

Appendix 5

Junction 3 Assessment

Part 1: Area Context

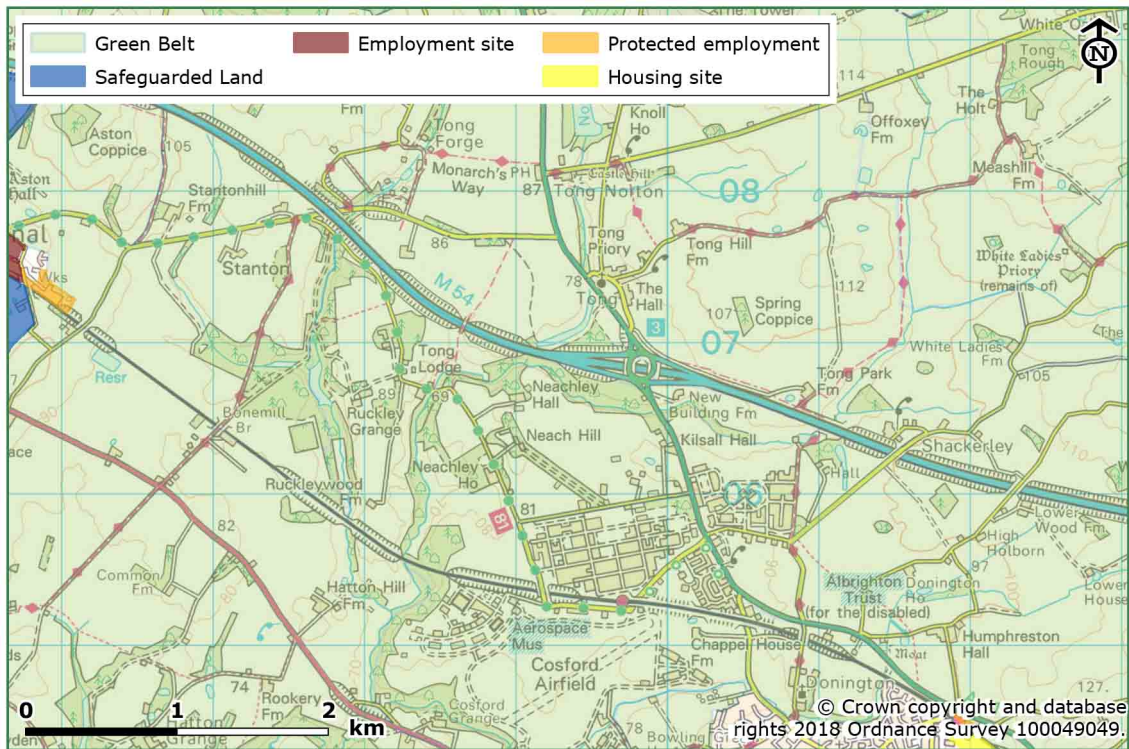


Figure A5.1: Junction 3 Context

In reviewing the Shropshire Green Belt, the Council wish to examine a range of opportunities that might form part of an appropriate growth strategy for Shropshire from 2016 to 2036, to meet the objectives of the Local Plan review. The Green Belt review therefore considers land around the principal settlements in the Green Belt and also the strategic location and sites around M54 Junction 3 including RAF Cosford. Junction 3 of the M54 lies to the north of Cosford and to the south of the village of Tong and to the east of Shifnal.

The Local Plan review’s focus on principal settlements reflects the ‘urban focus’ of the preferred spatial strategy but the Council also wish to focus investment into strategic corridors and new growth zones, utilising existing road and rail connections to seek to deliver a ‘step change’ in the Shropshire economy.

This further objective responds directly to the Shropshire Economic Growth Strategy that identifies the principal strategic corridors and growth zones in Shropshire. This includes the M54 / A5 east growth corridor which includes Junction 3 and adjacent strategic sites and also RAF Cosford. This growth zone is linked to investment in Telford, Wolverhampton and Stafford where the clustering and supply chain opportunities from existing and future business (including international investment) may create demand for development around Junction 3 to help deliver Shropshire’s economic growth objectives and to support the development needs of its neighbours.

Part 2: Parcels - Assessment of Harm on the Green Belt

The map and aerial show the location and extent of all the parcels around Junction 3 that were considered in the Stage 1 Green Belt Assessment (2017) (outlined in purple and blue on Figure A5.2). The parcels outlined in purple around Junction 3 are those that are being considered in further detail as part of the assessment of harm. This assesses the harm to the Green Belt as a consequence of releasing land for development.

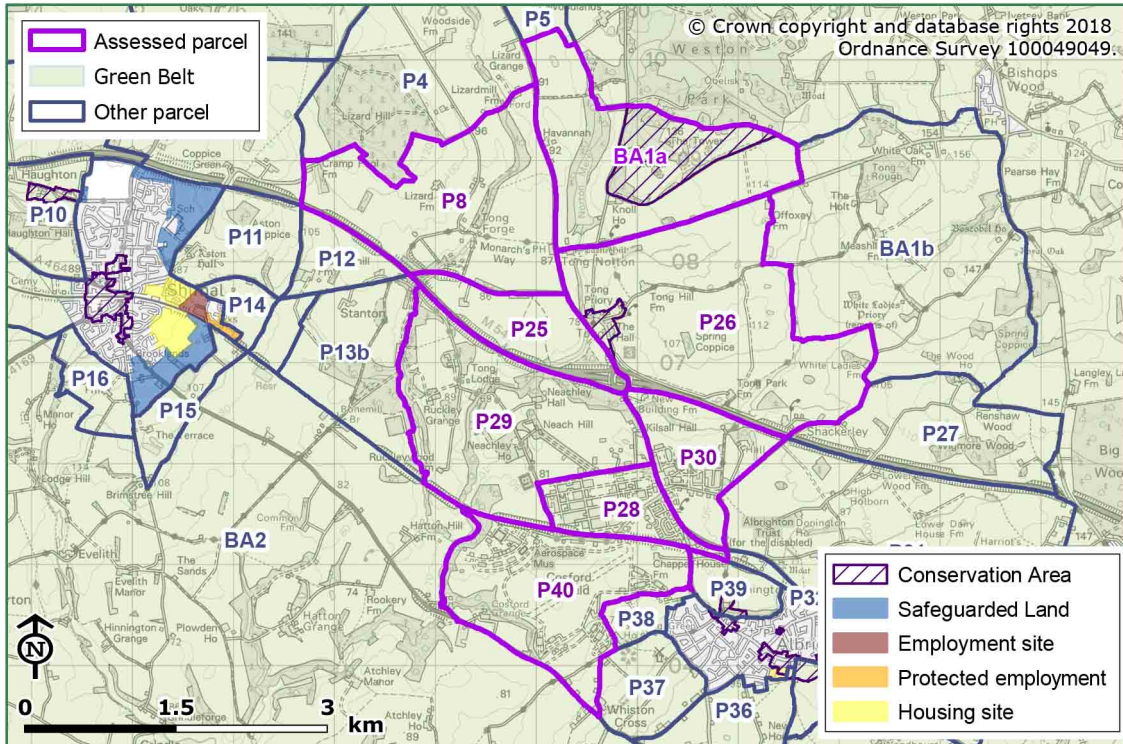


Figure A5.2: Green Belt Parcels Surrounding Junction 3

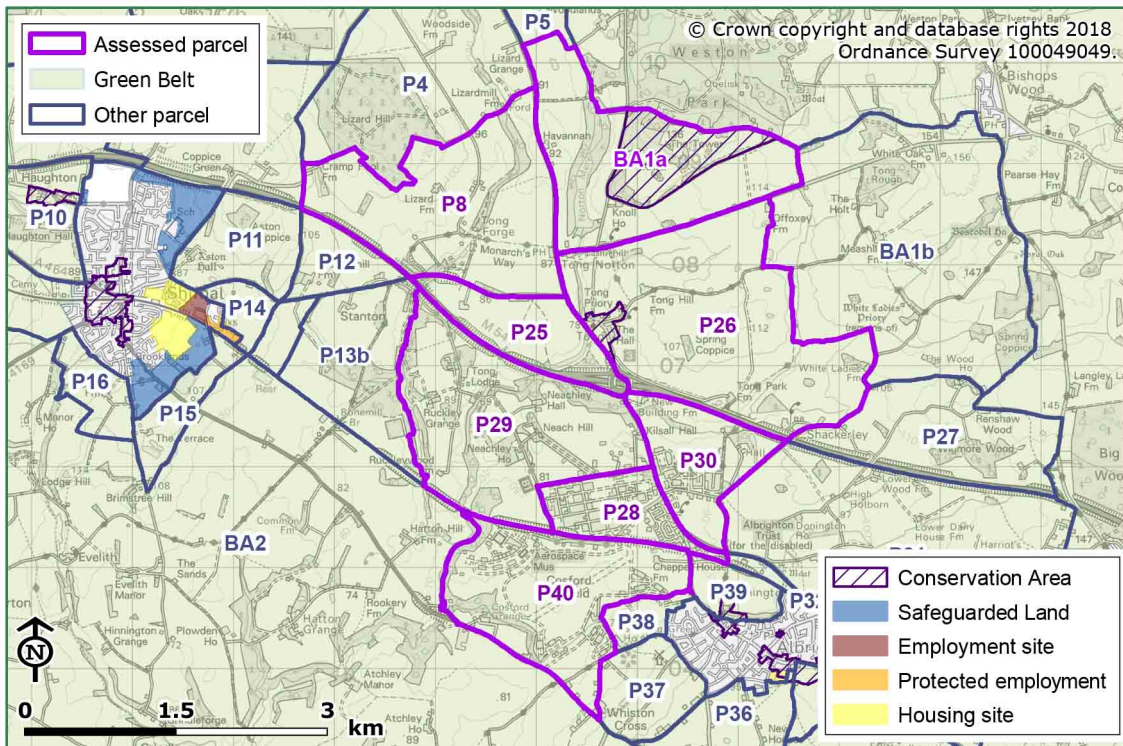


Figure A5.3: Aerial View of Green Belt Parcels Surrounding Junction 3

Parcel P8

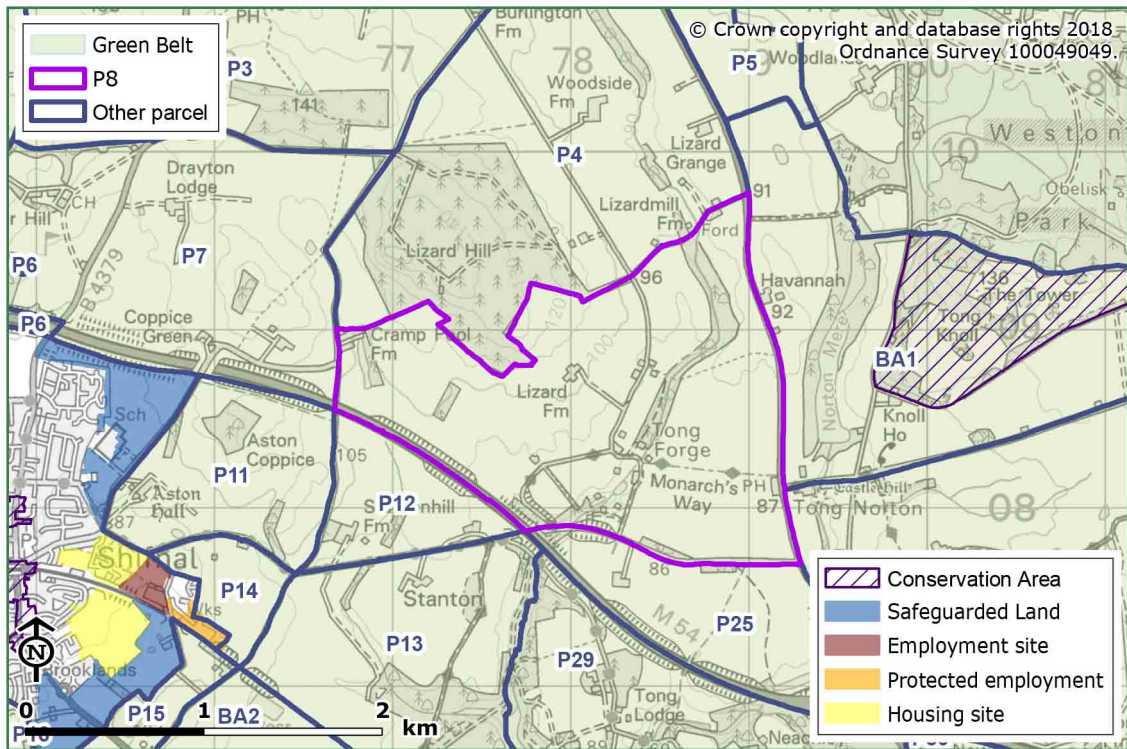


Figure A5.4: Parcel P8



Figure A5.5: Flat and gently undulating farmland within parcel P8 with Lizard Hill Wood in the distance, view looking northwest from Stanton Road

Relationship to settlement/countryside

Parcel P8 comprises undulating agricultural land with very little built development which lies adjacent to the north of the M54 motorway corridor. The parcel is bound to the north by field boundary hedgerows, Lizard Wood / Hill and a series of rural lanes. The east of the parcel is bound by the A41 and to the south by Stanton Lane and the route of the M54 to the south west. The parcel is open, rural and forms part of the wider countryside.

The conclusions on the contribution of parcel P8 to the Green Belt purposes and the harm of releasing it from the Green Belt are set out in the descriptions below. No sub-parcels were identified that would have a lower level of harm.

Purpose 1 - To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

No Contribution

This parcel does not lie adjacent to a large built up area and therefore makes no contribution to Purpose 1.

Purpose 2 - To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

Weak

The parcel is located approximately 900m and 3.3km from the settlements of Shifnal and Albrighton respectively, however it does not lie directly between them. The parcel is located to the north of the M54 motorway which separates the parcel from parcels to the South which lie between Shifnal and Albrighton. Receptors travelling along the motorway may perceive a relationship between the settlements, however intervisibility is limited due to vegetation, embankments, and agricultural land located in between the motorway and settlements. The parcel plays a very limited role in preventing the merging or erosion of the visual or physical gap between settlements. Loss of openness would not be perceived as reducing the gap between settlements.

Purpose 3 - To assist in the safeguarding of the countryside from encroachment

Strong

There is little sense of encroachment due to the area being almost entirely free of development. The parcel contains woodland, farmsteads and agricultural development (which are not considered to be an urbanising influence), a small number of residential properties as well as a single pub and a petrol station. Whilst the M54 and A41 run along the south-western and eastern edges of the area respectively only a small lane crosses the area edges. The Green Belt is playing a strong role preventing further encroachment of the open countryside.

Purpose 4 - To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

Weak

Digital analysis, based on bare earth height data, indicates that this parcel is theoretically visible from the historic settlement area located within Shifnal, Albrighton/ Donington. In practice, there is little intervisibility between this parcel and these historic settlement areas. The openness of the relatively flat land within this parcel is not considered to form part of the setting of these historic settlements, however it may play a limited role in their wider settings.

Purpose 5 - To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

All parcels make an equally significant contribution to this purpose.

Alternative Green Belt Boundaries

The parcel does not lie adjacent to an existing inset area, so any Green Belt release would result in the creation of a new area inset into the Green Belt. The existing boundaries of the parcel include the M54, minor roads, field boundaries and woodland. Although the roads would form readily recognisable alternative Green Belt boundaries the minor roads and field boundaries would not constitute strong Green Belt boundaries.

Harm to Green Belt Resulting from Release

This parcel is open, comprises agricultural land and is generally not contained by strong boundary features. There is very little development present within the parcel and it forms part of the wider open countryside stretching north from the M54. Releasing this parcel from the Green Belt would lead to significant encroachment on the countryside, with the potential to affect the integrity of neighbouring Green Belt land. The release of this parcel would lead to a **High** level of harm to the Green Belt in this local area.

Parcel P25



Figure A5.6: Parcel P25



Figure A5.7: Open farmland within parcel P25 with views of traffic along the M54, view southwest from brideway within the parcel.

Relationship to settlement/countryside

Parcel P25 comprises gently sloping agricultural land with little development. The southern boundary of the parcel lies adjacent to the M54 motorway. To the north, the parcel is bounded by Stanton Road and to the east by the A41 Newport Road. The M54 to the south exerts a level of encroachment on the parcel, however P25 is undeveloped and forms part of the open countryside.

The conclusions on the contribution of parcel P25 to the Green Belt purposes and the harm of releasing it from the Green Belt are set out in the descriptions below. No sub-parcels were identified that would have a lower level of harm.

Purpose 1 - To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

No Contribution

This parcel does not lie adjacent to a large built up area and therefore makes no contribution to Purpose 1.

Purpose 2 - To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

Weak

The parcel is located approximately 2.4km and 2.2km from the settlements of Shifnal and Albrighton respectively, however it does not lie directly between them. The parcel is located to the immediate north of Parcels 13 and 29 which are located directly between the settlements and the M54 motorway separates the parcel from these. Receptors travelling along the motorway may perceive a relationship between the settlements, however intervisibility is limited due to vegetation and embankments. The parcel plays a very limited role in preventing the merging or erosion of the visual or physical gap between settlements. Loss of openness would not be perceived as reducing the gap between settlements.

Purpose 3 - To assist in the safeguarding of the countryside from encroachment

Moderate

This parcel contains the farmstead of Vauxhall Farm. The M54 motorway defines the southern boundary and the M54/A41 is located in the south-east of the parcel. These large urbanising features can be seen from areas of the parcel and lead to a sense of encroachment in places, particularly in the south-east corner of the parcel. The parcel is open and displays the characteristics of the countryside, however is partially weakened by urbanising influences. The Green Belt plays a moderate role safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

Purpose 4 - To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

No Contribution

Digital analysis, based on bare earth height data, indicates that this parcel is theoretically visible from the historic settlement areas located within Shifnal, and Albrighton/ Donington. In practice, the parcel has very little intervisibility with these historic settlement areas and does not contribute to the immediate setting or wider setting.

Purpose 5 - To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

All parcels make an equally significant contribution to this purpose.

Alternative Green Belt Boundaries

The parcel does not lie adjacent to an existing inset area, so any Green Belt release would result in the creation of a new area inset into the Green Belt. The parcel is bounded to the south by the M54 motorway which would constitute a strong boundary. The northern and eastern boundaries would be defined by Stanton Road and the A41 and are clearly defined and readily recognisable as Green Belt boundaries.

Harm to Green Belt Resulting from Release

The M54 running along the southern boundary and to a lesser degree the A41 along the eastern boundary of the parcel exert a level of encroachment on the parcel, however the parcel is open, comprises agricultural land and is rural. Releasing this parcel from the Green Belt would lead to encroachment on the countryside and could weaken the contribution neighbouring land makes to the Green Belt with regard to Purpose 3. It would also lead to the creation of a new area inset into the Green Belt, away from any existing significant settlement edges. It is considered that the release of this parcel from the Green Belt would lead to a **Moderate-High** level of harm to the Green Belt in this local area.

Relationship to settlement/countryside

Parcel P26 comprises undulating agricultural land adjacent to the north of the M54 motorway corridor. The parcel is bound to the north by Offoxey Road, to the east by a series of farm access tracks, field boundaries and Shackerley Lane and to the west by the A41 Newport Road. The parcel forms part of the wider countryside to the north of Cosford/Albrighton and the M54.

The conclusions on the contribution of parcel P26 to the Green Belt purposes and the harm of releasing it from the Green Belt are set out in the descriptions below. No sub-parcels were identified that would have a lower level of harm.

Purpose 1 - To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

No contribution

This parcel does not lie adjacent to a large built up area and therefore makes no contribution to Purpose 1.

Purpose 2 - To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

No Contribution

The parcel is located approximately 1.5km north of Albrighton but does not lie between two settlements being considered under Purpose 2 for this study. The land parcel makes no contribution to preventing the merging or erosion of the visual or physical gap between settlements.

Purpose 3 - To assist in the safeguarding of the countryside from encroachment

Strong

The small hamlets of Tong and Tong Norton are located within the parcel to the West and the small hamlet of Shackerley is located within the parcel to the south east. These hamlets are washed over by the Green Belt. The M54 also runs along the southern edge of the parcel however the motorway embankments and associated vegetation limit the encroachment caused. The urbanising influences within the parcel are limited and the parcel is open and displays the characteristics of the countryside. The Green Belt plays a strong role safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

Purpose 4 - To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

Weak

Digital analysis, based on bare earth height data, indicates that this parcel is theoretically visible from the historic settlement area located within Shifnal and Albrighton. In practice, there is little intervisibility between this parcel and these settlements. The openness of the undulating land within this parcel is not considered to form part of the immediate setting of these historic settlements, however it does make a limited contribution to their wider rural setting.

Purpose 5 - To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

All parcels make an equally significant contribution to this purpose.

Alternative Green Belt Boundaries

The parcel does not lie adjacent to an existing inset area, so any Green Belt release would result in the creation of a new area inset into the Green Belt. The M54 motorway would constitute a strong boundary to the south. Other boundaries that surround the parcel comprise roads, field boundaries and small blocks of woodland. The field edges in particular would not constitute a strong Green Belt boundary.

Harm to Green Belt Resulting from Release

This parcel is open, comprises agricultural landcover and largely is not contained (particularly to the north and east) by strong boundary features. Development present within the parcel includes the small village of Tong and the small linear hamlet of Tong Norton, as well as a scattering of isolated farmsteads. This development is in keeping with the characteristics of the countryside. Releasing this parcel from the Green Belt would lead to significant encroachment on the countryside and could significantly weaken the role neighbouring areas contribute to Purpose 3. The release of this parcel from the Green Belt would lead to a **High** level of harm to the Green Belt in this local area.

Parcel P28

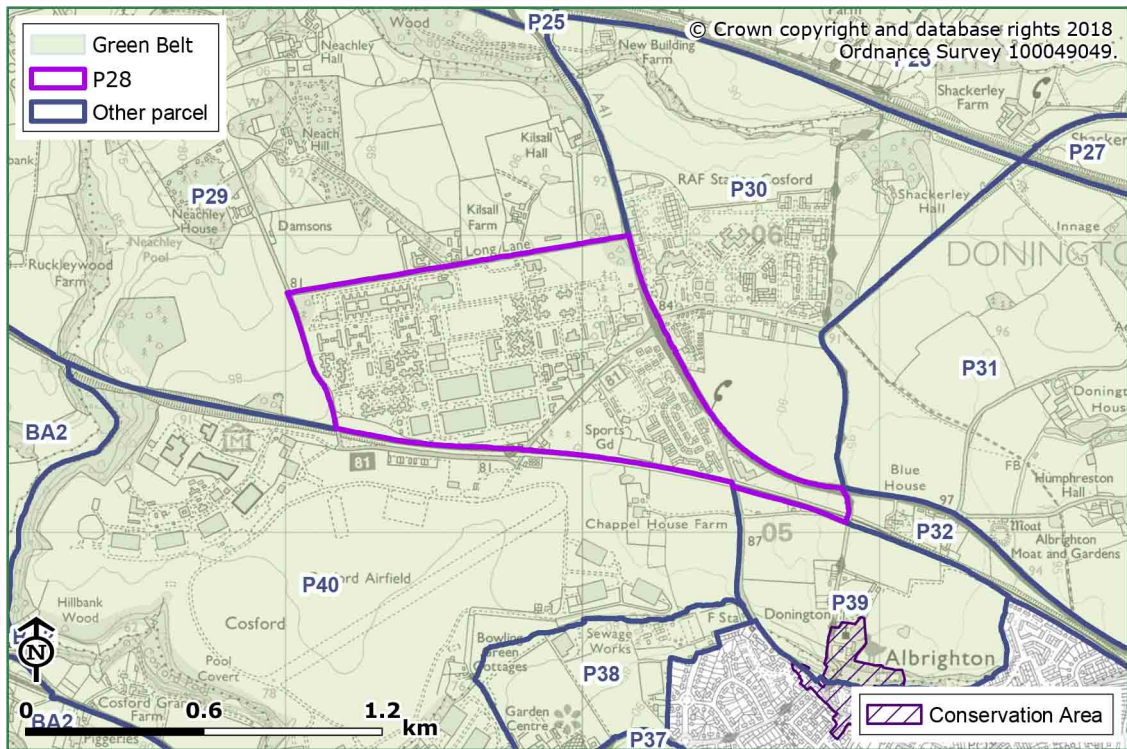


Figure A5.10: Parcel P28



Figure A5.11: Extensive development within parcel P28 and the railway line defining the southern boundary of the parcel

Relationship to settlement/countryside

Parcel P28 consists almost entirely of development within RAF Cosford and contains no agricultural land. The parcel comprises a large part of the settlement/base of Cosford and does not form part of the wider countryside. It lies to the North of and is separated from Albrighton village by the railway line.

The conclusions on the contribution of parcel P28 to the Green Belt purposes and the harm of releasing it from the Green Belt are set out in the descriptions below. No sub-parcels were identified that would have a lower level of harm.

Purpose 1 - To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

No Contribution

This parcel does not lie adjacent to a large built up area and therefore makes no contribution to Purpose 1.

Purpose 2 - To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

Weak

The parcel is located between the settlements of Albrighton (approx. 500m south) and Shifnal (approx. 3.7km northwest). The parcel is almost fully developed containing numerous buildings of the large RAF Cosford Military Base. This development has already led to the perception of narrowing the gap between Shifnal and Albrighton, especially when viewed from the railway line travelling between Shifnal and Albrighton. The parcel is considered to be playing a weak role in preventing the merging of Shifnal and Albrighton as the site is already developed.

Purpose 3 - To assist in the safeguarding of the countryside from encroachment

Weak

There has already been extensive urban encroachment within the parcel due to the development at RAF Cosford. This includes houses, floodlit sports pitches, large areas of hard standing and large hanger buildings. This development is a historical legacy which is washed over by the Green Belt. The parcel makes a weak contribution to preventing encroachment of the countryside.

Purpose 4 - To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

No Contribution

Digital analysis, based on bare earth height data, indicates that this parcel is theoretically visible from the historic settlement areas located within Shifnal, and Albrighton/Donington. In practice, there is little intervisibility between this parcel and these historic settlement areas. This parcel is almost entirely developed and does not play a role in the immediate or wider setting of these the historic settlements.

Purpose 5 - To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

All parcels make an equally significant contribution to this purpose.

Alternative Green Belt Boundaries

The parcel does not lie adjacent to an existing inset area. The railway along the southern boundary of the parcel would constitute a strong boundary. Other boundaries include the A41 and the smaller roads of Long Lane and Neachley Lane. These roads would form a clearly defined and readily recognisable new Green Belt boundary.

Harm to Green Belt Resulting from Release

This parcel is fully developed containing buildings and infrastructure associated with RAF Cosford. Releasing this parcel would not weaken the role that neighbouring areas of land are playing as Green Belt or impact on the integrity of the wider Green Belt in this area due to the level of existing development within the parcel. Releasing parcel P28 from the Green Belt would lead to a **Low** level of harm to the Green Belt in this local area.

Parcel P29

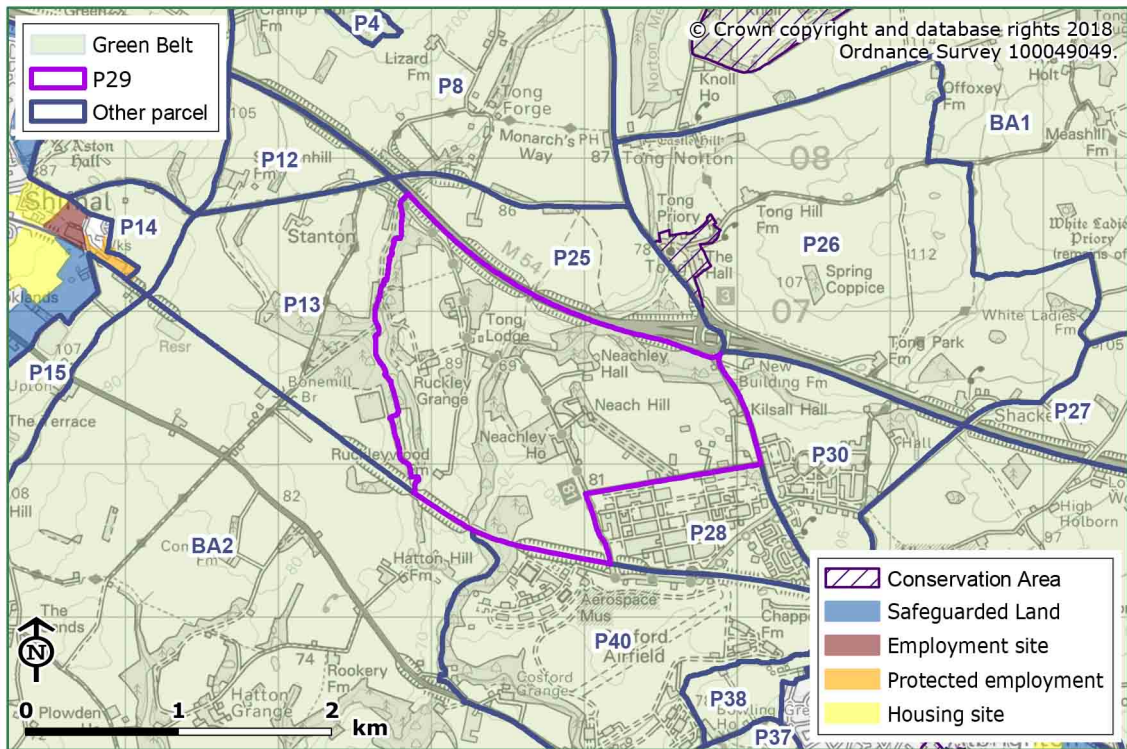


Figure A5.12: Parcel P29



Figure A5.13: Rolling countryside within Parcel P29, view west from Neachley Lane

Relationship to settlement/countryside

Parcel P29 is separated from neighbouring agricultural land to the north by the M54 motorway corridor which provides a degree of severance between the parcel and the wider countryside to the north. The parcel is separated from agricultural land to the east by a small water course lined with trees and pockets of woodland, these provide a limited degree of separation with the parcel forming part of an open area of countryside set between Cosford and Shifnal. It lies to the north west of Albrighton separated by the railway line and other intervening parcels (P28 & P40) and does not directly adjoin any parcels being assessed around Albrighton.

The conclusions on the contribution of parcel P29 to the Green Belt purposes and the harm of releasing it from the Green Belt are set out in the descriptions below. No sub-parcels were identified that would have a lower level of harm.

Purpose 1 - To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

No Contribution

This parcel does not lie adjacent to a large built up area and therefore makes no contribution to Purpose 1.

Purpose 2 - To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

Moderate

The parcel forms part of the gap between the settlements of Albrighton (approx. 1.3km south-east) and Shifnal (approx. 1.8km northwest). The intervening development of RAF Cosford is also located between the parcel and Albrighton. Any new development that took place within the parcel, and subsequent loss of openness, could lead to the perception that the westward growth of Cosford is narrowing the gap between Albrighton and Shifnal.

Purpose 3 - To assist in the safeguarding of the countryside from encroachment

Moderate

This parcel contains the historic large houses of Ruckley Grange, Tong Lodge and Neachley Hall, as well as a number of isolated farms and dwellings. This development is in keeping with the countryside. The M54 runs along the northern boundary and is largely screened by large road embankments, cuttings and vegetation, which limits the sense of encroachment. Large buildings that are part of RAF Cosford and the RAF museum, located within neighbouring parcels, are visible from parts of the parcel. This causes a sense of encroachment, however this is limited and localised to southern areas of the parcel. The remaining areas are open, display the characteristics of the countryside and make a strong contribution to Purpose 3. Overall due to the urbanising elements of RAF Cosford within some sections of the parcel, the Green Belt is judged to play a moderate role in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, although it is acknowledged that some areas play a strong role.

Purpose 4 - To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

Weak

Digital analysis, based on bare earth height data, indicates that this parcel is theoretically visible from the historic settlement areas located within Shifnal, and Albrighton/Donington. In practice, there is little intervisibility between this parcel and these historic settlement areas. The openness of elevated land within this parcel is not considered to form part of the immediate setting of these settlements, however it does make a limited contribution to their wider rural setting.

Purpose 5 - To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

All parcels make an equally significant contribution to this purpose.

Alternative Green Belt Boundaries

The parcel does not lie adjacent to an existing inset area. The M54 motorway that defines the northern boundary and the railway line defining the southern boundary of the parcel would form strong Green Belt boundaries. The western boundary of the parcel is defined by the small water course of Ruckley Pool, which is lined with a dense belt of mature woodland. The eastern boundary of parcel P29 is defined by the A41 and partly by RAF Cosford. These eastern and western boundaries are readily recognisable and clearly defined physical features.

Harm to Green Belt Resulting from Release

This parcel contains a limited amount of urban development and forms part of an area of open countryside set between Cosford/Albrighton and Shifnal. Releasing this relatively large parcel from the Green Belt would constitute significant encroachment on the countryside. However, there is a degree of separation between parcel P29 and the wider countryside to the north due to the presence of the M54 motorway corridor and to the south and south east, the parcel is contained by RAF Cosford. There is also a wide band of woodland at Ruckley that would limit encroachment on the wider countryside to the west. Parcel P29 does however form part of the settlement gap between Cosford/Albrighton and Shifnal. Its release would reduce the perception of separation between Shifnal and Cosford/Albrighton with regard to Purpose 2. It is considered that overall the release of parcel P29 from the Green Belt would lead to a **Moderate-High** level of harm to the Green Belt within this local area, with potentially higher levels of harm in the western areas of the parcel.

Parcel P30

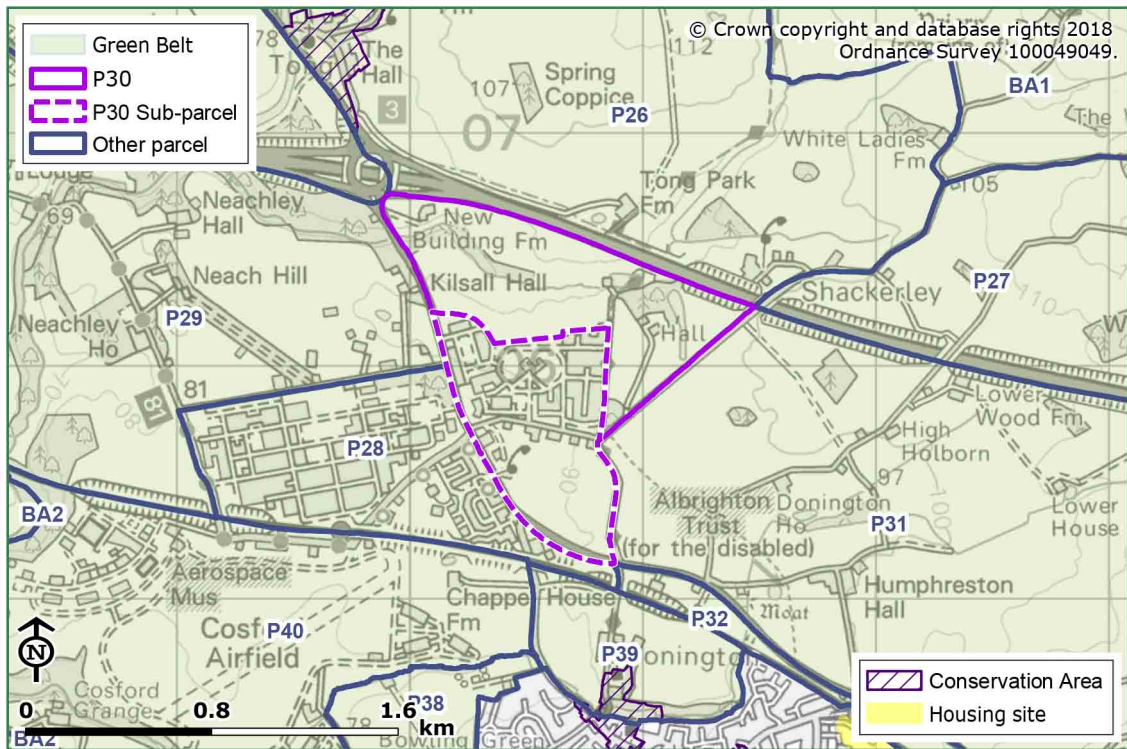


Figure A5.14: Parcel P30



Figure A5.15: Arable field in the far south of parcel P30 (Sub-parcel P30) with RAF Cosford seen in the distance.

Relationship to settlement/countryside

Parcel P30 lies to the north of Albrighton separated by the A41, railway line and intervening parcel P28 and does not directly adjoin any parcels being assessed around Albrighton. Parcel P30 is separated from the neighbouring agricultural land to the north by the M54 motorway corridor, which provides a degree of severance between the parcel and the wider countryside to the north.. An area of arable land in the north of the parcel is undeveloped and displays the characteristics of the open countryside. However, this land is contained by the motorway, the A41 and development associated with RAF Cosford which leads to a level of disconnect between it and the wider countryside to the east. Shackerley Lane separates the single arable field in the south of the parcel and the garden grounds of Shackerley Hall in the northeast from the countryside to the east and provides a limited degree of separation. The garden grounds of Shackerley Hall are more closely associated with the countryside to the east than the settlement of Cosford. The single arable field in the south of the parcel is enclosed by development on three sides which has led to a sense of urban encroachment and this field has a closer association with the built up area than the countryside.

The conclusions on the contribution of parcel P30 to the Green Belt purposes and the harm of releasing it from the Green Belt are set out in the descriptions below. This includes the identification of a sub-parcel within Parcel P30 (delineated on Figure A5.14 in a purple hatch line) which the assessment concludes would have a lower level of harm associated with its release.

Purpose 1 - To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

No Contribution

This parcel does not lie adjacent to a large built up area and therefore makes no contribution to Purpose 1.

Purpose 2 - To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

Moderate

The parcel is located approximately 600m to the north of Albrighton. The parcel lies within the gap between the settlements of Albrighton and Shifnal (approx. 4.0km northwest). A good proportion of the west of the parcel is developed, containing numerous buildings of the large RAF Cosford Military Base, a retirement village, a cluster of dwellings, a petrol station, and a caravan outlet. This development has led to a perception of narrowing the gap between Shifnal and Albrighton, when travelling along the A41. However, the remaining open areas of the parcel, particularly in the northwest, do play a limited role in preventing further merging or erosion of the visual and physical gap between these two settlements. Therefore, any loss of openness would be perceived as reducing the gap between settlements.

Purpose 3 - To assist in the safeguarding of the countryside from encroachment

Moderate

There has already been a level of urban encroachment within the parcel due to the development linked to RAF Cosford, as well as a retirement Park Home site, a cluster of dwellings, a petrol station, a supermarket and a caravan outlet. The remaining open areas of the parcel have characteristics of the countryside, comprising arable land, woodland, and the large gardens of Shackerley Hall. Overall the parcel is considered to be making a moderate contribution to preventing encroachment of the countryside within the parcel.

Purpose 4 - To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

No Contribution

Digital analysis, based on bare earth height data, indicates that this parcel is theoretically visible from the historic settlement areas located within Shifnal, Albrighton/Donington. In practice, there is little intervisibility between this parcel and these historic settlement areas.

Purpose 5 - To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

All parcels make an equally significant contribution to this purpose.

Alternative Green Belt Boundaries

The M54 motorway that defines the northern boundary of the parcel would form a readily recognisable and strong new Green Belt boundary. The western boundary of parcel P30 is defined by the A41 and the eastern boundary is defined by Shackerley Lane. All are readily recognisable features.

Harm to Green Belt Resulting from Release

This parcel contains a block of development containing buildings and infrastructure associated with RAF Cosford. The remaining areas of the parcel are open and comprise agricultural land and the garden grounds of Shackerley Hall. Releasing the entire parcel from the Green Belt would lead to a degree of encroachment on the open countryside to the east and would weaken the role this land is playing as Green Belt with regard to Purpose 3. However there is a degree of severance between the parcel and the wider countryside to the north due to the M54 motorway corridor. Due to the level of existing development within the parcel and its containment by the M54 to the north and by RAF Cosford to the south east, it is considered that the release of parcel P30 from the Green Belt as a whole would lead to a **Moderate** level of harm to the Green Belt within this local area.

A Sub-parcel has been identified within Parcel P30 that would lead to a lower level of overall harm to the Green Belt if it was to be released. Sub-parcel P30 comprises the block of development within the centre of the parcel, containing buildings and infrastructure associated with RAF Cosford, as well as a single arable field forming the southern extent of parcel P30. The north of the Sub-parcel is almost fully developed, therefore its release from the Green Belt would not significantly alter the existing level of encroachment on neighbouring areas of open land. The arable field in the south is enclosed by development on three sides and does not have a strong relationship with the wider countryside. The release of this field from the Green Belt would not significantly weaken the role neighbouring areas of countryside are playing as Green Belt in regard to Purpose 3. The release of Sub-parcel P30 from the Green Belt would lead to a **Low-Moderate** level of harm to the Green Belt in this local area.

Parcel P40

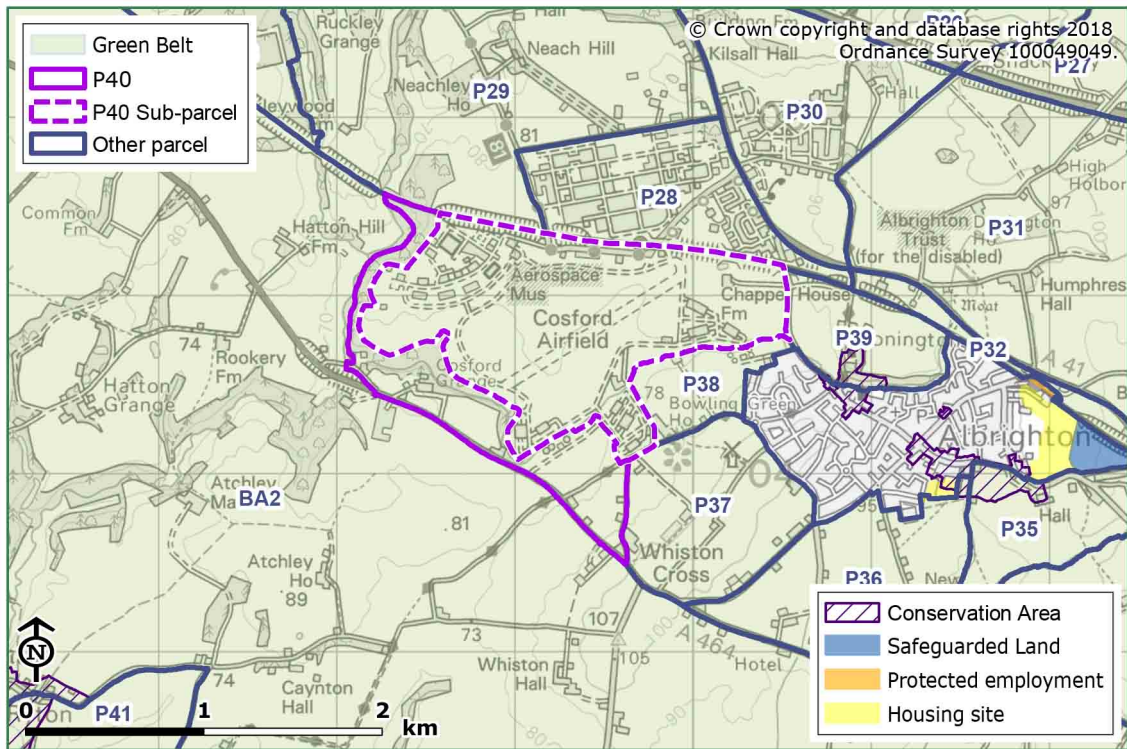


Figure A5.16: Parcel P40



Figure A5.17: Cosford Airfield with the belt of mature woodland along Cosford Pool watercourse seen in the distance.

Relationship to settlement/countryside

The majority of the land within Parcel P40 comprises the airfield of RAF Cosford and associated large buildings, hangars and large areas of hard standing, and are strongly associated with the settlement of Cosford. The south and western extent of the parcel comprises a collection of agricultural fields and Cosford Grange Farm, and is separated from the airfield by a dense belt of mature woodland that follows the Cosford Pool watercourse. This area of the parcel displays rural characteristics and is more closely associated with the wider countryside to the south than RAF Cosford. It should be noted that Parcel P40 lies to the north of Albrighton directly adjoining parcel P38 which is a parcel being assessed around Albrighton (See Appendix 1).

The conclusions on the contribution of parcel P40 to the Green Belt purposes and the harm of releasing it from the Green Belt are set out in the descriptions below. This includes the identification of a sub-parcel within Parcel P40 (delineated on the Map in a purple hatch line) which the assessment concludes would have a lower level of harm associated with its release.

Purpose 1 - To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

No contribution

This parcel does not lie adjacent to a large built up area and therefore makes no contribution to Purpose 1.

Purpose 2 - To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

Moderate

The parcel forms part of the gap between the settlements of Albrighton (approx. 100m east) and Shifnal (approx. 2.8km northwest). RAF Cosford, located within the parcel and to the north of the parcel, lies between the two settlements and already adds to the perception of narrowing the gap between Shifnal and Albrighton, especially when viewed from the railway line travelling between Shifnal and Albrighton. The parcel does however play some role in preventing the merging or erosion of the visual or physical gap between settlements. Loss of openness would be perceived as reducing the gap between settlements.

Purpose 3 - To assist in the safeguarding of the countryside from encroachment

Weak

There has already been extensive urban encroachment into the parcel due to the on-going development at RAF Cosford. This includes large buildings, hangars and large areas of hard standing in the northwest and north of the parcel. In addition to this, there are grass covered bunkers located to the east and southeast of the parcel and a runway located across the centre of the parcel. This development is a historical anomaly which is washed over by the Green Belt. In addition to this, the A464 borders the parcel to the southeast and the railway line borders the parcel to the north, both of which could also cause a sense of encroachment within the parcel. The Green Belt plays a weak role in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, albeit it is acknowledged that the south and western extent of the parcel which includes agricultural fields bordered by belts of woodland does play a stronger role in relation to Purpose 3.

Purpose 4 - To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

Weak

Digital analysis, based on bare earth height data, indicates that this parcel is theoretically visible from the historic settlement areas within Albrighton/Donington. In practice, there is some limited intervisibility between the flat land within this parcel and the Donington Conservation Area. The Parcel contains a relatively high amount of development, including RAF Cosford, and has very little rural character; therefore it does not make a strong contribution to the rural setting, an important characteristic of these historic settlements.

Purpose 5 - To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

All parcels make an equally significant contribution to this purpose.

Alternative Green Belt Boundaries

The parcel does not lie adjacent to any areas currently inset into the Green Belt. The railway line along the northern boundary of the parcel would form a strong new Green Belt boundary. . The western boundary of the parcel is defined by the small water course of Cosford Pool which is lined with a dense belt of mature woodland. This boundary feature has a degree of permanency and is readily recognisable. The southern boundary of the parcel is defined by the A464, Kennel Lane, Old Worcester Road, and a small water course, and part of the eastern boundary is defined by Newport Road.

Harm to Green Belt Resulting from Release

The majority of Parcel P40 contains extensive development associated with RAF Cosford, including a large airfield. The southern and western extents of the parcel contain a collection of agricultural fields and Cosford Grange Farm, which are separated from the RAF Cosford by a dense belt of mature woodland following the Cosford Pool watercourse. This area of parcel P40 displays rural characteristics and is more closely associated with the wider countryside to the south than the settlement of Cosford. Releasing the entire area of parcel P40 from the Green Belt would lead to a level of encroachment on neighbouring areas of countryside to the south and would weaken the role these areas are playing as Green Belt with regard to Purpose 3. Releasing parcel P40 from the Green Belt would lead to a **Moderate-High** level of harm to the Green Belt in this local area.

A sub-parcel has been identified within Parcel P40 that would lead to a lower level of overall harm to the Green Belt if it was to be released. Sub-parcel P40 comprises the airfield and associated built development within RAF Cosford. The airfield is separated from agricultural land to the south and west by a dense belt of mature woodland and does not have a strong relationship to the wider countryside. Although developed, the airfield comprises a large area of open green space. Therefore, any extensive new built development occurring on the airfield is likely to be visible from certain areas of agricultural land that surrounds Albrighton and could lead to an increased sense of urban encroachment e.g. within P37. However, the release of Cosford Airfield from the Green Belt would be unlikely to significantly weaken the role these neighbouring areas of land are playing with regard to Purpose 3 and would lead to a **Low-Moderate** level of harm to the Green Belt in this local area.

Its release would leave P38 to the south east further contained by development to the north but the harm of releasing P38 has been assessed separately in Appendix 1 as of Low-Moderate harm to the Green Belt.

Broad Area BA1a

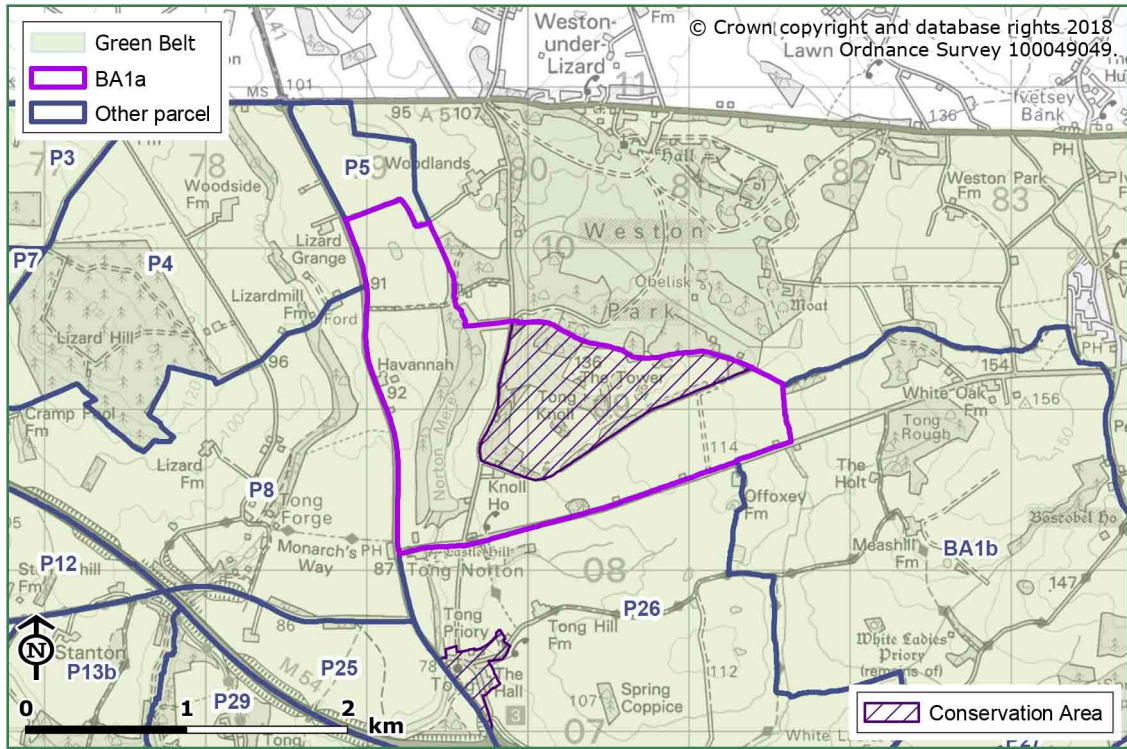


Figure A5.18: Parcel BA1



Figure A5.19: Rolling open farmland within BA1 with woodland within Weston Park seen in the distance, view northwest from Offoxey Road

Relationship to settlement/countryside

Broad Area BA1a comprises undulating agricultural land and parkland with woodland within the Weston Park Registered Park and Garden and the Weston-Under-Lizard Conservation Area. The parcel contains very little development and is defined by Offoxey Road to the south and the A41 to the west. The parcel forms part the wider countryside stretching across the Shropshire and South Staffordshire border.

The conclusions about the performance of Broad Area BA1a are set out in the descriptions below. No sub-parcels were identified that would have a lower level of harm.

Purpose 1 - To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

No contribution

This parcel does not lie adjacent to a large built up area and therefore makes no contribution to Purpose 1.

Purpose 2 - To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

No Contribution

The Broad Area does not lie directly between two settlements that are being considered under Purpose 2 for this assessment. Therefore, this area makes no contribution to this Green Belt purpose.

Purpose 3 - To assist in the safeguarding of the countryside from encroachment

Strong

There is little sense of encroachment due to the area being almost entirely free of development. Built development includes a few scattered farms (which are not considered to be an urbanising influence) and a small number of residential homes. There is a strong, unspoilt landscape, which is open and rural in character. The area clearly displays the characteristics of the countryside. The Green Belt is playing a strong role preventing further encroachment of the open countryside.

Purpose 4 - To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

Weak

Digital analysis, based on bare earth height data, indicates that this parcel is theoretically visible from the Shifnal, Albrighton/ Donington, and Codsall historic settlement areas. In practice, the higher ground within this Broad Area has good intervisibility with the Albrighton/Donington historic settlement area only. At a distance beyond 3.5km from Albrighton/ Donington, the openness of this land does not play an integral role in the immediate setting, however its openness and rural character contributes to the wider rural setting.

Purpose 5 - To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

All parcels make an equally significant contribution to this purpose.

Alternative Green Belt Boundaries

The parcel does not lie adjacent to an existing inset area, so any Green Belt release would result in the creation of a new area inset into the Green Belt. This area of land is bounded to the south by Offoxey Road and to the west by the A41, although clearly defined and readily recognisable physical features these roads would not provide a strong boundary. The northern boundary of the area is formed by the Shropshire district border comprising a mix of hedgerows, woodland and in some areas the border is not defined by any physical feature on the ground. This northern boundary does not constitute a readily recognisable Green Belt boundary.

Harm to Green Belt Resulting from Release

There is very little development or sense of encroachment within this area and it forms part of the wide open countryside. Releasing this area of land would constitute significant encroachment on the countryside and would significantly weaken the contribution of neighbouring areas of Green Belt to Purpose 3. The release of this parcel from the Green Belt would have a **High** level of harm on the Green Belt in this local area.

Conclusion

Figure A5.20 below shows the level of harm associated with the release of parcels/sub-parcels considered within the assessment around Junction 3.

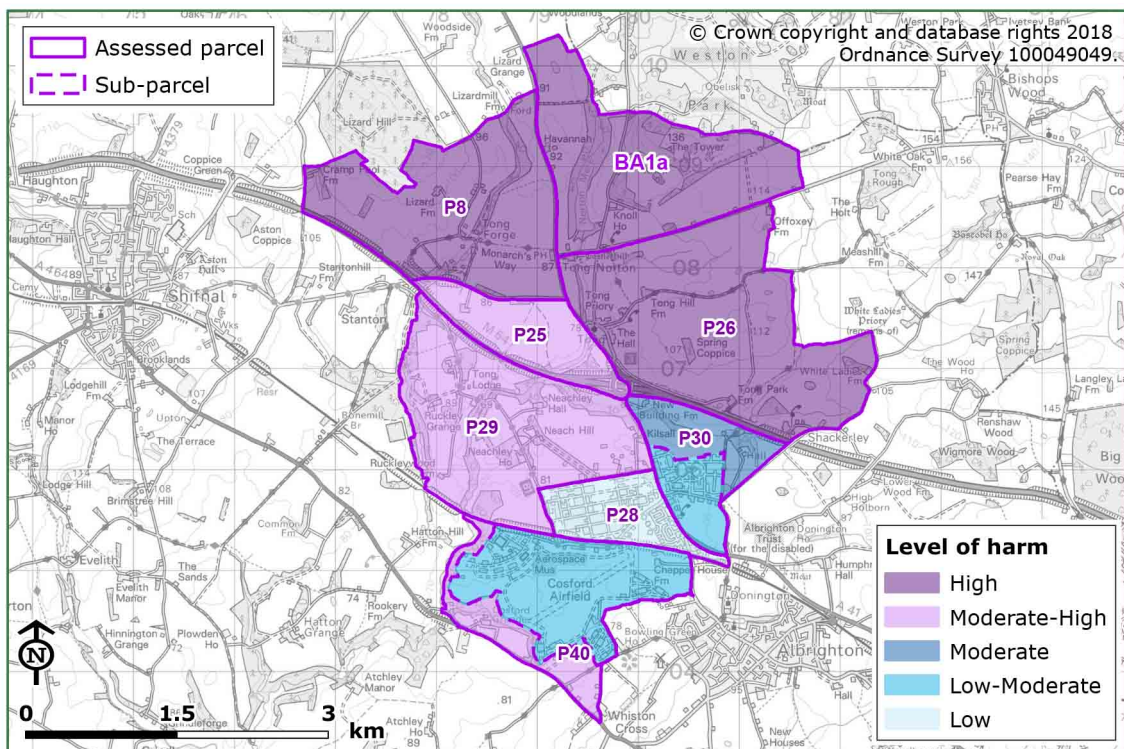


Figure A5.20: Individual Harm from Release of Parcels Surrounding Junction 3

The parcel assessment summarised on Figure A5.20 indicates that the release of Green Belt land for development could result in a 'high' level of harm to the Green Belt to the north of the M54 (parcels P8, P26 and the western extent of Broad Area BA1). The level of harm resulting from the release of parcel P25 is considered to be slightly lower due to the degree of existing encroachment exerted by the M54. Releasing parcel P25 is considered to have a 'moderate-high' level of harm to the Green Belt. In addition, the release of parcel P29 to the south of the M54 and the southern and western extents of parcel P40 could result in a 'moderate-high' level of harm. In comparison, the release of the already extensively developed parcel P28 could result in a 'low' level of harm and the release of sub-parcels P40 (RAF Cosford airfield) and sub-parcel P30 (RAF Cosford and the single arable field to the south) would result in a 'low-moderate' level of harm. The remaining area of parcel P30 comprises agricultural land and the garden grounds of Shackerley Hall, releasing this area of land would have a 'moderate' level of harm on the Green Belt in this local area.

Part 3: Opportunity Areas – Assessment of Harm on the Green Belt

The assessment of the harm that could be caused by releasing Green Belt land for development has been tested through the identification of an Opportunity Area around Junction 3 and by the identification of two Sub-Opportunity Areas. The findings of these assessments are set out below.

Opportunity Area J3-1

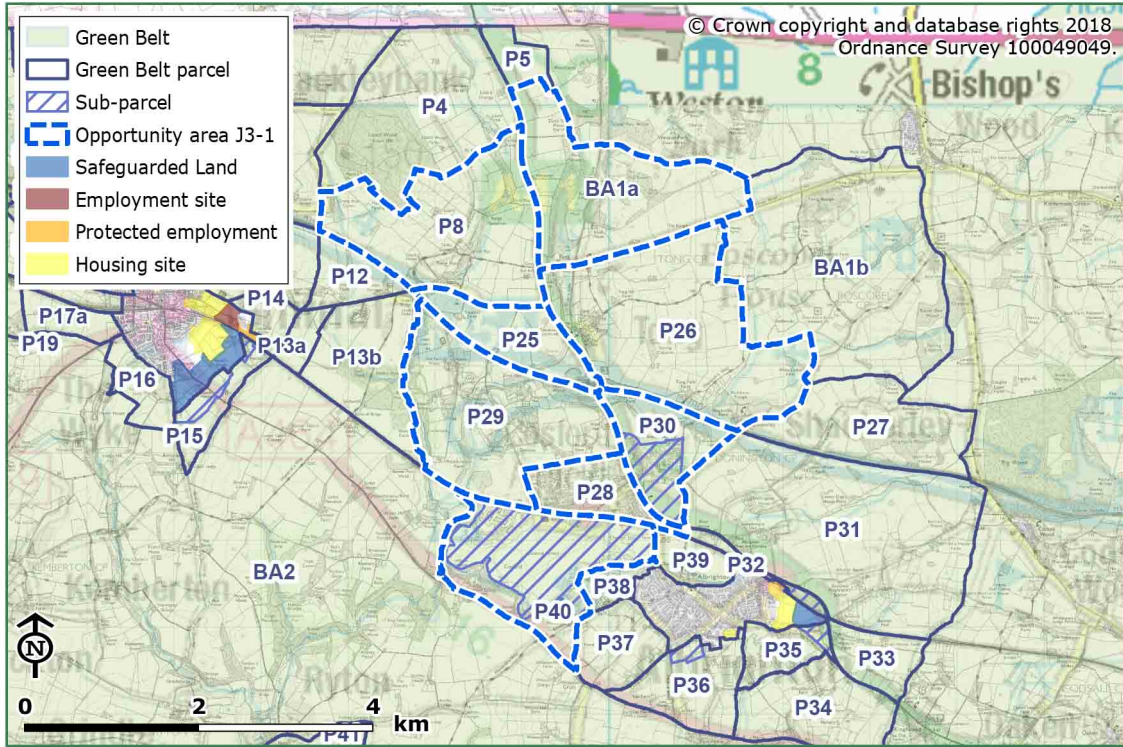


Figure A5.21: Opportunity Area J3-1

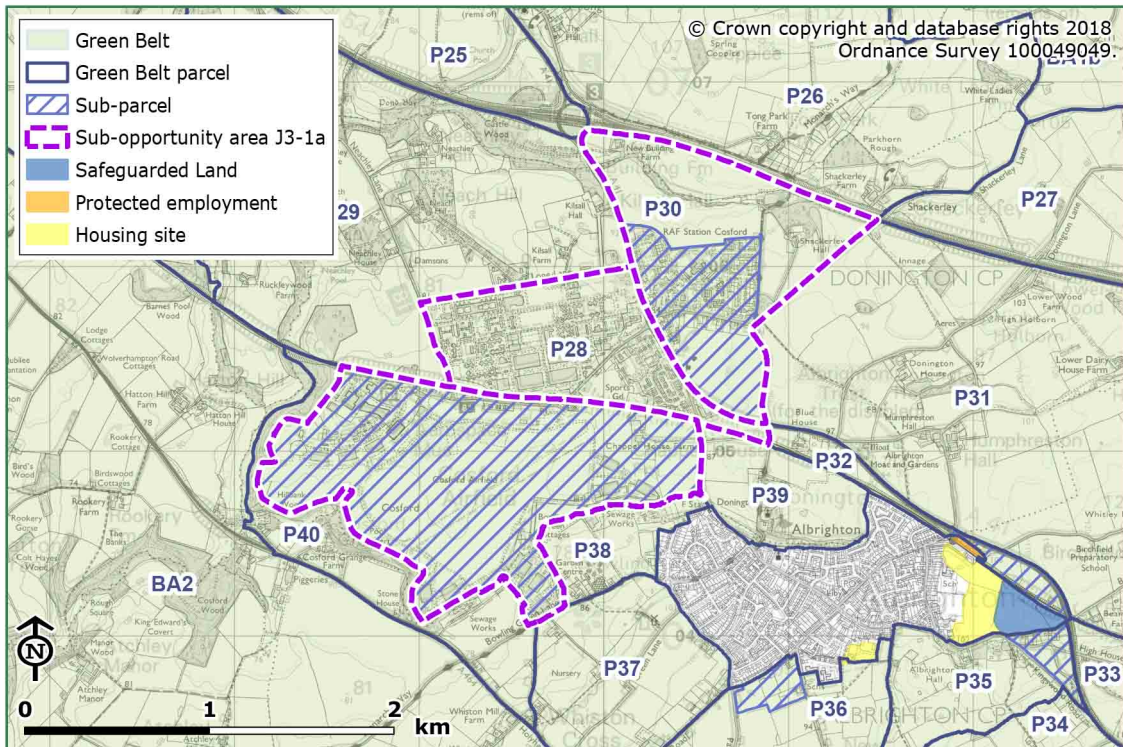


Figure A5.22: Sub-opportunity Area J3-1a

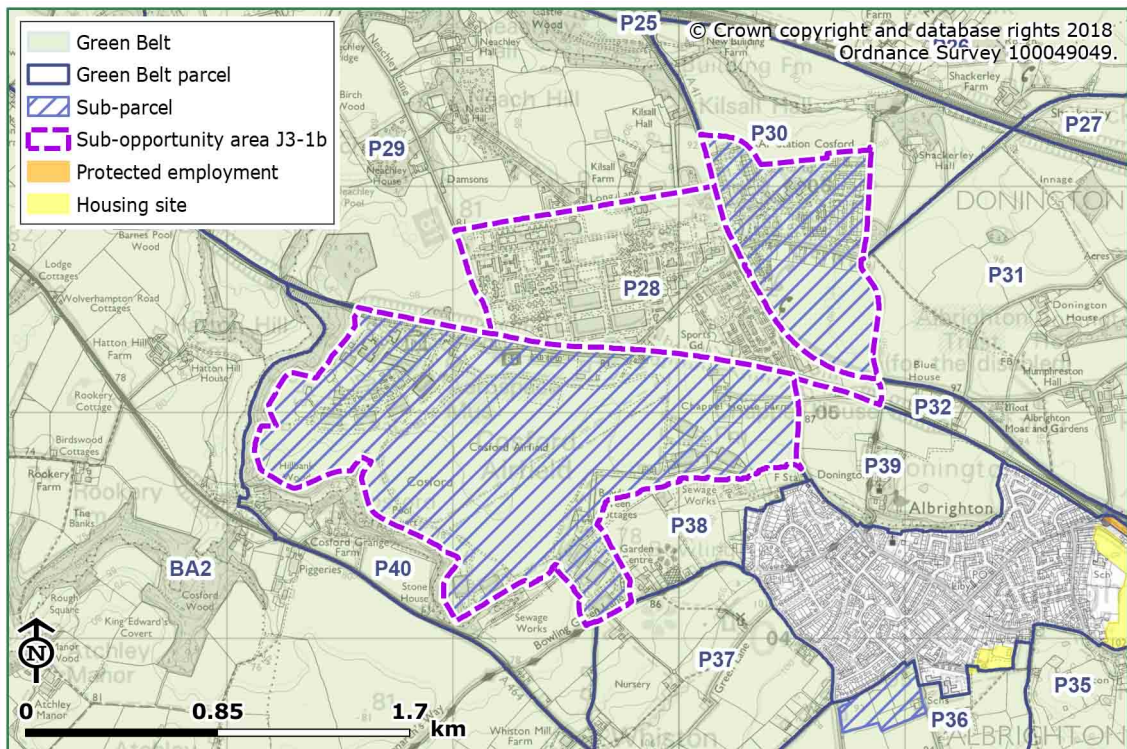


Figure A5.23: Sub-opportunity Area J3-1b

Description of Opportunity Area J3-1

Opportunity Area J3-1 comprises the entire areas of parcels P8, P25, P26, P28, P29, P30, P40 and the western extent of Broad Areas BA1 to identify a potential direction for growth across land to the north and south of Junction 3 of the M54.

Sub-opportunity Area J3-1a

A sub-opportunity area has been identified that would lead to a lower level of overall harm to the Green Belt. Sub-opportunity Area J3-1a comprises the release of Parcel P28, P30 and Sub-parcel P40.

Sub-opportunity Area J3-1b

A second sub-opportunity area has been identified that would lead to a lower level of overall harm to the Green Belt. Sub-opportunity Area J3-1b comprises the release of Parcel P28, Sub-parcel P30 and Sub-parcel P40.

NB Sub-opportunity Area J3-1a is the same as Sub-opportunity Area Co-1a (see **Appendix 4**) and Sub-opportunity Area J3-1b is the same as Sub-opportunity Area Co-1b (See **Appendix 4**). This allows these areas to be considered both in relation to Green Belt release focused on: a) Cosford as an existing settlement, military base and developed area; and/or b) Junction 3.

Summary of Assessment of Harm for Individual Parcels

The individual release of parcels P8, P26 and BA1 would have a **High** level of harm to the Green Belt. The individual release of parcel P25, P29 and P40 would have a **Moderate-High** level of harm to the Green Belt. The individual release of parcel P30 would have a **Moderate** level of harm and releasing P28 would have a **Low** level of harm to the Green Belt.

Assessment of Harm for sub-parcels

The release of sub-parcel P30 and sub-parcel P40 would have a **Low-Moderate** level of harm to the Green Belt.

Assessment of harm

Removal of Opportunity Area J3-1

The removal of J3-1 would result in development being sited in a large area of open countryside to the north of the M54 which would constitute substantial encroachment on the open countryside and significantly weaken the role neighbouring areas of Green Belt land are playing with regard to Purpose 3. Releasing the whole of Opportunity Area J3-1 would also lead to a substantial narrowing of the settlement gap between Shifnal and Albrighton which would compromise the Green Belt with regard to Purpose 2. The release of Opportunity Area J3-1 is would lead to a **High** level of harm to the Green Belt in this local area.

High Harm

No mitigation measures have been identified, as release of the opportunity area would have a high level of harm on the Green Belt.

Removal of Sub-Opportunity Area J3-1a

The impact of releasing sub-opportunity area J3-1a would be similar to J3-1b although it would include the release of the northern extent of P30. Releasing this additional area from the Green Belt alongside J3-1a would lead to a slightly greater degree of urban encroachment on the open countryside to the east of P30. Releasing sub-opportunity Area J3-1a from the Green Belt would lead to a **Moderate** level of harm to the Green Belt in this local area.

Moderate Harm

Removal of Sub-Opportunity Area J3-1b

Sub-opportunity Area J3-1b avoids development taking place within the wider countryside to the north of the M54 and within the band of open land separating Shifnal and Albrighton. In addition, the sub-opportunity area would not lead to a loss of openness within the western and southern extents of parcel P40 and the north-eastern extent of parcel P30. Releasing Sub-opportunity Area J3-1b is unlikely to lead to a high level of encroachment in neighbouring areas of open countryside and would not significantly weaken the Green Belt designation in this area with regard to Purpose 2 or Purpose 3.

Releasing Sub-opportunity Area J3-1b from the Green Belt would lead to a **Low-Moderate** level of harm to the Green Belt in this local area.

Low-Moderate Harm

The following section sets out the mitigation measures that could be considered in order to minimise the degree of harm to the Green Belt associated with the release of J3-1a and J3-1b.

Mitigation Measures

- The belt of mature trees along Cosford Pool water course within parcel P40 should be retained and protected against any construction activity in accordance with best practice. These trees help to define a stronger Green Belt edge.
- Hedgerows and hedgerow trees along either side of Shackerley Lane that defines the eastern boundary of Sub-parcel P30 should be retained and enhanced, with any weak points strengthened to minimise the impact of development on the wider Green Belt. Hedgerow trees should also be retained and protected against any new development in accordance with best practice.
- Hedgerows and lines of trees along the northern boundary of Sub-parcel P30 should be retained and where relevant enhanced.
- Existing small blocks of woodland, lines of planted trees and hedgerows along the fencing bordering parcel P28 should be retained and where relevant enhanced in order to create a strong Green Belt boundary.
- Hedgerows with trees lining Long Lane and Neachley Lane, which bound parcel P28 should be retained and enhanced, with any weak points strengthened.
- Banks of trees and shrubs along the railway line which defines the northern boundary of parcel P40 should be retained and protected against any construction activity in accordance with best practice.

Part 4: Conclusions for Junction 3

The assessment has reviewed the potential harm to the Green Belt of releasing for development, individual parcels or sub-parcels identified in this Green Belt Review. This has subsequently informed the identification of one opportunity area; and two sub-opportunity areas around Junction 3.

The findings of the assessment of harm likely to result from releasing the opportunity areas or sub-opportunity areas for development are summarised in **Table A5.1**.

Table A5.1: Summary Assessment of Harm for Opportunity Areas around Junction 3.

Opportunity Area Reference	Area (ha)	Rating
J3-1	1902.8	High
J3-1a	386.8	Moderate
J3-1b	320.5	Low-Moderate

The consideration of the release of Green Belt land around Junction 3, set out in detail in the preceding sections and summarised in the table above, highlights the various potential Green Belt impacts arising from the possible release of land for development to meet the future needs for development along the M54 growth corridor. The assessment in this Green Belt Review has shown that up to 320.5 ha of land (within opportunity area J3-1b) could be released from the Green Belt for development with only low-moderate levels of harm to the Green Belt and up to 386.8ha of land (within opportunity area J3-1a) with moderate levels of harm to the designation in this local area.

Whilst development on Green Belt land may inevitably lead to some degree of encroachment into the countryside within the Green Belt, the strategic function of the West Midlands Green Belt will not be affected by small scale releases of land (J3-1a or J3-1b) around Junction 3/ Cosford. The release of opportunity area J3-1 would however have a significant impact on the West Midlands Green Belt through the development of a large area of land along the M54 corridor between Wolverhampton, Albrighton, Shifnal and Telford and the narrowing of the gaps between these settlements.