

Cheshire West & Chester Council

Local Plan

Part One: Strategic Policies



Green Belt Study

Part One

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Cheshire West
and Chester

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Introduction

Introduction

The review of the Green Belt around Chester has been prompted by the preparation of the Local Plan in the Local Development Framework (LDF) process. The Local Plan will identify the development needs within the Borough for the next twenty years, including figures for new housing and new employment land.

Housing and employment land are central to the future growth needs of Cheshire West and Chester, and availability of land is critical to ensure that the borough continues to prosper. Much of the land across the borough is subject to development constraints, one of which is the national Green Belt designation. This designation serves an important role ensuring our countryside is protected from encroachment, stopping our urban areas from merging together and retaining the special character of the rural area.

The purpose of this study is to review land around the edge of the existing built-up area of Chester that is included within the north Cheshire Green Belt. This study will identify whether or not this land meets the purposes of land designated as Green Belt as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (2012).

The outcome of this study will provide evidence for the LDF and inform the direction of the Local Plan in order to establish an up to date Green Belt boundary that reflects the purposes of the Green Belt when considering the use of land today and in the future.

Disclaimer

This Green Belt Study has been prepared to inform the Local Plan over options regarding possible amendments to the Green Belt.

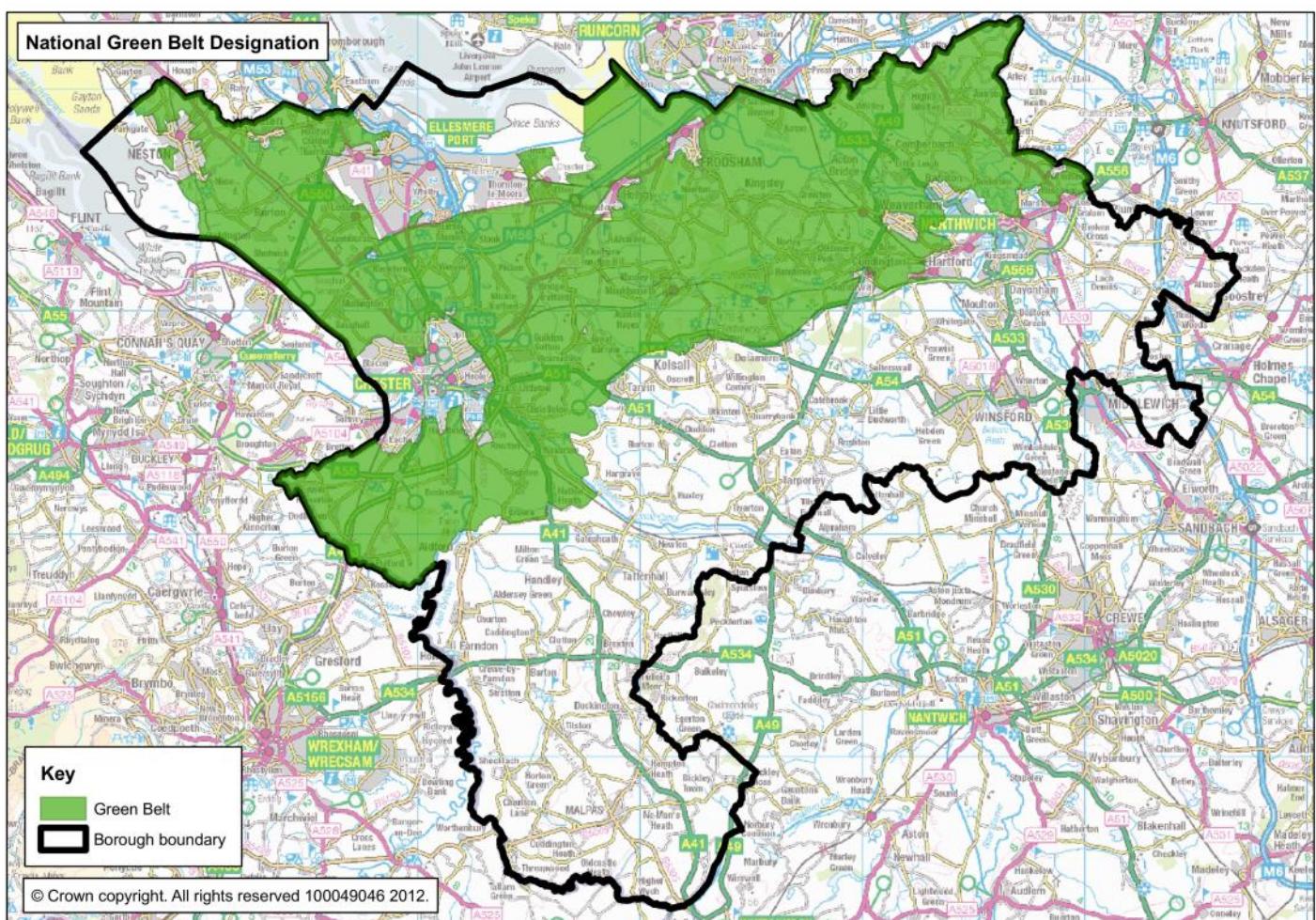
It is not the function of this study to de-allocate Green Belt land as any amendments to the Green Belt should be taken through the development plan process.

The assessments made in this study relate to the general extent and character of those areas identified, and do not relate to any individual plots of land. Therefore the study should not be used in connection with individual planning applications that predetermine decisions over the scale and location of development in advance of the Local Plan.

Chester In Context

Chester is surrounded on three sides (to the north, south and east) by the Green Belt which tightly abuts the existing urban area. To the west of the City is the English national border with Wales. Most of the land on the adjacent Welsh side of the border (in the County of Flintshire) is designated as Green Barrier in the Alyn and Deeside Local Plan which although not subject to the same status, serves a similar function to Green Belts.

Picture .1 North Cheshire Green Belt Designation



The setting and special character of Chester

Chester is a historic city with a unique character. Important historical periods of development are as follows:

- Roman fortress and town
- Saxon - Defended trading centre and port

Introduction

- Medieval - Walled town and port
- Post Medieval - County town.
- Industrial period - County town, incipient industrial centre, transport hub.

Sited on a raised sandstone bluff at the lowest river crossing of the Dee, the built form of Chester would have been highly visible from both the immediate and wider hinterland - an urban island in a rural sea.

The experience of transition from urban to rural would have been relatively rapid and distinct. For the traveller leaving the city, a variety of different environments would have been experienced depending on the direction. For much of the hinterland, and for most of Chester's history, the 'visual field' would have been dominated by arable or pastoral fields dotted with both small nucleated settlements and dispersed farmsteads (similar in many ways to the contemporary greenbelt settlement pattern). However, in some zones the Dee (both river floodplain and estuary), sparsely populated wetlands and heathlands, would have dominated.

There was considerable interaction between Chester and its immediate hinterland at all periods. The farms, settlements and their associated fields, woodlands and waste supplied a range of products to feed and service the population. Raw materials and commodities were also channelled through the Chester markets (especially animal products). Social connections were also close, for example from the Medieval period onwards, wealthy landowners had residences in both the immediate rural area and in the town. These various interactions were facilitated by a network of local paths, tracks, and more substantial longer distance routeways by land and water.

Green Barrier - Flintshire

The border between England and Wales does not follow strong physical features and indeed some developments in the Sealand area of Chester straddle the national boundary. Although Green Belts are not part of planning policy in Wales the Flintshire UDP does include Green Barriers which have a similar purpose and this policy designation applies to most of the Flintshire area that adjoins the City of Chester.

Policy Context

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)

The National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) replaces Planning Policy Guidance / Statements and sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

With regards to Green Belts NPPF states that "**the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence**". The fundamental guiding principles of Green Belts as formerly detailed in Planning Policy Guidance 2: Green Belts (PPG2) is reiterated in the NPPF identifying the 5 purposes of the Green Belt as:

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

In addition the NPPF states that "**Once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of the Local Plan**".

As the Council is currently preparing its Local Plan it is an appropriate time to consider whether Green Belt should be released.

Regional Planning Policy

Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West (RSS)

Policy RDF4 of the RSS relates to the Green Belt. The policy provides some context for the likely need to release/review Green Belt and ability to review Green Belt boundaries, i.e. that local authorities should only be able to make minor changes and strategic review should be carried out at the regional level and indicate that '*exceptional circumstances*' would be required to undertake such modifications to existing boundaries.

RSS Examination In Public Panel Report

The Panel Report debated some of the principles behind policy RDF4 which related to the timing of reviews indicated in RSS and highlight the importance of demonstrating the need for Green Belt review in terms of development needs, exceptional circumstances to justify a review or the release of land, plus what constitutes a strategic or local/small scale boundary change.

Local Planning Policy

Cheshire 2011 Replacement Structure Plan

The replacement Structure Plan 2011 was adopted on 1st July 1999. One of the main aims of the Plan's strategy is:

"Protecting the Green Belt and minimising development on green land outside the Green Belt."

The Plan accepts that resisting development in the Green Belt and beyond will limit the scope for further development in some Cheshire districts, however it states that:

"The development proposed in this Structure Plan (up to 2011) can be accommodated without any changes to the broad extent of the Green Belt in Cheshire ... A review of the broad extent of Green Belts in order to accommodate longer term development needs will form part of the review of the Structure Plan."

Chester District Local Plan (May 2006)

The Green Belt policy in the Chester District Local Plan (ENV 63) protects the open character and the permanence of the designation.

Policy ENV 63 Green Belt

The boundaries of the Green Belt are shown on the Proposals Maps. Within the Green Belt in the absence of very special circumstances planning permission will not be given for the construction of new buildings and changes of use of land unless it is for one of the purposes set out in the policies below and satisfies any requirements specified in those policies and the relevant criteria in Planning Policy Guidance Note 2: Green Belt.

Policy ENV 8 (Views, Viewpoints and Landmarks) states that "*Landmark buildings and features provide orientation within Chester and are important at both a strategic and local level*" The reason and explanation continues to state that "*the roofscape is an important factor in defining the skyline of the historic city due to the topography of the settlement*". Figure 3a of the Local Plan details the key views into and out of the city, and identifies the landmark features that are important to the setting and character of the city.

'Chester: The Future of an Historic City' (June 1994)

Commissioned in 1993 by the former Cheshire County and Chester City Council's, this study was a result of the decision of the Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr Michael Heseltine) on the Cheshire Replacement Structure Plan. At this time, Mr Heseltine stated that "*if the historic character of Chester is to be maintained there may be limits to the safe growth of the City*".

Part 5.0 of this study focuses on the Capacity Framework for the City and of most relevance to the current Green Belt Study; *Development Pressure on the Edge of the City*. The following details are an extract from Part 5.0 (pages 36-37) of the capacity study:

"The capacity guideline identifies those key edges, corridors of open space and distinctive environmental features that should not be altered if any development pressure is to be released at the edge of the city (please see Appendix 2). These are as follows

i. Key edges to the city

- *Eastern edge of the built up area*
- *Western and northern edges of Blacon*
- *River Dee and its corridor*

ii. Corridors of open space

- *River Dee and its corridor*
- *The canal and its corridor*

iii. Distinctive environmental features

- *Woodland belt west of Blacon*
- *Woodland belt in south of the City*
- *Woodland belt in north adjacent to railway line*

The edges, corridors and environmental features are those edges where development pressure should not be allowed to have an impact. Where an edge is not defined as a key edge, corridor or feature, it is not serving a strategic purpose by clearly differentiating between the rural and urban environment or by defining important edges of the countryside or rural features."

Methodology

The aims of this study are to:

- Assess whether the Green Belt land around the urban area of Chester meets the purposes of including land within the Green Belt as detailed in the National Planning Policy Framework;
- Provide an evidence base which will establish and support an up to date Green Belt boundary for the Council's emerging Local Plan.

Assessment Methodology

There are three stages to the methodology for this study. The three stages are:

Stage One: Sub division of Green Belt land around the urban fringes of Chester into parcels for assessment.

The focus of this study is the Green Belt surrounding the urban area of Chester. Through a desk top survey and in collaboration with the Council's Specialist Environmental Services Team, the defined area of Green Belt was divided into ten manageable logical parcels, generally using strong physical boundaries such as the road and rail infrastructure and watercourses. The division of land is based upon common features and characteristics of land and is purely for the purposes of this study and carrying out the required assessments.

Stage Two: Assessment Criteria

A set of criteria was established in order to measure each of the purposes of the Green Belt. The number of criteria varied for each purpose and was dependent upon the range of measures that were considered important when evaluating the individual purpose. No weighting has been applied to any of the purposes at this stage.

The number of criteria associated with each purpose is not a representation of the importance of the individual purpose as they are all being considered independently of one another during the assessments.

Stage Three: Assessment of land parcels

A site survey of each parcel has been carried out in accordance with the assessment criteria. Photographs of the parcels were taken as part of an evidence base to identify key land features and boundaries, scale of any existing development within the land parcels, and views into and out of the parcel.

A steering group made up of officers from the Spatial Planning Team and colleagues from the Specialist Environmental Service was established to critique the study and to inform the assessments made in stage three. The information collated through site surveys, desk based studies and Officer Steering Group meetings was presented for consultation through the use of display boards.

Stage One: Sub-division of the Green Belt around Chester

The first stage of the study identified individual parcels of Green Belt land around the urban area of Chester. The urban area is encompassed by Green Belt and therefore parcels of land adjacent to the existing urban area were identified around the settlement. An outer limit for the extent of Green Belt to be included in this study was established in order to help identify individual parcels of land.

The methodology was initially prepared in line with PPG2 which states that boundaries should be clearly defined using readily recognisable features where possible. Weak boundaries can be vulnerable to urban encroachment whereas strong boundaries are less likely to be altered on an ad hoc basis which is essential if the Green Belt boundaries are to have longevity and remain defensible.

The NPPF reiterates this in bullet point six of paragraph 85 stating that Local Authorities should "**define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent**". The methodology therefore is consistent with the most current planning framework.

On this basis the most evident durable physical boundary around the urban core (and within the Green Belt) is the road network. The A55 and A41 encase the southern and eastern fringes of Chester. Along a number of sections of these A-roads the carriageway is elevated which means that there is the additional physical feature of an embankment. The Shropshire Union Canal to the north-east of Chester was identified as another defensible boundary.

To the north and north-west of Chester, adjacent to the suburb of Blacon, there are fewer robust defensible boundaries. In this area mature hedgerows and similar physical features were used to identify the boundary of parcels where possible.

To make the assessment process manageable, land in the Green Belt around Chester was split into logical parcels of land that, where possible, had clearly evident hard boundaries such as the road, rail or waterways network, and were also a manageable size for officers to carry out a survey of the site.

Ordnance Survey Maps, aerial photography and GIS (Graphical Information Systems) were initially used to identify the parcels of land. At the end of this process each of the parcels was mapped using ArcGIS and assigned a unique reference number.

The Green Belt around the Chester urban area was sub-divided into a total of 22 parcels of land, however as a result of the officer steering group workshop that was carried out during stage three it was agreed that many adjacent parcels shared similar attributes and characteristics and could therefore be assessed as a single area. The final sub division of land into ten areas is detailed in Figure 5.1 and supporting Table 5.1.

The area of land covered by and adjacent to Chester Zoo was originally omitted from the assessment as there are proposals for the expansion of the Zoo to create a "Super Zoo". However the decision was taken that this area should be treated in the same way as other major developed sites in the Green Belt such as the Countess of Chester Health Park. The land at Chester Zoo now features as part of area eight: Land at Liverpool Road / Moston Road, Upton.

Green barrier to the west of Blacon will be considered in relation to the assessment of the corresponding area(s) (area one and area ten).

Figure .1 Area of Study

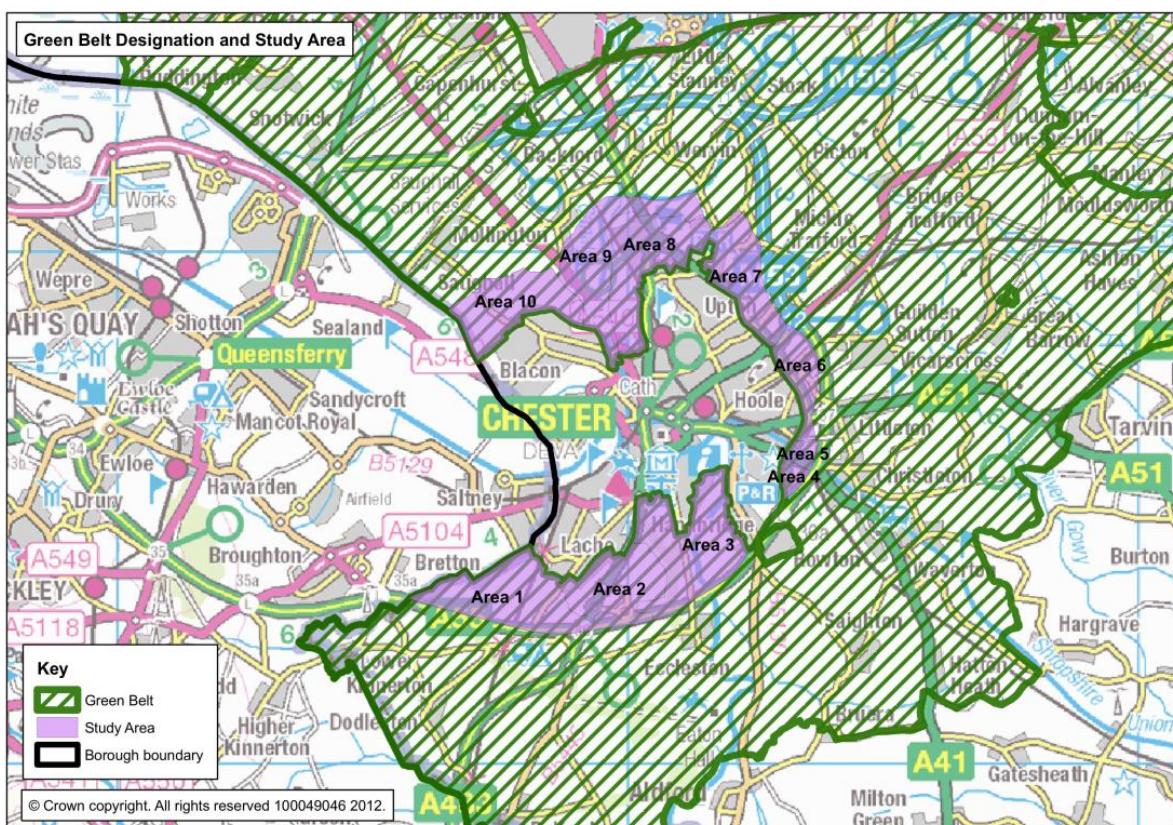


Table .1 Sub division of land - study areas

Area Ref	Location
One	The Lache Eyes - land south of Saltney / Lache, north of A55 (adjacent to green barrier)
Two	Land at Wrexham Road, north of A55
Three	Green Corridor - Duke's Driveway / River Dee / The Meadows
Four	Land south of Whitchurch Road, east of A55
Five	Green Corridor - Shropshire Union Canal, Boughton Heath
Six	Land at Piper's Ash, east of A41 ring-road
Seven	Land off Long Lane, Upton Heath, west of M53
Eight	Land at Liverpool Road / Moston Road, Upton
Nine	Green Corridor - Shropshire Union Canal, Parkgate Road (Mollington)
Ten	Land north of Blacon (adjacent to green barrier)

Stage Two: Assessment Criteria

Stage Two: Assessment Criteria

The main objective of this study is to assess how well land in the Green Belt around the urban area of Chester is meeting the purposes of the Green Belt, along with how many of the purposes were being met robustly. The outcome of the study is a judgement on and a recognition of how many of the purposes of Green Belt are being met in different locations around urban core of Chester.

In order to assess the five purposes of including land in the Green Belt robust and measurable criteria are required for each purpose. In addressing each purpose some required only one criteria, whereas others required a range of criteria to address all issues relating to that purpose. The reason for selecting each criteria is explained throughout this chapter.

This study was prepared under the guidance provided in PPG2, and has been updated in line with the guidance provided in the NPPF. PPG2 is, in the main, replicated in the NPPF therefore the methodology and criteria for assessment are current and valid under the new Framework.

PURPOSE: To check unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

Criteria	Criteria Definition
How well contained by the urban area is the parcel?	Not contained - the majority of the parcel is detached from the urban area - development of parcel would be independent of existing built-up area
	Partly contained - between 25-50% of the parcel is adjacent to the urban area
	Well contained - over 50% of the parcel is adjacent to the urban area - development would be an extension of existing built-up area

The containment of the parcel of land refers to the potential for urban sprawl to take place in areas not currently adjoining the urban core i.e. the area is not physically connected to a built-up area. If the parcel was developed would it result in independent growth in the Green Belt beyond the boundaries of the existing built-up areas?

Criteria	Criteria Definition
How strong is the boundary of the defined parcel of land?	Weak boundary; one or more features lacking in durability, may have large gaps between features, in poor condition, or have no prominent features. Development could lead to future sprawl.
	Moderate boundary; some durable boundary features, may have some gaps / condition issues and few prominent features
	Strong boundary; one or more durable boundary feature that is intact and well developed. Prominent features in the landscape. Development would be well contained.

A key consideration to assess the purpose of unrestricted sprawl is the boundary treatment of the area and its vulnerability to penetration from development. The strength of the parcel boundary plays an important role in restricting urban sprawl. Retaining strong boundaries to the Green Belt assists in defining a permanent and appropriate boundary between a developed area and the open countryside beyond this. Examples of strong and weak boundaries are detailed in the table below.

The consideration of boundary treatment addresses the issue of encroachment into the Green Belt and whether parcels identified are firmly contained by strong durable physical boundaries to the extent that it could not lead to unrestricted sprawl into adjacent land.

Table .1 Boundary Features

Durable Features	Topography - valley / ridge / depression / hill or mound Watercourse - river / stream / canal Vegetation - protected woodland / copse Constructed - motorway / road / railway / established building lines
Features Lacking Durability	Field Boundary - hedge / fence / line of trees Watercourse - brook Constructed - ditch / track / private path / weak intermittent building line

PURPOSE: To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another

Criteria	Criteria Definition
Would the loss of the area of land from the Green Belt result in a decrease in the strategic gap between Chester urban area and neighbouring towns / villages?	Removal of the parcel of land from the Green Belt would leave a gap of less than 1 mile between built-up areas which could result in cohesion of settlements.
	Removal of the parcel of land from the Green Belt would leave a gap of between 1 and 2 miles between built-up areas, cohesion is a possibility.
	Removal of the parcel of land from the Green Belt would leave a gap of more than 2 miles between built-up areas, cohesion unlikely.

One of the objectives of the Cheshire Green Belt in the area around Chester is to maintain the strategic gap between the urban settlements of Chester and Ellesmere Port to the north. As well as the urban settlement of Ellesmere Port there are a number of rural settlements that lie in close proximity to the suburbs of Chester, therefore in addition to neighbouring towns, villages will also be considered.

To the north-west of Chester is the village of Saughall, east of the urban area are the villages of Littleton and Guilden Sutton, and to the south-east lies Christleton. These villages are important to the rural character of the area surrounding Chester and maintaining the Green Belt between these settlements is important for retaining their individual character. A measure of distance from the edge of the existing built form within each area to the edge of the nearest town or village will be calculated using measuring tools in Arcmap (a GIS mapping programme).

Stage Two: Assessment Criteria

PURPOSE: To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

Criteria	Criteria Definition
Are Green Belt opportunities being achieved in the defined area?	5 opportunities are being achieved
	3 or 4 opportunities are being achieved
	2 or less opportunities are being achieved

The focus for this purpose will be on the land uses and opportunities that "**positively enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt**".⁽ⁱ⁾ Positive opportunities are:

- Providing access (to open space / countryside);
- Provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation;
- Retain, and enhance landscapes;
- Improve damaged and derelict land; and
- Visual amenity and biodiversity

Parcels of land that support the opportunities in the Green Belt or are in defined countryside use e.g. Country Parks and / or woodlands, are more likely to fulfil a positive Green Belt role, and arguably may also be less susceptible to change than some other uses.

Criteria	Criteria Definition
What percentage of the parcel if covered by development ?	Less than 25% of the parcel is developed
	Between 25 - 50% of the parcel is developed
	Greater than 50% of the parcel is developed

The level or proportion of development within the areas will show how well the area has been safeguarded as Green Belt, or alternatively has been developed despite its designation. Development is defined as residential, employment or service related buildings and structures (both in use and vacant / derelict). The range of uses will be recorded to assist in assessing both of the criteria for this purpose.

Boundary strength and land use within field parcels will be used to assess safeguarding and encroachment. The features and durability of the parcel boundary have already been identified and will be assessed through the purpose "*To check unrestricted sprawl*". Therefore it is felt unnecessary to include this criteria again.

PURPOSE: To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

Criteria	Criteria Definition
Are there any key views into/out of the historic city core?	Clear sight of key landmarks / assets or features into and/or out of the historic core
	Partial visibility of key landmarks / assets or features into and/or out of the historic core
	No key landmarks / assets or features in the historic core are visible. Area not visible from urban core.

Key views in to and out of the city are detailed in the Chester District Local Plan and referred to in the Chester Characterisation Study (Cheshire West and Chester, 2011). These key views define the outlook from within the city to the suburbs and beyond to the rural area, and also the inward landscapes that can be seen from a range of view points outside of the built-up area.

As part of the assessments a number of assets were identified which were considered to be important in terms of maintaining the setting of the city. The green network that includes The River Dee, Shropshire Union Canal and The Meadows form an essential part of the urban infrastructure. Key entrances and approaches into the city that are integral to the setting and character of the historic core include Chester Approach (Duke's Driveway) and Eaton Road, Handbridge.

Criteria	Criteria Definition
Does the parcel of land contribute towards the openness of the land and its surroundings?	Area is open with vistas over the adjacent rural landscapes and countryside
	Partial openness, some views of adjacent rural landscapes and countryside, some restriction
	Area has limited / no openness, views over adjacent rural landscapes and countryside greatly restricted

The openness of land is a key attribute of the Green Belt. The extent to which a parcel of land retains open landscapes and contributes towards enhancing landscapes around the urban core is also key to the historic setting and the rural landscapes that are attributed towards the area around Chester.

PURPOSE: Does the area contribute towards the historic character and environment of Chester?

Criteria	Criteria Definition
Does the area contribute towards the historic character and environment of Chester?	The area makes a significant contribution to the historic character and environment of Chester
	The area makes some contribution to the historic character and environment of Chester
	The area makes no contribution to the historic character and environment of Chester

Chester has a unique character and setting of a historic core surrounded by residential suburbs and the Cheshire Countryside. There are many historic features within the core as well as located on the periphery of the city that are linked for example to the main routes into the core.

'Chester - The Future Of An Historic City' (1994) describes the importance of key edges to the city, corridors of open space and distinctive environmental features that are integral to the setting of the urban area and of importance to the relationship between the city and the rural landscapes. Features listed in Part 5.0 of the capacity study (see Policy Context for a list of these features) will be taken into account when assessing this purpose.

Stage Two: Assessment Criteria

PURPOSE: To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

At this stage in the study it has been decided that the assessment of this purpose will be deferred. The reason for this decision is the difficulty of being able to measure whether development outside of the urban core, i.e. any remaining brownfield regeneration sites; was likely to have a positive or negative impact on regeneration priorities and subsequently on the success of the Green Belt to fulfil this purpose.

Stage Three: Assessment of land parcels

Stage three of the study was carried out in two parts. An initial assessment of each parcel was done by carrying out site visits and desk based surveys. Each parcel of land was categorised in respect of the criteria supplementing each of the purposes of Green Belt as detailed in stage two of this document.

Following this work, an officer steering group was established to aid the progress of the study and to collate as much information on the Green Belt as possible. The steering group was made up of a range of officers from the Spatial Planning Team and the Specialist Environmental Team.

An assessment was made of each of the areas in line with the criteria agreed for each purpose. Display boards were prepared for each of the areas that had been surveyed and this information was presented for consultation in form of information boards.

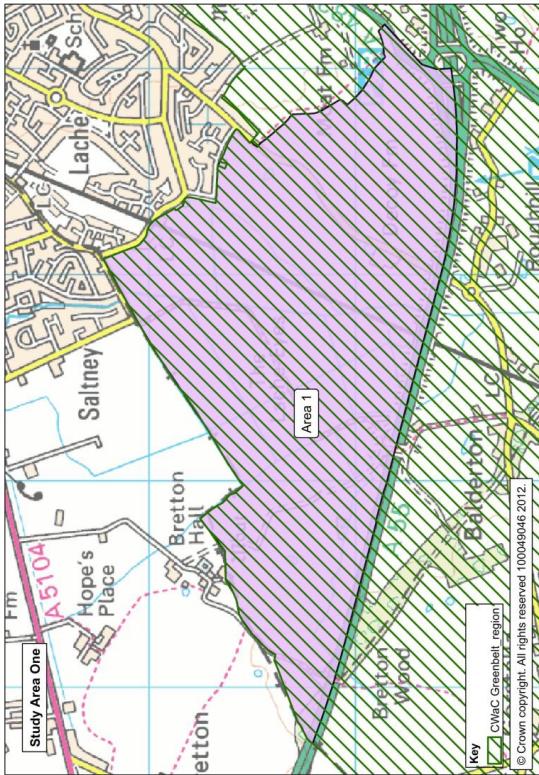
- Historical aerial photography to detail any changes that have taken place
- Location plan to show the position of the parcel of land in context of the city and urban area
- Boundary plan to detail the area of land that is being assessed
- Current photographs of each parcel of land to illustrate its current use, features and condition

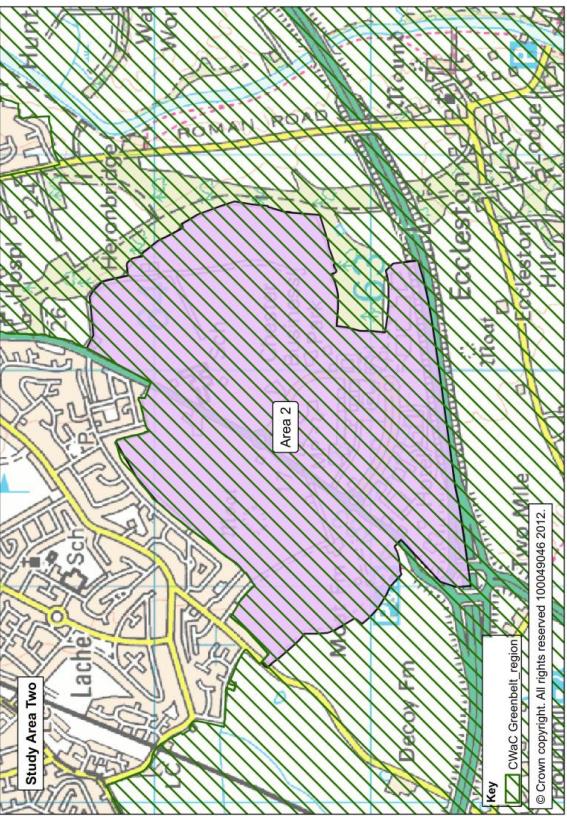
This information was then subject to consultation with the Local Development Framework Panel and Ward Members, followed by a series of public consultation events. All of the comments received throughout the consultation were collated and are available to view on request.

Findings of the Assessment

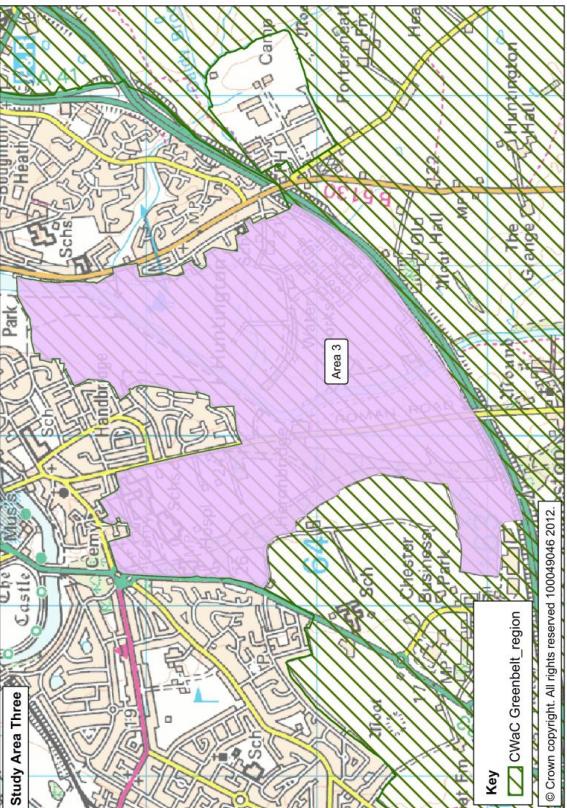
Findings of the Assessment

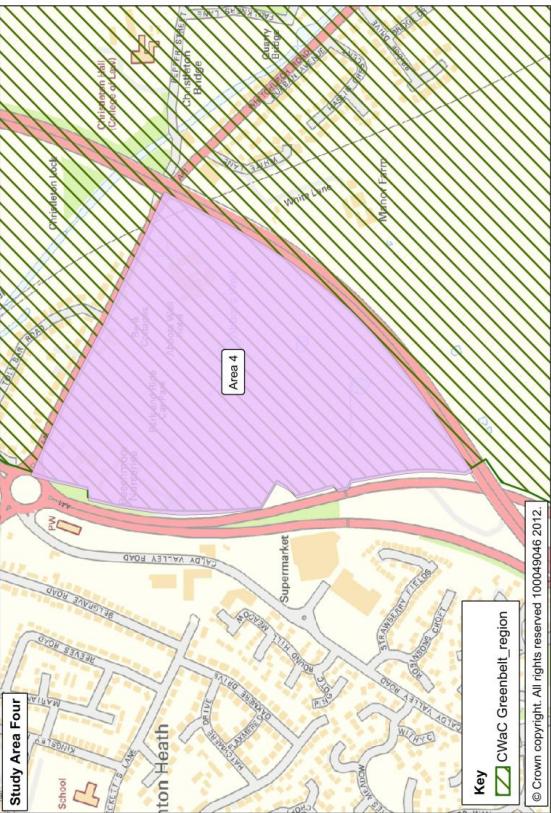
<p>Area One: The Lache Eyes - south of Saltney / Lache, north of the A55</p> <p>Site Area: 290 hectares</p> <p>Developed Area: 1.5 hectares</p> <p>Perimeter: 8.8 km</p> <p>Land adjoining urban area: 1.8 km</p> <p>Area One forms part of the boundary between England and Wales. Land to the north-east of this area is designated as green barrier in the Flintshire Local Plan.</p>	<p>Purpose</p> <p>To check unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas</p> <p>To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another</p> <p>To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment</p> <p>To preserve setting and special character of historic towns</p>	<p>Comments</p> <p>Not contained - approximately 20% adjoining the urban area of Lache.</p> <p>Moderate boundary strength with a durable boundary to the north (urban area) and south (A55). Weaker to the west and east.</p> <p>Nearest settlement - Dodleston - 1.9 miles from urban fringe in Area One, and 1.04 miles from the southern boundary of Area One.</p> <p>Meets three Green Belt opportunities (access / retaining landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity)</p> <p>Less than 1% is developed</p> <p>Landmarks visible from A55.</p> <p>Views out of Area One to open countryside and Welsh hills.</p> <p>Significant part of setting for historic city of Chester</p>
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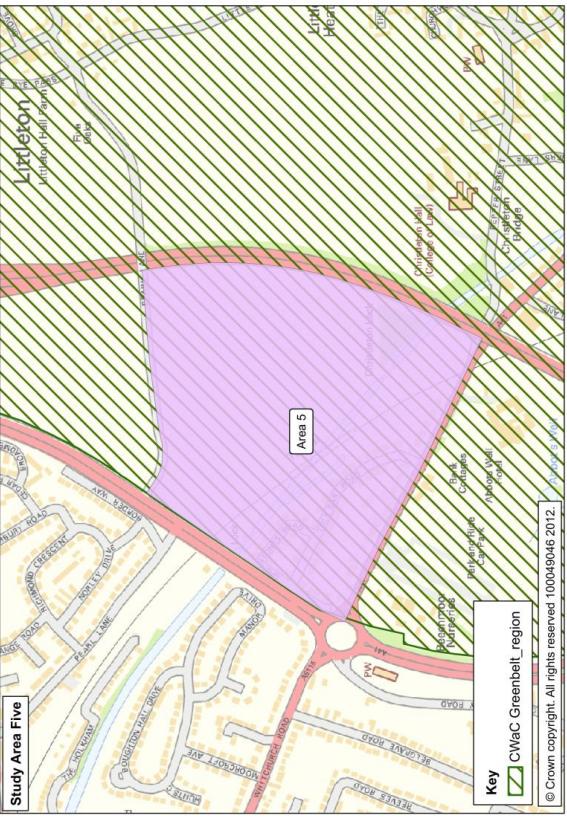
Area Two: Land at Wrexham Road, north of the A55	
Site area: 223 hectares	Land adjoining urban area: 2.2 km
Developed area: 81.4 hectares	Area is dominated by Chester Business Park to the east of Wrexham Road. Wrexham Road Park & Ride located on the west of Wrexham Road.
Perimeter: 7.9 km	
	
Purpose To check unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment To preserve setting and special character of historic towns	Comments Partly contained - approximately 28% adjoining the urban area at Lache / Westminster Park and Handbridge. Strong boundary strength with durable boundaries to the north (building line), the east (woodland corridor at Duke's Driveway), south (A55) and west (Park and Ride). Nearest settlement is Eccleston - 1 mile from existing built form within the area e.g. Chester business park. Meets three Green Belt opportunities (access / retaining landscapes, visual amenity & biodiversity) Approximately 36% developed with prominent Park and Ride, Chester Business Park and The Kings School No views of the historic city due to topography Mixture of built form and open countryside Significant part of setting for historic city of Chester.

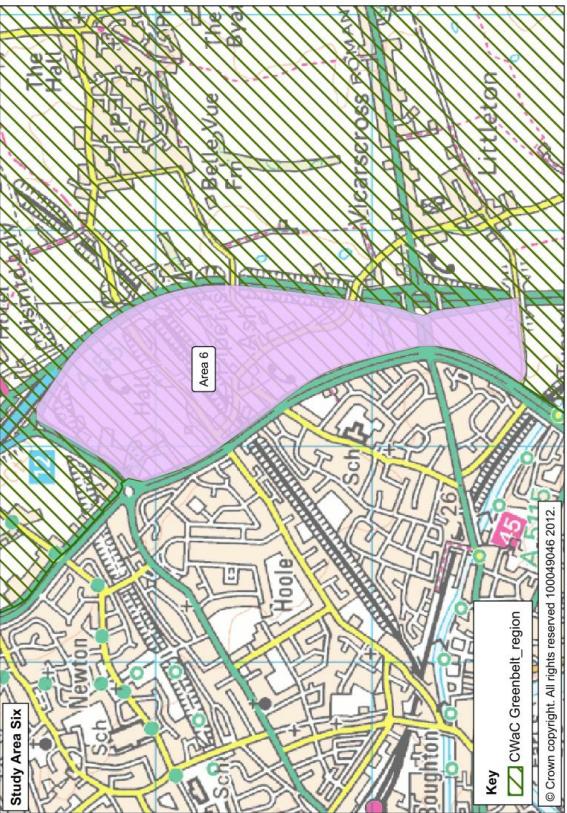
Findings of the Assessment

<p>Area Three: Green Corridor - Duke's Driveway, River Dee, The Meadows</p> <p>Site area: 330 hectares</p> <p>Developed area: 29.4 hectares</p> <p>Perimeter: 12.2 km</p> <p>Land adjoining urban area: 7 km</p> <p>Area dominated by the ancient woodland along the Duke's Drive, and The Meadows to the east and west of the River Dee.</p>  <p>© Crown copyright. All rights reserved 100049046 2012.</p>	<p>Purpose</p> <p>To check unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas</p> <p>To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another</p> <p>To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment</p> <p>To preserve setting and special character of historic town</p>	<p>Comments</p> <p>Well contained - Approximately 57% adjoining the urban area of Chester at Handbridge, City Centre / Huntington)</p> <p>Strong boundary strength with durable boundaries to the north (urban area), east (urban area), south (A55) and west (the Duke's Driveway).</p> <p>Nearest settlement is Eccleston – 1.1 miles from urban fringe in Area Three, and 0.33 miles from southern boundary of Area Three.</p> <p>Meets four Green Belt opportunities (access, outdoor sport & recreation, retaining landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity).</p> <p>Approximately 9% developed, including waste water treatment works and the Eaton Estate.</p> <p>Views of the city possible from Beeston View / Duke's Driveway and across towards the Meadows and Grosvenor Park. View of Cathedral and Town Hall from Sandy Lane.</p> <p>Green corridor and wedge in to the city with open spaces and woodland corridors in to the heart of the city.</p> <p>Eaton Park, field systems associated with Eaton Estate, Heronbridge and a Roman road.</p>
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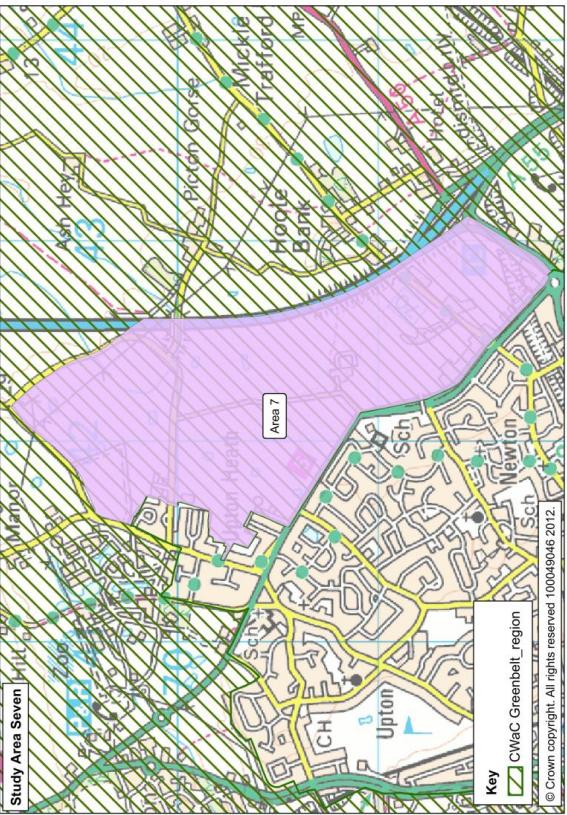
<p>Area Four: Land south of Whitchurch Road, east of A55</p> <p>Site area: 25 hectares</p> <p>Developed area: 6.95 hectares</p> <p>Perimeter: 2.2 km</p> <p>Land adjoining urban area: 1.3 km</p> <p>Northern section dominated by Park and Ride site, alongside commercial nursery and entrance to allotments. Agricultural land in active use in the southern half of the area.</p>	
	
<p>Purpose</p> <p>To check unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas</p> <p>To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another</p> <p>To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment</p> <p>To preserve setting and special character of historic towns</p>	<p>Comments</p> <p>Well contained – approximately 60% adjoining the urban area of Chester at Whitchurch Road and Boughton Heath.</p> <p>Strong boundary strength with a durable boundaries to the north (A41 - Whitchurch Road), east (A55), west (A41 – inner ring road), and south (intersection of A55 and A41).</p> <p>Nearest settlement is Christleton – less than 1 mile from existing built up area at Whitchurch Road.</p> <p>Meets two Green Belt opportunities (outdoor sport and recreation, and retaining landscapes).</p> <p>Approximately 28% developed – Park and Ride facility, nursery and hotel.</p> <p>No views in to or out of the city due to topography. City is visible from the A55.</p> <p>Open landscape beyond the allotments and when viewed from A55..</p> <p>Landscape and setting is fragmented. Features Abbot's Well.</p>

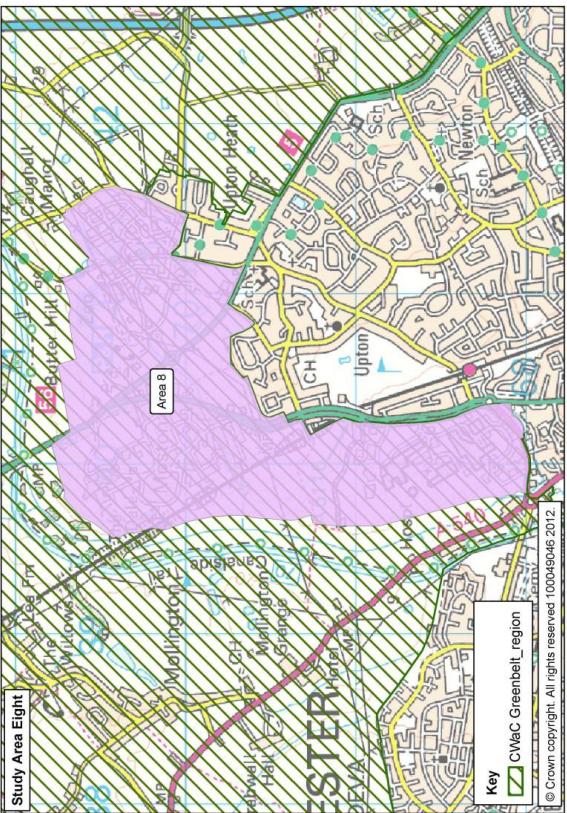
Findings of the Assessment

Area Five: Green Corridor - Shropshire Union Canal, Whitchurch Road, Boughton Heath	
Site area: 25 hectares	Developed area: 5.7 hectares
Perimeter: 2.0 km	Land adjoining urban area: 0.85 km
	Area predominantly agricultural land to north of Shropshire Union Canal. Residential properties to south of canal forms southern boundary.
 <p>Study Area Five</p> <p>© Crown copyright. All rights reserved 00049046 2012.</p> <p>Key: CWAC Greenbelt region</p>	<p>Comments</p> <p>Partially contained – approximately 42% adjoining the urban area of Chester at Whitchurch Road and Boughton Heath.</p> <p>Strong boundary strength with durable boundaries to the north (Pearl Lane), west (A41 – inner ring road), east (A55 outer ring road), and south (A41 – Whitchurch Road).</p> <p>Nearest settlement is Christleton – less than 1 mile from edge of existing built form along Whitchurch Road.</p> <p>Meets four Green Belt opportunities (access, outdoor sport and recreation, retaining landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity).</p> <p>Approximately 23% developed, with the Toll Bar Road residential area prominent.</p> <p>No views in to or out of the urban core due to topography of surrounding area. City is visible from the A55.</p> <p>Green corridor provided by Shropshire Union Canal and to be designated. High hedgerows restrict views of urban edge.</p> <p>Fragmented landscape – feature listed canal lock.</p>
<p>Purpose</p> <p>To check unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas</p> <p>To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment</p> <p>To preserve setting and special character of historic towns</p>	<p>Partially contained – approximately 42% adjoining the urban area of Chester at Whitchurch Road and Boughton Heath.</p> <p>Strong boundary strength with durable boundaries to the north (Pearl Lane), west (A41 – inner ring road), east (A55 outer ring road), and south (A41 – Whitchurch Road).</p> <p>Nearest settlement is Christleton – less than 1 mile from edge of existing built form along Whitchurch Road.</p> <p>Meets four Green Belt opportunities (access, outdoor sport and recreation, retaining landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity).</p> <p>Approximately 23% developed, with the Toll Bar Road residential area prominent.</p> <p>No views in to or out of the urban core due to topography of surrounding area. City is visible from the A55.</p> <p>Green corridor provided by Shropshire Union Canal and to be designated. High hedgerows restrict views of urban edge.</p> <p>Fragmented landscape – feature listed canal lock.</p>

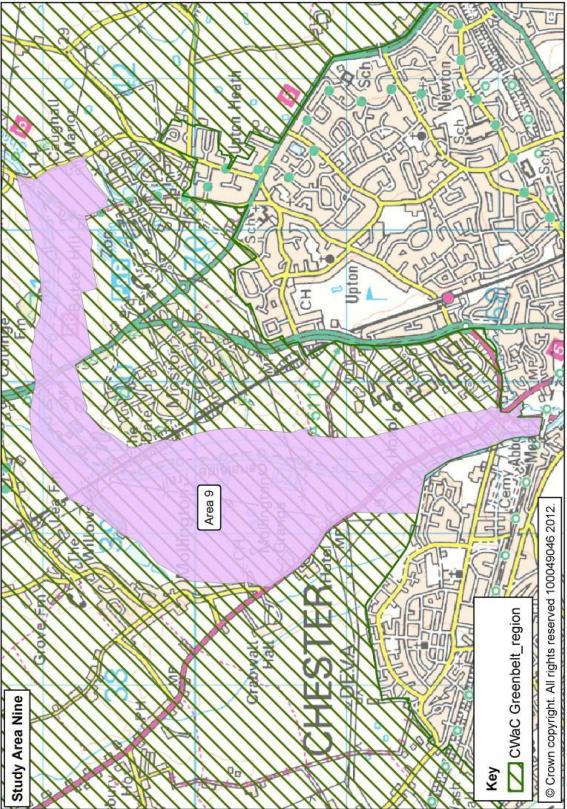
Area Six: Land at Piper's Ash	
Site area: 102 hectares	Developed area: 8.1 hectares
Perimeter: 5.5 km	Land adjoining urban area: 2.2 km
	Area split up by roads, railway line and residential properties (e.g. Hare Lane).
	Dominant land use throughout the area is agriculture. Rugby / sports facilities off Hare Lane.
	
Purpose	Comments
To check unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	Partially contained – approximately 40% adjoining the urban area of Chester at Vicars Cross and Hoole
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another	Strong boundary strength with durable boundaries to the north (A56), west (A41), east (A55) and south (Pearl Lane)..
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Nearest settlement is Littleton – less than 1 miles from urban edge of Chester. Piper's Ash is within Area Six.
To preserve setting and special character of historic towns	Meets four Green Belt opportunities (access, outdoor sport and recreation, retaining landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity). Approximately 8% developed, with Piper's Ash and Hoole Hall Hotel. Views from Piper's Ash back to Lead Shot Tower, Cathedral, and Town Hall. Key urban edge along A41. Open areas within Piper's Ash and beyond Hoole Hall Hotel and motorway.
	Fragmented landscape, with prominent historic features.

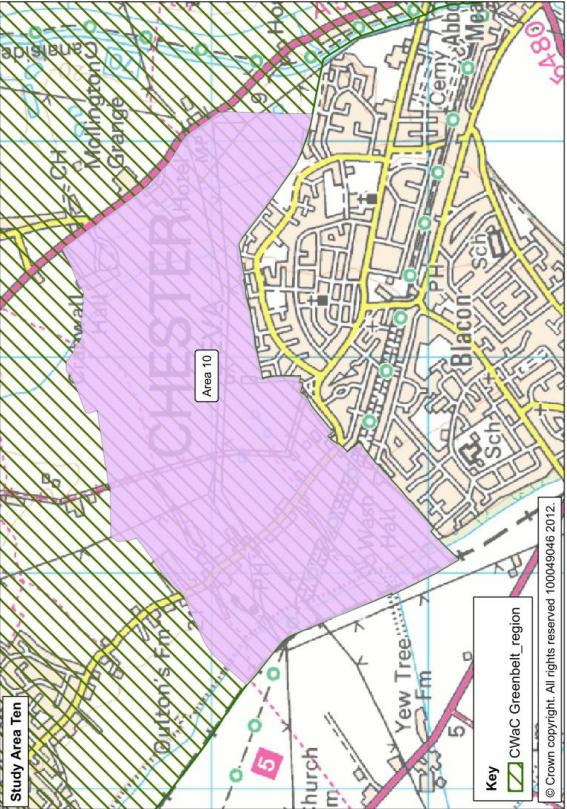
Findings of the Assessment

Area Seven: Land off Long Lane, Upton Heath	
Site area: 199 hectares	
Developed area: 9.8 hectares	
Perimeter: 7.4 km	
Land adjoining urban area: 3.8 km	
Predominantly agricultural land with associated farm buildings, and open countryside.	
	
Purpose	Comments
To check unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	Well contained – approximately 51% adjoining the urban area of Chester at Hoole, Upton and Upton Heath.
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another	Strong boundary strength with durable boundaries to the north (Wervin Road), west (urban form and A41), east (A55) and south (urban area) and south (A56). Nearest settlement is Mickle Trafford – 1.8 miles from urban area of Chester, 0.92 miles from the eastern boundary of Area Seven.
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Meets four Green Belt opportunities (access, outdoor sport and recreation, retaining landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity).
To preserve setting and special character of historic towns	Approximately 5% developed, with residential areas at Mannings Lane and Chester Sports Club.
	No key views in to or out of the historic city.
	Northern part has limited openness. Southern part is largely open. Key urban edge along Long Lane.
	Post medieval field pattern, large number of Roman practice camps.

<p>Area Eight: Land at Liverpool Road / Moston Road, Upton</p> <p>Site area: 243 hectares</p> <p>Developed area: 143.9 hectares</p> <p>Perimeter: 9.9 km</p> <p>Land adjoining urban area: 4.3 km</p> <p>Dominated by three major developed sites: Chester Zoo, Dale Barracks (army camp) and Countess of Chester Health Park.</p>	
<p>Purpose</p> <p>To check unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas</p> <p>To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another</p> <p>To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment</p> <p>To preserve setting and special character of historic towns</p>	<p>Comments</p> <p>Partially contained – approximately 45% adjoining the urban area of Chester at Upton and Upton Heath.</p> <p>Moderate boundary strength with durable boundaries to the south (urban area) and west (topographical features). Weaker boundaries to the north and east.</p> <p>Nearest settlement is Backford – less than 1 mile from the edge of the existing built form Dale Camp barracks.</p> <p>Meets five Green Belt opportunities (access, outdoor sports and recreation, retaining landscapes, improving damaged and derelict land, and visual amenity and biodiversity).</p> <p>Approximately 59% of the area is developed i.e. Chester Zoo, Dale Camp Barracks and Countess of Chester Health Park</p> <p>Views of Cathedral and Town Hall from Countess of Chester Health Park.</p> <p>Key urban edge to west of Countess of Chester Health Park. Area predominantly developed, limited openness north of Health Park and at Moston.</p> <p>Historic landscape has become fragmented</p>
	

Findings of the Assessment

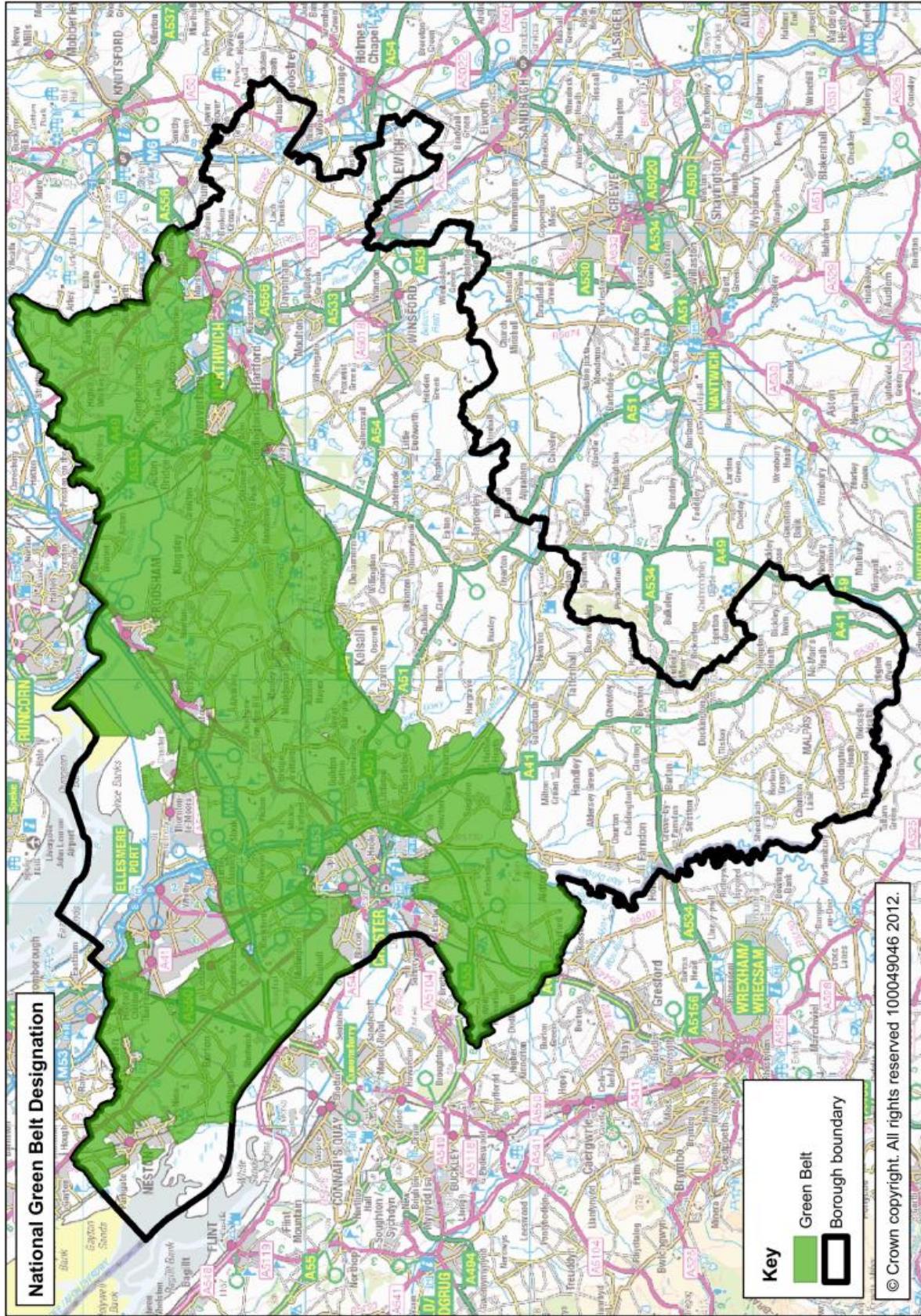
Area Nine: Green Corridor - Shropshire Union Canal, Upton	
Site Area: 304 hectares	
Developed area: 6.9 hectares	
Perimeter: 12.2 km	
Land adjoining urban area: 1.7 km	
<p>Dominated by the Shropshire Union Canal - green corridor in to the urban core, and Mollington Golf Course.</p>	
<p>Purpose</p> <p>To check unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas</p> <p>To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another</p> <p>To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment</p> <p>To preserve setting and special character of historic towns</p>	<p>Comments</p> <p>Not contained – approximately 14% adjoining the urban area of Chester at Upton Heath, Dale Camp barracks and CoCHP.</p> <p>Weak boundary strength with limited hard features along the boundary and based on topographical features and edges of major development sites.</p> <p>Nearest settlement is Backford – 0.4 miles from build development, and 0.24 miles from edge of Area Nine.</p> <p>Meets five Green Belt opportunities (access, outdoor sports and recreation, retaining landscapes, improving damaged and derelict land, and visual amenity and biodiversity).</p> <p>Approximately 3% developed, with Mollington Grange business park.</p> <p>Clear view of Cathedral, Town Hall from Parkgate Road. Area visible from the city walls and St.Martins Way.</p> <p>Key urban edge and green corridor into the city with open countryside to north of Blacon.</p> <p>Mix of field systems (largely late medieval). Character influenced by canal</p>
	

<p>Area Ten: Land north of Blacon, west of Parkgate Road</p> <p>Site area: 229 hectares</p> <p>Developed area: 12.6 hectares</p> <p>Perimeter: 7.9 km</p> <p>Land adjoining urban area: 2.7 km</p> <p>Predominantly rural, open land. Two leisure sites (hotels) along Parkgate Road and dispersed residential properties along Saughall Road.</p>	
 <p>Purpose</p> <p>To check unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas</p> <p>To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another</p> <p>To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment</p>	<p>Comments</p> <p>Partially contained – approximately 34% adjoining the urban area of Chester at Blacon. Strong boundary to the south and east (urban area and Parkgate Road), weaker to the north and west with hedgerows and field boundaries.</p> <p>Nearest settlement is Saughall – 1.02 miles from urban area.</p> <p>Meets four Green Belt opportunities (access, outdoor sport and recreation, retaining landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity).</p> <p>Approximately 6% developed, with linear development along Parkgate Road and Saughall Road.</p> <p>Views of Cathedral and Town Hall from Parkgate Road. Area to north of Parkgate Road visible from city at St.Martins Way</p> <p>Predominantly open countryside beyond urban edge at Blacon. Clear views across open countryside and Welsh border.</p> <p>Medieval field systems identified as one of oldest and rarest in Cheshire.</p>

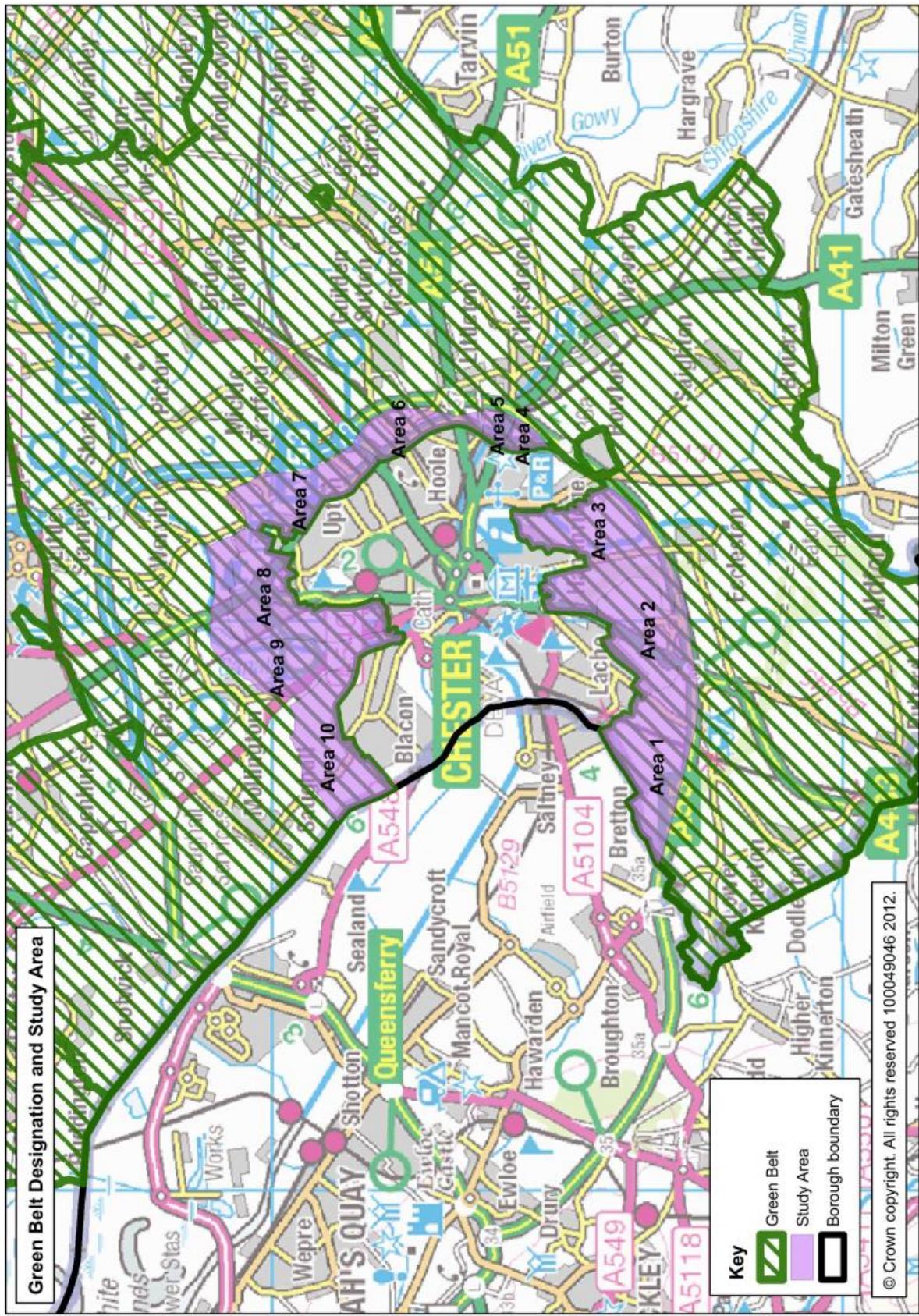
North Cheshire Green Belt Map

North Cheshire Green Belt Map

North Cheshire National Green Belt Designation



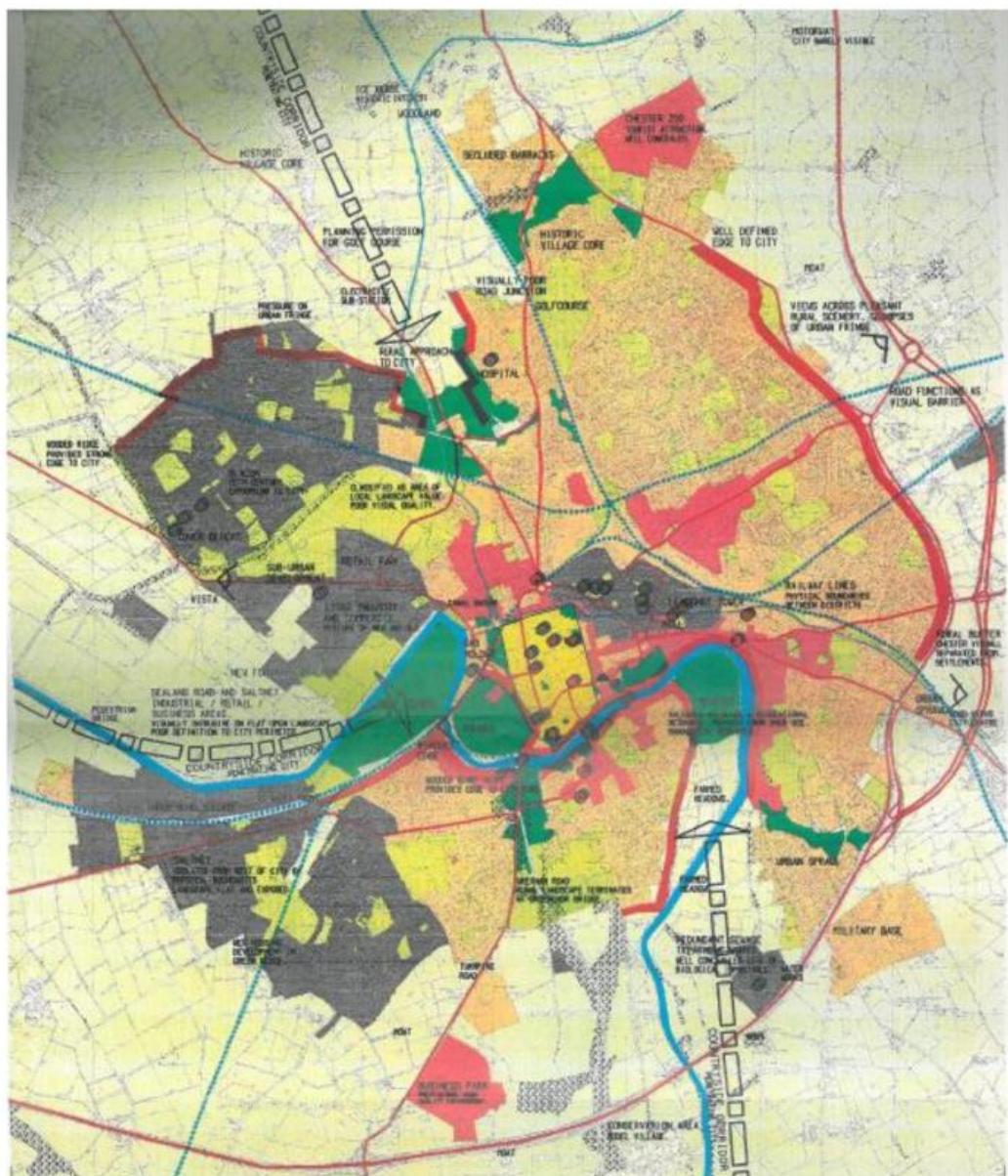
Study area map



Chester Environmental Capacity Study: Key Edges

Chester Environmental Capacity Study: Key Edges

Chester Evaluation (June, 1994)



1. CITY WIDE EVALUATION

GENERAL URBAN AREAS

BUILT-UP AREAS OF SUBSTANTIVE CHARACTER

URBAN AREAS OF NON-CONTINUOUS CHARACTER

 WOODLAND / SCRUB

URBAN OPTICS SPN03

DISTINCTIVE URBAN OPEN SPACE

LANDMARKS WHICH ENHANCE THE CHARACTER OF THE CITY

LANDMARKS WHICH DETRACT FROM THE CHARACTER OF THE CITY

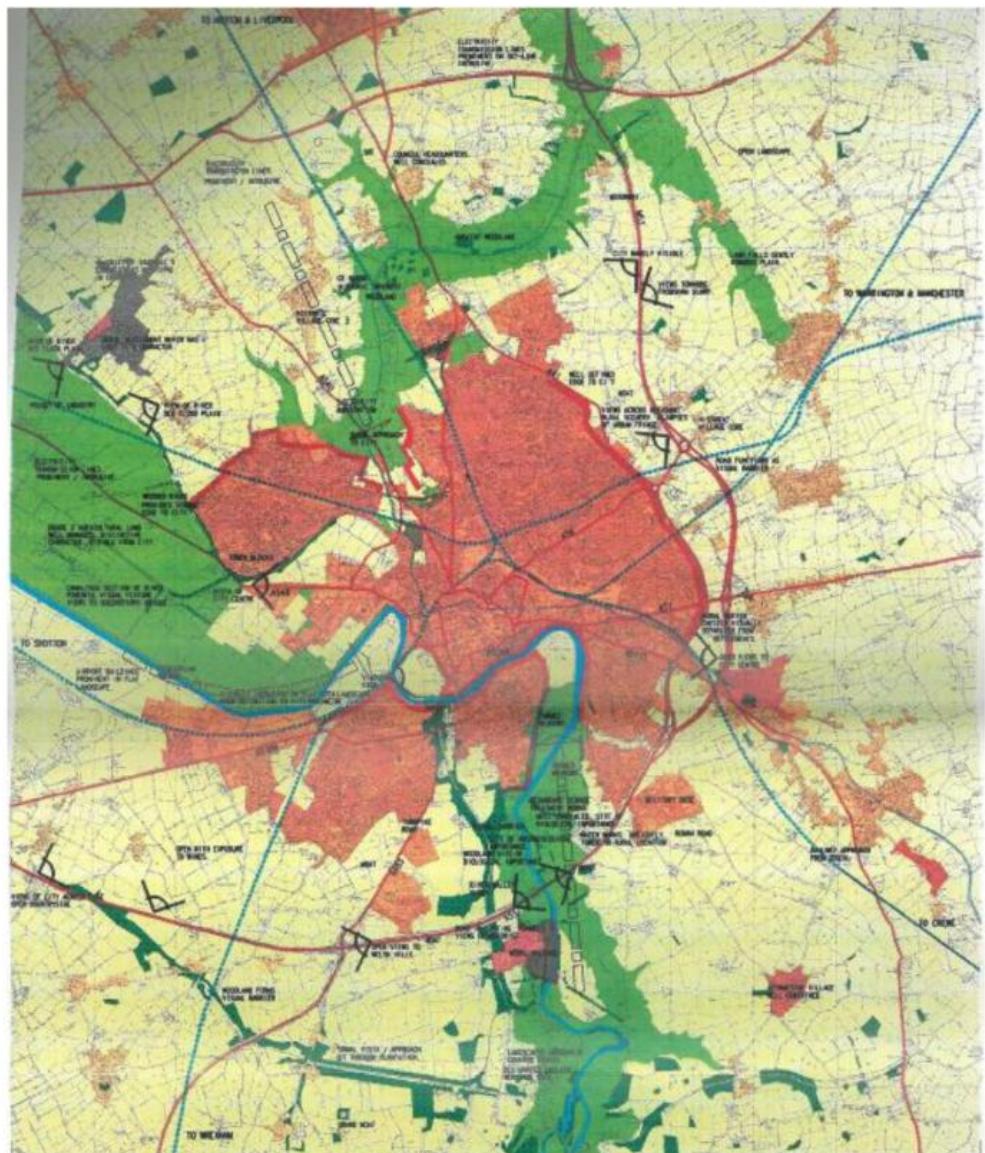
KEY WORDS

COUNTRYWISE CORRIDORS

350

CHESTER

Chester Rural Area Evaluation (June 1994)



E. COUNTRYSIDE EVALUATION

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■ DISTINCTIVE BURIAL SETTLEMENTS

EXAMINING COMMITTEE

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CHESTER

CHESTER

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Glossary

Glossary

Area of Nature Conservation Value (ANVC)	Sites designated by the former Chester City Council for their important nature conservation value.
Area of Special County Value (ASCV)	Areas in Cheshire which are particularly important because of their landscape, ecology, archaeology or history, and which merit protection from inappropriate forms of development. The detailed boundaries were established by district councils in their local plans.
Coalescence	The merger of two separate built up areas into
Chester Historic Landscape Characterisation (CHLC)	The Historic Landscape Characterisation study produced by the Historic Environment Team at CWaC (November 2007) provides advice on the management of the Historic Landscape of Cheshire.
Core Strategy	A core strategy document is the key compulsory local development document specified in United Kingdom planning law. Every other local development document is built on the principles it sets out, regarding the development and use of land in a local planning authority's area (now referred to as the Local Plan).
Graphical Information System (GIS)	A computer programme that enables areas / sites / features to be mapped on an Ordnance Survey base map. Units of area / length can be measured using GIS.
Green Belt	A national designation of an area of land, largely rural in character, which is adjacent to the main urban areas.
Infrastructure	When referring to a particular site it is the system of communications and services (such as water supply, electricity, gas and drainage) required before new development can begin. When referring to a wider area, the term includes the provision of more general services such as schools, shops and public transport.
Local Development Framework (LDF)	A portfolio of local development documents which include the Local Development Scheme, development plan documents, Supplementary Planning Documents, the Statement of Community Involvement and the Annual Monitoring Report. Together with the Regional Spatial Strategy, these documents provide the planning framework for the local authority area.
Major developed site in the Green Belt	An existing developed site that is within the Green Belt.
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	Government statement of national planning policy to be taken into account in determining planning applications and preparing Local Development Frameworks.
Open countryside	That part of the rural area outside the Green Belt and excluding sustainable settlements as identified in the SPD: Sustainable Development.

Scheduled Monument	Monuments considered to be of national importance by the government. The current legislation, the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, supports a formal system of Scheduled Monument Consent for any work to a designated monument.
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Sites of special value designated by Natural England under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

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