



# Wyre Green Belt Study Final Report

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# Executive Summary

1. The Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan which will provide a planning and development strategy to guide future development in Wyre and one of the key issues is to ensure that development does not put unacceptable pressure on the Green Belt leading to its erosion.
2. As part of its evidence base for the new Local Plan, Wyre Borough Council appointed Urban Vision to produce a Green Belt Study. The study is the first review of the Green Belt carried out since the Green Belt was established in the 1980s.
3. The study has:
  - a. Assessed individual parcels of land within the Green Belt to consider whether they continued to meet the purposes for Green Belt set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF); and
  - b. Made recommendations for potential changes to Green Belt boundaries to correct potential anomalies where appropriate.
4. This study is a local review considering the Green Belt boundary around the towns within Wyre (Figure 1). It is not a strategic and comprehensive review of Green Belt on the Fylde Coast and will not consider changes to areas of Green Belt outside of Wyre Borough (for example the adjoining Green Belt areas in Blackpool and Fylde). The study will not consider identification of any new areas of Green Belt as this is a matter for a strategic review of the entire Green Belt on the Fylde Coast.
5. The Study will be a key part of the evidence base to support the emerging Wyre Local Plan. Any alterations to the Green Belt boundaries will be carried out through the Local Plan process, with reference to the recommendations in this document, in the context of a wider evidence base. Any proposed changes will be consulted on through the Local Plan process.
6. The purpose of the Wyre Green Belt policies has been to retain open green areas surrounding the urban areas of Fleetwood, Cleveleys, Thornton and Poulton-le-Fylde. Four distinct areas of Green Belt are identified in the Borough (see Figure 2 in the main report):
  - Northern area between Fleetwood and Cleveleys (Area 1 on Figure 2).
  - Area that separates Cleveleys and Thornton, Thornton to the north and Poulton-le-Fylde to the south and Cleveleys to the north and Poulton-le-Fylde to the south (Area 2 on Figure 2).

- Area between Poulton-le-Fylde and Blackpool's urban area (Area 3 on Figure 2).
  - Southern area of Green Belt that separates Poulton-le-Fylde with Blackpool's urban area to the west, and Staining in Fylde Borough Council's area to the south (Area 4 on Figure 2).
7. The broad extent of the Green Belt was established in Wyre by the Central and North Lancashire Structure Plan which was adopted in 1983. Detailed boundaries were then drawn up by Wyre Council within the Fleetwood, Thornton Cleveleys and Poulton-le-Fylde Local Plan, adopted in 1987. During the consultation stages on the Local Plan, the Council developed an initial approach to Green Belt that was complemented by a series of proposals for land to be maintained as "green breaks" and specific areas identified for potential future development needs (unallocated sites). Subsequent representations led to changes being proposed by the Council, one of the most significant being the extension of the designation of land between Poulton-le-Fylde and Blackpool for Green Belt where land had been previously identified in part for future development needs and also as a "green break".
  8. Further minor amendments to the Green Belt were included in the Wyre Borough Local Plan, adopted in 1999. Subsequent work on draft Local Plans (First Deposit Draft and Core Strategy Preferred Options); Structure Plans (1997 and 2005); and Regional Plans (2003 and 2008) made no further alterations to the Green Belt in Wyre.
  9. The latest consultation on the Local Plan Issues and Options, undertaken earlier this year, notes that there is a potential need for the Local Plan to review the Green Belt to consider the extent to which it still serves its purpose.
  10. The study's methodology consisted of five stages.
  11. **Stage 1** involved a desk based exercise of subdividing the broad areas noted above (paragraph 6) into smaller land parcels. The boundaries were drawn based on overall landscape character and specific land use characteristics. 29 land parcels were identified covering the entire area of Green Belt in Wyre and immediate neighbouring areas in Blackpool and Fylde. It is important to note that three of the parcels (27, 28 and 29) are completely outside of Wyre Borough – one in Blackpool Borough Council's area and the other two in Fylde Borough Council. These parcels were not considered in any detail as part of this study but were included in the local review of the Wyre Green Belt, given that they form an integral part of the Green Belt in the area.
  12. **Stage 2** involved assessing the performance of the parcels against three of the five purposes of the Green Belt. The assessment of the three purposes was

subdivided into discrete tasks (2A, 2B, 2C). The first three tasks involved considering the following Green Belt purposes:

- check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas (Task 2A);
- prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another (Task 2B); and
- preserve the setting and special character of historic towns (Task 2C)

13. Details of the scoring approach used in undertaking Tasks 2A, 2B and 2C is set out in Appendix 1 of the study.

14. The remaining two of the five Green Belt purposes were considered as follows:

- a. The third Green Belt purpose - to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment – was assessed (as Task 2D) on site visits and by desk top analysis. It was taken into account as additional information in considering parcels for potential removal from the Green Belt in Stage 4 of the study.
- b. The fifth purpose - to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land – was not assessed as it is difficult to get robust evidence which will indicate whether development would have a positive or a negative impact on regeneration priorities. Assessing each parcel of land against the fifth purpose therefore adds little value since in principle release of land from the Green Belt land will only be put forward for development once opportunities within existing urban areas and on other land outside of the Green Belt have been considered.

15. Two specific methodological issues required further consideration at Stage 2. Firstly, with respect to Tasks 2A and 2B, it was necessary to define which neighbouring towns were to be considered in terms of the respective Green Belt purposes. A particular issue that required careful consideration was the treatment of the Green Belt between Poulton-le-Fylde and Blackpool. The area covered by Parcels 20 and 21 did not originally feature in proposals for Green Belt in the draft Fleetwood, Thornton Cleveleys and Poulton-le-Fylde Local Plan. Subsequent representations to the plan suggested the area should be designated as Green Belt both in terms of the need to maintain open land between Blackpool and Poulton-le-Fylde and also as a result of the quality of the agricultural land within the area. The Council, in its consideration of the representations<sup>1</sup>, stated the following:

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<sup>1</sup> Wyre Borough Council (March 1983), Fleetwood, Thornton Cleveleys and Poulton-le-Fylde Local Plan – Report on Public Participation

“Most of the undeveloped land within the plan area is Grade 3 in quality. At the time of formulating the draft proposals, there was no overriding argument from the Ministry of Agriculture to protect this land from development on these grounds. Equally, it was considered that this area was not a part of the Green Belt between Poulton and Blackpool but rather more of a ‘green break’ between Carleton and Poulton. Subsequently, however, the Ministry of Agriculture has been expressing a different view and suggesting the need to retain a viable agricultural unit in this area.

In view of the considerable area of ‘unallocated’ land in the draft plan the Council may wish to consider whether the designation of all or part of this land as Green Belt would be a reasonable response to the environmental and agricultural objections.”

16. The council subsequently reconsidered its position resulting in the land being included in the Green Belt. However, the environmental and agricultural factors considered in the early 1980’s are no longer valid green belt purposes in accordance with the NPPF. Furthermore, although the Central and North Lancashire Structure Plan Key Diagram is not precise, it is concluded that it was not the intention to extend the Green Belt to cover the area in parcels 20 and 21.
17. The second issue involved the definition and treatment of “countryside uses” with respect to Task 2D. There is no specific definition of countryside uses and conversely what to include in “built development” within national planning guidance so for the purposes of this study a definition was drawn up of what was considered to be countryside uses and what constituted built development (See Table 1 in the main report).
18. As well as assessing each individual parcel identified in stage 1, consideration was given to the grouped parcels that make up the four distinct areas of Green Belt within Wyre. This was an additional aspect of the study that had not featured in the proposed methodology, but emerged as a result of discussions with the officer team from the Council. It was agreed that it would provide a useful means in understanding the relationship between neighbouring Green Belt parcels and their collective contribution to the Green Belt.
19. The site visits also included assessment of potential Green Belt boundary anomalies. An initial list of potential boundary anomalies was identified by Wyre Council for the study team to consider during their site visits. These constituted possible changes to the existing Green Belt boundaries as a result of the following reasons:



- Green Belt boundaries that sub-divided existing properties either by passing through the built development or by placing elements of the property's curtilage within the Green Belt; and
- Potential mapping errors as a result of previous drafting/digitising of Green Belt boundary data;

Appendix 3 contains the details of the anomalies identified and recommendations for potential changes from the study team.

20. **Stage 3** enabled a review to be undertaken by the project team (consisting of the study team from Urban Vision and officers from Wyre Council). This enabled comments on the emerging findings to be discussed and allowed for further refinement of the draft conclusions and recommendations from Stage 2.
21. **Stage 4** considered parcels where the assessment at Stage 2 had not identified any purpose being met robustly. Parcels were assessed in terms of their contribution to Green Belt purposes and the characteristics of their boundaries. This enabled recommendations to be put forward to the Council with respect to the potential retention or removal of specific Green Belt parcels.
22. **Stage 5** enabled the project team to consider the results of Stage 4 and agree the final recommendations of the study.
23. Table 2 in the main report summarises the scores for each land parcel for the Stage 2 assessment (Tasks 2A, 2B and 2C). The majority of parcels were judged to meet robustly (i.e. a score of three) at least one of the three Green Belt purposes considered at this point of the study. Parcels 2, 20 and 21 were identified as not meeting any of the three Green Belt purposes considered in Stage 2 robustly. Parcel 2 scored '2' for Task 2A and Parcels 20 and 21 scored '2' for Task 2C which implied some contribution to the Green Belt purpose but were not 'show stopper' scores/conclusions (i.e. would need to score '3'). These sites formed the preliminary list of land parcels which could potentially be considered for removal from the Green Belt without affecting the integrity of the wider Green Belt. They were further considered in Stage 4 of the study.
24. **Parcel 2 could be removed from the Green Belt.** The northern, western and southern boundaries of parcel 2 adjoin the urban edge of Fleetwood and it has a relatively high degree of containment. If the parcel was removed from the Green Belt, the tramline on the eastern boundary would form a permanent robust boundary for the Green Belt. The boundaries to the parcel are strong and well defined (save for the small anomaly identified) consisting of the urban edge of Fleetwood and the tramline on its eastern side. The parcel is considered to not perform any role as part of a gap. The urban boundary on the western and southern side of the parcel – through its extension that effectively encloses the

parcel to a high degree - significantly diminishes the role that the parcel has in contributing to the overall gap between Fleetwood and Cleveleys. The parcel is of no importance to the setting due to its lack of any prominent landscape features that contribute to the setting of Fleetwood. Moreover, the parcel is enclosed to a significant degree by the urban area of Fleetwood and therefore has no contribution to the setting of the town.

**25. Parcel 20 could be removed from the Green Belt.** It is well contained, surrounded by existing residential development to 85% of its boundaries. The boundaries to the parcel are strong consisting of existing urban areas and additionally the rail line on its southern boundary. The parcel performs no role as a gap. This parcel sits wholly within Poulton-le-Fylde. The parcel would therefore not meet the specific purpose of the Green Belt as it does not separate neighbouring towns and its removal will not affect the gap between Blackpool and Poulton-le-Fylde. The parcel is of moderate importance to the setting due to its lack of any prominent landscape features although it does provide an aspect of the setting for the Conservation Area in the town due to its close proximity in the south eastern corner.

**26. Parcel 21 could be removed from the Green Belt.** It is well contained, surrounded by existing residential development to 70% of its boundaries. The boundaries to the parcel are strong consisting of existing urban areas and additionally the former rail line on its eastern boundary. The parcel performs no role as a gap. This parcel sits wholly within Poulton-le-Fylde. The parcel would therefore not meet the specific purpose of the Green Belt as it does not separate neighbouring towns and its removal will not affect the gap between Blackpool and Poulton-le-Fylde. The parcel is of moderate importance to the setting of Poulton-le-Fylde in that it provides an aspect of the setting for the Conservation Area in the town due to its close proximity.

**27.** It is therefore concluded that parcels 2, 20 and 21 are considered for removal from the Green Belt as part of the ongoing preparation of the Wyre Local Plan. Parcel 2 could be removed but has scored “2” at the Stage 4 assessment – the methodology states that if a parcel of land is only making a partial contribution (score of 2) to one purpose its development will have limited impact on the integrity of the Green Belt. Parcels 20 and 21 achieved an overall score of 2 and 1 respectively, so similarly, their development would only have a limited impact on the integrity of the Green Belt. However the history to the original designation of Parcels 20 and 21 as Green Belt revealed that the Council did not consider the area to be part of the Green Belt as it did not form part of the gap between Blackpool and Poulton-le-Fylde. Whether there is a need to release Parcel 2, 20 and 21 will therefore need to be considered as part of the Local Plan process.

# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Government guidance as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) promotes sustainable growth nationally to accommodate a rising population. Consequently Local Authorities are facing increased pressure to identify land to accommodate the increasing level of development to meet those future needs. However the Government also attaches great importance to Green Belts and once established they should only be altered in exceptional circumstances through the preparation or review of the Local Plan.
- 1.2 The Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan which will provide a planning and development strategy to guide future development in Wyre and one of the key issues is to ensure that development does not put unacceptable pressure on the Green Belt leading to its erosion. It is important therefore to conduct this review to provide the necessary evidence that the Green Belt fulfils the purposes for which it is designated and maintains a defensible boundary that will ensure its enduring permanence.
- 1.3 As part of its evidence base for the new Local Plan, Wyre Borough Council appointed Urban Vision to produce a Green Belt Study. The study is the first review of the Green Belt carried out since the Green Belt was established in the 1980s. The study assessed individual parcels of land within the Green Belt to consider whether they continued to meet the purposes for Green Belt set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It also made recommendations for potential changes to Green Belt boundaries to correct potential anomalies where appropriate.
- 1.4 The Study will be a key part of the evidence base to support the emerging Wyre Local Plan. Any alterations to the Green Belt boundaries will be carried out through the Local Plan process, with reference to the recommendations in this document, in the context of a wider evidence base. Any proposed changes will be consulted on through the Local Plan process.

## **Study Area context**

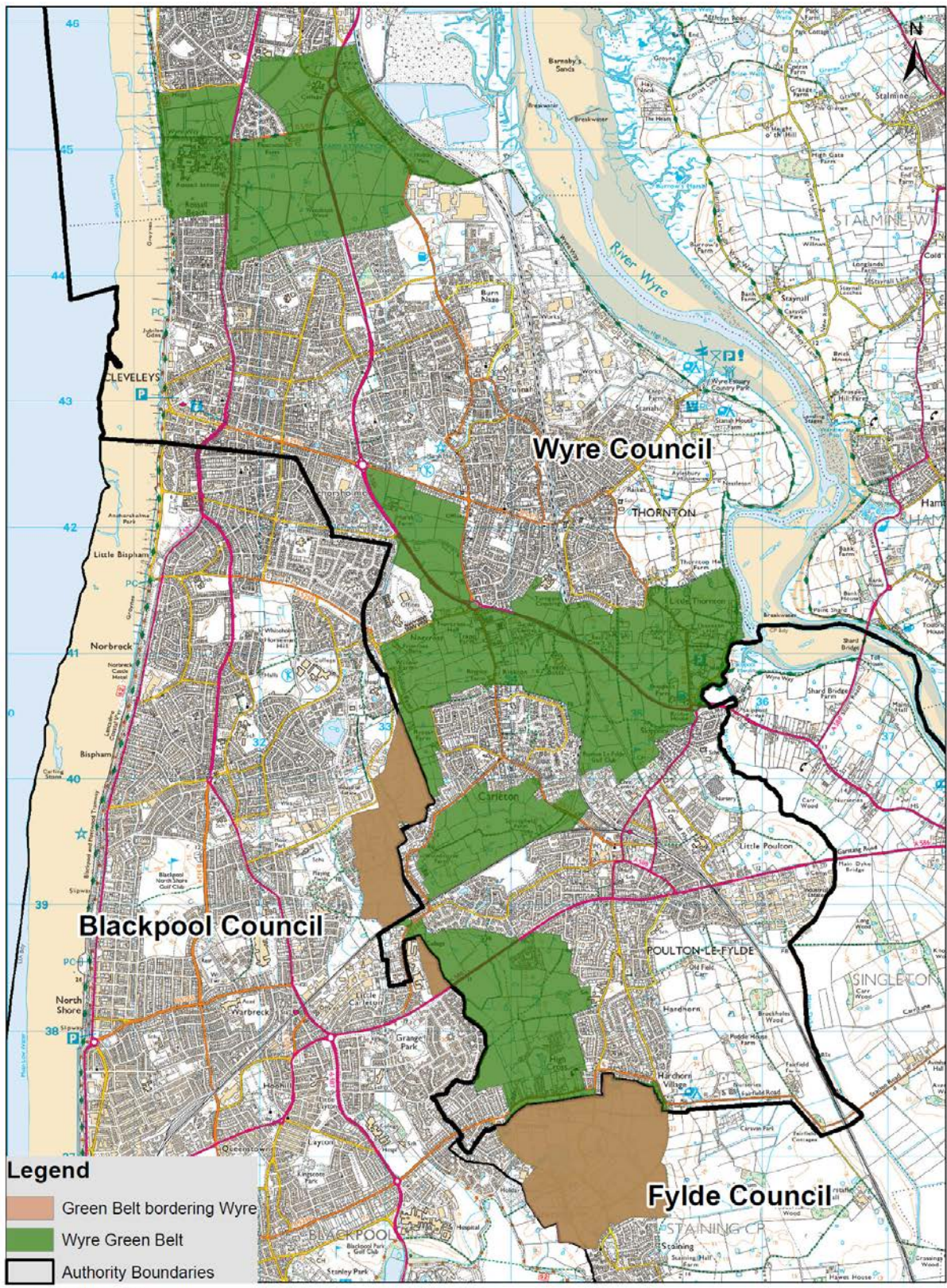
- 1.5 The Borough of Wyre lies in the north west of Lancashire reaching from the Fylde Coast in the west to the Forest of Bowland in the east. It is a predominantly rural authority with the majority of the built up areas being located along the coast in the west. The key towns within the western part of borough are Fleetwood, Cleveleys, Thornton and Poulton-le-Fylde.
- 1.6 The Green Belt is located in the west of the Borough on the Fylde Coast peninsula separating the main towns in Wyre, and also separating Cleveleys and Poulton-le-Fylde from the urban areas in Blackpool and Poulton-le-Fylde from Staining in the borough of Fylde.

## **Study coverage**

- 1.7 This study is a local review considering the Green Belt boundary around the towns within Wyre (Figure 1). It is not a strategic and comprehensive review of Green Belt on the Fylde Coast and will not consider changes to areas of Green Belt outside of Wyre Borough (for example the adjoining Green Belt areas in Blackpool and Fylde). The study will not consider identification of any new areas of Green Belt as this is a matter for a strategic review of the entire Green Belt on the Fylde Coast.



Figure 1 – Study Area





## **Study Purpose**

- 1.8 The purpose of this study is to assess the parcels of land which make up the Green Belt to determine whether there are areas which no longer fulfil the functions of the Green Belt, and which could be considered for release from the Green Belt without affecting its integrity and long term permanency. It will identify which parcels must be retained within the Green Belt in order to maintain its integrity, with consideration of the fact that an essential characteristic of the Green Belt is keeping the land open in the long term.
- 1.9 This is the first review of Green Belt in Wyre. It is a local review considering the boundary round the towns within Wyre. As such it is not a strategic and comprehensive review of Green Belt on the Fylde Coast. The scope of the study is to consider the inner Green Belt boundary around the towns in Wyre and to consider whether land included within the defined Green Belt continues to serve the purposes defined in the NPPF. The study will not consider any new areas of Green Belt which is a matter for Strategic Review on the Fylde Coast.
- 1.10 The Green Belt review will also offer the opportunity to rationalise the boundary and address any identified anomalies from when the first boundary was formally approved in 1987 or slightly modified in 1999. The Study makes recommendations for potential boundary changes reflecting the assessment of parcels as set out above with further detail available in Section 4.
- 1.11 The study will directly inform the preparation of the Wyre Local Plan and through the Local Plan process, will be able to establish a robust and enduring Green Belt boundary. The consideration of any parcel of land in this study does not mean that it would necessarily be released or allocated for development in the Local Plan.

## **Justification of the review of the Green Belt**

- 1.12 The NPPF makes it very clear that Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of a Local Plan. Any review or alteration of the boundaries should have regard to the intended permanence, in the long term (i.e. enduring beyond the Plan period) of any proposed changes.
- 1.13 Section 9 of the NPPF (Protecting Green Belt Land) establishes the great importance that the Government attaches to the Green Belt. Paragraph 80 of the NPPF confirms the five purposes of the Green Belt that provide the framework for assessing the current Green Belt in Wyre (see further details in Section 2).

## 2. Background

### Green Belt Designation

2.1 Green Belts are a long established element of planning policy and enjoy a high level of public understanding and support. Current national planning guidance on Green Belts is set out in section 9 of the NPPF. It affirms that the fundamental purpose of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. One of the essential characteristics of Green Belt is its permanence. The NPPF lists five purposes of designated Green Belt (paragraph 80), it states that the Green Belt should:

- i. check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- ii. prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;
- iii. assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- iv. preserve the setting and special character of historic towns;
- v. assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

2.2 The NPPF goes on to state that once established, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.

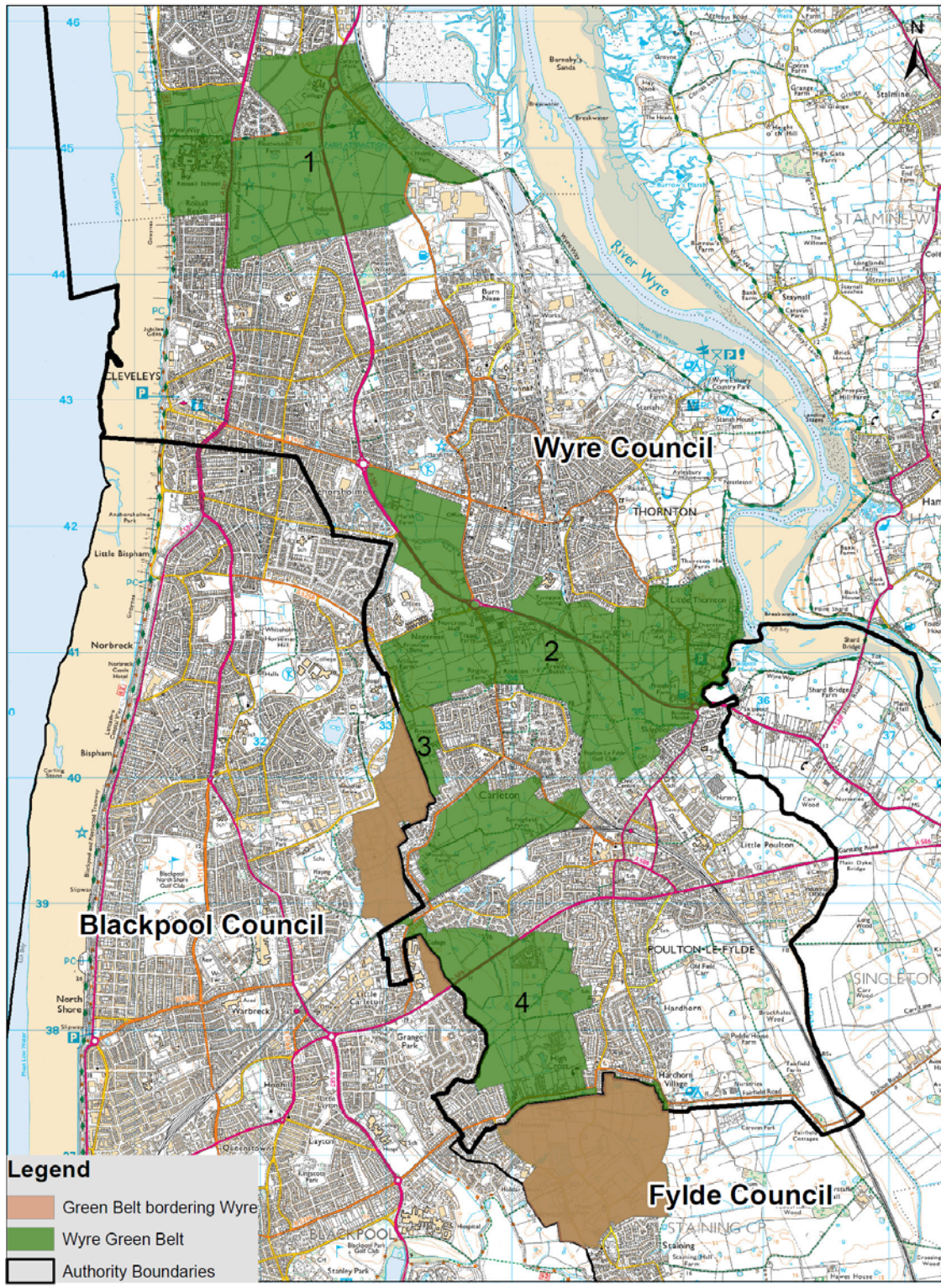
### History of the Wyre Green Belt

2.3 The context for any Green Belt review is provided by the history of the Green Belt and the way it has developed in that area.

2.4 The purpose of the Wyre Green Belt policies has been to retain open green areas surrounding the urban areas of Fleetwood, Cleveleys, Thornton and Poulton-le-Fylde. Four distinct areas of Green Belt are identified in the Borough (Figure 2):

- Northern area between Fleetwood and Cleveleys (Area 1 on Figure 2).
- Area that separates Cleveleys and Thornton, Thornton to the north and Poulton-le-Fylde to the south and Cleveleys to the north and Poulton-le-Fylde to the south (Area 2 on Figure 2).
- Area between Poulton-le-Fylde and Blackpool's urban area (Area 3 on Figure 2).
- Southern area of Green Belt that separates Poulton-le-Fylde with Blackpool's urban area to the west, and Staining in Fylde Borough Council's area to the south (Area 4 on Figure 2).

Figure 2 – Green Belt Sub-Areas





## **Central and North Lancashire Structure Plan (1983)**

- 2.5 The Green Belt was established in Wyre by the Central and North Lancashire Structure Plan which was adopted in 1983. Policy 8, and its supporting text, set out the broad locations of the Green Belt and the approach to be taken with regards to development in the Green Belt. The policy states for the Fylde Peninsula area:

“Green Belts will be established in the following areas to check the spread of urban areas; to prevent the merging of neighbouring settlements; to protect the special character of a settlement; and to complement proposals in adjacent Structure Plan areas...

(ii) In the Fylde, between Fleetwood and Cleveleys and Thornton, Poulton-le-Fylde and Blackpool, to the south of Poulton-le-Fylde and north of Staining, between South Blackpool and St Annes, Lytham and Warton, Kirkham and Freckleton...”

- 2.6 The reasoned justification for Policy 8 provides some further illumination as to the role of the Green Belt within the Fylde Peninsula stating:

“...Along the Fylde Coast development pressures between adjacent and hitherto distinct settlements are even more intense and proposals for Green Belt designation have had to be balanced with the need to allow for release of sufficient land for peripheral urban expansion. It is considered that this balance has been broadly achieved and that the Green Belts will provide some impetus for greater economy of land use and will also give added incentive towards the greater use of urban infill sites which is an integral part of the development strategy.”

- 2.7 The Key Diagram published with the Structure Plan shows the general location of the Green Belt in Wyre (and across the parts of Lancashire), but it was left to the individual Local Plans to set out the precise locations of the Green Belt for each district.

## **Fleetwood, Thornton Cleveleys and Poulton-le-Fylde Local Plan (1987)**

- 2.8 The Fleetwood, Thornton Cleveleys and Poulton-le-Fylde Local Plan set out the detailed location of the Green Belt for the first time and translated the policies and proposals of the Structure Plan to precise areas of land defined on the Proposals Map.
- 2.9 It is instructive to understand the approach to Green Belt designation that ultimately led to the written statement and the proposals map of the adopted

plan. Wyre Borough Council drew up proposals for the designation of areas of Green Belt that were consulted on initially in 1982 and then subsequent changes that led to the Final Proposals stage that was placed on deposit in 1985. The initial approach to Green Belt was complemented by a series of proposals for land to be maintained as “green breaks” and specific areas identified for potential future development needs (unallocated sites). Subsequent representations led to changes being proposed by the Council, one of the most significant being the extension of the designation of land between Poulton-le-Fylde and Blackpool for Green Belt where land had been previously identified in part for future development needs and also as a “green break”.

### **Wyre Borough Local Plan 1991 – 2006 (1999)**

2.10 With regard to Green Belt policy, the Wyre Borough Local Plan is based upon the Fleetwood, Thornton Cleveleys and Poulton-le-Fylde Local Plan. The Wyre Borough Local Plan very closely reflects the previous established boundaries of the Green Belts on the basis that the designation was intended to provide a degree of certainty that an area would be maintained as open land. Some minor boundary adjustments were made to the Green Belt boundaries which resulted in a net increase in the amount of land identified within the Green Belt.

### **The Lancashire Structure Plan 1991 – 2006 (1997) and the Replacement Joint Lancashire Structure Plan 2001 – 2016 (2005)**

2.11 The Lancashire Structure Plan replaced the Central and North Lancashire Structure Plan. The approach to Green Belt with respect to designated areas in Wyre continued without change.

2.12 The Replacement Joint Lancashire Structure Plan replaced the Lancashire Structure Plan 1991 – 2006; it was in place for a short space of time as a “saved” Plan prior to the adoption of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). Policy 6 in the Structure Plan continued the protection afforded to Green Belt in Lancashire, with no proposed changes from previous Structure Plans.

### **First Deposit Draft Wyre Borough Local Plan 2001 – 2016**

2.13 In 2004 the Council consulted on the First Deposit Draft Wyre Borough Local Plan which was published as the proposed replacement document for the Wyre Borough Local Plan (1999). The plan reflected the boundaries of the Green Belt which were established and approved in the previously adopted local plan. However work on the review document ceased in 2006 to allow the Council to progress with the preparation of a Core Strategy as part of the

Local Development Framework<sup>2</sup> in accordance with a change in national planning legislation. The plan continued to be used as a material consideration for development management purposes in determining planning applications.

### **Regional Planning Guidance for the North West (RPG13) (2003) & The North West of England Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 (2008)**

2.14 The need to review the Green Belt boundary was debated during the preparation of the Regional Planning Guidance for the North West (RPG13) in 2001. There was no proposal to amend the Green Belt boundary in Lancashire.

2.15 The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) subsequently replaced RPG13. Policy RDF4 in the RSS stated that “...there is no need for any exceptional substantial strategic change to Green Belt and its boundaries in the North West within Cheshire, Greater Manchester, Lancashire or Merseyside before 2011...”

### **Core Strategy Preferred Options 2003 - 2028 (2012)**

2.16 In 2012 the Council consulted on the Preferred Options for a new Core Strategy, under the Local Development Framework. The Preferred Options report proposed keeping the Green Belt in primarily the same format as the Wyre Borough Local Plan. However, the report noted that there were several minor anomalies to the boundary which had become apparent since the Wyre Borough Local Plan was adopted (1999). The intention of the Council at the time was that these would be amended as part of the Site Allocations and Development Management DPD.

2.17 However, as a result of the abolition of regional planning structures and changes in government planning policy, which now emphasises the need for a single Local Plan, the Council decided not to progress with the Core Strategy as drafted. The previous work undertaken to inform the Core Strategy, including the consultation feedback received in 2012, is still of relevance and has been used to feed into the preparation of the new Local Plan.

### **Local Plan Issues and Options (2015)**

2.18 The new Local Plan is in the early stages of production. The Council has recently published an Issues and Options consultation document (June 2015).

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<sup>2</sup> The Local Development Framework was introduced under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. It was a suite of documents prepared by a Local Planning Authority which set out the spatial planning strategy for the local area and replaced the previous system of structure and local plans.

The Issues and Options Report notes that there is a potential need for the Local Plan to review the Green Belt to consider the extent to which it still serves its purpose. This will enable the Council to determine whether there are any sites that are presently within the Green Belt which could be released for development without undermining the integrity or purpose of the Green Belt.

- 2.19 Future iterations of the new Local Plan will be guided by the findings of this study. However, it should be noted that the consideration of any parcel of land in this study does not mean that it would necessarily be released or allocated for development in the Local Plan.

## 3. Methodology

### Background

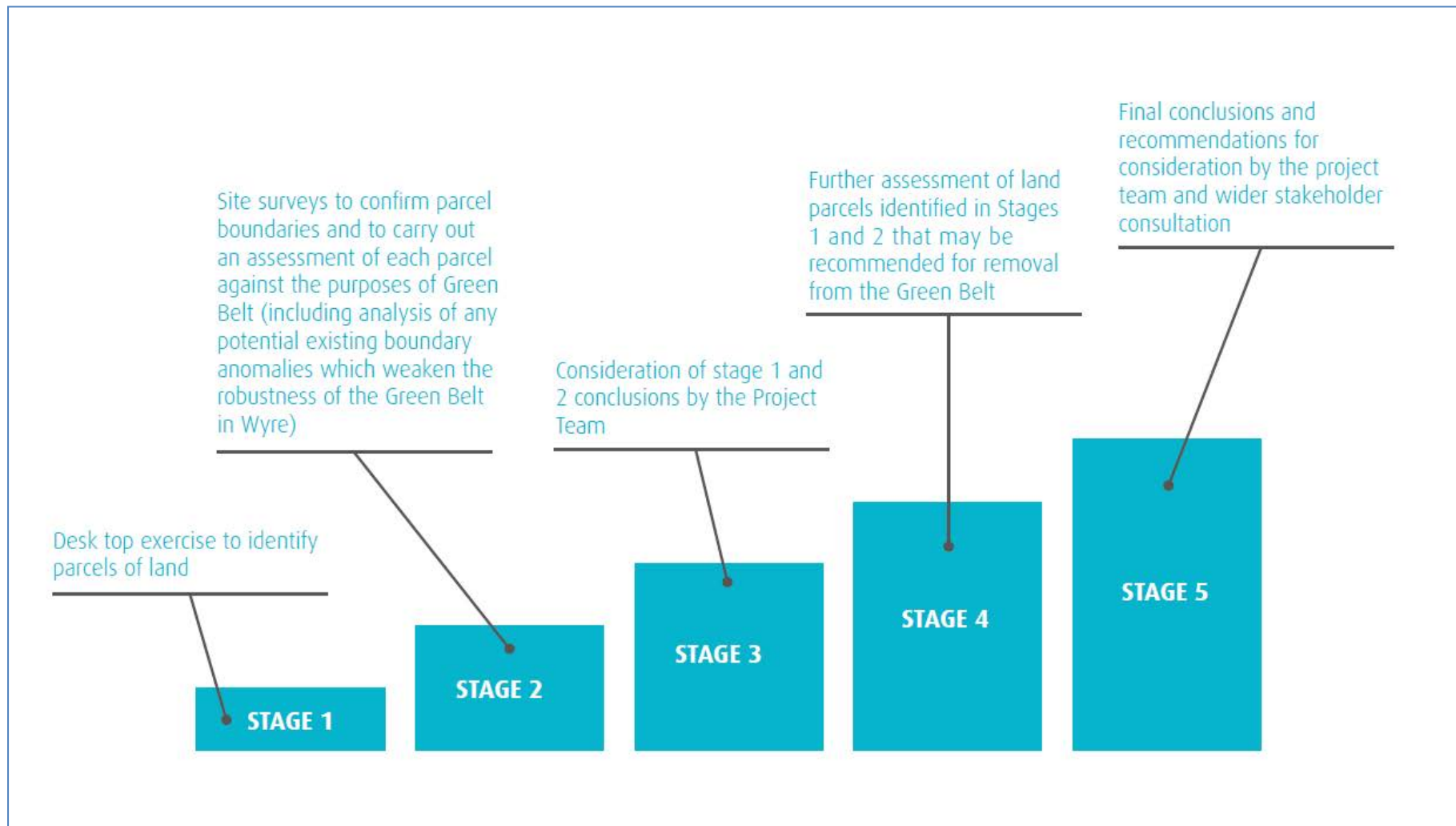
- 3.1 The Study is to consider the Green Belt boundary around the towns in Wyre and to consider whether land included within the defined Green Belt continues to serve the purposes defined in the NPPF.
- 3.2 The five purposes of the Green Belt in the NPPF are:
- i. check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
  - ii. prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;
  - iii. assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
  - iv. preserve the setting and special character of historic towns;
  - v. assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
- 3.3 It is considered in practice that purposes three and five do not provide a useful mechanism for assessing whether land should be released from the Green Belt. This has been highlighted in a number of Green Belt studies undertaken around the country<sup>3</sup>. With regards to the third purpose, by definition the release of any land from the Green Belt and subsequent development will constitute encroachment into the countryside. It is anticipated that most if not all land will meet this purpose robustly. Therefore the assessment under purpose three has only been taken into account as additional information in considering parcels for potential removal from the Green Belt in Stage 4 of this study.
- 3.4 With regards to the fifth purpose, it is difficult to get robust evidence which will indicate whether development would have a positive or a negative impact on regeneration priorities. Assessing each parcel of land against the fifth purpose therefore adds little value since in principle release of land from the Green Belt land will only be put forward for development once opportunities within existing urban areas and on other land outside of the Green Belt have been considered. As a result no assessment against the fifth purpose has been carried out.
- 3.5 There is no established methodology in best practice or government guidance notes to guide the review therefore the methodology was proposed by the council based on similar work undertaken by other Local Authorities to ensure

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<sup>3</sup> See for example the Blackburn with Darwen Green Belt Study (September 2013) and the Green Belt Review Purposes Assessment (for Dacorum Borough Council, St Albans City and District Council, and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council) (November 2013)

a robust and consistent approach. The study was separated into several different stages, as shown in the Figure 3 below.

**Figure 3 – Study Stages**



## **Stage 1 – Desk top exercise using up to date aerial photographs / OS maps**

3.6 The Green Belt in Wyre can be separated into four main sub areas:

- Northern area between Fleetwood and Cleveleys
- Area that separates Cleveleys and Thornton, Thornton to the north and Poulton-le-Fylde to the south and Cleveleys to the north and Poulton-le-Fylde to the south.
- Area between Poulton-le-Fylde and Blackpool's urban area
- Southern area of Green Belt that separates Poulton-le-Fylde with Blackpool's urban area to the west, and Staining in Fylde Borough Council's area to the south.

3.7 Stage 1 involved a desk based exercise of subdividing these broad areas into smaller land parcels. The boundaries were drawn based on overall landscape character and specific land use characteristics. Figure 4 illustrates the 29 land parcels that were identified covering the entire area of Green Belt in Wyre and immediate neighbouring areas in Blackpool and Fylde. It is important to note that three of the parcels (27, 28 and 29) are completely outside of Wyre Borough – one in Blackpool Borough Council's area and the other two in Fylde Borough Council. These parcels were not considered in any detail as part of this study but were included in the local review of the Wyre Green Belt, given that they form an integral part of the Green Belt in the area. A further four parcels (13, 23, 25 and 26) are either split across Wyre and Blackpool Councils' areas (13 and 23) or are predominantly within Fylde District Council's area (25 and 26). Each of these parcels was considered with respect to the elements within Wyre as part of the study.

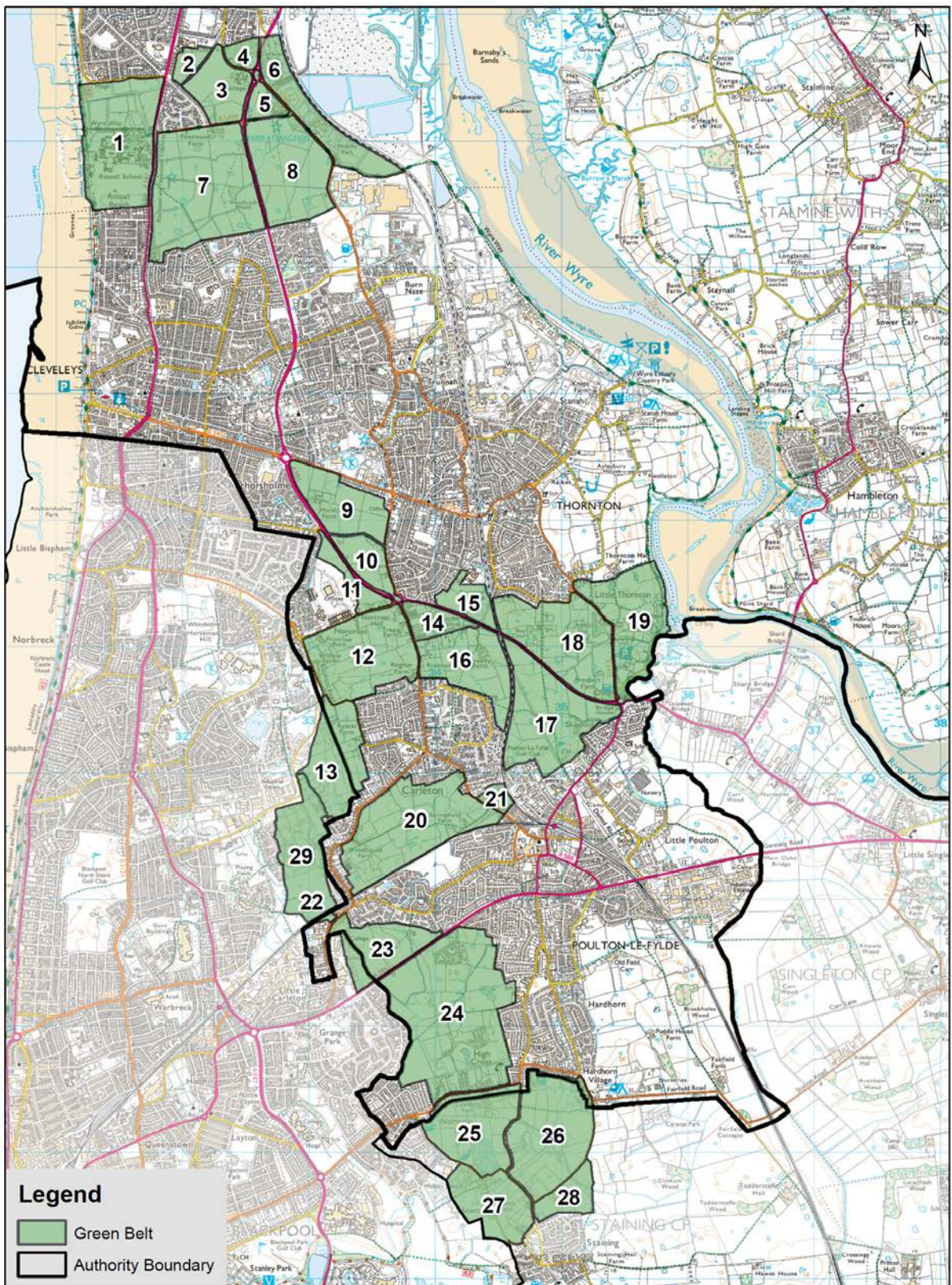
3.8 The Framework states, at paragraph 85, (6<sup>th</sup> bullet), that Green Belt boundaries should be clearly defined using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent. The parcels were therefore identified using the following criteria:

- Consideration of the overall landscape character and specific land use; within each parcel and
- Ensuring that the parcels could be clearly defined by durable, significant and strong physical boundaries wherever possible.

3.9 A desktop exercise was undertaken to define the parcel boundaries, using electronic mapping & aerial photos. Wherever possible, strong physical features were used including roads, railways/dismantled railways, tramlines, the River Wyre and existing built development.



Figure 4 – Green Belt Parcels



Scale: 1:26,500 @A3

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- 3.10 The suggested parcel boundaries were then discussed with Officers at Wyre Borough Council and amended slightly following input based on their detailed local knowledge of the area.

## **Stage 2 – Site Surveys and Assessments**

- 3.11 The primary task in Stage 2 involved assessing the performance of the parcels against three of the five purposes of the Green Belt. The assessment of the three purposes was subdivided into discrete tasks (2A, 2B, 2C). The first three tasks involved considering the following Green Belt purposes:

- check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas (Task 2A);
- prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another (Task 2B); and
- preserve the setting and special character of historic towns (Task 2C)

- 3.12 With respect to Tasks 2A and 2B, it was necessary to define which neighbouring towns were to be considered in terms of the Green Belt purposes to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; and to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another. This required an understanding of the original approach undertaken in defining Green Belts within the Fylde Peninsula area. This necessitated firstly, reference to the Central and North Lancashire Structure Plan (1983) which set out the strategic approach in terms of the broad extent of Green Belts. The relevant sections from the Structure Plan have previously been described in Section 2. It is particularly pertinent to note that the Structure Plan Policy 8 refers to specific towns that need to have Green Belt areas defined in order to “...check the spread of urban areas; to prevent the merging of neighbouring settlements; to protect the special character of a settlement and to complement proposals in adjacent Structure Plan areas...” In the case of Wyre and the neighbouring authorities, these were identified thus:

“In the Fylde, between Fleetwood and Cleveleys and Thornton, Poulton-le-Fylde and Blackpool, to the south of Poulton-le-Fylde and north of Staining...”

- 3.13 A particular issue that required careful consideration was the treatment of the Green Belt between Poulton-le-Fylde and Blackpool. It has already been noted in paragraph 2.9 that the designation of Green Belt with respect to Parcels 20 and 21 did not originally feature in proposals for Green Belt in the draft Fleetwood, Thornton Cleveleys and Poulton-le-Fylde Local Plan. Subsequent representations to the plan suggested the area should be designated as Green Belt both in terms of the need to maintain open land between Blackpool and Poulton-le-Fylde and also as a result of the quality of



the agricultural land within the area. The Council, in its consideration of the representations<sup>4</sup>, stated the following:

“Most of the undeveloped land within the plan area is Grade 3 in quality. At the time of formulating the draft proposals, there was no overriding argument from the Ministry of Agriculture to protect this land from development on these grounds. Equally, it was considered that this area was not a part of the Green Belt between Poulton and Blackpool but rather more of a ‘green break’ between Carleton and Poulton. Subsequently, however, the Ministry of Agriculture has been expressing a different view and suggesting the need to retain a viable agricultural unit in this area.

In view of the considerable area of ‘unallocated’ land in the draft plan the Council may wish to consider whether the designation of all or part of this land as Green Belt would be a reasonable response to the environmental and agricultural objections.”

- 3.14 The council subsequently reconsidered its position resulting in the land being included in the Green Belt. However, the environmental and agricultural factors considered in the early 1980’s are no longer valid green belt purposes in accordance with the NPPF. Furthermore, although the Central and North Lancashire Structure Plan Key Diagram is not precise, it is concluded that it was not the intention to extend the Green Belt to cover the area in parcels 20 and 21.
- 3.15 A further purpose of the Green Belt, namely to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, was also assessed during site visits (Task 2D) and combined with desk-top analysis to inform the work undertaken at Stage 4. This task considered the types of land use to determine the split between “countryside uses” and the amount of built development within each parcel. There is no specific definition of countryside uses and conversely what to include in “built development” within national planning guidance so for the purposes of this study the following approach was adopted (Table 1).

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<sup>4</sup> Wyre Borough Council (March 1983), Fleetwood, Thornton Cleveleys and Poulton-le-Fylde Local Plan – Report on Public Participation

Table 1 – Definition of Countryside Uses and Built Development

Countryside Uses	Built Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agricultural land</li> <li>• Woodland</li> <li>• Sports and Recreation Provision in the form of informal open space, parks, playing fields and grass pitches for various sports.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buildings within the Green Belt including dwellings, commercial enterprises (including farm buildings) and the buildings associated with sport and recreation provision (e.g. sports club buildings or cricket pavilions)</li> <li>• Roads and drives within the defined parcels (NB – not public rights of way and not the roads that are adjacent to the Green Belt parcels)</li> <li>• Sports provision where it consists of all weather pitches/hard courts (as opposed to grass pitches) and has been fenced in creating an urban dimension.</li> </ul>

3.16 A site survey of each parcel was conducted to establish the performance of the parcel. Photographs and site data was collected for each parcel. Following the site visits the data was used to assess each parcel. A scoring system was used whereby parcels were attributed a score on a scale of 1 to 3. A score of three denoted that a parcel met that Green Belt purpose robustly and hence the parcel would not be considered further in Stage 4. The criteria of how the scores were attributed to each purpose are set out in Appendix 1. The assessments are set out in the proformas and accompanying photos and plans contained in Appendix 2.

### Wider Analysis of Parcels

3.17 As well as assessing each individual parcel identified in stage 1, consideration was given to the grouped parcels that make up the four distinct areas of Green Belt within Wyre, previously described in paragraph 3.6. This was an additional aspect of the study that had not featured in the proposed methodology, but emerged as a result of discussions with the officer team from the Council. It was agreed that it would provide a useful means in understanding the relationship between neighbouring Green Belt parcels and their collective contribution to the Green Belt.

### **Identifying Potential Green Belt Boundary Anomalies**

3.18 An initial list of potential boundary anomalies was identified by Wyre Council for the study team to consider during their site visits. These constituted possible changes to the existing Green Belt boundaries as a result of the following reasons:

- Green Belt boundaries that sub-divided existing properties either by passing through the built development or by placing elements of the property's curtilage within the Green Belt; and
- Potential mapping errors as a result of previous drafting/digitising of Green Belt boundary data;

3.19 During the site visits, the study team also looked at the existing Green Belt boundaries to identify any additional potential anomalies. Appendix 3 contains the details of the anomalies identified and recommendations for potential changes from the study team.

### **Stage 3 – Consideration of stages 1 and 2 conclusions by project team**

3.20 The results of the desk-top analysis and site visits, captured within the proformas produced in Stage 2, were subsequently reviewed by the project team (consisting of the study team from Urban Vision and officers from Wyre Council). This enabled comments on the emerging findings to be discussed and allowed for further refinement of the draft conclusions and recommendations from Stage 2.

### **Stage 4 – Further assessment and scoring of parcels according to their performance against the purposes of the green belt**

3.21 Stage 2 of the study led to the identification of land parcels that were considered to meet at least one of the three Green Belt purposes considered robustly (i.e. a score of three) and hence would be recommended for retention in the Green Belt. These parcels were not considered any further in Stage 4. The remaining parcels, where the assessment had not identified any purpose being met robustly, were then taken forward into Stage 4 for further consideration. Parcels which performed some role towards the purposes of the Green Belt were prioritised by scoring them according to the number of purposes to which the parcel of land contributes. Because the methodology has adopted a scoring system of 1, 2 or 3 for each purpose, all parcels that scored 1 for a purpose were assumed not to contribute to that purpose. The overall scoring approach is summarised below – the purposes refer to the assessment tasks considered in Stage 2 (Tasks 2A, 2B and 2C) and also incorporates Task 2D at this point. With respect to Task 2D, a score of 6 (i.e.

scoring 3 for each component considered) was necessary for the parcel to be contributing to this purpose significantly.

- Parcels contributing to 3 / 4 purposes (score 3)
- Parcels contributing to 2 purposes (score 2)
- Parcels contributing to 1 purpose (score 1)
- Parcels making no contribution to any purpose (score 0)

3.22 Parcels of land scoring 3 in this Stage 4 assessment will be recommended for retention in the Green Belt. Parcels of land making no contribution to any purposes or only contributing to one purpose will be put forward to be considered for removal from the Green Belt (i.e. overall score of 0 or 1). It is considered that if a parcel of land is only making a partial contribution (score of 2) to one purpose its development will have limited impact on the integrity of the Green Belt. Whether there is a need to release any of the sites with overall score of 2 will be considered as part of the Local Plan process.

3.23 The remaining parcels were also considered in terms of boundary strength. The strength of a parcel's boundary plays an important role in restricting urban sprawl into adjacent parcels.

- Strong features were defined for the purposes of this study as prominent features within the landscape that were expected to remain in the long term and were difficult to alter or destroy. These included: landform features such as steep valley, prominent ridge-line or gully, escarpment, embankment or cutting, river, stream in gully, wide band of woodland, established hedgerow with trees; manmade features such as motorway, tarmac road, main farm track, railway line, canal, quarry, reservoir, line/group of buildings.
- Moderately strong features were defined for the purposes of this study as distinct, semi-permanent features in the landscape, though potentially less durable and ones that could be altered or removed in future. These included: landform features such as stream lined with vegetation, line or avenue of trees, narrow band of woodland; man-made features such as stone wall, stoned track, individual building.
- Weak features were those that could easily be altered or removed and did not provide a durable visual boundary. These included: field boundaries such as a hedge, fence, other flimsy barrier; man - made features such as power line, drainage ditch, small brook, culvert, unmade track, gravel or grass path.

3.24 In terms of scores for boundary strength, a maximum score was given to the weak boundaries that would not provide a robust revised inner Green Belt boundary and which could therefore lead to unrestricted urban sprawl. This was consistent with the scoring system for the Green Belt purposes undertaken in Stage 2, which allocates the highest scores to the parcels which are most important to retain within the Green Belt.

- A strong boundary (score 1) is one that includes one or more strong features that are well developed and prominent within the landscape.
- A medium boundary (score 2) contains a combination of strong and weak feature and also gaps along the boundary resulting at a less prominent and durable boundary.
- A weak boundary (score 3) - contains large gaps and no prominent features.

### **Stage 5 – Consideration of draft final recommendations by the project team**

3.25 The project team considered the results of Stage 4 to consider the analysis of the parcels and agree the final recommendations of the study.

## 4. Analysis of Green Belt Parcels

- 4.1 This section brings together the results from the assessment of the various land parcels in the Wyre Green Belt.

### Stage 1

- 4.2 The initial definition of the parcel boundaries is covered in Section 3. The study team from Urban Vision produced a draft set of parcels for consideration by the officers at Wyre Council. A small number of suggestions were made to change some of the parcels and the parcels were subsequently finalised for assessment in Stage 2.

### Stage 2

- 4.3 The key outcome from the Stage 2 work was an assessment for each parcel considering how the parcel performed against the purposes of the Green Belt. Table 2 summarises the scores for each land parcel for the Stage 2 assessment (Tasks 2A, 2B and 2C). In addition to the individual assessments, the study team carried out a wider analysis of the four distinct areas of Green Belt within Wyre.
- 4.4 Table 2 reveals that the majority of parcels were judged to meet robustly (i.e. a score of three) at least one of the three Green Belt purposes considered at this point of the study.
- 4.5 Parcels 2, 20 and 21 were identified as not meeting any of the three Green Belt purposes considered in Stage 2 robustly. Parcel 2 scored '2' for Task 2A and Parcels 20 and 21 scored '2' for Task 2C which implied some contribution to the Green Belt purpose but were not 'show stopper' scores/conclusions (i.e. would need to score '3'). These sites formed the preliminary list of land parcels which could potentially be considered for removal from the Green Belt without affecting the integrity of the wider Green Belt. They were further considered in Stage 4 of the study.
- 4.6 The full assessment for each parcel is set out in the proformas in Appendix 2.



**Table 2: Summary of findings – Stage 2**

Parcel Ref	Task 2A: Unrestricted Sprawl			Task 2B: Prevent neighbouring towns merging		Task 2C: Setting and Special Character		Stage 2 Recommendation
	%	Well Contained/ Part Contained/ Not Contained	Score	No role/ Moderate/ Significant	Score	No Importance/ Moderate/ Significant	Score	
1	46	Part Contained	2	Significant	3	Significant	3	Retain
2	58	Part Contained	2	No role	1	No Importance	1	Undertake stage 4 assessment
3	26	Not Contained	3	Significant	3	No importance	1	Retain
4	33	Not Contained	3	Moderate	2	Moderate	2	Retain
5	0	Not Contained	3	Significant	3	No Importance	1	Retain
6	21	Not Contained	3	Significant	3	No Importance	1	Retain
7	53	Part Contained	2	Significant	3	Moderate	2	Retain
8	25	Not Contained	3	Significant	3	No Importance	1	Retain
9	78	Well Contained	1	Significant	3	Moderate	2	Retain
10	26	Not Contained	3	Significant	3	No Importance	1	Retain
11	43	Part Contained	2	Significant	3	No Importance	1	Retain
12	56	Part Contained	2	Significant	3	No Importance	1	Retain
13	58	Part Contained	2	Significant	3	No Importance	1	Retain
14	18	Not Contained	3	Significant	3	No Importance	1	Retain
15	52	Part Contained	2	Significant	3	No Importance	1	Retain
16	34	Part Contained	2	Significant	3	No Importance	1	Retain
17	48	Part Contained	2	Significant	3	Moderate	2	Retain
18	25	Not Contained	3	Significant	3	No Importance	1	Retain
19	20	Not Contained	3	Moderate	2	No Importance	1	Retain
20	85	Well Contained	1	No role	1	Moderate	2	Undertake stage 4 assessment
21	70	Well Contained	1	No role	1	Moderate	2	Undertake stage 4 assessment
22	55	Part Contained	2	Significant	3	No Importance	1	Retain
23	73	Well Contained	1	Significant	3	No Importance	1	Retain
24	72	Well Contained	1	Significant	3	No Importance	1	Retain
25	31	Not Contained	3	Significant	3	No Importance	1	Retain
26	25	Not Contained	3	Significant	3	No Importance	1	Retain

## Wider Analysis

- 4.7 As well as assessing each individual Green Belt a wider analysis of the four distinct areas of Green Belt within Wyre was undertaken and the assessment for each area is set out below.

### *Northern area between Fleetwood and Cleveleys*

- 4.8 Parcels 1 – 8 make up the northern area between Fleetwood and Cleveleys to the western side of the Green Belt and Fleetwood and Thornton on the eastern side. Parcel 2 is identified as the only parcel that does not robustly meet any of the three Green Belt purposes considered in Stage 2. The location of Parcel 2 limits its role in terms of contributing to the wider Green Belt within this area – the urban boundary of Fleetwood extends down the western side of the parcel significantly limiting any wider views from the parcel towards Cleveleys. Moreover, the urban edge to Parcel 2 extends along its northern boundary, significantly diminishing the parcel's role in contributing to the first Green Belt purpose to “check unrestricted sprawl”.
- 4.9 Parcels 1 and 3 to 8 are all considered to meet at least one of the three Green Belt purposes robustly. In terms of first purpose to “check unrestricted sprawl”, Parcels 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8 meet the purpose robustly. Parcels 1, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8 are considered to be the critical elements of the Green Belt between Fleetwood and Cleveleys/Thornton in terms of robustly meeting the second purpose of the Green Belt – the prevention of neighbouring towns merging. Parcel 4 contributes to this purpose in a moderate manner due to the nature of the land use in the parcel (dense mature woodland). Only three of the parcels, Parcels 1, 4 and 7 are considered to have either a significant or a moderate contribution to the setting and character of the towns. Parcel 1 is adjacent to the sea front which provides an important element of the setting of the Fleetwood and Cleveleys in this area. Moreover, the parcel contains Rossall School, which contains eight listed buildings within its grounds, adding further to the setting of the two urban areas. Parcel 7 also contributes to the open setting of Rossall School whilst the dense mature woodland in Parcel 4 contributes to the setting of the town at this point

### *Area between Thornton and Cleveleys to the north and Poulton-le-Fylde to the south*

- 4.10 Parcels 9 to 12 and 14 to 19 make up the area between Thornton and Cleveleys to the north and Poulton-le-Fylde to the south.
- 4.11 In terms of first purpose to “check unrestricted sprawl”, Parcels 10, 14, 18 and 19 meet the purpose robustly. With respect to the second purpose - the

prevention of neighbouring towns merging - Parcels 9 to 12 forms the key area of Green Belt that separates Thornton and the southern part of Cleveleys, and parts of Blackpool's urban area – this is particularly important given the merging of the Thornton and Cleveleys to the north of parcel 9. In each case for parcels 9 to 12 they form the whole gap separating neighbouring towns. Moreover, Parcel 9 contributes to the setting of the two towns as a result of the conjoining of the two towns to the north of it, and it also contains the Grade II Listed Marsh Farmhouse. Parcels 14 to 19 in turn form the gap that is important in separating Thornton and Poulton-le-Fylde. Parcel 19 is primarily bounded by open countryside to the north and south east of the parcel which diminishes the role of this parcel in terms of separating neighbouring towns, hence it only being assessed to contribute in a moderate manner. Parcel 17 provides a moderate contribution to the setting of Poulton-le-Fylde as the parcel is adjacent to the town's conservation area.

#### *Area between Poulton-le-Fylde and Blackpool's Urban Area*

- 4.12 Parcels 13, 20, 21 and 29 are located in the area in, or between, Poulton-le-Fylde and Blackpool's urban area. Parcel 13 is an important part of the Green Belt at this point as it forms the whole gap between the urban areas in Blackpool and Wyre at this point. It is therefore a significant component of the Green Belt in this area in preventing neighbouring towns from merging.
- 4.13 Parcels 20 and 21 are identified as parcels that do not robustly meet any of the three Green Belt purposes considered in Stage 2. It is clear from Policy 8 of the Central and North Lancashire Structure Plan (see paragraphs 2.5 to 2.7), which informed the approach to defining Green Belt boundaries in the Fleetwood, Thornton Cleveleys and Poulton-le-Fylde Local Plan that the Green Belt should separate the neighbouring towns of Blackpool and Poulton-le-Fylde. Therefore as parcels 20 and 21 sit wholly within the settlement of Poulton-le-Fylde they do not meet this function of Green Belt.
- 4.14 With respect to Parcel 29, the parcel is completely within Blackpool Borough Council's area and was therefore not assessed. In terms of its role, it is similar to Parcel 13 in that it forms the whole gap between Blackpool and Wyre (abutting the district boundary).

#### *Southern area to the west of Poulton-le-Fylde*

- 4.15 Parcels 22 – 28 make up the southern area of Green Belt that separates Poulton-le-Fylde with Blackpool's urban area to the west, and Staining in Fylde Borough Council's area to the south. Two of the parcels sit completely within Fylde Borough Council's area and were therefore not assessed. A further three parcels (23, 25 and 26) sit both within Wyre and the neighbouring

local authority areas – in the case of Parcel 23, the majority of the land is in Wyre with the remainder of the area in Blackpool; conversely, Parcels 25 and 26 sit primarily in Fylde Borough Council's area.

4.16 All the parcels are considered to meet at least one of the three Green Belt purposes robustly. In terms of first purpose - to “check unrestricted sprawl” - Parcels 25 and 26 meet the purpose robustly reflecting the size and relationship of the other parcels to the urban area. With respect to the second purpose - the prevention of neighbouring towns merging – all the parcels robustly contribute to this part of the Green Belt that separates Poulton-le-Fylde with Blackpool's urban area to the west, and Staining in Fylde Borough Council's area to the south. None of the parcels are considered to be of importance with respect to providing the setting to Poulton-le-Fylde.

### **Identification of Potential Boundary Anomalies**

4.17 Stage 2 of the study also included an assessment of potential anomalies. These constituted possible changes to the existing Green Belt boundaries as a result of the following reasons:

- Green Belt boundaries that sub-divided existing properties either by passing through the built development or by placing elements of the property's curtilage within the Green Belt
- Potential mapping errors as a result of previous drafting/digitising of Green belt boundary data;

4.18 Appendix 3 sets out the anomalies that were identified and provides further detail on the recommendations from the study team.

### **Stage 4**

4.19 Stage 2 of the study led to the identification of land parcels that were considered to meet at least one of the three Green Belt purposes robustly (i.e. a score of three) and hence would be recommended for retention in the Green Belt. The remaining parcels, namely Parcels 2, 20 and 21, where the assessment had not identified any purpose being met robustly, were then taken forward into Stage 4 for further consideration.

4.20 Paragraphs 3.21 to 3.24 set out the method applied in Stage 4. With respect to the further analysis of the Green Belt purposes, this included the analysis undertaken for the three purposes (Tasks 2A to 2C) assessed in Stage 2 with the addition of the assessment of the fourth purpose (Task 2D) considered during the site surveys. The boundary strength of parcels was also considered

during the site surveys. Table 3 sets out the assessment of the parcels taken forward for Stage 4. The full scores for all parcels at Stage 2 and Stage 4 are contained in Table A1 in Appendix 2. Parcels 2, 20 and 21 are recommended for removal based on the assessment in Stage 4. Parcel 21 only realises an overall score of 1 but Parcels 2 and 20 have scored 2 at the Stage 4 assessment – the methodology states that if a parcel of land is only making a partial contribution (score of 2) to one purpose its development will have limited impact on the integrity of the Green Belt. Whether there is a need to release any of the sites with overall score of 1 or 2 will need to be considered as part of the Local Plan process.

**Table 3 - Stage 4 Assessment**

Parcel Ref	Task 2D – Countryside Uses and Built Development			Purposes met by parcel (Score)	Boundary Strength	Retain/ Remove from Green Belt?
	Countryside % Score	Built Devt % Score	Total Score			
2	3	3	6	2 (Parcel scores 2 for Task 2A and scores 6 for Task 2D)	1 (Strong)	Consider removal from Green Belt
20	3	3	6	2 (Parcel scores 2 for Task 2C and scores 6 for Task 2D)	1 (Strong)	Consider removal from Green Belt
21	2	3	5	1 (Parcel scores 2 for Task 2C)	1 (Strong)	Consider removal from Green Belt

4.21 The northern, western and southern boundaries of parcel 2 adjoin the urban edge of Fleetwood and it has a relatively high degree of containment. If the parcel was removed from the Green Belt, the tramline on the eastern boundary would form a permanent robust boundary for the Green Belt. The

boundaries to the parcel are strong and well defined (save for the small anomaly identified) consisting of the urban edge of Fleetwood and the tramline on its eastern side. The parcel is considered to not perform any role as part of a gap. The urban boundary on the western and southern side of the parcel – through its extension that effectively encloses the parcel to a high degree - significantly diminishes the role that the parcel has in contributing to the overall gap between Fleetwood and Cleveleys. The parcel is of no importance to the setting due to its lack of any prominent landscape features that contribute to the setting of Fleetwood. Moreover, the parcel is enclosed to a significant degree by the urban area of Fleetwood and therefore has no contribution to the setting of the town.

4.22 Parcel 20 is well contained, surrounded by existing residential development to 85% of its boundaries. The boundaries to the parcel are strong consisting of existing urban areas and additionally the rail line on its southern boundary. The parcel performs no role as a gap. This parcel sits wholly within Poulton-le-Fylde. The parcel would therefore not meet the specific purpose of the Green Belt as it does not separate neighbouring towns and its removal will not affect the gap between Blackpool and Poulton-le-Fylde. The parcel is of moderate importance to the setting due to its lack of any prominent landscape features although it does provide an aspect of the setting for the Conservation Area in the town due to its close proximity in the south eastern corner.

4.23 Parcel 21 is well contained, surrounded by existing residential development to 70% of its boundaries. The boundaries to the parcel are strong consisting of existing urban areas and additionally the former rail line on its eastern boundary. The parcel performs no role as a gap. This parcel sits wholly within Poulton-le-Fylde. The parcel would therefore not meet the specific purpose of the Green Belt as it does not separate neighbouring towns and its removal will not affect the gap between Blackpool and Poulton-le-Fylde. The parcel is of moderate importance to the setting of Poulton-le-Fylde in that it provides an aspect of the setting for the Conservation Area in the town due to its close proximity.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 5.1 The Wyre Green Belt study has considered individual parcels of land within the Green Belt to assess whether they continued to meet the purposes for Green Belt set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It has also made recommendations for potential changes to Green Belt boundaries to correct potential anomalies where appropriate.
- 5.2 The outcome from the study is a recommendation that parcels 2, 20 and 21 are considered for removal from the Green Belt as part of the ongoing preparation of the Wyre Local Plan. Parcel 2 could be removed but has scored “2” at the Stage 4 assessment – the methodology states that if a parcel of land is only making a partial contribution (score of 2) to one purpose its development will have limited impact on the integrity of the Green Belt. Parcels 20 and 21 achieved an overall score of 2 and 1 respectively, so similarly, their development would only have a limited impact on the integrity of the Green Belt. However the history to the original designation of Parcels 20 and 21 as Green Belt revealed that the Council did not consider the area to be part of the Green Belt as it did not form part of the gap between Blackpool and Poulton-le-Fylde. Whether there is a need to release Parcel 2, 20 and 21 will therefore need to be considered as part of the Local Plan process.





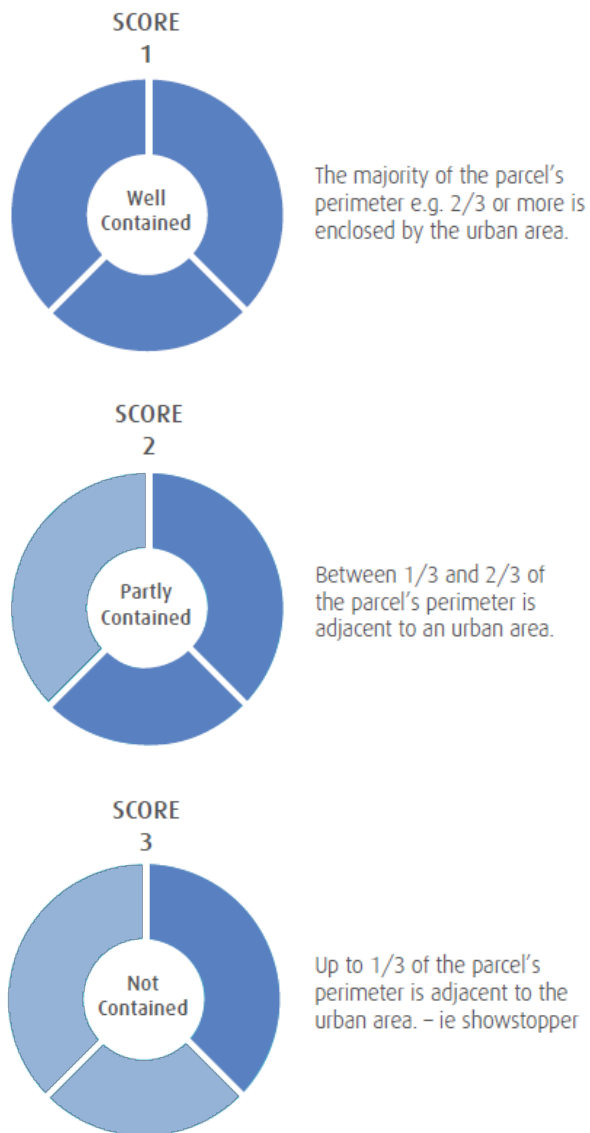


# Appendix 1 – Site Assessment Methodology

## Task 2A: Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

1. This task considered the containment of parcels by the existing urban area in order to determine whether future development adjacent to the urban area could be so firmly ‘contained’ by strong physical and /or visual features that it would not lead to / be perceived as ‘unrestricted sprawl’ onto adjacent land.
2. Where a parcel of land was poorly contained (i.e. only a small part of the parcel boundary adjoins the existing built up area) it was considered to meet the purpose robustly (i.e. a score of three) and was recommended for retention within the Green Belt. Such parcels of land would, if developed, constitute unrestricted sprawl of the urban area.
3. Where a site partially met this purpose (i.e. a score of one or two) a judgement was made as to whether expansion of the urban area into the Green Belt would be considered as ‘sprawl’ or it would constitute a logical continuation of the urban area. The assessment initially consisted of a desk based analysis of each parcel using GIS to calculate the percentage of the parcel edge that adjoined built up area. This analysis was then considered as part of the site visits to verify the desk based calculation. The maps attached in Appendix 3 (Proformas) indicate the extent of the urban area for each parcel.
4. Depending on the amount of the parcel’s perimeter that was enclosed scores were attributed as shown in Figure A1.

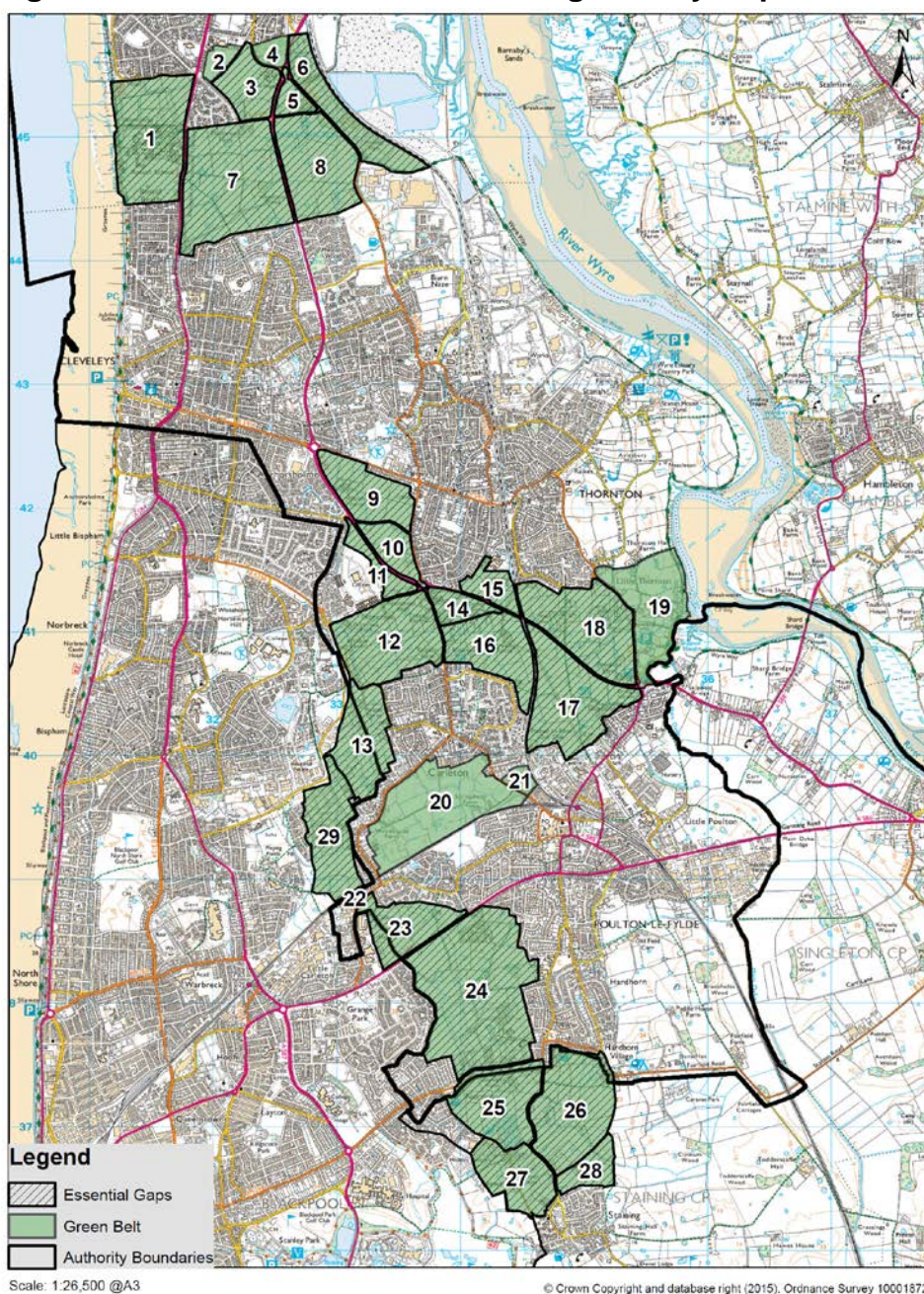
**Figure A1 – Scoring Approach for Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas**



## Task 2B: Prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another

- There is no defined ‘standard gap’ between settlements in national policy. The assessment considered whether the extent of the current gaps between neighbouring towns should be maintained in order to ensure adjacent settlements did not merge. Figure A2 shows the parcels of land that the study team considered were the key Green Belt gaps that performed the function of preventing neighbouring towns from merging into one another.

**Figure A2 – Green Belt Parcels forming the Key Gaps**



6. Each gap was considered on its merits in terms of the effectiveness of the particular gap as it is perceived on the ground. The width of an effective gap between settlements varies from place to place depending on the particular circumstances on the ground. Therefore it was not considered appropriate to set prescriptive distances.
7. In assessing the performance of different gaps between settlements the size and character of settlements to be kept separate was a key consideration, along with the existence of features that contributed to breaking up or defining the gap in question. The reasons for the conclusions formed on each parcel are contained in the relevant proformas.
8. Parcels of land were given a score from 1 to 3 based on the significance of the gap. Parcels with a “no role” scored 1, parcels with a “moderate” role scored 2 and parcels with a “significant” role scored 3.
9. For the purposes of this assessment the following definitions applied:

No role (score 1)

- Consideration of landscape features and topography – parcel contains strong/dominant features that diminish the role of the parcel in forming the visual impression of separation between settlements.
- Consideration of the parcel and its relationship to adjoining parcels – the function of the wider area of Green Belt continues to meet the purpose of preventing the merging of settlements.

Moderate role (score 2)

- Consideration of landscape features and topography – parcel has some features that diminish the role of the parcel in forming the visual impression of separation between settlements
- Consideration of the parcel and its relationship to adjoining parcels – the function of the wider area of Green Belt would be compromised to a moderate degree in meeting the purpose of preventing the merging of settlements

Significant role (Showstoppers - score 3)

- Consideration of landscape features and topography – parcel has few features that diminish the role of the parcel in forming the visual impression of separation between settlements
- Consideration of the parcel and its relationship to adjoining parcels – the function of the wider area of Green Belt would be compromised to a

significant degree in meeting the purpose of preventing the merging of settlements

### **Task 2C: Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns**

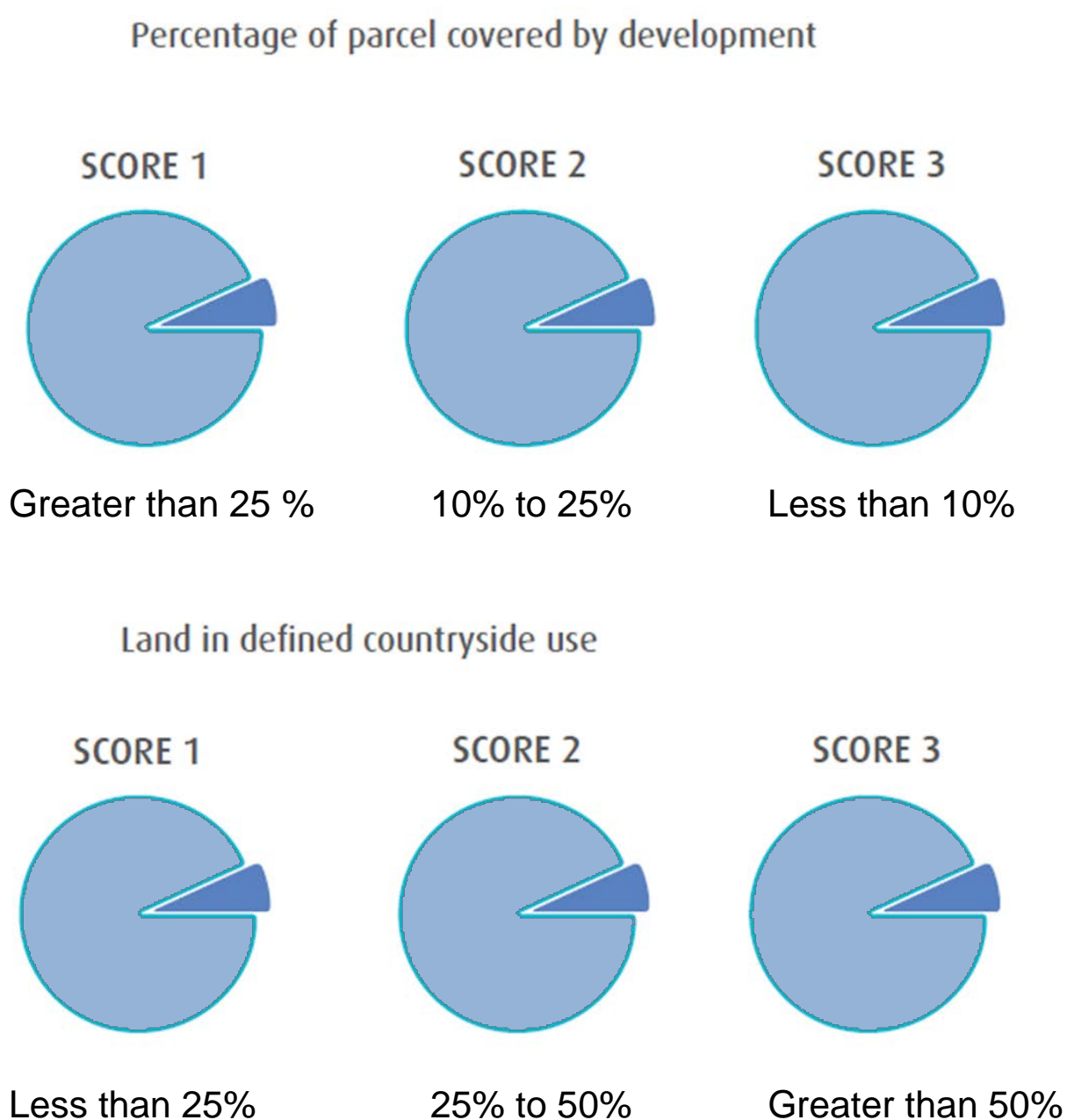
10. There are no 'nationally' recognised historic towns for which the setting and special character need to be protected within Wyre. However the main towns in Wyre have their own setting and individual character which contributes to their distinctiveness and that of the Borough as a whole. In order to assess this purpose in a robust manner, it was necessary to consider the nature of the setting and character that defines the towns adjacent to the Green Belt. The key aspects that were considered were the presence of Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and any specific landscape features that were important in providing the setting of the towns.
11. There are two Conservation Areas within this part of Wyre – one covering the central part of Fleetwood and the other encompassing the central area of Poulton-le-Fylde. Beyond these two areas, there are a number of Listed Buildings and of particular relevance to this study are the group of listed buildings at Rossall School and the Grade II listed Marsh Farmhouse. In terms of landscape features, two elements within the study area were considered to be of relevance: the seafront adjacent to Parcel 1; and the woodland in Parcel 4.
12. The following criteria were used to judge whether each parcel contributed to this purpose:
  - Parcel is important to the setting e.g. contributes significantly or development will have a significant impact on the setting (score 3 – showstopper)
  - Parcel is of moderate importance to the setting e.g. makes some moderate contribution to or development will have a moderate impact on setting (score 2)
  - Parcel is of no importance to the setting e.g. makes no contribution to or development will have no impact on the setting (score 1)
13. In assessing the significance of any parcel of land, consideration was given to:
  - Prominent landscape features which define the character of the locality; (i.e. would development of the parcel as a whole or in part compromise the role of the landscape feature in defining the character of the town?)

- Local and wider views of the settlement and out of the settlement.

**Task 2D: Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment**

14. As discussed in paragraph 3.3 of the main report, it was implicit that any removal of land from the Green Belt and its development thereafter would constitute ‘encroachment’ into the countryside. The assessment against this purpose was therefore used in Stage 4 of the study. The scoring approach used is set out in Figure A3.

**Figure A3 – Scoring Approach for considering the purpose, “Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment”**





## Appendix 2 – Site Assessment Proformas

1. This appendix contains the site assessment proformas detailing the analysis of each of the 26 parcels considered in the study. Table A1 below sets out the full summary of the assessments undertaken for each of the Green Belt purposes, both at Stage 2 (Tasks 2A, 2B and 2C) and at Stage 4 (Task 2D, analysis of boundary strength and overall scoring based on Tasks 2A to 2C). Figure A4 provides the study recommendations in a diagrammatic form.
2. Each proforma sets out the assessment in Stage 2 covering Tasks 2A, 2B and 2C. The relevant land uses are also recorded and the calculation for Task 2D (percentage coverage by countryside uses and built development). Each proforma also records whether the relevant parcel was recommended for retention at Stage 2 and in these cases the Stage 4 assessment is simply noted as not being required. In the cases of Parcels 2, 20 and 21 – which have been recommended for analysis in Stage 4 – the proformas record the Stage 4 assessment.



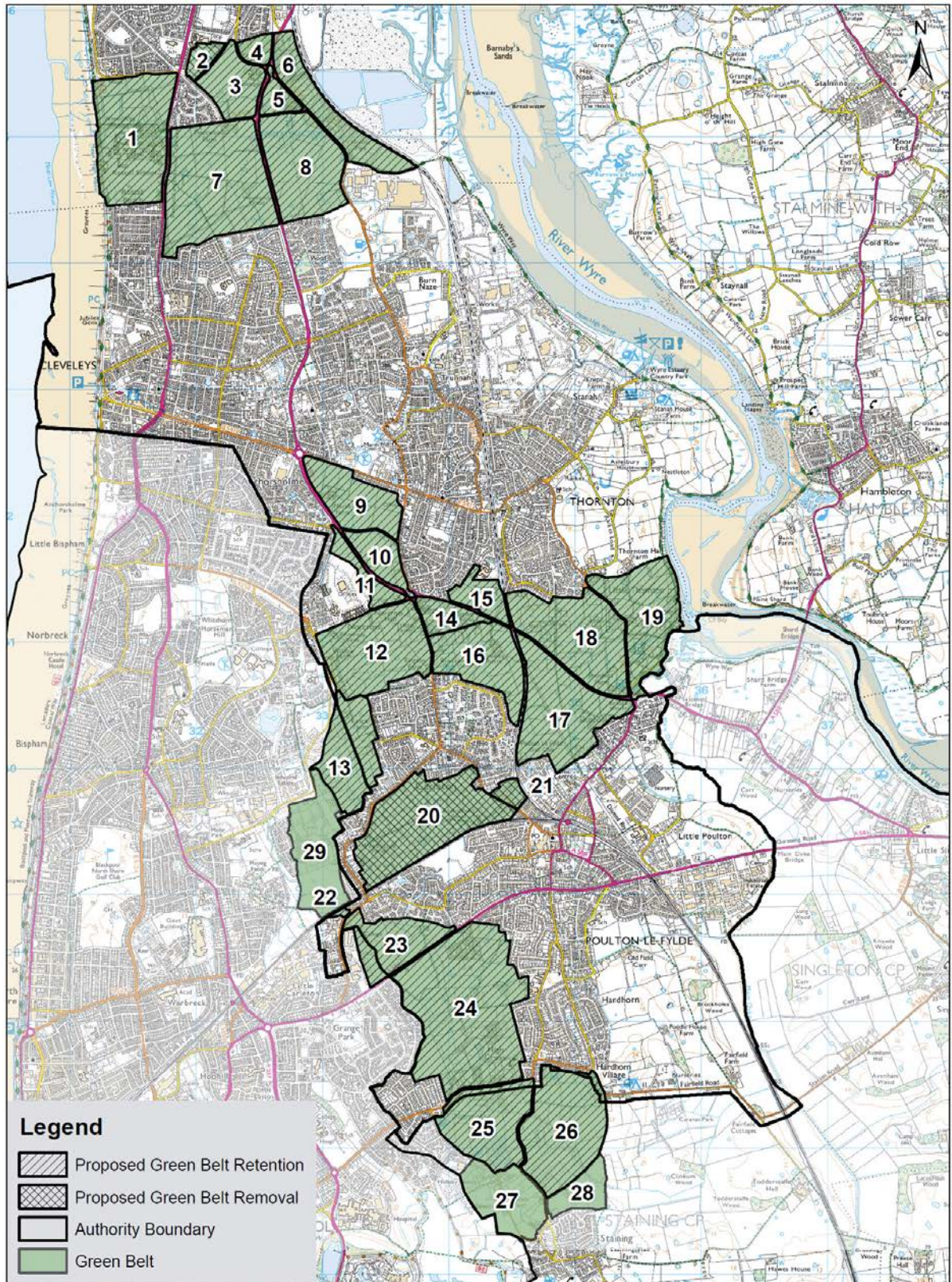
**Table A1 – Overall summary of assessment of parcels (Stage 2 and 4)**

Parcel Ref	Task 2A: Unrestricted Sprawl			Task 2B: Prevent neighbouring towns merging		Task 2C: Setting and Special Character		Stage 2 Recommendation	Task 2D: Countryside Uses/ Built Development					Stage 4 Assessment			
	%	Well Contained (WC) Part Contained (PC) Not Contained (NC)	Score	No role (NR) Moderate (M) Significant (S)	Score	No Importance (NI) Moderate (M) Significant (S)	Score		Built Devt %	Built Devt Score	Countryside %	Countryside Score	Total Score	Purposes Met	Boundary Strength	Score	Stage 4 Recommendation
1	46	PC	2	S	3	S	3	Retain	10-25	2	>50	3	5				
2	58	PC	2	NR	1	NI	1	Undertake stage 4 assessment	<10	3	>50	3	6	2	S	1	Consider removal.
3	26	NC	3	S	3	NI	1	Retain	10-25	2	>50	3	5				
4	33	NC	3	M	2	M	2	Retain	<10	3	>50	3	6				
5	0	NC	3	S	3	NI	1	Retain	10-25	2	>50	3	5				
6	21	NC	3	S	3	NI	1	Retain	>25	1	<25	1	2				
7	53	PC	2	S	3	M	2	Retain	<10	3	>50	3	6				
8	25	NC	3	S	3	NI	1	Retain	<10	3	>50	3	6				
9	78	WC	1	S	3	M	2	Retain	<10	3	>50	3	6				
10	26	NC	3	S	3	NI	1	Retain	<10	3	>50	3	6				
11	43	PC	2	S	3	NI	1	Retain	10-25	2	>50	3	5				
12	56	PC	2	S	3	NI	1	Retain	<10	3	>50	3	6				
13	58	PC	2	S	3	NI	1	Retain	<10	3	>50	3	6				
14	18	NC	3	S	3	NI	1	Retain	>25	1	25-50	2	3				
15	52	PC	2	S	3	NI	1	Retain	<10	3	>50	3	6				
16	34	PC	2	S	3	NI	1	Retain	<10	3	>50	3	6				
17	48	PC	2	S	3	M	2	Retain	<10	3	>50	3	6				
18	25	NC	3	S	3	NI	1	Retain	10-25	2	>50	3	5				

Parcel Ref	Task 2A: Unrestricted Sprawl			Task 2B: Prevent neighbouring towns merging		Task 2C: Setting and Special Character		Stage 2 Recommendation	Task 2D: Countryside Uses/ Built Development					Stage 4 Assessment			
	%	Well Contained (WC) Part Contained (PC) Not Contained (NC)	Score	No role (NR) Moderate (M) Significant (S)	Score	No Importance (NI) Moderate (M) Significant (S)	Score		Built Devt %	Built Devt Score	Countryside %	Countryside Score	Total Score	Purposes Met	Boundary Strength	Score	Stage 4 Recommendation
19	20	NC	3	M	2	NI	1	Retain	>25	1	>50	3	4				
20	85	WC	1	NR	1	M	2	Undertake stage 4 assessment	<10	3	>50	3	6	2	S	1	Consider removal
21	70	WC	1	NR	1	M	2	Undertake stage 4 assessment	10-25	2	>50	3	5	1	S	1	Consider removal
22	55	PC	2	S	3	NI	1	Retain	<10	3	>50	3	6				
23	73	WC	1	S	3	NI	1	Retain	<10	3	>50	3	6				
24	72	WC	1	S	3	NI	1	Retain	10-25	2	>50	3	5				
25	31	NC	3	S	3	NI	1	Retain	<10	3	>50	3	6				
26	25	NC	3	S	3	NI	1	Retain	<10	3	>50	3	6				



**Figure A4 – Study Recommendations (Retain or Consider Removal from Green Belt)**



## Appendix 3 – Green Belt Boundary Anomalies

Parcel	Anomalies - Description	Removal/ Addition of Green Belt
2	The north-eastern corner of the parcel abuts undeveloped land that lies outside of the Green Belt boundary. There is no clear physical demarcation between the existing Green Belt boundary and this undeveloped parcel of land. It is recommended that the boundary follows the perimeter of the playground area of the nursery and the undeveloped area adjacent to the Saint Edmund of Canterbury Chapel.	Addition
4	The north-eastern corner of parcel does not appear to follow the boundary with residential properties to north. Recommended that the boundary is revised to follow the line of the residential properties' boundaries and the southern boundary of the allotments.	Addition
6	The northern boundary does not follow any physical boundary and should be amended to include two additional areas – one consisting of the entire northern corner of the parcel, effectively abutting and to the east of the A585; and the other the small triangular section of land which lies west of the A585 and south west of Copse Road.	Addition
9	The Green Belt boundary cuts through a hard surfaced area used to display cars by the existing garage. It is recommended that the Green Belt boundary is altered to follow the curtilage of the garage hardstanding. A further anomaly has also been identified which affects the boundary of the garden to 207 Victoria Road East. Historic aerial photographs indicate that the garden boundary has not changed since the original green belt was designated in the 1980's and therefore it would be considered appropriate to remove the western section of the side garden to 207 Victoria Road East.	Removal



12/13	The western boundary follows Faraday Way to the north-west of the parcel but then stops following this road towards the south-western corner and instead follows an arbitrary route along no obvious demarcation on-site. It is recommended that the Green Belt boundary should follow Faraday Way to the south-western corner and then follow the borough boundary between Wyre and Blackpool BC (NB – the latter part of this boundary is in Blackpool BC area and this proposed alteration to the boundary would need to be raised under duty to cooperate discussions).	Addition
12	A section of the southern boundary for Parcel 12 cuts across the house and gardens to 8 and 9 Pond Gardens. These properties were built at the same time as all the other houses on this road which were originally proposed as a housing allocation in the Fleetwood, Thornton Cleveleys and Poulton-le-Fylde Local Plan. It is recommended that the boundary should be drawn around the rear gardens of 8 and 9 Pond Gardens and then follow the eastern edge of the adjacent pond (i.e. the pond remains in the Green Belt).	Removal
15	A section of the northern boundary follows no obvious demarcation across the school playing fields. It is recommended that it should be altered to follow the existing built development at the school.	Addition
18	The current boundary cuts across the rear garden of 11 New Road and it is recommended that the Green Belt boundary should be realigned around the rear boundary of 11 New Road.	Removal
19	The boundary in the south-eastern corner of the parcel appears to follow the Wyre Borough boundary with Fylde Borough, rather than any physical demarcation on the ground. It is recommended that the boundary is redrawn to follow a strong physical boundary - in this case the river channel.	Removal
20	The Green Belt boundary includes the rear garden to 73 Poulton Road but excludes the rear gardens to the remainder of the terrace 65 – 71 Poulton Road. It is proposed therefore that a small plot of land which forms the rear garden to 73 Poulton Road is removed from the Green Belt consistent and contiguous with the original rear gardens of these terraced properties.	Removal

21	In the north-eastern corner of the site, the Green Belt boundary does not follow the curtilage of existing residential development to the north but instead appears to follow an arbitrary line that has no physical demarcation on the ground. It is recommended that the boundary is redrawn to follow the residential curtilages.	Addition
23	On the northern boundary the parcel abuts residential development at the Rowans but the Green Belt boundary does not follow the residential curtilages and instead appears to follow an arbitrary route with no clear demarcation on the ground. It is recommended that the boundary is redrawn to follow the residential curtilages.	Addition
24	At the eastern boundary the Green Belt boundary transects a building associated with Baines School. The Green Belt boundary should be altered at this location to follow the building footprint whilst retaining the tarmacked area within the Green Belt.	Removal

## **Appendix 4 – Green Belt Parcels Outside of Wyre**