

YORK

CITY OF YORK

LOCAL PLAN

Topic Paper (TP1)

Approach to Defining York's Green Belt

May 2018

**City of York Local Plan Topic Paper (TP1)**  
**Approach to defining York's Green Belt**

CYC, 2018

# Contents

<b>SECTION 1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>SECTION 2</b>	<b>PLANNING CONTEXT.....</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1	NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT.....	4
<b>SECTION 3</b>	<b>THE PRINCIPLE AND GENERAL EXTENT OF YORK'S GREEN BELT.....</b>	<b>6</b>
3.1	REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY.....	6
3.2	THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT AND THE DUTY TO COOPERATE.....	8
<b>SECTION 4</b>	<b>APPROACH TO DEFINING YORK'S GREEN BELT.....</b>	<b>10</b>
4.1	INTRODUCTION.....	10
4.3	THE SPATIAL STRATEGY - DRIVERS AND SHAPERS.....	11
	<i>Conserving and Enhancing York's Historic and Natural Environment.....</i>	<i>13</i>
	<i>Open Space and Encroachment.....</i>	<i>18</i>
	<i>Ensuring access to sustainable modes of transport and services and checking sprawl.....</i>	<i>20</i>
4.4	SITE SELECTION METHODOLOGY.....	23
4.5	FINAL GREEN BELT BOUNDARIES.....	25
<b>SECTION 5</b>	<b>SUMMARY/CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>ANNEX A:</b>	<b>HISTORY OF YORK'S GREEN BELT.....</b>	<b>27</b>
A1	ORIGINS OF YORK'S GREEN BELT 1955-1974.....	27
A2	IMPACT OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972.....	28
A3	IMPACT OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND 1992.....	29
A4	IMPACT OF THE PLANNING AND COMPULSORY PURCHASE ACT 2004.....	30
A5	CITY OF YORK FOURTH SET OF CHANGES (DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT) LOCAL PLAN.....	31
A6	CITY OF YORK LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK.....	31
<b>ANNEX B</b>	<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>32</b>
	FIGURE 1: 'SAVED' RSS POLICY.....	6
	FIGURE 2: 'SAVED' RSS KEY DIAGRAM.....	7
	FIGURE 3: YORK GREEN BELT AND ADJOINING AUTHORITIES.....	9
	FIGURE 4 HISTORIC CHARACTER AND SETTING MAP.....	15
	FIGURE 5: NATURE CONSERVATION AREAS (INCLUDING INTERNATIONALLY, NATIONALLY AND LOCALLY SIGNIFICANT NATURE CONSERVATION SITES), ALONG WITH APPROPRIATE BUFFERS REGIONAL, DISTRICT AND LOCAL GREEN CORRIDORS, AND AREAS OF OPEN SPACE.....	19
	FIGURE 6: REVERSE ACCESS TO SERVICES MAP – IN GREEN IS HIGHLIGHTED AREAS WHICH HAVE ACCESS TO LESS THAN TWO SEPARATE SERVICES.....	21
	FIGURE 7: COMBINED CONSTRAINTS MAP.....	22
	TABLE 1: SITE SELECTION PRINCIPLES RELEVANT TO GREEN BELT PURPOSES.....	24

## **Section 1 Introduction**

- 1.1.1. York's Local Plan will formally define the boundary of the York Green Belt for the first time. This paper describes the methodology used to determine an appropriate boundary, maintaining openness and preserving the special character and setting of this historic City.
- 1.1.2. Green Belt policy emerged following work by town planner Patrick Abercrombie in the 1940s and was established in 1955 through government circular 42/55 which recommended that local authorities around the country consider protecting land around their towns and cities by the formal designation of clearly defined green belts. Authorities were encouraged to establish a Green Belt whenever this was desirable in order to check the further growth of a large built up area, prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another and/or preserve the special character of a town. The aims of Green Belt were expanded in subsequent circulars and planning policy guidance notes and are currently set out in the National Planning Policy Framework [SD035]. Please refer to Annex A for further details on the history of greenbelt in York.
- 1.1.3. Whilst York has had a draft Green Belt since the 1950's, this has remained in draft form. The principle and general extent of York's Green Belt is set through the saved aspects of the Yorkshire and Humber Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) (refer to section 2.2).



## Section 2 Planning Context

### 2.1 National Planning Policy context

2.1.1 At the national level, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) and ministerial statements provide the policy and guidance context for the role and function of the Green Belt.

2.1.2 National policy relating to the Green Belt is set out in Section 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 'Protecting Green Belt land'. The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. NPPF paragraph 79 reiterates that, as set out in PPG2, the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open, and that the essential characteristics of a Green Belt are its openness and its permanence. Green Belt serves five purposes:

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

2.1.3 Local authorities with Green Belts in their area are required to establish Green Belt boundaries in their Local Plans which set the framework for Green Belt and settlement policy (NPPF paragraph 83). The boundaries should be capable of enduring beyond the Plan period. Paragraph 84 of the NPPF goes on to say that when drawing up or reviewing green belt boundaries local authorities should take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development and they should consider the consequences for sustainable development of channelling development towards urban areas inside the green belt boundary, towards towns and villages inset within the green belt or towards locations beyond the outer green belt boundary.

2.1.4 NPPF paragraph 85 sets out 6 criteria that local authorities should consider when defining Green Belt boundaries. These are to:

- ensure consistency with the Local Plan strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development;
- not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open;

- where necessary, identify in their plans 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;
- make clear that the safeguarded land is not allocated for development at the present time. Planning permission for the permanent development of safeguarded land should only be granted following a Local Plan review which proposes the development;
- satisfy themselves that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the development plan period; and
- define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.

## Section 3 The principle and general extent of York's Green Belt

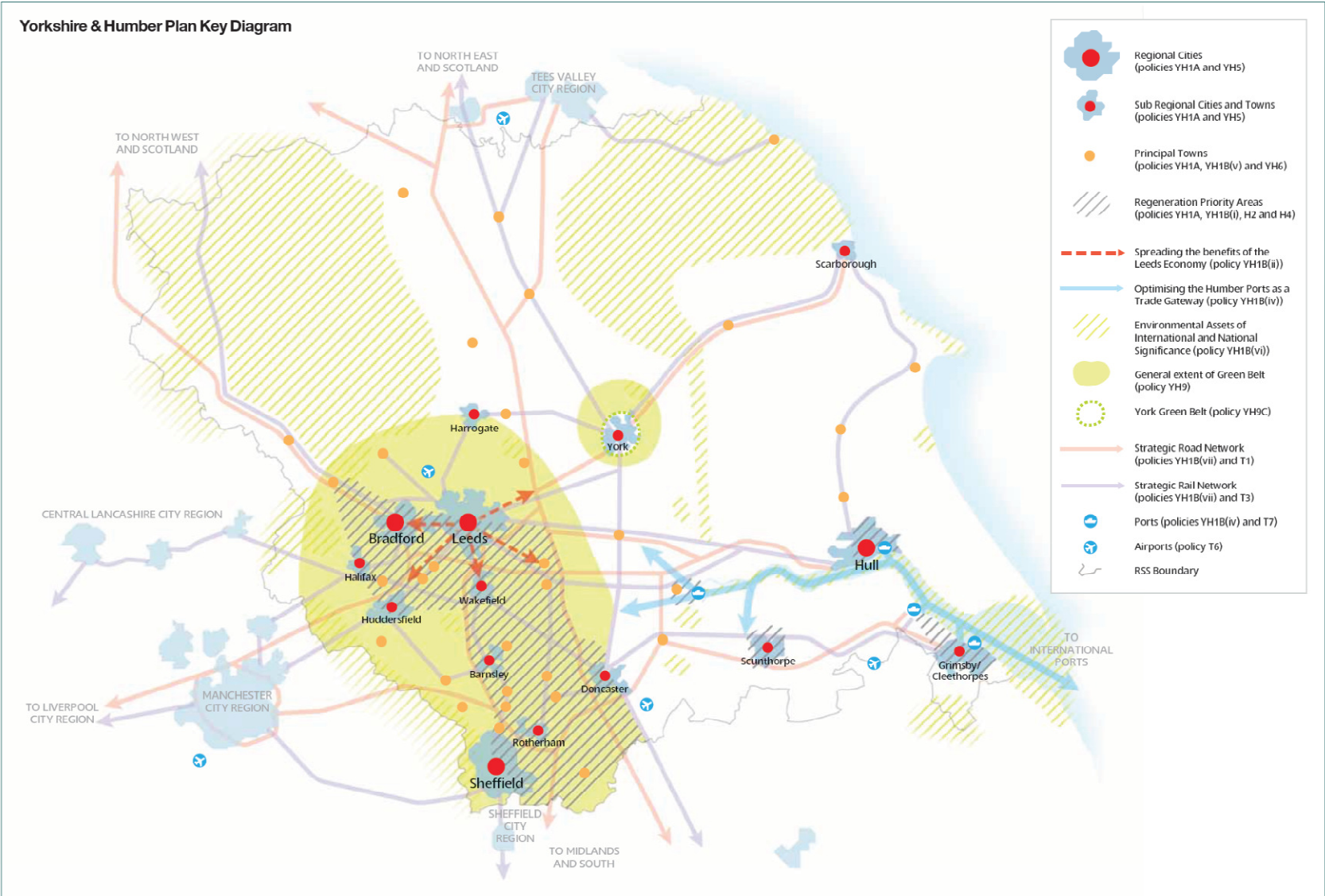
### 3.1 Regional Spatial Strategy

- 3.1.1 The removal of the regional tier of planning was an integral part of the Localism Act 2011, resulting in the revocation of Regional Spatial Strategies, part of a programme of planning reform which focused on measures to decentralise the planning system so that powers were passed down to local councils and the communities they represent. The abolition of RSS would enable a locally led planning system, comprising local and neighbourhood plans, and giving local councils responsibility for strategic planning in the region through the statutory duty to co-operate. Without a regional plan, the local plan would be the keystone of the planning system.
- 3.1.2 As City of York has no adopted local plan in place, revocation of the RSS would have removed the statutory basis for the York Green Belt, its general extent and purpose to prevent harm to the historic character of the City. The longer the period between revocation and the adoption of the local plan, the greater the opportunity for the cumulative effects of development on the green belt to have a significant negative effect on the special character and setting of York. The Secretary of State therefore decided to partially revoke the Yorkshire and Humber RSS [CD021], retaining its green belt policies and the relevant parts of the key diagram. This also indicated that it would be the role of York's next development plan document to define the detailed boundaries.

Figure 1: 'Saved' RSS policy

SCHEDULE		Article 2
RSS York Green Belt policies		
<b>POLICY YH9: Green belts</b>		
C The detailed inner boundaries of the Green Belt around York should be defined in order to establish long term development limits that safeguard the special character and setting of the historic city.		
<b>POLICY Y1: York sub area policy</b>		
Plans, strategies, investment decisions and programmes for the York sub area should:		
C Environment		
1. In the City of York LDF, define the detailed boundaries of the outstanding sections of the outer boundary of the York Green Belt about 6 miles from York city centre and the inner boundary in line with policy YH9C.		
2. Protect and enhance the nationally significant historical and environmental character of York, including its historic setting, views of the Minster and important open areas.		

Figure 2: 'Saved' RSS Key Diagram

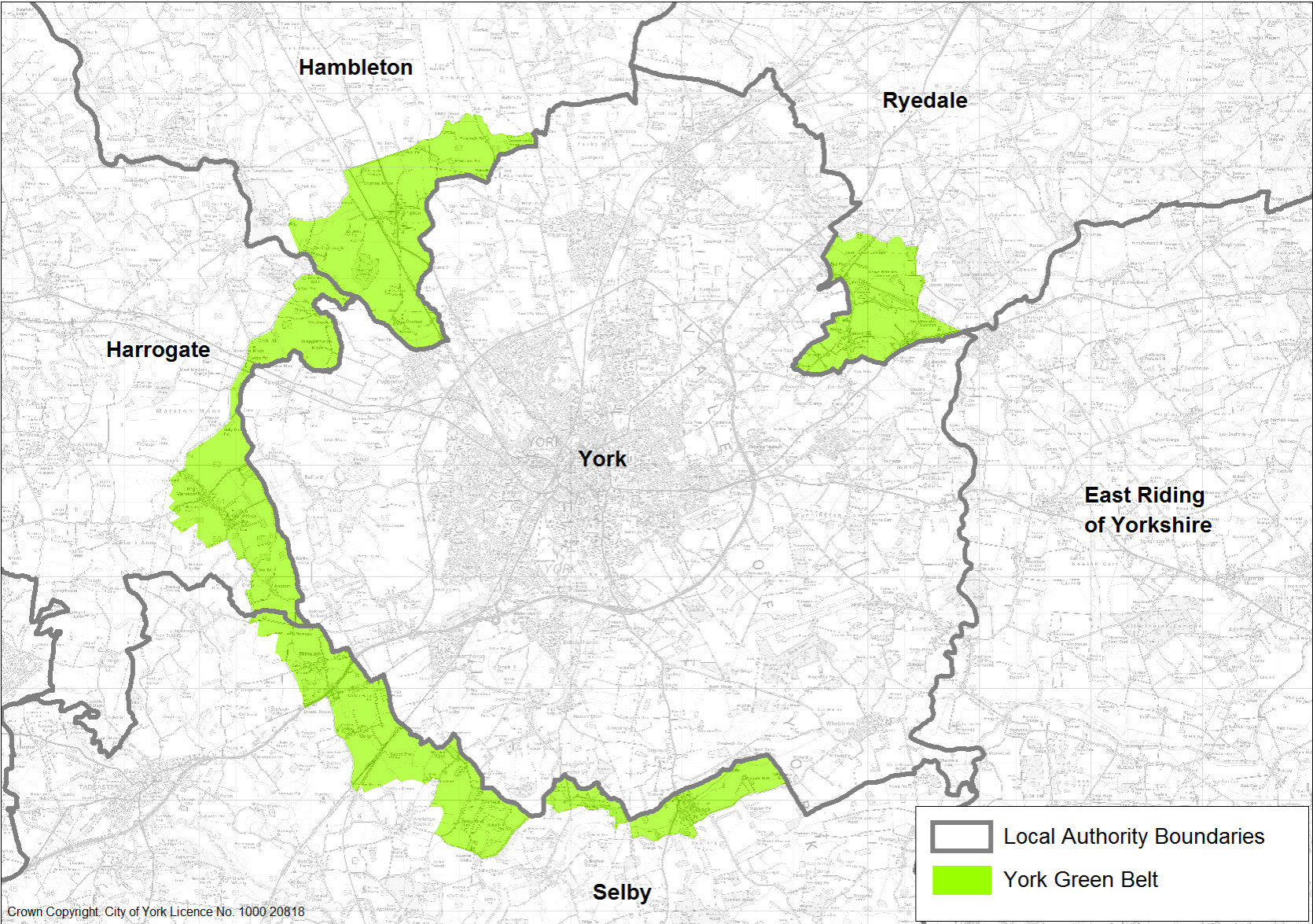




## **3.2 The Strategic Context and the Duty to Cooperate**

- 3.2.1 Ongoing discussions have been taking place throughout the stages of preparing the emerging Local Plan, regarding York's housing needs and the need to set an enduring Green Belt boundary. These have been formal through the Local Government North Yorkshire and York Spatial Planning and Transport Board, and informally, with each neighbouring authority. At its meeting on 9th December 2015, the Board broadly agreed in principle that City of York Council should provide some flexibility in setting the Green Belt boundary to protect York's special heritage and landscape, although deferred making a formal decision at that stage, but agreed that ongoing discussion should continue between authorities.
- 3.2.2 Land beyond the outer edge of the general extent of the York Green Belt is outwith the area of the York Unitary Authority. Consequently York has worked with neighbouring authorities on the technical work to determine the general extent of the green belt. Prior to 1996 this joint work was led by the County Council on behalf of all the districts including the then York City District Council.
- 3.2.3 The whole of the City of York Unitary Authority is included in this description of the general extent along with some parts of adjoining districts. This includes parts of Selby, Harrogate and Ryedale, whose own green belt boundaries have been established in adopted local plans.

Figure 3: York Green belt and adjoining authorities



## Section 4 Approach to defining York's Green Belt

### 4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 The new Local Plan for the City of York will be a single planning document. It will set out how much new development is to be accommodated in the District (defining York's GB boundaries until 2038) and where this growth will be located.<sup>1</sup> York's Local Plan reflects work which began in 2005 when the Council commenced the preparation of its LDF Core Strategy. In 2013, the Council published the Local Plan Preferred Options [SD005] and a (subsequently halted) Publication Draft in 2014 [SD010]. Following further technical work relating to housing and employment growth, Preferred Sites was published in 2016 [SD018], leading to consultation on Pre-Publication Plan in 2017 [SD021/SD022]. All stages in the Plan's preparation have been informed by evidence base, technical work on Site Selection and an iterative Sustainability Appraisal / SEA process. See Annex A of this report for further background to the preparation of the Local Plan.
- 4.1.2 As described in Section 3 above, the general principle of a Green Belt around York is already established, and its general extent set out in saved regional policy. The purpose of this section is to explain the local plan strategy and how factors relevant to green belt policy were taken into account in developing that strategy.
- 4.2.1 At a local level, emerging Local Plan policy SS2: 'The Role of York's Green Belt'<sup>2</sup> sets the policy context for a green belt around York, noting that its primary purpose is:
- to safeguard the setting and the special character of York, and
  - delivering the Local Plan Spatial Strategy.
- 4.2.2 The Local Plan's **Vision** describes a "...city whose special qualities and distinctiveness are recognised worldwide...(T)his will include ensuring that the city's place making and spatial planning policies reflect its heritage and contemporary culture, contributing to the economic and social welfare of the community whilst conserving and enhancing its unique historic, cultural and natural environmental assets."

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that the Local Plan spatial strategy does not allow for the provision of safeguarded land; instead the Plan seeks to identify sufficient land to accommodate York's development needs across the Plan period (2012-2033), and provides further development land to 2038 to establish a green belt boundary enduring for at least 20 years.

<sup>2</sup> City of York Local Plan Publication Draft 2018 [CD1]

- 4.2.3 The **Spatial Strategy** identifies the principles which will shape the City's future. Its key role is to identify the spatial distribution of development for York and set out the role of the Green Belt. The Spatial Strategy has developed through various stages of Plan production, informed by an iterative SA/SEA process. The characteristics of York's unique historic and natural environment are well documented; the historic environment of the City of York is of international, national, regional and local significance. The city has an outstanding heritage with many examples of assets which exhibit developments in architecture, monumental arts and town planning over centuries. However, its character is defined by much more than its noted heritage assets. Primary factors in developing a future strategy to accommodate growth include understanding the significance and sensitivity of the wider historic environment and developing an understanding of how we would value the environment of York differently were aspects to be lost or altered.
- 4.2.4 The boundary of the Green Belt is the consequence of decisions about which land serves a Green Belt purpose and which can be allocated for development. The Plan seeks to identify sufficient land to accommodate York's development needs across the Plan period (2012-2033), and provides further development land to 2038 to establish a 'permanent' green belt boundary enduring for at least 20 years.
- 4.2.5 York's Local Plan makes use of a range of technical documents and evidence to inform and guide decisions around growth and change, reflecting the primary role of York's green belt in preserving the historic character and setting of the City. The evidence is presented in brief below, with reference given to full contextual reports. This provides a description of what is special about the open land around York, how the setting of the historic city is a key part of its special character and how this evidence and the Plan's emerging approach to managing future growth informs the extent of green belt proposed.

### 4.3 The Spatial Strategy - Drivers and Shapers

- 4.3.1 The process of determining the spatial strategy started through the Local Development Framework as part of determining a Core Strategy (withdrawn in 2012), and has been taken forward in the preparation of the Local Plan.
- 4.3.2 The emerging Spatial Strategy uses spatial drivers to establish the level of growth required, and key shapers for development to ensure development is focussed in the most suitable and sustainable locations.
- 4.3.3 The **key drivers** for development are housing and employment growth, informed by



evidence base<sup>3</sup> which guides the current and projected needs across the plan period. One of the key tests of a Plan's soundness is that it meets its growth requirements and identifies sufficient land allocations to facilitate growth over the Plan period.

- 4.3.4 The **key shapers** for York are its unique characteristics that shape the way the city has developed, and have significant influence in locating future development; this includes evidence relating to the special character and setting of the historic City, safeguarding areas of open space and areas of nature conservation value and promoting sustainable forms of development.
- 4.3.5 Policy SS1: Delivering Sustainable Development continues to set the overarching principles guiding the level and location of growth. Policy SS1 states:

**Policy SS1: Delivering Sustainable Growth for York**

Development during the plan period will be consistent with the priorities below.

- Provide sufficient land to accommodate an annual provision of around 650 new jobs that will support sustainable economic growth, improve prosperity and ensure that York fulfils its role as a key economic driver within both the Leeds City Region and the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Local Enterprise Partnership area.
- Deliver a minimum annual provision of 867 new dwellings over the plan period to 2032/33 and post plan period to 2037/38. This will enable the building of strong, sustainable communities through addressing the housing and community needs of York's current and future population.

The location of development through the plan will be guided by the following five spatial principles.

- Conserving and enhancing York's historic and natural environment. This includes the city's character and setting and internationally, nationally and locally significant nature conservation sites, green corridors and areas with an important recreation function.
- Ensuring accessibility to sustainable modes of transport and a range of services.
- Preventing unacceptable levels of congestion, pollution and/or air quality.
- Ensuring flood risk is appropriately managed.
- Where viable and deliverable, the re-use of previously developed land will be phased first.

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<sup>3</sup> City of York Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update (2017) [SD050] and City of York Employment Land Review Update (2017) [SD063]

York City Centre, as defined on the Proposals Map, will remain the focus for main town centre uses<sup>4</sup>.

The identification of development sites is underpinned by the principle of ensuring deliverability and viability. Additionally, land or buildings identified for economic growth must be attractive to the market.

- 4.3.6 A description of the evidence and influence of the **key shapers** on York's spatial strategy, which have been taken into account when considering the proposed green belt boundary, is set out below. This includes reference to evidence used to inform site selection, which was itself guided by these same 'shapers'.

### **Conserving and Enhancing York's Historic and Natural Environment**

- 4.3.6 To inform future plan production and development decisions, the Council undertook work to categorise the special qualities of York, and through the Heritage Topic Paper, develop our understanding of the city's complex 2000 year history.
- 4.3.7 The historic city of York rises from and dominates the low-lying Vale of York, one of the great lowland plains of England. This provides the basis for the important long distance views both into and from the historic city which emphasise the special role and relationship of the historic city in the Vale of York, Yorkshire and beyond. The Minster can be seen from elevated viewpoints located as far away as Garrowby to the east, Sutton Bank to the north, Hazlewood Castle to the west, North Lincolnshire to the south. On clear days views from the Minster and from other elevated viewpoints within the City include the Pennines, the North York Moors and Wolds, Selby and the Humber estuary. Beyond the city's historic core the character is further defined by ancient arterial roads and commons (the green wedges formed by the strays), the river valleys, and the pattern of villages set within a predominately flat landscape of pasture, arable, woodland and wetland. In summary, the Heritage Topic Paper [SD103] further identifies the most significant contributors to York's historic setting as:
- a compact urban form surrounded by relatively small settlements;
  - a flat terrain providing views particularly of historic landmark features such as the Minster or Terry's Clock Tower;
  - open land which brings the countryside into the city through lngs, strays and

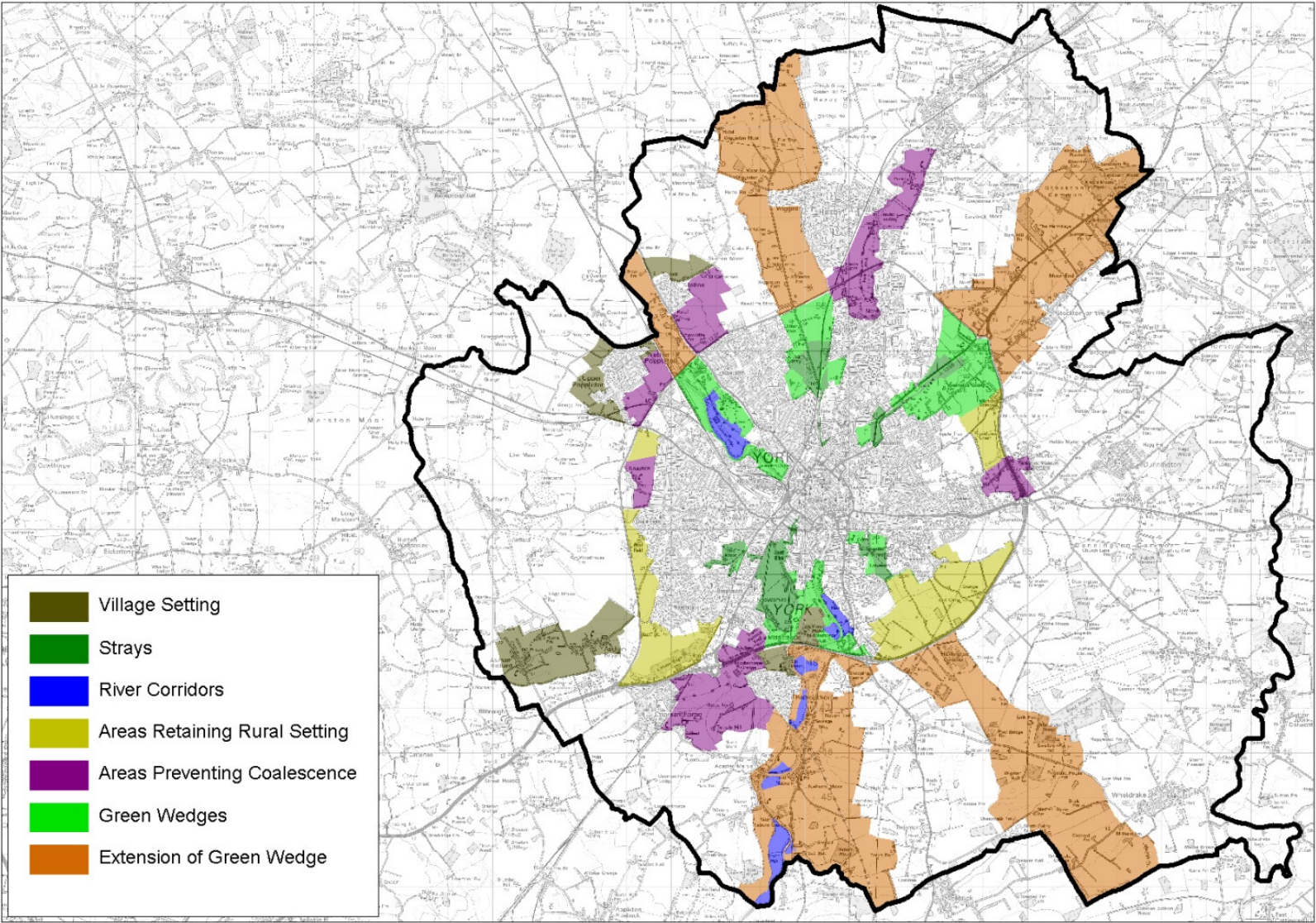
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<sup>4</sup> Main town centre uses as defined by the NPPF: Retail development (including warehouse clubs and factory outlet centres); leisure, entertainment facilities the more intensive sport and recreation uses (including cinemas, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, bars and pubs, night-clubs, casinos, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres, and bingo halls); offices; and arts, culture and tourism development (including theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities).

- associated land; and
- Key arterial routes that influence urban form.

- 4.3.8 There are few places in England where a 2000 year legacy of urbanism can be appreciated in such detail as in York. The spatial development of the historic core of the City of York can be seen as a series of chronological expansions from the historic core which annexe surrounding settlements, patterned by the arterial roads, the ancient commons and Ings, and the natural topography. These can be read through spatial progressions from centre to periphery. This chronological and spatial expansion of the historic city terminates in a clear frontier where the rural characteristics of farmland and woodland take over and provide a buffer zone between the villages and the core. The urban edge sits clearly within the encirclement established in the late 20th century by the construction of the outer ring road. The historic city therefore has a contained concentric form, some 6 miles across, and its relatively flat terrain makes it walkable and cycle friendly.
- 4.3.9 The villages surrounding York contribute to the setting and special character of the City through their intrinsic form and character, distribution and relationship with the surrounding agricultural landscape. Formerly of agricultural origin most of the villages began as linear green villages, many with dwellings along main streets and paddocks behind reaching into the agricultural landscape beyond. The settlement form bore a close relationship with the supporting agricultural landscape and their distribution was determined by the agricultural land required to support the community.
- 4.3.10 Some villages have retained their earlier form and character, retaining a close and visually harmonious relationship between the built and cultivated or grazed landscape. Others, particularly those situated close to the outer edge of the main urban area have expanded, significantly detracting from their earlier form and visual and working relationship with agricultural landscape. Notwithstanding this many of these villages have retained their early architectural character even if the village form beyond and the reference to the surrounding landscape has changed. This has helped engender their separate sense of community distinct from the urban areas of York.
- 4.3.11 The relationship between the main urban area and the settlements that surround it and other villages is seen as a key aspect of the historic character and setting of York. This includes the consideration of which areas of land outside existing settlements should be kept open to prevent communities from merging with one another or the city.

Figure 4 Historic Character and Setting map<sup>5</sup>



<sup>5</sup> Historic Character and Setting Technical Paper (2003, updated 2013 and 2014)



4.3.12 Technical work<sup>6</sup> (see Fig 4 above) carried out by the Council indicates that there are areas of land outside the existing built up areas that should be retained as open land due to their role in preserving the historic character and setting of York. Using information gathered, it was felt that the historic character and setting of the City in this context could be defined in terms of the following elements:

- ***Areas which retain, reinforce and extend the pattern of historic green wedges.*** These are a characteristic feature of York, comprising the historic 'Strays' and the Ouse 'Ings' and additional areas of undeveloped land which separates the existing urban form. Together, the Strays and Ings form large tracts of undeveloped land which largely extend from the countryside into the City.
  - The strays are areas of common land over which the Freeman of York held long established grazing rights. Whilst some parts are still retained for grazing, others have acquired additional uses. They have been retained for public use and are now managed by the City of York, becoming highly valued spaces for informal recreation. They represent an important link with the past to which great value is attached;
  - The Ings are the flood plain water meadows, defining a distinctive landscape character and a long, rich history. Their open grassland character, pattern of ditches and seasonal flooding remain as an important feature of the Ouse floodplains.
  - Green Wedges; the broad areas of undeveloped land usually bounded on three sides by urban development, part of which comprises the historic strays and ings and river floodplains. They prevent the lateral coalescence of different parts of the urban area, and help retain the distinctive characteristics of earlier periods of individual settlements. The green wedges bring a feeling of the countryside within a close proximity to the City Centre, allowing views to be enjoyed, including those towards the Minster. Green Wedges have helped shape the character and form of the urban edge and the pattern of built development which contributes greatly to the local distinctiveness and attractiveness of York. The green wedges provide an extended interface between the urban edge and the surrounding countryside.

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<sup>6</sup> Historic Character and Setting Technical Paper (2003, updated 2013 and 2014)

- ***The setting of villages whose traditional form, character and relationship with the surrounding agricultural landscape is substantially changed.***
  - Village setting – villages, or parts of villages whose traditional form, character and relationship with the surrounding landscape have remained substantially unchanged. This relates to those villages, the large part of which, or the outer part of which, is designated as a conservation area. They are important as the form, character, scale and pattern of the agricultural villages is considered to contribute to the setting and character of York.
  
- ***Areas which provide an impression of a historic City situated within a rural setting.***
  - The significant tracts of undeveloped land providing an open foreground of rural character enabling good views of the Minster or towards an urban edge of a historic character which is visible from a prominent and frequently used place.
  
- ***Areas which prevent the coalescence of settlements to retain their individual identity***
  - Retaining open areas of land between the outer edge of the urban area and an adjacent village and between neighbouring villages in order to retain the physical separation, individual character and identity. This includes land preventing coalescence (retaining separation between settlements, and retaining the pattern of villages).
  - Views of the Minster – York Minster is the most important landmark in the city. The prominence of the monument is an unmistakable feature of York. Views of the Minster from the wider countryside form an important association between the historic city and the surrounding landscape and helps reinforce the impression of a compact city set within a rural framework.
  - Character of the landscape – the landscape is broadly characterised as relatively flat and low lying agricultural land dominated by the wide flood plain of the Ouse, surrounded by a relatively evenly spaced pattern of villages. These characteristics of the landscape contribute to the prevention of coalescence of settlements.

4.3.13 In developing the Local Plan, a number of alternative spatial options were presented and tested through Sustainability Appraisal to understand the impacts of growth and change on the significant aspects of sustainable development – economic, environmental and social factors – within the context of York. In recognition of

York's special character and historic setting, the SA incorporates Heritage Impact Appraisal (HIA) to provide focused appraisal of the likely impacts of the Plan on the 6 principle characteristics defined in the Heritage Topic Paper, again reflecting the evidence of the Plan's key shapers.<sup>7</sup> This process of appraisal has been iterative throughout the preparation of the Local Plan.<sup>8</sup>

### **Open Space and Encroachment**

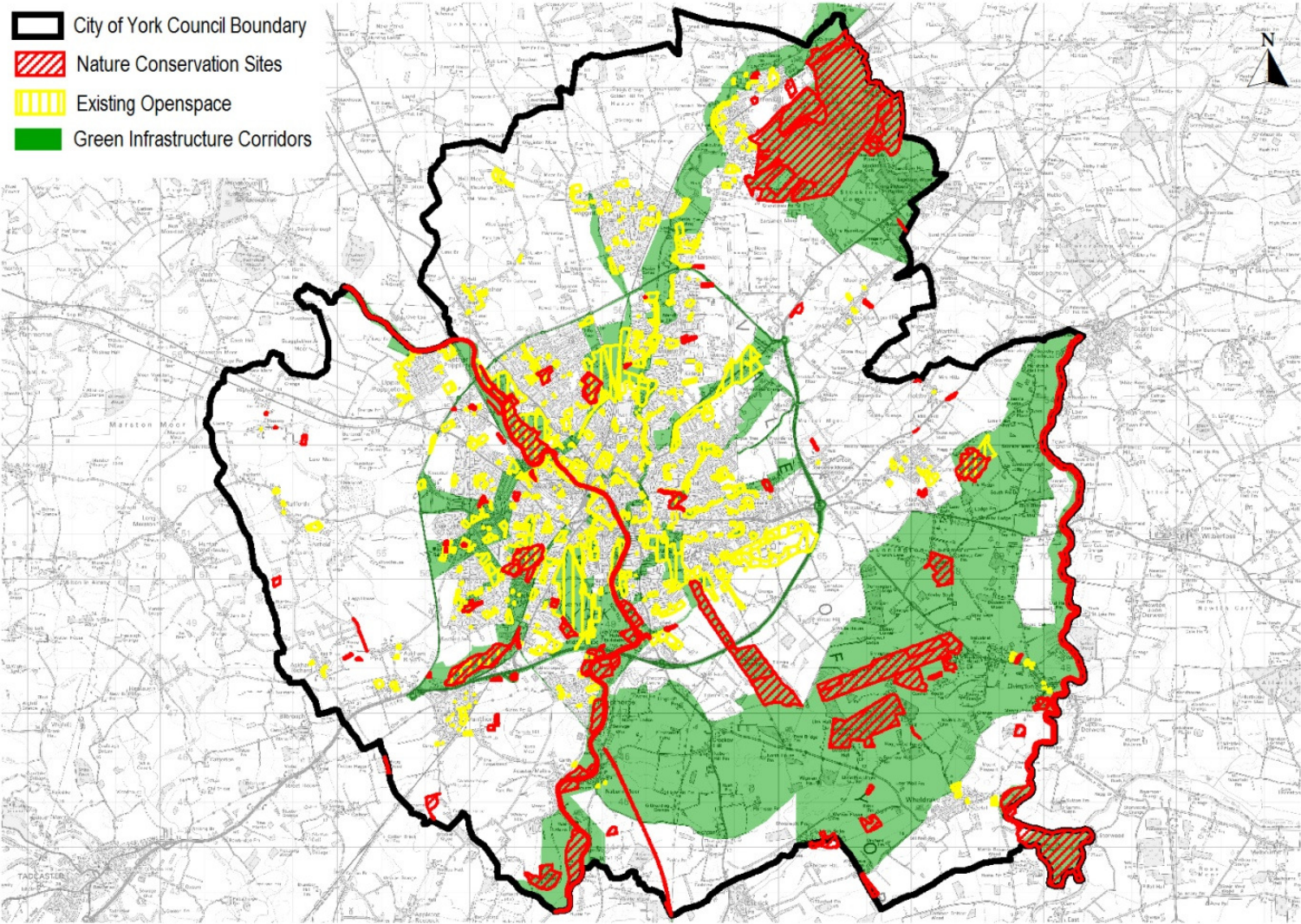
- 4.3.14 There is an ambition in the Plan to retain and promote access to existing open spaces. The Local Plan seeks to protect open space provision across all typologies as set out in the Openspace Study (2017) [SD085]. The Policies Map illustrates the urban open spaces in the built up area but does not specifically identify them where they are within the Green Belt.
- 4.3.15 Local, District and Regional Green Infrastructure Corridors were identified in the Green Corridors Technical Paper (2011) [SD088] and provide a framework within which only appropriate, managed development can take place. Green Infrastructure includes semi-natural habitats such as grasslands, woodlands, moorlands and river corridors; nature reserves and other outdoor destinations; cultural and historic landscapes such as parks and gardens, York's Ings and Strays, historic buildings and ancient monuments; as well as features of the wider rural landscape such as footpaths, hedgerows and game coverts. The historic landscape provides the City and its outlying villages with a rural setting, contributing much to its character. In urban areas, Green Infrastructure assets offer green porosity, and include open spaces such as allotments, public parks, cemeteries and previously developed land; significant tracts of garden space and features that provide public access such as canals, towpaths, and cycleways; as well as man-made features such as swales and green roofs on buildings. The extent of these, in combination with nature conservation sites and existing open space, is shown in Figure 5.
- 4.3.16 This assessment was relevant to the consideration of green belt purposes, in particular safeguarding the countryside from encroachment and preventing the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas.

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<sup>7</sup> Heritage Topic Paper

<sup>8</sup> Links to SA and HIA docs.

**Figure 5: Nature Conservation areas (including internationally, nationally and locally significant nature conservation sites), along with appropriate buffers Regional, District and Local Green Corridors, and areas of Open Space**





### **Ensuring access to sustainable modes of transport and services and checking sprawl**

- 4.3.17 York is a compact city with generally good public transport service and provision of community facilities. The location of development can play an important role in travel choice to and from destinations in maximising the opportunity to use non car modes of transport. Maximising this potential is an important aspect of creating sustainable neighbourhoods and contributing to residents' quality of life. Ensuring the local provision of and sustainable access to education, food, community services and openspace opportunities promotes environmental sustainability as well as social inclusivity and well-being. Similarly, taking advantage of non car modes of transport to employment destinations helps to capitalise on these benefits whilst maximising opportunities for the economy through ensuring an accessible workforce. Expanding connections between established areas can also benefit through clustering of industrial sectors and use of established routes.
- 4.3.18 This plan shows areas of land around York which are inaccessible to a range of local services (doctors, schools or shops); for the purposes of the spatial strategy, incremental development in such remote locations would exacerbate urban sprawl and run contrary to a planned approach which makes best use of brownfield land. The plan has been produced by City of York Council and is based on Access to Services information collated as part of the Local Plan Site Selection work as described in the Council's Site Selection methodology (See SD027A and SD018).
- 4.3.19 Having considered the evidence available which describes the special character and setting of York and which underpins the emerging spatial strategy, Figure 7 shows how land around York contributes to one or more green belt purposes, using combined GIS layers overlaid to the City's boundary.

**Figure 6: Reverse Access to Services map – in green is highlighted areas which have access to less than two separate services**

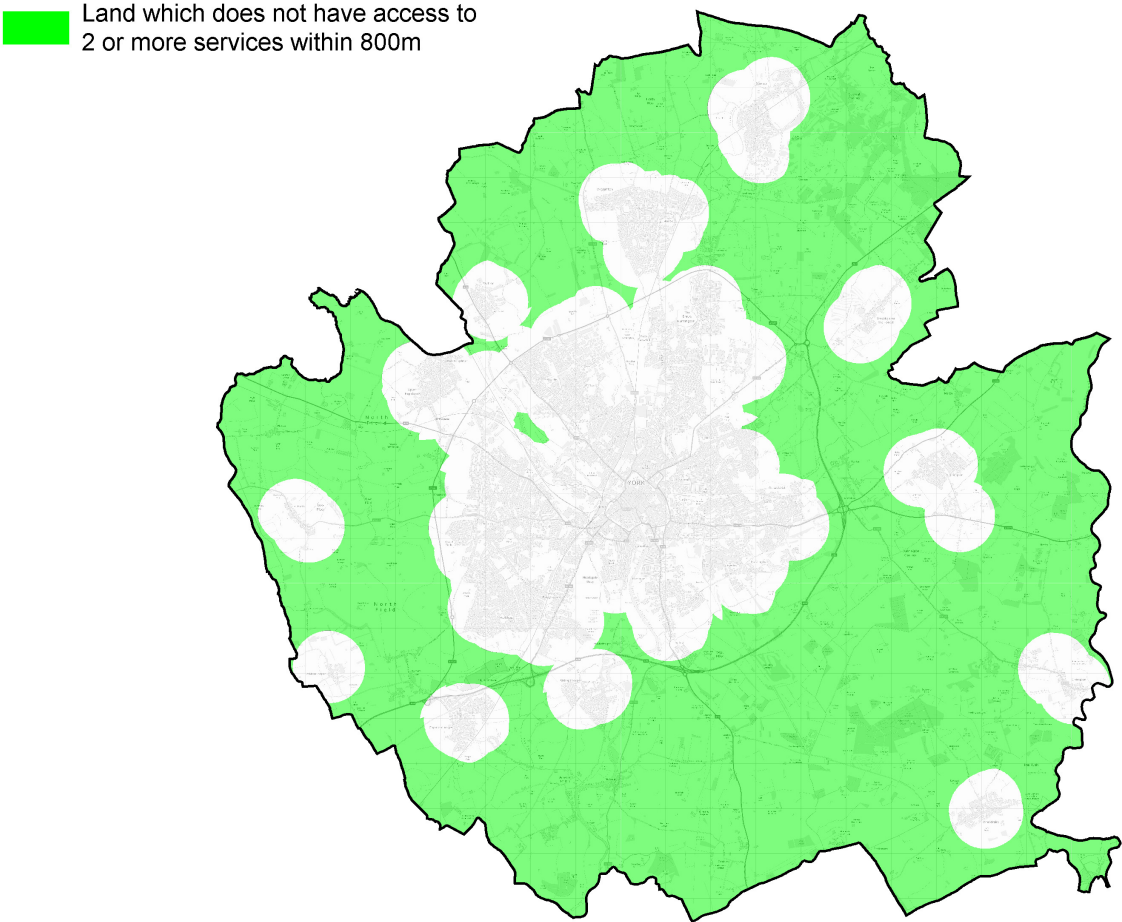
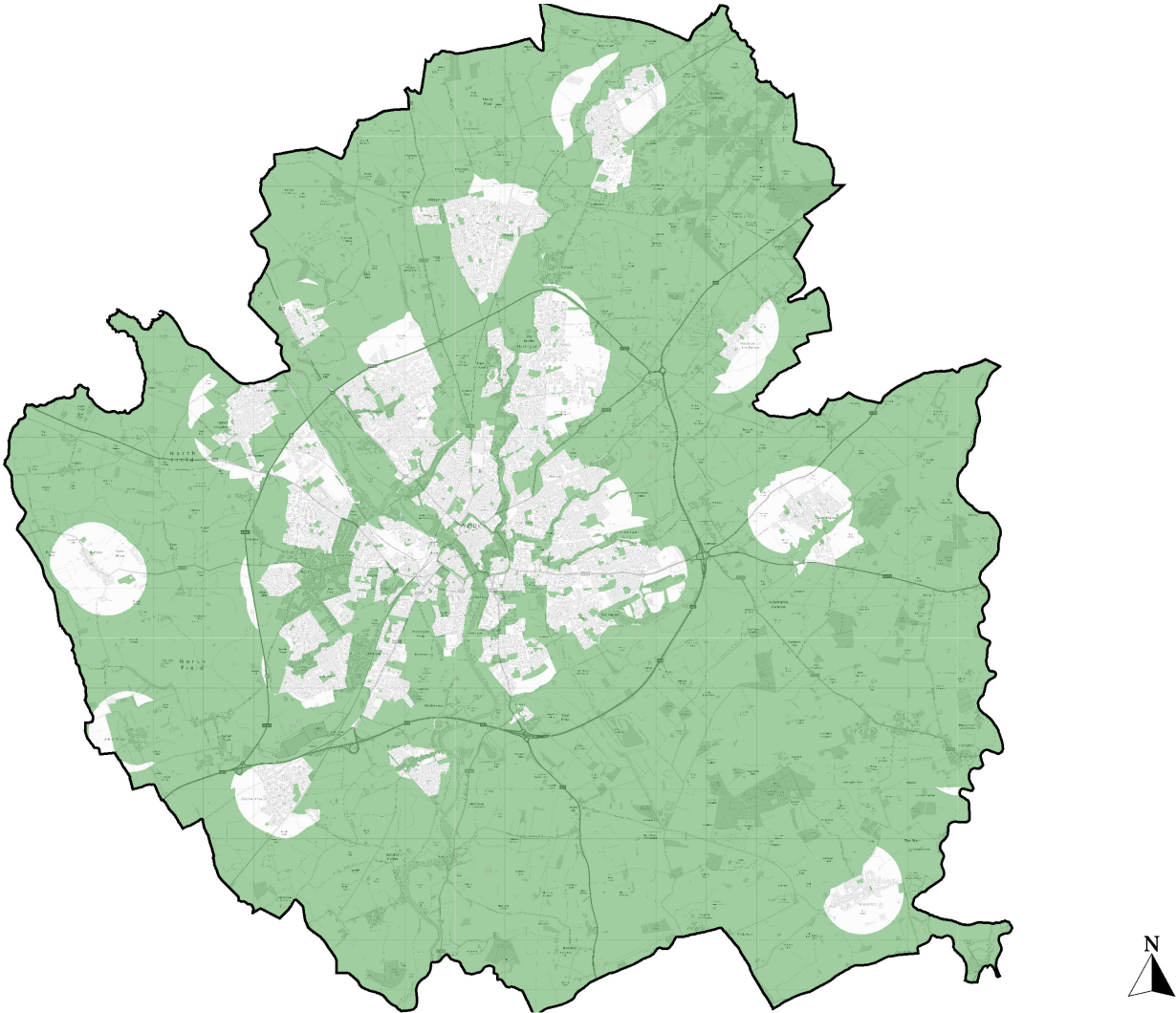


Figure 7: Combined constraints map



## **4.4 Site Selection Methodology**

- 4.4.1 It is considered that the primary purpose of green belt for the City of York is to protect the setting and special character of the historic city and this green belt purpose is taken into account through criteria 1 of the site selection methodology which looks at those areas important to the Historic Character and Setting of York. This criteria also relates to the green belt purpose 'prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another' as it looks at coalescence in the York context through mapping those areas which are important to prevent the coalescence of York's main urban area with its surrounding villages.
- 4.4.2 In relation to the green belt purpose safeguarding the countryside from encroachment and checking unrestricted sprawl this has been considered through criteria 2 of the site selection methodology which looks at those areas which are important to protect because they are areas of openspace and or/ nature conservation value. The green belt purpose relating to 'check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas' has also been considered through criteria 4 of the site selection process which considers those areas that are the most sustainable in relation to access to key services and transport ensuring development is sustainably located.
- 4.4.3 The table below illustrates how the site selection principles, which stem from the spatial strategy, have taken into account consideration of the green belt purposes. This is set out for each of the criteria used for the site selection methodology. It should be noted that the site selection methodology also takes into account areas at high risk from flooding (Flood Zone 3) which has also acted a constraint on development. This is taken into account on figure 7, the combined constraints map.

**Table 1: Site Selection principles relevant to Green Belt Purposes.**

<b>Green belt Purpose</b>	<b>1 - check unrestricted sprawl</b>	<b>2 - prevent neighbouring towns merging</b>	<b>3 - Safeguard the countryside from encroachment</b>	<b>4 - To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns</b>	<b>5 - encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land</b>
	To ensure that land which is unplanned and unsustainable remains in green belt protection	Given the special circumstances of York this is taken to mean the merging of villages of special and unique character	To ensure that the most precious parts of our countryside which have special environmental and social value are protected.	To ensure that the factors which make York special and illustrate its historical setting are preserved	To ensure that the balance of quantum's of development is such that there is still need and motivation for the development of Brownfield Land
<b>Site Selection Criteria 1: Environmental Assets</b>		Historic Character and Setting	Sites of Nature Conservation Designation, Ancient Woodlands	Historic Character and Setting	
<b>Site Selection Criteria 2: Openspace Retention</b>	Openspace		Openspace		
<b>Site Selection Criteria 3: Minimising Flood Risk in Greenfield locations</b>			Greenfield within flood zone 3a		
<b>Site Selection Criteria 4: Access to Services and transport</b>	Access to Services and transport (Land which is inaccessible to services should be protected).				



4.4.4 Greenbelt purposes therefore informed the site selection work, in particular the location of urban extensions and new settlements which is described in more detail in the site selection work published at each stage of Local Plan production. As part of this process the need to identify defensible boundaries has been taken into account. Please refer to:

- Preferred Options Site Selection Report and Annexes (SD072)
- City of York Local Plan Further Sites Consultation and Appendices (SD015)
- City of York Local Plan Preferred Sites Consultation (SD018)
- Moving to Pre-Publication Draft – report to July 2017 Executive (SD027)
- Moving to Publication Draft – report to January 2018 Executive (SD028)

## 4.5 Final Green Belt Boundaries

4.5.1 The Green Belt boundary is shown on the Local Plan policies map (CD004) and has been informed by both this site selection process as well as the spatial strategy work described above. The boundaries have also been drawn taking into account:

- Development which has been subsequently implemented through planning consents or incremental change;
- Improved mapping which has led to a better understanding of, or changes in physical features in the landscape;
- The need to define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent..

4.5.2 In defining the detailed boundaries of the Green Belt, care has been taken to follow readily recognisable physical features that are likely to endure such as streams, hedgerows, footpaths and highways. Clearly it will not always be possible to do this because of factors on the ground and where this is the case, a logical approach has been taken to establish a boundary that can be understood and interpreted on the ground.

## **Section 5      Summary/Conclusion**

- 5.1      This report concludes that the open landscape around York is of paramount importance in preserving the character and setting of the historic city. The city's approach to determining an appropriate spatial strategy is based on sound evidence describing what is special about its character and setting, reflecting green belt purposes and other guidance set out in NPPF; these are consistent themes in determining an appropriate spatial strategy and in delivering a permanent green belt boundary.

## **Annex A: History of York's Green Belt**

### **A1 Origins of York's Green Belt 1955-1974**

The background to York's Green Belt spans a period of over 55 years and is a long and complex one covering a number of government boundary re-organisations. In 1955 Government Circular 42/55 drew the attention of local planning authorities to the need to define Green Belts around built up areas. At this time the area around York was subdivided between 4 separate authorities - The former East Riding County Council, North Riding County Council, West Riding County Council and York City Council.

In response to the government circular each Authority submitted initial proposals for the Green Belt in their respective areas to the then Minister of Housing and Local Government. These were followed by formal submissions by the North and West Riding County Councils as part of their proposed amendments to the County Development Plans. Proposals drawn up by the East Riding County Council and York City Council were never formally submitted. However the collective proposals are what formed the draft York Green Belt.

City of York Borough Development Plan, 1956 The County Borough Development Plan was approved by the Minister of Housing and Local Government in March 1956. The Plan contains no policies in relation to the Green Belt.

Sketch Plan Green Belt Proposals, 1956 The City Council's draft proposals for the Green Belt designation within the City were submitted to the Minister in October 1956. No reply has been traced from the Ministry giving informal approval to these proposals, although in a letter dated October 1957 it was suggested that the proposals would be favourably considered, subject to no conflicts arising within the schemes proposed by the adjoining counties.

Throughout the early 1960's discussions took place between the planning authorities and Government Departments on the future distribution of development.

In 1963 the Minister decided to defer any decision on the submitted Green Belt for the North Riding on the grounds that the local planning authorities should prepare a comprehensive study of the long term needs of Greater York prior to further consideration of the submitted Green Belt proposals. The four authorities were instructed to consult and to submit a composite Green Belt for York as a whole.

It was eventually concluded in 1965 that the major part of development provision was to be located to the north of the City, mostly within the North Riding where agricultural land

quality was lowest. The East and North Riding County Councils and the City of York submitted details of their proposed allocations to the Department of the Environment. The submission of the North Riding proposals was, however, deferred because the City Council was unable to agree the inner boundary of the Green Belt as proposed within the North Riding fringe area.

As a result, the Green Belt proposals remained in draft or 'sketch plan' form and refusals of planning permission were issued on applications, and subsequently upheld on appeal, for development which was considered inappropriate in the Green Belt.

## **A2 Impact of the Local Government Act 1972**

The Local Government Act 1972 reorganised the administration of areas into a two tier county and district system. This meant that in 1974 the four former Authorities were replaced by the North Yorkshire County Council and five District Councils. This effectively put elements of the area under consideration for York's Green belt into the following districts: Hambleton, Harrogate, Ryedale, Selby and York.

The North Yorkshire County Council adopted the non-statutory Green Belt identified by its predecessors as an interim measure pending the preparation of the County Structure Plan.

In the continued absence of an adopted composite York Green Belt the Secretary of State decided in 1975 to maintain a 'sketch plan' Green Belt around the whole of York until such a time as comprehensive proposals could be established. It is unclear however, to which precise area sketch plan Green Belt designation applied.

The North Yorkshire County Structure Plan was formally adopted in 1980 and set the principle of a York Green Belt defined as: "a belt whose outer edge is about 6 miles from York City centre". Following approval of the Structure Plan the county council attempted to rationalise the boundaries of the Sketch plan and adopted a definition for its own purposes however these boundaries were not universally agreed or adopted.

Under normal circumstances, green belt boundaries would have been defined in the local plans of each of the district councils. However given that the potential extent of the York green belt covered 5 districts, the Local Plans for all of these would have needed to come forward simultaneously and would still not have provided an overall assessment of the York Green Belt. As a result it was decided that the Greater York Authorities would work together to create a Greater York Local Plan published and adopted by North Yorkshire County Council.

In September 1991, North Yorkshire County Council published the Deposit Draft 'York Green Belt Local Plan', covering the full extent of the York Green Belt. The document was subject to a joint Inquiry (with Ryedale District Council's Southern Ryedale Local Plan – as it also covered the Ryedale element of the York Green Belt) from September 1992 to April 1993. The Inspectors Report was published in January 1994. However, the York Green Belt was not pursued to formal adoption following the publication of the Inspectors Report, for the following reasons:

- The Government revised its guidance on Green Belts (Revised PPG2 – January 1995). This would mean that in order to progress the Plan to adoption, North Yorkshire County would need to further amend the Plan to reflect the new guidance and potentially hold another Public Inquiry;
- At its meeting in February 1995, North Yorkshire County Council resolved to abandon plans for a new settlement in the Greater York area – which would result in significant changes to the proposed Green Belt boundary around York, within the Plan – also potentially resulting in another Public Inquiry;
- Given the above, it was proposed that there would have been insufficient time before Local Government Re-organisation (1st April 1996) when City of York Council would expand to take in the majority of the York Green Belt, so it was decided not to pursue the Plan to adoption.

Consequently, North Yorkshire County Council made the decision to publish the York Green Belt Local Plan Post-Modifications document in September 1995 but the detailed boundaries of this proposed green belt remained unadopted.

### **A3 Impact of the Local Government Commission for England 1992**

The Local Government Commission for England reviewed the structure of Local Government from 1992 to 2002. As part of this reorganisation The York Unitary Authority was created on 1st April 1996. This resulted in elements of land previously controlled by Hambleton, Harrogate, Ryedale and Selby being re designated as part of a more extensive hinterland beyond the built up area of the city of York, and thereby encompassing the majority of the York Green Belt. The Council used the York Green Belt Local Plan – Post Modifications (September 1995) as a basis for defining the York Green Belt in its emerging Local Plan.

The Deposit Draft City of York Local Plan was published in May 1997, and following 2 sets of Pre Inquiry Changes (March and August 1999), the Local Plan Inquiry opened in



November 1999. One of the early Round Table sessions was on the short term nature of the proposed York Green Belt and the Inspector disagreed with the Council's proposed short term / interim timeframe of the Green Belt (i.e. review the Green Belt following the adoption of the Local Plan) which would give a 'life' of only 13 years. The Inspector stated that "In his 1994 Report on objections to the York Green Belt Local Plan, my colleague supported a Green Belt life of at least 20-25 years. In my experience this is a common approach". The Inspector recommended adjourning the Inquiry until the Council had undertaken a Green Belt Review and established a 'permanent' Green Belt boundary and consequently, was in a position to reconvene the Inquiry.

Following the adjournment of the Inquiry, the Council instigated a Green Belt Review and associated work, including an Urban Capacity Study, and Historic Character and Setting work to designate different character areas of the Green Belt etc. The Council undertook a public consultation on the Third Set of Changes to the Local Plan during February / March 2003, with a view to resuming the public inquiry in due course. However, the Government was now in the process of reviewing the planning policy approach nationally, which culminated in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 which made it clear that it would not be feasible to adopt the emerging local plan, as it would be out of date immediately.

## **A4 Impact of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004**

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 reformed planning at a local and regional level. The Structure Plans and Local Plans previously required of Local Governments were to be replaced by Local Development Frameworks (a portfolio of local planning documents) at a local level. Regional Assemblies were set up to write Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) which were expected to do a number of things including:

- establish a 'spatial' vision and strategy specific to the region - for example, identifying in general terms areas for development or regeneration for a period of about 20 years ahead
- address regional or sub-regional issues that may cross county, unitary authority or district boundaries

RSS documents were set up to be statutory legal documents which the Local Development Frameworks of Local Authorities must be in conformity with.

## **A5 City of York Fourth Set of Changes (Development Management) Local Plan**

Given the change in the national approach, it was clear that York's emerging Local Plan at this time, would be out of date immediately. However, given the Council's current position of not having an approved or adopted Local Plan, it was decided to approve it for Development Management purposes, so the Council could make informed Development Management decisions whilst it started work on a Local Development Framework for the City. The Plan was approved by Council in April 2005.

## **A6 City of York Local Development Framework**

City of York council officers were instructed by Members to undertake work to progress a Local Development Framework for York. The initial policy document to be started was the Core Strategy. This document went through various stages, as follows, before being submitted to the Government for Examination in February 2012:

- Core Strategy Issues and Options consultation Summer 2006;
- Core Strategy Issues and Options 2 consultation (Festival of Ideas) Summer 2007;
- Core Strategy Preferred Options consultation Summer 2009;
- Core Strategy Submission (Publication) Summer 2011.
- Core Strategy Submission – February 2012.

The Core Strategy was submitted for examination in February 2012, however the examination was suspended because of a number of concerns from the Inspector. The Core Strategy was not intended to set detailed Green Belt boundaries, but to indicate the general extent of the York Green Belt through the Key Diagram in the Plan. The more detailed Green Belt boundaries would have been set by the Allocations DPD which, following the halting of the Core Strategy, was not progressed.

Following the suspension of the LDF Core Strategy Examination, and the introduction of NPPF, City of York commenced work on a new Local Plan for the City.

## **Annex B      Bibliography**

- City of York Local Plan Publication Draft and Policies Map(Regulation 19 Consultation) [CD001 and CD004 A-C]
- The Approach to the Green Belt Appraisal (CYC, 2003) [SD107 A to C]
- Historic Character and Setting Technical Paper (CYC, January, 2011) [SD108]
- Historic Character and Setting Technical Paper Update (CYC, June 2013) [SD106]
- The Heritage Topic Paper Update (CYC, 2014) [SD103]
- Site Selection Methodology (CYC, 2013) [SD072A]
- National Planning Policy Framework (CLG, 2012) [SD035]
- Yorkshire and Humber Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) to 2026 (Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber, 2008) [SD032]
- The Regional Strategy for Yorkshire and Humber (Partial Revocation) Order 2013 [CD021]
- LDF Core Strategy Publication (CYC, 2012) [SD004]
- City of York Preferred Options Local Plan (CYC, 2013) [SD005]
- City of York Local Plan Publication (CYC, 2014) [SD010 A-D)
- City of York Preferred Sites Consultation document (CYC, 2016) [SD018 and SD019]
- City of York Pre-Publication Local Plan (Regulation 18) (CYC, 2017) [SD021 and SD022 A-C)
- City of York Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal (CYC and Wood Plc, 2018) [CD008 and CD009 A-D)
- Green Corridors Technical Paper (CYC, 2011) [SD088]
- Officers Assessment of Housing and Employment Sites following PSC (CYC, 2017) [SD027c]