

Hilton Park, M6 Junction 11

R02b_Green Belt and Sensitivity Study Advice Note

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. This report has been prepared by Tyler Grange Group Limited on behalf of Nurton Developments. The advice note provides advice on the contribution the site makes towards the Green Belt purposes in reference to South Staffordshire's latest Green Belt Study. It also considers the findings of the Council's new Landscape Sensitivity Assessment document in consideration of future employment development at Hilton Park, M6 Junction 11.
- 1.2. The report should be read in association with the **Green Belt Plan (10246/P08b)** and the Appendices contained at the rear of this report.

2.0 Landscape Sensitivity Study

South Staffordshire Landscape Sensitivity Study Assessment (July 2019)

- 2.1. The Council's Landscape Sensitivity Study report identifies the site as situated within Parcel SL55s1. On their scale ranging from Low to High, they consider the parcel as **Moderate** regarding Sensitivity.
- 2.2. Within Appendix 1 of the report, the Council provides the following commentary in relation to the parcel, "*The area falls within the following Landscape Character Type: Settled Plateau Farmlands. The area is located to the west of the M6 motorway (south west of Junction 11), which marks the eastern boundary. The A460 marks the western boundary. The southern boundary is formed by Hilton Lane and the north eastern settlement fringe of Featherstone. Shareshill lies to the north west of the area.*"
- 2.3. The Landscape Sensitivity Judgement states, "*This landscape is considered to have an overall moderate sensitivity to residential and employment development as the majority of the criteria score moderate and no criteria override that judgement.*"
- 2.4. In general, Tyler Grange's findings are in agreement with the Council, although the site is contained by a strong road network and is not prominent within the wider countryside and therefore in landscape terms, with suitable mitigation, could be considered suitable for development. This context is shown on the **Green Belt Plan (10246/P08b)**.

3.0 Green Belt

South Staffordshire Green Belt Study - Stage 1 and 2 (July 2019)

- 3.1. The Council's Green Belt Study Stage 1 Report identifies the site as located within Parcel S30 (Between Featherstone and M6); a parcel of 496.5 hectares separating Featherstone, Shareshill and Essington. See plan extract below from showing Parcel S30:

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South Staffordshire Green Belt Study – Stage 1 and Stage 2 Report 154

July 2019

3.2. In relation to the five Green Belt purposes, the Council provides the following commentary and judgements.

Purpose 1 – Moderate

3.3. *Land has some separation from the West Midlands conurbation but is close to it. The strong boundary provided by the M6 to the south helps it to retain a strong relationship with the wider countryside.*

Purpose 2 – Moderate

3.4. *Land lies in the gap between the West Midlands conurbation and Cheslyn Hay, which forms part of the large built-up area of Cannock. However the M54 and M6 motorways act as an intervening feature to contribute to the sense of separation between the two.*

Purpose 3 – Strong

3.5. *Land contains the characteristics of open countryside (ie an absence of built or otherwise urbanising uses in Green Belt terms) and does not have a stronger relationship with the urban area than with the wider countryside.*

Purpose 4 – Weak/No contribution

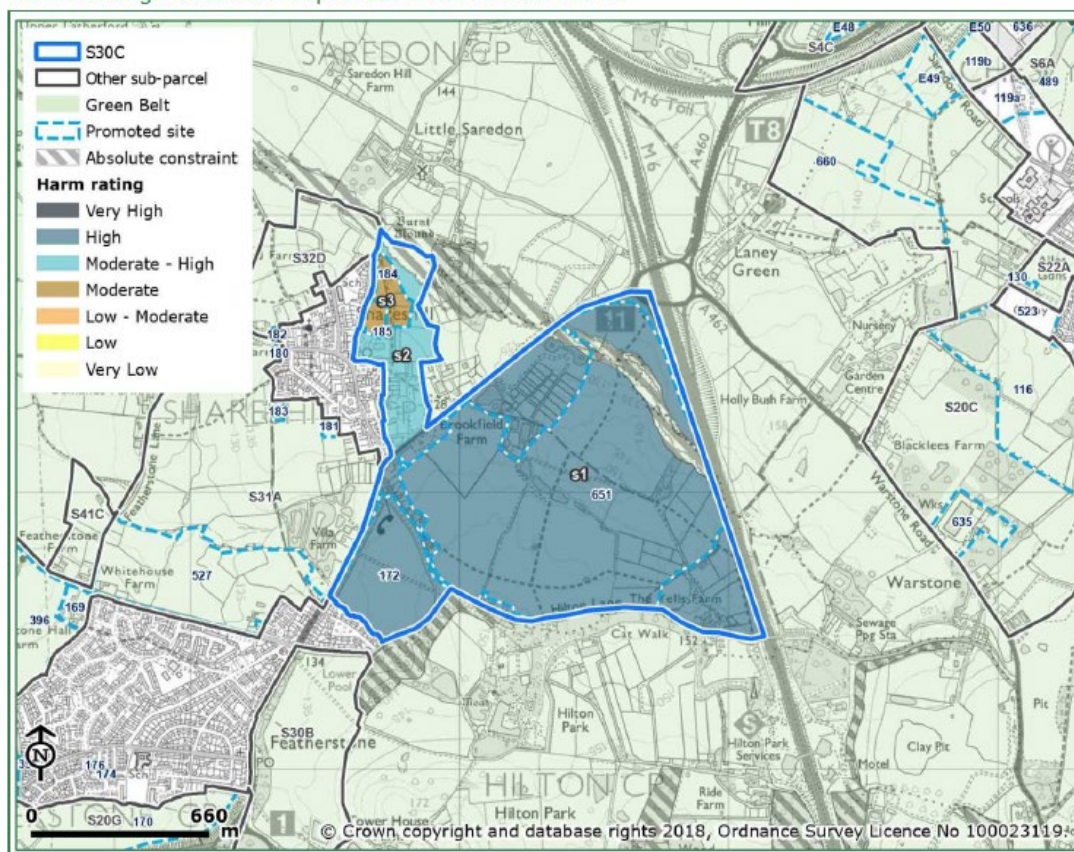
3.6. *Land does not contribute to the setting or special character of a historic town.*

Purpose 5 – Strong

3.7. *All parcels are considered to make an equal contribution to this purpose.*

- 3.8. The Council's Green Belt Study Stage 2 Report goes into further detail by dividing the Stage 1 parcels into smaller parcels. However, the Stage 2 report identifies the site within Sub-parcel S30C; a larger parcel including areas extending closer towards Shareshill and Featherstone with a total size of 135.7 hecatres.
- 3.9. At an even more detailed level, Parcel S30Cs1 identifies a 115.48 hectare parcel including the site (Employment allocation '651') and Housing allocation site '172'. The Council's findings, on a scale from 'Very Low' to 'Very High' consider the site as making a **'High'** contribution to the overall Green Belt purposes.
- 3.10. The Sub-parcel description is described as *"Farmland and small cluster of dwellings (along Hilton Lane) lying between the inset settlement at Featherstone and Cheslyn Hay, and bound to the east by the M6. Also includes an area of farmland and paddocks on the eastern edge of the inset village of Shareshill."*
- 3.11. The document goes on to describe the 'Harm' justification stating, *"The sub-parcel is adjacent in places to the edge of inset settlements of Featherstone and Shareshill, but has a stronger relationship to surrounding countryside than to urbanising uses. The release of any land to the east of the A460 would significantly weaken the Green Belt boundary by further breaching the strong edge provided by the A460, and would significantly weaken the integrity of the surrounding Green Belt by extending the inset urban edge into the fragile gap between towns."*
- 3.12. See plan extract below showing Parcel S30Cs1:

Harm Ratings Overview Map of Land within Sub-Parcel



Site Specific Assessment

- 3.13. As all parcels are considered to make an equal contribution to Purpose 5, it will not be considered further within this report. Below, this Note sets out how the site performs in relation to Green Belt purposes 1 to 4, as well as opportunities for release of Green Belt land including a new, permanent, defensible Green Belt boundary (as shown on the **Green Belt Plan 10246/P08b**).

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

- 3.14. The site is situated in close proximity, although not adjacent to, Shareshill and Featherstone to the west and south west respectively. The site is contained by the M6 motorway to the east, Hilton Lane to the south and the A460 to the west.
- 3.15. Considering the above, the site does not contribute to preventing the unrestricted sprawl of any large built up areas. The road network to the east and south will serve to provide defensible Green Belt boundaries, with the opportunity for a new, permanent Green Belt boundary utilising the A460, existing hedgerows and watercourses within the site assisting with restricting 'sprawl' to the surrounding areas.

Purpose 2 – To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

- 3.16. Given the containment of the site within the wider landscape, the site does not prevent coalescence of neighbouring towns. Shareshill and Featherstone are both separated by the A460 to the south west of the site and therefore the site cannot be considered to contribute towards coalescence. The defensible boundaries in the form of the M6 motorway to the east and Hilton Lane to the south present the opportunity to introduce a new Green Belt boundary to the west utilising part of the A460 in addition to existing vegetation equate to further physical and visual containment.
- 3.17. There are opportunities for the strengthening of the existing boundaries within the site which, in addition to the A460 in part, could potentially form the new, robust Green Belt boundary.

Purpose 3 - To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

- 3.18. The site sits to the west of the M6 motorway, bound further by Hilton Lane to the south and the A460 along the site's western edge provides a boundary to contain future development. The site contains existing business uses and residential properties along the periphery, thus limiting the contribution the site makes to safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
- 3.19. Whilst there are hedgerows and trees surrounding the site, they are degraded and gappy in places. The retention and enhancement of these, in addition to the enhancement of the boundary hedgerows will add to the contained nature of the site whilst improving biodiversity.

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

- 3.20. In agreement with the findings of the Council's assessment, the site makes no contribution to Purpose 4 in relation to the setting or special character of a historic town.
- 3.21. In general, Tyler Grange's findings are in agreement with the Council, however the parcel is contained within the wider landscape by a strong road network, notably the M6 motorway. The development presents the opportunity to provide a strong defensible green belt boundary utilising existing internal hedgerows and watercourses whilst situating development closest to the M6 motorway.

Opportunities for Release of Green Belt

- 3.22. Although development of the site would lead to the loss of arable fields, it is contained by strong boundaries and does not contribute towards sprawl. The southern developed extents

of Shareshill abuts the site's western boundary and therefore cannot be considered to contribute towards coalescence. The site does not form part of the wider countryside to the east beyond the M6 and makes no contribution to the setting or special character of a historic town.

- 3.23. The site is contained by strong recognisable boundaries in the form of the M6 motorway to the east and Hilton Lane to the south. The opportunity exists to utilise part of the A460 in addition to the existing internal hedgerows and watercourses as new Green Belt boundaries to the north; this would provide an area adjacent to the M6 with open green space and new tree planting.
- 3.24. As set out at paragraph 139 of the 2019 NPPF, when defining Green Belt boundaries, plans should '*define boundaries clearly using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent*'. The existing boundary vegetation, hedgerows and hedgerow trees assist with enhancing the boundaries that could comfortably accommodate permanent, defensible new Green Belt boundaries and enhance those formed by the M6 motorway to the east and Hilton Lane to the south.
- 3.25. The proposed new Green Belt boundary is shown on the **Green Belt Plan (10246/P08b)**.
- 3.26. In addition to requiring the release of Green belt land to be clearly defined by robust new Green Belt boundaries, the NPPF also considers at paragraph 138 that plans should, '*...set out ways in which the impact of removing land from the Green Belt can be offset through compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt land.*'
- 3.27. The opportunities exist to provide an area to the west of the M6 to be retained within the Green Belt for recreational and biodiversity enhancements. This could be in the form of characteristic new structure planting to assist with filtering views of the proposed development, as well as being managed for wildlife and biodiversity benefits. There may also be opportunities to open up the watercourses to incorporate SUDs features for further wildlife and biodiversity benefits.

M54 to M6 Link Road

- 3.28. A Planning Application is underway for a link road connecting the M54 to the M6, with the Public Consultation period ending in July 2019. The proposals bisect the site from north to west and connect to Junction 11 of the M6 to the north of the site (see **Appendix 1 – M54 to M6 Link Road GA Plans**).
- 3.29. Currently, the Council provide a '**High**' harm judgement for the site, although their study does not take into consideration the approval of the M54 to M6 link road. The approval of this link road would alter the baseline situation, dividing the site with major infrastructure.
- 3.30. With the construction of the link road, Tyler Grange consider the area to the west of the link road adjacent to the A460 as having a '**Moderate-High**' judgement, with the area to the east of the link road adjacent to the M6 as having a '**Moderate**' judgement. In addition to this, an area of land between the new link road and the M6 could be retained within the Green Belt for enhancements.

Planning Practice Guidance (July 2019 Update)

- 3.31. The July 2019 update to the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) provides additional information on the role of the Green Belt in the planning system to supplement Section 13 of the NPPF. It identifies three changes;

Change 1: What factors can be taken into account when considering the potential impact of development on the openness of the Green Belt?

- 3.32. The revised PPG provides clarity with regard to the type of factors that need to be considered

when a judgement is made with the impact of a proposal on the openness of Green Belt. The factors have been identified through case law and comprise the spatial and visual aspects of openness, the duration and the remediability of the development and the impacts of any associated activity such as traffic generation. (Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 64-001-20190722)

Change 2: How might plans set out ways in which the impact of removing land from the Green Belt be offset by compensatory improvements?

- 3.33. This change is encouraging the production of strategic policies by Local Authorities to compensate for loss of Green Belt land to development by improvements to the 'environmental quality and accessibility of the remaining Green Belt land'. Examples of compensatory measures provided include new or enhanced Green Infrastructure and woodland planting, landscape or visual enhancements, improvements to biodiversity, habitat connectivity and natural capital and improved access to new, enhanced or existing recreational and playing field provisions. (Paragraph: 002 Reference ID: 64-002-20190722)

Change 3: How can the strategic policy-making authority ensure that compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of the Green Belt be secured?

- 3.34. This change provides guidance on how compensatory measures may be achieved starting with the early engagement with landowners and other stakeholders for land identified for release and compensatory improvements, the identification of the improvements needed and the associated implications including deliverability. In addition, this change provides suggestions by which compliance to implement and maintain the necessary compensatory measures may be secured (use of Conditions, s106 obligations and CIL). (Paragraph: 003 Reference ID: 64-003-20190722)

4.0 Summary

- 4.1. The site is well-contained by strong boundaries; the M6 to the east, Hilton Lane to the south and the A460 to the west. The opportunity exists to utilise the existing watercourses and internal hedgerows to form the northern boundary to the site.
- 4.2. In relation to the Council's Sensitivity Study, Tyler Grange are in agreeance with the findings, although the site is contained by a strong road network and is not prominent within the wider countryside and therefore in landscape terms, with suitable mitigation, could be considered suitable for development.
- 4.3. The Council's Green Belt Study findings do not consider the application of the M54 to M6 link road, which would bisect the site from north to south. Their consideration of 'High' harm for release could be reduced with the introduction of major infrastructure relating to the link road. With the construction of the link road, Tyler Grange consider the area to the west of the link road adjacent to the A460 as having a 'Moderate-High' judgement, with the area to the east of the link road adjacent to the M6 as having a 'Moderate' judgement. In addition to this, an area of land between the new link road and the M6 could be retained within the Green Belt for enhancements.



- Site Boundary
- Potential Green Belt Boundary
- M54 to M6 Link Road (including associated boundary for works within Red Line)
- Land retained within Green Belt for enhancements.



Project Hilton Park, M6 Junction 11

Drawing Title **Green Belt Plan**

Scale Not to Scale

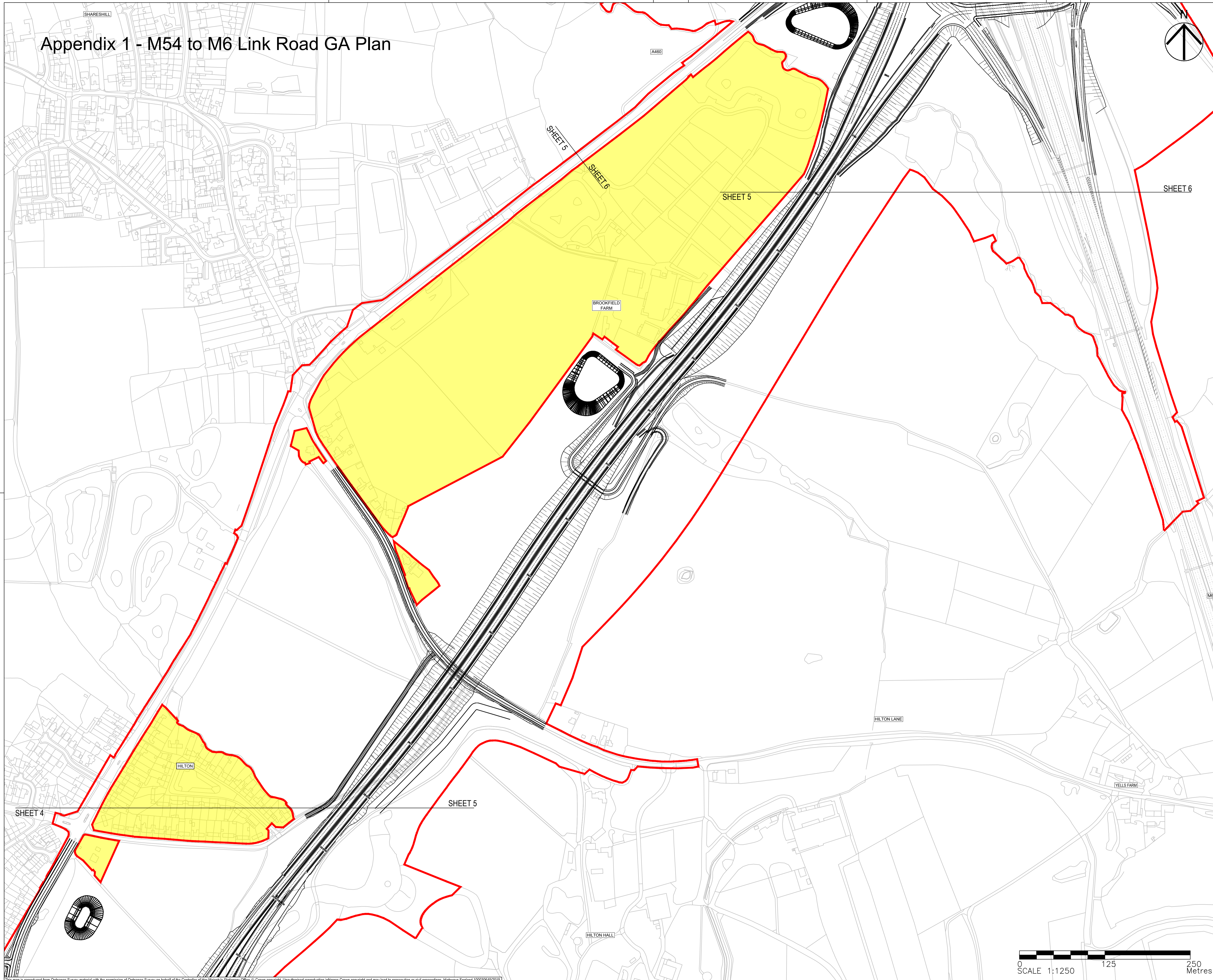
Drawing No. 10246/P08b

Date December 2019

Checked CD/RH



Appendix 1 - M54 to M6 Link Road GA Plan



SAFETY, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION BOX

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KEY

- LIMITS OF LAND TO BE ACQUIRED OR USED PERMANENTLY OR TEMPORARILY (THE ORDER LIMITS)
- LAND NOT INCLUDED WITHIN THE ORDER LIMITS
- RETAINING WALLS

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Revision	By	Date	Check	Suffix
1	AM	21/12/19		P01
2	AM	22/02/19		P02
3	MW	29/03/19		P03
4	AM	10/05/19		P04
5	HS	15/08/19		P05
6	JP	30/10/19		P06

Purpose of issue
SUITABLE FOR INFORMATION

Client
Highways England
The Cube
199 Wharfside Street
Birmingham
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Development Consent Order Number
TR010054

Project Title
M54 to M6 Link Road

Drawing Title
GENERAL ARRANGEMENT
SHEET 5 OF 10

Designed	Drawn	Checked	Approved	Date
---	JP	AM	RR	30/10/19

Internal Project No. 60536736 **Suitability** S2

Scale @ A1 1:1250H/1:1250V **Zone** Highways General

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Drawing Number	Highways England PIN	I Originator	I Volume	Rev
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Z2_SW_PR_Z		-DR-CH-1005		

SCALE 1:1250 125 250 Metres

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6	JP	30/10/19		P06

Purpose of issue
SUITABLE FOR INFORMATION

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Development Consent Order Number
TR010054

Project Title
M54 to M6 Link Road

Drawing Title
GENERAL ARRANGEMENT SHEET 6 OF 10

Designed	Drawn	Checked	Approved	Date
---	JP	AM	RR	30/10/19

Internal Project No. 60536736
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