at Little Crosby



Major developed sites in the Green Belt

- 3.22 Parcel identification at RAF Woodvale (S032 & S033) and the Altcar Rifle Range (S054 & S055) did not follow strong physical boundaries. Both sites contained an area with some built development which is designated in the UDP as a ‘major developed site in the Green Belt’ where infill development is permitted, and a surrounding area of open land. The two areas were identified as separate parcels, because the two parts exhibit a different character to each other. This approach is therefore consistent with the approach we have used elsewhere.

Cross-boundary parcels

- 3.23 Three parcels, SK001, SK002 and SK003, were identified as joint parcels that straddled the Sefton – Knowsley border. This was because the land on both sides of the Borough boundaries formed part of a single piece of land in one land use, and shared a single character. The administrative boundary between the two Boroughs is no longer formed by any physical feature on the ground, as it appears to follow a former route of the River Alt. These parcels are numbered SK001, SK002 and SK003 in both Sefton’s and Knowsley’s Green Belt Studies. The assessment of these parcels also appears in both studies.
- 3.24 In the case of parcels which would also encroach into West Lancashire if the assessment was based purely on land use and character, where there was a strong physical feature close to the boundary such as the Leeds and

Liverpool Canal which formed a better boundary than the administrative boundary, the stronger boundary was chosen. This might not include all the land in Sefton, or could include a small area of land in West Lancashire. However, they were only identified with a Sefton prefix (Sxxx), as they do not appear in the West Lancashire study, being outside their 'areas of search'.

Parcel definition

- 3.25 Parcels were initially identified as a desktop exercise. The parcels were refined following site visits, when the parcel boundary strength and land use characteristics could also be taken in to account.
- 3.26 Following the site inspections, a small number of boundaries were altered where a more robust boundary was identified. Some parcels were combined and others split because of difference in land use or the character of part of the provisional parcel.
- 3.27 Parcels were not chosen because of their size, but because they contained similar land uses and exhibited a similar character. This approach was supported by the first Stakeholder workshop. As a result, there is a significant variation in the size of parcels. The largest parcel (S025) has an area of 566 hectares, whilst the smallest parcel (S151) has an area of only 0.22 hectares.
- 3.28 In a number of cases, where parcels with robust boundaries in the same land use and a common character would have resulted in very large parcels being identified, we chose to split the provisional parcels. This was because the larger parcel would have been too large to be properly assessed at the latter stages of the Study. We concluded it was better to have more, smaller parcels with strongly defined boundaries wherever possible than to have a few large ones, as this would enable us to carry out a finer grain of analysis. The robustness of the boundary was therefore considered to be as important as the land use and character when identifying parcels.
- 3.29 Parcels tend to be smaller closer to the main urban areas compared to those in the more remote parts of Sefton. This is partly because parcels close to urban areas contain a greater mix of land uses and often have a more diverse character. These parcels also tend to have more complex relationships with nearby urban areas and contain more development than those in more remote areas. Parcels in these areas also tend to have stronger boundaries than the more rural areas, because there are more physical features close to settlements such as roads and railway lines.
- 3.30 The parcel references used in the Study report relate to the revised parcel boundaries. A description of the parcel boundaries is contained in the Schedule of parcels which is attached as Appendix 1. These references have also been used for all other studies that assess parts of Sefton's Green Belt, including the Agricultural Land Study, the assessment of Flood Risk and the Scoping Report for assessment under the Habitat Regulations.

Fully developed parcels and villages

- 3.31 The villages that comprised self-contained parcels and the 'major developed sites' in the Green Belt were both classified for the purposes of the Study as being fully developed. This is because the Framework allows some infill

development in the 'inset' villages, unlike other parcels, as well as the partial or complete of previously developed land in the Green Belt. Development here should comply with other planning policies. The three areas which the Detailed Boundary Review recommended should become part of the urban area were also identified as self-contained parcels, because they were already developed (Green Belt parcels S159, S160 and S161)).

- 3.32 A small number of other parcels were also considered to be 'fully developed', even though they are not identified in the UDP as being 'major developed sites' in the Green Belt. These included the Waste Transfer Station at Foul Lane, Southport; Pontin's, Ainsdale; and the commercial area on the north side of Sefton Lane, Maghull. These all comprise developed sites on the edge of the urban areas, and therefore do not contribute to the openness of the Green Belt.
- 3.33 All these parcels were excluded from further consideration at the end of this Stage of the assessment, as they were not locations where new development in the Green Belt should be assessed.
- 3.34 The site of Ashworth Hospital South at Maghull was also included in this category in the draft Green Belt Study because the site had planning permission for a new prison and would not therefore be available for other uses. Accommodation works for the prison, including the provision of a new site access, had started. However, during the Core Strategy options consultation period the Ministry of Justice confirmed that the prison would no longer go ahead, and hence this parcel has been removed from the list of 'discarded' parcels.
- 3.35 Parcels that were mostly developed, but where there may be some scope for limited infill on any undeveloped areas and where there was not an extant planning permission were not identified as being fully developed, and were treated in a similar way to other 'non-discarded' parcels.

Changes as a result of the approval of the Thornton – Switch Island link road

- 3.36 When the draft Study was prepared there was no certainty that the proposed Thornton – Switch Island link road would be built, as it did not have funding or planning permission, and the Council did not own of the land required for its construction. However, as it is now a commitment which will be constructed from the end of 2013, the parcel boundaries in this area have been revised. This is because the road would form a robust, clear and well-defined parcel boundary for assessment. The following maps show the 'before' and 'after' parcels in this area.

Figure 3.5.Thornton (before link road)

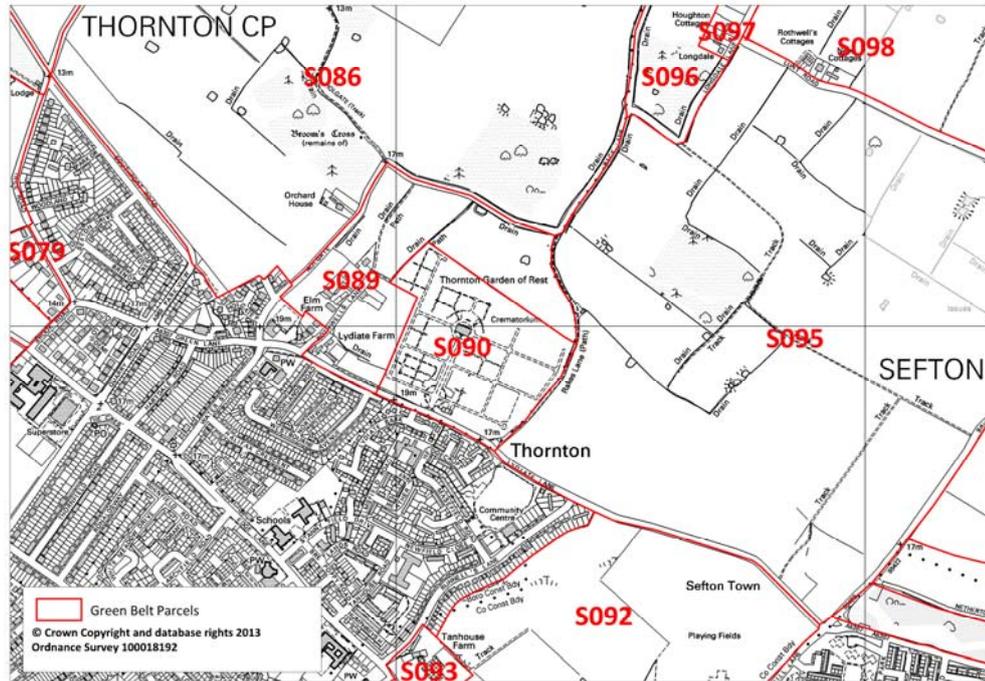


Figure 3.6 Thornton (after link road)

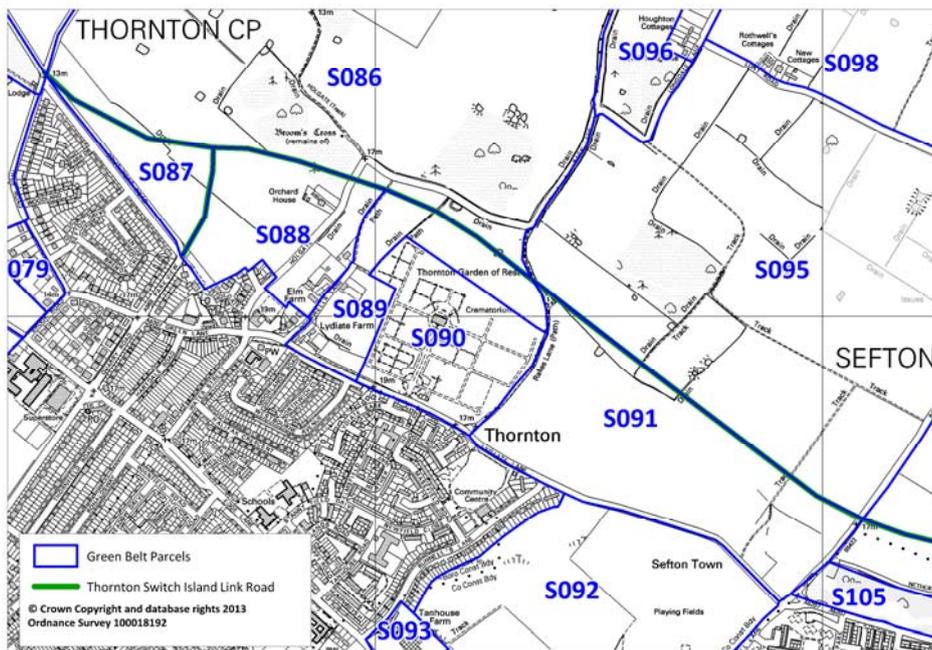


Figure 3.7 Netherton (before link road)

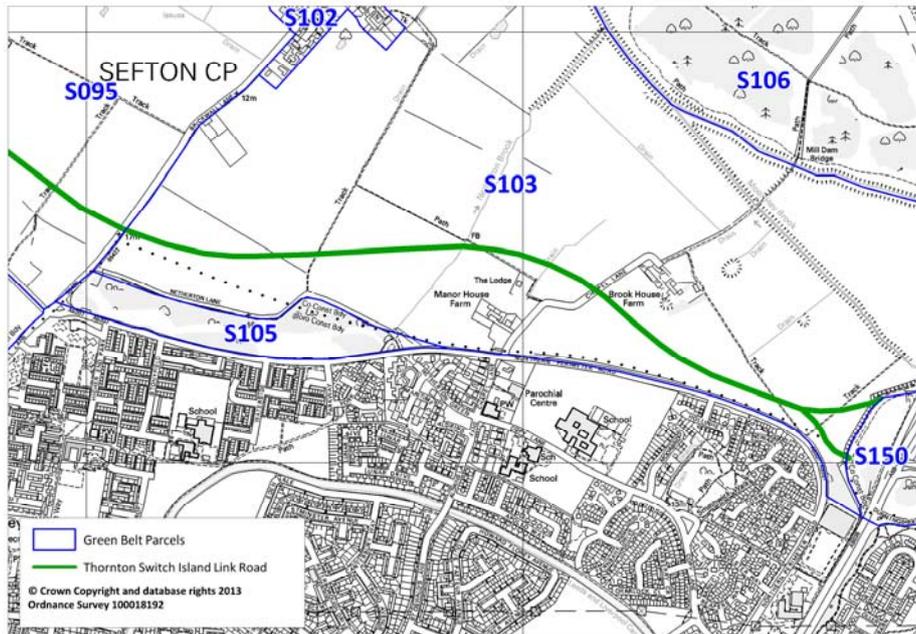
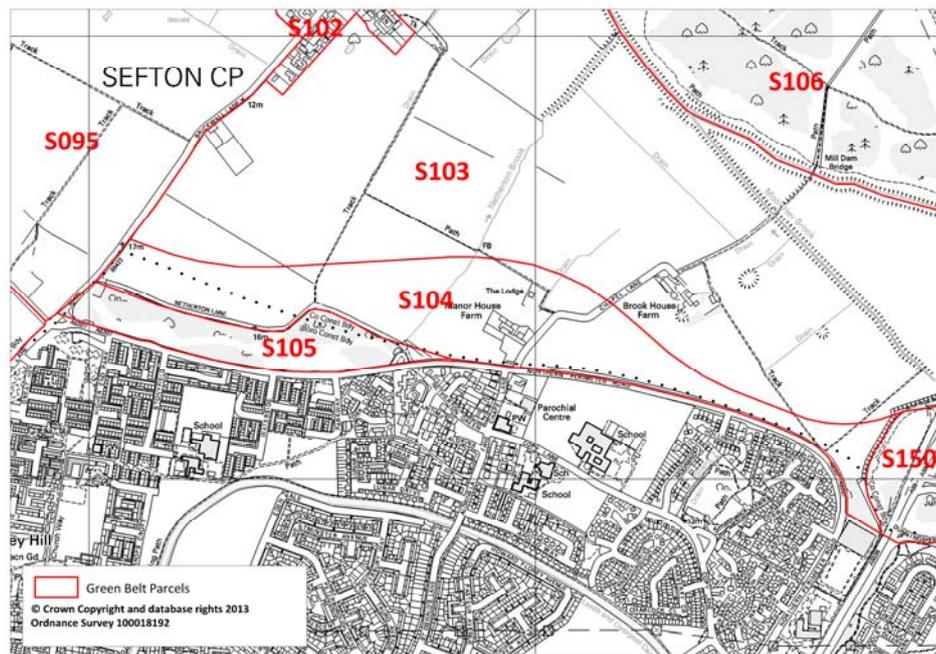


Figure 3.8 Netherton (after link road)



3.37 Parcels that were identified as being ‘fully developed’ were discarded at the end of Stage 1, and were not considered further in the Study. This includes the three parcels (S159, S160 and S161) that the Detailed Boundary Review considered ought to be re-allocated as part of the urban area when the Site Allocations DPD is prepared.

Table 3.9: List of ‘fully developed’ parcels discarded at Stage 1

S010	Waste Transfer Station, Foul Lane, Southport
S023	Pontin's, Shore Road, Ainsdale
S033	RAF Woodvale / airfield buildings
S051	Powerhouse site, Altcar Lane, Formby
S055	Altcar Rifle Range built development, Hightown
S063	Ince Blundell village & Lady Green
S072	Little Crosby village
S079	Residential development on Ince Lane, Thornton
S097	Lunt village
S102	Sefton village
S108	Commercial frontage, Sefton Lane, Maghull
S126	Ashworth Hospital North & East (HMP Kennet), Maghull
S146	Melling village
S148	Rock Lane / Bedford Lane, Maghull
S159	63 - 85 Moss Lane & 2 Pitts House Lane, Southport
S160	56 - 78 Crowland Street, Southport
S161	127 - 133 Pinfold Lane, Ainsdale

4. Stage 2 – Assessment of parcels against the purposes of including land in the Green Belt

- 4.1 Once the Green Belt had been sub-divided into parcels, and the fully developed parcels discarded at the end of Stage 1, the remaining parcels were assessed against how well they performed against the purposes of including land in the Green Belt. The draft Methodology stated that this would largely be an assessment of how open an area is, both in its own right, and as part of a broader swathe of land.
- 4.2 At the end of Stage 2, the draft Methodology anticipated that a number of areas would be identified as being so important to maintaining the integrity of the Green Belt that they must be kept open and should not be considered for development. This accords with paragraph 79 of the Framework which states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open, and that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence.
- 4.3 This aim is supplemented by paragraph 80 which states that there are five purposes for including land in the Green Belt:
1. To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
 2. To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;
 3. To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
 4. To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
 5. To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
- 4.4 The Merseyside Green Belt was adopted in 1983. The Written Statement says that the Green Belt is necessary in order to:
- (i) check the outward spread of the built-up area, direct development into existing towns, and encourage their regeneration;
 - (ii) ensure that towns and villages retain their individual character; and
 - (iii) safeguard the surrounding countryside so that its potential for agriculture, nature conservation and recreation and its value as an amenity for townspeople is preserved.
- 4.5 These do not exactly replicate the purposes set out in the Framework, or its predecessor PPG2. However, they do provide a local explanation of the aims and reasons why the Merseyside Green Belt was established. The first Stakeholder workshop held in April 2010 confirmed that these criteria should be included as part of the assessment at this stage.
- 4.6 The following table shows how the three Merseyside Green Belt purposes relate to the five purposes included in the Framework:

Figure 4.1: Green Belt Purposes

The Framework purposes	Merseyside Green Belt purposes
1. To check unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	Check the outward spread of the built-up area, direct development into existing towns (part of MGB purpose i)
2. To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another	Ensure that towns and villages retain their individual character (MGB purpose ii)
3. To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Safeguard the surrounding countryside so that its potential for agriculture, nature conservation and recreation and its value as an amenity for townspeople is preserved (MGB purpose iii)
4. To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	Ensure that towns and villages retain their individual character (MGB purpose ii)
5. To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	Encourage the regeneration [of the built-up area] (part of MGB purpose i)

- 4.7 The Framework does not suggest that any of the purposes are any more or less important than the others. Each parcel was therefore assessed against each purpose in an equitable manner, taking into account the three purposes that the whole of the Merseyside Green Belt performs, in order to reflect local differences & distinctiveness.
- 4.8 The draft Methodology acknowledged that regardless of how many or how few purposes a parcel met, there were likely to be some areas that were so important purely in maintaining the openness of the Green Belt, that they should be protected from any development and should remain in the Green Belt in perpetuity. This meant that parcels did not have to meet a minimum number of purposes in order to be excluded from the Study; if they met only one, this may be sufficient to exclude the parcel from further assessment during the later stages of the Study.
- 4.9 The draft Methodology indicated that, as part of the assessment, a commentary would be provided setting out how each parcel meets any or all of the purposes. This is included in Appendix 2.
- 4.10 The two Stakeholder workshops held in April & June 2010, considered, amongst other things, whether the draft Methodology provided the most efficient way of assessing the Green Belt purposes contained in national planning policy. The proposals set out in the draft Methodology were examined in detail. A record of the workshop discussions is attached as Appendix 3.
- 4.11 The first workshop agreed that the first four purposes could be measured with a good degree of confidence, but both workshops concluded that there was very little consistent evidence that could be used to indicate whether development was likely to have a positive (complementary) or negative (adverse) impact on purpose 5 – regeneration priorities. Both workshops

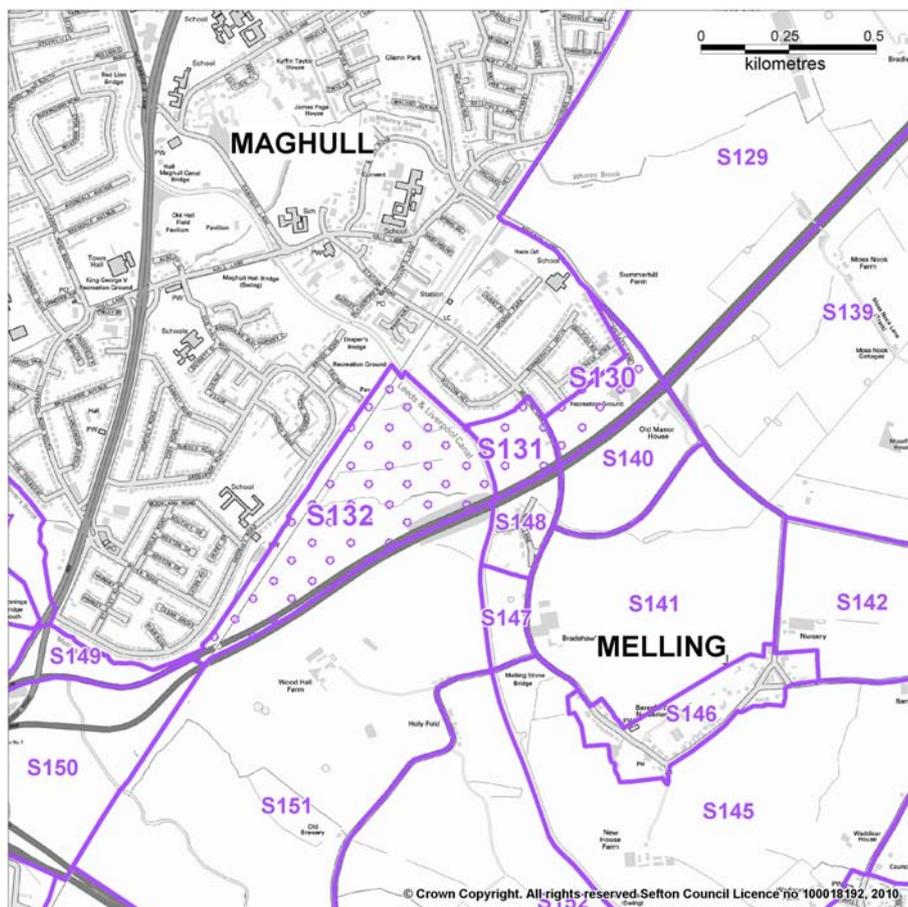
concluded that whether development would or would not have an impact was likely to depend on the details of the proposed scheme and on future regeneration priorities and initiatives, as well as matters such as distance between the site being developed and any regeneration priority area, and the links between them including any possibility of cross-subsidisation. This could only be determined at the time a planning application was submitted in accordance with policy requirements prevailing at that time.

- 4.12 It was therefore concluded that purpose 5 could not adequately be addressed as part of this Study, but should be considered as part of the preparation of the Sefton Local Plan.

Purpose 1 – To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

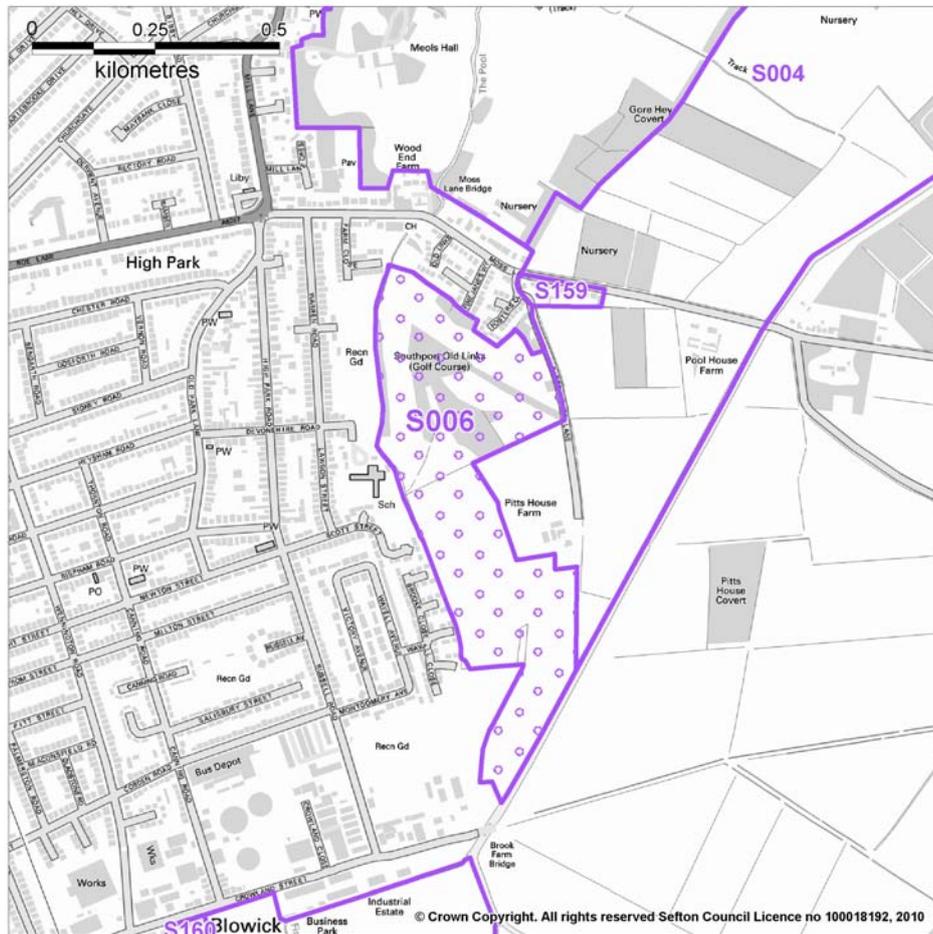
- 4.13 The draft Methodology indicated that this purpose should be assessed by measuring how much of the parcel was covered by buildings. However, having already discarded those parcels that were fully developed from further consideration at the end of Stage 1, it was concluded at the first Stakeholder workshop that this would not be an effective way to assess Purpose 1.
- 4.14 The workshop agreed that a more appropriate measure was to consider whether any future development adjacent to an urban area could be so firmly 'contained' by strong physical and / or visual features that it would not lead to 'unrestricted sprawl' into adjoining parcels.
- 4.15 The remaining parcels (i.e. those not discarded at the end of Stage 1) were therefore assessed in terms of how 'contained' each parcel was by one or more urban areas. This could apply to the whole of a parcel or to only one or more small parts of a parcel. Parcels that were not adjacent to any urban area were incapable of being 'contained' by an urban area.
- 4.16 Parcels were categorised as follows:
- 4.17 **Well contained (WC)** – For a parcel to be described as being 'well contained', it must be adjacent to an urban area and bounded by strong physical features such as main roads, railways or tree belts. This would prevent any development within the parcel from encroaching beyond the parcel boundary into the open countryside in neighbouring parcels, and hence if developed would be likely to have a minimal impact on the overall openness of the Green Belt.
- 4.18 The definition of 'urban areas' in this context included not only the main towns and villages such as Southport, Formby, Crosby, Netherton, Maghull and Aintree, but also the smaller villages that had been identified at Stage 1 as parcels in their own right. Hence villages such as Hightown & Ince Blundell were considered to be urban for the purposes of this part of the assessment, but not looser groups of buildings such as the hamlets of Homer Green & Carr Houses which were not identified as self-contained parcels.

Figure 4.2: 'Well-contained' parcels east of Maghull



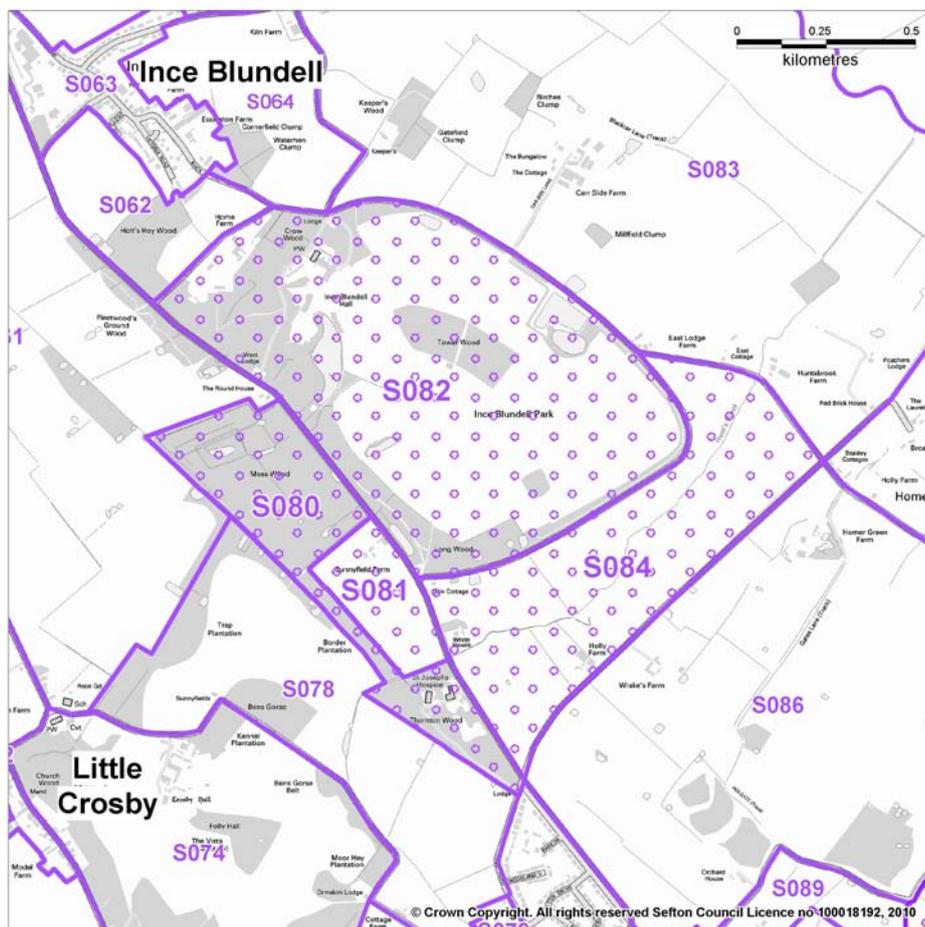
- 4.19 The above plan shows parcels S130, S131 & S132 which illustrate this principle. They are all bounded by the urban area to their north & west, and by the M58 motorway to their southeast. The M58 clearly acts as a strong physical barrier that would prevent the development of these parcels from sprawling out into the open countryside beyond the motorway.
- 4.20 **Partly contained (PC)** – Parcels were considered to be ‘partly contained’ if only a small part of the parcel was ‘contained’ by the urban area. This category included parcels that abutted an urban area for any part of their boundary, as these parcels may be a suitable location for an urban extension, even if the area is currently not physically well-contained by the urban area. Furthermore, the relationship with the urban area may change if an adjoining parcel were to be developed.
- 4.21 Parcel S006 is typical of a partly contained parcel. It is contained by the urban area to its north and west, but abuts open agricultural land to its east.

Figure 4.3: A 'partly contained' parcel east of Southport



- 4.22 **Not contained (NC)** – Parcels that were ‘not contained’ by an urban area, and were therefore areas where development would lead to urban sprawl, included parcels that were not adjacent to an urban area. Such parcels could not, by definition, be ‘contained’ by an urban area. In the case of parcels that were physically separated from an urban area e.g. by a main road (dual carriageway or motorway) or railway, these were also considered to be ‘not contained’.
- 4.23 Parcels S080, S081, S082 & S084 on the attached plan are parcels that are not contained by any urban area, unlike S062 & S064 to their north which are partly contained by the village of Ince Blundell. This example also shows that only a small part of the parcel needs to abut an urban area for it to be ‘partly contained’.
- 4.24 Parcels that were identified as being ‘not contained’ would be discarded the Study at the end of this Stage and would not be subject further consideration during the subsequent stages of the Study, because any built development within these parcels would lead to unrestricted sprawl across open countryside, contrary to Green Belt Purpose 1.

Figure 4.4: Parcels that are ‘not contained’ south of Ince Blundell



4.25 Appendix 2a sets out how each parcel was classified in relation to PPG2 Purpose 1 – to check the spread of unrestricted urban sprawl. Parcels that were ‘not contained’ by an urban area were discarded after this assessment:

Table 4.5: Parcels discarded as being ‘not contained’ by an urban area

S011	Birkdale Hills (Jubilee Trail) south of Eco-Centre
S013	Dunes west of the Coastal Road, Birkdale
S024	Ainsdale Discovery Centre & car parks
S025	Ainsdale Sand Dunes National Nature Reserve
S037	Local Wildlife Site / Nature reserve to west of Formby Bypass
S039	Land between Formby Bypass and Formby Golf course
S040	Land between Formby Bypass & Old Southport Road, north of North Moss Lane
S041	Formby Hall Golf Course, Old Southport Road, Formby
S042	Land between Broad Lane & Downholland Brook, Formby
S043	‘Built up’ area north of Moss Side, Formby
S057	Land bounded by North End Lane, Formby Bypass, Orrell Hill Lane & Moss Lane, Hightown
S061	Land west of Formby Bypass & south of Orrell Hill Lane

S080	Thornton Wood & Moss Wood, Thornton
S081	Sunnyfield Farm, Thornton
S082	Ince Blundell Hall
S083	Land to east of Ince Blundell park
S084	Land to south of Ince Blundell park
S085	Land southeast of Homer Green and north east of Lunt
S087	Land south of Homer Green & Lunt bounded by Long Lane, Lunt Road, Back Lane and the Thornton – Switch Island link road
S091	Land between Lunt & Sefton villages, S of Lunt Road & Thornton, bounded by Brickwall Lane, Rakes Lane, Back Lane & Longdale Lane and the Thornton - Switch Island link road
S096	Community woodland south of Lunt village
S098	Agricultural land east of Lunt village
S099	Land to north of Harrison's Brook, Lunt
S100	Sefton Meadows south and west of River Alt
S109	Land to north of Sefton Lane and west of the Cheshire Lines, Maghull
S113	Land between Acres Lane, Pilling Lane, Punnell's Lane & Bell's Lane, Lydiate
S114	Land bounded by Station Road, Southport Road, Leeds & Liverpool Canal & Pilling Lane, Lydiate
S115	Land north of Punnells Lane / Station Road, E of Southport Road & south of Lydiate Brook
S116	Land bounded by Sudell Brook, Hall Lane & Eager Lane, Lydiate
S117	Land east of Southport Road between the Leeds & Liverpool Canal & Hall Lane, Lydiate
S118	Land between Eager Lane & the Leeds & Liverpool Canal, Lydiate
S119	Land between the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, Pygon's Hill Lane, Sudell Lane & Sudell Brook, Lydiate
S121	Land between Pygon's Hill Lane, Sudell Lane & Sudell Brook, Lydiate
S127	Land bounded by Butchers Lane, Prescott Road, the M58, School Lane & Ashworth Prison, Maghull
S133	Land north of Coniscough Lane, Maghull
S134	Land between Coniscough Lane and the M58, Maghull
S135	Land south of the M58, east of Prescott Road & north of Spurriers Lane, Maghull
S136	Land between Prescott Road and M58 junction 1
S137	Land east of Melling Mount and north of Kirkby
S138	Land bounded by Giddygate Lane, M58, Prescott Road & Angers Lane, Melling
S139	Land between Giddygate Lane, the M58 & Leatherbarrows Lane, Maghull
S140	Land between Leatherbarrows Lane, the M58 & Weavers Lane, Maghull
S141	Land north of Melling village
S142	Land northeast of Melling village
S143	Land bounded by Angers Lane, Prescott Road &

	Waddicar Lane, Melling
S147	Land between Rock Lane, the Leeds and Liverpool Canal and north of Brewery Lane, Melling
S151	Land between Brewery Lane and the railway
SK001	Land between the R Alt, the Leeds & Liverpool Canal, Bulls Bridge Lane and the M57, Aintree

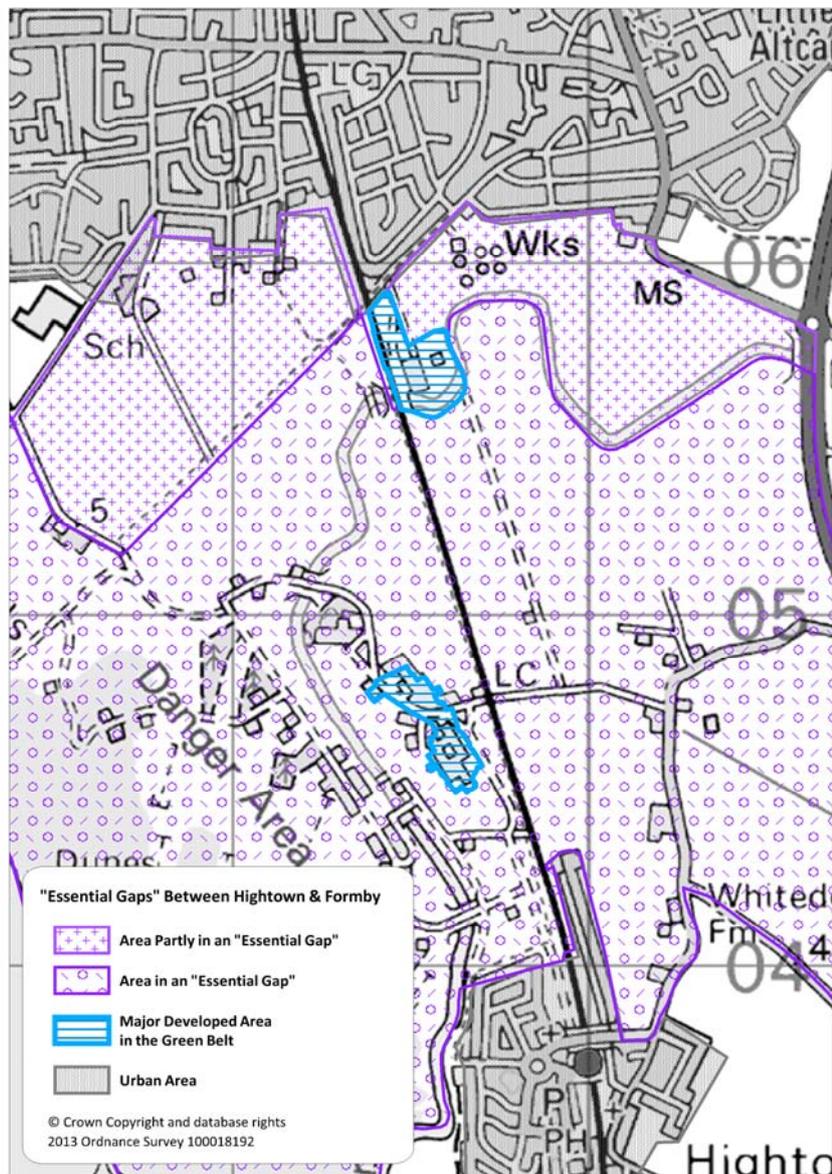
Purpose 2 – To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another

- 4.26 The draft Methodology indicated that Purpose 2 would be assessed using distances between settlements. People attending the first Stakeholder workshop held in April 2010 agreed with the principle that the smaller the gap, the more essential that it should be kept open. They also felt that a simply measuring the distance between settlements would be unhelpful. Not only would this be pedantic, but it was agreed that it was also important to consider the ‘visual’ impression of a gap. The perception of settlements merging will vary depending on factors such as the size of the settlements that are to be kept separate, and whether there were visual factors (e.g. motorway or railway embankments, groups of trees or buildings) that might break up a gap or help define it.
- 4.27 The workshop concluded that whilst it was essential to keep open a small gap such as a single field between small villages & hamlets (e.g. between Lunt and Sefton village) to stop them from coalescing, a wider gap between larger settlements, (e.g. a gap approximately 2 kilometres wide between Southport & Formby or Hightown & Crosby), could also be a gap that should be kept open. It was not possible to assign a fixed distance as this would depend on individual circumstances. Any gaps that had to be kept open in order to ensure that adjacent settlements did not merge were identified as ‘Essential Gaps’ (EG).
- 4.28 It was also important to consider that when we identified a gap as forming an ‘Essential Gap’, there may be some limited scope for development on one or both sides of the gap without adversely harming its overall integrity, especially where the gap is relatively wide or there is a part that is ‘well contained’(WC). Gaps that could accommodate some development were therefore classified as ‘partly being within an Essential Gap’ (EG (part)) – see paragraph 4.36 below.
- 4.29 There may be built development (a ‘major developed site’ or a village or a hamlet) located within an Essential Gap between two larger settlements. The above plan shows that the whole of the area between these settlements forms an Essential Gap. However, there are two ‘major developed sites’ (the Powerhouse site and the Altcar Rifle Range) in this gap. These break up the gap.
- 4.30 The gap between the northern end of St George’s Road and the Altcar training camp is only about 300m wide. No development should therefore be permitted north of Hightown because it could lead to these areas merging.
- 4.31 There is a wider gap (over 1.6 kms) to the southernmost point of the Formby urban area (Park Close), although this is reduced to about 700m between the

north of the training camp and the Powerhouse site. There is also a strong natural boundary, formed by the River Alt, to the south of Formby. Consequently, the areas south of Barton Heys Road and Altcar Lane were identified as lying 'partly within an Essential Gap' where development might be accommodated without compromising the overall integrity of the Essential Gap.

- 4.32 It should be stressed that although some parcels were identified as being 'partly within an Essential Gap', this does not in any way confer any expectation that any parcel so identified will be suitable for development. A parcel may be discarded from consideration as part of any subsequent stage of the Study. It is the role of the Local Plan, not the Green Belt Study, to identify which settlements should be expanded, by what amount, and on which sites.

Figure 4.6: Essential and partly essential gaps between Formby and Hightown



- 4.33 For some parcels the gaps are not as clearly defined as those described above, as the settlements may not be so conveniently arranged. This will be particularly true where:
- there are several parcels between settlements; or
 - the gap is visually broken up by groups of buildings, woodland or infrastructure; or
 - the settlement on the other side of the gap is some distance away, and may be in another local authority's administrative area.
- 4.34 Examples of less clearly defined gaps include the area to the east of both Southport and Formby, where there is a wide gap across the West Lancashire Plain between these settlements and Ormskirk (in West Lancashire). This wide gap contains a series of narrower gaps to villages such as Halsall & Haskayne (both of which are in West Lancashire). Likewise, the 'Essential Gap' between Netherton & Maghull (parcels S103, S104 & S106) contains Sefton village at its western edge (shown on the above plan as parcel S102), which, in turn, has its own 'gap' relationships with Netherton, Thornton & Maghull (see Figure 4.6 above).
- 4.35 Parcels on the seaward side of any settlement cannot lie on the side of any gap, so the concept is clearly not appropriate in these locations. The analysis for these parcels therefore indicates that assessment in relation to this purpose was not appropriate (N/A).
- 4.36 For the purposes of assessment against purpose 2 of the Framework, parcels were classified as follows:
- EG** – The parcel is within an essential gap, where any further development would reduce the gap between settlements to an unacceptable width;
- EG (part)** – Although these parcels are situated within an essential gap that must be kept open, there may be scope for some development e.g. 'rounding off' on one or both edges of the gap without adversely harming its overall openness and the broad extent of the gap.
- NG** – Narrow gaps were defined as being wider than essential gaps, but are still sensitive to development. Potentially more development could be accommodated on the edge of an urban area without leading to neighbouring settlements merging. These gaps were generally more than 2 kilometres wide.
- WG** – Wide gaps were identified where development on the urban edge is not likely to impact on the integrity of the gap. Such gaps were generally more than 5 kilometres wide. Wide gaps are also likely to contain a series of narrower gaps between smaller settlements within them.
- N/A** – For parcels that are located on the coast, where there is no other settlement that could be located on the far side of a gap, this purpose is not relevant.

- 4.37 One of the submissions received in response to the Core Strategy Options suggested that the narrow area of land east of Runnells Lane, Thornton could be developed without reducing the gap between Thornton and Netherton unduly. Having reviewed this proposal, it has been agreed that S092 should be re-designated as being partly within an 'essential gap', with the rest of the land kept permanently open.
- 4.38 Parcels that were identified as being within an 'Essential Gap' were discarded from further consideration in the Study at the end of this stage. As each purpose was assessed independently, a number of parcels were therefore discarded not only because they were identified as being both within an 'Essential Gap' (purpose 2 of the Framework), and because they were also 'not well-contained' by the urban area (purpose 1).
- 4.39 A list of how each parcel was assessed is included in Appendix 2b. The following parcels were discarded at this Stage because they contained a parcel that was fully within an 'Essential Gap':

Table 4.7: Parcels discarded as being within an Essential Gap

S018	Southport & Ainsdale Golf Links, Bradshaw's Lane, Ainsdale
S032	RAF Woodvale airfield (excluding buildings)
S034	Site of Local Biological Interest (Local Wildlife Site) adjacent to railway, RAF Woodvale
S037	Local Wildlife Site / Nature reserve to west of Formby bypass
S039	Land between Formby Bypass and Formby Golf course
S041	Formby Hall Golf Course, Old Southport Road, Formby
S050	Land bounded by Hoggs Hill Lane (track), railway, River Alt and coast
S057	Land bounded by North End Lane, Formby bypass, Orrell Hill Lane and Moss Lane, Hightown
S061	Land west of Formby bypass & south of Orrell Hill Lane
S073	Land between Little Crosby & Moor Park
S074	Little Crosby Hall
S076	Northern Cricket Club, Moor Lane, Crosby
S087	Land between the Thornton - Switch Island link road and Lunt Road
S091	Land between the Thornton - Switch Island link road and Lunt and Sefton villages
S094	The Rimrose Valley
S096	Community woodland south of Lunt village
S098	Agricultural land east of Lunt village
S100	Sefton Meadows south and west of the River Alt
S101	Agricultural land north of Sefton village and west of Bridges Lane
S103	Land bounded by the River Alt, the A59, the Thornton – Switch Island link road, Brickwall Lane, Sefton village and Bridges Lane
S104	Land between Netherton and the Thornton- Switch Island link road
S105	Pinfold Wood, Netherton
S106	Sefton Meadows, south-west of Maghull

S107	Land to south of The Crescent, Maghull
S136	Land between Prescot Road and the M58 junction 1
S138	Land bounded by Giddygate Lane, the M58, Prescot Road & Angers Lane, Melling
S139	Land between Giddygate Lane, the M58 and Leatherbarrows Lane, Maghull
S140	Land between Leatherbarrows Lane, M58 and Weavers Lane, Maghull
S143	Land bounded by Angers Lane, Prescot Road and Waddicar Lane, Melling
S147	Land between Rock Lane, the Leeds & Liverpool Canal and N of Brewery Lane, Melling
S150	Switch Island and land between motorways & railway
S151	Land between Brewery Lane & railway, Melling
S153	Land south of Spencers Lane, Waddicar
S156	Aintree racecourse
SK001	Land between the River Alt, the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, Bulls Bridge Lane and the M57
SK002	Wango Lane Country Park, Aintree
SK003	Kirkby Golf Course

N.B. Parcels SK001, SK002 & SK003 are joint parcels that straddle the Sefton – Knowsley border (see paragraph 3.26 above).

Purpose 3 – to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

- 4.40 The draft Methodology proposed that this purpose would be assessed (i) on the basis of the boundary strength, & (ii) whether the parcel contained land used for agriculture, forestry, outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and cemeteries (as set out in the first two bullets of paragraph 89 of the Framework), and other appropriate uses including uses identified in paragraph 90 such as mineral extraction, engineering operations and transport infrastructure.
- 4.41 As part of the validation process, Envision confirmed that whilst we should assess land use as part of the consideration of this purpose, the strength of the boundary had already been assessed at Stage 1 and there was no need to assess this again. In assessing this purpose we considered how open a parcel was, as openness in Green Belt terms relates to the absence of inappropriate development.
- 4.42 For the purposes of this Study, parcels in ‘appropriate’ or countryside uses included the following land uses:
- Agriculture
 - Equine uses
 - Nature
 - Dunes
 - Areas used for sport and recreation
 - Amenity space
 - Woodland
 - Parkland

- Cemeteries, and
 - Open land occupied by the Ministry of Defence and TAVR such as airfields & rifle ranges
 - Former landfill sites where used for agriculture or recreation uses
- 4.46 Other infrastructure and development considered to be 'appropriate' in the Green Belt for the purposes of this Study included land used as a prison, caravan storage and static caravan sites, sewerage works, highways infrastructure and former landfill sites.
- 4.47 A number of parcels contained a mix of land uses where no use was dominant. These were described as 'mixed' land use parcels. Parcels were therefore classified as being in an 'appropriate' or 'inappropriate' land use, or containing a mix of land uses.
- 4.48 Paragraphs 89 and 90 of the Framework are more permissive about limited infill and other development in villages and on previously developed land. As any proposals could only be assessed when a planning application is submitted as it relates to circumstances pertaining on site when the application is submitted, the scope for further development on such areas has not been assessed as part of this Study.
- 4.49 Although paragraph 1.7 of PPG2 stated that the extent to which land in the Green Belt fulfils these objectives is not a material factor to be taken into account when considering its continued protection, this is not repeated in the Framework. As a result, no parcels were discarded at the end of this assessment.

Purpose 4 – to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

- 4.49 Sefton does not contain any nationally recognised historic towns, the setting of which needs to be protected. However, the second aim of the Merseyside Green Belt is to ensure that towns and villages retain their individual character. Whilst this can be partly achieved by ensuring that individual settlements are not allowed to merge (purpose 2 of the Framework), the setting of many of the towns and villages located in the Green Belt can make a significant contribution to their distinctive character, particularly if they are designated as Conservation Areas or have some other heritage designation.
- 4.50 This would accord with paragraph 129 of the Framework which states that LPAs should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal, including development affecting the setting of an asset.
- 4.51 As part of the assessment of the individual parcels, a number of historic assets were identified where it was important to maintain the setting round them. This included a number of villages and parklands, whether designated as Conservations Areas or not. A setting was not identified around an individual listed building because the setting of listed buildings is localised, and unlikely to impact on the whole of a parcel, and would also depend on the amount and location of any proposed development.

- 4.52 No parcels were discarded at the end of the assessment of Purpose 4, even if the whole of the parcel contributed to the setting of an asset. Like Purpose 3, the fact that a parcel contained the setting of an asset whose setting should be protected, was noted as a factor to be taken into account during subsequent stages of the Study.

Purpose 5 - To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

- 4.53 The Merseyside Green Belt was adopted in 1983 partly in order to “(i) check the outward spread of the built-up area, direct development into existing towns, and encourage their regeneration”. This supports the fifth purpose for including land in the Green Belt set out in paragraph 80 of the Framework.
- 4.54 The Merseyside Green Belt remains largely unaltered today, and has been successful at directing new development into the urban areas and securing urban regeneration. The need for continued urban regeneration remains. The funding secured under the Housing Market Renewal Initiative has been abolished, there is still a need to regenerate the older housing areas especially in Bootle, and many of the older employment areas, especially in Bootle and Netherton need to be re-modelled and re-configured so that they are capable of meeting future needs.
- 4.55 Elsewhere, employment uses are often no longer ‘good neighbours’ with residential areas, so there is a growing trend for such uses to relocate on industrial estates, in Sefton and elsewhere.
- 4.56 This is particularly true of the ‘backland’ areas of Southport and Birkdale, and there is a need to provide an extension to the Crowland Street industrial area in the Green Belt (Green Belt parcel S007), where these uses can relocate to. This would not only enable more housing to be built in the urban area, but also help to improve the liveability of these areas, due to the improvement to residential amenity that will be secured. The alternative is that employment uses cannot relocate when a site is redeveloped for housing or other uses, due to a lack of alternate provision, which could lead to more unemployment and higher levels of deprivation.
- 4.57 The draft Methodology set out two criteria that could help assess whether development in a parcel was likely to divert development away from any identified regeneration area. These were:
- (a) whether the parcel was located in the same housing sub-market where it may have an impact; and
 - (b) whether the site was located in area where it was unlikely to have any impact on urban regeneration.
- 4.58 As previously indicated, both Stakeholder workshops (see Appendix 3) considered it would not be possible to assess whether any development in any parcel would or would not have a positive or a negative impact on any regeneration initiatives in Sefton and the wider City Region. This would depend very much on the nature of the proposals, the scale of the development, and any links or opportunities for cross-subsidisation, including

the use of the New Homes Bonus to help complete the regeneration of the former HMRI area that could be secured as a result of development taking place elsewhere in Sefton, on urban and Green Belt sites.

- 4.59 As this relationship can only be determined when planning applications were submitted, and in the context of policies in the Local Plan, no assessment was made in relation to Purpose 5.
- 4.60 Apart from the possible allocation of land at Crowland Street, Southport for employment purposes, the only other exception to this is the area between Prescott Road (B5192) and Kirkby (Green Belt parcel S158). Any development in this area would have a direct impact on proposals to regenerate Tower Hill and bring the former golf driving range forward for development. This parcel was therefore excluded from further consideration at this stage.

Table 4.8: Parcels discarded as having a detrimental impact on regeneration

S158	Land adjacent to Tower Hill, Kirkby
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Stage 2 Conclusion

- 4.58 At the end of Stage 2, each parcel had been assessed against the five purposes of including land in the Green Belt. Although this was designed to be robust, as a result of the independent validation process, including the Stakeholder workshops, a number of changes were made to strengthen our assessment. The changes made resulted in a more appropriate and systematic evaluation of each purpose, which have resulted in improvements to the robustness of the Study.
- 4.59 At the end of the assessment of all parcels against the Green Belt purposes, a number of parcels were discarded and excluded from further assessment. This only applied to the assessment against Green Belt Purposes 1 and 2; it was concluded that no parcels should be discarded at the end of the assessment of Purposes 3 and 4.
- 4.60 Although it was not possible to fully assess Purpose 5, it was concluded that land adjacent to Tower Hill, Kirkby (Green Belt parcel S158) should be discarded because of the impact the future development of this site could have on the regeneration of Kirkby. In addition, this part of the assessment concluded that the land south of Crowland Street (S007) should be developed, because it would have a beneficial impact on the economy and reside environment of Southport.

5. Stage 3 – Assessment against identified constraints and accessibility criteria

- 5.1. Stages 1 and 2 identified and eliminated those parcels in the Green Belt that contribute most to fulfilling the purposes of including land in the Green Belt. At Stage 3 the remaining parcels were assessed (using GIS mapping) against a set of identified development constraints (Stage 3a) and accessibility criteria (Stage 3b). This was used to provide an indication of how sustainable development within any of the parcels would be, as well as identifying those parcels where development should not occur because the constraints were so important or extensive that they affected the development potential of any parcel.
- 5.2. The constraints and accessibility criteria were assessed as two separate tasks. This meant that parcels that were discarded because they were 'undevelopable' due to the extent of the prohibitive or 'showstopper' constraints (Stage 3a) did not need to be assessed in relation to how accessible they were (Stage 3b).

Stage 3a - Constraints to development

- 5.3. The list of constraints was identified by reviewing the National Planning Policy Framework and other regulations / data that set out land protection criteria.
- 5.4. The draft Methodology categorised constraints into critical, primary and secondary constraints, based on how prohibitive they were, and whether they were international, national, regional or local designations. Each constraint was assessed on the amount of the parcel that was affected, and whether this affected the area adjacent to the urban area.
- 5.5. This approach conformed with the consensus reached at the first Stakeholder workshop held in April 2010. The workshop acknowledged that even if a very small part of the parcel was not affected by any constraint, that part may not be suitable or located in the most appropriate place for development. For example, it may be separated from the urban area by the constraint, or be distributed in very small areas across a parcel, because development would have a significant impact on the openness of the Green Belt.
- 5.6. It was therefore agreed to use an amended approach using the constraints' assessment as a "sieve" to exclude prohibitive constraints such as land in Flood Zones 3a & 3b, setting out the reasons why the constraints had been assigned. Instead of using the strict hierarchy of whether a constraint was internationally, nationally or locally important, and then considering the amount and part(s) of the parcel affected, the constraints were graded in relation to their significance in terms of:
 1. Whether the constraint was so important that it would prohibit development;
 2. Whether the constraint would severely restrict but not limit new development, or would place restrictions on the types of development that could be accommodated; and

3. Whether the constraint could be capable of mitigation by accommodation and / or relocation as a result of new development taking place.
- 5.7. In addition to this, constraints such as flood risk and agricultural land need to be assessed on a 'sequential basis' so that areas with a lower risk or quality should be used in preference to higher risk or better quality land.
- 5.8. Government advice indicates that smaller villages should not 'grow' by more than 10% in 10 years, so that any growth is proportionate to the size of the village. We have applied to this approach to the smaller settlements (with a population of fewer than 1000 people) as these villages and hamlets generally lack services and are unsustainable locations for significant additional development.
- 5.9. We have therefore noted where the capacity of areas on either a single site or cumulatively would exceed this level of growth. However, this does not apply to development on the edge of the main conurbation, such as Aintree and Waddicar.
- 5.10. The revised categories are set out in the table below:

Table 5.1: Constraints Hierarchy

Prohibitive ('show-stopper')	International/National wildlife sites Coastal Erosion Zones / coastal squeeze Flood Zone 3b for all land uses / Flood Zone 3a for housing Flood Storage Areas Historic Parks and Gardens Cemeteries Rifle Ranges Waste Water Treatment Works Intensive agricultural infrastructure e.g. modern glasshouses
Severely Restrictive (but would not entirely prohibit new development)	Flood Zones 2 Agricultural Land (Grades 1, 2 & 3a) Conservation Areas Regional Important Geological Sites Mineral Safeguarding Areas Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Sites of Archaeological Interest Local Nature and Wildlife Sites Community Woodlands Recreation Areas including school playing fields Size of settlement / lack of services
Restrictive (can be mitigated by accommodation / relocation within new development or by the way a development is carried out)	Setting of Conservation Areas/Heritage Assets Listed Buildings Core Biodiversity Areas and Nature Improvement Areas

- 5.11. Not all these constraints are found in Sefton. This reflects the fact that the Study was carried out jointly with Knowsley, and would be capable of being used by any other Merseyside local authority needing to carry out an assessment of their Green Belt. In some cases, the areas are still in draft so the intention is that they could be assessed once data becomes available.
- 5.12. In conjunction with the Environment Agency, it was agreed that land in Flood Zone 3a should be included as a 'prohibitive' constraint if the potential use was housing, as land in this Flood Zone should not be developed for housing unless there are no available alternative sites available. However, this restriction does not apply to land with a potential employment end use. Land in Flood Zone 2 was retained in the severely restrictive category, as there are fewer restrictions relating to what development can be permitted in such areas, and land with a lower flood risk should be used first.
- 5.13. This approach accords with the Sequential Test requirement set out in the Framework. However, it was not appropriate at this stage to carry out the Sequential or Exceptions Tests to identify sites for development, because this can only be done once the total requirement and the alternate supply of sites is known when the site is to be brought forward. This process can only be carried out when any subsequent planning application is submitted.
- 5.14. Since the Study was initially completed in August 2010, the EA has published further sets of flood zone information based on more detailed modelling in the Formby and River Alt catchment areas. This has reduced the amount of land at highest risk of flooding in Sefton. However we need to minimise the risk from all forms of flooding. These have been identified in a separate study¹⁰ which has assessed the risk from surface water and other forms of flooding.
- 5.15. In the case of Local Wildlife Sites, the Council has adopted a pragmatic approach. It has assessed whether the whole of the Green Belt parcel met the criteria pertaining to the designation of the area and the likely impact that development would have on them, and also considered whether development on part could secure benefits, including the management of the remainder of the area so that it continued to meet the designation criteria. The emerging Ecological Framework for the Liverpool City Region will help to identify what improvements are needed should any areas be identified for development.
- 5.16. The Council has also taken account of published ecological data relating to internationally protected habitats or species. This applies to feeding and roosting areas which should be protected from development, and may require the creation of replacement habitat before any development takes place.
- 5.17. Development to the west of Formby was ruled out of consideration as most of the area is likely to be affected by coastal erosion. The remaining area considered unsuitable, in part because development here was likely to have a significant impact on internationally important nature conservation sites, but also because of 'coastal squeeze' where the coastal margin (dunes) is squeezed between the fixed landward boundary (artificial or otherwise) and the rising sea level.

- 5.18. The national maps showing agricultural land quality are not intended to be used to confirm the agricultural land quality of any individual area of land. They are a 'general indication of the distribution of land quality'¹¹.
- 5.19. Paragraph 112 of the Framework states that LPAs should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, LPAs should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.
- 5.20. It was therefore agreed that the 'best and most versatile' agricultural land should be avoided if possible. This acknowledges the increased weight being given nationally to preserving the most productive land in the interests of food security.
- 5.21. As a result of representations made to the Core Strategy Options consultation, the Council commissioned an Agricultural Land Study which assessed the economic and other benefits of agric land, as well as the accuracy of the nationally available data on agricultural land quality, and the impact that loss of an agricultural area would have on the agricultural economy. It concluded that only one area, the Maghull Smallholdings Estate, should be ruled out from consideration on agricultural grounds, because of the level of investment in modern glasshouse infrastructure in this area.
- 5.22. The Local Plan will have to determine the weight to give this national objective relative to any local need to meet housing and employment needs. However almost 70% of the agricultural land in Sefton is identified as best and most versatile agricultural land, including most of the land to the east of Southport, Formby and Crosby, and including all the agricultural land in Sefton's eastern parishes around Maghull and Aintree. Avoiding these areas is likely to impose severe restrictions on our ability to meet our future housing and employment needs. For this reason, Grade 1, 2 and 3a agricultural land in Sefton has not been included as a prohibitive constraint, but is identified as a restrictive constraint, to be avoided if possible, in accordance with paragraph 112 of the Framework.
- 5.23. A number of parcels also contain uses such as school playing fields, parks and other recreational assets. For the purpose of this Study, it is assumed that they will remain in their current uses. Where a use such as a recreational area or playing field occupies part of the parcel, there may be scope to relocate this use elsewhere within the parcel. If it is decided that the facility could be relocated, policies in the Local Plan will have to set out the requirement for ensuring that the facility is relocated in the local area.
- 5.24. The draft Green Belt Study Methodology also listed a number of miscellaneous constraints that should be assessed on an individual basis. Such constraints included land with poor ground conditions, or where infrastructure was needed before development could take place. These were not considered to be constraints. Whilst any costs associated with overcoming these constraints could affect the viability of development, they would not necessarily mean that development should not take place.

- 5.25. A number of parcels were identified where the area not directly affected by any prohibitive or severely restricted constraint was adjacent to the urban area. Where development was unlikely to affect the constrained area, these parts of the relevant parcels were retained in the Study.
- 5.26. At the end of this process only a few parcels were not affected by any constraints.
- 5.27. The following parcels were discarded as wholly or very largely affected by 'prohibitive' constraints:

Table 5.2: Parcels discarded because of prohibitive constraints

Prohibitive constraints		
Parcel No.	Location	Reason why discarded
S001	Marshside RSPB reserve, Southport	International & national nature designations, land at high risk of flooding
S002	Stanley High Schools playing fields, Southport	Land at high risk of flooding, school playing fields
S003	Hesketh and Municipal Golf Courses, Marshside Road, Southport	Land at high risk of flooding
S005	Meols Hall, Botanic Road, Churchtown	Local Wildlife Site and open parkland
S006	Southport Old Course, Moss Lane, Southport	Local Wildlife Site (unique habitat)
S012	Land to east of Camberley Drive, Birkdale	Local Wildlife Site, undevelopable site area
S014	Birkdale Hills (south)	International & national nature designations
S015	Royal Birkdale & Hillside Golf Links	Area subject to international or national nature conservation designations or designated common
S019	Birkdale High School, Windy Harbour Road, Birkdale	School playing fields
S020	Birkdale Cemetery, Liverpool Road, Birkdale	Cemetery
S021	Ainsdale Village Park	Only neighbourhood park in local area
S022	Land to east of Coastal Road, Ainsdale	International & national nature designations
S028	Formby Golf Links, Golf Road, Formby	Nature conservation designations, recreational asset
S029	Willow Bank Holiday Caravan Park & Dunlop Avenue, Ainsdale	Local Wildlife Site, recreational asset
S035	Land to rear of Brewery Lane /	Residential cartilages,

Prohibitive constraints		
Parcel No.	Location	Reason why discarded
	West Lane, Formby	part designated as a Local Wildlife Site
S036	Bowlers Riding School and Stables, 35 Brewery Lane, Formby	Riding School and Stables – recreational asset
S045	Formby Point / Raven Meols Hills, Formby	International & national nature designations
S046	Land west of Larkhill Road, Formby	Impact on international & national nature designations and 'coastal squeeze'
S047	Land south of Formby business park	Flood Zone 3 adjacent to urban area, best and most versatile agricultural land
S052	Allotments and sewage works, Altcar Lane, Formby	Current uses likely to be retained.
S054	Altcar Rifle Range open land	Rifle range and TAVR training camp likely to be retained
S059	Sports fields, Sandy Lane, Hightown	Playing fields to be retained
S060	Land N of Ince Blundell & E of Formby bypass	Best and most versatile agricultural land, size of village
S062	Land between Ince Blundell & Formby bypass	Local Wildlife Site, best and most versatile agricultural land, size of village
S064	Land east of Ince Blundell Village	Best and most versatile agricultural land, size of village
S065	Coast between Hightown and Blundellsands, Crosby	Coastal flooding and international & national nature designations
S067	Land west of railway between Hightown & Crosby	Over 95% designated as a Local Wildlife Site, winter feeding area for internationally protected birds
S069	Land north of Crosby, west of railway & east of Moss Lane - parcel excludes any of Little Crosby	Most designated a Local Wildlife Site. Area that is not is used as playing fields. Important feeding areas for designated species
S070	St Michael's C of E High School playing fields, Manor Road, Crosby	School playing fields. Winter feeding area for internationally

Prohibitive constraints		
Parcel No.	Location	Reason why discarded
		protected birds
S071	Land between St Michaels High School & Little Crosby	Eastern part of parcel contains grade 2 agricultural land. Winter feeding area for internationally protected birds
S075	Crosby High School playing fields	School playing fields. Winter feeding area for internationally protected birds
S076	Northern Cricket Club, Moor Lane, Crosby	Best and most versatile agricultural land and feeding area of internationally protected birds
S089	Land east of Rothwell's Lane	Land held for cemetery extension
S090	Thornton Crematorium and Cemetery	Cemetery
S125	Maghull Smallholdings Estate	Best and most versatile agricultural land, high value agricultural infrastructure

- 5.28. Parcels affected by a number of constraints were assessed to see what the cumulative impact of the constraints was, and how the unaffected areas related to the urban area. No decisions needed to be taken as to the relative importance of any of the constraints that were not identified as being prohibitive, as this is not the role of this Study, but of the Local Plan process.
- 5.29. The next table shows areas that have not been discarded, but where development could result in some compromises being made to parcels with 'severely restrictive' or 'restrictive' constraints affecting the whole or that part of a parcel which is adjacent to the edge of the urban area.

Table 5.3

Parcels with constraints that should only be included in the Local Plan if insufficient land remains with fewer constraints		
Parcel No.	Location	Constraints
S004	Land at Blundell Lane / Moss Lane, Southport between urban area & Sefton boundary	Local Wildlife Site, best and most versatile agricultural land
S007	Land south of Crowland Street, Southport	Some best and most versatile agricultural land
S008	Kew Park & Ride site, Foul Lane, Southport	Likely to be retained in current use
S009	Former tip, Foul Lane, Southport	Tipped land, viability
S017	Land to rear of Lynton Road,	Local Wildlife Site

Parcels with constraints that should only be included in the Local Plan if insufficient land remains with fewer constraints		
Parcel No.	Location	Constraints
	Birkdale	
S038	Land north of Brackenway & Hawksworth Drive, Formby	Local Wildlife Site and part of area in Flood Zone 3a
S048	Land between Little Altcar & Formby Bypass / Liverpool Road, Formby	Recreation ground. Best and most versatile agricultural land.
S049	Land south of Barton Heys Road, and Range High School, Formby	Best and most versatile agricultural land.
S053	Agricultural land between Altcar Lane & River Alt, Formby, including Loveday's Farm	Best and most versatile agricultural land
S056	Land bounded by railway, Formby bypass. River Alt & North End Lane, Hightown	Some best and most versatile agricultural land
S058	Land east of Hightown bounded by Alt Road, Moss Lane, Hightown Village, Sandy Lane and Gorsey Lane	Significant impact on openness of Green Belt, should not be developed until after S056
S077	North of Holy Family School, Thornton	Best and most versatile agricultural land, setting of Conservation Area
S078	Land east of Back Lane & Virgins Lane, Little Crosby	Best and most versatile agricultural land, setting of Conservation Area
S086	Land east of Southport Old Road and the Thornton – Switch Island link road	Best and most versatile agricultural land
S087	Land between Thornton, the Park Drive extension and the Thornton-Switch island link road	Best and most versatile agricultural land
S092	Land between Lydiate Lane and Edge Lane, Thornton and Netherton	best and most versatile agricultural land
S095	Land between Lydiate Lane and the Thornton-Switch island link road	Best and most versatile agricultural land
S110	Land between Cheshire Lines & South Meade, Maghull	Best and most versatile, areas at high risk of flooding
S111	Land bounded by Green Lane & built up area of Maghull	Best and most versatile agricultural land
S112	Land between Maghull Brook, Bell's Lane, Green Lane & built up area of Lydiate	Best and most versatile agricultural land
S120	Land bounded by Leeds &	Best and most versatile

Parcels with constraints that should only be included in the Local Plan if insufficient land remains with fewer constraints		
Parcel No.	Location	Constraints
	Liverpool Canal, Sandy Lane & Pygon's Hill Lane, Lydiate	agricultural land, poorly related to urban area
S122	Land bounded by Moss Lane, Liverpool Road, Lambshear Lane & Sandy Lane, Lydiate	Best and most versatile agricultural land
S123	Land bounded by Liverpool Road, Kenyons Lane & Northway, Lydiate	Best and most versatile agricultural land
S124	Land east of A59, S of Sudell Brook & W of Maghull Smallholdings Estate, Lydiate	Best and most versatile agricultural land, poorly related to the urban area
S129	Land bounded by School Lane, M58, Poverty Lane & railway, Maghull	Best and most versatile agricultural land
S130	Land bounded by Melling Lane, M58, Poverty Lane & railway, Maghull	Best and most versatile agricultural land
S131	Land bounded by Melling Lane, Leeds & Liverpool Canal and M58	Best and most versatile agricultural land
S132	Land between railway & M58, south of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal	Best and most versatile agricultural land
S141	Land between Leatherbarrows Lane, Weavers Lane, Melling & Rock Lane	Best and most versatile agricultural land
S142	Land bounded by Leatherbarrows Lane, Tithebarn Lane & Sandy Lane, Melling	Best and most versatile agricultural land
S144	Land between Waddicar Lane, Prescott Road & Waddicar	Some best and most versatile agricultural land
S145	Land between Waddicar Lane, Leeds Liverpool Canal and Melling	Some best and most versatile agricultural land
S149	Land south of Moorhey Road, Maghull	Local nature reserve & 65% in Flood Zone 3a
S152	Land between Leeds & Liverpool Canal, Brewery Lane & Spencers Lane, Melling	Best and most versatile agricultural land
S154	West of Bull's Bridge Lane, Aintree	Predominantly best and most versatile agricultural land
S155	Rear of Lawton Drive / Wango Lane, Aintree	Best and most versatile agricultural land
S157	Land to rear of Oriel Drive, Aintree	Mainly best and most versatile agricultural land
S158	Land between B5192 and Kirkby	Best and most versatile

Parcels with constraints that should only be included in the Local Plan if insufficient land remains with fewer constraints		
Parcel No.	Location	Constraints
		agricultural land

Table 5.4

Parcels with few or no constraints		
Parcel No.	Location	Constraints
S016	Former Ainsdale Hope High School, Ainsdale	Contains school playing fields which will not be available until after 31/08/2017
S026	Agricultural land at Segars Farm, Pinfold Lane, Ainsdale	MOD to be consulted on layout due to flight restriction zone
S027	Caravan storage at Segars Farm, Pinfold Lane, Ainsdale	Should only be developed in conjunction with S026
S030	Land south of Moor Lane, Ainsdale	Impact on setting of Formby House Farmhouse (listed building)
S031	Plex Moss Caravan Site & Woodvale Sidings, Ainsdale	Currently in use as kennels, so may not be available.
S049	Land South of Barton Heys Road / Range High School, Formby	Area south of Kew Farmhouse should be avoided (setting of a listed building)
S066	Hall Road sidings	Cleared site but may be contaminated due to former use as railway engine shed
S068	Land between Hightown & Gorsey Lane / Sandy Lane	Contains playing fields, which should be avoided
S093	Runnells Lane Nursery, Thornton	Developed site in 'Essential Gap' between Thornton and Netherton

Stage 3b - Accessibility criteria

- 5.30. All the parcels not excluded at Stage 3a because of prohibitive constraints were then assessed to ascertain how accessible they were. The positive criteria were identified through a review of the criteria used in our sustainability framework and the criteria used to assess urban land in our Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment.
- 5.31. The list of factors considered were:
- Is the parcel adjacent to or contain a primary route network road?
 - Is the parcel adjacent to or contain a primary route network road?

- Is the parcel within 800m of a rail station?
- Is the parcel within 400m of a frequent bus route?
- Is the parcel adjacent to or contain a cycle route or public right of way?
- Is the parcel within 5km of an employment area?
- Is the parcel within 600m of a primary school?
- Is the parcel within 1km of a GP/Health Centre?
- Is the parcel within 800m of a local centre?
- Is the parcel within 800m of a leisure centre?

5.32. No parcels of land were excluded from consideration at the end of this assessment, because access by public transport and accessibility to local services and facilities can be improved when development occurs, particularly if the development permitted is of a suitable scale. The information is contextual to provide a general indication of how accessible each area is in general terms. However, as the information relates to the whole parcel and not just any smaller area that may be developed it has limited value.

6. Stage 4 – Assessment of capacity

6.1 Stage 4 of the draft Methodology included 3 tasks:

- Stage 4a – to assess whether the development of the remaining parcels would be:
 - (i) non-strategic (and hence could be released through the Local Plan preparation), or whether they constituted
 - (ii) a larger ‘strategic’ area (either singly or cumulatively) that would need wider sub-regional agreement before it could be released, as a result of a strategic study having taken place;
- Stage 4b – to assess how the release of Green Belt sites in different areas would assist or deflect from meeting the individual local authority’s spatial objectives set out in their emerging Local Plan; and
- Stage 4c – calculation of the net capacity for each individual parcel or groups of parcels.

6.2 However, as outlined in chapter 2 ‘the planning policy context’ above, neither Stage 4a nor 4b could proceed as originally intended. In the case of Stage 4a, this stage was no longer required as a result of the abolition of the Regional Strategy in May 2013, whilst it was concluded that it was more appropriate for the Local Plan to decide how much development was required and where it should be located. As a result, the proposed methodology for Stages 4a & 4b has been significantly altered of necessity, both during the preparation of the draft Study and for this update.

6.3 The need for land in the Green Belt identified through this study will be assessed by other studies prepared to identify the Local Plan’s Preferred Option including the Housing Requirement Study, the Employment Land and Premises Study and the Consequences Study. Site selection has been carried out using a ‘traffic light’ assessment that has been validated by the Planning Advisory Service and AMEC.

6.4 The need for new homes is expected to change again before the Local Plan is adopted, when the Office of National Statistics publishes updated population and household projections in 2014. Consequently, this Study will end with the calculation as to how much development could be developed be accommodated on the non-discarded sites identified in the Stage 3 assessment, leaving the Local Plan to determine on which sites should be developed where and when.

6.5 The Green Belt Study assumed, as the principal need is to identify land for housing, that this will be the preferred use for development in any parcel in order to be able to calculate an indicative capacity for each area. Whilst other uses will not normally be considered unless the constraints affecting any individual parcel suggests that development in the parcel should be for a less sensitive use, the Employment Land and Premises Study¹² indicates sites are needed for two Business Parks, one in the north and one in the south of Sefton, as well as the suggested development of a ‘general employment’ area to be provided south of Crowland Street.

Stage 4c – assessment of indicative capacities of remaining parcels

- 6.6 At Stage 2, parcels were retained in the Study for further appraisal if they were partly in an Essential Gap, or were in a Narrow or Wide Gap. However, the Study did not indicate whether development could be accommodated at either one or both sides of the gap without harming the integrity of the gap.
- 6.7 Parcels were also assessed at Stage 2 to ascertain whether they were well-contained by an urban area, or only partly contained. These parcels contained land on the edge of the urban areas (& villages). Parcels that were not contained were discarded from the Study for further consideration. However, this does not take into account the impact that development would have on the openness of the Green Belt should the whole parcel be developed. This can only be assessed on a site by site basis, and in the context of existing buildings and infrastructure whether in the urban areas or the Green Belt.
- 6.8 The first task within Stage 4 was therefore to determine whether any development should be permitted in each parcel, and in which area, taking into account the constraints that had been assessed and the above factors.
- 6.9 The fact that only part of a parcel may be suitable for development may often mean that the area suggested for development, and consequently for removal from the Green Belt, would have less well-defined boundaries than if the whole parcel were developed. In such cases, the development would need to ensure that new robust boundaries were created to prevent further urban sprawl.

Calculating Capacity

- 6.10 Once the extent of the developable area had been established for each parcel (shown on the individual record sheets), the preferred use was noted, and an indicative capacity calculated for each parcel to provide an estimation of the amount of new development that could be accommodated in each parcel. This was carried out for all the remaining sites, and does not imply that any of the parcels will ultimately be considered for development. This depends not only on the Local Plan's spatial strategy, but also on other factors including individual landowner's intentions.
- 6.11 Having determined the net developable area, the following calculations were used to identify the actual area that would be available for development, taking into account the need for other supporting uses including open space, sustainable drainage and buffer planting (if appropriate). The assumptions used were the same as those used to inform the SHLAA assessment¹³.
- 6.12 These are set out in the following table:

Figure 6.1: calculation of net densities

Gross developable area	Net developable area
Less than 0.4 hectares	100%
0.4 – 2 hectares	90%
2 – 5 hectares	75%
More than 5 hectares	50%

- 6.13 Although the draft Green Belt Study calculated that sites in the Green Belt could be developed at 30 dwellings per hectare (dph), this has been increased to 35 dph on the net area, to provide a more realistic calculation of the amount of Green Belt required. This assumption has been tested by the Housing Market Partnership. However, until planning applications are submitted, it is impossible to accurately predict the number of houses that will be built on each site.
- 6.14 Finally, as the ‘developable areas’ have been re-drawn to become potential allocations, the areas have reduced. In part this reflects the removal of roads, verges and other infrastructure, and open space that would be retained from the Green Belt parcel, but it also reflects discussions with landowners about what land they own and what could therefore come forward for development.

Conclusions

- 6.15 Using the above information, the following conclusions were reached:

Figure 6.2 preferred use and housing capacity

Green Belt parcel	Location	Use if not housing	Indicative capacity or area if employment use
S004	Land at Blundell Lane / Moss Lane, Southport between urban area & Sefton boundary	N/A	658 (2 areas)
S007	Land south of Crowland Street, Southport	General employment	22.0
S016	Former Ainsdale Hope High School, Ainsdale	N/A	217
S026 + S027	Land at Segars Farm, Pinfold Lane, Ainsdale, including caravan storage area	N/A	531
S030	Land south of Moor Lane, Ainsdale	N/A	136
S031	Plex Moss Caravan Site & Woodvale Sidings, Ainsdale	N/A	20
S038	Land north of Brackenway, Formby	N/A	169
S044	Land north of Formby Industrial Estate, Formby	Business Park	22.5
S048	Land between Little Altcar & Formby Bypass / Liverpool Road, Formby	N/A	372

Green Belt parcel	Location	Use if not housing	Indicative capacity or area if employment use
S049	Land south of Barton Heys Road, and Range High School, Formby	N/A	403 (2 sites)
S053	Agricultural land between Altcar Lane & River Alt, Formby, including Loveday's Farm	N/A	67
S056	Land bounded by railway, Formby bypass. River Alt & North End Lane, Hightown	N/A	260
S058	Land east of Hightown bounded by Alt Road, Moss Lane, Hightown Village, Sandy Lane and Gorsey Lane	N/A	254
S066	Hall Road sidings	N/A	14
S068	Land between Hightown & Gorsey Lane / Sandy Lane	N/A	58
S086	Land east of Southport Old Road and the Thornton – Switch Island link road	N/A	85
S088	Land between Thornton, the Park Drive extension, Holgate and the Thornton-Switch island link road	N/A	177
S088	Land between Thornton, Holgate and the Thornton-Switch island link road	N/A	63
S092	Land between Lydiat Lane and Edge Lane, Thornton and Netherton	N/A	137
S093	Rushton's Nursery, Runnell's Lane, Thornton	N/A	46
S095	Land between Lydiat Lane and the Thornton-Switch island link road	N/A	235
S111	Land bounded by Green Lane & built up area of Maghull	N/A	346
S112	Land between Maghull Brook, Bell's Lane, Green Lane & built up area of Lydiat	N/A	272
S122	Land bounded by Moss Lane, Liverpool Road, Lambshear Lane & Sandy Lane, Lydiat	N/A	819
S123	Land bounded by Liverpool Road, Kenyons Lane &	N/A	257

Green Belt parcel	Location	Use if not housing	Indicative capacity or area if employment use
	Northway, Lydiate		
S128	Former 'prison' site, School Lane, Maghull	N/A	357
S129	Land bounded by School Lane, M58, Poverty Lane & railway, Maghull	Housing and Business Park	1588 + 25 hectares
S131	Land bounded by Melling Lane, Leeds & Liverpool Canal and M58	N/A	89
S132	Land between railway & M58, south of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal	N/A	445
S144	Land between Waddicar Lane, Prescott Road & Waddicar	N/A	141
S145	Land between Waddicar Lane, Leeds Liverpool Canal and Melling	N/A	144
S152	Land between Leeds & Liverpool Canal, Brewery Lane & Spencers Lane, Melling	N/A	195
S154	West of Bull's Bridge Lane, Aintree	N/A	141
S155	Rear of Lawton Drive / Wango Lane, Aintree	N/A	57
S157	Land to rear of Oriel Drive, Aintree	N/A	531
S158	Land between B5192 and Kirkby	N/A	294

6. Conclusions and Next Steps

- 6.1 At the end of the assessment, the Green Belt Study identified a number of sites that have the potential to meet the Council's future housing and employment needs. These have a greater capacity than is currently required to meet the identified housing and employment needs that will be addressed through the emerging Local Plan.
- 6.2 A separate assessment has looked at all the potential sites in order to identify those that best meet the Local Plan's aims and objectives, to allocate sites on a proportionate basis as far as possible. This can be updated if more up-to-date evidence comes forward and in the light of future housing and employment requirements.
- 6.3 The Council will consult on its Preferred Option in July – September 2013. This will lead to the submission of the Local Plan in 2014. The Plan, and the evidence that supports it, including this Study, will be examined by an independent Inspector, before the Local Plan can be adopted in 2015.

Endnotes and references

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- ¹ The National Planning Policy Framework, Department of Communities and Local Government, March 2012, also known as the NPPF or 'the Framework'
- ² Draft Green Belt Study Methodology, Sefton Council, December 2009
- ³ Detailed Green Belt Boundary Review – Draft for consultation, Sefton Council, August 2010
- ⁴ The National Planning Policy Framework, Department of Communities and Local Government, March 2012
- ⁵ The North West Plan, Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 (GONW, 2008)
- ⁶ Policy GB 2: Amendments to Green Belt boundary, Sefton UDP, May 1995
- ⁷ Detailed Green Belt Boundary Review – Draft for consultation, Sefton Council, August 2010
- ⁸ Sefton Unitary Development Plan, adopted June 2006, Sefton Council
- ⁹ Sefton Unitary Development Plan, adopted June 2006, Sefton Council
- ¹⁰ Sefton SFRA Assessment, Capita Symonds, 2013 update
- ¹¹ <http://archive.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/landmanage/land-use/documents/alc-guidelines-1988.pdf>
- ¹² The Employment Land and Premises Study, 2012 Update, BE Group
- ¹³ Sefton Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, 2012 Update, Sefton Council