

# GREEN BELT TOPIC PAPER

## ROSSENDALE LOCAL PLAN



August 2018

**Rossendale**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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# 1. Introduction

This Topic Paper is one of a number that have been produced to discuss and explain how the overall Strategy was developed for the Rossendale Local Plan.

Green Belt is a national policy designation which had its genesis in the 1930's around Metropolitan areas of London and after the passing of the Town and Country Planning Act in 1947 became a tool that could be used nationally, particularly after the passing of Circular 42/55 in 1955. The primary role of Green Belt is to keep land open and by so doing preventing the sprawl of built development.

The pressure to build enough houses to meet projected need has put pressure to build on Green Belt land in many areas, including within Rossendale. Green Belt is often located in attractive locations adjacent to settlements.

## Location of Green Belt in Rossendale

The main locations of Green Belt in the Borough are in the following places:

- Around Rising Bridge. This overlaps with Green Belt with Hyndburn Borough Council and is intended to prevent the merging of Rising Bridge with the settlement of Baxenden.
- Between Rawtenstall and Haslingden. The Green Belt in this area is intended to prevent the merging of the two settlements with the gap between them being narrow at this point.
- In the south west of the Borough. In this area the Rossendale Green Belt adjoins the Greater Manchester Green Belt within Bury. As well as protecting the identity of small settlements such as Irwell Vale and Chatterton the Green Belt in this location helps to prevent settlements such as Edenfield and Stubbins from merging with Ramsbottom.
- Between Waterfoot and Stacksteads. This is a small, isolated area of Green Belt that keeps an area of open land between the two settlements, particularly in the area known as the Glen.
- Land around Britannia, Sharneyford and Whitworth. The Green Belt in this location helps to prevent any further merging of these ribbon settlements and also forms an extension of the Greater Manchester Green Belt in Rochdale.

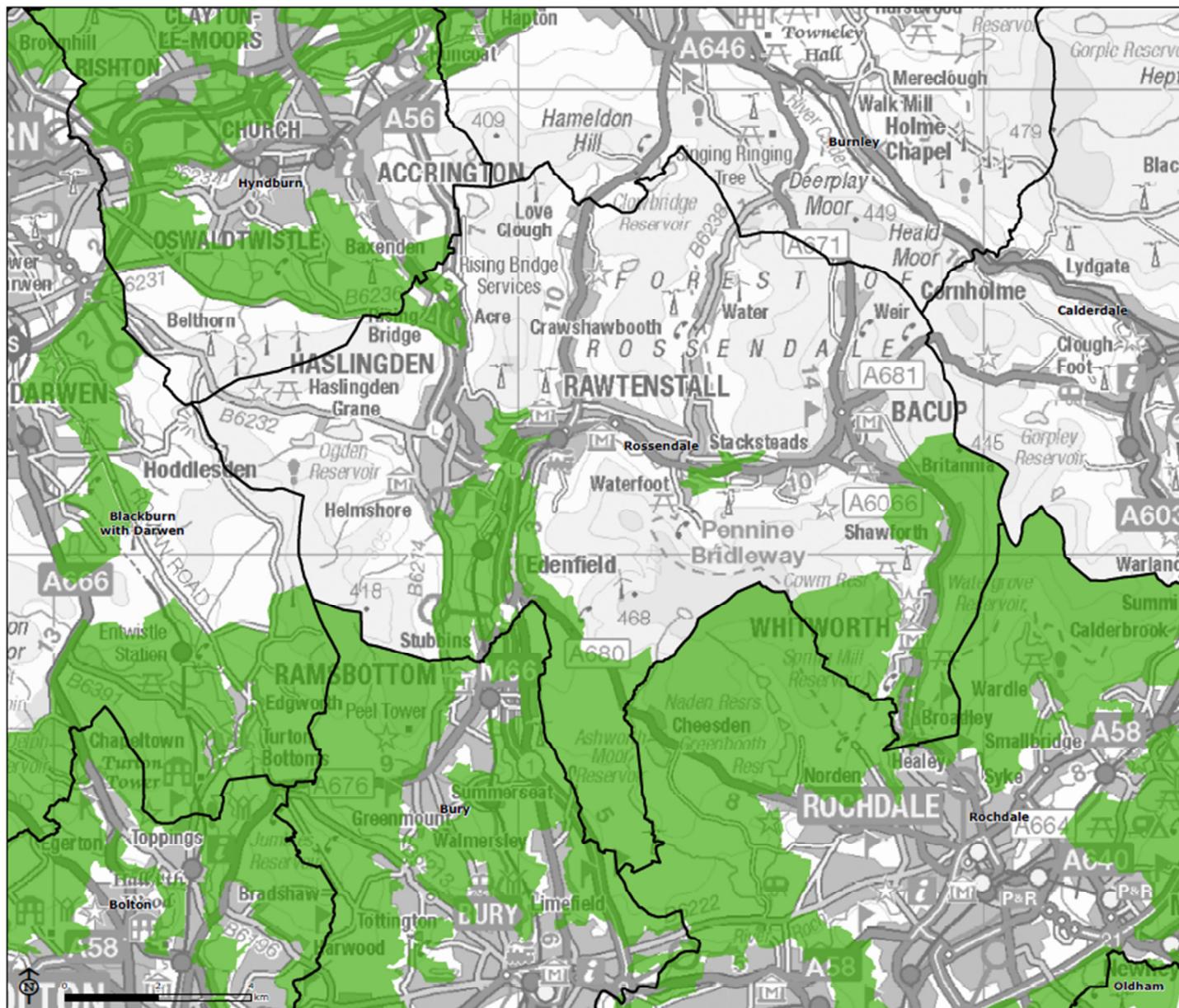
## Amount of land covered by Green Belt

3 177ha of land within Rossendale currently exists as Green Belt out of a total area of 138km<sup>2</sup>. This equates to 23% of the total land area of the Borough. The Plan proposes the loss of 27.54ha of Green Belt which amounts to less than 1% of the current Green Belt total. Overall less than 10% of the land in the Borough is within the urban area.

## The Housing context

Rossendale currently has just under 32 000 dwellings. The standard Housing Methodology for the District currently shows a need for 212 new dwelling per year. The 2017-2022 5 Year Housing Land Supply Report indicates that the authority has only met this figure twice in the previous six years. Work undertaken for the Local Plan Viability Assessment indicates that the areas of greatest viability

for development are in the south-west of the Borough and around Rawtenstall. This is also an area of high housing demand.



**Rossendale Green Belt Review**

**Green Belt Context**

- District boundary
- Green belt

Map Scale @ A3: 1:80,000

**LUC**

## 2. History of the Green Belt in Rossendale

The **North East Lancashire Structure Plan (1979)** was the first document to establish the general extent of the Green Belt in Lancashire and the broad areas which it would cover. The principle aims were to prevent urban coalescence; to manage urban sprawl and facilitate recreational opportunities. The 1982 Rossendale Local Plan provided specific boundaries

The 1995 **Rossendale Local Plan** sets out the Green Belt boundary as it exists today but only made minor changes to the 1982 Plan. This included adding land to the Green Belt which had previously obtained planning permission for housing but which had not been developed. This included land at Tonacliffe in Whitworth (sites HS2:106/109 in the Regulation 18 Draft of the current Plan) and at Clod Lane close to Ewood Bridge. The Inspector at the Local Plan Inquiry took an area of land at Longacres Drive in Whitworth out of the Green Belt and placed it into countryside. This site has not been developed and has no obvious access to it.

**Core Strategy (2011)** –The Core Strategy retained the same Green Belt Boundaries as the 1996 Local Plan. There was considerable debate at the Examination in Public about the need to amend Green Belt with developers promoting substantial changes in the south west of the Borough, in particular around Rossendale Golf Club. The Inspector recommended that a Green Belt and Urban Boundary Review be undertaken as soon as possible after the adoption of the Core Strategy as part of a Site Allocations and Development Management DPD. The methodology developed for assessing Green Belt changes is shown in the Appendix A. Only small scale changes were suggested in line with the policy in the Core Strategy. The Site Allocations and Development Management DPD (Local Plan Part 2) was ultimately withdrawn before publication because of the Objectively Assessed Need housing figures been greater than those in the Core Strategy, which had been derived from the now revoked Regional Spatial Strategy. The Local Plan Part 2 was withdrawn and it was decided to embark on preparation of a complete new Local Plan.

### **National Green Belt Policy**

*National Planning Policy Framework* –this has recently (July 2018) been updated and the policy on Green Belt strengthened.

The Framework indicates that Green Belt serves five purposes:

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Paragraph 136 of NPPF indicates that Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in “exceptional circumstances”, be fully evidenced and justified and done as part of the preparation of a Local Plan. Paragraph 137 indicates that Councils should look at all other reasonable options for meeting its housing needs and should take into account whether the Plan:

- a) makes as much use as possible of suitable brownfield sites and underutilised land;
- b) optimises the density of development .....including whether policies promote a significant uplift in minimum density standards in town and city centres and other locations well served by public transport; and
- c) has been informed by discussions with neighbouring authorities about whether they could accommodate some of the identified need for development, as demonstrated through the statement of common ground.

Paragraph 138 indicates that if Green Belt is to be released Councils should give priority to sustainable sites, i.e. those which have been previously developed and/or have good access to public transport. It also identifies that Council's should identify how removal of land can be compensated through improvements to the remaining Green Belt.

#### *Case Law*

The judgement in *Gallagher Homes v Solihull Borough Council* (2014) makes clear that the act of reviewing the Local Plan does not amount in itself to "exceptional circumstances". The authority needs to demonstrate that wider circumstances exist that make altering the Green Belt boundary the most appropriate and sustainable approach. The following extract is taken from Elmbridge Borough Council's Topic Paper on Green Belt and forms a helpful summary of the decision.

*"As there is no formal definition or standard set of assessment criteria to demonstrate exceptional circumstances, there has been an increasing amount of case law as local planning authorities attempt to alter the boundaries of the Green Belt, and their justifications for doing so, have become under increasing scrutiny. One of the most established cases is Gallagher Homes Limited v Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council [2014]25. The following points were made clear by this decision:*

- *Planning guidance is a material consideration for plan-making and decision-taking. However, it does not have statutory force: the only statutory obligation is to have regard to relevant policies;*
- *The test for redefining a Green Belt boundary has not been changed by the NPPF. It is not arguable that the mere fact that a local authority is drawing up its local plan is itself an exceptional circumstances justifying a boundary change. National guidance has always dealt with revisions of the Green Belt in the context of reviews of local plans (e.g. paragraph 2.7 of PPG226) and has always required exceptional circumstances to do this;*
- *A local planning authority must find that exceptional circumstances exist before they make any alteration in a Green Belt boundary, whether it is considering extending or diminishing the Green Belt; and*
- *Whilst each case is fact-sensitive and the question of whether circumstances are exceptional for these purposes requires an exercise of planning judgement, what is capable of amounting to exceptional circumstances is a matter of law, and a plan-maker may err in law if they fail to adopt a lawful approach to exceptional circumstances. Once Green Belt has been established and approved, it requires more than general planning concepts to justify alterations.*

*In addition, when considering whether to amend the boundary of the Green Belt, the starting point for every local authority is that this decision should only arise after all reasonable and acceptable efforts have been taken to maximise the amount of development within the urban area. Optimising densities and ensuring that all land is appropriately used must be the first response to growth. This would include a review of employment land and other areas or uses that are protected by planning policies, commensurate with ensuring the proper balance between residential, employment and other uses. Case law also established that general planning merits cannot be exceptional circumstances: for example, it is not sufficient that the local authority consider that the relevant land would, or would not be, a sustainable location for development, or that they would have drawn the boundary line in a different place had they been starting from scratch. In other words, something must have occurred subsequent to the definition of the Green Belt boundary that justifies a change. The fact that, after the definition of the Green Belt boundary, the local authority or an inspector may form a different view on where the boundary should lie, however cogent that view is on planning grounds, that cannot of itself constitute an exceptional circumstance which necessitates and therefore justifies a change.*

*Should a local authority decide that exceptional circumstances do necessitate a revision to Green Belt boundaries, then they cannot revise the boundaries further than is necessary to meet those exceptional circumstances. For example, if exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated to necessitate the building of, say 50 additional homes per year on Green Belt land, they cannot then release land to allow for the building of 100 homes per year. In addition, a local authority will need to ensure that the exceptional circumstances justifying the release of Green Belt land are carried through to fruition when allocating sites for development /granting planning permission, for example, providing sufficient affordable housing provision on-site if a significant need for affordable housing has been successfully demonstrated to justify the release of land designated as Green Belt. If challenged, the Court can declare the adoption of a plan unlawful and quash it (or parts of it) if the plan-maker has failed to take a lawful approach to exceptional circumstances. This means that it is not enough for a local authority or inspector to assert that exceptional circumstances exist: it is not possible to convert unexceptional circumstances into exceptional circumstances simply by labelling them as such.*

The approach in *Gallagher Homes* was followed in the case of *Calverton Parish Council (2015)* which established the way that Local Authorities should systematically assess whether “Exceptional Circumstances” exist. The following is a summary by Pinsent Mason Solicitors.

*The judge said that, after establishing the objectively assessed housing need in the area covered by a development plan document, an inspector should ideally consider the "acuteness/intensity of the ... need"; the "constraints on the supply/availability of land ... suitable for development"; the "difficulties in achieving sustainability without impinging on the green belt"; the "nature and extent of the harm to this green belt"; and how far the impacts on green belt purposes could be reduced.*

*In the present case, Mr Justice Jay was satisfied that, whilst "an ideal approach has not been explicitly followed on a systematic basis", the inspector had "at least in legally sufficient*



*terms, followed the sort of approach I have set out". He said the inspector had given "a logically coherent reason for holding that exceptional circumstances existed". Her report had considered "the limited availability of alternative sustainable sites", the tightly drawn inner boundary of the green belt around Nottingham and the difficulty of undertaking sustainable development beyond its outer boundary. She had then "paid regard to the purposes of the green belt, the nature and quality of the proposed impingement, and the issue of sustainability", the judge found.*

The case of *Hunston Properties Ltd v St Albans Borough Council (2013)* established that in the absence of an up to date Local Plan housing need cannot be artificially reduced by the existence of Green Belt. Planning decisions should however be considered in the light of wider policies of restraint including Green Belt.

### **3. Background evidence**

#### **Green Belt Study**

As part of the preparation of the Evidence base for the Local Plan Rossendale Borough Council commissioned a Green Belt Review. Land Use Consultants (LUC) was commissioned to undertake this task. The same consultancy had previously undertaken a similar review for Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) so there was the benefit of having a consistent approach to how Green Belt parcels were appraised that were on the Borough boundary.

A link to the study can be found below:

[https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/downloads/download/10820/green\\_belt\\_review\\_2016](https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/downloads/download/10820/green_belt_review_2016)

The Study established a methodology for analysing and scoring each of the five purposes of Green Belt. Consultation was held with each of the neighbouring authorities on the suitability of the methodology. The Green Belt was then subdivided into 82 individual Green Belt parcels defined on the basis of their own distinctive characteristics. Paragraph 3:8 of the Study described parcel definition as follows:

The aim was to define parcels that contain land of the same or very similar land use or character, bounded by recognisable features including:

- Natural features; for example, substantial watercourses and water bodies.
- Man-made features; for example, A and B roads and railway lines

The parcels were split into two main types:

- Smaller parcels adjacent to urban areas
- Larger parcels in rural areas


Each parcel was assessed against each of the five main purposes of Green Belt on the basis of the Table below:

<b>Strong</b>	Parcel performs strong against this Purpose.
<b>Moderate</b>	Parcel performs moderately well.
<b>Weak</b>	Parcel performs poorly.
<b>No Contribution</b>	Parcel makes no contribution.
<b>Not Applicable</b>	It is not applicable to make an assessment.

If a parcel performed strongly against at least one of the criteria it was not recommended that the land be released from the Green Belt. In some if there were parts of the parcel that performed poorly these could be considered separately for release. The Study stresses that the assessment is based solely on an assessment of Green Belt characteristics and does not take into account other constraints or “exceptional circumstances”.

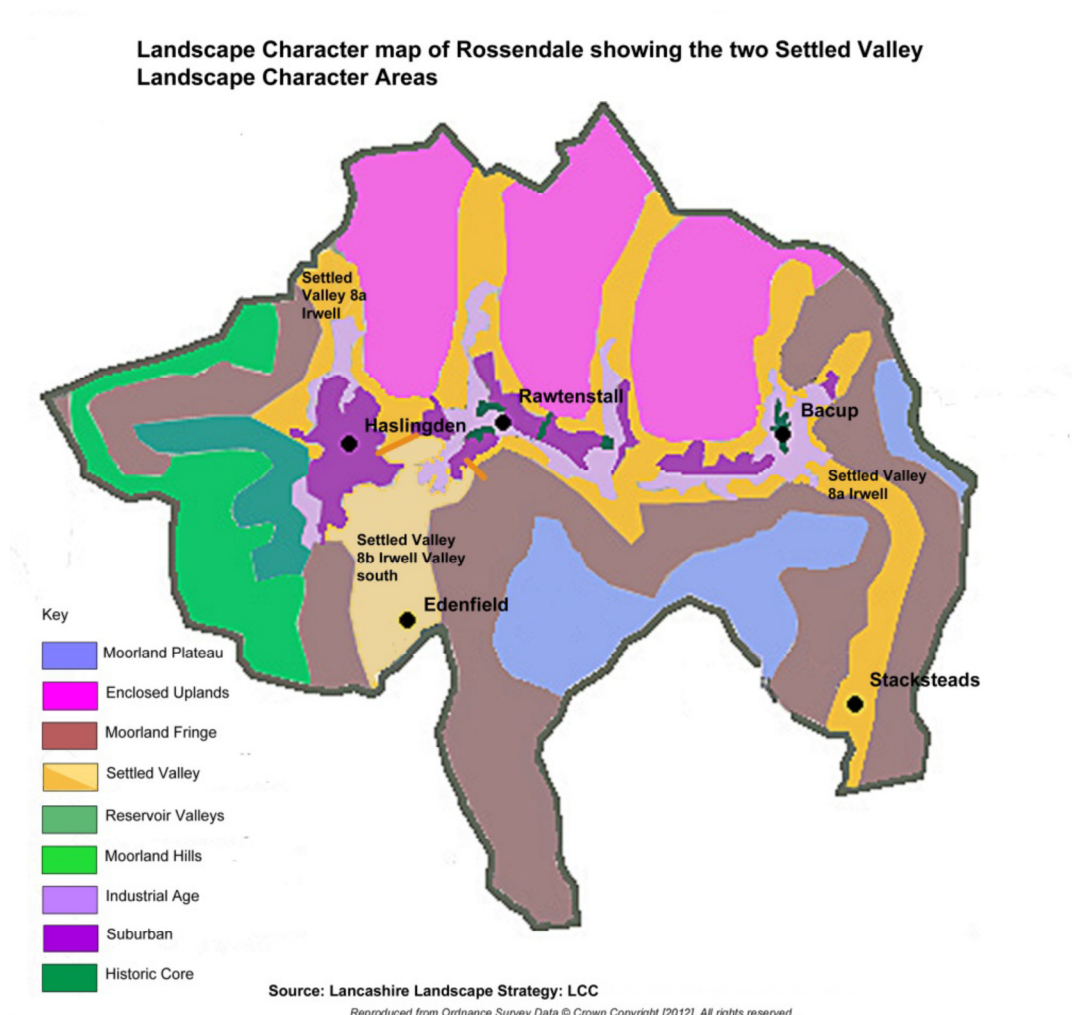
Release of Green Belt land has been considered first and foremost in the context of “exceptional circumstances”. Once that case was established, what the Study does is to provide an analysis of the impact on Green Belt if individual parcels of land are released. In preparing the Local Plan, the Council has sought to follow the guidance of the Study as closely as possible while taking into account other factors related to sites such as flood risk, access and availability of alternative sites. Thus some sites are considered as suitable for release in the Green Belt Study but are not included as allocations in the Local Plan.

### Example of a Green Belt Parcel Assessment Commentary

Parcel ref	Degree of Harm	Parcel (and sub-parcel where relevant) map	Commentary on Green Belt Performance	Potential for release (GB terms only)
01	High		<p>This parcel of Green Belt land does not lie adjacent to the defined 'large built up area' as considered under Purpose 1, therefore it is rated as not applicable against purpose 1a and 1b. The parcel performs strongly against purpose 2, moderately against purpose 3 and makes no contribution to purpose 4. The key function of this parcel in Green Belt terms is to prevent neighbouring settlements of Rising Bridge and Higher Baxenden (part of Accrington) merging into one another. Release of this parcel from the Green Belt would compromise the physical, visual separation between the two settlements by significantly reducing the existing area of open Green Belt between them. Its release would also negatively affect the performance of the Green Belt to the north-west (located within Hyndburn district) in providing physical and perceptual separation between the two neighbouring towns. A secondary issue would be the effect that releasing the parcel would have on the large area of open countryside that adjoins to the north. This area is not designated as Green Belt therefore the release of the parcel could leave it vulnerable to urban encroachment.</p> <p>A small sub-area within this parcel has been identified along the settlement edge to the north of Back Lane. The sub-area performs less-well under purpose 2 as it does not lie directly between Rising Bridge and Higher Baxenden, therefore its release is unlikely to lead to perceptions of the two settlements merging. The sub-area also performs less-well under purpose 3 as it is a relatively small pastoral field that is strongly influenced by the adjoining settlement edge and lacks a strong and intact rural character. Furthermore the sub-area is contained by woodland and the site of a disused quarry and is relatively disconnected to the remaining land within the parcel. It is considered that releasing the sub-area is unlikely to have a detrimental effect on the integrity of the wider Green Belt, however it should be noted that its release may lead to uneven settlement edge.</p>	Yes (sub-area)

## Landscape Study

The Council commissioned a Study by Penny Bennett Associates to examine the landscape characteristics of the Borough. This looks at the overall landscape features of Rossendale building on earlier work by Julie Martin Associates and Natural England Landscape Character Areas.



The Study also did detailed assessments of a number of individual sites, some of which are in Green Belt. In some cases these partly conflicted with the findings of the Green Belt Review, such as in Edenfield. The Landscape Study is a material consideration in looking at sites and can add to and complement the work the Green Belt Study with respect to Openness. Overall the Council has used its planning judgement in coming to an opinion on the impact on Openness

A link to the Landscape Study is found below.

[https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/downloads/download/10829/landscape\\_study\\_2015](https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/downloads/download/10829/landscape_study_2015)

## Strategic Housing Land Area Assessment (SHLAA)

Individual Site assessments have been taken for over 350 potential housing sites within the Borough. These use a consistent methodology for analysing the Availability, Suitability and Achievability of bringing forward sites for new dwellings. It looks at physical issues such as access and flood risk as

well as market factors such as land ownership. The approach taken is “policy off” so it does not consider if a site is within the Green Belt. This was deliberate and the methodology was supported by an independent assessment. Thus a site can be identified as Available, Suitable and Achievable in SHLAA terms but this does not mean that it should be taken forward when policy matters such as Green Belt are taken into consideration.

A link to the SHLAA is provided below:

[https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/downloads/download/10816/strategic\\_housing\\_land\\_availability\\_assessment\\_-\\_stages\\_1\\_and\\_2\\_and\\_site\\_assessment\\_2017](https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/downloads/download/10816/strategic_housing_land_availability_assessment_-_stages_1_and_2_and_site_assessment_2017)

### Employment Land Study

The Employment Land Study was undertaken by consultants. This looks at the employment land needs and supply in the Borough and includes detailed site assessments of a wide range of sites.

The criteria for site assessments include a wide range of factors such as market attractiveness, access and barriers to delivery. Green Belt location is not explicitly examined as a site criterion but is addressed in the commentary. An extract from one Site Assessment is attached below and brings out the recognition of a need to identify “Exceptional Circumstances”.

<b>Barriers to Delivery and Timescales</b>	The site would need to be released from the Green Belt and hence it would be necessary for RBC to demonstrate that an exceptional circumstances case can be made. It requires platforming and levelling works before it can be fully developed. However, the site is located in an area of strong market demand which would improve the attractiveness to developers. Based on this, the site is likely to be delivered within 5 to 10 years
<b>Potential Future Uses</b>	Due to the location of the site it would be most suitable for several smaller sized units for B2 or B8 employment uses.
<b>OVERALL SITE RATING</b>	Good
<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	Allocate for employment
<b>SITE SUMMARY</b>	The large site is designated Green Belt land and hence an exceptional circumstances case would need to be made by RBC in its emerging Local Plan Part 2, although it is well contained by existing borders. The site would require a new access road and platforming or levelling works but is located where there is greatest market demand. The site would be attractive for industrial occupiers due to its excellent location in proximity to the A56

A link to the Employment Land Study is attached below.

[https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/downloads/download/10819/employment\\_land\\_review](https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/downloads/download/10819/employment_land_review)

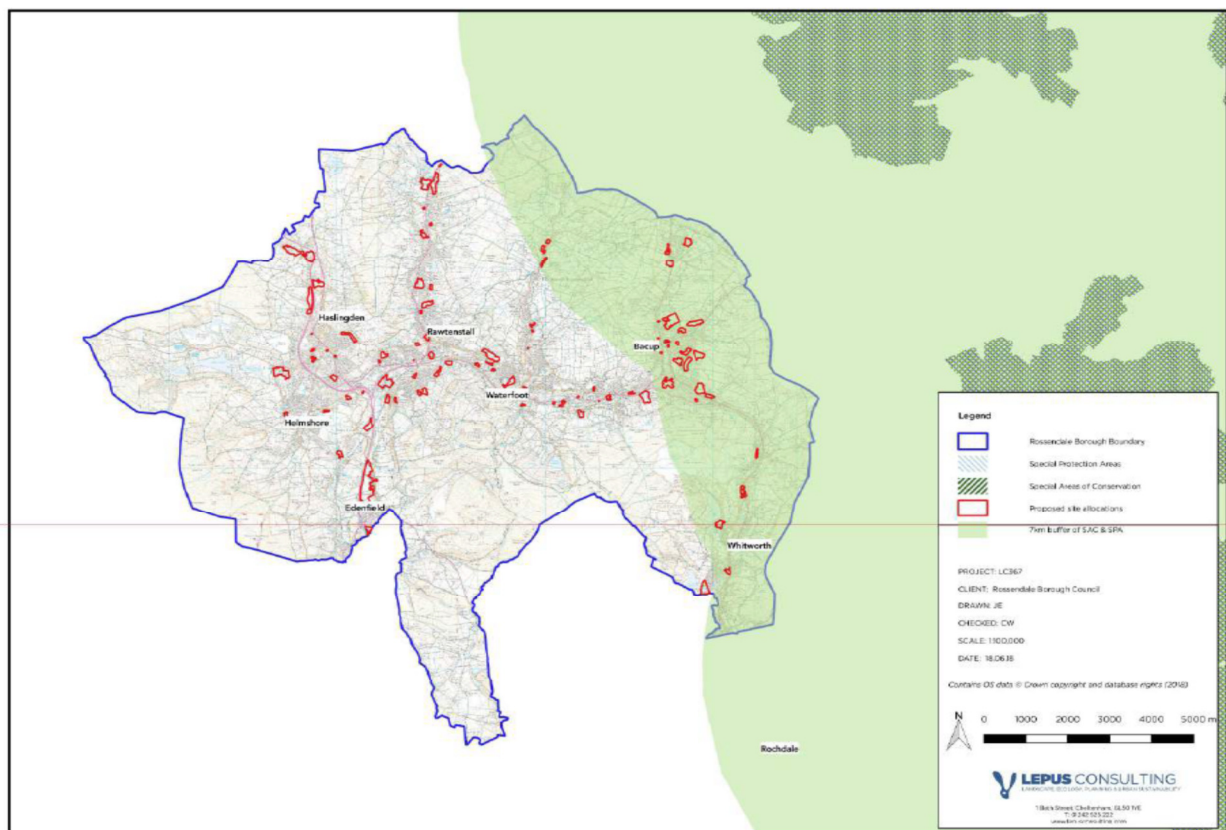
## Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) Appropriate Assessment

The HRA Appropriate Assessment for the Local Plan Publication draft looked at impacts on the South Pennine Special Protection Area (SPA)/Special Area of Conservation (SAC). This identified a 7km buffer zone around the SPA/SAC as being the most likely area that people would be drawn from to visit the area for recreational purposes, potentially impacting on the bird species living there. The Study also looked at areas that the Breeding Bird Assemblage would use outside the SPA. This included the Moorland Fringe Landscape Character Area. Two areas of Green Belt land within Rossendale (Tonacliffe and off Horsefield Avenue, Whitworth) which had been identified for possible development fell within this area. The draft HRA recommended that remedial action should be taken and that ideally the land should be retained in its current undeveloped state. This was one of the reasons that the land was not allocated for development.

The Appropriate Assessment recommended that all sites within Rossendale that deliver more than 100 homes should produce a detailed HRA on impacts on the designated Breeding Bird Assemblage and the Habitats they use. This will impact on the proposed Green Belt site at Edenfield. A link to the Study by Lepus Consulting can be found below.

[https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/downloads/file/13689/habitats\\_regulation\\_assessment\\_2016](https://www.rossendale.gov.uk/downloads/file/13689/habitats_regulation_assessment_2016)

### Area of Rossendale covered by buffer to SPA



## 4. Duty to Co-operate

The National Planning Policy Framework (paragraphs 24-27; 178-181) and Planning Practice Guidance (including the 2018 consultation version) emphasise the importance of cross-border co-operation between Local Planning Authorities. This includes whether neighbouring authorities are able to accommodate any of the host authority's (in this case Rossendale) development needs. If an authority can take any of another areas development this reduces the pressure for an authority to provide it within its own borders and reduces the pressure on areas such as Green Belt to accommodate the development.

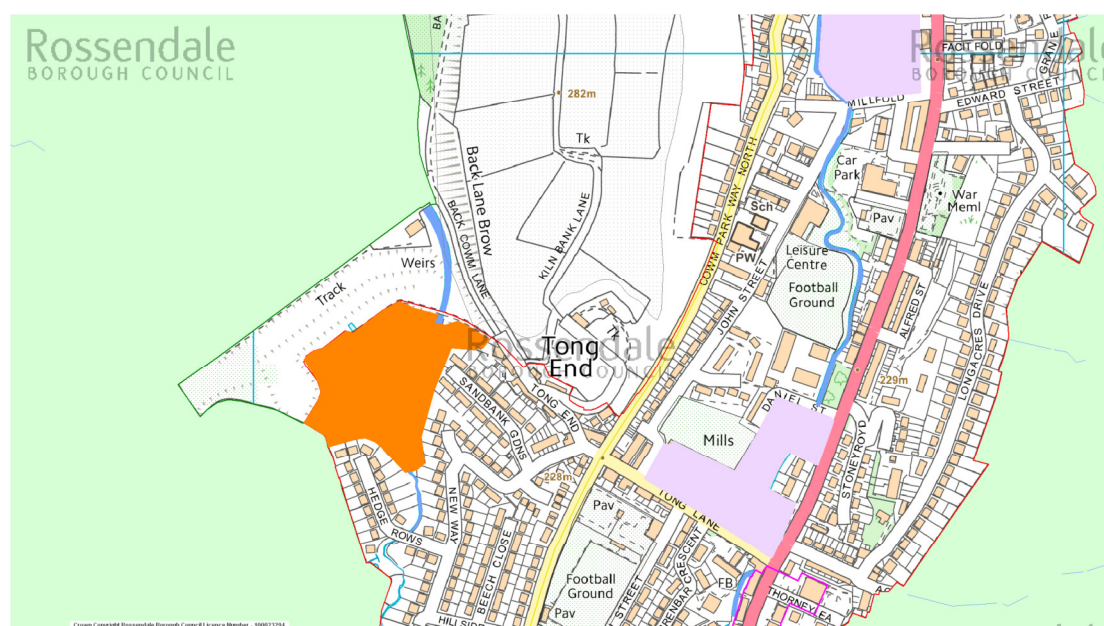
Rossendale has held meetings and corresponded with neighbouring authorities during the preparation of the Local Plan. As mentioned earlier, this included on the appropriateness of the Green Belt Review Methodology, its cross-border impacts and its findings. The Borough Council has also specifically asked neighbouring authorities whether they are able to accommodate any of the Borough's development needs. No neighbouring authority has indicated a willingness to accommodate any of the Housing and employment requirements for Rossendale. This is either because they are facing challenges in accommodating their own need; there isn't a functional linkage between Housing Market Areas or because they are at an early stage of Plan preparation. Bury, to the south of Rossendale, acknowledged the release of Green Belt land and has decided to await to see the Publication version before assessing the implications of this.

## 5. Proposed Green Belt changes

Green Belt changes are proposed in the following locations:

### Housing

**H69 Cowm Waste Water Treatment Works, Whitworth 20 homes 0.68 ha**

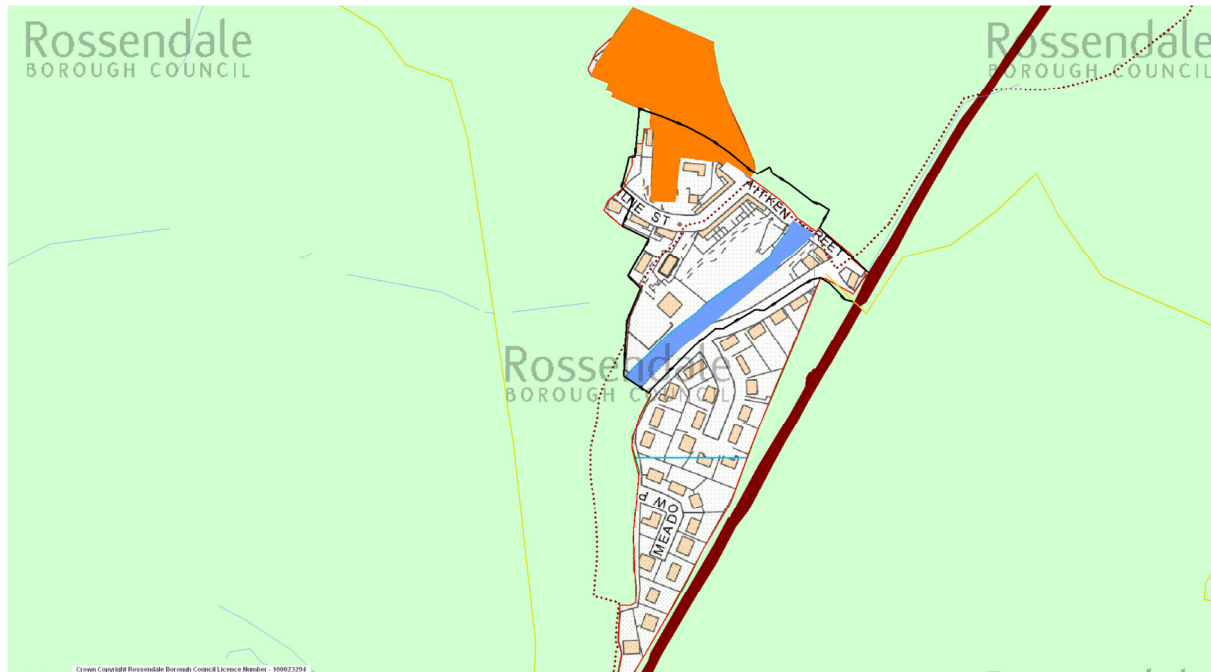


This small site is the location of the Treatment Works for Cowm Reservoir which is being decommissioned. It forms part of the dam wall. As well as being partly brownfield, the Green Belt Study (Parcel 69) considers the land suitable for release in Green Belt terms subject to development being low density housing of two stories or less with suitable planting. The existing access may need improving.

**H70 Irwell Vale Mill, Irwell Vale**

**45 homes**

**1.43 ha**

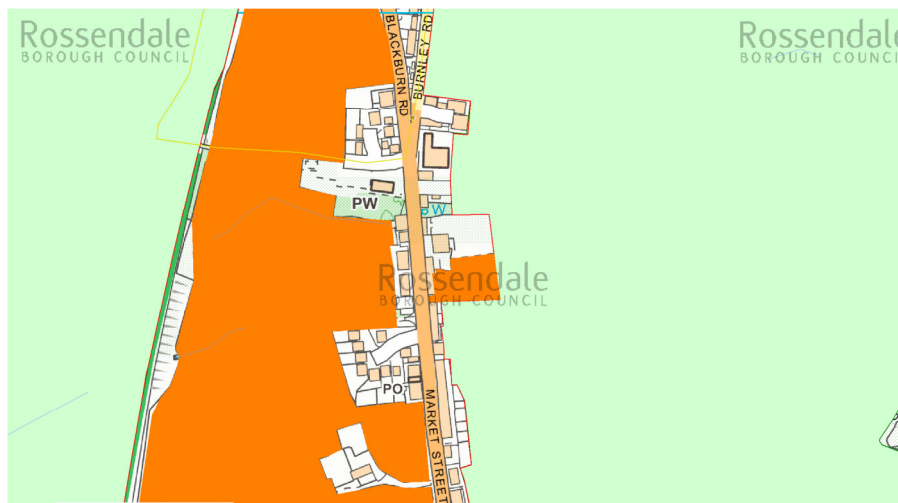


The Green Belt Study (Parcel 33) recommended that this parcel could be released subject to suitable design and strengthening planting. The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment identified significant Flood Risk and that the Exceptions Test should be applied. Environment Agency however support the development of the site as demolition of the Mill would create the opportunity to reconfigure the River Ogden at this point and reduce overall Flood Risk in Irwell Vale. Good landscaping would create the opportunity to create an enhanced entry into the Conservation Area.

**H71 Edenfield-Land east of Market Street**

**9 homes**

**0.31ha**

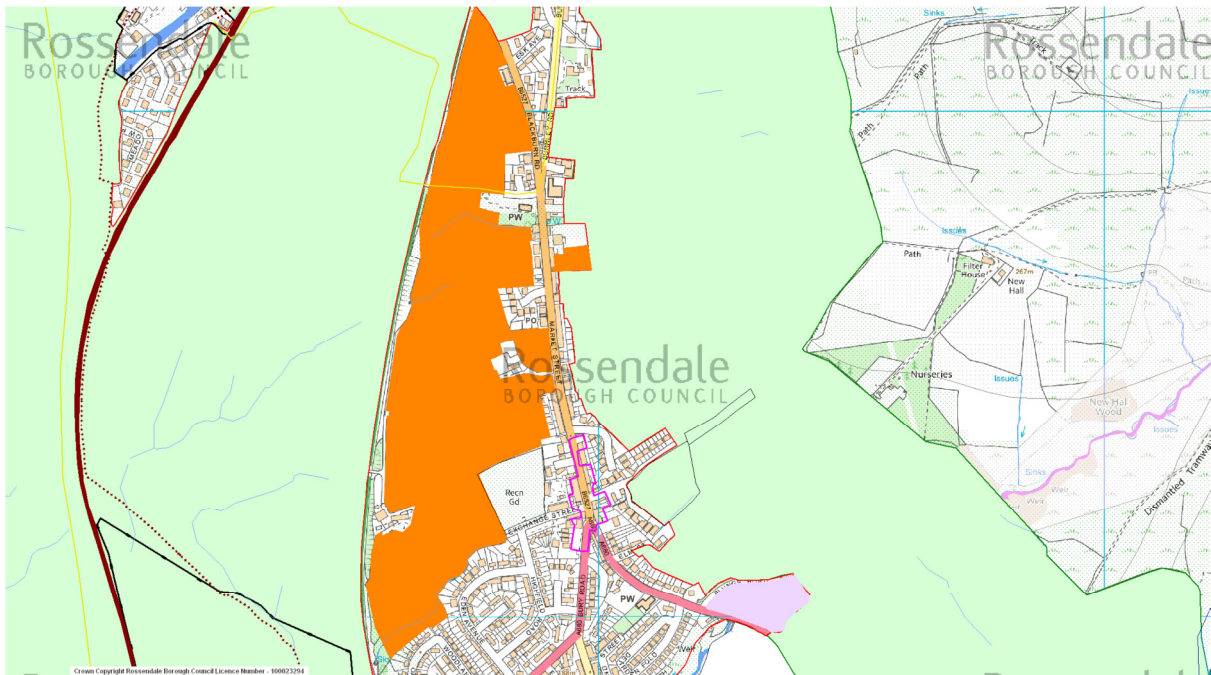




This is an existing brownfield site used for storage purposes, a part of which is in the Green Belt. The Green Belt Study examines this parcel of Green Belt (Parcel 41) as part of a much larger area east of Market Street in Edenfield and does not recommend release. However the brownfield nature of the site, its small scale and the opportunity to enhance a currently untidy area of land is considered to justify release.

**H72 Edenfield-west of Market Street**  
**15.25ha**

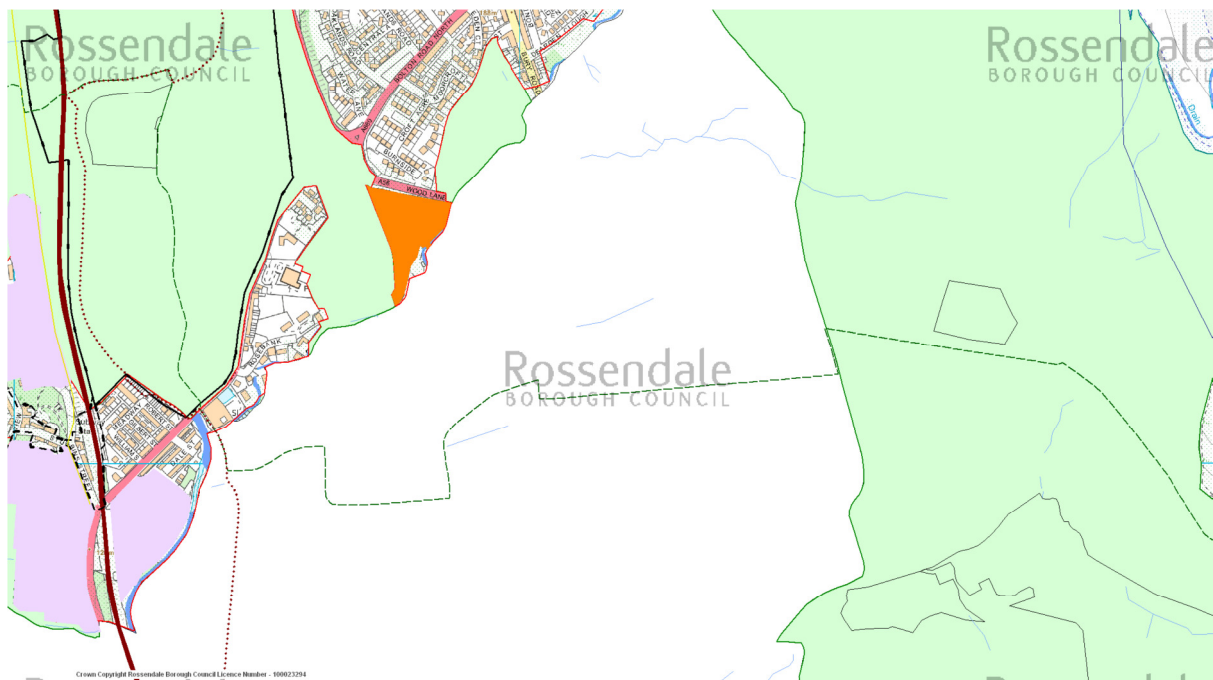
**400 homes**



This is by some distance the largest housing site in Edenfield and has received a significant amount of local opposition due to its scale, location, infrastructure and visual impacts.

The site forms Parcels 39, 43 and 44 in the Green Belt Study. This suggests that in Green Belt terms the site performs relatively weakly, partly because the site is contained by the A56 (T) which forms a strong physical and visual barrier. The Study recommends that the site be developed from south to north. The Landscape Study does not consider that the central area of the site is suitable for development.

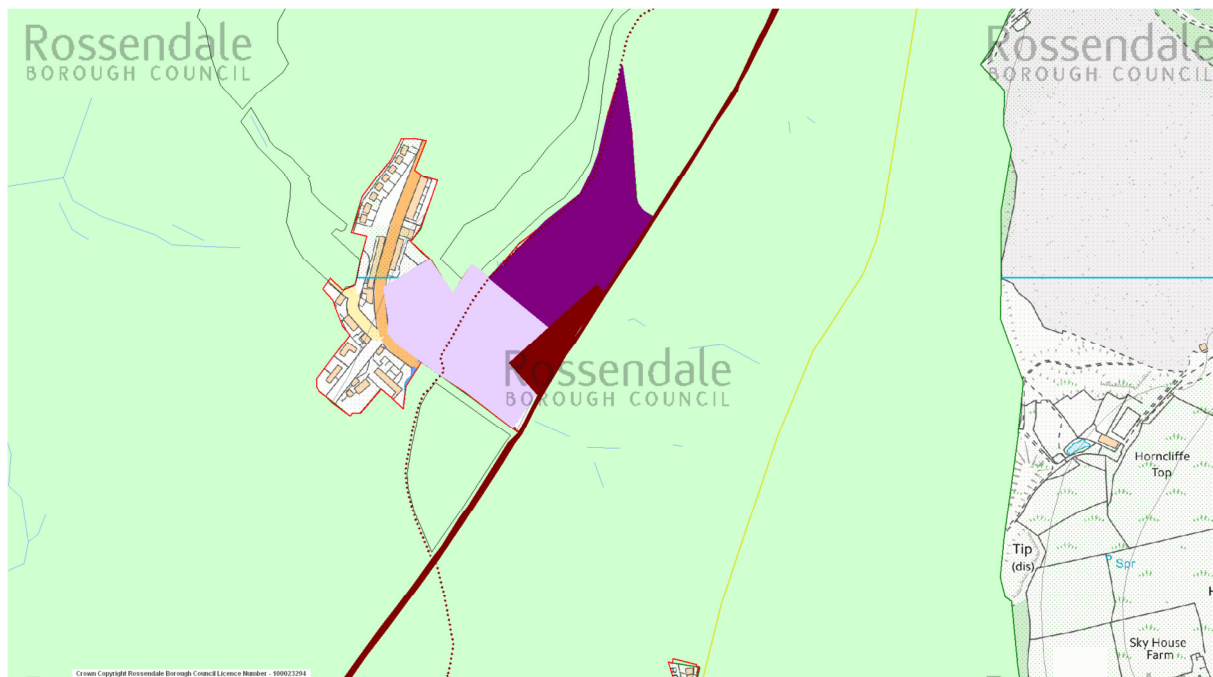
The site is in a viable location with willing landowners. It is recognised that a strategic Masterplan led approach is required, including landscaping and infrastructure provision, and this is set out in Policy HS3.



Edenwood Mill is an existing though dilapidated building in the Green Belt so its development could be acceptable in Green Belt terms. The wider area (Green Belt Study Parcel 49) does not recommend release of the area for housing though the landscape study considers release of this particular area would be acceptable. The existing access is extremely poor so creation of a new road through to Wood Lane would require a page through the Green Belt.

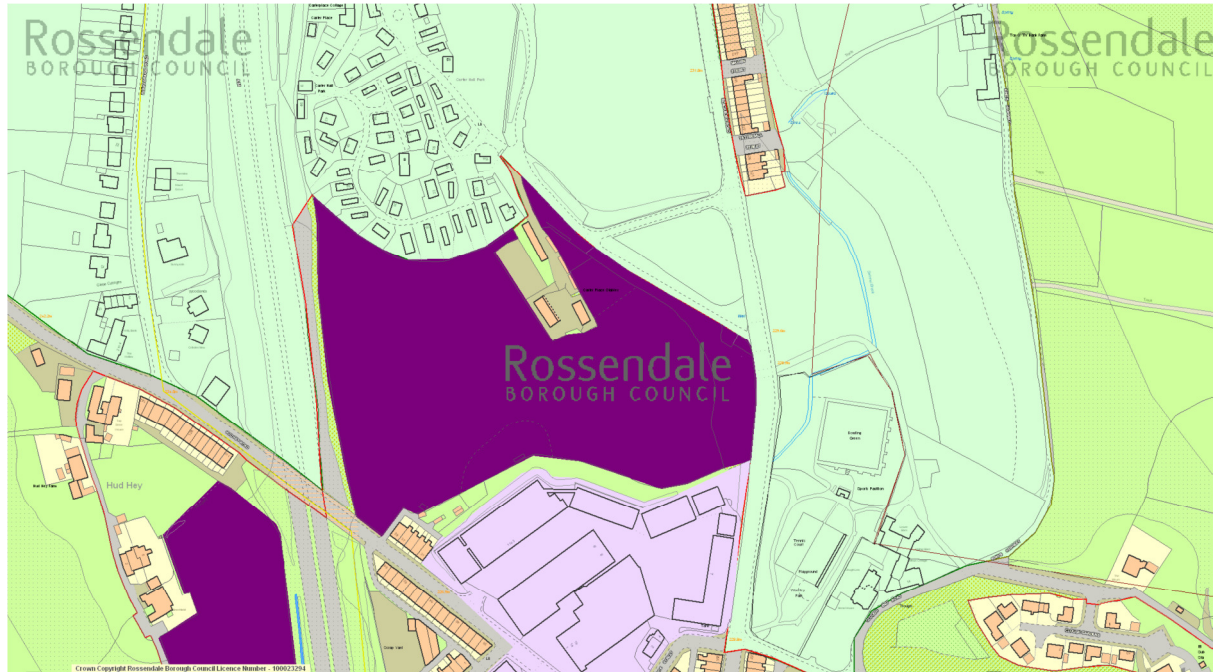
Employment

**NE1 Extension to Mayfield Chicks, Ewood Bridge 2.81 ha**



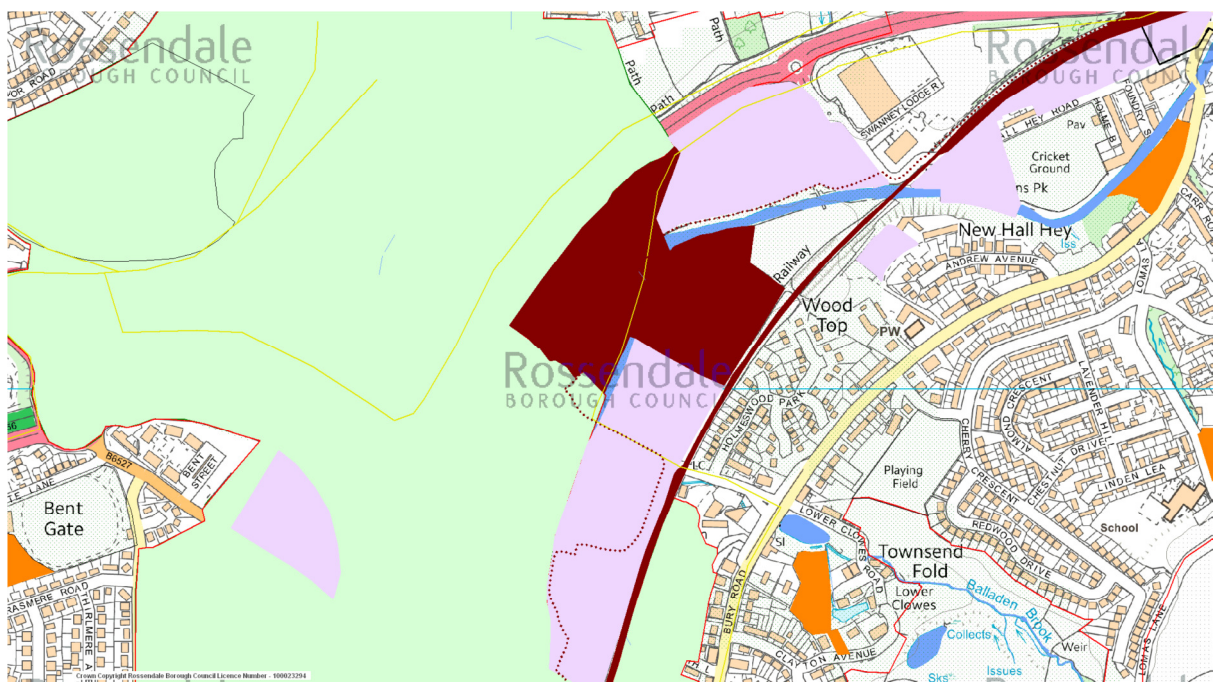
An existing employment area already exists to the south of the proposed Green Belt release. The Green Belt Study (Parcel 26) identifies that the parcel is suitable for release and would have defensible boundaries. There is an element of flood risk at the northern end of the site.

**NE2 Land north of Hud Hey near Acre 2.7 ha**



Land north of Hud Hey is not recommended for release in the Green Belt Study (Parcel 10) because of its role in separating Haslingden and Rising Bridge. However discussions with local developers indicate a strong interest in the site with its proximity to the A56 (T). There is also an overall shortage of suitable employment sites close to the A56.

**NE4 New Hall Hey Extension 5.2 ha**



The land at New Hall Hey (west of the river-the east side of the River is not Green Belt) is not recommended for release in the Green Belt Study (Parcel 18). It is also not supported by the Landscape Study. This is considered to be outweighed by the need to provide suitable employment land close to the A682 and A56 corridor acting as a Gateway site to Rossendale's town of Rawtenstall.

## 6. Changes to Green Belt from the Regulation 18 Consultation

A number of Green Belt sites put forward for development in the Regulation 18 consultation held in Autumn 2017 have not been taken forward.

In the 2017 consultation 22% of all proposed housing was located in the Green Belt; a total of 786 houses. Additional employment land in the Green Belt was proposed at Rising Bridge.

There was strong local opposition to proposed Green Belt development from local residents in Edenfield, primarily based on the scale of development and the impact on local infrastructure. Over 800 objections were received and a Community Neighbourhood Forum established.

Residents near Haslam Farm resubmitted a petition of over 800 signatures against Green Belt release and over 100 residents objected to proposed Green Belt sites at Tonacliffe. There were also resident objections to sites at Rising Bridge, Cowm, Green Lane and Hud Hey. Developers objected to the non-inclusion of Green Belt land at a range of locations including Kirkhill Rise near Haslingden; to the rear of the former Hospital; next to Rossendale Golf Club and around Edenfield.

Following the public consultation the Government published draft NPPF in March 2018. As a response to the new guidance on efficient use of land a detailed assessment was undertaken by the Council on whether there was an opportunity to release more brownfield land as well as the potential to increase densities.

In light of the comments received and additional work undertaken as a result of NPPF the Council looked again at the sites proposed for allocation in the Green Belt, including reviewing them again alongside the findings of the Green Belt Study. Wherever possible if a site allocation was contrary to the Green Belt Study it was removed from the proposed Plan. Former allocations that were removed from the Regulation 19 version of the Plan include:

- Haslam Farm (HS2:60) 21 houses
- Land at Snig Hole, Helmshore (HS2:76) 7 houses
- Land to west of Moorland View, Edenfield (HS2:71) 45 houses
- Rossendale Golf Club (HS2:79) 15 houses
- Land south of Quarry Street, Shawforth (HS2:104) 19 houses
- Land east of Tonacliffe School (HS2:106) 68 houses
- Site off Horsefield Avenue, Tonacliffe (HS2:109) 52 houses
  
- Land adjacent to Hollingate Farm (EMP2:38) 4.43ha

## 7. Exceptional circumstances

### 1. To meet housing land requirements through a balanced approach to supply

The Strategic Housing Land Area Assessment (SHLAA) for the Borough considered 361 sites during the main stage of assessment. This included a mix of different types of sites put forward by landowners; large and small; brownfield and greenfield; urban and rural. This was a “policy off approach” and did not consider Green Belt constraints. Of the sites that were considered as suitable, available and achievable 50 were located in the Green Belt. The presence of Green Belt was then factored in with other policy issues in final site selection.

The Strategic Housing Market Area Assessment (SHMA) examined a wide range of supply side factors as well as Housing need. In work that is reflected in the Viability Study it demonstrated that there was a high level of housing need in the east of the Borough and around Rawtenstall. There is a shortage of certain types of housing including suitable family housing and specialist housing for the elderly.

The Local Plan seeks to provide a good range of new housing in the Bacup area but also reflect the market demand in the west of the Borough. There is also a strong cross-border flow of households between Bury and South West Rossendale.

Communication with developers indicates that while there is a demand in Bacup for three and four bed market housing there are some sites where only social housing is viable. In contrast in the west of the Borough, where most Green Belt is located, there is very strong market demand.

As part of the Council’s approach to achieving a balanced approach to site provision in line with NPPF, considerable effort was put into identifying suitable brownfield sites and increasing densities. Twenty three brownfield sites are being brought forward (20 from the previous consultation and three new sites) providing 603 houses with an average density of 100 dwellings per hectare. Amongst those sites, one is situated within the Green Belt (Land east of Market Street, Edenfield) and another one is currently in the countryside (Loveclough Working Mens Club).

Eight mixed sites are proposed for allocation and could deliver 407 dwellings (at an average density of 34 dph). Three of these sites are currently wholly or partly within the Green Belt (Cwm Water Treatment Works, Irwell Vale Mill and Edenwood Mill), and one site is within the countryside (Land at Blackwood Road, Stacksteads).

Combining the brownfield sites and the mixed sites, they could deliver 1010 dwellings at an average density of 75 dph, or 1117 dwellings if density is increased to 85 dph (please see table 4)

The Green Belt sites that are being put forward in this consultation have been assessed against a range of policy issues identified by both the authority and by respondents to the Regulation 18 consultation. It is recognised in particular that the large site at Edenfield (H72) is contentious and that it does have impacts on infrastructure and the character of the settlement. It is

considered however that it does play an important role in contributing to a balanced housing supply in the following ways:

- It is located in the popular south west of the Borough where there is high demand.
- Given the substantial number of houses proposed in the East of the Borough the site helps to ensure a balanced supply between the east and west of the Borough
- The site is large enough to ensure a mix of housing types and sizes, including affordable provision in an area of the Borough where affordability ratios are highest

**Summary table of the proposed brownfield and mixed site allocations for regulation 19.**

<b>Proposed Brownfield and Mixed Housing Site Allocations (Regulation 19)</b>	Brownfield Sites (average density of 104 dph)	Mixed Sites (average density of 33 dph)	Combined brownfield and mixed sites (average density of 75 dph)	Combined brownfield and mixed sites (average density of 85 dph)
Number of sites	23	8	31	28
Number of dwellings	603	407	1010	1117

The Council has sought to prioritise brownfield land first, followed by Greenfield land in the urban area then in the countryside, followed by Greenbelt.

## **2. Address past under-delivery**

Delivery rates for housing in Rossendale have fluctuated considerably over the years but the general trend is one of delivery below Core Strategy targets. This would also translate into meeting the draft Standard Methodology figure of 212 houses

Year	Completions		Delivery against Core Strategy Average (of 247 p.a.)			Delivery against Core Strategy Trajectory		
	Actual Completions	Cumulative Completions	Annual Average of 247 houses	Cumulative annual average of 247 houses	Cumulative annual average undersupply	Core Strategy Trajectory	Cumulative Housing Trajectory	Cumulative under (-) and over (+) supply
2011/2012	119	119	247	247	-128	100	100	19
2012/2013	135	254	247	494	-240	170	270	-16
2013/2014	265	519	247	741	-222	221	491	28
2014/2015	224	743	247	988	-245	270	761	-18
2015/2016	122	865	247	1235	-370	270	1031	-166
2016/2017	192	1057	247	1482	-425	275	1306	-249
2017/2018	149	1206	247	1729	-523	275	1581	-375

The data indicates a worsening cumulative trend of under delivery, whichever measure is used. It is important that this is addressed within the Local Plan and a supply of attractive sites provided which are attractive to the market. As many of these areas are currently constrained by Green Belt designation it is important that some Green Belt release is considered as part of a balanced portfolio of sites that can reverse this trend.

### **3. Provision of a balanced employment portfolio in suitable locations for the market**

The Employment Land Study undertaken by Lichfields for the Council identified a need for 27ha of employment land within the Borough. Some of this can come through intensification of existing sites but there is still a need to find new premises. Much of the existing stock is in older, often multi-story premises with poor access to the Strategic Road Network.

Paragraph 12:5 of the Study states the following:

*“Whilst future economic growth is expected to be increasingly driven by the knowledge economy and service sector, there is still a strong need for new industrial premises. This is particularly the case in the west of the Borough where there is good access to the A56 and M66 Corridor. There has been an undersupply of industrial sites in recent years, and commercial agents reported that they have unmet enquiries. The Borough has a particular need for large sites around Rawtenstall and Haslingden with good access to the A56 and M66.”*

Over 50% of the working age population have jobs outside the Borough, in particular within Greater Manchester. Wage levels of residents working within the Borough are significantly lower than those which work outside. In order to maximise the potential for employment growth and to increase the opportunities for better paid jobs it has been necessary to look at sites in the A56 corridor.

Lichfields suggested a number of locations within the A56 corridor, most of which were in Green Belt. One large Green Belt site between the A682 and Tesco Haslingden was discounted for a range of reasons including issues with access; infrastructure easements within the site and the presence of an ecological corridor. Another Green Belt site at Hollin Gate Farm, Rising Bridge suggested by Lichfields was consulted on within the Regulation 18 Plan (site EMP2:38) but drew a range of objections, including in relation to the road access and is not being pursued. There was also doubt over whether the site would come forward as contact could not be made with the landowner.

Three Green Belt Employment sites (NE1, 2 and 4) are still being pursued within the current Plan. It is considered that in order to meet both the need for adequacy of supply and quality of supply that these sites should be brought forward.

### **4. To enable a balanced approach of housing and employment**

The Strategic Housing Market Area Assessment (SHMA) undertaken by Lichfields looked at a range of scenarios for housing growth in the Borough in examining the relevant figures for establishing an Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) figure for the Borough. These are listed below:

	<b>Dwellings per annum (2014-2034)</b>
Demographic Starting Point	183 dpa
Adjustments to Demographic-led Needs	220 dpa
Uplift for Market Signals?	242 dpa (+10%)
Employment Led Needs	269 dpa – 335 dpa
Affordable Housing Needs	527 / 1,070 dpa*
Uplift to demographic led needs for Affordable Housing (@10%)	266 dpa – 335 dpa
<b>Full Objectively Assessed Needs (rounded)</b>	<b>265 dpa – 335 dpa</b>

\*Based on an affordable housing net annual need of 158 dpa / 321 dpa at a delivery rate of 30% of all housing

The Consultants recommended a Full OAN figure of 265 houses per year as an appropriate figure. This took into account that if projected job growth by the consultants Experian is used then a minimum figure of 269 houses pa would be required. The figure that most closely relates to the Government Standard Housing Methodology figure of 212 houses pa is the adjustment to Demographic Led needs scenario above.

What the work undertaken by Lichfields demonstrates is that there is a correlation between employment provision and housing need. Failure to provide sufficient employment land to meet market need can have the effect of exacerbating the already high level of out-commuting.

## 5. Provide a good mix of housing types across the Borough

The 2011 census indicated that almost 44% of the housing stock in the Borough comprises of terraced properties with the majority of these being located in the east of the Borough as well as Haslingden. Over 50% of the housing stock is in Council Band A which indicates substantial levels of low value housing, in common with many East Lancashire authorities. There is a higher than average number of 2 bedroom terraced properties with an under-representation of semi-detached houses (25.3% of the stock).

Type	Sub-Type	Rossendale (2001)		Rossendale (2011)		Lancashire	North West	England
		N	%	N	%	%	%	%
House or Bungalow	Detached	5,223	19.3%	6,233	20.2%	21.9%	18.0%	22.3%
	Semi-detached	7,258	27.0%	7,819	25.3%	33.2%	36.4%	31.0%
	Terraced	12,063	44.5%	13,444	43.6%	31.5%	29.9%	24.3%
Flat, maisonette or apartment	Purpose-built block of flats	1,950	7.2%	2,634	8.5%	9.5%	12.7%	16.4%
	Part of a converted or shared house	204	0.8%	303	1.0%	2.1%	2.0%	3.8%
	In a commercial building	279	1.0%	326	1.1%	1.0%	0.8%	1.0%
Other	Caravan or other mobile/temp structure	128	0.5%	93	0.3%	0.8%	0.2%	0.4%
Total	All Occupied Household Spaces	27,108	100%	30,902	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: 2011 Census: KS402EW Accommodation Type - Households

Rossendale has a low amount of apartments and flats compared to the national average which is matched by a relatively low level of demand. Commercial agents indicate that existing mill conversions in the Borough are running at a level of around 75% occupancy.



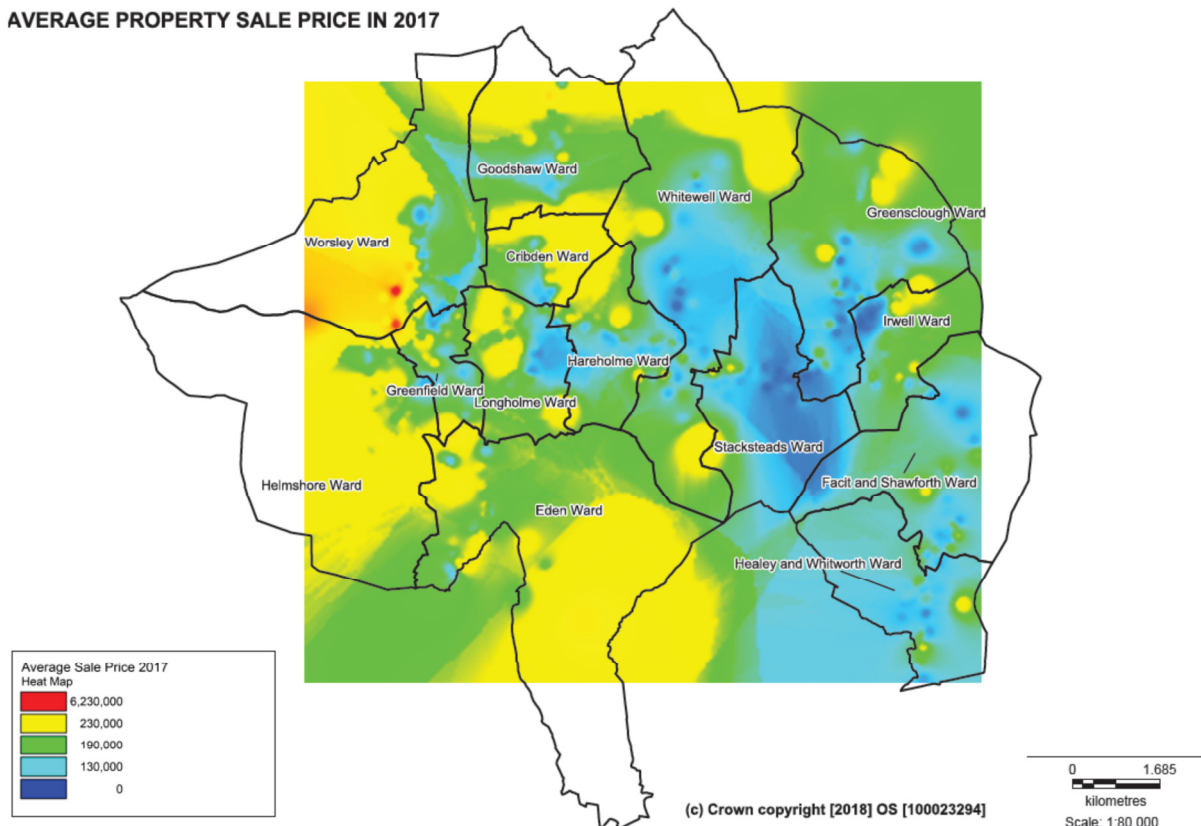
While some terraced stock does have private garden space there is a substantial proportion that does not. Young families, which are under-represented as a percentage of the population compared to the national average can therefore have limited choice on the housing ladder between entry level accommodation and more expensive detached properties.

In order to ensure that the housing market provides a range of accommodation to suit all levels of affordability it is important to provide a range of sites across the Borough. Within larger sites such as that proposed in the Green Belt in Edenfield it is possible to provide a range of housing types, including affordable provision.

## 6. Viability

Values for residential development in Edenfield and the south west of Rossendale where there is the largest amount of Green Belt are approximately £210m<sup>2</sup> (2016 prices). This is the highest in the Borough. For Whitworth the equivalent figure is £190m<sup>2</sup> which is also high while the relevant figure for Bacup and Stacksteads is £150m<sup>2</sup>. This indicates that the ability to deliver housing in Green Belt areas is likely to be very substantial as developers will be able to sell properties at a premium price. The high values achievable also mean that there is sufficient value in developments to fund affordable housing and also necessary infrastructure which may include extra school capacity. The map below shows a heat map of average property prices in 2017. The yellow and red areas are the most profitable indicating that the west of the Borough has higher property prices than the east.

**AVERAGE PROPERTY SALE PRICE IN 2017**



There are willing landowners involved in each of the housing sites proposed for release from the Green Belt so the dwellings proposed would be deliverable. There is also landowner support for the employment sites proposed.

#### **7. Other authorities are unable to meet housing/employment need**

The Council has met and corresponded with neighbouring authorities on a broad range of issues including Green Belt; housing and employment. Neighbouring authorities were all in agreement with the approach taken to the Green Belt Review and none are able to meet any of the Borough's housing and employment need. Indeed, a number of authorities, including Greater Manchester Combined Authority, have asked if Rossendale was able to meet any of their housing.

With neighbouring authorities being unable to accommodate any of the Council's need the authority is left with the situation that this must be met within its own borders.

#### **8. Improving the Green Belt**

The National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 138) recognises the importance of improving the quality of Green belt land and compensatory provision when land is lost. This is a new introduction to the planning system though the importance of Green Belt land for recreational purposes has been recognised for many years. Exactly how this will be implemented is still an area for consideration though the principle of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG's) has been implemented in some locations across the country. A level of ownership control or management responsibility is necessary to effectively implement a scheme that will improve public access and enhance the landscape. Such provision can in some cases be provided "on-site" but is more likely to be "off-site" and require management agreement. Working with a range of partners is likely to be necessary to effectively implement such a project

Policy HS3e) recognises that provision of improved access to Green Belt land will particularly important with respect to the land to the west of Market Street in Edenfield. The developers of this site will be required to identify how they will address this issue. The same principle will be expected in other Green Belt locations.

## **8. Conclusion**

Green Belt land serves a number of important purposes, most importantly in keeping land open and preventing settlements from merging into each other. In Rossendale it plays an important role in a number of ways including separating the settlements of Rawtenstall and Haslingden and Stacksteads/Waterfoot as well protecting the setting of Whitworth. The importance of the permanence of Green Belt is recognised.

A comprehensive review of Green Belt in Rossendale has not previously been undertaken for over 20 years. The Study by LUC provides a comprehensive review of the value of all parts of the Green Belt in Rossendale. This has played a key role in informing the suitability of parcels of Green Belt land for release.

The Council does not take Green Belt land release lightly and has looked at a wide range of alternative sites, especially through the SHLAA but also through the Employment Land Study. Options for maximising use of brownfield land and increasing density have been considered.

The importance of having a balanced housing and employment supply in a District with challenging geography and viability issues in the east of the Borough has influenced the approach to release of Green Belt land. In employment terms the A56 corridor is key to attracting new businesses but many potential sites are constrained by Green Belt. In order to provide sites that meet the Borough's employment land requirement it has therefore been necessary, following analysis, to look at Green Belt sites.

Delivery of new housing to meet the numbers identified in the Standard Methodology is fundamental to the Plan. A wide range of sites have been considered and the potential for brownfield land and higher densities given detailed examination. A number of Green Belt sites have been dropped since the previous consultation. Sites in Whitworth have been carried forward; two are partly brownfield land. The very large allocation at Edenfield is considered to be a strategic allocation that with application of masterplanning principles can be implemented in such a way as to minimise impacts on the wider Green Belt.

## Appendix A

# Criteria for Green Belt Boundary Changes (Boundary Change consultation 2013)

Changes to the **existing** Green Belt will only be made in **exceptional circumstances** where they are **small scale** and would not increase the overall area of the existing settlement (in combination with other Green Belt changes) by more than 5%, where the following criteria are satisfied:

- 1) **Existing Green Belt boundaries will only be amended where:**
  - a) Cartographic errors have occurred; **or**
  - b) The current boundary defining the extent of the Green Belt is un-identifiable, intermittent and/or indefensible on the ground
  
- 2) **Land will only be considered for removal from the Green Belt where:**
  - a) It would not significantly reduce the current distance between settlements and built up areas separated by Green Belt; **and**
  - b) The site perimeter is directly adjacent to the Urban Boundary; **and**
  - c) It would not hinder urban regeneration of derelict, vacant and/or previously-developed land in adjacent or neighbouring settlements having regard to:
    - i) The amount of derelict, vacant and/or previously developed land available within the Urban Boundary of adjacent or neighbouring settlements capable of meeting development needs; **and**
  - d) It would not adversely impact upon local and longer distance views or detrimentally affect the openness of the Green Belt; **and**
  - e) It would not be detrimental to the setting and/or special character of historic towns and settlements; **and**
  - f) It does not make a significant contribution to the beneficial use of the Green Belt.
  
- 3) **Additions to the existing Green Belt will only be considered where:**
  - a) Normal planning policies would not be adequate to maintain the permanence and openness of the existing Green Belt; **or**
  - b) Site specific circumstances have significantly changed since the boundaries were defined; **and in all cases**
  - c) It would maintain or increase the current distance between settlements and built up areas separated by Green Belt; **and**
  - d) It would assist the urban regeneration of derelict, vacant and/or previously-developed land in adjacent or neighbouring settlements; **and**
  - e) It would protect or enhance local and longer distance views and the openness of the Green Belt; **and**
  - f) It would preserve the setting and/or special character of historic towns and settlements; **and**
  - g) It would make a significant contribution to the beneficial use of the Green Belt.

Please note that removal from Green Belt does not necessarily mean that the land will be allocated or is suitable for development.