

DRAFT Technical note:

Staffordshire Moorlands Green Belt Review – Additional Site Appraisals, April 2017

1. Requirements

This technical note accompanies the Green Belt Review Study published in November 2015. Staffordshire Moorlands Council is in the process of considering the results of its recent 'Preferred Options Sites and Boundaries' consultation. A number of additional sites have emerged which require appraisal against Green Belt purposes, alongside other elements of the evidence base. These are:

- ▶ Underwood Farm, Mow Lane, Gillow Heath, Biddulph
- ▶ Marsh Lane Nursery, off Well Lane, Gillow Heath, Biddulph
- ▶ Woodside Farm, Wharf Road, Biddulph
- ▶ Land at Newpool Road/Towerhill Road, Biddulph
- ▶ Kingsley Youth Centre, Holt Lane, Kingsley

2. Approach to the Review

1.1 Site Evaluation

The appraisal of sites used the template used for the District-wide Green Belt Review¹, as set out in Table 2.1. This considers the main purposes of Green Belt designation (excluding the urban regeneration purpose which is a strategic function), namely:

- ▶ To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.
- ▶ To prevent neighbouring towns from merging.
- ▶ To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
- ▶ To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.

The sites are assigned a straightforward colour-coded judgement of the degree of contribution of the site to each Green Belt purpose and an overall evaluation:

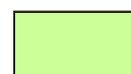
Parcel/site makes a significant contribution to Green Belt purposes and a boundary review is unlikely to be considered appropriate, although release (either in whole or part) could be considered where strong material planning considerations exist to justify this.



Parcel/site makes a contribution to Green Belt purposes indicating that the purposes are partially being fulfilled and that the boundary could be revised in light of other planning considerations.



Parcel/site makes a limited contribution overall to Green Belt purposes indicating that these areas might be considered for Green Belt release, subject to other planning considerations.



¹ Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (2015) Green Belt Review: Part 2 Settlement and Site Appraisal

For context, the strategic Green Belt Review was used, as well as inspection of OS maps, aerial photography and a site visit. An overall appraisal made on impact on the Green Belt and a recommendation for the potential for boundary revision is given.

Table 2.1 Green Belt Appraisal Criteria

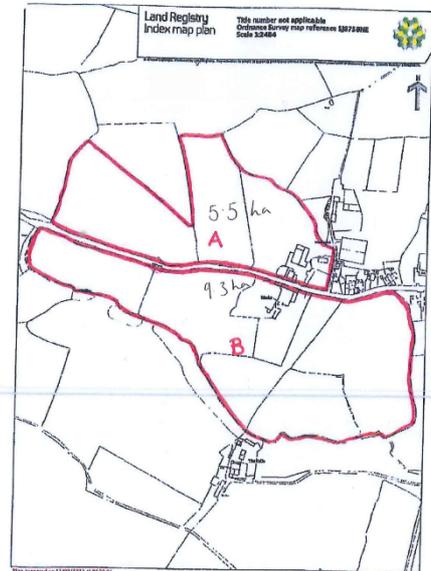
Green Belt Purpose/ NPPF topic	Appraisal Criteria
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would potential development represent an outward extension of the urban area, result in a physical connection between urban areas, or lead to the danger of a subsequent coalescence between such settlements? • If released from Green Belt could enduring long-term settlement boundaries be established? • Does the parcel sensibly round-off an existing built-up area to help create good built form?
To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would potential development in the parcel appear to result in the merging of towns or compromise the separation of towns physically? • Would potential development of the parcel be a significant step leading towards coalescence of two settlements?
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there clear strong and robust boundaries to contain development and prevent encroachment in the long term?
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	What is the proximity and degree of intervisibility with the historic core (such as a Conservation Area) of an historic town (proximate/good, partial, no connection), and would development have an impact on the setting of the town/settlement in question?
Overall Assessment of Contribution to Green Belt Purposes	In light of the assessment of individual purposes, what is the overall contribution of the parcel to the Green Belt, both individually and in a wider context?
Recommendation for Green Belt boundary revision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the Green Belt boundary have long term permanence (defensible and durable) so that it is capable of enduring beyond the plan period? • Are the current boundaries logical? • Are there opportunities for the re-definition or 'tidying-up' of the boundary?

2. Site-by-Site Appraisal

The following sections present the appraisal of the sites.

2.1 Land at Underwood Farm, Mow Lane, Gillow Heath, Biddulph

On rising land to the west of Biddulph, parcel A to the north is bounded by Mow Lane and field boundaries of variable strength, whilst parcel B to the south is bounded by Mow Lane and a brook and associated woodland belt. Land use is pasture and some built development to the east on both sides of Mow Lane.



Green Belt Purpose	Appraisal
Check Sprawl	Significant Contribution – development would constitute sprawl from the built edge of Biddulph into open countryside. Existing development along Mow Lane (to the west of Wedgewood Lane) is of a modest scale and further development to the west would not constitute a rounding-off of Gillow Heath in this location. There are no substantive boundaries to contain development over the longer term, particularly to the north of Mow Lane.
Maintain Separation	Limited Contribution – the Green Belt does not perform a distinctive separation function in this location.
Prevent Encroachment	Contribution – the site is part of the open countryside to the west of Biddulph which has a strong sense of openness. Development in this location and of the proposed configuration would constitute encroachment into open countryside beyond the built edge of Gillow Heath/Biddulph.
Preserve Setting	Contribution - the land forms the westerly backdrop to Biddulph, rising to the distinctive ridge-line of Mow Cop. Development would create a new visual context for the town in this location, particularly when viewed from Mow Lane ascending the slope to Mow Cop.
Overall impact of development on Green Belt purposes and openness	Development would have a damaging effect on the openness of the Green Belt in this location, and more widely, and would be set apart from the existing built edge of Biddulph at Wedgewood Lane (notwithstanding some properties along Mow Lane). The impression of change is most significant from Mow Lane looking eastwards where the built edge of Biddulph can be seen and this would be brought into open countryside.
Recommendation for Green Belt boundary revision	Not recommended for release. Development would be a clear intrusion into open countryside, without substantial boundaries with which it could be contained. A new built edge to Gillow Heath (and Biddulph) would be created which would be of a linear character and not constitute a logical rounding-off of the settlement.

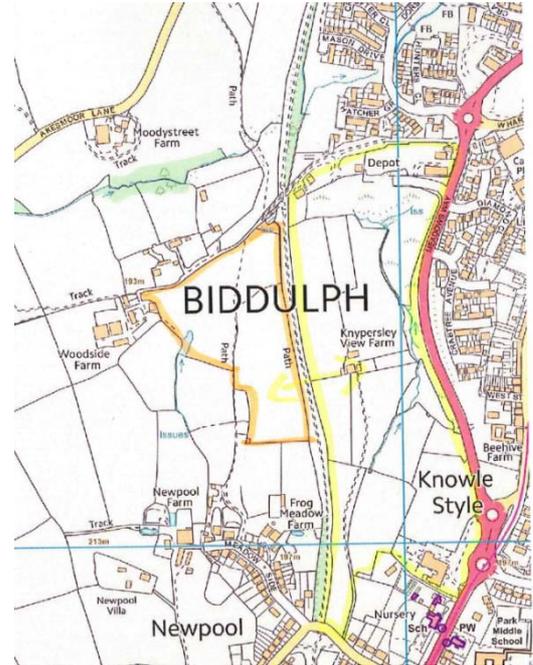
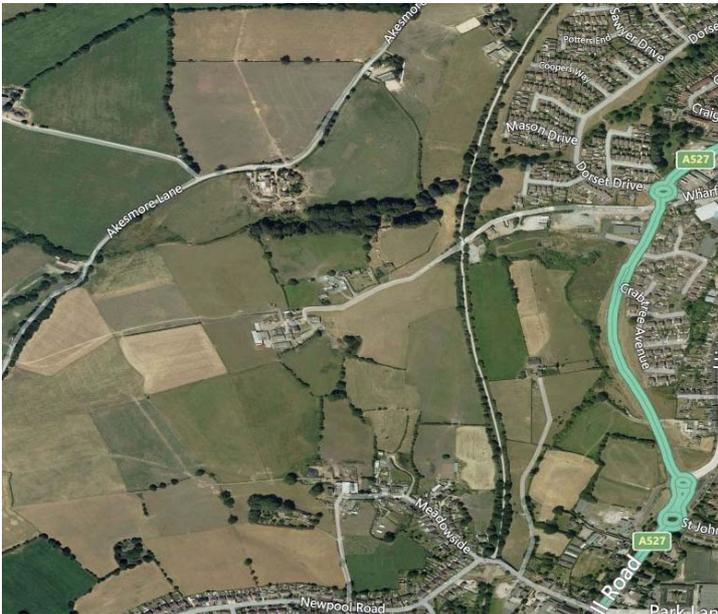
2.2 Marsh Lane Nursery, off Well Lane, Gillow Heath, Biddulph



Land to the north of Well Lane, comprising residential properties and a plant nursery, defined by Well Lane, unnamed farm tracks to the north east and north west, and a hedgerow to the south west. The land is bounded by a Public Right of Way.

Green Belt Purpose	Appraisal
Check Sprawl	Limited Contribution – the Green Belt in this location contains the built edge of Biddulph at Gillow Heath, currently east of Well Lane. Development would breach this boundary, although be contained by recognisable boundaries.
Maintain Separation	Contribution – strategically, this is part of land separating Biddulph and Congleton, although the role is not significant in this location.
Prevent Encroachment	Limited Contribution – the wider countryside to the north west of Biddulph has a strong sense of openness which is protected from incremental change as a result of ad hoc development. This site is well-bounded with some built development and development would not constitute encroachment.
Preserve Setting	Limited Contribution – the Green Belt forms part of the setting of Biddulph, although there is no intervisibility with the town centre.
Overall impact of development on Green Belt purposes and openness	The land makes a contribution to four Green Belt purposes. Development on this site would replace existing buildings and structures which are of a more or less permanent nature. The overall built footprint of Biddulph/Gillow Heath in this location would not be significantly extended into open countryside, although development would breach the current development limit broadly defined by Well Lane. The openness of the Green Belt is compromised by existing development and a relatively strong degree of enclosure of the land.
Recommendation for Green Belt boundary revision	Consider for release under Exceptional Circumstances. Notwithstanding the contribution of the land to the Green Belt in this locality, development would not cause significant harm to the openness of the Green Belt, reflecting the bounded nature of the site and the character of existing built form, combining both residential properties and the garden nursery. Of the two options, the smaller would be less damaging, being more closely related to the current built edge at Well Lane and limiting the interface with open countryside to the north west. However, there is no obvious significant feature between the two options which would serve as a reasonable long term boundary.

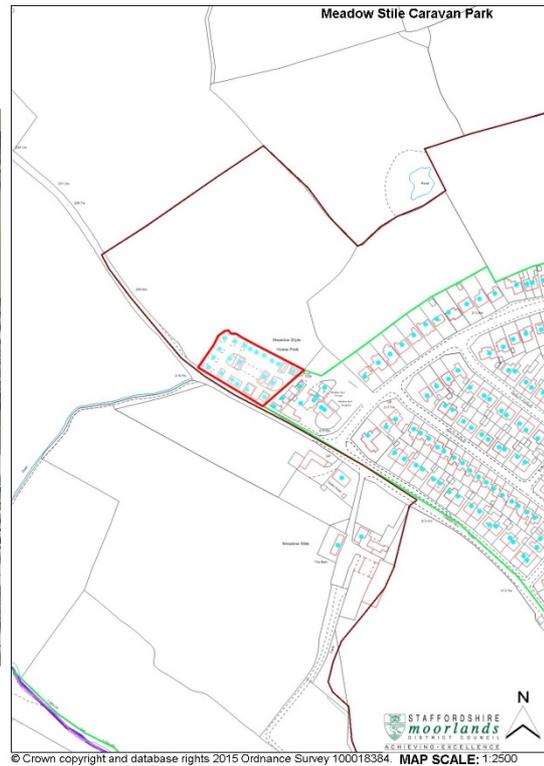
2.3 Land at Woodside Farm, Wharf Road, Biddulph



Land between a disused railway line (now a footpath/cycletrack) and Woodside Farm. The site is defined to the north by the extension of Wharf Road to Woodside Farm, the east by the disused railway corridor and to the south west by hedgerows of varying robustness. The land is traversed by a Public Right of Way.

Green Belt Purpose	Appraisal
Check Sprawl	Contribution – the Green Belt helps to contain the westerly extension of Biddulph beyond the disused railway corridor. However, development at Meadowside to the south has created an intrusion of built development into this part of the Green Belt.
Maintain Separation	Limited Contribution – the Green Belt in this location has no clear role in this regard, being part of open countryside towards Mow Cop.
Prevent Encroachment	Contribution – the Green Belt helps to prevent ad hoc and incremental erosion of the Green Belt in this location.
Preserve Setting	Contribution – the land forms part of the wider western setting of Biddulph which becomes more significant on the rising land towards Akemoor Lane and Mow Cop.
Overall impact of development on Green Belt purposes and openness	Development would compromise the openness of the Green Belt in this location by virtue of extending the built edge of Biddulph into the wider countryside to the west of the town. However, development at Newpool (Meadowside) and Brown Lees more generally, has set a precedent, meaning that damage to Green Belt function overall is unlikely to be significant.
Recommendation for Green Belt boundary revision	Consider for release under Exceptional Circumstances. Development could be considered without significant damage to the wider Green Belt, although there would be an impact on openness given the location of the land. The site largely sits within low-lying land and is clearly bounded to the north and to the east. The south western boundary is problematic, however, comprising various insubstantial hedgerows as well as being arranged by field pattern and not a clear feature which would constitute a logical and permanent external boundary. This would constitute a new settlement edge which would have to be created, without which there would be a danger of sprawl into open countryside over the longer term.

2.4 Land at Newpool Road/Towerhill Road, Biddulph



Currently in use as a mobile home park, the land forms the extreme south west corner of the Green Belt defined by Towerhill Road and Newpool Road. The land is bounded by a hedgerow to the north and west.

Green Belt Purpose	Appraisal
Check Sprawl	Contribution – the land forms part of the Green Belt to the west of Biddulph containing built development on the western edge of Biddulph.
Maintain Separation	Limited Contribution – the land performs no separation function either strategically or locally.
Prevent Encroachment	Limited Contribution – the land forms part of the wider Green Belt which protects open countryside to the north of Biddulph from intrusion, although the size and degree of enclosure of the site means that it makes a limited contribution to this purpose in this location.
Preserve Setting	Limited Contribution – the size and degree of enclosure of the site mean that there is no direct role in forming part of the westerly context for Biddulph.
Overall impact of development on Green Belt purposes and openness	Whilst the site is part of the wider Green Belt in this location, the size, bounded character and current developed footprint mean that the site makes a very limited contribution to fulfilling Green Belt purposes. The openness of the Green Belt in this location would not be compromised.
Recommendation for Green Belt boundary revision	Consider for release under Exceptional Circumstances, reflecting no change in the built footprint of development in this location. The site is clearly bounded by the current extent of development, with no risk of sprawl or encroachment into the wider open countryside to the north, and is attached to development at Newpool Road.

2.5 Kingsley Youth Centre, Holt Lane, Kingsley



Currently a disused youth centre with adjacent sports pitches (also disused), the land forms part of the eastern edge of the village, is on gently rising land and is bounded by dense vegetation along Holt Lane, but weaker hedgerows to the north and east. The land is traversed and bounded by Public Rights of Way.

Green Belt Purpose	Appraisal
Check Sprawl	Limited Contribution – Kingsley is a relatively small settlement and development of this size would not constitute sprawl.
Maintain Separation	Contribution – locally the Green Belt helps to separate the settlements of Kingsley and Kingsley Holt.
Prevent Encroachment	Contribution – the land is part of wider open land to the east and notwithstanding the presence of some built form has an open aspect. The boundary to the east is weak, being a hedgerow in poor condition established as part of the creation of sports pitch from adjacent pasture land. There is no clear boundary feature to the north with views across open land.
Preserve Setting	Contribution – locally, the land is part of the eastern gateway into the village along Holt Lane and as such provides an open countryside context.
Overall impact of development on Green Belt purposes and openness	The land contributes to Green Belt purposes through preventing development in the open countryside. Development would impact on the openness of the countryside in this location creating a new edge to the village, despite being largely obscured from Holt Lane by topography and vegetation.
Recommendation for Green Belt boundary revision	Not recommended for release. Notwithstanding the size and current use of the site, development would constitute an extension the built footprint of the village into open countryside. Locally, this would also extend the built extent of the village towards Kingsley Holt, although there is no intervisibility between the two settlements.

3. Summary

Table 3.1 presents a summary of the recommendations made in respect of each site appraised.

Table 3.1 Summary of Recommendations by Site

Site	Recommendation
1. Land at Underwood Farm, Mow Lane, Gillow Heath, Biddulph	Not recommended for release. Development would be a clear intrusion into open countryside, without substantial boundaries with which it could be contained. A new built edge to Gillow Heath (and Biddulph) would be created which would be of a linear character and not constitute a logical rounding-off of the settlement.
2. Marsh Lane Nursery, off Well Lane, Gillow Heath, Biddulph	Consider for release under Exceptional Circumstances. Notwithstanding the contribution of the land to the Green Belt in this locality, development would not cause significant harm to the openness of the Green Belt, reflecting the bounded nature of the site and the character of existing built form, combining both residential properties and the garden nursery. Of the two options, the smaller would be less damaging, being more closely related to the current built edge at Well Lane and limiting the interface with open countryside to the north west. However, there is no obvious significant feature between the two options which would serve as a reasonable long term boundary.
3. Land at Woodside Farm, Wharf Road, Biddulph	Consider for release under Exceptional Circumstances. Development could be considered without significant damage to the wider Green Belt, although there would be an impact on openness given the location of the land. The site largely sits within low-lying land and is clearly bounded to the north and to the east. The south western boundary is problematic, however, comprising various insubstantial hedgerows as well as being arranged by field pattern and not a clear feature which would constitute a logical and permanent external boundary. This would constitute a new settlement edge which would have to be created, without which there would be a danger of sprawl into open countryside over the longer term.
4. Land at Newpool Road/Towerhill Road, Biddulph	Consider for release under Exceptional Circumstances, reflecting no change in the built footprint of development in this location. The site is clearly bounded by the current extent of development, with no risk of sprawl or encroachment into the wider open countryside to the north, and is attached to development at Newpool Road.
5. Kingsley Youth Centre, Holt Lane, Kingsley	Not recommended for release. Notwithstanding the size and current use of the site, development would constitute an extension the built footprint of the village into open countryside. Locally, this would also extend the built extent of the village towards Kingsley Holt, although there is no intervisibility between the two settlements.



Author

.....
Robert Deanwood

Reviewer

.....
Clive Harridge

Copyright and non-disclosure notice

The contents and layout of this report are subject to copyright owned by Amec Foster Wheeler (© Amec Foster Wheeler Environment & Infrastructure UK Limited 2016) save to the extent that copyright has been legally assigned by us to another party or is used by Amec Foster Wheeler under licence. To the extent that we own the copyright in this report, it may not be copied or used without our prior written agreement for any purpose other than the purpose indicated in this report. The methodology (if any) contained in this report is provided to you in confidence and must not be disclosed or copied to third parties without the prior written agreement of Amec Foster Wheeler. Disclosure of that information may constitute an actionable breach of confidence or may otherwise prejudice our commercial interests. Any third party who obtains access to this report by any means will, in any event, be subject to the Third Party Disclaimer set out below.

Third party disclaimer

Any disclosure of this report to a third party is subject to this disclaimer. The report was prepared by Amec Foster Wheeler at the instruction of, and for use by, our client named on the front of the report. It does not in any way constitute advice to any third party who is able to access it by any means. Amec Foster Wheeler excludes to the fullest extent lawfully permitted all liability whatsoever for any loss or damage howsoever arising from reliance on the contents of this report. We do not however exclude our liability (if any) for personal injury or death resulting from our negligence, for fraud or any other matter in relation to which we cannot legally exclude liability.

Management systems

This document has been produced by Amec Foster Wheeler Environment & Infrastructure UK Limited in full compliance with the management systems, which have been certified to ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and OHSAS 18001 by LRQA.

