

## **1. Meaningful Gap Assessment**

### **Introduction**

- 1.1 The Borough Council believes that the designation of a gap between Tamworth and Polesworth/Dordon is essential to help shape the future settlement pattern and protect current settlement identity, so that new employment land and new homes can be accommodated, between 2011 and 2029, but in ways which will avoid the coalescence of the settlements and loss of settlement identity.
- 1.2 The principle of a meaningful gap has been established through the Council's Core Strategy, which has recently been adopted (October 2014). The Inspector accepted the need for maintaining a gap between Tamworth and Polesworth/Dordon, requiring the maintenance of a "meaningful gap" between the settlements in Policy NW19. This document draws upon existing policy and other background information for evaluating the requirement and justification for what constitutes a "meaningful gap" policy in the Council's Core Strategy, for consultation and inclusion in the Site Allocations Plan.
- 1.3 The aims of the paper are to:
1. Define what is meant by the term "meaningful gap"; and
  2. Provide background information about their planning benefits.
- 1.4 This is done by;
- providing a framework for the identification of the "meaningful gap" areas.
  - providing justification for the "meaningful gap" policy in the Core Strategy.
- 1.5 This assessment identifies potential boundaries for the "Meaningful Gap" areas for the Core Strategy and for inclusion in the Site Allocations Development Plan.

## **2. Gap Designations**

- 2.1 Gaps are spatial planning tools designed to shape the pattern of settlements, they are not countryside protection or landscape designations. They command wide public support and have been used with success in previous strategic plans to influence the settlement pattern. Nationally the most significant application of policy to maintain settlement separation and avoid coalescence is Green Belt Policy. Gaps can have other positive aspects: in retaining open land adjacent to urban areas which can be used for new/enhanced recreation and other green infrastructure purposes.
- 2.2 Previous National Guidance (in PPS's and PPG's) on gaps and green wedges has subsequently been revoked but the rationale for a meaningful gap has therefore been established over many years as a principle in planning and there are some overlaps with Green Belt policy and purposes.

- 2.3 This guidance introduced the idea that new development should not *significantly* diminish the extent of a gap, thus allowing for small-scale changes but maintaining a core area for protection to prevent coalescence of settlements and maintain their identity. The Core Strategy Inspectors term of “meaningful gap” in Policy NW19 is intended to apply this approach. A gap should also be a contiguous, uninterrupted, integral whole to be a ‘meaningful gap’ and not broken or split/partially subdivided by significant development. The potential impact of geographical proximity to existing development and the impact that new development may have on the narrowest most critical parts of the meaningful gap and the areas they lie in will also be considered/assessed.
- 2.4 Landscape quality/amenity can also contribute towards determining which areas of meaningful gap are most sensitive and should preferably contribute towards supplying the specific area that constitutes the meaningful gap.
- 2.5 The meaningful gap is bounded to the extreme south by Green Belt. The potential for overlap between the application of a meaningful gap and Green Belt designation needs to be avoided. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open but the fundamental aim of the Meaningful Gap is to prevent the coalescence of development from the settlements of Polesworth, Dordon and Tamworth to respect their identities. The Inspector in the Core Strategy Inquiry did not consider extending the Green Belt to cover the open area between Tamworth and Polesworth/Dordon. The NPPF notes that new areas of Green Belt should only be established in exceptional circumstances. The Borough Council did not consider any changes to the Green Belt and until such a time that a full assessment can be made this is not considered applicable or necessary at this time. The Meaningful Gap assessment is not intended to replace or overlap with Green Belt.

### 3. Current Policy

- 3.1 The adopted Core Strategy Adoption Policy NW19 refers to the provision of a “Meaningful Gap” between Polesworth/Dordon and Tamworth, to maintain the separation between the settlements and respect their separate identities.

#### ***NW19 Polesworth & Dordon***

*The broad location of growth will be to the south and east of the settlements subject to there being no unacceptable environmental impacts from surface mining and that viable and practicable coal reserves are safeguarded.*

*Any development to the west of Polesworth & Dordon must respect the separate identities of Polesworth and Dordon and Tamworth and maintain a **Meaningful Gap** between them.*

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- 3.2 This policy links to the positive management and enhancement of the environment of the urban fringe covered by such designation. It reflects the Spatial Vision for the Borough relating to the Borough's rural character; "*The rural character of North Warwickshire will be retained and reinforced to ensure that when entering the Borough it is distinctive from the surrounding urban areas.*"
- 3.3 There are, however, a number of other pressures impacting on this area in policy terms as follows;
- The emerging Tamworth Local Plan indicates a significant level of growth in both housing and employment that may not be able to be accommodated solely within its current boundaries. Policy **SP1**, The Spatial Strategy for Tamworth, indicates that a minimum of 2000 homes and 14 ha of employment land will need to be found outside of the borough to meet their needs. Some of the development pressure may be met through redevelopment of the Golf Course site but this will not be sufficient to address the full need sought.
  - Under the Duty to Co-operate, North Warwickshire has a legal duty to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis to maximise the effectiveness of Local Plan preparation in the context of strategic cross boundary matters. The duty to cooperate is not a duty to agree. But local planning authorities should make every effort to secure the necessary cooperation on strategic cross boundary matters before they submit their Local Plans for examination. This inevitably brings additional pressure in how this duty can be complied, how any agreed potential development accommodation from Tamworth should be delivered and how to maintain the Meaningful Gap required in Policy NW19.
  - The Tamworth Future Development and Infrastructure Study 2009, which was jointly commissioned with North Warwickshire BC and Lichfield DC, identified potential sites immediately adjoining Tamworth's boundary. The Study indicated that these sites, forming option D in the study, performed reasonably well over a range of sustainability indicators although significant off-site highway works may be necessary. The study indicates a net potential of 1367 units in site E immediately adjoining the Tamworth Boundary and 2738 units immediately west of Polesworth/Dordon, site D. It should be noted that North Warwickshire Borough Council did not support the final findings, which predate the NPPF and the Duty to Co-operate.
  - The submission of a number of significant planning applications within the area covered by the Meaningful Gap, and the need to assess the impact of these development proposals in terms of Policy NW19. It should be noted that of the current planning applications submitted within the Meaningful Gap area between Tamworth and

Polesworth/Dordon one site, west of the M42, has recently received planning consent. This is noted in the report below.

#### 4. Description of Area under assessment

- 4.1 The Area for assessment covers a distinctive area of land currently separating Tamworth from the settlements of Polesworth, Dordon, Birchmoor and Freasley. The latter two small hamlets lie within the area or gap, which also contains the M42 motorway subdividing the gap into east and west elements and further cut by the A5 and B5000 transport corridors/roads.
- 4.2 The area stretches from the current Green Belt boundary to the south of Tamworth, where the current Freight Branch line to Birch Coppice Business Park and Birmingham Intermodal Freight Terminal (BIFT) runs and then up to the West Coast Main Line, which forms a clear northern boundary/limit to the Gap. It is bordered to the east by the former Birch Coppice Spoil Tip (now landscaped/planted), Polesworth and Dordon settlements up to Pooley Park/Alvecote Pools SSSI, and to the west by Tamworth built development from Centurion Park on the A5/M42 Junction 10 up to the Tamworth Golf Course, Alvecote Marina. The area also incorporates the hamlets of Freasley and Birchmoor. This area is shown in **Appendix 1**.

#### 5. Infrastructure Constraints within Area of assessment

- 5.1 The area is subdivided by some significant transport and utility service infrastructure assets and constraints, including the following;
- 1) M42 which runs north to south through the area, centrally in the top half and along the western boundary at the southern half of the area.
  - 2) A5 and Junction 10 of the M42, running east to west in the southern third of the area, the major gateway into the Borough from the west.
  - 3) B5000, main northern route to Tamworth from Polesworth/Dordon, in the northern third of the area, a main gateway into the Borough
  - 4) High Pressure Gas Pipeline. This is underground and therefore not visible but applies a significant constraint to potential development, with a significant buffer zone approximately 80m **either side** of the pipeline, applied by the HSE (known as the Inner Zone or "IZ"), to maintain/protect access to service/maintain the pipeline. This travels south to north through the centre of the eastern half of the site approximately parallel with the M42 route. The Middle and Outer Zones will not restrict development unless this is fairly high density residential or other development with a high level of public use and access. **See Map Appendix 2**
  - 5) HS2 "Y" Route. At this stage the route is still only proposed, awaiting a formal announcement by the Secretary of State as well as Parliamentary Approval. The route closely follows the M42 travelling from the south west to north east corners of the area, with the greatest potential impact on the area from Junction 10 to Pooley Park, impacting on some of the more sensitive landscapes within this area. **See Map Appendix 2**

- 5.2 The presence of and potential for impact on the gap by the significant infrastructure constraints must be considered. The potential impact (or lack of impact) from these infrastructure constraints on the 10 areas is shown in **Map Appendix 4**

## **6. Landscape Constraints**

- 6.1 The North Warwickshire Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) has undertaken a Landscape Sensitivity assessment of land immediately adjoining the settlement boundaries of the main settlements in North Warwickshire. The relevant areas included in that assessment and affecting the meaningful gap are included in Appendix 8, which is an extract from the LCA. In summary this indicates the land immediately adjoining the western boundary of Dordon/Polesworth (between the A5 and B5000 corridors) as moderate sensitivity and the land further to the north west boundary of Polesworth, between the settlement and Pooley Lane (along the canal/river valley corridor) as of higher sensitivity in landscape terms.
- 6.2 The Warwickshire County Council Landscape Guidelines (published first in 1990) identify the area as falling within the “Arden Landscape”. The guidelines offer guidance to landowners, farmers, planners, developers, road engineers, foresters, ecologists and landscape architects on how development and modern land management practices can best be integrated into the landscape. They define areas of strong landscape character and areas where a concerted effort is required to enhance areas of degradation to help conserve the diversity and beauty of Warwickshire’s Landscapes.
- 6.3 The Landscape Assessment and Guidelines are being reviewed and currently indicate the area covered by the gap to constitute ‘Open Field Landscapes’ and part of the “Industrial Arden”. This is described as a variable, rather fragmented urban fringe landscape characterised by mining settlements, spoil heaps and pockets of both pastoral and arable farmland. This is a landscape often dominated by the proximity of urban and industrial land, including housing estates, commercial development, factories, former mines and quarries. Roads, railways, canals and pylons are also common features.
- 6.4 Although farmland makes up a significant proportion of the landscape, much may have, poorly managed, intermittent hedgerows or significant enlarged fields, where hedgerow removal to enable more efficient arable cropping has occurred. Areas of farmland are typically surrounded on two or more sides by urban development, which may not be well defined. The assessment also notes that “the undulating nature of the landform often allows views from one mining settlement to another, reinforcing the settled community character of the landscape. The description above of the Industrial Arden and Open Field Landscape clearly reflects the character of the area under consideration as a “Meaningful Gap”.

## **7. Landscape and Heritage sensitivity**

- 7.1 In order to start identifying the most appropriate area to designate as a “Meaningful Gap” it would be appropriate to identify those areas sensitive in landscape terms in addition to contributing to maintaining the gap between the settlements.
- 7.2 The area has been broken down into 10 discrete areas. Each is divided/separated from each other by significant Transport infrastructure (M42/A5 etc) or landscape and settlement features (canal, woodlands, spoil tip, small settlements eg Birchmoor/Freasley or existing commercial or residential development). These areas are identified on Map **Appendix 3** and Photomontage of the areas in **Appendix 6**.
- 7.3 In addition, the presence of Heritage assets is noted, such as Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed buildings or other non-statutory buildings or sites noted as of local value in either the Borough’s Historic Environment Assessment or Warwickshire County Council’s historic (where known/available) records. The Borough Council’s Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) and the County’s Arden Landscape Guidelines have been used to help identify the most sensitive landscape areas and are noted in the following assessments where relevant/appropriate.

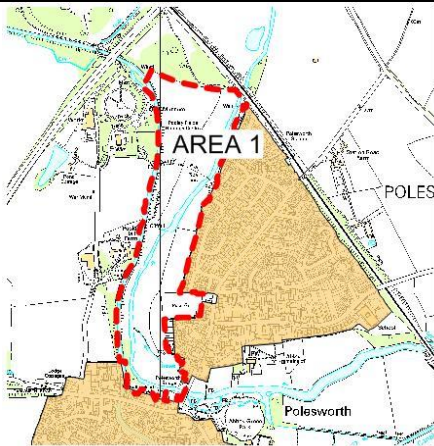






## **8 Geographical Proximity and Narrowness of the Gap**

- 8.1 The geographical proximity to existing development and physical narrowness of the gap is also an issue that needs to be considered and addressed. At significant locations within the Gap there are certain areas where the presence of existing development, the narrowness of the remaining gap(s) of open, undeveloped land, the potential impact of future development proposals and/or local plan allocations on these gaps, all have an impact on and affect the potential future maintenance of a “meaningful gap” and the separation of the settlements.
- 8.2 Where this also corresponds with significant gateways/entrances to the Borough along significant transport corridors, the need to protect such areas from significant development is re-inforced both by Policy NW19 and the need to deliver the Core Strategy Spatial Vision of retaining and re-inforcing the rural character of North Warwickshire distinctive from the surrounding urban areas.

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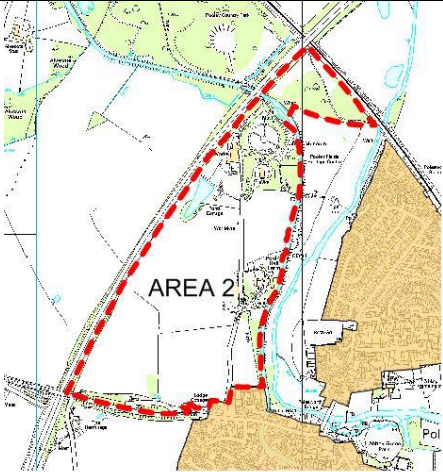


**9. Assessment Tables and Recommendations**

9.1 The following tables list the assessment of sensitivity, identifies any known constraints and the presence of property/development within the areas assessed as relevant and appropriate. The findings/impacts are displayed using a Traffic Light Sensitivity assessment, Red = High Sensitivity/High Impact, Amber= Moderate Sensitivity/Impact , Green = Low Sensitivity/Impact.

 <p><b>Area 1)</b> Land immediately west of Polesworth along the river/canal corridor See Appendix 5.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Landscape:</b> Noted as Area C in the LCA, identified as of high sensitivity in landscape terms. An open river flood plain and canal corridor, with steep, treed escarpment to the west, leading to open farm land and a former colliery site now significantly landscaped and planted.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Heritage:</b> This corridor adjoins a number of heritage assets including Pooley Hall (Grade 2*), Polesworth Bridge (Grade 2), the former North Warwickshire Colliery at Pooley, now Pooley Park and Heritage Centre, includes part of the Coventry Canal and associated structures.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Infrastructure:</b> North West corner of site affected by HS2 route and presence of HP gas pipeline.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Properties:</b> No significant properties in the area. Closely adjoins built area of Polesworth to south and east.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Environmental Constraints:</b> Area affected significantly by Flood Zones 2 and 3 along Anker River. Agricultural land classification 3.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Geographical proximity/Narrowness of Gap :</b> The area immediately adjoins the settlement of Polesworth. The southern element of this area covers the narrow river gap over the floodplain, which is unlikely to be under significant pressure from</li> </ul>	





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	development but has some incremental pressure along its edge, outside of the floodplain areas. This forms a natural gap in the built up area with limited function as a strategic gap	
<b>Recommendation</b> – Include as part of the “Meaningful Gap” due to higher sensitivity to development impact and loss and effect of environmental and heritage constraints.		

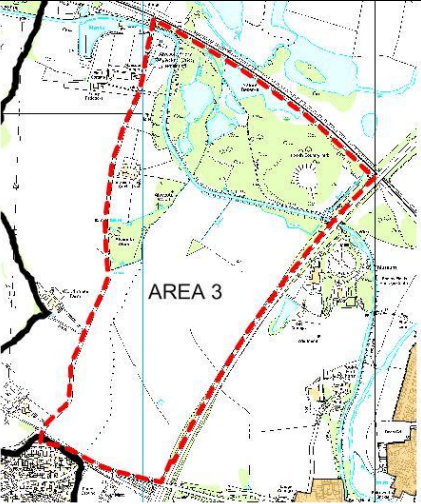






 <p><b>Area 2)</b> Land west of Polesworth, between the Coventry Canal, Pooley Lane and M42 See Appendix 5.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Landscape:</b> Area of large open fields with some remnant hedgerows to the west. Visible along Pooley Lane, the highest part of this area, with views towards Tamworth/Golf Course boundary and Polesworth to the south and east. Land drops from Pooley Lane down to the M42 which lies partially within a cutting at this point, opening out as it travels north past Pooley Park, over the canal and River Anker. To the east the area slopes sharply down to the canal and river, with significant mature tree/hedgerow field boundaries. Development would have significant visual impact on views and outlook to and from Polesworth. The southernmost field area, immediately adjoining the recent development at the Lynch off Pooley Lane, is partially screened by tree and scrub growth on the steep slope above the canal at this point. This may help minimise development impact potential on this part of the area but development would still be visible from Polesworth (See photos). This heavily treed slope/escarpment rising from the river valley and canal forms a significant visual landscape border and barrier to the west of Polesworth that would be sensitive to development particularly along the ridge line.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Heritage:</b> The area also includes some significant heritage assets including Pooley Hall Listed Grade 2*, the miners war memorial from Pooley Colliery, the Pooley Park former colliery site, heritage centre and former wharves at Pooley Park and the Coventry Canal.</li> </ul>	



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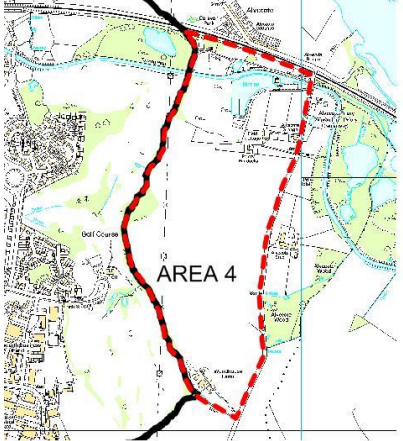






	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Infrastructure:</b> The high pressure gas pipeline cuts through the centre of the site and adjoins the route of the M42 and the proposed route of HS2, restricting the potential for development without impacting on one or other of these significant infrastructure assets.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Properties:</b> There are industrial units adjoining the Park, based in and converted from the old former mining buildings. The area includes the Heritage Centre at Pooley Park to the north east and adjoins some limited, sporadic residential developments to the south along the B5000 and off Pooley Lane.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Environmental Constraints:</b> Pooley Park to the north is partly a SSSI in favourable condition. Agricultural land classification 3.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Geographical proximity/Narrowness of Gap :</b> Forms a significant gap between Polesworth and the M42 that has already been impacted along its southern boundary by some small scale, sporadic ribbon development along B5000 Tamworth Road. This area is sensitive to development which could impact significantly on the maintenance of a “meaningful gap” between Polesworth and the M42. It is considered it operates as strategic gap.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Recommendation</b> – Include as part of the “Meaningful Gap” due to higher sensitivity to development impact, importance as a strategic gap along a gateway into North Warwickshire and effect of potential infrastructure constraints.</p>		

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 <p><b>Area 3)</b> Land west of M42 at Polesworth and Robeys Lane. See Appendix 5 photos Nos 1 to 20.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Landscape:</b> Area of open rolling arable fields with some remnant hedgerows, ponds and isolated tree copses, which levels out to the north and east. Significant views across to north and north east. Land rises to south. This area also includes Alvecote wood, recently awarded the best small woodland in England in the Royal Forestry Society Best of England awards 2014. Pooley Country Park, landscaped former colliery lies to the north</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Heritage:</b> Pooley Country Park (landscaped former colliery), the Coventry Canal and Alvecote Priory, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and listed grade 2, all lie within the northern part of the area.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Infrastructure:</b> Site not significantly impacted by any proposed or existing infrastructure constraints.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Properties:</b> Area contains a commercial stable and farm buildings.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Environmental Constraints:</b> Alvecote Wood is a designated local wildlife site and ancient woodland. Pooley Country Park includes a significant area of SSSI designation. Agricultural land classification 3a and 3b.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Geographical proximity/Narrowness of Gap:</b> Forms a significant open gap between Tamworth and the M42. This area is sensitive to development which could impact on the maintenance of a “meaningful gap” between Polesworth and the M42. It is considered it operates as strategic gap, particularly in relation to its southern boundary and the land to the south (Area 7). It acts as a significant gateway into the Borough from Tamworth. The expansion of the area to the north also provides a clear gap between Tamworth and the M42 which, although sensitive to development is not as critical as its southern border/element, hence an amber score.</li> </ul>	

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**Recommendation** – Include as part of the “Meaningful Gap” due to its contribution as strategic gap, open aspect, higher sensitivity of landscape to development and environmental impact.

 <p><b>Area 4)</b> Land immediately adjoining Tamworth’s north eastern boundary, alongside the Golf Course potential development site, west of Robey’s Lane, north of Priory Park Kart Circuit but south of West Coast Main Line (WCML). See Appendix 5 photos Nos 1 to 20.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Landscape:</b> Top two thirds of the site is highly visible rolling open countryside, with few field boundaries. Views to north and east are extensive and the land rises to the centre of the site/fields before dropping down to Alvecote marina. Development on this area would be highly visible and constitute a significant visual impact on the open countryside in this area. There is currently a fairly strong treed/hedgerow boundary along the western Golf Course border of this area, which helps screen and minimise the visual impact of potential development areas on the golf course.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Heritage:</b> Includes Alvecote Marina on the Coventry Canal, former coal wharves and dock. Adjoins Alvecote Priory Remains, Scheduled monument and listed grade 2 to north east.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Infrastructure:</b> Site not significantly impacted by any proposed or existing infrastructure constraints</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Properties:</b> The area includes Woodhouse Farm and commercial units to the south and Alvecote Marina and Pub to the north, alongside a number of residential properties within large grounds.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Environmental Constraints:</b> Site not significantly impacted by any environmental constraints or designations. Agricultural land classification 2 and 3b. Site includes some areas of very good quality agricultural land.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Geographical proximity/Narrowness of Gap:</b> The area immediately borders Tamworth Borough, currently the former Golf Course which is subject to a planning application for mixed residential, employment and open space/services. It is not, however, considered to operate significantly as strategic gap between Polesworth and Tamworth and has limited development within it except at the margins of its</li> </ul>	


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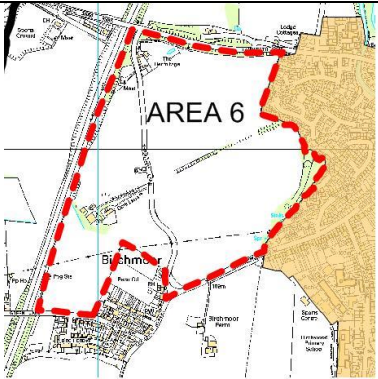



	northern and southern boundaries. Significant gap still remains east of Robey's Lane outside this area to operate as 'meaningful gap'.	
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**Recommendation** – Exclude as part of the “Meaningful Gap” as it does not operate significantly as ‘strategic gap’. Treat as open countryside. Note presence of very good quality agricultural land.




 <p><b>Area 5)</b> Land immediately adjoining Tamworth's eastern boundary, north of B5000, south of Woodhouse Farm of approximately 19.5ha. See Appendix 5 photos Nos 1 to 20.</p>	<b>A</b>	<p><b>Landscape:</b> This area contains the Tamworth Priory Park Karting circuit and open arable pasture, screened with mature hedge banks and treed boundaries along the southern, south eastern and western edges. The site area lies close to existing residential and commercial development in Tamworth to the south and west respectively. The site drops to the north east and adjoins Tamworth Golf Course with mature tree screened boundaries.</p>	☐
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Heritage:</b> There are no significant heritage constraints or designations affecting this area.</li> </ul>	☑	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Infrastructure:</b> Site not significantly impacted by any proposed or existing infrastructure constraints. The site could potentially be accessed from the adjoining golf course redevelopment site or access onto the B5000 or via Robey's Lane.</li> </ul>	☑	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Properties:</b> This area contains the Tamworth Priory Park Karting circuit. The site adjoins Tamworth Golf Course, which is currently under investigation as a potential development area for Tamworth's needs.</li> </ul>	☑	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Environmental Constraints:</b> There are no significant environmental constraints or designations affecting this area. Agricultural land classification of grade 2, very good quality agricultural land, but currently partly in leisure/recreation use (former Priory Park circuit).</li> </ul>	☐	

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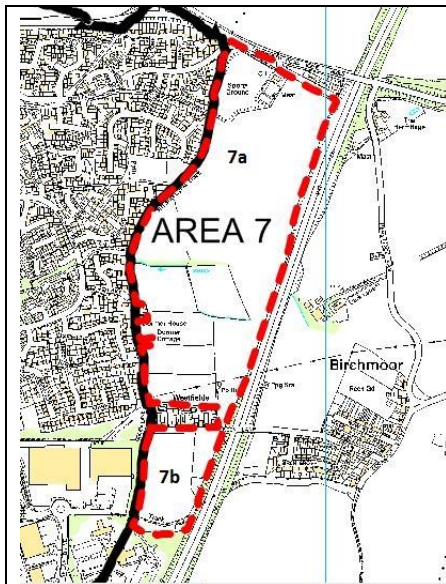
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Geographical proximity/Narrowness of Gap:</b> The area immediately borders Tamworth Borough, currently the former Golf Course which is subject to a planning application for mixed residential, employment and open space/services. It is not, considered to operate significantly as strategic gap between Polesworth and Tamworth and has limited development within it, constituting a farm and commercial go kart track. Significant gap still remains east of Robey's Lane outside this area to operate as 'meaningful gap'. Its relationship and proximity is primarily with Tamworth's built up area and is not considered to operate/contribute as a rural Gateway into North Warwickshire to the same degree that the land east of Robey's Lane and Chiltern Road operates as.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Recommendation –</b> Do not include as part of the “Meaningful Gap” but note presence of very good quality agricultural land.</p>		

 <p><b>Area 6) Land between Birchmoor to the south, B5000 to north, Polesworth to east and M42 to west along Hermitage Road. See Appendix 5 photos</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Landscape:</b> Rolling open arable fields with some mature tree'd hedgerows around farms on the site of former colliery and tram way to Polesworth and canal basin. The presence of these industrial heritage assets reflects the former land uses. The topography drops from Birchmoor then rises as it approaches the B5000 before dropping sharply to the highway. This results in significant views to the north east, east and north, with more restricted views to the west across the M42 and towards the margins of Tamworth. Development on the higher areas of this site would have a significant visual impact both on the site itself and on views into the site area.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Heritage:</b> Presence of former colliery site and tramway reflects local industrial heritage. No designated assets.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Infrastructure:</b> The high pressure gas pipeline cuts through the centre of the site and adjoins the route of Hermitage Road. HS2 “Y” route also cuts through the north-west third of the site, alongside the M42. This limits the potential for development without impacting on one or other of these significant infrastructure assets.</li> </ul>	






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<b>No's 25 to 32</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Properties:</b> Site of former colliery now a farm and small commercial units. Area adjoins Birchmoor hamlet/settlement to south, which served the former colliery.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Environmental Constraints:</b> Site not significantly impacted by any environmental constraints or designations. Agricultural land classification 3.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Geographical proximity/Narrowness of Gap:</b> Forms a significant gap between Polesworth and the M42 that has already been partially impacted along its northern boundary by some small scale, development at the Old Dairy, Hermitage Lane adjoining the B5000 Tamworth Road. The area lies in close proximity to Polesworth to the east and has a significant area of built settlement at Birchmoor along its south western boundary. The presence of Birchmoor reduces the size of the gap between Tamworth and Polesworth. This area is sensitive to development which could impact significantly on the maintenance of a “meaningful gap” between Polesworth and the M42. It is considered it operates as an important strategic gap.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Recommendation</b> – Include as part of the “Meaningful Gap” due to landscape sensitivity to development impact and importance as a strategic gap. Note also impact of potential infrastructure constraints (HS2 and HP Gas pipeline).</p>		


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**Area 7)** Land south of B5000, immediately adjoining Tamworth Boundary, west of the M42 and bordered by the service station and Industrial estate, Relay Park to the south.  
See Appendix 5 photos Nos 21 to 24.

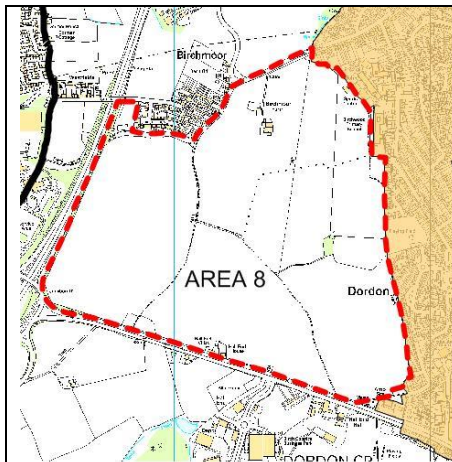
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Landscape:</b> The land is primarily flat, arable pastureland, split into a number of fields with small hedgerows and fences delineating them and more substantial, mature hedges and tree'd boundaries around the whole site, particularly to the west which also includes a pedestrian/cycle access route providing access into the adjoining residential areas in Stonydelph. There are some views out of the site towards the north and east across the M42, but views into the site are limited and restricted by the screening from existing boundary hedge and trees, the presence of some development within the site and the existing commercial and residential developments to the south and west. This is an "urban fringe" area, constrained physically by development (M42, Relay Park Industrial estate, Westfields housing) and with strong clearly defined physical boundaries. Its visual and physical relationship is primarily with Stonydelph/Tamworth and development to the south.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Heritage:</b> There are no significant heritage constraints or designations affecting this area.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Infrastructure:</b> The main constraint is likely to be the potential impact of the HS2"Y" route, which cuts the south eastern corner of the site and housing at Westfields after cutting through the commercial estate and service station area. At Westfields the route crosses over the M42 leaving the majority of the northern two thirds (29ha) of the site less impacted by HS2.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Properties:</b> The area including the sports ground and facilities on Tamworth Road, a small area of housing west of Birchmoor (Westfields) and the M42 overbridge and is approximately 35ha in area. The area immediately adjoins the main built up settlement area of Stonydelph, Tamworth to the west. Retention or replacement of sports facilities/playing fields likely to be required.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Environmental Constraints:</b> There are no natural, environment or ecological designations affecting the site. Agricultural land classification a mix of 2, 3a and 3b. Site includes some areas of very good quality agricultural land.</li> </ul>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Geographical proximity/Narrowness of Gap:</b> Forms a significant gap between Tamworth and the M42 that has already been partially impacted along its northern boundary by some small scale, development at the Polesworth football ground adjoining the B5000 Tamworth Road and along the former Tamworth Road. The northern area is considered to operate/contribute as a rural Gateway into North Warwickshire. The area lies in close proximity to Tamworth to the west and has a significant area of built settlement at Green Lane, Birchmoor along its southern boundary. The presence of development at Green Lane, Birchmoor reduces the size of the gap between Tamworth and Polesworth but outlook and relationship is primarily towards existing development to the south. This part of the area is also impacted and compromised by the proposed route of HS2. The area is sensitive to development which could impact significantly on the maintenance of a “meaningful gap” between Polesworth and the M42. It is considered the northern element operates as an important strategic gap.</li></ul>	
<p><b>Recommendation</b> – Include as part of the “Meaningful Gap” in view of its importance as a strategic gap. Note presence of very good quality agricultural land and recreational facilities to north. Note also impact of potential infrastructure constraints (HS2) on southern part of area. Include northern and southern parts, 7a and 7b, as part of Meaningful Gap. See Main Map.</p>		




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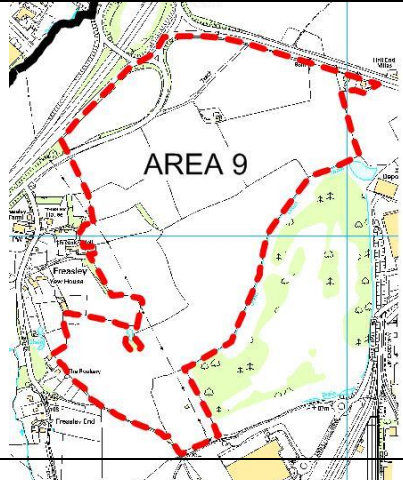




**Area 8)** Land south of Birchmoor Road and Green lane, North of A5, bordered by the M42 to the west and Dordon to the east. See Appendix 5 photos Nos 33 to 65.





- **Landscape:** Large open arable fields, typical industrial style agriculture, rising gently to the north and Birchmoor, with most hedgerows removed and some limited remnant tree copses. Some planting and tree screening along the south western and south eastern boundaries where the site adjoins the M42 and the former ambulance station. Little landscape value. Indicated as of moderate sensitivity in the LCA. The open nature of the site and hard boundary edge to the east with Dordon and the Secondary school providing the backdrop means development on this site would be highly visible, particularly from the A5 and Dordon. This area forms the most obvious potential for maintaining a “Meaningful Gap” between the settlements of Tamworth and Dordon with the clear boundaries provided by the M42 to the west and Dordon built edge to the east. Development along the eastern edge may also provide the opportunity for softening the urban edge through appropriate landscaping. ☉
- **Heritage;** There may be some heritage assets along the route of the A5, the roman Watling Street, on the site of the former Hall End Hall and the Industrial heritage linked to a former Tramway within the site related to Birch Coppice Colliery. ☉
- **Infrastructure;** The high pressure gas pipeline cuts centrally through this site, which reduces the potential for development. ☐
- **Properties:** There are a limited number of residential properties north of the A5 at Hall End Villas. Area 8 also adjoins or contains part of the small settlement of Birchmoor. To maintain the separation of Birchmoor and avoid encroachment from Tamworth it is considered appropriate to include all the land around the settlement. This area also currently provides sport and recreation assets/fields linked to the primary and secondary Schools immediately adjoining the main Dordon settlement built up area to the east. An opportunity exists for enhancing this provision, which could include some associated development and landscaping to soften the harder, urban edge of the settlement in landscape terms. ☑
- **Environmental Constraints:** There are no natural environment or ecological designations affecting the site. Agricultural land classification 3. ☑

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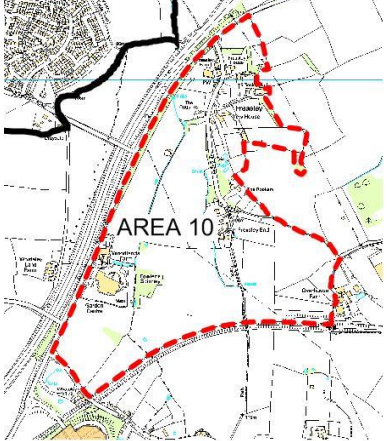




	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Geographical proximity/Narrowness of Gap:</b> Forms a significant gap between Polesworth and the M42. Although of significant size the area is of very open aspect forming a significant whole. To the north the presence of the built development at Green Lane, Birchmoor, significantly reduces the area of remaining gap between Tamworth and Polesworth/Dordon making this area sensitive to development and critical for maintenance as a strategic gap. The presence and proximity of Polesworth/Dordon to the east forms a significant built edge/form to the area and the southern boundary provides and contributes to the major open and rural gateway into North Warwickshire. This southern boundary area has some limited sporadic development along it and any significant development in this area is considered to have a detrimental impact on the ability to maintain the separation of the settlements at this point. This area is considered to be sensitive from development and operate as strategic gap.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Recommendation</b> – Include as part of the “Meaningful Gap” due to development impact on open landscape and importance as a strategic gap. Note also significant impact of infrastructure constraints (HP Gas pipeline). There is a clear character link between this area and the open areas 6 and 9 to the north and south, forming an uninterrupted, continuous open area, forming an integral whole meaningful gap.</p>		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Landscape:</b> Similar to area 8 this is primarily open arable land with much of the original field boundaries and hedgerows removed. The land is flat and open, visible from the A5 and partially from the west (along Trinity Road). Towards the south the older more historic field boundaries still exist, around Frasley, and reflect the Arden Landscape more prevalent to the south, including smaller fields with wooded and hedged boundaries and small remnant woodlands and copses. The Spoil Tip to the east forms a significant landscape and development barrier/boundary and the allotments to the north east are identified as a Site Allocations development opportunity.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Heritage:</b> Similar to Area 8 there may be unknown heritage remains/assets relating to the roman road, Watling Street, along the northern boundary. Western boundary also close to/adjoining Frasley Hall and associated structures, and Yew</li> </ul>	



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<p><b>Area 9)</b> Land south of the A5, with the M42 and Junction 10 to the west, the Spoil tip to the east and up to Freasley hamlet in the south. See Appendix 5 photos Nos 33 to 65.</p>	<p>House, listed Grade 2 and Common Land along 'The Green'..</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Infrastructure:</b> This area is cut centrally by the high pressure gas pipeline, which limits significantly the potential for development to the east and west. There may be some opportunity to “round off” the current employment allocation at/on the allotments to the west of Birch Coppice access and immediately north of the Spoil Tip/ south of Nos 15 to 18, Hall End Cottages, Watling Street, as long as this does not extend into or impact upon the Inner Buffer Zone area of the high pressure gas pipeline.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Properties:</b> There are few buildings within the site apart from a number of residential properties immediately south of the A5 at Hall End Cottages, adjoining the allotments to the east.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Environmental Constraints:</b> There are no natural, environment or ecological designations affecting the site. Agricultural land classification 3.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Geographical proximity/Narrowness of Gap:</b> Forms a significant gap between Dordon and the M42. Although of significant size the area is of very open aspect forming a significant whole. The presence and proximity of development at Centurion Park Tamworth to the west (including planning consent right up to the M42) and at Birch Coppice to the east frames this area. There is also significant further employment allocation on the land immediately adjoining Birch Coppice to the rear of sporadic residential development on the north eastern boundary of this area, along the A5, which further reduces the remaining strategic gap between the M42 and Birch Coppice. The Area contributes to the major open and rural gateway into North Warwickshire from the west along the A5 with its significant open aspect and character framed to the south by the spoil tip and small hamlet of Freasley, both set back from the A5. Significant development on the remaining undeveloped area of this corridor/gateway would effectively merge the settlements of Tamworth and Dordon from Wilnecote to Birch Coppice. This area is considered to be</li> </ul>	

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	sensitive from development and operates as strategic gap.	
<p><b>Recommendation</b> – Include as part of the “Meaningful Gap” due to development impact on open landscape and importance as a strategic gap. Note also significant impact of infrastructure constraints (HP Gas pipeline). Some limited potential for development alongside the adjoining, allocated Allotments site west of Birch Coppice.</p>		
 <p><b>Area 10)</b> The settlement of Freasley , including land immediately adjoining and to the south of the settlement. See Appendix 5 and Photomontage Appendix 7.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Landscape:</b> This area forms an attractive access corridor through the hamlet of Freasley, with mature trees and hedgerows along the roads, field boundaries and copses around the settlement reflecting the historic Arden landscape, surrounded by more industrial agriculture in the form of more modern, open arable fields stretching up to the A5 and alongside the spoil tip. The area is fairly flat and well screened from Trinity Road to the west. This forms a small remnant of Arden Landscape, which would be extremely sensitive to the impact of major development. Minor development of a residential nature may be possible within and on the margins of Freasley, without significantly impacting on any meaningful gap.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Heritage:</b> There are numerous heritage assets,(Listed Buildings) in Freasley, including Yew House, Sycamore Cottage, Freasley Hall and associated structures from the late 1600’s to mid 1700’s, which contribute to the character of this area. The remaining properties are predominantly late 19C or 20C era. The settlement also includes an area of Commons Land along The Green.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Infrastructure:</b> The high pressure gas pipeline cuts through the eastern half of the site. Trinity Road, the M42 (and proposed HS2 route to the west of the M42) and the Freight Branch line to Birch Coppice to the south form strong transport infrastructure boundaries, which along with the Spoil Tip separate this area from the surrounding landscape, including residential development to the west (Tamworth) and commercial development to the east (Birch Coppice and BIFT).</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Properties:</b> Apart from the hamlet itself there is a large garden centre located on the south west corner of this area where the land rises towards the south west and Trinity Road. A farm which includes some commercial uses lies to the south east of the area, alongside Birch Coppice.</li> </ul>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Environmental Constraints:</b> There are no significant environmental constraints or designations affecting this area. Agricultural land classification 3.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Geographical proximity/Narrowness of Gap:</b> Forms a gap between Dordon, at Birch Coppice and the M42. The area is mainly of open aspect but with some development impact already existing from the Planters Garden Centre to the west and the hamlet of Freasley in the north of the area. The presence and proximity of development to the west of the M42 at Hockley (with the HS2 route proposals and residential planning applications affecting the land), the hamlet of Freasley within the northern part of the site and the presence of Birch Coppice, business park and container terminal to the east frames this area. Significant development on the remaining undeveloped part of this area would contribute towards the merger of the settlements of Tamworth and Dordon with a southern arm of built development stretching from Hockley to Birch Coppice, Dordon. It has a significant relationship with the open Area 9 to the north. This area is considered to be sensitive from development and operate as a strategic gap albeit this is not considered as critical as Areas 9 and 8 to the north, hence the “amber” classification.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Recommendation</b> – Include as part of the “Meaningful Gap” due to landscape and heritage sensitivity from development impact. Note also impact of infrastructure constraints (HP Gas pipeline).</p>		

## **10. Conclusion**

- 10.1 In terms of landscape sensitivity the areas that are considered most sensitive to the potential impact of development are Areas 1, 2, 3, 6 and 10. However, although Areas 8 and 9 are considered less sensitive in landscape terms they are considered to operate more significantly as strategic gap on the major Gateway into the Borough from the west, are more sensitive to the impact of development in view of their open aspect and constitute the main “Meaningful Gap” area between Tamworth, the M42 and the built areas of Dordon and Birch Coppice, along with Areas 2 and 6, which follow the broad, eastern corridor of the M42. Area 2 and 3 are also considered to perform/operate significantly as strategic gap either side of the M42 on a similar gateway into the Borough.
- 10.2 These are also the areas most affected by infrastructure constraints with both HS2 “Y” Route and the High Pressure Gas Line and its associated Buffer Zone present. This would appear to support the identification of this south west/north east corridor or gap as the main area of meaningful gap referred to in the Core Strategy Policy. Areas 8 and 6 also adjoin or contain part of the small settlement of Birchmoor. In view of the proximity of development at Tamworth and Polesworth to Birchmoor, the narrowness of the gap either side of Birchmoor and the M42 along Green Lane and it is considered appropriate to include all the land around that settlement in Areas 6, 7 and 8 within the meaningful gap to maintain the identity and separation of Birchmoor and avoid encroachment from Tamworth, particularly as this settlement may be significantly impacted by the route of HS2 in the future. This area also contributes significantly to a contiguous, integral area that would constitute a ‘meaningful gap’.
- 10.3 The narrowness of the gap remaining between Tamworth and Polesworth along the B5000 is also an issue. This area is sensitive to development and provides a similar rural gateway role into Polesworth and North Warwickshire as the A5 does in the south into Dordon. The presence of some limited sporadic development along the northern boundaries of Area 7 and 6 and the southern boundary of Area 2, already impacts somewhat on this area of strategic gap and it is considered essential to try and maintain that gap that remains to avoid further co-alescence of the settlements, particularly in view of the proximity of the gap to development at Stonydelph, Tamworth and Kiln Way, Polesworth, It is therefore considered important to include Area 7 within the meaningful gap to help maintain this open corridor into the Borough and avoid loss of separation between Tamworth and Polesworth.
- 10.4 The areas contributing least to the principle of a ‘Meaningful Gap’ are considered to be Areas 3, 4, 5 and 10. Of these only Area 10 is east of the M42 but is still considered sensitive in landscape terms (remnant Arden Historic Landscape), containing Common land and adjoining the Green Belt to the south. This area is also affected by the High Pressure gas main and

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has a number of heritage assets within the settlement of Freasley, which would be adversely impacted by any significant levels of development. This area should therefore be considered as contributing to the “Meaningful Gap”.

- 10.5 Area 3 is considered to currently operate less significantly as Meaningful Gap more as simply “open countryside” with significant landscape sensitivity. If development from the west starts to encroach towards Robeys Lane this sensitivity will increase and the areas importance as part of the Meaningful Gap, particularly between Tamworth and the M42, will grow. It is therefore still considered to operate as a strategic gap particularly between Tamworth and the M42 and forms part of an open corridor either side of the M42 between Tamworth and Polesworth that connects to the corridor to the south in areas 6, 7 and 8. Therefore, in advance of any development proposals to the west and mindful of the potential impact from HS2 it is considered appropriate to include these Areas within the Meaningful Gap.
- 10.6 The areas therefore most likely to fall outside the remit of the Meaningful Gap term are Areas 4 and 5, immediately adjoining Tamworth Borough boundary. Current proposals for development on the Golf Course and land adjoining Area 5 would result in built development on three sides of Area 5. Their visual and physical relationships are considered closer to built development in Tamworth and the physical separation of Area 4 from the rest of the open areas above reduces its relationship with and contribution to the meaningful gap . These areas are recommended to be excluded from falling within the terms or ‘designation’ of a Meaningful Gap in Policy NW19.

## **11. Proposed Policy Approach**

- 11.1 The Meaningful Gap report supports Policy NW19. This explains how the Borough Council will interpret the words “meaningful gap” within that policy. The main principles would be to retain the mainly undeveloped aspect of the areas designated, avoiding/restricting significant development within the “Meaningful Gap” to help maintain the separate identity of the settlements affected as sought by Core Strategy Policy NW19. Those areas not affected by Meaningful Gap designation would be governed by the remaining Core Strategy/Local Plan policies and the NPPF dealing with sustainable development in the open countryside.

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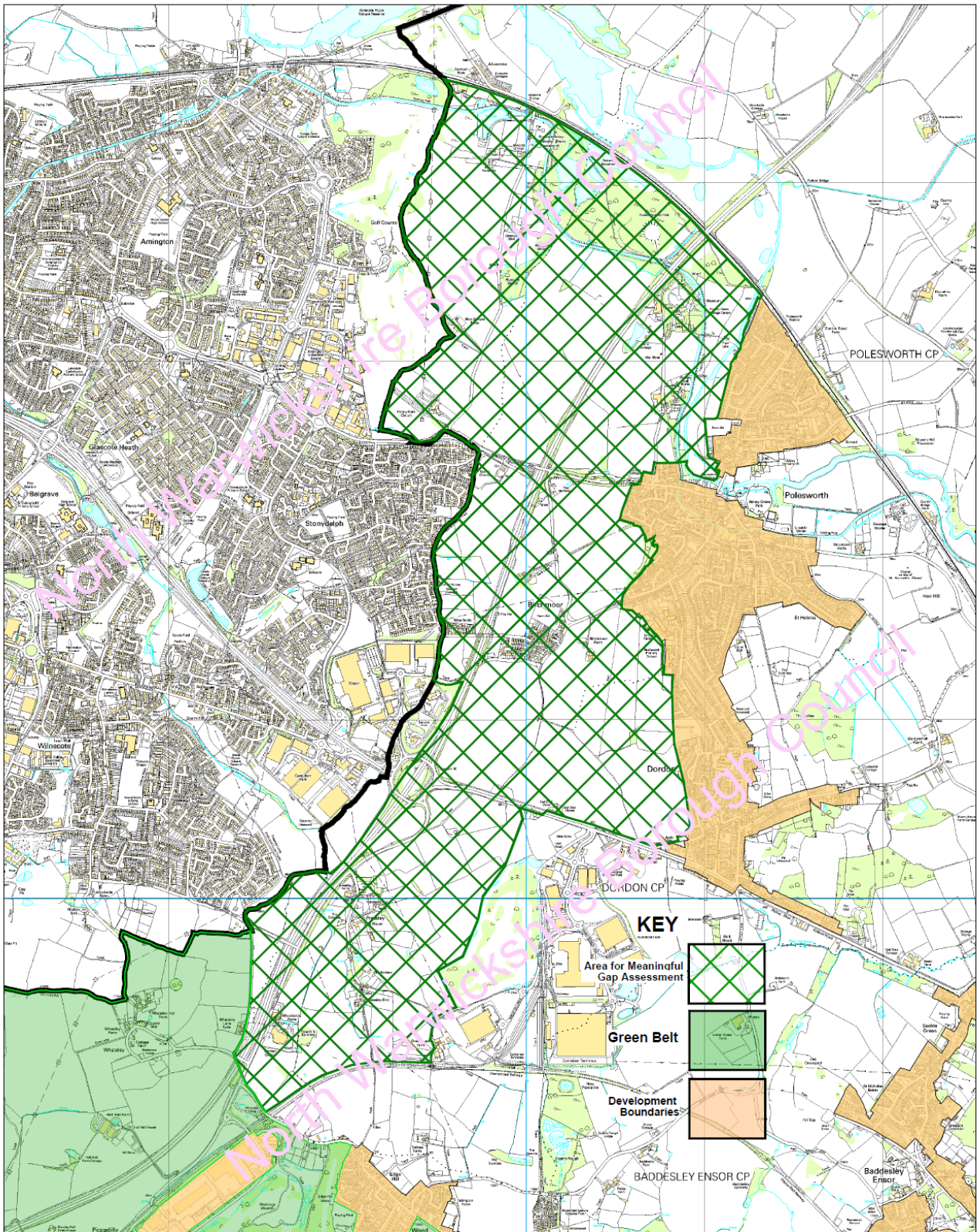
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**Appendix 1**



# Meaningful Gap Report August 2015

Area for Assessment of Meaningful Gap



North Warwickshire  
Site Allocations Plan  
Pre-Submission Stage 2014

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North Warwickshire  
Borough Council



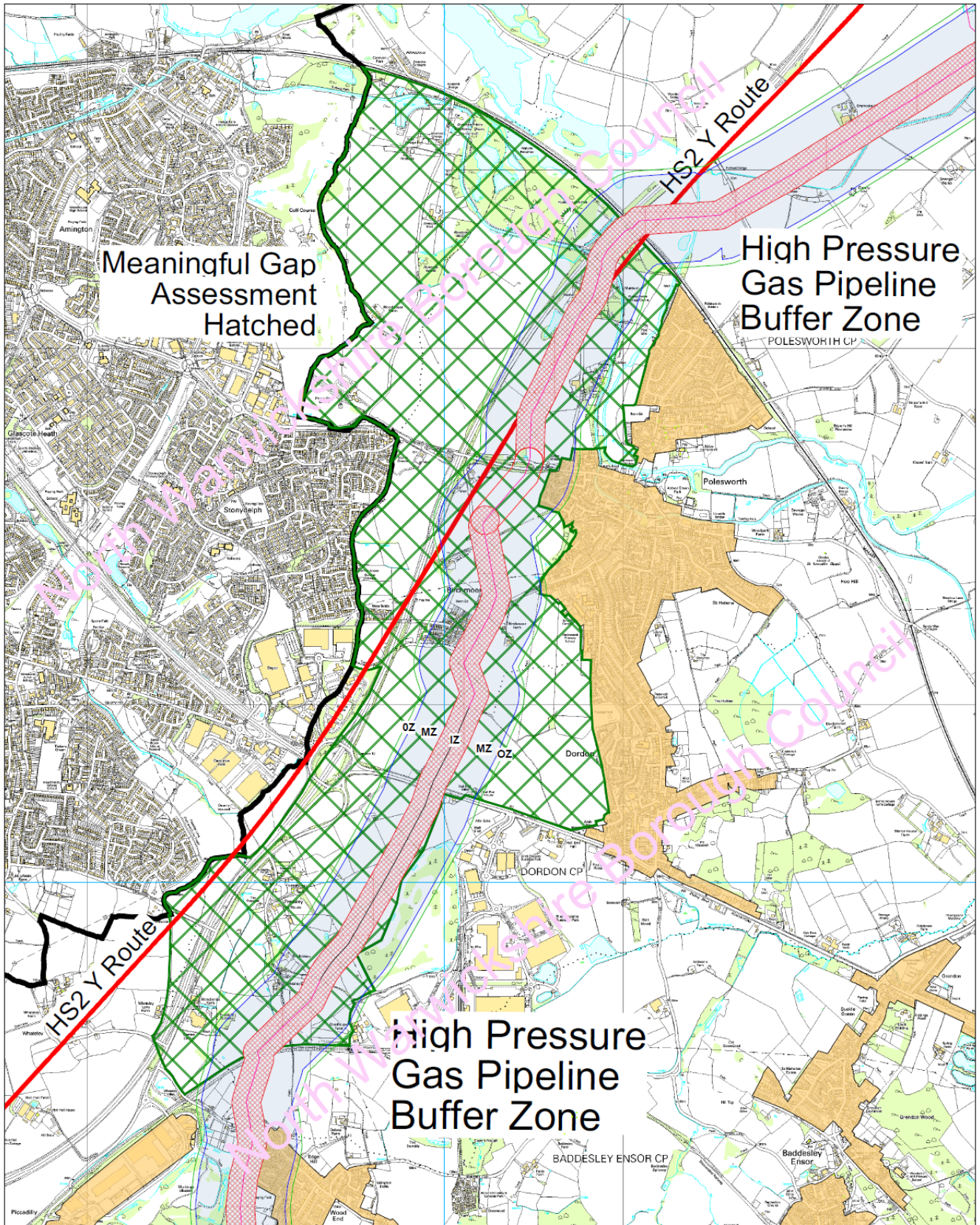
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**Appendix 2**

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Impact of Gas Pipeline Buffer and HS2 Y Route on Meaningful Gap



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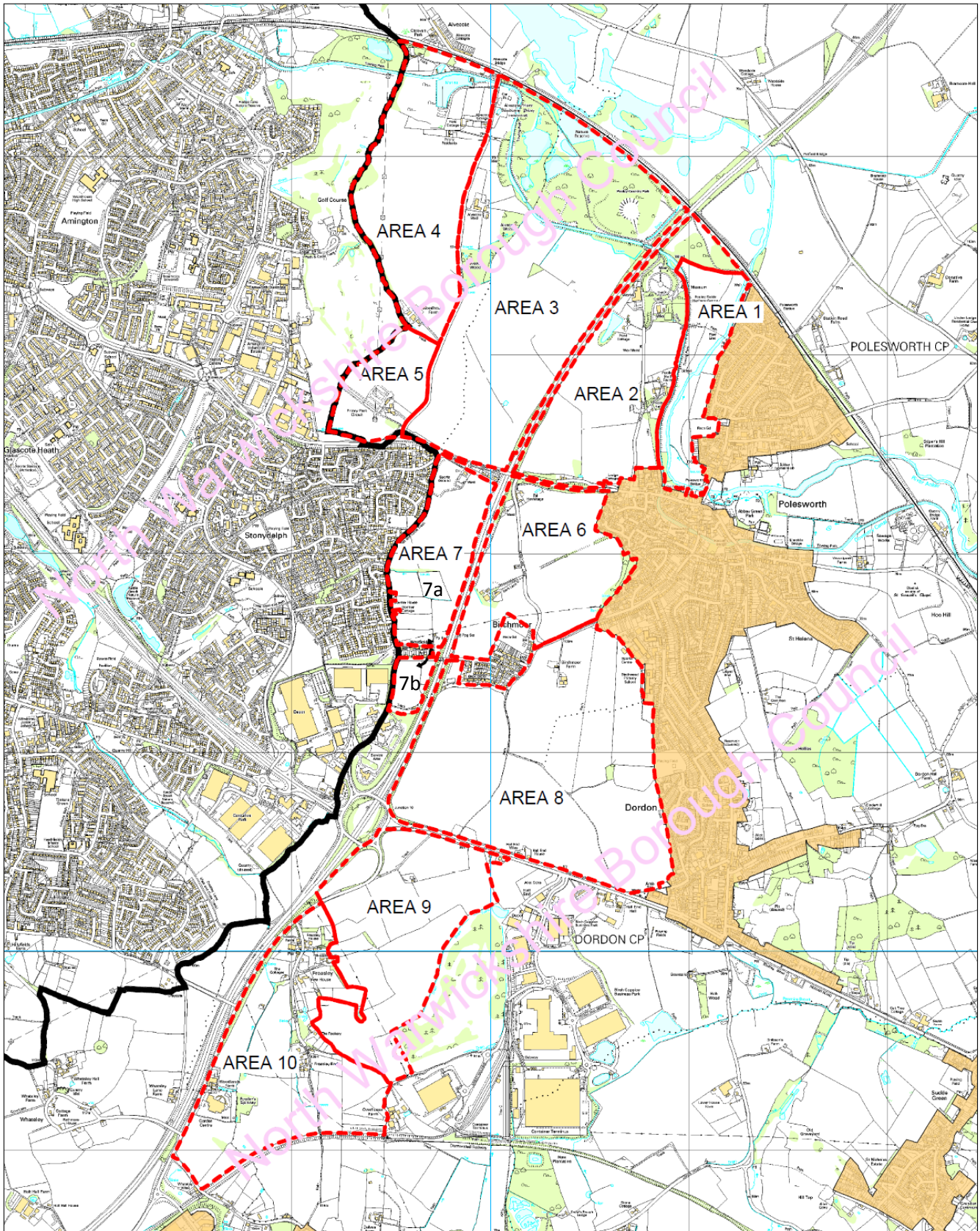
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**Appendix 3**

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Individual Assessment areas within Meaningful Gap



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**Appendix 4**



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Assessment Areas, Green Belt, HS2 Route, HP Gas Pipeline & Buffer Zone within Meaningful Gap

