

Green Belt Assessment

Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

Final report

Prepared by LUC

October 2025



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Contents

Chapter 1	5
Introduction	
Report structure	5
Chapter 2	7
Study Context	
Green Belt Land	7
Relevant policy	10
Local studies	19
Chapter 3	22
Green Belt Assessment Methodology	
The location and scale of assessment areas	22
Rating scale	23
Minimum parcel size	24
NPPF footnote 7 areas and assets	24
Previously developed land	29
Assessment of Green Belt contribution and definition of grey belt land	31
Purpose A – to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	31
Purpose B – to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	37
Purpose C – to protect the countryside from encroachment	41
Purpose D – to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	43
Purpose E – to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	50
Fundamental impact on remaining Green Belt land	51
Fundamental impact outputs	53
Outputs of borough-wide assessment of contribution	54
Detailed reporting	54
Chapter 4	57
Summary of Findings	

Grey belt	57
Possible fundamental impacts to remaining Green Belt land	57

Chapter 5 **85**

Next Steps

Potential further work	85
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Appendix A **86**

Detailed proforma reports

References **87**

Table of Tables

Table 4.1: Green Belt contribution	73
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Table of Figures

Figure 2.1: Stockport Borough's Green Belt	8
Figure 3.1: NPPF Footnote 7 Designations	27
Figure 3.2: NPPF Footnote 7 Designations – historic and landscape	28
Figure 4.1: Contribution parcels	61
Figure 4.2: Areas of strongest contribution – including NPPF purposes A, B, C and D	66
Figure 4.3: Contribution to Purpose A – Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	67
Figure 4.4: Contribution to Purpose B – Prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	68
Figure 4.5: Contribution to Purpose C – Assists in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	69
Figure 4.6: Contribution to Purpose D – Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	70
Figure 4.7: Contribution to Purpose E – To assist in urban regeneration e.g. encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	71
Figure 4.8: Areas suitable for definition as grey belt	72

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 LUC was commissioned by Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) to undertake a review of the Green Belt within the Borough. The assessment identifies how land performs against the five purposes of Green Belt consistent with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). This assessment is then used to define grey belt in line with national guidance.

1.2 The Green Belt assessment will form part of a wider evidence base that, taken together, will help inform the development of the Borough Local Plan. The purpose of a Green Belt assessment is not to identify land that may be suitable for development or set out the necessary exceptional circumstances for releasing land from the Green Belt. This will be done by the Council in due course considering a wide range of evidence relating to sustainability and viability considerations.

1.3 LUC prepared a previous Green Belt assessment for Stockport in 2022 which was updated in 2024 and this study supersedes those reports. A revised assessment is required because of the changes to the NPPF in December 2024 which introduced the concept of 'grey belt' and the requirement for local authorities to review their Green Belt boundaries, unless they are able to meet their identified housing development needs in full. New National Planning Policy Guidance on the assessment of Green Belt land (in order to identify grey belt) was published in February 2025 so this assessment takes account of that guidance to ensure that the approach to assessing the Green Belt is comprehensive and robust.

1.4 This report sets out the context and proposed methodology used to undertake the Green Belt review, the key study findings and proposed next steps.

Report structure

1.5 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 2** sets out the study context, including a description of the Greater Manchester Green Belt and summaries of relevant national and local planning policy practice guidance and previous Green Belt studies;
- **Chapter 3** outlines the methodology that was used to undertake the assessment of Green Belt land;

- **Chapter 4** provides a summary of the contribution assessment findings and the identification of grey belt land; and
- **Chapter 5** summarises how the study should be used and the potential next steps beyond the study.
- **Appendix A** contains the detailed proforma reports for the assessment land parcels.

Chapter 2

Study Context

2.1 This chapter sets out the study context, including a description of the Borough's Green Belt. It also summarises relevant national and local policy, and previous Green Belt studies within and in the immediate vicinity of the Borough.

Green Belt Land

The Green Belt in Stockport

2.2 Stockport has 5,861 hectares of Green Belt land, which represents almost half of the total SMBC area as shown on **Figure 2.1**. This forms part of the wider Greater Manchester Green Belt, the origins of which are discussed below.

2.3 The Green Belt in Stockport is predominately comprised of rolling open farmland interspersed with wooded river valleys that penetrate the urban areas. However, not all of SMBC's Green Belt is green, nor does it have a single character or use. There are areas of development within the Green Belt at various locations, with the densest concentration of development to the south of the borough around Woodford.

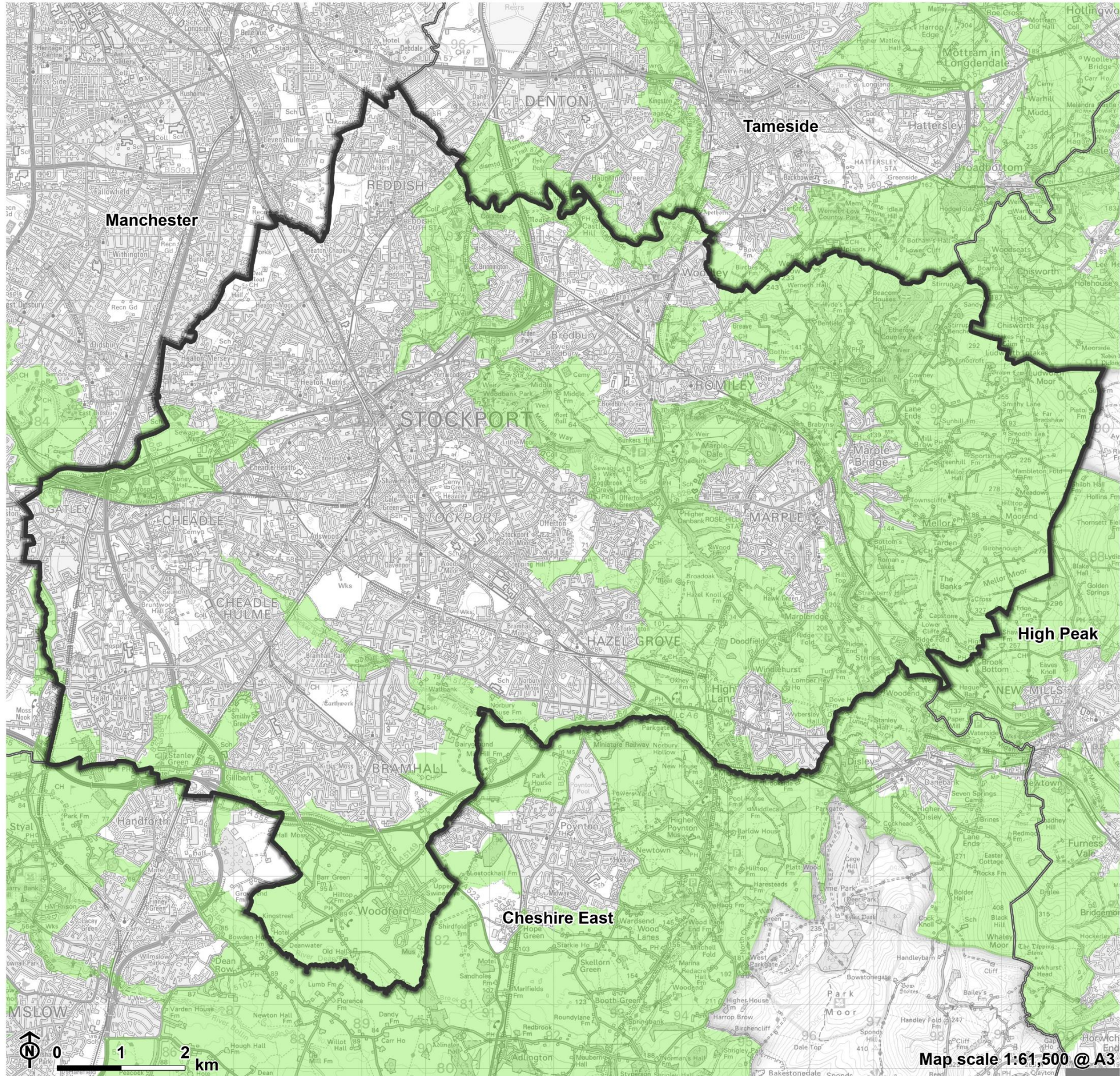
Figure 2.1: Stockport Borough's Green Belt

Stockport Green Belt Assessment
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council



Figure 2.1: Stockport Borough's Green Belt

- Local authority boundary
- Neighbouring authority
- Green Belt



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The Greater Manchester Green Belt

2.4 In 1955 the Government established (through Circular 42/55) the first clear policy on the need for Green Belts in areas outside of London, including the Greater Manchester area. However, there was initial uncertainty over the exact extent of the areas to be defined as Green Belt within areas such as Greater Manchester due to uncertainty on future growth levels.

2.5 Further difficulty deciding on an appropriate approach for the Green Belt arose with the evolution of the planning system in England towards the new Development Plan system under the Planning Acts of 1947 and 1962, as well as the re-organisation of local government. This latter change resulted in the creation of the Greater Manchester Council (GMC) and 10 metropolitan district councils in the northwest in 1974.

2.6 A 'patchwork-quilt' of Green Belt policies were inherited by the new authorities and as such there was a need to rationalise and bring about consistency in the approach to Green Belt.

2.7 The broad extent of the Green Belt in Greater Manchester appeared in draft in the 1978 Greater Manchester Structure Plan which was approved by the Secretary of State in 1981. Detailed boundaries were introduced in the Greater Manchester Green Belt Local Plan adopted in 1984 in the form of the Proposals Map. Since that time and following the GMC's abolition in 1986 these boundaries have been carried forward and, in some cases, amended through individual Local Plans, Unitary Development Plans and the Core Strategies for each of the ten GM districts.

2.8 One of the aims which emerged in the preparation of the GM Structure Plan was the regeneration of the older urban parts of the conurbation at Manchester and Salford in particular. This was in addition to the more 'traditional' Green Belt roles of separating urban areas from each other and preventing further suburbanisation of countryside surrounding these areas. The primary purposes of the Greater Manchester Green Belt, were set out in Policy OL1 of The Greater Manchester Green Belt Local Plan Written Statement and were in line with policy at a national level:

- To check further growth of a built-up area.
- To prevent neighbouring towns from merging.
- To preserve the special character of a town.

2.9 Nationally the three main functions of the Green Belt were originally set out in Circular 42/55. Emphasis upon the strict control of development and the presumption

against building in the Green Belt except in special circumstances was set out through further Government Green Belt guidance in 1962. The essential characteristic of Green Belts as permanent with boundaries only to be altered in exceptional circumstances was established through Circular 14/84.

2.10 In January 1988 Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 ‘Green Belts’ (PPG2), which was subsequently replaced in 1995 and further amended in 2001, explicitly extended the original purposes of the Green Belt to add:

- To safeguard the surrounding countryside from further encroachment; and
- To assist in urban regeneration (subsequently replaced in 1995 and further amended in 2001).

2.11 PPG2 was replaced through the publication of the NPPF in March 2012, revised and re-published several times with the most recent December 2024 document currently providing national Green Belt policy as described below.

Relevant policy

National Green Belt Policy

2.12 Government policy on the Green Belt is set out in Chapter 13 of the adopted [National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#) ‘Protecting Green Belt Land’.

Aims and Purposes

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

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

- A - to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- B - to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- C - to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- D - to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- E - to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Exceptional Circumstances

2.15 The NPPF paragraph 145 states: “Once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified through the preparation or updating of plans. Strategic policies should establish the need for any changes to Green Belt boundaries, having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so they can endure beyond the plan period.”

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

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

- making as much use as possible of suitable brownfield sites and underutilised land;
- optimise the density of development in line with the policies in chapter 11 of this Framework, including whether policies promote a significant uplift in minimum density standards in town and city centres and other locations well served by public transport; and
- discuss with neighbouring authorities about whether they could accommodate some of the identified need for development, as demonstrated through the statement of common ground.’

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

Grey Belt

2.19 ‘Grey belt’ is defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF as “land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does

not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. ‘Grey belt’ excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.”

Green Belt Boundaries

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

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

Appropriate Green Belt development

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

- “buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
- the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;
- the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- limited infilling in villages;
- limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites);
- limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land (including a material change of use to residential or mixed use including residential), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary

buildings), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

- Other forms of development provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These are:
 - mineral extraction;
 - engineering operations;
 - local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;
 - the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;
 - material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); and
 - development, including buildings, brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.”

2.22 In addition, paragraph 155 states the development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where:

- the development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;
- there is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed;
- the development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework; and
- where applicable the development proposed meets the ‘Golden Rules’ requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 below.

2.23 Case law has shown that appropriate development cannot have an impact on the openness of the Green Belt and therefore in the context of a Green Belt assessment cannot affect the extent to which land is considered to be developed.

Golden Rules

2.24 Where major development involving the provision of housing is proposed within or on land released from the Green Belt the following contributions should be made:

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

Planning Practice Guidance

2.25 The NPPF's Green Belt policies are supplemented by [Planning Practice Guidance \(PPG\)](#) on Green Belt planning and how to assess Green Belt land, which is particularly relevant to the methodology of this study.

2.26 The PPG sets out:

- how to consider the potential impact of development on the openness of the Green Belt;
- key considerations in assessing the contribution Green Belt land makes to Green Belt purposes a, b and d when identifying grey belt land;
- what release or development of Green Belt land would fundamentally undermine the remaining Green Belt in the plan area;
- guidance for determining proposals on potential grey belt land;
- guidance on identifying sustainable locations in the Green Belt; and,
- how major housing development should contribute to accessible green space.

2.27 The PPG makes it clear that local planning authorities, or appropriate groups of local planning authorities should produce a Green Belt assessment during the preparation or updating of all Local Plans, and Spatial Development Strategies that set the strategic context for land release where this would be required to meet development needs.

Assessing Green Belt land to Identify Grey Belt Land

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

- sustainably prioritise it over other Green Belt locations through the plan-making process; and

- help determine planning applications on Green Belt land in line with paragraph 155.

2.29 The guidance is clear that ‘where grey belt is identified, it does not automatically follow that it should be allocated for development, released from the Green Belt, or for development proposals to be approved in all circumstances. The contribution Green Belt land makes to Green Belt purposes is one consideration in making decisions about Green Belt land. Such decisions should also be informed by an overall application of the relevant policies in the area’s adopted Plan and the NPPF’ (PPG Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 64-001-20250225), including whether:

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

2.30 This is important as it means that in some cases Green Belt land (which performs strongly in relation to either Purpose A, B and D) may be more suitable for release than grey belt land.

The appropriate scale of Green Belt assessments

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

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

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

Grey Belt assessment criteria

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

2.35 When assessing **Purpose A** (to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas), the PPG states that the following factors that should be considered:

- Proximity to large built-up area(s).
- Extent of existing development in assessment area and impact of other urbanising influences.
- Presence, or otherwise, of physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development.
- Shape of development if released, with degree of enclosure and incongruous patterns of development considered.

2.36 When assessing **Purpose B** (to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another), the PPG states that the following factors that should be considered:

- Extent of existing development in assessment area.
- Extent to which the assessment area forms part of the gap between towns.
- Degree to which the development of the assessment area would result in loss of visual separation of towns, including whether there are any physical or natural features that might preserve visual separation.

2.37 When assessing **Purpose D** (to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns), the PPG states that the following factors that should be considered. It notes that if there are no historic towns, a detailed assessment is not necessary:

- Extent of existing development in assessment area.
- Role that the assessment area plays in the setting of the historic town.
- Contribution that the assessment area makes to the special character of the historic town. This should consider physical, visual and experiential links between the assessment area and the historic aspects of the town.
- Degree of separation of assessment area from the historic aspects of the town by existing development or topography.

2.38 These criteria form the basis of the approach set out in Chapter 3. No assessment criteria are provided in the PPG in relation to the assessment of Purpose C and E as these are not relevant to the assessment of grey belt.

Applying NPPF footnote 7 to the definition of Grey Belt land

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

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

2.40 This assessment is not limited to the impact of release or development of grey belt land but any Green Belt land, and requires consideration of:

- Fundamental impact to all five Green Belt purposes (taken together).
- To all remaining Green Belt across the plan area as a whole.

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

Identifying sustainable locations in a Green Belt

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

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

Impact of development on the openness of the Green Belt

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

- spatial volume, i.e. impact on spatial openness;
- visual impact, i.e. impact on visual openness;
- the duration of development, and extent to which land can be remediated; and,
- the degree of activity, such as traffic generation.

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

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

Local Policy

2.46 Stockport's Unitary Development Plan Review was adopted May 2006. Saved policy GBA1.1 'Extent of Green Belt' defines the extent of the Greater Manchester Green Belt.

2.47 The Stockport Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) was adopted in March 2011 and sets out how the Council will meet future strategic development needs including housing, employment, retail, education and healthcare between 2011 and 2026. The Strategy in the document states that development should be focussed principally within Stockport Central Area, within other regeneration priority areas and at sites where specific regeneration needs have been identified and to a lesser extent areas surrounding the Town, District and Large Local Centres, as well as in other locations that are genuinely sustainably accessible within the urban area.

2.48 The Core Strategy lists as one of its objectives the safeguarding of the permanence of the Borough's Green Belt. Policy CS4 states that Green Belt sites will be allocated for housing in the Allocations DPD if this is necessary to meet the Borough's local needs. Alterations to the Green Belt boundary are only to be made when they can be justified by exceptional circumstances. Small infill sites within the Green Belt are not to be used for housing given their negligible contribution to housing in the Borough and the harmful cumulative impact such development might have on the openness of the Green Belt.

Local studies

Stage 1 Greater Manchester Green Belt Assessment (2016)

2.49 Since the original designation of the Green Belt in Greater Manchester was adopted in 1984, no full assessment of the Green Belt areas took place until 2016. LUC produced a report in July 2016 [See reference 1] which included an assessment of the Green Belt within Greater Manchester. The overall aim of the study was to provide an objective, evidence-based and independent assessment of how the Greater Manchester Green Belt contributes to the five purposes of Green Belt, as set out in the NPPF.

2.50 The study included an assessment against the purposes of:

- The individual parcels; and broad strategic areas that make up the existing Green Belt; and
- Potential additional areas of land that currently lie outside the Green Belt, to help understand whether they could be added to the Green Belt.

2.51 The report concluded that the Green Belt played an important role in:

- Restricting unplanned development due to the complex urban form of Greater Manchester resulting from its historical development and growth of a series of industrial towns;
- Ensuring that cities, towns and smaller settlements retain their identity by preventing further coalescence, particularly the narrow corridors of open land that separate one town from the next;
- Maintaining the openness of the countryside around and within the conurbation providing an important landscape, recreational and ecological resource; and
- Protecting the setting and character of towns and cities that grew during the Industrial Revolution which, whilst not always recognised as being of historic importance, represent an important era in British history. In many places the Green Belt helps to protect the setting of the historic cores despite continued growth in the 20th and 21st centuries.

2.52 The 2016 study defined a total of 89 assessment parcels in, or partly in, the SMBC area. Key findings in relation to each of the Green Belt purposes were as follows:

- Much land close to the urban edge and forming corridors along the Goyt and Tame valleys, along the narrow corridor of open land at Cheadle Hulme and

lying between Cheadle and Heaton Mersey plays a significant role in checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas (Purpose A).

- Other than areas of open country in the east of the borough, and some smaller areas adjacent to urban edges, much land plays a key role in preventing settlements in Stockport from merging, or settlements which have already merged from coalescing further (Purpose B). Land which plays a significant role includes the Goyt and Tame valleys, between High Lane, Marple and Hazel Grove, the narrow corridor of open land at Cheadle Hulme and land between Cheadle and Heaton Mersey. At a strategic level, the Green Belt maintains separation from settlements beyond the SMBC boundary, including New Mills and Handforth/Wilmslow.
- Much of the eastern part of the Green Belt in Stockport was assessed as playing a significant role in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment (Purpose C). This includes the open countryside to the east of Romiley and Marple/Marple Bridge, the land to the north and west of High Lane, and much of the Goyt Valley to the east of Stockport. Land in the Tame Valley north-east of Stockport, lying along the southern edge of the Greater Manchester conurbation, forming the narrow corridor of open land at Cheadle Hulme and located closest to the edge of urban areas was identified as typically making a more moderate or weaker contribution to this purpose.
- Green Belt land to the east of Marple and Marple Bridge was found to play a significant role in preserving the setting and special character of these historic settlements (Purpose D). The rising ground of the Pennine Fringes provides the backdrop to much of this part of the conurbation. A narrow finger of Green Belt at Cheadle Hulme also plays a significant role. Most other land, including areas closer to the urban edge, lying within the Goyt, Tame and Mersey Valleys and running along the southern edge of the Greater Manchester conurbation, was found to play a less significant role in relation to this purpose.
- All land was considered to contribute equally to assisting in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land (Purpose E).

Stage 2 Greater Manchester Green Belt Assessment (2020)

2.53 The Stage 2 Greater Manchester Green Belt Study, undertaken by LUC in 2020 [\[See reference 2\]](#) assessed the harm of release of specific sites proposed for allocation in the Revised Draft (January 2019) of the GMSF.

Stage 1 Stockport Green Belt Harm Assessment (2022, updated 2024)

2.54 The Stage 1 Stockport Green Belt Harm Assessment was undertaken by LUC in 2022 (with updates made in 2024) [\[See reference 3\]](#). It assessed the potential impact on the Green Belt that could result from the release of land within a number of Areas of Search (AoS) that lay entirely, or in part, within the Green Belt. The study's intention was to provide evidence for the Council to assist them in the identification and refinement of allocation sites, alongside other considerations. The assessment adopted the same methodology used in the Stage 2 Greater Manchester Green Belt Study (2020).

2.55 SMBC identified 28 broad AoS which were defined based on a number of sites submitted to the Council through call for sites exercises, including the Brownfield Call for Sites. The sites went through an initial sifting exercise. This approach was intended to help identify sites which contribute to the overall strategic objective of delivering sustainable development that is well located to existing communities and which delivers benefits for new and existing residents.

Chapter 3

Green Belt Assessment Methodology

3.1 This chapter provides an explanation of the assessment methodology, which took into account the changes in national planning policy and practice guidance.

3.2 The publication of the updated [Planning Practice Guidance \(PPG\)](#) in February 2025 on Green Belt assessment (summarised in Chapter 2) is particularly relevant to the methodology outlined in this chapter .

The location and scale of assessment areas

3.3 The PPG states that authorities must identify an appropriate scale of Green Belt assessment that delivers clear variations in contribution to the Green Belt purposes, assessing all Green Belt land within a Plan area in the first instance and responding to local circumstances. The Plan area in this study is defined as the Stockport Local Plan area and this study assesses all the Green Belt land within this area.

3.4 In this study, LUC's approach to parcelling does not predefine parcels but instead uses an analysis process to identify variations in contribution to the purposes, with areas being defined to reflect those variations. The defined areas are the final product of the assessment, reflecting the range of variations in Green Belt contribution to the Green Belt purposes. Areas vary in size depending on the range of factors (within and in their immediate vicinity) affecting their contribution. For example, parcels closer to urban areas are likely to be subject to a greater range of factors influencing their contribution compared to more remote areas in the open countryside, resulting in smaller 'parcels' at urban edges and larger 'outer areas' in the open countryside respectively. This is an approach that LUC has successfully used in all its recent Green Belt assessments and has been considered robust by inspectors at Local Plan Examinations. The benefits of this approach is that:

- it avoids misleading results where predefined areas have variations in contribution within a parcel that are averaged out.
- it enables the Council to overlay potential development sites over the findings of the Green Belt assessment to get a clear understanding of the contribution they make to the Green Belt purposes without the need for further evaluation (unless the sites are less than 2ha in size – see below for further information on the granularity of the assessment).

3.5 Contribution to Purposes C and E are not relevant to the identification of grey belt but Purpose C in particular is still an important consideration in Green Belt planning decisions, particularly in scenarios involving the release of Green Belt land that is not defined as grey belt land. Purposes C and E are also be assessed in this study.

3.6 The granularity of the study in terms of the resultant number of identified assessment parcels and outer areas has been influenced by the rating scale and defined minimum parcel size described below.

Rating scale

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

3.8 Even where grey belt areas are defined through the study, a plan area’s growth needs and the need for development to be in sustainable locations may still require consideration of the release of Green Belt land that does not meet the grey belt definition, therefore Green Belt purposes C and E must also be rated.

3.9 This assessment of Green Belt land is designed to follow the same rating scale referenced in the PPG: ‘strong’, ‘moderate’ or ‘weak/no’. In addition, the assessment identifies areas of ‘very strong’ contribution within the wider ‘strong’ contribution areas.

3.10 The ‘strong’ and ‘very strong’ contribution ratings, where applicable to Purposes A, B or D, identify land which does not meet the definition of grey belt (given that land which performs strongly to Purpose C and/or E can still meet the definition of grey belt land). To be clear the addition of a ‘very strong’ rating has not affected the determination of land which is identified as grey belt, rather it provides a more nuanced understanding of how strong land at the top of the rating scale performs.

3.11 The release and/or development of strongly contributing Green Belt land may require more justification, but NPPF paragraph 148 makes it clear that more sustainable greenfield sites on higher-performing Green Belt land (such as around train stations) can still be considered for allocation or permission where Exceptional or Very Special Circumstances apply.

3.12 The splitting of land which does not perform strongly into two levels – moderate and weak/no – is in line with the PPG on grey belt and will help, alongside sustainability considerations, to inform more nuanced judgements as to what land

should be considered for release and development within lower contributing, including grey belt, locations.

Minimum parcel size

3.13 The number of parcels resulting from the assessment process is also influenced by setting a minimum parcel size. The higher the minimum parcel size, the greater the likelihood that smaller areas may exist within a parcel that performs more weakly in relation to one or more of the Green Belt purposes than the parcel as a whole.

3.14 In order to maximise the usefulness of the study for development management purposes, and to minimise the likelihood of more localised variations in Green Belt contribution being identified at a later stage, the minimum parcel size for the assessment is defined as 2 hectares (ha).

NPPF footnote 7 areas and assets

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

3.16 Footnote 7 states "The policies referred to are those in this Framework (rather than those in development plans) relating to: habitats sites [\[See reference 4\]](#) (and those sites listed in paragraph 194) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, a National Landscape, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets [\[See reference 5\]](#) (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 75 [\[See reference 6\]](#)); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change." This covers the following of relevance to Stockport:

- Sites of Community Importance
- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) – include possible SACs;
- Special Protection Areas (SPA) – including potential SPAs;
- Ramsar sites – including proposed Ramsar sites;
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI);

- Sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on habitats sites;
- Irreplaceable habitats;
- Scheduled Monuments;
- Registered Parks and Gardens;
- Registered Battlefield;
- Listed Buildings;
- Conservation Areas;
- National Landscape;
- Archaeological Priority Areas;
- Flood Zones 3 and 2;
- Areas at risk of surface water or groundwater flooding; and,

3.17 In light of the PPG, these areas and assets are not excluded from assessment, but their location and extent is mapped alongside the findings of the Green Belt contribution assessment. Green Belt land that does not contribute strongly to Green Belt purposes A, B and D and overlaps with these footnote 7 areas and assets are only provisionally identified as grey belt land. Further detailed work would need to be undertaken (as necessary through the plan-making and development management processes) to establish the effects of more detailed specific development proposals on them. It is not possible to undertake this assessment at this stage in the absence of the potential nature and form of development.

3.18 GIS data on listed buildings (a designated heritage asset) and ancient and veteran trees (a designated irreplaceable habitats) are only available as point data. There is no consistent and accurate GIS data available marking the extent of the setting of such assets across Stockport or immediately beyond its boundaries. In the absence of consistent and readily available area-based data sets for these assets, GIS point data will instead be mapped to draw attention to their location within assessed Green Belt locations, highlighting the need for further detailed work (as appropriate through the plan-making and development management processes) to establish the effects on these assets.

3.19 Mapped areas at risk of flooding are confined to Flood Zones 2 and 3 on the basis that additional areas of surface water or groundwater flooding outside of these flood zones are not mapped to at a sufficiently granular and consistent scale across the study area to be useful to the definition of grey belt land at a strategic scale.

3.20 Again, the impact of prospective development sites on listed buildings, ancient and veteran trees and additional areas of surface water or groundwater flooding (outside of flood zones 2 and 3) would need to be considered in greater detail at a later stage through site allocation and/or development management processes.

3.21 The relevant Footnote 7 Areas and Assets are shown on **Figure 3.1** and **Figure 3.2**.

Figure 3.1: NPPF Footnote 7 Designations



Figure 3.1: NPPF Footnote 7 Designations

- Local authority boundary
- Neighbouring authority
- Green Belt
- NPPF footnote 7 areas or assets within Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council**
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Ancient Woodland
- High risk of surface water flooding
- Flood zone 3
- Flood zone 2
- Peaty soil
- Blanket bog
- Lowland fens

NPPF Footnote 7 designations:
NPPF Footnote 7 designations not listed and mapped in this figure are generally not located within Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council or local data sets were not readily available. Listed Buildings have not been included to improve legibility. These assets may provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development and should therefore be reviewed separately. The locations of these assets are illustrated in parcel proforma.

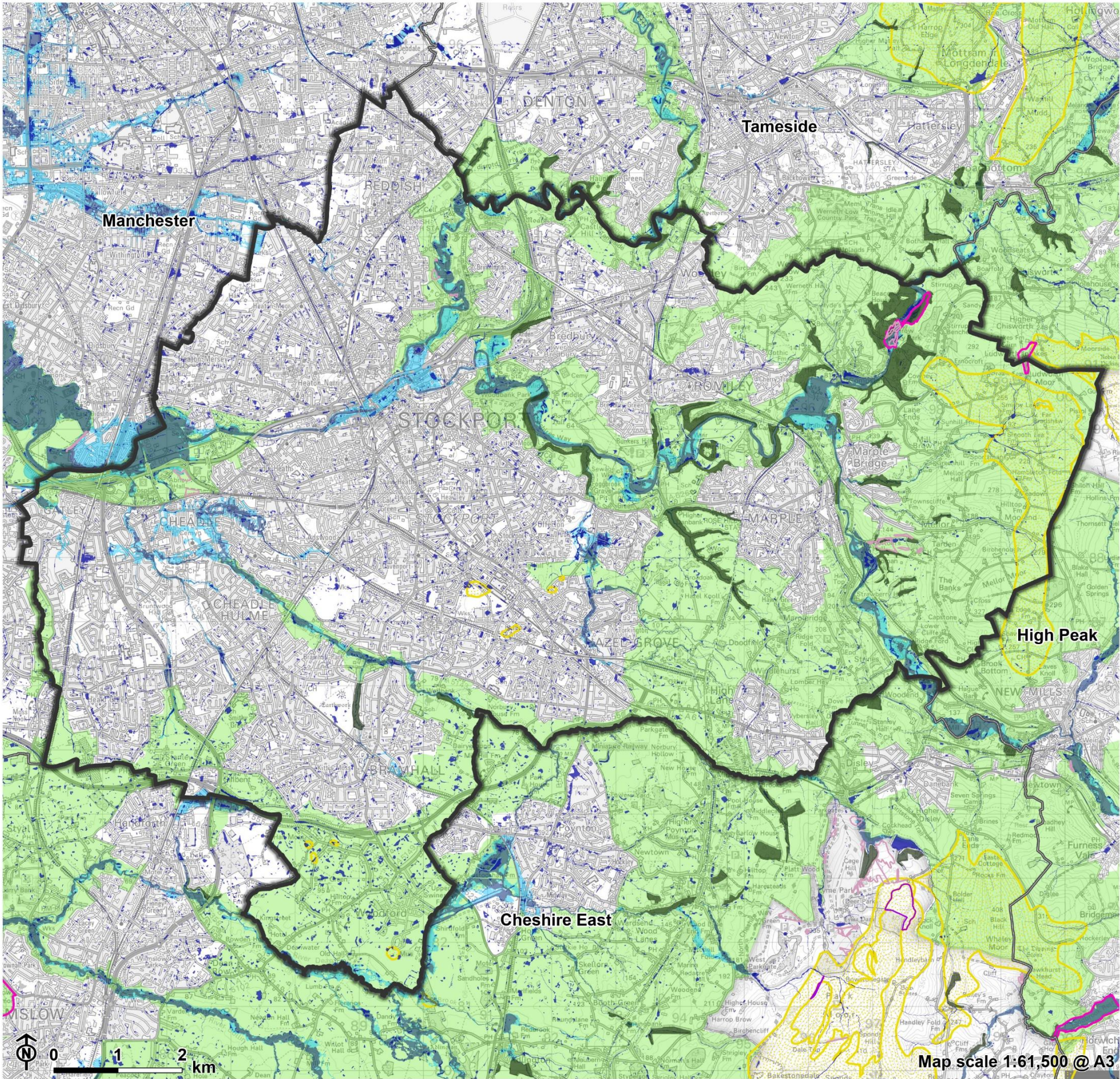


Figure 3.2: NPPF Footnote 7 Designations – historic and landscape

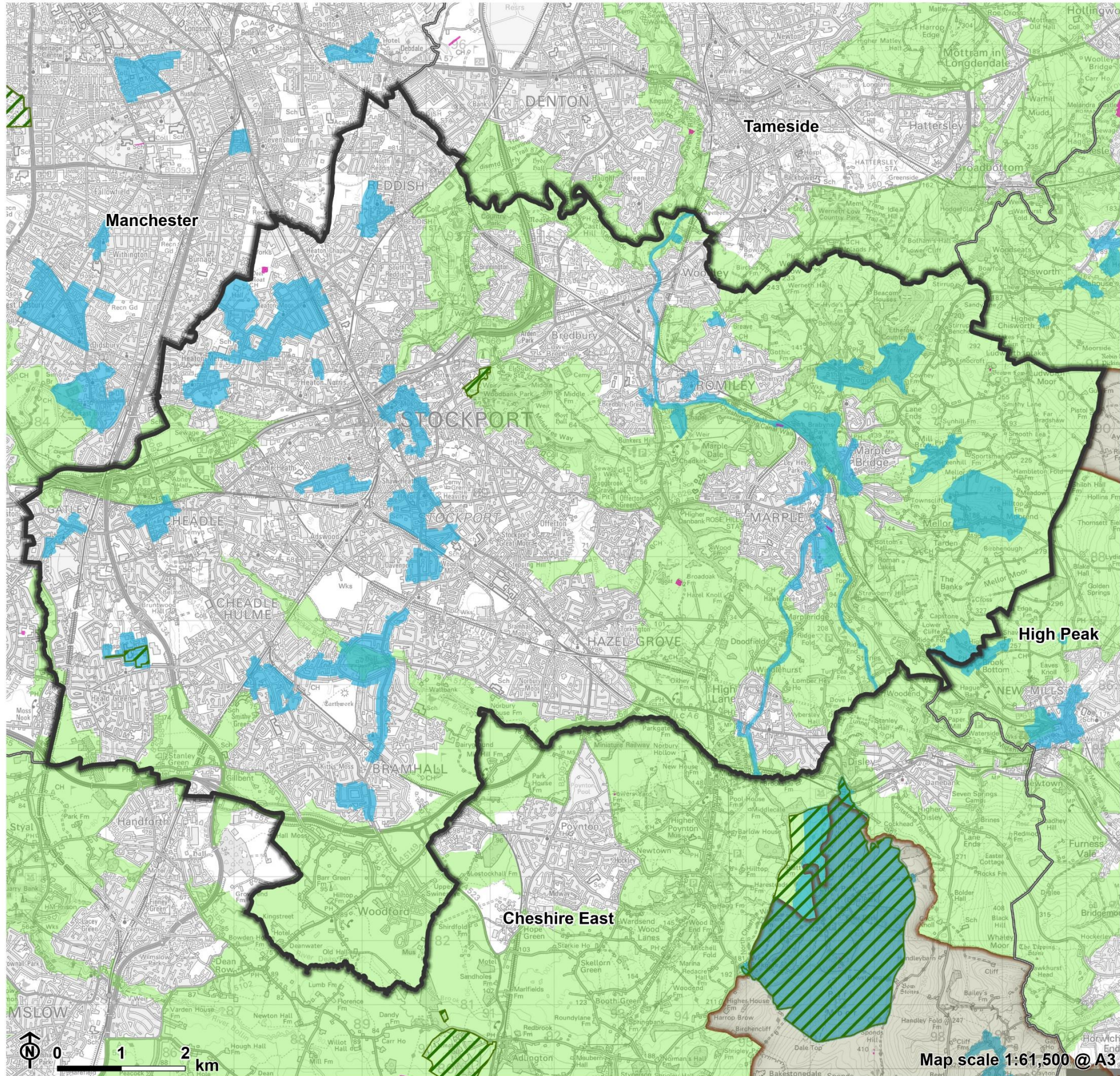
Figure 3.2: NPPF Footnote 7 Designations - historic and landscape

- Local authority boundary
- Neighbouring authority
- Green Belt

NPPF footnote 7 areas or assets within Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

- Conservation area
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Scheduled Monument
- National Park

NPPF Footnote 7 designations:
NPPF Footnote 7 designations not listed and mapped in this figure are generally not located within Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council or local data sets were not readily available. Listed Buildings have not been included to improve legibility. These assets may provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development and should therefore be reviewed separately. The locations of these assets are illustrated in parcel proforma.



Previously developed land

3.22 The NPPF defines grey belt “as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143.” The definition makes it clear that only previously developed land (PDL) that does not make a strong contribution to the Green Belt purposes can be defined as grey belt land. This is supported by recent case law [\[See reference 7\]](#).

3.23 The NPPF defines Previously Developed Land (PDL) as:

“Land which has been lawfully developed and is or was occupied by a permanent structure and any fixed surface infrastructure associated with it, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed). It also includes land comprising large areas of fixed surface infrastructure such as large areas of hardstanding which have been lawfully developed. Previously developed land excludes: land that is or was last occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill, where provision for restoration has been made through development management procedures; land in built-up areas such as residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape.”

3.24 The majority of significant (≥ 2 ha) activities and land uses that qualify for definition as PDL will likely be defined as making less than a strong contribution to Green Belt purposes A, B and D (by virtue of their urbanising influence and/or effect on the openness of the Green Belt) and will therefore fall within defined grey belt locations through the strategic assessment process. Some PDL such as large areas of fixed surface infrastructure may in certain locations maintain a strong sense of openness such that they make a strong contribution to Green Belt purposes A, B or D and are not eligible for definition as grey belt land.

Other considerations

3.25 The assessment assumes that all land within the urban area and settlements inset from the Green Belt, unless constrained by absolute footnote 7 designations (i.e. clearly provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development), could potentially be developed, and therefore have an enclosing or urbanising influence on the adjacent Green Belt.

3.26 Likewise, the assessment assumes that any land released from the Green Belt would, unless constrained by absolute footnote 7 designations, be ‘developed’ and would not retain any ‘openness’. It is recognised that specific development proposals may include, within the area to be released, the retention of undeveloped land, and/or the implementation of landscaping measures – such as creating a stronger boundary – that could potentially reduce harm to Green Belt purposes. However, this study does not take any such proposals into account, since they are at varying stages of development and certainty.

3.27 In some locations significant committed development (that is, any major planning application that has secured planning permission) is coming forward, is under construction, or has recently been constructed. These areas, along with other areas of significant existing development within the Green Belt – i.e. areas of no openness (e.g. Compstall Village) – are excluded from the assessment. The assessment also takes into consideration any urbanising influence these areas have on surrounding land. The following are considered significant committed development:

- Seashell Trust, Heald Green (residential development) – DC/078180, DC/084620 and DC/084575 (under construction);
- Eden Park Roundabout Handforth Bypass, Cheadle Hulme – DC/086881;
- Land to the east of Wilmslow Road, Heald Green (residential development) – DC/088902;
- Land off Stanley Road, Heald Green (residential development) – DC/087141;
- 160 Seashell Trust, Royal School Manchester, Stanley Road, Heald Green (construction of a new college and associated access and car parking) – DC/089288, DC/089817 and DC/089425;
- A555 Airport Link Road (construction completed and opened in 2018);
- Land at Welkin Mill, Welkin Road, Bredbury (battery storage development) – DC/087394;
- Bredbury Substation, Stockport Road, West Bredbury – DC/082085;
- Land at Alexandra Hospital, Mill Lane Cheadle (provision of a new railway station) – DC/084801;
- Land to the North of Blackberry Lane, Brinnington (residential development and a new leisure centre) – DC/056554 (construction completed); and
- Woodford Aerodrome, Chester Road, Woodford (residential development, extra care unit, commercial floorspace and a public house) – Hybrid full/outline

approval under DC/053832 with relevant subsequent permissions (under construction).

- The Garden House, Lakes Road, Marple (mixed use development) – DC/080313 (under construction).
- Land West Of Castle Hill, Bredbury Park Industrial Estate (Class B2, B8 and E(g) (iii) development) - DC/083927
- Robinsons Nurseries Ltd, Bolshaw Road, Heald Green, Cheadle (replacement glass houses and water tanks) - DC/083510.
- Land Adjacent To Mill Lane, Cheadle Hulme, Cheadle (retirement home) - DC/081218
- Seashell Trust, Royal School Manchester, 160 Stanley Road, Heald Green, Cheadle - DC/083433 (under construction).
- Land North Of Clapgate, Bredbury Green (Battery Energy Storage) - DC/090340.

Assessment of Green Belt contribution and definition of grey belt land

3.28 Starting from the inset settlement edges and moving outward, the analysis examines how urban and open land interact. By overlaying lines that indicate changes in the strength of this relationship, and by considering how relevant each Green Belt purpose is in different areas, the process defines parcels that each make a consistent contribution to Green Belt purposes. The paragraphs below identify the factors relevant to the assessment of each of the Green Belt purposes and detail the assessment outputs specific to each NPPF Green Belt purpose.

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

Grey belt PPG for Purpose A

3.29 The following features in combination are identified as being illustrative of a ‘strong’ contribution:

- Absence of existing development.
- Proximity to a large built-up area.

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

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

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

3.31 Either lack of proximity to a large built-up area or the presence of, or containment by, significant existing development, is identified as being illustrative of a '**weak/no**' contribution to Purpose A.

Purpose A definitions

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

'Large built-up area'

3.33 The PPG states that "'villages' should not be considered large built-up areas". The implication of this is that towns or cities are large built-up areas.

3.34 The Greater Manchester Green Belt was created to prevent the sprawl of Greater Manchester. Therefore, for the purpose of this study all urban areas within Stockport that are contiguous or in close proximity with the **Greater Manchester conurbation** are defined as part of the large built-up area. This includes Brinnington, Bredbury, Woodley and Romiley. In addition, Marple being a 'town' (including Marple Bridge due to its proximity 'near to' Marple) is also a large built-up area. High Lane is sufficiently separate from the main urban areas within Stockport and its relatively small size means that it is classified as a 'village'.

3.35 In addition, Handforth and Wilmslow (within Cheshire East) are located very close to Bramhall/Cheadle Hulme and are therefore considered to form part of the

large built-up area. This definition is consistent with the previous studies (2016 and 2024).

‘Near to’

3.36 Purpose A is relevant to land which is ‘adjacent or near to’ a large built-up area. The extent to which land in the vicinity of a large built-up area relates to it is a question of judgement based on a range of factors including:

- Distance proportional to the size and proximity of large built-up areas.
- Features that create a sense of physical and/or visual separation.
- Features that weaken the sense of separation through physical and/or visual connection.
- Urbanising development and activity within the Green Belt.

3.37 Although villages are not large built-up areas, villages that lack significant separation from, or are relatively close to a large built-up area as a result of one or more of the factors outlined above, are considered to be near to a large built-up area.

3.38 The point beyond which Green Belt land is not considered to be near to any large built up area is where development, whether it be the expansion of existing villages or the creation of new settlements would be sufficiently separate from large built-up area as to not be perceived as sprawl from them.

‘Free of existing development’

3.39 ‘Existing development’ is not considered to include the appropriate development ‘exceptions’ listed in NPPF paragraph 154, such as agricultural buildings and highways infrastructure, which case law [\[See reference 8\]](#) generally considers does not affect the openness of the Green Belt.

3.40 ‘Free of’ is not considered to mean ‘no existing inappropriate development’. The influence of existing inappropriate development is judged on the basis of a combination of an area’s visual and spatial openness, relative to the scale at which the assessment is being undertaken.

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

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

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

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

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

3.44 As assessment parcels have been defined to reflect variations in contribution to the Green Belt purposes, physical features that would restrict and contain development have typically be used to define parcel boundaries. Where this is the case, they are judged to be in reasonable proximity. Physical features that are some distance away generally do not form the outer edge of parcels and therefore are not eligible for definition as grey belt land.

‘Enclosed by existing development’ (‘partially’ or ‘largely’)

3.45 The extent to which land can be considered to be enclosed by development is a judgement which depends on the strength of the existing development’s urbanising influence on neighbouring Green Belt land and the strength of the neighbouring Green Belt land’s physical and/or visual relationship with the wider countryside. The greater the proportion of a defined Green Belt area’s boundary that adjoins urban development (whether that is inset from the Green Belt or washed-over by it) the greater its enclosure. Strong urban edge boundary features which limit urbanising influence can limit a sense of enclosure or containment by adjoining development, as long as there is some sense of connectivity with the wider countryside. Conversely, a lack of physical and visual connectivity with the wider countryside can increase the sense of enclosure, even if urban development around a Green Belt area is not strongly visible.

‘Other urbanising influences’

3.46 Separate to the consideration of existing development within the Green Belt, ‘other urbanising influences’ could be land use or activity without development which is generally associated with urban areas, or it could be an urbanising influence from adjacent development, either inset within the Green Belt or outside but adjacent to Green Belt land.

3.47 The PPG refers to activity in the Green Belt, such as traffic generation, having an impact on openness. In some cases, there may be land uses which, although appropriate and not therefore affecting openness, still have an association with the urban area that constitutes a degree of urbanising influence. Notable examples could include sport and recreational playing fields or ‘large areas of fixed surface infrastructure such as large areas of hardstanding [that have not blended into the landscape]’, the latter of which is defined in the NPPF as PDL.

3.48 The urbanising influence of renewable energy and power infrastructure is judged on a case-by-case basis based on their permanence and scale of fixed associated surface infrastructure, such as large areas of hardstanding. For example, renewable energy and power infrastructure permitted for temporary periods of time (often in the open countryside) are not permanent and therefore are not ~~be~~ judged as notable urbanising influences affecting contribution to the Green Belt purposes in perpetuity, whereas permanent substations set on fixed surface infrastructure do affect the contribution to the Green Belt purposes over the long term.

3.49 The strength of urbanising influence associated with such areas will depend on a number of factors, including the presence or lack of intervening physical boundary

features, the scale/visibility of development in the associated urban area, landform change, distance from the existing urban edge and strength of relationship with the wider countryside.

‘An incongruous pattern of development’

3.50 The PPG cites an extended ‘finger’ of development into the Green Belt as an example of an incongruous pattern of development. Where parcels are defined to reflect variations in contribution to the Green Belt purposes they are only likely to have a finger-like form where they follow existing urban development, so this scenario would more typically relate to the assessment of specific new development proposals.

3.51 However, where smaller ‘satellite’ settlements around large built-up areas lie close enough together to be at risk of merging were development to reduce separation between them, significant loss of separation in such a gap, could in effect lead to the satellite settlement becoming an extended finger of the large built-up area.

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

Purpose A assessment outputs

3.53 The contribution of a parcel to Purpose A is determined in line with the illustrative factors listed in the PPG guidance, denoting strong, moderate and weak contributions. In addition, this assessment distinguishes between Green Belt land that makes a ‘strong’ and ‘very strong’ contribution and ‘weak’ and ‘no contribution’.

3.54 Factors which characterise a **‘very strong’** rating include:

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

Purpose B – to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

Grey belt PPG for Purpose B

3.55 The following features in combination are identified as being illustrative of a **‘strong’** contribution:

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

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

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

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

Purpose B definitions

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

‘Town’

3.59 The PPG states that “this purpose relates to the merging of towns, not villages”. As all towns have been treated as ‘large built-up areas’ for Purpose A, the same list of settlements is applicable to Purpose B. For clarity these are:

- Bramhall;
- Bredbury (including Lower Bredbury and Brinnington);
- Cheadle;

- Cheadle Hulme (including Heald Green);
- Denton (via Haughton Green) (Tameside District);
- Didsbury/East Didsbury (Manchester District);_
- Handforth/Wilmslow (Cheshire East);
- Hazel Grove;
- Heaton Mersey;
- Hyde (Tameside);
- Marple (including Marple Bridge);
- Offerton/Offerton Green;
- Poynton (Cheshire East);
- Reddish (including South Reddish and North Reddish);
- Romiley;
- Stockport (including Adswold and Portwood);
- Woodley; and
- Wythenshawe (Cheshire East).

‘A substantial part of a gap’

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

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

3.62 A parcel will contribute more to the ‘substance’ of a gap between towns if it contains key separating physical features, and the more fragile a gap the smaller a part of a gap might be to be considered substantial.

3.63 The fragility of a gap is a key consideration to establish what is and is not substantial within or adjacent to a gap between neighbouring towns. Gap fragility is judged based on a combination of factors including the relative size of the gap and/or the presence/absence of connecting and separating features:

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

3.64 Green Belt land can play a peripheral role and therefore make a more limited contribution to a gap between towns where it does not lie directly in a gap but its development would weaken Green Belt land in a gap. Green Belt land on the periphery of fragile gaps may still be judged to be a substantial part of it, but otherwise will generally not. Green Belt land within a gap may have a diminished role if the neighbouring towns in question are already to a significant extent connected by development.

3.65 Development expanding a town out into the core of a gap, removing a relatively large part of it, would clearly represent a substantial impact, but such scenarios would generally be captured as making a 'strong' contribution to Purpose A (and therefore not be eligible for definition as grey belt) as a consequence of a likely resulting incongruous pattern of development.

3.66 Relatively wide gaps between towns generally have scope for some new development within them without significant loss of visual separation between neighbouring towns. Consequently, large parcels or 'outer areas' within or on the periphery of relatively wide gaps that only represent 'a substantial part of a gap' between towns by virtue of their size have generally been rated as making a 'moderate' contribution to Purpose B, in acknowledgement of their potential to accommodate development in smaller parts of them without loss of visual separation of towns. In this way the assessment findings help point to areas of search where there could be potential (in Green Belt terms) for development, including new settlements, in gaps between neighbouring towns.

A ‘small’ or ‘very small’ part of a gap’

3.67 “A small part of a gap” is judged to be an ‘insubstantial’ part of it – that is, land in a gap that does not meet the ‘substantial’ definition above – but one which still provides a degree of visual separation (see the paragraph 3.66).

3.68 A ‘very small’ part of gap is an area which does not contribute to visual separation. Such areas would generally correspond to areas judged to make a weak contribution to Purpose A defined above.

‘Loss of visual separation’

3.69 ‘Loss’ is interpreted as a ‘significant reduction’ in visual separation, rather than its complete removal. Typically, the development of a substantial part of a gap has the potential to equate to a significant loss of visual separation although, as noted in the section above, relatively wide gaps between towns could accommodate some degree of new development, isolated from any town, without a significant loss of visual separation, i.e. no more than a minor reduction in visual separation. Negligible reductions in visual separation are likely to be limited to areas already containing existing development and/or are contained and significantly urbanised by urban areas.

‘Free of existing development’

3.70 ‘Existing development’ is not considered to include the appropriate development ‘exceptions’ listed in NPPF paragraph 154, such as agricultural buildings and highways infrastructure, which case law [\[See reference 9\]](#) generally considers does not affect the openness of the Green Belt. Paragraph 160 of the NPPF states ‘elements of many renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development’; however, renewable energy and power infrastructure permitted for temporary periods of time (often in the open countryside) are not permanent and therefore are not judged as existing development affecting contribution to the Green Belt purposes in perpetuity.

3.71 ‘Free of’ is not considered to mean ‘no existing inappropriate development’. The influence of existing inappropriate development is judged on the basis of a combination of an area’s visual and spatial openness.

Purpose B assessment outputs

3.72 The contribution of a parcel to Purpose B is determined in line with the illustrative factors listed in the PPG guidance, denoting strong, moderate and weak contributions. In addition, this assessment distinguishes between Green Belt land that makes a 'strong' and 'very strong' contribution and 'weak' and 'no contribution'.

3.73 Factors that characterise a '**very strong**', as opposed to a 'strong' rating include:

- Development would reduce a robust gap to a fragile one, or significantly weaken what is already a fragile gap.
- Development would result in a very substantial loss of visual separation of towns.

Purpose C – to protect the countryside from encroachment

Grey belt PPG for Purpose C

3.74 Purpose C is not relevant to the identification of grey belt and is not referenced in the PPG, but it is still one of the five purposes of Green Belt set out in the NPPF. Ratings of contribution to Purpose C could still help inform judgements regarding which grey belt areas are more suitable for release than others in Green Belt terms. In addition, if the release and/or development of Green Belt land outside of defined grey belt areas needs to be considered, contribution ratings for Purpose C are likely to be an important consideration. For example, in locations not near to and remote from towns and cities, variations in contribution to Purpose C may provide the only source of comparison in the contribution of Green Belt land to the Green Belt purposes.

Purpose C definitions

3.75 Purpose C is assessed by determining the extent to which a location can be considered part of the countryside, the level of urbanising influence affecting it and whether or not development in the parcel would significantly increase urbanising influence on adjacent open land.

‘Part of the countryside’

3.76 Green Belt land is part of the countryside where it is open and has a clear connection with the wider open countryside. Physical isolation from the wider countryside, uses which create a strong association with an urban area, or the presence of existing urban development can affect what is judged to be countryside in Green Belt terms. This is not a judgement which considers the scenic beauty, ecological value or condition of land.

‘Urbanising influence’

3.77 This is defined as a combination of both the influences of ‘existing development’ and ‘other urbanising influences’ (both defined under Purpose A above). This includes urbanising development washed over by, inset within or directly adjacent to the outer edges of Green Belts, such as villages and hamlets, industrial, educational and/or retail estates.

3.78 Relevant factors influencing the significance of urbanising influence include separating/screening physical boundary features, the scale/visibility of urbanising development and associated land uses and activity, landform change, distance from the urban areas, and the strength of relationship with the wider countryside.

Purpose C assessment outputs

3.79 The contribution of a parcel to Purpose C is determined in line with relevant illustrative factors listed in the PPG guidance, denoting strong, moderate and weak contributions to Purposes A and B. In addition, this assessment distinguishes between Green Belt land that makes a ‘strong’ and ‘very strong’ contribution and ‘weak’ and ‘no contribution’.

3.80 The following features in combination are identified as being illustrative of a ‘**very strong**’ contribution:

- Land is part of the countryside.
- Land is subject to negligible or no urbanising influence and has a strong sense of separation from urban areas.
- There is a lack of features to restrict and contain development, such that were development to take place within the parcel there would be an urbanising impact on adjacent Green Belt land.

3.81 The following features in combination are identified as being illustrative of a **‘strong’** contribution:

- Land is part of the countryside.
- No significant but some urbanising influence but a lack of features to restrict and contain development, such that were development to take place, there would be a stronger urbanising impact on adjacent Green Belt land than is currently the case.

3.82 The following features in combination are identified as being illustrative of a **‘moderate’** contribution:

- Land is part of the countryside.
- Some urbanising influence.
- The presence of features to restrict and contain development, such that were development to take place, there would be no stronger urbanising impact on adjacent Green Belt land.

3.83 The following features in combination are identified as being illustrative of a **‘weak/no’** contribution:

- Land is wholly or largely contained from the wider countryside by development, or openness is significantly limited by existing development.
- Significant urbanising influence.
- Were development to take place, there would be no stronger urbanising impact on adjacent Green Belt land.

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

Grey belt PPG for Purpose D

3.84 The following features in combination are identified as being illustrative of a **‘strong’** contribution to Purpose D:

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

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

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

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

Purpose D definitions

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

‘Historic town’

3.88 The PPG is clear that this purpose relates to historic towns, not villages (PPG Paragraph: 005 Reference ID: 64-005-20250225). An extract from Hansard in 1988 clarified which historic settlements in England were certainly considered ‘historic towns’ in the context of the Green Belt purposes. The Secretary of State for the Environment clarified in answer to a parliamentary question that the purpose of preserving the special character of historic towns is especially relevant to the Green Belts of York, Chester, Bath, Oxford and Cambridge **[See reference 10]**. Durham has since been added to this list.

3.89 It has been LUC’s experience through consultation with Historic England on several Green Belt study method statements, that Historic England do not consider the list on towns quoted in Parliament to necessarily be exclusive. Therefore, the settlements referenced under the definitions of ‘large built-up area’ (see section titled Purpose A definitions) and ‘town’ (see section titled Purpose B definitions) above all have the potential to be defined as ‘historic towns’ relevant to the assessment of Purpose D, subject to the definition of their historic settings or special character.

‘Setting and special character’

3.90 The extent to which the Green Belt contributes to the setting and special character of a historic town is related to the visual, physical and/or experiential relationship between Green Belt land and historic aspects of a town.

3.91 What forms part of a historic town’s setting and/or contributes to the special character of a historic town is a matter of professional judgement that cannot be defined in general terms. It is unique to each historic town’s character, townscape and connections to the wider landscape.

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

‘Historic aspects’

3.93 In order to establish the relevance of Green Belt land to historic aspects of a historic town it is necessary to review and research each historic town’s historic aspects in turn. This is to be done with reference to historic environment evidence for each historic town, such as conservation area appraisals.

3.94 Recorded references to the open countryside or key physical features and/or landmarks in the Green Belt are useful in judging and justifying the appropriate level of contribution relevant Green Belt land makes to a historic town’s setting and special character.

3.95 Many historic towns have historic aspects that have little to no relationship with their setting and special character, and many historic towns contain historic areas focused on historic buildings and spaces within towns, with any views of the Green Belt countryside being incidental rather than part of the historic town’s setting and special character. Where this is the case, contribution to Purpose D can often be ruled out, noting that this does not mean such places do not have special and unique characteristics worthy of preservation, just that these characteristics are not directly relevant to an assessment of Green Belt Purpose D.

‘Free of existing development’

3.96 ‘Free of existing development’ is defined under Purpose A and B above. The same definition applies to Purpose D.

Purpose D assessment outputs

3.97 The contribution of a parcel to Purpose D is determined in line with the illustrative factors listed in the PPG guidance, denoting strong, moderate and weak contributions. In addition, this assessment distinguishes between Green Belt land that makes a 'strong' and 'very strong' contribution.

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

Purpose D Assessment

3.99 A review of relevant historic designations within and adjacent to the Borough has been undertaken. Drawing on the definition of Green Belt towns explored in the section relating to Green Belt Purpose B above, the Borough contains several large urban areas that are contiguous and form part of the Greater Manchester conurbation, that are considered to be 'towns' in Green Belt terms. In addition, Marple (including Marple Bridge) is considered a 'town'.

3.100 Within these urban areas there are 32 conservation areas. In most cases the conservation areas are focused on historic buildings and spaces within towns with the surrounding Green Belt not contributing to their setting or special character. Many historic areas are also surrounded by later development which limits the visual relationship with the open countryside designated as Green Belt. Others are designated to protect areas that, whilst of historic importance, are not considered to represent parts of a historic town (e.g. former hamlets or villages or residential suburb developments from the 19th century). Those where Green Belt land makes some contribution to setting and special character are explored further below.

3.101 It is important to note that this conclusion does not mean that the Borough does not have special and unique characteristics worthy of preservation, it is just that these characteristics are not directly relevant to an assessment of Green Belt Purpose D. Other Green Belt purposes seek to maintain openness of the countryside and maintain separation between towns, which may directly or indirectly contribute to preserving such special and unique local characteristics. There are also several towns identified within surrounding districts, with almost all of these being at such a distance from the boundary with Stockport that land within the borough has little to no relationship with these towns.

Heaton Mersey

3.102 Heaton Mersey Conservation Area is located on an elevated level site at a point where a spur of high ground extends out from the steep-sided ridge into the Mersey Valley. [The Conservation Area Character Appraisal \(2012\)](#) lists the elements that contribute to the special character of the settlement, which include:

- “Contrasts of topography: elevated plateau above a steep-sided valley;...
- Panoramic views over the Mersey valley...”.

3.103 In regard to setting, views and vistas the appraisal notes that the elevated position above the Mersey valley “affords a fine panoramic view across the tree-covered green bowl of the hillside to the south from Didsbury Road” and “extensive views ... from Heaton Mersey Park”.

Bramhall Lane South

3.104 Bramhall Lane South is a historic route running north-south connecting Stockport town centre with the present-day Bramhall village centre and beyond to Woodford. The Conservation Area is approximately 2.5km in length and comprises two separate sections located north and south of Bramhall Hall Park and Lady Brook. [The Conservation Area Character Appraisal \(2018\)](#) notes that “the large open space formed by the Bramhall Green roundabout and the edges of Bramall’s parkland forms an important vista out of the Bramhall Lane South conservation area, when approached from the south”.

Bramhall Park

3.105 Bramhall Park Conservation Area is situated 4 km south-west of the Stockport town centre and covers the original settled area of Bramhall. It is a leafy residential suburb arranged around a large public park which contains, at its heart, a medieval hall which was described by Nicolas Pevsner as ‘one of the four best surviving timber-framed mansions of England’ (1971). A large part of the conservation area is in the Green Belt. [The Conservation Area Character Appraisal \(2011\)](#) lists the elements that contribute to the special character of the area, which include:

- “Survival of the parkland and buildings of Bramall Hall and their public accessibility; ...
- Steep sided valleys create a dramatic setting for the Hall and create a series of open and closed views and vistas within and across the park; ...

- The survival of mature trees, hedges and some natural green spaces and grass verges along its length”.

Swann Lane/Hulme Hall Road/Hill Top Avenue

3.106 The area comprises the old settlements of Hulme Hall and the fields of Swan Meadow and Hill Top Avenue, which was not laid out until the end of the 19th century as part of the growing suburban development. The area is a rural suburb containing a continuity of building types ranging from 16th / 17th century timber-framed houses, scattered cottages, former farmsteads, Victorian villas, churches and terraced and later detached and semi-detached dwellings. [The Conservation Area Character Appraisal \(2011\)](#) notes that “views are contained within the area, and are intimate in character”. Despite having limited visual relationship with the open countryside designated as Green Belt to the south-west, this provides some sense of a rural setting to this former agricultural settlement.

Cheadle Village

3.107 The Cheadle Village Conservation Area is comprised of a shopping street, with the mainly 19th and early 20th century housing virtually all on its north side, beyond which are industrial and other uses up to the railway in the north and the Micker Brook in the south. A small part of the conservation area extends beyond the railway line to the north in the Green Belt. [The Conservation Area Character Appraisal \(2012\)](#) lists the elements that contribute to the special character of the area, which include “significant groups of mature trees along the railway embankments and fringe areas of the conservation area”. The appraisal also notes views in and out of the conservation area along Manchester Road, with those out taking in “the Railway Bridge and embankment with its fringe of mature trees, and the group of buildings around the Ashlea Public House”.

Marple Bridge

3.108 Marple Bridge is situated on the banks of the River Goyt, just to the north-east of Marple. The conservation area lies predominantly within the Green Belt along the river valley and includes Brabyns Park to the north. Historically the location had significance as a bridging point on the route between Stockport and Derbyshire and where waterpower was available initially for a forge and corn mill. [The Conservation Area Character Appraisal \(2012\)](#) lists the elements that contribute to the special character of the settlement, which include:

- “Dramatic visual relationship between built form, topography, river and surrounding woodland ...;
- Wooded Pennine landscape setting ...;
- Open setting of Town Street, with unimpeded views along and across the river to the wooded valley sides...;
- Extensive panoramic views from Brabyns Park;
- Open planned landscape of Brabyns Park with ‘informal’ parkland plantings contrasting with wider wooded Pennine setting...; and
- Trees in open green spaces, framing views, delineating routes and spaces, and in the wider landscape”.

3.109 The appraisal also adds that “the riverside location of the village at the foot of the wooded, steep-sided Goyt Valley gives rise to a dramatic landscape setting”. Key views include “... over the village and its wider landscape setting from Low Lea Road” and from Town Street where “unimpeded views over the river to the wooded hillside beyond is a key aspect of the character of the area”. There are also “extensive panoramic views across the Goyt Valley” from Brabyns Park.

Station Road/Winnington Road, Marple

3.110 Station Road/Winnington Road conservation area is situated in Marple and follows closely the line of Station Road, west of the junction with Stockport Road to just beyond the High Peak Canal in the east. The conservation area lies partly within the Green Belt along adjacent to the canal in the east. [The Conservation Area Character Appraisal \(2013\)](#) lists the elements that contribute to the special character of the settlement, which include:

- “Dramatic, semi-rural setting, with ... the Peak Forest Canal and Brabyns Park to the east ...;
- Strong visual interest and distinctive edge to the built environment provided by the canal and its locks and bridges ...;
- Green space provided by ... the frontage ... along the canal towpath; and
- Key views both in and out of the conservation area”.

3.111 In regard to views the conservation area appraisal notes that “The junction of the canal and Station Road is a focal point in the area, with the strong visual interest of locks and bridges on the canal” and that “views along Station Road ... particularly as the road descends towards Marple Bridge, are also important”. It also notes that

the area “has far-reaching and dramatic views” with “views along the canal towpath itself ... of a locally outstanding quality” and “vistas towards the Pennine foothills”.

All Saints', Marple

3.112 All Saints' Conservation area is situated in the Borough's Pennine fringe, lying immediately to the south of Marple town centre. Church Lane, the historic route between Marple and Disley, forms the spine of the area as it ascends the slope from the town to All Saints' Church, set on the crest of Marple Ridge. [The Conservation Area Character Appraisal \(2011\)](#) lists the elements that contribute to the special character of the settlement, which include:

- “Contrast between the regular ribbon settlement pattern and open hillside to the east;
- Green spaces, including ... churchyard, glebeland and open hillside; ...
- Trees in green spaces, framing views, delineating routes and spaces, and in the wider landscape; and
- Panoramic views to north and east over Pennine landscape setting ...”.

3.113 In regard to views the conservation area character appraisal notes that “fine views out from Marple Ridge over the surrounding countryside are an important element of the character of the conservation area”. This includes “from vantage points by All Saints' Church and churchyard ... panoramic vistas over the Goyt Valley towards Mellor and the high tops of Ludworth Moor and Cobden Edge”, “views to the west from Church Lane take the form of glimpses over the broad expanse of the Cheshire Plain between the houses of Parsonage Gardens” and open views north “over the rooftops towards a wide horizon defined by the bulk of Werneth Low”.

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

Grey belt PPG for Purpose E

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

3.115 Most Green Belt studies do not assess individual Green Belt land parcels against Purpose E, and either do not rate them or rate them all equally, on the grounds that it is difficult to support arguments that the release of one parcel of Green Belt land has a greater impact on encouraging re-use of urban land than another.

3.116 The Inspector's report (D Smith) to the London Borough of Redbridge (January 2018) notes that with regards to Purpose E "this purpose applies to most land" but that "it does not form a particularly useful means of evaluating sites". [\[See reference 11\]](#)

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

Purpose E conclusions

3.118 Using evidence to inform meaningful judgements on the collective contribution Green Belt land makes to Purpose E is also difficult. In the absence of any clear guidance on what percentage of recorded brownfield land enables a Green Belt to play a stronger or more limited role in encouraging urban regeneration, a uniform level of 'equal' contribution to Purpose 5 is applied to all areas of Green Belt in the study area.

Fundamental impact on remaining Green Belt land

3.119 Green Belt assessments must also consider the extent to which release or development of Green Belt land (including but not limited to grey belt land) would fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the plan area as whole. The PPG states that this judgement should focus on evaluating the effect of release or development on 'the ability of all the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan from serving all five of the Green Belt purposes in a meaningful way'.

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

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

‘Plan area’

3.122 With regards to Stockport, the plan area is deemed to be the Stockport Local Plan area as a whole,

‘Purposes (taken together)’

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

‘Fundamental’ and ‘meaningful’

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

3.125 The scale and continuity of Green Belt land within a borough may also play a role in what is meaningful. Release or development of smaller areas of Green Belt land are likely to be more meaningful in boroughs with smaller areas of Green Belt land. Release or development of pockets of Green Belt land that are isolated from the wider designation within urban areas are less likely to have a meaningful impact.

3.126 A fundamental and meaningful impact on Purpose A (to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas) in an individual borough context may include (but is not limited to) where release or development of land would result in the physical or perceived merging of a large built-up area with an adjacent satellite settlement. In such circumstances, the adjacent settlement may come to be perceived as part of a larger ‘sprawling’ large built-up area. How fundamental and meaningful the loss of a

such a gap would be is dependent on its current contribution to Purpose A. Most sprawl of a large built-up area will not fundamentally undermine the ability of remaining Green Belt land to continue to fulfil this function.

3.127 A fundamental and meaningful impact on Purpose B (to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another) in an individual borough context may include (but is not limited to) release or development that would result in the physical or perceived merging of two currently distinctly separate neighbouring towns. It may also arise where release or development would result in the loss of the most substantial part of a gap separating neighbouring towns such that the gap no longer played a meaningful role in relation to Purpose B. Whether the merging of two neighbouring towns is meaningful in a borough context may also be influenced by the number of neighbouring towns that could remain distinctly separate by remaining Green Belt land.

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

3.129 A fundamental and meaningful impact on Purpose D (to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns) in an individual borough context may include (but is not limited to) the release or development of an important or very important part of the setting of a historic town, integral to its special character.

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

Fundamental impact outputs

3.131 Without a clear understanding of the location of release or development, its scale and land use, including what Green Belt land would remain within a plan area, it is not possible to make a definitive judgement on fundamental impact. In the

absence of specific proposals, the variations in contribution to each Green Belt purpose identified in this assessment will highlight the areas where Green Belt contribution is at its greatest within the Local Plan area. These areas of highest contribution are reviewed in the round to give an indication of where release or development could fundamentally and meaningfully undermine the purposes (see Chapter 4).

3.132 Once the Council is in a position to evaluate specific proposals for Green Belt release or development, it will be possible to make a definitive judgement as to whether they would (individually or cumulatively) fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the plan area as whole.

Outputs of borough-wide assessment of contribution

3.133 A series of overview maps have been prepared to illustrate the variations in contribution to each purpose. In addition, two additional 'overview' maps have been prepared illustrating:

- Areas suitable for definition as 'grey belt', i.e. Green Belt land judged not to perform strongly to Green Belt purposes A, B and D and outside the defined footnote 7 areas and assets. Footnote 7 areas and assets that overlap with areas otherwise suitable for definition as grey belt land are 'provisionally' defined as grey belt subject to further detailed assessment.
- The number of very strong and strong contribution ratings and/or highest rating in a given location as a high-level indicator of the overall contribution. This map highlights any locations outside of identified grey belt locations where Green Belt release/development has the greatest potential to fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the Local Plan area.

Detailed reporting

3.134 Detailed proforma reports (Appendix A) are organised on a settlement(s) basis (e.g. South and East of Hazel Grove) contain the following information:

- Settlement-level context map showing the parcel locations and any footnote 7 areas and assets.

- Settlement-level context map showing the highest contribution ratings, including NPPF purposes A, B, C and D.
- Settlement-level context map showing the areas potentially suitable for definition as grey belt.

3.135 Following this each parcel assessment is set out separately and includes the following information:

- An OS map showing the parcel and any footnote 7 areas and assets.
- An aerial view showing the parcel.
- A description section summarising information relevant to the contribution assessment, including:
 - Boundary features between the urban area and assessment area.
 - Any changes in landform which strengthen the sense of separation from the urban area.
 - The degree of urbanising influence from defined urban areas, taking into consideration the above plus any other relevant factors, such as the scale of development in the settlement and the distance between the assessment area and urban areas.
 - The extent of development and/or activity in the Green Belt that would increase urbanising influence.
 - The relationship between the assessment area and the wider Green Belt, with reference to visual connectivity and the role of natural or built features in limiting this relationship.
- The contribution ratings assigned for each Green Belt purpose for the release of the assessment area as a whole. Each rating is justified as follows:

Purpose A:

- The relevance of the purpose to the assessment area, with reference to whether the parcel is adjacent or near to large built-up areas.
- The extent of development within the parcel.
- The degree of urbanising influence from development/ activity outside the parcel.
- The strength of relationship with the wider countryside and whether, there are physical features that would restrict and/or contain development in the parcel.

- Whether development in the parcel would have an incongruous impact on the pattern of development.

Purpose B:

- The relevance of the purpose to the assessment area – that is, whether the parcel lies in a gap between towns.
- Whether the area forms a substantial, small or very small part of the gap, with reference to the size of the gap and its strength (fragile, moderate or robust) taking account of separating and connecting features etc.
- The extent to which development within the parcel would have an impact on the visual separation of towns.

Purpose C:

- The relevance of the purpose to this assessment area – that is, whether the area is part of the countryside or whether urban containment or development weaken its relationship with the wider countryside.
- The strength of urbanising influence within or adjacent to the area.
- Whether development in the area would significantly increase urbanising influence on adjacent open land.

Purpose D

- The relevance of the purpose to the assessment area – being within, adjacent or of visual or experiential importance to historic aspects of a historic town.
- The extent to which the land within the parcel contributes to the setting and special character of historic town(s).

For Purpose E the rating is always 'equal'.

Chapter 4

Summary of Findings

4.1 This chapter sets out the findings of the assessment of Green Belt contribution.

4.2 The findings of the assessment of Green Belt contribution are summarised in **Table 4.1** below and illustrated on **Figures 4.1 to 4.7**.

4.3 As noted above, in the absence of any clear guidance on what percentage of brownfield land enables the Green Belt to play a stronger, or more limited, role in encouraging urban regeneration, and the fact that Purpose E must have already been followed before options in the Green Belt are considered further, a uniform level of 'Equal' contribution to Purpose E has been applied to all Green Belt land in Stockport. This has not been added to **Table 4.1**.

Grey belt

4.4 **Figure 4.8** illustrates the area potentially suitable for definition as grey belt land within Stockport. These are areas where land does not contribute strongly or very strongly to Purposes A, B or D. The figure also maps the extent of the present NPPF Footnote 7 areas and assets. Areas suitable for definition as grey belt land that overlap with the NPPF footnote 7 areas and assets are only 'provisionally' defined as grey belt land until such time that further detailed work can be undertaken (as necessary) to establish whether specific proposals in these locations would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.

Possible fundamental impacts to remaining Green Belt land

4.5 As noted in Chapter 3, in the absence of specific proposals the variations in contribution to each Green Belt purpose identified in this assessment highlight the areas where Green Belt contribution is at its greatest within the Local Plan area. These areas of highest contribution help give an indication of where release or development could fundamentally and meaningfully undermine the purposes.

4.6 **Figure 4.2** illustrates the strongest level of contribution each area of the Borough's Green Belt land makes to Green Belt purposes A, B, C and D, noting all Green Belt land is judged to make a moderate contribution to Purpose E.

4.7 In light of the of the scale and contiguity of Green Belt land in Stockport and the contributions the Borough's Green Belt land makes to the Green Belt purposes, the release or development of the following has the potential to fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the plan area as whole:

- Release or development south of Heald Green and Cheadle Hulme that would merge the urban area of Handforth/Wilmslow with Heald Green/Cheadle Hulme would have a fundamental impact on Purpose A.
- Release or development south-east of Bramhall that would merge the urban area of Poynton with Bramhall would have a fundamental impact on Purpose A.
- Release or development south-east of Hazel Grove that would significantly weaken the separation between the urban area of Poynton and that at Hazel Grove would have a fundamental impact on Purpose A (part of the existing gap between the two urban areas lies within neighbouring Cheshire East).
- Release or development east of Reddish and south of Brinnington that would significantly weaken the separation between the urban areas of Brinnington and Reddish and Portwood would have a fundamental impact on Purpose A.
- Release or development east of Portwood and west of Lower Bredbury that would significantly weaken the separation between the two distinct urban areas would have a fundamental impact on Purpose A.
- Release or development north of Offerton that would significantly weaken the separation between the urban area of Bredbury/Bredbury Green and that at Offerton/Offerton Green would have a fundamental impact on Purpose A.
- Release or development west of Marple and east of Offerton that would significantly weaken the separation between the two distinct urban areas would have a fundamental impact on Purpose A.
- Land south of Romiley and north of Marple that would significantly weaken the separation between the two distinct urban areas would have a fundamental impact on Purpose A.
- Land east of Havel Grove and west of High Lane that would significantly weaken the separation between the urban area of High Lane and the large built up area at Hazel Grove would have a fundamental impact on Purpose A.
- Release or development north of Woodley that would significantly weaken the separation between the urban area of Gee Cross and that at Woodley would have a fundamental impact on Purpose A (part of the existing gap between the two urban areas lies within neighbouring Tameside).

- Release or development that would result in the physical or perceived merging of the following towns would have a fundamental impact on Purpose B:
 - Cheadle Hulme/Heald Green and Handforth/Wilmslow;
 - Bramhall and Poynton;
 - Hazel Grove and Bramhall;
 - Hazel Grove and Poynton;
 - Hazel Grove and Offerton;
 - Hazel Grove and Marple;
 - Offerton and Marple;
 - Romiley and Marple/Marple Bridge;
 - Offerton/Offerton Green and Bredbury/Bredbury Green;
 - Stockport (via Portwood) and Bredbury (via Lower Bredbury);
 - Bredbury (via Lower Bredbury and Brinnington) and Stockport (via Portwood);
 - Reddish and Bredbury (via Brinnington);
 - Bredbury (via Brinnington) and Denton;
 - Romiley and Woodley;
 - Romiley and Marple/Marple Bridge;
 - Cheadle and East Didsbury/Heaton Mersey;
 - Bredbury and Woodley and Denton (via Haughton Green); and
 - Woodley and Hyde (via Gee Cross);
- Release or development of the vast majority of the open Green Belt land within the Borough would likely have a fundamental impact on Purpose C.
- Release or development of parts of the valley of the River Goyt, including Brabyns Park, that are important to the setting and special character of Marple/Marple Bridge would likely have a fundamental impact on Purpose D.
- Release or development of higher ground to the north and west of the Borough, including Werneth Low and Ludworth Moor, that form a wider Pennine setting to Marple/Marple Bridge would likely have a fundamental impact on Purpose D.

4.8 It is not possible to make any more definitive judgements on what constitutes a fundamental impact without a clearer understanding of the exact location of release

or development in the Borough, its scale and land use, including what Green Belt land would remain within a plan area.

4.9 Once the Council is in a position to evaluate specific proposals for Green Belt release or development, it will be possible to make a definitive judgement as to whether they would (individually or cumulatively) fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the plan area as whole.

Figure 4.1: Contribution parcels



Figure 4.1: Contribution parcels

- Local authority boundary
- Neighbouring authority
- Parcel
- Green Belt
- Significant planning application
- Area of no openness

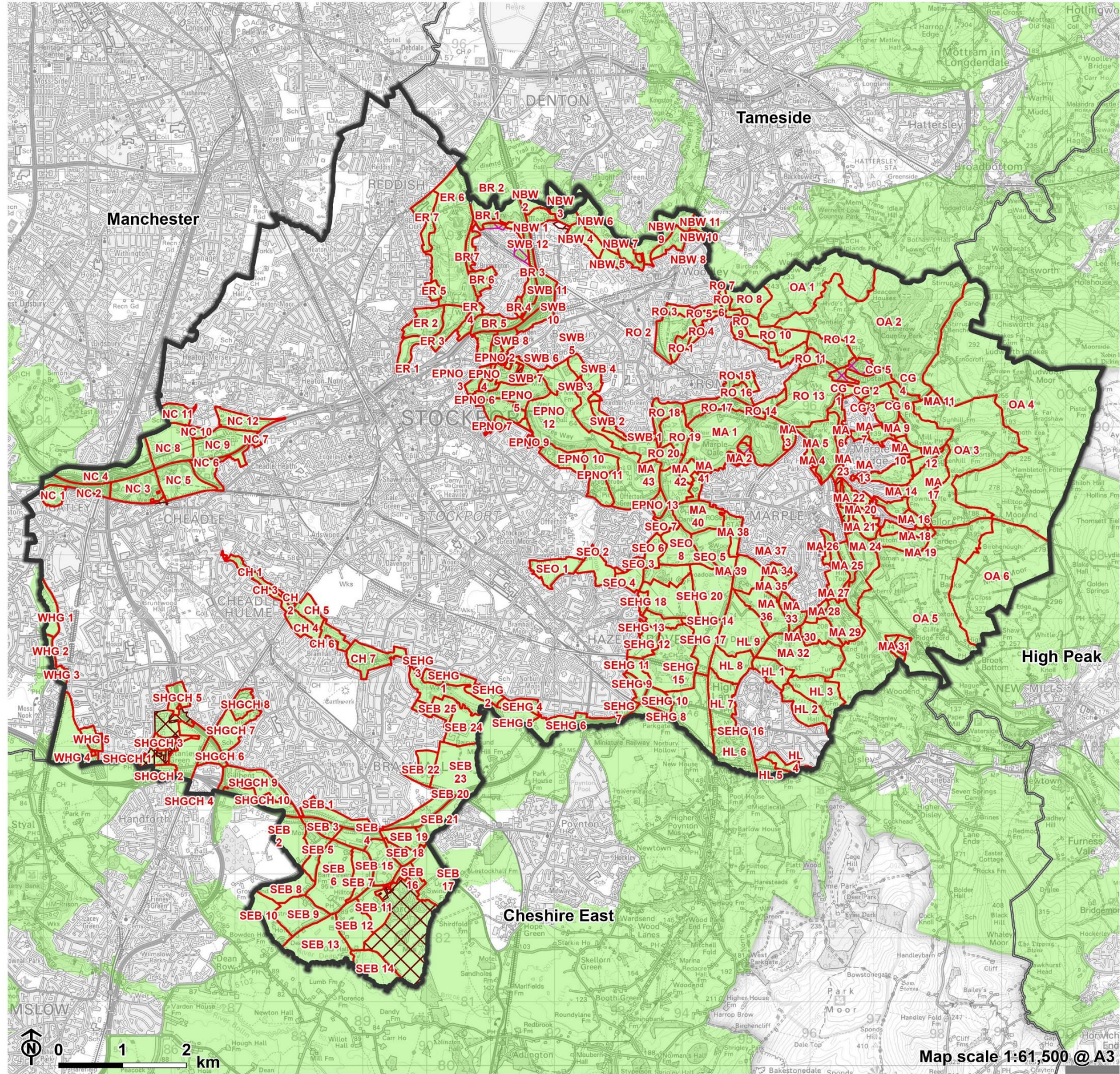




Figure 4.1a Contribution Parcels South-East

- Local authority boundary
- Neighbouring authority
- Parcel
- Green Belt
- Significant planning application
- Area of no openness

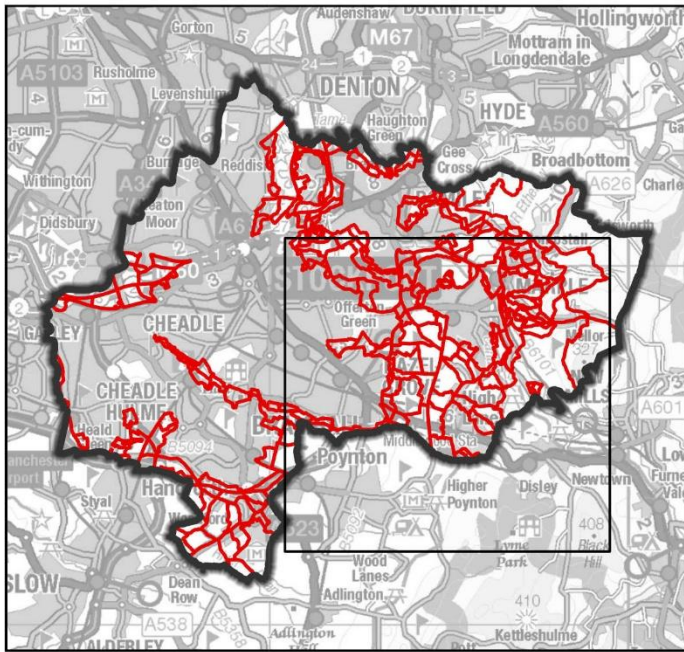
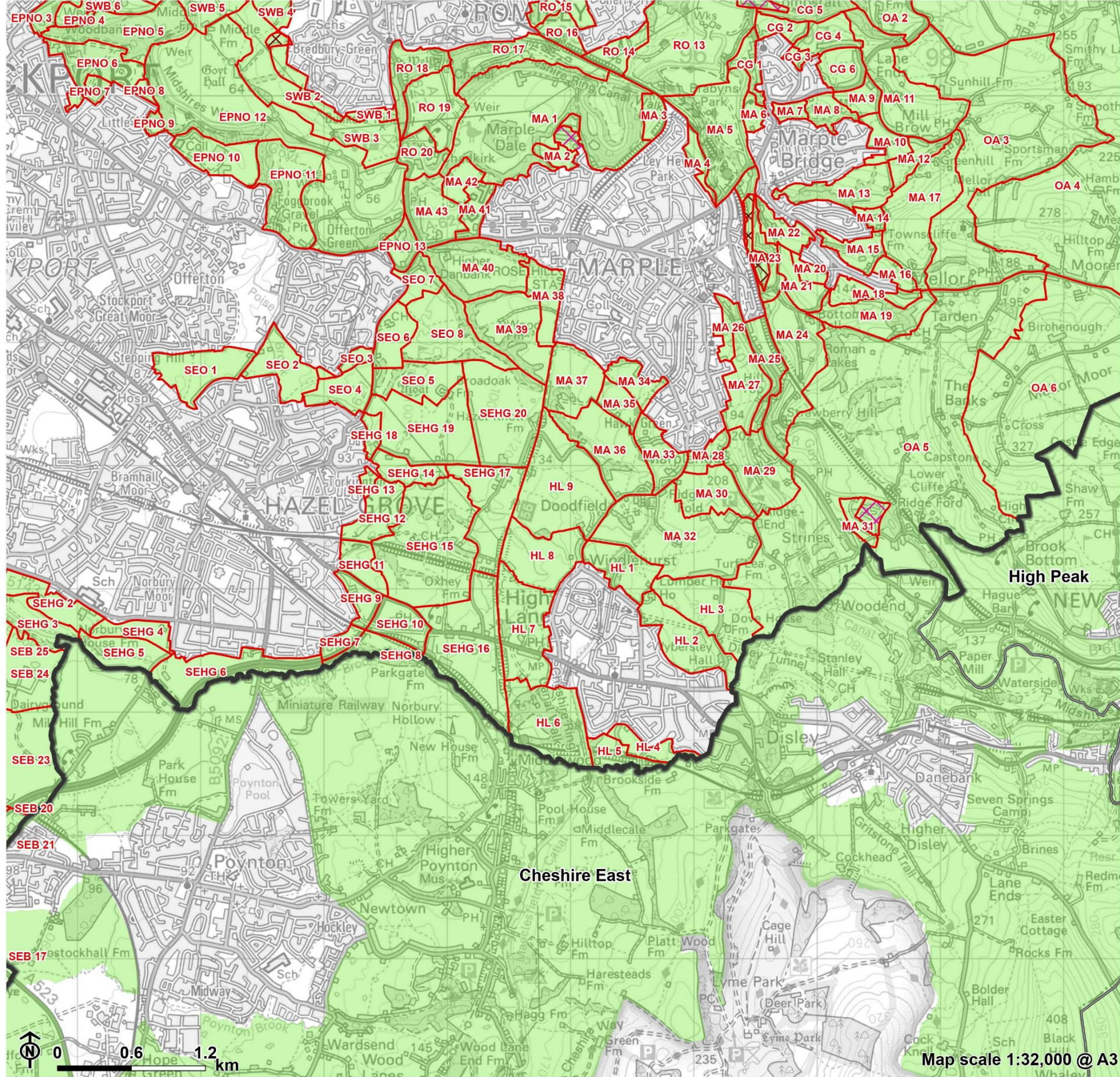




Figure 4.1b Contribution Parcels North-East

- Local authority boundary
- Neighbouring authority
- Parcel
- Green Belt
- Significant planning application
- Area of no openness

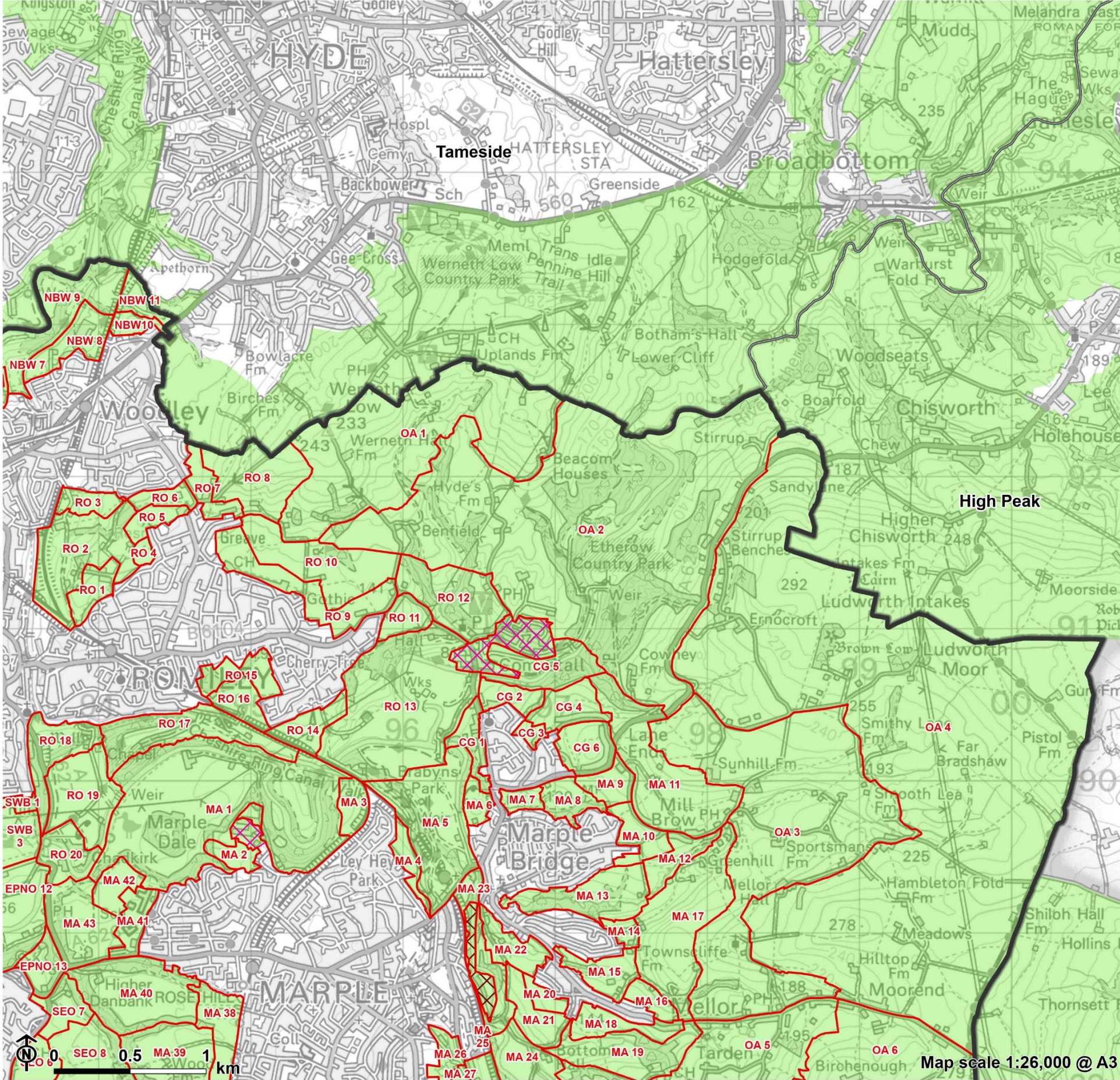
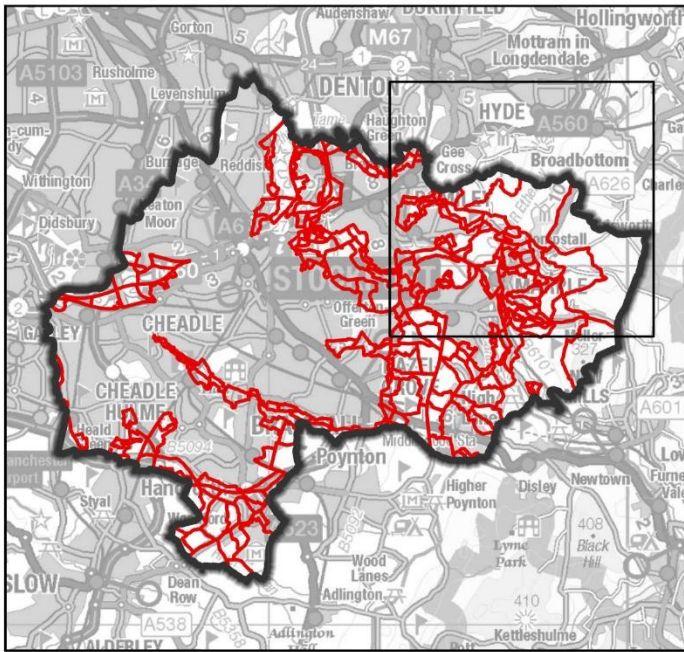


Figure 4.1c Contribution Parcels South-West

-  Local authority boundary
-  Neighbouring authority
-  Parcel
-  Green Belt
-  Significant planning application
-  Area of no openness

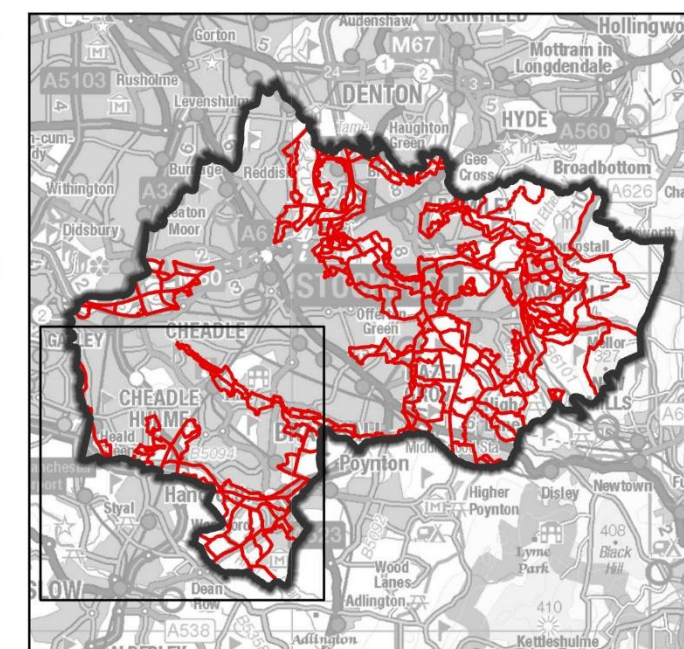
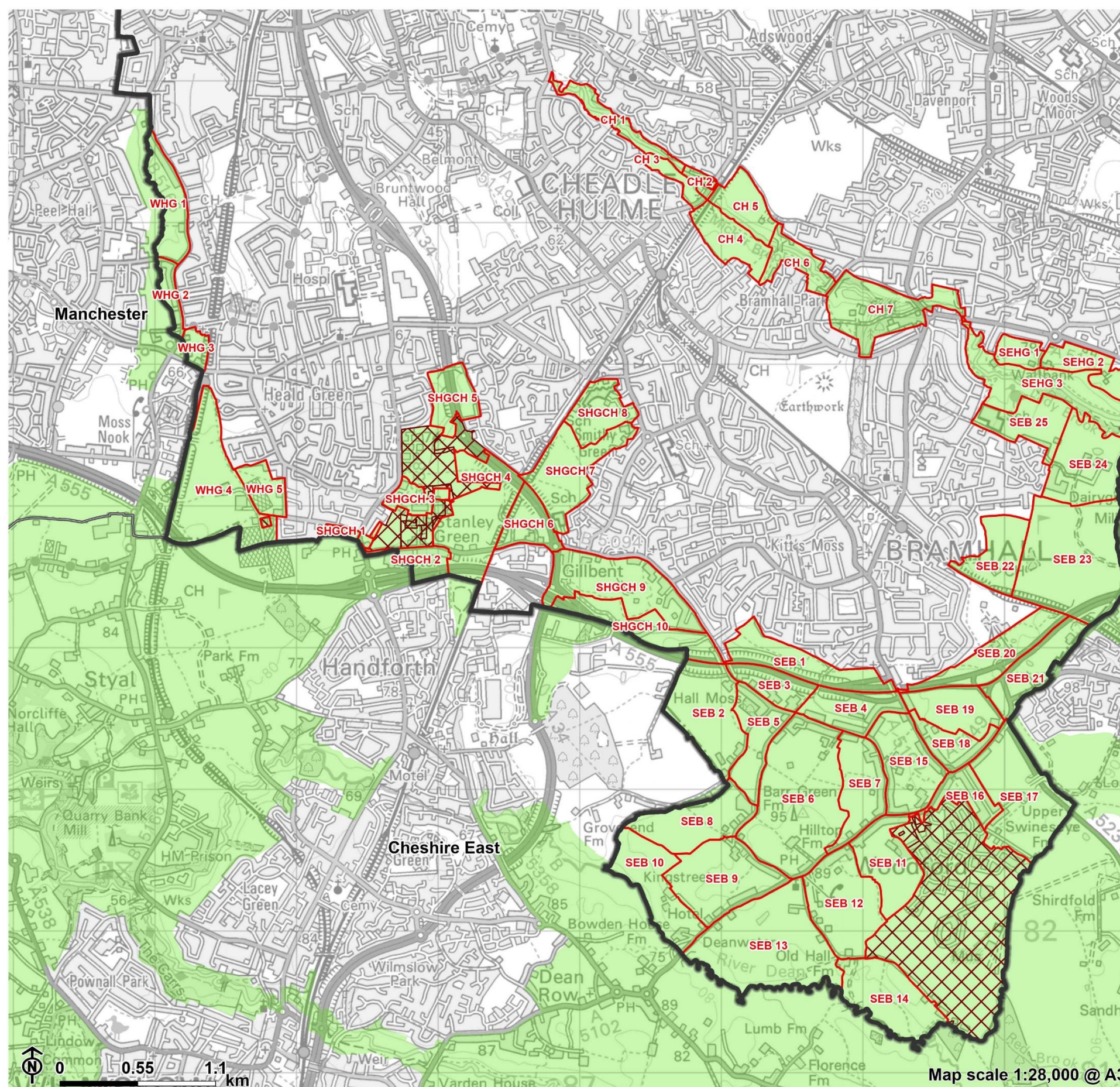


Figure 4.1d Contribution Parcels North-West

-  Local authority boundary
-  Neighbouring authority
-  Parcel
-  Green Belt
-  Significant planning application
-  Area of no openness

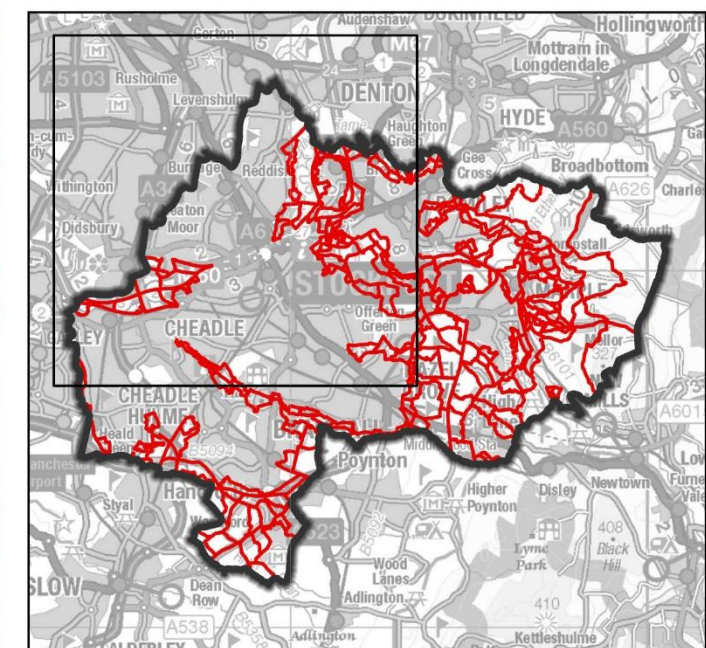
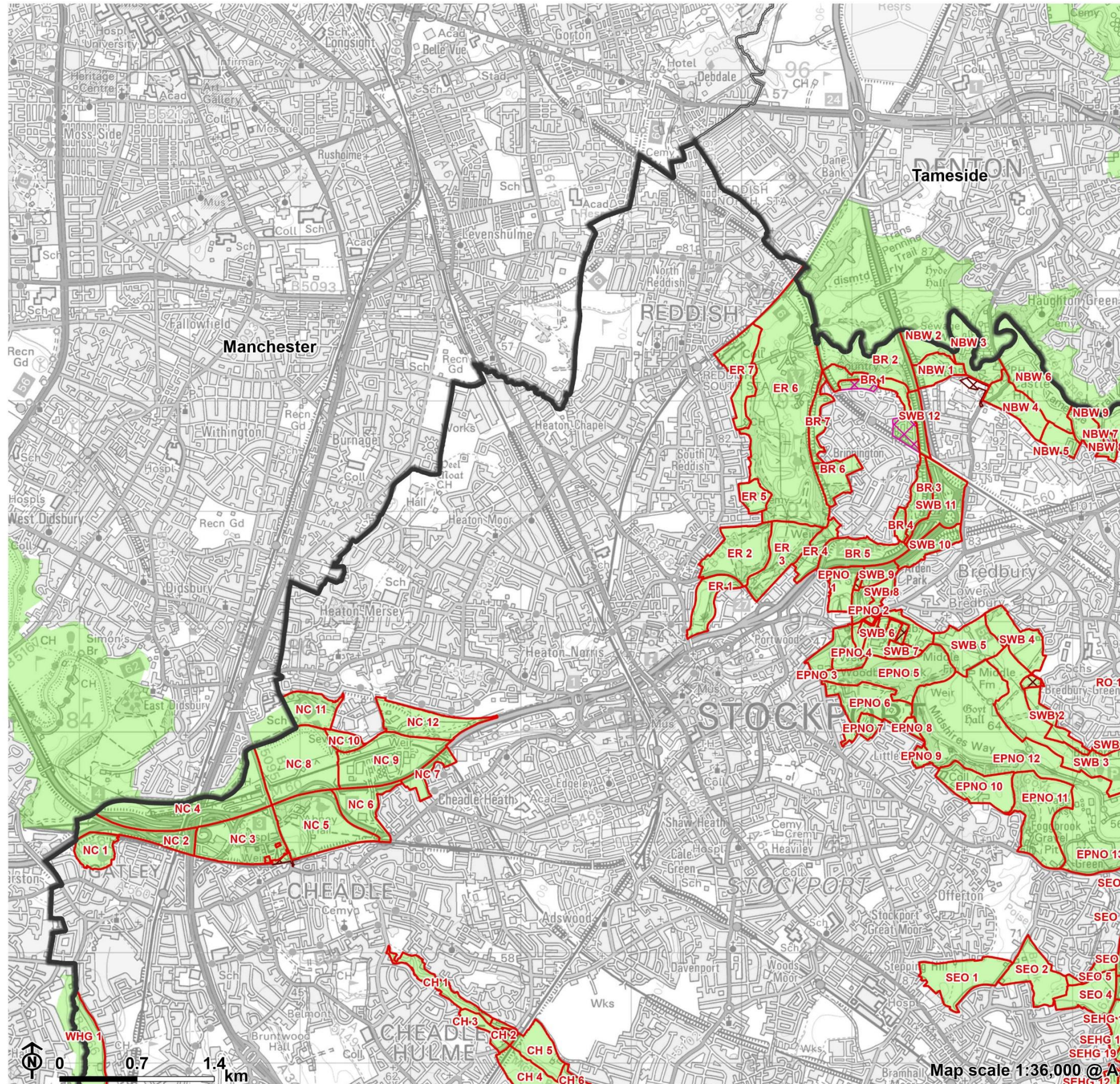
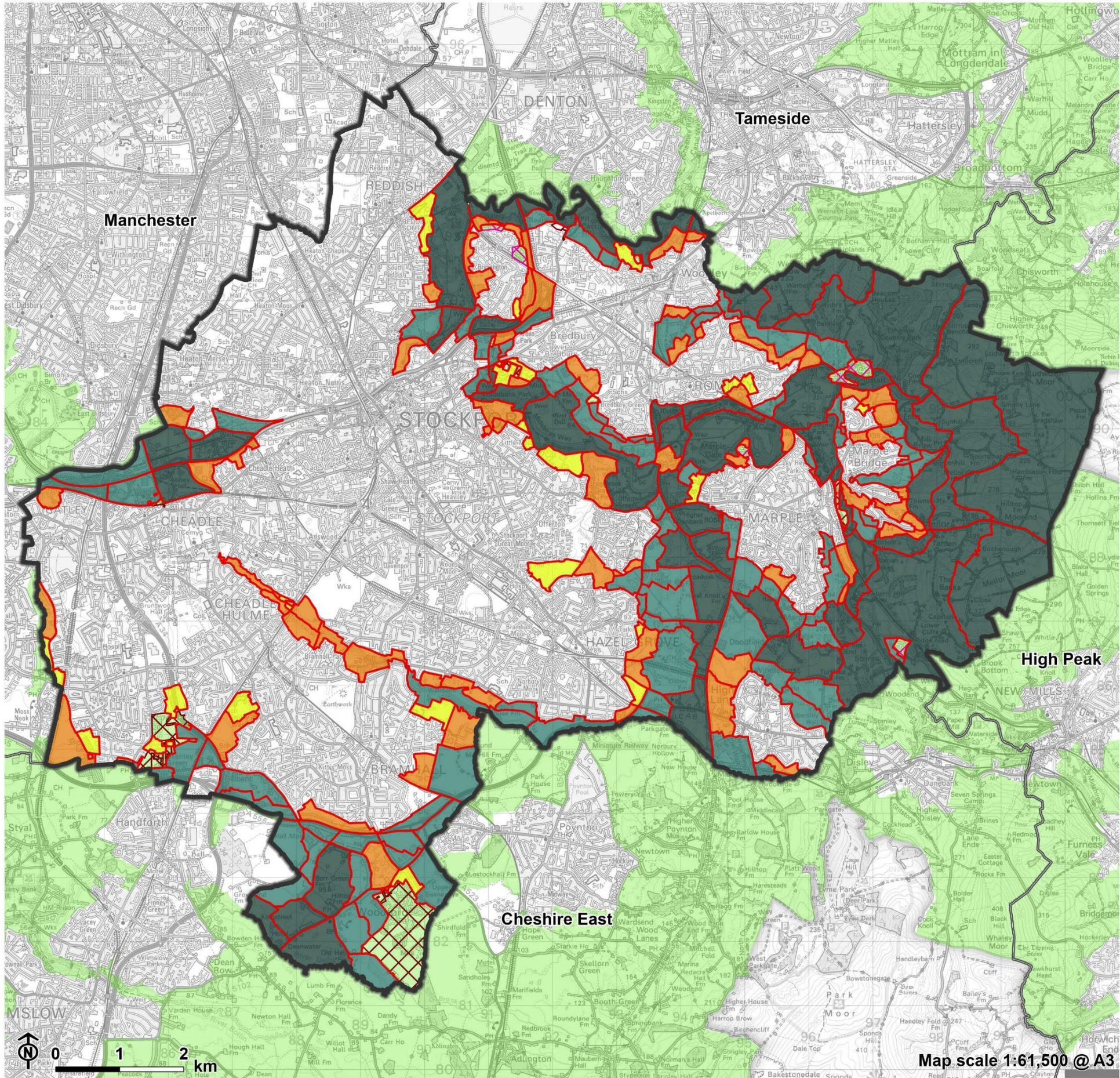


Figure 4.2: Areas of strongest contribution – including NPPF purposes A, B, C and D



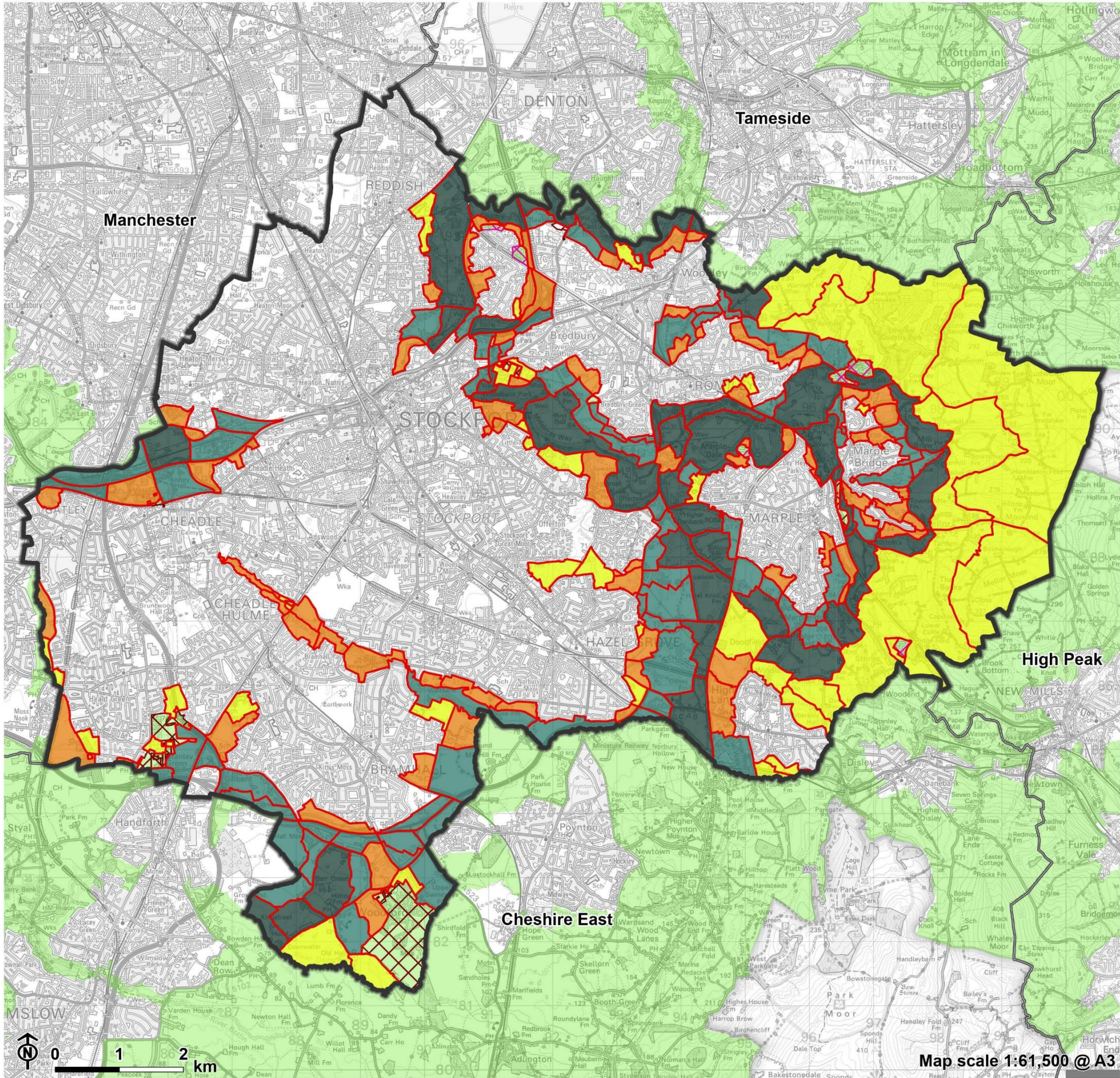
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Figure 4.2: Areas of strongest contribution - including NPPF purposes A, B, C and D

- Local authority boundary
 - Neighbouring authority
 - Parcel
 - Green Belt
 - Significant planning application
 - Area of no openness
- Highest Rating:**
- Very Strong
 - Strong
 - Moderate
 - Weak/No

Figure 4.3: Contribution to Purpose A – Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas



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Figure 4.3: Contribution to Purpose A –
Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

- Local authority boundary
 - Neighbouring authority
 - Parcel
 - Green Belt
 - Significant planning application
 - Area of no openness
- Purpose Contribution Rating:**
- Very Strong
 - Strong
 - Moderate
 - Weak/No

Figure 4.4: Contribution to Purpose B – Prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

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Figure 4.4: Contribution to Purpose B – Prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

- Local authority boundary
 - Neighbouring authority
 - Parcel
 - Green Belt
 - Significant planning application
 - Area of no openness
- Purpose Contribution Rating:**
- Very Strong
 - Strong
 - Moderate
 - Weak/No

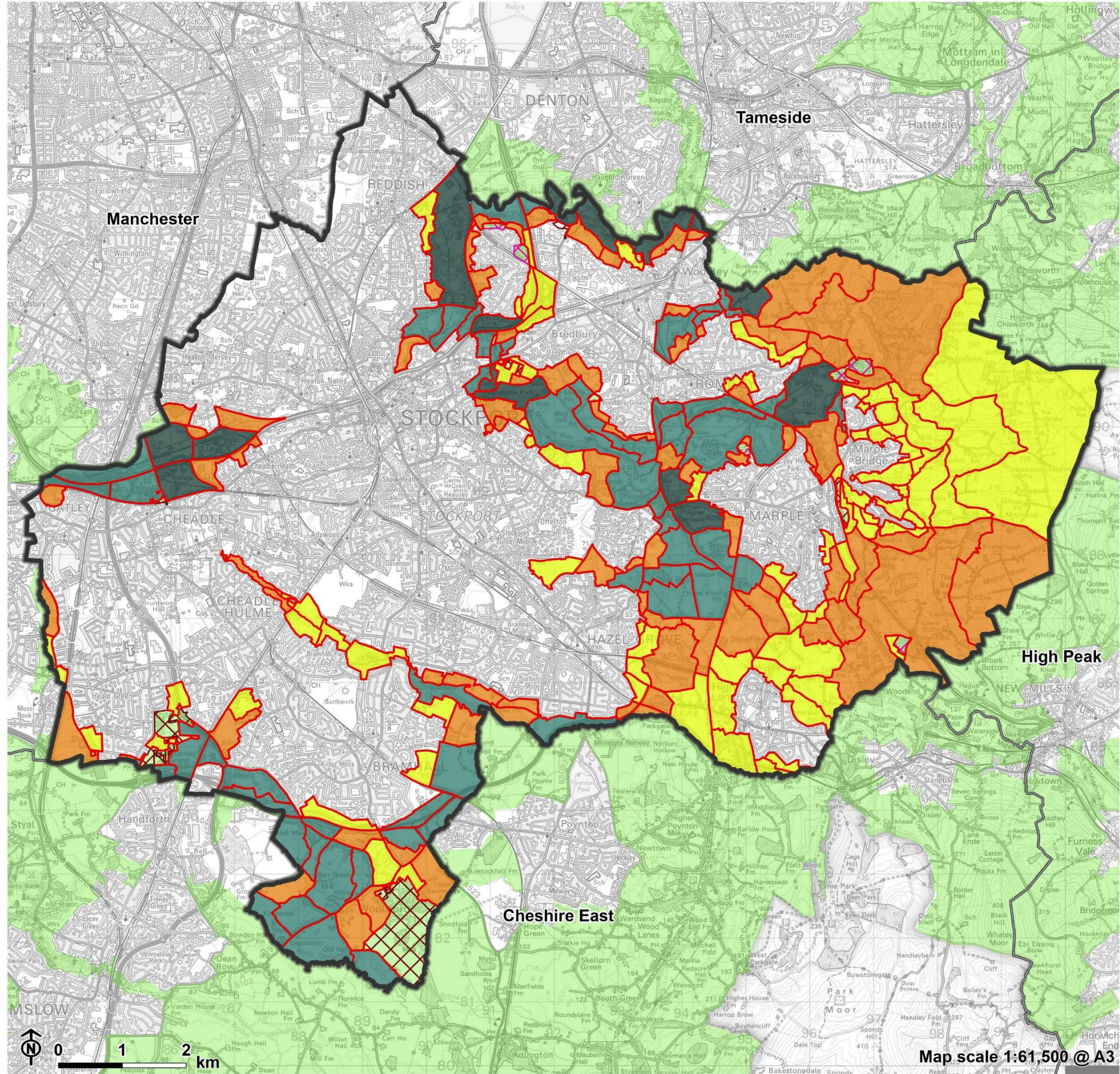
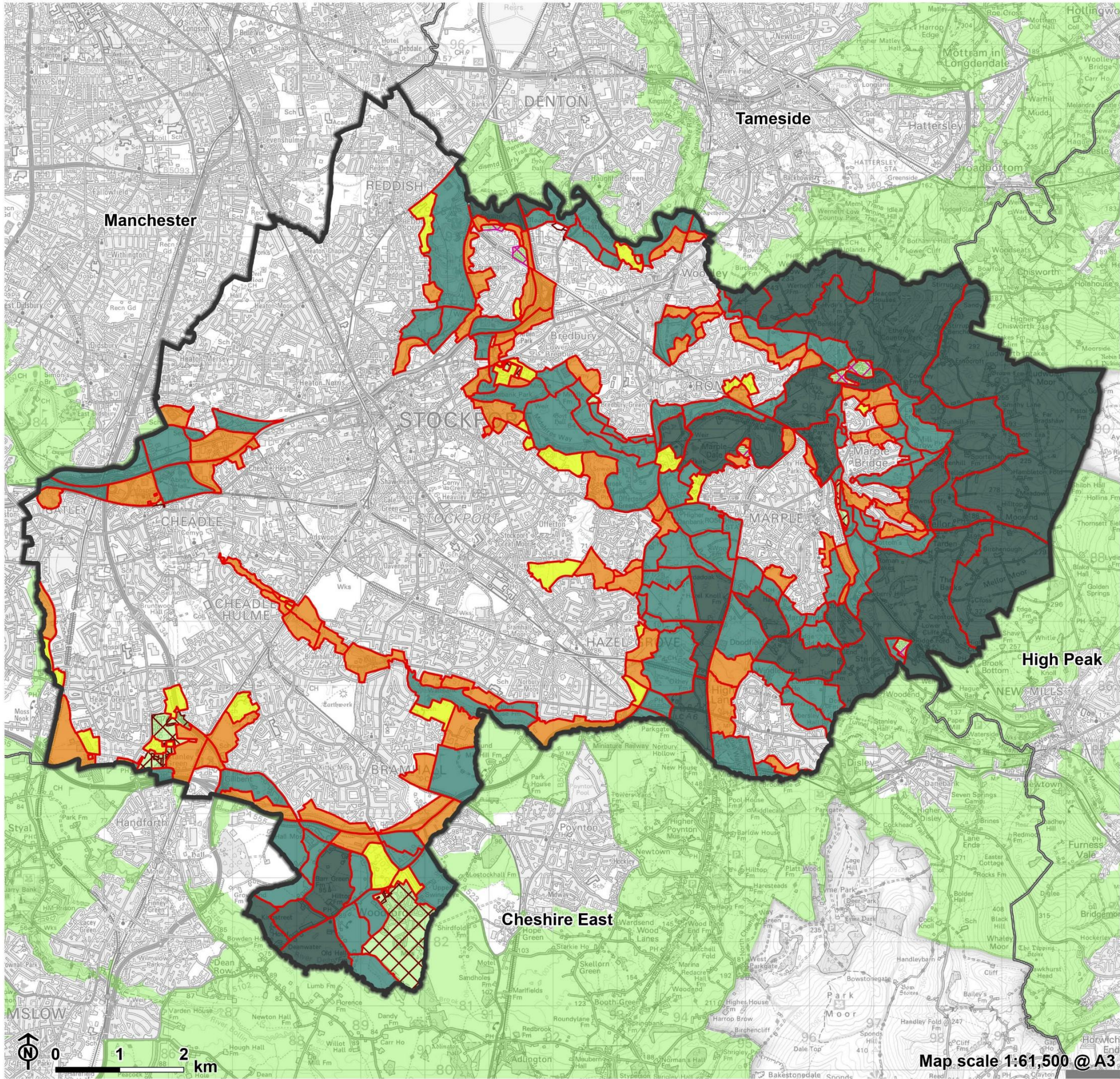


Figure 4.5: Contribution to Purpose C – Assists in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment



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Figure 4.5: Contribution to Purpose C – Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

- Local authority boundary
- Neighbouring authority
- Parcel
- Green Belt
- Significant planning application
- Area of no openness
- Purpose Contribution Rating:**
 - Very Strong
 - Strong
 - Moderate
 - Weak/No

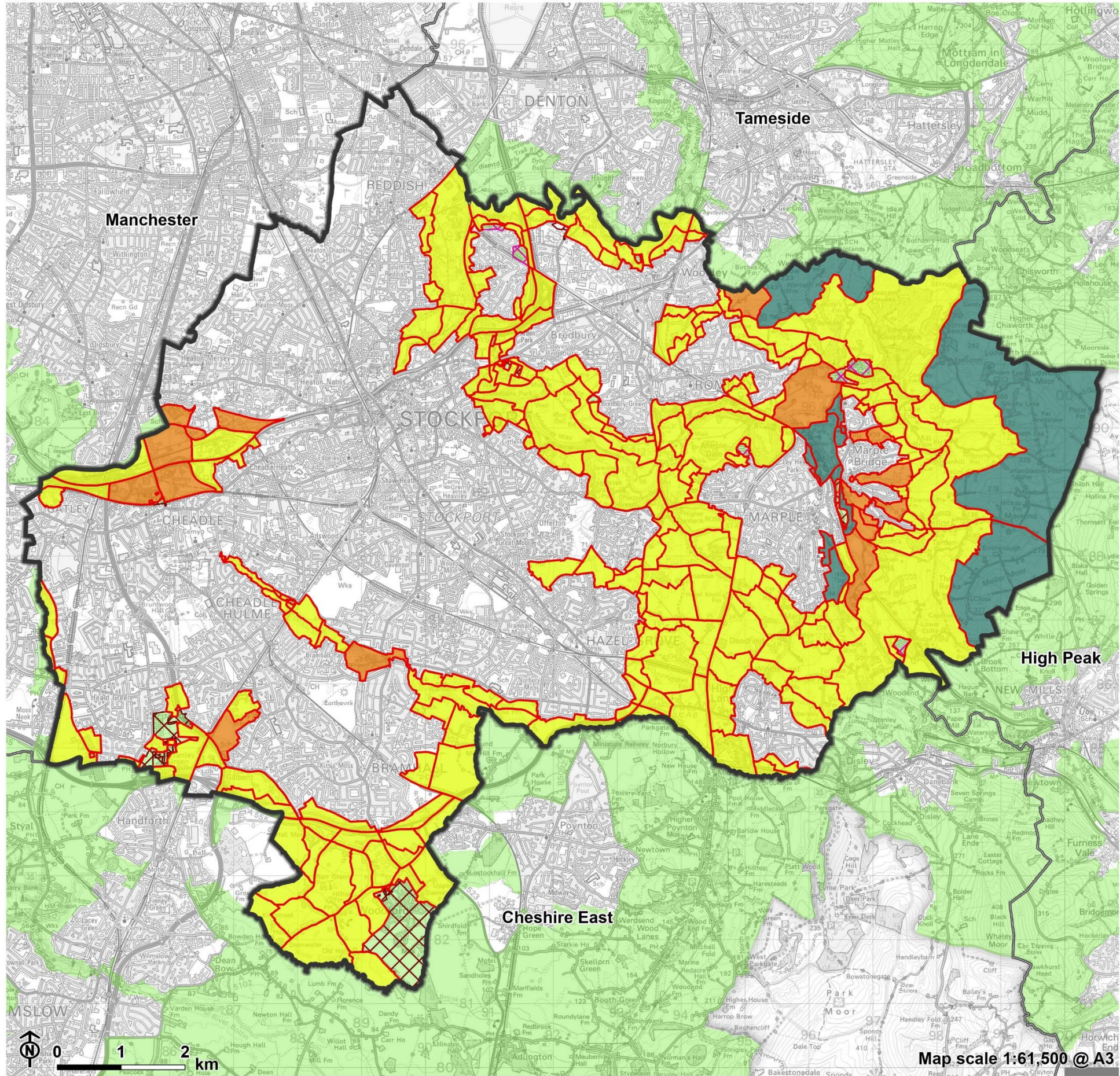
Figure 4.6: Contribution to Purpose D – Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

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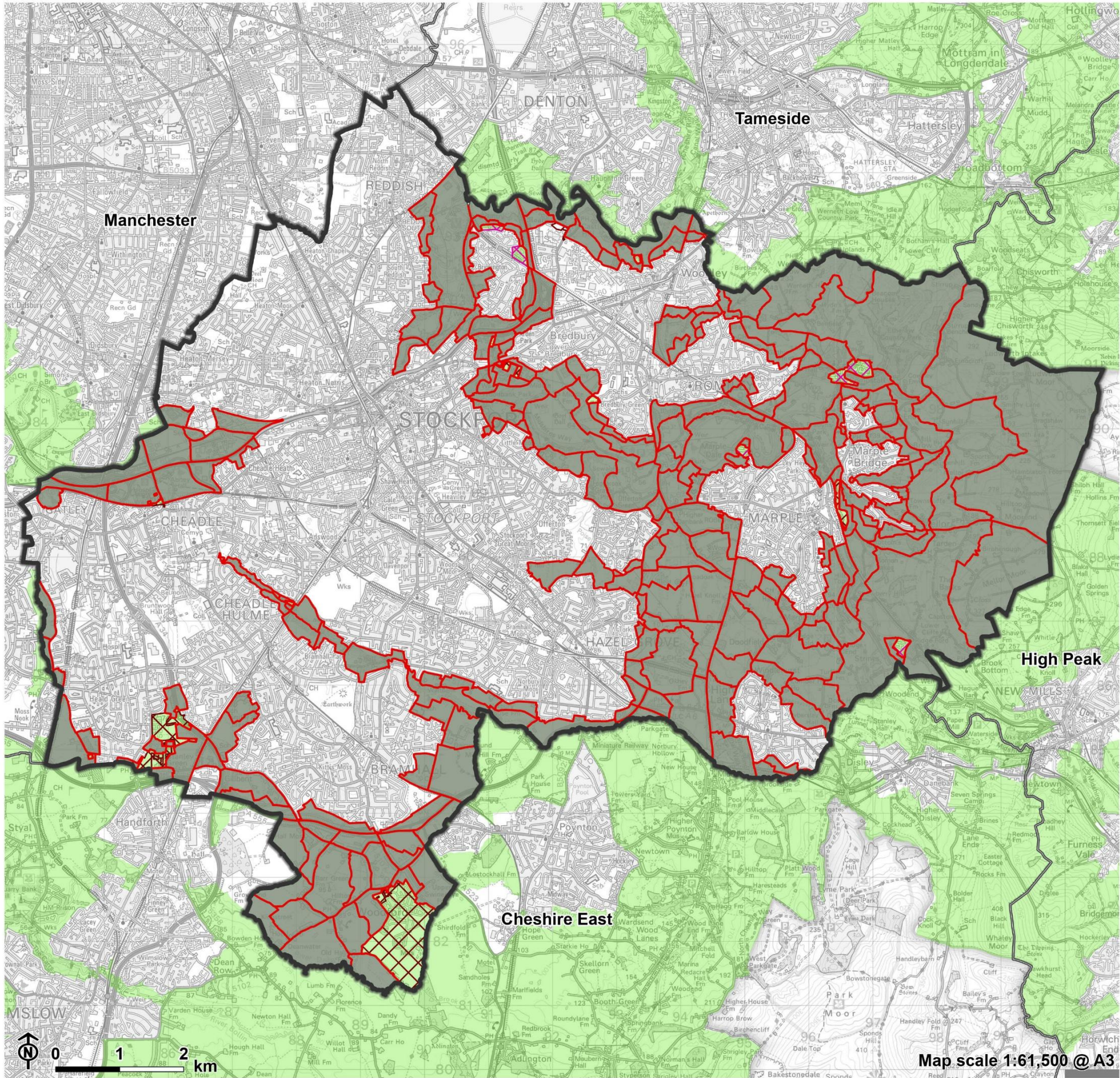
Figure 4.6: Contribution to Purpose D – Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

- Local authority boundary
- Neighbouring authority
- Parcel
- Green Belt
- Significant planning application
- Area of no openness
- Purpose Contribution Rating:**
 - Very Strong
 - Strong
 - Moderate
 - Weak/No



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Figure 4.7: Contribution to Purpose E – To assist in urban regeneration e.g. encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land



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Figure 4.7: Contribution to Purpose E – To assist in urban regeneration e.g. encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

- Local authority boundary
- Neighbouring authority
- Parcel
- Green Belt
- Significant planning application
- Area of no openness
- Purpose Contribution Rating:**
 - Equal

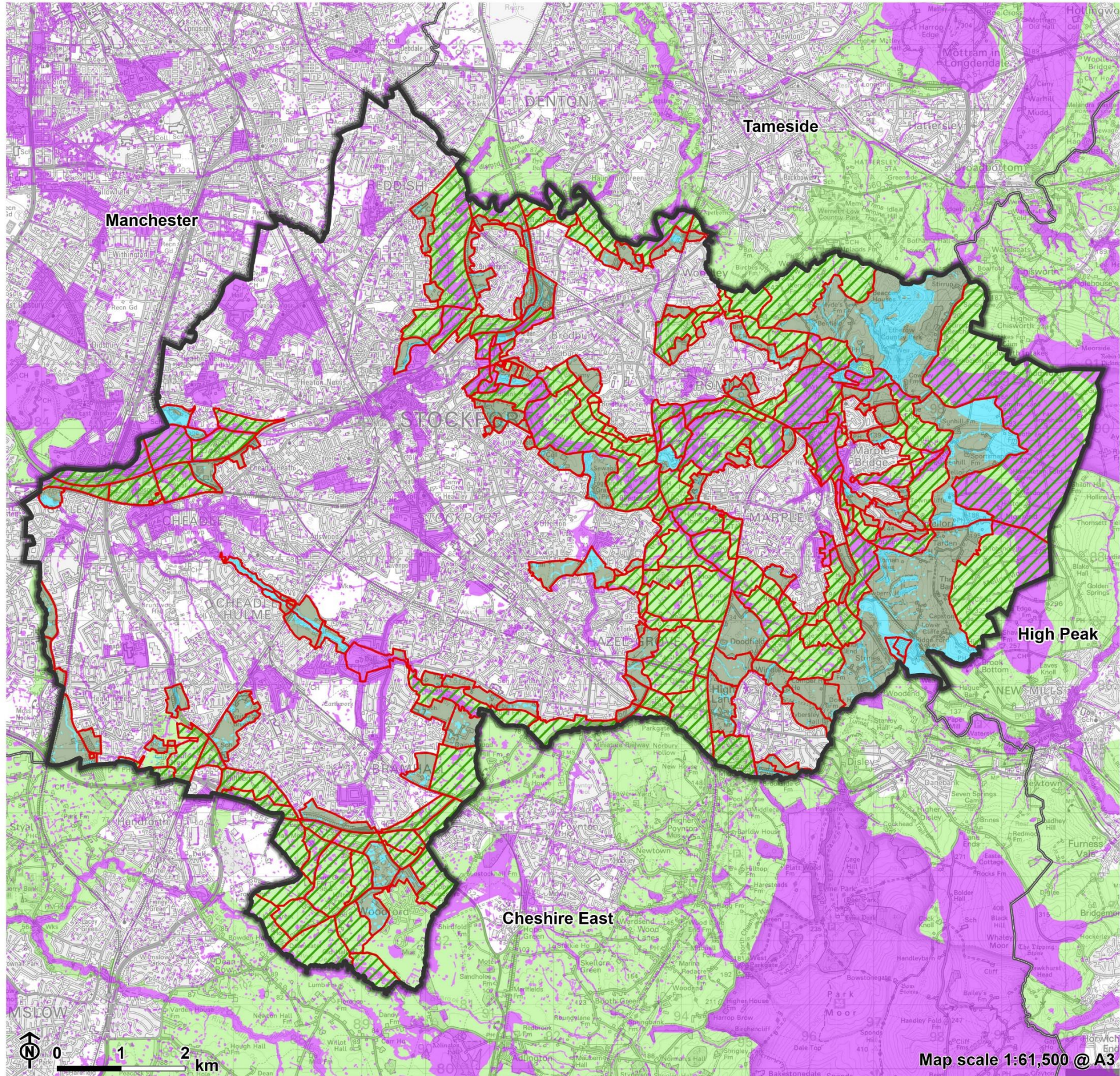
Figure 4.8: Areas suitable for definition as grey belt



Figure 4.8: Areas suitable for definition as grey belt

- Local authority boundary
- Neighbouring authority
- Green Belt land outside of the borough
- Parcel
- Green Belt land potentially not suitable for definition as grey belt land in the borough
- Potentially suitable for definition as grey belt land in the borough
- Potential grey belt land overlapping with footnote 7 designations in the borough
- Footnote 7 designations outside of grey belt

Note:
Listed Buildings have not been included to improve legibility. These assets may provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development and therefore should be reviewed separately. The locations of these assets are illustrated in parcel proforma reports. Each NPPF footnote 7 designation is individually mapped on Figure 3.1 and 3.2.



Map scale 1:61,500 @ A3

Table 4.1: Green Belt contribution

Settlement / Area	Parcel reference	Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Potentially suitable for definition as Grey Belt
Brinnington	BR1	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
Brinnington	BR2	Very Strong	Strong	Very Strong	Weak/No	No
Brinnington	BR3	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
Brinnington	BR4	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Yes
Brinnington	BR5	Very Strong	Very Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
Brinnington	BR6	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
Brinnington	BR7	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
Cote Green	CG1	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	No
Cote Green	CG2	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
Cote Green	CG3	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Yes
Cote Green	CG4	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
Cote Green	CG5	Very Strong	Moderate	Very Strong	Weak/No	No
Cote Green	CG6	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
Cheadle Hulme	CH1	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
Cheadle Hulme	CH2	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Yes
Cheadle Hulme	CH3	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
Cheadle Hulme	CH4	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
Cheadle Hulme	CH5	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes

Settlement / Area	Parcel reference	Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Potentially suitable for definition as Grey Belt
Cheadle Hulme	CH6	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
Cheadle Hulme	CH7	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Moderate	Yes
East of Portwood and North of Offerton	EPNO1	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
East of Portwood and North of Offerton	EPNO2	Strong	Strong	Moderate	Weak/No	No
East of Portwood and North of Offerton	EPNO3	Strong	Strong	Moderate	Weak/No	No
East of Portwood and North of Offerton	EPNO4	Very Strong	Very Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
East of Portwood and North of Offerton	EPNO5	Very Strong	Very Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
East of Portwood and North of Offerton	EPNO6	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
East of Portwood and North of Offerton	EPNO7	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
East of Portwood and North of Offerton	EPNO8	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Yes
East of Portwood and North of Offerton	EPNO9	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Yes
East of Portwood and North of Offerton	EPNO10	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Yes
East of Portwood and North of Offerton	EPNO11	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
East of Portwood and North of Offerton	EPNO12	Very Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
East of Portwood and North of Offerton	EPNO13	Strong	Strong	Moderate	Weak/No	No
East of Reddish	ER1	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
East of Reddish	ER2	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
East of Reddish	ER3	Very Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
East of Reddish	ER4	Strong	Strong	Moderate	Weak/No	No
East of Reddish	ER5	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes

Settlement / Area	Parcel reference	Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Potentially suitable for definition as Grey Belt
East of Reddish	ER6	Very Strong	Very Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
East of Reddish	ER7	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Yes
High Lane	HL1	Weak/No	Weak/No	Strong	Weak/No	Yes
High Lane	HL2	Weak/No	Weak/No	Strong	Weak/No	Yes
High Lane	HL3	Weak/No	Weak/No	Strong	Weak/No	Yes
High Lane	HL4	Weak/No	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
High Lane	HL5	Weak/No	Weak/No	Strong	Weak/No	Yes
High Lane	HL6	Strong	Weak/No	Strong	Weak/No	No
High Lane	HL7	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
High Lane	HL8	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
High Lane	HL9	Weak/No	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Yes
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA1	Very Strong	Strong	Very Strong	Weak/No	No
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA2	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA3	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA4	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Strong	No
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA5	Very Strong	Moderate	Very Strong	Strong	No
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA6	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Strong	No
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA7	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Moderate	Yes
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA8	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Moderate	Yes
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA9	Strong	Weak/No	Strong	Weak/No	No

Settlement / Area	Parcel reference	Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Potentially suitable for definition as Grey Belt
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA10	Strong	Weak/No	Strong	Weak/No	No
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA11	Very Strong	Weak/No	Strong	Weak/No	No
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA12	Strong	Weak/No	Strong	Weak/No	No
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA13	Strong	Weak/No	Strong	Moderate	No
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA14	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA15	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Moderate	Yes
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA16	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA17	Very Strong	Weak/No	Very Strong	Weak/No	No
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA18	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA19	Very Strong	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	No
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA20	Moderate	Weak/No	Strong	Moderate	Yes
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA21	Strong	Weak/No	Strong	Moderate	No
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA22	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Moderate	Yes
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA23	Very Strong	Weak/No	Strong	Strong	No
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA24	Very Strong	Moderate	Strong	Moderate	No
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA25	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA26	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Strong	No
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA27	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Strong	No
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA28	Strong	Weak/No	Strong	Weak/No	No
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA29	Very Strong	Moderate	Very Strong	Weak/No	No

Settlement / Area	Parcel reference	Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Potentially suitable for definition as Grey Belt
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA30	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	No
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA31	Weak/No	Weak/No	Strong	Weak/No	Yes
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA32	Very Strong	Weak/No	Very Strong	Weak/No	No
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA33	Strong	Weak/No	Strong	Weak/No	No
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA34	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA35	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	No
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA36	Very Strong	Moderate	Very Strong	Weak/No	No
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA37	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA38	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	No
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA39	Very Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA40	Very Strong	Very Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA41	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Yes
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA42	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	No
Marple and Marple Bridge	MA43	Very Strong	Very Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
North of Bredbury and Woodley	NBW1	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	No
North of Bredbury and Woodley	NBW2	Very Strong	Strong	Very Strong	Weak/No	No
North of Bredbury and Woodley	NBW3	Very Strong	Very Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
North of Bredbury and Woodley	NBW4	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	No
North of Bredbury and Woodley	NBW5	Moderate	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Yes
North of Bredbury and Woodley	NBW6	Very Strong	Very Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No

Settlement / Area	Parcel reference	Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Potentially suitable for definition as Grey Belt
North of Bredbury and Woodley	NBW7	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Yes
North of Bredbury and Woodley	NBW8	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
North of Bredbury and Woodley	NBW9	Very Strong	Very Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
North of Bredbury and Woodley	NBW10	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
North of Bredbury and Woodley	NBW11	Very Strong	Very Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
North of Cheadle	NC1	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
North of Cheadle	NC2	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
North of Cheadle	NC3	Moderate	Strong	Moderate	Moderate	No
North of Cheadle	NC4	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
North of Cheadle	NC5	Strong	Very Strong	Strong	Moderate	No
North of Cheadle	NC6	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
North of Cheadle	NC7	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
North of Cheadle	NC8	Very Strong	Very Strong	Strong	Moderate	No
North of Cheadle	NC9	Strong	Very Strong	Moderate	Weak/No	No
North of Cheadle	NC10	Moderate	Moderate	Strong	Moderate	Yes
North of Cheadle	NC11	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Yes
North of Cheadle	NC12	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Moderate	No
Romiley	RO1	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
Romiley	RO2	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
Romiley	RO3	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes

Settlement / Area	Parcel reference	Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Potentially suitable for definition as Grey Belt
Romiley	RO4	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
Romiley	RO5	Strong	Strong	Moderate	Weak/No	No
Romiley	RO6	Strong	Strong	Moderate	Weak/No	No
Romiley	RO7	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
Romiley	RO8	Very Strong	Very Strong	Very Strong	Moderate	No
Romiley	RO9	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
Romiley	RO10	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	No
Romiley	RO11	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
Romiley	RO12	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	No
Romiley	RO13	Very Strong	Very Strong	Very Strong	Moderate	No
Romiley	RO14	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
Romiley	RO15	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Yes
Romiley	RO16	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
Romiley	RO17	Very Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
Romiley	RO18	Very Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
Romiley	RO19	Very Strong	Strong	Very Strong	Weak/No	No
Romiley	RO20	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Weak/No	Yes
South and East of Bramhall	SEB1	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
South and East of Bramhall	SEB2	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
South and East of Bramhall	SEB3	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No

Settlement / Area	Parcel reference	Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Potentially suitable for definition as Grey Belt
South and East of Bramhall	SEB4	Strong	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	No
South and East of Bramhall	SEB5	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
South and East of Bramhall	SEB6	Very Strong	Strong	Very Strong	Weak/No	No
South and East of Bramhall	SEB7	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
South and East of Bramhall	SEB8	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	No
South and East of Bramhall	SEB9	Very Strong	Strong	Very Strong	Weak/No	No
South and East of Bramhall	SEB10	Very Strong	Strong	Very Strong	Weak/No	No
South and East of Bramhall	SEB11	Moderate	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Yes
South and East of Bramhall	SEB12	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	No
South and East of Bramhall	SEB13	Weak/No	Strong	Very Strong	Weak/No	No
South and East of Bramhall	SEB14	Weak/No	Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
South and East of Bramhall	SEB15	Moderate	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Yes
South and East of Bramhall	SEB16	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Yes
South and East of Bramhall	SEB17	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	No
South and East of Bramhall	SEB18	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	No
South and East of Bramhall	SEB19	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
South and East of Bramhall	SEB20	Strong	Strong	Moderate	Weak/No	No
South and East of Bramhall	SEB21	Strong	Strong	Moderate	Weak/No	No
South and East of Bramhall	SEB22	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
South and East of Bramhall	SEB23	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No

Settlement / Area	Parcel reference	Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Potentially suitable for definition as Grey Belt
South and East of Bramhall	SEB24	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
South and East of Bramhall	SEB25	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Yes
South and East of Offerton	SEO1	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Yes
South and East of Offerton	SEO2	Weak/No	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
South and East of Offerton	SEO3	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
South and East of Offerton	SEO4	Moderate	Strong	Moderate	Weak/No	No
South and East of Offerton	SEO5	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
South and East of Offerton	SEO6	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	No
South and East of Offerton	SEO7	Strong	Strong	Moderate	Weak/No	No
South and East of Offerton	SEO8	Very Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
South and East of Hazel Grove	SEHG1	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
South and East of Hazel Grove	SEHG2	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
South and East of Hazel Grove	SEHG3	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
South and East of Hazel Grove	SEHG4	Moderate	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	No
South and East of Hazel Grove	SEHG5	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	No
South and East of Hazel Grove	SEHG6	Strong	Strong	Moderate	Weak/No	No
South and East of Hazel Grove	SEHG7	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
South and East of Hazel Grove	SEHG8	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	No
South and East of Hazel Grove	SEHG9	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Yes
South and East of Hazel Grove	SEHG10	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	No

Settlement / Area	Parcel reference	Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Potentially suitable for definition as Grey Belt
South and East of Hazel Grove	SEHG11	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
South and East of Hazel Grove	SEHG12	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
South and East of Hazel Grove	SEHG13	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Yes
South and East of Hazel Grove	SEHG14	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	No
South and East of Hazel Grove	SEHG15	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	No
South and East of Hazel Grove	SEHG16	Very Strong	Weak/No	Very Strong	Weak/No	No
South and East of Hazel Grove	SEHG17	Very Strong	Moderate	Very Strong	Weak/No	No
South and East of Hazel Grove	SEHG18	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	No
South and East of Hazel Grove	SEHG19	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
South and East of Hazel Grove	SEHG20	Very Strong	Strong	Very Strong	Weak/No	No
South of Heald Green and Cheadle Hulme	SHGCH1	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
South of Heald Green and Cheadle Hulme	SHGCH2	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
South of Heald Green and Cheadle Hulme	SHGCH3	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Yes
South of Heald Green and Cheadle Hulme	SHGCH4	Strong	Strong	Moderate	Weak/No	No
South of Heald Green and Cheadle Hulme	SHGCH5	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Yes
South of Heald Green and Cheadle Hulme	SHGCH6	Strong	Strong	Moderate	Weak/No	No
South of Heald Green and Cheadle Hulme	SHGCH7	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Yes
South of Heald Green and Cheadle Hulme	SHGCH8	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Yes
South of Heald Green and Cheadle Hulme	SHGCH9	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
South of Heald Green and Cheadle Hulme	SHGCH10	Strong	Strong	Moderate	Weak/No	No

Settlement / Area	Parcel reference	Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Potentially suitable for definition as Grey Belt
South and West of Bredbury	SWB1	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	No
South and West of Bredbury	SWB2	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	No
South and West of Bredbury	SWB3	Strong	Strong	Strong	Weak/No	No
South and West of Bredbury	SWB4	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
South and West of Bredbury	SWB5	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	No
South and West of Bredbury	SWB6	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Yes
South and West of Bredbury	SWB7	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
South and West of Bredbury	SWB8	Strong	Strong	Moderate	Weak/No	No
South and West of Bredbury	SWB9	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
South and West of Bredbury	SWB10	Strong	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	No
South and West of Bredbury	SWB11	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
South and West of Bredbury	SWB12	Moderate	Weak/No	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
West of Heald Green	WHG1	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
West of Heald Green	WHG2	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Yes
West of Heald Green	WHG3	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Yes
West of Heald Green	WHG4	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Weak/No	Yes
West of Heald Green	WHG5	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Weak/No	Yes
Outer Area	OA1	Weak/No	Moderate	Very Strong	Strong	No
Outer Area	OA2	Weak/No	Moderate	Very Strong	Weak/No	Yes
Outer Area	OA3	Weak/No	Weak/No	Very Strong	Weak/No	Yes

Settlement / Area	Parcel reference	Purpose A	Purpose B	Purpose C	Purpose D	Potentially suitable for definition as Grey Belt
Outer Area	OA4	Weak/No	Weak/No	Very Strong	Strong	No
Outer Area	OA5	Weak/No	Moderate	Very Strong	Weak/No	Yes
Outer Area	OA6	Weak/No	Moderate	Very Strong	Strong	No

Chapter 5

Next Steps

5.1 This chapter summarises the potential next steps to be undertaken beyond the study.

Potential further work

5.2 The study will be used by SMBC alongside other pieces of evidence to shape Green Belt policy and assist in identifying site allocations for the new Local Plan (if required). However, this study cannot in isolation identify land that is suitable for development, or to set out the necessary exceptional circumstances for releasing land from the Green Belt. That will require the consideration of other evidence beyond the scope of this study.

5.3 Further detailed assessment work may be required to inform this process.

5.4 If the necessary exceptional circumstances for making alterations to the Borough's Green Belt are identified, consideration may then be given to:

- Assessing whether preferred or final releases would in combination fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the Local Plan area – i.e. the cumulative effect of any proposed allocations on the designation (as outlined in Chapter 3).
- Defining defensible boundaries – i.e. for the masterplans associated with allocated sites and any proposed safeguarded land.
- Identifying opportunities to minimise the harm to the designations of proposed releases and development.
- Identifying opportunities to enhance Green Belt land.

Appendix A

Detailed proforma reports

References

- 1 LUC (June 2026) Greater Manchester Green Belt Assessment.
- 2 LUC (2020) Stage 2 Greater Manchester Green Belt Study, Assessment of Proposed 2019 GMSF Allocations
- 3 LUC (2024) Stockport Green Belt Harm Assessment Stage 1
- 4 NPPF definition of 'Habitat Site': Any site which would be included within the definition at regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 for the purpose of those regulations, including candidate Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Community Importance, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and any relevant Marine Sites.
- 5 NPPF definition of 'Heritage Asset': A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. It includes designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).
- 6 Non-designated heritage assets of archaeological interest, which are demonstrably of equivalent significance to scheduled monuments, should be considered subject to the policies for designated heritage assets.
- 7 Robin Buchanan, January 2025 with regards to Suite 1, The Stables, Cannons Mill Lane, Bishop's Stortford CM23 2BN (Appeal Ref: APP/J1915/W/24/3339916)
- 8 The Court of Appeal decision in R (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority) v Epping Forest DC [2016] EWCA Civ 404 included reference to openness in relation to appropriate development, with the judgement that appropriate development cannot be considered to have an urbanising influence and therefore harm Green Belt purposes.
- 9 The Court of Appeal decision in R (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority) v Epping Forest DC [2016] EWCA Civ 404 included reference to openness in relation to appropriate development, with the judgement that appropriate development cannot be considered to have an urbanising influence and therefore harm Green Belt purposes
- 10 Hansard HC Deb 08 November 1988 vol 140 c148W 148W; referenced in Historic England (2018) response to the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan – Green Belt Review – Stage 3.
- 11 File reference: PINS/W5780/429/10

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