



ROUGH HILL, CHESTER

Study Area Appraisal and Green Belt Analysis

July 2025

Document Control			
Issued by	Land Studio		Tel: 01244 319 019
	The Old Rectory St Marys Hill Chester CH1 2DW		www.landstudio-uk.com
Client	Chorlton Lodge		
Project Name	Rough Hill, Chester		
Document Title	Green Belt Analysis		
Document Ref	495-LST-XX-XX-RP-L-0101		
Status	S2		
Publish Date	08.07.2025		

Document Revision Record			
Issue Number	Status	Date	Revision Details
P01	S2	08.07.2025	First Draft
P02		25.07.2025	Second Draft
P03		01.09.2025	Third Draft
P04		30.10.2025	Fourth Draft

This document has been produced by Land Studio on behalf of Chorlton Lodge. The contents of the document are intended for submission with an application for Green Belt release related to the redevelopment proposals at Rough Hill, Chester. Land Studio has prepared this report in accordance with the instructions of the above-named client for their sole and specific use. Any third parties who may use the information contained herein do so at their own risk.

CONTENTS

01 ROUGH HILL: INTRODUCTION 4

02 ROUGH HILL: POLICY CONTEXT 5

Green Belt & Grey Belt	6
Local Plan	7
New Local Plan	8
Potential Growth Areas	11

03 ROUGH HILL: STUDY AREA CONTEXT 13

Study Area Context	14
Study Area context: Access	15
Study Area context: Historic Woodland	16
Study Area Context: History	17
Study Area Context: Watercourses and Flooding	18
Study Area context: Green Belt	19
Study Area context: Agricultural Classification	22
Study Area context: Surrounding Area	23
Study Area context: Study Area Interior	24

04 ROUGH HILL: STUDY AREA ANALYSIS 25

Existing Study Area Conditions	26
Study Area Analysis	28

05 ROUGH HILL: CONCLUSION 33

Conclusion	36
------------	----

06 ROUGH HILL: BIBLIOGRAPHY 37

Bibliography	38
--------------	----

ROUGH HILL: INTRODUCTION

This report aims to examine the current Green Belt around Rough Hill, implemented by Cheshire West and Chester. It will provide an overview and analysis of the authority's own assessment of the Green Belt parcels and examine the opportunities relevant to one parcel in particular, which is between the A55 and the A483 road corridors to the southwest of Chester.

The document consists of the following parts:

Part 01 : Introduction

Part 02 : Baseline Studies

Part 03 : Context Analysis

Part 04: Study Area Analysis

Part 05: Opportunities and Constraints

Part 06: Concepts

Part 06: Conclusion

At the end of the report, a recommendation will be presented outlining the potential extent and location of the lands to be considered for release from the Green Belt.



Study Area Location

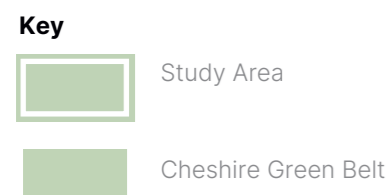
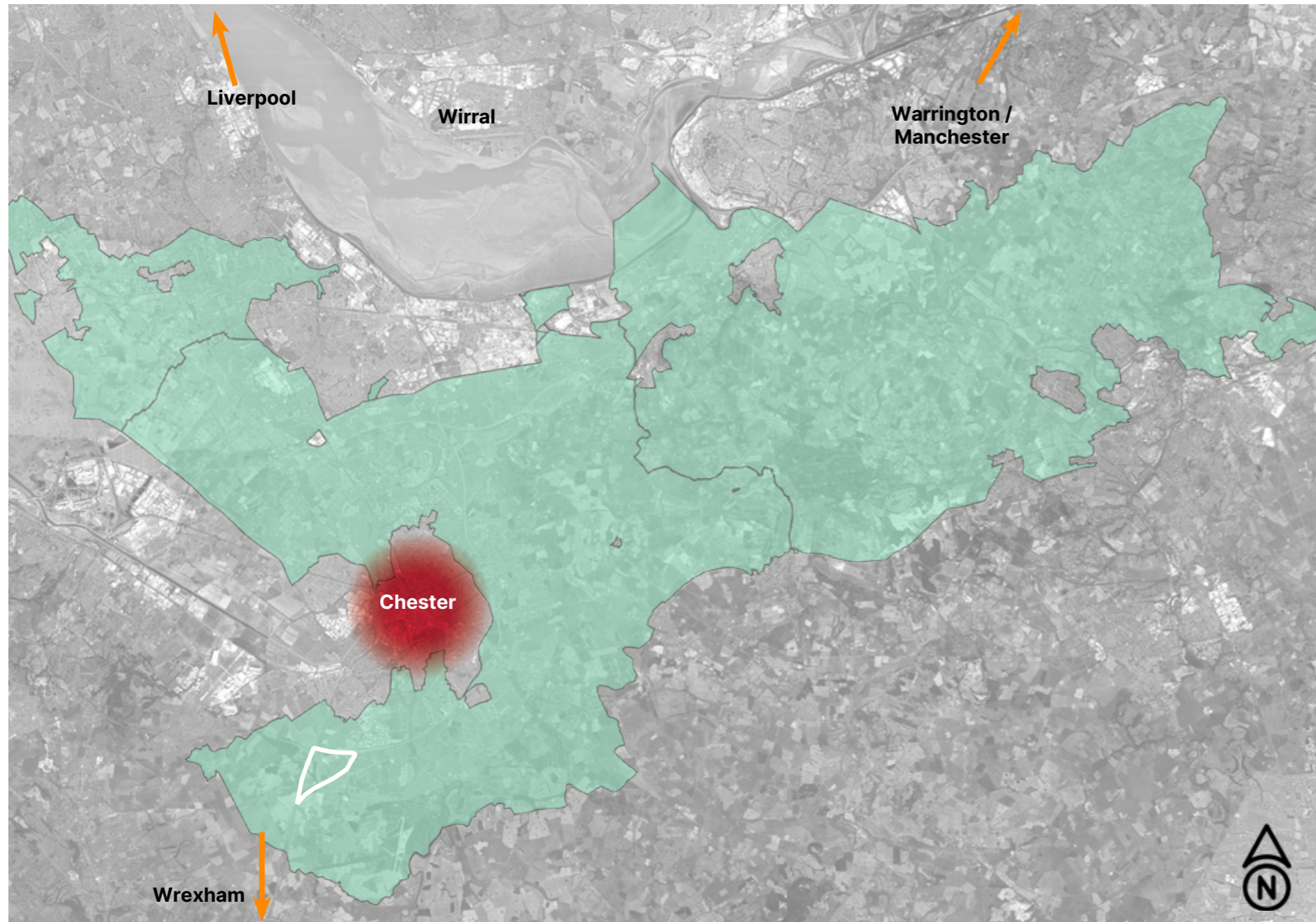




ROUGH HILL: POLICY CONTEXT

02

ROUGH HILL: POLICY CONTEXT



Green Belt.

According to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in December 2024, the primary objective of the Green Belt is to prevent urban sprawl by maintaining land as permanently open and undeveloped. The December update of the NPPF made changes to the Green Belt policy in order to relieve pressure on Green Belt land, unlock lower-value parcels and previously developed Study Areas and assist in the delivery of 370,000 homes per year and 1.5 million homes over the current Parliament. This was done by introducing the idea of 'Grey Belt'. The Green Belt serves five key purposes:

- a) to check the unrestricted expansion of large built-up areas;**
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;**
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;**
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns;**
- e) to support urban regeneration by encouraging the reuse of derelict and other previously developed urban land.**

Of these, a,b and d are particularly important to the determination of land as Grey Belt.

Grey Belt.

Where it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development, plans should give priority to brownfield first, then other previously developed land, and only if neither of these are available to then consider Green Belt locations. The NPPF defines the Grey Belt as areas within the Green Belt that consist of previously developed land and other parcels that have minimal impact on the Green Belt's core objectives, excluding land or assets with significant environmental protections (e.g., SSSIs, heritage assets).¹

In areas where housing need isn't being met, Grey Belt land—if sustainably located and not fundamentally undermining Green Belt as a whole—can be developed without needing to prove very special circumstances as was the case with development in Green Belt previous to this new policy.

The conditions for Grey Belt Development, or "Golden Rules" are as follows. When considering major residential developments, the following three criteria must all be met:

- The development must provide at least 15% more affordable homes than the local policy, capped at 50%
- Necessary upgrades to infrastructure (e.g., transport, schools, utilities) must be planned or funded
- Accessible public green spaces (landscape, biodiversity, recreational) must be provided and / or improvements made to existing green spaces

¹ National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), HM Government, Dec 2024

ROUGH HILL: POLICY CONTEXT



Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Part One).

In Cheshire, the concept of a Green Belt was first proposed in 1960–61 and was formally established in 1979. The current Local Plan designates approximately 38,499 hectares as Green Belt land, which constitutes around 42% of the Cheshire West area.

It should be noted that the Cheshire Green Belt primarily focuses on curbing suburban / sprawl development towards the north, with the large urban areas of Manchester and Liverpool and their suburban areas encroaching on Cheshire and risking coalescence across this area. As Chester is a border city with Wales to the West and South, considering growth on and in tandem with the border is also important. Future Wales (FW) (February 2021) indicates 'Areas of Consideration' for Green Belts around Wrexham/Deeside, however the area to the south of Chester towards Wrexham is still largely rural with only a small number of villages in close proximity.

This is the currently adopted Local Plan for Chester and Cheshire West.

Green Belt and Countryside:

Policy STRAT 9

The intrinsic character, landscape quality, and natural beauty of the Cheshire countryside will be safeguarded by strictly limiting development to that which demonstrably requires a countryside location and cannot reasonably be accommodated within designated settlements.

Within the countryside, the following types of development may be permitted, subject to compliance with relevant planning policies:

- Development that necessitates a countryside location, such as for agricultural or forestry operations
- The replacement of existing buildings
- Small-scale, low-impact rural or farm diversification schemes that are appropriate in scale and sensitive to the Study Area's context, location, and landscape setting. The re-use of existing rural buildings, particularly for economic purposes, where the buildings are of permanent construction and capable of conversion without substantial reconstruction
- The proportionate expansion of existing buildings to support the growth of established rural businesses, where the scale and design are in keeping with the character and setting of the surrounding area
- All development proposals must be of a scale, form, and design that do not adversely affect the visual character, openness, or amenity of the countryside.¹

¹ Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies,

In accordance with Policy STRAT 3 (Chester), a limited release of Green Belt land is proposed to meet the long-term development needs of Chester. In areas of the countryside that fall within the designated Green Belt, further restrictions will apply, consistent with the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Part Two).

Relevant text includes:

Green Belt and Countryside:

GBC 1 - Commercial Study Areas in the Green Belt

D- Chester Business Park: Land to the east of Wrexham Road, Chester is identified as an established business park within the Green Belt. Development proposals for office development (use class B1a) within the area defined on the policies map will be supported where they are in line with Local Plan (Part Two) policy GBC 1 and:

1. they provide for a high quality development in a parkland setting
2. the traffic/transport requirements generated by the development can be safely and satisfactorily accommodated on the highways network.²

Policy STRAT 9 – Green Belt and Countryside, adopted January 2015.

² Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies, Policy GBC 1 – Commercial Study Areas in the Green Belt, adopted July 2019.

ROUGH HILL: POLICY CONTEXT



New Local Plan (2025 - draft).

In January 2025 Chester and Cheshire West Council embarked on an update to their local plan, with a necessary focus on providing housing options for the community to meet the demand that is occurring more or less nationwide in the UK. The draft local plan is still in consultation now and has envisioned a number of scenarios for provision of housing and other community development needs such as employment centres and active travel corridors.¹

Spatial Strategy.

National policy says that the new Local Plan must plan to meet the government's housing target (the standard method number) which was revised in December 2024. The figure for Cheshire West and Chester is a minimum of 1,914 new homes each year, and for a plan covering a 15-year period, this equates to a total figure of 28,710 new homes.

Spatial Strategy Options:

Three growth options are proposed for where development could be located, which would require updating the STRAT 2 policy of the Local Plan (Part One). These proposals are not final decisions.

The three options are:

Option A

Retain the Green Belt

Option B

Follow current Local Plan level and distribution of development

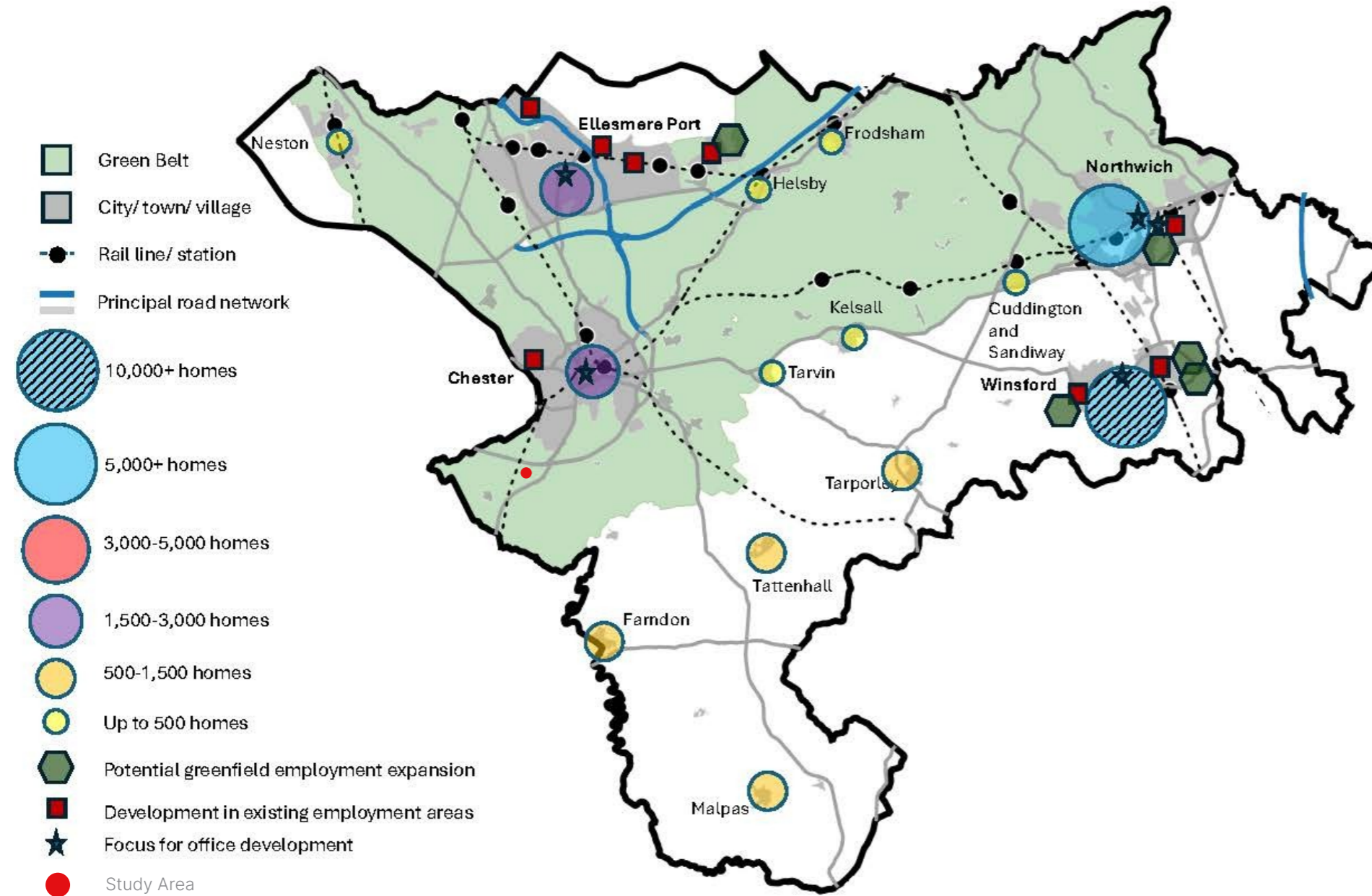
Option C

Sustainable transport corridors

¹ Cheshire West and Chester Council – Local Plan Review Consultation, January 2025.

ROUGH HILL: POLICY CONTEXT

OPTION A: RETAIN THE GREEN BELT



Option A: Retain the Green Belt. ¹

Government advice is that the Green Belt can only be altered in exceptional circumstances, so it is important to demonstrate that all other reasonable options for meeting needs have been fully explored first, such as using brownfield Study Areas in settlements, increased densities and assessing the potential for growth in neighbouring areas.

This approach therefore assumes that any new development areas are located outside the Green Belt.

For housing development it includes:

- Major development in and to the south of Northwich of just over 5,000 homes

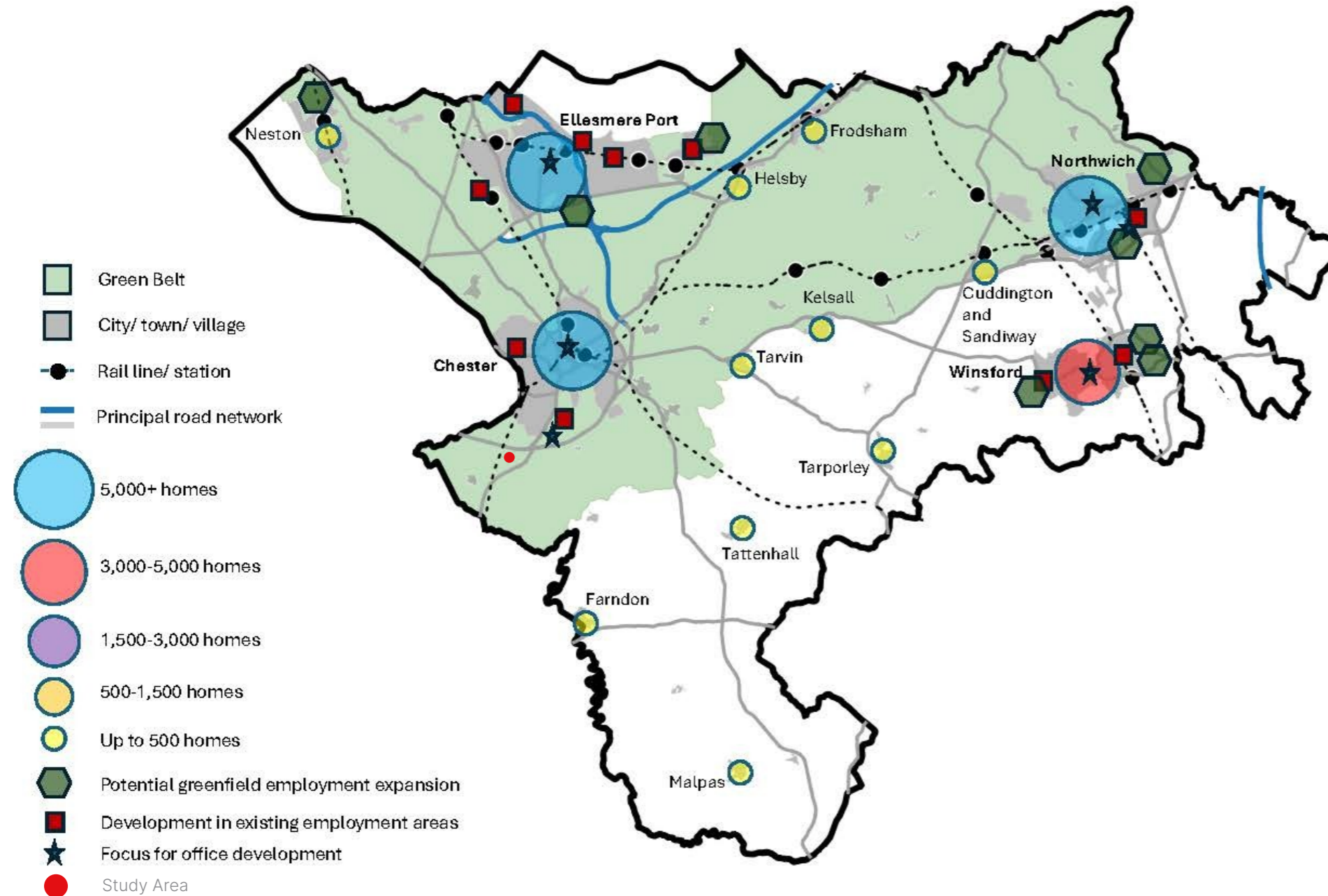
For employment development it includes:

- Refurbishment and redevelopment of Study Areas in existing employment areas, retaining key employment locations of: Origin, Ellesmere Port; Winsford Industrial Estate; Woodford Park; Gadbrook Park; Chester West/Sealand Industrial Estate
- For new large scale industrial/warehousing provision, if this did not deliver enough Study Areas for employment needs.
- For office development, focus primarily on town centres or established business parks, including Gadbrook Park
- Outside of the main settlements and market towns, potential for smaller scale employment or mixed use development, appropriate to the scale and function of the settlement, to meet local employment needs

¹ Cheshire West and Chester Council – Local Plan Review Consultation, January 2025.

ROUGH HILL: POLICY CONTEXT

OPTION B: FOLLOW CURRENT LOCAL PLAN LEVEL AND DISTRIBUTION OF DEVELOPMENT



Option B: Follow current Local Plan level and distribution of development.¹

This approach follows the existing Local Plan strategy and settlement hierarchy set out in the Local Plan (Part One) Policy STRAT 2, which locates most new development in, or on the edge of the main urban areas, and an appropriate level of new development focused on the smaller settlements which have adequate services and facilities and access to public transport.

A key difference between the Local Plan (Part One) and the new Local Plan is that there is a much more limited supply of previously developed land to accommodate new development, and unlike the last plan, larger areas of Green Belt and/or countryside are likely to be needed.

In developing this option, the government's new housing target of 28,170 homes has been distributed according to the relative proportions of the existing local plan housing requirement of 22,000 homes as set out in the Local Plan (Part One).

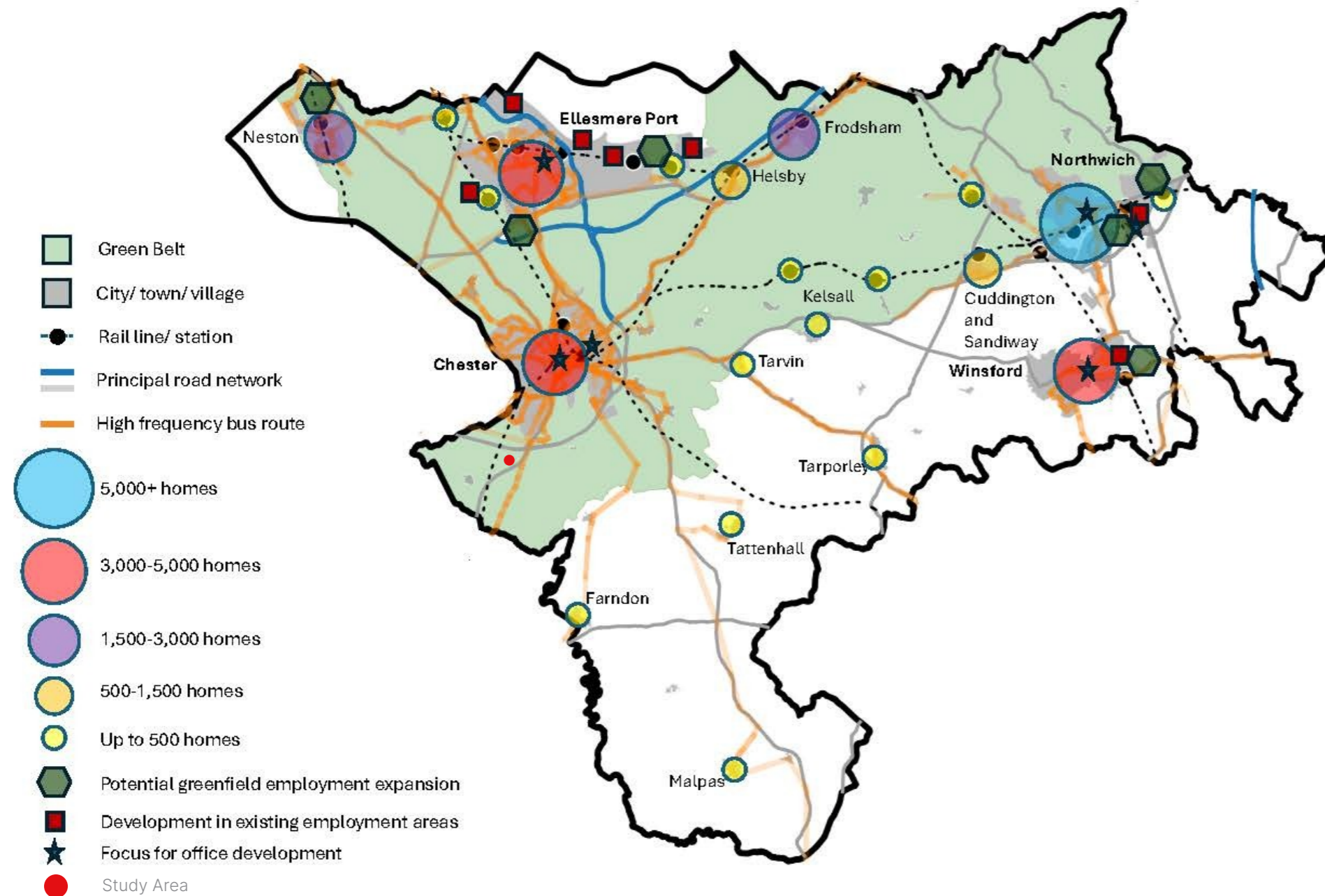
This option would need to ensure that peripheral development has good sustainable connectivity and design relating to existing built form. While a proportion of development can be accommodated within existing settlements, much of the new development under this option would need to be located within the Green Belt and/or countryside.

- Total Green Belt release of Study Areas to deliver 11,000 homes.
- For office development, focus on primarily on town centres or established business parks, including: Chester Business Park and Gadbrook Park.
- Refurbishment and redevelopment of Study Areas in existing employment areas, retaining key employment locations of: Origin, Ellesmere Port; Winsford Industrial Estate; Woodford Park; Gadbrook Park; Chester West/Sealand Industrial Estate; and commercial Study Areas in the Green Belt at Urenco and Chester Business Park

¹ Cheshire West and Chester Council – Local Plan Review Consultation, January 2025.

ROUGH HILL: POLICY CONTEXT

OPTION C: SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT CORRIDORS



Option C: Sustainable Transport Corridors.¹

This option would see new homes focused in and around settlements on the railway network, and on main bus route corridors (based on those routes with a bus service frequency of at least one per hour). Focusing development in locations currently well-served by trains and buses would maximise opportunities for sustainable travel choices and could support future improvements to services, frequency and hours.

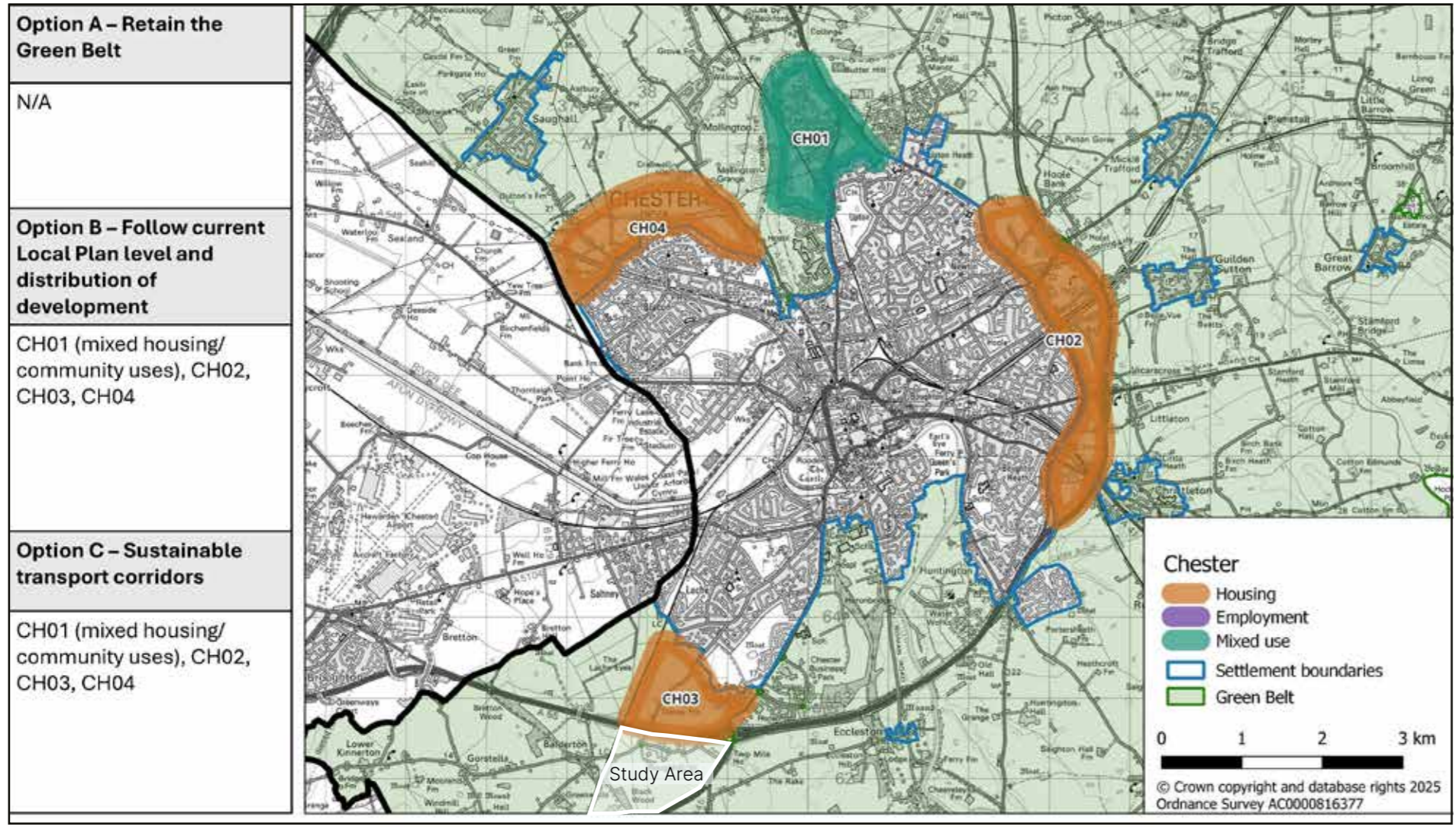
In this scenario there would also be brownfield opportunities at all main urban areas including locations where transport hubs could be improved such as at stations and smaller settlements with stations and/or bus connectivity, including long term aspirations for a new rail station at Gadbrook Park.

This approach could have a greater impact on the Green Belt if multiple developments took place along corridors potentially adding to the impression of urban sprawl and the merging of settlements.

- Total Green Belt release of Study Areas to deliver more than 12,000 homes
- For office development, focus primarily on town centres or established business parks
- Outside of the main settlements and market towns, the potential for smaller scale employment or mixed use development close to local railway stations, appropriate to the scale and function of the settlement, to meet local employment needs

¹ Cheshire West and Chester Council – Local Plan Review Consultation, January 2025.

ROUGH HILL: POLICY CONTEXT



New Local Plan (2025 - draft).¹

Potential Growth Areas.

Under all of the SS 5 'Spatial strategy options' set out above, it may be necessary to identify new areas or broad locations for development if not enough land can be identified within settlements. These may be located in the Green Belt and/or countryside.

Options B and C are those that consider CH03 as a potential housing development area near the case studied in this report.

Summary of Policy Analysis.

As mentioned previously, the Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan (Part One) Policy STRAT 3 (Chester), states that a limited release of Green Belt land is proposed to meet the long-term development needs of Chester. The further restrictions will apply, consistent with the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and as stated previously in this report, namely that the Study Areas chosen for release will qualify as Grey Belt, defined as areas within the Green Belt that consist of previously developed land and other parcels that have minimal impact on the Green Belt's core objectives, excluding land or assets with significant environmental protections.

The study Study Area is contiguous to area CH03, a housing allocation area that is considered in both options B and C in the draft local plan. A portion of the Study Area already extends into the proposed allocation area.

¹ Cheshire West and Chester Council – Local Plan Review Consultation, January 2025.



ROUGH HILL: STUDY AREA CONTEXT

03

ROUGH HILL: STUDY AREA CONTEXT












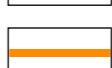
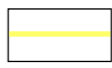




The study area in this report is bounded to the north by Rough Hill Road, to the east and south by the busy Wrexham Road, and to the west by woodlands and the railway line. These infrastructure elements that border the Study Area are key to connectivity between Wrexham and Chester.

This area contains 146 hectares belonging to a mixture of land use classifications: industrial, residential, farmland and forest/scrub.

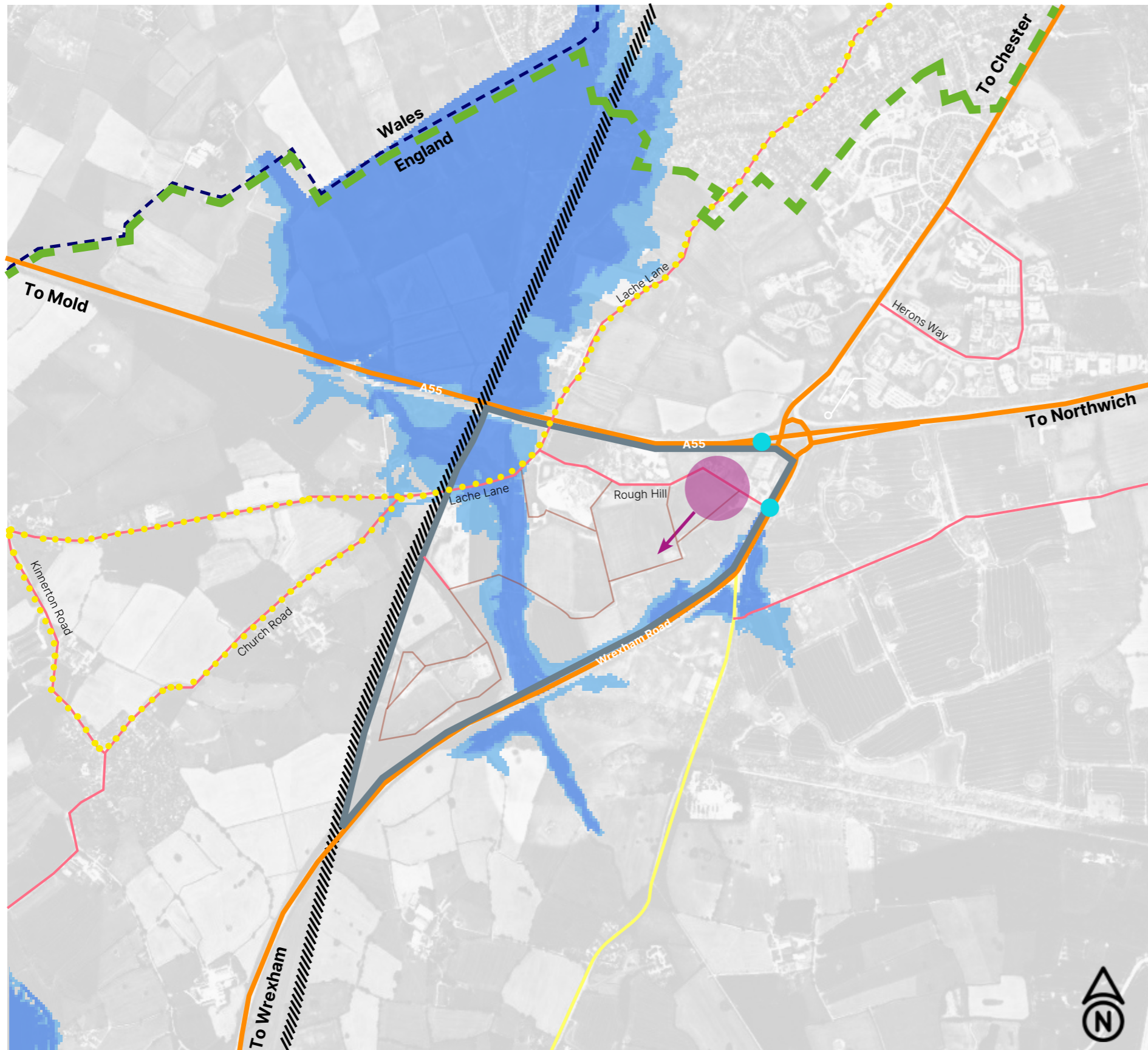
The commercial growth of Chester has been supported by the establishment of Chester Business Park and the development of new hospitality infrastructure, including hotels such as the Holiday Inn. Additionally, a Park and Ride facility, provides access to public transport to reduce congestion within the city.

From north west to south east, the woodland edge of Black Wood forms a green corridor and visual edge to the Study Area. The Bretton and Black woodlands form a dense green buffer until reaching Eaton Park.

Key

-  Study Area (146 ha)
-  Green Belt Boundary
-  Commercial Development
-  Industrial Development
-  Residential Development
-  Chester Lakes
-  Caravan Park
-  Vacant industrial / Residential
-  Woodland
-  Meadow
-  Railway
-  Primary Road
-  Secondary Road
-  Minor Road
-  Flood Zone 2
- Flood Zone 3

ROUGH HILL: STUDY AREA CONTEXT _ ACCESS

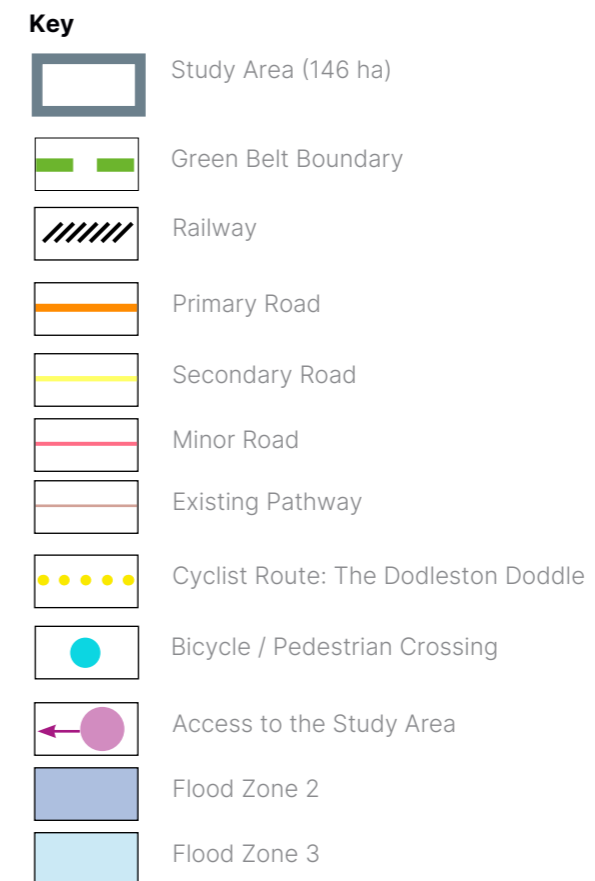


The study area has a main vehicular access on the A483 / Wrexham Road near the Posthouse Roundabout, the intersection of the A55 and Wrexham Road. A pedestrian and cycling route crosses the A55 near this junction as well, and there is a crossing for pedestrians and cyclists at the junction of Rough Hill Road and the A483. Nearby connections to Chester via Eccleston are also potential future active transport links.

There is a cycle route promoting sustainable transport options in this area as well. This route was created by the Chester Cycling Campaign initiative, dedicated to promoting a safe and cycle-friendly environment within Chester. The Campaign actively encourages residents to increase their use of cycling infrastructure, aiming to make cycling a more accessible and practical mode of transport for all.

The Dodleston Duddle Route: this route offers a scenic experience, combining countryside views with access to several welcoming village pubs. It connects a number of rural and urban locations including Dodleston, Gorstella, Lower Kinnerton, and Westminster Park. The route includes a short off-road section and is designed to appeal to cyclists of varying abilities

The route is part of the study area where it follows Lache Lane, crosses the railway and connects to Dodleston.

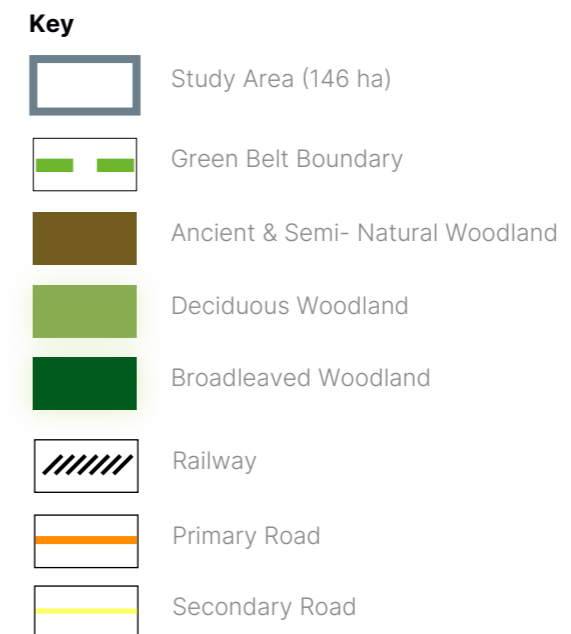


ROUGH HILL: STUDY AREA CONTEXT _ HISTORIC WOODLAND

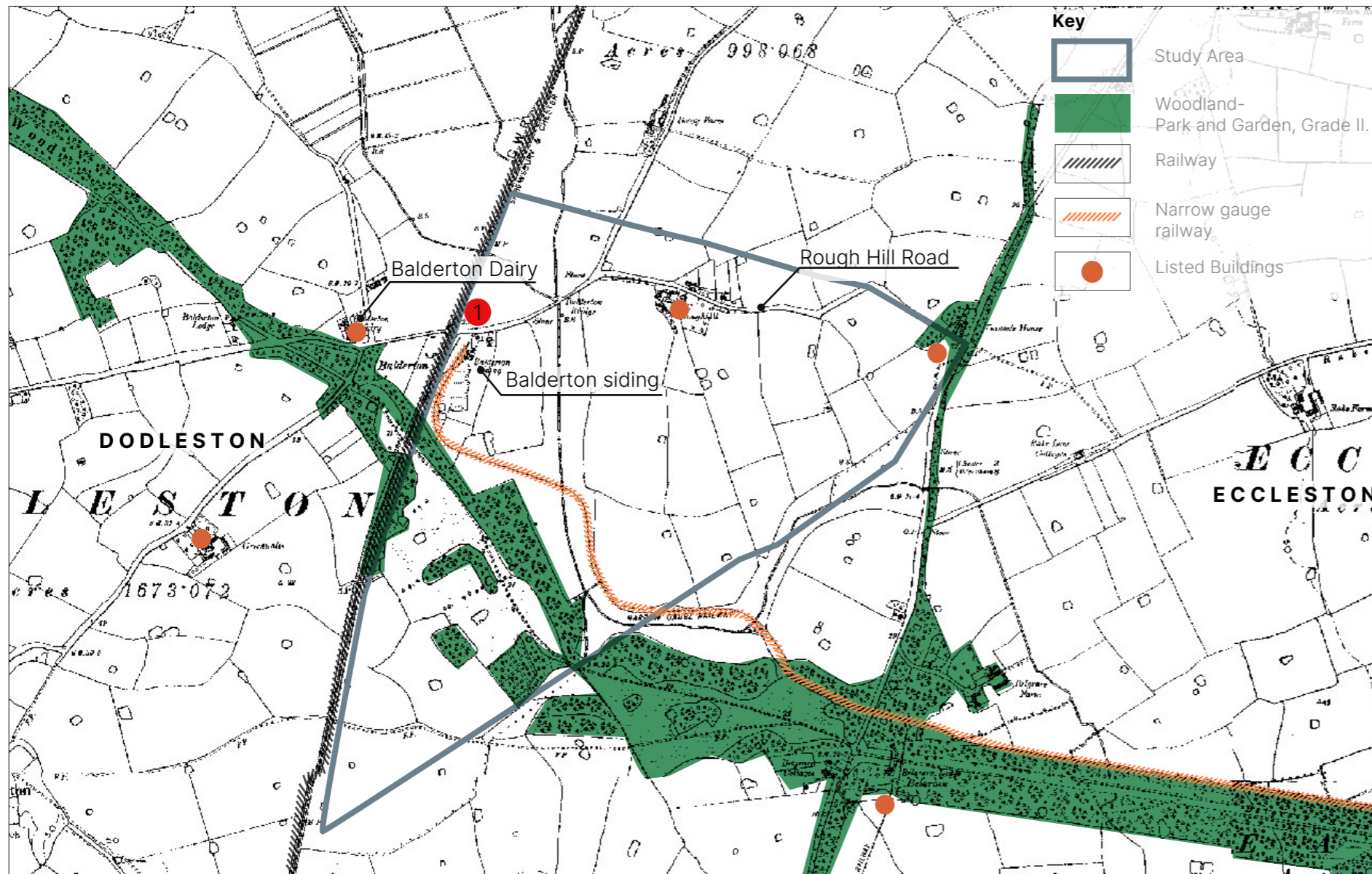


The study area has a woodland boundary to the south that extends beyond the area to both east and west. A portion of this is an ancient and semi natural woodland. The classification of the woodland generally is upland mixed ashwoods, oakwoods, birchwoods and pinewoods (zone 4-7). This provides a range of habitats which support a rich diversity of plants and animals.

Bretton woodland, Black woodland and Eaton Hall woodland are also part of the heritage category of Park and Garden, Grade II. The woodland forms an important part of Eaton Hall's historic designed landscape, offering heritage, aesthetic and ecological value. To the east of the Hall, near the River Dee, lies the park's central water feature system—the Fish Pond, Serpentine, and Oxleisure Pool—all constructed between 1804–06 by famed landscape designer John Webb.



ROUGH HILL: STUDY AREA CONTEXT _ HISTORY



Ordnance Survey Map- c1898 (maps.cheshireeast.gov.uk)

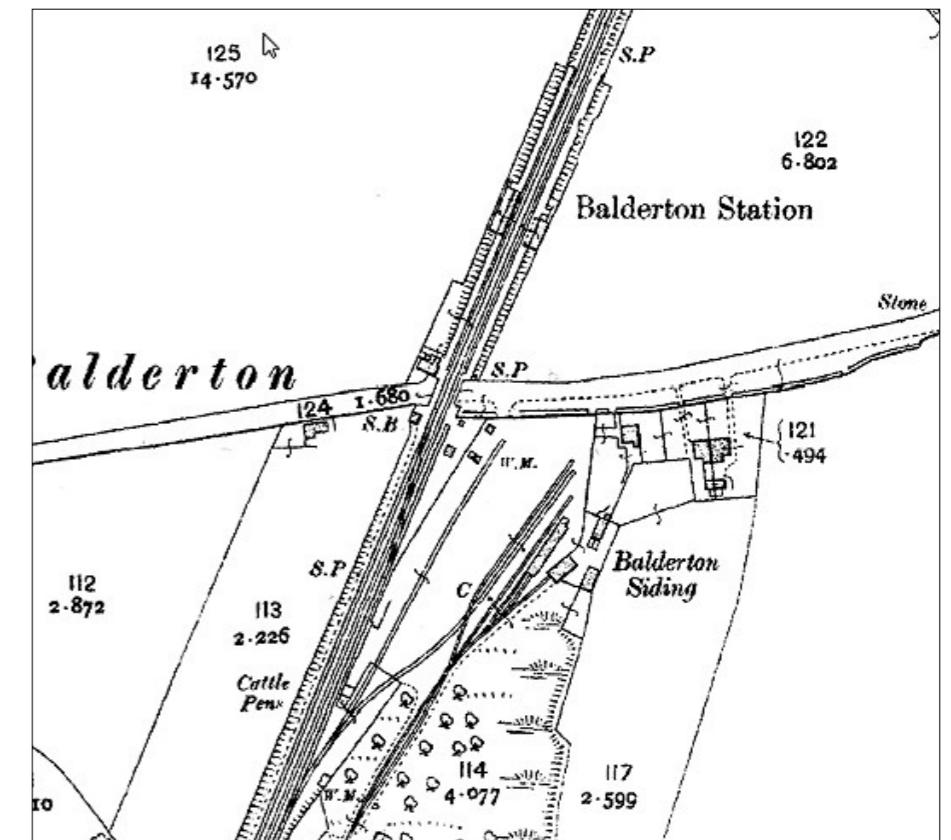
The accompanying Ordnance Survey Map, dated 1898, highlights the importance of the woodland around the Study Area, much of which remains to this day and forms part of the Registered Park and Gardens listing for Eaton Hall.

The railway line also remains, intended to connect Shrewsbury and Chester. By 1896, a narrow gauge railway had opened from the siding at Balderton to Eaton Hall, the home of the Duke of Westminster. Facilities were installed for the exchange of goods from the main line to the narrow gauge railway. Coal and other goods were delivered to the hall by the railway. Private passenger trains were also operated on the line.

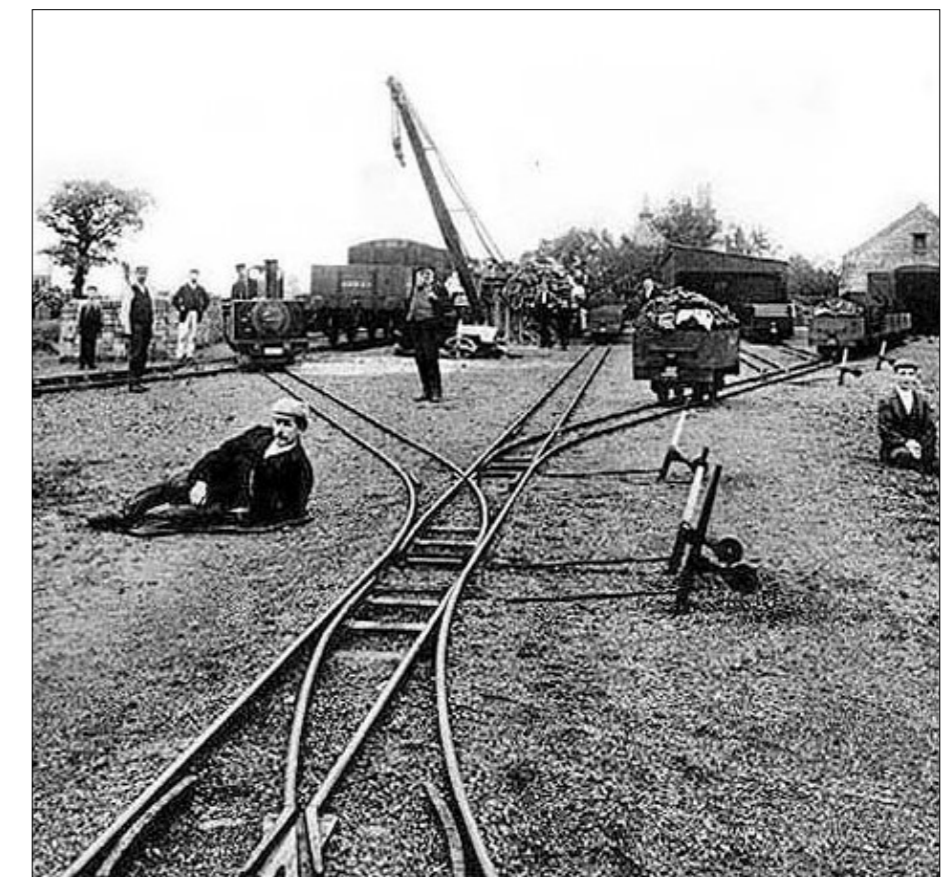
Providing uneconomical passenger services were withdrawn on 3 March 1952. The goods siding remained in use until 1 November 1954. The station buildings had been demolished by the 1960s and the platforms by 1980. Balderton signal box closed on 17 October 1965.

The London Paddington–Birkenhead expresses along with a number of other long distance services ceased in March 1967 which reduced the importance of the former GWR main line.

On 2 February 1986 the line was singled with the former 'up' line being removed and the 'down' becoming bi-directional. Following a period of passenger growth in the first decade of the Twenty-First century the line became a double track railway once again in 2016.¹



1 Balderton Station



¹ Disused Stations: Balderton, 2017



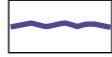

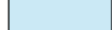
ROUGH HILL: STUDY AREA CONTEXT _ WATERCOURSES AND FLOODING



A large flood zone is concentrated to the north of the study area, which is fed by several watercourses predominantly flowing from the north and northwest.

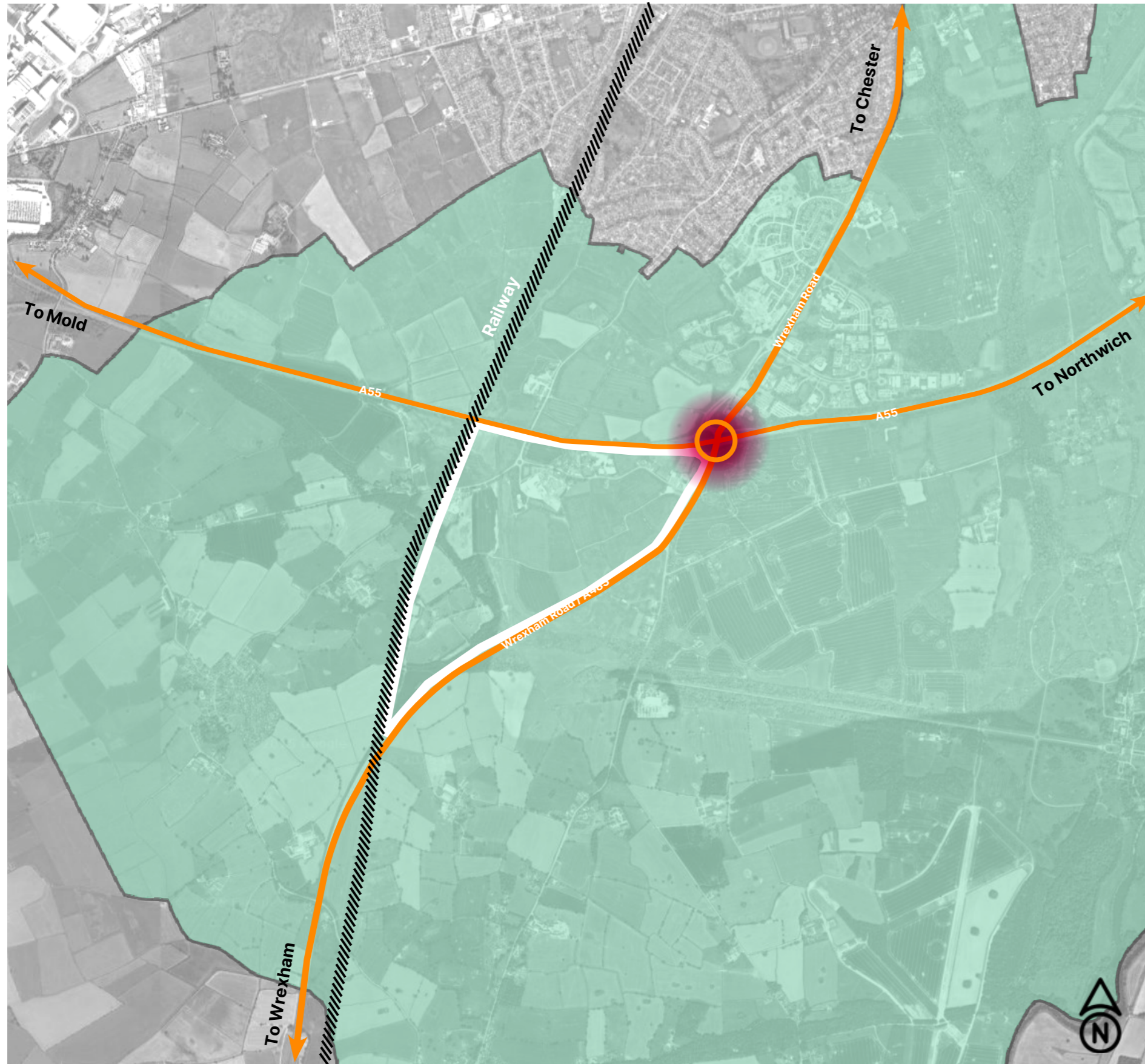
A stream runs through the Study Area to the west and south, creating a natural buffer. This flood zone naturally limits certain residential, commercial and industrial developments and maintains an ecological corridor between built up areas assisting the natural habitats and movements of wildlife species living in the area.

Key

-  Study Area (146 ha)
-  Drainage Ditch
-  Stream
-  Flood Zone 2
-  Flood Zone 3

Location Map

ROUGH HILL: STUDY AREA CONTEXT _ GREEN BELT



Location Map

As shown in the adjacent map, the Green Belt is intended to limit the suburban expansion and 'sprawl' of Chester.





However, there are important infrastructure corridors that allow access to and from Chester and that play a critical role in the discussion of expansion and development.

The A55 connects Chester to North Wales and Anglesey, terminating at Holyhead and is the primary carriageway access for all of North Wales. The A483 connects Chester to Wrexham and then continues into South Wales, terminating at Llanedi near the A48 / M4. The land located at the southwest terminus of these two important corridors has extremely advantageous infrastructure linkages in this context.

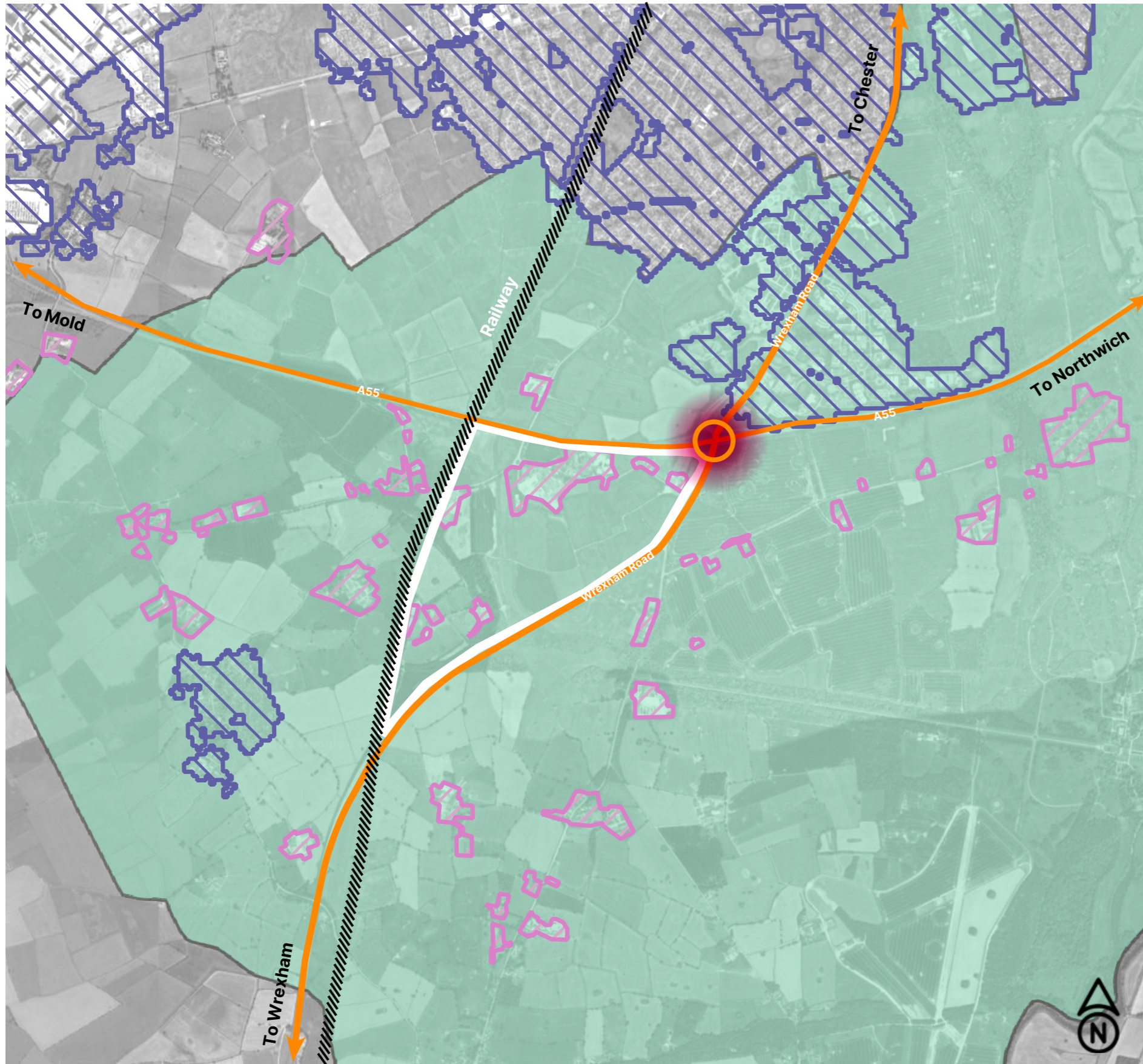
Future connectivity to the Transport for Wales railway line connecting Wrexham and Chester that passes this area is also a potential transportation offer.

Furthermore, the suburban expansion of south Chester has already occurred and will continue to do so as housing and commercial needs are increasing and are as yet substantially unmet within the current confines of the city. In order to accommodate this growth it is imperative to think strategically and sensibly and promote development in places where it will least affect the character of rural Cheshire and North Wales countryside nearby. The recent Grey Belt policy of this government establishes a set of tools for applying such a strategy.

Key

-  Study Area (146 ha)
-  Green Belt
-  Access node
-  Primary Road

ROUGH HILL: STUDY AREA CONTEXT _ GREEN BELT & EXISTING DEVELOPMENT



Location Map







Currently the area to the north of the study area is experiencing growth in both commercial and residential sectors.

Already constructed are the following:

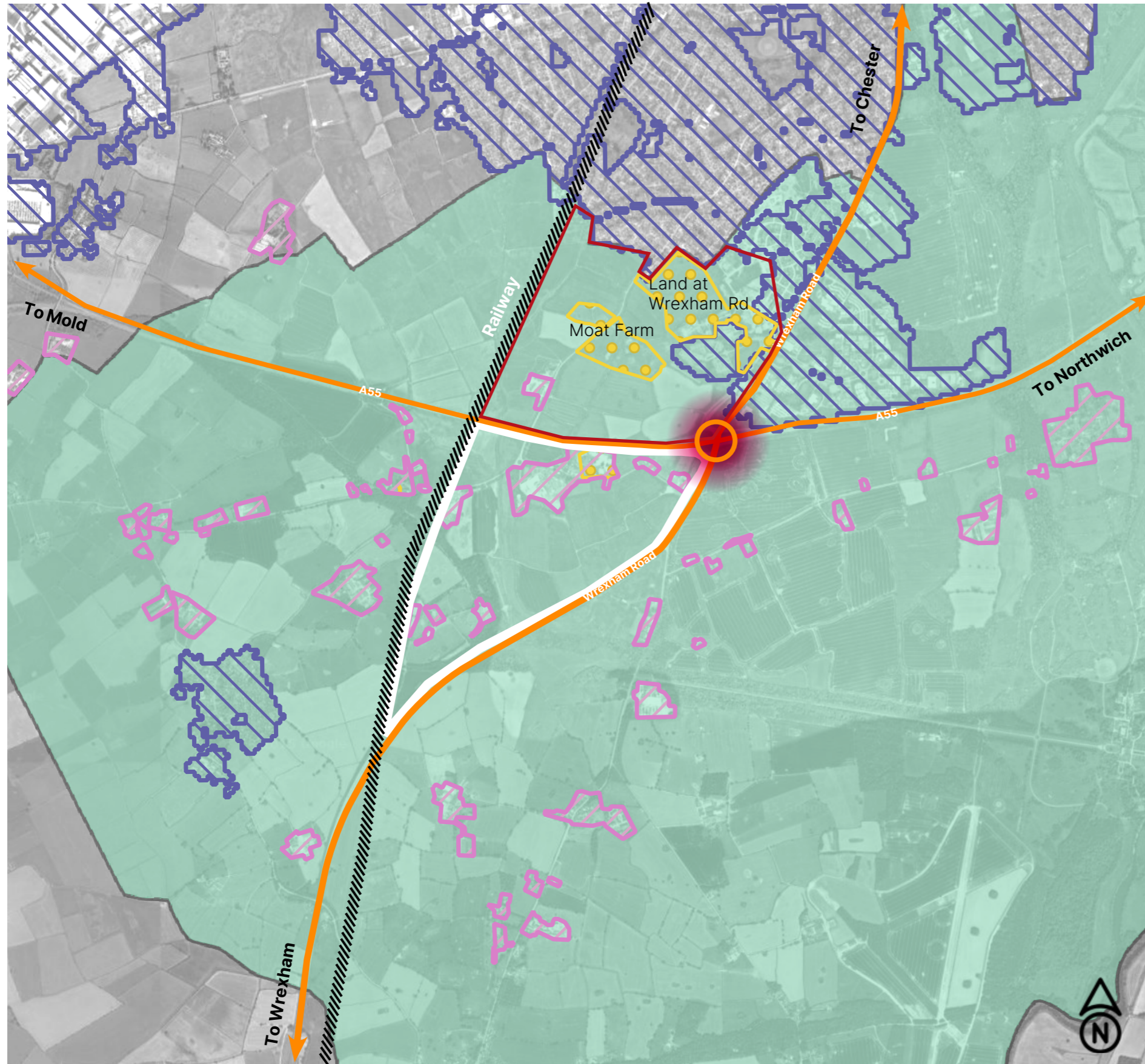
- Wrexham Road Park and Ride
- Chester Business Park
- King's Moat Garden Village
- Extensive residential developments along both sides of Lache Lane and Rowcliffe Avenue as they head north into Chester

To the south in and around the study area there is already a substantial collection of development too, albeit not contiguous like the northern portion.

Key

-  Study Area (146 ha)
-  Green Belt
-  Access Node
-  Primary Road
-  Existing Small built-up Areas
-  Existing Built-up Areas Extents

ROUGH HILL: STUDY AREA CONTEXT _ GREEN BELT & FUTURE DEVELOPMENT



Location Map

Proposed developments (both commercial and residential) are already in the draft local plan and in fact some have already been granted planning approval.

- Moat Farm - 54 residential units





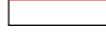



(Affordable Housing under planning permission 22/03736/FUL and the provision of associated infrastructure including roads, footpaths, cycleways, landscaping and children's play area and two new ponds located off Lache Lane)

- Land At Wrexham Road Chester- 453 residential units

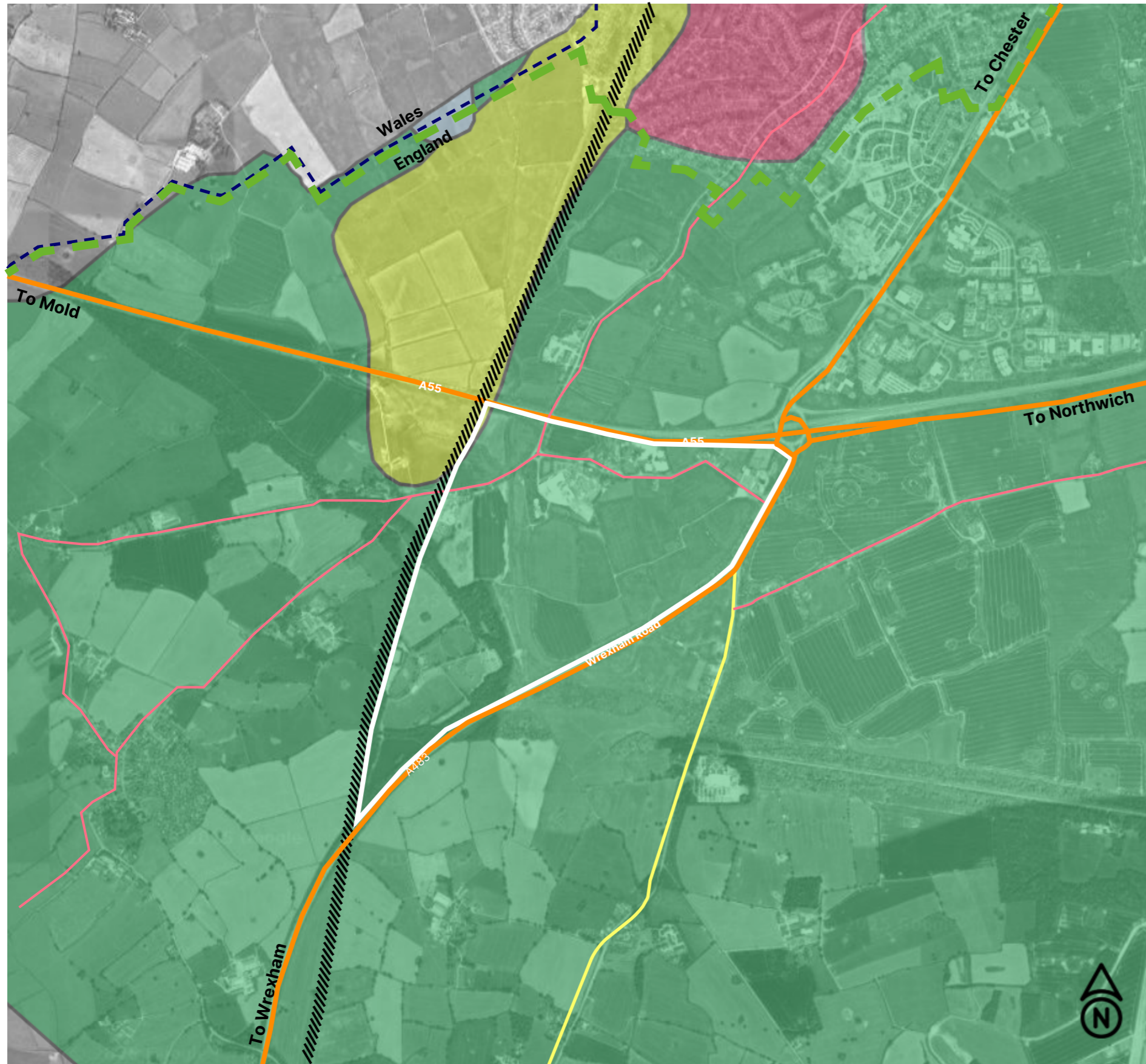
(Part A - full permission for phased development of 483 dwellings and associated infrastructure including playing fields / open space)

(Part B - outline permission - all matters reserved apart from access for a local centre comprising supermarket, other shops, cafe/ restaurant, public house, and nursery/creche plus an outdoor play area and a primary school with associated playing fields (Hybrid application))

Key

-  Study Area (146 ha)
-  Green Belt
-  Access node
-  Primary Road
-  Proposed Draft Development Housing Area
-  Proposed Development under Planning Revision
-  Existing Small built-up Areas
-  Existing Built-up Areas Extents

ROUGH HILL: STUDY AREA CONTEXT _ AGRICULTURAL LAND CLASSIFICATION







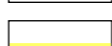
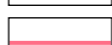
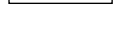


The Study Area is in agricultural land classification grade 3, which is 'good to moderate'. This is the same classification as all the land to the north which is either already under development or is slated for development in the near future.

The map also shows a nearby grade 4 area that corresponds to poor land, to the west and northwest.

Approximately 1.2 km away is the urban classification land use, which is the boundary used by Chester.

Key

-  Study Area (146 ha)
-  Green Belt Boundary
-  Grade 4- Poor
-  Grade 3- Good to Moderate
-  Land in Urban Use
-  Railway
-  Primary Road
-  Secondary Road
-  Minor Road

ROUGH HILL: STUDY AREA CONTEXT _ SURROUNDING AREA



1

Railway: Chester - Wrexham
Intersection with Lache Lane and Railway

The railway is at road level, separated only by a safety barrier. The route is surrounded by dense hedgerows.



2

A55: North Wales Expressway
North road

Major road in Wales and England, connecting Cheshire and North Wales.



3

Listed Building: Two Mile House
Wrexham Road

Building in the entrance of Rough Hill and in the corner of Wrexham Road. The building is unoccupied and in poor condition.



4

Posthouse Roundabout
Primary junction close to the Study Area

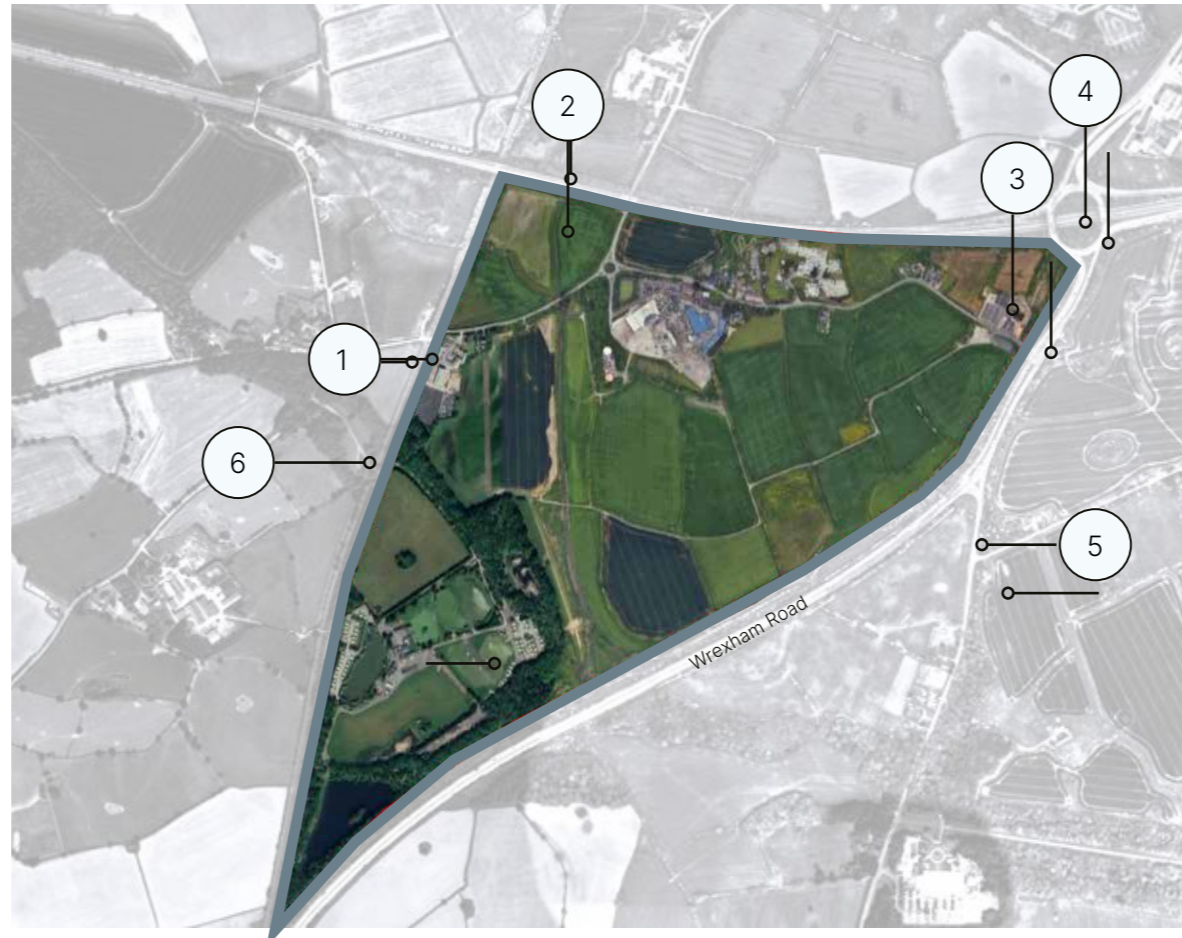
Principal entrance to Chester and the A55 which at specific times can experience heavy traffic congestion.



6

Black Woodland
Entrance from Balderton Drive to the Study Area

Dense woodland enclosing the space surrounding the path to the Study Area.



Location Map



5

A483: Wrexham Road
Connectivity

Wrexham Road / A483 is the primary route between Wrexham and Chester and also connects to South Wales.

ROUGH HILL: STUDY AREA CONTEXT _ INSIDE OF THE STUDY AREA



7
Example of architectural style in the area, bricks and open entrances



8
Entrance to Chester Lakes



9
Pathway within Study Area. View to the north (Listed Building)



10
Pathway within Study Area. View to the east. Hedgerow screening the view



12
Entrance to Meadow Foods Chester - Industrial use



Location Map



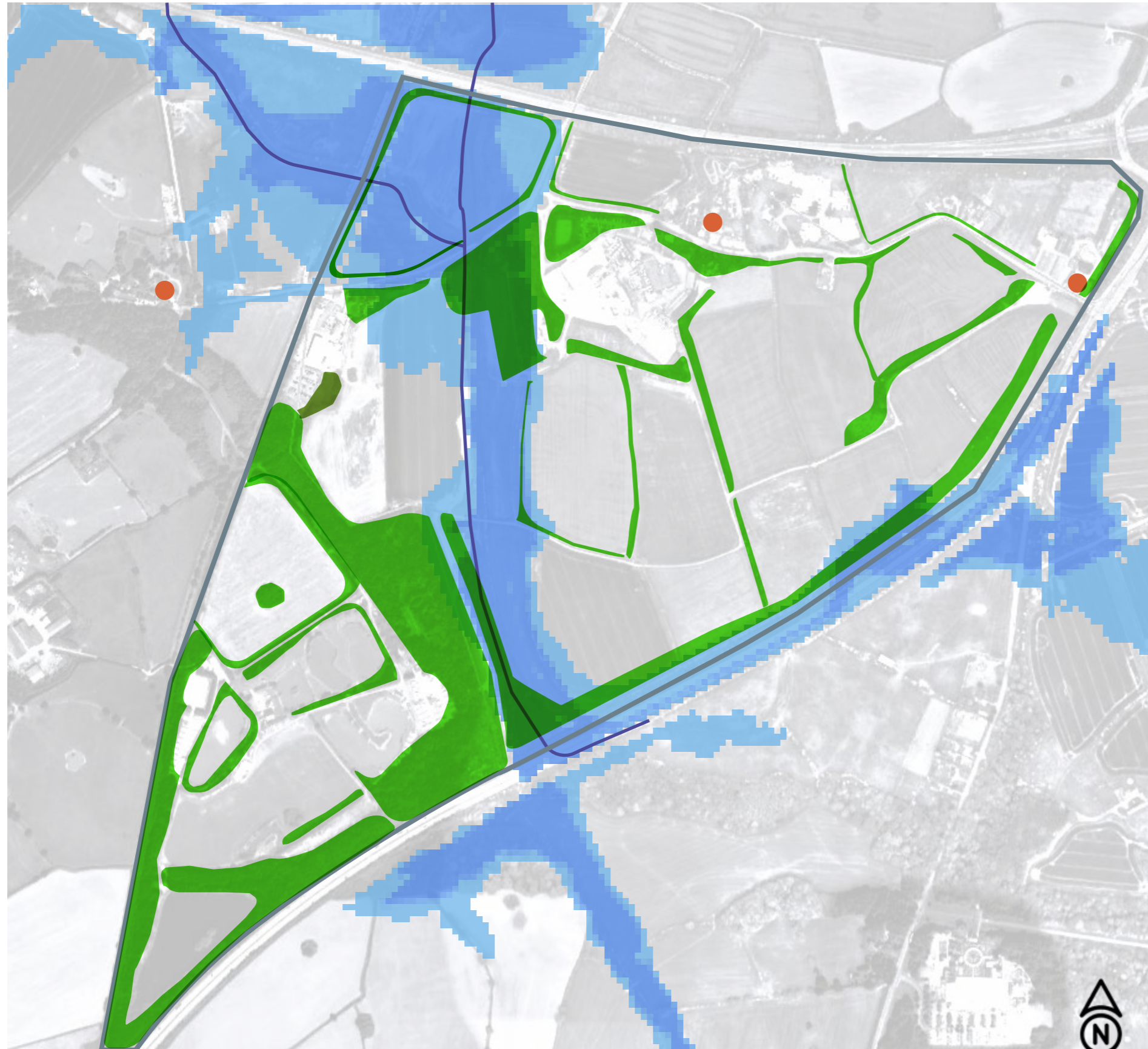
11
Pathway within Study Area. View to the north. Hedgerow on the boundary screening the view



ROUGH HILL: ANALYSIS

04

ROUGH HILL: ANALYSIS _ EXISTING STUDY AREA CONDITIONS






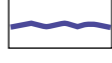

The land classification for much of the Study Area is agricultural use, so from the interior, a large portion of the landscape is open and unobstructed other than hedgerows and a limited number of mature trees.

The study area is enclosed by varying densities of vegetation, particularly along Rough Hill Road and the A483 / Wrexham Road, blocking views to both the exterior and developed areas on the interior of the Study Area. Because of this vegetation, cars passing along Wrexham Road / A483, Rough Hill Road, and even those travelling on the A55 / North Wales Expressway are obscured from many views.

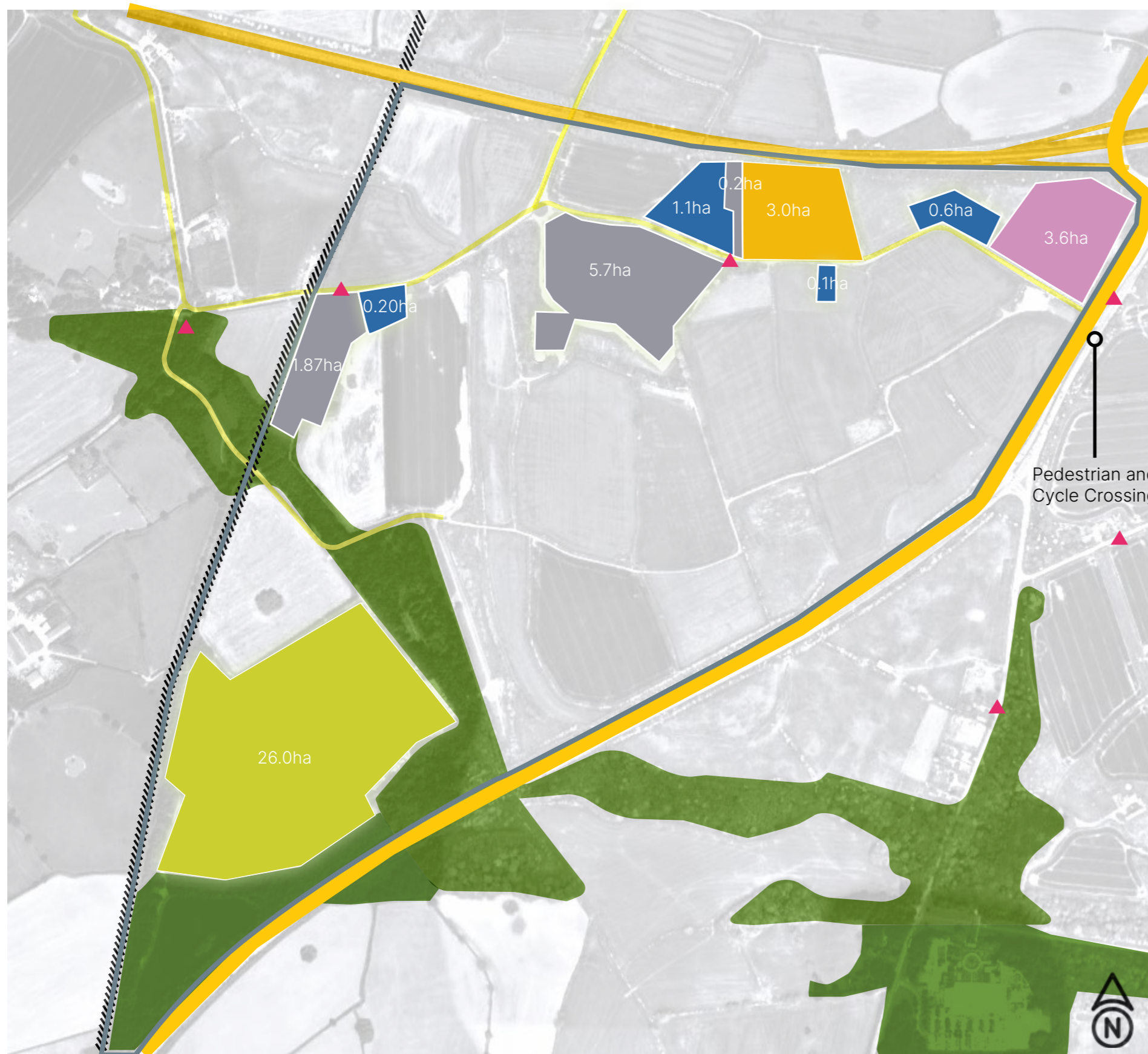
The nearest industrial areas are surrounded by tall hedgerows, which reduces visibility to the buildings. The flood area creates a secondary buffer towards the main road.

The listed buildings located in the Study Area lend architectural character to the area, however at this time they are vacant and an underutilised aspect of the Study Area.

Key

-  Study Area (146 ha)
-  Vegetation Buffer
-  Listed Building
-  Stream
-  Flood Area (18.7 ha. inside the Study Area)

ROUGH HILL: ANALYSIS _ EXISTING STUDY AREA CONDITIONS








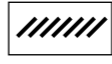
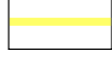




The Study Area is strongly enclosed by a combination of existing transportation infrastructure (carriageways and railway line) as well as green infrastructure such as the woodland to the west of Study Area. The combination of infrastructure corridors effectively create an 'island Study Area', visually and otherwise removed from its greater context.

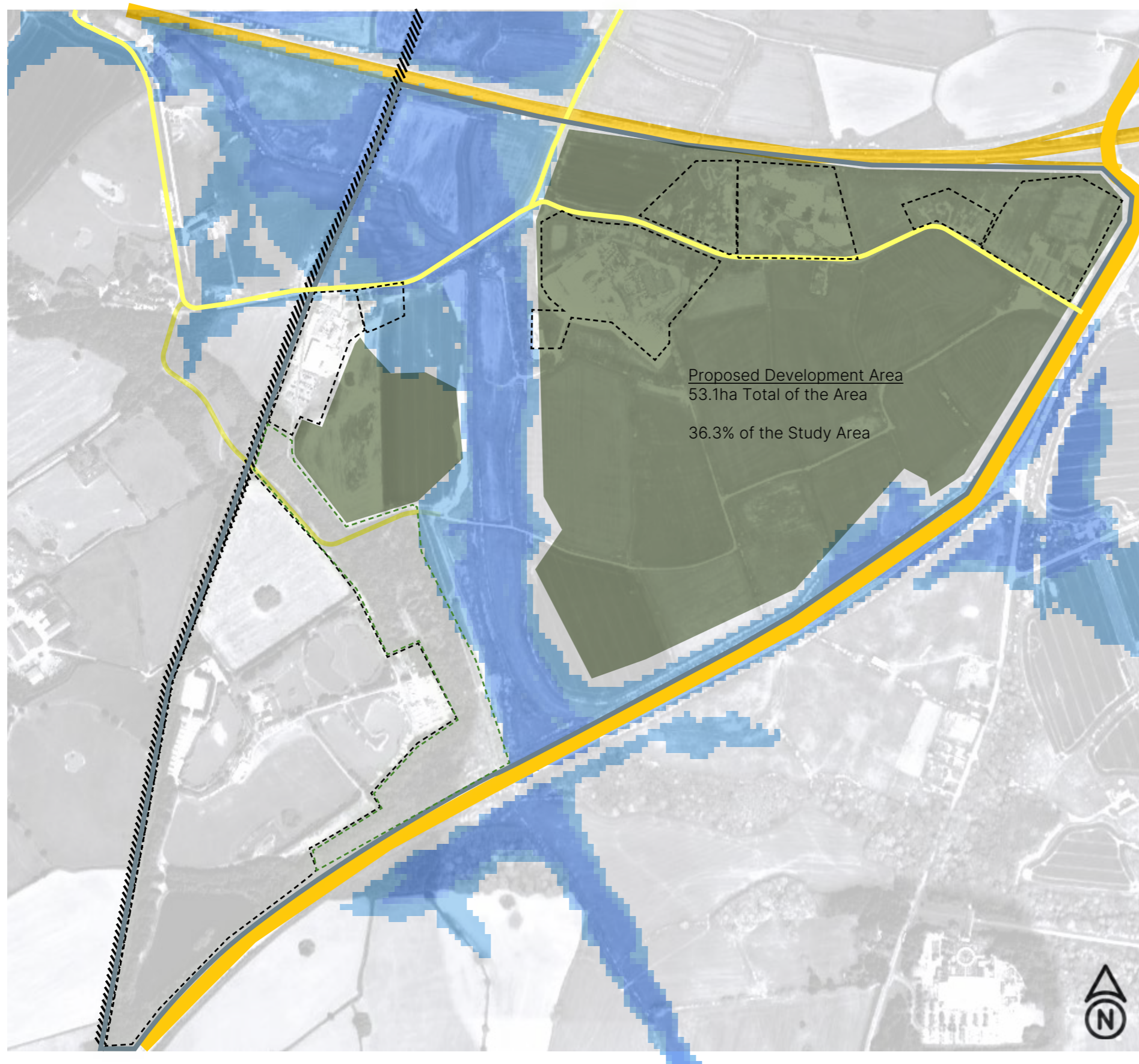
As mentioned previously, the area offers opportunities for active travel connections as a part of proposed development, with existing cycling and public transit networks already in place connecting to Chester, Wrexham and Northwest Wales.

There are several bus stops to the north of the Study Area, providing access to public transit and opportunities for reducing car dependence in future development. This, together with active travel connections that could be incorporated, would contribute to regional sustainability and climate action goals.

Key

-  Study Area (146 ha)
-  Industrial Development
-  Residential Development
-  Chester Lakes
-  Caravan Park
-  Vacant industrial / Residential
-  Woodland
-  Railway
-  Primary Road
-  Secondary Road
-  Flood Zone - Blue Buffer
-  Bus Stop



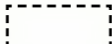



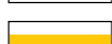
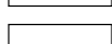
ROUGH HILL: ANALYSIS _ TOPOGRAPHY AND LANDSCAPE CHARACTER



The Study Area is typical of the Cheshire Plain generally, with some low lying areas to the west and south along the A483 that are indicative of flood plain before rising gently to the area of Rough Hill. This provides an opportunity for development that can achieve good screening at the edges. The flat terrain minimises views of the Study Area from surrounding areas as well, thereby limiting visual impact of development.



Key

-  Study Area (146 ha)
-  Proposed Development Area- 53ha (36% of the study area)
-  Existing Build up Areas- 42.3ha (29% of the study area)
-  Woodland Areas - 20.4ha (14% of the study area)
-  Flood Zone - 30.2ha (21% of the study area)
-  Railway
-  Primary Road
-  Secondary Road

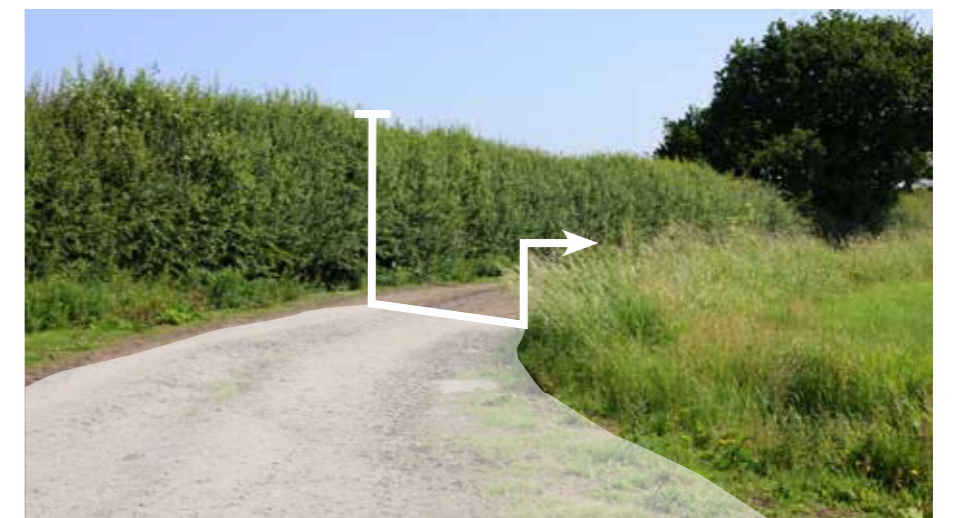
ROUGH HILL: ANALYSIS _ VEGETATION



The Study Area is bounded by a strong framework of woodland edges and roadside planting that creates a distinct sense of enclosure with limited visibility beyond the Study Area extents.

The Study Area is currently entered from the western boundary through the existing woodland.

There is a dense hedgerow network around much of the Study Area exterior as well as internal hedgerows, providing an opportunity to protect and enhance the natural corridor, encourage local biodiversity and promote a green grid approach.



Dense hedgerow network around the Study Area.

Key

-  Study Area (146 ha)
-  Existing Hedgerow
-  Existing Woodland
-  Railway
-  Primary Road
-  Secondary Road

ROUGH HILL: ANALYSIS_ EXISTING USES AND DENSITY OF BUILDING






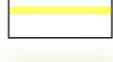






Currently there is a mixture of low-density uses on the Study Area, none of which are overly dominant. There are currently:

- Three industrial uses comprising approximately 7.8ha cumulative area
- Four residential developments and one vacant, comprising approximately 3.13ha cumulative area
- A caravan park of which a portion (3.0ha) is located on the Study Area



Industrial use on western boundary of Study Area, with small residential plot adjacent on Rough Hill Road.

Key

-  Study Area (146 ha)
-  Railway
-  Primary Road
-  Secondary Road
-  Density of Buildings
-  Industrial Development
-  Residential Development
-  Chester Lakes
-  Caravan Park
-  Vacant Industrial / Residential

ROUGH HILL: ANALYSIS _ NATURE OF URBAN EDGES


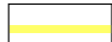


As described earlier, the Study Area is bounded by major road and rail infrastructure which provides distinct edges to the overall Study Area area. The principal urban edge to Chester is located to the north of the A55 corridor with the potential connection to land that may form part of the future Green Belt release along Lache Lane.



Railway line level crossing on western boundary of Study Area

Key

-  Study Area (146 ha)
-  Railway
-  Primary Road
-  Secondary Road
-  Urban Edges
-  To Chester Business Park

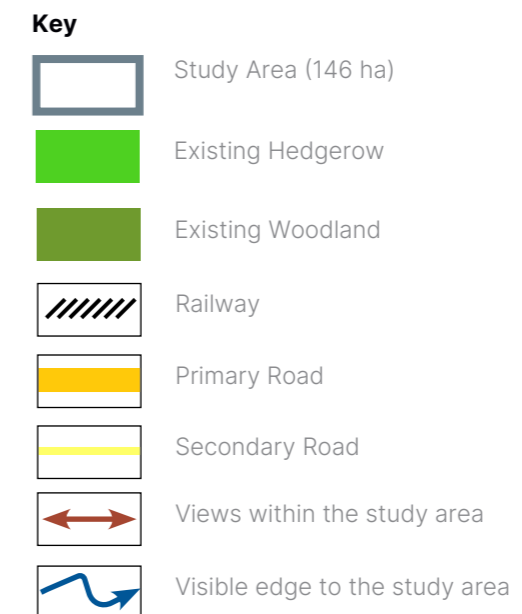
ROUGH HILL: ANALYSIS _ INTER-VISIBILITY AND INTRA-VISIBILITY



Large portions of the Study Area are screened from views by dense vegetation and woodland, and a hedgerow network that encloses much of the Study Area and also buffers uses from each other internally. When standing in the open centre of the Study Area there is almost no visibility of neighbouring uses other than glimpses of rooftops in places, and distant glimpses of the dual carriageways in certain locations.




Hedgerows border much of the Study Area and obstruct or soften views from roads and adjacent uses.





ROUGH HILL: CONCLUSION

05

An aerial photograph of a green belt landscape. The foreground shows a large, vibrant green field. A road with a few vehicles, including a red truck and a white van, runs diagonally across the middle ground. In the background, there are more green fields, a dense line of trees, and a distant town or city under a clear blue sky.

IN FEBRUARY 2025 THE MINISTRY OF HOUSING, COMMUNITIES
AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ISSUED FURTHER GUIDANCE ON
GREEN BELT/GREY BELT TO ASSIST UNDERSTANDING
THE RECENT CHANGES MADE TO THE NPPF.

NATIONAL POLICY ALSO REQUIRES LOCAL AUTHORITIES
TO IDENTIFY, WHERE NECESSARY, **WHETHER LAND
IS GREY BELT FOR THE PURPOSE OF CONSIDERING
APPLICATIONS ON GREEN BELT LAND.** WHEN MAKING
JUDGEMENTS AS TO WHETHER LAND IS GREY BELT,
**AUTHORITIES SHOULD CONSIDER THE CONTRIBUTION
THAT ASSESSMENT AREAS MAKE TO GREEN BELT
PURPOSES A, B, AND D.** CONSIDERATIONS FOR
INFORMING THESE JUDGEMENTS ARE SET
OUT [HERE.](#)

ROUGH HILL: CONCLUSION

This report has undertaken a comprehensive assessment of the Rough Hill study area in the context of its current Green Belt designation. Through baseline and contextual studies, Study Area analysis, and an evaluation of opportunities and constraints, the report establishes a grounded understanding of the area's potential for sensitive and sustainable development.

While Rough Hill is currently within the designated Green Belt, the following reasons illustrate the logic behind releasing this plot of land with a view for carefully orchestrated development:

- The study area meets the definition of Grey Belt as previously discussed in this report: 'The NPPF defines the Grey Belt as areas within the Green Belt that consist of previously developed land and other parcels that have minimal impact on the Green Belt's core objectives, excluding land or assets with significant environmental protections (e.g., SSSIs, heritage assets).
- In particular the determination of Grey Belt is reliant upon these three Green Belt core objectives:

a) to check the unrestricted expansion of large built-up areas;

Response to a):

The Study Area displays a weak contribution to Green Belt due to the enclosure by large transportation corridors that isolate and constrict its openness, thereby creating an 'island Study Area'

b) to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;

Response to b):

The Study Area is not part of a gap between towns and has no potential to link to other urban areas in the future.

d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns;

Response to d):

The Study Area is not in close proximity to the Conservation Districts or Heritage Assets of Chester and bears no relationship to those aspects of the City. Other Heritage / Conservation Districts such as Eccleston are also outside its proximity.



In addition to the Rough Hill study area meeting the criteria for Grey Belt, the following aspects of the Study Area's location and character also play a part in our recommendation for release from Green Belt:

- There is existing industrial and residential development within the study area as well on land to the north of the A55 corridor. These areas of development signify a larger pattern of strategic development within the Green Belt for both housing and commercial development.
- There is existing infrastructure in proximity to the Study Area that allows good access to major road networks, including both dual carriageways, secondary roads and railway access, as well as potential for strong active travel links and nearby leisure and amenity such as the Chester Lakes site.
- The Study Area is in close proximity to Chester Business Park which presents viable opportunities for strategic growth and access to employment
- The Study Area is also well placed in terms of strategic planning in the draft local plan to be released from Green Belt
- Natural features such as woodland buffers, hedgerows, and flood zones support ecological corridors that can be retained and enhanced, providing strong ecological connectivity with adjacent green infrastructure

Given these factors, it is recommended that the area of land at Rough Hill be considered for release from the Green Belt. Such a release should be aligned with national planning policies and the emerging Local Plan, ensuring that any future development enhances local character, supports biodiversity, and meets long-term housing and commercial / economic needs without compromising the openness and purpose of the remaining Green Belt.

ROUGH HILL: CONCLUSION

Purpose a.

To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas

This purpose relates to the sprawl of large built up areas. Villages should not be considered large built up areas.

Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely to be free of existing development, and lack physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development. They are also likely to include all of the following features:

- be adjacent or near to a large built up area
- if developed, result in an incongruous pattern of development (such as an extended “finger” of development into the Green Belt)

Areas with a moderate contribution to Green Belt have the following illustrative features:

Areas that contribute moderately are likely to be adjacent or near to a large built up area, but include one or more features that weaken the land’s contribution to this purpose a, such as (but not limited to):

- having physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development
- be partially enclosed by existing development, such that new development would not result in an incongruous pattern of development
- contain existing development
- being subject to other urbanising influences

Areas with weak or no contribution to Green Belt have the following illustrative features:

- are not adjacent to or near to a large built up area
- are adjacent to or near to a large built up area, but containing or being largely enclosed by significant existing development

The Study Area displays a weak contribution to Green Belt due to the enclosure by large transportation corridors that isolate and constrict its openness.

Purpose b.

To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

This purpose relates to the merging of towns, not villages.

Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely to be free of existing development and include all of the following features:

- forming a substantial part of a gap between towns
- the development of which would be likely to result in the loss of visual separation of towns

Assessment areas that contribute moderately are likely to be located in a gap between towns, but include one or more features that weaken their contribution to this purpose, such as (but not limited to):

- forming a small part of the gap between towns
- being able to be developed without the loss of visual separation between towns. This could be (but is not limited to) due to the presence or the close proximity of structures, natural landscape elements or topography that preserve visual separation

Assessment areas that contribute weakly or not at all are likely to include those that:

- do not form part of a gap between towns, or
- form part of a gap between towns, but only a very small part of this gap, without making a contribution to visual separation

The Study Area is not part of a gap between towns and has no potential to link to other urban areas in the future.

Purpose d.

To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

This purpose relates to historic towns, not villages. Where there are no historic towns in the plan area, it may not be necessary to provide detailed assessments against this purpose.

Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely be free of existing development and to include all of the following features:

- form part of the setting of the historic town
- make a considerable contribution to the special character of a historic town. This could be (but is not limited to) as a result of being within, adjacent to, or of significant visual importance to the historic aspects of the town

Assessment areas that perform moderately are likely to form part of the setting and/or contribute to the special character of a historic town but include one or more features that weaken their contribution to this purpose, such as (but not limited to):

- being separated to some extent from historic aspects of the town by existing development or topography
- containing existing development
- not having an important visual, physical, or experiential relationship to historic aspects of the town

Assessment areas that make no or only a weak contribution are likely to include those that:

- do not form part of the setting of a historic town
- have no visual, physical, or experiential connection to the historic aspects of the town

The Study Area is not in close proximity to the Conservation Districts or Heritage Assets of Chester and bears no relationship to those aspects of the City.



ROUGH HILL: BIBLIOGRAPHY

06

ROUGH HILL: BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cheshire West and Chester Council. (2015, January). Local Plan (Part One): Strategic policies – STRAT 9 – Green Belt and countryside. <https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk>

Cheshire West and Chester Council. (2015, January). Local Plan (Part One): Strategic policies – STRAT 5 (Green Belt and countryside) and ENV 2 (Landscape). <https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk>

Cheshire West and Chester Council. (2015, January). Local Plan (Part One): Strategic policies, including employment and green infrastructure policies. <https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk>

Cheshire West and Chester Council. (2019, July). Local Plan (Part Two): Land allocations and detailed policies – GBC 1 – Commercial Study Areas in the Green Belt. <https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk>

Cheshire West and Chester Council. (2025, January). Local Plan Review Consultation. <https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk>

Disused Stations. (2017). Balderton Station. <http://www.disused-stations.org.uk/b/balderton/>

HM Government. (2024, December). National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

Welsh Government. (2021, February). Future Wales: The national plan 2040. <https://www.gov.wales/future-wales-national-plan-2040>

