Blackpool Local Plan Evidence Base

Draft Local Green Belt Review Assessment

October 2018

Blackpool Council

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1 Introduction

Purpose of this Study

1.1 Blackpool Council is currently preparing the Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Document which will:

- Allocate sites for new development including housing, employment and retail and identify areas for safeguarding and protection e.g. public open space, greenbelt
- Designate areas where particular policies will apply e.g. local and district centres
- Include policies to be applied when considering applications for development e.g. design, amenity and transport

1.2 This study is a local review considering the Green Belt areas located to the northern and southernmost parts of the Borough within Blackpool looking specifically at the local detailed boundaries. It is not a strategic and comprehensive review of Green Belt on the Fylde Coast and will not consider changes to areas of Green Belt outside of Blackpool Borough (for example the adjoining Green Belt areas in Wyre and Fylde).

1.3 This review considers whether land included within the current Green Belt designation continues to serve its purpose as Green Belt.

1.4 This Local Green Belt Review will form part of the evidence base for the Local Plan Part 2 and will inform any minor amendments to the current Green Belt designation.

What are Green Belts?

1.5 Green Belts are areas around certain towns, cities and large built-up areas, where the aim is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping the land permanently undeveloped.

1.6 There are over a dozen green belts in England and their combined area is around 1.6 million hectares or 13% of the land area of England in 2016/17, according to DCLG figures. Green Belt boundaries often cross local authority boundaries and this has consequences for planning development and growth and the retention of rural land and countryside. Land is not included in green belts due to its landscape or ecological value.

2 Blackpool's Greenbelt

History of the Green Belt in Blackpool

2.1 The establishment and maintenance of Green Belt around many of the largest urban areas in England has long been part of national planning policy, with the aim being to protect open countryside from the pressure of development by restricting the expansion of towns and villages and thereby inhibiting 'urban sprawl'.

2.2 Legislation for the establishment and maintenance of Green Belts was introduced in the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947. In 1955 circular 42/55 extended the principle beyond London.

Central and North Lancashire Structure Plan (1983)

2.3 The Green Belt was established in Blackpool and the wider Fylde Peninsular by the Central and North Lancashire Structure Plan which was adopted in 1983.

2.4 Policy 8, and its supporting text, set out the broad locations of the Green Belt and the approach to be taken with regards to development in the Green Belt. The policy states for the Fylde Peninsula area:

"Green Belts will be established in the following areas to check the spread of urban areas; to prevent the merging of neighbouring settlements; to protect the special character of a settlement; and to complement proposals in adjacent Structure Plan areas...

(ii) In the Fylde, between Fleetwood and Cleveleys and Thornton, Poulton-le-Fylde and Blackpool, to the south of Poulton-le-Fylde and north of Staining, between South Blackpool and St Annes, Lytham and Warton, Kirkham and Freckleton..."

2.5 The reasoned justification for Policy 8 provides some further illumination as to the role of the Green Belt within the Fylde Peninsula stating:

"...Along the Fylde Coast development pressures between adjacent and hitherto distinct settlements are even more intense and proposals for Green Belt designation have had to be balanced with the need to allow for release of sufficient land for peripheral urban expansion. It is considered that this balance has been broadly achieved and that the Green Belts will provide some impetus for greater economy of land use and will also give added incentive towards the greater use of urban infill sites which is an integral part of the development strategy."

2.6 The Key Diagram published with the Structure Plan shows the general location of the Green Belt across the Fylde Coast (and Lancashire in the wider context), but it was left to the individual Local Plans to set out the precise locations of the Green Belt for each district.

2.7 The context for any Green Belt review is provided by the history of the Green Belt and the way it has developed in that area.

3 Green Belt Planning Policy Context

3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (2018), Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy (2016) and the saved policies in the adopted Blackpool Local Plan (2006) provide the current policy context for the role and function of the Green Belt.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

3.2 The NPPF sets out the role and purpose of the Green Belt in England as follows:

'*The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence*.' (Paragraph 133)

3.3 This is elaborated in paragraph 134, which states that Green Belts should serve five purposes:

- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and,
- To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

3.4 The NPPF emphasises that local planning authorities should establish Green Belt boundaries in their Local Plans which set the framework for Green Belt and settlement policy. The NPPF stipulates that '*once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of the Local Plan. At that time, authorities should consider the Green Belt boundaries having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so that they should be capable of enduring beyond the plan period*.'

3.5 Paragraph 139 states that *'when defining boundaries, local planning authorities should:*

- *Ensure consistency with the Local Plan strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development;*
- *Not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open;*
- *Where necessary, identify in their plans areas of 'safeguarded land' between the urban area and the Green Belt, in order to meet longer-term development needs stretching well beyond the plan period;*
- *Make clear that the safeguarded land is not allocated for development at the present time.*
- *Planning permission for the permanent development of safeguarded land should only be granted following a Local Plan review which proposes the development;*
- *Satisfy themselves that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the development plan period; and*

- *Define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.'*

3.6 The Government's position on Green Belt reviews appears to remain committed to maintaining the broad functions of the Green Belt. However, the NPPF does clearly allow flexibility for boundary change through the Local Plan process.

Local Plan Policy

Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy (2016)

3.7 **Policy CS6: Green Infrastructure** is the overarching policy for green infrastructure and includes reference to Green Belt. It supports the protection of existing green infrastructure networks and existing areas of Green Belt. The loss of green infrastructure will only be acceptable in exceptional circumstances where it is allowed for as part of an adopted Development Plan Document; or where provision is made for appropriate compensatory measures, mitigation or replacement; or in line with national planning policy.

3.8 The supporting text to the policy recognises a number of important designations exist beyond Blackpool's built-up area. This includes Green Belt land, which has an important role in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, preventing Blackpool merging with neighbouring settlements and assisting in urban regeneration. It further states that the broad strategic extent of the Green Belt land in Blackpool will continue to be protected by restricting the type of development here to retain its open and locally distinctive character, in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Blackpool Local Plan (2006)

3.9 Saved Local Plan Policy NE1 relates to the Green Belt and provides additional detail on the use and development that is appropriate:

'To safeguard the open character of the Green Belt, planning permission will not be given for the construction of new buildings or the change of use of existing buildings other than for:

(a) agriculture or in relation to re-use of buildings, on-farm agricultural diversification which is appropriate to the rural area and does not compromise the objectives of the Green Belt.

(b) essential facilities for outdoor sport/recreation, cemeteries or other uses appropriate to a rural area

(c) limited extension, alteration or replacement of existing dwellings.'

3.10 The policy recognises that much of Blackpool is already built up and there are intense pressures for development to meet needs generated by the urban area.

3.11 The supporting text to the policy highlights that within the tightly defined boundaries of the Borough, a prime role of the Green Belt is to define the limits of development and prevent Blackpool

merging with neighbouring settlements. The Council will maintain the Green Belt land shown on the Proposals Map between Blackpool and Carleton and between Blackpool and St Annes.

3.12 The boundaries in Blackpool remain unchanged from those designated in the previous Local Plan (1991-2001).

3.13 We do not anticipate that this policy will be carried forward in the Local Plan Part 2. It is considered that there is sufficient level of detail in NPPF Chapter 13 to provide adequate policy coverage with respect to the Green Belt.

4 Assessment

4.1 Blackpool Borough has two distinct areas of Green Belt highlighted in figure 1 and described in this section:

1) Land between Blackpool and St Annes
2) Land between Blackpool and Carleton

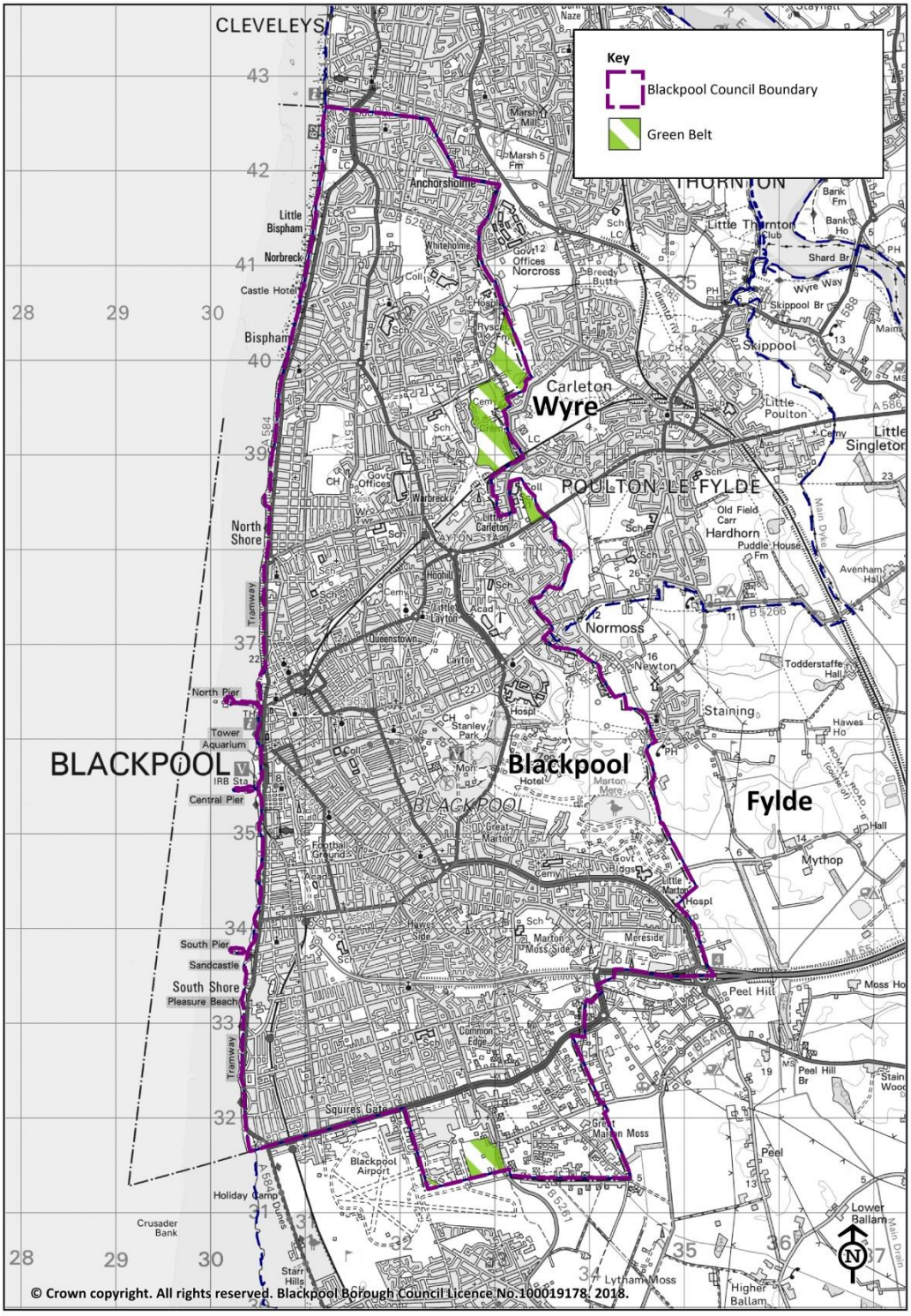

Figure 1: Green Belt land in Blackpool Borough

1) Land between Blackpool and St Annes

4.2 The Green Belt between Blackpool and St Annes comprises playing fields and sports grounds and forms part of a larger area of Green Belt on land at Blackpool Airport within Fylde Borough (see figure 2). It is 470 hectares in total with 15 hectares of this located within Blackpool Borough.

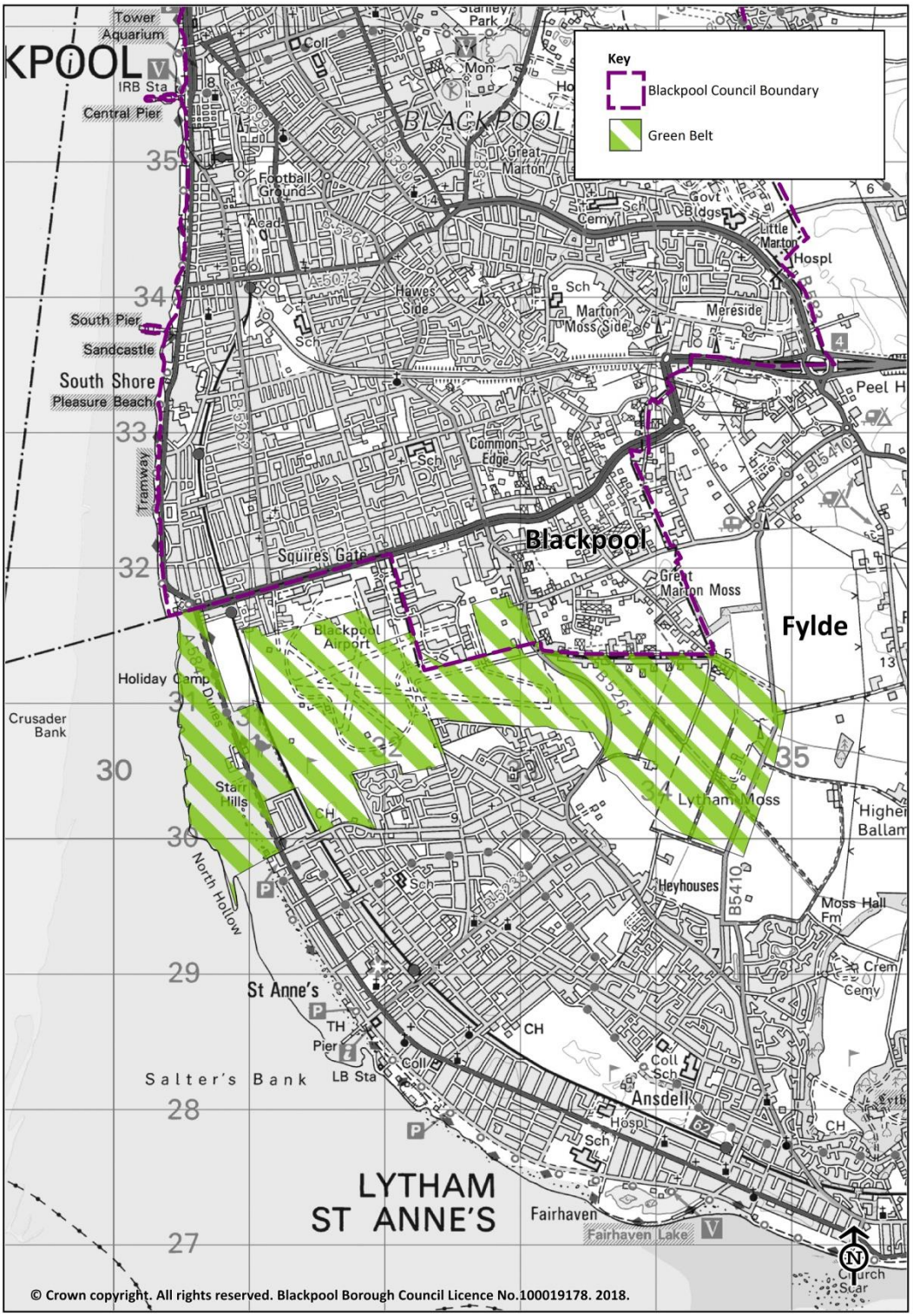

Figure 2: Blackpool/St Annes Green Belt

4.3 Figure 3 identifies the two distinct pieces of Green Belt within Blackpool Borough close to Blackpool's southern borough boundary with Fylde. The largest piece (parcel A) is rectangular with a total area of 13.93ha. The second is a small triangular shaped area (parcel B) at 1.15ha.

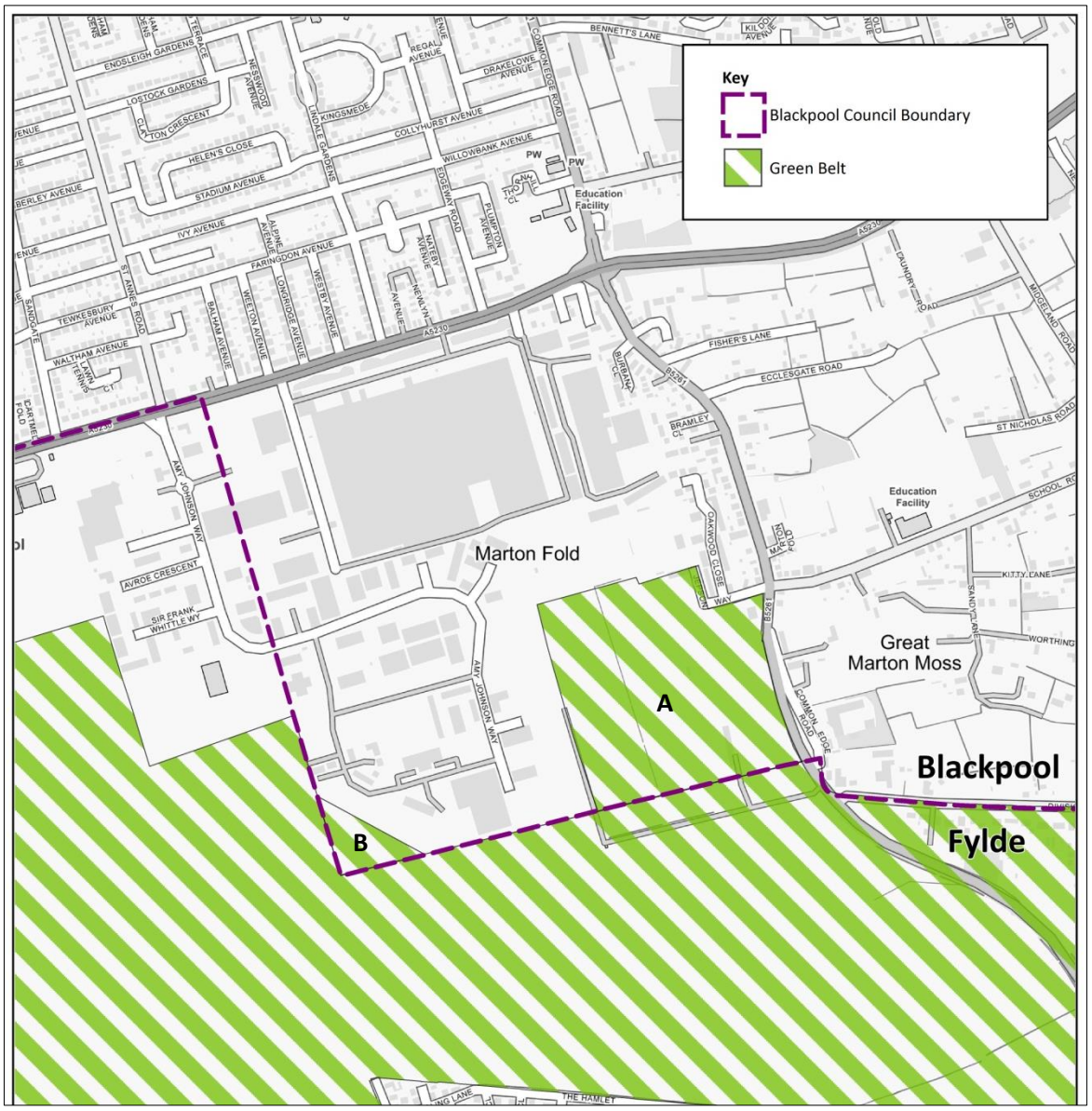

Figure 3: Green Belt land around the Airport

4.4 The table below provides the sizes of the parcels of Green Belt in relation to the wider Blackpool/Fylde Green Belt:

Boundary	Area Hectares	% of total
Fylde LA Green Belt	469.72	96.82
Blackpool LA Green Belt - Parcel A	13.83	2.94
Blackpool LA Green Belt - Parcel B	1.15	0.24
Total Area of Blackpool/Fylde Green Belt	**484.7**	**100**

Figure 4: Green Belt land around the Airport

Blackpool Enterprise Zone

4.5 The two parcels of green belt land in Blackpool are also located within the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone. Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone was designated by government early 2016 and became active in April of that year, with the status remaining active until 2041. Financial incentives are in place to encourage businesses to invest and expand, with the aim of increasing the number of jobs on the site by 3,000 over the 25-year lifespan of the Enterprise Zone, in addition to the 1,800 jobs already on the site. There will be over 260,000 sqm of potential floor space available on the site for development, conversion or repurposing.

4.6 The targeted sectors for jobs growth are in Energy, Aviation, Advanced Manufacturing, Food and Drink Manufacturing and Digital and Creative sectors and back office administration. The runway itself is not included within the Enterprise Zone so as not to preclude future development of this for larger commercial aircraft.

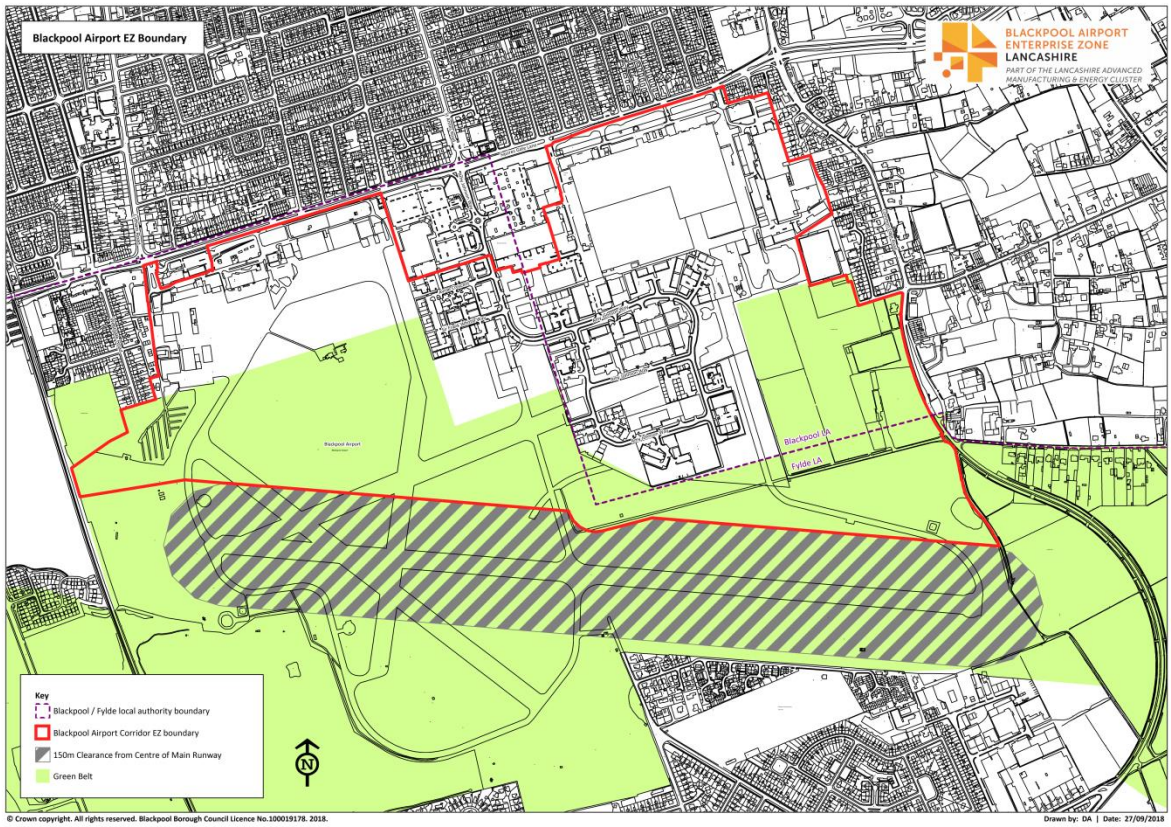

Figure 5: Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone

Proposed Amendments

4.7 The Council is considering amending the local Green Belt boundary to better comply with the requirements of NPPF in particular paragraphs 134 and 139. The context and justification is set out in the following section.

Parcel A

4.8 Parcel A is a 13.93ha of Green Belt that currently comprises South Shore Cricket, Squash and Rugby Club, Spirit of the Youth Football Club and a remediated waste lagoon associated with airport operations.

4.9 This parcel of Green Belt appears to 'punch 'into the existing urban area and is surrounded to the west and north by established business/industrial sites and to the east by the B52619 (Common Edge Road) - a key transport route between Blackpool and St Annes to the south.

4.10 The parcel is not considered to meet the specific purpose of the Green Belt. It is well contained, surrounded by existing urban development to 75% of its boundaries. The boundaries to the parcel are strong consisting of existing urban areas and additionally Common Edge Road on its eastern boundary. As such it does not play a role in separating neighbouring towns and its removal will not affect the gap between Blackpool and St Annes.

Recommendation

4.11 Taking the above into account and in light of the Government's commitment to delivery of the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone, it is proposed to remove Parcel A from the Green Belt (see figures 6 and 7). The parcel is only a very small part of the wider Blackpool/Fylde Green Belt (just under 3%), is surrounded by urban development to three sides and is not essential preventing the neighbouring towns of Blackpool and St Annes merging into one another.

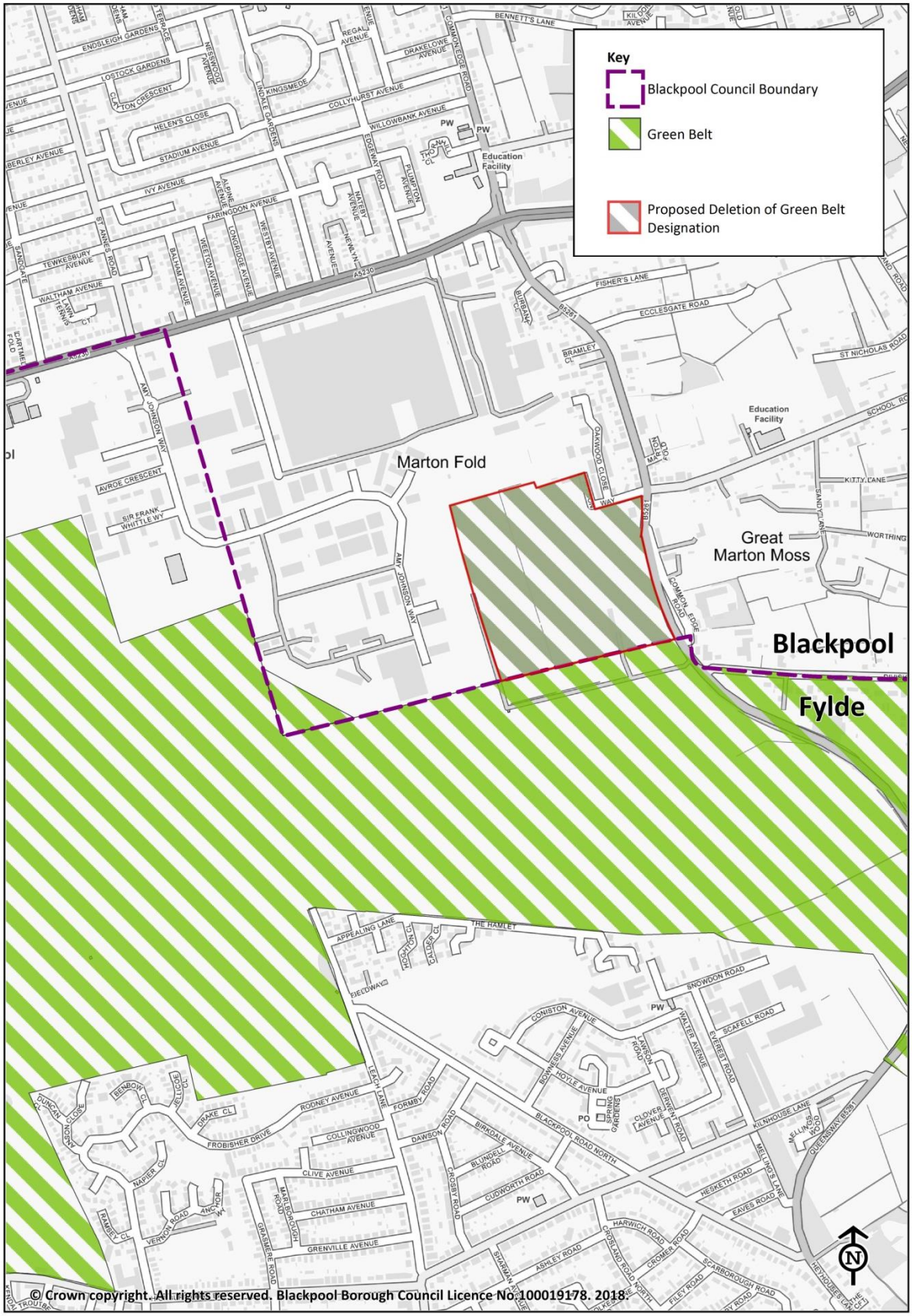

Figure 6: Proposed Amendments to the Green Belt at the Enterprise Zone

Figure 7: Proposed Amendments to the Green Belt at the Enterprise Zone – Aerial Image

2) Land between Blackpool and Carleton

4.12 The Green Belt between Blackpool and Carleton in the north of the borough comprises mainly open farmland and Carleton Cemetery together with school playing fields adjoining the Borough boundary north of Garstang Road (see figure 8).

4.13 The Council is considering amending the local Green Belt boundary to better comply with the requirements of NPPF in particular paragraphs 134 and 139. The context and justification is set out in the following section.

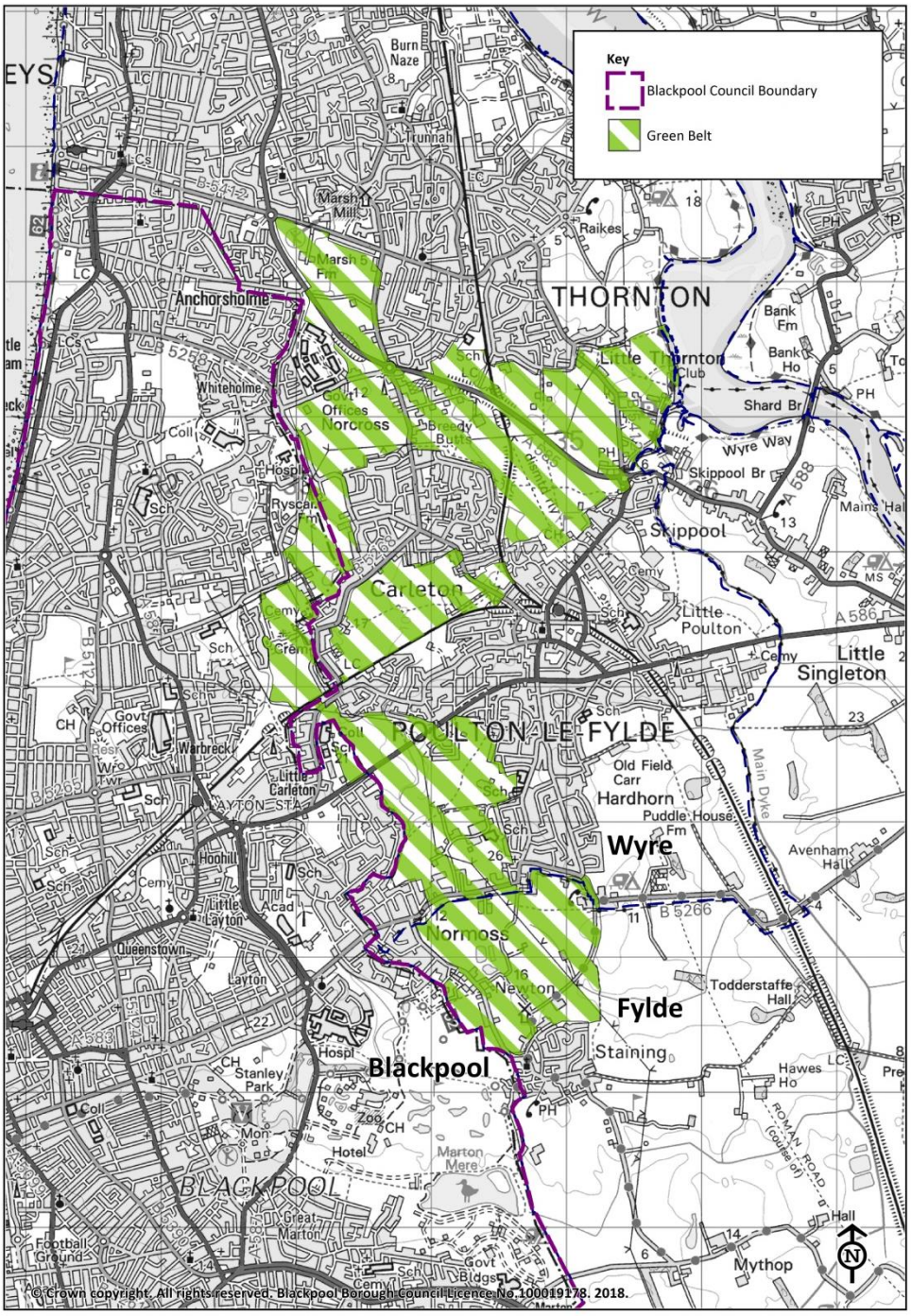

Figure 8: Blackpool/Carleton Green Belt

Land at Faraday Way - North

4.14 As previously discussed, Paragraph 139 emphasises that plans should define Green Belt boundaries clearly, using physical features that are easily recognisable and likely to be permanent.

4.15 The current green belt boundary close to Faraday Way to the north of the Technology Park (as shown in figures 9 and 10) appears to cut across the field in an arbitrary nature and does not follow any physical features of the landscape. This review presents the opportunity to address this localised anomaly and amend the boundary to follow the existing field boundary in accordance with NPPF which would also ensure consistency with the Green Belt designation to the east of the borough boundary in Wyre Borough.

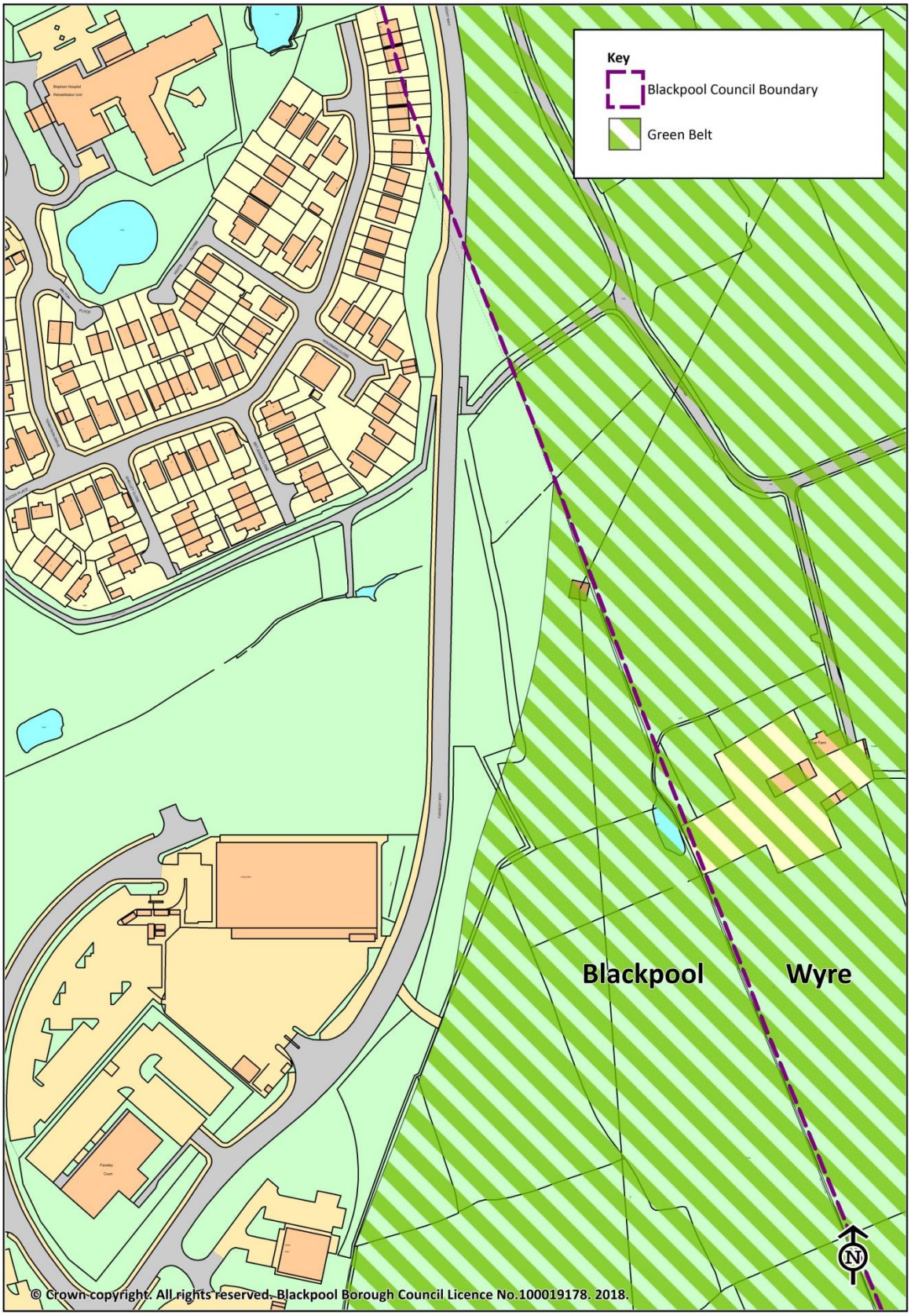

Figure 9: Green Belt land at Faraday Way - North

Figure 10: Aerial Image of Green Belt land at Faraday Way - North

Recommendation

4.16 It is recommended that the Green Belt boundary is amended to follow the natural line of the field boundary as shown in figures 11 and 12.

4.17 The amendment would lead to an overall net gain of 2543 sqm of designated Green Belt in this location.

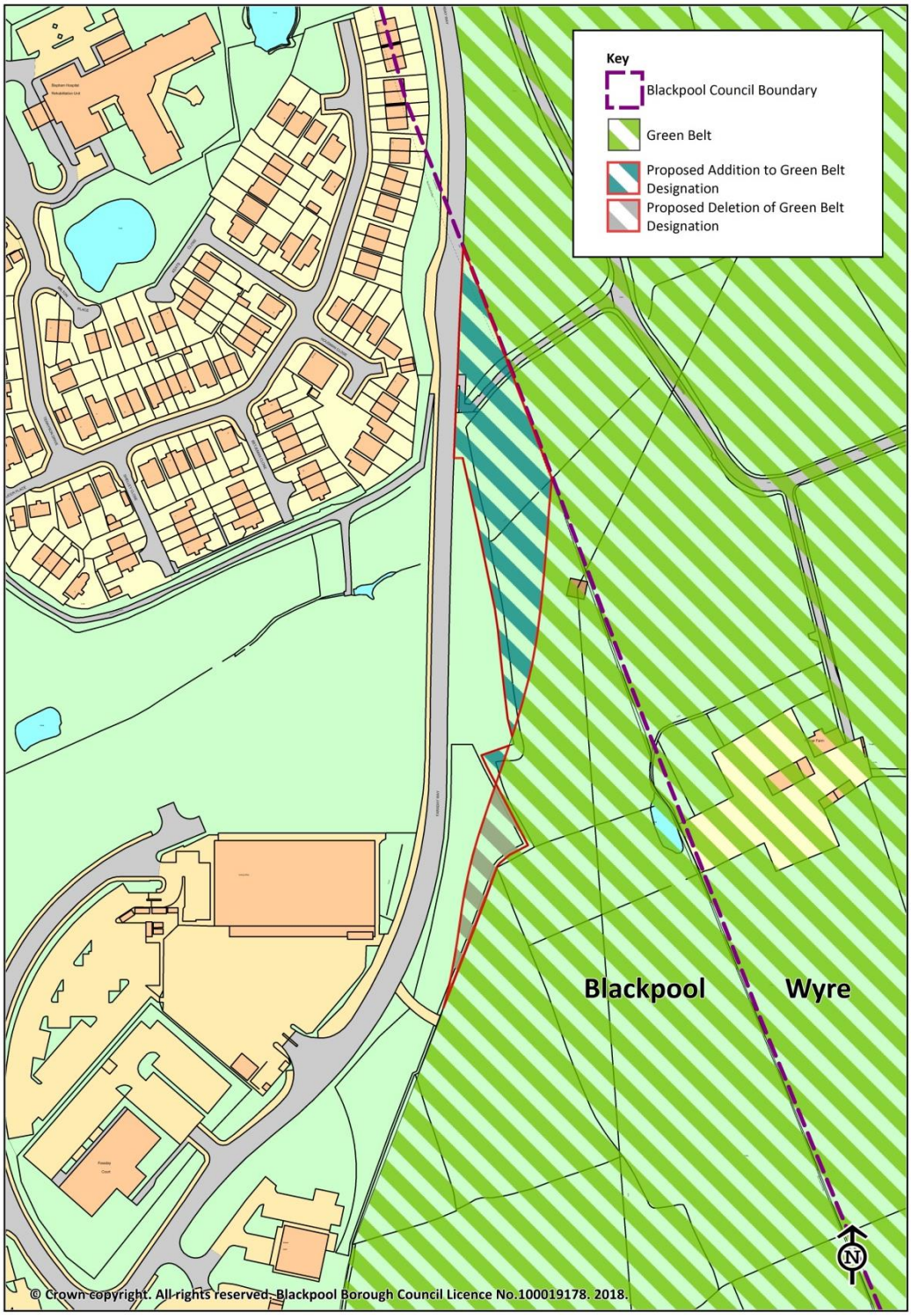

Figure 11: Proposed changes to Green Belt at Faraday Way - North

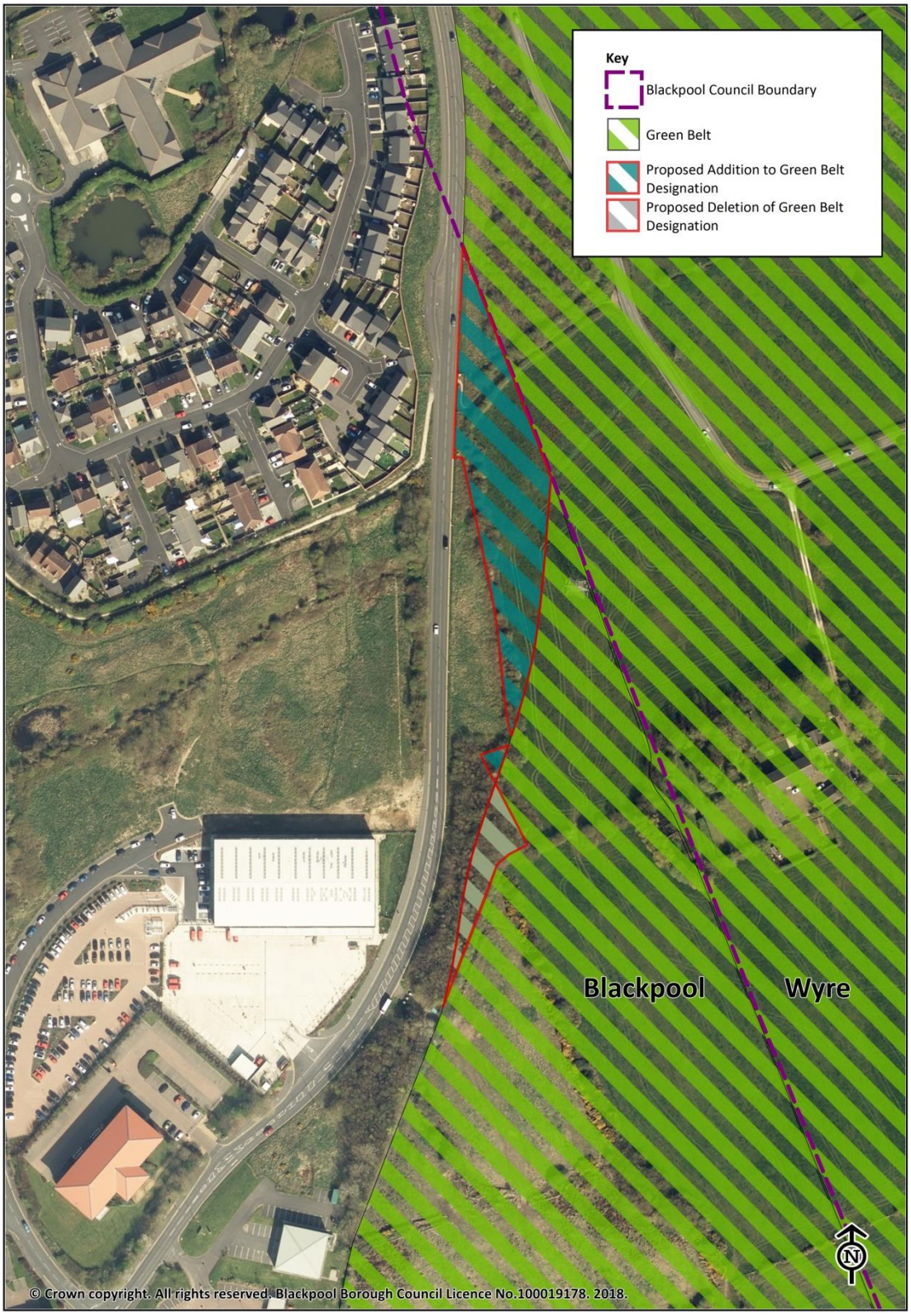

Figure 12: Aerial imaage of proposed changes to Green Belt at Faraday Way - North

Land at Faraday Way - South

4.18 This area of Green Belt still performs its role and function separating the edge of the Blackpool urban area and Carleton (within Wyre). However, there appears to be a localised minor anomaly in the way the Green Belt boundary has been drawn and how it relates to the existing industrial/ business allocation at the Blackpool Technology Park. Paragraph 139 emphasises that plans should define Green Belt boundaries clearly, using physical features that are easily recognisable and likely to be permanent.

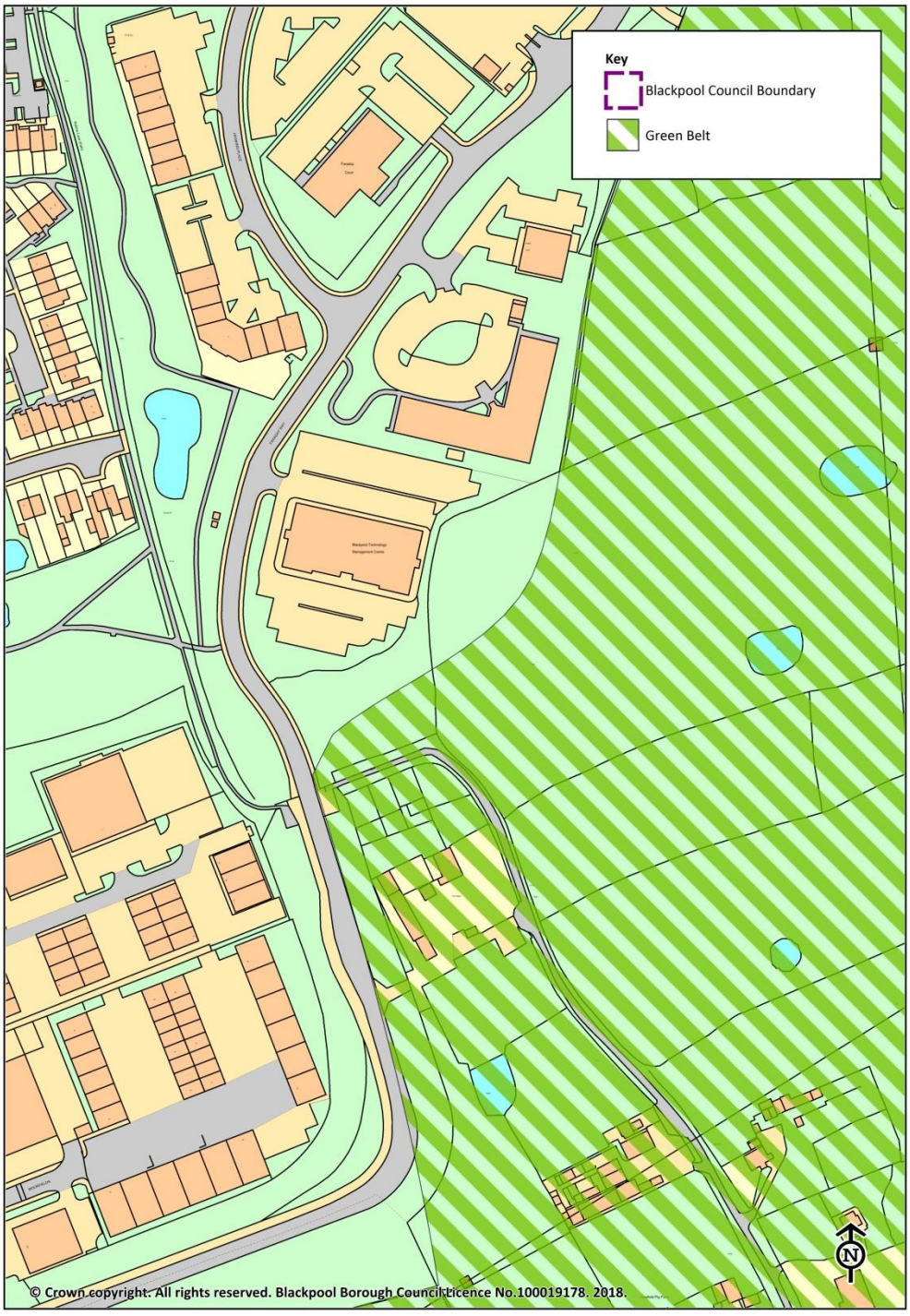

Figure 13: Green Belt land at Faraday Way - South

Figure 14: Aerial Image of Green Belt land at Faraday Way - South

4.19 A small portion of land fronting Faraday Way is defined as both Green Belt and industrial/business land in the 2006 Local Plan. The land directly fronts Faraday Way, and relates better to the adjacent Technology Park than the remaining Green Belt.

Figure 15: Land fronting Faraday Way - designated as Green Belt and Employment Land (Source: Google Streetview)

Recommendation

4.20 It is recommended that the Green Belt boundary is amended to follow the natural line of the field boundary as shown in figures 16 and 17. This provides a more robustly defined boundary in accordance with NPPF paragraph 139 that can be safeguarded in the longer term. The amendment would lead to an overall net gain of 1,416 sqm of designated Green Belt in this particular location.

Figure 16: Proposed changes to Green Belt at Faraday Way - South

Figure 17: Aerial image of proposed changes to Green Belt at Faraday Way - South

5 Conclusion

5.1 NPPF indicates that Green Belt boundaries should only be designated or altered through the preparation of a Local Plan. This, therefore, presents an opportunity to amend boundaries where there are existing anomalies.

5.2 This study has highlighted several minor anomalies regarding the detailed local Green Belt boundaries. The proposed amendments are a very small proportion of the overall green belt across the Fylde Coast and do not amount to any strategic change to the Green Belt.

5.3 Those locations where we are proposing an alteration to the Green Belt are listed below:

- Amendment of Green Belt at Faraday Way to follow natural field boundaries
- Removal of Green Belt at the southern boundary with Fylde to support economic growth at the Government approved Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone.

5.4 The proposed amended boundaries as justified in Section 3 do not undermine the purpose of Green Belt and comply with the requirements as set out in NPPF. These amendments will be shown on the Policies Map that accompanies the Local Plan Part 2.