

Oxford Local Plan

Green Belt Assessment of Additional Sites

Oxford City Council

Final report

Prepared by LUC

December 2025

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 This chapter sets out the background to the assessment and a summary of the relevant context.

1.2 LUC was commissioned by Oxford City Council (OCC) in January 2025 to undertake an assessment of certain Green Belt sites around the City, utilising a methodology which responds to the recent changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF – December 2024) and to the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on identification of grey belt that was published in February 2025.

1.3 This study follows on from assessments of the harm of release of Green Belt sites around Oxford that were carried out by LUC in 2017 and in 2023. Those studies used a methodology that has now been superseded by one which reflects the recent NPPF and PPG changes, so the scope of this new analysis includes a review of the earlier assessment findings to identify whether any of the assessed sites would now meet the criteria for identification as grey belt.

1.4 Table 1.1 below lists the 25 sites which have been assessed in full to determine their contribution to each of the Green Belt purposes set out in the NPPF and, consequently, to identify any which meet the criteria for categorisation as grey belt. The sites are mapped on Figure 1.1.

1.5 Table 1.2 below lists the 17 sites assessed in 2017 and 2023 which remain (in whole or in part) in the Green Belt and which have been reviewed to establish whether they would meet the criteria for categorisation as grey belt. This is not a full reassessment but a reinterpretation of the assessment findings. Where development subsequent to the original assessment is considered to have had an impact on the assessment outcome this is noted. The sites are mapped on Figure 1.2.

Table 1.1: Sites assessed

HELAA Site Ref	Site Name	Total Area (ha)
025	Oxford Sports Park	13.9

HELAA Site Ref	Site Name	Total Area (ha)
114c	Marston Saints Sports Ground	0.98
163	Astons Eyt (#163a) and The Kidneys (#163b)	17.52
166	Banbury Road North Sports Club	3.48 (2.22 ha in GB - car park not included)
178	Boults Lane Recreation Ground	1.8
180	Brasenose Farm Allotments	1.91
183	Burgess Field (edge of Port Meadow)	35.52
188	Court Place Farm – East	1.52
189	Court Place Farm – West	9.98
194	Cutteslowe Park 1	2.79
195	Cutteslowe Park 2	13.51
196	Cutteslowe Park 3	11.5
197	Cutteslowe Park 4	7.95
198	Cutteslowe Park Allotments	2.38
209	Fairacres Road Allotments	0.79
251	Merton College Sports Ground	5.29
252	Merton Field	3.5
275	Part Trinity and Magdalen Sports Grounds – North	7.76

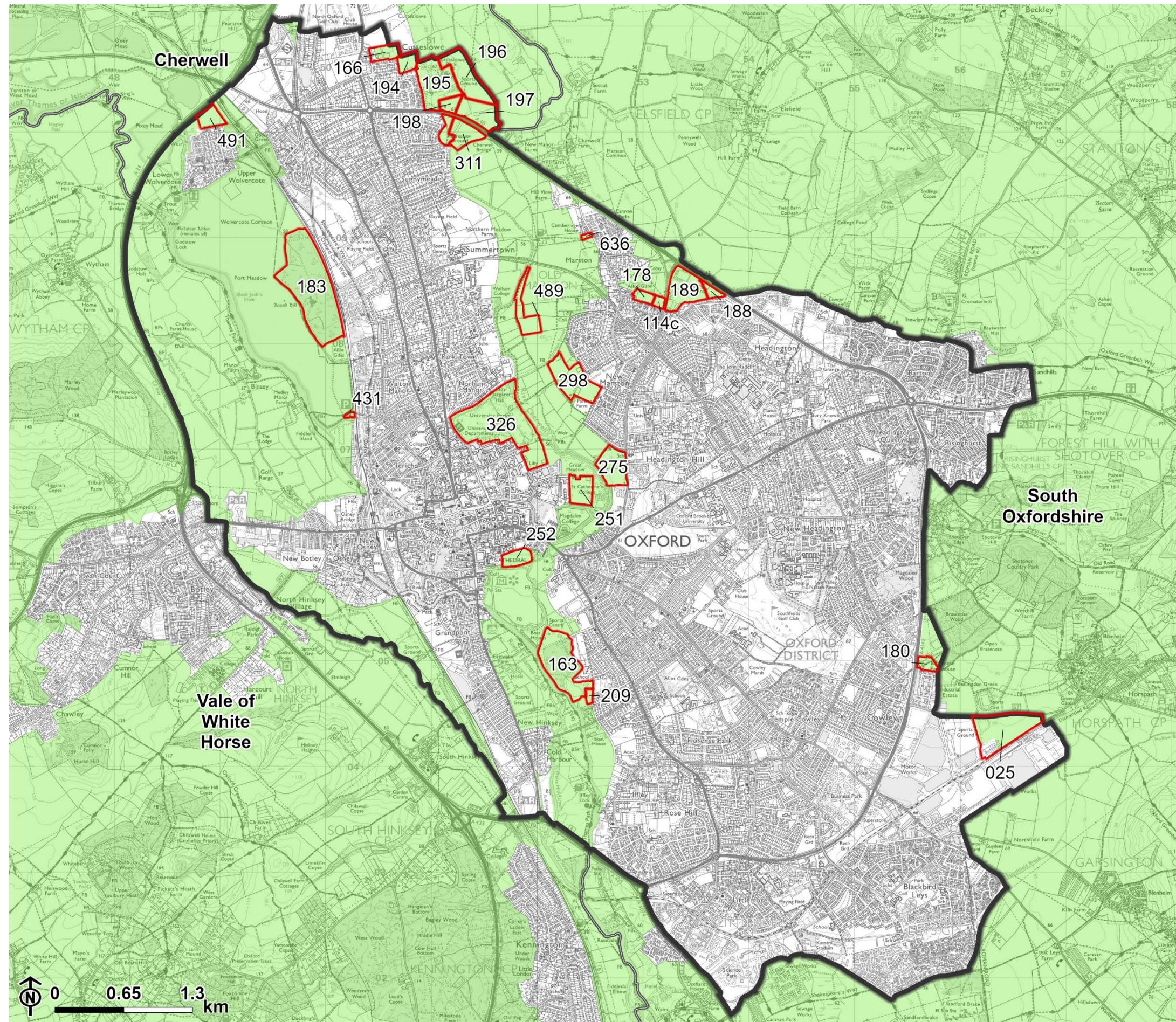
HELAA Site Ref	Site Name	Total Area (ha)
298	St Catherine's, Exeter, and Hertford Colleges Sports Grounds	10.86
311	Sunnymead Park	7.87
326	University Parks	33.02
431	Walton Well Road Car Park	0.318
489	Marston – gap between SSSI	5.13
491	East of Wolvercote Paper Mill site (Nixey's Field)	3.43
636	Land off Mill Lane	0.33

Table 1.2: Earlier assessment sites reviewed

HELAA Site Ref	Site Name	Total Area (ha)
112a-2	Cherwell Valley/Old Marston (includes Hill View Farm, Land at Mill Lane)	13.53
112b-2, 3, 4, 5, 6	Old Marston	56.4
114	Field at junction of Marsh Lane and Elsfield Road	1.70
114a	Land at Marston Brook (northern part)	3.56
114b	Showman's Field	2.18
115	Land west of Meadow Lane	2.34
118	Land rear of Wolvercote Social Club (small GB part)	0.52
136	Wildlife corridor at River Cherwell	0.44

HELAA Site Ref	Site Name	Total Area (ha)
144a	Wildlife Corridor at Marston Brook	1.39
144b	Wildlife Corridor at Marston Brook	0.84
151	Wildlife corridor at St Edward's Boatyard	0.76
153	Wildlife corridor at River Cherwell	1.96
157	Wildlife Corridor at Hill Farm	2.78
159	Wildlife corridor adjacent to Duke's Meadow	0.85
190-1	Court Place Farm allotments	3.51
190-2	Court Place Farm allotments	2.42
464	Land adjacent to Seacourt Park and Ride	37.25

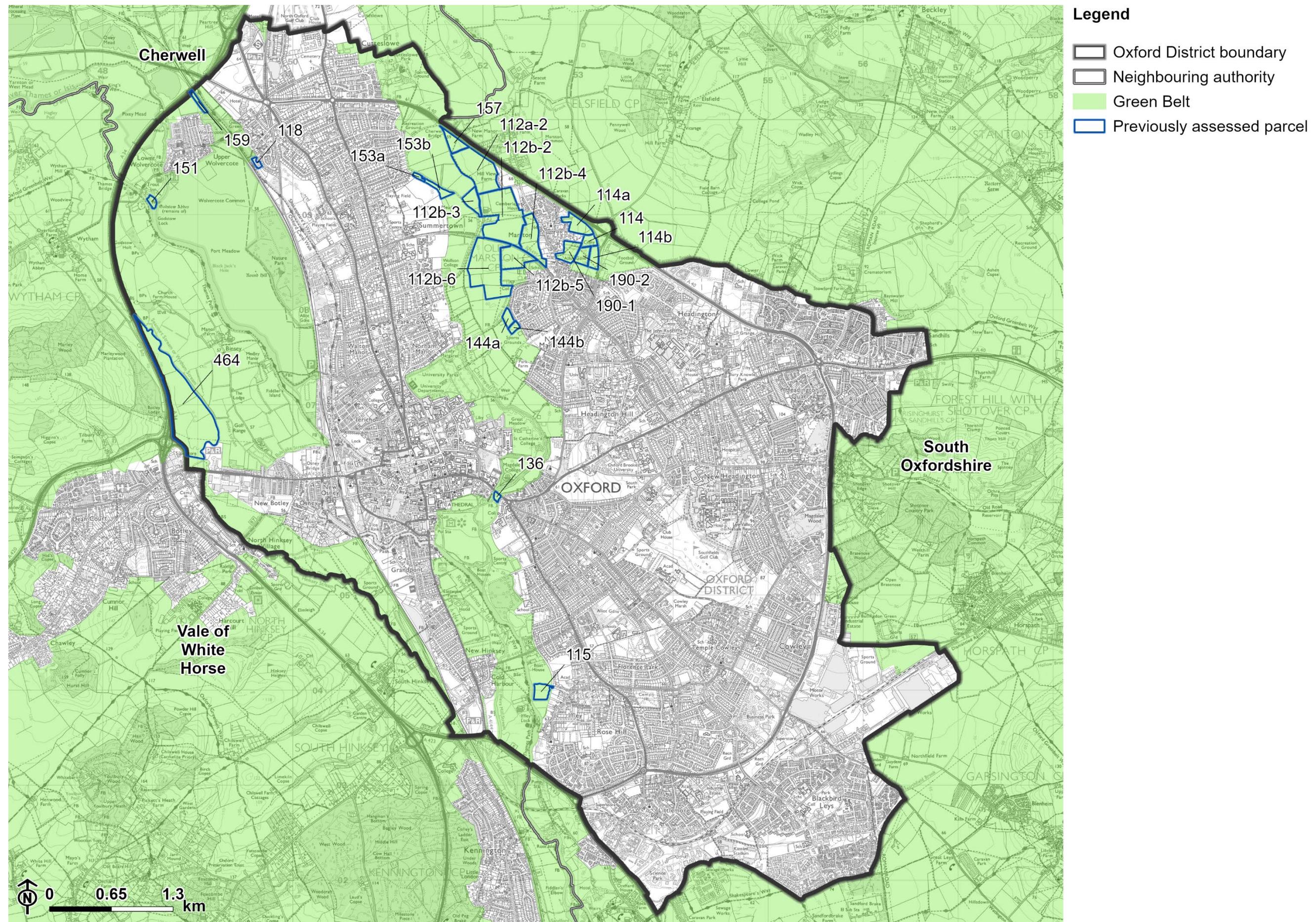
Figure 1.1: Location of assessed sites



Legend

- Oxford District boundary
- Neighbouring authority
- Green Belt
- Assessed site

Figure 1.2: Location of previously assessed sites



Created by LUC - 13254_Oxford_Site_Maps_Nov2025/13254_r0_Fig1-1_Fig1-2_GreenBeltContext 09/12/2025

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1.6 The rest of this report is set out as follows:

- Chapter 2 explains the planning policy context, with particular reference to the recent changes to the NPPF and PPG in relation to Green Belt.
- Chapter 3 sets out LUC's methodology used to assess the contribution of each site to each of the Green Belt purposes.
- Chapter 4 summarises the assessment findings for the 25 newly assessed sites.
- Chapter 5 provides comments on the findings of the 2019 and 2023 site assessments, in the context of the recent NPPF and PPG changes in relation to Green Belt, to identify whether any should be categorised as grey belt. It also concludes on whether development in any of these would have the potential to fundamentally undermine the purposes of the Green Belt in Oxford.
- Chapter 6 presents the detailed assessment findings for each of the 25 newly assessed sites, concluding on whether any should be categorised as grey belt and on whether development in any of these would have the potential to fundamentally undermine the purposes of the Green Belt in Oxford.

Chapter 2

Planning Policy Context

National Green Belt policy

2.1 Government policy on the Green Belt and grey belt is set out in Chapter 13 of the NPPF 'Protecting Green Belt Land' **[See reference 1]**.

Aims and purposes

2.2 Paragraph 142 of the NPPF states that 'the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence'.

2.3 This is elaborated in NPPF paragraph 143, which states that Green Belts serve five purposes, as set out below:

- 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.

Exceptional circumstances

2.4 The NPPF paragraph 145 states:

'Once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified through the preparation or updating of plans. Strategic policies should establish the need for any changes to Green Belt boundaries, having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so they can endure beyond the plan period.'

2.5 Paragraph 146 goes on to state that ‘where an authority cannot meet its identified need for homes, commercial or other development through other means...authorities should review Green Belt boundaries in accordance with the policies in this Framework and propose alterations to meet these needs in full, unless the review provides clear evidence that doing so would fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan.’

2.6 Paragraph 147 states that authorities must examine fully all other reasonable options for meeting its identified need for development before exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated. Notable reasonable alternatives include:

- ‘making as much use as possible of suitable brownfield sites and underutilised land;
- optimise the density of development in line with the policies in chapter 11 of this Framework, 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
- discuss with neighbouring authorities about whether they could accommodate some of the identified need for development, as demonstrated through the statement of common ground.’

2.7 Paragraph 148 states that ‘Where it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development, plans should give priority to previously developed land, then consider grey belt which is not previously developed, and then other Green Belt locations. However, when drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries, the need to promote sustainable patterns of development should determine whether a site’s location is appropriate with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework.’

Grey belt

2.8 ‘Grey belt’ is defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF as ‘land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. ‘Grey belt’ excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.’

Green Belt boundaries

2.9 Paragraph 149 states that when defining Green Belt boundaries, plans should:

- demonstrate consistency with Local Plan strategy, most notably achieving sustainable development;
- not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open;
- safeguard enough non-Green Belt land to meet development needs beyond the plan period; and,
- define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.

Very special circumstances

2.10 Paragraph 153 states that 'inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.'

Appropriate Green Belt development

2.11 New buildings are inappropriate in the Green Belt. There are exceptions to this which are set out in a closed list:

- 'buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
- the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;
- the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- limited infilling in villages;

- limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites);
- limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land (including a material change of use to residential or mixed use including residential), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt; and,
- Other forms of development provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These are:
 - i. mineral extraction;
 - ii. engineering operations;
 - iii. local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;
 - iv. the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;
 - v. material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); and
 - vi. development, including buildings, brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.

Golden Rules

2.12 The NPPF states that where major development involving the provision of housing is proposed within or on land released from the Green Belt the following contributions must be made:

- affordable housing – in line with specifications set out in more detail in the NPPF and PPG.
- necessary improvements to local or national infrastructure; and
- the provision of new, or improvements to existing, green spaces that are accessible to the public.

2.13 A development which complies with the Golden Rules should be given significant weight in favour of the granting of permission.

National Green Belt Planning Practice Guidance

2.14 The NPPF's Green Belt policies are supplemented by Planning Practice Guidance [See reference 2] on the role of the Green Belt in the planning system.

2.15 The PPG sets out:

- the key steps in a Green Belt assessment, including:
 - defining the location and scale of the assessment area,
 - evaluating contribution to the Green Belt purposes,
 - considering areas and assets lists in NPPF footnote 7,
 - identifying grey belt land, and
 - determining if proposals would fundamentally undermine the five Green Belt purposes (taken together) of remaining Green Belt in the plan area;
- key considerations in assessing the contribution Green Belt land makes to Green Belt purposes A, B and D when identifying grey belt land;
- what release or development of Green Belt land would fundamentally undermine the remaining Green Belt in the plan area;
- how to determine proposals on potential grey belt land;
- guidance on identifying sustainable locations in the Green Belt;
- golden rules for housing development including, how major housing development should contribute to accessible green space; and,
- how to consider the potential impact of development on the openness of the Green Belt.

2.16 The PPG makes it clear that local planning authorities, or appropriate groups of local planning authorities should produce a Green Belt assessment during the preparation or updating of all Local Plans, and Spatial Development Strategies that set the strategic context for the release of land.

Assessing Green Belt land to identify grey belt land

2.17 Authorities must identify grey belt land as part of the necessary review and alteration of Green Belt boundaries in order to:

- sustainably prioritise it over other Green Belt locations through the plan-making process, and
- help determine planning applications on Green Belt land in line with paragraph 155.

2.18 The guidance is clear that ‘where grey belt is identified, it does not automatically follow that it should be allocated for development, released from the Green Belt, or for development proposals to be approved in all circumstances. The contribution Green Belt land makes to Green Belt purposes is one consideration in making decisions about Green Belt land. Such decisions should also be informed by an overall application of the relevant policies in the area’s adopted Plan and the NPPF’, including whether:

- development is sustainably located;
- whether it would meet the ‘Golden Rules’ contribution (where applicable); and
- whether there is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed.

The appropriate scale of Green Belt assessments

2.19 Authorities must identify an appropriate scale of Green Belt assessment that delivers clear variations in contribution to the Green Belt purposes, assessing all Green Belt land within a Plan area in the first instance and responding to local circumstances. Local circumstances may dictate, for example, the need for smaller assessment areas in areas where there is greater variation in contribution to the Green Belt purposes, or greater potential for sustainable development, such as around existing settlements or public transport hubs or corridors.

2.20 Green Belt land not judged to strongly contribute to any one of Green Belt purposes A, B and D has the potential to be identified as grey belt land. The assessment of variations in contribution to Green Belt purposes A, B and D must be informed by the criteria below.

2.21 Villages should not be defined as large built-up areas, towns or historic towns. Where there are no historic towns in or adjacent to a plan area, it may not be necessary to provide detailed assessments against Purpose D.

Grey belt assessment criteria

2.22 The PPG sets out illustrative criteria that should be considered when assessing the contribution of land to Green Belt Purposes A, B and D.

Purpose A – to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

2.23 Green Belt land contributing **strongly** to Purpose A is likely to be:

- adjacent or near to a large built-up area;
- free of existing development;
- lack physical features in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development; and,
- would result in an incongruous pattern of development (such as an extended 'finger' of development into the Green Belt).

2.24 Green Belt land contributing **moderately** to Purpose A is likely to be adjacent or near to a large built-up area, and include one or more features that weaken contribution, such as (but not limited to):

- having physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development; and/or
- contain or be partially enclosed by existing development, such that new development would not result in an incongruous pattern of development; and/or
- being subject to other urbanising influences.

2.25 Green Belt land contributing **weakly** to Purpose A is likely to be:

- not adjacent to or near to a large built-up area; or,
- adjacent to or near to a large built-up area, but containing or being largely enclosed by significant existing development.

Purpose B – to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

2.26 Green Belt land contributing **strongly** to Purpose B is likely to be:

- free of existing development;

- form a substantial part of a gap between towns; and
- would likely result in the loss of visual separation of towns.

2.27 Green Belt land contributing **moderately** to Purpose B is likely to be located in a gap between towns, and include one or more features that weaken contribution, such as (but not limited to):

- form a small part of a gap between towns; or
- would not result in the loss of visual separation between towns, for example due to the close proximity of structures, natural landscape elements or topography that preserve visual separation.

2.28 Green Belt land contributing **weakly** to Purpose B is likely to:

- not form part of a gap between towns; or,
- form only a very small part of a gap between towns, without making a contribution to visual separation.

Purpose D – to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

2.29 Green Belt land contributing **strongly** to Purpose D is likely to:

- be free of existing development;
- form part of the setting of a historic town; and
- make a considerable contribution to the special character of a historic town, for example, as a result of being within, adjacent to, or of significant visual importance to the historic aspects of a town.

2.30 Green Belt land contributing **moderately** to Purpose D is likely to form part of the setting and/or contribute to the special character of a historic town, and include one or more features that weaken their contribution, such as (but not limited to):

- being separated to some extent from historic aspects of the town by existing development or topography;
- containing existing development; or
- not having an important visual, physical, or experiential relationship to historic aspects of a town.

2.31 Green Belt land contributing **weakly** to Purpose D is likely to not form part of the setting of a historic town, with no visual, physical, or experiential connection to the historic aspects of a town.

Applying NPPF footnote 7 to the definition of Grey Belt land

2.32 Grey belt land cannot be defined on Green Belt land covered by or affecting other NPPF footnote designations that 'would provide a strong reason for refusing and restricting development'. In such locations, it may be necessary to only 'provisionally identify such land as grey belt in advance of more detailed specific proposals'.

Assessing the impact of Green Belt release or development on the remaining Green Belt in the Plan area

2.33 The PPG states that a Green Belt assessment should not be limited to the impact of release or development of grey belt land but any Green Belt land, and requires consideration of fundamental impact to all five Green Belt purposes (taken together) to all remaining Green Belt across the plan area as a whole.

2.34 Such Green Belt locations should only be discounted for release or development where they would 'affect the ability of all the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan from serving all five of the Green Belt purposes in a meaningful way.'

Identifying sustainable locations in a Green Belt

2.35 Whether reviewing Green Belt boundaries or determining applications for development in the Green Belt, the need to promote sustainable patterns of development should determine whether a site's location would be appropriate for the kind of development proposed. Consequently, where grey belt land is not in a location that is or can be made sustainable, development on this land is inappropriate.

2.36 The sustainability of specific locations should be determined in light of local context and site or development-specific considerations; however, authorities should seek to maximise sustainable transport solutions in line with NPPF paragraphs 110 and 115.

Golden Rules for Green Belt development

2.37 Green Belt developments must contribute to accessible green spaces. Accessible green spaces are areas of vegetation set within a landscape or townscape, often including blue space, which are available for public use free of charge and with limited time restrictions.

2.38 Contributions to accessible green space should consider delivering:

- Good quality green spaces which are safe; visually stimulating and attractive; well-designed; sustainably managed and maintained; and seek to meet the needs of the communities which they serve.
- Include safe active travel routes which should be served by public transport and infrastructure (such as footpaths and bridleways).
- Nature recovery set out within the relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategies, providing greater benefit to nature and contributing to the delivery of wider environmental outcomes.
- Arrangements for the long-term maintenance of green spaces.

2.39 Further guidance on Golden Rules for Green Belt development is set out in viability guidance, which states site specific viability assessment should not be undertaken or taken into account for the purpose of reducing developer contributions, including affordable housing. The government intends to review this Viability Guidance and will be considering whether there are circumstances in which site-specific viability assessment may be taken into account, for example, on large sites and Previously Developed Land (PDL).

2.40 Prior to development plan policies for affordable housing being updated in accordance with paragraph 67 in the National Planning Policy Framework, the amount of affordable housing contributions required are subject to an overall cap of 50% (or more if developer wishes).

Impact of development on the openness of the Green Belt

2.41 Where necessary, assessments of the impact of proposals on the openness of the Green Belt must be tailored to the circumstances of the case and may include consideration of a proposals:

- spatial volume, i.e. impact on spatial openness;
- visual impact, i.e. impact on visual openness;

- the duration of development, and its remendability; and,
- the degree of activity, such as traffic generation.

Harm of not inappropriate development to the Green Belt and its openness

2.42 If development is on previously developed land (PDL) or grey belt and is not inappropriate development, substantial weight does not need to be given to any harm to the Green Belt, including to its openness (NPPF footnote 55). This is justified by the definition of the land as PDL or grey belt, having already considered its impacts on openness or to Green Belt purposes.

Local Green Belt Policy

2.43 Policy G3 of the Oxford Local Plan 2036 seeks to protect the Oxford Green Belt, stating that “proposals for development in the Green Belt will be determined in accordance with national policy” and that “planning permission will not be granted for inappropriate development within the Green Belt, in accordance with national policy”.

2.44 The supporting text for Policy G3 notes that “Green Belt is a strategic planning policy tool designed primarily to prevent the spread of development and the coalescence of urban areas” and that “the Oxford Green Belt offers important protection to the historic setting of the city and it must continue to be protected where it is important to this aim”.

Chapter 3

Assessment Methodology

3.1 This chapter provides an explanation of the assessment methodology, which has taken into consideration recent changes to national planning policy and the February 2025 PPG relating to the identification of grey belt.

Assessment areas and ratings

3.2 The PPG states that authorities must identify an appropriate scale of Green Belt assessment that delivers clear variations in contribution to the Green Belt purposes. The boundaries of the sites identified by OCC (see Table 1.1 above) provided the initial assessment areas, but the methodology allowed for these areas to be subdivided into smaller parcels if required to reflect identified variations in contribution to the Green Belt purposes. When considering whether parcels should be subdivided to reflect localised variations in contribution, this was only done where it would not result in a parcel being less than one hectare in area. Some sites are already smaller than one hectare, in which case the parcel size reflects the size of the site.

3.3 The PPG is not prescriptive in terms of the definition of rating scales but, for the purposes of identifying grey belt land, it provides illustrative examples of features which would characterise 'strong', 'moderate' and 'weak' levels of contribution to the relevant Green Belt purposes (A, B and D).

3.4 It is recognised that the NPPF's definition of grey belt is broad, but assessed growth needs and the need for development to be in sustainable locations may still require consideration of the release of Green Belt land that does not meet the definition for grey belt. The assessment provides ratings against each Green Belt Purpose on a 4-point scale of 'very strong', 'strong', 'moderate' or 'weak'. The first two, where applicable to Purposes A, B or D, identify land which does not meet the definition of grey belt (given that land which performs strongly or very strongly in relation to Purpose C alone would still be deemed grey belt). The splitting of land which doesn't perform strongly into two levels – moderate and weak – is in line with the PPG guidance on grey belt and will help, alongside sustainability considerations, to inform finer judgements as to what land should be considered for release from the Green Belt.

NPPF footnote 7 areas and assets

3.5 The Government's definition of grey belt land 'excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.' The PPG states in such locations, it may be necessary to only 'provisionally identify such land as grey belt in advance of more detailed specific proposals' (PPG Paragraph: 006 Reference ID: 64-006-20250225).

3.6 Footnote 7 states 'The policies referred to are those in this Framework (rather than those in development plans) relating to: habitat sites **[See reference 3]** (and those sites listed in paragraph 194) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, a National Landscape, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets **[See reference 4]** (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 75 **[See reference 5]**); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.' Examples of footnote 7 areas or assets include (but are not limited to):

- Statutory nature designations (habitats sites): SAC, SPA, SSSI;
- Sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on habitats sites;
- Irreplaceable habitats: ancient woodland, blanket bog;
- Scheduled Monuments;
- Registered Parks and Gardens;
- Registered Battlefields;
- Flood Zones 2, 3a and 3b.

3.7 These areas and assets have not been excluded from assessment, but their location and extent are mapped alongside the findings of the Green Belt contribution assessment. Green Belt land that does not contribute strongly to Green Belt purposes A, B and D and overlaps with these footnote 7 areas and assets can only provisionally be identified as grey belt land. Further detailed work would need to be undertaken by local planning authorities (as necessary through the plan-making and development management processes) to establish the effects of more detailed specific proposals on them.

Assessment of Contribution

3.8 The analysis process has assessed the relationship between urban and open land, including the identification of any significant variations in this within a site. A series of bullet points, under the heading 'description', sets out these findings in a consistent manner for each identified parcel:

- The first bullet point comments on boundary features between the urban area and the parcel, giving an indication of their strength. Features such as woodlands, major roads and rivers would typically be considered strong boundary features, and consistency of a distinctive boundary feature over distance also adds to its strength. Where a site does not lie directly adjacent to an urban area there may be a number of 'layers' of boundary feature to consider. Hedgerows (unless containing a strong component of mature trees), garden fence-lines or minor roads (unless combined with strong hedgerows) are considered weak boundaries.
- The second bullet point notes any changes in landform which strengthen the sense of separation from the urban area. A sharp change in slope or crossing of a ridgeline are examples of changes in landform which would significantly increase sense of separation from an urban area.
- The third bullet point summarises the degree of urbanising influence from land outside of the Green Belt, taking into consideration the above plus any other relevant factors, such as the scale of development in the settlement and the distance between the parcel and the settlement edge.
- The fourth bullet point comments on the extent of development and/or activity in the Green Belt that would increase urbanising influence.
- The final bullet point notes the relationship between the parcel and the wider Green Belt, with reference to visual connectivity and the role of natural or built features in limiting this relationship.

3.9 The paragraphs below identify the factors relevant to the assessment of each of the Green Belt purposes and detail the assessment outputs specific to each purpose.

Purpose A - to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

Grey belt PPG for Purpose A

3.10 The following features in combination are identified as being illustrative of a 'strong' contribution:

- Proximity to a large built-up area.
- Absence of existing development.
- Lack physical features in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development.
- A location which, if developed, would form an incongruous pattern in relation to the large built-up area.

3.11 The presence of one or more of the following features, in addition to being near to a large built-up area, is identified as being illustrative of a 'moderate' contribution to Purpose A:

- Presence of, or containment by, development such that any new development would not result in an incongruous pattern of development.
- Being subject to other urbanising influences.
- Having physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development.

3.12 Either lack of proximity to a large built-up area or the presence of, or containment by, significant existing development, is identified as being illustrative of a 'weak' contribution to Purpose A.

Purpose A definitions

3.13 The PPG uses several terms which require further definition to be applied as part of the assessment process. These are addressed in the paragraphs below.

'Large built-up area'

3.14 The PPG states that “villages should not be considered large built-up areas”. The implication of this is that towns or cities are large built-up areas. On this basis, Oxford is defined as a large built-up area.

'Near to'

3.15 It is stated that Purpose A is relevant to land which is “adjacent or near to” a large built-up area. The extent to which land in the vicinity of a large built-up area relates to that settlement is a question of judgement rather than application of a fixed distance, or a distance proportional to the size of the large built-up area – although the latter is a useful starting point for considering what area might be deemed ‘near’.

3.16 The judgement is influenced by the nature of the land around the large built-up area, including the presence of features which create a sense of physical and/or visual separation from the settlement – such as major roads or rivers, woodlands or changes in landform – and the presence of features which weaken the sense of separation – such as major roads connecting to the settlement or the presence of urbanising development and activity within the Green Belt.

3.17 Although villages are not large built-up areas, a village that lacks very strong separation from a large built-up area is considered a ‘satellite’ settlement, the land around which still has some association with the large built-up area and therefore makes some contribution to Purpose A. Around Oxford, Botley, Kennington, Wolvercote and Horspath would all be considered satellite settlements.

'Free of existing development'

3.18 ‘Existing development’ is not considered to include the appropriate development ‘exceptions’ listed in NPPF paragraph 154, such as agricultural buildings, which case law generally considers does not affect the openness of the Green Belt. ‘Free of’ is not considered to mean that there is no existing inappropriate development at all: the influence of existing inappropriate development is judged on the basis of a combination of an area’s visual and spatial openness, relative to the scale at which the assessment is being undertaken.

'Physical features in reasonable proximity...that could restrict and contain development'

3.19 Many features could be considered to define the edge of a developed area, including features created in association with new development, but the concept of 'restricting' and 'containing' development is considered to relate to the extent to which new development would be prevented from having a significant urbanising influence on land immediately beyond by intervening physical features. Urbanising influence is one of the factors identified in the PPG as being indicative of a 'moderate' contribution to Purpose A. If land which currently makes a 'strong' contribution to Purpose A would, as a result of increased urbanising influence, make a weaker contribution, such that it became grey belt, then development would not be deemed to 'restrict and contain'.

3.20 For the purposes of a strategic assessment of existing Green Belt land, this judgement is based on existing physical features in reasonable proximity to existing urban areas, without consideration of potential strengthening of boundaries that could be associated with particular development proposals. Physical features that restrict and contain development would typically be:

- Strong natural landscape elements such as woodlands or changes in topography, which limit views or create a stronger sense of separation between urban and open land; or
- Natural or manmade features that present a physical barrier to movement, and which have some visual screening role, such as tree-lined rivers or canals, motorways and railway lines with embankments, or main roads with strong boundary vegetation.

3.21 Such features are not considered to restrict and contain development if they emanate out from a large built-up area.

3.22 As assessment parcels have been defined to reflect variations in contribution to the Green Belt purposes, physical features that would restrict and contain development would typically be parcel boundaries and, therefore, in 'reasonable proximity'. The question of the extent to which a physical feature that is some distance away would limit impact on undeveloped Green Belt land is more likely to arise when harm of the release of a specific site is being addressed.

'Enclosed by existing development' ('partially' or 'largely')

3.23 The extent to which Green Belt land can be considered to be enclosed by development is a judgement which depends on:

- the strength of the existing development's urbanising influence on that land;
- the strength of the Green Belt land's physical and/or visual relationship with the wider countryside;
- the physical proportion of the Green Belt area's boundary which adjoins urban development (whether that is inset from the Green Belt or washed-over by it).

3.24 Strong urban edge boundary features which limit urbanising influence can limit a sense of enclosure or containment by adjoining existing development, as long as there is some sense of connectivity with the wider countryside.

Conversely, a lack of physical and visual connectivity with the wider countryside can increase the sense of enclosure, even if urban development around a Green Belt area is not strongly visible.

'Other urbanising influences'

3.25 Separate to the consideration of existing development within the Green Belt, 'other urbanising influences' could be land use or activity in a parcel which is generally associated with urban areas, or it could be an urbanising influence from inset / non-Green Belt development.

3.26 PPG predating the recent grey belt guidance refers to activity in the Green Belt, such as traffic, having an impact on openness. In some cases, there may be land uses which, although appropriate and not therefore affecting openness, still have an association with the urban area that constitutes a degree of urbanising influence. Sport and recreational playing fields would be an example of this.

3.27 The strength of urbanising influence associated with the inset urban area will depend on a number of factors, including physical boundary features, the scale/visibility of development in the urban area, landform change, distance from the existing urban edge and strength of relationship with the wider countryside.

‘An incongruous pattern of development’

3.28 The PPG cites an extended “finger” of development into the Green Belt as an example of an incongruous pattern of development. Where parcels are defined to reflect variations in contribution to the Green Belt purposes they are unlikely to be finger-like in form, so this scenario would more typically relate to the assessment of specific development proposals. There may, however, be smaller ‘satellite’ settlements around large built-up areas which lie close enough to them to be at risk of merger were development to reduce separation between them. Significant loss of separation in such a gap, could in effect lead to the satellite settlement becoming an extended finger of the large built-up area.

3.29 Any breaching of a significant existing physical feature, or a significant combination of adjacent physical features, that currently serve to restrict and contain the existing large built-up area, would also form an incongruous pattern of development. Examples of this sort of step-change in settlement form would be development crossing a major retaining and containing road, railway or river, or extending out from a valley onto a hilltop into open Green Belt land that does not relate well to existing development.

Purpose A assessment outputs

3.30 The contribution of a parcel to Purpose A is determined in line with the illustrative factors listed in the PPG guidance, but with an additional ‘very strong’ level of contribution. Factors which can tip a ‘strong’ rating into the ‘very strong’ category include:

- A very strong sense of separation from the urban area, with no notable urbanising influence from it; or
- A significant impact on the separation of a satellite settlement from a large built-up area, resulting in a very incongruous impact on the settlement pattern.

3.31 The supporting analysis of contribution to Purpose A is set out in parcel assessment outputs under four bullet points. These draw on information set out in the ‘description’ section:

- The first bullet point indicates whether the parcel is adjacent or near to a large built-up area, with additional text to note if the parcel is close to a village which is near enough to the large built-up area to contribute to preventing its sprawl (termed a ‘satellite’ settlement).

- The second bullet point indicates whether the parcel is free from development.
- The third bullet point indicates whether the parcel is subject to urbanising influences from outside of the parcel.
- The fourth bullet point notes whether there are physical features which could restrict and contain development.
- The fifth bullet point states whether development in the parcel would have an incongruous impact on the pattern of development.

Purpose B - to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

Grey belt PPG for Purpose B

3.32 The following features in combination are identified as being illustrative of a 'strong' contribution:

- Land forming a substantial part of a gap between towns.
- Absence of existing development.
- Development would result in the loss of visual separation of towns.

3.33 The presence of one or more of the following features in a gap between towns is identified as being illustrative of a 'moderate' contribution to Purpose B:

- Land forming a small part of a gap between towns.
- Development would not result in the loss of visual separation of towns, for example due to the close proximity of structures, natural landscape elements or topography that preserve visual separation.

3.34 Green Belt land that does not have a relationship with a gap between towns or forms only a very small part of a gap between towns, such that it makes no contribution to visual separation, is identified as being illustrative of a 'weak' contribution to Purpose B.

Purpose B definitions

3.35 The PPG uses several terms which require further definition to be applied as part of the assessment process. These are addressed in the paragraphs below.

'Town'

3.36 The PPG states that "this purpose relates to the merging of towns, not villages". Oxford is a town but, on the basis of its population rather than its official status, Kidlington is also considered to be a town. The House of Commons Library [\[see reference 6\]](#) classifies settlement with a population above 7,500 as towns, and Kidlington's population in 2021 was 14,640.

'A substantial part of a gap'

3.37 Whether part of a gap can be described as substantial is a function not just of its size relative to the gap as a whole but of the physical features in it, and in the gap as a whole. Some 'separating' features, such as woodlands, landform features, major roads, railways and rivers strengthen perceived separation, particularly where they contribute to visual separation. Roads and railways can also be 'connecting' features that strengthen the link between towns, reducing the time taken to pass through a gap and weakening the role of visual separators.

3.38 Smaller urban areas – villages and hamlets, industrial, educational and retail estates – between towns can be physically and visually connecting features. Towns may be some distance apart but, due to the presence of such smaller urban areas between them, intervening open Green Belt land may be judged more important to maintaining visual separation than distance alone might suggest.

3.39 A parcel will contribute more to the 'substance' of a gap between towns if it contains key separating features, and the more fragile a gap, either as a result of its size and/or the presence/absence of connecting/separating features, the smaller a part of a gap might be to be considered substantial:

- A robust gap will typically be relatively wide and contain significant physical features that maintain visual separation.

- A moderate gap may be relatively wide but lack significant physical features that maintain visual separation or be relatively narrow but contain physical features that maintain visual separation.
- A fragile gap will typically be relatively narrow and lack physical features that maintain visual separation.

3.40 Judgement is also required as to whether a parcel is playing a peripheral role in relation to a gap between towns, in which case its contribution will be diminished. If a parcel doesn't lie directly in a gap but its development would weaken land in the gap it will still make some contribution to Purpose B. Unless the gap is very fragile, land in a peripheral location will not generally be judged to be a substantial part of it. Land which does lie within a gap may also to an extent be considered peripheral if the neighbouring towns in question are already to a significant extent connected by development.

3.41 Development expanding a town out into the core of a robust gap, removing a relatively large part of it, would clearly represent a substantial impact, but the assumptions set out earlier in this chapter regarding development form have a bearing on ratings in such cases. Where land in a gap between towns has a very strong sense of separation from urban areas, and an 'outer area' has been defined, it is assumed that there would be scope for some new development within such outer areas without significant loss of visual separation between neighbouring towns.

3.42 Consequently, although such 'outer areas' might represent a spatially substantial part of a gap between towns, they would generally be rated as making a 'moderate' contribution to Purpose B in acknowledgement of their potential to accommodate development in smaller parts of them without significant impact on Purpose B. In this way the assessment findings help point to locations where there could be potential in Green Belt terms for new settlements in robust gaps between neighbouring towns.

A 'small' or 'very small' part of a gap'

3.43 'A small part of a gap' is judged to be an 'insubstantial' part of it – that is, land in a gap that does not meet the 'substantial' definition above – but one which still provides a degree of visual separation.

3.44 A 'very small' part of gap is an area which forms an insubstantial part of it and does not contribute to visual separation. Such areas would generally correspond to areas judged to make a weak contribution to Purpose B defined above.

'Loss of visual separation'

3.45 'Loss' is interpreted as a 'significant reduction' in visual separation, rather than its complete removal. Typically, the removal of a substantial part of a gap would equate to a significant loss of visual separation although, as noted in the last paragraph defining 'a substantial part of a gap' above, the 'outer areas' that exist within gaps between towns could accommodate some degree of new development, isolated from any town, without a significant loss of visual separation.

'Free of existing development'

3.46 'Free of existing development' is defined under Purpose A above. The same definition applies to Purpose B.

Purpose B assessment outputs

3.47 The contribution of a parcel to Purpose B is determined in line with the illustrative factors listed in the PPG guidance, but with an additional 'very strong' level of contribution. Factors which can tip a 'strong' rating into the 'very strong' category include:

- Development would significantly weaken what is already a fragile gap.
- Development would result in a very substantial loss of visual separation of towns.

3.48 None of the sites were identified as making any contribution to Purpose B so this is stated in a single bullet point for each parcel assessment.

Purpose C - to protect the countryside from encroachment

Grey belt PPG for Purpose C

3.49 Purpose C is not relevant to the identification of grey belt and is not referenced in the PPG, but it is still one of the five purposes of Green Belt set out in the NPPF. Ratings of contribution to Purpose C could still help inform judgements regarding which grey belt areas are more suitable for release than others. If the release and development of Green Belt land outside of defined grey belt areas needs to be considered, contribution ratings for Purpose C will likely be of more importance.

Purpose C definitions

3.50 Purpose C is assessed by determining the extent to which a location can be considered part of the countryside, the level of urbanising influence affecting it and whether development in the parcel would significantly increase urbanising influence on adjacent open land.

'Part of the countryside'

3.51 Most Green Belt land is perceived as part of the countryside, but physical isolation from the rest of the countryside, uses which create a strong association with an urban area, or the presence of existing urban development will reduce contribution to this purpose. This is not a judgement which considers the scenic beauty or condition of land.

'Urbanising influence'

3.52 This includes 'existing development' and 'other urbanising influences', as defined under Purpose A, the former relating to development within the assessment parcel and the latter to development outside of it (whether within or outside of the defined Green belt). So, the relevant factors include physical boundary features, landform change, the scale/visibility of development in urban areas, any urban-associated land uses and activity in the Green Belt, distance from urban areas and the strength of relationship with the wider countryside.

Purpose C assessment outputs

3.53 The following features in combination are identified as being illustrative of a 'very strong' contribution:

- Land is part of the countryside.
- Negligible or no urbanising influence from development within or outside of the parcel, and a strong sense of separation from urban areas.
- A lack of features to restrict and contain development, such that adjacent open Green Belt land would be subject to stronger urbanising influence than is currently the case, were development to take place.

3.54 The following features in combination are identified as being illustrative of a 'strong' contribution:

- Land is part of the countryside.

- Either i) no significant urbanising influence from development within or outside of the parcel; or ii) some urbanising influence but a lack of features to restrict and contain development, such that adjacent open Green Belt land would be subject to stronger urbanising influence than is currently the case, were development to take place.

3.55 The following features in combination are identified as being illustrative of a 'moderate' contribution:

- Land is part of the countryside.
- Some urbanising influence from development within and/or outside of the parcel.
- The presence of features to restrict and contain development, such that adjacent open Green Belt land would not be subject to significantly stronger urbanising influence than is currently the case, were development to take place.

3.56 The following features in combination are identified as being illustrative of a 'weak' contribution:

- Land is wholly or largely contained from the wider countryside by development; or openness is significantly limited by existing development.
- Significant urbanising influence from development within and/or outside of the parcel.
- Adjacent/nearby open Green Belt land would not be subject to significantly stronger urbanising influence than is currently the case, were development to take place.

3.57 The supporting analysis of contribution to Purpose C is set out in parcel assessment outputs under four bullet points. These draw on information set out in the 'description' section:

- The first bullet point indicates whether the parcel is perceived as part of the countryside or whether urban containment or development weaken its relationship with the wider countryside.
- The second bullet point indicates whether the parcel is free from development.
- The third bullet point indicates whether the parcel is subject to urbanising influences from outside of the parcel.

- The fourth bullet point states whether development in the parcel would significantly increase urbanising influence on adjacent open land.

Purpose D - to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

Grey belt PPG for Purpose D

3.58 The following features in combination are identified as being illustrative of a '**strong**' contribution to Purpose D:

- Absence of existing development.
- Form part of the setting of a historic town.
- Land makes a considerable contribution to a historic town's special character – being within, adjacent, or of significant visual importance to historic aspects.

3.59 The presence of one or more of the following features, in addition to being part of the setting and/or contributing to the special character of a historic town, is identified as being illustrative of a '**moderate**' contribution to Purpose D:

- Containing existing development.
- Separated from historic aspects of the town by existing development or topography.
- No important visual, physical, or experiential relationship to historic aspects of a town.

3.60 Land that does not form part of the setting of a historic town, with no visual, physical, or experiential connection to the historic aspects of a town is illustrative of a '**weak/no**' contribution to Purpose D.

Purpose D definitions

3.61 The PPG uses several terms which require further definition to be applied as part of the assessment process. These are addressed in the paragraphs below.

'Historic town'

3.62 The PPG is clear that this purpose relates to historic towns, not villages. An extract from Hansard in 1988 clarified which historic settlements in England were certainly considered 'historic towns' in the context of the Green Belt purposes. The Secretary of State for the Environment clarified in answer to a parliamentary question that the purpose of preserving the special character of historic towns is especially relevant to the Green Belts of York, Chester, Bath, Oxford and Cambridge [See reference 7]. Durham has since been added to this list. Oxford is, therefore, identified as a historic town.

'Setting'

3.63 The setting of a historic town is the area that shares a relationship with that town. This is typically thought of in visual terms but can also apply to land which, although physically connected to the town, is visually screened from it. It can also apply to land which has some experiential connection with the town – for example a sense of arrival or departure – which could apply to a wider area.

'Special character' and 'historic aspects'

3.64 The extent to which the Green Belt within the setting of a historic town contributes to that town's special character is related to the visual, physical and/or experiential relationship between Green Belt land and historic aspects of the town. These are matters of professional judgement that cannot be defined in general terms but are unique to each historic town's character, townscape and connections to the wider landscape.

3.65 Many towns have historic aspects which, whilst they might contribute to special character, have little to no relationship with the town's setting – for example, historic buildings and spaces that have no visual relationship with the surrounding Green Belt countryside, or just occasional views which are incidental rather than a significant aspect of the town's special character. Where this is the case, contribution to Purpose D can often be ruled out, noting that this does not mean such places do not have special and unique characteristics worthy of preservation, just that these characteristics are not directly relevant to an assessment of Green Belt Purpose D.

3.66 For Oxford, the study has drawn on previous analysis carried out for the 2017 and 2023 Green Belt site assessments, which in turn drew on analysis carried out for the 2015 Oxford Green Belt Study (also by LUC). Sources for the

latter included the Assessment of Oxford View Cones (OCC, 2014) and A Character Assessment of Oxford City in its Landscape setting (LUC, 2002).

'Visual, physical, or experiential relationship'

3.67 The connection between a historic town's historic character and the wider countryside does not have to be physical; indeed, successive waves of development often isolate core historic areas from the surrounding countryside, meaning it is often more a visual connection. This visual connection can be defined through movement through the area, or views into or out of the settlement.

3.68 Features in countryside that have association with the historic town, creating a sense of approach regardless of physical and visual connections, are considered to create an experiential relationship.

'Free of existing development'

3.69 'Free of existing development' is defined under Purpose A. The same definition applies to Purposes B and D.

Purpose D outputs

3.70 The contribution of a parcel to Purpose D is determined in line with the illustrative factors listed in the PPG guidance, denoting strong, moderate and weak/no contributions, but with an additional 'very strong' level of contribution.

3.71 Factors that characterise a '**very strong**' rating as opposed to a 'strong' rating include land judged to form an essential part of the setting of a historic town, integral to its special character.

3.72 The supporting analysis of contribution to Purpose D is set out in parcel assessment outputs under three bullet points. These in part draw on information set out in the 'description' section:

- The first bullet point states whether the parcel forms part of the setting of a historic town.
- The second bullet point indicates whether the parcel is free from development.

- The third bullet point indicates whether the parcel makes a considerable contribution to special character, some contribution or little/no contribution, with supporting text to justify this judgement.

Purpose E – to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

3.73 Purpose E is not relevant to the identification of grey belt and is not referenced in the PPG, but it is one of the five purposes of Green Belt set out in the NPPF.

3.74 Most Green Belt studies do not assess individual Green Belt land parcels against Purpose E, and either do not rate them or rate them all equally, on the grounds that outside the definition of PDL, it is difficult to justify why the release and/or development of one area of Green Belt land has a greater impact on encouraging re-use of urban land than another. This is supported by planning inspector's judgements on the matter, such as the inspector's report re: the London Borough of Redbridge's Local Plan (January 2018), which noted that with regards to Purpose E 'this purpose applies to most land' but that 'it does not form a particularly useful means of evaluating sites' **[See reference 8]**.

3.75 More generally regarding plan-making, paragraph 147 of the NPPF states that 'before concluding that exceptional circumstances exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries, the strategic policy-making authority should be able to demonstrate that it has examined fully all other reasonable options for meeting its identified need for development [including] a) makes as much use as possible of suitable brownfield sites and underutilised land and b) optimises the density of development in line with the policies in chapter 11 of this Framework, including whether policies promote a significant uplift in minimum density standards in town and city centres and other locations well served by public transport'. In other words, Purpose E must have already been followed before options in the Green Belt are considered further.

3.76 Using evidence to inform meaningful judgements on the collective contribution Green Belt land makes to Purpose E is also difficult. In the absence of any clear guidance on what percentage of recorded brownfield land enables a Green Belt to play a stronger or more limited role in encouraging urban regeneration, a uniform 'equal' level of contribution to Purpose E is applied to all areas of Green Belt in the study area.

Assessing Fundamental Impact

PPG for assessing fundamental impact

3.77 NPPF paragraph 146 requires consideration as to whether any alterations to Green Belt boundaries would ‘fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan’. The PPG states that this judgement should focus on evaluating the effect of release or development on ‘the ability of all the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan from serving all five of the Green Belt purposes in a meaningful way’.

3.78 This can most clearly be judged when the Council has identified a set of preferred development options, and the cumulative impact of their release can be considered, but any potential for development in a particular location to ‘fundamentally undermine the purposes’ can also be flagged at this earlier stage in the process.

3.79 What is fundamental and meaningful could vary significantly based on the scale and nature of the plan area and the range, significance and extent of contribution Green Belt land makes to the Green Belt purposes within it.

Fundamental impact definitions

3.80 The PPG uses a few terms which require further definition to be applied as part of the assessment process. These are addressed in the paragraphs below.

‘Purposes (taken together)’

3.81 Most Green Belt land does not contribute to all Green Belt purposes to the same degree, with large areas of Green Belt land not contributing or contributing weakly to multiple purposes. Consequently, what constitutes a fundamental and meaningful impact will vary from authority to authority depending on which purposes are important in each. Release or development that fundamentally and meaningfully impacts Green Belt land contributing to one Green Belt purpose would in effect affect its ability to serve the purposes (taken together) in a meaningful way.

‘Fundamental’ and ‘meaningful’

3.82 Some proposals may only fundamentally undermine the ability of the remaining Green Belt land in a plan area to serve a single important purpose to have a meaningful impact. Other proposals may undermine multiple purposes to a degree that in combination their impact is meaningful.

3.83 For the Green Belt in Oxford, a fundamental and meaningful impact on Purpose A (to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas) may include, but is not limited to, locations where release or development of land would result in the physical or perceived merging of a large built-up area with an adjacent satellite settlement such that the adjacent settlement would be perceived to be part of a larger ‘sprawling’ large built-up area. How fundamental and meaningful the loss of a such a gap would be is dependent on its current contribution to Purpose A. Most sprawl of the large built-up area will not fundamentally undermine the ability of remaining Green Belt land in Oxford and in adjoining districts to continue to fulfil this function.

3.84 A fundamental and meaningful impact on Purpose B (to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another) may include, but is not limited to, release or development that would result in the physical or perceived merging of two currently distinctly separate neighbouring towns, or where release or development would result in the loss of the most substantial part of a gap separating neighbouring towns such that it no longer played a meaningful role in relation to Purpose B. For Oxford this could apply to merger with Kidlington.

3.85 A fundamental and meaningful impact on Purpose C (to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment) may include, but is not limited to, locations where release or development would sever and isolate an area of Green Belt land contributing strongly to Green Belt Purpose C from the wider designation. The vast majority of Green Belt land has at least some countryside function. The release or development of the vast majority of Green Belt land would likely not fundamentally and meaningfully influence the function of adjacent Green Belt land such that it would cease to be considered countryside.

3.86 A fundamental and meaningful impact on Purpose D (to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns) could include the release or development of a very important part of the setting of Oxford, integral to its special character. There is more potential for development in Oxford to fundamentally impact on this purpose than on other purposes; within the Oxford City Council area the key setting features are the open riverside corridors along

the Thames and Cherwell which penetrate into the heart of the city and which have a strong association with university colleges.

3.87 A fundamental and meaningful impact on Purpose E (to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land) is not considered likely given that other Green Belt policy prioritise the use of non-Green Belt locations first followed by previous developed land in the Green Belt. It is unlikely that Green Belt release or development could be justified having not already demonstrated that this purpose has not been fundamentally and meaningfully undermined.

Fundamental impact outputs

3.88 In the absence of specific proposals, the variations in contribution to each Green Belt purpose identified in this assessment highlight the areas where Green Belt contribution is at its greatest. These areas of highest contribution have been reviewed in the round to judge where there is potential for development (this would be dependent on the exact nature of development which is unknown) to fundamentally and meaningfully undermine the purposes. This has been done at a site level both for the new and previously reviewed sites.

Chapter 4

Site Assessments – Summary of Findings

4.1 This chapter summarises the contribution ratings given to each additional site and comments on whether development of any site has the potential to fundamentally undermine the Green Belt purposes in the Oxford plan area. It also summarises which of the previously assessed sites should be considered as grey belt and whether any would, if released, have the potential to fundamental undermine the purposes (taken as a whole) across the Oxford plan area.

4.2 Where potential to fundamentally undermine the purposes is identified it should be noted that this potential can in some cases vary within a parcel, as noted in the parcel assessment comments. No definitive line is drawn as the analysis is just of potential to fundamentally undermine the purposes, subject to consideration of detailed development proposals.

Additional Site Ratings

4.3 Table 4.1 provides a summary of contribution ratings and indicates which site are judged to constitute grey belt, as informed by the February 2025 Green Belt PPG, and which have the potential for development to fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the Green Belt in the Oxford plan area. The individual site assessments are set out in Chapter 6.

4.4 There are 25 sites in total but site 311 has, in order to reflect identified variations in contribution, been split into two parts in Table 4.1.

4.5 In total, 12 of the sites, and part of one other site, are identified as grey belt. Some potential for development to fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the Green Belt in the Oxford plan area is identified for three sites.

4.6 As noted in Chapter 2 of this report, the February 2025 PPG is clear that 'where grey belt is identified, it does not automatically follow that it should be allocated for development, released from the Green Belt, or for development proposals to be approved in all circumstances. The contribution Green Belt land makes to Green Belt purposes is one consideration in making decisions about Green Belt land. Such decisions should also be informed by an overall application of the relevant policies in the area's adopted Plan and the NPPF', including whether:

- development is sustainably located;
- whether it would meet the 'Golden Rules' contribution (where applicable); and
- whether there is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed.

Previously Assessed Sites

4.7 Table 4.2 lists the findings for 17 previously assessed sites. One of these, site 112b, was split into a number of sub-areas for the review process.

4.8 Three of the 17 sites are identified as grey belt and some potential for development to fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the Green Belt in the Oxford plan area is identified for six sites.

4.9 Commentary on the individual sites is set out in Chapter 5.

Table 4.1: Summary of site contribution ratings

HELAA Site Ref	Site Name	Total Area (ha)	Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Purpose E	Grey Belt?	Potential Fundamental Impact?
025	Oxford Sports Park	13.9	Strong	Weak	Weak	Weak	Equal	N	N
114c	Marston Saints Sports Ground	0.98	Moderate	Weak	Moderate	Moderate	Equal	Y	N
163	Astons Eyot (#163a) and The Kidneys (#163b)	17.52	Strong	Weak	Strong	Strong	Equal	N	N
166	Banbury Road North Sports Club	3.48 (2.22 ha in GB)	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak	Equal	Y	N
178	Boults Lane Recreation Ground	1.8	Moderate	Weak	Moderate	Moderate	Equal	Y	N
180	Brasenose Farm Allotments	1.91	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak	Equal	Y	N
183	Burgess Field (edge of Port Meadow)	35.52	Very Strong	Weak	Very Strong	Weak	Equal	N	Y

HELAA Site Ref	Site Name	Total Area (ha)	Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Purpose E	Grey Belt?	Potential Fundamental Impact?
188	Court Place Farm – East	1.52	Moderate	Weak	Weak	Weak	Equal	Y	N
189	Court Place Farm – West	9.98	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak	Equal	Y	N
194	Cutteslowe Park 1	2.79	Moderate	Weak	Moderate	Weak	Equal	Y	N
195	Cutteslowe Park 2	13.51	Moderate	Weak	Moderate	Moderate	Equal	Y	N
196	Cutteslowe Park 3	11.5	Strong	Weak	Strong	Moderate	Equal	N	N
197	Cutteslowe Park 4	7.95	Strong	Weak	Strong	Strong	Equal	N	N
198	Cutteslowe Park Allotments	2.38	Moderate	Weak	Moderate	Weak	Equal	Y	N
209	Fairacres Road Allotments	0.79	Moderate	Weak	Moderate	Moderate	Equal	Y	N
251	Merton College Sports Ground	5.29	Moderate	Weak	Moderate	Strong	Equal	N	N

HELAA Site Ref	Site Name	Total Area (ha)	Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Purpose E	Grey Belt?	Potential Fundamental Impact?
252	Merton Field	3.5	Weak	Weak	Weak	Very Strong	Equal	N	Y
275	Part Trinity and Magdalen Sports Grounds – North	7.76	Strong	Weak	Moderate	Strong	Equal	N	N
298	St Catherine's, Exeter, and Hertford Colleges Sports Grounds	10.86	Strong	Weak	Strong	Moderate	Equal	N	N
311	Sunnymead Park (west)	2.39	Weak	Weak	Moderate	Weak	Equal	Y	N
311	Sunnymead Park (east)	5.48	Strong	Weak	Strong	Moderate	Equal	N	N
326	University Parks	33.02	Moderate	Weak	Moderate	Strong	Equal	N	N
431	Walton Well Road Car Park	0.318	Strong	Weak	Strong	Strong	Equal	N	N
489	Marston – gap between SSSI	5.13	Strong	Weak	Strong	Very strong	Equal	N	Y

HELAA Site Ref	Site Name	Total Area (ha)	Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Purpose E	Grey Belt?	Potential Fundamental Impact?
491	East of Wolvercote Paper Mill site (Nixey's Field)	3.43	Moderate	Weak	Moderate	Weak	Equal	Y	N
636	Land off Mill Lane	0.33	Moderate	Weak	Moderate	Moderate	Equal	Y	N

Table 4.2: Summary of previously assessed sites

HELAA Site Ref	Site Name	Total Area (ha)	Grey Belt?	Potential Fundamental Impact?
112a-2	Cherwell Valley/Old Marston (includes Hill View Farm, Land at Mill Lane)	13.53	N	Y
112b-2	Old Marston	20.39	N	Y
112b-4	Old Marston	7.46	N	N
112b-5	Old Marston	6.43	N	N
112b-6	Old Marston	19.11	N	Y

HELAA Site Ref	Site Name	Total Area (ha)	Grey Belt?	Potential Fundamental Impact?
114	Field at junction of Marsh Lane and Elsfield Road	1.70	N	N
114a	Land at Marston Brook (northern part)	3.56	N	N
114b	Showman's Field	2.18	N	N
115	Land west of Meadow Lane	2.34	N	N
118	Land rear of Wolvercote Social Club (small GB part)	0.52	Y	N
136	Wildlife corridor at River Cherwell	0.44	N	Y
144a	Wildlife Corridor at Marston Brook	1.39	N	N
144b	Wildlife Corridor at Marston Brook	0.84	N	N
151	Wildlife corridor at St Edward's Boatyard	0.76	N	N
153	Wildlife corridor at River Cherwell	1.96	Y	N
157	Wildlife Corridor at Hill Farm	2.78	N	Y

Chapter 4 **Site Assessments – Summary of Findings**

HELAA Site Ref	Site Name	Total Area (ha)	Grey Belt?	Potential Fundamental Impact?
159	Wildlife corridor adjacent to Duke's Meadow	0.85	Y	N
190-1	Court Place Farm allotments	3.51	N	N
190-2	Court Place Farm allotments	2.42	N	N
464	Land adjacent to Seacourt Park and Ride	37.25	N	Y

Chapter 5

Review of Earlier Site Assessments

5.1 This chapter provides a review of 17 sites previously assessed by LUC, eight in 2017 and nine in 2023. The former were also reviewed in 2023, to consider whether any conclusions needed revising as a result of the removal of land from the Green Belt in the Oxford Local Plan 2036 (with the assumption that released land would be developed).

5.2 This review reappraises the conclusions of those earlier assessments to provide a brief summary of whether or not, and why, those sites should be categorised as grey belt. In making this judgement it also takes into account any subsequent alterations to Green Belt boundaries, or significant planning approvals, since 2023. The sites, listed in Table 1.2 and shown on Figure 1.2, are addressed in turn in the paragraphs below.

5.3 As a general point, we would not now consider that any land in the reviewed sites contributes to Green Belt Purpose B. In the earlier studies, separate parts of Oxford were treated as separate towns but our view now, informed by the 2025 Green Belt PPG, is that any role of Green Belt land in separating suburbs of Oxford should now be considered as an aspect of Oxford's special character and setting (Purpose D) rather than as the separation of towns.

112a-2: Cherwell Valley/Old Marston

5.4 This site comprises land on the eastern side of the Cherwell Valley, between Local Plan Allocation SP25, an expansion of Old Marston, and the floodplain of the River Cherwell.

5.5 In 2017 it was determined that its release (in conjunction with land which has since been released as allocation SP25) would constitute high harm to the Green Belt purposes. It was noted that development here would:

- Relate badly to the existing settlement form, to the detriment of Purpose A;
- Represent a significant narrowing of the gap between Marston and Sunnymead (which at the time was considered relevant to Purpose B);
- Encroach on countryside subject to little urbanising influence (Purpose C);
- Compromise the openness of the Cherwell Valley, detracting from Oxford's historic setting (Purpose D).

5.6 The expansion of Marston through allocation SP25 will increase urbanising influence on this area but this will not change the fact that development further downslope towards the river would represent a significant encroachment on the open valley side. The retention of open river corridors, of both the Thames and the Cherwell, which penetrate into the heart of the city, makes a considerable contribution to the special character of Oxford. The narrowing of this corridor would weaken this character, affecting what is currently a gradual transition from a broader, more rural corridor to a narrower, more park-like one. The site is considered to make a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose D.

5.7 The openness of the valley side also means that development here would not be restricted or contained, increasing urbanising influence on remaining open land in the river corridor. By extending further west than other development at Old Marston it would also represent an incongruous pattern of development. The site is considered to make a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose A.

5.8 The site makes a strong contribution to Green Belt Purposes A and D. It is not, therefore, considered to be grey belt. Development extending down close to the River Cherwell could have potential to fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan. The open river corridor is a key element in Oxford's historic setting which would be significantly diminished by development down to the eastern edge of the river, which is currently open land all the way to the heart of the city. However, the likelihood of an impact that would fundamentally undermine the purposes will reduce with distance eastwards, if development is not perceived as significantly encroaching on the river corridor.

112b-2 to 112b-6: Old Marston

5.9 Site 112b was split into 6 parcels when assessed in 2017. Of these, 112b-1 has now been released as allocation SP26, and 112b-3, which was located in the Cherwell floodplain, is no longer shown on the Council's HELAA maps.

112b-2

5.10 112b-2 comprises land on the eastern side of the Cherwell Valley, extended west and south-west from Local Plan Allocation SP26, an expansion of Old Marston. It is contained by the floodplain of the River Cherwell to the west.

5.11 In 2017 it was determined that the release of land here (in conjunction with land which has since been released as allocation SP25, or in conjunction with the land in parcel 112b-4 to the south) would constitute high harm to the Green Belt purposes. It was noted that development here would:

- Relate badly to the existing settlement form, to the detriment of Purpose A;
- Represent a significant narrowing of the gap between Marston and Sunnymead (which at the time was considered relevant to Purpose B);
- Compromise the openness of the Cherwell Valley, detracting from Oxford's historic setting (Purpose D).

5.12 The expansion of Marston through allocations SP25 and SP26 will increase urbanising influence on adjacent land within this parcel, but the absence of any containing features means that land here still has a strong relationship with the open Cherwell valley. Any expansion into this parcel would in turn increase urbanising influence on the lower slopes of the valley.

5.13 The retention of open river corridors, of both the Thames and the Cherwell, which penetrate into the heart of the city, makes a considerable contribution to the special character of Oxford. A narrowing or increase in urbanising influence on this corridor would weaken this character, affecting what is currently a gradual transition from a broader, more rural corridor to a narrower, more park-like one. The parcel is considered to make a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose D.

5.14 With regard to Purpose A, development here would not be restricted or contained; it would increase urbanising influence on remaining open land in the river corridor. In the absence of any clear outer boundary features there are no parts of it that have a sufficient sense of enclosure by urban edges to be able to say that development would not form an incongruous pattern. The parcel is considered to make a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose A.

5.15 Parcel 112b-2 makes a strong contribution to Green Belt Purposes A and D. It is not, therefore, considered to be grey belt. Development extending down close to the River Cherwell could have potential to fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan. The open river corridor is a key element in Oxford's historic setting which would be significantly diminished by development down to the eastern edge of the river, which is currently open land all the way to the heart of the city. However, the likelihood of an impact that would fundamentally undermine the purposes will reduce with distance eastwards, if development is not perceived as significantly encroaching on the river corridor.

112b-4

5.16 112b-4 comprises land on the eastern side of the Cherwell Valley, extended west from the edge of the Old Marston Conservation Area. It is contained by hedgerows to the west.

5.17 In 2017 it was determined that the release of land here (in conjunction with land which has since been released as allocation SP25, or in conjunction with the land in parcel 112b-4 to the south) would constitute moderate harm to the Green Belt purposes. Its role in relation to purposes A and D was considered more limited than land to the west because of the presence of mature hedgerow boundaries that align with the existing urban edges to the north and south. These were judged to give it a more peripheral role as part of the river valley corridor.

5.18 Reviewing this judgement, the mature tree-lined track with forms a boundary along the edge of old Marston is considered to form a relatively strong edge, beyond which development would be incongruous with the existing urban form of Old Marston (where development density is low). Also, although the parcel plays a more peripheral role in terms of the openness of the Cherwell river valley, its openness also contributes to the setting of the Old Marston Conservation Area. On balance it is considered to make a substantial contribution to the special character of Oxford.

5.19 Parcel 112b-4 is considered to make a strong contribution to Green Belt Purposes A and D. It is not, therefore, considered to be grey belt. Development here would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan. The river corridor is wide enough here for development to not strongly compromise its role.

112b-5

5.20 112b-5 comprises land to the south of Marston Ferry Road, on the eastern side of the Cherwell Valley. It is slightly separated from the existing Green Belt edge but is adjacent to the Swan School, a substantial recent development within the Green Belt. It is contained by a hedgerow to the west.

5.21 In 2017 it was determined that the release of land here would constitute moderate-high harm to the Green Belt purposes. It was noted that development here would have an adverse impact on settlement separation (Purpose B) and on Oxford's historic setting (Purpose D).

5.22 Both of the above effects relate to a narrowing of the open Cherwell valley corridor. Although we would not now consider this an impact on Purpose B the development of this parcel would still represent a significant impact on Purpose D. The parcel does not extend much further west than the urban edge of New Marston to the south, but the latter has a strong containing tree belt. It would represent a significant narrowing of the corridor in relation to land to the north, where Old Marston is set back further eastwards and well contained by mature tree cover. Development of any part of this parcel would in turn weaken the remainder.

5.23 The retention of open river corridors, of both the Thames and the Cherwell, which penetrate into the heart of the city, makes a considerable contribution to the special character of Oxford. A narrowing and increase in urbanising influence on this corridor would weaken this character, affecting what is currently a gradual transition from a broader, more rural corridor to a narrower, more park-like one. The parcel is considered to make a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose D.

5.24 Parcel 112b-5 makes a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose D. It is not, therefore, considered to be grey belt. Development here would not, however, fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan. The river corridor would be narrowed but would still remain.

112b-6

5.25 112b-6 comprises land on the eastern side of the Cherwell Valley, extended west and north-west from the urban edge of New Marston. It is contained by the floodplain of the River Cherwell to the west.

5.26 In 2017 it was determined that the release of land here (in conjunction with land which has since been released as allocation SP25, or in conjunction with the land in parcel 112b-4 to the south) would constitute high harm to the Green Belt purposes. It was noted that development here would:

- Represent significant urban sprawl, to the detriment of Purpose A;
- Represent a significant narrowing of the gap between Marston and Sunnymead (which at the time was considered relevant to Purpose B);
- Compromise the openness of the Cherwell Valley, detracting from Oxford's historic setting (Purpose D).

5.27 The retention of open river corridors, of both the Thames and the Cherwell, which penetrate into the heart of the city, makes a considerable contribution to the special character of Oxford. A narrowing or increase in urbanising influence on this corridor would weaken this character, affecting what is currently a gradual transition from a broader, more rural corridor to a narrower, more park-like one. The parcel is considered to make a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose D, increasing to a very strong contribution towards the river.

5.28 With regard to Purpose A, development here would not be restricted or contained; it would increase urbanising influence on remaining open land in the river corridor. In the absence of any clear outer boundary features there are no parts of it that have a sufficient sense of enclosure by urban edges to be able to say that development would not form an incongruous pattern. The parcel is considered to make a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose A.

5.29 Parcel 112b-6 makes a strong contribution to Green Belt Purposes A and D. It is not, therefore, considered to be grey belt. Development extending down close to the River Cherwell could have potential to fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan. The open river corridor is a key element in Oxford's historic setting which would be significantly diminished by development down to the eastern edge of the river, which is currently open land all the way to the heart of the city. However, the likelihood of an impact that would fundamentally undermine the purposes will reduce with distance eastwards, if development is not perceived as significantly encroaching on the river corridor.

114: Field at junction of Marsh Lane and Elsfield Road

5.30 114 comprises land between the eastern edge of Old Marston and Marsh Lane. In 2017 it was determined that the rural character of the parcel makes a significant contribution to the historic setting of Old Marston. This role is reflected in the field's inclusion in the Old Marston Conservation Area. Development here would weaken the village's historic character and in turn increase urbanising influence on the remaining open areas west of Marsh Lane, weakening their contribution to the settlement's setting. The historic character of Old Marston contributes to the historic character of Oxford, so it was judged that development would cause moderate high harm to Green Belt purposes.

5.31 There has been no change since 2017 that would alter this conclusion. The Old Marston Conservation Area Appraisal notes the role of greenspace to

the east in retaining open views across the allotments towards Headington Hill, and reverse views from Headington Cemetery in which the open land strengthens Old Marston's village character. In terms of the 2025 Green Belt PPG, Old Marston has a special character which in turn makes a considerable contribution to the special character of Oxford.

5.32 The site is considered to make a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose D and so is not grey belt. Development here would not, however, fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan. The open area within which the site is located does not form one of the key open river corridors extending into Oxford.

114a: Land at Marston Brook (northern part)

5.33 114a comprises land between the eastern edge of Old Marston, north of Elsfield Road, and Marsh Lane. In 2023 it was determined that the rural character of the parcel makes a significant contribution to the historic setting of Old Marston. This role is reflected in the field's inclusion in the Old Marston Conservation Area. Development here would weaken the village's historic character and in turn increase urbanising influence on the remaining open areas west of Marsh Lane, weakening their contribution to the settlement's setting. The historic character of Old Marston contributes to the historic character of Oxford, so it was judged that development would cause moderate high harm to Green Belt purposes.

5.34 There has been no change since 2023 that would alter this conclusion. The release of land to the north-west (allocation SP23), outside of the Conservation Area, does not significantly diminish the site's role. The Old Marston Conservation Area Appraisal notes the role of greenspace to the east in views from Headington Cemetery in which the open land strengthens Old Marston's village character. In terms of the 2025 Green Belt PPG, Old Marston has a special character which in turn makes a considerable contribution to the special character of Oxford.

5.35 The site is considered to make a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose D and so is not grey belt. Development here would not, however, fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan. The open area within which the site is located does not form one of the key open river corridors extending into Oxford.

114b: Showmans Field

5.36 114b comprises land between the eastern edge of Old Marston and Marsh Lane. In 2017 it was determined that the rural character of the parcel makes a significant contribution to the historic setting of Old Marston. This role is reflected in the field's inclusion in the Old Marston Conservation Area. Development here would weaken the village's historic character and in turn increase urbanising influence on the remaining open areas west of Marsh Lane, weakening their contribution to the settlement's setting. The historic character of Old Marston contributes to the historic character of Oxford, so it was judged that development would cause moderate high harm to Green Belt purposes.

5.37 There has been no change since 2017 that would alter this conclusion. The Old Marston Conservation Area Appraisal notes the role of greenspace to the east in retaining open views across the allotments towards Headington Hill, and reverse views from Headington Cemetery in which the open land strengthens Old Marston's village character. In terms of the 2025 Green Belt PPG, Old Marston has a special character which in turn makes a considerable contribution to the special character of Oxford.

5.38 The site is considered to make a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose D and so is not grey belt. Development here would not, however, fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan. The open area within which the site is located does not form one of the key open river corridors extending into Oxford.

115: Land west of Meadow Lane

5.39 115 comprises a small island of raised ground in the floodplain of the River Thames to the west of Iffley.

5.40 In 2017 it was assessed that its release would cause high harm to the Green Belt purposes, principally because its strength of association with the floodplain of the River Thames. Development here would constitute a significant intrusion of urban sprawl into the undeveloped river corridor, and openness of that river corridor, penetrating into the heart of Oxford, is one of the key elements of Oxford's historic setting.

5.41 Although the floodplain would in practice limit further urban sprawl, development of the site would nonetheless have an urbanising influence on adjacent open land and so is not considered to be restricted or contained. Expansion into this small island above the floodplain would form an incongruous

pattern in relation to the rest of the urban area, and so the parcel is considered to make a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose A.

5.42 The retention of open river corridors, of both the Thames and the Cherwell, which penetrate into the heart of the city, makes a considerable contribution to the special character of Oxford. The parcel is considered to make a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose D.

5.43 Site 115 makes a strong contribution to Green Belt Purposes A and D. It is not, therefore, considered to be grey belt. Development here would not, however, fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan. The Thames river corridor in this area is fairly fragmented visually so development, unless large in scale, would be unlikely to cause fundamental harm.

118: Land rear of Wolvercote Social Club

5.44 118 is a small site alongside the Oxford Canal and railway line at Upper Wolvercote, within which only a narrow strip is designated as Green Belt.

5.45 Although the wooded nature of the Green Belt strip was recognised in the 2023 assessment as making some localised contribution to settlement setting the contained location of the site, and the fact the bulk of it does not have Green Belt protection, means that the Green Belt strip itself is playing a negligible role. Harm of release was judged to be low.

5.46 Site 118 does not make a strong contribution to Green Belt purposes A, B or D. It is, therefore, considered to be grey belt. Development here would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan.

136: Wildlife corridor at River Cherwell

5.47 Site 136 is located in a narrow Green Belt corridor between central Oxford and St Clements, contained between channels of the River Cherwell on three sides and by Magdalen Bridge on the fourth.

5.48 The 2023 assessment rated harm of release as high. Of key importance is the site's location in the historic setting of Oxford, with Magdalen Bridge forming a principal entry point to the historic core of the city. Given the site's

containment by river channels development here would also constitute significant urban sprawl.

5.49 Expansion into the river corridor would form an incongruous pattern in relation to the rest of the urban area, and so the parcel is considered to make a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose A.

5.50 The retention of open river corridors, of both the Thames and the Cherwell, which penetrate into the heart of the city, makes a considerable contribution to the special character of Oxford. This location alongside Magdalen Bridge is particularly sensitive. The parcel is considered to make a very strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose D.

5.51 Site 136 makes a strong contribution to Green Belt purpose A and a very strong contribution to Purpose D. It is not, therefore, considered to be grey belt. Development in this sensitive location would have the potential to fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan, by removing the remaining open land in the river corridor at this key point.

144a: Wildlife corridor at Marston Brook

5.52 Site 144a lies to the west of Marston, south of Marston Brook. The 2023 assessment rated harm of release as moderate high. Development here would cross a strong boundary feature (a tree belt containing the western edge of Marston) and intrude on a narrow part of the Cherwell valley corridor to the detriment of Oxford's historic setting.

5.53 Expansion of Marston beyond its current strong boundary would form an incongruous pattern in relation to the rest of the urban area, and although the site is relatively well contained by tree cover to the south and west there would still be some increased urbanising impact on adjacent open land in particular to the north. The parcel is considered to make a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose A.

5.54 The retention of open river corridors, of both the Thames and the Cherwell, which penetrate into the heart of the city, makes a considerable contribution to the special character of Oxford. Any reduction in this relatively narrow part of the corridor would be to the detriment of this purpose so the parcel is considered to make a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose D.

5.55 Site 144a makes a strong contribution to Green Belt Purposes A and D. It is not, therefore, considered to be grey belt. Development here would not, however, fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan. The river corridor would be narrowed a little but would still remain.

144b: Wildlife corridor at Marston Brook

5.56 Site 144b is an area of scrub woodland to the west of Marston, north of Exeter College Sports Ground. The 2023 assessment rated harm of release as high. The woodland forms a strong boundary to the edge of Marston so development here would weaken this urban edge, relate badly to the settlement form and intrude on a narrow part of the Cherwell valley corridor to the detriment of Oxford's historic setting.

5.57 Expansion of Marston beyond its current strong boundary would form an incongruous pattern in relation to the rest of the urban area and would not be restricted and contained. The parcel is considered to make a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose A.

5.58 The retention of open river corridors, of both the Thames and the Cherwell, which penetrate into the heart of the city, makes a considerable contribution to the special character of Oxford. Any reduction in this relatively narrow part of the corridor would be to the detriment of this purpose so the parcel is considered to make a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose D.

5.59 Site 144b makes a strong contribution to Green Belt Purposes A and D. It is not, therefore, considered to be grey belt. Development here would not, however, fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan. The river corridor would be narrowed a little but would still remain.

151: Wildlife corridor at St Edward's Boatyard

5.60 Site 151 is a small, wooded island at the confluence of the Thames and the Wolvercote Mill Stream. The 2023 assessment rated harm of release as high because development would encroach on countryside that is very distinct from the nearest urban area (Wolvercote) and which is very sensitively located in terms of Oxford's special character and historic setting.

5.61 The location clearly forms part of Oxford's rural setting, with the undeveloped Thames valley to the west of the city being separated from the core urban area by the historic expanse of Port Meadow. The parcel is close to the village of Wolvercote but distinctly separated from it by open fields and by the River Thames, both of which form part of the village's Conservation Area, so the parcel is considered to make a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose D.

5.62 Site 151 makes a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose D. It is not, therefore, considered to be grey belt. Development here would not, however, fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan. The small size of the site and assume retention of perimeter tree cover would limit the potential for any fundamental impact.

153: Wildlife corridor at River Cherwell

5.63 Site 153 is a linear strip of woodland and pasture alongside the River Cherwell to the east of Summertown. The 2023 assessment split the site into two parcels: a smaller open area at the western end of the site adjacent to housing on the urban edge (153a) and a larger wooded area adjacent to open land forming part of the recreation grounds of Summer Fields School (153b). The former was rated as moderate harm of release and the latter as moderate-high. Both locations were judged to be contained by the river and adjacent trees, limiting impact on the wider Green Belt, but the latter's tree cover was considered to give it a stronger sense of separation from the urban area and therefore a greater impact on Purposes A, C and D.

5.64 The site has only a short boundary with residential properties on the urban edge but, although the grounds of Summer Fields School are open land, they lack Green Belt protection and so there is an assumption that in Green Belt terms this land is part of the urban area. There is also an assumption that released land would retain its existing outer boundary features, which in this case is tree cover alongside the River Cherwell. In practice the narrowness of the central part of the site would limit development scope, and designation within Flood Zone 3b would be likely to present a significant constraint to development at the eastern end of the site.

5.65 Noting the above, development on the less treed western end of the site (153a) would be sufficiently contained by the river to not have an incongruous impact on the urban pattern, and so would not contribute strongly to Purpose A. The retention of open river corridors, of both the Thames and the Cherwell, which penetrate into the heart of the city, makes a considerable contribution to

the special character of Oxford. However, given the presence of nearby residential dwellings alongside the river to the north this part of the site is also not considered to make a strong contribution to Purpose D. Parcel 153a is, therefore, assessed as being grey belt.

5.66 Development resulting in the loss of woodland forming the central and eastern parts of the site would be more incongruous but would still be restricted and contained by retained tree cover alongside the river and so this area also would not make a strong contribution to Purpose A or Purpose D. Parcel 153b is also, therefore grey belt, although only provisionally so for the area within Flood Zone 3. As with all assessment sites, this conclusion assumes the retention of outer boundary features, which in this case is tree cover which makes a more significant contribution to Purpose D in terms of preserving the rural, tree-fringed character of this stretch of the River Cherwell.

5.67 Development here would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan.

157: Wildlife corridor at Hill Farm

5.68 Site 157 is a triangle of land just outside of the functional floodplain of the River Cherwell, midway between Marston and Summertown. The 2023 assessment rated harm of release as high because development would significantly compromise the openness of the Cherwell Valley to the detriment of countryside character and the historic setting of Oxford, and would relate badly to the existing settlement form.

5.69 The retention of open river corridors, of both the Thames and the Cherwell, which penetrate into the heart of the city, makes a considerable contribution to the special character of Oxford. The significant narrowing of this corridor would weaken this character, affecting what is currently a gradual transition from a broader, more rural corridor to a narrower, more park-like one. The site is considered to make a very strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose D.

5.70 The openness of the valley side also means that development here would not be restricted or contained, increasing urbanising influence on remaining open land in the river corridor. By extending further west than other development at Old Marston it would also represent an incongruous pattern of development. The site is considered to make a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose A.

5.71 The site makes a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose A and a very strong contribution to Purpose D. It is not, therefore, considered to be grey belt. Development here could have potential to fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan. The open river corridor would be significantly narrowed by development extending this far from the urban edge of Marston.

159: Wildlife corridor adjacent to Duke's Meadow

5.72 Site 159 is a narrow strip of scrub and woodland just south of the A34. Separate from the Northern Gateway development by tree cover, canal and railway line, the site is more closely related to Wolvercote. The 2023 assessment rated harm of release as moderate because, although development wouldn't relate well to Wolvercote's existing settlement form, the site's containment would limit any adverse impact on the wider Green Belt.

5.73 Although the site does not relate well to Wolvercote the intervening strong separating features would preserve a sense of separation from Oxford. This containment would limit any sense of development here being sprawl associated with the large built-up area of Oxford. The site does not, therefore, make a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose A. Contribution to Purpose D is similarly limited by the site's containment from the corridor of the Oxford Canal, the openness of which is more significant to Oxford's historic character.

5.74 Wolvercote is not a town so Purpose B is not relevant.

5.75 The site does not make a strong contribution to Green Belt purposes A, B or D so it is considered to be grey belt. Development here would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan.

190: Court Place Farm allotments

5.76 The allotments forming site 190 lie to the east of Old Marston. In 2017 the site was split into two parcels, 190-1 and 190-2, which were rated moderate-high and high respectively for harm to the Green Belt purposes as a result of release. In both cases the key consideration was contribution to Purpose D, with the allotments playing an important role in the retention of Old Marston's distinct village character and the historic character of Old Marston in turn contributing to the historic character of Oxford. This role is reflected in the allotments' inclusion in the Old Marston Conservation Area. Development in

both parcels would weaken the village's historic character, and development in 190-2 in particular would increase urbanising influence on the remaining open areas west of Marsh Lane, weakening their contribution to the settlement's setting; hence the higher harm rating for this parcel.

5.77 There has been no change since 2017 that would alter this conclusion. The Old Marston Conservation Area Appraisal notes the role of greenspace to the east in retaining open views across the allotments towards Headington Hill, and reverse views from Headington Cemetery in which the open land strengthens Old Marston's village character. In terms of the 2025 Green Belt PPG, Old Marston has a special character which in turn makes a considerable contribution to the special character of Oxford. Both parcels are considered to make a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose D and so the site is not grey belt. Development here would not, however, fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan. The open area within which the site is located does not form one of the key open river corridors extending into Oxford.

464: Land adjacent to Seacourt Park & Ride

5.78 Site 464 is farmland to the north of Seacourt and east of the A34 lie to the east of Old Marston. In 2017 the site was rated high for harm to the Green Belt purposes as a result of release. It was noted that development would represent significant sprawl into countryside that has a poor relationship with the existing urban form, and would affect the undeveloped character of the Thames river valley in this area which contributes significantly to Oxford's rural setting.

5.79 There has been no change since 2017 that would alter this conclusion. The site forms part of a low-lying area dominated by the Thames and associated streams and separated from the main body of Oxford by the railway line further to the east, creating a rural approach to Oxford along the river corridor. It makes a significant contribution to Oxford's setting and special character (Purpose D).

5.80 The openness of the valley here also means that development here would not be restricted or contained, increasing urbanising influence on adjacent open land in the river corridor. By extending Oxford north of Seacourt, Botley and Osney it would also represent an incongruous pattern of development. The site is considered to make a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose A.

5.81 The site makes a very strong contribution to Green Belt Purposes A and D so it is not considered to be grey belt. Development here could potentially

fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan. Development other than just at the southern end of the parcel would be very incongruous with existing urban form, affecting one of the key approaches to the city along the undeveloped Thames river corridor.

Chapter 6

Individual Site Assessments

025 – Oxford Sports Park

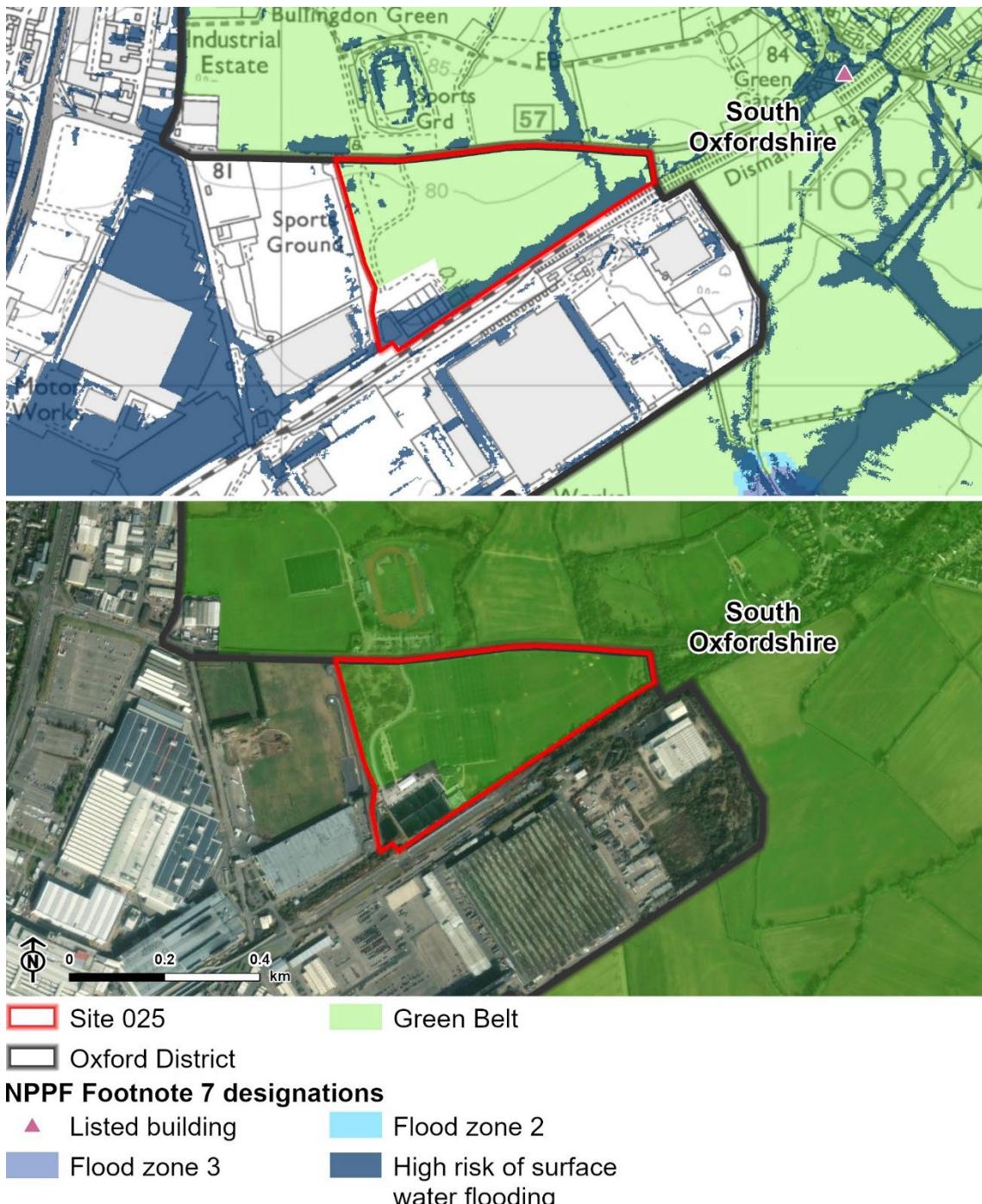


Figure 6.25: View looking north-east from inside the parcel



Description

- Land on the east of Cowley, west of Horspath, in the east of Oxford. Parcel size: 13.9 hectares.
- There are no significant boundary features to separate the parcel from the settlement. The defined urban area includes the south-west corner of the site, which has no boundary from the remainder of the site. A hedgerow forms a relatively weak boundary to the rest of the urban area to the west. The railway and tree line to the south, although forming a stronger edge, are not a consistent boundary feature as development within the defined urban area to the east already spans both sides of the line.
- There is no significant change in landform to create a sense of separation between the settlement and the parcel.
- There is a strong perception of urban development outside of the Green Belt. Large-scale industrial development both to the south and west is very visible above the parcel's boundary vegetation.

- Land use creates some association with the urban area but there is little urbanising activity in the parcel. The majority of the parcel is used as sports pitches with an area of scrub in the north-west. Buildings and floodlighting are limited to the south-west corner of the site, which is excluded from the Green Belt.
- There is some perception of connectivity with the wider countryside, limiting the impact of any existing urbanising influence. The site is partially contained by development but there are views to the high ground of Shotover Hill to the north.

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

Role in preventing impact on the Green Belt from the expansion of Oxford:

Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Purpose E
Strong	Weak	Weak	Weak	Equal

Purpose A – Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

- The parcel is adjacent to a large built-up area.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- There is substantial urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel.
- There are no physical features in reasonable proximity strong enough to restrict and contain development. Although Oxford Road forms a clear boundary to the north of the parcel, and there is strong tree cover at the parcel's eastern tip, development close to the road connecting Oxford and the village of Horspath could substantially narrow the perceived gap between these settlements. In this respect, development would not be restricted.
- Development of land in the parcel would have an incongruous impact on the urban pattern. The loss of a gap between Oxford and Horspath would be a significant change to the urban form and the openness of this parcel is playing a role in preventing that (the gap between the site edge and Horspath is only around 300m). Although the physical gap is already very

narrow to the south of the railway line, strong tree cover limits the perception of development from the edge of Horspath.

Purpose B – Preventing neighbouring towns from merging.

- The parcel does not lie in a gap between towns that are close enough to be considered neighbouring.

Purpose C – Assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

- The parcel has uses associated with the urban area which limit the extent to which it is perceived as being part of the countryside.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- There is substantial urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel.
- Development in the parcel would not significantly increase the urbanising influence on adjacent open land. The Oxford Road provides a clear boundary to the north, and land beyond this is already subject to urbanising influence from the large-scale industrial development on this edge of Oxford.

Purpose D – Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

- The parcel forms part of the setting of a historic town.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- The parcel makes little contribution to the special character of a historic town. Its sporting use adds nothing to the historic character of Oxford.

Purpose E – Assisting in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- All Green Belt land plays an equal role in relation to this purpose.

Conclusion:

- The parcel makes a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose A, and so is not assessed as being grey belt.
- Development of the parcel would not have the potential to fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan. Although important to the prevention of sprawl the extent of existing urbanising influence limits the extent to which new development would undermine the purposes.

114c – Marston Saints Sports Ground



NPPF Footnote 7 designations

	Flood zone 3		High risk of surface water flooding
	Flood zone 2		Conservation area

Figure 6.1: From north-east corner looking to north-west corner along vegetated boundary of the parcel



Description

- Land to the east of Old Marston in the north of Oxford. Parcel size: 0.98 hectares.
- There are no significant boundary features to separate the parcel from the settlement. There is a thin row of trees separating the playing pitches from the road and developed area of Horseman Close.
- There is no significant change in landform to add distinction between the settlement and the parcel with only a very gentle fall from west to east.
- There is some perception of urban development outside of the Green Belt.
- Land use creates some association with the urban area but there is little urbanising activity in the parcel.
- Natural features limit perception of the wider countryside. A mature tree line forms a boundary to the north and the parcel lies within an area of

Green Belt that is contained from the wider countryside to the north by the A40.

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

Role in preventing impact on the Green Belt from the expansion of Oxford:

Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Purpose E
Moderate	Weak	Moderate	Moderate	Equal

Contribution of land in 114c

Purpose A – Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

- The parcel is adjacent to a large built-up area. New Marston is a suburb of Oxford and Old Marston is contiguous with it.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- There is some urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel.
- There are physical features that could restrict and contain development. Development in the parcel would not significantly increase urbanising influence on any adjacent open land that makes a stronger contribution to the Green Belt purposes.
- Development of land in the parcel would not have an incongruous impact on the urban pattern.

Purpose B – Preventing neighbouring towns from merging.

- The parcel does not lie in a gap between towns that are close enough to be considered neighbouring.

Purpose C – Assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

- The parcel has uses associated with the urban area which limit the extent to which it is perceived as being part of the countryside.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- There is some urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel. Proximity of residential areas at Horseman Close and Dent Close as well as the Oxsrad Leisure Centre (site 189) on the opposite side of Marsh Lane (B4150).
- Development in the parcel would not significantly increase urbanising influence on adjacent open land.

Purpose D – Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

- The parcel forms part of the setting of the historic town of Oxford. The parcel also contributes to the historic setting of the area of Old Marston which is part of the setting of Oxford.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- The parcel makes some contribution to the special character of a historic town. Although part of the Old Marston Conservation Area the parcel's use and its location adjacent to modern development mean that it plays a weaker role in historic settlement setting than the allotments and fields to the north.

Purpose E – Assisting in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

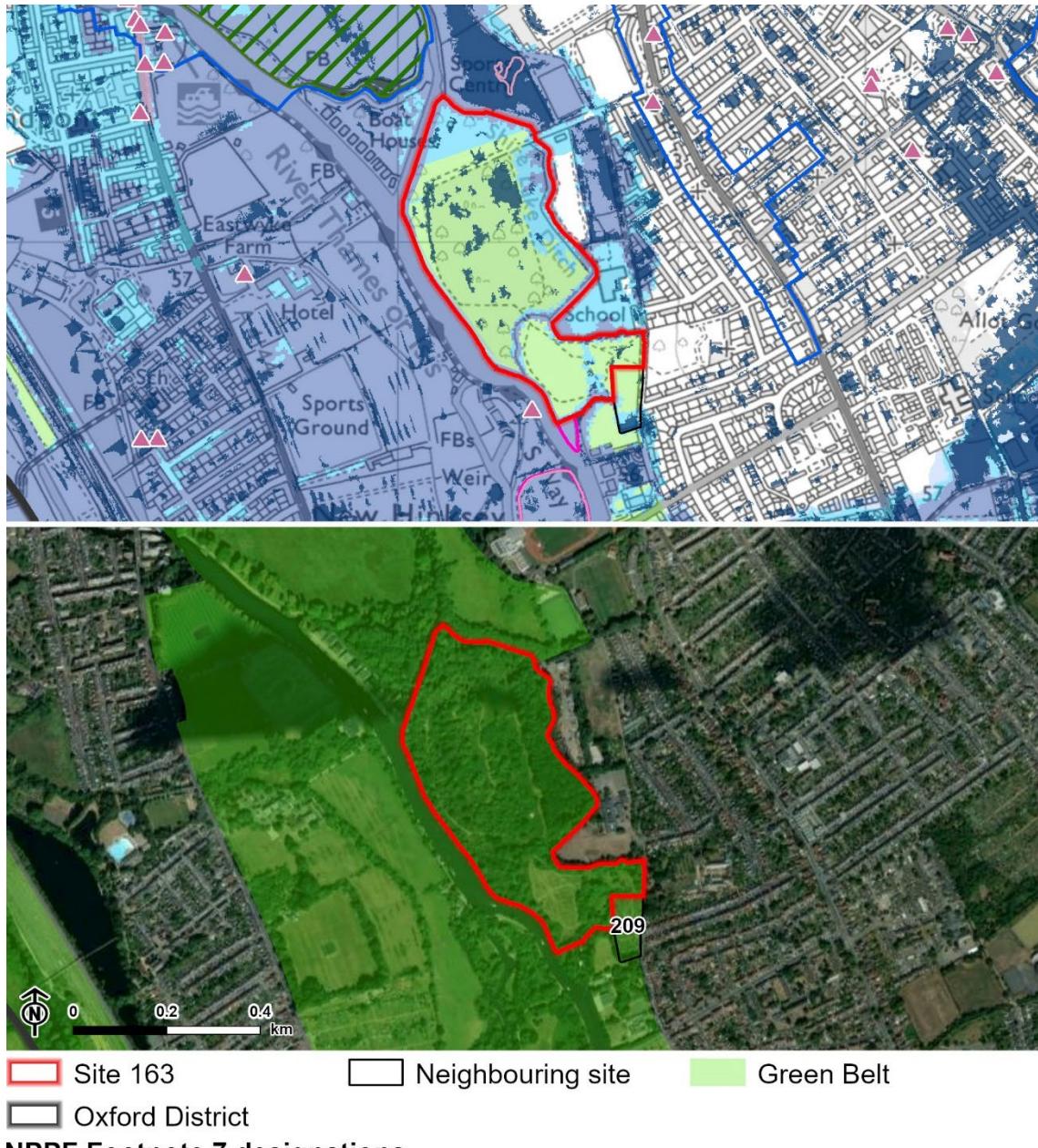
- All Green Belt land plays an equal role in relation to this purpose.

Conclusion:

- The parcel does not make a strong contribution to Green Belt purposes A, B or D and so is assessed as being grey belt.

Development of the parcel would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan.

163 – Astons Eyt and The Kidneys



NPPF Footnote 7 designations

▲ Listed building	■ Flood zone 2
■ Site of Special Scientific Interest	■ High risk of surface water flooding
■ Ancient woodland	■ Conservation area
■ Lowland fens	■ Scheduled monument
■ Flood zone 3	■ Registered Parks and Gardens

Figure 6.2: Long grass and mature trees in the centre of Astons Eyot looking west



Description

- Land to the south of Oxford City Centre on the eastern bank of the River Thames. Parcel size: 17.52 hectares.
- There is a strong boundary feature between the settlement and the parcel. This comprises woodland on the eastern boundary of Aston's Eyot and the Shire Lake Ditch.
- There is no significant change in landform to create a sense of separation between the settlement and the parcel.
- There is a weak perception of urban development outside of the Green Belt. The wooded character of the site limits any sense of urban containment.
- There is no significant urbanising development or activity in the Green Belt affecting this parcel. Development inside this area of the Green Belt is limited to boat houses along the River Cherwell.

- There is some perception of connectivity with the wider countryside provided by views along the River Cherwell and across to its west bank.

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

Role in preventing impact on the Green Belt from the expansion of Oxford:

Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Purpose E
Strong	Weak	Strong	Strong	Equal

Purpose A – Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

- The parcel is adjacent to a large built-up area.
- The parcel is free from urbanising development.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising influences associated with development outside the parcel.
- There are physical features that could restrict and contain development within the parcel. The well-treed parcel boundaries, along with the River Cherwell to the west, would contain development.
- Development of land in the parcel would have an incongruous impact on the urban pattern. Although the parcel has a strong outer boundary, its wooded character gives it a strong sense of separation from the urban edge. Development within the parcel would be perceived as extending the settlement beyond a boundary that restricts and contains it.

Purpose B – Preventing neighbouring towns from merging.

- The parcel does not lie in a gap between towns that are close enough to be considered neighbouring.

Purpose C – Assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

- The parcel is part of the countryside and so contributes to preventing encroachment on it.

- The parcel is free from urbanising development.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising influences associated with development outside the parcel.
- Development in the parcel would not significantly increase urbanising influence on adjacent open land.

Purpose D – Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

- The parcel forms part of the setting of a historic town.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- The parcel makes a considerable contribution to the special character of a historic town. The River Thames is an important feature in the setting of Oxford, in particular where it provides an open approach through the suburbs to the city centre. The parcel's position on the eastern bank makes an important contribution to setting and character, although it is assumed that any development in this area would preserve the visually prominent perimeter woodland.

Purpose E – Assisting in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- All Green Belt land plays an equal role in relation to this purpose.

Conclusion:

- The parcel makes a strong contribution to Green Belt Purposes A and D and so is assessed as not being grey belt.
- Assuming retention of perimeter tree cover there is unlikely to be potential for development of the parcel to fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan. Open land in the Thames river corridor is very significant to Oxford's special character but the site's tree cover offer potential for visual containment of development, limiting the likelihood of a fundamental undermining of the Green Belt purposes.

166 – Banbury Road North Sports Club

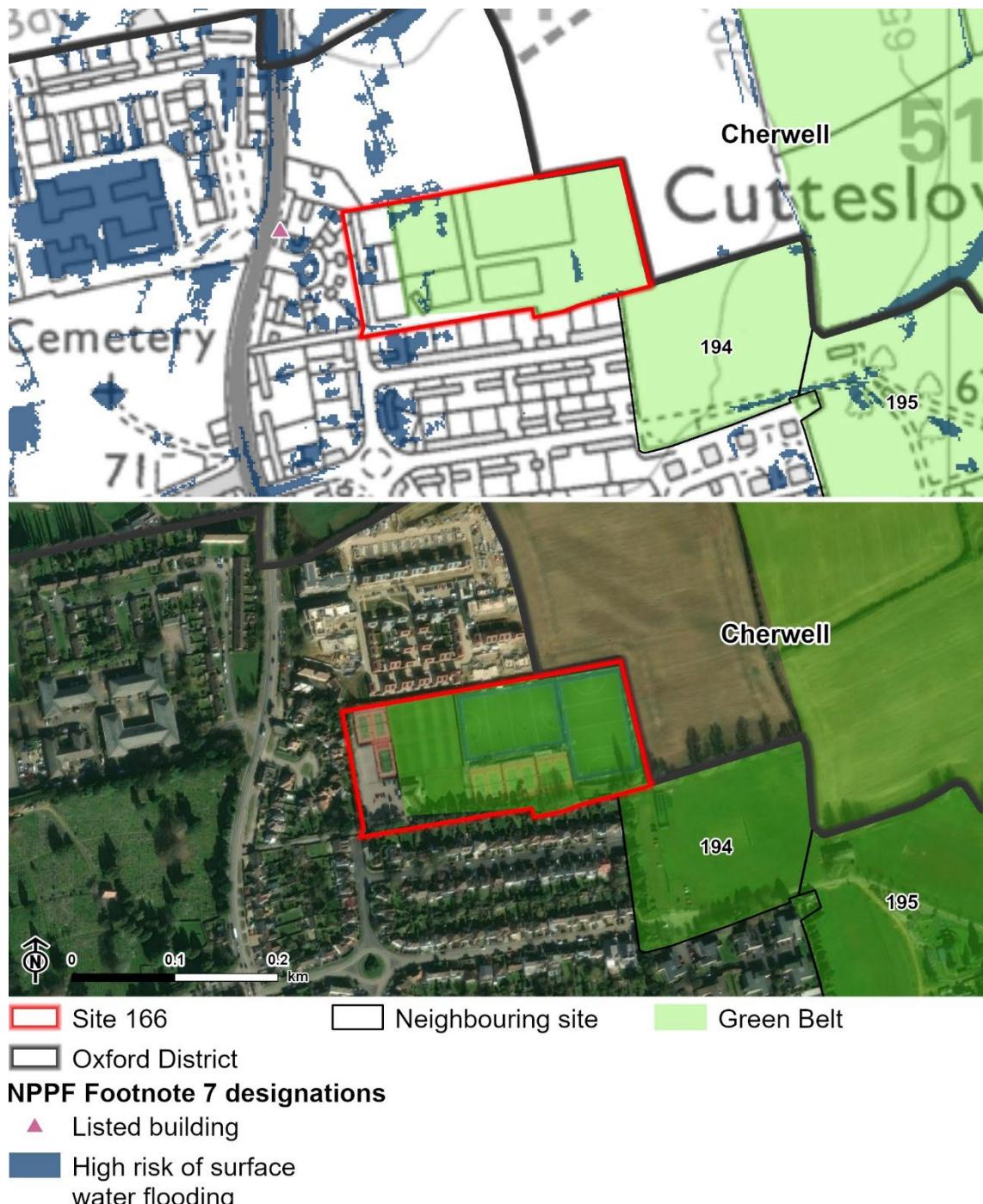


Figure 6.3: Eastern parcel boundary between tennis courts and northern inset edge of Cutteslowe



Description

- Land on the northern edge of the suburb of Cutteslowe, in the north of Oxford. Parcel size: 3.5 hectares (2.2 hectares in the Green Belt).
- There are no significant boundary features to separate the parcel from the settlement. The residential area of Cutteslowe borders the parcel on three sides with domestic garden fences.
- There is no significant change in landform to create a sense of separation between the settlement and the parcel.
- There is a strong perception of urban development outside of the Green Belt. There is residential development of detached and semi-detached houses on three of the four sides of the parcel which forms part of the northern settlement edge of Oxford.
- There is significant urbanising influence associated with development, land use and activity in the Green Belt.
- Natural features limit perception of the wider countryside. A tall, clipped hedge on the western boundary of the parcel limits any connection with the open farmland and neighbouring Cutteslowe park.

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

Role in preventing impact on the Green Belt from the expansion of Oxford:

Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Purpose E
Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak	Equal

Purpose A – Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

- The parcel is adjacent to a large built-up area.
- There is some urbanising development in the parcel. Artificial playing surfaces, fencing and floodlighting have an urbanising influence.
- There is substantial urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel. There is new development on the parcel's northern boundary whilst development is planned on the parcel's eastern boundary as part of the Cherwell District Local Plan.
- There are physical features that could restrict and contain development. The parcel lacks any relationship with Green Belt land beyond the adjacent development allocation.
- Development of land in the parcel would not have an incongruous impact on the urban pattern. The parcel has residential development on its north, west, and southern boundaries and land to the east in Cherwell is also allocated for development.

Purpose B – Preventing neighbouring towns from merging.

- The parcel does not lie in a gap between towns that are close enough to be considered neighbouring.

Purpose C – Assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

- The parcel has uses associated with the urban area which limit the extent to which it is perceived as being part of the countryside.
- There is some urbanising development in the parcel. Artificial playing surfaces, fencing and floodlighting have an urbanising influence.

- There is substantial urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel. There is new development on the parcels northern boundary whilst development is planned on the parcel's eastern boundary as part of the Cherwell District Local Plan.
- Development in the parcel would not significantly increase the urbanising influence on adjacent open land. The parcel has residential development on its north, west, and southern boundaries and land to the east in Cherwell is also allocated for development.

Purpose D – Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

- The parcel forms part of the setting of the historic town of Oxford.
- There is some urbanising development in the parcel. Artificial playing surfaces, fencing and floodlighting have an urbanising influence.
- The parcel makes little or no contribution to the special character of a historic town. The current land use and enclosure from recent development means the parcel contributes little in terms of character.

Purpose E – Assisting in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- All Green Belt land plays an equal role in relation to this purpose.

Conclusion:

- The parcel does not make a strong contribution to Green Belt purposes A, B or D and so is assessed as being grey belt.
- Development of the parcel would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan.

178 – Boult's Lane Recreation Ground



NPPF Footnote 7 designations

▲ Listed building	■ High risk of surface water flooding
■ Flood zone 3	□ Conservation area
■ Flood zone 2	

Figure 6.4: Towards the western boundary with the changing rooms on the right (inside boundary) and scout hut on the left (outside boundary)



Description

- Recreation ground to the east of Old Marston, north-east of Oxford. Parcel size: 1.8 hectares.
- There are no significant boundary features to separate the parcel from the settlement. The southern boundary is defined by garden boundaries and occasional mature trees. The western boundary is defined by Boult's Lane.
- There is no significant change in landform to create a sense of separation between the settlement and the parcel.
- There is some perception of urban development outside of the Green Belt. This is particularly evident along the developed southern boundary of the parcel.
- Land use creates some association with the urban area but there is little urbanising activity in the parcel.

- Natural features limit perception of the wider countryside. A mature tree line forms a boundary to the north and the parcel lies within an area of Green Belt that is contained from the wider countryside to the north by the A40.

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

Role in preventing impact on the Green Belt from the expansion of Oxford:

Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Purpose E
Moderate	Weak	Moderate	Moderate	Equal

Purpose A – Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

- The parcel is adjacent to a large built-up area. New Marston is a suburb of Oxford and Old Marston is contiguous with it.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- There is some urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel.
- There are physical features that could restrict and contain development. Development in the parcel would not significantly increase urbanising influence on any adjacent open land that makes a stronger contribution to the Green Belt purposes.
- Development of land in the parcel would not have an incongruous impact on the urban pattern.

Purpose B – Preventing neighbouring towns from merging.

- The parcel does not lie in a gap between towns that are close enough to be considered neighbouring.

Purpose C – Assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

- The parcel has uses associated with the urban area which limit the extent to which it is perceived as being part of the countryside.

- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- There is some urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel from the residential areas to the south and west.
- Development in the parcel would not significantly increase urbanising influence on adjacent open land.

Purpose D – Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

- The parcel forms part of the setting of the historic town of Oxford. The parcel also contributes to the historic setting of the area of Old Marston which is part of the setting of Oxford.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- The parcel makes some contribution to the special character of a historic town. Although part of the Old Marston Conservation Area, the parcel's use and its location adjacent to modern development mean that it plays a weaker role in historic settlement setting than the allotments and fields to the north.

Purpose E – Assisting in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- All Green Belt land plays an equal role in relation to this purpose.

Conclusion:

- The parcel does not make a strong contribution to Green Belt purposes A, B or D and so is assessed as being grey belt.
- Development of the parcel would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan.

180 – Brasenose Farm Allotments

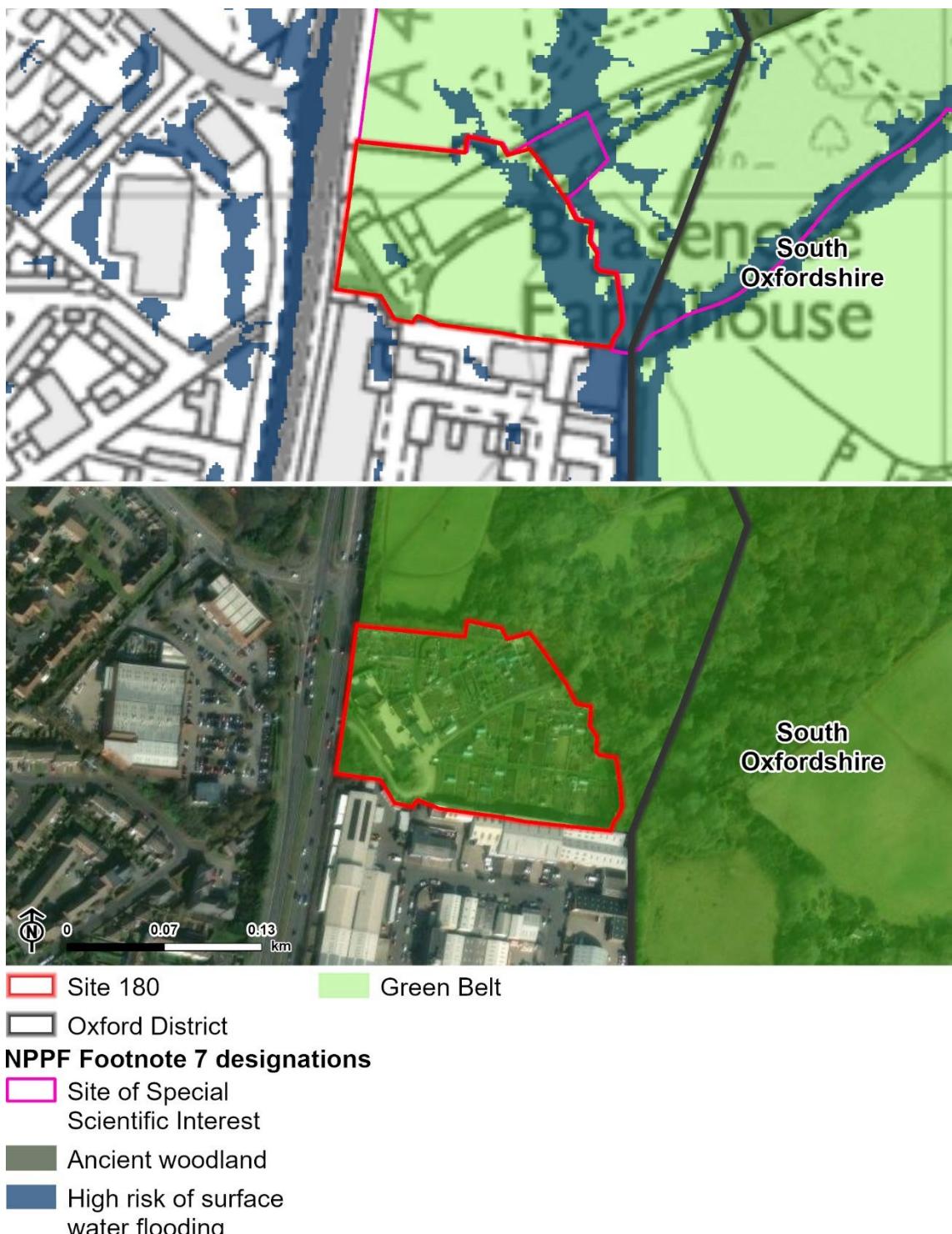


Figure 6.5: Western edge of Brasenose allotments with Brasenose Wood behind to the east



Description

- Allotment site on the eastern edge of Oxford. Parcel size: 1.9 hectares.
- There are no significant boundary features to separate the parcel from the settlement.
- There is no significant change in landform to create a sense of separation between the settlement and the parcel. The southern boundary is formed by the Horspath Industrial Estate.
- There is a strong perception of urban development outside of the Green Belt. The industrial area immediately to the south of the parcel along with the Slade Park area of Oxford to the west, create a strong sense of the built-up area of Oxford in this parcel.
- Land use creates some association with the urban area but there is little urbanising activity in the parcel.

- Natural features limit perception of the wider countryside. Brasenose Wood to the north-east acts as a strong visual screen to the wider countryside.

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

Role in preventing impact on the Green Belt from the expansion of Oxford:

Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Purpose E
Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak	Equal

Purpose A – Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

- The parcel is adjacent to a large built-up area.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- There is substantial urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel. Multiple industrial parks to the south of the parcel and the large built-up area of Oxford to the west provide a strong urbanising influence.
- There are physical features that could restrict and contain development. The adjacent SSSI and ancient woodland that form part of the Shotover Country Park would form a significant feature to restrict any further sprawl.
- Development of land in the parcel would not have an incongruous impact on the urban pattern.

Purpose B – Preventing neighbouring towns from merging.

- The parcel does not lie in a gap between towns that are close enough to be considered neighbouring.

Purpose C – Assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

- The parcel has uses associated with the urban area which limit the extent to which it is perceived as being part of the countryside.

- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- There is substantial urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel.
- Development in the parcel would not significantly increase the urbanising influence on adjacent open land. This is due largely to the enclosed nature of the site created by the strong boundary feature of mature trees at Brasenose Wood/ Shotover Country Park.

Purpose D – Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

- The parcel forms part of the setting of a historic town.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- The parcel makes little or no contribution to the special character of a historic town. the parcel is sheltered by a mix of more recent development and Brasenose Wood and so has little connection to the special character of Oxford.

Purpose E – Assisting in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- All Green Belt land plays an equal role in relation to this purpose.

Conclusion:

- The parcel does not make a strong contribution to Green Belt purposes A, B or D and so is assessed as being grey belt.
- Development of the parcel would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan.

183 – Burgess Field

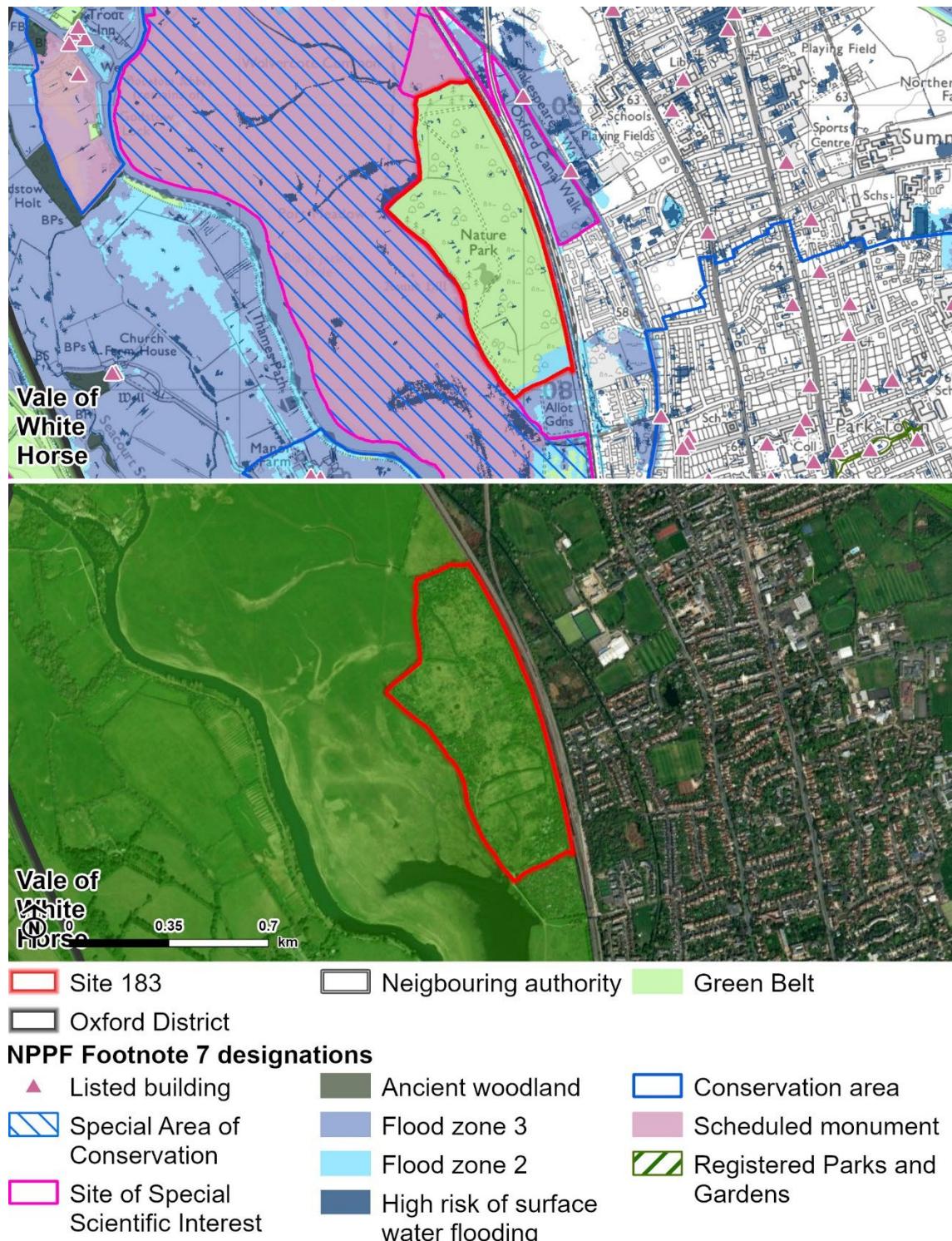


Figure 6.6: View along path leading south from the north entrance gate to Burgess Field Nature Park



Description

- Nature Park to the north-west of Oxford. Parcel size: 35.5 hectares.
- There is a consistent strong boundary feature between the settlement and the parcel. The railway corridor on the eastern boundary forms a long, consistent boundary.
- There is no significant change in landform to create a sense of separation between the settlement and the parcel.
- There is a weak perception of urban development outside of the Green Belt. The parcel has a good amount of tree cover which, along with the railway corridor to the east, limits perception of the rest of Oxford.
- There is no significant urbanising development or activity in the Green Belt affecting this parcel.

- There is a strong perception of the wider countryside. This is aided by the surrounding 150 hectares SSSI of Port Meadow to the north, south and west of the parcel.

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

Role in preventing impact on the Green Belt from the expansion of Oxford:

Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Purpose E
Very strong	Weak	Very strong	Weak	Equal

Purpose A – Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

- The parcel is adjacent to a large built-up area. The built-up area of Oxford lies to the east of the parcel beyond the railway corridor at the site's eastern boundary.
- The parcel is free from urbanising development.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising influences associated with development outside the parcel.
- There are no physical features strong enough to restrict and contain development. The parcel is bordered on three sides by the SSSI of Port Meadow where urban influence would be increased by development on this site.
- There is a strong perception of the wider countryside. The surrounding Port Meadow and River Thames along with the treed hill at Wytham Great Wood to the west create a strong relationship to the wider countryside.
- Development of land in the parcel would have an incongruous impact on the urban pattern. The railway corridor to the east creates a strong settlement edge in this area of Oxford so development here would not fit with the wider pattern.

Purpose B – Preventing neighbouring towns from merging.

- The parcel does not lie in a gap between towns that are close enough to be considered neighbouring.

Purpose C – Assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

- The parcel is part of the countryside and so contributes to preventing encroachment on it.
- The parcel is free from urbanising development.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising influences associated with development outside the parcel.
- Development in the parcel would significantly increase the urbanising influence on adjacent open land. Port Meadow with its low-lying landform and open, almost treeless landscape means any form of development would be highly visible from the wider countryside.

Purpose D – Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

- The parcel forms part of the setting of a historic town. The openness of the Thames valley floor to the west of the parcel, centred on the historic common land of Port Meadow, is a very important part of the setting of Oxford with Burgess Field forming a backdrop to this.
- The parcel is free from urbanising development.
- The parcel makes a very considerable contribution to the special character of a historic town.

Purpose E – Assisting in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- All Green Belt land plays an equal role in relation to this purpose.

Conclusion:

- The parcel makes a very strong contribution to Green Belt Purposes A and D and so is assessed as not being grey belt.
- Development of the parcel would have the potential to fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan. The open character of Port Meadow and its surroundings forms a key approach to the city centre and development in this parcel would detract from that.

188 – Court Place Farm – East



Figure 6.7: Looking east into the parcel from near the western boundary



Description

- Land on the northern edge of the area of Northway, in the north-east of Oxford. Parcel size: 1.5 hectares.
- The parcel's largely wooded character is a strong boundary to the urban edge along Borrowmead Road to the south and, to a lesser extent, to the football ground and sports centre to the west.
- There is no significant change in landform to create a sense of separation between the settlement and the parcel.
- Although tree cover provides screening the proximity of urban development mean that there is some perception of it.
- Existing development in the Green Belt has some urbanising influence. Development in the neighbouring area (Parcel 189) of the leisure centre, carparks areas, and small football stadium have some urbanising influence in this parcel.

- Natural features limit perception of the wider countryside. The northern boundary of the A40 cuts off the parcel's connection to the wider countryside whilst the associated vegetated screen creates a visual barrier.

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

Role in preventing impact on the Green Belt from the expansion of Oxford:

Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Purpose E
Moderate	Weak	Weak	Weak	Equal

Purpose A – Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

- The parcel is adjacent to a large built-up area.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- There is some urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel.
- There are physical features that could restrict and contain development. The northern boundary of the site is formed by the A40 which would restrict sprawl.
- Development of land in the parcel would not have an incongruous impact on the urban pattern with previous development of the Northway suburb having already reached the A40 to the south-east.

Purpose B – Preventing neighbouring towns from merging.

- The parcel does not lie in a gap between towns that are close enough to be considered neighbouring.

Purpose C – Assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

- The parcel, although largely tree covered, lacks connectivity with other areas than can be considered countryside due to the presence of the A40 to the north and the football ground and sports centre to the west.

- The parcel is free from urbanising development.
- There is some urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel.
- Development in the parcel would not significantly increase the urbanising influence on adjacent open land.

Purpose D – Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

- The parcel forms part of the setting of a historic town.
- The parcel is free from urbanising development.
- The parcel makes little contribution to the special character of a historic town. It is too small and too confined to play any significant role in the city's setting.

Purpose E – Assisting in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- All Green Belt land plays an equal role in relation to this purpose.

Conclusion:

- The parcel does not make a strong contribution to Green Belt purposes A, B or D and so is assessed as being grey belt.
- Development of the parcel would not have the potential to fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan.

189 – Court Place Farm – West



Figure 6.8: East across pitches and goal posts from the earth bund near the centre of the parcel



Description

- Land on the northern edge of Northway, in the north-east of Oxford. Parcel size: 10 hectares.
- There is a moderate boundary between the parcel and the urban area. A well-treed hedgerow defines the parcel's southern boundary.
- There is no significant change in landform to create a sense of separation between the settlement and the parcel.
- There is some perception of urban development outside of the Green Belt.
- There is significant urbanising influence and loss of Green Belt openness associated with development, land use and activity in the Green Belt. The parcel is largely used for formal recreation purposes which includes a leisure centre, small football stadium and associated parking and playing surfaces.

- Natural features limit perception of the wider countryside. The northern boundary of the A40 and associated tree cover cuts off the parcel's connection to the wider countryside to the north and mature tree cover along Marsh Lane screens the parcel from fields to the west.

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

Role in preventing impact on the Green Belt from the expansion of Oxford:

Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Purpose E
Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak	Equal

Purpose A – Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

- The parcel is adjacent to a large built-up area.
- There is substantial urbanising development in the parcel. The west of the parcel contains a leisure centre of Oxsrad and the stands for Oxford City Football Club stadium with some associated buildings.
- There is some urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel.
- There are physical features that could restrict and contain development. The A40 is a strong boundary along the northern edge of the parcel. Remaining open fields to the west would not suffer significant increased containment as a result of development, given the extent of development in the parcel already.
- Development of land in the parcel would not have an incongruous impact on the urban pattern.

Purpose B – Preventing neighbouring towns from merging.

- The parcel does not lie in a gap between towns that are close enough to be considered neighbouring.

Purpose C – Assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

- The parcel has uses associated with the urban area which limit the extent to which it is perceived as being part of the countryside.
- There is substantial urbanising development in the parcel.
- There is some urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel.
- Development in the parcel would not significantly increase the urbanising influence on adjacent open land. The A40 is a strong boundary along the northern edge of the parcel. Remaining open fields to the west would not suffer significant increased containment as a result of development, given the extent of development in the parcel already.

Purpose D – Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

- The parcel forms part of the setting of a historic town.
- There is substantial urbanising development in the parcel.
- The parcel makes little contribution to the special character of a historic town. Its uses add nothing to the historic character of Oxford or the setting of the Old Marston Conservation Area.

Purpose E – Assisting in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- All Green Belt land plays an equal role in relation to this purpose.

Conclusion:

- The parcel does not make a strong contribution to Green Belt purposes A, B or D and so is assessed as being grey belt.
- Development of the parcel would not have the potential to fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan.

194 – Cutteslowe Park 1



Figure 6.9: Cutteslowe Park cricket pitch with views of the wider countryside to the north-east



Description

- Open sports field on the north-eastern edge of Oxford. Parcel size: 2.79 hectares.
- There is a moderate boundary feature between the settlement and the parcel. The southern and western boundaries largely comprise of mature trees.
- There is no significant change in landform to create a sense of separation between the settlement and the parcel. The landform does begin to change outside the parcel to the east as it slopes down towards the Cherwell River Valley.
- There is a strong perception of urban development outside of the Green Belt. There is existing residential development on the parcels southern and western boundaries and land to the north has been released from the Green Belt for development of a primary school as part of a larger site allocation in Cherwell District.

- There is no urbanising development in the Green Belt affecting this parcel but the site's location within Cutteslowe Park creates some association with the urban area.
- There is some perception of the wider countryside. This is created by the landform outside of the parcel sloping down into the Cherwell River Valley coupled with a weak parcel boundary to the east.

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

Role in preventing impact on the Green Belt from the expansion of Oxford:

Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Purpose E
Moderate	Weak	Moderate	Weak	Equal

Purpose A – Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

- The parcel is adjacent to a large built-up area. Cutteslowe Park lies on the eastern edge of Cutteslowe to the north-east of Oxford.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- There is substantial urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel.
- There are physical features strong enough to restrict and contain development. Although the parcel has low hedge boundaries to the east, open to the wider countryside, its containment by current or planned future urban edges on three sides limits the extent to which development here would increase urbanising influence on open land.
- Development of land in the parcel would not have an incongruous impact on the urban pattern.

Purpose B – Preventing neighbouring towns from merging.

- The parcel does not lie in a gap between towns that are close enough to be considered neighbouring.

Purpose C – Assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

- The parcel is part of the countryside and so contributes to preventing encroachment on it.
- The parcel is free from urbanising development but has some association with the urban area.
- There is substantial urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel.
- Development in the parcel would not significantly increase the urbanising influence on adjacent open land. Although the parcel has low hedge boundaries to the east, open to the wider countryside, its containment by current or planned future urban edges on three sides limits the extent to which development here would increase urbanising influence on open land.

Purpose D – Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

- The parcel forms part of the setting of a historic town.
- The parcel is free from urbanising development but has some association with the urban area.
- The parcel makes little or no contribution to the special character of a historic town. Its containment by urban edge limits the extent to which it is associated with the Cherwell river valley.

Purpose E – Assisting in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- All Green Belt land plays an equal role in relation to this purpose.

Conclusion:

- The parcel does not make a strong contribution to Green Belt purposes A, B or D and so is assessed as being grey belt.
- Development of the parcel would not have the potential to fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan.

195 – Cutteslowe Park 2

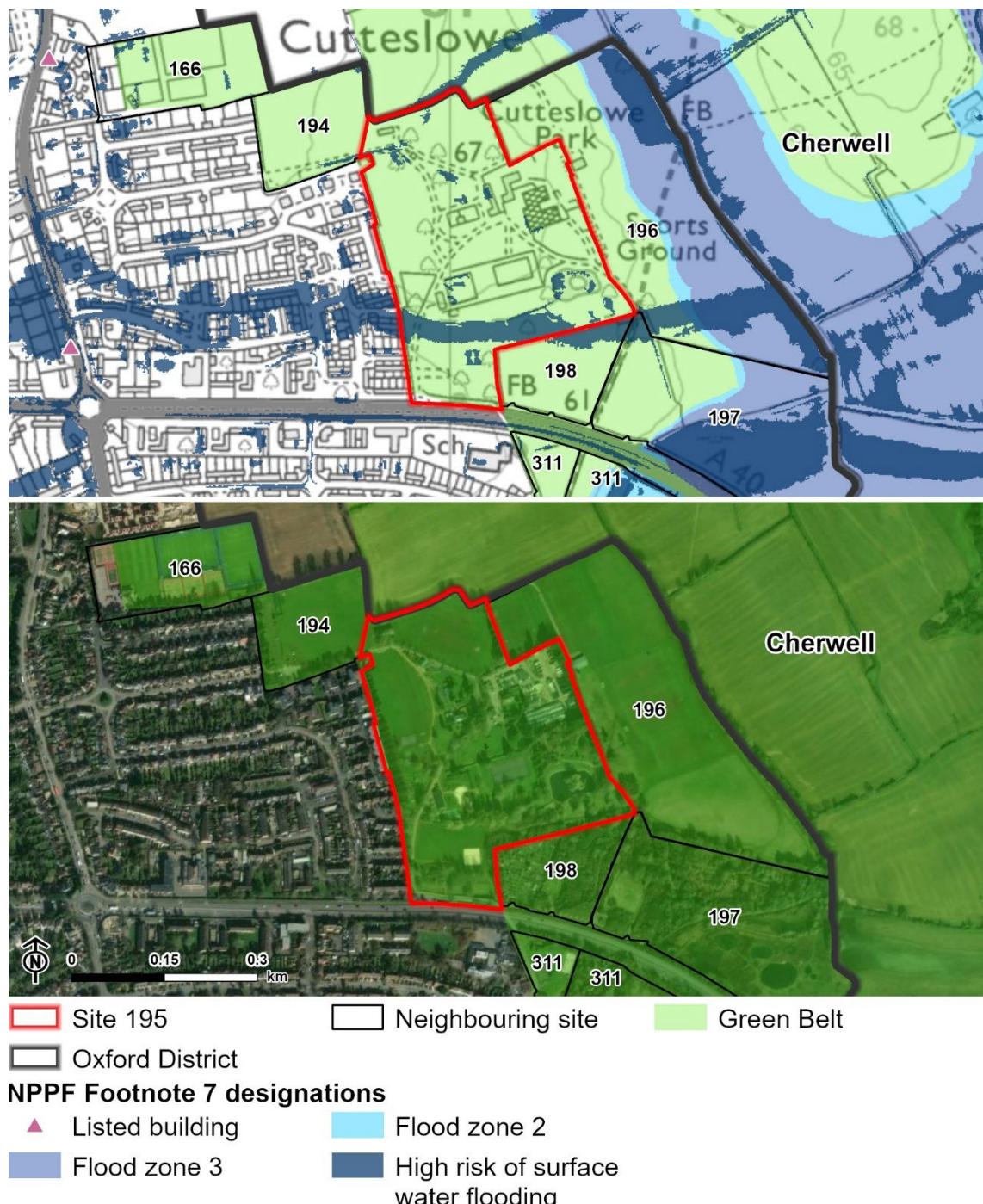


Figure 6.10: View from the north-west corner of Cutteslowe Park looking south-east



Description

- Parkland area including miniature railway and play facilities on the northern edge of Oxford. Parcel size: 13.5 hectares.
- There is a moderate boundary feature between the settlement and the parcel. The boundaries largely comprise of mature tree lines.
- There is no significant change in landform to create a sense of separation between the settlement and the parcel. The land in the parcel begins to slope gently down towards the Cherwell River Valley in the east but not to a significant degree.
- There is some perception of urban development outside of the Green Belt. This comes from the residential areas of Cutteslowe to west and Sunnymead to the south.
- There is no significant urbanising development in the Green Belt affecting this parcel but the site's location within Cutteslowe Park creates some association with the urban area.

- There is some perception of the wider countryside. Views into the Cherwell valley are available especially in the north of the parcel where tree cover is more open.

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

Role in preventing impact on the Green Belt from the expansion of Oxford:

Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Purpose E
Moderate	Weak	Moderate	Moderate	Equal

Purpose A – Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

- The parcel is adjacent to a large built-up area.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development. Buildings in the park associated with its recreational and horticultural uses do not have a significant urbanising influence.
- There is some urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel.
- There are physical features strong enough to restrict and contain development. Mature tree cover contains most of the parcel, and where it does not the Cherwell valley to the east is a distinct visually open landscape, the contribution of which would not be likely to be significantly reduced by development in this area.
- Development of land in the parcel would not have an incongruous impact on the urban pattern. It would not extend development into the open landscape of the lower-lying river valley.

Purpose B – Preventing neighbouring towns from merging.

- The parcel does not lie in a gap between towns that are close enough to be considered neighbouring.

Purpose C – Assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

- The parcel is part of the countryside and so contributes to preventing encroachment on it.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development. Buildings in the park associated with its recreational and horticultural uses do not have a significant urbanising influence.
- There is some urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel.
- Development in the parcel would not significantly increase the urbanising influence on adjacent open land. Mature tree cover contains most of the parcel, and where it does not, the Cherwell valley to the east is a distinct, visually open landscape, the contribution of which would not be likely to be significantly reduced by development in this area.

Purpose D – Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

- The parcel forms part of the setting of a historic town.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development. Buildings in the park associated with its recreational and horticultural uses do not have a significant urbanising influence.
- The parcel makes some contribution to the special character of a historic town. The park forms a well-treed buffer between the city and the valley of the River Cherwell in this area. The openness of the Cherwell Valley is important to Oxford's historic setting but would not be strongly affected by development here, assuming retention of outer boundary tree cover.

Purpose E – Assisting in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- All Green Belt land plays an equal role in relation to this purpose.

Conclusion:

- The parcel does not make a strong contribution to Green Belt purposes A, B or D and so is assessed as being grey belt.

- Development of the parcel would not have the potential to fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan.

196 – Cutteslowe Park 3

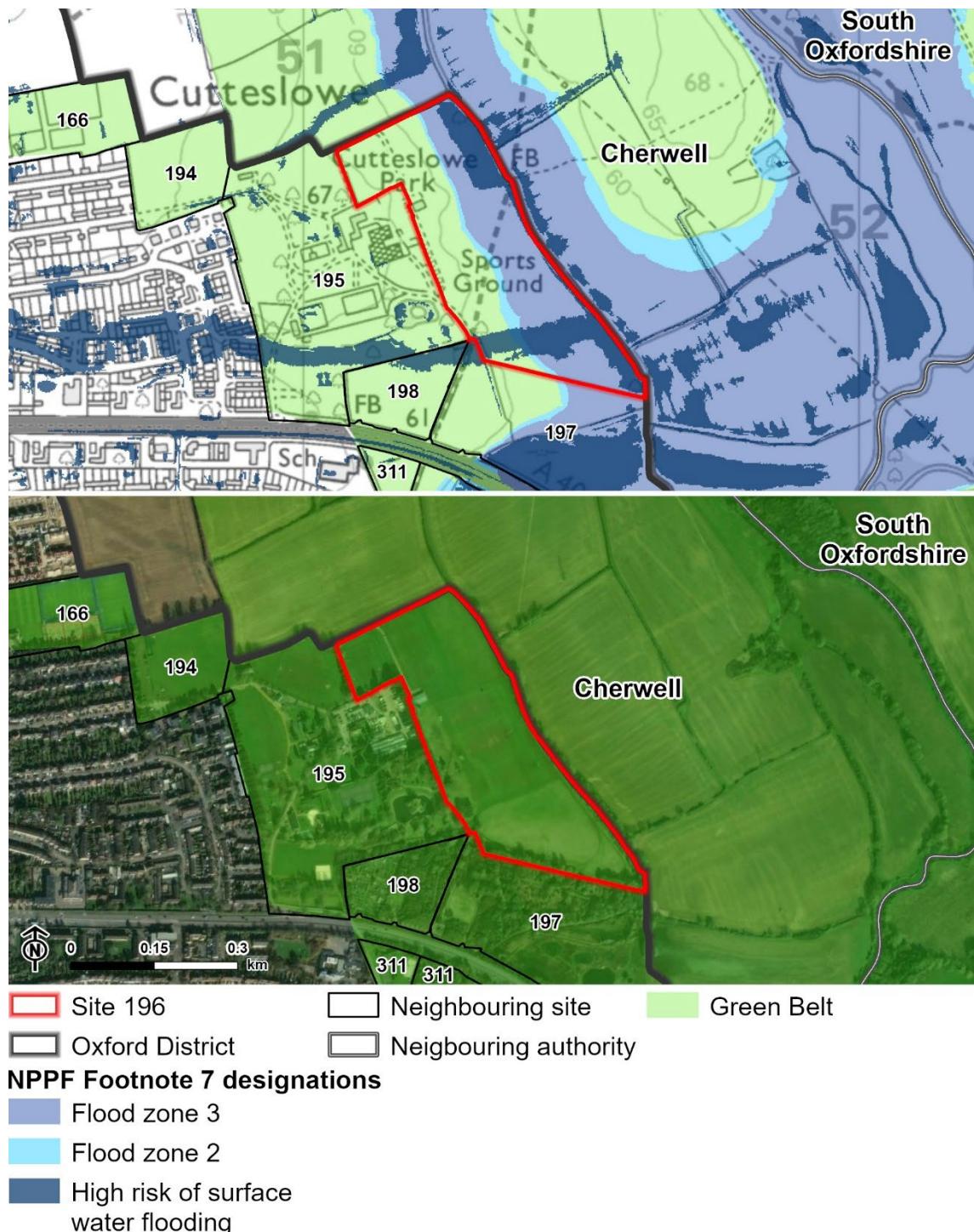


Figure 6.11: View from south-west corner of Playing fields at Cutteslowe Park sports ground looking north



Description

- Recreation ground used primarily for football pitches to the north of Oxford. Parcel size: 11.5 hectares.
- Boundary features within the gap between the settlement and the parcel combine to create strong separation. These strong features come from the main area of Cutteslowe Park (Parcel 195) with its mixture of mature parkland trees and other woodland features.
- There is some change in landform which creates a sense of separation between the settlement and the parcel. Towards the northern end of the parcel in particular there is a distinct step down from the wooded parkland area to the west towards the River Cherwell in the east.
- There is a weak perception of urban development outside of the Green Belt.

- There is no urbanising development in the Green Belt affecting this parcel but the site's location within Cutteslowe Park creates some association with the urban area.
- There is a strong perception of the wider countryside. The wider Cherwell River Valley to the east creates an open area with long views that connects this parcel to the countryside.

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

Role in preventing impact on the Green Belt from the expansion of Oxford:

Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Purpose E
Strong	Weak	Strong	Moderate	Equal

Purpose A – Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

- The parcel is near to a large built-up area.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising influences associated with development outside the parcel. The gap between the parcel and the built edge of both Cutteslowe and Sunnymead is approximately 300m, with strong intervening tree cover.
- There are no physical features strong enough to restrict and contain development. Although there is a well-treed hedgerow to the east, the parcel is more open to the north.
- Development of land in the parcel would have an incongruous impact on the urban pattern. The strong gap between the parcel and the settlement edge means that any development would not relate well to the existing built-up area.

Purpose B – Preventing neighbouring towns from merging.

- The parcel does not lie in a gap between towns that are close enough to be considered neighbouring.

Purpose C – Assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

- The parcel is part of the countryside and so contributes to preventing encroachment on it.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising influences associated with development outside the parcel. The strong gap between the parcel and the urban edge ensures there is little urban influence in the parcel.
- Development in the parcel would significantly increase the urbanising influence on adjacent open land. Although there is a well-treed hedgerow to the east the parcel is more open to the north.

Purpose D – Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

- The parcel forms part of the setting of a historic town.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- The parcel makes some contribution to the special character of a historic town. The openness of the Cherwell valley contributes to Oxford's rural setting but the parcel's formal recreational use limits its contribution to special character. Land in the river valley to the south of the A40, where it forms a corridor into the heart of the city, is more significant in this respect.

Purpose E – Assisting in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- All Green Belt land plays an equal role in relation to this purpose.

Conclusion:

- The parcel makes a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose A and so is assessed as not being grey belt.
- Development of the parcel would not have the potential to fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan. Although the parcel makes a strong contribution to Purposes A and C it does not cross any major boundaries or extend into countryside remote from the urban area.

197 – Cutteslowe Park 4

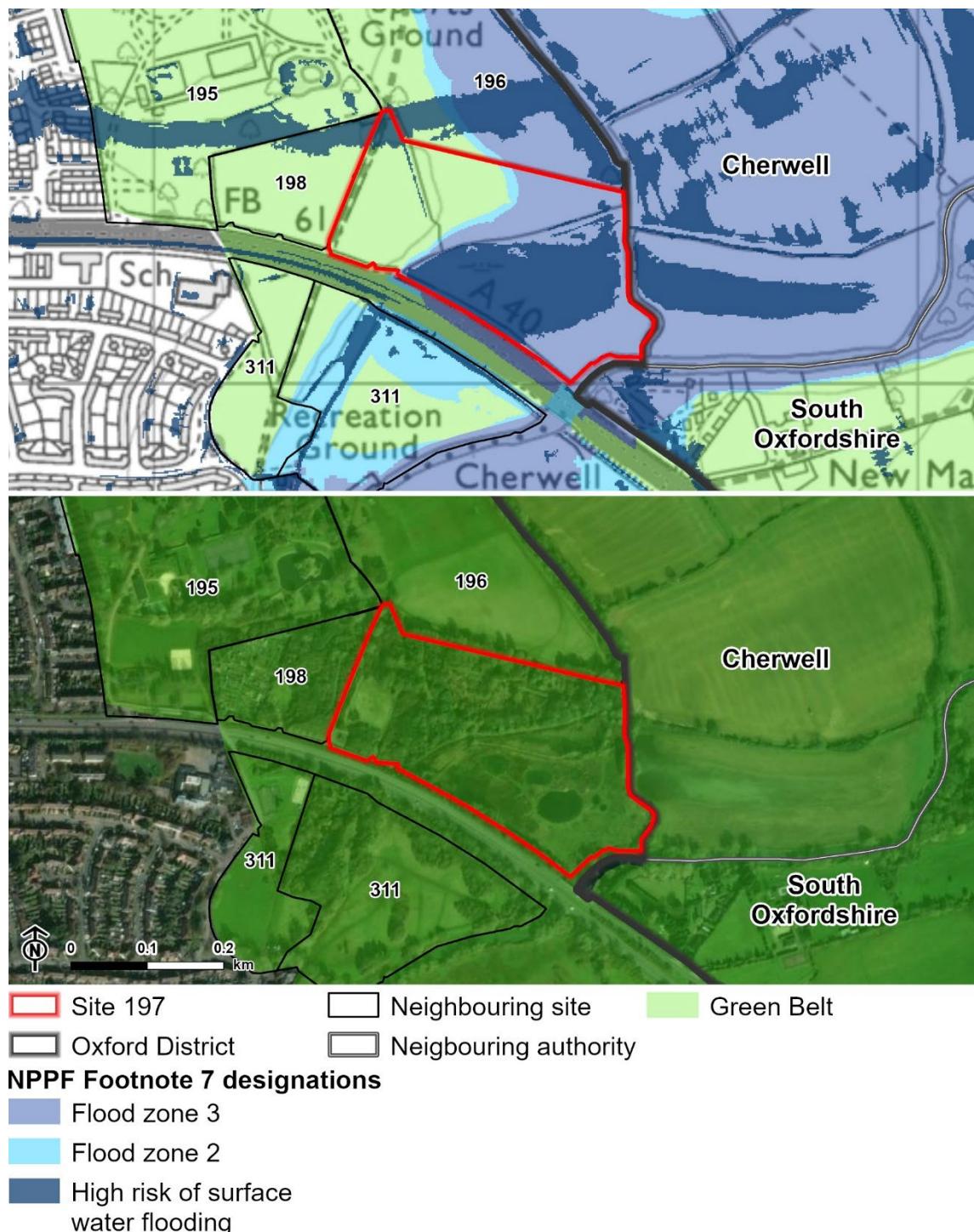


Figure 6.12: Open area at the centre of Cutteslowe Park 4 looking south-east towards the A40



Description

- Open field with rough grass on the northern edge of Oxford alongside the A40. Parcel size: 8 hectares.
- There is a combination of features creating a strong boundary between the settlement and the parcel including the A40 on the southern boundary and a gap created by Cutteslowe Park to the west.
- There is some change in landform which creates a sense of separation between the settlement and the parcel. The landform slopes down towards the River Cherwell on the eastern edge of the parcel.
- There is a weak perception of urban development outside of the Green Belt. The parcel has a significant amount of tree cover which, together with landform change, screens it from urban influences.
- There is no significant urbanising development or activity in the Green Belt affecting this parcel.

- There is a strong perception of the wider countryside. This is especially strong to the east along the River Cherwell where the boundary is more open.

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

Role in preventing impact on the Green Belt from the expansion of Oxford:

Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Purpose E
Strong	Weak	Strong	Strong	Equal

Purpose A – Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

- The parcel is near to a large built-up area.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising influences associated with development outside the parcel.
- There are no physical features strong enough to restrict and contain development. Whilst the River Cherwell would form a strong physical boundary feature to the east there would still be an increased urbanising influence on land to the east of the river.
- Development of land in the parcel would have an incongruous impact on the urban pattern. The parcel's largely wooded character, and other tree cover between the parcel and the urban edge, mean that the parcel has a strong sense of separation from the urban area.

Purpose B – Preventing neighbouring towns from merging.

- The parcel does not lie in a gap between towns that are close enough to be considered neighbouring.

Purpose C – Assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

- The parcel is part of the countryside and so contributes to preventing encroachment on it.

- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising influences associated with development outside the parcel.
- Development in the parcel would significantly increase the urbanising influence on adjacent open land. Whilst the River Cherwell would form a strong physical boundary feature to the east there would still be an increased urbanising influence on land to the east of the river.

Purpose D – Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

- The parcel forms part of the setting of a historic town.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- The parcel makes a considerable contribution to the special character of a historic town. The parcel and adjacent land form a well-treed buffer between the city and the valley of the River Cherwell in this area north of the A40, where there is no development close to the river. This rural approach to Oxford would be weakened by visible development.

Purpose E – Assisting in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- All Green Belt land plays an equal role in relation to this purpose.

Conclusion:

- The parcel makes a strong contribution to Green Belt Purposes A and D and so is assessed as not being grey belt.
- Development of the parcel would not have the potential to fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan. Although the parcel makes a strong contribution to Purposes A, C and D it does not cross the River Cherwell and extend into countryside remote from the urban area.

198 – Cutteslowe Park allotments



Figure 6.13: View from the entrance gates at Cutteslowe Park allotments with polytunnels and growing beds



Description

- Allotment site on the northern edge of Oxford along the A40. Parcel size: 2.4 hectares.
- There is a combination of features creating a strong boundary between the settlement and the parcel. The A40 forms the parcels southern boundary whilst Cutteslowe Park (parcel 195) with its mature boundary tree lines creates a strong gap between the allotments and the urban edge of Cutteslowe.
- There is no significant change in landform to create a sense of separation between the settlement and the parcel.
- There is some perception of urban development outside of the Green Belt. Although there are visual screening features the close proximity to urban edges to the west and south means that there is some urbanising influence.

- There is no significant urbanising development in the Green Belt affecting this parcel but the site's location within Cutteslowe Park creates some association with the urban area.
- Natural features limit perception of the wider countryside. The parcel has a well-treed boundary, especially to the east, which create an effective screen around the parcel.

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

Role in preventing impact on the Green Belt from the expansion of Oxford:

Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Purpose E
Moderate	Weak	Moderate	Weak	Equal

Purpose A – Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

- The parcel is near to a large built-up area.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- There is some urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel.
- There are physical features that could restrict and contain development. The parcel is well contained by tree cover.
- Development of land in the parcel would not have an incongruous impact on the urban pattern.

Purpose B – Preventing neighbouring towns from merging.

- The parcel does not lie in a gap between towns that are close enough to be considered neighbouring.

Purpose C – Assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

- The parcel is part of the countryside and so contributes to preventing encroachment on it.

- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- There is some urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel. This weak influence comes from the nearby school and the A40 however this is tempered by the boundary tree cover and local topography.
- Development in the parcel would significantly increase the urbanising influence on adjacent open land.

Purpose D – Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

- The parcel forms part of the setting of a historic town.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- The parcel makes little contribution to the special character of a historic town. Tree cover around the parcel contributes to a buffer between the urban edge and the valley of the River Cherwell, but the parcel is too well screened to play a significant role.

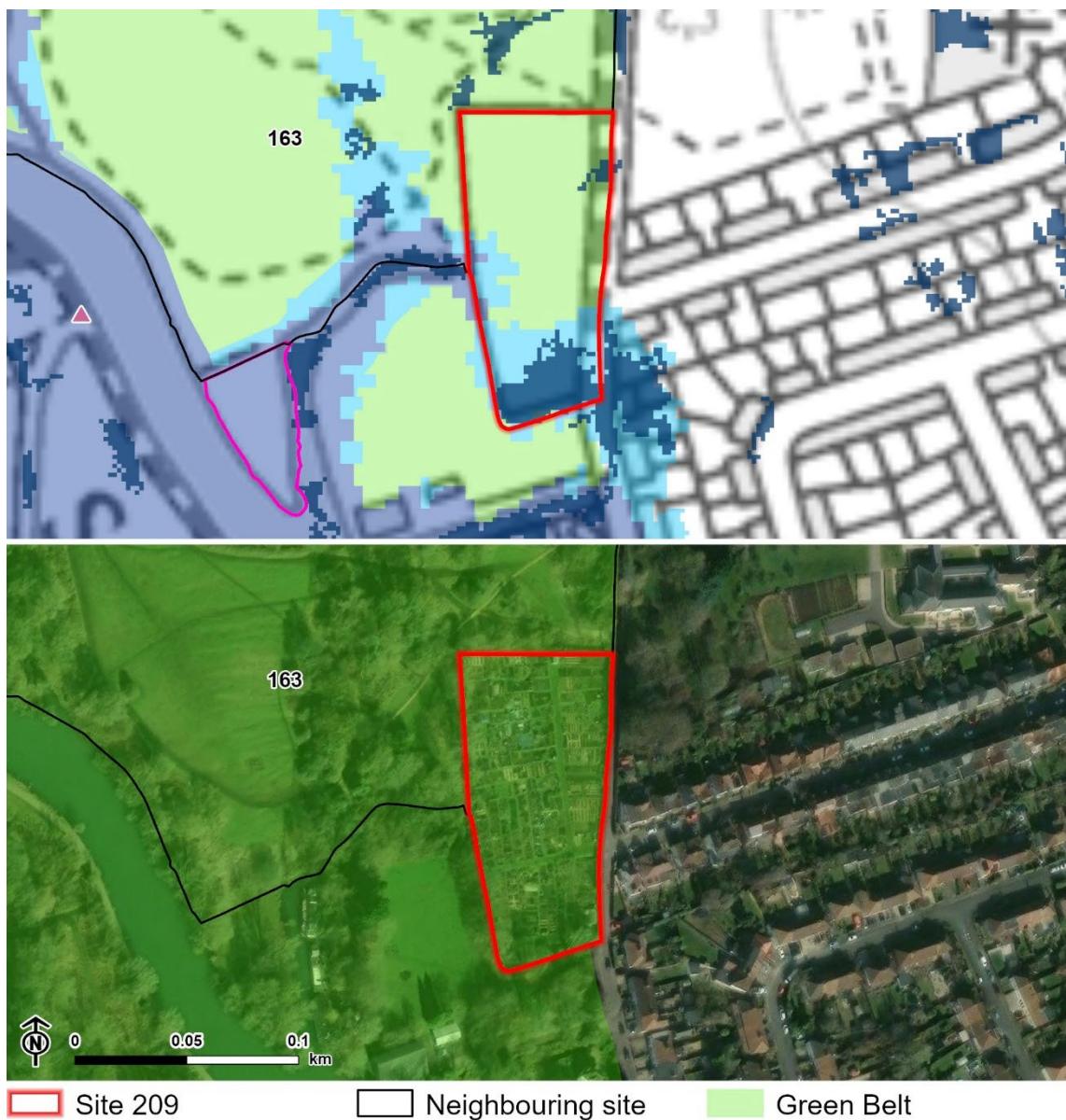
Purpose E – Assisting in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- All Green Belt land plays an equal role in relation to this purpose.

Conclusion:

- The parcel does not make a strong contribution to Green Belt purposes A, B or D and so is assessed as being grey belt.
- Development of the parcel would not have the potential to fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan.

209 – Fairacres Road allotments



NPPF Footnote 7 designations

▲ Listed building	■ Flood zone 2
■ Site of Special Scientific Interest	■ High risk of surface water flooding
■ Flood zone 3	

Figure 6.14: Fairacres Road allotments growing area from the eastern boundary



Description

- Allotment site in the south of Oxford. Parcel size: 0.8 hectares.
- There is a consistent, permanent boundary feature extending a significant distance. There are no strong boundary features but Meadow Lane creates a consistent boundary to over 1km of the settlement edge in this area.
- There is no significant change in landform to create a sense of separation between the settlement and the parcel. Meadow Lane largely coincides with the edge of the Thames floodplain but there are islands of slightly higher ground, such as the area in which this site is located.
- There is some perception of urban development outside of the Green Belt. Due to the weak and open south-eastern boundary the largely two storey residential area of New Hinksey has a clear presence in this area, but the parcel only abuts a small number of dwellings. Tree cover plays a stronger separating role to the north-east.

- There is no significant urbanising development or activity in the Green Belt affecting this parcel, although the allotment usage creates some association with the developed area.
- Natural features limit perception of the wider countryside. The more wooded western boundary (Parcel 163) creates an effective screen to the surrounding countryside.

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

Role in preventing impact on the Green Belt from the expansion of Oxford:

Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Purpose E
Moderate	Weak	Moderate	Moderate	Equal

Purpose A – Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

- The parcel is adjacent to a large built-up area.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- There is some urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel.
- There are physical features that would restrict and contain development. Tree cover provides strong containment.
- Development of land in the parcel would have an incongruous impact on the urban pattern. There is very little development, other than boat houses, on the western side of Meadow Lane.

Purpose B – Preventing neighbouring towns from merging.

- The parcel does not lie in a gap between towns that are close enough to be considered neighbouring.

Purpose C – Assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

- The parcel is part of the countryside and so contributes to preventing encroachment on it.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- There is some urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel.
- Development in the parcel would not significantly increase the urbanising influence on adjacent open land. Tree cover provides strong containment.

Purpose D – Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

- The parcel forms part of the setting of a historic town.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- The parcel makes some contribution to the special character of a historic town by being located to the west of Meadow Lane, and so forming part of the largely undeveloped Thames river corridor. However, its allotment use, small size and containment from the rest of the riverside area limit its role.

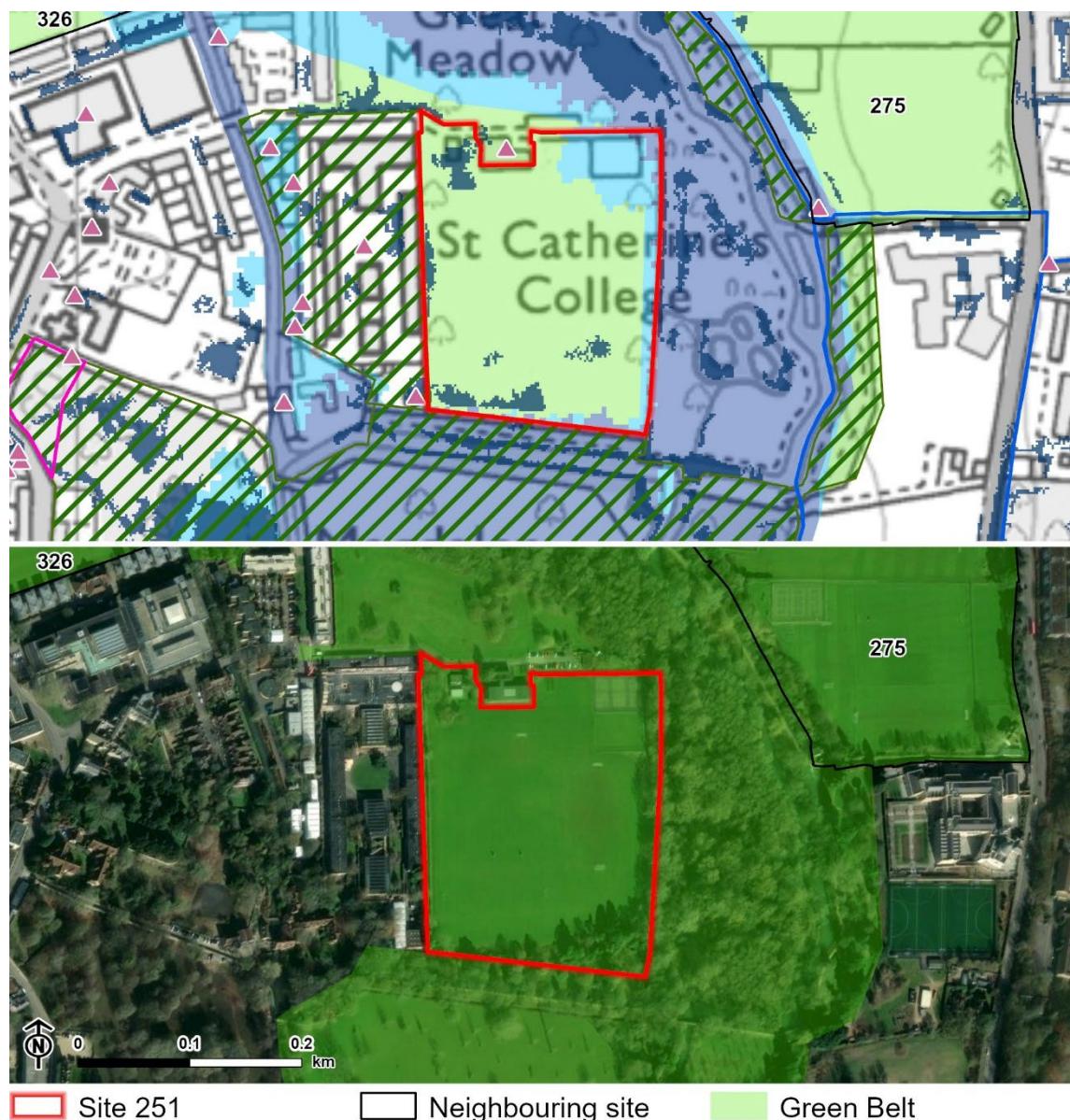
Purpose E – Assisting in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- All Green Belt land plays an equal role in relation to this purpose.

Conclusion:

- The parcel does not make a strong contribution to Green Belt purposes A, B or D and so is assessed as being grey belt.
- Development of the parcel would not have the potential to fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan.

251 – Merton College Sports Ground



NPPF Footnote 7 designations

▲ Listed building	■ High risk of surface water flooding
■ Site of Special Scientific Interest	□ Conservation area
■ Flood zone 3	■ Scheduled monument
■ Flood zone 2	■ Registered Parks and Gardens

Figure 6.15: East across Merton College sports ground with pavillion to the north



Description

- Land in the centre of Oxford between St Catherine's College and the River Cherwell. Parcel size: 5.3 hectares.
- There are no significant boundary features to separate the parcel from the settlement. The western edge of the parcel is formed of university buildings which form the edge of the built-up area.
- There is no significant change in landform to create a sense of separation between the settlement and the parcel.
- There is some perception of urban development outside of the Green Belt. The buildings of St Catherine's College are prominent along the western side of the parcel.
- There is no significant urbanising development in the Green Belt affecting this parcel but the site's formal recreational use creates some association with college buildings in the urban area.

- Natural features limit perception of the wider countryside. There is an area of established woodland between the parcel and the River Cherwell in the east which also spreads round to the northern and southern boundaries.

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

Role in preventing impact on the Green Belt from the expansion of Oxford:

Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Purpose E
Moderate	Weak	Moderate	Strong	Equal

Purpose A – Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

- The parcel is adjacent to a large built-up area at the edge of St Catherine's College to the east of the University of Oxford.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- There is some urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel.
- There are physical features that could restrict and contain development. The River Cherwell and its associated area of woodland creates a strong boundary feature that would limit the urbanising influence of development on adjacent open land.
- Development of land in the parcel would not have an incongruous impact on the urban pattern.

Purpose B – Preventing neighbouring towns from merging.

- The parcel does not lie in a gap between towns that are close enough to be considered neighbouring.

Purpose C – Assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

- The parcel has uses associated with the urban area which limit the extent to which it is perceived as being part of the countryside.

- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- There is some urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel.
- Development in the parcel would not significantly increase the urbanising influence on adjacent open land. The River Cherwell and its associated area of woodland creates a strong boundary feature that would limit the urbanising influence of development on adjacent open land.

Purpose D – Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

- The parcel forms part of the setting of a historic town.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- The parcel makes a significant contribution to the special character of a historic town. It lies within the Cherwell river valley, forming part of a corridor of open land that reaches from the city's edge to the centre. Woodland forms a strong boundary that limits the parcel's relationship with the rest of the corridor, and it lies next to modern college buildings rather than historically significant ones, but absence of development here preserve visual openness in what would otherwise be a narrow, wooded part of the river valley corridor.

Purpose E – Assisting in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- All Green Belt land plays an equal role in relation to this purpose.

Conclusion:

- The parcel makes a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose D and so is assessed as not being grey belt.
- Development of the parcel would not have the potential to fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan. It is too contained to play a fundamentally important role in the city's historic setting.

252 – Merton Field



NPPF Footnote 7 designations

▲ Listed building	■ Conservation area
■ Flood zone 3	■ Scheduled monument
■ Flood zone 2	■ Registered Parks and Gardens
■ High risk of surface water flooding	

Figure 6.16: Short cut grass of cricket pitches at Merton Field from the eastern corner towards Christ Church Cathedral



Description

- An open university sports field in the centre of Oxford. Parcel size: 3.5 hectares.
- There are no significant boundary features to separate the parcel from the settlement. The northern boundary consists of the Merton College campus whilst the western boundary is the grounds of Christ Church Cathedral.
- There is no significant change in landform to create a sense of separation between the settlement and the parcel.
- There is a strong perception of urban development outside of the Green Belt. Oxford City centre lies on the parcel's northern and western boundaries and the large university buildings are very prominent.
- There is no urbanising development in the Green Belt affecting this parcel but the site's formal recreational use creates some association with the adjoining college buildings in the urban area.

- There is some perception of connectivity with the wider countryside. The parcel is contained by urban edges on three sides and tree cover largely contains the parcel to the south but there are views down the Thames valley across Christ Church Meadow.

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

Role in preventing impact on the Green Belt from the expansion of Oxford:

Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Purpose E
Weak	Weak	Weak	Very strong	Equal

Purpose A – Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

- The parcel is adjacent to a large built-up area.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- There is substantial urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel.
- There are physical features strong enough to restrict and contain development. The extent to which the parcel is already contained by urban edges limits the impact that further development would have on open land to the south.
- Development of land in the parcel would not have an incongruous impact on the urban pattern.

Purpose B – Preventing neighbouring towns from merging.

- The parcel does not lie in a gap between towns that are close enough to be considered neighbouring.

Purpose C – Assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

- The parcel has uses associated with the urban area which limit the extent to which it is perceived as being part of the countryside.

- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- There is substantial urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel.
- Development in the parcel would not significantly increase the urbanising influence on adjacent open land. The extent to which the parcel is already contained by urban edges limits the impact that further development would have on open land to the south.

Purpose D – Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

- The parcel forms part of the setting of a historic town.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- The parcel makes a very considerable contribution to the special character of a historic town. It is part of a Registered Park and Garden that forms a key part of the setting of important Grade I listed buildings.

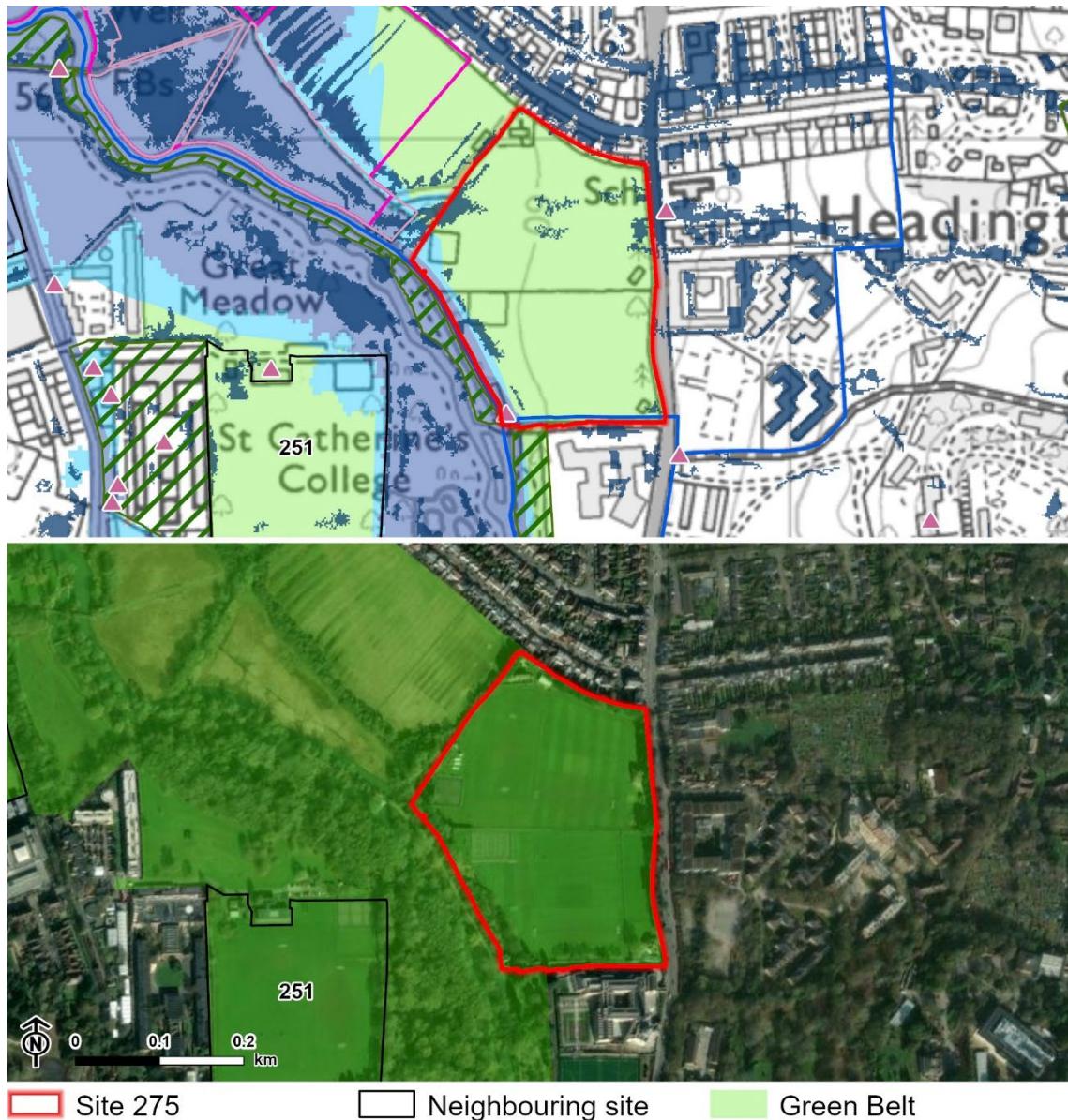
Purpose E – Assisting in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- All Green Belt land plays an equal role in relation to this purpose.

Conclusion:

- The parcel makes a very strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose D and so is assessed as not being grey belt.
- Development of the parcel would have the potential to fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan. This is a key historic location where development would be very likely to significantly affect the setting of important buildings that have a strong relationship with the undeveloped Thames river corridor.

275 – Part Trinity and Magdalen Sports Grounds – North



NPPF Footnote 7 designations

▲ Listed building	■ Flood zone 2
■ Site of Special Scientific Interest	■ High risk of surface water flooding
■ Lowland fens	■ Conservation area
■ Flood zone 3	■ Registered Parks and Gardens

Figure 6.17: View from the south-western boundary looking north across a mixture of playing surfaces and Pavilions



Description

- Land in the centre of Oxford between New Marston and the River Cherwell. Parcel size: 7.8 hectares.
- There is a moderate boundary feature between the settlement and the parcel. Marston Road (B4150) and mature tree cover alongside it, and mature trees along the back of dwellings on Ferry Road and adjacent to the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, form clear boundaries to the east and north and south respectively.
- There is no significant change in landform to create a sense of separation between the settlement and the parcel.
- There is some perception of urban development outside of the Green Belt. Development on three sides has an urbanising influence.
- There is no significant urbanising development in the Green Belt affecting this parcel but the site's formal recreational use creates some association with college buildings in the urban area.

- There is some perception of connectivity with the wider countryside. The established woodland along the River Cherwell creates an enclosed western boundary but there is some sense of connectivity with open land to the north-west.

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

Role in preventing impact on the Green Belt from the expansion of Oxford:

Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Purpose E
Strong	Weak	Moderate	Strong	Equal

Purpose A – Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

- The parcel is adjacent to a large built-up area at the southern edge of New Marston.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- There is some urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel. The parcel is contained on three sides by urban edges, although mature tree cover offsets the influence of this to a degree.
- There are no physical features strong enough to restrict and contain development. Although the River Cherwell and its associated woodland are a strong physical feature on the western boundary development in the parcel would increase the perceived urbanising containment of adjacent land in the Cherwell river corridor to the north.
- Development of land in the parcel would have an incongruous impact on the urban pattern. Although partially contained by development the parcel is, in common with fields to the north-west, preserving a consistent corridor of open land to the east of the River Cherwell. Development extending down towards the river would be incongruous with this.

Purpose B – Preventing neighbouring towns from merging.

- The parcel does not lie in a gap between towns that are close enough to be considered neighbouring.

Purpose C – Assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

- The parcel has uses associated with the urban area which limit the extent to which it is perceived as being part of the countryside.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- There is some urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel. The parcel is contained on three sides by urban edges, although mature tree cover offsets the influence of this to a degree.
- Development in the parcel would significantly increase the urbanising influence on adjacent open land to the north-west.

Purpose D – Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

- The parcel forms part of the setting of a historic town.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- The parcel makes a significant contribution to the special character of a historic town as it forms part of the undeveloped Cherwell river valley extending from beyond the city's edge to its heart. Although woodland forms a strong boundary along the riverside, the absence of development here preserves visual openness in what would otherwise be a narrower, more wooded and more visually contained part of the river valley corridor.

Purpose E – Assisting in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- All Green Belt land plays an equal role in relation to this purpose.

Conclusion:

- The parcel makes a strong contribution to Green Belt Purposes A and D and so is assessed as not being grey belt.
- Development of the parcel would not have the potential to fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan. Adjacent riverside woodland is playing a stronger role in preserving the undeveloped Cherwell river corridor.

298 – St Catherine's, Exeter, and Hertord Colleges Sports Grounds



NPPF Footnote 7 designations

▲ Listed building	■ Flood zone 2
■ Site of Special Scientific Interest	■ High risk of surface water flooding
■ Ancient woodland	■ Conservation area
■ Lowland fens	■ Registered Parks and Gardens
■ Flood zone 3	

Figure 6.18: Looking north-east across Hertford College Recreation Ground from Park Farm



Description

- Land in the centre of Oxford between New Marston and the River Cherwell. Parcel size: 10.9 hectares.
- There are no significant boundary features to separate the parcel from the settlement. Back garden tree cover forms a relatively weak boundary along some of the parcel's urban edge.
- There is no significant change in landform to create a sense of separation between the settlement and the parcel.
- There is some perception of urban development outside of the Green Belt from New Marston to the north-east and south-east of the parcel. Well-treed hedgerows limit perception of the urban area in places, so despite containment on two sides urbanising influence is not strong. Urban influence is weakest at the northern end of the parcel, where tree cover to the east forms a stronger separation from the urban edge.

- Land use creates some association with the urban area but there is little urbanising activity in the parcel. The parcel is all in formal recreational use (cricket pitches).
- There is a strong perception of the wider countryside. A weak western boundary creates a strong connection with the surrounding Cherwell river valley.

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

Role in preventing impact on the Green Belt from the expansion of Oxford:

Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Purpose E
Strong	Weak	Strong	Moderate	Equal

Purpose A – Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

- The parcel is adjacent to a large built-up area of New Marston to the north-east and south-east.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- There is some urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel.
- There are no physical features strong enough to restrict and contain development. Any development in this visually relatively open part of the river valley would in turn increase urbanising influence on adjacent open land.
- Development of land in the parcel would have an incongruous impact on the urban pattern. The lack of features to restrict and contain development mean that, although the parcel is subject to some urbanising influence, development here would have an incongruous impact.

Purpose B – Preventing neighbouring towns from merging.

- The parcel does not lie in a gap between towns that are close enough to be considered neighbouring.

Purpose C – Assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

- The parcel is part of the countryside and so contributes to preventing encroachment on it.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- There is some urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel at New Marston.
- Development in the parcel would significantly increase the urbanising influence on adjacent open land. Any development in this visually relatively open part of the river valley would in turn increase urbanising influence on adjacent open land.

Purpose D – Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

- The parcel forms part of the setting of a historic town.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- The parcel makes some contribution to the special character of a historic town. As part of the undeveloped Cherwell river valley the parcel plays a role in maintaining central Oxford's sense of connectivity with the wider countryside. However, the corridor is relatively wide at this point, with mature hedgerow boundaries further west preserving its core area.

Purpose E – Assisting in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- All Green Belt land plays an equal role in relation to this purpose.

Conclusion:

- The parcel makes a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose A and so is assessed as not being grey belt.
- Development of the parcel would not have the potential to fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan. Although not well contained the site lies in a relatively wide part of the river corridor.

311 – Sunnymead Park



Figure 6.19: Path through woodland in the centre of Sunnymead Park. West area of the eastern parcel



Description

- Park area with some play facilities, woodland and more open areas in the north-east of Oxford. Parcel size: 7.9 hectares.
- There are no significant boundary features to separate the western half of the parcel from the settlement, where the parcel's urban edge boundary runs along Wren Road. The eastern half of the parcel is largely separated from the west by a woodland belt.
- There is no significant change in landform in western part of the parcel but there is a strong slope running through the middle of the parcel which creates a lower landform in the east running down to the River Cherwell.
- There is a strong perception of urban development outside of the Green Belt in the western part of the parcel, but less in the eastern part.
- There is no significant urbanising development or activity in the Green Belt affecting this parcel but hard-landscaped park amenities – a MUGA, skate

park and playground, associate the western part more strongly with the urban area.

- Natural features (tree cover) limit perception of the wider countryside in the western part of the parcel but there are some views across the River Cherwell from the eastern area.

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes – western part of the site

Role of the western part of the parcel (distinguished from the eastern part by a red line on the map and aerial above) in preventing impact on the Green Belt from the expansion of Oxford:

Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Purpose E
Weak	Weak	Moderate	Weak	Equal

Purpose A – Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

- The parcel is adjacent to a large built-up area.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- There is substantial urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel. This influence is from the residential edges of Sunnymead to the west and south of the parcel.
- There are physical features that could restrict and contain development. The woodland belt running north-south through the parcel forms a clear boundary that would limit the urbanising influence of any new development on the open parkland to the east.
- Development of land in the parcel would not have an incongruous impact on the urban pattern.

Purpose B – Preventing neighbouring towns from merging.

- The parcel does not lie in a gap between towns that are close enough to be considered neighbouring.

Purpose C – Assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

- The parcel has uses associated with the urban area which limit the extent to which it is perceived as being part of the countryside.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- There is substantial urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel.
- Development in the parcel would not significantly increase the urbanising influence on adjacent open land. The woodland belt running north-south through the parcel forms a clear boundary that would limit the urbanising influence of any new development on the open parkland to the east.

Purpose D – Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

- The parcel forms part of the setting of a historic town.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- The parcel makes little contribution to the special character of a historic town. It is detached from the open Cherwell river corridor and its recreational uses associate it with adjacent modern urban development.

Purpose E – Assisting in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- All Green Belt land plays an equal role in relation to this purpose.

Conclusion:

- The parcel forming the western part of the site does not make a strong contribution to Green Belt Purposes A, B or D and so is assessed as being grey belt.
- Development of the parcel would not have the potential to fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan.

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes – eastern part of the site

Role of the eastern part of the parcel (distinguished from the western part by a red line on the map and aerial above) in preventing impact on the Green Belt from the expansion of Oxford:

Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Purpose E
Strong	Weak	Strong	Moderate	Equal

Purpose A – Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

- The parcel is close to a large built-up area.
- The parcel is free from urbanising development.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising influences associated with development outside the parcel. The parcel is close enough to Sunnymead for there to be some limited urbanising influence, but tree cover and landform limit this.
- There are no physical features to restrict and contain development. The River Cherwell is a strong boundary feature on the southern boundary and the A40 forms a strong physical feature along the northern boundary, but development in this parcel would increase urbanising influence on land to the east of the river.
- Development of land in the parcel would have an incongruous impact on the urban pattern. By negating the boundary role of the woodland belt that runs north-south through the site development here would be incongruous with the existing urban area.

Purpose B – Preventing neighbouring towns from merging.

- The parcel does not lie in a gap between towns that are close enough to be considered neighbouring.

Purpose C – Assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

- The parcel has uses associated with the urban area which limit the extent to which it is perceived as being part of the countryside.
- The parcel is free from urbanising development.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising influences associated with development outside the parcel. The parcel is close enough to Sunnymead for there to be some limited urbanising influence, but tree cover and landform limit this.
- Development in the parcel would significantly increase the urbanising influence on adjacent open land. By negating the boundary role of the woodland belt that runs north-south through the site development here would be incongruous with the existing urban area.

Purpose D – Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

- The parcel forms part of the setting of a historic town.
- The parcel is free from urbanising development.
- The parcel makes some contribution to the special character of a historic town. As open land directly adjacent to the River Cherwell it contributes to the openness the river corridor which penetrates into the heart of Oxford. However, the corridor is broad in this area, and residential edge to the south already abuts the river.

Purpose E – Assisting in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- All Green Belt land plays an equal role in relation to this purpose.

Conclusion:

- The parcel forming the eastern part of the site makes a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose A and so is assessed as not being grey belt.
- Development of the parcel would not have the potential to fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan. Although the parcel makes a

strong contribution to Purposes A and C it remains contained by the River Cherwell.

326 – University Parks



NPPF Footnote 7 designations

▲ Listed building	■ Lowland fens	■ Conservation area
■ Special Area of Conservation	■ Flood zone 3	■ Scheduled monument
■ Site of Special Scientific Interest	■ Flood zone 2	■ Registered Parks and Gardens
	■ High risk of surface water flooding	

Figure 6.20: Sports pitches at University Parks viewed from Thorn Walk looking west



Description

- Large parkland area with multiple different areas dedicated to sports uses in the centre of Oxford. The area of the parcel to the north of Marston Cycle Path is a Grade II Registered Park and Garden. Parcel size: 33 hectares.
- There are no significant boundary features to separate the parcel from the settlement. The northern boundary of the parcel is well-treed but the western and southern boundaries consist of a thinner level of tree cover between the parcel and large university buildings.
- There is no significant change in landform to create a sense of separation between the settlement and the parcel, other than along the eastern edge of the site where land drops down towards the River Cherwell.
- There is some perception of urban development outside of the Green Belt. This is stronger in the west of the parcel.

- There is no significant urbanising development or activity in the Green Belt affecting this parcel, but the parcel's formal recreational use creates an association with the university within the urban area.
- Natural features limit perception of the wider countryside. The parcel is well-treed in places including alongside the River Cherwell, limiting visibility of the wider Green Belt.

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

Role in preventing impact on the Green Belt from the expansion of Oxford:

Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Purpose E
Moderate	Weak	Moderate	Strong	Equal

Purpose A – Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

- The parcel is adjacent to a large built-up area.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development, although its formal sports uses creation some association with the adjacent colleges within the urban area.
- There is some urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel.
- There are physical features that could restrict and contain development. Riverside tree cover and the boundary formed by the river itself would limit the impact of development on land to the east.
- Development of land in the parcel would not have an incongruous impact on the urban pattern. The parcel is contained by existing urban development on three sides.

Purpose B – Preventing neighbouring towns from merging.

- The parcel does not lie in a gap between towns that are close enough to be considered neighbouring.

Purpose C – Assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

- The parcel is part of the countryside and so contributes to preventing encroachment on it.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development, although its formal sports uses create some association with the adjacent colleges within the urban area.
- There is some urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel.
- Development in the parcel would not significantly increase the urbanising influence on adjacent open land. Riverside tree cover and the boundary formed by the river itself would limit the impact of development on land to the east.

Purpose D – Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

- The parcel forms part of the setting of a historic town.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development, although its formal sports uses create some association with the adjacent colleges within the urban area.
- The parcel makes a considerable contribution to the special character of a historic town. Although the western part of the parcel is peripheral to the river valley, and on higher ground, this is a sizeable area of open space that has a strong relationship with many of the city centre university buildings, providing an open link to the river corridor and contributing to setting. A large part of it is a Grade II Registered Park and Garden, reflecting its character.

Purpose E – Assisting in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- All Green Belt land plays an equal role in relation to this purpose.

Conclusion:

- The parcel makes a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose D and so is assessed as not being grey belt.

- Development of the parcel would not have the potential to fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan.

431 – Walton Well Road Car Park



NPPF Footnote 7 designations

■ Special Area of Conservation	■ Flood zone 2
■ Site of Special Scientific Interest	■ High risk of surface water flooding
■ Flood zone 3	■ Conservation area

Figure 6.21: Looking toward the car park from Port Meadow looking east



Description

- A car park on the western edge of Oxford, adjacent to Port Meadow.
Parcel size: 0.3 hectares.
- There is a consistent strong boundary feature between the settlement and the main urban area, with the railway corridor and the Oxford canal running along the eastern boundary. There is a strip of urban development to the west of the railway line, on Roger Dudman Way, but Castle Mill Stream and associated linear tree cover to the south of the parcel still provides a strong boundary to that.
- There is no significant change in landform to create a sense of separation between the settlement and the parcel.

- There is a weak perception of urban development outside of the Green Belt due to the mature tree and shrubs along the railway corridor and along Castle Mill Stream.
- Existing development in the Green Belt has some urbanising influence. The parcel is a hard-surfaced car park for users of Port Meadow and so can be considered partially developed.
- There is a strong perception of the wider countryside. Although the parcel is largely contained by mature trees it is too small for land within it not to have a relationship with Port Meadow, a large expanse of visually open and undeveloped land to the north and west.

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

Role in preventing impact on the Green Belt from the expansion of Oxford:

Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Purpose E
Strong	Weak	Strong	Strong	Equal

Purpose A – Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

- The parcel is near to a large built-up area.
- There is some urbanising development in the parcel. The parcel's use as a car park diminishes its openness in Green Belt terms.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising influences associated with development outside the parcel.
- There are no physical features strong enough to restrict and contain development. Development here would be likely to have some urbanising impact on adjacent land on Port Meadow, which currently has a very strong sense of separation from the main urban area of Oxford.
- Development of land in the parcel would have an incongruous impact on the urban pattern. The residential blocks on Roger Dudman Way already have some urbanising visual influence and development on the site, which is part of the Port Meadow common land, would potentially compound this.

Purpose B – Preventing neighbouring towns from merging.

- The parcel does not lie in a gap between towns that are close enough to be considered neighbouring.

Purpose C – Assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

- Although partially developed the parcel's location is part of the countryside and so it contributes to preventing encroachment.
- There is some urbanising development in the parcel. The parcel's use as a car park diminishes its openness in Green Belt terms.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising influences associated with development outside the parcel.
- Development in the parcel would significantly increase the urbanising influence on adjacent open land. This is amplified by the open nature of the adjacent Port Meadow to the north.

Purpose D – Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

- The parcel forms part of the setting of a historic town.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- The parcel makes a considerable contribution to the special character of a historic town. Although its use as a car park makes no contribution to special character the location is a very sensitive one. The openness of the Thames valley floor to the west of the parcel, centred on the historic common land of Port Meadow, is a very important part of the setting of Oxford, so visually prominent development here has the potential to affect its character.

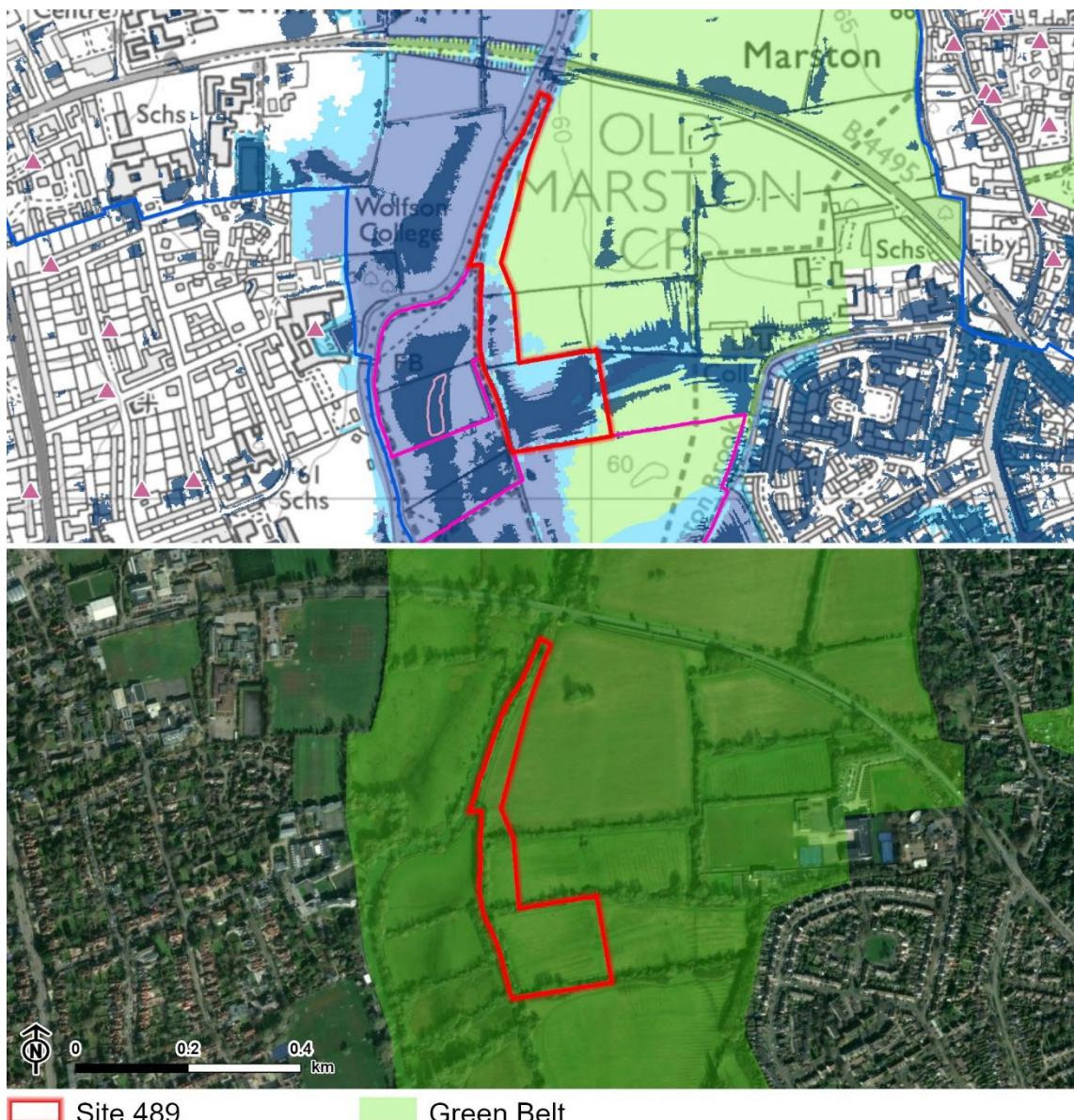
Purpose E – Assisting in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- All Green Belt land plays an equal role in relation to this purpose.

Conclusion:

- The parcel makes a strong contribution to Green Belt Purposes A and D and so is assessed as not being grey belt.
- Development of the parcel would not have the potential to fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan. Although Port Meadow is a key feature in Oxford's historic setting the site is too small, and too close to existing development on Roger Dudman Way, for new development here to have a fundamental impact.

489 – Marston - Gap between SSSI



NPPF Footnote 7 designations

▲ Listed building	■ Flood zone 2
■ Site of Special Scientific Interest	■ High risk of surface water flooding
■ Lowland fens	■ Conservation area
■ Flood zone 3	

Figure 6.22: Area of pasture west of New Marston looking east from the western boundary



Description

- Pastural fields to the west of New Marston in the north of Oxford. Parcel size: 5.1 hectares.
- Boundary features within the gap between the parcel and both New Marston (to the east) and North Oxford (to the west) combine to create strong separation. Multiple well-vegetated field boundaries between the parcel and New Marston in the east mean that there is a strong sense of separation, whilst to the west the River Cherwell and associated tree cover contributes to separation.
- There is some change in landform which creates a sense of separation between the settlement and the parcel. The parcel is on the eastern bank of the River Cherwell in a low-lying part of the river valley.
- There is a weak perception of urban development outside of the Green Belt.

- There is no significant urbanising development or activity in the Green Belt affecting this parcel. The surrounding Green Belt consists of pasture and arable fields.
- There is a strong perception of the wider countryside.

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

Role in preventing impact on the Green Belt from the expansion of Oxford:

Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Purpose E
Strong	Weak	Strong	Very Strong	Equal

Purpose A – Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

- The parcel is near to a large built-up area.
- The parcel is free from urbanising development.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising influences associated with development outside the parcel.
- There are no physical features that could restrict and contain development. Hedgerows do not form strong boundaries. Any development here would in turn increase urbanising influence on adjacent open land.
- Development of land in the parcel would have an incongruous impact on the urban pattern. The valley floor to the east of the River Cherwell remains undeveloped all the way to the city centre where the Cherwell joins the Thames.

Purpose B – Preventing neighbouring towns from merging.

- The parcel does not lie in a gap between towns that are close enough to be considered neighbouring.

Purpose C – Assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

- The parcel is part of the countryside and so contributes to preventing encroachment on it.
- The parcel is free from urbanising development.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising influences associated with development outside the parcel.
- Development in the parcel would significantly increase the urbanising influence on adjacent open land. Hedgerows do not form strong boundaries. Any development here would in turn increase urbanising influence on adjacent open land.

Purpose D – Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

- The parcel forms part of the setting of a historic town.
- The parcel is free from urbanising development.
- The parcel makes a very considerable contribution to the special character of a historic town. The openness of the Cherwell river valley is a key element in Oxford's historic setting so development on visually open land to the east of the river would significantly truncate the openness of the river corridor.

Purpose E – Assisting in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- All Green Belt land plays an equal role in relation to this purpose.

Conclusion:

- The parcel makes a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose A and a very strong contribution to Purpose D and so is assessed as not being grey belt.
- Development of the parcel would have the potential to fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan. Its location is central to the

open Cherwell river corridor which links the wider countryside to the heart of the city.

491 – East of Wolvercote Paper Mill site



Figure 6.23: High scrub and mature tree boundary from the south-west corner with the A34 at the northern boundary



Description

- Green field site to the north of Wolvercote on the northern edge of Oxford. Parcel size: 3.4 hectares.
- There is a moderate boundary feature between the settlement and the parcel. A well-treed hedgerow forms the rear garden boundaries of houses on Home Close and Rosamund Road.
- There is no significant change in landform to create a sense of separation between the settlement and the parcel.
- There is some perception of urban development outside of the Green Belt. This is particularly evident to the south and south-west at the edge of Wolvercote, however, there is increasing influence from the east from the visible parts of the new development at Oxford North.
- There is no significant urbanising development or activity in the Green Belt affecting this parcel.

- Natural features and transport routes limit perception of the wider countryside. The A34 bypass and the railway line, with associated tree cover, contain the parcel.

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

Role in preventing impact on the Green Belt from the expansion of Oxford:

Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Purpose E
Moderate	Weak	Moderate	Weak	Equal

Purpose A – Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

- The parcel is close to a large built-up area.
- The parcel is free from urbanising development.
- There is some urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel. The northern edge of Wolvercote to the south and the new development of Oxford North to the east are urbanising influences.
- There are physical features that could restrict and contain development. The A34 and railway line serve as strong physical boundaries to contain development.
- Development of land in the parcel would not have an incongruous impact on the urban pattern. The intervening railway line, canal and associated vegetation would preserve a sense of separation from Oxford. This containment would limit any sense of development here being sprawl associated with the large built-up area of Oxford, and would not be perceived as risking merger between Oxford and Wolvercote.

Purpose B – Preventing neighbouring towns from merging.

- The parcel does not lie in a gap between towns that are close enough to be considered neighbouring.

Purpose C – Assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

- The parcel lacks openness and so is part of an urban area rather than part of the countryside. The A34 limits any perception of the wider countryside in this area.
- The parcel is predominantly free from urbanising development.
- There is some urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel. There is new development on the parcels south-west edge at Wolvercote whilst some development of the nearby Oxford North is also visible from the parcel.
- Development in the parcel would not significantly increase the urbanising influence on adjacent open land. The A34 and railway line serve as strong physical boundaries to contain urbanising impact.

Purpose D – Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

- The parcel forms part of the setting of a historic town.
- The parcel is free from urbanising development.
- The parcel makes little contribution to the special character of a historic town. Although close to Oxford, its physical containment limits any perception of it.

Purpose E – Assisting in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- All Green Belt land plays an equal role in relation to this purpose.

Conclusion:

- The parcel does not make a strong contribution to Green Belt Purposes A, B or D and so is assessed as being grey belt.
- Development of the parcel would not have the potential to fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan.

636 – Land off Mill Lane



NPPF Footnote 7 designations

- ▲ Listed building
- High risk of surface water flooding
- Conservation area

Figure 6.24: Looking west from Mill Lane towards the River Cherwell



Description

- Land in the north-east of Oxford on the west edge of Old Marston. Parcel size: 0.3 hectares.
- There is a moderate boundary to separate the parcel from the settlement. There are mature trees Mill Lane at this point, and along the site's longer boundary with residential development to the north.
- There is no significant change in landform to create a sense of separation between the settlement and the parcel. The landform changes to the west of the parcel towards the River Cherwell but in the parcel is consistent with that of Old Marston.
- There is some perception of urban development outside of the Green Belt. This is provided by the residential development on the north and the east of the parcel.

- There is no significant urbanising development or activity in the Green Belt affecting this parcel.
- There is some perception of the wider countryside. The weak western boundary allows for views to the wider countryside but the parcel is largely contained by well-treed boundaries and, to the south, by the access road to the Victoria Arms public house.

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

Role in preventing impact on the Green Belt from the expansion of Oxford:

Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Purpose E
Moderate	Weak	Moderate	Moderate	Equal

Purpose A – Checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

- The parcel is close to a large built-up area. The parcel is on the edge of Old Marston, part of the large built-up area of Oxford.
- The parcel is free from urbanising development.
- There is some urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel.
- There are physical features to restrict and contain development. The parcel has well-treed boundaries. Although development would be visible from land to the west this would, given the narrowness of the site, have little impact in the context of views of existing development immediately to the north.
- Development of land in the parcel would not have an incongruous impact on the urban pattern. This is due to the parcels small size and already having adjacent development on two sides.

Purpose B – Preventing neighbouring towns from merging.

- The parcel does not lie in a gap between towns that are close enough to be considered neighbouring.

Purpose C – Assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

- The parcel is part of the countryside and so contributes to preventing encroachment on it.
- The parcel is free from urbanising development.
- There is some urbanising influence associated with development outside of the parcel.
- Development in the parcel would not significantly increase the urbanising influence on adjacent open land. Vegetation and mature hedgerow trees in the neighbouring fields would provide a level of screening. Although development would be visible from land to the west this would, given the narrowness of the site, have little impact in the context of views of existing development immediately to the north

Purpose D – Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.

- The parcel forms part of the setting of a historic town.
- The parcel is free from urbanising development.
- The parcel makes some contribution to the special character of a historic town. It lies in the Cherwell river valley corridor, the openness of which contributes significantly to Oxford's historic setting, but is peripheral to it.

Purpose E – Assisting in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- All Green Belt land plays an equal role in relation to this purpose.

Conclusion:

- The parcel does not make a strong contribution to Green Belt Purposes A, B or D and so is assessed as being grey belt.
- Development of the parcel would not have the potential to fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan.

References

- 1 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government published a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024.) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>
- 2 Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2025) Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>.
- 3 NPPF definition of 'Habitat Site': Any site which would be included within the definition at regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 for the purpose of those regulations, including candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and any relevant Marine Sites.
- 4 NPPF definition of 'Heritage Asset': A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).
- 5 Non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest, which are demonstrably of equivalent significance to scheduled monuments, should be considered subject to the policies for designated heritage assets.
- 6 City and Town Classification of Constituencies and Local Authorities, available at: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8322/#:~:text=The%20House%20of%20Commons%20Library,and%20inequalities%20across%20Great%20Britain>.
- 7 Hansard HC Deb 08 November 1988 vol 140 c148W 148W; referenced in Historic England (2018) response to the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan – Green Belt Review – Stage 3.
- 8 Planning Inspectorate, David Smith, Report to the Council of the London Borough of Redbridge regarding the Examination of the Redbridge Local Plan 2015-2030 (January, 2018). Available at: <https://www.redbridge.gov.uk/media/4732/redbridge-local-plan-inspectors-report.pdf>

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