

Green Belt - Stage 3 Assessment

Methodology



Spelthorne Takes Shape

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this Stage 3 Green Belt Assessment (GBA) is to undertake a finer grain assessment of the draft allocation sites, building on the work undertaken as part of the Stage 1 and Stage 2 GBAs carried out by the Council's consultants ARUP. The assessment is not a policy or decision-making document but forms an important part of the evidence base supporting the Draft Local Plan. It is not within the remit of the assessment to consider the exceptional circumstances arguments which would be required to justify the release of land from the Green Belt.
- 1.2 In the period since the Stage 2 GBA was produced, the Council undertook its Preferred Options Consultation and subsequently agreed its revised spatial strategy which focuses on the sequential use of land, prioritises using brownfield land first then considers the most suitable Green Belt land following assessment.
- 1.3 As set out in the Council's Site Selection Methodology¹, one element of the spatial strategy allows for 'a small amount of dispersed Green Belt release for development where its release would not adversely affect the integrity of the strategic Green Belt. Any consideration of the potential release of Green Belt will have due regard for the sustainability of location and the quantity of previously developed land'.
- 1.4 The Stage 3 GBA focuses on a finer grain assessment of the sites previously assessed at Stage 2 and proposed as allocations in the Draft Local Plan (referred to henceforth as 'parcels'), as well as an assessment of those sites previously unassessed at Stage 2.

2 Methodology

- 2.1 The Stage 3 Green Belt Assessment follows the principles² of the preceding assessments, with a narrower focus on the parcel boundaries pre-defined in the draft site allocations. This is a desk-based qualitative assessment undertaken by the Council.
- 2.2 The assessment of each parcel has been undertaken as a two-step process:
 - 1 Assessment against the NPPF purposes
 - 2 Assessment of the parcel's role in the strategic function of the wider Green Belt

¹ [Site Selection Methodology - Update Final 24.01.22%20\(1\)](#)

² A detailed description of the assessment methodology can be found in the Stage 2 GBA report on Council's website: <https://www.spelthorne.gov.uk/Greenbeltassessment>

NPPF Purposes

2.3 As part of the methodology for the Stage 1 and Stage 2 GBA, four of the five Green Belt purposes were considered. This approach has been maintained for this part of the assessment. As such, each parcel has been assessed against NPPF Purposes 1-4³:

- 1 To check the unrestricted sprawl of the large built-up areas.
- 2 To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.
- 3 To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
- 4 To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.

2.4 Each of the purposes was scored as follows, in accordance with the methodology that has been used throughout each stage of the GBA :

Score	Green Belt Performance	Red / Amber / Green
0 - 2	Weakly Performing	Red
3	Moderately Performing	Amber
4 - 5	Strongly Performing	Green

Role in the strategic function of the wider Green Belt

2.5 In addition to an assessment of the performance of the individual parcels against the NPPF purposes, an additional qualitative assessment was undertaken to identify the role the individual parcels play in the overall performance of the wider Green Belt. The impact of their release in isolation or in combination with adjoining parcels was assessed and the parcels were rated as follows:

Importance to strategic function of wider Green Belt
Important
Partly Less Important
Less Important

³ As with the Stage 1 and 2 GBA, no assessment of sub-areas was undertaken with regard to NPPF Purpose 5: 'To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land'. Assessment against this purpose would not enable a distinction between sub-areas as all Green Belt achieves the purpose. It is difficult to distinguish the individual contribution that a single parcel of land makes to encouraging the re-use of urban land.

3 Mitigating the loss of Green Belt

- 3.1 Paragraph 142 of the NPPF (2021) states that strategic policy-making authorities should 'set out ways in which the impact of removing land from the Green Belt can be offset through compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt land'.
- 3.2 Planning Practice Guidance clarifies that where it has been demonstrated that it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development, strategic plan-making authorities should set out policies for such compensatory improvements. These may include but are not limited to new or enhanced green infrastructure; woodland planting; landscape and visual enhancements (beyond those needed to mitigate the immediate impacts of the proposal); improvements to biodiversity, habitat connectivity and natural capital; new or enhanced walking and cycle routes; and improved access to new, enhance or existing recreational and playing field provision.
- 3.3 While the focus of the Stage 3 Green Belt Assessment is the finer grain assessment of the proposed Allocations, as part of the assessment consideration has been given to the potential opportunities for compensatory improvements, mitigating the impact of the potential release of these proposed allocations from the Green Belt.
- 3.4 Paragraph 142 of the NPPF (2021) states that Plans should 'set out ways in which the impact of removing land from the Green Belt can be offset through compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt land'. Building on the opportunities identified as part of this assessment a future Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy and Design Coding work will set out detailed requirements.

Appendix A - Summary of Assessment Outcomes

Parcel Reference	Purpose 1	Purpose 2	Purpose 3	Purpose 4	Overall Performance	Strategic Importance
AS1/011	0	0	1	0	Weakly Performing	Less Important
AS2/006	5	5	2	0	Strongly Performing	Important
AT1/002	1	1	0	0	Weakly Performing	Less Important
AT1/012	3	5+	2	0	Strongly Performing	Important
HS1/002	1	1	2	0	Weakly Performing	Less Important
HS1/009	3	5	2	0	Strongly Performing	Important
HS1/012	3+	1	2	0	Moderately Performing	Partly Less Important
HS1/012b	5	1	2	0	Strongly Performing	Partly Less Important
HS2/004	1	1	1	0	Weakly Performing	Less Important
LS1/024	0	1	1	0	Weakly Performing	Less Important
RL1/011	2	1	1	0	Weakly Performing	Less Important
SN1/005	1+	0	1	0	Weakly Performing	Less Important
SN1/006	1+	0	1	0	Weakly Performing	Less Important
ST1/043	2	3	2	0	Moderately Performing	Less Important
ST4/025	0	3	3	0	Moderately Performing	Less Important

Appendix B – Example Assessment Template

Site Specific Green Belt Assessment			
Site Reference:	<input type="text"/>	Site Name:	<input type="text"/>
		Size (ha):	<input type="text"/>

Site Description:	
<input type="text"/>	

Map (Parcel and Site Boundary):	Aerial (Site Boundary):
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

PDL Status:	<input type="text"/>
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Stage 1 Assessment Results:			
Parcel Reference:		Overall Rating:	
Purpose 1: To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	Purpose 2: To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	Purpose 3: To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Purpose 4: To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns
Score	Score	Score	Score

Stage 2 Assessment Results:			
Parcel Reference:		Overall Rating:	
Purpose 1: To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	Purpose 2: To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	Purpose 3: To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Purpose 4: To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns
Score	Score	Score	Score

Stage 3 Assessment Results:			
Parcel Reference:		Overall Rating:	
Purpose 1: To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	Purpose 2: To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	Purpose 3: To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Purpose 4: To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns
Score	Score	Score	Score

Role in strategic function	
Overall rating of parcel	Overall Performance / Strategic Importance

Potential Mitigation	
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