

Matter 3: Principle of Green Belt Release		
Issue 3: Has the Plan been positively prepared and is it justified, effective and consistent with national policy in respect of its policies and proposals for the Green Belt?		
<b>Principle of Green Belt Release</b>	1. Do the exceptional circumstances, as required by paragraphs 140 – 143 of the Framework, exist to justify the proposed revisions to the Green Belt boundary for additional land for housing and employment?	<p>Yes, the Council considers that exceptional circumstances, to justify the proposed revisions to the Green Belt boundary for additional land for housing and employment.</p> <p>The housing and employment requirements (3,686 homes and 70ha of employment land) cannot be met within the existing urban areas alone. The SHELAA assessment (<a href="#">HBC5.001a</a>) shows that brownfield and non-Green Belt capacity falls short of requirements. The scale of need, combined with regeneration and economic objectives of the plan, creates exceptional circumstances to amend the Green Belt boundaries.</p> <p>The council has undertaken a Green Belt study (<a href="#">HBC2.001</a>) to provide a robust assessment and has prepared a background paper on exceptional circumstances for Green Belt release (<a href="#">HBC8.004</a>). The exceptional circumstances for Green Belt Release background paper specifically considers the requirements of paragraphs 140-143 through section 5 and 6 of the paper and concludes justification of the release to meet housing and employment needs in the borough.</p>
	2. Has the Council examined fully all reasonable options for meeting its identified needs in line with paragraph 141 of the Framework?	<p>The Council has examined all reasonable options for meeting its identified needs in line with paragraph 141 of the Framework. The background paper on exceptional circumstance for Green Belt release (<a href="#">HBC8.004</a>) sets out in Section 5 of the paper how the council has considered each of the three requirements set out in paragraph 143 of the NPPF.</p>
	3. How do the proposed Green Belt revisions align with the spatial strategy for the Borough? How will they promote sustainable patterns of development?	<p>The proposed greenbelt revisions are considered to align with the spatial strategy for the borough. The conclusions of the IIA (<a href="#">HBC2.010a</a>) and Growth Options and Spatial Options Justification Paper (<a href="#">H015</a>) set out that the selected growth options are the most positive options for growth when accounting for all considerations. To achieve these, strategic releases of employment land along the M65 corridor and housing land, including at Huncoat for the garden village proposals are required to support the strategy and this is further expanded in the background paper on exceptional circumstance for Green Belt release (<a href="#">HBC8.004</a>) through paragraphs 6.5 – 6.8.</p>

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		<p>The exceptional circumstances paper highlights in Section 5 paragraphs 5.25-5.28 how the proposed releases of greenbelt would provide sustainable patters of development through access to transport, while paragraphs 6.9 – 6.18 set out the constraints on available of suitable land for sustainable development outside of the Green Belt.</p>
	<p>4. Is the Green Belt Assessment 2019 (HBC2.001) based on a robust assessment methodology? Does it adequately consider the fundamental aim and purposes of Green Belts?</p>	<p>Yes. The Green Belt Study (<a href="#">HBC2.001</a>) is an independent, robust and transparent assessment of Green Belt land with Hyndburn. Whilst there is no national guidance as to how Green Belt studies should be undertaken, national planning policy, guidance, reviews of other authorities’ studies and case law was used to inform the methodology and is set out in Sections 3 and 4 of the study. The methodology was also subject to consultation with the Council’s Duty to Cooperate partners as indicated in both the study in section 4 and the statement of compliance with Duty to Cooperate (<a href="#">HBC10.001</a>). The Green Belt Study was carried out by consultants LUC who has advised local authorities and developers across the country on Green Belt issues, as well as undertaking numerous independent Green Belt studies at a range of scales. LUC has completed Green Belt assessments or reviews on numerous Local Authorities throughout England and has successfully defended all of those that have been scrutinised as part of a Local Plan Examination process.</p> <p>The study also adequately considers the fundamental aim and purposes of the Green Belt. Chapter 3 of the Green Belt Study sets out the policy context underpinning the Study’s assessment methodology, including the two essential characteristics of Green Belt (openness and permanence) and the five purposes of the Green Belts as defined in paragraph 138 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Chapter 3 and 4 of the Green Belt Study clearly defines the fundamental Green Belt policy terms as set out in national planning policy that are used in the Study’s assessment methodology. Stage 1 of the Green Belt Study represents a comprehensive strategic assessment of the contribution of the Green Belt land to these five purposes. Stage 2 of the Green Belt Study considers the extent to which the release of different areas of land would reduce the contribution to the Green Belt purposes, through both the loss of openness of the released land and the resulting impact that this could have on the strength of the remaining Green Belt.</p>
	<p>5. Are the revised boundaries capable of enduring in the long term, beyond the plan period?</p>	<p>As part of the proposed major revision to the Green Belt boundary the council has identified Sites S1 and S2 at Huncoat for future housing and rail freight terminals respectively. This has been done explicitly to ensure that the revised boundary can endure</p>

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		<p>beyond the current plan period, to accommodate potential longer-term development needs in line with Paragraph 143c of the NPPF.</p> <p>The Council acknowledges that given the changes to the NPPF in 2024 and the method for calculating the standard method that the housing figures for Hyndburn has seen a significant increase to 301 dwellings per annum. Considering this the next review of the Local Plan will likely need to review the green belt boundaries in light of these changes.</p>
	<p>6. The Local Plan proposes the addition of three new areas of Green Belt totalling 10.5 hectares. Paragraph 139 of the Framework sets out that proposals for new Green Belt should only be established in exceptional circumstances and outlines that they should be set out in strategic policies which should demonstrate five criteria are met. Where in the evidence base is an assessment of the sites against these criteria? Have exceptional circumstances been demonstrated for the establishment of these three new Green Belt sites?</p>	<p>The Council has set out its justification for the additions to the Green Belt in the Background Paper exceptional circumstance for Green Belt release (<a href="#">HBC8.004</a>) in paragraph 6.32, in conjunction with paragraphs 4.14 – 4.18 including table 5.</p> <p>The council’s main argument is that given their previous allocations as ASR sites (similar to previously safeguarded land) within the 1996 Local Plan that these are former greenbelt sites which are being reintroduced after not being allocated for development and therefore is correcting anomalies and enhancing openness and wider designations. Therefore, these sites would not need to be considered against the tests set out in paragraph 139.</p>
	<p>7. Policy SP1 6e refers to Green Belt boundary changes to address minor discrepancies. Where are these set out? What are the exceptional circumstances to justify these amendments?</p>	<p>Minor adjustments are mapped on the policies map. These correct anomalies, such as garden curtilages and boundary alignments to physical features. These are due to improved digital mapping where it is easier to identify anomalies. The exceptional circumstances are technical and ensure that the Green Belt is defined with clarity and consistency, in line with NPPF paragraph 143.</p>
	<p>8. What is the justification for safeguarding land at Huncoat for development beyond the plan period?</p>	<p>The Council is proposing to designate two areas of Safeguarded land in the new Local Plan:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 7.6ha of Land at Huncoat for a strategic rail freight terminal.</li> <li>2. 21.4ha of Land at Huncoat for future housing development in connection with the Huncoat Garden Village proposals.</li> </ol> <p>Safeguarded land is required to meet the long-term development needs beyond 2040. In relation to the 21.4ha of land for housing at Huncoat this is to ensure that the wider delivery of the Huncoat Garden Village can be achieved beyond the plan period. The safeguarding of land for a potential rail freight terminal The Council is aware that the government is considering proposals to extend the east Lancashire Railway Line between</p>

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		<p>Colne and Skipton for both passenger and freight services. If the proposals for the development of a freight service along the East Lancashire Railway are supported, it is important that this supports local economic development along its route. The site of the former rail sidings at Huncoat is one of few locations along the route of the railway that could accommodate a rail freight terminal. The Council acknowledge that there is no certainty to any potential development here and therefore have proposed to safeguard the land for this purpose to ensure the permanence of the wider Green Belt as required by the NPPF.</p> <p>The justification for safeguarding these parcels of land is further set out in the background paper exceptional circumstances for Green Belt release (<a href="#">HBC8.004</a>).</p> <p>The approach to safeguarded land is set out in the NPPF in paragraph 143 part c and d. It makes clear that this land is not allocated for development at the present time but offers the option for the land to be brought forward, should it be proven necessary at a plan review stage.</p>
	<p>9. What ways does the plan set out how 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 in line with paragraph 142 of the Framework?</p>	<p>The council has considered potential compensatory measures in line with paragraph 142 of the NPPF. These are set out in the Background Paper on exceptional circumstances of Green Belt Release (<a href="#">HBC8.004</a>) from paragraphs 6.25 to 6.31 including table 10. The findings in table 10 have been used to shape the development of policies for sites that have been proposed for release from the Green Belt. Furthermore, for sites which are proposed for release from the Greenbelt that are being proposed for Masterplans (Huncoat Garden Village, Altham Business Park and Whitebirk) it is expected that the masterplans will outline further measures in line with the recommendations in table 10 to ensure compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt land.</p> <p>The Council also considers that the proposed reinstatement of 10.5ha of land to the Green Belt can also be considered to offset some of the proposed removal of land from the Green Belt.</p>