

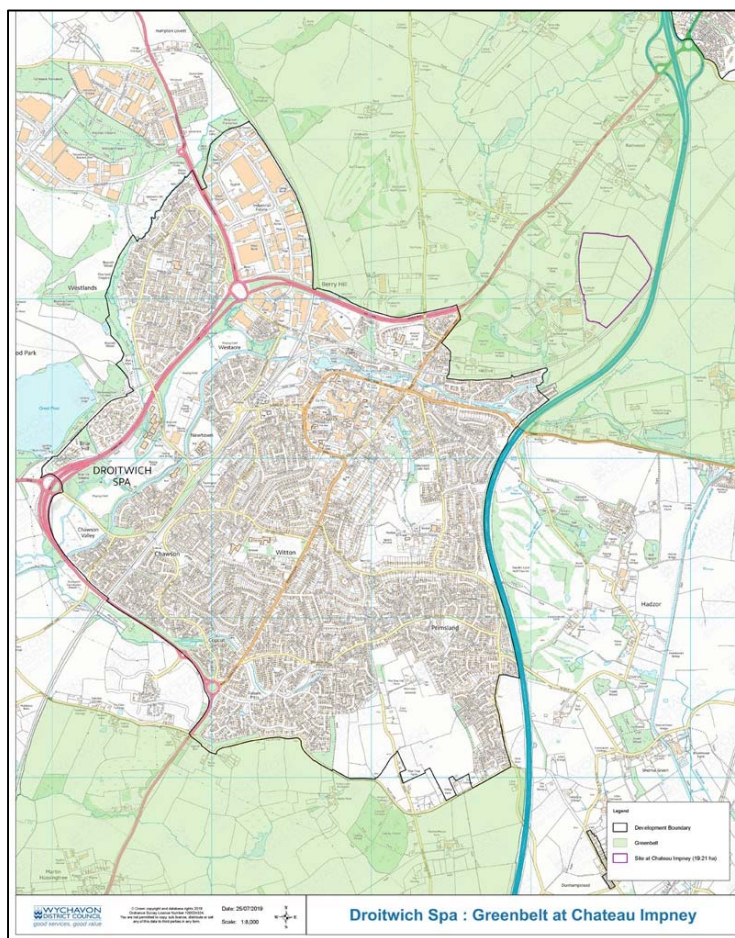
Technical note:

Land at Chateau Impney, Droitwich Spa: Green Belt Site Assessment

1. Background

This Technical Note sets out a site assessment of land at Chateau Impney, Droitwich Spa which the landowner has put forward for consideration as an employment allocation in the SWDP Review. The site extent is shown on Figure 1.1, lying around 1km to the northeast of Droitwich Spa and immediately northwest of various buildings associated with Chateau Impney. The site lies within the West Midlands Green Belt in Wychavon District.

Figure 1.1 Site Location



The methodology for assessing the likely degree of harm to the Green Belt arising from the development of the land is set out in Appendix A. The site assessment draws on the Strategic Assessment of Green Belt Purposes undertaken in 2018 for the South Worcestershire Councils.

2. Site Assessment

2.1 Site Description

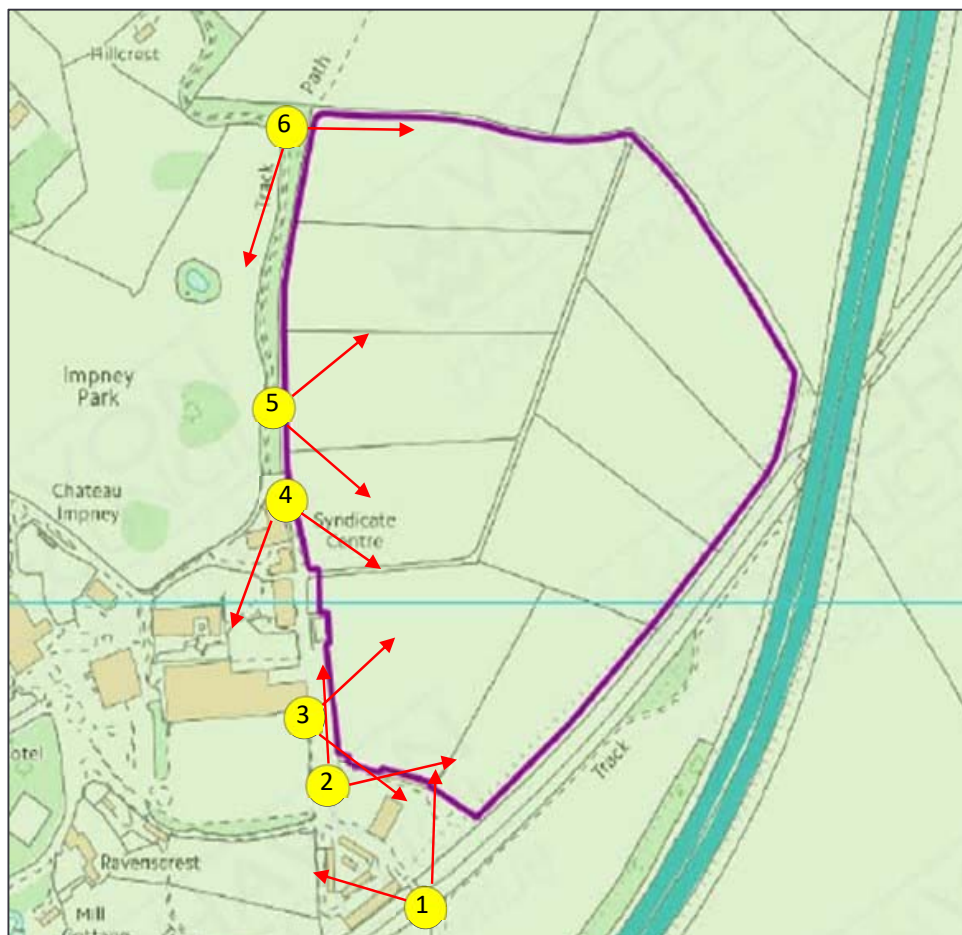
The site comprises 19.21ha of land situated to the northeast of existing commercial / light industrial units on the Chateau Impney estate. The land rises over approximately 20m, forming a prominent southeast facing slope. The land is down to rough grass and is understood to be used for various events including motor sport. The site is bounded by existing commercial / industrial units to the south, a railway line to the southeast, a road/bridleway to the west (the John Corbett Way) and a hedgerow to the north/northeast. Internal divisions to the site comprise a trackway and post and wire fences.

From the western edge of the site and particularly the northwest corner, there are expansive views over open countryside to the east and southeast. Visual sensitivity is less pronounced in the vicinity of the existing industrial buildings to the south.

2.2 Photographic Viewpoints and Site Photographs

Figure 2.1 records the photographic viewpoints of the site visit undertaken on 27th August 2019.

Figure 2.1 Photographic Viewpoints



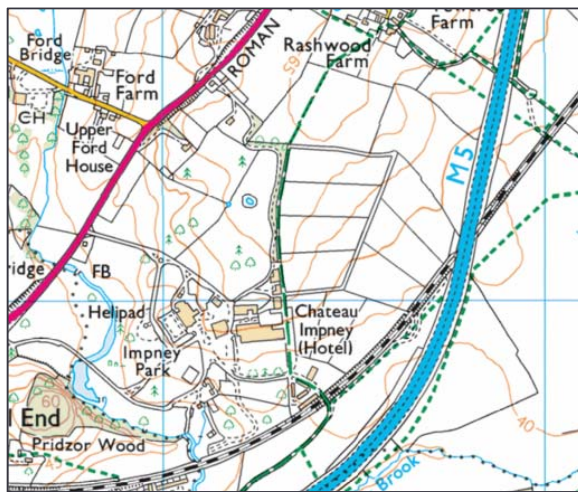




Viewpoint 6: Looking southeastwards from the northwest corner of the site

2.3 Green Belt Site Assessment

Location Map and Aerial



Site Description (land use, condition, degree of openness – visual and physical), boundary quality

The site comprises 19.21ha on land situated to the northeast of existing commercial/ light industrial units on the Chateau Impney estate. The land rises over approximately 20m, forming a prominent southeast facing slope. The land is down to rough grass and is understood to be used for various events including motor sport. The site is bounded by existing industrial units to the south, a railway line to the southeast, a road/bridleway to the west and a hedgerow to the north/northeast.

Visual Openness	Physical Openness	Boundary Quality
High Reflecting the topography and exposure of the site, with expansive views across the site to the east and southeast from the adjacent bridleway. There is less visual exposure towards the south of the site where the land is enclosed by existing development and the embankment of the railway line.	High The site contains no built development.	Mixed The site is well bounded to the southeast by a railway line, to the south and southwest by existing industrial buildings, otherwise a combination of post and wire fencing and an insubstantial hedgerow to the north.

Green Belt Purpose	Contribution to Green Belt Purposes / Explanation Grading of: <u>Significant Contribution</u> / <u>Contribution</u> / <u>Limited or No Contribution</u> , with accompanying narrative
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas <i>What is the role of the site in preventing the extension of an existing development into open land beyond established limits, in light of the presence of significant boundaries?</i>	Contribution The site lies within the gap between Bromsgrove and Droitwich Spa and locally between Droitwich Spa and the large village of Wychbold. Whilst not physically connected to Droitwich, there is significant localised sprawl associated with various forms of development at Chateau Impney.
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another <i>What is the role of the site in preventing the merger of settlements which might occur through a reduction in the distance between them?</i>	Significant Contribution The land forms part of the gap between Bromsgrove and Droitwich Spa, and locally between Droitwich Spa and the large village of Wychbold. Whilst the physical distance between settlements and the topography and tree cover at Hill End and at Rashwood Farm maintain a strong sense of separation, in the absence of a clear containing boundary to the north, this could be quickly eroded by incremental change.
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment <i>What is the role of the site in maintaining a sense of openness, particularly in light of proximity to a settlement edge?</i>	Contribution Despite its location between busy arterial roads (the A38 and the M5), the site is part of wider land retains a largely rural character and has an open aspect which is sensitive to incremental change. There is no clear boundary to the north which would contain development.
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns <i>What is the role of the site in respect of the proximity to, and degree of intervisibility with, the core (such as a Conservation Area) of an historic town or settlement?</i>	Contribution The land does not have a physical or visual connection with a Conservation Area, although it is part of the broader northerly context of Droitwich Spa.
Overall Assessment of Contribution to Green Belt Purposes <i>In light of the judgements made on individual purposes, what is the overall contribution of the site to the Green Belt?</i>	Significant Contribution Reflecting the location of the land in the gap between Bromsgrove and Droitwich Spa, the Green Belt makes a significant contribution to maintaining openness in an area which has a relatively strong open character (with high physical and visual openness) which is vulnerable to incremental change and has limited capacity to accept change.

2.4 Judgement of the Likely Effects of Development on the Green Belt

Degree of Harm	Criteria
	Significant Clear adverse effects of development on physical and/or visual openness and permanence which is unlikely to be able to be successfully mitigated.
	Moderate to Significant Adverse effects of development on physical and/or visual openness and permanence with potential opportunities for mitigation.
	Moderate Mixed effects of development on physical and/or visual openness and permanence with opportunities for mitigation.
	Moderate to Limited Lesser effects of development on physical and/or visual openness or permanence, with clear opportunities for mitigation.
	Limited No discernible effect of development on physical and/or visual openness and permanence.

Evaluation Question (adapted from: Calverton Parish Council v Nottingham City Council & Ors [2015] EWHC 1078 (Admin) (21 April 2015))	Assessment
What is the nature and extent of the harm to the Green Belt of removing the site from it?	Development on this site is considered to result in a Significant degree of harm to the Green Belt in this location, reflecting the intrusion of built form into open countryside, the exposure of the site and the consequent effects on openness. The site is poorly bounded to the north and north west, meaning that permanence is uncertain.
To what extent could the consequent impacts on the purposes of the Green Belt be ameliorated or reduced to the lowest reasonably practicable extent?	Given the exposure of the site, mitigation such as through screening would be difficult to achieve, particularly in light of the potential scale and massing of industrial and commercial units.
If this site were to be developed would the adjacent Green Belt continue to serve at least one of the five purposes of Green Belts, or would the Green Belt function be undermined by the site's development?	The wider Green Belt to the north and west would continue to perform its functions of maintaining separation and preventing encroachment, although these would all be compromised by such development. The narrowness of this strategic gap between Bromsgrove and Droitwich Spa heightens the impact of development.
Can a Green Belt boundary around the site be defined clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent? Does it avoid including land which it is necessary to keep permanently open?	Whilst the site is clearly defined, the boundaries to the north and northwest are not substantial (being a hedgerow and a post and wire fence respectively) and cannot be relied upon as permanent features through which development can be contained over the long term.
Overall Conclusions on the Likely Effects on the Green Belt of Site Development	Development of the site is judged to result in Significant harm to the Green Belt in this location, reflecting the sensitivity of the strategic gap between Bromsgrove and Droitwich. Incremental erosion through the extension of built form into open countryside would compromise the separation function of the land in

Evaluation Question (adapted from: Calverton Parish Council v Nottingham City Council & Ors [2015] EWHC 1078 (Admin) (21 April 2015))	Assessment
	particular, whilst having a disproportionately large impact on visual openness through the introduction of large-scale built form. The boundaries of the site to the north and west are insubstantial and cannot guarantee permanence.

3. Conclusions and Recommendations

The site is of a scale and location which is judged to result in a **Significant degree of harm** to the openness and permanence of the Green Belt in this location. This reflects the context of the site within the strategic gap between Bromsgrove and Droitwich which overall makes a Significant Contribution to Green Belt purposes and the role of the site as part of open countryside in this location. The strategic Green Belt purposes of separation and prevention of encroachment would be compromised by development in this location.

Development to the proposed site extent would introduce further localised urbanisation into open countryside extending from existing development which would compromise the physical and visual openness of the Green Belt. Mitigation of the effects of site development through boundary tree planting for example are unlikely to be effective, reflecting the overall exposed character of the site. Visual openness is less towards the south of the site where existing development and the railway embankment create a degree of visual enclosure. However, this effect quickly disappears as the land gains height to the north.

The permanence of the site boundaries, whilst clear to the southeast (a railway line) and southwest (existing development at Chateau Impney), are insubstantial to the northwest and north, being post and wire fencing and a hedgerow. Internal boundaries comprise a track and post and wire fencing.

The evidence provided in this assessment of impact on the Green Belt, strategically and locally, can be complemented by other technical studies such as a landscape and visual impact appraisal and a sustainability appraisal.

Issued by

Robert Deanwood

Approved by

Clive Harridge

Copyright and non-disclosure notice

The contents and layout of this report are subject to copyright owned by Wood (© Wood Environment & Infrastructure Solutions UK Limited 2019) save to the extent that copyright has been legally assigned by us to another party or is used by Wood under licence. To the extent that we own the copyright in this report, it may not be copied or used without our prior written agreement for any purpose other than the purpose indicated in this report. The methodology (if any) contained in this report is provided to you in confidence and must not be disclosed or copied to third parties without the prior written agreement of Wood. Disclosure of that information may constitute an actionable breach of confidence or may otherwise prejudice our commercial interests. Any third party who obtains access to this report by any means will, in any event, be subject to the Third Party Disclaimer set out below.

Third party disclaimer

Any disclosure of this report to a third party is subject to this disclaimer. The report was prepared by Wood at the instruction of, and for use by, our client named on the front of the report. It does not in any way constitute advice to any third party who is able to access it by any means. Wood excludes to the fullest extent lawfully permitted all liability whatsoever for any loss or damage howsoever arising from reliance on the contents of this report. We do not however exclude our liability (if any) for personal injury or death resulting from our negligence, for fraud or any other matter in relation to which we cannot legally exclude liability.

Management systems

This document has been produced by Wood Environment & Infrastructure Solutions UK Limited in full compliance with our management systems, which have been certified to ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and OHSAS 18001 by LRQA.

Appendix 1: Site Assessment Methodology

1. The Part 1 Strategic Assessment Report set out the character and qualities of the Green Belt across South Worcestershire, and its role in fulfilling the purposes set for it in national policy. This Report uses the Strategic Assessment to help determine the likely effects of the development of sites on the Green Belt, both individually and cumulatively. Other documents will consider the need and justification for development.
2. The following matrices (Tables 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3) are used to record and guide the Assessment of the contribution to Green Belt purposes of each proposed site. Where the site is co-extensive with the parent parcel, the analysis of the Strategic Assessment is reproduced, otherwise the analysis is adapted to fit the site proposed, be this covering part of a parcel or multiple parcels.
3. For each Green Belt purpose, a guide question is used as the reference point for the consideration of the degree to which the parcel contributes to that purpose, in turn assisted by criteria which help to steer the judgements made in specific circumstances. The results are recorded in a matrix which sets out comments on how each site performs against Green Belt purposes. Consideration is given in the Assessment to both the strategic and local roles of the Green Belt generally and in the context of settlement edges in particular.

Table 1.1 Site Assessment Proforma

Location Map and Aerial			
Site Description (land use, condition, degree of openness – visual and physical), boundary quality	XX		
	Visual Openness¹	Physical Openness	Boundary Quality
	XX	XX	XX
Green Belt Purpose	Contribution to Green Belt Purposes / Explanation Grading of: <u>Significant Contribution / Contribution / Limited or No Contribution</u> , with accompanying narrative		
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas <i>What is the role of the site in preventing the extension of an existing development into open land beyond established limits, in light of the presence of significant boundaries?</i>			
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another <i>What is the role of the site in preventing the merger of settlements which might occur through a reduction in the distance between them?</i>			
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment <i>What is the role of the site in maintaining a sense of openness, particularly in light of proximity to a settlement edge?</i>			

¹ See Table below for assessment criteria

Green Belt Purpose	Contribution to Green Belt Purposes / Explanation Grading of: <u>Significant Contribution / Contribution / Limited or No Contribution</u> , with accompanying narrative
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns <i>What is the role of the site in respect of the proximity to, and degree of intervisibility with, the core (such as a Conservation Area) of an historic town or settlement?</i>	
Overall Assessment of Contribution to Green Belt Purposes <i>In light of the judgements made on individual purposes, what is the overall contribution of the site to the Green Belt?</i>	

Table 1.2 Criteria used in the Assessment of Visual and Physical Openness and Boundary Quality

Visual Openness	High	Clear, middle and longer-distance views across the land.
	Mixed	Partially enclosed (e.g. by landform, vegetation or built form) but with views in/out.
	Low	Flat, surrounded by trees and vegetation.
Physical Openness	High	No built form or very limited urbanising influences.
	Mixed	Some built form, but not a defining feature.
	Low	Existing development and urban influences a prominent, defining element.
Quality of Boundaries	Strong	Prominent physical features (roads, railways, buildings/urban edge).
	Moderate	Less robust physical features (paths/tracks, watercourses, woodlands, hedgerows).
	Weak	No definable boundary on the ground.

Table 1.3 Site Gradings against Green Belt Purposes

Purpose & Guide Question	Grading	Assessment Criteria
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas <i>What is the role of the site in preventing the extension of an existing development into open land beyond established limits, in light of the presence of significant boundaries?</i>	Significant Contribution	An extension of a built-up area which is not contained by substantial boundaries.
	Contribution	An extension of a built-up area with a degree of containment by substantial boundaries.
	Limited or No Contribution	Largely enclosed by existing development, strong containment and a limited relationship with the wider Green Belt.
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another	Significant Contribution	Located within a gap between settlements which would be physically and/or visually compromised by development and which is unlikely to be able to be mitigated.

Purpose & Guide Question	Grading	Assessment Criteria
<i>What is the role of the site in preventing the merger of settlements which might occur through a reduction in the distance between them?</i>	Contribution	Located within a strategic or local gap which could be physically and/or visually compromised by development but could also be mitigated.
	Limited or No Contribution	Not located within a strategic or local gap.
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment <i>What is the role of the site in maintaining a sense of openness, particularly in light of proximity to a settlement edge?</i>	Significant Contribution	Of open character, proximate to an urban edge, maintaining a clear distinction between town and country.
	Contribution	Of open character, detached or unrelated to an urban edge.
	Limited or No Contribution	Land is largely urbanised and/or has little or no relationship with the wider Green Belt.
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns <i>What is the role of the site in respect of the proximity to, and degree of intervisibility with, the core (such as a Conservation Area) of an historic town or settlement?</i>	Significant Contribution	Contains, or is directly adjacent to, a Conservation Area or other significant historic feature and contributes physically and/or visually to their setting.
	Contribution	In the vicinity of Conservation Area or other significant historic feature and partially contributes physically and/or visually to their setting.
	Limited or No Contribution	No relationship with a Conservation Area or other significant historic feature.
Overall Contribution <i>In light of the judgements made on individual purposes, what is the overall contribution of the site to the Green Belt?</i>	Significant Contribution	Makes a significant contribution to one or more Green Belt purposes, or an accumulation of contributions to purposes.
	Contribution	Makes a contribution to one or more Green Belt purposes.
	Limited or No Contribution	Makes a limited or no contribution to Green Belt purposes.

The Colouring Assessment for Individual Green Belt Purposes

The site makes a **Significant Contribution** to a Green Belt purpose clearly and unambiguously against the assessment criterion.

The site makes a **Contribution** to a Green Belt purpose against the assessment criterion, although this is more diffuse in character and/or has been compromised by development.

The site makes a **Limited or No Contribution** to a Green Belt purpose because of either performing no clear role in a particular location and/or has been compromised by development



3.1 Judgement of the Likely Effects of Development on the Green Belt

- The following table (Table 1.4) is used to summarise, in the light of the assessment of Green Belt purposes, the likely effect of development on the Green Belt, on-site and in the immediate vicinity, and the potential for mitigation of the adverse effects arising.

Table 1.4 Evaluation Template Relating to Site Development

Evaluation Question (adapted from: Calverton Parish Council v Nottingham City Council & Ors [2015] EWHC 1078 (Admin) (21 April 2015))	Assessment
What is the nature and extent of the harm to the Green Belt of removing the site from it?	Narrative stating the likely degree of harm to the Green Belt as: significant, moderate or limited (and combinations thereof), reflecting the meeting of Green Belt purposes of the parcel affected and the likely impact of development on openness. This is a professional judgement.
To what extent could the consequent impacts on the purposes of the Green Belt be ameliorated or reduced to the lowest reasonably practicable extent?	Narrative reflecting opportunities to employ strategic and local measures such as landscaping to mitigate the impacts of development on openness.
If this site were to be developed would the adjacent Green Belt continue to serve at least one of the five purposes of Green Belts, or would the Green Belt function be undermined by the site's development?	Narrative, reflecting the relationship of the site with its wider Green Belt context.
Can a Green Belt boundary around the site be defined clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent? Does it avoid including land which it is necessary to keep permanently open?	Narrative in light of site-specific context.
Overall Conclusions on the Likely Effects on the Green Belt of Site Development	Narrative based on the above assessment.

Degree of Harm	Criteria
	Significant Clear adverse effects of development on physical and/or visual openness and permanence which is unlikely to be able to be successfully mitigated.
	Moderate to Significant Adverse effects of development on physical and/or visual openness and permanence with potential opportunities for mitigation.
	Moderate Mixed effects of development on physical and/or visual openness and permanence with opportunities for mitigation.
	Moderate to Limited Lesser effects of development on physical and/or visual openness or permanence, with clear opportunities for mitigation.
	Limited No discernible effect of development on physical and/or visual openness and permanence.

3.2 Mitigation of Harm to the Green Belt and Enhancement of Beneficial Use

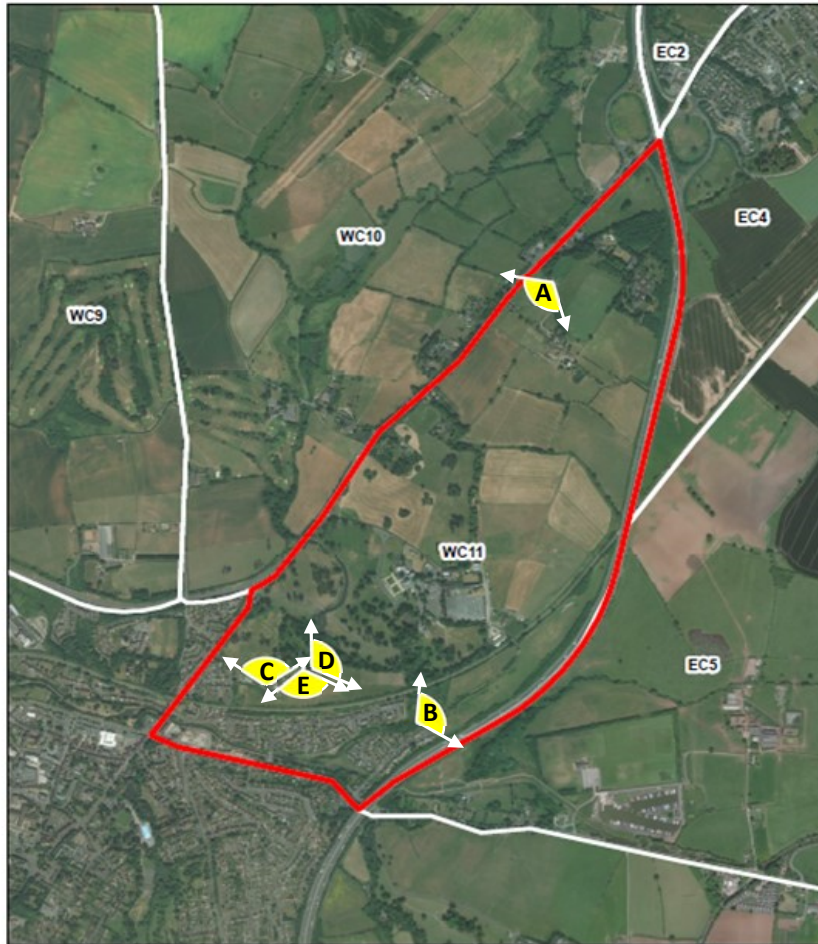
- The NPPF (2019) (para. 138) notes that: *"Where it has been concluded that it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development, plans should give first consideration to land which has been previously-developed and/or is well-served by public transport. They should also set out ways in which the impact of*

removing land from the Green Belt can be offset through compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt land."

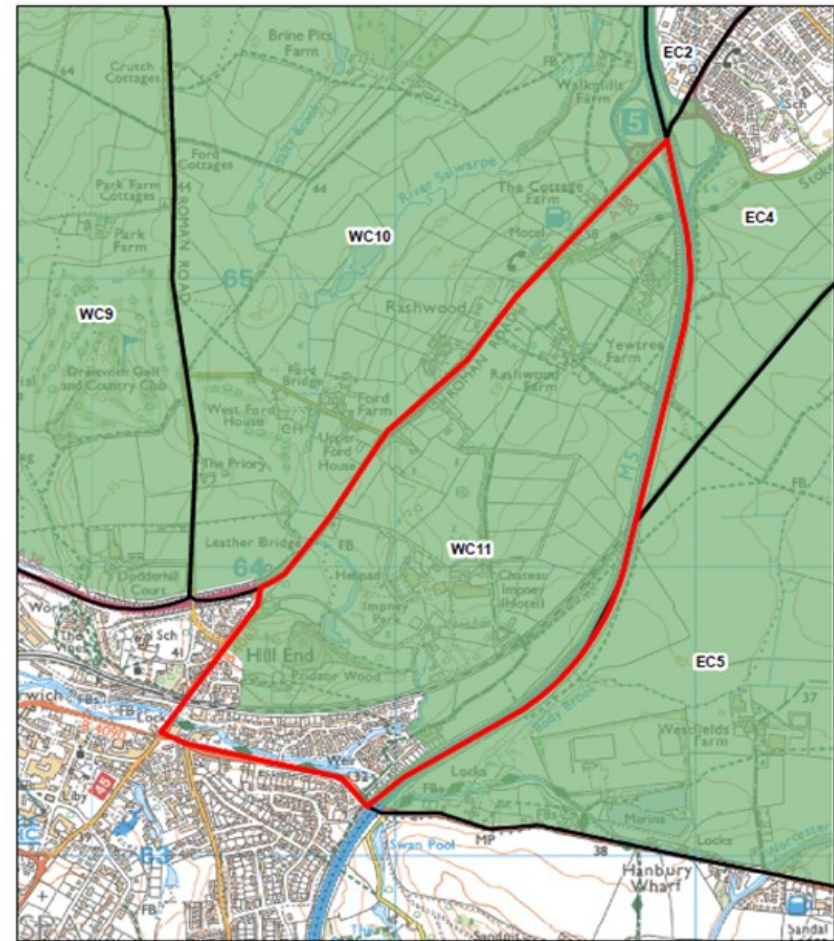
In defining harm to remaining Green Belt land, loss of openness is the principal consideration, such as through the breaching of a physical barrier, increased containment, or severance from adjoining Green Belt. Such direct harm can be mitigated to some degree.

Appendix 2: Strategic Parcel Assessment

PARCEL WC11



Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number AL300001776.

View southwards from the A38 at Rashwood (viewpoint A)



View northeastwards from Swan Drive (viewpoint B)



View northwards from Hill End (viewpoint C)



View northeastwards from Hill End (viewpoint D)



View southeastwards from Hill End (viewpoint E)



WC11: Land northeast of Droitwich Spa, between the A38 and the M5. Land use comprises a mixture of pasture, arable, formal parkland and commercial, residential and farm-related properties. There is evidence of incremental change to the south of the parcel associated with the urban edge of Droitwich Spa, which takes the form of unbounded development extending into open land.

Physical openness – mixed, reflecting a balance between open countryside and built development to the north and south of the parcel.

Visual openness – mixed, reflecting the presence of middle- and short-distance views across the parcel.

Purpose & Guide Question	Contribution to Green Belt Purposes / Analysis
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	Significant Contribution
<i>What is the role of the parcel in preventing the extension of an existing development into open land</i>	The parcel lies within the gap between Bromsgrove and Droitwich Spa and locally between Droitwich Spa and the large village of Wychbold. Development has breached the strong boundary of the Droitwich – Bromsgrove railway

WC11: Land northeast of Droitwich Spa, between the A38 and the M5. Land use comprises a mixture of pasture, arable, formal parkland and commercial, residential and farm-related properties. There is evidence of incremental change to the south of the parcel associated with the urban edge of Droitwich Spa, which takes the form of unbounded development extending into open land.

Physical openness – mixed, reflecting a balance between open countryside and built development to the north and south of the parcel.

Visual openness – mixed, reflecting the presence of middle- and short-distance views across the parcel.

Purpose & Guide Question	Contribution to Green Belt Purposes / Analysis
<i>beyond established limits, in light of the presence of significant boundaries?</i>	at Hill End, creating unbounded edge which combined with some evidence of incremental change across the parcel as a whole, creates the potential for sprawl along the A38 corridor.
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another	Significant Contribution
<i>What is the role of the parcel in preventing the merger of settlements which might occur through a reduction in the distance between them?</i>	The land forms part of the gap between Bromsgrove and Droitwich Spa, and locally between Droitwich Spa and the large village of Wychbold. Whilst the physical distance between settlements and the topography and tree cover at Hill End and at Rashwood Farm maintain a strong sense of separation, in the absence of a clear containing boundary to the north, this could be quickly eroded by incremental change.
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Contribution
<i>What is the role of the parcel in maintaining a sense of openness, particularly in light of proximity to a settlement edge?</i>	Despite its location between busy arterial roads, the land retains a largely rural character, and has an open aspect which is sensitive to incremental change. There is no clear boundary to the north which would contain development.
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	Contribution
<i>What is the role of the parcel in respect of the proximity to, and degree of intervisibility with, the core (such as a Conservation Area) of an historic town or settlement?</i>	The land does not have a physical or visual connection with a Conservation Area, although it is part of the broader northerly context of Droitwich Spa.
Overall Assessment of Contribution to Green Belt Purposes	Significant Contribution
	Reflecting the location of the land in the gap between Bromsgrove and Droitwich Spa, the Green Belt makes a significant contribution to maintaining openness in an area which has a relatively strong open character (with mixed physical and visual openness) and is vulnerable to incremental change because of its size and location within a strategic road corridor.