



Report of	Meeting	Date
Head of Spatial Planning	Central Lancashire Strategic Planning Joint Advisory Committee	22 nd November 2022

STAGE 1 REPORT GREEN BELT AND LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. To note contents of this report

PURPOSE OF REPORT

2. To inform the Joint Advisory Committee of the final stage 1 reports for green belt and landscape sensitivity.
3. To consider the recommendations made by Land Use Consultants (LUC) on the existing Core Strategy and Local Plan policies related to open land designations, as set out in the report at Appendix Three.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

4. This report gives an overview of the final reports produced by Land Use Consultants (LUC) on Open Land Designations Study including the Green Belt Assessment and Landscape Assessment. There are two studies this report will refer to;
 - Green Belt Assessment (Appendix One)
 - Landscape Assessment (Appendix two)
5. These will be published on the website to accompany the Preferred Options consultation.
6. The study also includes a review of the scope and function of the policies set out in each of the participating authority's existing Local Plans to inform the development of replacement policies for the Joint Plan that share a common approach and terminology.
7. LUC delivered a presentation to members of the initial findings earlier in 2022 and so members may be familiar with some of this content. This paper presents the final report for these two studies and is a succinct overview. To fully understand the outcome of those assessments, including at a spatial scale, members are encouraged to look at the assessment outputs and parcel outputs at the back of each study.

Confidential report Please bold as appropriate	Yes	No
--	-----	----

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

(If the recommendations are accepted)

8. None, for information only.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

9. None.

Background

10. LUC was commissioned by the three Central Lancashire local authorities (Preston City Council, South Ribble Borough Council and Chorley Council) to undertake strategic assessments of how land in the area:

- contributes to the Green Belt purposes as defined in paragraph 138 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- demonstrates valued landscape characteristics (including the identification of any areas where landscape quality can be considered of 'above ordinary' value);
- provides landscape settings which are important to the character of settlements; and
- maintains gaps between settlements in the Preston City Council area that are not designated as part of its Open Countryside (policy EN1) area.

11. This report is split into three sections, the Green Belt Assessment, the Landscape Assessment and Land Use Policy Recommendations for the new Local Plan.

Green belt Assessment

12. Appendix One is the final report for the strategic assessment of contribution to the Green Belt purposes. Local Plan policies of particular relevance to this work include:

Preston Local Plan policies:

- GB1 – Green Belt.
- EN1 – Development in the Open Countryside.
- EN4 – Areas of Separation.
- EN5 – Areas of Major Open Space.

South Ribble Local Plan policies:

- G1 – Green Belt.
- G3 – Safeguarded Land for Future Development.
- G4 – Protected Open Land.
- G5 – Areas of Separation.

Chorley Local Plan policies:

- BNE2 – Development in the Area of Other Open Countryside.
- BNE3 – Areas of Safeguarded Land for Future Development Needs.
- BNE4 – Areas of Separation.

Objective of the Evidence

13. The study provides a proportionate, objective, transparent, comprehensive, and consistent assessment of the strategic role and function of Central Lancashire's Green

Belt. The assessment of strategic contribution has identified broad variations in the role of land in relation to each of the NPPF Green Belt purposes, as defined in the NPPF, defining parcels of land with ratings, and supporting text. NPPF policy and the associated Green Belt purposes are outlined in more detail in Chapter 2 of the evidence paper.

14. The study identifies the key characteristics and features in each strategic parcel likely to influence Green Belt harm, and in so doing points towards any locations within each parcel where harm to the Green Belt purposes might be minimised. The key distinction between the concepts of contribution to the Green Belt purposes and harm to those purposes relates to the impact that release of land would have on the integrity of remaining Green Belt land.
15. An assessment of 'contribution' considers the role that land plays now, whereas an assessment of 'harm' considers how the loss of contribution of released land, together with any weakening of the remaining Green Belt, would combine to diminish the strength of the Green Belt. In the development of a preferred spatial strategy, relative harm to Green Belt of releasing specific site options will need to be weighed against benefits and the availability of any other reasonable alternatives
16. In addition to assessing land that is currently defined as Green Belt, the study has assessed areas that are subject to similarly restrictive local designations – namely Preston's EN1 ('Development in the Open Countryside'), South Ribble's G4 ('Protected Open Land'), Chorley's BNE2 ('Development in the Area of Other Open Countryside) and the policies defining land safeguarded for future development needs (G3 and BNE3). This analysis will inform any decisions regarding any potential recommended changes to the current Green Belt extent.
17. There was no assessment of Preston's EN5 policy area ('Areas of Major Open Space'), as this is entirely contained within the built-up area of Preston and so has little potential for consideration as new Green Belt, and no separate consideration of G5 and BNE4 ('Areas of Separation', in South Ribble and Chorley respectively) as these are both defined as Green Belt as well.
18. Paragraph 20 of the NPPF sets out the strategic topics for which Local Plan strategic policies should be prepared, including population and economic growth and associated development and infrastructure and facilities, climate change and the conservation and enhancement of the natural, built, and historic environment. All these topics either have a direct or indirect link to land designated as Green Belt or other local countryside designations. Consequently, a method statement was prepared for consultation with the stakeholders with whom the Authorities have a duty to cooperate. These include Historic England, Natural England, Environment Agency, and the relevant neighbouring local planning authorities.

National Green Belt Policy

19. Government policy on the Green Belt is set out in Chapter 13 of the adopted National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Protecting Green Belt Land. Paragraph 137 of the NPPF indicates that the government attaches "great importance" to Green Belts and states "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". This is elaborated in NPPF paragraph 138, which states that Green Belts serve five purposes, as set out below.

The purposes of Green Belt:

- 1) To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.
- 2) To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.

- 3) To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
 - 4) To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.
 - 5) To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
20. The NPPF emphasises that local planning authorities should establish and, if justified, only alter Green Belt boundaries through the preparation of their Local Plans. It goes on to state that “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”.

Green Belt Policy: What Policies Currently Exist in the Core Strategy and Three Local Plans

21. Central Lancashire Core Strategy does not have a specific Green Belt policy, but contains, at Paragraph 10.13, text that explains the role of the Green Belt:

The Green Belt helps ensure that settlements do not coalesce. No changes are anticipated to the strategic extent of the Green Belt within Central Lancashire. There is a general presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and the very special circumstances needed to justify inappropriate development within it will not exist unless the harm, by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

22. The Preston Local Plan applies national Green Belt policy through Policy GB1 (note: the NPPF paragraph referred to in the policy text is paragraph 138 in the 2021 version).
23. The South Ribble Local Plan applies national Green Belt policy through Policy G1.

Safeguarded Land

24. NPPF paragraph 143 details what local planning authorities should do when defining Green Belt boundaries. One of these requirements is ‘*where necessary, identify areas of safeguarded land between the urban area and the Green Belt, in order to meet longer-term development needs stretching well beyond the plan period*’. Safeguarded land is typically, therefore, located between urban edges and Green Belt land.

Safeguarded Land Policy: What Policies Currently Exist in the Core Strategy and Three Local Plans

25. There is no reference in the Core Strategy to safeguarding land for potential future development. The South Ribble Local Plan identifies safeguarded land sites through Policy G3 with 5 designated sites:
- S1 South of Factory Lane and east of the West Coast Main Line
 - S2 Southern area of the Major Development Site at Pickering’s Farm, Penwortham
 - S3 South of Coote Lane, Chain House Lane, Farington
 - S4 Land off Church Lane, Farington
 - S5 Land off Emnie Lane, Leyland

26. The Chorley Local Plan identifies safeguarded land sites through Policy BNE3 with 11 designated sites:
- BNE3.1 East of M61, Chorley
 - BNE3.2 Harrison's Farm, Adlington
 - BNE3.3 North of Bond's Lane, Adlington
 - BNE3.4 Babylon Lane, Heath Charnock
 - BNE3.5 North of Hewlett Avenue, Coppull
 - BNE3.6 Blainscough Hall, Coppull
 - BNE3.7 East of Tincklers Lane, Eccleston
 - BNE3.8 Between Bradley Lane, 7 Parr Lane, Eccleston
 - BNE3.9 Pear Tree Lane, Euxton
 - BNE3.10 West of M61, Whittle-le-Woods
 - BNE3.11 South east of Belmont Road & Abbey Grove, Adlington

Open Countryside Policy

27. Aside from Green Belt openness, the NPPF only refers specifically to open space in the context of its recreational role for communities, with Paragraph 96 discusses the importance of access to open spaces for sport and physical activity.

Open Countryside Land Policy: What Policies Currently Exist in the Core Strategy and Three Local Plans

28. Although not referring specifically to open land, the Core Strategy's principal spatial growth strategy policy, Policy 1, sets out the areas in which growth is to be focused. It lists a hierarchy of the settlement areas to be expanded, list the strategic sites to be allocated, and notes that 'In other places- smaller villages, substantially built-up frontages and Major Developed Sites -development will typically be small scale and limited to appropriate infilling, conversion of buildings and proposals to meet local need, unless there are exceptional reasons for larger scale redevelopment schemes.'
29. Preston's Policy EN1 applies constraint to development in the open countryside. It is noted that its provisions make no reference to landscape value/quality, only to protecting its openness and rurality. The designation covers most of the local authority area to the north and west of the city. The South Ribble Local Plan applies Policy G4 to a number of relatively small areas of land adjacent to settlements that are inset from the Green Belt.
30. The Chorley Local Plan applies Policy BNE2 to a single, large area of land to the east of the town that forms part of the West Pennine Moors.

Green Belt Assessment Methodology

31. There is no defined approach set out in national planning policy or guidance as to how Green Belt studies should be undertaken. The assessment provides a parcel-by-parcel analysis, with each parcel assessment split into two sections:
- A strategic assessment of the contribution of the parcel to the Green Belt purposes.
 - An analysis of key considerations with regard to potential harm resulting from the release of land within the parcel.

32. Although the study introduces the concept of Green Belt harm, that is the impact of Green Belt release on the purposes of the designation, it does not draw conclusions on the harm of releasing specific site options or recommend what land could be released for development. This requires *both a finer-grained scale of Green Belt analysis and the consideration of a wider range of sustainability factors* which the Councils will take into account in reaching a conclusion as to whether there are exceptional circumstances to justify the release of Green Belt land

What Land Does the Study Cover?

33. The assessment covers all Green Belt land within Central Lancashire. It also considers the extent to which land subject to other open countryside designations contribute to the purposes of Green Belt, were it so designated. This includes Preston's Open Countryside (policy EN1), South Ribble's Protected Open Land (G4), Chorley's Area of Other Open Countryside (BNE2) and the safeguarded land in South Ribble and Chorley (G3 and BNE3).
34. It excludes Preston's Areas of Major Open Space (EN5), which are wholly contained within the urban area. The study area is mapped on Figure 3.1. The assessment focuses on identifying strategic variations in the contribution of defined parcels of land to the five Green Belt purposes set out in the NPPF.
35. As a strategic study, the Green Belt assessment does not include a fine grained analysis of all variations in Green Belt performance. However, the core components both of this strategic assessment and any subsequent more detailed assessments are the same and require:
- An analysis of spatial variations in the function of the Green Belt, as set out in the NPPF purposes
 - Consideration of the impact of existing development on Green Belt Openness
 - Consideration of the relationship between built-up areas and Green Belt land (degree of distinction). Built-up areas could include land which is inset from the Green Belt, or located at its outer edge, or washed-over settlements that lack openness. This is distinct from the definition of large built-up areas.
36. In this strategic study, contribution ratings have been given using a three point scale of significant, moderate, or limited/no contribution. Ratings typically reflect the fact that most parcels contain at least some open land which does not have a strong relationship with any built-up area and therefore make a strong contribution to Purpose 3 (safeguarding the countryside from encroachment).
37. The second part of the assessment process, the consideration of potential harm resulting from the release of land, takes the analysis of contribution a step further by considering the implications of the release of land on the Green Belt purposes.
38. Harm to the Green Belt purposes will result from the loss of contribution of land that is released, but also from any impact that release has on the contribution of the remaining Green Belt. To provide meaningful ratings for harm to the Green Belt purposes requires a finer grain of analysis than is appropriate for a strategic study. However, the second part of each parcel assessment offers some consideration of the two principal factors that could influence the potential harm resulting from the release of land:
- The presence of areas within the parcel which, although still 'strategic' in Scale make a weaker contribution to the Green Belt purposes than the parcel as a whole.

- The existence of physical features within the parcel that could form a new Green Belt boundary that would limit the impact of release on the integrity of adjacent Green Belt land.

How Parcels of Land Were Defined

39. Parcels have not been predefined using promoted sites or existing boundaries, but have instead been the outcome of a consistent, strategic assessment process. In the first instance, variations in openness and in Green Belt function with regard to each NPPF purpose were identified and overlaid. A guideline minimum parcel size of 30ha was applied and a guideline maximum parcel size of 500ha was applied for areas adjacent to inset settlements and a maximum 2000ha area for land remote from inset settlements. Logical landscape elements were used, where available, to subdivide areas.

Summary of findings Green Belt Study

40. Variations in strategic contribution have been identified in accordance with the criteria set out in Chapter 3. The variations in relation to each Green Belt purpose have been overlaid to identify strategic parcels by which the assessment outputs are organised.
41. The reference numbers for parcels which are wholly or principally in the Green Belt are prefaced with a 'P' and those which are wholly or principally in other open countryside areas are prefaced with an 'N'. Each parcel assessment includes:
- A map to show the parcel's context, and to identify any statutory constraints to development;
 - Ratings and supporting analysis setting out the contribution to each of the five Green Belt purposes; and
 - An overview of key considerations regarding potential harm to the Green Belt purposes associated with the strategic-scale release of land, identifying any particular physical features beyond which release might mark an increase in harm.
42. Table 4.1 (page 78) of Appendix One lists the ratings for strategic contribution to the Green Belt purposes for each of the defined assessment parcels and it shows the parcels that were defined to reflect variations in strategic contribution.
43. Overview maps at figures 4.2 to 4.5 (page 92 onwards in Appendix three) strategic variations in contribution to each of the first four Green Belt purposes across the Central Lancashire area. As set out in the assessment methodology, no Green Belt land in Central Lancashire is considered to contribute to Green Belt Purpose 5 (the recycling of derelict and other urban land), so these findings are not mapped. Figure 4.6 combines the contribution ratings for Purposes 1-4 to illustrate how many Green Belt purposes each parcel contributes towards.

Contribution to Purpose 1

44. There is a very clear pattern of contribution to Purpose 1 – checking the unrestricted sprawl of a large, built-up area. Preston, Chorley, and the intervening settlements together form a large, built-up area, so most land on the outer fringes of this area is, at a strategic scale, playing a significant role in preventing its sprawl. This applies to the 'open countryside' (policy EN1) area to the north of Preston, and also Chorley's 'other open land' (BNE2), as much as to the Green Belt.

45. Land adjacent to the Feniscowles suburb of Blackburn also makes a significant contribution to Purpose 1, as Blackburn together with Darwen is also a large, built-up area.
46. Open land separating the settlements between Preston and Chorley that make up the large built-up area makes only a limited contribution to Purpose 1, due to its weak connectivity with the wider Green Belt. Development within these areas would be considered to be infilling in gaps within the large, built-up area rather than sprawl expanding it
47. Beyond the parcels adjacent to Preston-Chorley and Blackburn there are two chains of settlements that are sufficiently linked by urbanising development for their expansion to have some association with the large built-up area. These are the settlements extending west from Penwortham out to Much Hoole, and east from Bamber Bridge out to Hoghton.. Although development here would not constitute direct expansion of the large built-up area, land which is preventing significant expansion of these settlements, including the loss of remaining separation between them, is making some contribution to preventing the perception of sprawl associated with the Preston-South Ribble-Chorley conurbation. It should be recognised that more substantial expansion of the Preston-South Ribble-Chorley urban area or of Blackburn beyond the immediately adjacent parcels would still have a significant impact on this purpose

Contribution to Purpose 2

48. There are three areas where land makes a significant contribution to preventing the merger of neighbouring towns. Although land between the settlements that make up the Preston-Chorley large, built-up area makes only a limited contribution to preventing expansion of that area as a whole, the settlements that make up the area still retain a degree of distinction as separate towns. Where these gaps are fragile, such as between Bamber Bridge and Leyland, and between Chorley and Whittle-le-Woods or Euxton, contribution at a strategic scale is significant. It is only where land is very isolated within the urban area, and lacking association with the wider Green Belt, that strategic contribution to Purpose 2 is weaker, despite gaps being narrow. This is the case between Penwortham / Lostock Hall and Preston.
49. The second area where some strategic parcels make a significant contribution to Purpose 2 is to the south of Chorley. There are relatively narrow gaps between Chorley and Adlington, between Adlington and Horwich, between Chorley and Coppull and between Coppull and Standish. In some areas there are physical separating features which reduce contribution, or land lacks strong enough distinction from the adjacent urban edge for it to be considered to be making a strong contribution, but where this is not the case the contribution to Purpose 2 is significant.
50. The third area in which land rates as significant for Purpose 2 is in the open countryside (EN1) area between Preston and Longridge. The urban area of Preston has expanded beyond the M61 here, and intervening development at Grimsargh and a lack of Green Belt protection for land within Ribble Valley Borough further weakens the gap.

Landscape Assessment Findings

51. Appendix Two is the Landscape Assessment report which include LUC's methodology and outputs for the strategic assessment of landscape value, settlement settings and settlement gaps.

52. An analysis of the open land planning policies across the Central Lancashire area has identified aspects relating to the three roles of landscape covered by this assessment:
- its key aspects of landscape value
 - its role in providing a setting for its settlements
 - its role in maintaining the separation of settlements.
53. The study provides, at a strategic level, a proportionate, objective, transparent and consistent assessment of Central Lancashire's landscape in terms of these three roles. The study outputs will help determine what open land policies would be most appropriate for the Central Lancashire Local Plan and will assist with the consideration of potential future development locations. This study undertakes a strategic-scale analysis of landscape qualities across all open land within the Central Lancashire area subject to the open land policies listed in Paragraph 1.5 above based on the Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) identified within the Landscape Strategy for Lancashire (2000). The study area excludes the Forest of Bowland, located to the north of Preston, which is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and is also subject to a local plan policy, EN6, which recognises its natural beauty.
54. The assessment includes a 'value evaluation' which reviews various aspects of landscape value [see Chapter 3] and summarises the key landscape qualities and/or elements/ features/ areas of value within each LCA, noting any distinct strategic-scale variations within the LCA. Each assessment also records whether an area is considered to have 'above ordinary' landscape value. This terminology reflects the language used in the TGN's definition of a valued landscape as being above 'everyday landscapes'. This analysis is intended to help determine whether an area-based policy identifying areas of local landscape value, such as Chorley policy BNE2, is appropriate in the joint Local Plan and, if so, which areas might be considered for inclusion.

Settlement setting assessment

55. For each relevant village or larger settlement (refer to Chapter 3) this strategic assessment provides an overview of the settlement's character/identity and the extent to which its relationship with the surrounding landscape is important in contributing to that character. It also summarises key elements of that setting and concludes whether the landscape setting makes.

Areas of separation assessment

56. In South Ribble and Chorley, areas that are currently subject to area of separation policies (G5 and BNE4 respectively) all lie within the Green Belt and relate to towns. In Preston, however, areas of separation (policy EN4) have been defined between the main urban area and much smaller settlements. Therefore, it was agreed that the scope of this assessment would focus on settlements outside of the Green Belt within Preston. This 'areas of separation' assessment focuses on the spatial separation of settlements, taking into consideration the presence of physical features that serve to either reduce or increase the perceived gaps between settlements. It provides an evaluation of the gap, followed by identification of any variations, and provides an overall judgement on the strength of the gap, whether it is robust, moderate, or fragile. The assessment also notes the key elements that contribute to the maintenance of the gap.

Relevant Local Policies

57. There are a number of relevant local policies to this assessment which include

- Core Strategy Policy 13 Rural Economy' is concerned primarily with ways in which economic and social improvement of rural areas can be achieved, and after setting out types of development that will be allowed it state that '... proposals will be required to show good siting and design in order to conserve and where possible enhance the character and quality of the landscape ...'.
 - Core Strategy Policy 21 – 'Landscape Character Areas' concerns the positive role that new development is required to play in relation to landscape character.
 - Policy 1 – 'Locating Growth' seeks to "focus growth and investment ... whilst protecting the character of suburban and rural areas".
 - Policy 19 – 'Areas of Separation and Major Open Space' seeks to "protect the identity, local distinctiveness and green infrastructure of certain settlements and neighbourhoods by the designation of Areas of Separation and Major Open Space, to ensure that those places at greatest risk of merging are protected and environmental/ open space resources are safeguarded".
 - Policy EN1 – 'Development in the Open Countryside' aims to protect areas of 'Open Countryside' from unacceptable development which would harm its open and rural character. It seeks to do this by limiting development to "a) that needed for purposes of agriculture or forestry or other uses appropriate to a rural area ...; b) the re-use or re-habilitation of existing buildings; c) infilling within groups of buildings in smaller rural settlements". The majority of land within Preston District is designated as 'Open Countryside
 - Policy EN4 – 'Areas of Separation' seeks to prevent "harm to the effectiveness of gaps between settlements and, in particular, the degree to which the development proposed would compromise the function of the Area of Separation in protecting the identity and distinctiveness of settlements". Areas of Separation are identified between: Broughton and the Preston Urban Area; Goosnargh Whittingham and Grimsargh; and Grimsargh and the Preston Urban Area.
 - Policy EN5 – 'Areas of Major Open Space' is concerned primarily with maintaining separation between urban neighbourhoods in Preston
 - Policy G4 – 'Protected Open Land' seeks to "retain the openness and natural character of local areas and to protect the land from development". It is applied to a number of relatively small areas of land adjacent to Penwortham, Longton, New Longton, Hutton and Gregson Lane
 - Policy G5 – 'Areas of Separation' seeks to prevent built-up areas from merging into one another and to protect the land within the boundary from inappropriate development
 - Policy BNE2 – 'Development in the Area of Other Open Countryside' applies to a single, large area of land located to the east of the M61 including the West Pennine Moors.
58. Policy BNE10 – 'Trees' seeks to protect trees and woodland areas "which make a valuable contribution to the character of the landscape, a building, a settlement, or the setting thereof.
59. Policy BNE4 – 'Areas of Separation' seeks to protect built-up areas from merging into each other and maintain the openness of these areas of countryside by preventing inappropriate development. Two Areas of Separation are identified between Chorley and Euxton and between Chorley and Whittle-le- Woods.
60. The Landscape Institute TGN 02/21 provides a list of factors that can be considered when identifying landscape value. These factors and their definitions are as follows:
- Natural heritage – Landscape with clear evidence of ecological,
 - geological, geomorphological, or physiographic interest which contribute positively to the landscape.
 - Cultural heritage – Landscape with clear evidence of archaeological,
 - historical or cultural interest which contribute positively to the landscape.

- Landscape condition – Landscape which is in a good physical state both with regard to individual elements and overall landscape structure.
- Associations – Landscape, which is connected with notable people, events and the arts.
- Distinctiveness – Landscape that has a strong sense of identity.
- Recreational – Landscape offering recreational opportunities where experience of landscape is important.
- Perceptual (scenic) – Landscape that appeals to the senses, primarily the visual sense.
- Perceptual (wildness and tranquillity) – Landscape with a strong perceptual value notably wildness, tranquillity, and/or dark skies.
- Functional – Landscape which performs a clearly identifiable and valuable function, particularly in the healthy functioning of the landscape.

Assessment Findings

61. The landscape assessment findings can be found at table 4.1 (page 39 of Appendix Two) and table 4.2: provides a summary of the Settlement Setting Assessment, and Table 4.3: provides a summary of the Areas of Separation Assessment. The findings are also shown on the overview maps, in Figure 4.1 - Figure 4.2.
62. There are only five LCAs within the Central Lancashire Area that are assessed as having 'above ordinary' landscape value. That is, they are considered to have particular qualities/characteristics that elevate it above that of 'ordinary' countryside. The other LCAs, whilst having some valued landscape characteristics, are overall not considered to have 'above ordinary' landscape value.

Land Use Policy Designations

63. This report is a short summary of the findings paper produced by LUC which should be read in its entirety and attention paid to its reference to three Councils as a joint plan-making area as opposed to solely Chorley borough, although for this report extracts focus on Chorley.

Summary of Existing Policies

- Open Countryside (Preston, Chorley)
 - Green Belt (all authorities).
 - Safeguarded Land (South Ribble, Chorley).
 - Areas of Separation (all authorities).
64. Table 1.1 of Appendix Three (Policy Option Evaluation) illustrates the policy options available to the three Councils, taking account of the positives and negatives of each. In short, these options are:
 - Open Countryside – whether the current open countryside policies are appropriate, and if so whether a rationalised policy should be purely spatial or should refer to landscape value and settlement identity and setting?
 - Green Belt – whether there would be a case for any strategic changes to Green Belt, i.e. to create new Green Belt in areas currently subject to other open countryside designations e.g. in Preston? This paper does not consider the release of land for development purposes, as this will be subject to further considerations beyond just Green Belt matters

- Area of separation – whether a policy relating to settlement gaps should be retained and/or redefined?
- Settlement setting – whether a policy should be considered to protect land that contributes to settlement setting?
- Landscape – whether a policy should be considered to protect land that contributes to landscape quality?
- Large open spaces in urban areas – whether a policy should be included protecting large areas of open land within urban areas?

Policy Recommendations

65. The exceptional circumstances needed to justify the designation of a new Green Belt in Central Lancashire are extensive, and there is currently insufficient evidence to determine whether it would be possible for the following reasons:
- The sustainable scale and distribution of growth across Central Lancashire has yet to be agreed and justified.
 - Alternative local policies have not been ruled out as unsustainable, or unreasonable in meeting Central Lancashire’s policy objectives
 - The implications of Green Belt extensions on the cooperating authorities’ immediate neighbours have not been explored.
66. It is therefore recommended that the Central Lancashire authorities pursue alternative local policy mechanisms for protecting the open countryside at this time:

Recommendation Number One

67. It is recommended that open countryside policy (BNE2) is deleted in favour of relying on the Councils preferred spatial strategy to provide a simple blanket protection of the open countryside, assuming growth is focused with existing urban areas and specific allocated greenfield sites. Policy wording could be added to the spatial strategy to
- Clarify what types of development are appropriate in the countryside i.e. beyond the proposed areas of defined growth and the settlement limits. In particular the policy could consider the requirements for: affordable and specialist housing needs; rural land uses and employment opportunities and tourism and community infrastructure.
 - Integrate wider sustainability considerations and reference need for any development that does take place to be sustainable
 - Mention any major barrier/ boundary features that should not be crossed

Recommendation Number Two

68. It is recommended that the Councils’ Area of Separation Policies (BNE4) are consolidated and refined as follows:
- Areas of separation in Green Belt removed, noting that national Green Belt policy adequately protects the open countryside in these locations.
 - Use LUC’s settlement gap assessments to refine the extent of existing and designate new Areas of Separation in sensitive settlement gaps outside the Green Belt.

- Each Area of Separation should be listed in the consolidated policy and their broad extent mapped in the accompanying policies map
- Each Area of Separation designation could list the key elements that contribute to the maintenance of the gap that are in need of protection (see LUC's settlement gap assessments), rather than being prohibitive of any development that falls within a defined gap (so gaps can be drawn quite broadly).

Recommendation Number Three

69. It is recommended that the Councils replace the only existing policy that makes reference to settlement setting, (G4 which is a South Ribble Local Plan policy), with a new Settlement Setting Policy.
- A criteria-based policy is recommended in preference to the definition of boundaries around specific settlements identified as having high-value settings. Development proposals would need to consider the key elements and areas that contribute to a settlement's setting (see LUC's settlement setting assessments).
 - Policy could refer to LUC study to identify any sensitivities to be considered in association with any settlement. Attentively, this could refer to more detailed landscape sensitivity assessments (if these are carried out).

Recommendation Number Four

70. It is recommended that the Councils consolidate and expand upon the existing Landscape Policies (CS13, CS21) with:
- A criteria-based policy which makes it clear how landscape qualities should be considered in relation to new development – referring back to the LUC landscape value assessments for each LCA or sub-area or, if they are carried out, more detailed landscape sensitivity assessments.
71. The Councils could also use LUC's landscape value assessments to designate areas of local landscape importance – i.e. areas of 'above ordinary value' such as within the Ribble Valley, Ribble Marshes and West Pennine Moors (as identified in the LUC landscape study).
72. Each protected landscape could be listed in the policy and their broad extent mapped in the accompanying policies map. However, each designation could list the key elements that need protection (see LUC's landscape value assessments), rather than being prohibitive of any development that falls within sensitive landscapes.

Next Steps

73. The policy recommendations will be incorporated into the emerging Preferred Options version of the local plan.
74. The other study assessments will be used by the Central Lancashire authorities alongside other pieces of evidence to undertake the sieving process required to select proposed site allocations and develop proposed policies and spatial strategy.

Equality and diversity

1. Not applicable

Risk

There are no risks associated with this report the report is for information.

Comments of the Statutory Finance Officer

2. There are no direct financial implications of this report.

Comments of the Monitoring Officer

3. The report is for consideration and discussion by Members – in particular it is for Members to consider the four recommendations at the end of the report. Clearly the final position we arrive at needs to be capable of being defended in the context of national legislation and guidance.

Appendices

Appendix One Open Land Designations Study Green Belt Assessment LUC

Appendix Two Open Land Designations Study Landscape Assessment LUC

Appendix Three Central Lancashire Green Belt and Other Open Land Designations Review

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Zoe Whiteside (Service Lead – Spatial Planning)	zoe.whiteside@ch orley.gov.uk	08/11/22	