



**Local Plan Part 1:
Rushcliffe Core Strategy**

**Green Belt Background
Paper**

February 2014

EX34

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is draw together the relevant evidence that has been prepared in support of the proposed alterations to the Green Belt contained within Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy, in particular Policy 2 (Spatial Strategy) and Policy 3 (Green Belt).
- 1.2 The Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy is the first part of the Local Plan (formerly Local Development Framework). Work on Local Plan Part 2: Land and Planning Policies Development Plan Document (DPD) is due to commence later on in 2014: Collectively these two documents will form the statutory Development Plan for the area and will set out how the Borough Council will develop by 2028. The Regional Spatial Strategy (The East Midlands Regional Plan) previously formed part of the Development Plan, but has now been revoked.

2. Background to Green Belt policy

- 2.1 Paragraph 79 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), identifies 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 permanence.
- 2.2 The five purposes of the Green Belt are listed in the NPPF (paragraph 80) as:
 - to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
 - to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
 - to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
 - to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
 - to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land
- 2.3 Once established, the NPPF (paragraph 83) identifies that Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of the Local Plan. The NPPF also provides that authorities should consider the boundaries of the Green Belt having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so that they should be capable of enduring beyond the plan period.
- 2.4 In reviewing Green Belts, the Government places particular importance on promoting sustainable patterns of development. Paragraph 84 of the NPPF provides that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) should consider the

consequences for sustainable development of channelling development towards urban areas inside the Green Belt boundary, towards towns and villages inset within the Green Belt or towards locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary. Paragraph 85 then identifies that, in defining boundaries, LPAs should ensure consistency with the Local Plan strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development.

- 2.5 The NPPF (paragraph 85) also states that local planning authorities should provide for safeguarded land. Safeguarded land is an area of land that performs the function of the Green Belt during the short to medium term, but provides opportunities for development through the review of a Local Plan without having to open the Green Belt up for further full scale review. At present there is no safeguarded land identified within Rushcliffe through a statutory policy.
- 2.6 Sketch plans for the Nottingham-Derby Green Belt were first produced in the 1950's but were not formally adopted. Policies were set to formalise Green Belt boundaries in the 1980 Nottinghamshire Structure Plan and Nottinghamshire County Council prepared the Green Belt Local Plan for Nottinghamshire which identified specific Green Belt boundaries in 1989.
- 2.7 Rushcliffe Borough Council carried the Green Belt boundary forward from the Nottinghamshire Green Belt Local Plan into its 1996 local plan in its entirety. In addition, it included additional land within the Green Belt at Lady Bay. The policy detailing the extent of the Green Belt was saved by the Secretary of State under the provisions of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. This means that the Green Belt has maintained its statutory status in terms of its extent for over a quarter of a century without any review, and sketch plans have existed for much longer.
- 2.8 The Green Belt has performed its main wider function and purpose well in preventing the coalescence of the principal urban areas of Nottingham and Derby. In the case of Rushcliffe, it has also helped to maintain separations between settlements, together with containing urban sprawl.

3. Need for a Green Belt Review

- 3.1 Green Belts should only be altered in exceptional circumstances. These exceptional circumstances may include whether the development needs of the area can be accommodated without releasing Green Belt land. Consideration should be given to the consequences for sustainable development of channelling development towards urban areas inside the

Green Belt boundary, towards towns and villages inset within the Green Belt or towards locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary.

- 3.2 Therefore, even if the development needs of the area can be met without Green Belt release, consideration will still need to be given as to whether releasing Green Belt land may produce a more sustainable outcome within Rushcliffe.
- 3.3 As work on the Core Strategy commenced when the East Midlands Regional Plan (RD01¹) was in place, the focus of the Green Belt Review was on assessing the sites around the Principal Urban Area in accordance with the strategy of urban concentration it adopted. While the Regional Plan itself has now been revoked, in order to maintain a degree of alignment with other Greater Nottingham authorities, the Core Strategy has continued to follow a strategy of urban concentration with regeneration across the plan area, as the Sustainability Appraisal has shown this to be the most sustainable pattern of development, especially when the Borough Council will be meeting a significant proportion of Nottingham City's unmet need.
- 3.4 Whilst the Regional Plan has been formally revoked, the evidence that supported its development still exists, including a broad strategic review of the Green Belt (the Nottingham-Derby Green Belt Review (ED14)). Paragraph 218 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that Local Planning Authorities may also continue to draw on evidence that informed the preparation of Regional Strategies to support Local Plan policies, supplemented as needed by up to date, robust local evidence.
- 3.5 The objectively assessed housing figure for Greater Nottingham (including the boroughs of Erewash and Rushcliffe) is 49,950 homes up to 2028. Information regarding the potential supply of sites can be found within the various Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments which cover the plan area. Given the tightly drawn Green Belt boundaries around much of Greater Nottingham and the scale objectively assessed development needs, it is accepted that exceptional circumstances to justify the release of some land from the Green Belt can be demonstrated.
- 3.6 In order to meet objectively assessed housing needs and also comply with the 'duty to cooperate', the proportion of new homes that Rushcliffe must provide totals 13,150 dwellings between 2011 and 2028. The 2013 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) update (EX29) indicates that the Borough Council cannot accommodate all of this growth on sites that are

¹ This and similar references throughout are to the number assigned to the document referred to in the Core Strategy's examination library list.

considered to be suitable for development. It is therefore considered that a review of the Green Belt within Rushcliffe is required to support the plan-making process.

4. Approach across Greater Nottingham

- 4.1 In order to provide evidence to support the production of the former East Midlands Regional Plan, a broad strategic review of the Nottingham-Derby Green Belt was undertaken (ED14). In addition, the Greater Nottingham authorities commissioned additional work to support the production of Development Plan Documents. These include Tribal's Appraisal of Sustainable Urban Extensions (ED06) and the Greater Nottingham Sustainable Locations for Growth Study (ED07).
- 4.2 The Nottingham-Derby Green Belt Review (2006) provided strategic guidance as to the relative importance of different areas of the Green Belt around Greater Nottingham in relation to the five purposes of the Green Belt identified above. Overall it concluded that the area between Nottingham and Derby was the most important area of Green Belt. Areas to the south and east were considered less important in terms of the five purposes for including land within the Green Belt. It should be noted, however, that only those areas of Green Belt within the area covered by Rushcliffe can be altered through its Local Plan.
- 4.3 The main purpose of the Green Belt Review (2006) was to provide an assessment as to how the land within the Green Belt fulfilled the five purposes of the Green Belt set out; at the time in paragraph 1.5 of the Government's *Planning Policy Guidance Note 2: Green Belts* (included in paragraph 2.2 of this Background Paper). The Green Belt Review also considered the potential of identifying additional areas as Green Belt and the role open Green Belt land might play as part of the Green Infrastructure network for the area.
- 4.4 The Green Belt Review (2006) rated broad areas for their importance against the five purposes identified above. Each of the five purposes carried equal weight and was given a rating of **X** (low importance) to **XXXXX** (high importance) for its regional and national importance. A score was also given for the Green Infrastructure importance of the area. Each area was given an overall assessment of 'High', 'Medium' or 'Low' importance.
- 4.5 The Appraisal of Sustainable Urban Extensions (ED06) assessed locations around Greater Nottingham against a number of criteria, including Green Belt, accessibility and environmental constraints. The study was focussed on the

edge of the main built up area (the Principal Urban Area) as well as the edges of other urban areas (the Sub-Regional Centres of Hucknall and Ilkeston) as it was prepared in the context of the Regional Strategy which steered development to these locations.

- 4.6 The Sustainable Locations for Growth Study (2010)(ED07) assessed the appropriateness of development in and around key settlements across Greater Nottingham other than those addressed by the SUE Study. It used similar assessment criteria to the Appraisal of Sustainable Urban Extensions study, including consideration of Green Belt policy.

5. Further Green Belt Review for Rushcliffe

- 5.1 As a result of the Inspector's concerns in relation to the Rushcliffe Publication Core Strategy (March 2012), in particular her request that the Borough Council re-examine the case for a further Sustainable Urban Extension, and seek to increase the provision of housing in the plan, a more focussed review of the Green Belt within Rushcliffe has been completed during the Core Strategy suspension period (EX26). This review built upon the existing evidence contained within the Nottingham-Derby Green Belt Review and the two Tribal studies.
- 5.2 The review is comprised of two parts. Part 1 consists of a strategic review of the Green Belt around the built up area of Nottingham within Rushcliffe (part 1(a)) and a strategic review of the remainder of the Green Belt within Rushcliffe (Part 1 (b)) Part 2 consists of a more detailed review of the Green Belt within Rushcliffe. Part 2 (a) focusses on the Green Belt around the main built up area of Nottingham (within Rushcliffe). Part 2 (b) which has yet to be undertaken, will focus upon other settlements within Rushcliffe. This stage will be undertaken in support of Local Plan Part 2: Land and Planning Policies DPD. The following table (Table 1) shows how each part of the review fits into the development of Local Plan part 1: Core Strategy and Local Plan Part 2: Land and Planning Policies DPD.

Table 1: Rushcliffe Green Belt Review stages

<p>CORE STRATEGY STAGE</p>	<p>Part 1(a) Strategic review of the Green Belt around the Nottingham Principal Urban Area (PUA) within Rushcliffe using existing evidence and work as a starting point.</p> <p>Part 1(b) Strategic review of the rest of the Green Belt within Rushcliffe focussing on rural settlements and areas proposed for regeneration.</p> <p>Review of existing settlements “washed over” by the Green Belt and identification of whether or not they should be “inset” from the Green Belt.</p> <p>Part 2 (a) Detailed review of inner Green Belt Boundaries around the PUA and for proposed strategic regeneration sites across rural Rushcliffe that currently lie within the Green Belt.</p>
<p>LAND AND PLANNING POLICIES STAGE</p>	<p>Part 2 (b) Detailed reviews around the settlements of Bingham, Cotgrave, Keyworth, Radcliffe on Trent and Ruddington to accommodate future development needs.</p> <p>Definition of new detailed inset boundaries for those settlements deemed suitable for “insetting” at the Core Strategy stage in order to bring the Rushcliffe Green Belt into conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework</p> <p>Review of all other existing “inset” boundaries in order to correct any minor issues in relation to current Green Belt boundaries.</p>

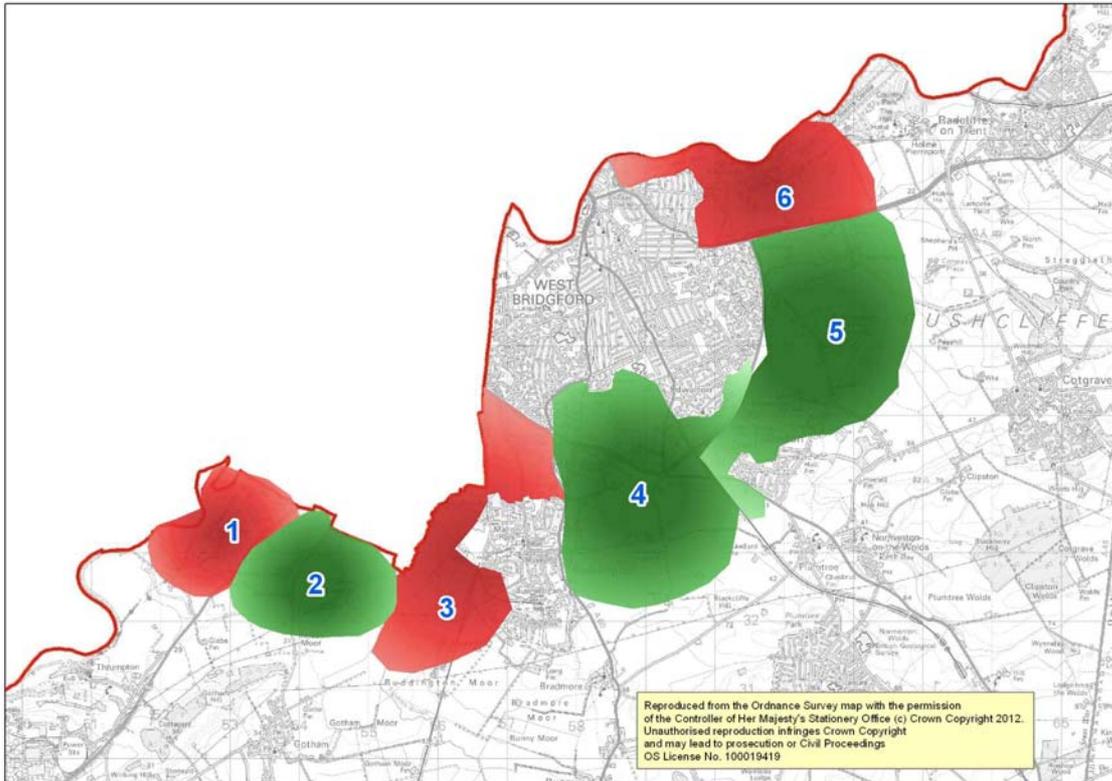
5.3 The Borough Council consulted upon a draft version of the Green Belt Review during June and July 2013. Comments were then considered, and alterations were made as appropriate. Part 1(a) and part 2(a) of the Green Belt Review was then used as evidence to support the defining of appropriate Green Belt boundaries for the enlarged strategic allocations at Melton Road, Edwalton; in support of South of Clifton and East of Gamston/North of Tollerton, together with the consideration of safeguarded land around the Nottingham built-up area (within Rushcliffe). Part 1(b) was used to support proposed modifications to Policy 3 - Green Belt. A more detailed explanation of each of the proposed amendments to the Green Belt is contained within the following sections of this background paper.

6. Proposed amendments to the Green Belt Boundary around the main built-up area of Nottingham (within Rushcliffe).

Stage 1(a) Methodology and Conclusions

- 6.1 The full Methodology for Stage 1(a) – Assessment of Broad Areas adjacent to the Nottingham Principal Urban Area (PUA) can be found on pages 14 – 17 of the Green Belt Review (EX26). Table 2 of the Green Belt Review outlines how the assessment of each broad location on the edge of the PUA is structured. Table 3 of the Green Belt Review then details the criteria used to assess each broad location against the five purposes of including land within the Green Belt. Table 3 also identifies whether there are any significant planning constraints within each broad location which would rule it out from more detailed review.
- 6.2 The conclusions of Stage 1(a) of the Review provided that of the six broad locations adjacent to the PUA within Rushcliffe, three should be ruled out on Green Belt or other planning grounds; thus leaving three broad locations to be carried through for more detailed assessment (shown in green in Figure 1 below). These are Broad Location 2: South of Clifton and North of Gotham; Broad Location 4: South of West Bridgford and East of Ruddington and Broad Location 5: East of Gamston and North of Tollerton. The following map identifies the broad locations carried forward for detailed assessment (shown in Green): This stage of the review also noted that whilst Broad Location 5 is assessed to be of medium Green Belt importance, and that whilst the conclusions of Tribal’s ‘Appraisal of Sustainable Urban Extensions’ were not favourable in terms of development within this area, the household projections and objectively assessed need including unmet needs from Nottingham necessitates that the area has to be subject to further detailed consideration.

Figure 1: Results of Assessment of Broad Areas around the Principal Urban Area within Rushcliffe*



*Green areas are those carried forward to the 1(b) assessment.

Stage 2(a) Methodology and Conclusions

6.3 Stage 2(a) of the Rushcliffe Green Belt Review carried out a detailed review of the Green Belt around the edge of the main built up area of Nottingham, within Rushcliffe. Each broad location was then divided into zones in order to carry out more detailed analysis against Green Belt purposes and identify other relevant factors which could contribute to the sensitivity of each zone. The methodology for Stage 2(a) can be found on page 68 of the Green Belt Review.

Role of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment within the Green Belt Review

6.4 The role of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) is to assess sites that may have the potential for future housing development. The SHLAA looks at sites which have either entered the planning process or sites that have been submitted for assessment by developers/landowners etc. Whilst the SHLAA did not influence the Green Belt Review in terms of providing an assessment against the five purposes of including land within it, it must be borne in mind that when reviewing the Green Belt, for development

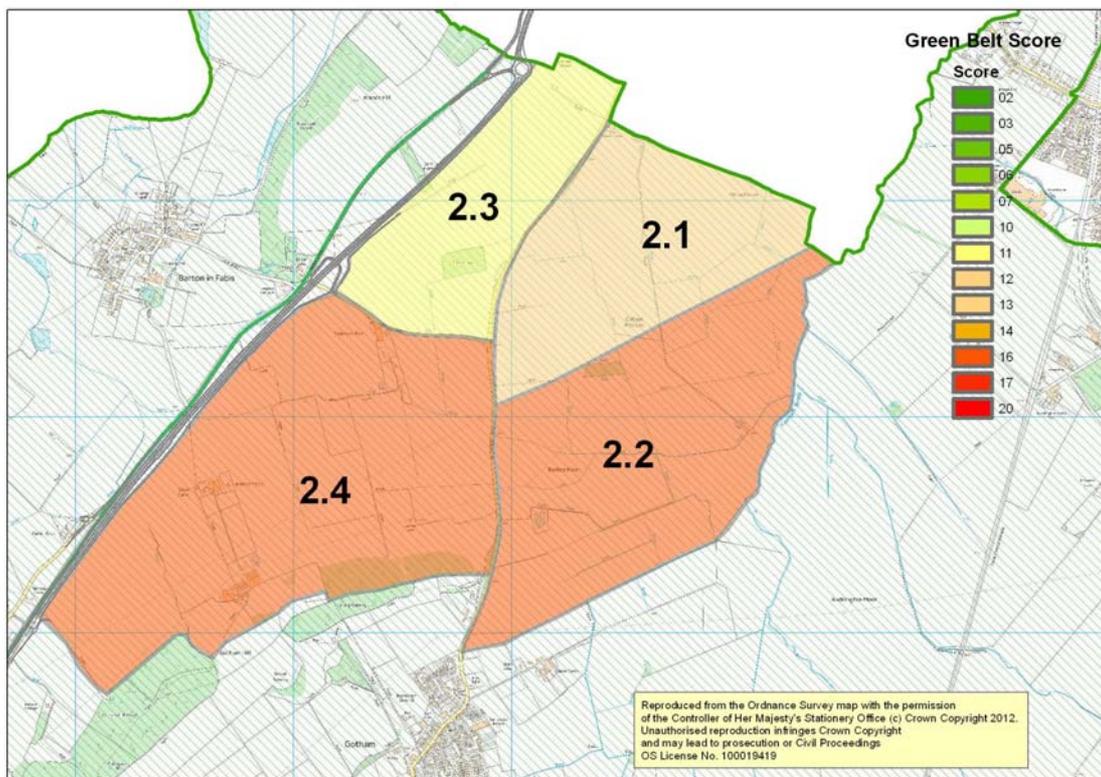
requirements to be met land must be promoted for development in order to be considered deliverable. The review therefore identified where zones were being promoted for development through the SHLAA process.

Summary of conclusions of part 1(a) of the Green Belt Review and subsequent proposed amendments to Green Belt boundary through the Core Strategy

Broad location 2

6.5 Broad Location 2 was divided into four Zones for further consideration, as shown in the following map (Figure 2). The Green Belt Review concluded that Zones 2.1 and 2.3 were of medium importance when assessed against the five purposes of the Green Belt. These two zones offered the least damaging options in Green Belt terms within this broad location. Zone 2.2 and 2.4 were assessed as being of medium-high importance, scoring particularly high in terms of checking unrestricted sprawl and safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

Figure 2: Results of Part 2 (a) Assessment Zone 2



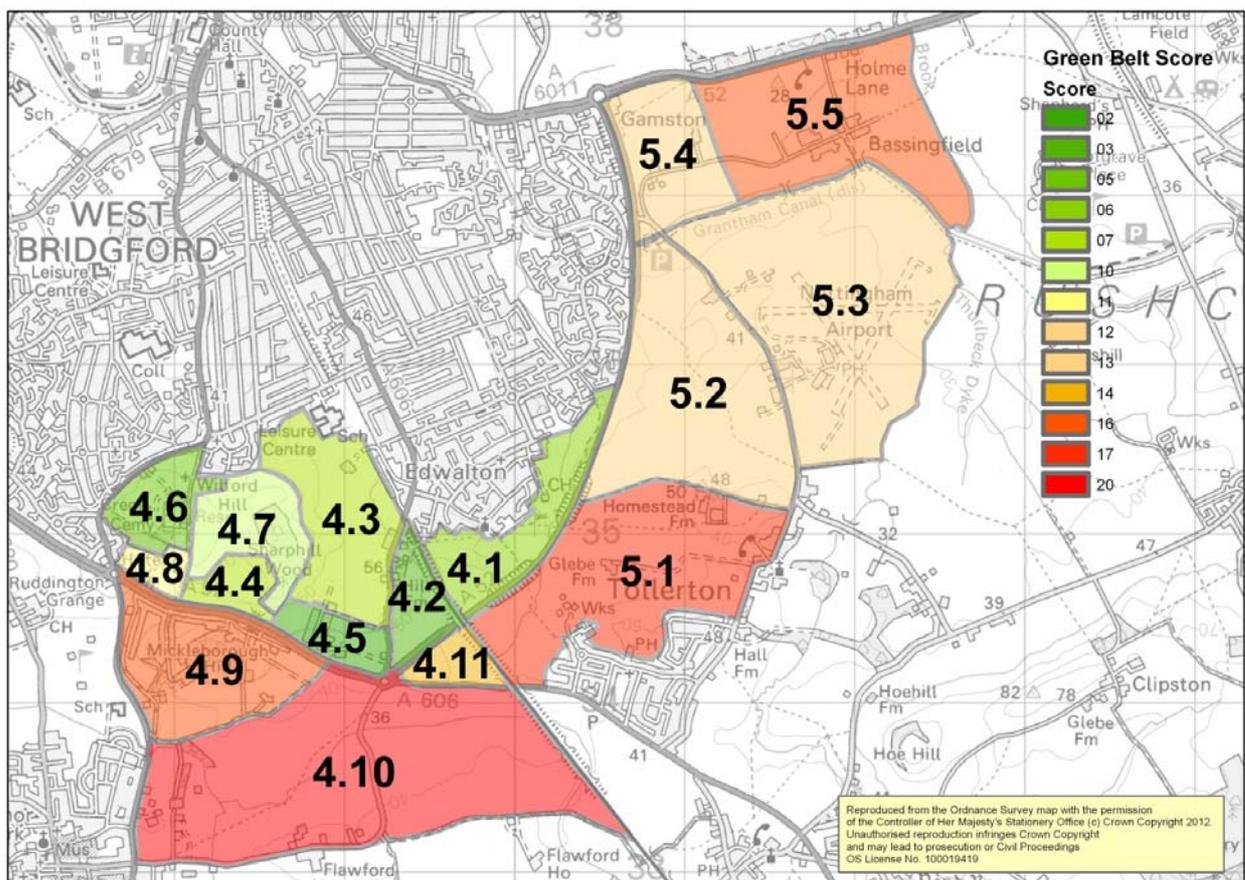
6.6 Zones, 2.1 and 2.3 are part of a site being promoted through the SHLAA and are therefore 'available' for development. Both Zones 2.2 and 2.4 were only partially being promoted for development through the SHLAA process.

6.7 Whilst both zones 2.1 and 2.3 were assessed as being of medium importance against the five purposes of the Green Belt and including land within it, they both offer the least damaging option in Green Belt terms within this broad location. The draft Core Strategy (CD01 and EX41) and Publication Proposals Map (now known as the Policies Map) (CD02) proposes to remove these two zones from the Green Belt in order to accommodate development through the proposed strategic allocation at land south of Clifton. In the Council's view there are exceptional circumstances to do so in order to sustainably meet objectively assessed development needs.

Broad Location 4

6.8 Broad Location 4 was divided into 11 Zones for further consideration, as shown in the following map (Figure 3). The Green Belt Review concluded that Zones 4.2, 4.5, 4.6 were of low importance in relation to the purposes of the Green Belt.

Figure 3: Results of Part 2 (a) Assessment Zones 4 and 5



6.9 Zones 4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 4.7 and 4.8 were assessed as being of low to medium importance in relation to the purposes of the Green Belt. Zone 4.11 was

assessed as being of medium importance and Zones 4.9 and 4.10 were assessed as being of medium-high importance.

- 6.10 Of these zones, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5 and a small proportion of 4.7 are all part of sites being promoted through the SHLAA process by developers and therefore 'available' for development. Zones 4.2, 4.8, 4.9 and 4.10 are available in part i.e. part of the site is within a SHLAA site. Zones 4.1, 4.6, the vast proportion of 4.8 and 4.11 are not identified as available for development through the SHLAA process as they have not been submitted to the assessment.
- 6.11 The Green Belt Review concluded that Zones 4.1 – 4.8 could be removed from the Green Belt without compromising the purposes of including land within the Green Belt. It also stated that: *"it may be appropriate to offer 'safeguarded' status to those zones that perform/will perform an open space function, and to those zones that at the present time are being actively promoted for development"*.
- 6.12 The Borough Council consider that, given that Zones 4.6, 4.8 and the majority of land within Zone 4.7 are not being promoted for development or that they perform the function of open space or cemetery use, these zones should remain within the Green Belt. In addition, it was considered that Zone 4.4 should not be removed from the Green Belt due to concerns raised by, in particular, Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust that development either side of Sharphill Wood would be of severe detriment to wildlife within the nature reserve. Retaining zone 4.4 as Green Belt to the west of the wood will also help ensure that Sharphill Wood is not unduly surrounded by development.
- 6.13 The Council do consider that it is appropriate to remove zones 4.2, 4.3, 4.5 and a small part of 4.7 (to the east of Sharphill Wood) from the Green Belt, as the majority of these zones have planning permission for development, are already developed or to allow for a larger strategic allocation at Melton Road, Edwalton. The draft Core Strategy (CD01 and EX41) and Publication Proposals Map (CD02 and EX42) therefore proposes to remove these zones; three in their entirety and one in part; from the Green Belt. In the Council's view there are exceptional circumstances to do so in order to sustainably meet objectively assessed development needs.
- 6.14 The Council is also of the view that Zone 4.1 should become safeguarded land in accordance with NPPF paragraph 85. Whilst it is not being actively promoted for development by the Borough Council at this time, the area is owned by the Borough Council, and if it is decided that the golf course should be released for development through future reviews of the Local Plan if the facility can be relocated, or is no longer required, then this would facilitate this

being progressed. The draft Core Strategy as modified (EX41) and Publication Proposals Map as modified (EX42) therefore proposes to remove this zone from the Green Belt and designate it as 'safeguarded' land. In the Council's view there are exceptional circumstances to do so in order to facilitate the process of meeting longer-term development needs beyond the plan period.

Broad Location 5

- 6.15 Broad Location 5 was divided into 5 Zones for the purposes of the assessment, as indicated in Figure 3 above. The Green Belt Review concluded that Zones 5.1 and 5.5 are considered to be of medium-high importance in relation to the purposes of the Green Belt. Zone 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4 are considered to be of medium importance
- 6.16 Of these, Zones 5.2, 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5 are all part of sites being promoted through the SHLAA process by developers and therefore 'available' for development. Zone 5.2 is available in part, i.e. part of the site is within a SHLAA site.
- 6.17 The Green Belt Review recommended that Zones 5.1 and 5.5 should ideally remain within the Green Belt when assessing against Green Belt purposes from the edge of the built up area of Nottingham outwards. Whilst assessed as being of medium importance, the review recommended that Zones 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4 could potentially be removed from the Green Belt in order to meet development needs, if exceptional circumstances are judged to exist, as they offer the least damaging option in Green Belt terms within this broad location.
- 6.18 The draft Core Strategy (EX41) and Publication Proposals Map (EX42) proposes that Zones 5.3 and 5.2 be removed from the Green Belt, and the area allocated for development (the East of Gamston/North of Tollerton strategic allocation). In the Council's view there are exceptional circumstances to do so in order to sustainably meet objectively assessed development needs.
- 6.19 Zone 5.4 is retained within the Green Belt as whilst the zone was assessed as similar in importance to Zones 5.3 and 5.2, development would cross, what the Council believes to be, the important defensible boundary of the Grantham Canal. The eastern boundary of 5.4 is not well defined and, therefore, if this zone was released from the Green Belt there is concern that it would increase the threat of possible future coalescence between new development and the existing settlement of Bassingfield.

Proposed amendments to the Green Belt boundary around regeneration sites

- 6.20 Planning permission has been granted for comprehensive redevelopment of former RAF Newton, and former Cotgrave Colliery. Proposed amendments to the Green Belt boundary reflect the area proposed for built development in both cases.

Approach to other settlements within the Green Belt

- 6.21 Due to the strategic nature of the Core Strategy (part 1 of the Local Plan), there are a number of potential revisions to the Green Belt that have not been specifically addressed within it. Policy 3, as revised (EX41), provides a framework setting out how the remaining parts of the Green Belt within Rushcliffe will be reviewed through Local Plan Part 2 (the Land and Planning Policies (LAPP) Development Plan Document).
- 6.22 The policy identifies where alterations to the Green Belt will be made, using the recommendations from Part 1(b) of the Green Belt Review. In defining or reviewing boundaries, Policy 3 states that consideration will also be given to designating land as safeguarded land to allow for future development needs around key settlements.
- 6.23 Part 1 (b) of the Green Belt Review follows the policy advice contained within the National Planning Policy Framework. Paragraph 84 identifies the procedure that should be followed when drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries. It states that:

“when drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries local planning authorities should take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development. They should consider the consequences for sustainable development of channelling development towards urban areas inside the Green Belt Boundary, towards towns and villages inset within the Green Belt or towards locations beyond the Green Belt Boundary”.

- 6.24 Given this clear advice, this stage 1(b) of the Green Belt Review focuses assessment on existing rural settlements that are inset from the Green Belt. In addition, paragraph 86 provides further guidance as to how Green Belt designations should be applied to villages. It states that:

“If it is necessary to prevent development in a village primarily because of the important contribution that it makes to the openness of the Green Belt, the village should be included within the Green Belt. If, however, the character of the village needs to be protected for other reasons, other means should be

used, such as Conservation Area or normal development management policies, and the village should be excluded from the Green Belt.”

- 6.25 Given the requirements of the NPPF, the review also looked at those settlements that are currently washed over by the Green Belt and whether this washed over status remains appropriate.
- 6.26 Part 1 (b) of the Green Belt Review built upon the conclusions of the Sustainable Locations for Growth Study (2010)(ED07) in respect of those settlements with a population of 750 and above. In addition, in order to conform with paragraphs 84 and 86 of the NPPF, the assessment looked at the broad character of each settlement located within the Green Belt, and made recommendations as to how the Green Belt should be treated in broad terms within the Local Plan. The assessment can be found on pages 35-67 of the Green Belt Review.
- 6.27 All of the recommendations contained within part 1(b) of the Green Belt Review were carried forward into Policy 3, as amended through proposed modifications. The following map (Figure 4) depicts how the Green Belt around settlements will be reviewed through Part 2(b) of the Green Belt Review and through subsequent revisions to the Green Belt as part of Local Plan Part 2: Land and Planning Policies DPD.

Figure 4: Conclusions of Stage 1(b) Assessment

