

REPORT TO:		Cabinet	
DATE:		03 January 2018	
PORTFOLIO:		Cllr Miles Parkinson, Leader	
REPORT AUTHOR:		Chief Planning and Transportation Officer	
TITLE OF REPORT:		Green Belt Assessment	
EXEMPT REPORT (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A)	Options	Not applicable	
KEY DECISION:	Options	If yes, date of publication:	

1. **Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The Planning and Transportation Service is working on the development of the Local Plan for Hyndburn and as part of this work is reviewing the Core Strategy and developing a Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD). A masterplan for the future development of the Huncoat Housing Zone will also be prepared in 2018.
- 1.2 In order to develop these documents it is necessary for them to be based on appropriate evidence. There are large areas of Green Belt abutting the urban areas of Accrington, Great Harwood, Clayton-Le-Moors, Rishton and Huncoat. This was first designated by the North east Lancashire Structure Plan (1980) and the detailed boundary of the Green Belt was later established by the Hyndburn Local Plan that was adopted in 1996.
- 1.3 Although a number of amendments were made to the boundary of the Green Belt when the Core Strategy was adopted in 2012, the Council has not undertaken a full assessment of the Green Belt since the detailed boundaries were established by the Local Plan in 1996.
- 1.4 The purpose of this report is to advise members of Cabinet of the Green Belt Assessment that is being undertaken to inform the development of the Local Plan for Hyndburn.

2. **Recommendations**

- 2.1 That the Report be noted and that a further report be presented to Cabinet setting out the findings of the Green Belt assessment when it has been completed.

3. Reasons for Recommendations and Background

- 3.1 The Council is preparing a Local Plan for Hyndburn and to do this it is necessary to undertake a Green Belt Assessment.
- 3.2 The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green belt being their openness and their permanence. Once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation of the Local Plan.
- 3.3 An assessment of the Green Belt in Hyndburn has not been undertaken since the Local Plan was adopted over 20 years ago and an assessment of the Green Belt forms an essential part of the evidence that will be needed in the development of the Site Allocations DPD and for the Masterplan that will be prepared for Huncoat next year.
- 3.4 The assessment will identify general areas of Green Belt before identifying more detailed parcels that abut the urban boundary. The assessment will consider the contribution made by each parcel to the five purposes of the Green Belt identified by the National Planning Policy Framework, namely:
- i. To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas;
 - ii. To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
 - iii. To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
 - iv. To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
 - v. To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
- 3.5 It is important to stress at this stage that the Green Belt assessment will not be identifying land that should be taken out of the Green Belt or land that should remain in the Green Belt, it is simply an assessment against the five purposes set out above.
- 3.6 In determining whether to allocate land for development it is necessary to take into account a wide range of factors, one of which will be the findings of the Green belt Assessment if the site is within the Green Belt. However, this will be undertaken at a later stage of the development of the Local Plan.

4. Alternative Options considered and Reasons for Rejection

- 4.1 A large portion of the Borough is designated Green Belt. A Green Belt assessment will form an important part of the evidence base for the review of the Core Strategy, the Site Allocations DPD and the Huncoat Masterplan. If a Green Belt assessment is not undertaken it is likely to be difficult to defend decisions relating to areas of Green Belt, for example in cases where developers are seeking to take land out of the Green Belt that the Council wishes to retain in the Green Belt, or where the Council believes land should be taken out of the Green Belt.

4.2 If an assessment of the Green belt is not undertaken there is a risk that the plan may not be found “sound” by an Inspector.

5. Consultations

5.1 The Councils Local Plan Working Group and Portfolio Holder have been informed that this work is being undertaken.

5.2 The Council’s Corporate Management Team have been informed that this work is being undertaken.

6. Implications

Financial implications (including any future financial commitments for the Council)	The Green Belt Assessment was tendered in line with the requirements of the Council’s Constitution.
Legal and human rights implications	The Green Belt Assessment will not make recommendations on whether to allocate land for development, this will be done at a later stage of the plan preparation. Local plans are prepared in a manner that is prescribed by statute and by its very nature seeks to protect human rights.
Assessment of risk	It is important that the Green Belt assessment is undertaken in a consistent manner that applies the methodology equally to all parcels. Taking an inconsistent approach increases the risks associated with a challenge.
Equality and diversity implications <i>A Customer First Analysis should be completed in relation to policy decisions and should be attached as an appendix to the report.</i>	The report is for the information of members only. There are no specific policy recommendations / decisions accompanying this report.

**7. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985:
List of Background Papers**

7.1 Copies of the Green Belt assessment will be made available on the Council’s website when it has been completed. The Local Plan Working Group and Portfolio Holder, Cllr Parkinson, will be kept informed of progress of the work.