

Agenda Item No 7

Local Development Framework Sub-Committee

21 January 2015

Report of the Assistant Chief Executive and Solicitor to the Council

Meaningful Gap Assessment

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report recommends the identification and designation of the area that will constitute the “Meaningful Gap”, referred to in Policy NW19 of the current Core Strategy, adopted October 2014.

Recommendation to Sub-Committee

- a That Areas 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9 and 10 are designated as the “Meaningful Gap” for the purposes of Core Strategy Policy NW19;
- b Areas 5 and 7 are excluded from the Meaningful Gap and remain outside current Development Boundaries;
- c To apply the meaningful gap area identified as policy and to start using it for planning purposes from the date of this committee; and
- d To undertake a public consultation on the report and designation, subject to assessment of the responses received and to bring back any amendments to the Sub-Committee.

2 Consultation

- 2.1 A copy of the report has been forwarded to Councillors Sweet, Winter, Simpson, M Stanley, D Butcher and L Smith.

3 Introduction

- 3.1 The Borough Council has consistently worked to maintain the gap between Tamworth and Polesworth and Dordon as it is essential to ensuring the continuing identity of Polesworth and Dordon.

4 Core Strategy Policy

- 4.1 Following the examination of the Core Strategy the Inspector's modifications to Policy NW16 for Polesworth and Dordon amended the requirement for the 'land to the west of Polesworth & Dordon' to provide for a "Meaningful Gap". The Adopted Core Strategy Policy states;

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."*

- 4.2 There is therefore the need to define the areas that will constitute the Meaningful Gap in order to be able to apply the additional planning constraints set out on Adopted Policy NW19. As a result a study has been carried out and this is attached as Appendix A to this report.

...

5 Observations

- 5.1 The study and assessment subdivides the gap between Tamworth and Polesworth & Dordon down into a series of 10 areas that are defined by significant transport corridors, such as the B5000, A5, M42 and West Coast Main line (WCML) and by significant landscape features such as the spoil tip, existing small settlements and the canal and river corridors.

- 5.2 Each individual area is then assessed as to the contribution it provides towards the function of a 'meaningful gap' with a recommendation to include or exclude that specific area. The areas are shown on Maps in Appendix 3 to the Study. In brief the areas can be described as follows;

- Area 1 – Comprising the river and canal corridor between Polesworth and the ridge leading to Pooley Park. The WCML forms the northern boundary.
- Area 2 – Land between the M42 and the ridge overlooking the canal, river and Polesworth. The WCML forms the northern boundary and B5000, off Pooley Lane, the southern boundary.
- Area 3 – Open land west of the M42, east of Robey's Lane with the WCML forming the northern boundary and B5000 the southern boundary.
- Area 4 - Open land west of Robey's Lane with the WCML forming the northern boundary and Woodhouse Farm and commercial units the southern boundary. The site adjoins Tamworth Golf Course to the west.
- Area 5 - Land west of Robey's Lane, north of the B5000 and east of the Golf Course, incorporating the Priory Park Karting Circuit.
- Area 6 – Open land south of the B5000, west of Polesworth (the Dexter Way and Ensor Drive estates) and east of the M42. The southern boundary is the Birchmoor settlement and Birchmoor Road. Hermitage Way cuts through this area.

- Area 7 – land between the Tamworth Borough boundary at Wilnecote (Green Lane) and the M42 with the B5000 forming the northern boundary and the Relay Drive Industrial Estate and motorway service area forming the southern boundary. The area includes some older residential development at Green Lane/Westfields and the Polesworth Town football club and pitch/cricket ground off the B5000.
- Area 8 – Large open fields west of Dordon, east of the M42. Birchmoor settlement and Birchmoor Road form the northern boundary and the A5 the southern boundary.
- Area 9 – Open land south of the A5, east of Junction 10 on the M42, west of the spoil tip and Birch Coppice Business Park and north of the small settlement of Freasley.
- Area 10 – Land incorporating Freasley settlement, forming the northern boundary of the area. The southern boundary is the freight line to the Birch Coppice Freight transfer station and the western boundary is Trinity Road and the M42. The site includes Planters Garden Centre. The land to the immediate south of this area is designated as Green Belt.

5.3 The only areas not considered as part of the study includes land recently granted planning consent immediately west of Junction 10 on the M42 and land between Hockley housing estate and the M42. The first site has planning consent as an extension to the existing Business Park at Centurion Way. Similarly land west of the M42, east of Hockley, Tamworth has recently been proposed for housing and is subject to a current planning application. Both of these sites are impacted significantly by the proposed HS2 route.

6 **Conclusion**

6.1 The results of the study recommend that Areas 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9 and 10 should be designated as the Meaningful Gap.

6.2 The two areas not being included are Areas 5 and 7. It is recommended that they should be treated like other sites that lie outside of development boundaries.

7 **Report Implications**

7.1 **Environment and Sustainability Implications**

7.1.1 The designation of a meaningful gap will contribute towards the Council's Spatial Vision, retaining and re-enforcing the Borough's rural character and retaining the distinctiveness of existing communities. Similarly it will help meet the Council's corporate aim 'seeking to protect, conserve and improve the quality of the local environment'.

The Contact Officer for this report is Mike Dittman (719499).

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.
- 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 There is a potential overlap between the application of a meaningful gap and Green Belt designation, which is in the area of preventing the coalescence of settlements. However, 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 at this time.

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.*

- 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.

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 and Freasley, where the current Freight Branch line to Birch Coppice Business Park and Birmingham Intermodal Freight Terminal (BIFT) runs and 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. 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
 - 3) B5000, main northern route to Tamworth from Polesworth/Dordon, in the northern third of the area
 - 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”.

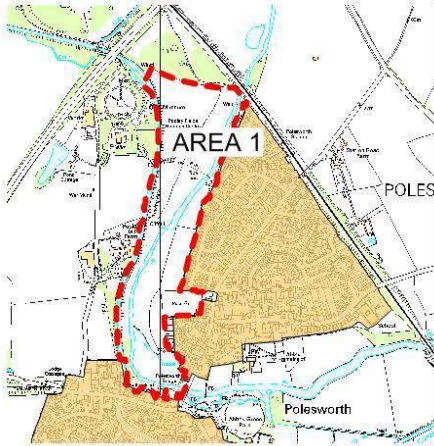





7. Landscape and Heritage sensitivity

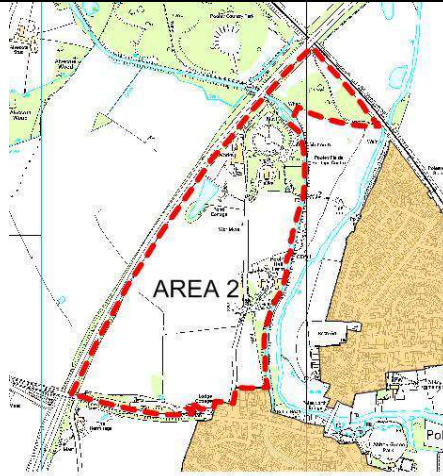
- 7.1 In order to start identifying the most appropriate area to designate as a “Meaningful Gap” it would be appropriate to identify those areas sensitive in landscape terms in addition to contributing to maintaining the gap between the settlements.
- 7.2 The area has been broken down into 10 discrete 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. Assessment Tables and Recommendations

8.1 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>Area 1) Land immediately west of Polesworth along the river/canal corridor See Appendix 5.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape: 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. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage: 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. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure: North West corner of site affected by HS2 route and presence of HP gas pipeline. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Properties: No significant properties in the area. Closely adjoins built area of Polesworth to south and east. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Constraints: Area affected significantly by Flood Zones 2 and 3 along Anker River. Agricultural land classification 3. 	
<p>Recommendation – Include as part of the “Meaningful Gap” due to higher sensitivity to development impact and loss and effect of environmental and heritage constraints.</p>		

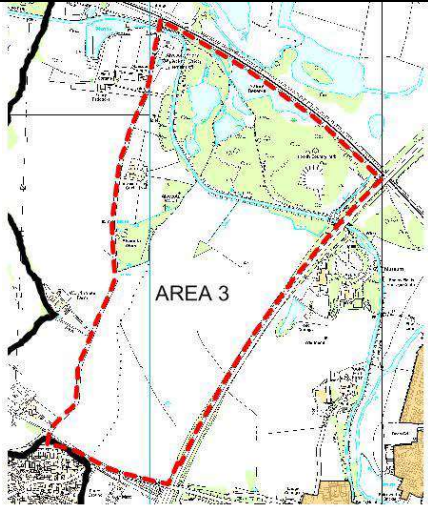


Area 2) Land west of Polesworth, between the Coventry Canal, Pooley Lane and M42
See Appendix 5.

- Landscape:** 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.
- Heritage:** 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.
- Infrastructure:** 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.
- Properties:** 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.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Constraints: Pooley Park to the north is partly a SSSI in favourable condition. Agricultural land classification 3. 	☉
<p>Recommendation – Include as part of the “Meaningful Gap” due to higher sensitivity to development impact and effect of potential infrastructure constraints.</p>		

 <p>Area 3) Land west of M42 at Polesworth and Robeys Lane. See Appendix 5 photos Nos 1 to 20.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape: 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 	☹
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage: 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. 	☹
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure: Site not significantly impacted by any proposed or existing infrastructure constraints. 	☺
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Properties: Area contains a commercial stable and farm buildings. 	☺
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Constraints: 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. 	☹
<p>Recommendation – Include as part of the “Meaningful Gap” due to higher sensitivity of landscape to development and environmental impact.</p>		









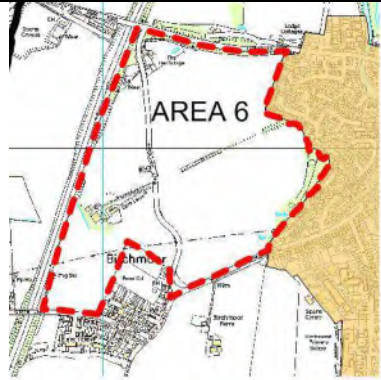
Area 4) Land immediately adjoining Tamworth's north eastern boundary, alongside the Golf Course potential development site, west of Robey's Lane, north of Priory Park Kart Circuit but south of West Coast Main Line (WCML). See Appendix 5 photos Nos 1 to 20.

- Landscape:** 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.
- Heritage:** 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.
- Infrastructure:** Site not significantly impacted by any proposed or existing infrastructure constraints
- Properties:** 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.
- Environmental Constraints:** 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.



Recommendation – Include as part of the “Meaningful Gap” due to landscape sensitivity and development impact. Note presence of very good quality agricultural land.

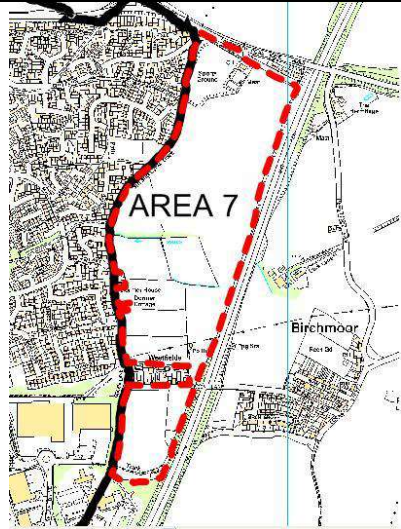
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape: This area contains the Tamworth Priory Park Karting circuit and open arable pasture, screened with mature hedge banks and treed boundaries along the southern, south eastern and western edges. The site area lies close to existing residential and commercial 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>Area 5) 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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage: There are no significant heritage constraints or designations affecting this area. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure: 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. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Properties: 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. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Constraints: 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). 	
<p>Recommendation – Do not include as part of the “Meaningful Gap” but note presence of very good quality agricultural land.</p>		



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 No's 25 to 32

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape: 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. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage: Presence of former colliery site and tramway reflects local industrial heritage. No designated assets. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure: 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. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Properties: Site of former colliery now a farm and small commercial units. Area adjoins Birchmoor hamlet/settlement to south, which served the former colliery. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Constraints: Site not significantly impacted by any environmental constraints or designations. Agricultural land classification 3. 	

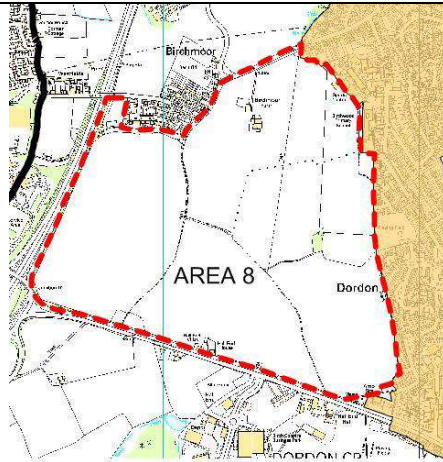
Recommendation – Include as part of the “Meaningful Gap” due to landscape sensitivity to development impact. Note also impact of potential infrastructure constraints (HS2 and HP Gas pipeline).



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.

- **Landscape:** 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.
- **Heritage:** There are no significant heritage constraints or designations affecting this area.
- **Infrastructure:** 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.
- **Properties:** 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.
- **Environmental Constraints:** 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.

Recommendation – Do not include as part of the “Meaningful Gap” but 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.

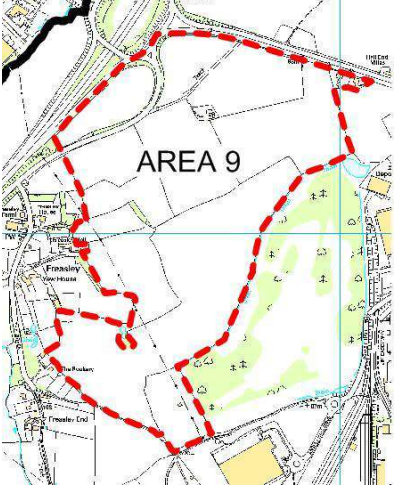


Area 8) Land south of Birchmoor Road and Green lane, North of A5, bordered by the M42 to the west and Dordon to the east. See Appendix 5 photos Nos 33 to 65.

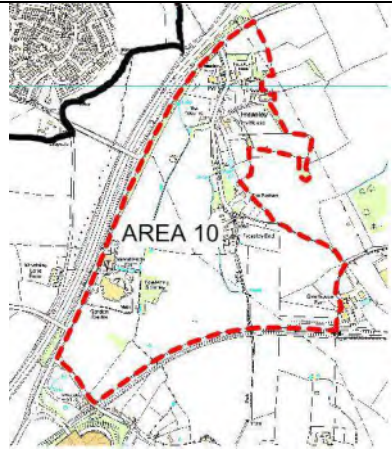
- Landscape:** Large open arable fields, typical industrial style agriculture, rising gently to the north and Birchmoor, with most hedgerows removed and some limited remnant tree copses. Some planting and tree screening along the south western and south eastern boundaries where the site adjoins the M42 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.








Recommendation – Include as part of the “Meaningful Gap” due to development impact on open landscape. Note also significant impact of infrastructure constraints (HP Gas pipeline). There is a clear character link between this area and the open areas 7 and 9 to the north and south, forming an uninterrupted, continuous open area, forming an integral whole meaningful gap.

 <p>Area 9) 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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape: 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 Freasley, 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. 	☉
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage: 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 Freasley Hall and associated structures, and Yew House, listed Grade 2 and Common Land along ‘The Green’.. 	☉
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure: 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. 	☹
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Properties: 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. 	☑
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Constraints: There are no natural, environment or ecological designations affecting the site. Agricultural land classification 3. 	☑

Recommendation – Include as part of the “Meaningful Gap” due to development impact on open landscape. 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.



Area 10) The settlement of Freasley, including land immediately adjoining and to the south of the settlement. See Appendix 5 and Photomontage Appendix 7.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape: 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. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage: 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. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure: 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). 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Properties: 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. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Constraints: There are no significant environmental constraints or designations affecting this area. Agricultural land classification 3. 	

Recommendation – 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).

9. Conclusion

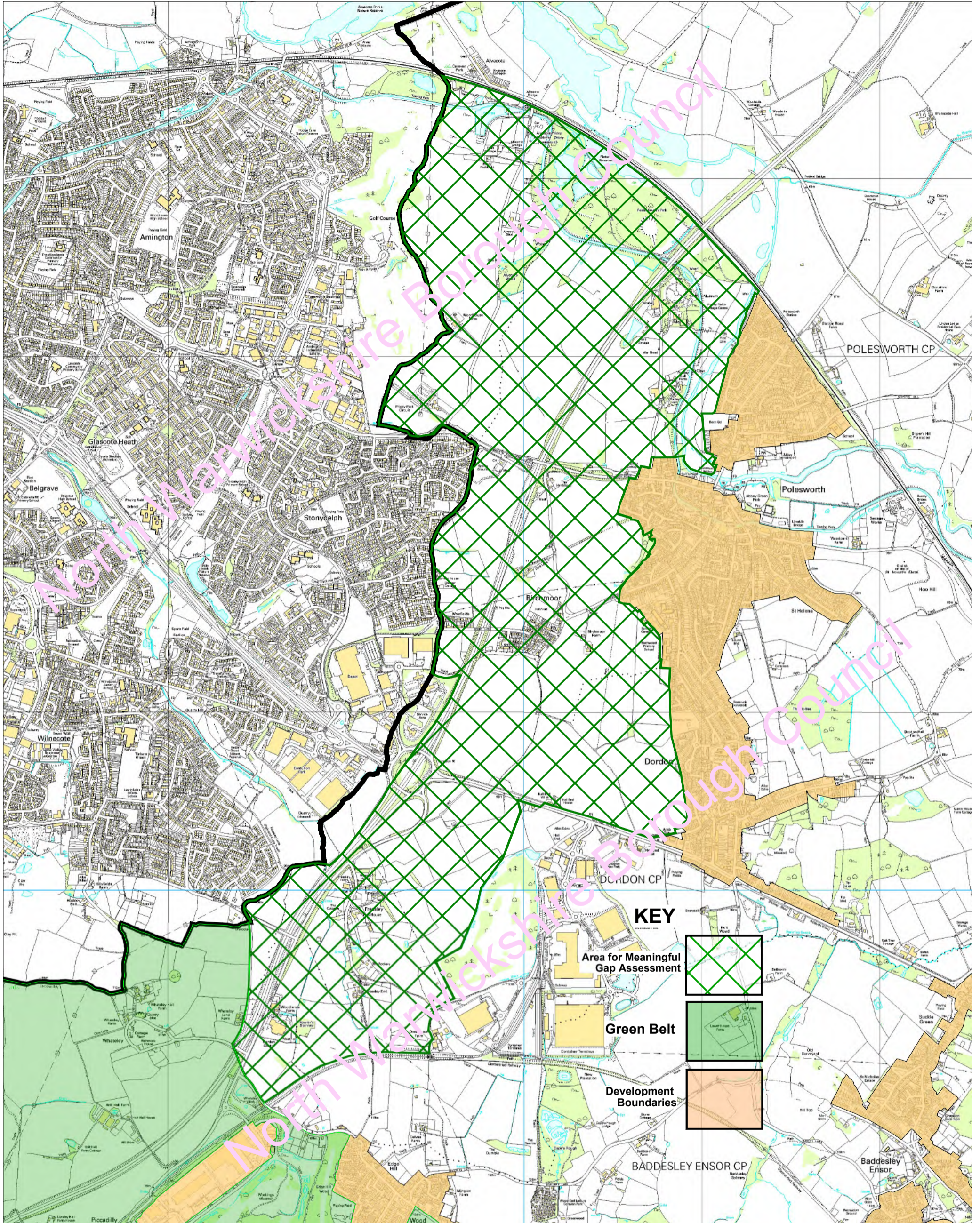
- 9.1 In terms of landscape sensitivity the areas that are considered most sensitive to the potential impact of development are Areas 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 and 10. However, although Areas 8 and 9 are considered less sensitive in landscape terms they are considered more sensitive to the impact of development 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.
- 9.2 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. Area 8 (and 6) also adjoins or contains part of the small settlement of Birchmoor and it is considered appropriate to include all the land around that settlement 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’.
- 9.3 Nevertheless, the southern boundary of Area 2 has small infill plots and areas immediately adjoining the main built up areas of Polesworth/Dordon off the B5000, west of Pooley Lane that may not contribute significantly to the principle of a Meaningful Gap and small scale very limited development may be able to be accommodated.
- 9.4 The areas contributing least to the principle of a ‘Meaningful Gap’ are considered to be Areas 3, 4, 10, 5 and 7. 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 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 contributory to the “Meaningful Gap”.
- 9.5 Areas 3 and 4 are considered to currently operate less 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. 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.

9.6 The areas therefore most likely to fall outside the remit of the Meaningful Gap term are Areas 7 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 7 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.

10. Proposed Policy Approach

10.1 The Meaningful Gap policy would constitute an additional presumption against development, over and above the strict controls normally available to local authorities for development in the countryside. The main principles would be to retain the openness of the areas designated, avoiding/restricting development within the "Meaningful Gap" to help maintain the separate identity of the settlements affected. 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.

Area for Assessment of Meaningful Gap



North Warwickshire
Meaningful Gap

(C) Crown copyright and database rights 2014 Ordnance Survey 100017910

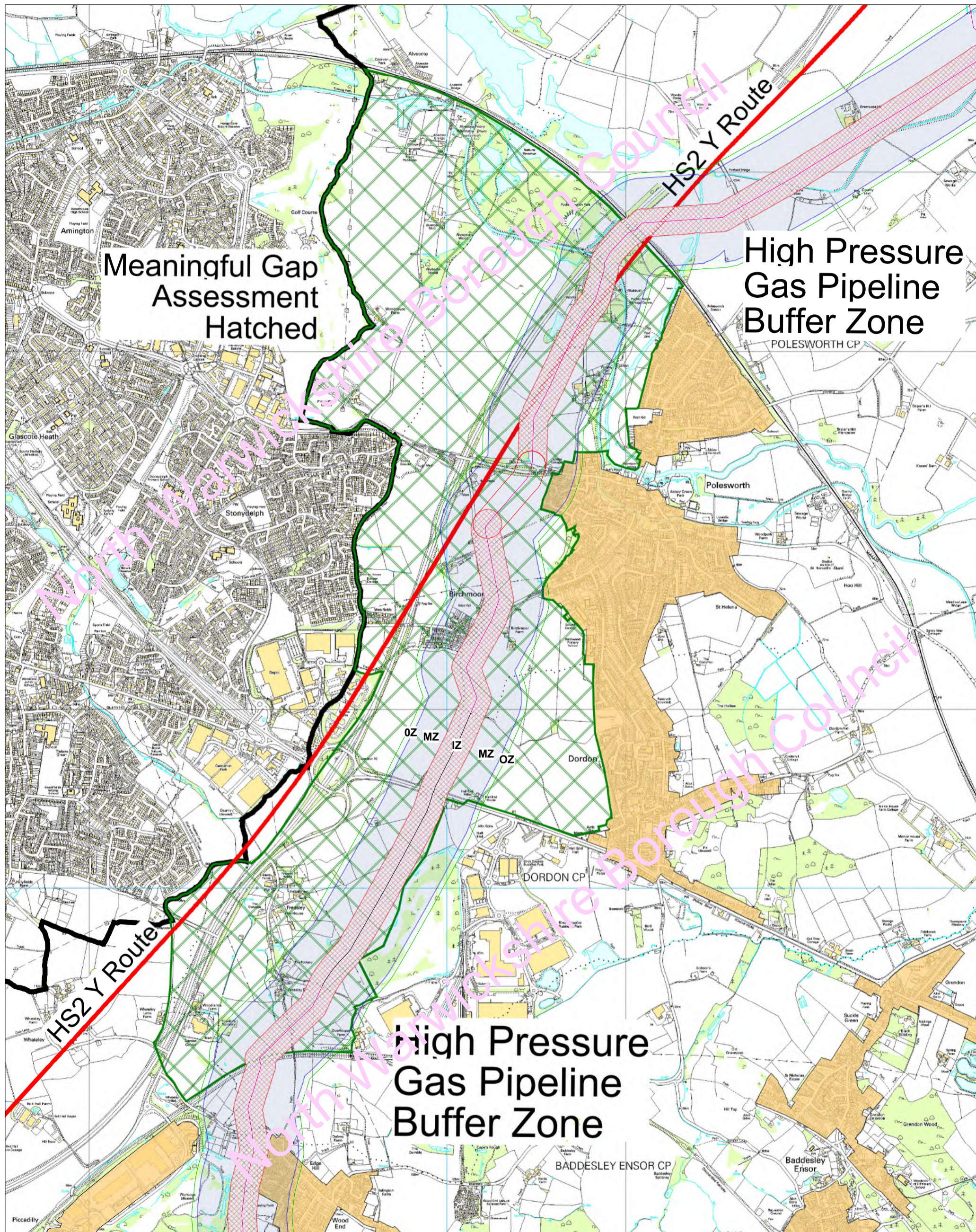


North Warwickshire
Borough Council



Ordnance
Survey
Licensed System Supplier

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



North Warwickshire
Meaningful Gap

(C) Crown copyright and database rights 2014 Ordnance Survey 100017910

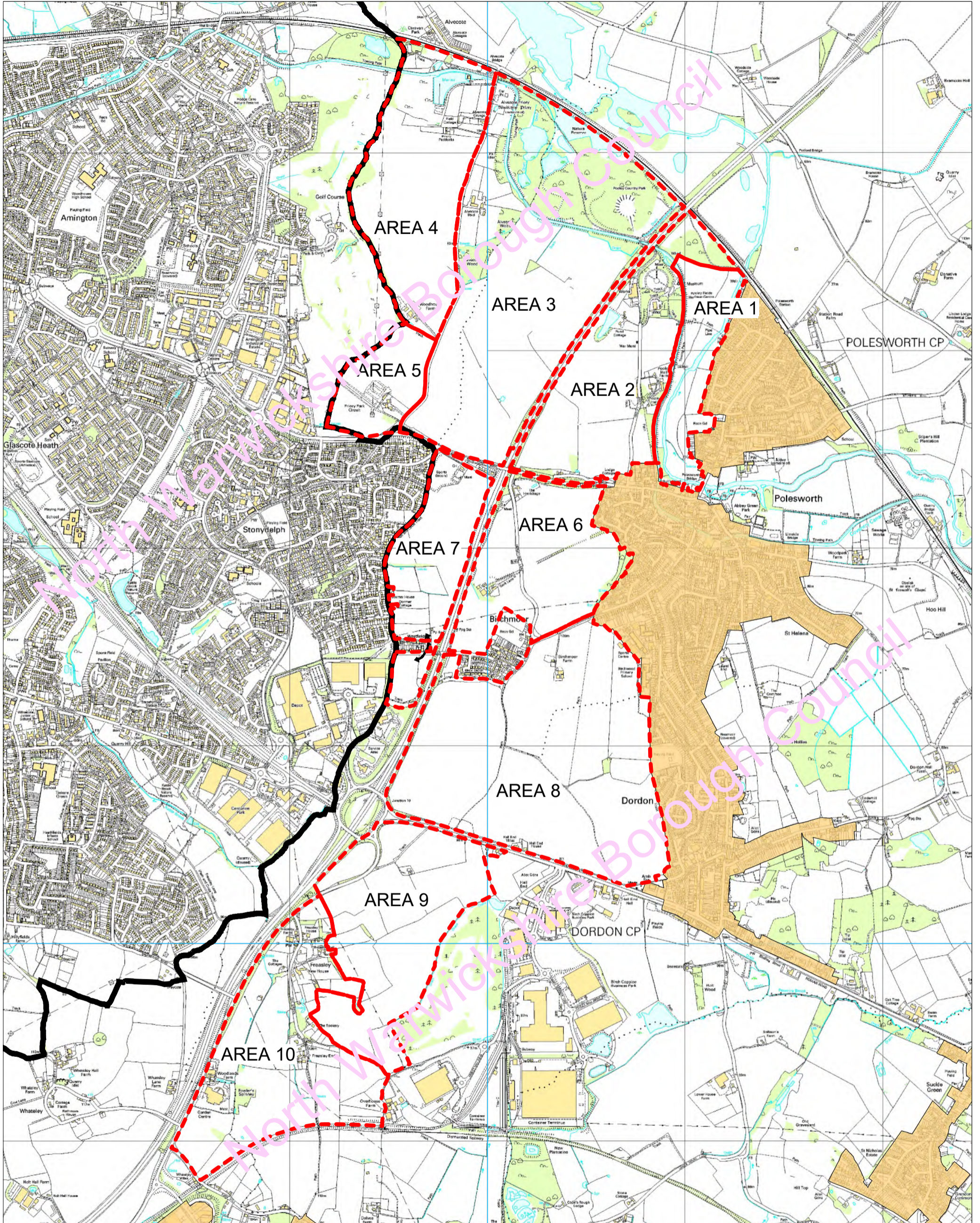


North Warwickshire
Borough Council



Ordnance
Survey
Licensed System Supplier

Individual Assessment areas within Meaningful Gap



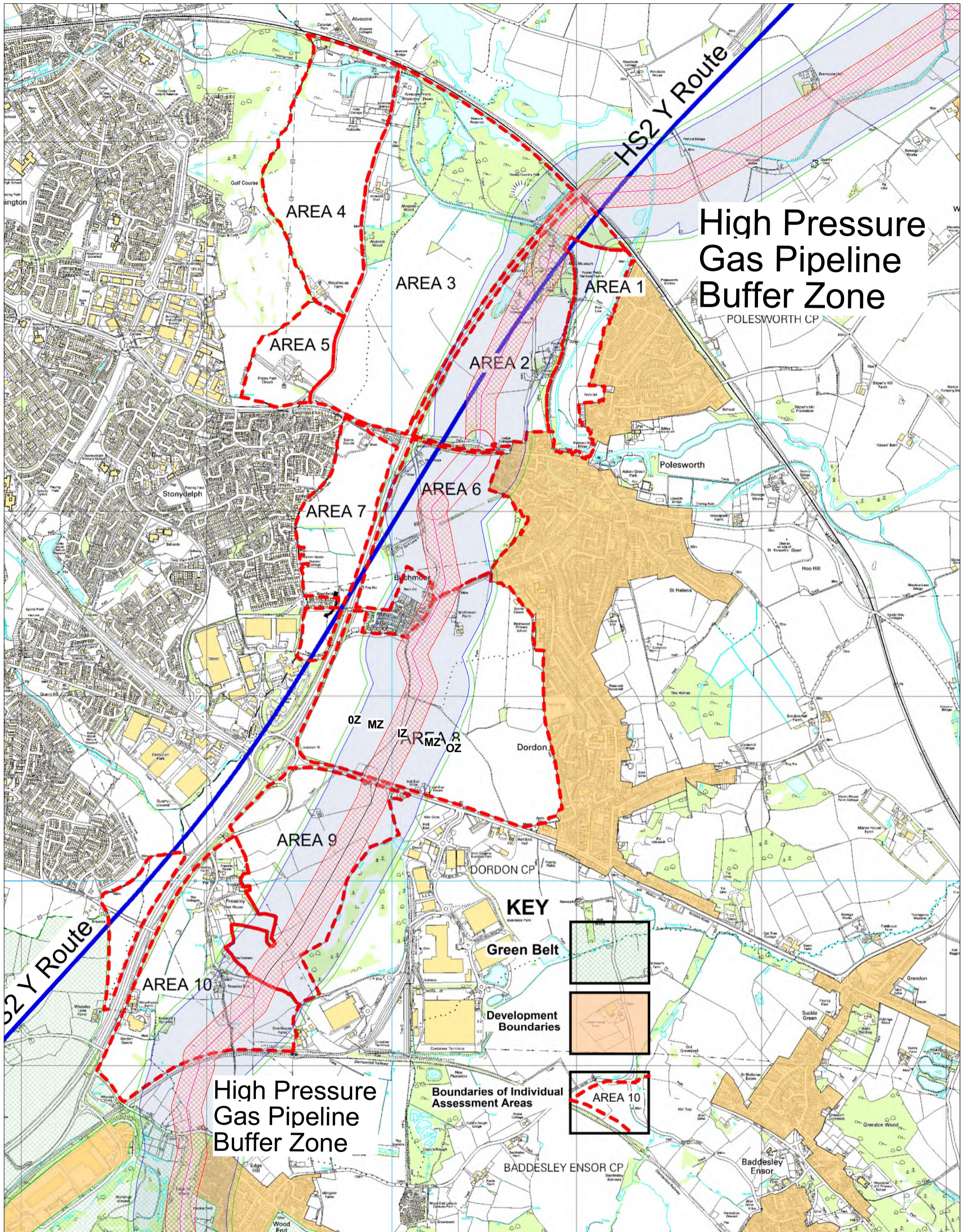
North Warwickshire
Meaningful Gap

(C) Crown copyright and database rights 2012 Ordnance Survey 100017910



North Warwickshire
Borough Council





**North Warwickshire
Meaningful Gap**

Date:12:01:15



1  3/10/2014 15:40	2  3/10/2014 15:40	3  3/10/2014 15:40	4  3/10/2014 15:40
5  3/10/2014 15:40	6  3/10/2014 15:40	7  3/10/2014 15:40	8  3/10/2014 15:40
9  3/10/2014 15:40	10  3/10/2014 15:40	11  3/10/2014 15:40	12  3/10/2014 15:40
13  3/10/2014 15:40	14  3/10/2014 15:40	15  3/10/2014 15:40	16  3/10/2014 15:40
17  3/10/2014 15:40	18  3/10/2014 15:40	19  3/10/2014 15:40	20  3/10/2014 15:40
21  3/10/2014 15:40	22  3/10/2014 15:40	23  3/10/2014 15:40	24  3/10/2014 15:40
25  3/10/2014 15:28	26  3/10/2014 15:28	27  3/10/2014 15:28	28  3/10/2014 15:28


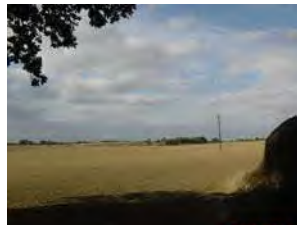


Area 8 looking SW

Area 8 looking S

Area 8 looking SE

Area 8 looking ESE



<p>57</p> 	<p>58</p> 	<p>59</p> 	<p>60</p> 
<p>61</p> 	<p>62</p> 	<p>63</p> 	<p>64</p> 
<p>65</p> 	<p>Areas 3, 4 & 5 No's 1 – 20</p> <p>Area 7 No's 21 - 24</p>	<p>Area 6 No's 25 – 32</p> <p>Area 8 & 9 No's 33 - 65</p>	

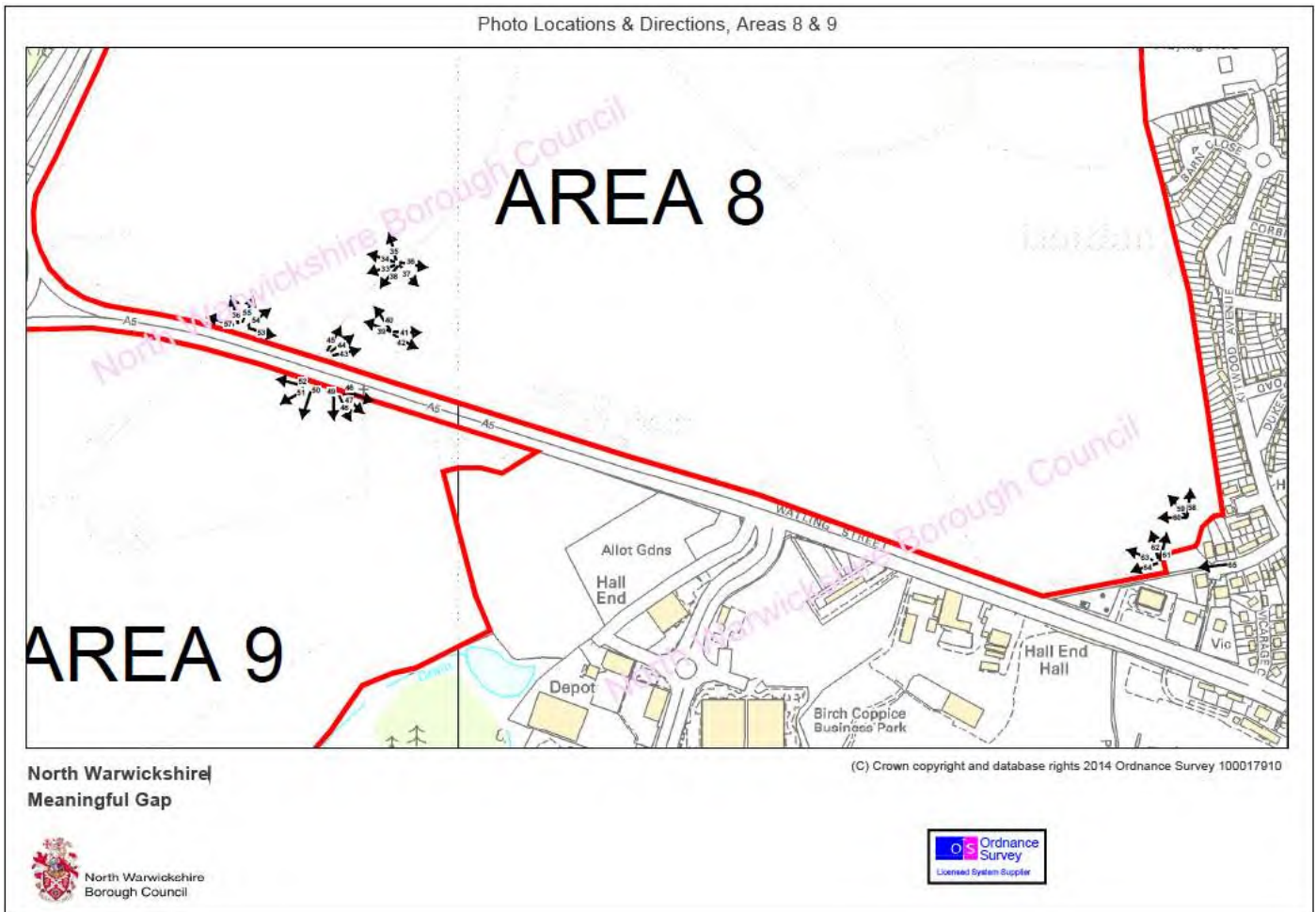
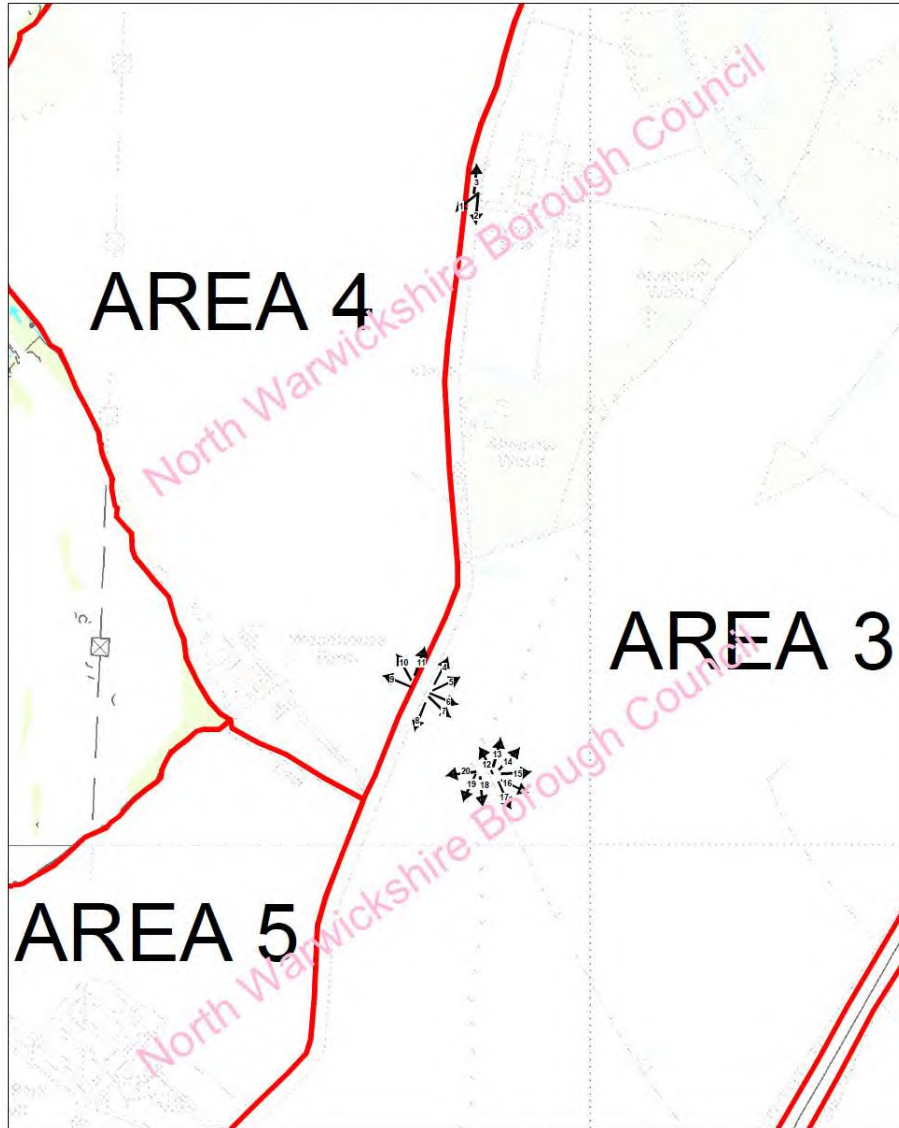


Photo Locations & Directions in Areas 3, 4 & 5

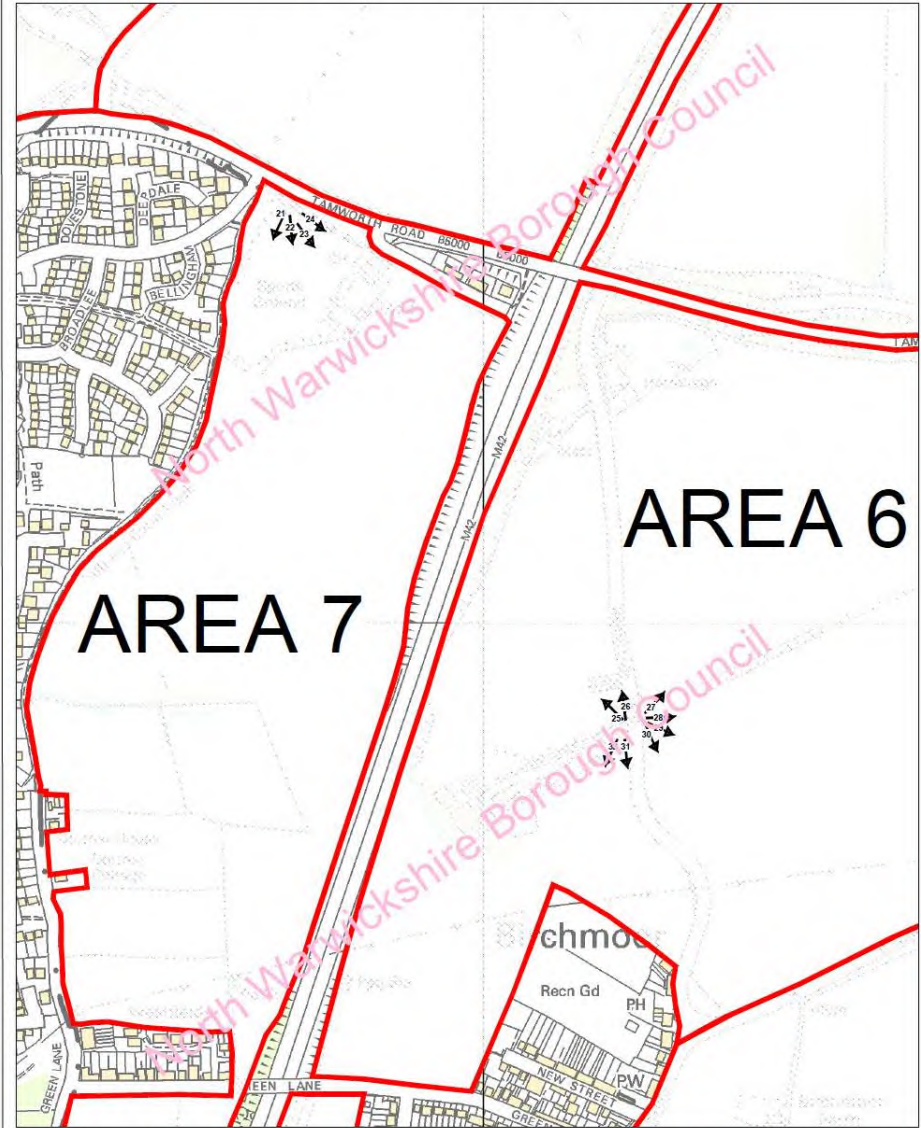


NorthWarwickshire | Meaningful Gap

© Crown copyright and database rights 2014 Ordnance Survey 100017910



Photo Locations & Directions, Areas 6 & 7



North Warwickshire Meaningful Gap

© Crown copyright and database rights 2014 Ordnance Survey 100017910







Freasley - A remnant Arden Landscape within an Industrialised Agricultural fieldscape and setting

Aerial Photograph looking South West from immediately above the Birch Coppice Spoil Tip. M42 corridor and edge of Centurion Park, Tamworth at top right of photograph