

Lichfield District Council  
**Green Belt Village Study**  
Final Report

Final Issue | 16 March 2021

This report takes into account the particular instructions and requirements of our client.

It is not intended for and should not be relied upon by any third party and no responsibility is undertaken to any third party.

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**ARUP**

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Green Belt Village Assessment Proforma - BLANK

# 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 Overview

In September 2020, Ove Arup and Partners ('Arup') was appointed by Lichfield District Council ('the Council') to prepare a Stage 2 Green Belt Review as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan Review.

This study forms part of the Stage 2 Green Belt Review and follows on from the Green Belt Review published in 2019 ('the 2019 Green Belt Review') which was prepared by the Council and which Arup provided critical friend advice on. This study builds on the recommendations set out in the 2019 Green Belt Review, in particular: *"A Green Belt Village Study be progressed to consider those villages which are currently located within the Green Belt, in particular Chorley, Shenstone Wood End and Hints. Should such consideration result in changes to the Green Belt these should be identified through an allocations document or through community's neighbourhood plans."*

The purpose of this study is to independently and objectively assess the extent to which the washed over villages of Chorley, Shenstone Wood End and Hints meet the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (February 2019) requirements of paragraph 140:

*"If it is necessary to restrict development in a village primarily because of the important contribution which the open character of the village makes to the openness of the Green Belt, the village should be included in the Green Belt. If, however, the character of the village needs to be protected for other reasons, other means should be used, such as conservation area or normal development management policies, and the village should be excluded from the Green Belt."*

The study provides a review of the three washed over villages against paragraph 140. It has considered whether the villages are open in character and whether they make a contribution to the openness of the Green Belt. On this basis, the study has provided recommendations as to whether they could remain in the Green Belt or could be excluded from it.

If it was recommended that a village is excluded from the Green Belt, the study would have considered the potential future inset boundaries of the village. Any alterations to Green Belt boundaries will require the Council to develop an exceptional circumstances case in accordance with paragraph 136 of the NPPF.

In relation to the recommendations set out in this study, it should be noted that:

- Recommendations for removal from the Green Belt does not imply that the Council must accept these or that they will appear in an adopted Local Plan.
- Recommendations for removal from the Green Belt does not imply that the village is suitable for development.
- Alterations to Green Belt boundaries require exceptional circumstances, which are fully evidenced and justified, in accordance with paragraph 136 of the

NPPF. The Council will need to demonstrate the exceptional circumstances case if alterations are proposed.

## 1.2 Structure of the Report

The Green Belt Villages Study is structured as follows:

- Section 2 reviews current national and local policy and guidance as well as case law in relation to Green Belt villages. A comparative review of Green Belt Village studies from other local authorities is provided and the exceptional circumstances required to amend Green Belt boundaries for villages are considered.
- Section 3 sets out the methodology used for the Green Belt village study taking into account the findings from the review of policy, guidance and comparative study review.
- Section 4 sets out the outcomes from Stages 1 and 2 involving the identification of village boundaries and the assessment of the villages against paragraph 140 of the NPPF. A summary of the recommendations is provided.
- Section 5 provides a summary of the study and sets out the conclusions.

## 2 Policy, Guidance and Case Law

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### 2.1 Overview

This section provides a review of the national and local planning policy context in relation to Green Belt villages. Relevant case law is also considered.

This section then reviews a number of other Green Belt Village studies undertaken by other authorities in order to understand the approach and definitions used when determining whether a village should be washed over or inset, in accordance with paragraph 140 of the NPPF. The exceptional circumstances required to amend Green Belt boundaries in relation to villages are also considered.

### 2.2 National Planning Policy

#### 2.2.1 Historic Policy Context

Firstly, it is necessary to consider the historic policy context relating to Green Belt villages given that the Council's Green Belt was last considered against this policy basis as part of the 1998 Lichfield District Local Plan.

The previous guidance on Green Belt villages contained in Planning Policy Guidance Note 2: Green Belts (PPG2) (1995) was superseded by the adoption of the NPPF (March 2012), now superseded by the NPPF (February 2019).<sup>1</sup>

Paragraph 2.11 of PPG2 set out how development plans should treat existing villages in the Green Belt, this was in one of three ways:

- If no new building is allowed (other than for agriculture and forestry; essential facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation, for cemeteries, and for other uses of land which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and which do not conflict with the purpose of including land in it; and for limited extension, alteration or replacement of existing dwellings), then the village should be included within the Green Belt. The Green Belt notation should be carried across (“washed over”) it.
- If infilling only is allowed, the village should either be “washed over” and listed in the development plan or should be inset (excluded) from the Green Belt. If washed over, the Local Plan may need to define infill boundaries to avoid dispute over whether particular sites are covered by infill policies.
- If limited development or limited expansion is proposed, the village should be inset from the Green Belt.

In light of the different policy position set out in the NPPF, the consideration of whether a village should be included (washed-over) or excluded (inset) from the Green Belt now relies on the contribution that the open character of the village

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<sup>1</sup> There were no changes made to the policy wording in the NPPF 2019 compared to NPPF 2012. Paragraph 140 of the NPPF 2019 replicates the wording of the Paragraph 86 of the NPPF 2012.

makes to the openness of the Green Belt, rather than the degree of restriction of development sought by the development plan (as per PPG2). It is therefore necessary to consider the status of the washed over villages against this new policy position. This represents the starting point to the development of an exceptional circumstances case if it is considered that amendments to Green Belt boundaries are required.

## 2.2.2 National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019)

Paragraph 140 of the NPPF focuses on whether a village should be included or excluded from the Green Belt based on its open character and the contribution this character makes to the openness of the Green Belt, it states:

*“If it is necessary to restrict development in a village primarily because of the important contribution which the open character of the village makes to the openness of the Green Belt, the village should be included in the Green Belt. If, however, the character of the village needs to be protected for other reasons, other means should be used, such as conservation area or normal development management policies, and the village should be excluded from the Green Belt.”*

Paragraph 133 states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.

The NPPF stipulates that, *“once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified, through the preparation or updating of plans”* (paragraph 136).

Paragraph 138 states that: *“When drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries, the need to promote sustainable patterns of development should be taken into account. Strategic policy making authorities should consider the consequences for sustainable development of channelling development towards urban areas inside the Green Belt boundary, towards towns and villages inset within the Green Belt or towards locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary.”*

Paragraph 139 states that when defining Green Belt boundaries, plans should:

- a) *ensure consistency with the development plan’s strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development;*
- b) *not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open;*
- c) *where necessary, identify 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;*
- d) *make clear that the safeguarded land is not allocated for development at the present time. Planning permission for the permanent development of safeguarded land should only be granted following an update to a plan which proposes the development;*

- e) *be able to demonstrate that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the plan period; and*
- f) *define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.*

### 2.2.3 National Planning Practice Guidance

The Planning Practice Guidance ('PPG') provides an additional layer of interpretive clarification and guidance to the NPPF. The PPG does not provide any further guidance on the assessment of Green Belt villages however it emphasises the strength of Green Belt policy once established. It also provides some guidance on the definition of openness. Paragraph 001 on Green Belt states:

*"...openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects – in other words, the visual impact of the proposal may be relevant, as could its volume..."*  
[Reference ID: 64-001-20190722, published 22 July 2019]

## 2.3 Local Planning Policy

The adopted local plan comprises the Local Plan Strategy (February 2015), the Local Plan Allocations (July 2019), the Local Plan policies maps and a number of 'made' neighbourhood plans. The minerals and waste plans are prepared by Staffordshire County Council and form part of the development plan.

Core Policy 1 (The Spatial Strategy) and Policy NR2 (development in the Green Belt) of the Local Plan Strategy state that limited infilling within Green Belt villages will be allowed, with appropriate 'infill' boundaries being determined through the Local Plan Allocations document, which may, where appropriate, be informed by local community-led plans. The Allocations Plan and policies map define the inset villages where this policy applies. There is no defined boundary provided for the washed over villages.

### 2.3.1 Emerging Local Plan

The Council is currently reviewing the Local Plan in order to create a new Local Plan which will provide direction on the future growth of the area. They are working towards the submission Local Plan scheduled for consultation in winter 2020/2021. The Preferred Options Local Plan (Regulation 18) was published for consultation between November 2019 and January 2020. The Preferred Options Local Plan does not make any reference to Green Belt villages and does not mention the three villages being considered as part of this study.

## 2019 Green Belt Review

The 2019 Green Belt Review was published as part of the evidence base to the consultation. Section 4 considered 'Villages and Hamlets within the Green Belt and the Permanence of Green Belt Boundaries'. It provides an initial assessment of all eight washed over villages against Paragraph 140 of the NPPF to consider whether there is a potential need for an inset boundary. The eight washed over

villages were as follows: Longdon Green, Elmhurst, Chorley, Wall, Lower Stonnall, Shenstone Wood End, Weeford, and Hints. A desktop and site visit based approach to the assessment was applied. The assessment findings as set out in Table 4.1 are shown below:

Table 1. Village Assessment Findings from 2019 Green Belt Review (Table 4.1)

<b>Village</b>	<b>Potential need for inset boundary</b>	<b>Summary of reasons</b>
Longdon Green	No	Settlement in open in character, loosely spread properties form the village with conservable gaps between them. Village is not compact, nor does the built form impact upon openness.
Elmhurst	No	Small number of loosely spread properties along Fox Lane. Character of the village is relatively open.
Chorley	Yes	Village consists of reasonable level of linear development along Shute Hill and Lodge Lane. Village is compact in character which impacts upon openness. Limited sense of openness within the village.
Wall	No	Small number of properties are compact (along The Butts), remainder of village is separated from these with gaps between properties and open areas which have an open character.
Lower Stonnall	No	Large gaps between properties. Open in character as settlement is not compact.
Shenstone Wood End	Yes	Built area of village is compact with few gaps between properties. Character of parts of the village is more suburban (cul-de-sac's etc.) which reduced openness character. There is limited sense of openness within the built area of the village.
Weeford	No	Small number of loosely arranged properties with extensive gaps between buildings. Area is open in character.
Hints	Yes	Village is compact in character with few significant gaps between buildings, particularly those along School and Hints Close. There is



		limited sense of openness within the built area of the village
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The assessment concludes that three villages are compact in character and have very little openness within them therefore these settlements should be considered for exclusion from the Green Belt. These are Chorley, Hints, and Shenstone Wood End.

The Review recommends that further work should be undertaken to explore whether these settlements should be removed from the Green Belt. This study therefore explores these settlements further.

## 2.4 Case Law

Latest case law relevant to this study focuses on the definition of openness. The case of *Turner v SSCLG* [2016] EWCA Civ 466 established the principle that openness has both a spatial and a visual dimension. The Judge stated that the concept of ‘openness’ is not “*narrowly limited to [a] volumetric approach...visual impact is implicitly part of the concept of ‘openness of the Green Belt.’*”

More recently, the Supreme Court case of *R (on the application of Samuel Smith Old Brewery) v North Yorkshire County Council* [2020] UKSC 3 considered the concept of openness. The Judge concluded:

*“[Openness] is a matter not of legal principle but of planning judgement for the planning authority or the inspector”* [Paragraph 25] ... “*...There was no error of law on the face of the report. Paragraph 90 [now NPPF146] does not expressly refer to visual impact as a necessary part of the analysis, nor in my view is it made so by implication. As explained in my discussion of the authorities, the matters relevant to openness in any particular case are a matter of planning judgement, not law.*” [Paragraph 39]

The Supreme Court did not dispute the approach in *Turner* but acknowledged that *Turner* did not specify how visual effects may or may not be taken into account. The Supreme Court judgement clarifies that it is not an implicit requirement to consider the visual effects on Green Belt openness, however it does not imply that this is not ever relevant, it just wasn’t in this case. Ultimately, it is a matter of planning judgement for the planning authority or the inspector.

The PPG (July 2019) does recognise that “*openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects*” and this remains unchanged following the *Samuel Smith* judgement therefore this interpretation will be applied in this study.

## 2.5 Comparative Review of Green Belt Village studies

This section provides a review of other Green Belt Village studies undertaken by other authorities. The purpose of this review was to understand the approach and comparative definitions used for determining whether a village should be inset or

washed over in accordance with both local circumstances and the requirements of paragraph 140 of the NPPF. This will help support the production of an appropriate methodology for this study that is robust and meets the requirements for a Local Plan evidence base.

The full review table is provided at Appendix A and the relevant components of paragraph 140 are considered in turn within this section. The following studies were reviewed:

- Runnymede Council Green Belt Village Review Stage 1 and 2 Update (2018) – Local Plan adopted July 2020.
- Guildford Council Green Belt and Countryside Study (Volume IV) (2014) – Local Plan adopted in April 2019.
- Vale of White Horse Council Green Belt Review (2014) – Local Plan adopted December 2016.
- Selby Council Status of Villages in the Green Belt (2016) – Local Plan not adopted.

All of these studies have been through Examination except for Selby Council’s study and therefore represent sound, robust and credible examples which will provide a sound basis to develop the methodology for this study. The Selby Council study formed part of PLAN Selby (the Sites and Policies Local Plan) however this was halted and Selby has since embarked on the preparation of a new comprehensive Local Plan.

The Inspector for the Vale of White Horse Local Plan did not comment on the approach to the assessment of villages. The Inspector for the Guildford Local Plan commented that the study was “*comprehensive and well-founded*” (Guildford Local Plan Inspector’s Report (March 2019), paragraph 101). The Inspector for the Runnymede Local Plan comments on the village study at paragraph 67-68 of the Inspector’s Report (May 2020), she states:

*“The Green Belt review was undertaken as a series of complementary studies and carried out in stages that examined it first at a strategic level, and then at a more fine-grained level to assess the performance of smaller parcels of land against Green Belt purposes; the studies also included a Green Belt Villages review and a technical review of the Green Belt boundaries. The overall process took account of good practice advice from the Planning Advisory Service, comparator studies carried out by other local planning authorities whose plans were found sound, and Landscape Institute advice on landscape visual assessment.*

*...In summary, I have concluded that the review was comprehensive, systematic and based on a robust, consistently applied methodology that properly reflected local circumstances and the unique characteristics of the borough in assessing how the Green Belt serves the purposes laid down in national planning policy.”*

All of the Inspectors commented on the exceptional circumstances case (this is discussed in Section 2.5 below).

## 2.5.1 Overall Approach

All of the studies included a staged approach consisting of some or all of these stages:

- Identify villages to be assessed;
- Identify development limits of village;
- Assessment of open character;
- Assessment of openness;
- Decision on insetting or washing over of village; and
- Review development limits/boundaries where village is to be inset.

The Vale of White Horse Council Green Belt Review included the village assessment as part of the wider Green Belt Assessment.

Runnymede Council notes that paragraph 140 NPPF includes two distinct tests with the first test being the gateway as to whether the second test should be undertaken. For completeness, both parts were assessed in that case as the findings were not clear cut. Paragraph 4.17 of the report states:

*“The test in paragraph 86 [now paragraph 140] of the NPPF is the contribution the open character of a village makes to the openness of the Green Belt. This implies that if a village does not have an open character then it does not make a contribution to the openness of the Green Belt and by default the second test is not required. Although it is considered that the larger area of the village [the village of Thorpe which had been assessed] demonstrates a lower degree of open character, there are still open aspects and for completeness the contribution the village makes to the openness of the Green Belt should be considered.”*

All of the other studies assessed both elements of the NPPF wording.

## 2.5.2 Open Character

Open character was largely assessed based on factors relating to the built form and open space within the village, these included:

- Density
- Settlement pattern
- Types of dwelling/property
- Distribution of properties
- Plot size
- Building heights
- Enclosures or barriers
- Scale and Form
- Extent of open space

- Vegetation
- Topography
- Views

Assessments were qualitative and often involved a variant of the High, Medium and Low ranking system based on definitions of these according to the above criteria.

### 2.5.3 Important Contribution to Openness

There was some overlap between the studies on the assessment of open character and openness with similar criteria applied to both assessments.

Where the assessment of openness was different, it was emphasised that openness focused on the physical and/or perceptual connection between the openness of the village and the openness of the Green Belt. The following criteria were considered:

- The continuation of open areas within the village with the surrounding open land beyond the village;
- Relationship between Green Belt and/or open space and built form;
- The boundaries of the village and whether these were incomplete or indistinguishable; and
- Views into and out of the village and their restriction by natural or man-made features.

Assessments were qualitative and often involved a variant of the High, Medium and Low ranking system based on definitions of these according to the above criteria.

The NPPF does not explicitly define openness however the PPG does now provide guidance on the definition of openness. This was issued after the publication of these studies. Selby Council and Runnymede Council included a definition of openness, referencing case law or creating their own definitions:

- Selby Council: the *'extent to which Green Belt land could be considered open from an absence of built form and urbanising influences, rather than from a landscape character sense.'*
- Runnymede Council: *"In terms of 'openness', the courts have held that it is epitomised by land that is not built upon and can include factors relevant to the visual impact on openness."* The following cases are referenced: *Heath & Hampstead Society v London Borough of Camden [2007] EWHC 977 (Admin) & Turner vs East Dorset Council [2015] EWHC 2788 (Admin).*

### 2.5.4 Identification of Villages to be Assessed

Most of the studies determined the villages to be assessed based on an established settlement hierarchy. In the case of Runnymede Council, where an established

settlement hierarchy did not exist the study applied definitions of a ‘village’ from established sources.

### 2.5.5 How are the Assessment Conclusions Reached?

In concluding whether the village should be washed over or inset, all of the studies took a slightly different approach however all of them stated that professional judgement should be applied unless the outcome was quite clear cut.

Guildford Council applied a ‘+’ or ‘-’ to their three criteria, as follows:

- *“Does the majority of the village exhibit an open character?”*
- *Do open areas within the village appear continuous with surrounding open land beyond the village – from within and/or outside of the village?*
- *Does the majority of the village exhibit incomplete, indistinguishable boundaries that would not permit the provision of new Green Belt boundaries in accordance with the requirements of NPPF paragraph 85 (last point)?”*

Villages that scored 2 +s or more were classed as making an important contribution to the Green Belt and insetting was not considered appropriate. Villages that scored 2 -s or more were classed as making no important contribution to the Green Belt and should be inset. Villages that exhibited a combination of + and – were either determined with justification or subject to further discussion with the adjoining authority.

Runnymede Council stated that:

*“If the majority of the village is considered to have a high degree of open character and its impact on the openness of the Green Belt is high then the village should be ‘washed over’.*

*If the majority of the village exhibits a low open character with a low impact on the openness of the surrounding Green Belt, the village should be excluded from the Green Belt.*

*However there will be occasions which are less clear cut, for instance, a village is open in character but does not make a contribution to the openness of the Green Belt or is not open in character but does make a contribution. There will also be occasions where villages show a degree of both open/closed characteristics and a degree of contribution to the openness of the Green Belt, but not uniformly across the whole village area. In these instances it will be necessary to form a view as to whether the village should be ‘washed over’ or excluded, accepting that some areas may still exhibit a much higher or lower degree of open character or contribution to openness.” (Paragraph 3.24-3.26)*

A similar approach was applied by Selby Council combining the outcomes from Stage 2a (assessment of open character) and Stage 2b (assessment of openness) to determine whether the village ‘makes’ an important contribution or ‘may make’ an important contribution to the openness of the Green Belt whilst acknowledging that professional judgement may need to be applied in some cases.

## 2.5.6 Identification of Village Boundaries

Where there was a need to identify a village boundary, these were defined according to durable, visible and permanent features, for example:

- Natural landscape features such as woodlands, hedgerows, rivers, or protected woodland.
- Manmade features, including roads, railway infrastructure or existing developments.
- A combination of durable features, such as A-roads, and less durable physical features, such as tree lines and garden boundaries.

Runnymede Council published a separate ‘Stage 2 Report’ to consider the detailed boundaries for the village of Thorpe which it proposed to exclude from the Green Belt. The boundary was largely based on the existing extent of Policy GB2 of the Runnymede Local Plan 2001 however was reviewed to account for discrepancies in OS base mapping or where a boundary can follow a more logical and defensible/durable boundary. The Stage 2 Report sets out a number of criteria to be applied in defining the boundary based on the NPPF and the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Guidance ‘Planning on the Doorstep: The Big Issues – Green Belt (February 2015)’.

The Report acknowledges that the PAS Guidance is aimed at larger scale Green Belt reviews such as borough wide reviews however on p7 of the Guidance it describes areas of land where Green Belt release could be considered. This includes where:

- it would effectively be ‘infill’, with the land partially enclosed by development
- the development would be well contained by the landscape eg- with rising land
- there would be little harm to the qualities that contributed to the distinct identity of separate settlements in reality
- a strong boundary could be created with a clear distinction between ‘town’ and ‘country’.

Based on this and the NPPF, the report sets out 3 stages and the following criteria to be applied:

- Will the boundary maintain the essential open characteristic of the Green Belt or is it unnecessary to keep land permanently open? Would it be considered ‘infill’ with land partially enclosed by development?
- Will the boundary check unrestricted sprawl, encroachment into the countryside and would development be well contained by the landscape?
- Will the boundary prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another or, in reality would it harm the qualities which contribute to the distinct identity of separate settlements?

- Is the boundary based on permanent physical features or if not what other features have been used and what is their degree of permanence? Does this create a strong distinction between ‘town’ and ‘country’?
- Will the boundary be durable and defensible now and beyond the Local Plan period?

## 2.6 Exceptional Circumstances

As set out in paragraph 136 of the NPPF, local authorities must demonstrate exceptional circumstances in order to amend Green Belt boundaries. The change in policy position from PPG2 to the current paragraph 140 of the NPPF relating to whether a Green Belt village should be washed over or inset is relevant to the demonstration of exceptional circumstances. In the below examples of Guildford Council and Runnymede Council, the change in policy position, combined with evidence of a robust and clearly justified assessment of the Green Belt village, combined with development need, collectively provided the exceptional circumstances case required to amend Green Belt boundaries.

Guildford Council’s Green Belt and Countryside Topic Paper (2017) at paragraph 4.8 states: *“Insofar as exceptional circumstances are required in order to amend Green Belt boundaries, the change in policy approach, as set out above, together with the detailed consideration of each village, provides the justification for amending Green Belt boundaries to inset selected villages.”* The detailed evidence on this is provided in the Council’s Green Belt and Countryside Study (2014). The Local Plan Inspector for the Guildford Local Plan at paragraph 101 of the Inspector’s Report (March 2019) concluded that there were exceptional circumstances to inset the villages from the Green Belt. He states: *“In previous plans, all the villages except for Ash Green were washed over by the Green Belt, but the NPPF states that only those villages whose open character makes an important contribution to the openness of the Green Belt should be included within it. The submitted Plan therefore insets 14 villages from the Green Belt based on the comprehensive and well-founded work of the Green Belt and Countryside Study. The villages concerned do not have an open character that contributes to the openness of the Green Belt, and the Plan establishes the new Green Belt boundary around them.”*

In the case of Runnymede Council, in considering whether exceptional circumstances for alterations to the Green Belt boundary exist, the Inspector comments at paragraph 49 of the Local Plan Inspector’s Report (May 2020):

*“Thirdly, the detailed boundary of the Green Belt was established in 1986. Since then, development has rendered some parts of the boundary illogical or indefensible, and discrepancies have come to light that need to be corrected. Furthermore, national planning policy on villages that are ‘washed over’ by the Green Belt has altered since 1986, and it is necessary to review whether the policy framework for the borough’s Green Belt villages remains sound.”*

At paragraph 55 she concludes *“...for the reasons set out above, there is compelling evidence that in principle, exceptional circumstances exist which justify altering the Green Belt boundary in the Plan.”*

Runnymede Council proposed to exclude the washed over village of Thorpe from the Green Belt as a result of the findings from their Village Study. At Issue 4 of the Inspector's Report, she considers whether exceptional circumstances exist to justify the proposed exclusion of Thorpe Village from the Green Belt. She states the following:

*“204. I have concluded in Issue 2 above that there are exceptional circumstances in principle for altering the Green Belt boundary in the Plan. In bringing forward the Plan, the Council carried out a review of the Green Belt villages, including Thorpe, taking account of the advice in paragraph 86 of NPPF. Particular attention was paid to the character of the edges of the village envelope and their relationship with the wider Green Belt.*

*205. On the balance of the evidence about the limited contribution that the village makes to the physical and visual openness of the Green Belt, it is justified and consistent with national planning policy to exclude Thorpe Village from the Green Belt. The Plan's definition of the new Green Belt boundary around village, as shown on the policies map, has been informed by Stage 2 of the Green Belt Villages Review and I am satisfied that it is justified, positively prepared, effective and consistent with NPPF, including that exceptional circumstances exist for the alteration of the Green Belt boundary.*

*206. The Thorpe Neighbourhood Plan is in preparation and it will be informed by the strategic policies of the local plan, including Policy SD2 which proposes limited growth in Thorpe in accordance with the spatial strategy. This level of growth is capable of being accommodated within the proposed settlement boundary. Nonetheless, should a need be identified through the Neighbourhood Plan, detailed amendments to the boundary could be made in accordance with paragraph 136 of NPPF 2019. For clarity, paragraph 5.30 of the Plan should be modified to acknowledge this (MM10). Therefore, reasonable flexibility exists to take account of any new evidence that may become available during the Plan period. Subject to the above, the proposals for Thorpe Village are sound.*

*207. In conclusion on this issue, provided that the recommended MMs are made, I am satisfied that the other proposed allocations for housing are sound, and that there are exceptional circumstances that justify the exclusion of Thorpe Village from the Green Belt.”*

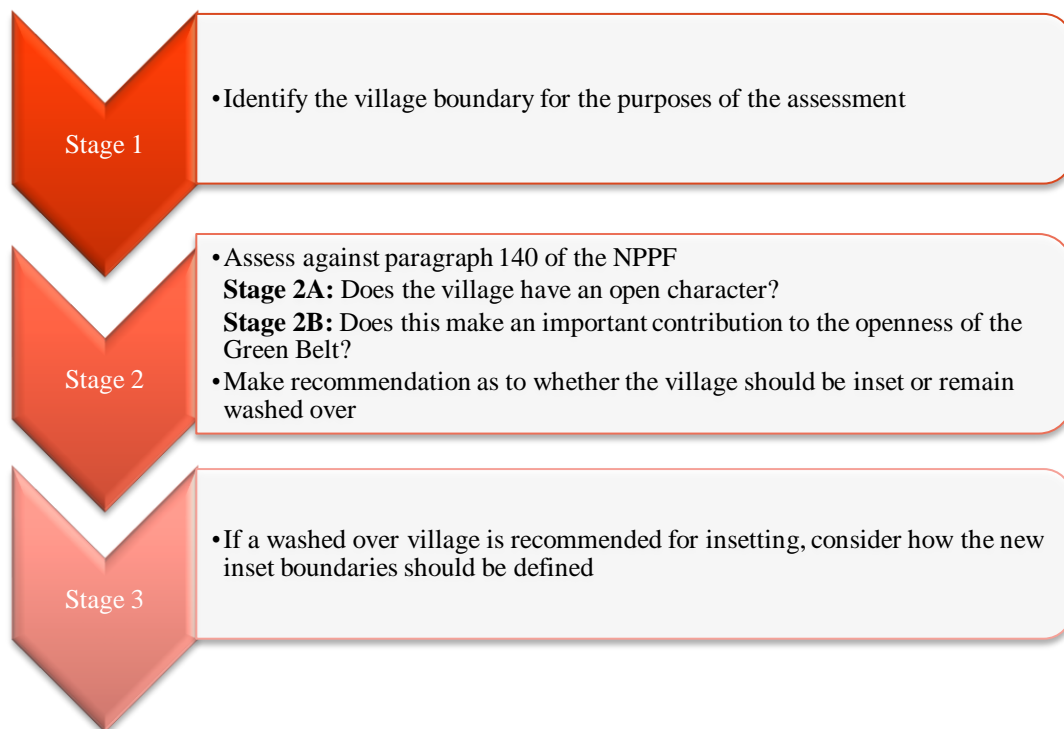
In contrast, the Local Plan Inspector for the Vale of White Horse Local Plan at paragraph 95 of the Inspector's Report (November 2016) concluded that the exceptional circumstances necessary to remove the washed over village of Farmoor from the Green Belt did not exist as he had seen ‘no specific evidence to justify this particular change’. Whilst the Vale of White Horse Green Belt Review (2014) did include a brief section which assessed whether currently washed over villages should be inset from the Green Belt taking into account paragraph 86 [of the NPPF 2012], this did not have a clear methodology or a clear basis and explanation for the recommendations made.



## 3 Methodology

### 3.1 Overview

Given that national policy and guidance does not provide a methodology for assessing Green Belt villages against paragraph 140 of the NPPF, the following methodology has been developed taking into account the comparative studies reviewed in the previous section and relevant national policy, guidance and case law. The methodology utilises an element of professional judgement however it is deliberately detailed and prescriptive in order to ensure a consistent and justified approach. The methodology follows a three-stage approach:



An example of the assessment proforma which encompasses Stages 1-2 is included at Appendix B. This includes a section to reference relevant information from the 2019 Green Belt Review.

The following section explains each stage of the approach in turn.

### 3.2 Stage 1: Identification of Village Boundary

Only the washed over villages of Chorley, Shenstone Wood End and Hints have been assessed as part of this study. There is no existing village boundary defined for these villages. The limits of the built curtilage have been used to define the village boundary for the purposes of this assessment. A desktop exercise using OS (Ordnance Survey) mapping has been used to complete this Stage. A sense check of the boundaries has been undertaken as part of the Stage 2 site visits.

### 3.3 Stage 2: Assessment against Paragraph 140 of the NPPF

Paragraph 140 of the NPPF consists of two clear component parts: the assessment of open character and the assessment of openness. The comparative studies each assessed these components applying different criteria as detailed in Section 2.5 above however all of them used a qualitative scoring system. The proforma at Appendix B sets out the criteria to be applied for each component and the definitions according to the high, medium and low assessment scale. The criteria in the proforma has been developed from the comparative review of other Green Belt Village studies and the descriptions noted in these assessments.

A combination of desktop research combined with site visits to each village has been used to complete Stage 2. The assessor was fully briefed on the approach and methodology prior to undertaking the site visits.

#### Stage 2A: Does the village have an open character?

As shown in the proforma, the assessment of open character is focused on the following criteria:

- General pattern of development and density; and
- Scale and form (dwelling type, building height, extent of gaps/open spaces).

These criteria focus on the village itself. The intention is that open character is assessed from within the village, either at the centre point of the village or where appropriate, from a number of key locations within the village (this will only be required if the village is large and/or has variations in character). The ‘Conclusion and Justification’ column of the proforma is provided for the assessor to explain the high/medium/low category chosen and how differences across the village have been accounted for (if relevant).

In determining whether the village has an open character, a majority-based approach will be applied whereby if the majority of the criteria are assessed as high or medium, then the village is considered to have an open character. If the majority of the criteria are assessed as low, then the village is not considered to have an open character. Given that there are four criteria, if there is an equal split between them professional judgement should be applied in determining whether the village has an open character.

#### Stage 2B: Does this open character make an important contribution to the openness of the Green Belt?

Given that paragraph 140 specifically refers to ‘openness’, it is necessary to define openness for the purposes of this study.

As set out in Section 2.4 above, the *Turner* case established the principle that openness has both a spatial and a visual dimension. More recently, the Supreme Court in the case of *Samuel Smith Old Brewery* confirmed that it is not an implicit requirement to consider the visual effects on Green Belt openness and it is up to

the decision maker as a matter of planning judgement. As the PPG confirms, openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects (see Section 2.2.3 above).

Whilst not explicitly defined, it is understood that spatial openness relates to the level of built form and visual openness relates to the perception of openness, for example, the impact topography, long views and vegetation have on the openness of the Green Belt.

This component of paragraph 140 is therefore focused on the relationship between the village and the wider Green Belt. This is primarily from the perspective of the views into and out of the village from the surrounding Green Belt as well as the relationship of open areas within the village to the surrounding Green Belt. The intention is that this is assessed from the village envelope on the edge of the village as well as outside of the village (for example on key approaches into the village), and where appropriate from locations within the village where views are present. As shown in the proforma, the assessment of Stage 2B is focused on the following criteria:

- Definition of the village in terms of how clearly defined the boundary is;
- Built form, topography and vegetation (focused on how these enable or obstruct views); and
- Whether open areas within the village appear continuous with the surrounding Green Belt.

In determining whether the open character of the village makes an ‘important contribution’ to openness, a majority-based approach has been applied whereby if the majority of the criteria are assessed as high or medium, then the village is considered to make an important contribution. If the majority of the criteria are assessed as low, then the village is not considered to make an important contribution.

### **Recommending whether a village could be ‘inset’ or remain ‘washed over’**

In recommending whether a village should remain washed over or should be considered for exclusion (insetting) from the Green Belt against paragraph 140, both components of the assessment have been taken into account. However Stage 2A (open character) could be considered to act as a gateway given that the wording of paragraph 140 implies that if a village does not have an open character then it does not make a contribution to the openness of the Green Belt and by default Stage 2B does not need to be assessed. This was acknowledged in the Runcyede Council Green Belt Village Review however ‘for completeness’, Runcyede decided to assess both components. The same approach has been taken in this study for completeness and robustness.

It is recognised that in some cases the recommendation will be clear cut however in other cases it may not be. Table 2 below sets out the assessment outcomes from Stage 2A and 2B and how these may impact upon the recommendation. It should be read alongside the Assessment Proforma included at Appendix B.

It is recognised that in some instances professional judgment is required to determine the recommendation on the status of the village, particularly where the assessment is borderline and/or the characteristics are not uniform across the village. Where the village is recommended to be inset and there are significant differences in character across it, consideration could be given as to whether the whole of the village should be inset or instead whether certain areas should remain washed over. This is an unlikely scenario and would require a strong justification should this approach be taken.

Table 2. Determining the Recommendation

Stage 2A	Stage 2B	Recommendation
Village has an open character	The open character of the village makes an important contribution to openness	Village should remain washed over
Village does not have an open character	The village does not make an important contribution to openness	Village should be considered to be inset
Village has an open character (where Stage 2A was borderline and the criteria was split 2 / 2)	The open character of the village does not make an important contribution to openness	Village should be considered to be inset.
Village has an open character (where Stage 2A was borderline and the criteria was split 2 / 2)	The open character of the village makes an important contribution to openness	Village should remain washed over

### 3.4 Stage 3: Definition of New Inset Boundaries

If it is recommended that a village (or parts of a village) should be considered for exclusion (insetting) from the Green Belt, then it will be necessary to define a new inset boundary taking into account paragraphs 133, 136, 138 and 139 of the NPPF (see Section 2.2.2 above).

The following criteria will be applied:

- Will the boundary maintain the essential open characteristic of the Green Belt or is it unnecessary to keep land permanently open? (NPPF paragraph 133 and 139(b)).
- Is the boundary based on physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent? If not, what other features have been used and what is their degree of permanence? (NPPF paragraph 139(f)).
- Will the boundary be durable and defensible now and beyond the Local Plan period? (NPPF paragraph 139(e)).

The above criteria will be considered in the round. There will be occasions where some criteria are met but others are not or where criteria may be partially met. In these instances, professional judgement will be applied and fully explained.

In addition, the following rules will be followed in defining the boundaries:

- Roads - Where the proposed village boundary crosses or runs along a stretch of road, the road will be included within the village boundary, unless illogical to do so.
- Discrepancies in Property/OS Lines - Where the details on the OS base map are not completely up to date and do not reflect the situation on the ground (for example, due to more recent development), professional judgement should be applied to determine how the boundary should be drawn. As part of the site visit undertaken during Stage 2, the consistency and accuracy of the OS base map will be considered.

The remaining elements of NPPF paragraph 138 and 139 relate to safeguarded land and promoting sustainable patterns of development. Strategic Policy OSS2 of the Preferred Options Local Plan directs development to the larger settlements in the settlement hierarchy in the first instance. The Settlement Sustainability Study (September 2020) provides the evidence base for the settlement hierarchy.

Washed over villages were not assessed as part of this study. It is not expected that any villages which have the potential to be inset within the Green Belt will be a focus for large scale growth now or in the foreseeable future. Safeguarding land around such villages for future large-scale development is also unlikely to promote sustainable patterns of development. The inclusion of small areas of development potential within the village boundary commensurate with the size of the village could constitute sustainable development however further evidence is likely to be required to support this. It is therefore not appropriate for this study to consider or include such locations within the village boundary.

Any alterations to Green Belt boundaries will require the Council to develop an exceptional circumstances case in accordance with paragraph 136 of the NPPF.

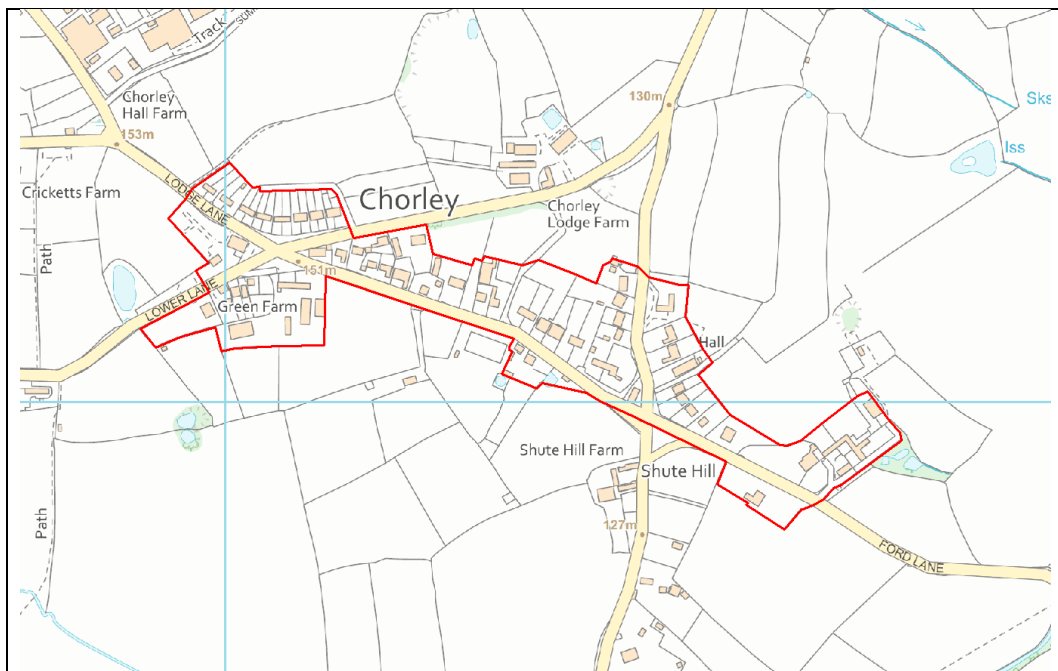
## 4 Village Assessments

### 4.1 Overview

This section sets out the findings from Stages 1 and 2. Stage 1 involved the definition of the village boundaries for the purposes of the assessment. The detailed assessment proformas explain how the village boundary has been defined. As set out in Section 3.2, the limits of the built curtilage has been used to define the village boundary for the purposes of this assessment. A desktop exercise using OS mapping was used with a sense check of the boundaries undertaken through the site visits.

In undertaking Stage 2 and assessing the villages against paragraph 140 of the NPPF, the criteria set out in the proformas and the qualitative scoring system was applied. The justification for the chosen assessment scale is provided in the proformas. Stage 2 was completed through a site visit to each village combined with desktop research. All three assessments were completed by the same assessor following a detailed briefing on the method. Multiple points within the villages were visited by the assessor to enable them to form a balanced judgement.

### 4.2 Green Belt Village Assessment - Chorley



Context – 2019 Green Belt Review	
Village assessment findings from 2019 Green Belt Review.	Village consists of reasonable level of linear development along Shute Hill and Lodge Lane. Village is compact in character which impacts upon openness. Limited sense of openness within the village.
Was the village considered as part of the	Village falls within Broad Area 3 which was assessed as having an important role to Green Belt purposes.

parcel or broad area assessment?					
<b>Village Boundary (for the purposes of the assessment)</b>					
Area to be assessed		<p>The village boundary used here consists of the built curtilage of the village including the large grounds and gardens which accompany a number of properties. To the west of the village this includes the properties along Lodge Lane and Lower Lane including Touchwood house and its large garden. The Malt Shoal Inn and its car park and area of open space have been included as they form part of its curtilage. Within the centre of the village, the properties to the north of Shute Hill have been included. Merryfields which is located to the south of Shute Hill has been included however the menage to the west of Merryfields has not been included as it is located within the horse grazing paddock and consists of a menage surrounded by post and rail fencing used for private equestrian use only. To the east of the village, the properties along Shute Hill (including Chorley Village Hall) and to the north of Ford Lane have been included. Twelve Acres located to the south of Ford Lane has also been included.</p> <p>Shute Hill Farm which is located further south along Shute Hill has not been included as it is separated from the rest of the village. The properties further south along Shute Hill have also not been included as they are not linked to the rest of the village. Chorley Lodge Farm which is located to the north of Lodge Lane has not been included as it is clearly separated from the rest of the village. Further north along Lodge Lane and Summerhouse Lane there are a number of properties including Chorley Hall Lodge, Chorley Hall Farm and Cricket Cottage. These have not been included within the village boundary as there is clear separation from the rest of the village.</p>			
<b>Assessment against Paragraph 140 NPPF</b>					
<b>Assessment of 'open character' of the village</b>					
Criteria		Assessment Scale (Degree of open character)			Conclusion and Justification
		High	Medium	Low	
General Pattern of Existing Development and Density		<i>Sparsely distributed or dispersed, low density</i>	<i>Linear or small clusters across the village, medium density</i>	<b><i>Clustered, high density</i></b>	Development in the village forms a linear cluster along Shute Hill. The centre of the village forms the main cluster of development. Development within the village is high density although becomes sparser at the east end of the village.
Scale and Form	Types of dwelling	<b><i>Detached /semi-</i></b>	<i>Semi-detached / terraced</i>	<i>Flatted / terraced</i>	The majority of dwellings in the

		<b>detached properties with large gardens or set within large grounds</b>	<i>properties with medium sized gardens. Multiple rows of properties.</i>	<i>properties with limited or no garden space</i>	village are detached, with some semi-detached housing in the west along Lodge Lane. Most properties in the village have large gardens. The large majority of properties are not enclosed by neighbouring properties and instead face out into the wider Green Belt.
	Building heights	<b>1-2 storeys</b>	<i>2-3 storeys</i>	<i>3+ storeys</i>	The majority of buildings are 2 storeys, there are more 1 storey buildings than 3 storeys. Bungalows are present in the north along Shute Hill, and towards the far east along Ford Lane.
	Extent of gaps / open spaces	Gaps in frontages and/or areas of open space form prominent features within the village boundary and/or the Green Belt is closely linked across the village	<b>Some gaps in frontages and/or some areas of open space within the village boundary and/or the Green Belt is linked in parts across the village</b>	Limited gaps in frontages and/or limited open space within the village boundary and/or the Green Belt is not linked across the village	There are some areas of open space in the western half of the village around the junction of Lower Lane and Shute Hill. There are limited gaps in frontages, and the majority of development is clustered in a way which does not allow for large gaps.
	Does the village have an open character?	<i>If the majority of the criteria score either high/medium then the village is considered to have an open character</i>	<i>If the majority of the criteria score low then the village is considered to not have an open character.</i>		The village scored 'high' for two criteria, 'medium' for one criterion and 'low' for one, and therefore has an open character.



<b>Relationship of the village with the ‘openness’ of the Green Belt</b>				
Criteria	Assessment Scale (Level of contribution)			Conclusion and Justification
	High	Medium	Low	
Views into and out of village from surrounding Green Belt				
Perceived definition of the village (visual perception)	<i>Village boundary is undefined</i>	<b>Part of village boundary is clearly defined but other parts unclear</b>	<i>Majority of village boundary is clearly defined</i>	Part of the village boundary is clearly defined by residential properties. Some areas along the south west boundary along Shute Hill and Lower Lane are less clearly defined.
Built form <sup>2</sup>	<i>Built form is sparse and/or building/frontages contain gaps allowing for views</i>	<i>Views are partially restricted by built form in places although gaps in building/frontages allow for views in places</i>	<b>Views are largely restricted by built form and building/frontages are solid without gaps</b>	There are frequent small gaps between the residential properties, but these do not allow for views of the wider Green Belt. On the whole the built form of the village restricts views.
Topography <sup>3</sup>	<i>Flat or gently rising topography allowing / enabling views</i>	<b>Mixed topography allowing some views</b>	<i>Steep / big changes in topography obstructing views</i>	The topography of the village is generally flat in the western area which slopes gently downhill towards Ford Lane. Around the Shute Hill and Ford Lane crossroads the decline is more noticeable from north west to south east which allows for some views stretching south from this crossroad. Views are also

<sup>2</sup> This refers to any form of built development including residential properties, employment uses, warehouses, schools, and sports facilities.

<sup>3</sup> This refers to the configuration of the natural and artificial physical features which make up the surface of the land.

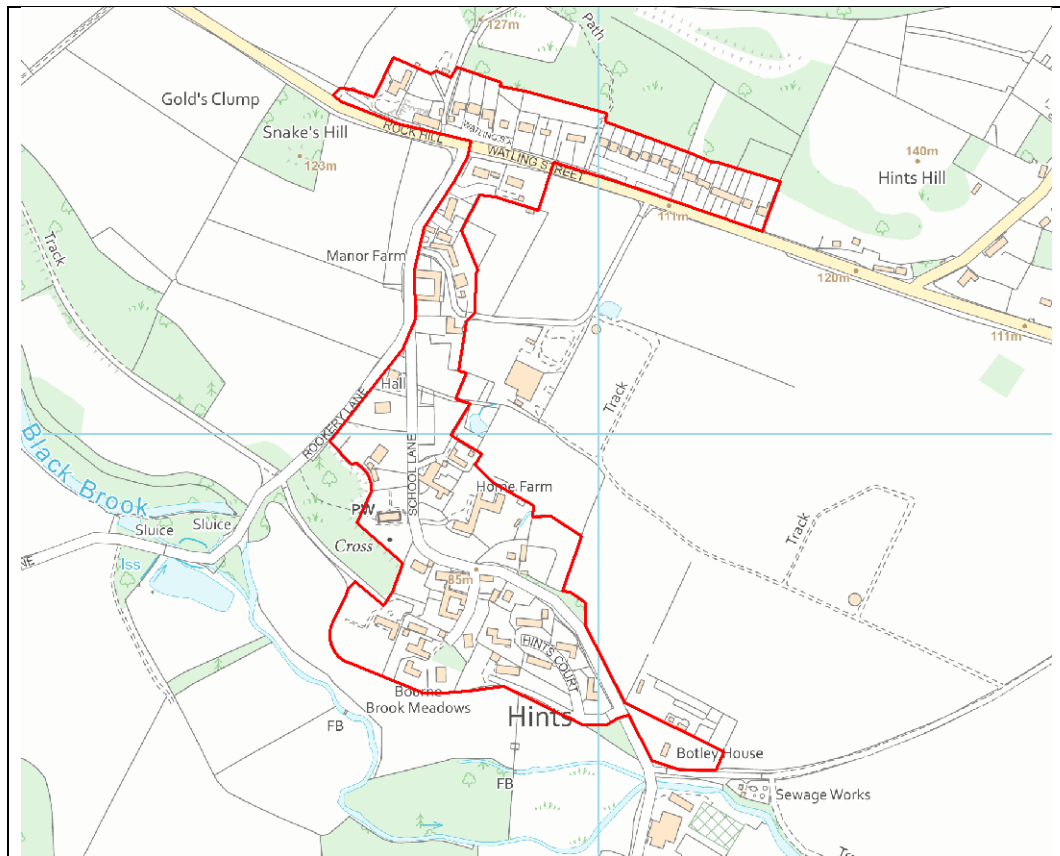
				present from the most eastern point of the boundary stretching east into the Green Belt.
Vegetation <sup>4</sup>	<i>Low lying and/or sparse allowing views</i>	<i>Partially dense allowing for views in places</i>	<b><i>Tall and/or dense obstructing views</i></b>	Tall trees and hedgerows restrict views into the wider Green Belt across the village, but some views are possible through the vegetation due to a lack of leaves in winter. There is sparse vegetation at the most eastern point along Ford Lane and the Farmhouse Cottage area that allows for views into the wider Green Belt.
Do open areas <sup>5</sup> within the village appear continuous with the surrounding Green Belt	<b><i>Open areas continue into surrounding Green Belt</i></b>	<i>Few open areas continue into the surrounding Green Belt</i>	<i>No continuance of open areas into surrounding Green Belt</i>	There are open spaces within the village such as the junction around the Malt Shovel pub, and Shute Hill and Ford Lane crossroads which appear continuous with the wider Green Belt.
Does the open character of the village make an important contribution to the openness of the Green Belt	<i>If the majority of the criteria score either high/medium then the village is considered to make an important contribution</i>	<i>If the majority of the criteria score low then the village is considered to not make an important contribution</i>		The village scored 'high/medium' for three criteria and 'low' for two. Its open character is therefore judged to make an important contribution to

<sup>4</sup> This refers to the assemblage of plants, trees or shrubs.

<sup>5</sup> This refers to gardens, village greens, parks, roadside verges and embankments, and other incidental spaces within the village.

		the openness of the Green Belt.
<b>Summary and Recommendations</b>		
<b>Summary</b>	<p>The village is assessed as having an open character as it scored ‘high’ for two criteria, ‘medium’ for one and ‘low’ for one. The open character is assessed as making an important contribution to the openness of the Green Belt as the village scored ‘high’ for one criterion, ‘medium’ for two criteria and low for two. Development in the village forms a liner cluster along Shute Hill. The centre of the village forms the main cluster of development. There are some areas of open space within the village boundary along Lower Lane, Lodge Lane and Shute Hill. The Green Belt is closely linked across the majority of the village due to its size and linear formation with the exception of the central cluster of development. While built form and vegetation largely restrict views, the topography of the village allows for views in places. The rising topography close to the village enhances views to the east. In addition, some of the village’s open areas appear to be continuous with the wider Green Belt.</p>	
<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Retain as washed over</b>	

### 4.3 Green Belt Village Assessment - Hints



<b>Context – 2019 Green Belt Review</b>	
Village assessment findings from 2019 Green Belt Review.	Village is compact in character with few significant gaps between buildings, particularly those along School and Hints Close. There is limited sense of openness within the built area of the village.
Was the village considered as part of the	Village falls within Broad Area 10 which was assessed as having an important role to Green Belt purposes.

parcel or broad area assessment?				
<b>Village Boundary (for the purposes of the assessment)</b>				
Area to be assessed	<p>The village boundary used here consists of the built curtilage of the village including the large grounds and gardens which accompany a number of properties. To the north of the village, this includes the properties along Rock Hill and Watling Street. Within the centre of the village, this includes the properties along School Lane and Rookery Lane. The western boundary consists of Rookery Lane, Chadwick House, the Old Coach House, St Bartholomew's Church and Hints Hall and its immediate grounds. Hints Hall has been included however the access road to the hall which is hidden amongst dense woodland has not been included as apart from the road it does not include any built form and it blends with the surrounding woodland to the west. The boundary at this point therefore follows the curtilage of St Bartholomew's Church and Cedar Tree Cottage. To the south of the village, the properties along School Lane and Hints Court are included. Botley House located to the east of School Lane has also been included as the curtilage of the property links with the rest of the village.</p> <p>Further south along School Lane, Brookside Nursery has not been included due to its use. To the east of the village, there are a number of properties along Watling Street and Hints Lane. These have not been included in the village boundary as there is a clear separation from the rest of the village. These properties are also more sparsely located. Manor Farm has not been included due to its use combined with the fact that it is set back from the main areas of the village.</p>			
<b>Assessment against Paragraph 140 NPPF</b>				
<b>Assessment of 'open character' of the village</b>				
Criteria	Assessment Scale (Degree of open character)			Conclusion and Justification
	High	Medium	Low	
General Pattern of Existing Development and Density	<i>Sparsely distributed or dispersed, low density</i>	<b><i>Linear or small clusters across the village, medium density</i></b>	<i>Clustered, high density</i>	The village consists of a section of linear residential properties along Watling Street and the more clustered, higher density residential properties along School Lane, as well as less clustered residential development within Hints Close. Development is a mix of

					medium and high density.
Scale and Form	Types of dwelling	<b><i>Detached /semi-detached properties with large gardens or set within large grounds</i></b>	<i>Semi-detached / terraced properties with medium sized gardens. Multiple rows of properties.</i>	<i>Flatted / terraced properties with limited or no garden space</i>	The majority of dwellings are detached, with some semi-detached properties along Watling Street and School Lane. Most properties have large gardens. Properties along Watling Street are not enclosed by neighbouring properties and instead face out into the wider Green Belt, while the majority of development within School Lane is enclosed by neighbouring properties. Towards the south of the village within Hints Court there are much larger detached homes with large gardens that are not enclosed by neighbouring properties.
	Building heights	<b><i>1-2 storeys</i></b>	<i>2-3 storeys</i>	<i>3+ storeys</i>	The majority of properties are 2 storeys, with some bungalows within the centre of village and towards the south of the village. There are more 1 storey buildings than 3 storey buildings.
	Extent of gaps / open spaces	Gaps in frontages and/or areas of open space form prominent	<b><i>Some gaps in frontages and/or some areas of open space within the village</i></b>	Limited gaps in frontages and/or limited open space within the village	There are some gaps and open spaces within the village, but this is not a prominent

		features within the village boundary and/or the Green Belt is closely linked across the village	<b>boundary and/or the Green Belt is linked in parts across the village</b>	boundary and/or the Green Belt is not linked across the village	feature within the village. A significant gap exists at the junction of School Lane and Rookery Lane, and at the very south of the village. The Green Belt is linked in the north along the linear development, but less linked in the centre of the village due to more clustered development.
Does the village have an open character?		<i>If the majority of the criteria score either high/medium then the village is considered to have an open character</i>		<i>If the majority of the criteria score low then the village is considered to not have an open character.</i>	The village scored 'high' for two criteria and 'medium' for two criteria, and therefore has an open character.
<b>Relationship of the village with the 'openness' of the Green Belt</b>					
Criteria	Assessment Scale (Level of contribution)			Conclusion and Justification	
	High	Medium	Low		
Views into and out of village from surrounding Green Belt					
Perceived definition of the village (visual perception)		<i>Village boundary is undefined</i>	<b><i>Part of village boundary is clearly defined but other parts unclear</i></b>	<i>Majority of village boundary is clearly defined</i>	Parts of the village boundary are clearly defined, particularly in the north along Watling Street. However, other parts of the village are less clearly defined particularly around the central area including Rookery Lane and St Bartholomew Church and east of School Lane. The south east boundary is also

				unclear as there is development directly outside of the boundary (Brookside Nursery).
Built form <sup>6</sup>	<i>Built form is sparse and/or building/frontages contain gaps allowing for views</i>	<b><i>Views are partially restricted by built form in places although gaps in building/frontages allow for views in places</i></b>	<i>Views are largely restricted by built form and building/frontages are solid without gaps</i>	Views are partially restricted into the wider Green Belt to the north along Watling Street and to the south around Hints Close/School Lane. There are gaps in built form in the centre of the village along School Lane and at the junction with Rookery Lane and also at the southernmost tip of the village which allow for views in the wider Green Belt.
Topography <sup>7</sup>	<i>Flat or gently rising topography allowing / enabling views</i>	<b><i>Mixed topography allowing some views</i></b>	<i>Steep / big changes in topography obstructing views</i>	The topography of the village slopes downhill from the north along Watling Street, both ends of this street slope slightly uphill blocking views into the surrounding Green Belt. The topography allows for views looking south into Manor Farm. Along the majority of School Lane views are very limited, but the flat topography

<sup>6</sup> This refers to any form of built development including residential properties, employment uses, warehouses, schools, and sports facilities.

<sup>7</sup> This refers to the configuration of the natural and artificial physical features which make up the surface of the land.

				at the very southern tip of the village allows for views into the wider Green Belt.
Vegetation <sup>8</sup>	<i>Low lying and/or sparse allowing views</i>	<i>Partially dense allowing for views in places</i>	<b>Tall and/or dense obstructing views</b>	The village contains lots of tall and dense vegetation obstructing views.
Do open areas <sup>9</sup> within the village appear continuous with the surrounding Green Belt	<b>Open areas continue into surrounding Green Belt</b>	<i>Few open areas continue into the surrounding Green Belt</i>	<i>No continuance of open areas into surrounding Green Belt</i>	Open areas in the village consist predominantly of gardens which appear continuous with the surrounding Green Belt in parts. The roadside verge along Rookery Lane. does appear continuous with the surrounding Green Belt.
Does the open character of the village make an important contribution to the openness of the Green Belt	<i>If the majority of the criteria score either high/medium then the village is considered to make an important contribution</i>	<i>If the majority of the criteria score low then the village is considered to not make an important contribution</i>		The village scored 'medium' for three criteria, 'high' for one criterion and 'low' for one criterion. Its open character is therefore judged to make an important contribution to the openness of the Green Belt.
<b>Summary and Recommendations</b>				
<b>Summary</b>	The village is assessed as having an open character as it scored 'high' for two criteria and 'medium' for two criteria. The open character is assessed as making an important contribution to the openness of the Green Belt as the village scored 'medium' for three criteria, 'high' for one criterion and 'low' for one. Development in the village is a mix of linear development in the north and more clustered development within the centre. There are open areas within the village which largely consist of residential gardens. There are some gaps between buildings where views are not restricted by either built form or vegetation, in addition the topography allows for			

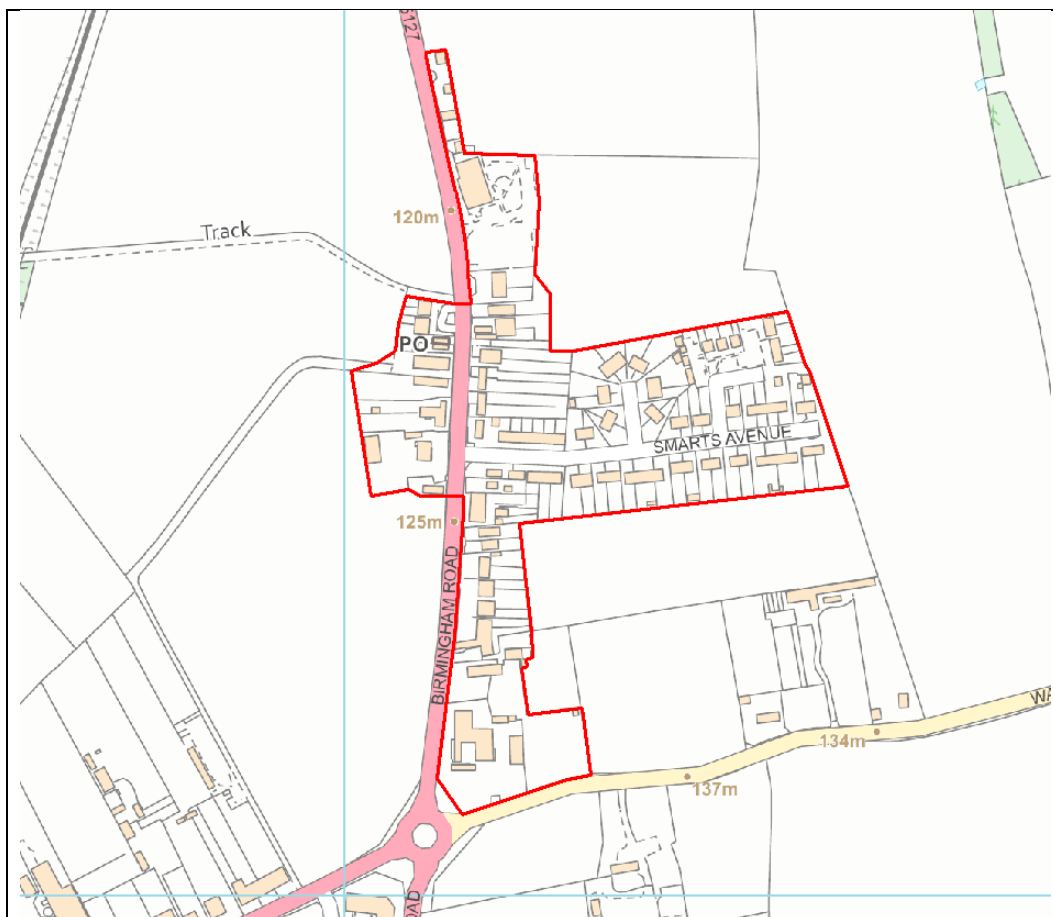
<sup>8</sup> This refers to the assemblage of plants, trees or shrubs.

<sup>9</sup> This refers to gardens, village greens, parks, roadside verges and embankments, and other incidental spaces within the village.



	some views into the Green Belt. The village’s open areas appear to be continuous with the wider Green Belt.
<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Retain as washed over</b>

## 4.4 Green Belt Village Assessment - Shenstone Wood End



<b>Context – 2019 Green Belt Review</b>	
Village assessment findings from 2019 Green Belt Review.	Built area of village is compact with few gaps between properties. Character of parts of the village is more suburban (cul-de-sac’s etc.) which reduced openness character. There is limited sense of openness within the built area of the village.
Was the village considered as part of the parcel or broad area assessment?	Village falls within Broad Area 12 which was assessed as having an important role to Green Belt purposes. Village is adjacent to parcel Little Aston 6 which was assessed as having an important role to Green Belt purposes. The assessment states that Shenstone Wood End is an intervening washed over village between Little Aston and Shenstone. It adds that development of the parcel would develop the gap between Little Aston and Shenstone Wood End.
<b>Village Boundary (for the purposes of the assessment)</b>	
Area to be assessed	The village boundary used here consists of the built curtilage of the village including the large grounds and gardens which accompany a number of properties. To the south of the village, this includes Watford House Residential Home and the large grounds surrounding it given that this forms part of the curtilage of the

		<p>property. To the west of the village this includes the properties along Birmingham Road and their large gardens. To the east of the village, this includes the properties along Smarts Avenue and Woodland Court. To the north of the village this include Toby Carvery Shenstone and its surrounding car park as well as the residential properties to the north of it along Birmingham Road.</p> <p>The properties further east along Watford Gap Road consisting of the Old Tiles, Watford Gap Cottage and Greyhound Trust Hall Green have not been included as they are clearly separated from the rest of the village. Biddles Farm located to the south of Watford Gap Road has also not been included as it is also separated from the rest of the village.</p>			
<b>Assessment against Paragraph 140 NPPF</b>					
<b>Assessment of 'open character' of the village</b>					
Criteria		Assessment Scale (Degree of open character)			Conclusion and Justification
		High	Medium	Low	
General Pattern of Existing Development and Density		<i>Sparsely distributed or dispersed, low density</i>	<i>Linear or small clusters across the village, medium density</i>	<b>Clustered, high density</b>	Development in the village is linear along Birmingham Road with a central cluster around Smarts Avenue. Development within the village is of high density.
Scale and Form	Types of dwelling	<b>Detached /semi-detached properties with large gardens or set within large grounds</b>	<i>Semi-detached / terraced properties with medium sized gardens. Multiple rows of properties.</i>	<i>Flatted / terraced properties with limited or no garden space</i>	The majority of dwellings in the village are semi-detached, with a majority of medium sized gardens. There are more detached houses than terraced housing. With the exception of the cluster of properties around Smarts Avenue, the majority of properties are not enclosed by neighbouring properties and instead face out into the wider Green Belt.

	Building heights	<b>1-2 storeys</b>	2-3 storeys	3+ storeys	The majority of buildings appear to be 2 storeys within the village, with some 1 storey development at the southern end.
	Extent of gaps / open spaces	Gaps in frontages and/or areas of open space form prominent features within the village boundary and/or the Green Belt is closely linked across the village	<b>Some gaps in frontages and/or some areas of open space within the village boundary and/or the Green Belt is linked in parts across the village</b>	Limited gaps in frontages and/or limited open space within the village boundary and/or the Green Belt is not linked across the village	There are gaps in frontages along Birmingham Road, and limited gaps in frontages within Smarts Avenue and the adjoining cul de sacs.
	Does the village have an open character?	<i>If the majority of the criteria score either high/medium then the village is considered to have an open character</i>		<i>If the majority of the criteria score low then the village is considered to not have an open character.</i>	The village scored 'high' for two criteria, 'medium' for one criteria, and 'low' for one, therefore the village has an open character.
<b>Relationship of the village with the 'openness' of the Green Belt</b>					
Criteria	Assessment Scale (Level of contribution)			Conclusion and Justification	
	High	Medium	Low		
Views into and out of village from surrounding Green Belt					
Perceived definition of the village (visual perception)	<i>Village boundary is undefined</i>	<i>Part of village boundary is clearly defined but other parts unclear</i>	<b>Majority of village boundary is clearly defined</b>	The village is clearly defined along all boundaries.	
Built form <sup>10</sup>	<i>Built form is sparse and/or building/frontages contain gaps allowing for views</i>	<b>Views are partially restricted by built form in places although gaps in building/frontages allow for</b>	<i>Views are largely restricted by built form and building/frontages are solid without gaps</i>	Views are partially restricted into the wider Green Belt within the central area of the village (Smarts Avenue). The remainder of the	

<sup>10</sup> This refers to any form of built development including residential properties, employment uses, warehouses, schools, and sports facilities.

		<b>views in places</b>		village allows for views into the wider Green Belt predominantly due to its linear form.
Topography <sup>11</sup>	<b>Flat or gently rising topography allowing / enabling views</b>	<i>Mixed topography allowing some views</i>	<i>Steep / big changes in topography obstructing views</i>	The topography of the village is generally flat with a slight incline from north to south. This allows for views stretching west and east at points.
Vegetation <sup>12</sup>	<b>Low lying and/or sparse allowing views</b>	<i>Partially dense allowing for views in places</i>	<i>Tall and/or dense obstructing views</i>	Vegetation is largely low lying allowing for views into the wider Green Belt.
Do open areas <sup>13</sup> within the village appear continuous with the surrounding Green Belt	<b>Open areas continue into surrounding Green Belt</b>	<i>Few open areas continue into the surrounding Green Belt</i>	<i>No continuance of open areas into surrounding Green Belt</i>	Open areas in the village consist predominantly of gardens and roadside verges along Birmingham Road. These appear continuous with the wider Green Belt.
Does the open character of the village make an important contribution to the openness of the Green Belt	<i>If the majority of the criteria score either high/medium then the village is considered to make an important contribution</i>	<i>If the majority of the criteria score low then the village is considered to not make an important contribution</i>		The village scored 'high' for three criteria, 'medium' for one criterion and low for one. Its open character is therefore judged to make an important contribution to the openness of the Green Belt.
<b>Summary and Recommendations</b>				

<sup>11</sup> This refers to the configuration of the natural and artificial physical features which make up the surface of the land.

<sup>12</sup> This refers to the assemblage of plants, trees or shrubs.

<sup>13</sup> This refers to gardens, village greens, parks, roadside verges and embankments, and other incidental spaces within the village.

<b>Summary</b>	The village is assessed as having an open character as it scored 'high' for two criteria, 'medium' for one and 'low' for one. The open character is assessed as making an important contribution to the openness of the Green Belt as the village scored 'high' for three criteria, 'medium' for one and low for one. Development in the village is linear to the north and south with a central cluster. Development is high density. The topography and low-lying vegetation allow for views into the Green Belt, in addition to the open areas in the village that appear continuous with the wider Green Belt.
<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Retain as washed over</b>

## 4.5 Summary

As set out in the proformas above it is recommended that all three villages are retained as washed over villages. It is therefore not necessary to undertake Stage 3 (definition of new inset boundaries).

Although the initial assessment of the Green Belt villages from the 2019 Green Belt Review noted that Chorley, Hints and Shenstone Wood End were compact in character and had a limited sense of openness, this was an initial high-level review only which recommended that further work should be undertaken to explore whether these settlements should be removed from the Green Belt. This detailed review has concluded that the villages should be retained as washed over villages.

## 5 Summary and Conclusion

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This study forms part of the Stage 2 Green Belt Review and follows on from the recommendations made in the 2019 Green Belt Review which were to progress a Green Belt Village Study focusing on Chorley, Hints and Shenstone Wood End.

This study provides an independent and objective assessment of the extent to which the three washed over villages meet the requirements of paragraph 140 NPPF.

Given that national policy and guidance does not provide a methodology for assessing Green Belt villages against paragraph 140 of the NPPF, a methodology was developed taking into account comparative studies, national policy, guidance and case law. The three-stage methodology utilises an element of professional judgement however it is deliberately detailed and prescriptive in order to ensure a consistent and justified approach.

Stage 1 of the methodology involved defining the village boundary for the purposes of the assessment. There was no existing village boundary defined for Chorley, Hints and Shenstone Wood End and therefore the limits of the built curtilage were used for the purposes of the assessment.

In order to assess the village against paragraph 140 a number of qualitative scoring criteria were developed. These criteria are shown on the assessment proformas. Stages 1 and 2 are set out in the completed assessment proformas for each village. A site visit of each village was undertaken in order to complete the proformas with multiple points within the villages visited by the assessor to enable them to form a balanced judgement. A recommendation was made as to whether the village should remain washed over or be inset within the Green Belt. It was recommended that all three village should remain washed over by the Green Belt. In light of this, Stage 3 has not been undertaken.

## **Appendix A**

### **Comparative Review of Green Belt Village Studies**

# A1 Comparative Review of Green Belt Village Studies

## A1.1 Guildford Borough Council

<p><b>Guildford Borough Council: Green Belt and Countryside Study (2014) Volume IV – Insetting of Villages and Defining New Green Belt boundaries within Guildford Council in accordance with the NPPF</b></p> <p>Undertaken by Pegasus Planning – The Guildford Borough Local Plan: Strategy and Sites (2015-2034) was adopted in April 2019.</p> <p>The Local Plan Inspector’s Report (March 2019) at paragraph 101 states: <i>“In previous plans, all the villages except for Ash Green were washed over by the Green Belt, but the NPPF states that only those villages whose open character makes an important contribution to the openness of the Green Belt should be included within it. The submitted Plan therefore insets 14 villages from the Green Belt based on the comprehensive and well-founded work of the Green Belt and Countryside Study. The villages concerned do not have an open character that contributes to the openness of the Green Belt, and the Plan establishes the new Green Belt boundary around them...Having regard to the NPPF, there are exceptional circumstances to inset these villages from the Green Belt.”</i></p>	
<p>What is the approach to reviewing Green Belt villages?</p>	<p>In Volume IV of the Guildford Borough Green Belt and Countryside Study, the Council assess the insetting of villages and the defining of new Green Belt boundaries using a three stage approach:</p> <p>Stage 1: Assessing the degree of openness within each village through analysis of village form, density and extent of existing developed land</p> <p>Stage 2: Assessing the village surrounds and locations of potential Green Belt defensible boundaries surrounding each village across Guildford Borough</p> <p>Stage 3: Assessing the suitability of each village for insetting within the Green Belt and defining new Green Belt boundaries</p>
<p>How is open character assessed?</p>	<p>Areas of high, medium and low development density were identified within the village area.</p> <p>Built development is the dominant characteristic in high development density areas, while visible open areas are the dominant characteristic for low development density areas.</p> <p>Highly developed settlements with little sense of openness within the built form were classed as making no important contribution to the Green Belt, and therefore would be appropriate to be excluded and form inset land.</p>

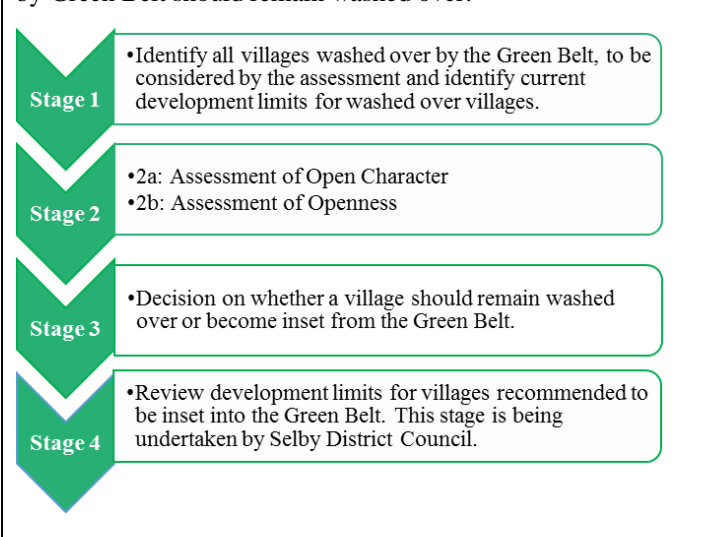


	<p>The areas were defined as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High Development Density – generally includes areas of flats, terrace, detached, semi-detached or singular buildings within densely distributed clusters with enclosed street frontages, small scale garden plots enclosed by fencelines, hedgerows and other buildings. Built development forms the dominant characteristic;</li> <li>• Medium Development Density – generally includes areas of detached, semidetached or singular buildings within closely distributed clusters within medium scale garden plots, small holdings, open spaces or small fields. Built development is the prevalent characteristic interspersed with visible open areas; and</li> <li>• Low Development Density – generally includes singular detached buildings that are sparsely distributed within large garden plots, country estates or open farmland. Open areas form the dominant characteristic interspersed with infrequent buildings.</li> </ul>
How is openness assessed?	<p>The locations of developed and open areas were mapped to determine their relation to the openness of the surrounding Green Belt. A judgement on their openness was based on professional discretion, using aerial imagery, base mapping and site surveys to support the decision.</p>
Does the assessment include a definition for openness?	<p>There is not a definition of openness however the study explains how ‘important contribution to openness’ is assessed, as follows:</p> <p><i>“13.16 NPPF paragraph 86 [replaced by paragraph 140] notes that if the open character of the village makes an important contribution to the openness of the Green Belt, the village should remain washed over by the Green Belt. It is recognised that the absence of built development and presence of trees can contribute to openness in Green Belt terms. In this instance however, paragraph 86 requires the contribution to the openness to be important i.e. significant or considerable in other words. For this to occur, a high degree of perception of this openness contribution is required i.e. it is readily apparent that the role that the village environment serves to contribute to openness of the wider Green Belt.</i></p> <p><i>13.17 Where a settlement is highly developed and has little sense of openness within the built form, there would be no important contribution to be secured and therefore it would be unnecessary to include such land and it would be appropriate for it to be excluded and form ‘inset’ land within the Green Belt. Additionally, if such land is then physically enclosed to a significant degree by topography and/or vegetation there would be little opportunity to observe the land in question, and little opportunity to perceive how such land could significantly</i></p>

	<p><i>contribute to openness in Green Belt terms, thus limiting its opportunity to contribute to the openness of the area to any significant degree or attach any sense of importance. In these circumstances i.e. a combination of a strong sense of development with little sense of openness, coupled with a well contained village (physically and/or visually), the land will be unable to make an important contribution either literally or perceptually, and therefore can be argued as unnecessary in designation terms and could justifiably be excluded from the Green Belt in accordance with the NPPF guidance. Such an arrangement would result in a village being inset in the Green Belt.”</i></p>
<p>How is the assessment scored?</p>	<p>Each village is subject to 3 criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the majority of the village exhibit an open character?</li> <li>• Do open areas within the village appear continuous with surrounding open land beyond the village – from within and/or outside of the village?</li> <li>• Does the majority of the village exhibit incomplete, indistinguishable boundaries that would not permit the provision of new Green Belt boundaries in accordance with the requirements of NPPF paragraph 85 (last point)?</li> </ul> <p>Each of these questions is given either a + or -. Villages that scored 2 +'s or more were classed as making an important contribution to the Green Belt and insetting was not considered appropriate.</p> <p>Villages that scored 2 -'s or more were classed as making no important contribution to the Green Belt and should be inset.</p> <p>Villages that exhibited a combination of + and – were either determined with justification or subject to further discussion with the adjoining authority.</p>
<p>How does the study determine what constitutes a village?</p>	<p>Villages are determined by settlement hierarchy, given a number between based on factors including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population</li> <li>• Defined settlement</li> <li>• Shops</li> <li>• Schools</li> <li>• Other community facilities</li> <li>• Public transport</li> <li>• Employment</li> </ul>

<p>How are new village boundaries defined?</p>	<p>The boundaries of each land parcel are clearly demarcated by visible landscape features such as woodlands, hedgerows, roads or railway infrastructure. This ensures that if a village is deemed suitable for development, it would be physically and visually contained, and not need altering at the end of the plan period.</p> <p>The detailed locations of defensible Green Belt boundaries were identified from site surveys, aerial imagery and detailed OS mapping between 1:5,000 and 1:12,000 scale. The detailed locations of woodlands, hedgerows, treebelts, highways and railway infrastructure surrounding each village were also mapped.</p> <p>Recommended boundaries do include treebelts, woodlands and hedgerows. Whilst they consist of plants, such features are clearly recognisable, and with regards permanence will often be in place as long as, if not longer than, much built development. Such features are therefore considered to adhere to the boundary definition requirements, as set out in paragraph 85 of the NPPF.</p>
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## A1.2 Selby District Council

<p><b>Selby District Council: Status of Villages in the Green Belt (November 2016)</b></p> <p>Undertaken by Arup – not been through Examination - PLAN Selby (the Sites and Policies Local Plan) was halted and the Council have since embarked on the preparation of a new comprehensive Local Plan.</p>	
<p>What is the approach to reviewing Green Belt villages?</p>	<p>The method assesses whether the villages currently washed over by Green Belt should remain washed over:</p> 
<p>How is open character assessed?</p>	<p>Open character is assessed throughout each village, as well as from the edges and centre of the settlement looking outwards and views looking towards the village, according to the following qualitative scoring:</p>

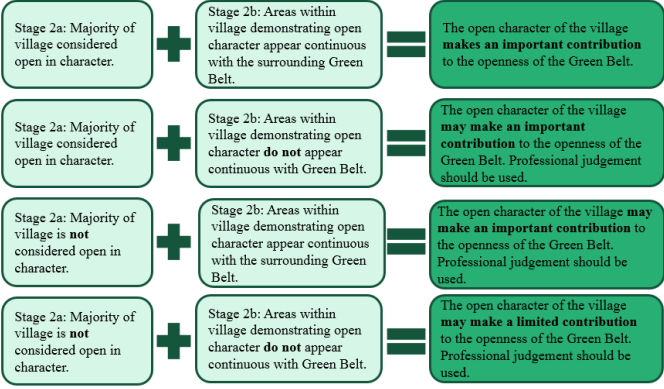
	<p><b>High:</b> The village has an open character with infrequent buildings, e.g. sparsely distributed detached dwellings set in large plots. There is inconsistent or dispersed built form. There are open areas throughout the village development limits contributing to a sense of openness. There are low levels of vegetation or low lying vegetation which allow open views. There is a lack of separation between the Green Belt and the village Development Limits.</p> <p><b>Medium:</b> The village has a built character with clustered detached or semi-detached properties set in medium plots. There may be areas of open space within the development limits, but some areas are enclosed due to built form, rising topography or dense vegetation. There are partially obscured views into and out of the village due to built form, topography or dense vegetation. There is some sense of separation between the Green Belt and the village Development Limits</p> <p><b>Low:</b> The village is dominated by built form with terraced properties with yards, closely spaced detached or semi-detached properties set in small plots. There is a lack of open space within the development limits and a perception of enclosure due to built form, dense vegetation or steep or rising topography. Views into and out of the village are predominantly restricted by built form, topography or dense vegetation. There is clear separation between the Green Belt and the village Development Limits.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="627 1120 1286 1601"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2">Criteria</th> <th colspan="3">Strength Scale</th> </tr> <tr> <th>High</th> <th>Medium</th> <th>Low</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Density of development</td> <td>Low density</td> <td>Medium density</td> <td>High density</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Spacing of built form</td> <td>Open</td> <td>Partially open</td> <td>Narrow</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Vegetation</td> <td>Low lying and/or sparse</td> <td>Partially dense</td> <td>Tall and/or dense</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Topography</td> <td>Flat allowing views</td> <td>Mixed allowing some views</td> <td>Steep and/or rising obstructing views</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Open Space</td> <td>Space forms prominent feature</td> <td>Some open space</td> <td>Limited open space</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td colspan="2">If the majority of the criteria scores a combination of high and medium, then the village is considered to be open in character.</td> <td>If the majority of the criteria score a combination of low and medium, then the village is considered to not have an open character.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Criteria	Strength Scale			High	Medium	Low	Density of development	Low density	Medium density	High density	Spacing of built form	Open	Partially open	Narrow	Vegetation	Low lying and/or sparse	Partially dense	Tall and/or dense	Topography	Flat allowing views	Mixed allowing some views	Steep and/or rising obstructing views	Open Space	Space forms prominent feature	Some open space	Limited open space		If the majority of the criteria scores a combination of high and medium, then the village is considered to be open in character.		If the majority of the criteria score a combination of low and medium, then the village is considered to not have an open character.
Criteria	Strength Scale																															
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<p>How is openness assessed?</p>	<p>Through a physical and/or perceptual connection between the openness of the village and the openness of the Green Belt. A perceptual connection is one that relates to the ability to interpret or become aware of something through the senses including experiencing views. This does not require direct access to open space and green infrastructure, but can be perceived.</p>																															

Criteria	Strength Scale		
	High	Medium	Low
Relationship between Green Belt and built form	Continuous perception	Continuous perception exists in parts	Broken perception
Views into and out of the village	Open	Partial views	Obstructed/Restricted
	If the majority of the criteria score a combination of high and medium, then the village is considered <b>continuous</b> with the Green Belt.		If the majority of the criteria score a combination of low and medium, then the village is considered <b>to not be</b> continuous with the Green Belt.

Where the majority of criteria score medium, professional judgement informed by site work has been used to identify whether the village is considered to have an open character. The criteria to be used in this methodology are defined as:

- Relationship with the surrounding Green Belt** which is concerned with the physical and/or perceptual connectivity of the openness of a village with the surrounding open countryside, for example a village surrounded by dense trees is not visually connected to the surrounding open countryside.
- Views into and out of the village** which relates to the visual permeability of a village, is heavily influenced by the factors which inform the assessment of openness. The presence of open views into and out of a village contribute to the physical and/or perceived continuation of the open character of the Green Belt into the village.

Does the assessment include a definition for openness?	In the Selby Stage 1 Green Belt Study, openness is defined as the ‘extent to which Green Belt land could be considered open from an absence of built form and urbanising influences, rather than from a landscape character sense’.
How is the assessment scored?	<p>Qualitative – The degree of open character and degree of openness are qualitatively assessed on a scale of High, Medium and Low as shown above.</p> <p>The overall scoring in determining whether a village should be inset or washed over firstly defined ‘important contribution’ in terms of the qualitative scoring system. For the open character of a village to make an important contribution to the openness of the Green Belt a high or medium-high degree of open character was required based on the criteria assessed in Stage 2.</p> <p>For a village to exhibit a limited contribution, a low or low-medium degree of open character was required based on these criteria. If the village exhibits a limited contribution to the openness of the Green Belt then it would be appropriate to inset the village within the Green Belt. Villages that are recommended to be inset will then be considered in Stage 4 to determine whether the <i>‘character of the village needs to be</i></p>

	<p><i>protected for other reasons</i>’ such as by a conservation area or planning policy.</p> <p>Combining the outcomes from Stages 2a and 2b determines whether the village makes an important contribution or may make an important contribution to the openness of the Green Belt.</p> 
<p>How does the study determine what constitutes a village?</p>	<p>Villages are defined by settlement hierarchy as of the Selby Core Strategy 2013.</p> <p>Settlements are ranking in the following order:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principal Town</li> <li>• Local Service Centres</li> <li>• Designated Service Villages</li> <li>• Secondary Villages with defined Development Limits</li> </ul> <p>All villages investigated within this study are identified as Secondary Villages with defined Development Limits. The Core Strategy emphasises that growth in these areas would be inappropriate with the exception of some housing development within Development Limits such as conversions or replacement dwellings.</p>
<p>How are new village boundaries defined?</p>	<p>Boundaries are defined by their durability. Durable features are both natural and manmade, including rivers, protected woodland, motorways or existing developments. Less durable features include field, tree lines, or unmade roads. Therefore, new village boundaries are defined along durable borders which preserve the openness of the Green Belt without the need to be altered at the end of the plan period.</p>

### A1.3 Vale of White Horse District Council

**Vale of White Horse District Council: Green Belt Review Phase 1&2 (2014)**

<p>Undertaken by Kirkham Landscape Planning Ltd / Terra Firma Consultancy – Local Plan Part 1 adopted in December 2016 following Examination in 2015-16.</p> <p>The Local Plan Inspector did not specifically comment on the Green Belt Village assessment methodology however the village study had recommended that the washed over village of Farmoor should be inset from the Green Belt. The Inspector stated at paragraph 95 of the Inspectors Report (November 2016): <i>‘I have seen no specific evidence to justify this particular change. Moreover, it is unclear to me why Farmoor should be an “inset” village when other smaller villages (as defined by policy CP3), including Dry Sanford, Shippon, South Hinksey, Sunningwell and Wytham would remain “washed-over” by the Green Belt. If and when a subsequent review of the Green Belt takes place it would make sense to consider, as part of this, the appropriateness of each of these villages as being either “inset” or “washed-over” by the Green Belt. However, at the current time I conclude that the exceptional circumstances necessary to remove Farmoor from the Green Belt do not exist.’</i></p>	
<p>What is the approach to reviewing Green Belt villages?</p>	<p>The Green Belt Village Assessment forms a part of the wider Green Belt Assessment. Section 12 of the document contains the assessment which consists of a simple table of the washed over villages being assessed against paragraph 86 according to open character and contribution to openness, from which a recommendation is made. There does not appear to be a clearly defined methodology for the assessment against paragraph 86 [now paragraph 140].</p> <p>Stage 1: subdivide green belt into land parcels.</p> <p>Stage 2: assessment of edge of settlement within land parcels against five green belt purposes and recommendations.</p> <p>Stage 3: assessment of whole land parcels against five green belt purposes and recommendations.</p> <p>Stage 4: assessment of additional land for inclusion in an extension to the green belt and recommendations.</p> <p>Stage 5: assessment of small villages within the green belt and their potential for inclusion as inset settlements within the green belt and recommendations.</p>
<p>How is open character assessed?</p>	<p>There does not appear to be any set criteria which has been applied. Example of the description as follows ‘Small linear rural hamlet broken up by tree lines, very small fields and large gardens’.</p>
<p>How is openness assessed?</p>	<p>There does not appear to be any clear criteria which are to be used. The assessment is related to the landscape which the village forms part of, for example: ‘Part of the vale landscape south of Wootton.’</p>
<p>Does the assessment include a definition for openness?</p>	<p>There is no definition for openness as part of the village assessment.</p>

How is the assessment scored?	There is no scoring system used. It is unclear how the descriptions in the open character and openness columns relate to the recommendation.
How does the study determine what constitutes a village?	There is no definition for villages, or what constitutes a village, but under the Core Strategy villages are ranked according to settlement hierarchy.
How are new village boundaries defined?	Study notes that precise boundaries will need to be assessed however does not set out how this will be done.

## A1.4 Runnymede Borough Council

### **Runnymede Borough Council: Green Belt Village Review Stage 1 and 2 Update (January 2018)**

(The Stage 1 Report consists of the assessment of Green Belt villages whilst the Stage 2 Report focused on where a new detailed village/Green Belt boundary should be placed around the village of Thorpe which was proposed to be excluded from the Green Belt.)

Undertaken by Runnymede Council – The Runnymede 2030 Local Plan was adopted in July 2020.

The Local Plan Inspector’s Report (May 2020) at paragraph 49 in considering whether exceptional circumstances for alterations to the Green Belt boundary exist, the Inspector comments:

*“49. Thirdly, the detailed boundary of the Green Belt was established in 1986. Since then, development has rendered some parts of the boundary illogical or indefensible, and discrepancies have come to light that need to be corrected. Furthermore, national planning policy on villages that are ‘washed over’ by the Green Belt has altered since 1986, and it is necessary to review whether the policy framework for the borough’s Green Belt villages remains sound.”*

She then goes on to consider the robustness of the Green Belt village study and states the following:

*“68. I consider the robustness of the Green Belt review and the justification for the proposed release of land in more detail in Issues 3 and 4 below in relation to the Plan’s site allocations. In summary, I have concluded that the review was comprehensive, systematic and based on a robust, consistently applied methodology that properly reflected local circumstances and the unique characteristics of the borough in assessing how the Green Belt serves the purposes laid down in national planning policy.*

*69. The review responds to the Council’s strategy to only consider sites for release from the Green Belt that can be shown to perform most weakly against the purposes of including land within it. This is a justified approach which is consistent with national planning policy by ensuring that maximum protection is given to the Green Belt. And in this and all other respects, I have concluded that the approach to the Green Belt review and the basis on which the Council selected the Plan’s spatial strategy accords with the Calverton judgement.”*



<p>At Issue 4 the Inspector considered whether exceptional circumstances existed to justify the proposed exclusion of Thorpe Village from the Green Belt. Her conclusions are set out at paragraph 204-207. She states:</p> <p><i>“205. On the balance of the evidence about the limited contribution that the village makes to the physical and visual openness of the Green Belt, it is justified and consistent with national planning policy to exclude Thorpe Village from the Green Belt. The Plan’s definition of the new Green Belt boundary around village, as shown on the policies map, has been informed by Stage 2 of the Green Belt Villages Review and I am satisfied that it is justified, positively prepared, effective and consistent with NPPF, including that exceptional circumstances exist for the alteration of the Green Belt boundary.”</i></p>	
<p>What is the approach to reviewing Green Belt villages?</p>	<p>Stage 1 - Identify developed areas in Runnymede which are currently ‘washed over’ by (included within) the Green Belt and which could be considered ‘villages’ or ‘settlements which function as a village’.</p> <p>Stage 2 – If an area is considered for review, identify a boundary around the village for the purposes of a working assessment.</p> <p>Stage 3 - Consider whether the village has an open character.</p> <p>Stage 4 - Consider the relationship that the village has with the openness of the surrounding Green Belt.</p> <p>Stage 5 – Make a decision as to whether a village should be ‘washed over’ by the Green Belt or if it should be excluded;</p> <p>Stage 6 - If a decision has been made to exclude a village (or parts of), consider detailed village boundaries.</p>
<p>How is open character assessed?</p>	<p>A detailed consideration of a village’s character will include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Density – Consider the density of built/residential development as a whole and how this differs (or not) across the village area;</li> <li>• Scale &amp; Form - Consider different development forms and how this changes (or not) across the village area taking into account:</li> <li>• Type of dwelling – flatted, terraced, semi-detached, detached</li> <li>• Plot size – small, medium, large</li> <li>• Building heights – one, two or more storeys in height</li> <li>• Enclosures or barriers - natural or man-made</li> <li>• Extent of open space or gaps in frontages – Are there any open areas within the village boundary or gaps in frontages? Are views restricted or if gaps in frontages are evident are views through obscured and by what?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Topography – flat, undulating, sloped, rolling. Significant stands of trees/hedgerows.</li> </ul> <p>The degree of open character exhibited and whether this is low, medium or high should taken into account the above factors. The criteria was developed using comparative studies as a guide. The descriptions for low, medium and high are as follows:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="627 517 1291 1070"> <thead> <tr> <th>Degree of Open Character</th> <th>Definition</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Low</td> <td>Area dominated by built form with closely spaced two story or higher flats, terraces or semi-detached/detached properties set in modest/small plots in uniform patterns or blocks. Enclosures predominantly man-made. Open areas are few or incidental with limited gaps in frontages restricting or partially restricting short views through. Any longer views through gaps are obscured or partially obscured predominantly by built development. Limited stands of trees/copses or non-landscaped vegetation.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Medium</td> <td>Area has a built character with clusters of detached/semi-detached single/two storey dwellings set in modest plots. Modest gaps in frontages with largely unrestricted short views through. Longer views partially obscured by built development or obscured/partially obscured by vegetation. Enclosures either natural or man-made. Modest amount of open areas within the village boundary.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>High</td> <td>Buildings are dispersed within the village boundary and are predominantly detached single/two storey set in large plots. Extensive gaps between development with short views predominantly unrestricted and long views unobscured or partially obscured by vegetation. Enclosures are either natural or if man made are low lying or obscured by vegetation. Open areas present throughout the village boundary.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Degree of Open Character	Definition	Low	Area dominated by built form with closely spaced two story or higher flats, terraces or semi-detached/detached properties set in modest/small plots in uniform patterns or blocks. Enclosures predominantly man-made. Open areas are few or incidental with limited gaps in frontages restricting or partially restricting short views through. Any longer views through gaps are obscured or partially obscured predominantly by built development. Limited stands of trees/copses or non-landscaped vegetation.	Medium	Area has a built character with clusters of detached/semi-detached single/two storey dwellings set in modest plots. Modest gaps in frontages with largely unrestricted short views through. Longer views partially obscured by built development or obscured/partially obscured by vegetation. Enclosures either natural or man-made. Modest amount of open areas within the village boundary.	High	Buildings are dispersed within the village boundary and are predominantly detached single/two storey set in large plots. Extensive gaps between development with short views predominantly unrestricted and long views unobscured or partially obscured by vegetation. Enclosures are either natural or if man made are low lying or obscured by vegetation. Open areas present throughout the village boundary.
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<p>How is openness assessed?</p>	<p>The relationship the village has with the openness of the surrounding Green Belt is based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Views into and out of the village along its periphery and whether views in/out are restricted and/or obscured and if so, whether by natural, man-made or topographical features.</li> <li>• Relationship between open or private amenity areas on the periphery of the village and the surrounding Green Belt and how these interact with any gap to an adjacent settlement or development.</li> </ul> <p>Villages were qualitatively categorised based on the degree of openness within the surrounding green belt into high, medium, and low categories:</p>								

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<p>Does the assessment include a definition for openness?</p>	<p>The assessment states:</p> <p><i>“In terms of ‘openness’, the courts have held that it is epitomised by land that is not built upon and can include factors relevant to the visual impact on openness.”</i> The following cases are referenced: Heath &amp; Hampstead Society v London Borough of Camden [2007] EWHC 977 (Admin) &amp; Turner vs East Dorset Council [2015] EWHC 2788 (Admin).</p> <p>In assessing the openness of the village of Thorpe, the review considers: density, open space, spacing, views, vegetation and topography.</p>								
<p>How is the assessment scored?</p>	<p>Qualitative- the assessment is scored by High, Medium, or Low categories (these are defined separately according to the assessment of open character and separately for the assessment of openness – as above)</p> <p>In terms of coming to an overall judgement, Stage 5 explains the approach:</p> <p><i>“3.23 A decision will be made as to whether a village should be ‘washed over’ by the Green Belt or if it should be excluded based on the results from stages 3 and 4. It is likely that different areas of a village will exhibit different density and forms of development rather than exhibit a uniform pattern. Similarly views into or out of a village from different locations will exhibit different levels of restriction and boundaries are likely to be distinct/indistinct in different areas. Where this is the case, a view will be taken as to how different areas combine to produce an overall degree of open character or openness (or not).</i></p> <p><i>3.24 As such, if the majority of the village is considered to have a high degree of open character and its impact on the openness of the Green Belt is high then the village should be ‘washed over’.</i></p>								

	<p><i>3.25 If the majority of the village exhibits a low open character with a low impact on the openness of the surrounding Green Belt, the village should be excluded from the Green Belt.</i></p> <p><i>3.26 However there will be occasions which are less clear cut, for instance, a village is open in character but does not make a contribution to the openness of the Green Belt or is not open in character but does make a contribution. There will also be occasions where villages show a degree of both open/closed characteristics and a degree of contribution to the openness of the Green Belt, but not uniformly across the whole village area. In these instances it will be necessary to form a view as to whether the village should be ‘washed over’ or excluded, accepting that some areas may still exhibit a much higher or lower degree of open character or contribution to openness. If it is considered that a village should be excluded then consideration could be given to whether areas of a village should remain ‘washed over’ and others excluded.”</i></p> <p>Paragraph 4.14-4.20 onwards explains how professional judgement was applied in order to decide whether the village should be washed over or inset. Given that the larger area of the village demonstrated a lower degree of open character or lower contribution to openness it was concluded that the village should be excluded from the Green Belt.</p> <p>It is noted that both aspects of paragraph 140 [para 86 previously] were considered for ‘completeness’. Paragraph 4.17 states: <i>“The test in paragraph 86 of the NPPF is the contribution the open character of a village makes to the openness of the Green Belt. This implies that if a village does not have an open character then it does not make a contribution to the openness of the Green Belt and by default the second test is not required. Although it is considered that the larger area of the village demonstrates a lower degree of open character, there are still open aspects and for completeness the contribution the village makes to the openness of the Green Belt should be considered.”</i></p>
<p>How does the study determine what constitutes a village?</p>	<p>The document notes that according to the Oxford English Dictionary, a village is defined as <i>‘a group of houses and associated buildings, larger than a hamlet and smaller than a town, situated in a rural area’</i>.</p> <p>The National Geographic website defines a village as <i>‘A village is a small settlement usually found in a rural setting. It is generally larger than a hamlet, but smaller than a town. Some geographers specifically define a village as having between 500 and 2,500 inhabitants’</i>.</p> <p>The definition of a hamlet is <i>‘A small settlement, generally one smaller than a village and strictly (in Britain) one without a Church’</i>.</p>

<p>How are new village boundaries defined?</p>	<p>The Stage 2 Update Report (January 2018) considers the detailed boundaries for the village of Thorpe which is proposed to be excluded from the Green Belt. This previously had a boundary as part of saved Policy GB2 of the Runnymede Local Plan and the study notes this may need to be refined.</p> <p>The Stage 2 Report sets out the process for defining boundaries as follows:</p> <p>Stage 1 – Desktop study - The village of Thorpe has been split into 19 separate ‘map tiles’ based on OS base mapping at a scale of 1:1000 to take a finer detailed view of where Green Belt boundaries might be defined. Each map tile was examined for features which could form a defensible boundary aided by 2013 (or older if appropriate) aerial photography.</p> <p>Stage 2 – Site visits - Where base maps or aerial photography did not reveal clear features or where boundaries were indistinct, site visits were undertaken to determine/clarify where boundaries should be defined.</p> <p>Stage 3 – Map defined boundary with justification for selection - For each map tile of the village the proposed boundary has been plotted onto the base map. A commentary has been provided in a separate appendix to explain the proposed boundary position based on a number of criteria developed from relevant paragraphs of the NPPF and guidance from the Planning Advisory Service.</p> <p>The criteria which was applied is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will the boundary maintain the essential open characteristic of the Green Belt or is it unnecessary to keep land permanently open? Would it be considered ‘infill’ with land partially enclosed by development? (NPPF paragraph 79 &amp; 85 bullet 2, PAS guidance bullet 1).</li> <li>• Will the boundary check unrestricted sprawl, encroachment into the countryside and would development be well contained by the landscape? (NPPF paragraph 80 bullets 1 &amp; 3, PAS guidance bullet 2)</li> <li>• Will the boundary prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another or, in reality would it harm the qualities which contribute to the distinct identity of separate settlements? (NPPF paragraph 80 bullet 2, PAS guidance bullet 3)</li> <li>• Is the boundary based on permanent physical features or if not what other features have been used and what is their degree of permanence? Does this create a strong distinction between ‘town’ and ‘country’ (NPPF paragraph 85 bullet 6, PAS guidance bullet 4)</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Will the boundary be durable and defensible now and beyond the Local Plan period (NPPF paragraph 83)?</li></ul> <p>The assessment does not attach greater weight to any of the above criteria, rather they are considered in the round. There will be occasions where some criteria are met but others are not or where criteria may be partially met. In these instances a judgement will be made as to where the boundary should lie which may also give rise to a number of options for consideration. Promoting sustainable patterns of development will also need to be considered.</p>
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## **Appendix B**

Green Belt Village Assessment  
Proforma - BLANK

# B1 Green Belt Village Assessment Proforma - BLANK

<b>NAME OF VILLAGE</b>					
INSERT MAP					
<b>Context – 2019 Green Belt Review</b>					
Village assessment findings from 2019 Green Belt Review.		<i>Information from the ‘Summary of Reasons’ column in Table 4.1 of the 2019 Green Belt Review.</i>			
Was the village considered as part of the parcel or broad area assessment?		<i>Identify any relevant broad area or parcel assessments relating to the village from the 2019 Green Belt Review.</i>			
<b>Village Boundary</b>					
Area to be assessed		<i>What constitutes the village for the purposes of the assessment? Justification</i>			
<b>Assessment against Paragraph 140 NPPF</b>					
<b>Assessment of ‘open character’ of the village</b>					
Criteria		Assessment Scale (Degree of open character)			Conclusion and Justification
		High	Medium	Low	
General Pattern of Existing Development and Density		<i>Sparsely distributed or dispersed, low density</i>	<i>Linear or small clusters across the village, medium density</i>	<i>Clustered, high density</i>	<i>Explanation of category taking into account differences across the village</i>
Scale and Form	Types of dwelling	<i>Detached /semi-detached properties with large gardens or set within large grounds</i>	<i>Semi-detached / terraced properties with medium sized gardens. Multiple rows of properties.</i>	<i>Flatted / terraced properties with limited or no garden space</i>	
	Building heights	<i>1-2 storeys</i>	<i>2-3 storeys</i>	<i>3+ storeys</i>	
	Extent of gaps / open spaces	<i>Gaps in frontages and/or areas of open space form</i>	<i>Some gaps in frontages and/or some areas of open space within</i>	<i>Limited gaps in frontages and/or limited open space within the</i>	



		prominent features within the village boundary and/or the Green Belt is closely linked across the village	the village boundary and/or the Green Belt is linked in parts across the village	village boundary and/or the Green Belt is not linked across the village	
Does the village have an open character?		<i>If the majority of the criteria score either high/medium then the village is considered to have an open character</i>		<i>If the majority of the criteria score low then the village is considered to not have an open character.</i>	
<b>Relationship of the village with the 'openness' of the Green Belt</b>					
Criteria	Assessment Scale (Level of contribution)			Conclusion and Justification	
	High	Medium	Low		
Views into and out of village from surrounding Green Belt					
Perceived definition of the village (visual perception)		<i>Village boundary is undefined</i>	<i>Part of village boundary is clearly defined but other parts unclear</i>	<i>Majority of village boundary is clearly defined</i>	<i>Explanation of category taking into account differences across the village</i>
Built form <sup>14</sup>		<i>Built form is sparse and/or building/frontages contain gaps allowing for views</i>	<i>Views are partially restricted by built form in places although gaps in building/frontages allow for views in places</i>	<i>Views are largely restricted by built form and building/frontages are solid without gaps</i>	
Topography <sup>15</sup>		<i>Flat or gently rising topography allowing / enabling views</i>	<i>Mixed topography allowing some views</i>	<i>Steep / big changes in topography obstructing views</i>	
Vegetation <sup>16</sup>		<i>Low lying and/or sparse</i>	<i>Partially dense allowing for</i>	<i>Tall and/or dense obstructing views</i>	

<sup>14</sup> This refers to any form of built development including residential properties, employment uses, warehouses, schools, and sports facilities.

<sup>15</sup> This refers to the configuration of the natural and artificial physical features which make up the surface of the land.

<sup>16</sup> This refers to the assemblage of plants, trees or shrubs.

	<i>allowing views</i>	<i>views in places</i>		
Do open areas <sup>17</sup> within the village appear continuous with the surrounding Green Belt	<i>Open areas continue into surrounding Green Belt</i>	<i>Few open areas continue into the surrounding Green Belt</i>	<i>No continuance of open areas into surrounding Green Belt</i>	
Does the open character of the village make an important contribution to the openness of the Green Belt	<i>If the majority of the criteria score either high/medium then the village is considered to make an important contribution</i>	<i>If the majority of the criteria score low then the village is considered to not make an important contribution</i>		
<b>Summary and Recommendations</b>				
<b>Summary</b>	<i>Summary of the above</i>			
<b>Recommendation</b>	<i>Retain as washed over / Village should be considered for exclusion (insetting) from the Green Belt</i>			

<sup>17</sup> This refers to gardens, village greens, parks, roadside verges and embankments, and other incidental spaces within the village.