Halton Borough Council

Halton Green Belt Review

November 2017

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Disclaimer

This Green Belt Review has been undertaken solely for the purposes of informing the local plan making process. It does not constitute planning policy and it does not allocate land for development.

The Green Belt designation carries significant weight as a material consideration in planning policy and development management. Government policy is explicit that changes to Green Belt designations should be made through the Local Plan process, in the context of promoting sustainable development as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

The main purpose of the study is to undertake a strategic review of all Green Belt land in the Borough to identify the contribution of the Green Belt towards national Green Belt purposes as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This will identify the primary functions of the Green Belt, which deliver the national purposes, and identify areas of Green Belt land which are considered to contribute least towards national purposes.

The outcome of this Review provides only one piece of evidence among a wide range of considerations that must be taken into account before deciding on any changes to Green Belt boundaries.

Version Control

Version	Date	Author	Check	Notes
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1 Introduction

1.1 This Green Belt Review is a technical evidence base document that provides an assessment of all of the designated Green Belt within the Borough boundary. It is required to be undertaken to inform the future planning strategy for Halton Borough. A key requirement of preparing a Local Plan is for it to be informed by a robust and up to date evidence base.

1.2 The core purpose of this document is to assess the extent to which land designated as Green Belt performs against the five purposes set out national planning policy[1].

1.3 Green Belt is a strategic issue and the Council has sought co-operation from our neighbouring authorities, to work in partnership to ensure that a co-ordinated and strategic approach is taken. Knowsley Council, Warrington Council, Sefton Council, and West Lancashire Council have already conducted Green Belt Studies to inform their Local Plans.

1.4 The Council have adopted a methodology closely aligned to those used by neighbouring authorities[2] to ensure a consistent approach, making minor alterations informed by their experiences and to accord with recent examination/legal judgements.

1.5 It should be noted that in addition to carrying out this strategic Green Belt Review, the Council will also undertake a detailed review of the existing Green Belt boundaries to ensure that the boundaries are consistently and robustly defined (partially as a result of the greater accuracy required by the move to digital mapping). This will be carried out and consulted upon as part of the production of the Local Plan Policies Map.

Previous Consultations

1.6 Previously, the Green Belt Study has only considered the Green Belt around Widnes and Hale. The draft methodology was subject to public consultation between 5th September 2013 and 9th October 2013, the results of which are set out in the Statement of Consultation available on the Council website (www.halton.gov.uk).

1.7 During 2014 Green Belt site assessments were undertaken for the Widnes and Hale area and were reported on during early 2015. The Green Belt Study – Site Assessment comprised a summary document and a Compendium of Individual Site Records which contained detailed assessment information for each study 'parcel'. This

[1] Paragraphs 79 and 80 of the NPPF
[2] Knowsley Council, Sefton Council, and West Lancashire

consultation gave people the opportunity to comment on the parcels and the assessment that the Council had undertaken. This document has taken on board the comments that were received during each of these consultations.

Merseyside Green Belt

1.8 The Merseyside Green Belt was approved in 1983. Its key purposes were to channel development into the existing urban areas and assist urban regeneration of the urban core. Since its creation, the Merseyside Green Belt has not been reviewed at a sub-regional level, although minor changes have been approved in the constituent local authorities' individual Unitary Development Plans (UDPs). Map 1 shows the current Merseyside Green belt.

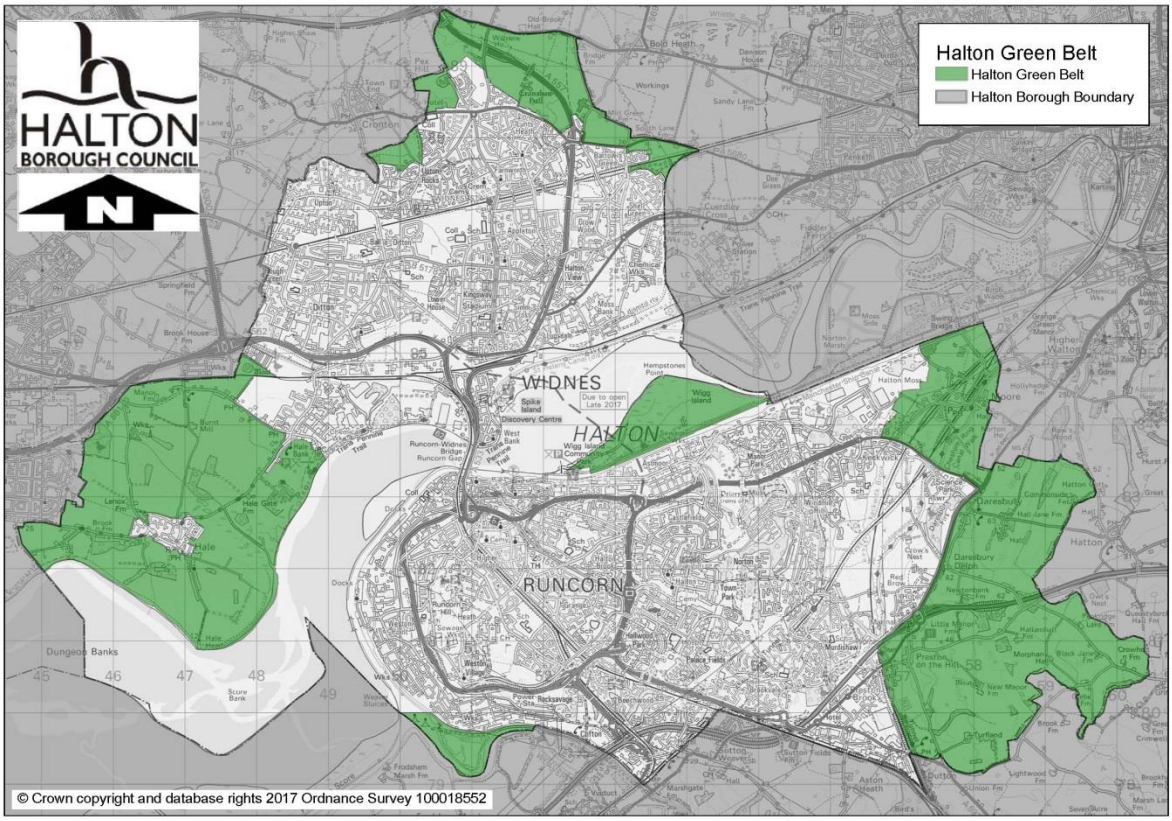
1.9 It should be noted that both Knowsley Borough Council[3] and Sefton Borough Council[4] have recently released land from the Green Belt to meet immediate development needs through their Local Plans.

[3] More information about the changes to the Green Belt around Knowsley can be found at http://www.knowsley.gov.uk/residents/building-and-planning/local-plan.aspx

[4] More information about the changes to the Green Belt around Sefton can be found at http://www.sefton.gov.uk/localplan

Map 1: Merseyside Green Belt

Map 2: Halton Borough Green Belt



Format of this Study

1.10 This document introduces the Green Belt Review, and sets out the Policy Context under which it is being undertaken. It goes on to explain how the review and assessment of individual parcels has been undertaken. Within each stage of the review, the assessment criteria are explained and a map is provided showing the results of the assessment with a written description of key points.

1.11 This document goes further than the previous Site Assessment documents, it considers some different parcels than had previously been identified; this has included grouped parcels in some cases and disaggregated parcels in others. The new parcels have in some cases been at the suggestion of respondents to the last consultation; however, some are based on the considerations of the Council Officers, to ensure that all appropriate parcels have been considered.

1.12 This Green Belt Review is seen as an iterative process and it is possible that following further consultation, or even during the production of the Local Plan for Halton that some site or parcels may be amended and will need to be reconsidered as part of a Green Belt Study.

1.13 It is recognised that the maps within the main section of this document are necessarily of a small size and it may be difficult to pick out details for individual sites, however larger scale versions of the map are provided at the end of the document for clarity.

1.14 The following two pages (4 & 5) explain the layout of the Individual Site Records within the Compendium of Individual Site Assessments that accompanies this document.

1.15 Following on from the Review, the Key Findings are set out highlighting the important factors that have been drawn from the Review.

Figure 1: Format of the Compendium of Individual Site Records

Parcel Reference: a unique number for each parcel

Parcel location: OS Map and Aerial Photo showing Boundary Strengths

Parcel Description: this describes the parcel and sets out the current uses on the site

Stage 2: Constraints: This section identifies any Prohibitive 'Show Stopping' Constraints such as the parcel being within an Inner Zone of a COMAH site, where development could not take place, and any restrictive constraints that development would need to take into account, such as the presence of a Listed Building.

Stage 2: Accessibility: This identifies how accessible certain facilities are from the parcel such as public transport, shops and schools.

Parcel Ref: GB002

Area (ha) 0.939 Land to the north of Old Upton Lane, to the rear of Upton House (99 Old Upton Lane)

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Description The site is occupied by a residential detached housing built in the sixties/seventies (approx. 1964 - 1979) with substantial garden areas.

Stage 2: Prohibitive / Show Stopping Constraints			
Flood Risk (Zones 3A and 3B)	No	Sites of Special Scientific Importance	No
COMAH / Airport Public Safety Zone (PSZ)	No	Ancient Woodland	No
Known Remediation or Contamination	No	RAMSAR / SPA / SAC	No

Stage 2: Restrictive Constraints			
Conservation Area	No	PADHI	No
Local Geological Importance	No	Local Nature Reserve / Wildlife Site	No
Listed Building	No	Area of Landscape Value	No
Ancient Monument	No	Pollution	No
Flood Risk Zone 2	No	Playing Pitches	No
Agricultural Land Classification	Grade 2	Proximity to RAMSAR / SPA / SAC	No

Stage 2: Accessibility Scoring			
Within 400m of Bus Stop	Yes	Within 800m of a Town / District Centre	No
Within 800m of Rail Station	No	Within 600m of a Local Centre	Yes
Within 600m of Primary School	No	Within 800m of a Leisure Centre	No
Within 600m of Secondary School	No	Within 800m of a Post Office	No
Within 600m of Further Education	No	Within 1km of a GP / Health Centre	Yes
Within 2km of primary employment area or allocated employment site	Yes	Within 800m of Public Park / Play Area	Yes

This site has good accessibility, with access to at least four of the listed facilities.

Stage 3: Assessment against Green Belt Purposes: this section looks at each of the Green Belt purposes in turn and assesses the parcel against the relevant criteria

Purpose 1: Unrestricted Sprawl: this assesses the parcels containment and boundary strength

Photographs: These show the boundaries and key features of the parcel.

Purpose 2: Prevent Merging: This assesses the gap between neighbouring towns and other settlements.

Purpose 3: Safeguarding the countryside from encroachment: This section looks at the land use of the site and the levels of visual encroachment.

Purposes 4 & 5: Individual parcels have not been assessed against these criteria at this time.

Overall Summary: this summarises the assessment of the parcel against each of the Green Belt purposes.

Stage 4: Provides additional information in relation to the parcel that may be of interest, such as the openness of the parcel (proportion of development) and the potential residential capacity of the site.

Parcel Ref: GB002

Stage 3: Assessment Against The Purposes Of Including Land In The Green Belt

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

How well contained by the urban area is the parcel?	Largely Contained
Boundary Strength	The site lies to the rear of Upton House with the existing Green Belt boundary transecting the hereditament. The boundaries to the urban area to the south and west are largely to rear gardens whilst the northern and eastern boundaries comprise field / garden boundaries with a copse of (unprotected) trees to the west.
Containment	Around half of the sites boundary abuts the urban area to its western and southern edges. The eastern edge is shared with Site GB001 whilst the northern edge is to open countryside.

Northern edge boundary to open countryside

View of built development from Old Upton Lane

Purpose 2:
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another

Gap description	Gap Distance to Widnes = 3.47m. Gap Distance to Surrounding Settlements = 2157.93m. Gap Distance to Cronton OR Hale = 738.54m. The gap between Widnes and the neighbouring towns (nearest being Rainhill) would be over 2000m should this site be released. However, the site also sits in the gap between Widnes and the village of Cronton. This gap is less than 500m in places. Release of this parcel would reduce the gap from the northern edge of this parcel to Cronton to less than 750m.

Purpose 3:
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

Land Use	Non Country Use
Field Crops, Field margins, Improved pasture, Residential, Residential - Investigation incomplete (Unknown Age), Roads, Standing water	
Visual Encroachment	This site is within the North Widnes Farmland landscape character area, which was assessed to have modetate character strength, but to be in a poor condition. Overall this parcel has partial visual encroachment. Release of this parcel individually would not contribute to rounding, however it does lie within a wider 'depression' in the settlement boundary and could contribute as part of a wider release.
Roundness	Release of this parcel individually would not contribute to rounding, however it

Parcel Ref: GB002

does lie within a wider 'depression' in the settlement boundary and could contribute as part of a wider release.

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

Does the parcel help to preserve the setting of an historic town, village or park?	The parcel does not affect the setting of a 'historic town or village' or listed 'historic park' as there are no such designations within the study area. Other heritage assets are identified under Stage 2: Restrictive Constraints.

Purpose 5:
To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

Individual sites have not been assessed against this function, as no measureable criteia were identified in the study methodology

Stage 3: Overall Summary of Purpose

This parcel makes a partial contribution to the purposes of including land within the Green Belt. It is adjacent to the urban area, with approximately 50% to 75% of the boundary adjacent to development and is considered to be largely contained. It is considered to provide an important role in preventing neighbouring towns from merging. It is used for non-countryside purposes for example residential development. It has some visual encroachment with views at certain points of the site overlooked by development. However, this parcel does make an important contribution to maintaining the gap between the settlements of Widnes and Cronton. Best and most versatile agricultural land is also identified as a restrictive constraint for the site, with at least part of the site considered to be Grade 2.

Stage 4: Assessment of how the parcel contributes to meeting the Core Strategy Local Plans identified need, together with an indicative housing capacity

What percentage of the parcel is covered in development?	Less than 10%			
Assumed Total Net deliverable area	100% <= 0.4ha	90% >0.4ha <= 2ha ✓	80% >2ha <= 5ha	75% >5ha
Notional site capacity @ 30dph (of assumed developable area)		25		

2 Policy Context

National Policy Context

2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in March 2012, sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The purpose of the NPPF is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, which has three dimensions; an economic role, a social role and an environmental role.

2.2 Section 9 of the NPPF sets out the national policy for Green Belt. The opening sentence states that '*the Government places great importance on the Green Belt*'. It defines the essential characteristics of the Green Belts as their '*openness*' and '*permanence*' and reiterates from previous guidance the five *purposes* which they perform.

2.3 The five purposes of including land in Green Belts, as set out in paragraph 80 of the NPPF, are:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns from 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.

2.4 Paragraph 83 of the NPPF identifies 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.

2.5 Paragraph 84 of the NPPF states that:
"When drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries local planning authorities should take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development. They should consider the consequences for sustainable development of channelling development towards urban areas inside the Green Belt boundary, towards towns and villages inset within the Green Belt or towards locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary."

2.6 The NPPF in paragraph 85 provides 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.

Local Policy Context

2.7 The Core Strategy Local Plan was adopted in April 2013. Policy CS6 sets out that a partial review will be necessary during the early part of the plan period to ensure sufficient ongoing supply of deliverable development land to meet the requirements of the Borough's communities. It highlights that the review will be limited to meeting the identified needs of Widnes / Hale with the release of land strictly phased in accordance with the prioritisation of urban regeneration as set out elsewhere within the Core Strategy.

2.8 The Examination into the Core Strategy concluded that there was sufficient identified development land within Runcorn to meet its needs to 2028, and as such there were no exceptional circumstances to require a review of the Green Belt around Runcorn at this time.

2.9 Since then the Council has identified the need to revisit the housing requirement for the Borough, as the Core Strategy figure is derived from the revoked Regional Strategy of 2004. The 2016 Mid-Mersey Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) identifies an objectively assessed need for Halton of 466 dwellings each year. Whilst this is a lower annualised requirement than the Core Strategy, we now need to plan over a longer time horizon (to 2037 as opposed to 2028) meaning we need to identify additional development land. The Council has prepared a paper setting out why it considers that exceptional circumstances exist to also require the Green Belt Review to be extended to cover Runcorn.

2.10 The Council are preparing a Delivery and Allocations Local Plan, which looks to review a number of the policies within the Core Strategy. However, it is not expected to change the need for a review of the Green Belt and it is likely that this will be the document that identifies and allocates the land within the Green Belt for development.

The current review

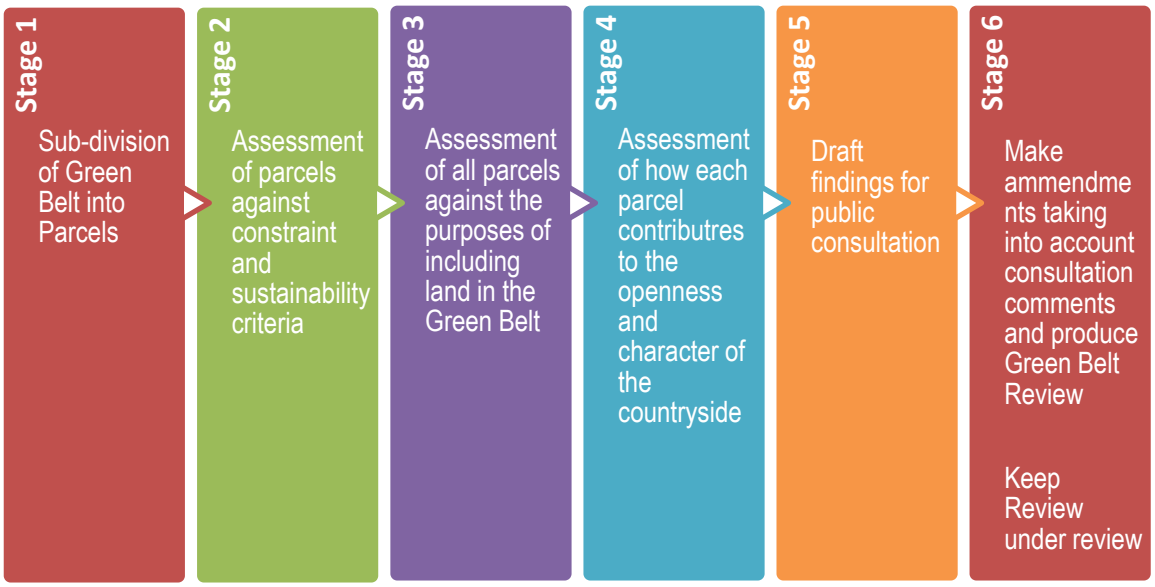
2.11 This Green Belt review is being undertaken in compliance with the commitment in the Core Strategy. This will form one part of the evidence base for the next Delivery and Allocations Local Plan. The Council is currently undertaking additional work to quantify the (urban) land supply position and with working with neighbouring authorities to produce a Liverpool City Region Strategic Housing and Employment Land Market Assessment (SHELMA). Together, these additional pieces of work will allow the Council to quantify the shortfall of development land that may have to be found from within the current Green Belt.

3 Green Belt Review

3.1 The Green Belt Review has been triggered by a need to identify additional development land to meet the future needs of Halton. The review has to determine the relative performance of different areas of the existing Green Belt against the five purposes of including land in the Green Belt to determine the relative importance of differing areas and to identify 'land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open'. [see 2.3 and 2.6 above]

3.2 The stages of the Review are as set out in the figure below.

Figure 2: Green Belt Study Methodology



3.3 Changes to the initial draft Methodology were made as the Review has been undertaken; these are explained within the text at the relevant stage.

STAGE 1 – Defining Study Parcels

3.4 The first stage was to split the Green Belt into manageable, 'assessable', parcels. Given the limited nature of the Green Belt in Halton the review has not been limited to particular areas, but has comprehensively assessed the Green Belt in its entirety to the borough boundary.

3.5 This 'parcelisation' exercise was initially completed as a desk-based exercise, using electronic mapping and aerial photography. The criterion applied was that parcels should:

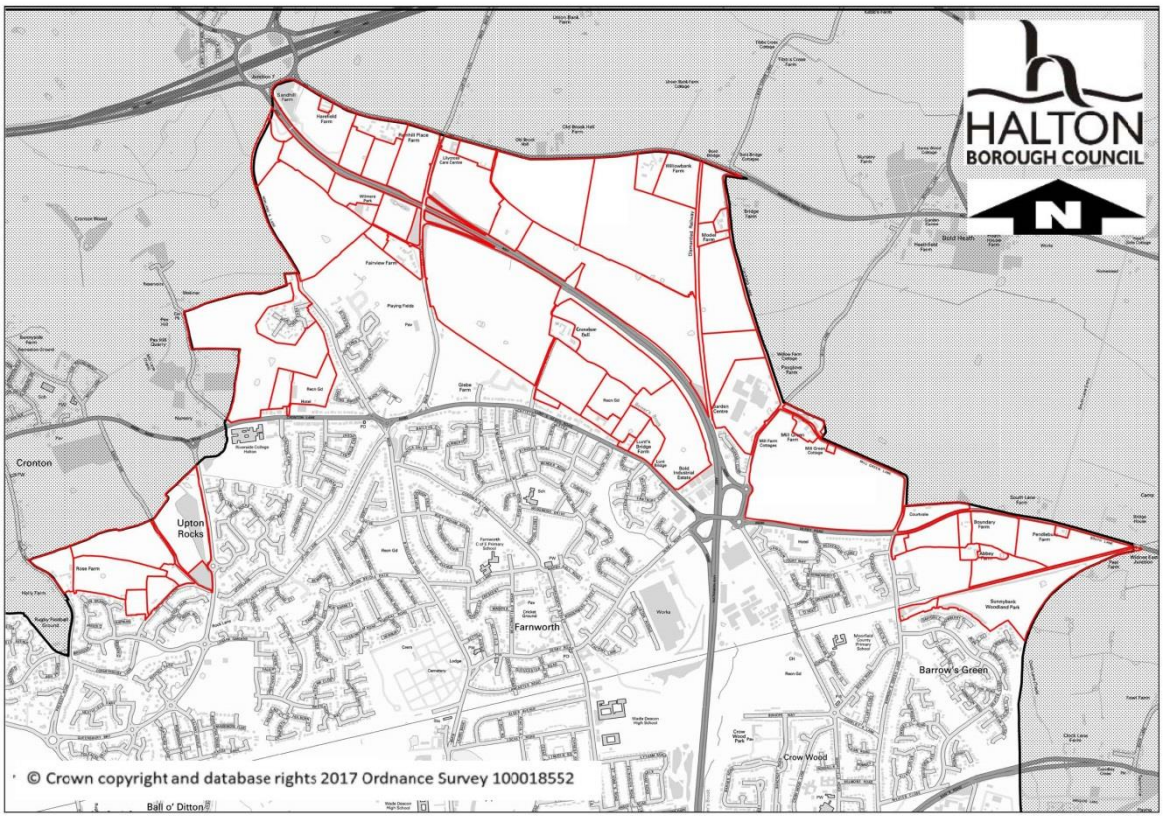
- Form one land use;
- Exhibit a single character; and
- Where possible, have strong permanent physical boundaries which are easily identifiable.

3.6 Maps 3a to 3e below illustrate the boundaries of the parcels that have been assessed as part of this Green Belt Study.

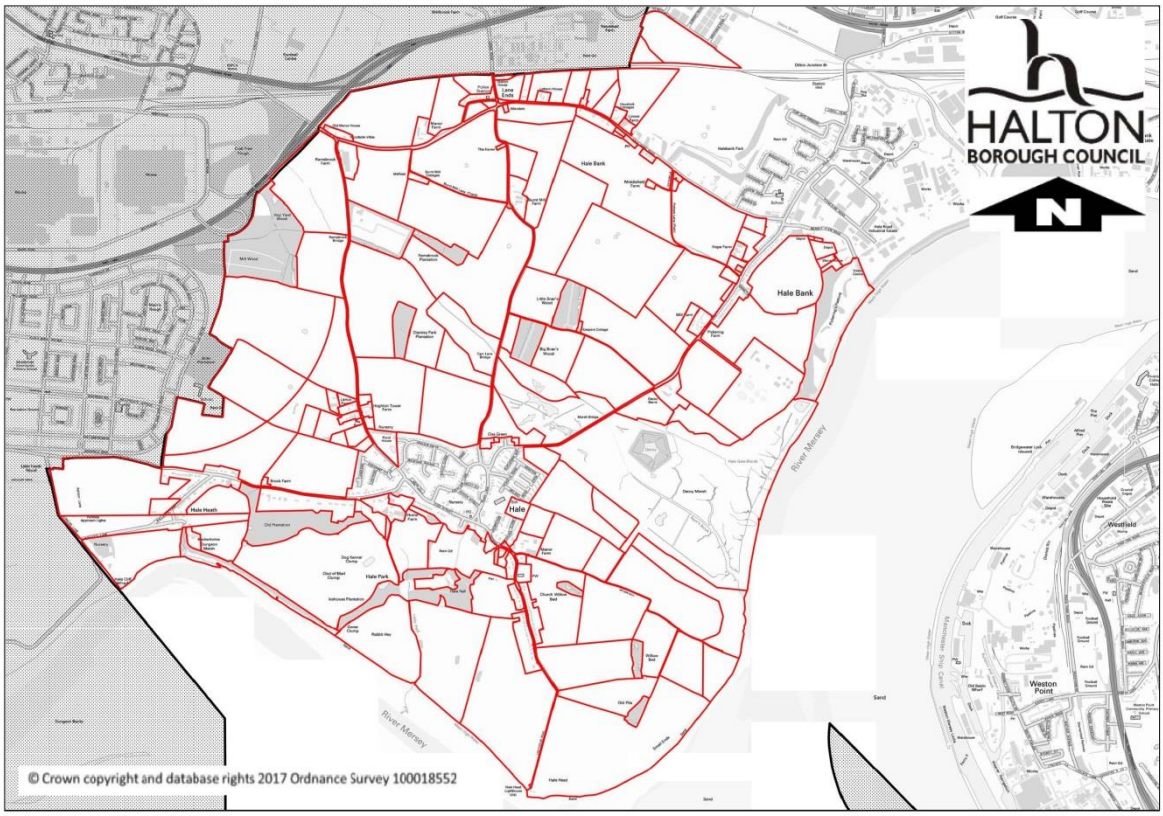
3.7 During the consultation on the Methodology and Call for Sites representations were made concerning a number of sites within neighbouring authorities. These were notified to their respective Local Planning Authority and initial discussions as to issues raised have been undertaken.

3.8 The consultation on the Widnes and Hale Green Belt Site Assessments also highlighted the need for some of the parcels to be considered at different scales. In some cases it was suggested that parcels should have been grouped together and in others it was suggested that it may have been appropriate to consider whether to disaggregate the parcels. This review has taken this into consideration, and reviewed all of the parcels to see whether it would be appropriate to aggregate or disaggregate them further. This has created additional grouped sites and additional disaggregated parcels. The grouped parcels are shown on Map 3d, whilst the disaggregated parcels are shown on Map 3e.

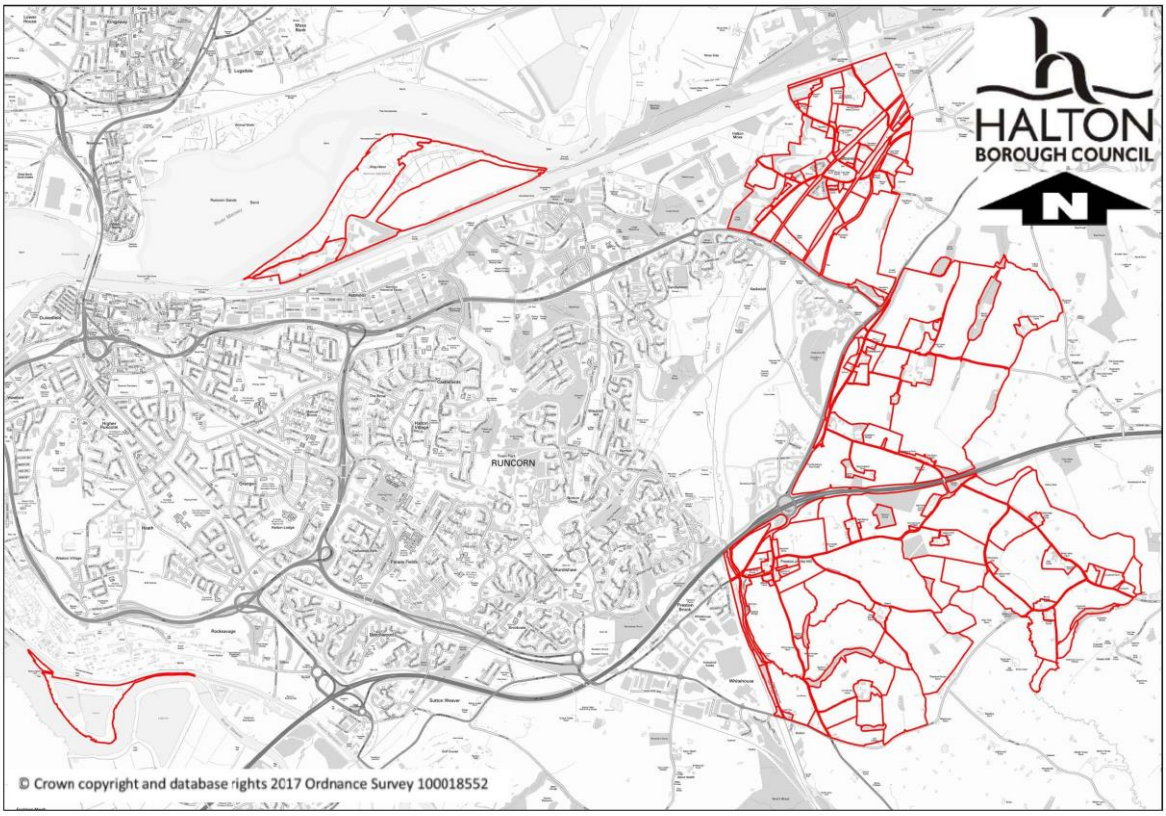
Map 3a: Parcel Identification (North Widnes)



Map 3b: Parcel Identification (South Widnes and Hale)

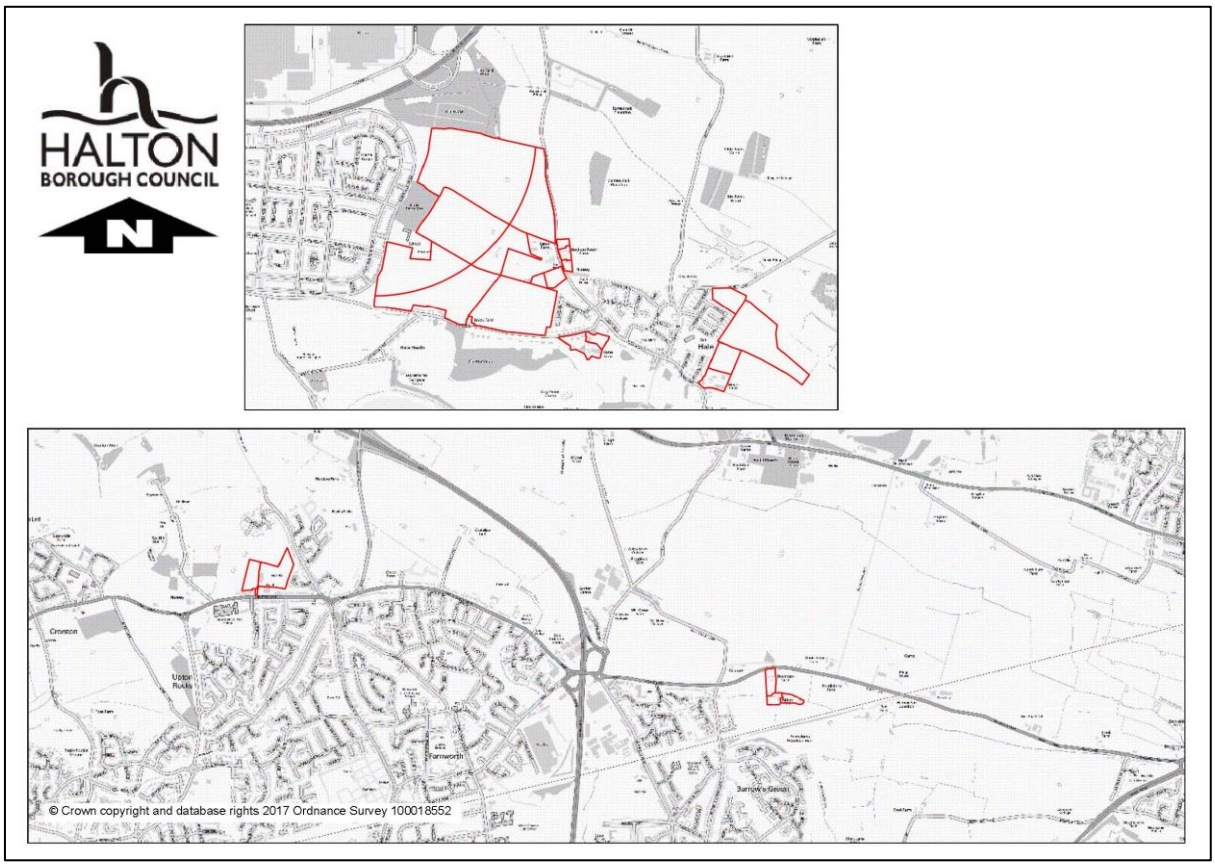


Map 3c: Parcel Identification (Runcorn)



Map 3d: Parcel Identification (Group Sites)

Map 3e: Parcel Identification (Split Sites)



STAGE 2 – Constraint and Sustainability Criteria

3.9 The second stage was to assess the parcels, using Geographical Information Systems [GIS] mapping, against a set of identified constraints that would prevent or restrict development and accessibility criteria. The constraints were subdivided into two categories –

1. Prohibitive ('show stopping') constraints which are those constraints thatare so important that they would prohibit development. For example, a site that is subject to the greatest risk of flooding or a site that is designated for its nature conservation value such as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

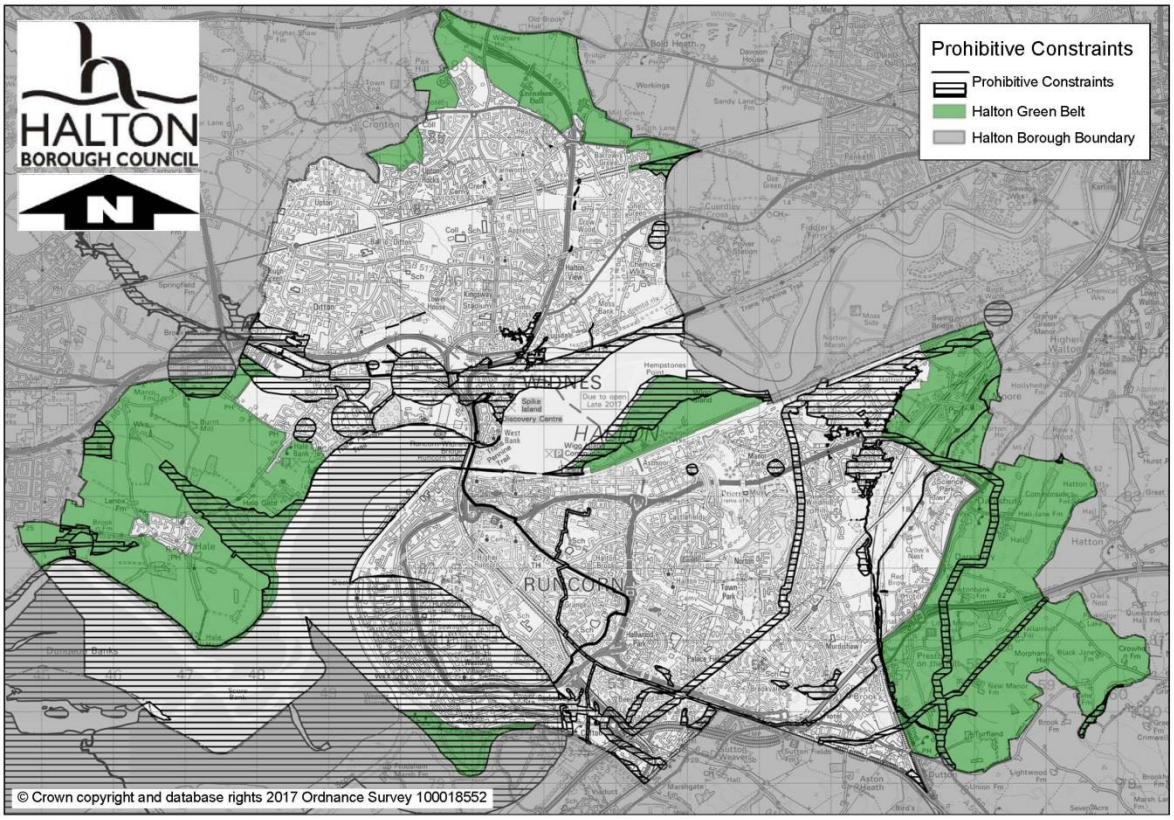
2. Restrictive constraints are constraints that could severely restrict but not necessarily prevent new development; that would place restrictions on the types of development that could be accommodated; or constraints that may be capable of being overcome by some form of mitigation.

3.10 This exercise identified sites that were unlikely to be developed for reasons other than just their location in the Green Belt.

Prohibitive Constraints

3.11 A number of initial study parcels were split to remove areas covered by a prohibitive constraint. The remaining areas retained the original parcel references and the constrained areas were given new parcel references. Map 4 shows the prohibitive constraints that are located within the Borough and those within the Green Belt.

Map 4: Prohibitive Constraints



3.12 Map 4 illustrates those areas that are currently considered to be undevelopable due to being affected by a prohibitive constraint. They cover, or partially cover, the following parcels:

- Parcels 176, 226, 228, 230, 231, 233, 375, 376, 421,422 and parts of parcels 278, 291, 387, 403, 408, 409, 412, 420 and 424 are within **Flood Zone 3a and 3b** (the highest risk) and are not considered appropriate for development.
- Parcels 82, 176, 228 and 233 are **Sites of Special Scientific Importance** (SSSI); they are not considered appropriate for development due to their nature conservation importance.
- Parcels 75, 95, 96, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 137, 224, 225, 232, 241, 243, 326, 422 and parts of 76, 77, 146, 238, 239, 240, 242, 244, 249, 250, 266, 269, 271, 272, 291, 293, 298, 299, 302, 325, 327, 331, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 353, 354, 360, 369, 370, 389, 390, 391, 394, 397, 402, 403, 405, 423, 425 are within the **'Inner Zone' of a COMAH** site or pipeline. The Health and Safety Executive identifies sites and installations under the Control of Major Accident Hazards regulations. Inner, Middle and Outer zones are defined representing differing levels of 'risk' within each zone. New development that would increase the population within an Inner Zone is generally considered inappropriate.

- Parcels 86, 121, 321 (part) and 390 are **Ancient Woodland** and are not considered appropriate for development due to their importance to the local environment and landscape.
- Parcels 41 and 88 are areas of **contaminated land** that have been reclaimed for a 'green end use' and not considered appropriate for development.
- Parcel 229 is the area of land affected by John Lennon **Airport Public Safety Zone** (PSZ) as defined by the Civil Aviation Authority and is therefore not considered developable.
- Parcels 82, 176, 228, 233 and parts of 197, 199, 200, 201 and 221 are within the **Mersey Estuary Ramsar** and are therefore not considered developable (or the part covered by the Ramsar is not).

Restrictive Constraints

3.13 There are a number of parcels that contain restrictive constraints which could affect the deliverability of the site or indeed the type of development the site could accommodate. For example sites that are affected by flood risk grade 2 could not accommodate a residential care home or sites that contain a pipeline or is subject to planning advice for development near hazardous installations (PADHI) would restrict the end use of the site. The restrictive constraints for each site are identified in the Compendium of Individual Site Records (Appendix A).

3.14 The restrictive constraint used in the assessment are as follows:

Constraint
• Conservation Area
• Sites of Local Geological Importance
• Listed buildings/Ancient Monuments (& their setting)
• Food Risk Zone 2
• Agricultural Land Classification (all grades)
• PADHI pipelines and sites
• Local Nature Reserve / Local Wildlife Sites
• Area of Landscape Value
• Pollution
• Playing Pitches
• Proximity to a Ramsar, SPA or SAC

3.15 In the previous consultation the restrictive constraints identified where a Listed Building or Ancient Monument was located. During the consultation it was identified that no consideration had been given to the settings of these assets, therefore this version of the restrictive constraints will also identified where there is a Listed Building or Ancient Monument within 250m of a parcel, although it is not necessarily felt that this will reflect the actual setting of these assets, it should help to identify

where an Asset needs to be given consideration as part of any development and the setting may be affected. It is likely that as the sites progress through the planning process that more detailed information in relation to the asset and its setting will be provided.

3.16 There is also potential for there to be non-designated heritage assets within or adjacent to the parcels. These assets are unlikely to prevent development, but may require mitigation measures to be undertaken following a suitable cultural heritage assessment. Again as the parcels continue through the planning process increased consideration will be given to any impact on these assets.

3.17 Additional restrictive constraints have also been added in relation to Playing Pitches and the proximity of the parcel to a Ramsar, SPA or SAC, these constraints have been included in response to the previous consultation exercise.

3.18 Sport England considers that where any playing fields is identified as having potential for development, that the site should be identified and assessed within the Playing Pitch Strategy. The findings should clearly demonstrate the playing field is not required to meet existing and predicted future demand for pitch sports. If it is required then the playing field should be replaced within the locality.

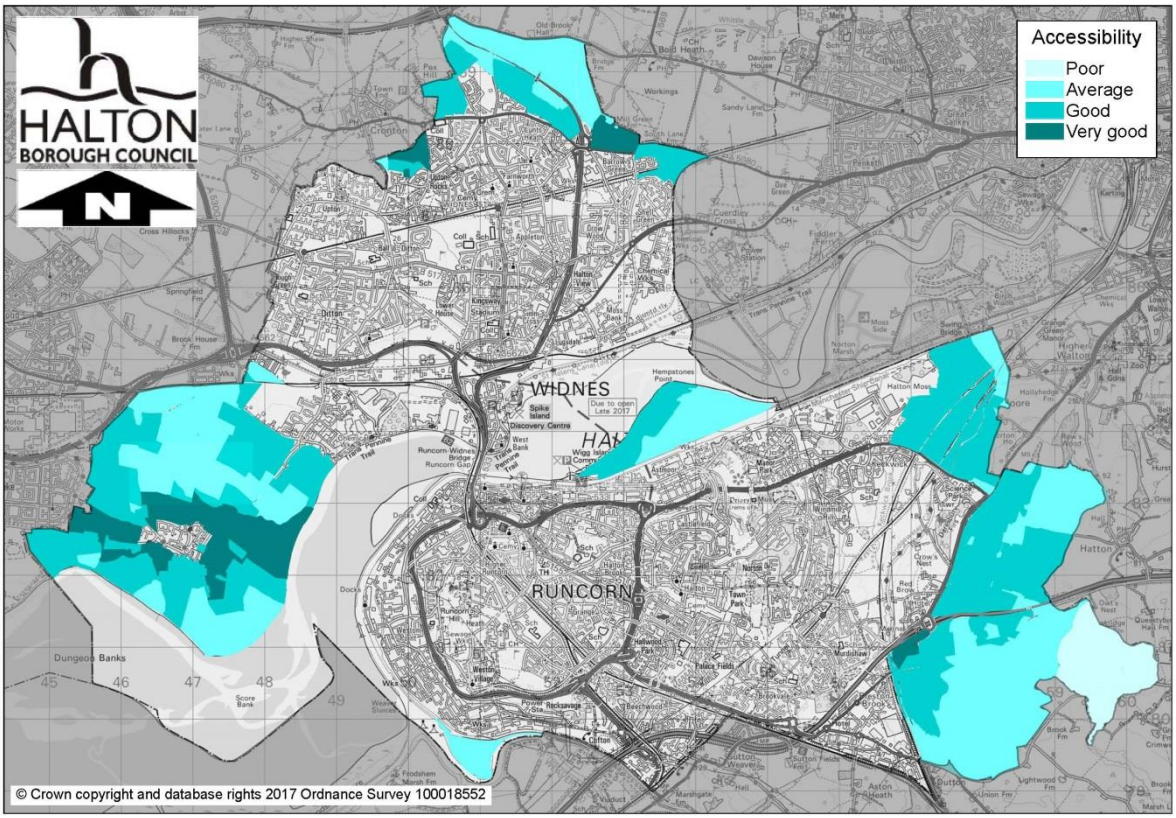
Accessibility

3.19 Parcels were then assessed to ascertain how accessible they are to a range of supporting services/facilities, as follows;

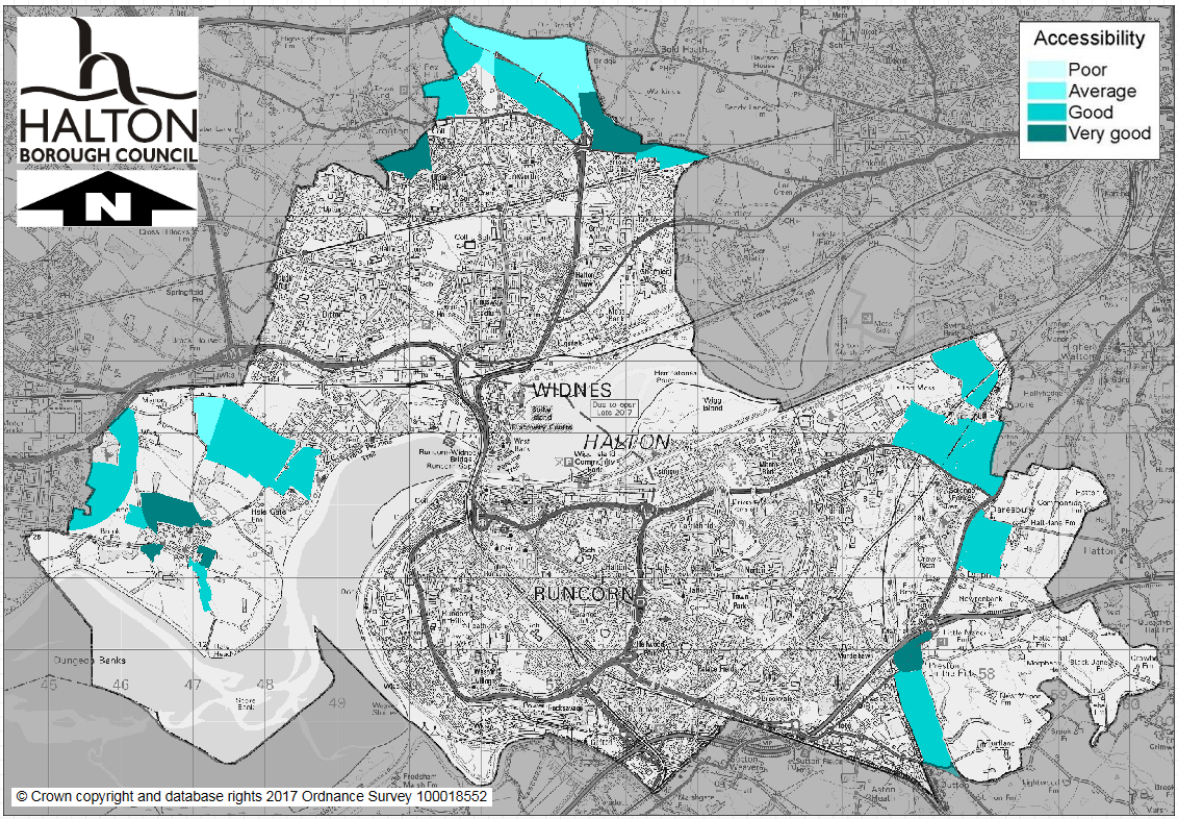
Within 400m	• Bus Stop;
Within 600m	• Primary School; • Secondary School; • Further Education Establishment; • Local Centre
Within 800m	• Rail Station; • Town or District Centre; • Leisure Centre; • Post Office; • Public Park / Play Area
Within 1km	• GP / Health Centre
Within 2km	• Primary Employment Area or Allocated Employment Site

3.20 The accessibility of the site to the above supporting facilities was then deemed to be either 'Poor', 'Average', 'Good' or 'Very Good' depending on how many of these facilities the site had access to; with poor sites only having access to one facility, and very good sites having access to six or more facilities.

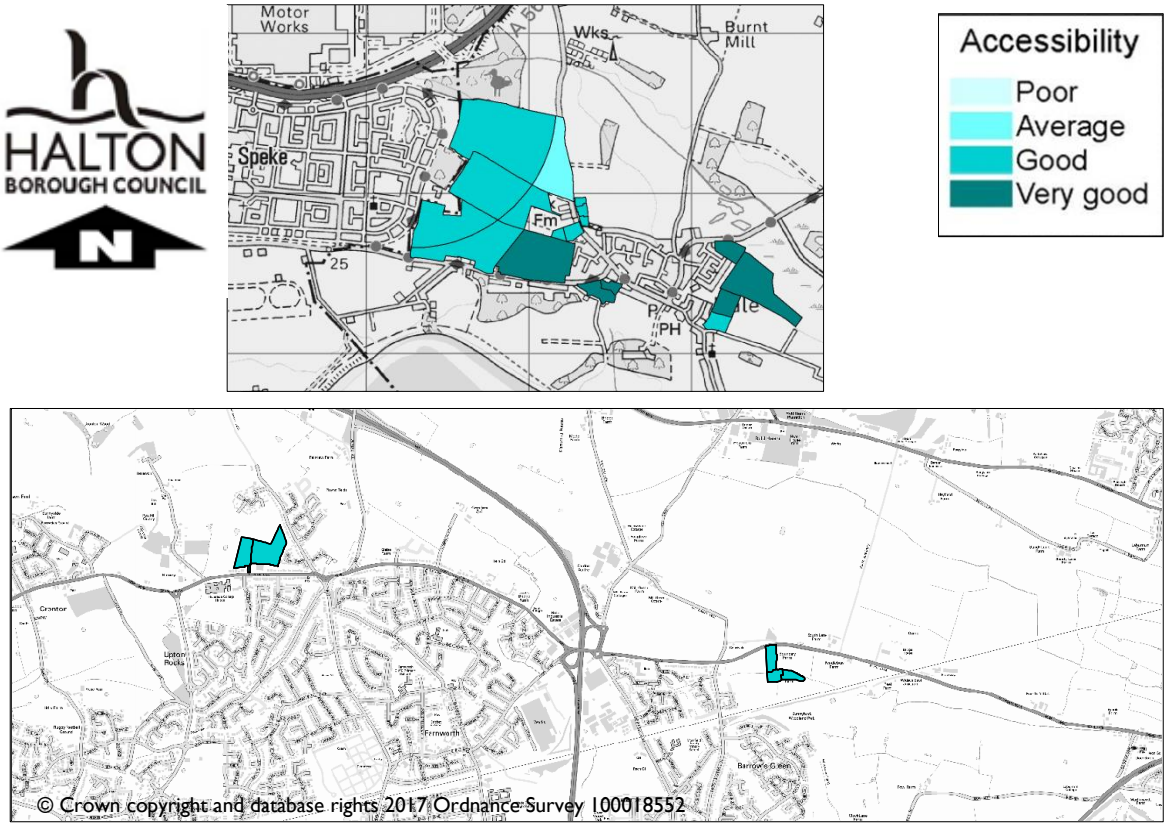
Map 5a: Accessibility (to key services)



Map 5b: Accessibility (to key services) (Grouped Sites)



Map 5c: Accessibility (to key services) (Split Sites)



3.21 As could be expected, Maps 5a, 5b and 5c show that the sites that are closest to an urban area have the best access to supporting services with accessibility falling off with distance.

3.22 There is a stark difference in accessibility of sites in the north of Widnes (Map 5a and 5c) to either side of Watkinson Way, with those sites to the north clearly showing limited accessibility to services, and those to the south mostly enjoying good or very good access. The majority of sites to the north of Watkinson Way only have average access (with access to two of the listed services). The areas with the highest levels of accessibility include those along Cronton Lane and Norland's Lane where they have access to the Sixth Form College, shops and public open space.

3.23 Map 5b shows sites immediately to the south of Halebank and around Hale village (which provides many of the facilities within the assessment) enjoying very good access to services. There is an arc of sites between Hale and Halebank, together with sites along the Mersey coast for example Sites 185, 186, 187 and 233 to the south east of Hale and Sites 220 and 234 located to the south east of Speke, south of Bailey's Lane having only average or poor accessibility.

3.24 The Grouped sites shown in Map 5c follow many of the trends seen in the original parcels with Watkinson Way providing a clear divide in north Widnes and greatest accessibility been seen closest to Hale Village in south Widnes. The divided sites are

shown in Map 5d, and again in south Widnes similar trends are seen with the sites closest to Hale being most accessible.

STAGE 3 – Assessment against Green Belt Purposes

3.25 The third stage was to assess the parcels against each of the five purposes of the Green Belt as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). [see para 2.3]

3.26 The NPPF does not suggest that any of the five purposes are more, or less, important than the others. The Study therefore sets out to assess each parcel against the five purposes in a balanced manner. However, it is acknowledged that in some instances, one function or purpose of the Green Belt may be so important in a given locality; a parcel should retain Green Belt status and be protected from development regardless of how it performs in relation to the other functions.

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

3.27 The first purpose performs a *barrier role*. This purpose is assessed at the strategic level whereby it underpins the establishment of the Merseyside Green Belt in the sense that the original strategic purpose was to check sprawl from Liverpool.

3.28 This was assessed by considering the parcels proximity to, and containment by, the urban area and by evaluating the strength and durability of the current and potential Green Belt boundaries.

Containment

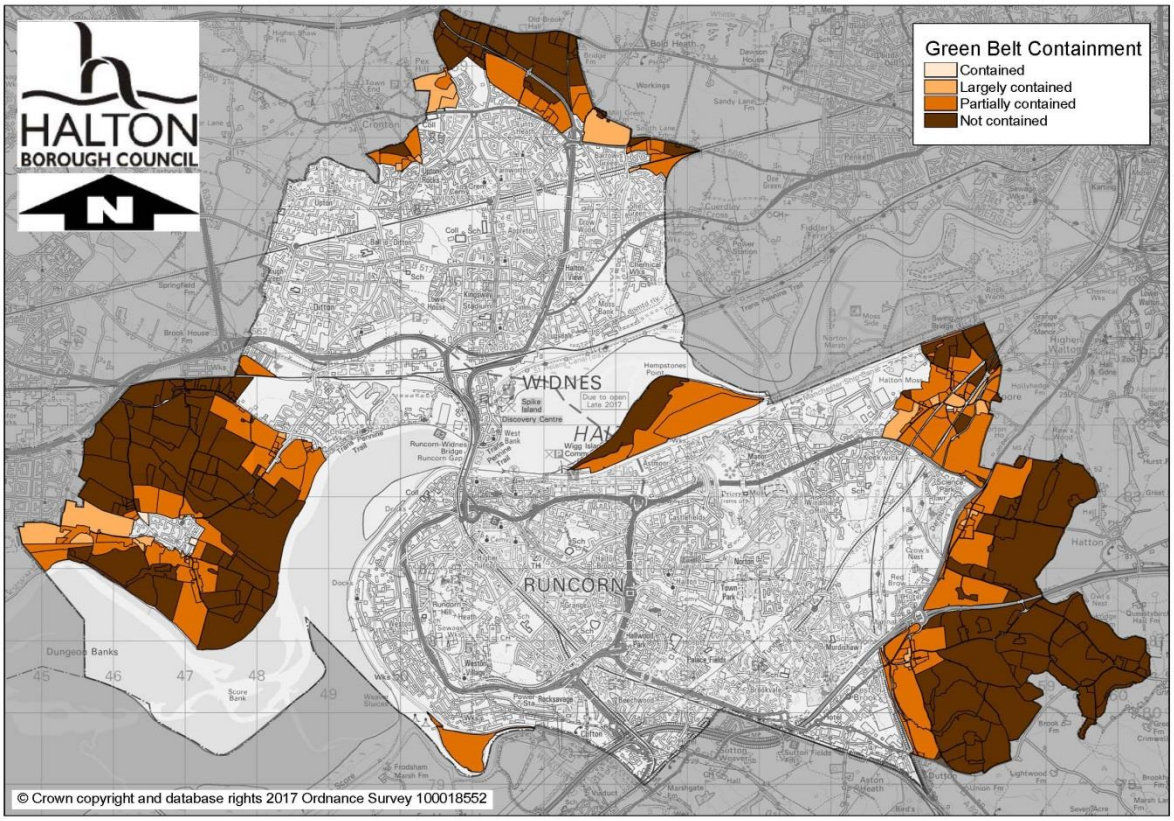
3.29 Each parcel was assessed for its level of containment. This is the level to which it shares boundaries with the urban area or is surrounded by built form.

3.30 The following definitions have been used:

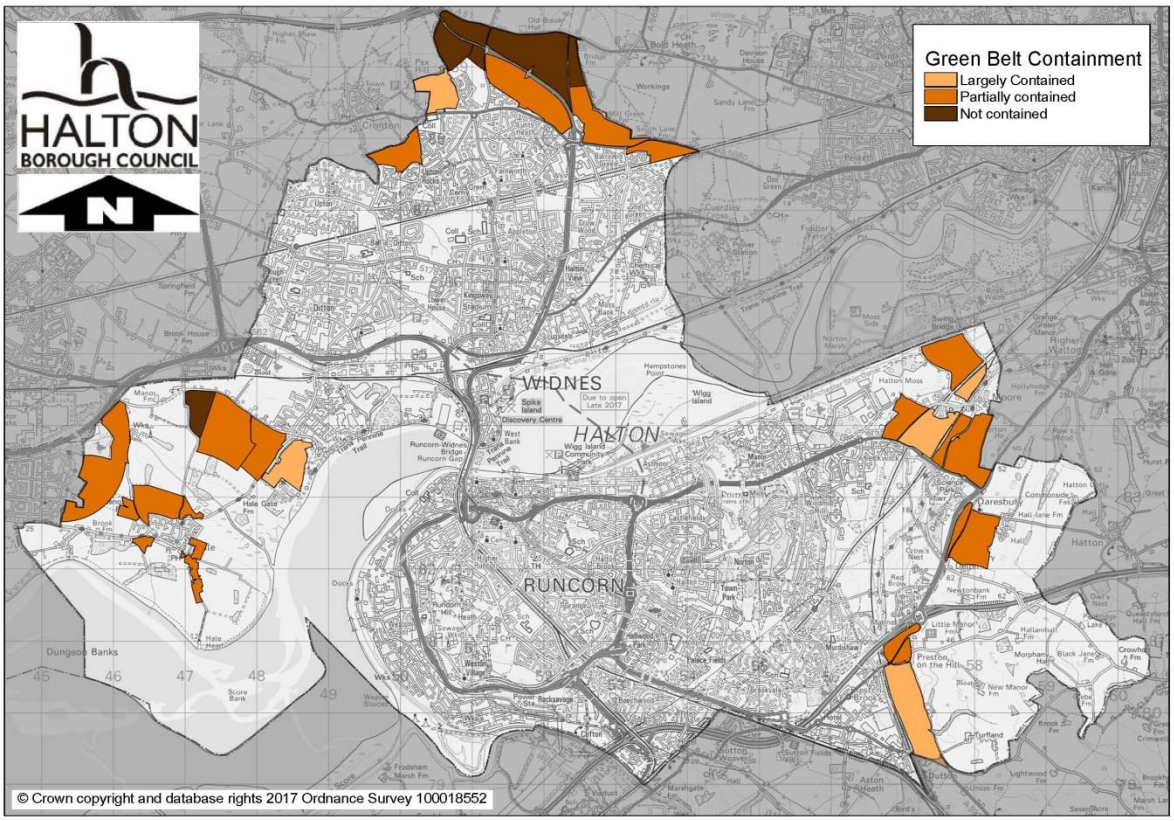
- Not Contained - Parcel is detached from the urban area;
- Partially Contained - Parcel is adjacent to the urban area, but with less than 50% of the boundary adjacent to development;
- Largely Contained - It is adjacent to the urban area, with approximately 50% to 75% of the boundary adjacent to development and is considered to be largely contained;
- Contained - Parcel is adjacent to the urban area with the 75% or more of the boundary enclosed by development.

3.31 This is a slight amendment from the previously consulted upon methodology allowing for greater differences between the sites that are adjacent to the urban area but not contained and those that are detached from the urban area.

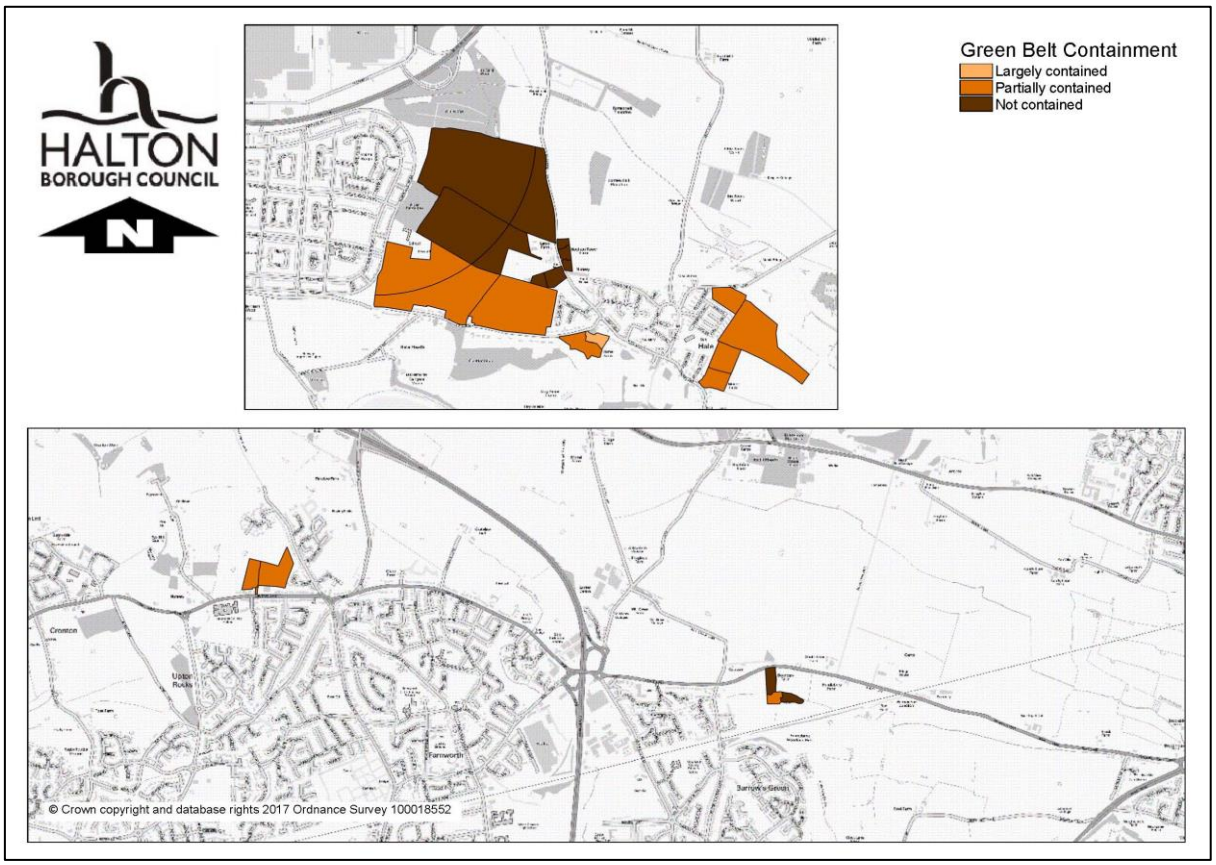
Map 6a: Containment



Map 6b: Containment (Grouped Sites)



Map 6c: Containment (Split Sites)



3.32 Maps 6a, 6b and 6c show the level of containment of each of the Green Belt parcels. The areas that are not adjacent to the urban areas are clearly shown as being 'not contained' and are shaded the darkest browns on the map, with lighter tones indicating increasing levels of containment.

3.33 To the north of Widnes (Map 6a) there are a few parcels that are considered to be largely contained, where there has been ribbon development along roads out of Widnes and where previously developed sites in the Green Belt have been converted, this includes land at Mill Green Lane, land north of Cronton Lane and some sites to the north of Old Upton Lane (Parcels 2, 4, 20, 21, 36 and 222). However, the parcels to the north are mainly partially or not contained. To the south of Widnes at Halebank again there are a few parcels that are considered to be largely contained with the majority being only partially contained.

3.34 Around Hale (Map 6a) there is a small selection of sites that are considered 'contained', where there is urban development enclosing approximately 75% of the parcel. These include a parcel of land off Ramsbrook Lane, the school playing field and a small parcel between Vicarage Close and Church End (Parcels 110, 179 and 209). There also a few additional sites that are considered to be largely contained to the south of the village and to the north east. There are also sites that are considered to

be partially contained between Hale and Speke where, mainly, the ribbon development out of the west of Hale creates a developed edge to these parcels.

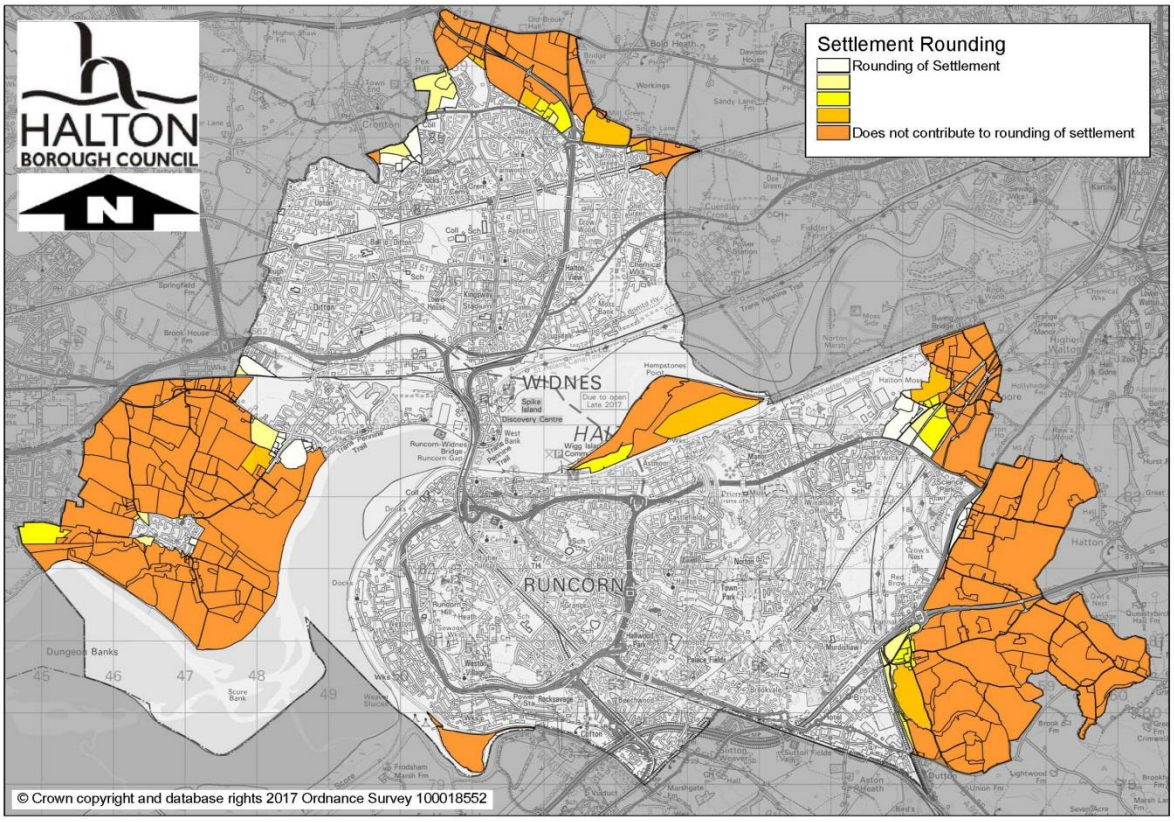
3.35 Adjacent to Moore, Preston-on-the-Hill and Daresbury villages there are parcels that are considered to be largely contained where development encloses more than 50% of the site boundary. Within Moore village there is one site that is considered to be 'contained' at Manor Farm Barn (Parcel 280). Further away from the urban area of Runcorn and from the villages there majority of sites are considered not contained.

3.36 Map 6b shows that many of the grouped parcels adjacent to the urban areas are considered partially contained with those a greater distance considered to be 'not contained'. However, there are a couple of grouped parcels that are considered to be largely contained (Groups H, J, Y, AF and AG), with urban development enclosing more than 50% of the parcel. For the divided parcels shown on Map 6c there is a mix of not contained and partially contained, with only one parcel (GB202B) identified as largely contained.

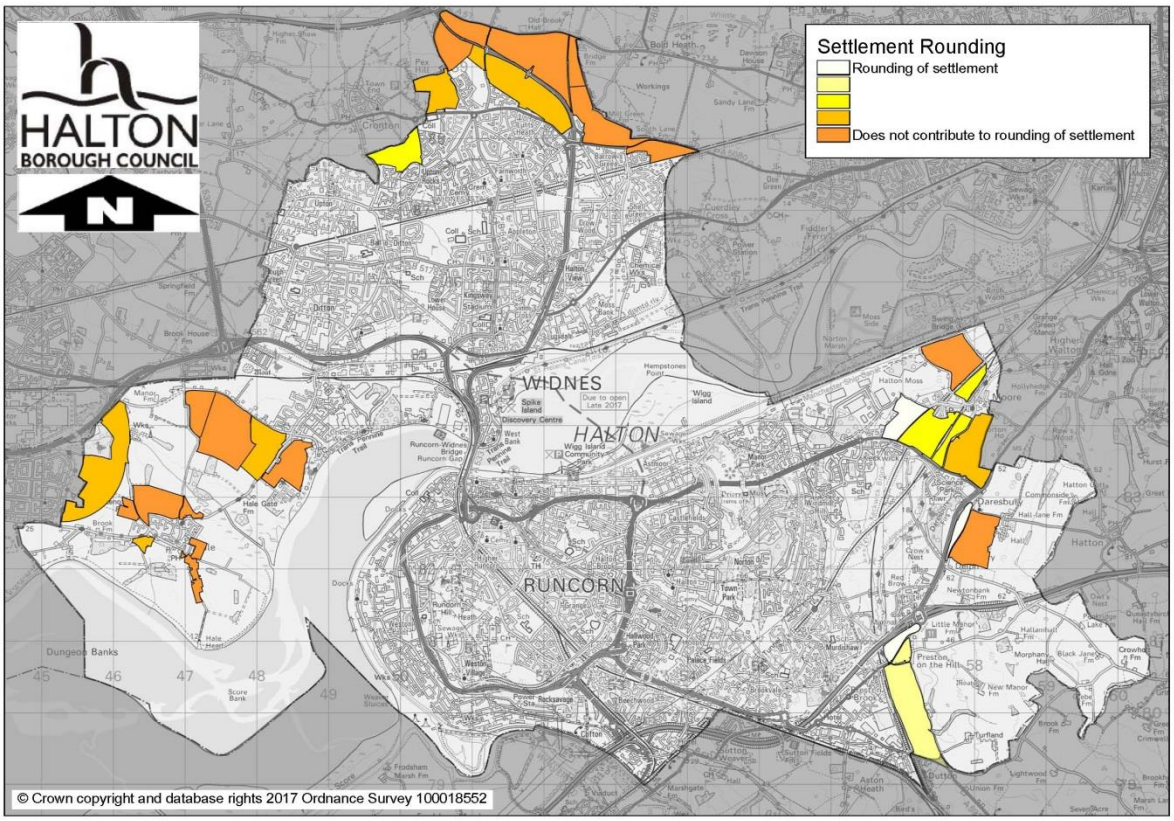
Rounding

3.37 In addition to the consideration of containment, to reflect comments that were made during the consultation, the Council have also considered the ability of the site to round-off the settlement as part of the consideration of encroachment. Where the existing settlement is an irregular shape it has been considered whether the parcel would fill in a gap or complete the shape, or whether the parcel along with any neighbouring parcels could potentially round off the settlement. This information is provided within the Compendium of Individual Site Records, found in Appendix A.

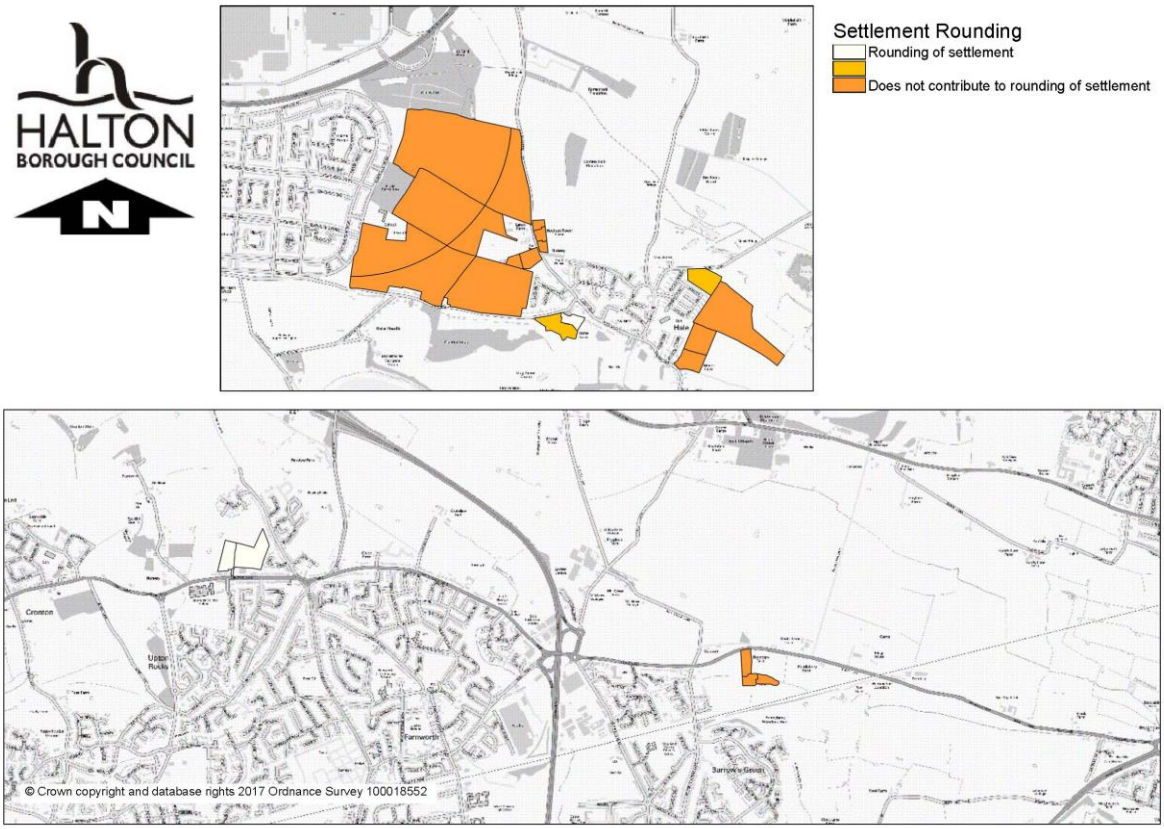
Map 7a: Rounding



Map 7b: Rounding (Grouped Sites)



Map 7c: Rounding (Split Sites)



3.38 Maps 7a, 7b and 7c show the level of rounding of each of the Green Belt parcels. The areas that are not considered to round off the urban areas are clearly shown and are shaded the darkest oranges on the map, with lighter tones indicating increasing levels of potential to round off the settlement.

3.39 To the north of Widnes (Map 7a) there are areas that are considered to round off the town between Chapel Lane and Queensbury Way, and to a slightly lesser extent between Cronton Lane and Norlands Lane and at Barrows Green (Parcels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 20, 42 and 222). To the south of Widnes there a number of parcels around Halebank which are considered to have potential to round off the settlement between the main urban area and development which stretches out along Hale Gate Road (Parcels 71, 72, 73, 75, 76, 77, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169 and 226). At Hale village there is one parcel considered to have potential for rounding, at the school playing fields (Parcel 179).

3.40 Within the Runcorn Green Belt there are areas that are considered to have potential to round off the settlement adjacent to Manor Park and Sandymoor (Parcels 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 298, 383 and 424). There are also areas at Daresbury where they are considered to have potential to round off the settlement (parcels 305, 306, 307, 308, 309 and 310).

3.41 Map 7b shows a few of the grouped parcels have potential to round off the settlement, and that these are all sites located in Runcorn. A site at Moore located between Moore village, Manor Park and Sandymoor is considered to have potential to round off the settlement as is a site at Daresbury and one at Preston on the Hill (Groups X, AB and AD). For the split parcels shown on Map 7c there are a few parcels that are considered to the have potential to round off the settlement, one to the south of Hale Road (Parcel 202B) and to the north of Cronton Lane (Parcels 20A and 20B).

Boundary Strength

3.42 In order to assess boundary strength and (potential) durability the following boundaries were considered to be 'strong':

- Landform – valley ridge, river, stream or depression
- Vegetation – protected woodland, copse, greenway
- Constructed – motorway, adopted highway/roads, railway, canal, buildings with long established line, or parcels directly adjacent to the urban area.

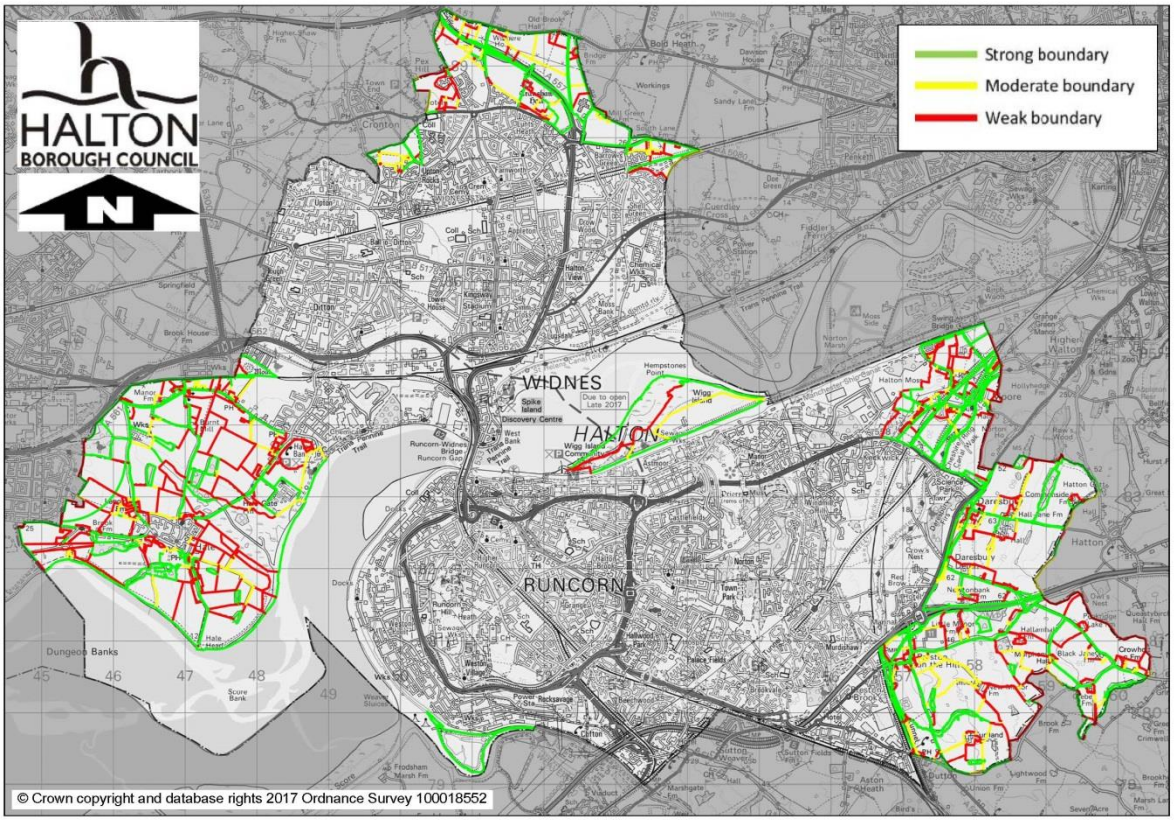
Figure 3: Example of a strong boundary: the River Mersey.

3.43 Less durable boundary features were considered to field boundaries such as intermittent hedges, fences and individual trees or constructed elements such as field ditches, access tracks, or buildings with an intermittent or weak building line. Consideration was also given to whether the urban area had a good strong existing boundary separating the Green Belt parcel from the urban area and increasing the potential for the development of the parcel to be considered sprawl by encroachment into the countryside.

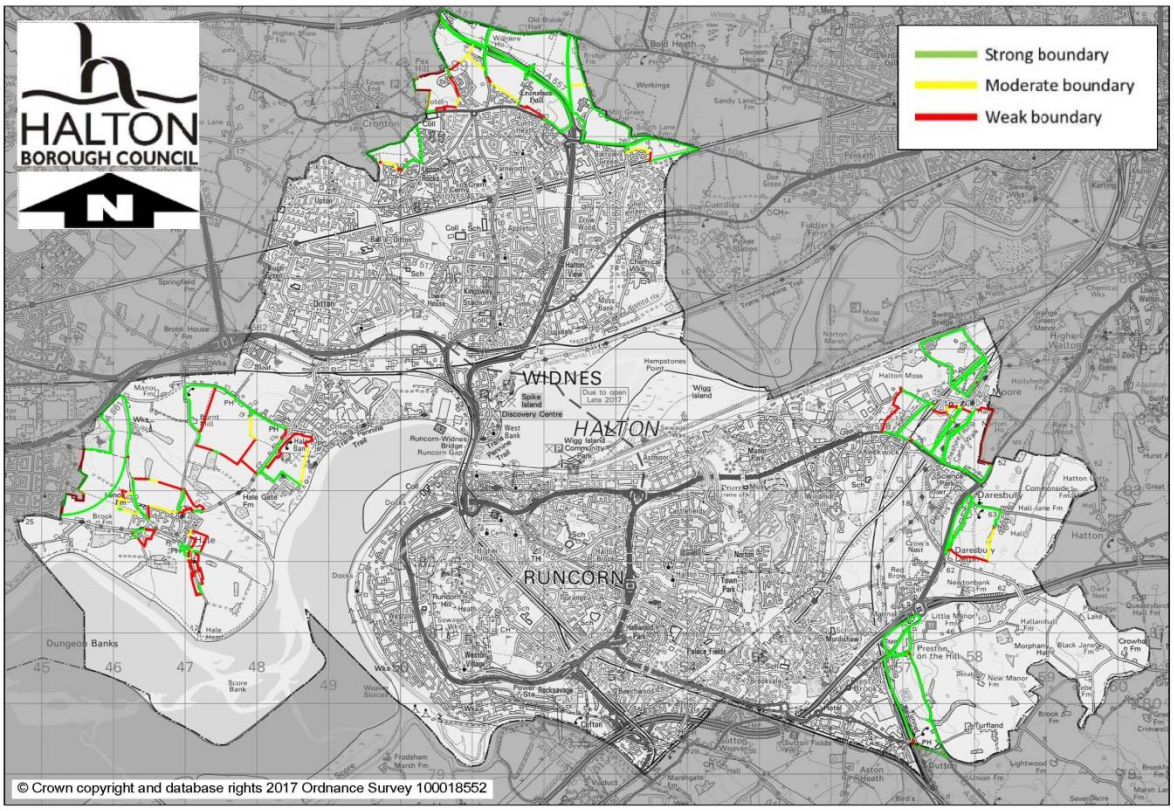
Figure 4: Example of a weak boundary: a field margin, followed by an intermittent hedge and individual trees.

3.44 Maps 8a, 8b and 8c below show the strength of each of the assessed boundaries. Strong boundaries are shown in green, weak boundaries in red and more moderate boundaries in yellow. As set out above it shows that there are strong boundaries created by the road network around the Borough, including for example Watkinson Way in north Widnes or Hale Gate Road to the south. The canal network and rail network also provide strong boundaries as shown at Moore where the Bridgewater Canal, the Manchester Ship Canal, the West Coast Mainline and the Manchester – Chester rail line all provide boundaries. The River Mersey also creates a strong boundary to the south of Hale and at Wigg Island, as do other watercourses that cross the Green Belt. There are also areas of strong boundaries created by the protected woodland areas within the Green Belt.

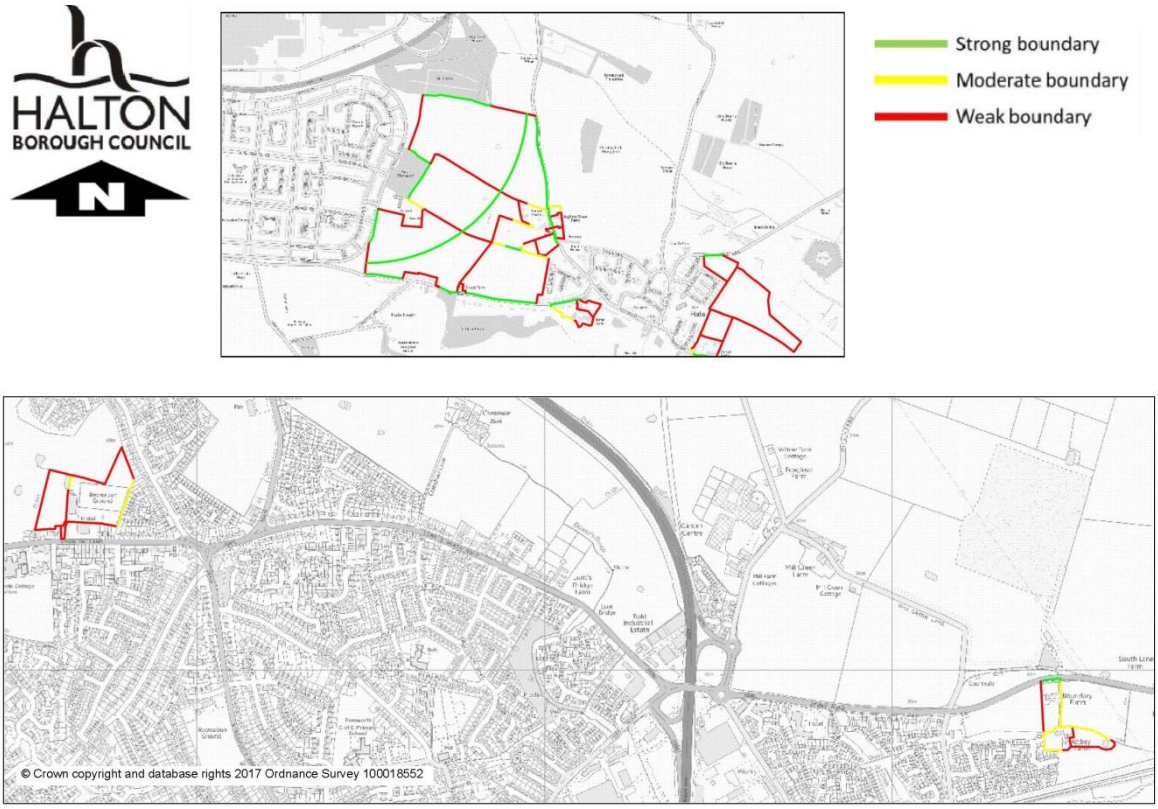
Map 8a: Boundary Strength



Map 8b: Boundary Strength (Grouped Sites)



Map 8c: Boundary Strength (Split Sites)



3.45 There are a significant number of weak boundaries within the Green Belt area these are mainly agricultural land, where the boundaries are similar to that shown in Figure 4, with only an ill-defined margin separating the fields or intermittent hedges, individual trees or post fencing.

3.46 The parcels with a moderate boundary are those where there are consistent tree lines of unprotected trees or where there is a continuous hedge, or where there are a number of features such as a hedge, trees, vegetation, paths or ditches that come together to create something more than a weak boundary. These are more common around the urban areas and surrounding residential development.

3.47 The Compendium of Individual Site Records contains larger scale maps for each site with the boundary strengths shown against an aerial photograph.

Purpose 2: To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another

3.48 The second purpose of including land in the Green Belt seeks to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another. This helps maintain the existing settlement pattern of towns and helps settlements retain their individual identity.

3.49 Government guidance suggests that Green Belts should ideally be 'several miles' wide. Given the heavily urbanised nature of the Liverpool City Region (see map 1), this is already often not the case, and the necessity to meet future development needs can only put further pressure on the gaps that remain.

3.50 The issue of the width of the green belt; the gaps between settlements that would remain should any given parcel be removed from the green belt is complicated by the by the fact that parcels could be released to facilitate development in any of four directions:

(1) Outwards from the Widnes settlement boundary
(2) Outwards from the Hale settlement boundary
(3) Inwards from a surrounding settlement boundary (i.e. Speke)
(4) Stand-alone development, remote from an existing settlement.

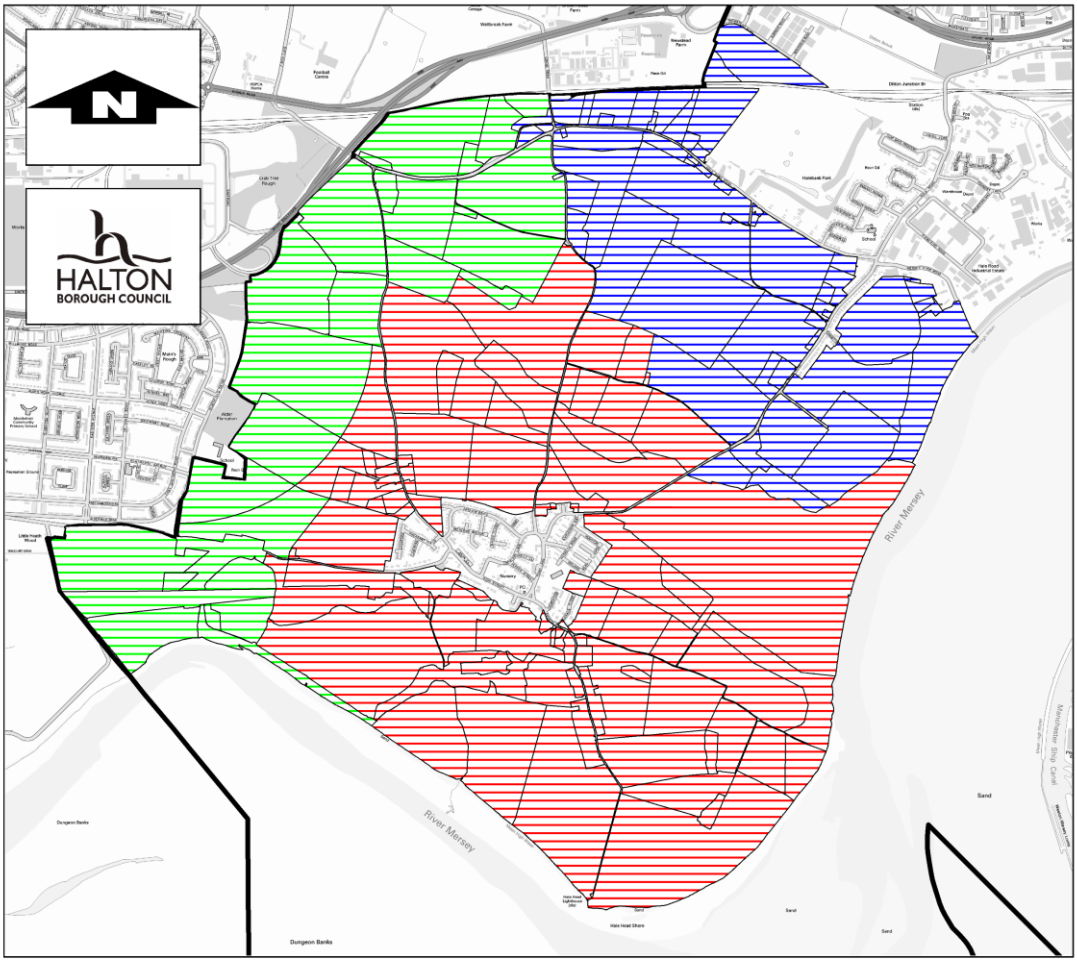
3.51 For the purposes of this assessment, we have discounted the 4th option above. The Green Belt around Widnes and Hale is for the most part significantly below the Government's stated ideal of being 'several miles wide' and as such it is considered highly improbable that new stand-alone settlements could be created within it.

3.52 The gap to Runcorn has also been discounted as physical distance is only one part of preventing settlements from merging, as the 'perception' of the gap between settlements can also be significant. The green belt gap to Runcorn is a little less than 500m at its narrowest point, yet the River Mersey presents a significant barrier, both physical and perceived, allowing both settlements to retain their identity.

3.53 Around north Widnes and Runcorn the assessment comprises of a single measurement outwards from each parcel to the next surrounding settlement (i.e. distance to Widnes or Runcorn is discounted).

3.54 Around south Widnes and Hale the assessment is slightly more complicated, requiring the measurement of the 'gap' outwards from Widnes, Hale or Liverpool/Knowsley as appropriate, with the distance to the next closest settlement being used as the appropriate gap distance. Map 9 shows where the gap measurements have been taken from for each parcel as it is assumed for the purposes of the calculation that the parcel would form an extension to that settlement.

Map 9: Green Belt Gap



Green Belt Gap

- Distance measured from Hale to either Widnes or Liverpool / Knowsley
- Distance measured from Liverpool / Knowsley to either Hale or Widnes
- Distance measured from Widnes to either Hale or Liverpool / Knowsley

Halton Borough Boundary

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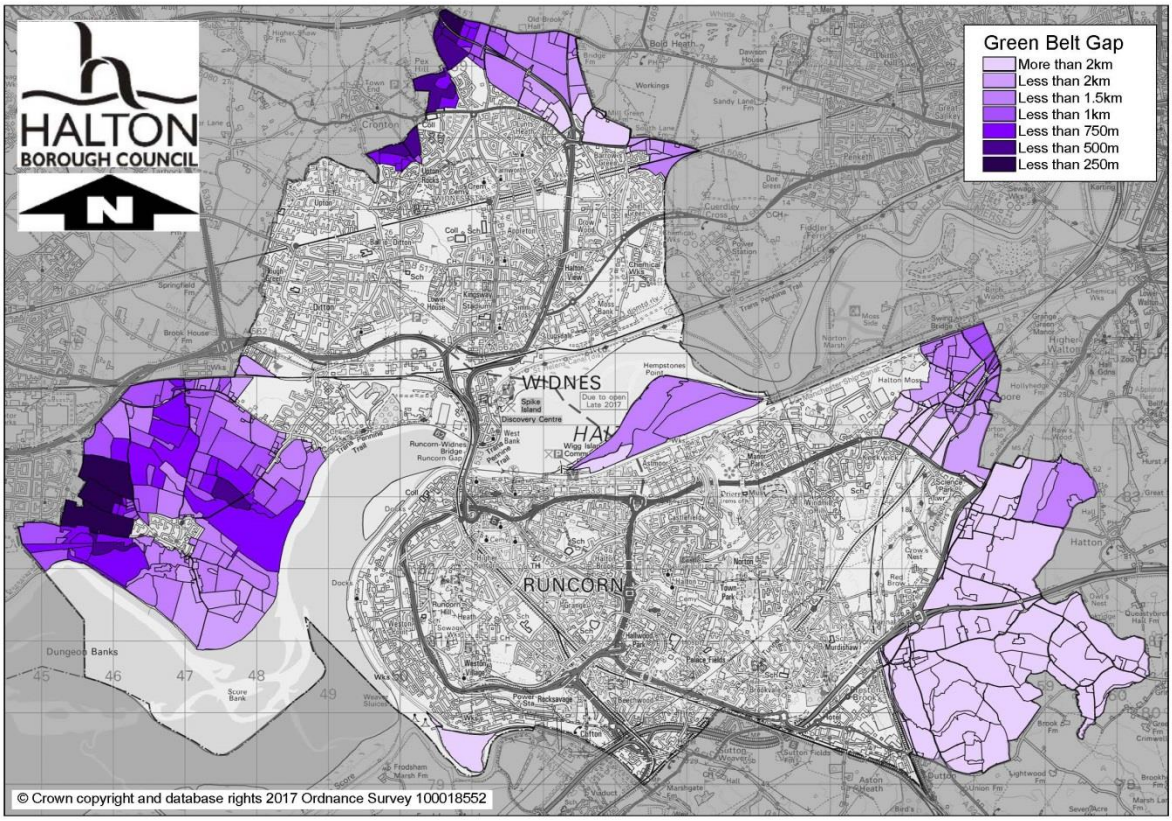
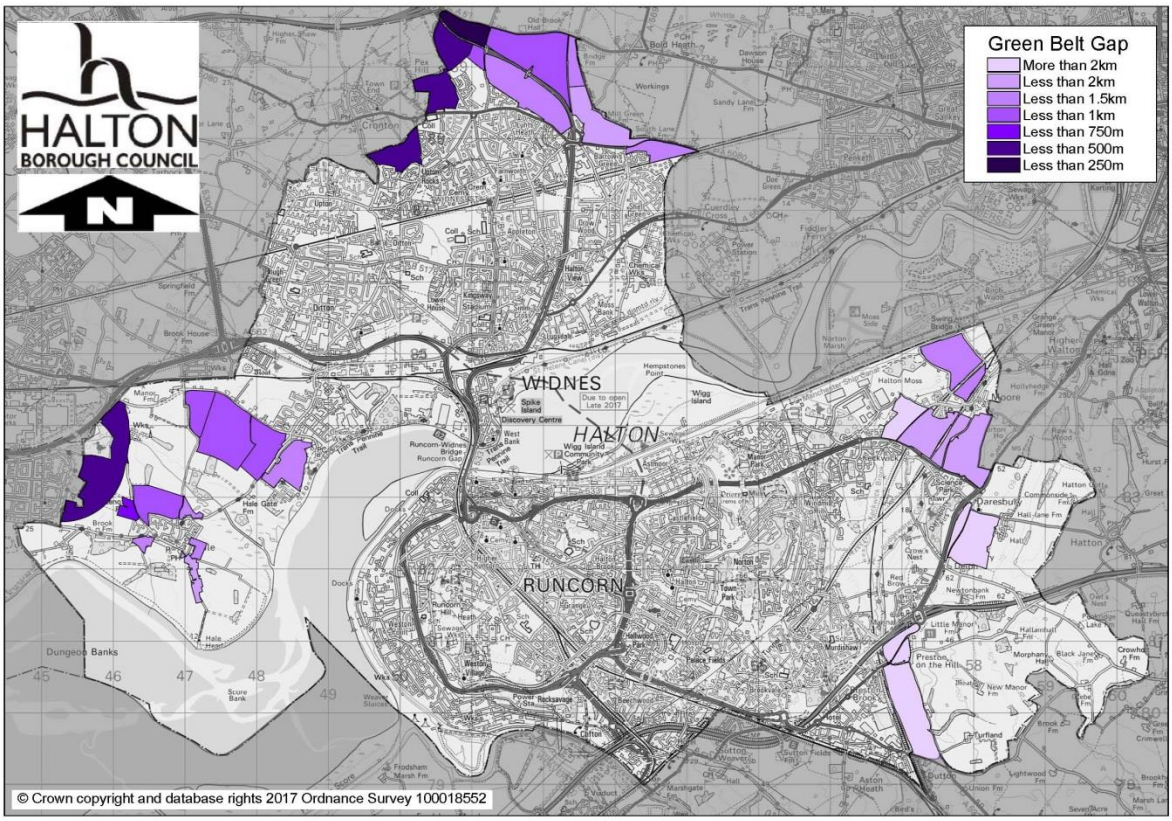
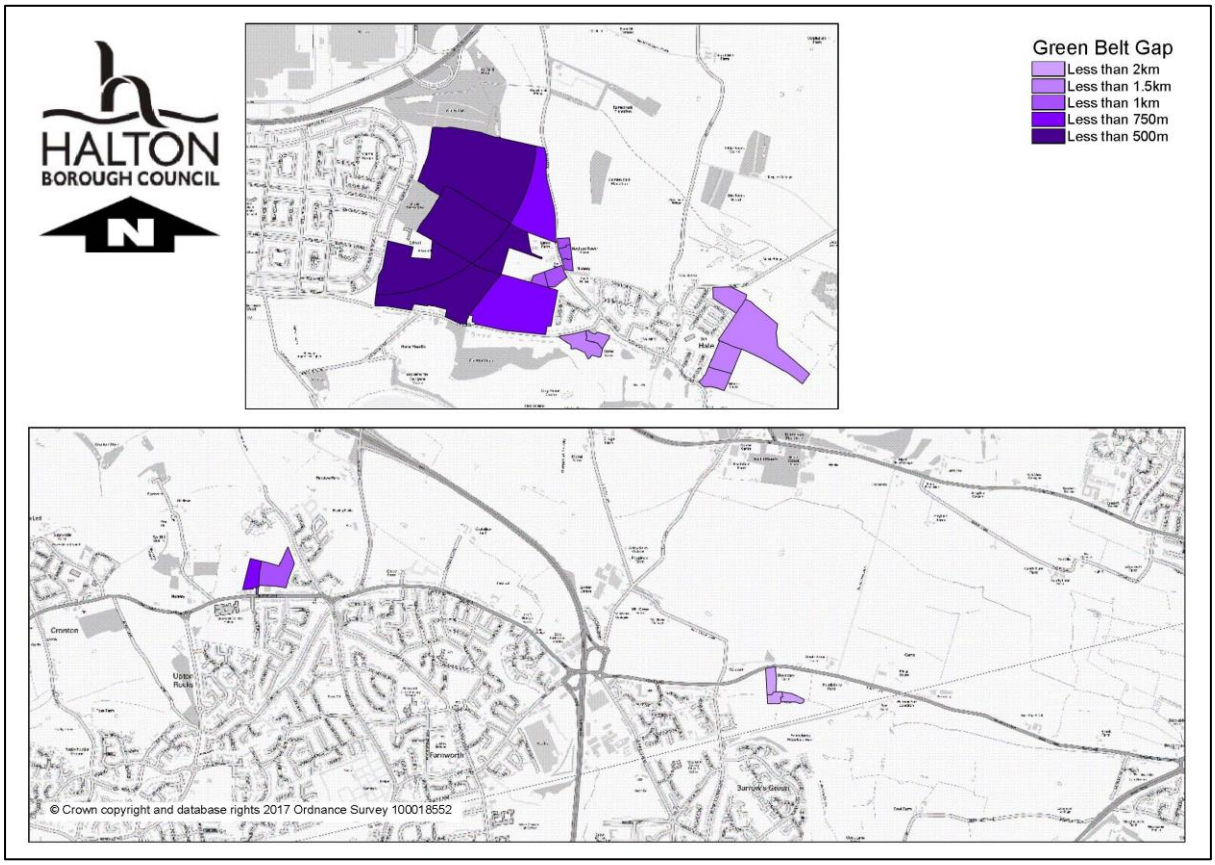
Map 9a: Green Belt Gap



Map 9b: Green Belt Gap (Grouped Sites)



Map 9c: Green Belt Gap (Split Sites)



3.55 Maps 9a, 9b and 9c highlight the green belt gaps between Widnes, Hale and the surrounding towns and settlements in the neighbouring authorities of Liverpool, Knowsley, St Helens and to a lesser extent Warrington, and the gap between Runcorn and Warrington. This provides a visual guide to the width of the Green Belt between Widnes, Hale, Runcorn and surrounding settlements and the 'gaps' that would remain if parcels were to be developed.

3.56 It is evident from the maps that there are some parcels that sit within already very narrow gaps and are therefore are important to preventing neighbouring settlements from merging, for example Site 74 spans the gap between Speke and Hale (Map 8b) and would fill a key part of the gap between Widnes and Liverpool. There are also a number of parcels that will be important in maintaining a gap of more than 500m between towns for example site 119, located to the east of Speke and the Alder Plantation and to the west of Lennox Farm at Hale, which would again reduce the gap between Speke and Hale or Sites 17, 18 and 23 to the north of Widnes (Map 8a), which would reduce the gap between Widnes and Rainhill.

3.57 The parcels within the narrowest gaps were assessed for the gap that would remain should they be developed with the parcels leaving the smallest residual gap shaded darkest. The lighter shades represent larger, though not large, residual gaps. Generally speaking the larger gaps can be found in parcels in Runcorn.

Purpose 3: To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

3.58 The third purpose performs a protective role, to safeguard the countryside. The 'countryside' is defined as open land with an absence of built development and urbanising influences and is characterised by rural, open land uses including agriculture, forestry and some forms of recreation. It is, therefore, closely connected to the assessment of the level of openness which is similarly defined as an absence of built development and urbanising influences.

3.59 It is important to note that some urban fringe land uses which are acceptable under Green Belt policy (e.g. outdoor recreational activities) may include elements of built development that have an urbanising influence and reduce openness, such as playing field changing rooms or pavilions. Certain topographies and natural screening provide a sense of being in the countryside, despite the area being adjacent to an urban boundary.

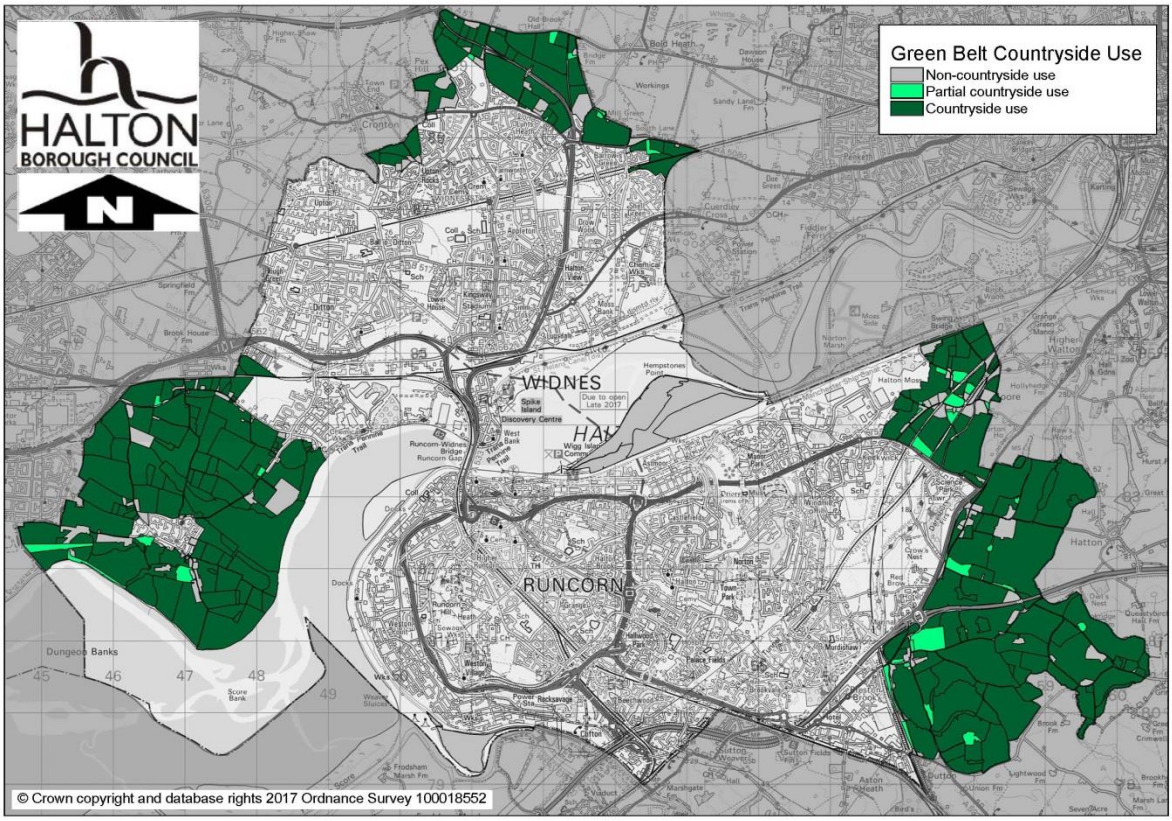
Countryside Uses

3.60 As part of the assessment, the level of encroachment was measured by considering existing development and what the development was used for. Land use within each of the parcels has been considered and categorised as being in one of three categories these being:

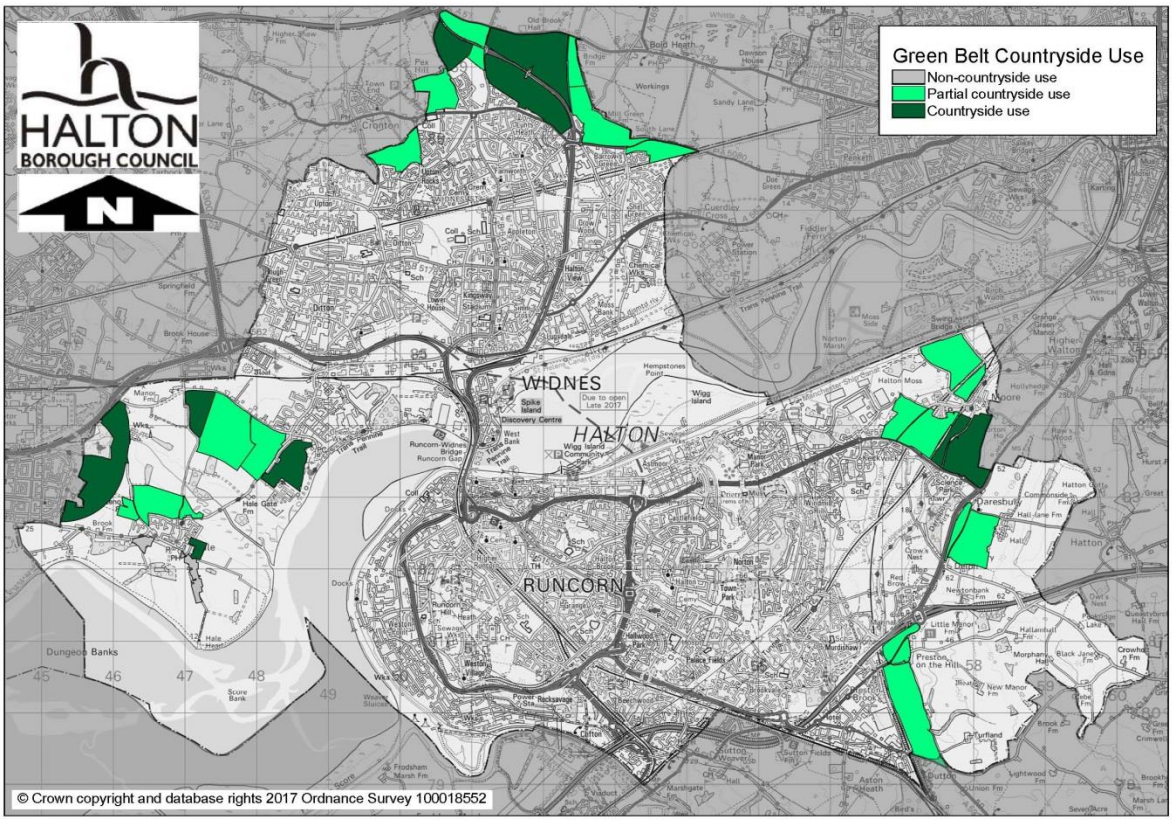
- 'Countryside Use' - include agriculture, equestrian uses, nature, areas used for sport and recreation, amenity space, woodland, parkland, cemeteries and former landfill sites where used for agriculture or recreational uses.
- 'Partial Countryside Use' – include sites with mixed uses either containing one or more 'countryside uses' in addition to non-countryside uses which include garden centres, office development, sewerage works, sport and recreational club houses.
- 'Non Countryside Use' being remaining land uses not described under 'countryside use' or 'partial countryside use' above.

3.61 Other infrastructure and development considered to be 'appropriate' in the Green Belt for the purposes of this assessment included land used for highways infrastructure and former landfill sites.

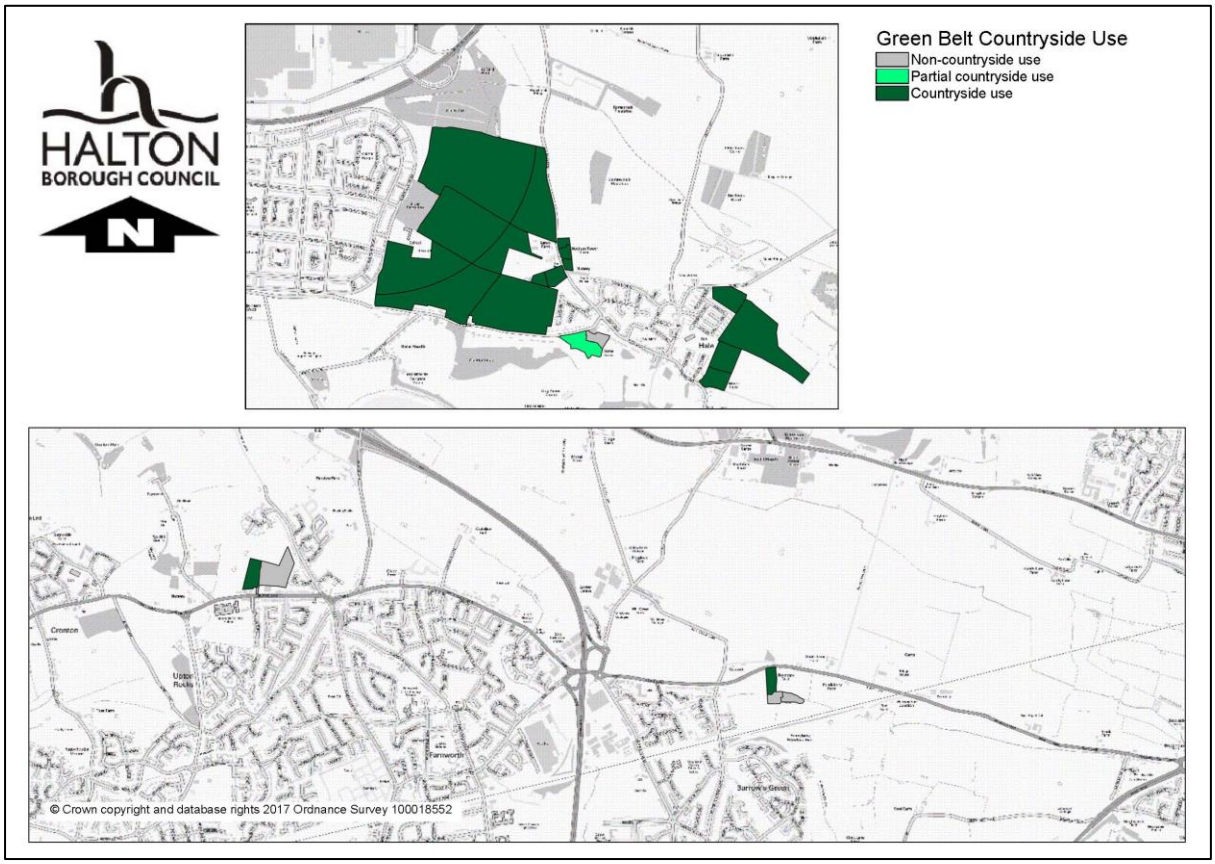
Map 10a: Countryside Use



Map 10b: Countryside Use (Grouped Sites)



Map 10c: Countryside Use (Split Sites)



3.62 As can be seen on Maps 10a, 10b and 10c, much of the Widnes, Hale and Runcorn Green Belt is in Countryside Use, this is to be expected. There are some parcels that are scattered across the Green Belt that are not within Countryside Uses this includes the Sewage Treatment Works (Sites 90 and 126), and residential development, such as that along Church Road and Bailey's Lane and those within the villages of Moore, Daresbury and Preston on the Hill. There are also a small number of parcels in partial countryside uses, including Site 43 Abbey Farm, South Lane, where part of the development of the site is residential and part of it is considered to be farm development.

3.63 The number of grouped parcels (shown on map 10b) in partial countryside uses is much greater with these parcels including the smaller parcels previously identified as within non-countryside use. Whilst the split parcels (shown on map 10c) have no partial countryside uses, as the sites have been split to avoid this where possible e.g. splitting the residential uses from the agricultural ones.

Visual Encroachment

3.64 An assessment of the degree to which a parcel is affected by visual encroachment was also undertaken. By its very nature, this has to be a subjective judgement, as it is not simply a measure of how many urban features can be seen from a particular site. Indeed, due to the urban nature of the area there are few locations in the Borough

where you cannot see substantial 'urban' features such as Fiddlers Ferry Power Station or the Silver Jubilee Bridge.

3.65 Visual encroachment includes the views across a parcel, how open those views are and how much they are interrupted by, or lead on to, urban development and how much any urban development affects the 'countryside feel' of a parcel. These are important considerations. Parcels were then assessed as making a limited, partial or high level of visual encroachment. The following definitions have been used:

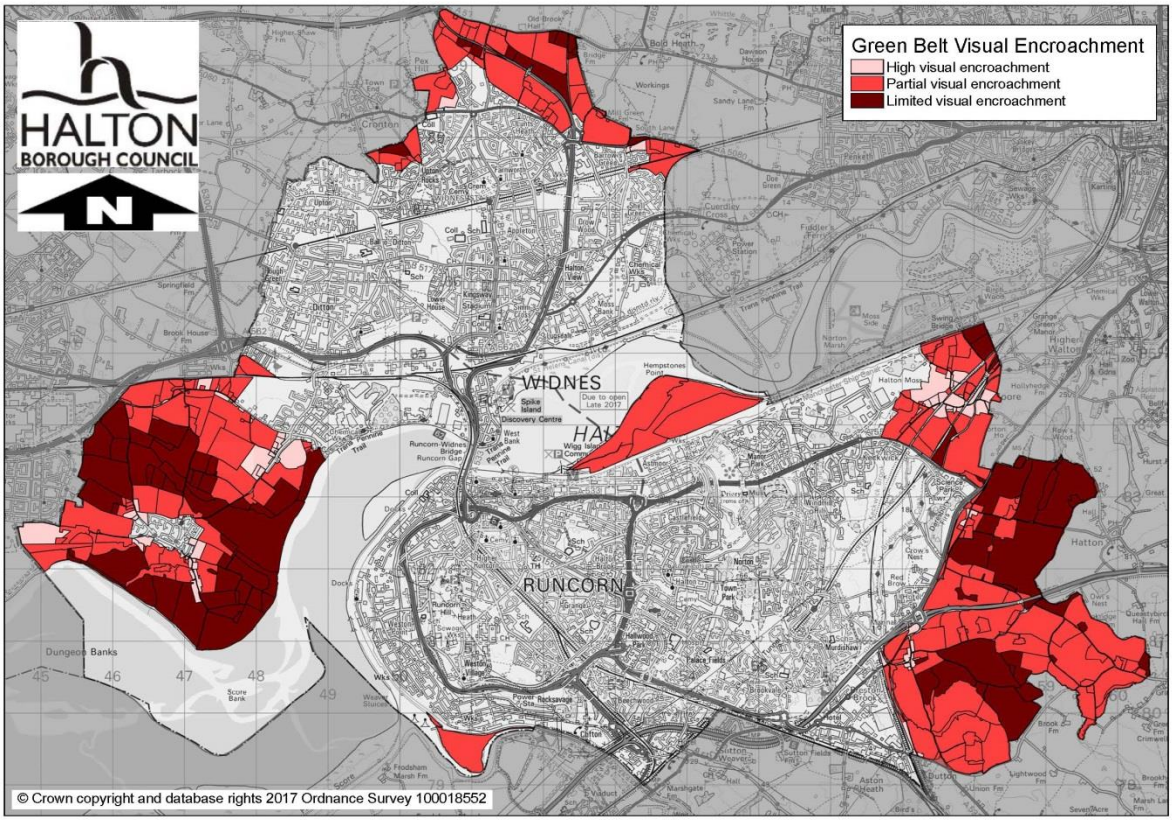
- High level of visual encroachment – views through the parcel and from the parcel are interrupted by urban development or by non-countryside uses within the Green Belt
- Partial visual encroachment – some views through the parcel and from the parcel are considered to be without encroachment from urban development or non-countryside uses
- Limited visual encroachment – views through the parcel and from the parcel are considered to be open and without encroachment from urban development

3.66 This section also identifies the landscape character of the area, highlighting which of the landscape character areas the parcel is within and what strength of character that area is considered to have and what condition it is considered to be in. This information has been taken from the Landscape Character Assessment[5]. The Landscape Character Assessment determined the strength of the character of the area using a range of criteria, including:

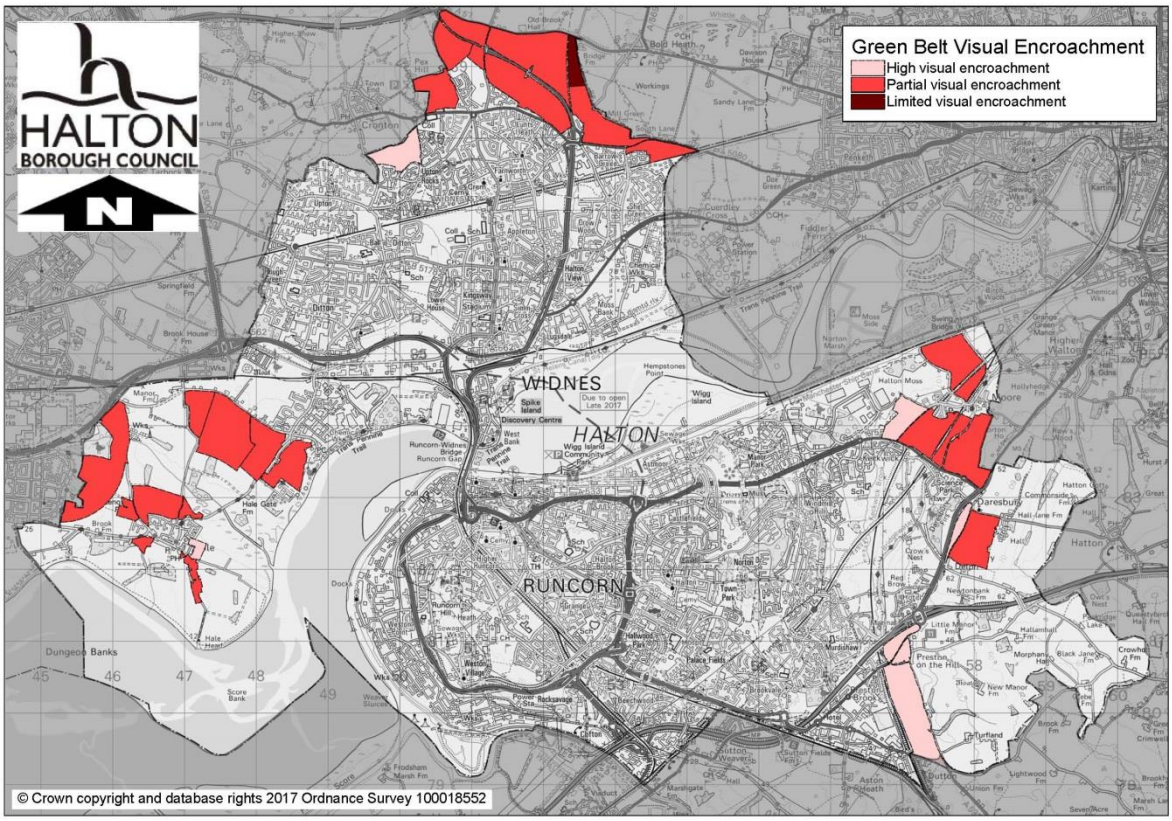
- An assessment of how characteristic features and elements combine to form a sense of place;
- How distinctive and recognisable is the pattern of elements that makes up the character, including both positive and negative elements e.g. consistent use of local building materials;
- Presence and quantity of distinctive features; and
- Identification of landscapes containing historic patterns and features.

[5] Halton Landscape Character Assessment (TEP, 2009) http://www4.halton.gov.uk/Pages/planning/policyguidance/pdf/evidencebase/Green%20Environment/Halton_Landscape_Character_Assessment_(2009).pdf

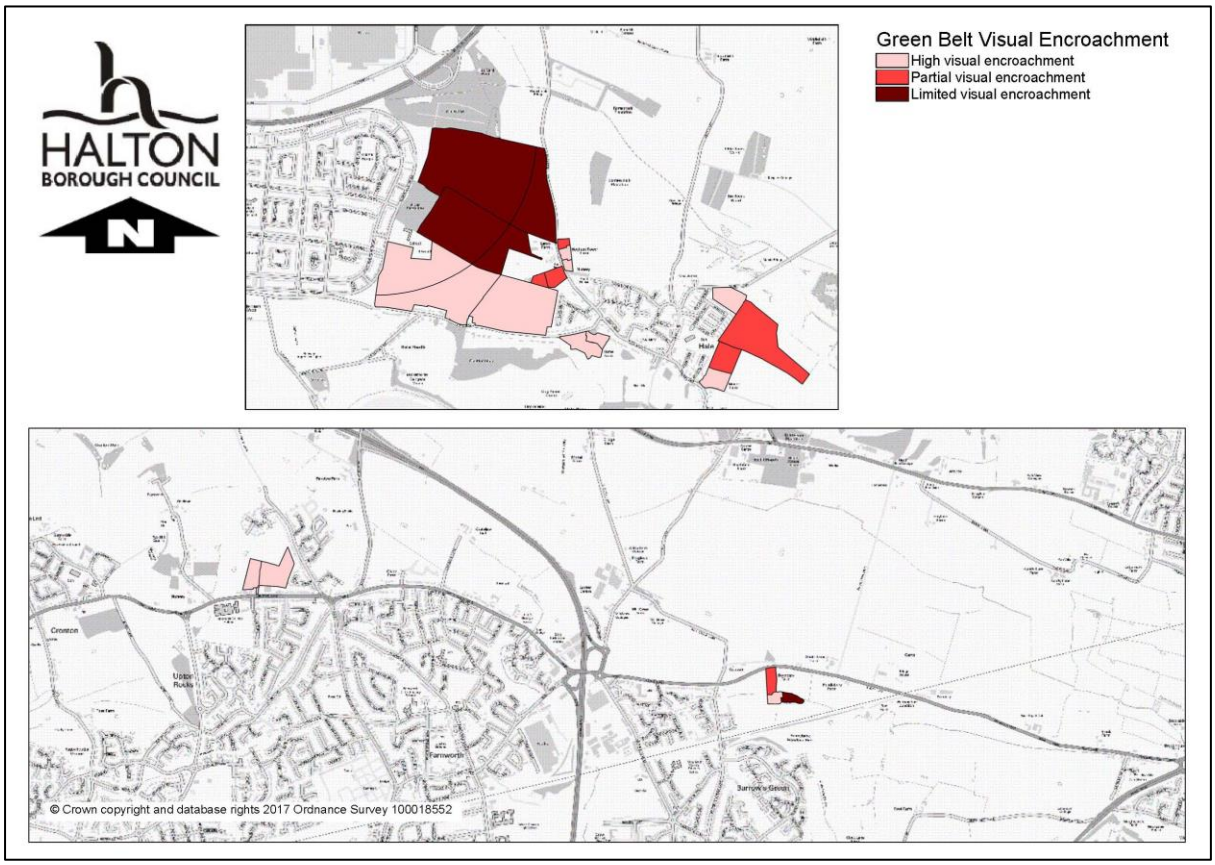
Map 11a: Visual Encroachment



Map 11b: Visual Encroachment (Grouped Sites)



Map 11c: Visual Encroachment (Split Sites)



3.67 Maps 11a, 11b and 11c show the visual encroachment assessment of each of the Green Belt parcels. As can be seen the majority of the parcels adjacent to the urban area and almost all of the grouped parcels have partial visual encroachment and are coloured pink. This can be expected and is typical of urban fringe development where urban development fringes at least one side of the site.

3.68 The parcels with the highest visual encroachment are those sites coloured the lightest shade (pink) and are parcels that are predominately fully developed or where existing urban development adjoins and overlooks the parcel. This includes the residential development within Moore village, Daresbury and Preston on the Hill, and along Church Road, Hale Road, Bailey's Lane and Ramsbrook Lane around Hale, the residential development along Hale Gate Road and Halebank Road around Halebank and the residential development and the Sports Ground along Norland's Lane to the north of Widnes, which are predominantly developed and adjacent to development. Whilst Sites 42 and 45 to the north are adjacent to new residential development off Barrow's Green Lane and Sites 91 and 226 are adjacent to employment development on Newstead Road all of which are considered to be visually encroached by their surrounding development.

3.69 The parcels demonstrating the least visual encroachment are those sites coloured the darkest shade (dark red). The majority of which are located adjacent to Twyford Lane to the north of Widnes, and almost in a circle around Hale to the south. Sites adjacent to the River Mersey and south east of Hale have the least visual encroachment as the absence of built form in combination with natural vegetated screening of existing development results in limited or no visual encroachment. Sites furthest away from the urban area of Runcorn, and the villages of Moore, Daresbury and Preston on the Hill demonstrate the least visual encroachment within the Runcorn Green Belt.

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

3.70 This purpose aims to preserve the character of historic towns such as Chester or Cambridge. Neither Halton nor the surrounding urban areas contain nationally recognised 'historic towns'. This is not to say that there are no locally important historic features that should be respected.

3.71 The second aim of the Merseyside Green Belt, was to ensure that towns and villages retain their individual character. Whilst this can be partly achieved by ensuring that individual settlements are not allowed to merge (Purpose 2), the historic value of the settlements and the assets within it, are also likely to contribute. It is expected that these historic assets would be protected through appropriate policy in the Local Plan.

3.72 However, given the lack of nationally recognised 'historic towns' affecting the study area, the methodology concluded that no specific 'parcel by parcel' assessment was required. Heritage issues are included within Stage 2, Restrictive Constraints.

Purpose 5: To assist urban regeneration

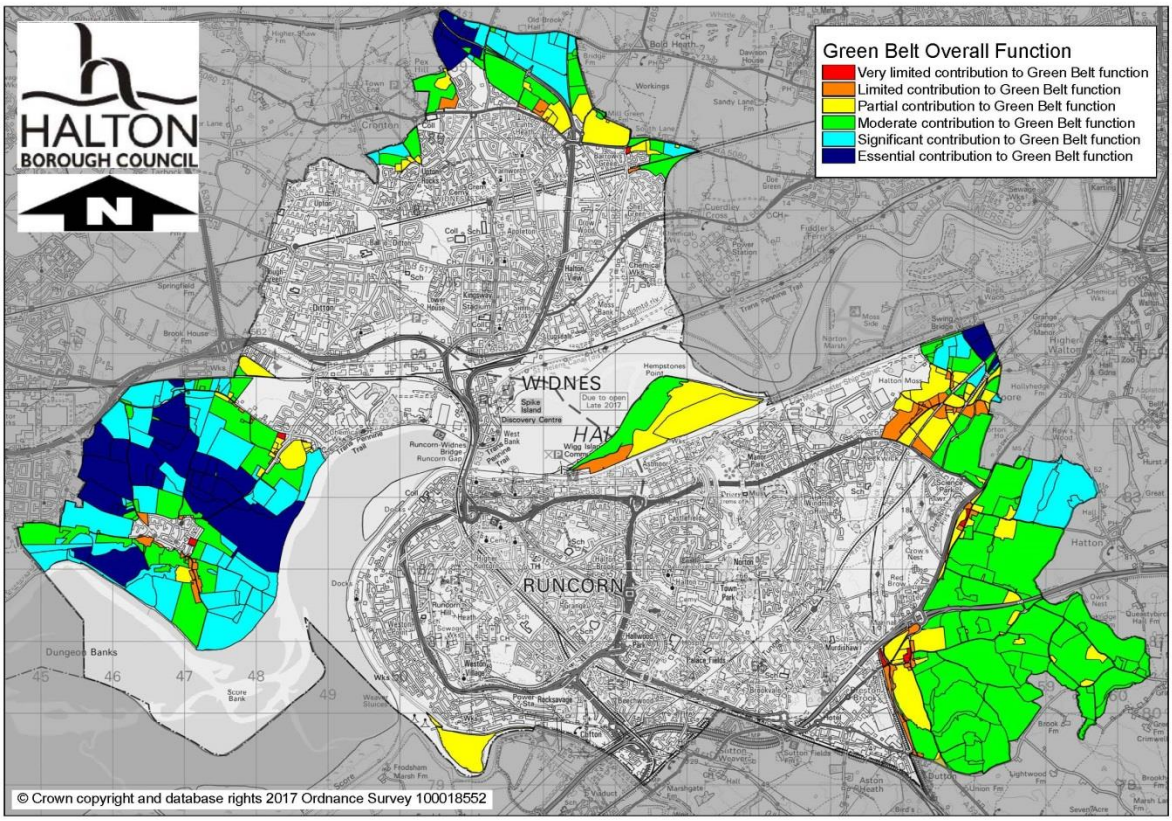
3.73 This purpose is generally recognised as creating an urban focus for development. The Merseyside Green Belt was approved in 1983. Its key purposes were to channel development into the existing urban areas and assist urban regeneration of the urban core. Therefore it is considered that all areas within the Green Belt by their nature and designation should contribute to the recycling of derelict and urban land; as Green Belt is generally a prohibitive designation where development is rarely acceptable, thus urban development becomes the focus for development.

3.74 This purpose has been screened out, as it is felt that development of any of the sites in the Green Belt around Widnes and Hale would be likely to have the same level of impact on urban regeneration.

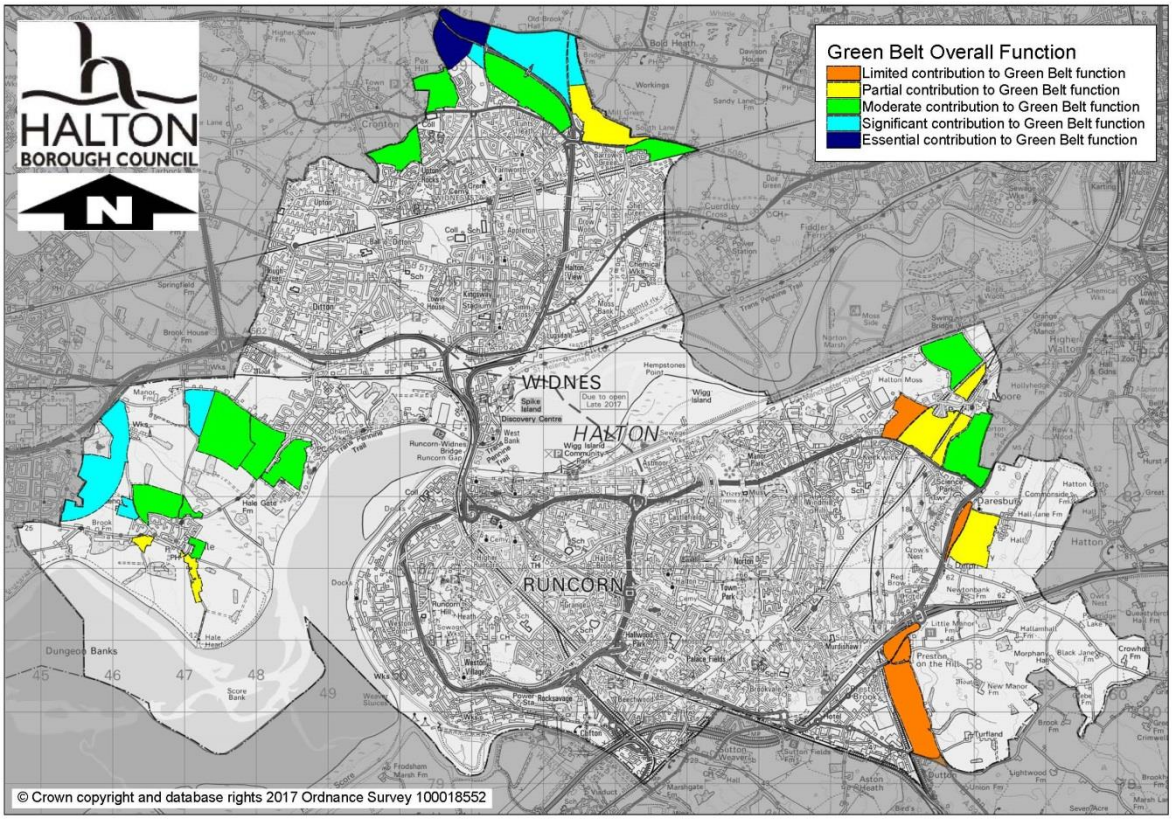
Summary of Green Belt Function

3.75 This third stage has assessed each of the parcels against each of the purposes of the Green Belt, this final section brings together each of the purposes into one overall assessment. Although the NPPF does not suggest that any of the purposes are more or less important than the others, this study has considered that in some areas within the Borough one purpose of the Green Belt is so important that a parcel should remain in the Green Belt, even if it has not performed as well in relation to other purposes. For example, where there are parcels that are performing a critical role in maintaining the gap between towns.

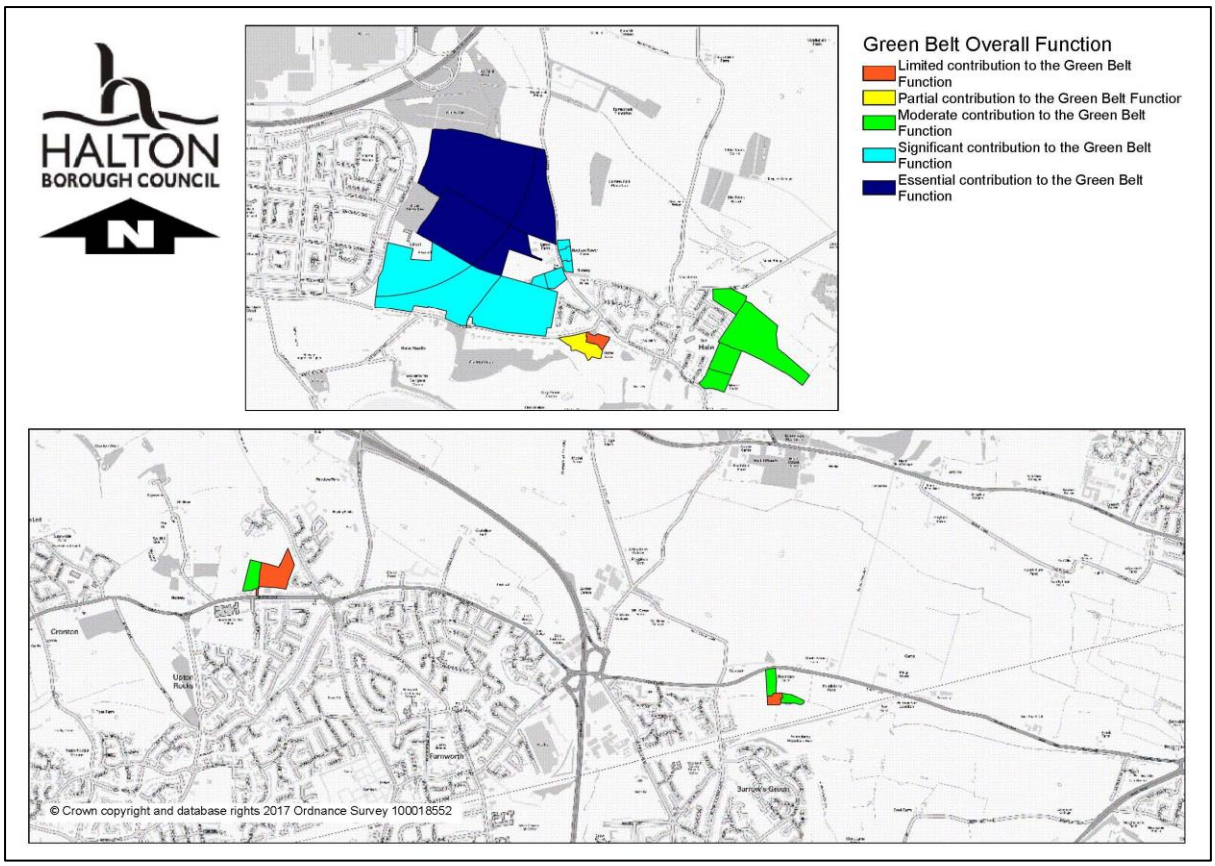
Map 12a: Overall Green Belt Function



Map 12b: Overall Green Belt Function (Grouped Sites)



Map 12c: Overall Green Belt Function (Split Sites)



3.76 This Green Belt Study shows that all the land within the Green Belt around Widnes, Hale and Runcorn provides some contribution to the purposes of including land in the Green Belt. However, Maps 12a, 12b and 12c help to identify the parcels that are serving a Green Belt function but to a greater or lesser extent than other parcels. The parcels that are contributing most to the Green Belt purposes are identified in dark blue, whilst those that are performing the least Green Belt functions are identified in red.

3.77 The red shades are often found where there is already existing development washed over by the Green Belt, and therefore the contribution that the parcel now provides is limited, such as the residential development within the villages at Moore, Daresbruy and Preston on the Hill, and at Norland's Lane or the sites that create ribbon development out of Hale along Church Road and Hale Road. They also include sites that are already so contained by development that it could be argued that development of those parcels would help to 'round off' the settlement pattern, for example Site 110 The Pond House, in Hale.

3.78 However, there are also sites where the Green Belt function is particularly strong. These are sites that are generally open in character, with weak boundaries, used for countryside purposes and generally not encroached or contained by development. In the north of Widnes, they are predominantly located close to Junction 7 of the M62 and along Twyford Lane. Around Hale and south Widnes they are predominantly located to the east of Liverpool and round in an arc between Hale and Halebank down towards the River Mersey and stretching from just south of Pickering's Pasture all the way to Hale Lighthouse. Within Runcorn they include the land to the east of Moore Lane.

3.79 There are also parcels where the contribution to maintaining the gap is such that it is essential to protect the site for example Site 74, on Hale Road, where its development would remove any gap between Liverpool and Hale. There are also parcels to the north of Widnes that if developed would be adjoining Junction 7 of the M62, which is already adjacent to Rainhill, St Helens to the north, thereby potentially joining Widnes and Rainhill or alternatively if the gap is retained to the south, then drawing the urban area of Rainhill closer to Widnes (these sites include 17, 18 and 23).

3.80 There are a significant proportion of sites within the intermediate categories. Those in the lower functioning categories are often those that are adjacent to the urban area or villages and are therefore considered largely or partially contained and are subject to visual encroachment due to their proximity to development.

3.81 The remaining sites are all subject to a mix of visual encroachment, partial containment and gap influences, with some having a mid-ground for each and some being greatly affected by one factor only.

3.82 More detail on each parcel can be found within the Compendium of Individual Site Records, with Map 3 of this report identifying the Parcel Identification Number for each site.

STAGE 4 – Assessment of Openness and Countryside Character

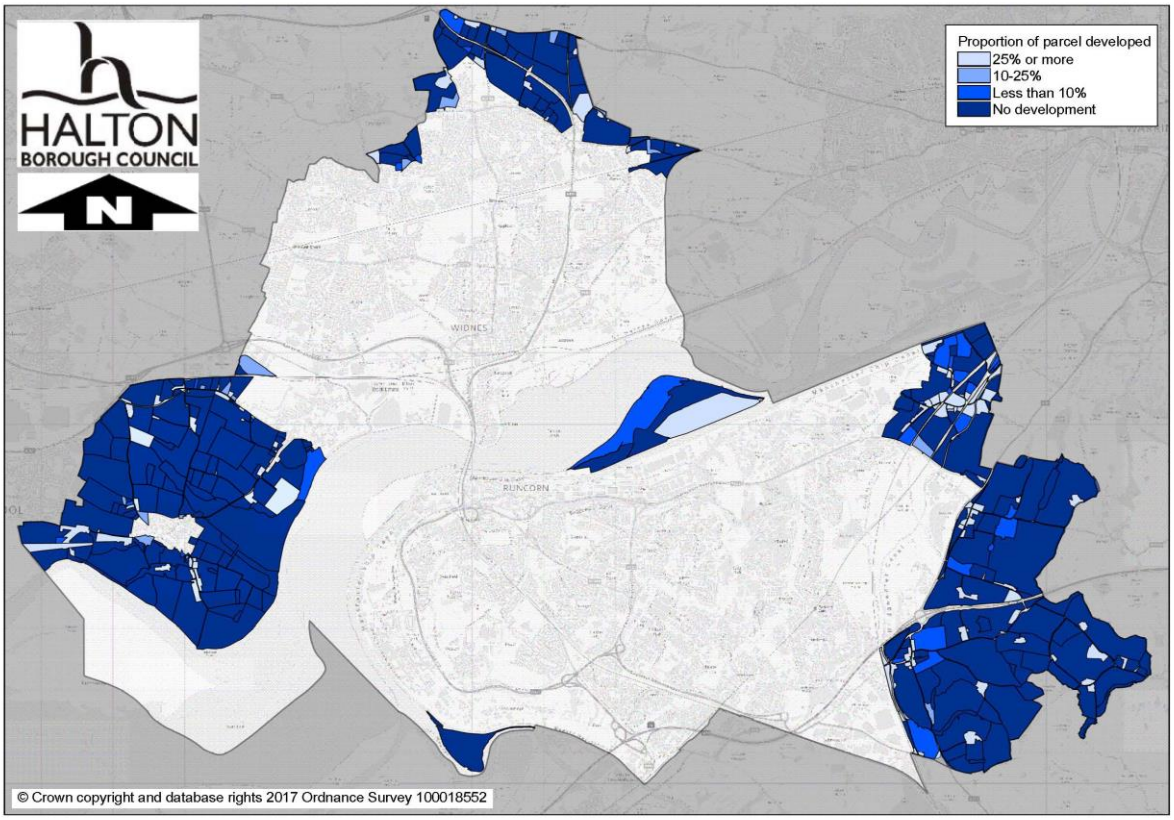
Openness

3.83 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that 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. There is however, no specific definition of 'openness' in the NPPF.

3.84 This final stage of the assessment has considered the openness of each of the parcels at the current time. The issue of openness has, recently been considered in the Courts[6] where it has been defined that openness is a concept which equates to the 'absence of buildings'; i.e. it is land that is not built upon.

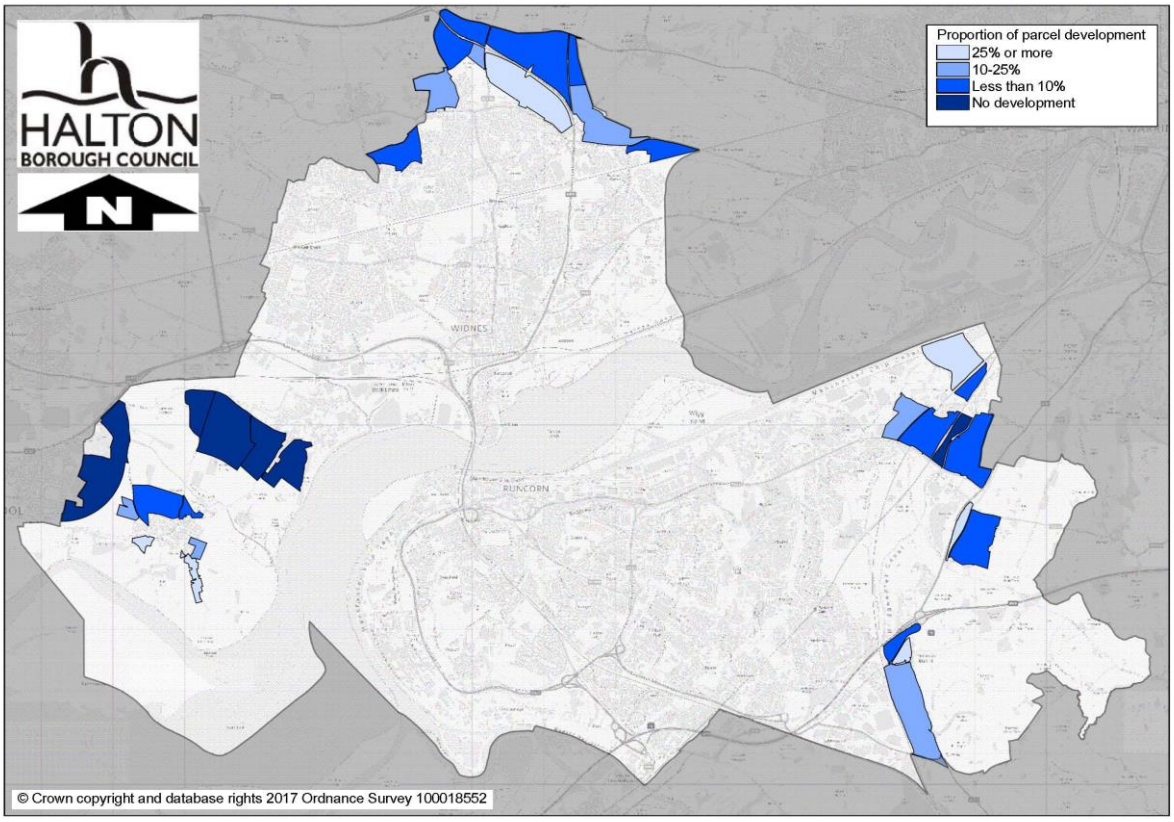
3.85 Therefore one of the considerations when looking at the concept of openness is the lack of buildings. A site with buildings that are unobtrusive, camouflaged or screened in some way is not necessarily open.

Map 13a: Openness

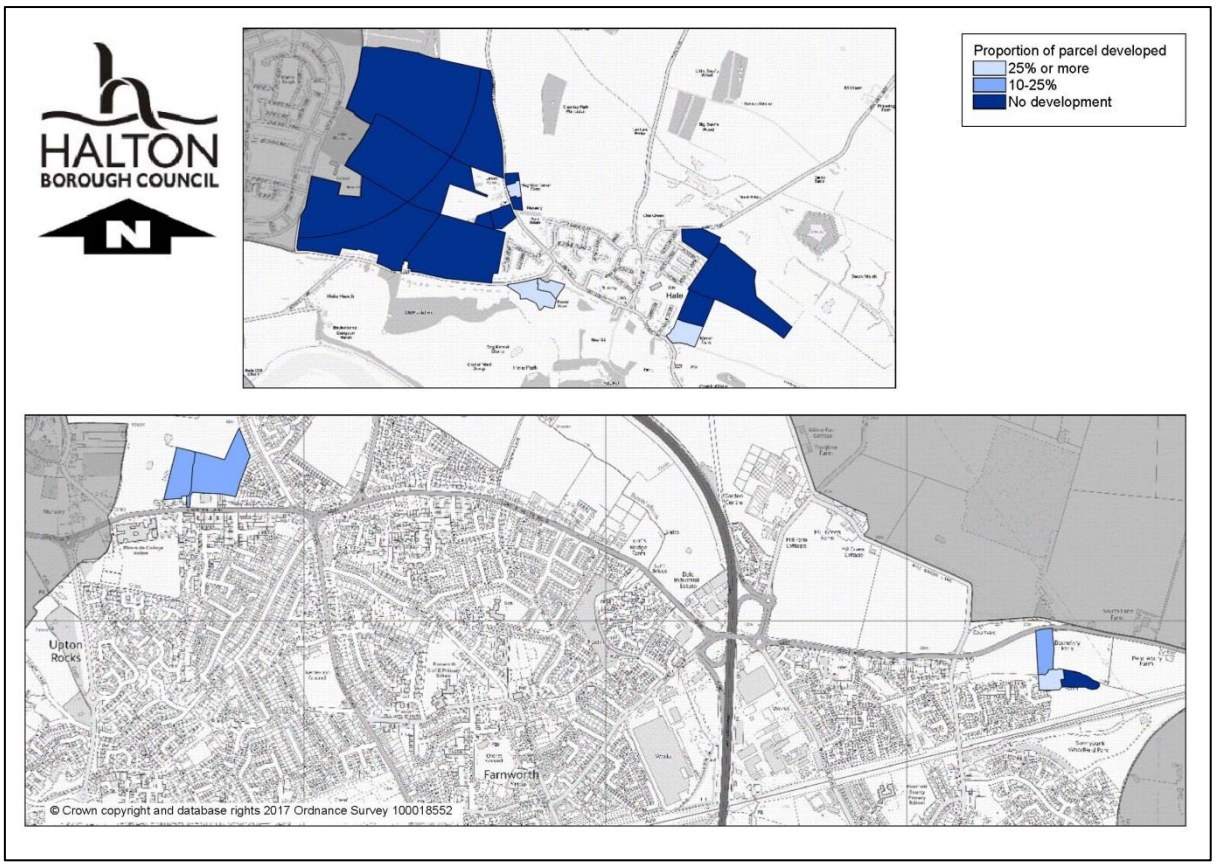


[6] Heath & Hampstead Society v London Borough of Camden (3rd April 2007))([2007]EWHC977(Admin)) and Mrs Jean Timmins & AW Lymn (The Family Funeral Service) Ltd vs Gedling Borough Council (11/03/2014) ([2014 EWHC 654 (Admin))

Map 13b: Openness



Map 13c: Openness



3.86 As would be expected, much of the existing Green Belt is considered open, these are shown by the darkest shades of blue. The sites with the highest proportion of development and therefore least open include the residential development within the villages of Moore, Daresbury and Preston on the Hill along with development that ribbons along the roads out of Hale at Church Road and Hale Road. There are also other parcels where there is substantial unscreened residential development that results in an interruption to the openness of those areas. In addition a number of commercial developments such as Rivendell Garden Centre and Fords Sports and Social Club also have this interruption to the openness of those areas.

3.87 Where there is only a small proportion of development on the site the parcels are shaded in the intermediate range, for example at Pickering's Pasture where there is only a Visitor Centre on the site and no other development (Less than 10% development).

3.88 Grouping the parcels, as shown in Map 13b has increased the proportion of development within the sites with more of these parcels having some form of development within them.

Countryside Character

3.89 Countryside character this has included a general assessment of the perception of the countryside, for example certain topographies and natural screening provide a sense of being in the countryside despite the area being adjacent to the urban area. Areas considered to provide a limited contribution to the countryside character are those that include urban influences such as hardstanding or floodlighting, whilst those making a strong contribution tend to be those that display rural characteristics and uses or include key landscape features that are considered important to the appreciation of the countryside. Rural uses of a countryside character are considered to include agriculture, forestry, outdoor recreation and areas of biodiversity in accordance with national policy.

Site Capacity

3.90 The Individual Site Assessment for each parcel contains information in relation to the potential number of houses it could accommodate, the 'notional site capacity'. These figures have been calculated using a standard formula, including the following standard assumptions about how much of any site (based on site size) is 'developable'.

Site Size	Developable Area: Gross to Net Ratio	Density
Less than 0.4ha	100%	30dph
0.4ha to 2ha	90%	30dph
2ha to 5ha	80%	30dph
Over 5ha	70%	30dph

3.91 These gross to net ratios have been calculated based on evidence from existing developments across the Borough.

Site Area (Hectares)	X	Percentage of site assumed to be developable	X	Average Dwellings per Hectare (dph)	=	Notional Capacity

Worked example – Site GB001

1.29 Ha.	**X**	**90%**	**X**	**30 dph**	**34**

3.92 The site capacities are only for information and have not taken into account all the details of the site, including existing development, physical constraints (e.g. topography, ponds, woodland), restrictive constraints (e.g. flooding or ground conditions) or the deliverability or viability of the site.

3.93 It is also important to note that at this stage the sites have not been subject to the level of testing that would be required were they to be removed from the Green Belt and allocated for development in future planning policy or granted planning permission for development. This testing could include, amongst others, Sustainability Appraisals (SA), Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA), Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), Environment Impact Assessment (EIA), Traffic Impact Assessment (TIA), Health Impact Assessment (HIA) and Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA).

3.94 It should also be noted that the Green Belt Study, will not be the only piece of evidence supporting the Local Plan that is considered in determining sites to be removed from the Green Belt and in considering future land uses.

Appendices

Map 1: Merseyside Green Belt

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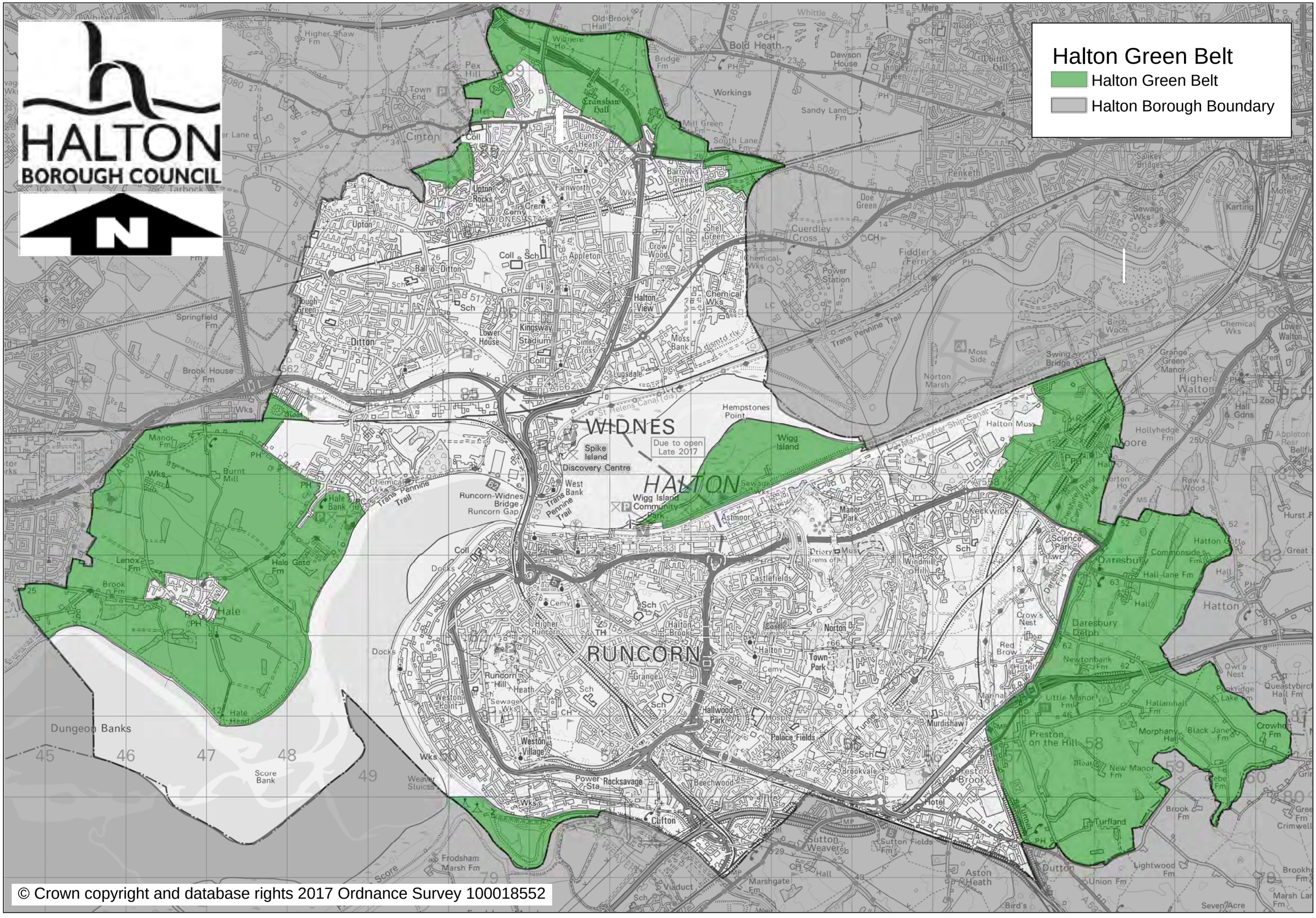

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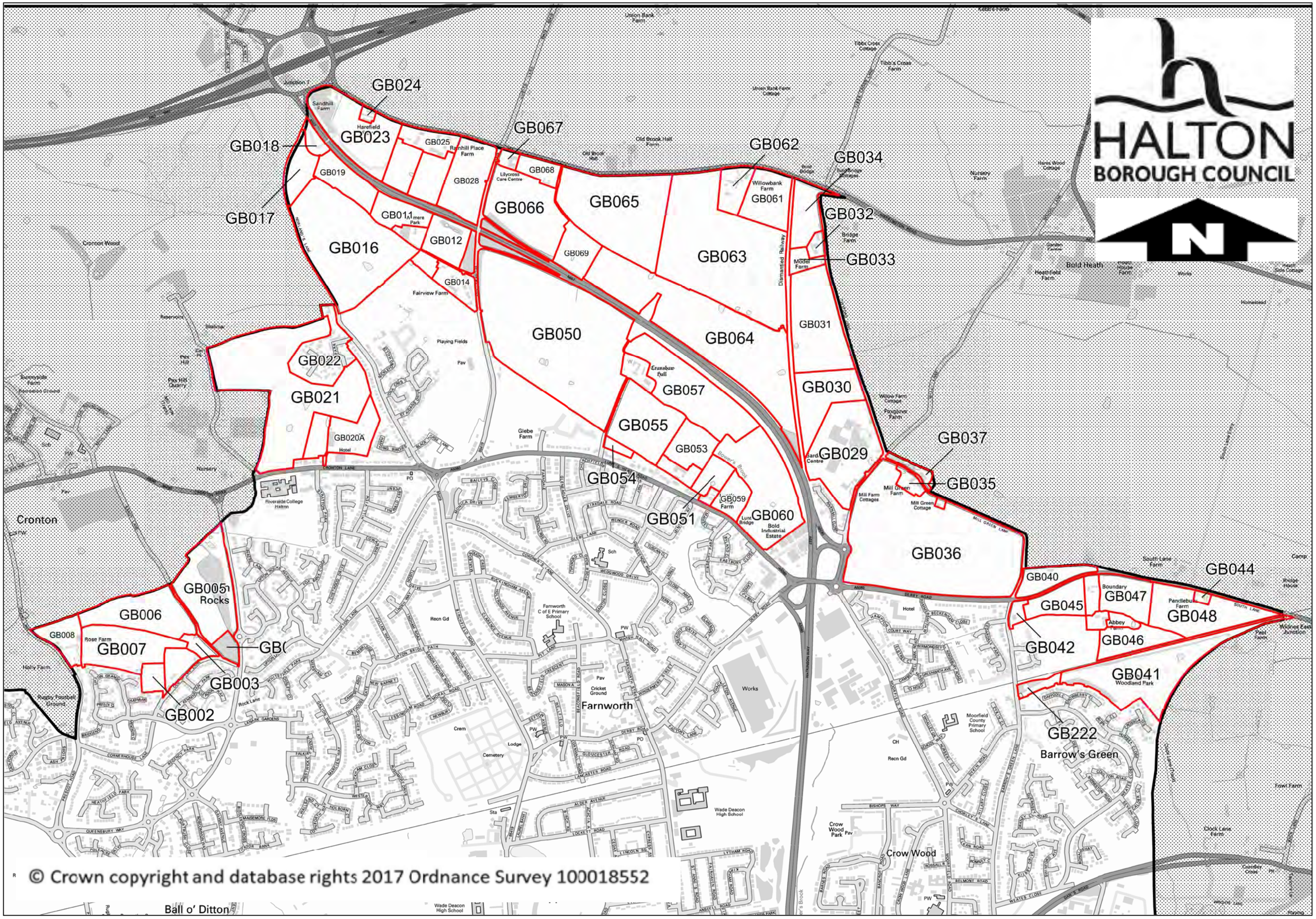
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Rocks
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Cronton
Farnworth
Crow Wood
Bold Heath
Ball o' Ditton
Union Bank Farm
Tibb's Cross Farm
Sandhill Farm
Harefield
Renhill Place Farm
Lilycross Care Centre
Old Brook Hall Farm
Willowbank Farm
Bridge Farm
Model Farm
Fairview Farm
Playing Fields
Glebe Farm
Cransbaw Hall
Mill Green Farm
Mill Farm Cottages
Mill Green Cottage
Lunt Bridge
Bold Industrial Estate
Riverside College Halton
Farnworth C of E Primary School
Cricket Ground
Cemetery
Wade Deacon High School
Moorfield County Primary School
Crow Wood Park
Woodland Park
Pandlebury Farm
Abbey Farm
Boundary
Dismantled Railway
Junction 7
Cronton Wood
Holly Farm
Rugby Football Ground
Nursery
Recn Gd
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Hotel
Sch
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Lodge
Crem
Riding Stables
Pex Hill
Pex Hill Quarry
Sunnyside Farm
Rose Farm
Hares Wood Cottage
Nursery Farm
Heathfield Farm
Willow Farm Cottage
Foxglove Farm
Bard Centre
Bold Bridge
Bold Bridge Cottages
Tibb's Cross Cottage
Union Bank Farm Cottage
Kebble Farm
Garden Centre
Homestead
Heath Side Cottage
South Lane Farm
Wadnes East Junction
Fowl Farm
Clock Carle Farm
Camp
Bridge House
Pebil Farm
Greenbay Cross
Rock Lane
Cronton Lane
Derby Road
Mill Green Lane
South Lane
Watkinson Way
Bishops Way
Weates Close
Dans Road
Moorfield Road
Beaver's Brook
Playing
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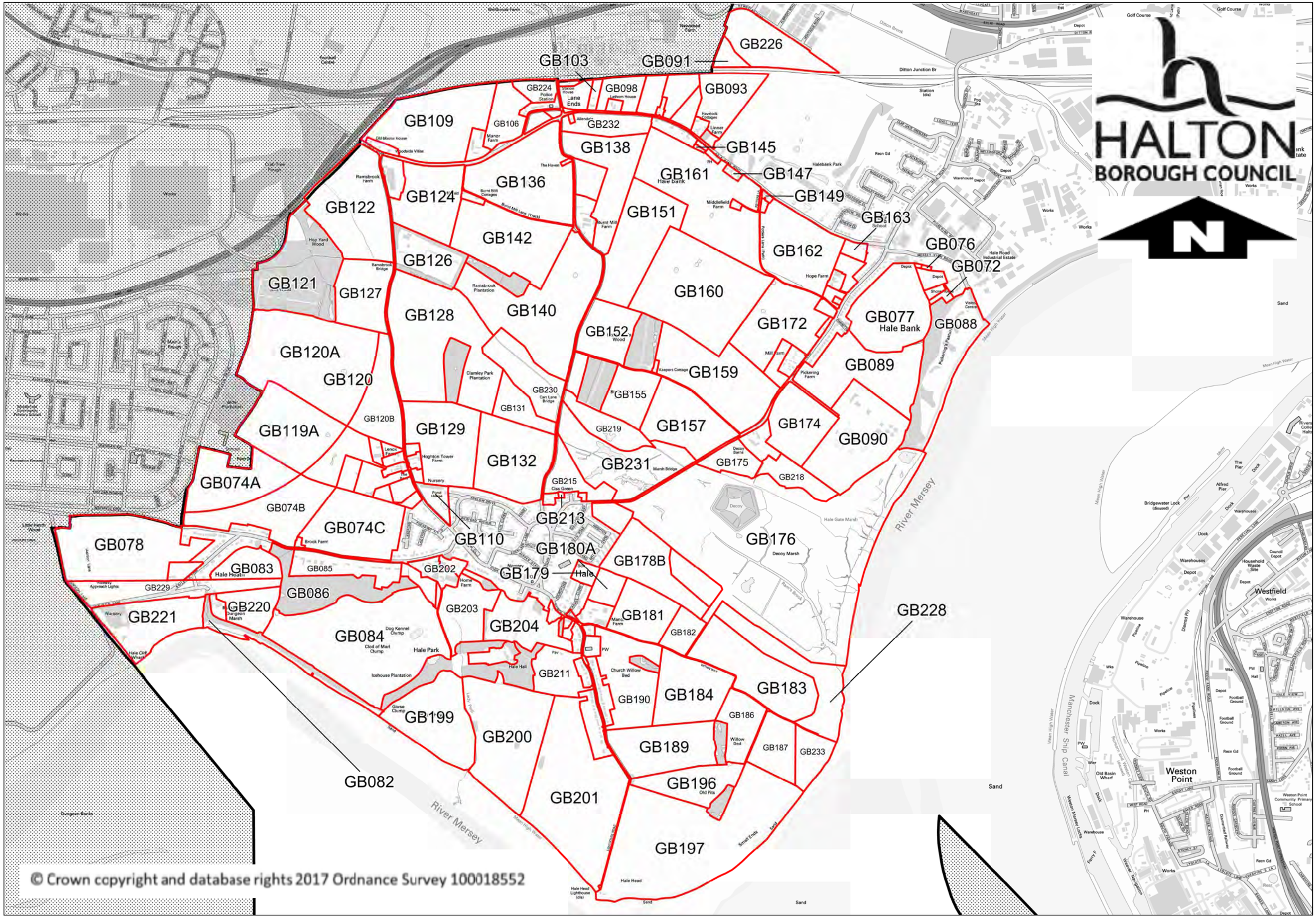
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River Mersey
Manchester Ship Canal
Weston Point
Westfield
Hale
Hale Park
Hale Head
Sand
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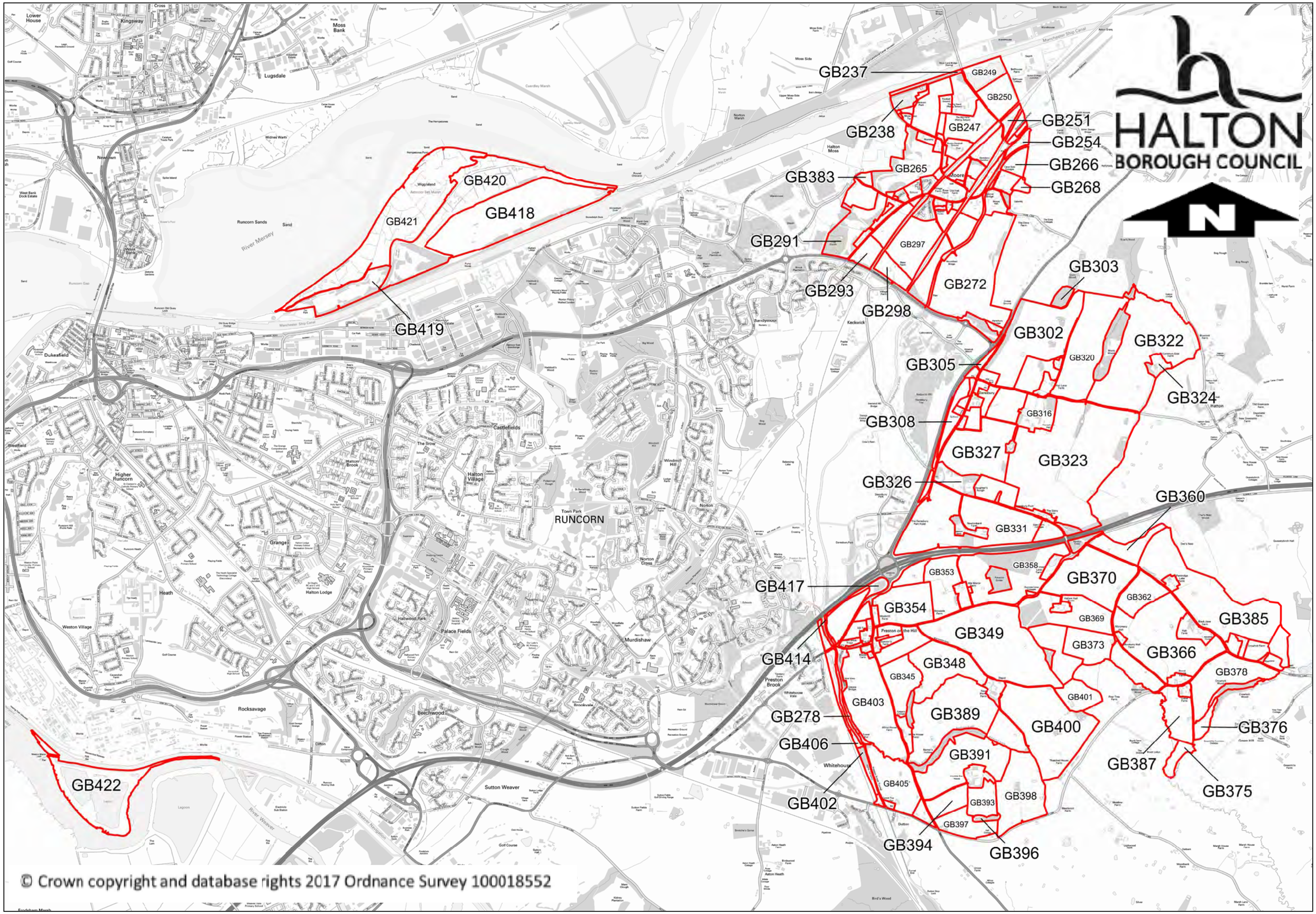

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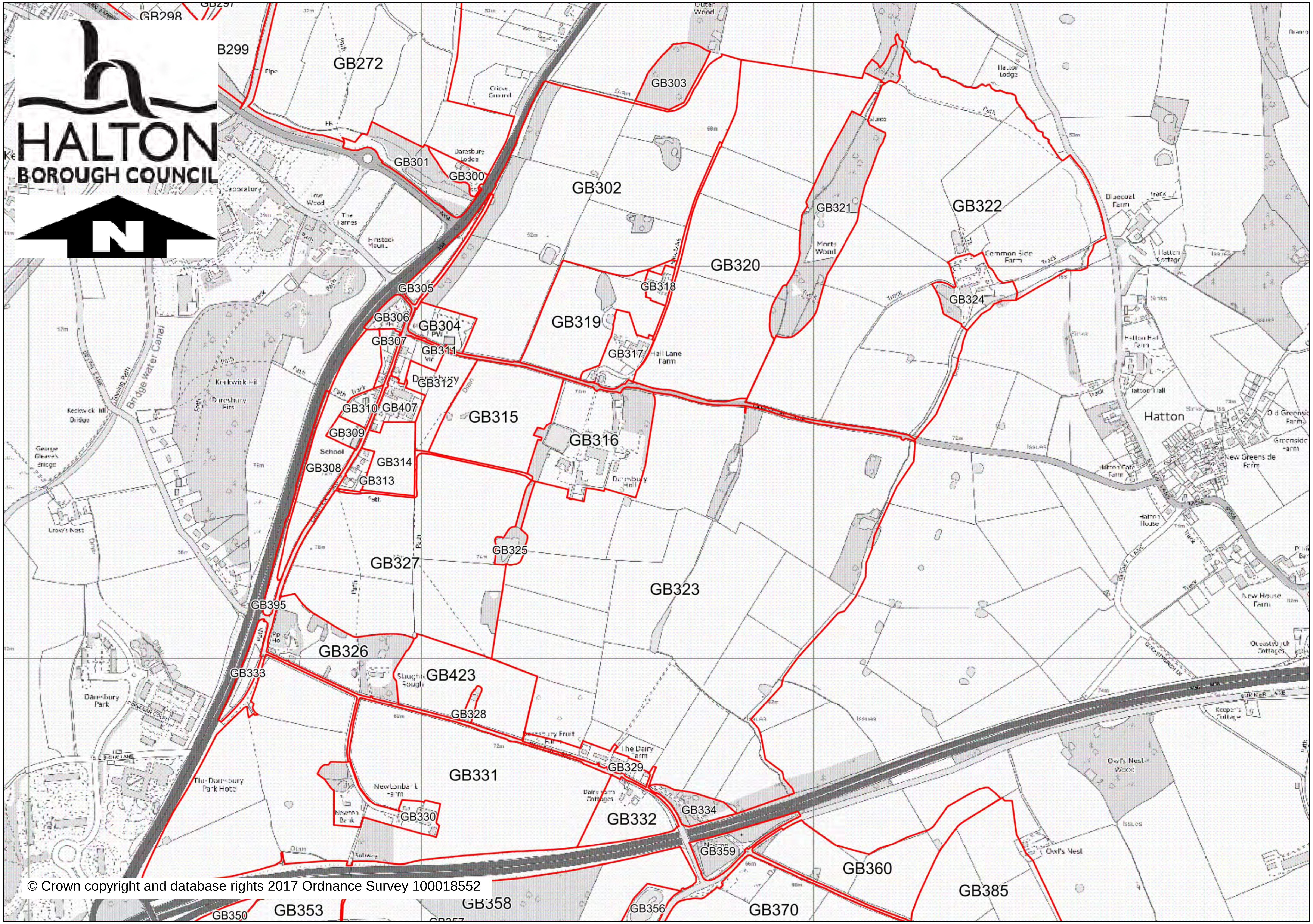

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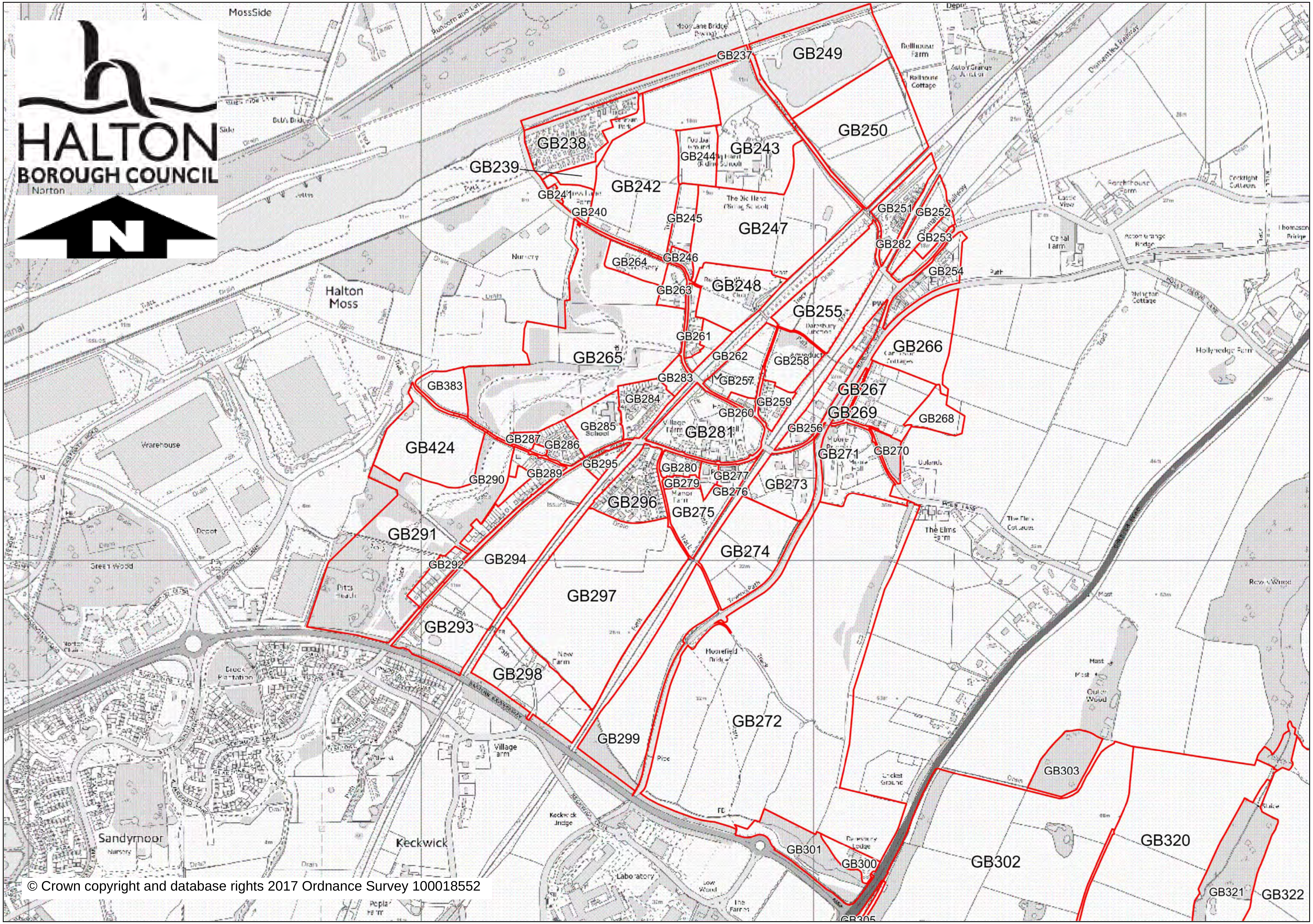

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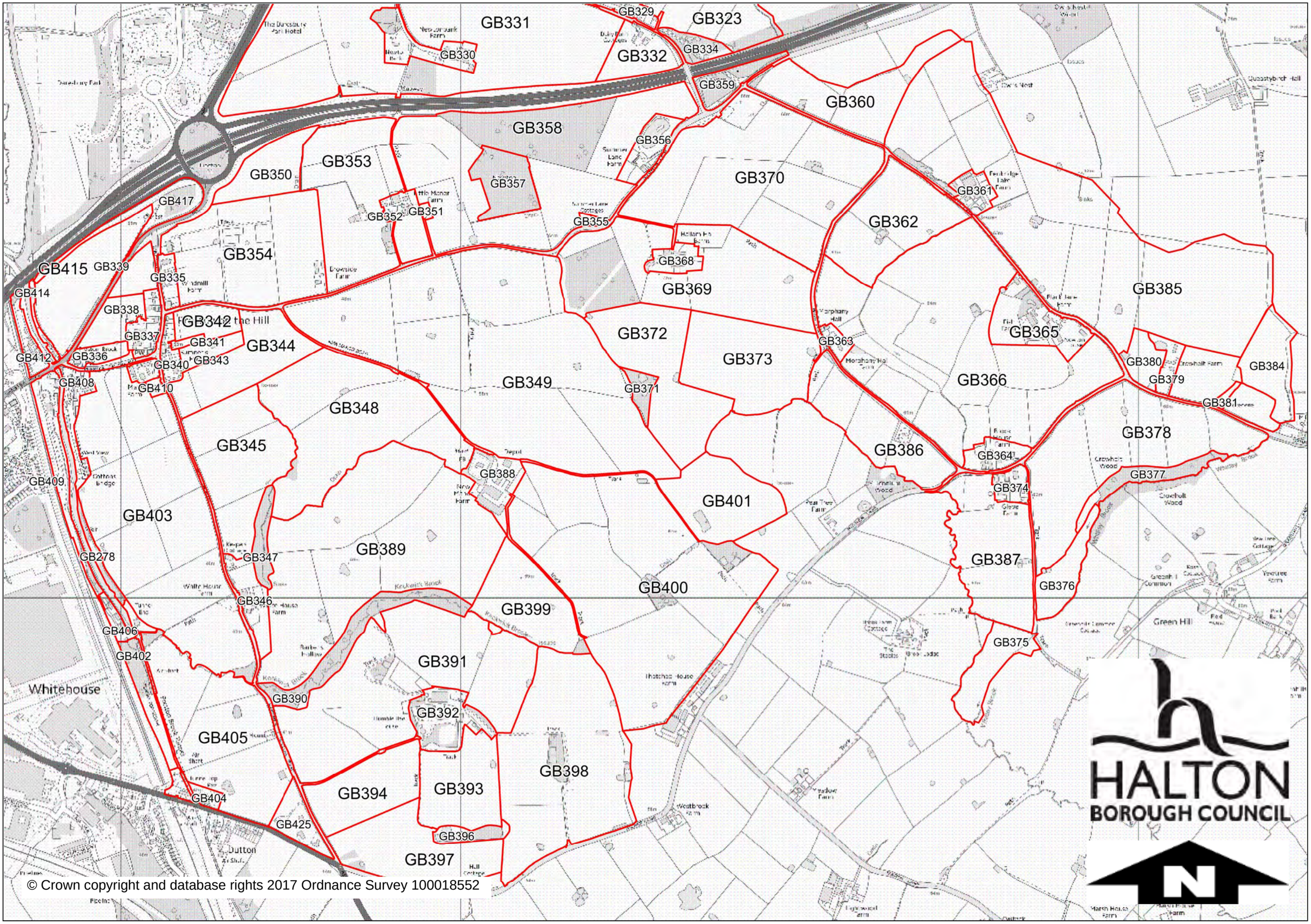

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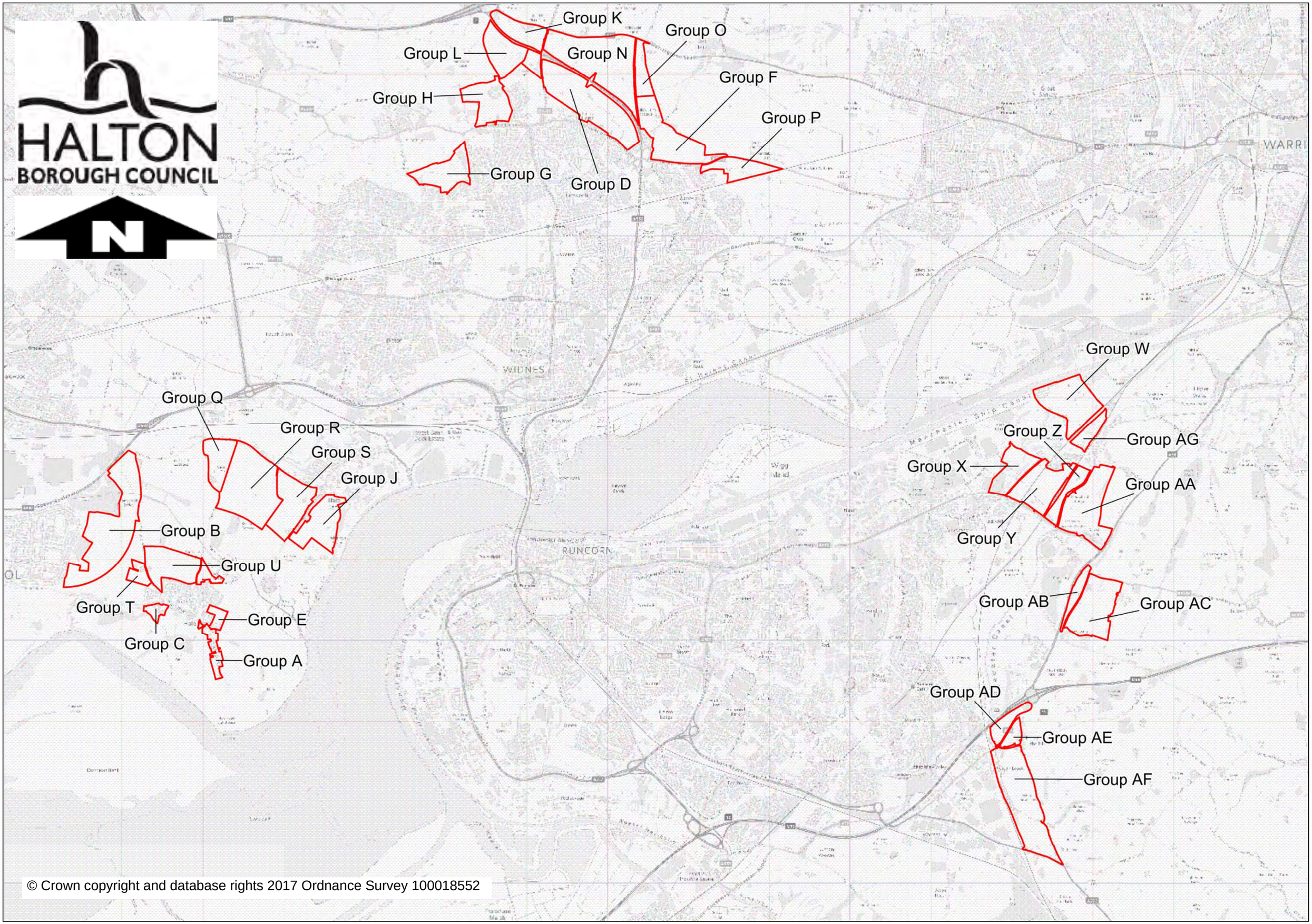
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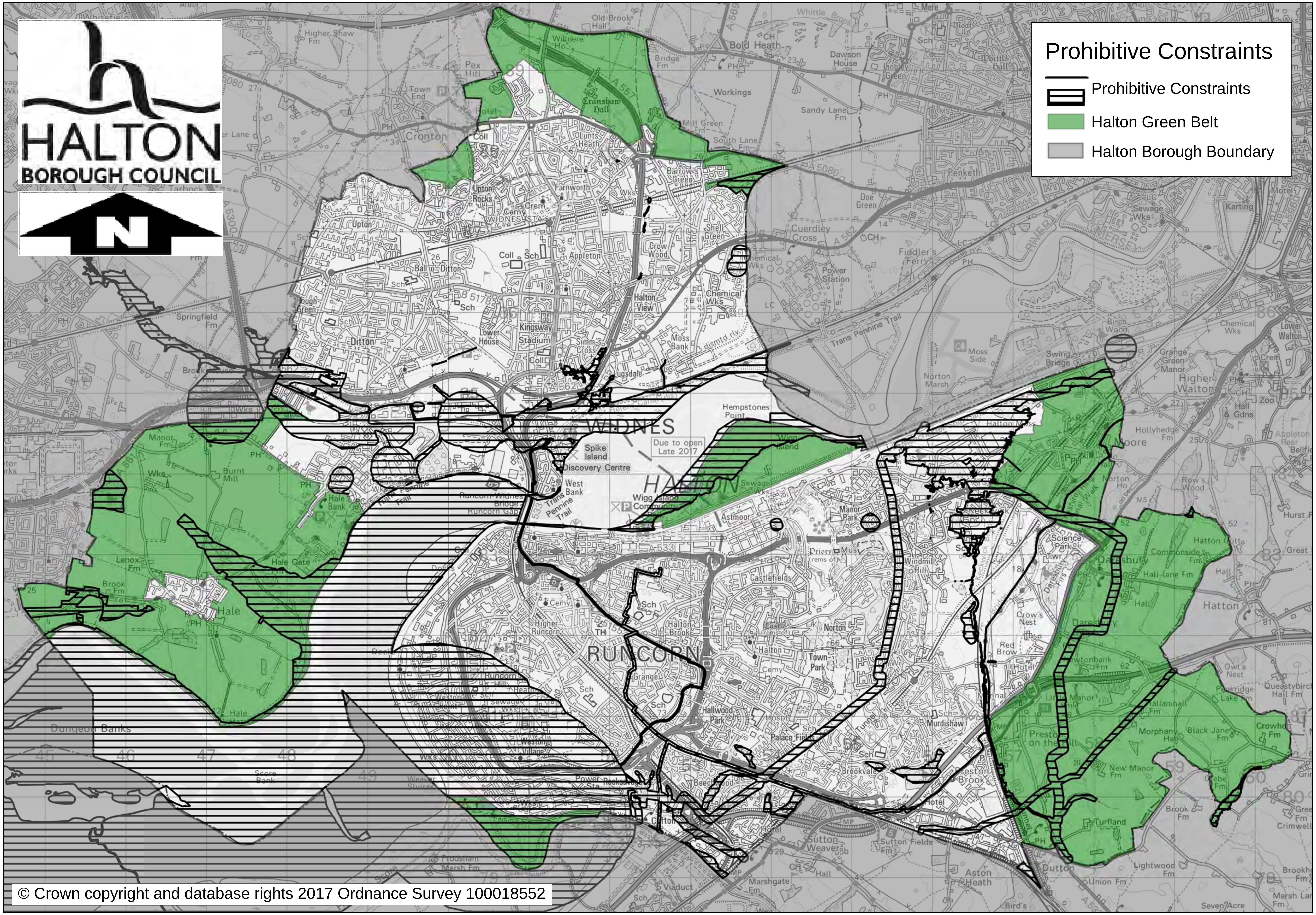

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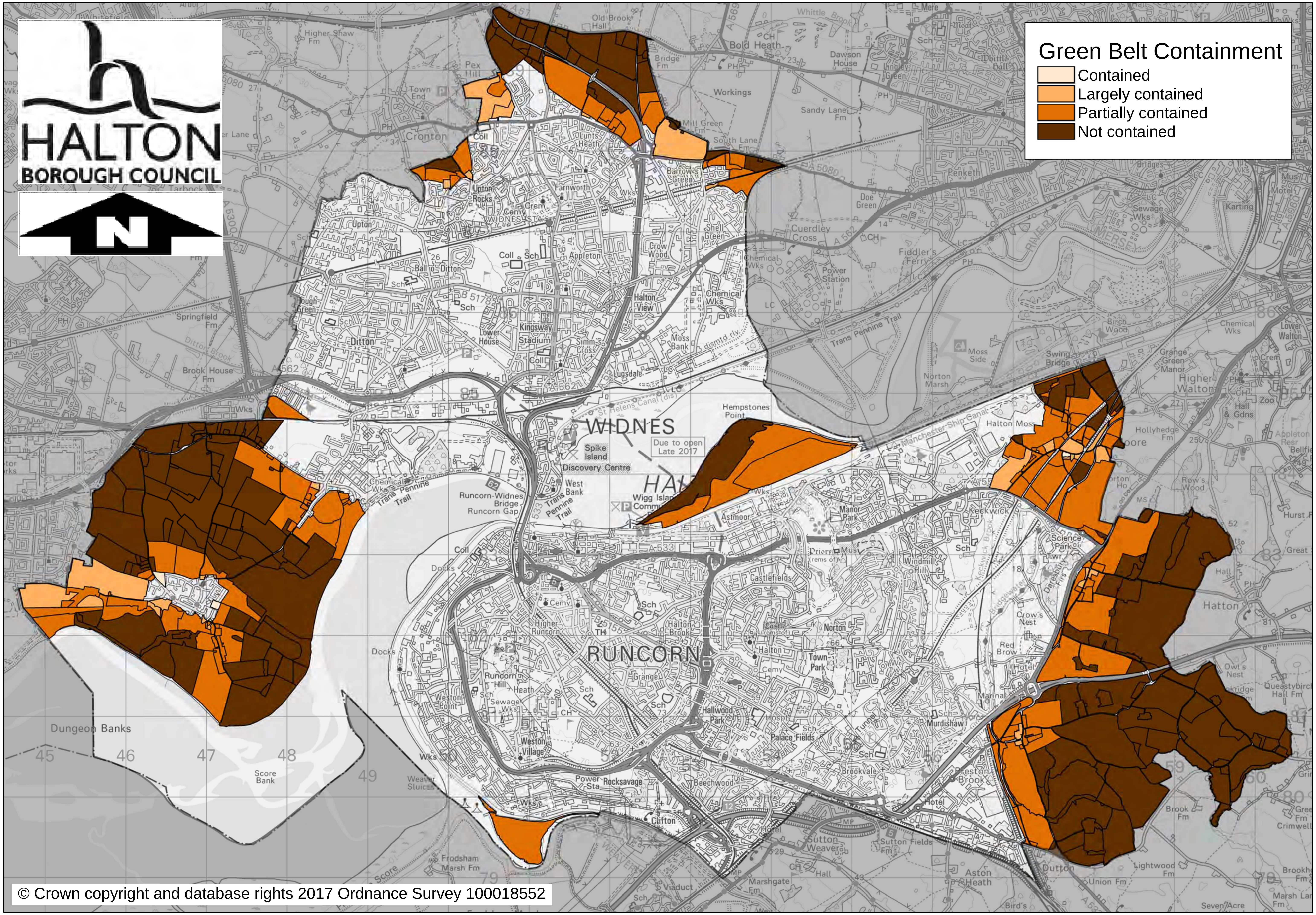

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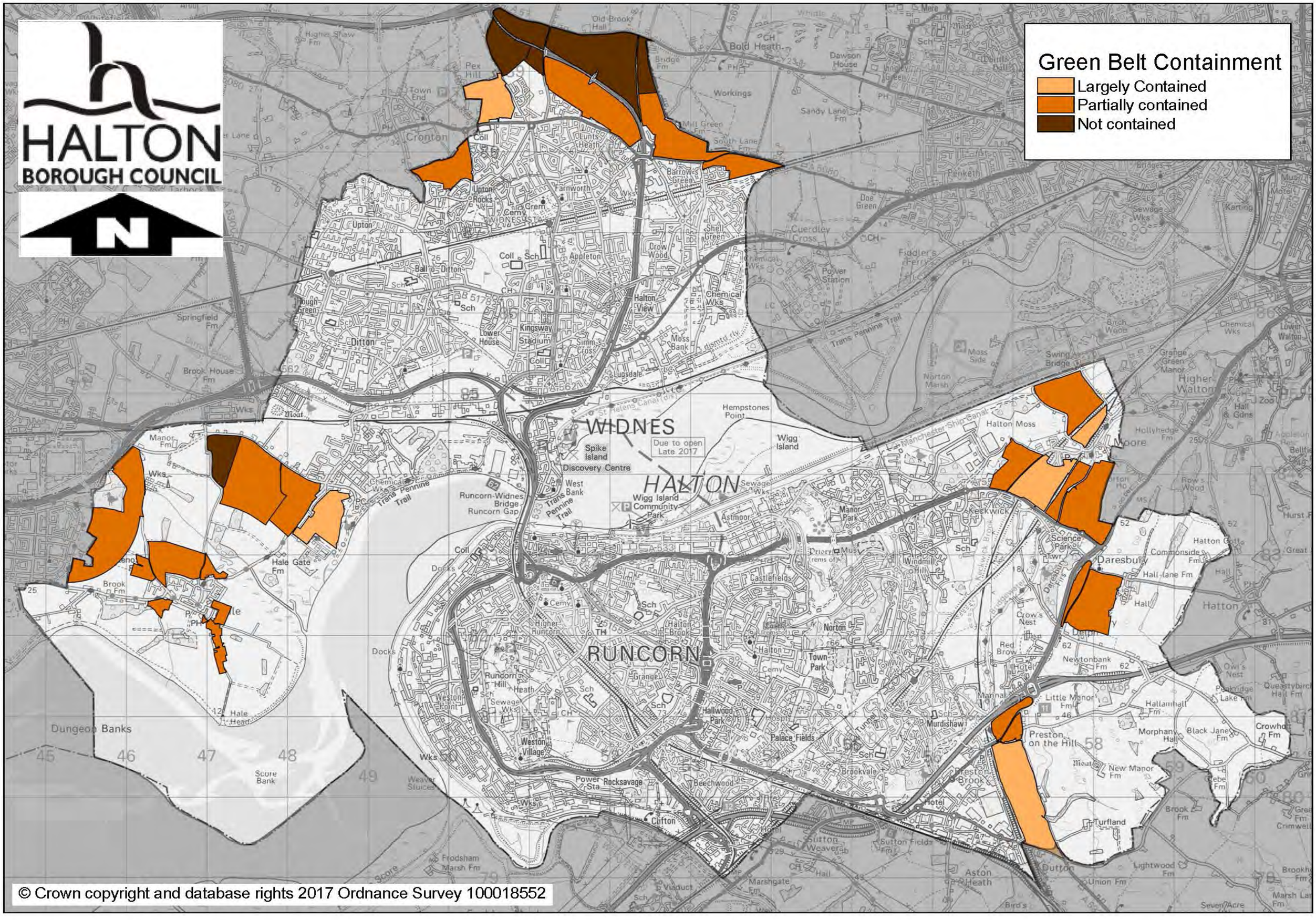

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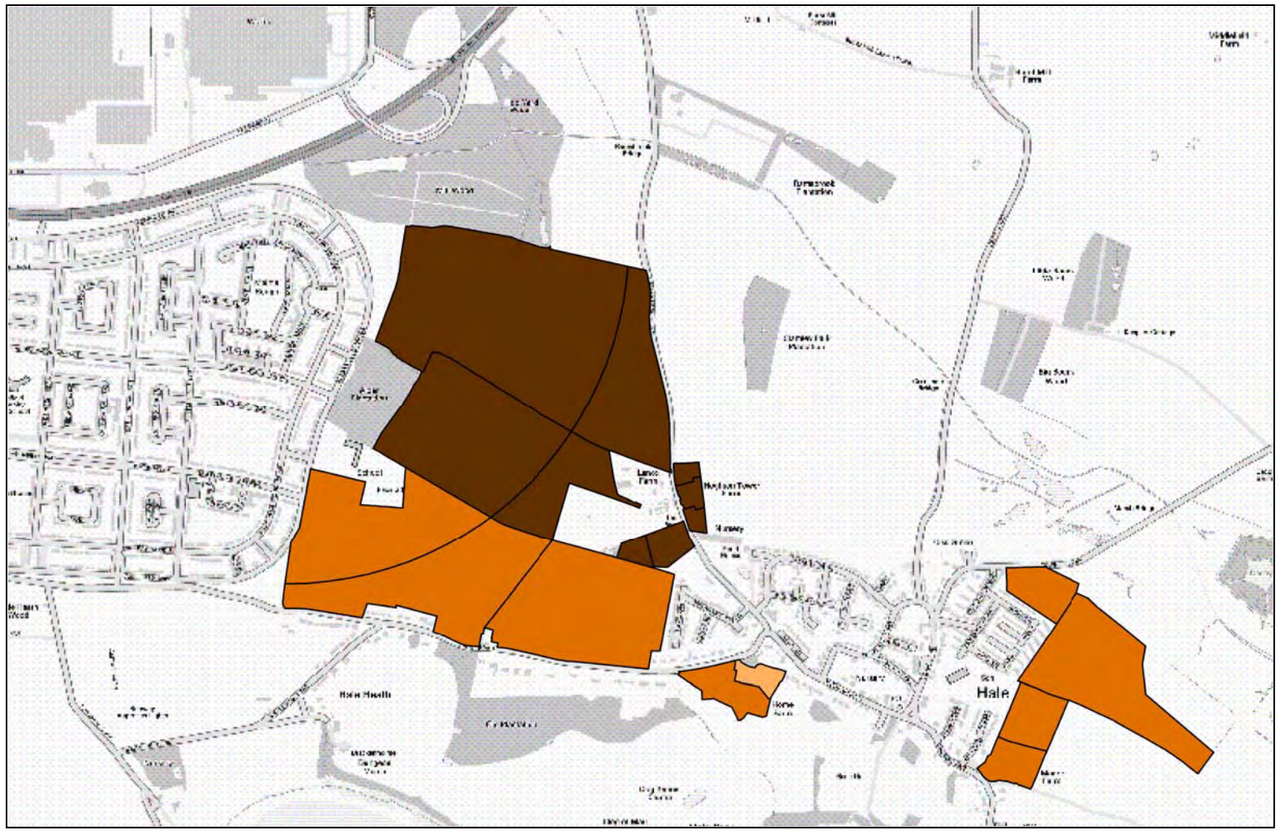
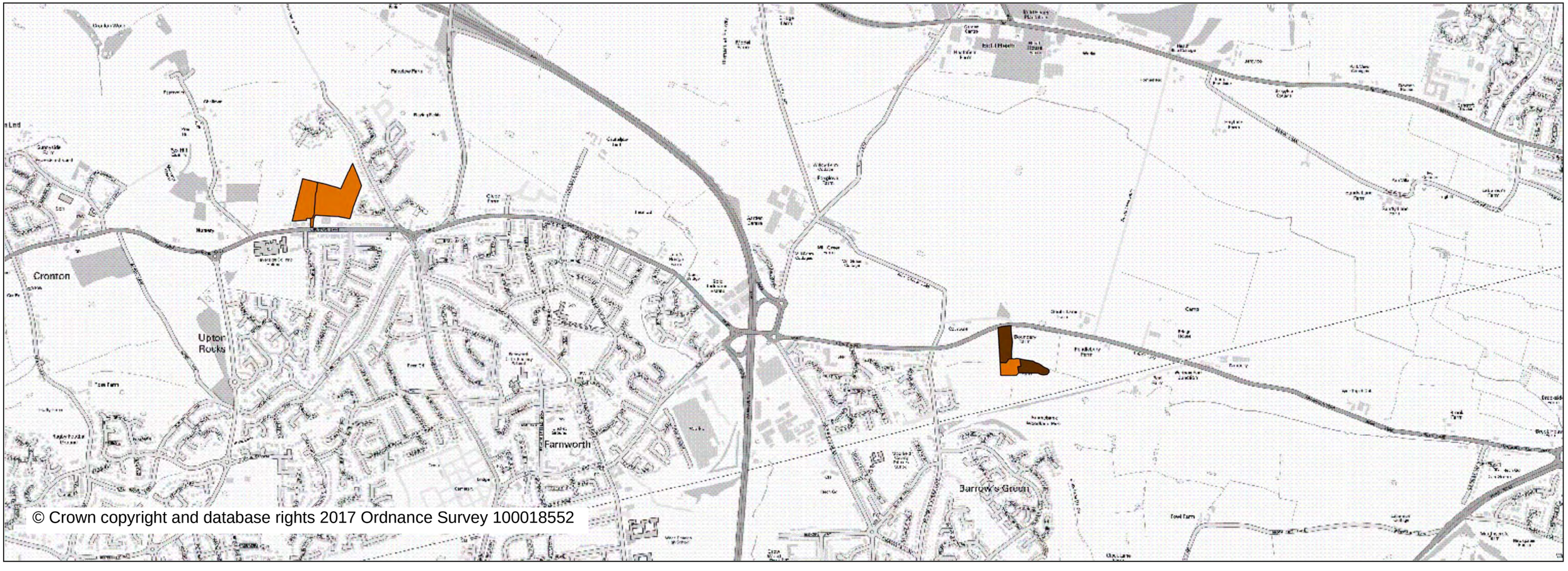


Green Belt Containment

- Largely contained
- Partially contained
- Not contained



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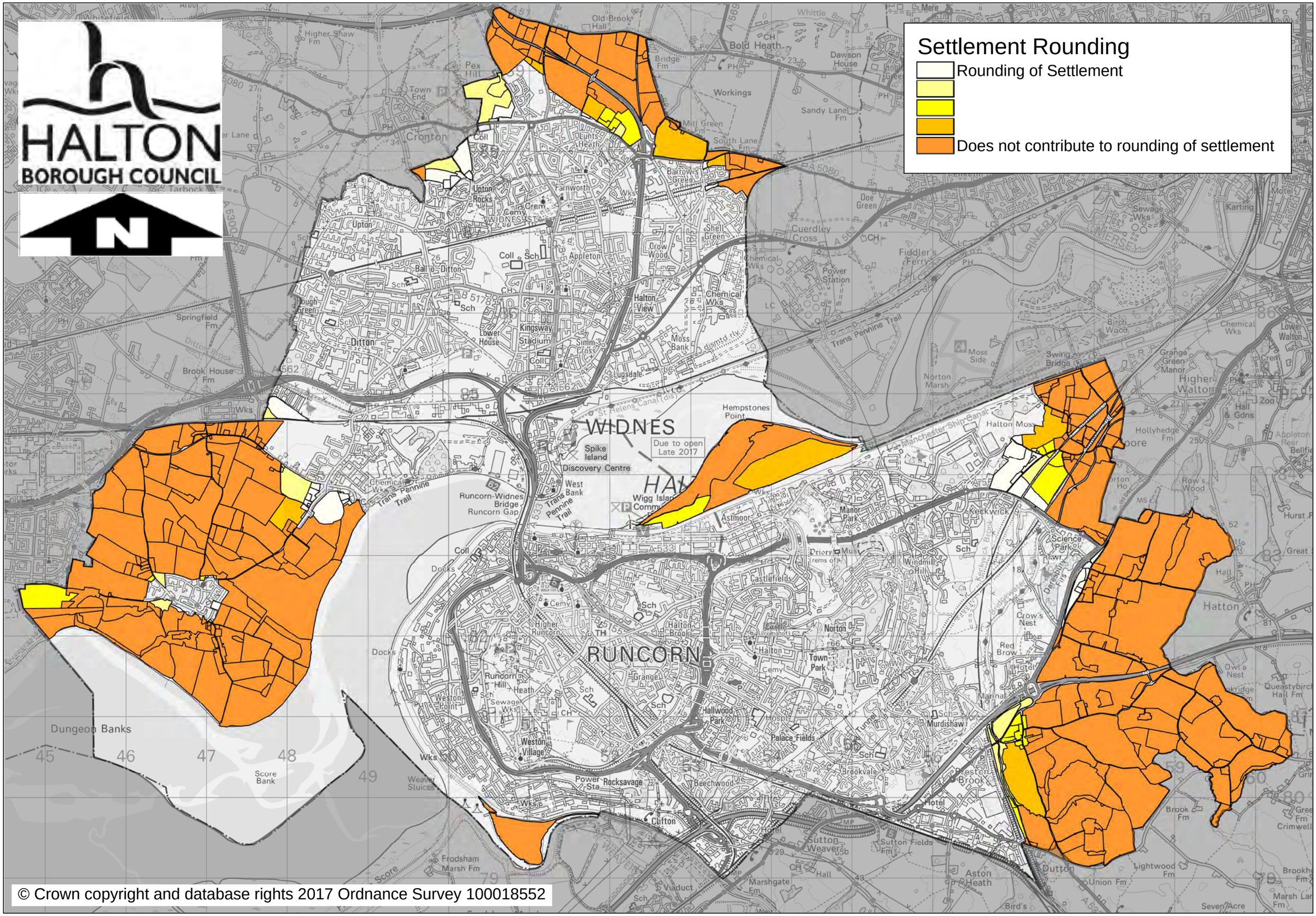
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Runcorn Gap
Trans Pennine
Trail
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Score
Bank
Manchester Ship Canal
St Helens Canal (dis)
Hempstones
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Halton Moss
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Weston
Village
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Point
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Castlefields
Palace Fields
Hallwood
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Rocksavage
Power
Sta
Beechwood
Brookvale
Murdishaw
Preston
Brook
Clifton
Viaduct
Marshgate
Fm
Ditton
Upton
Upton
Rocks
Farnworth
Appleton
Ball o' Ditton
Hough
Green
Springfield
Fm
Brook House
Fm
Kingsway
Stadium
Lower
House
Simm
Cross
Lugsdale
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Moss
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Wks
Shell
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Wood
Cuerdley
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Power
Station
Fiddler's
Ferry
Doe
Green
Barrow's
Green
Bridge
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Old Brook
Hall
Bold Heath
Dawson
House
Workings
Sandy Lane
Fm
Mill Green
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South Lane
Fm
Eunts
Heath
Pex
Hill
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End
Cronton
Higher Shaw
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Tarbock
Whittle Brook
Mere
Sewage
Wks
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Motel
Birch
Wood
Chemical
Wks
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Walton
Hollyhedge
Fm
Row's
Wood
Hurst
Great
Crow's
Nest
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Brow
Owl's
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Queastybirch
Hall Fm
Brook
Fm
Lightwood
Fm
Marsh Lane
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Seven Acre
Bird's
Union Fm
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Brook
Fm
Lightwood
Fm
Marsh Lane
Fm
Seven Acre
Bird's
Union Fm
Astmoor
Manor
Park
Keckwick
Science
Park
Windmill
Hill
Priory
(rems of)
Mus
Castle
Cemy
Sch
Coll
Docks
Wks
Cemy
Crem
Hotel
Mannal
Tunnel
Hospl
Crem
Zoo
Hall
& Gdns
Appleton
Resr
Bellfie
Chemical
Wks
Trans Pennine
Trail
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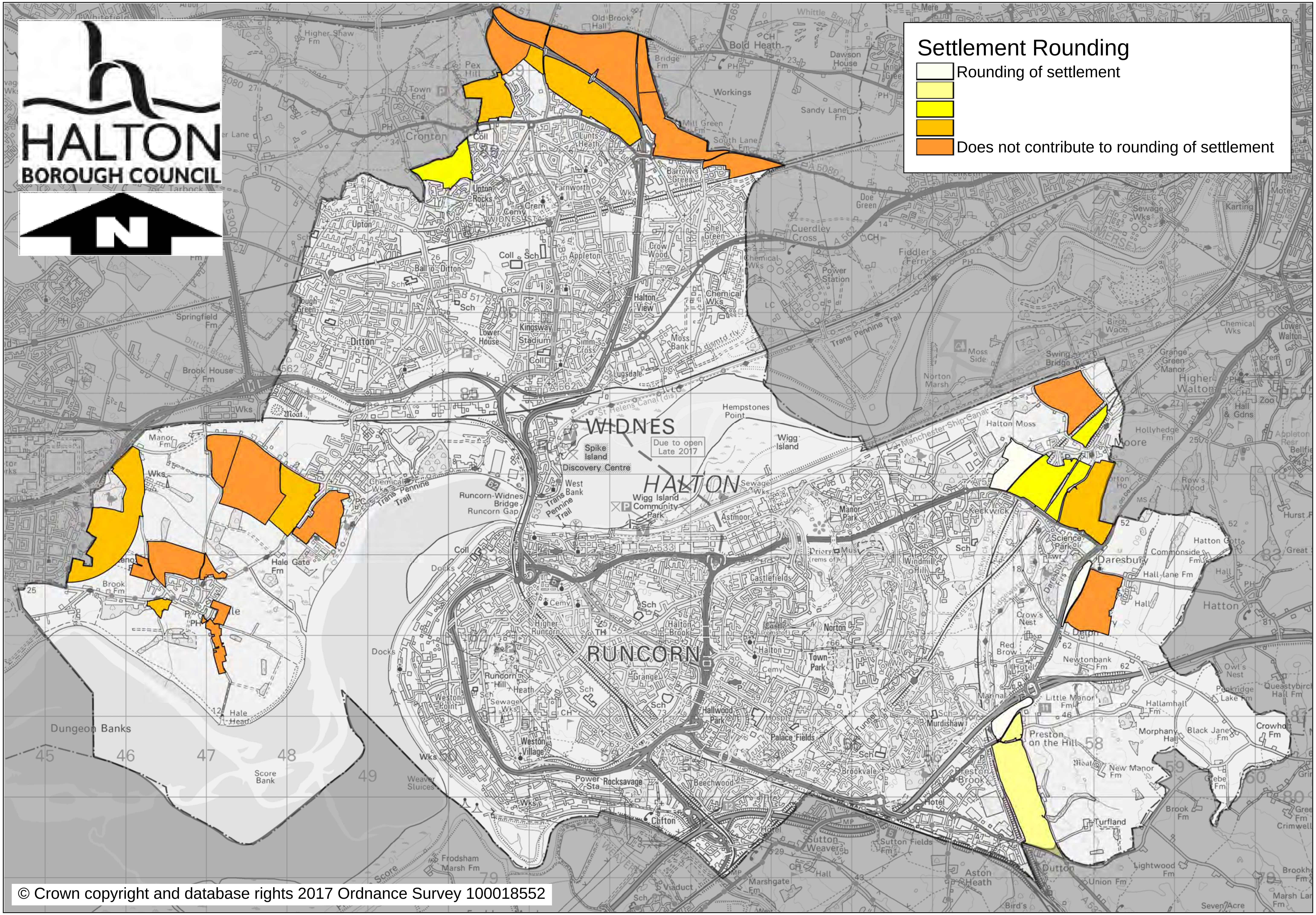
HALTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL
N
Settlement Rounding
Rounding of settlement
Does not contribute to rounding of settlement
WIDNES
HALTON
RUNCORN
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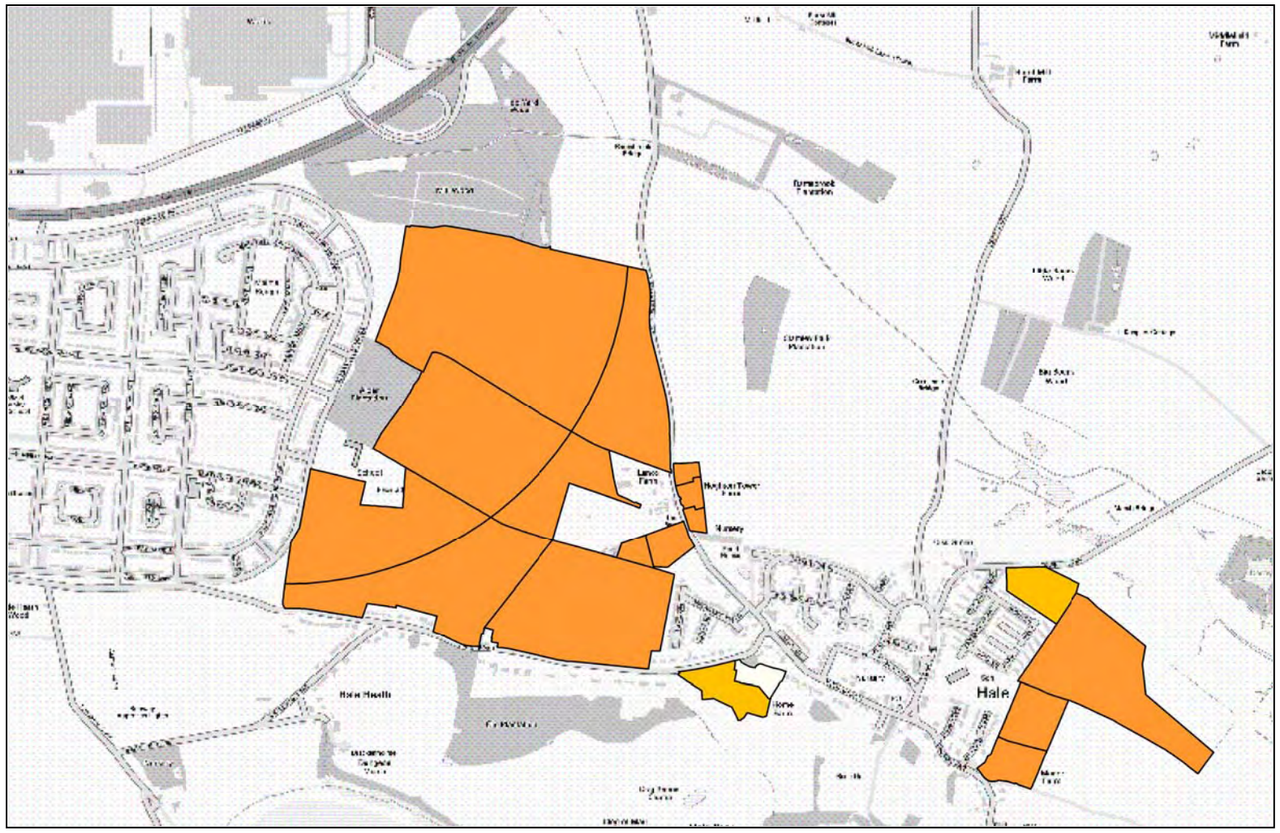
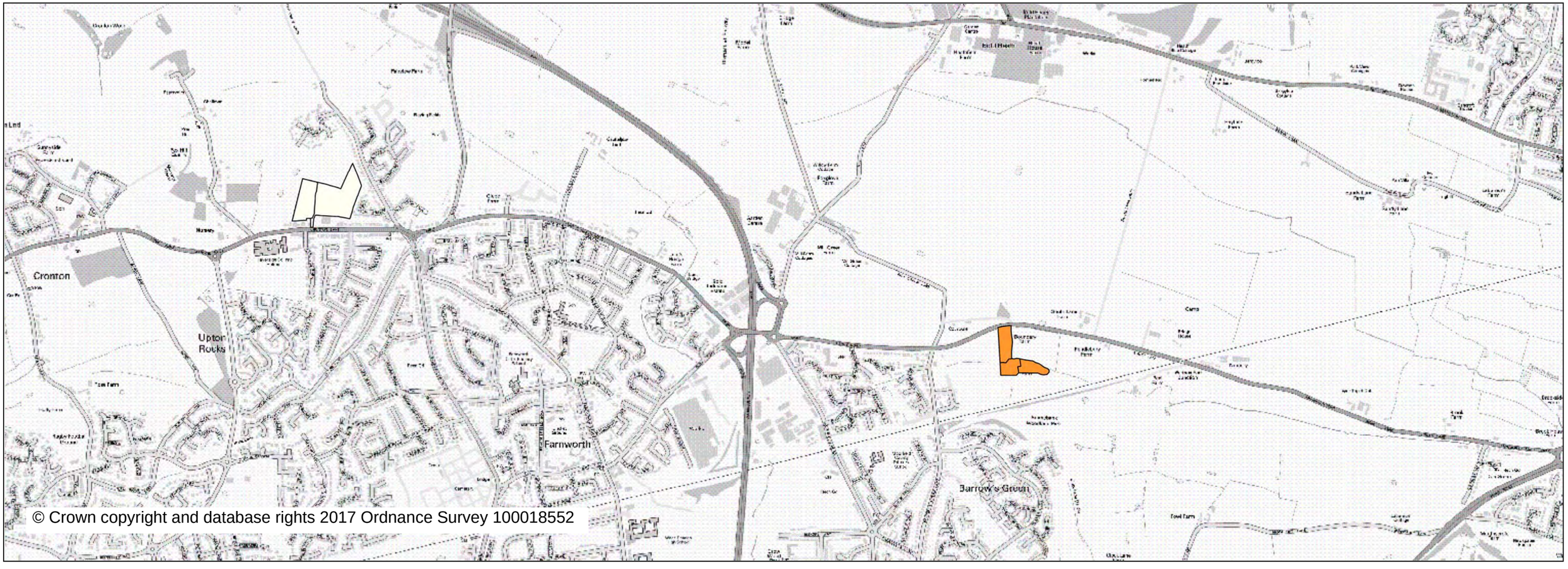
HALTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

N



Settlement Rounding

- Rounding of settlement
- Does not contribute to rounding of settlement



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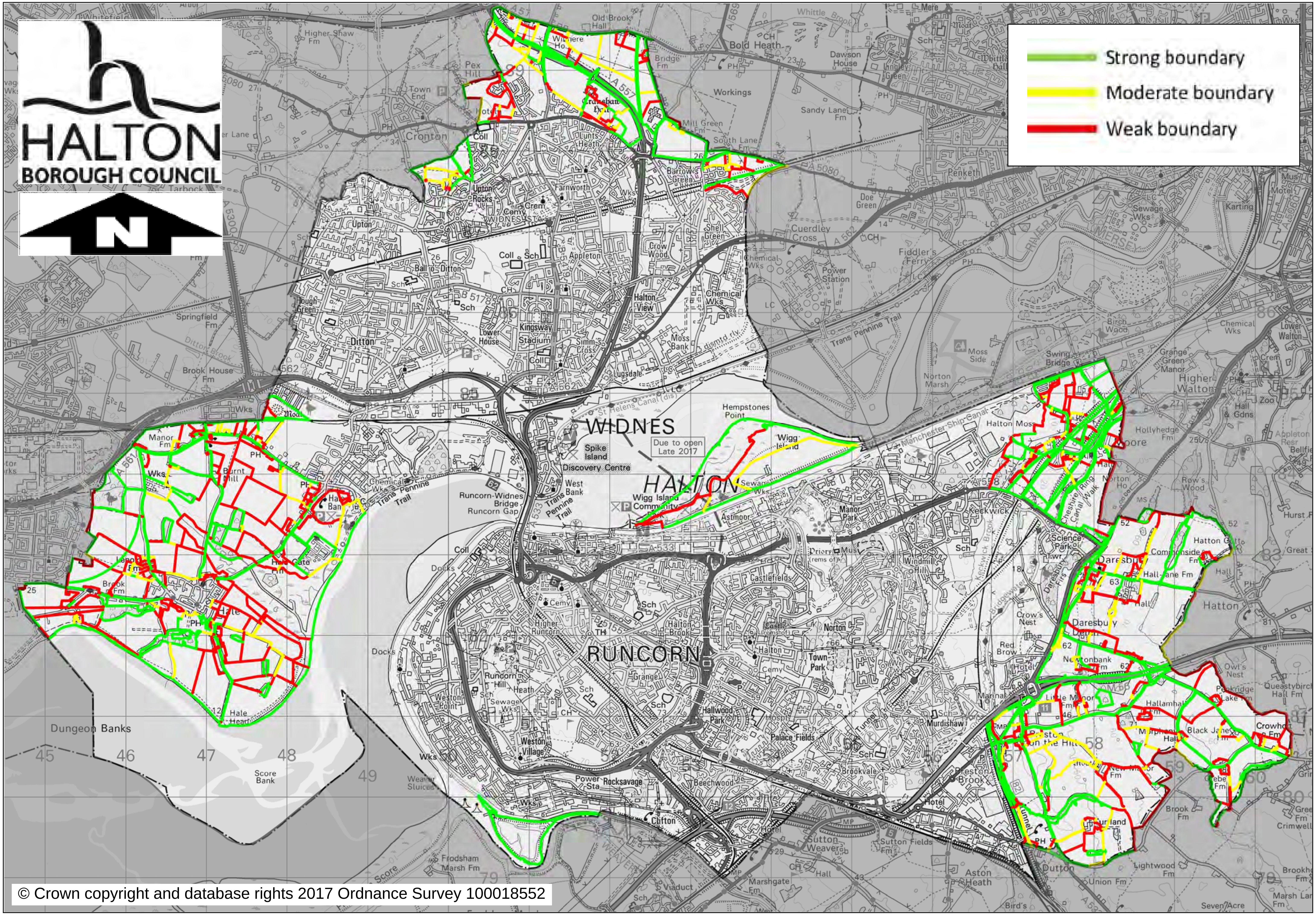

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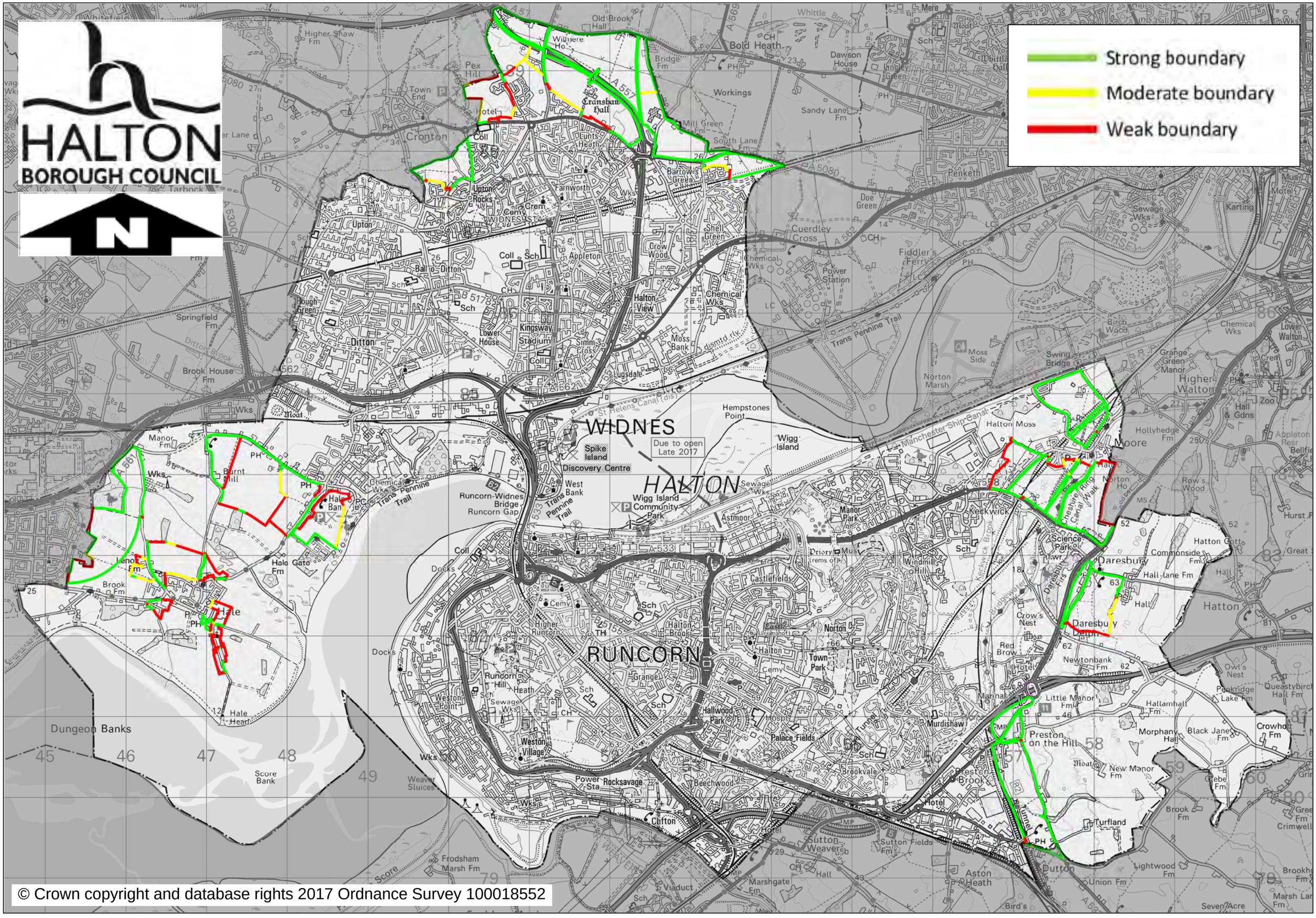

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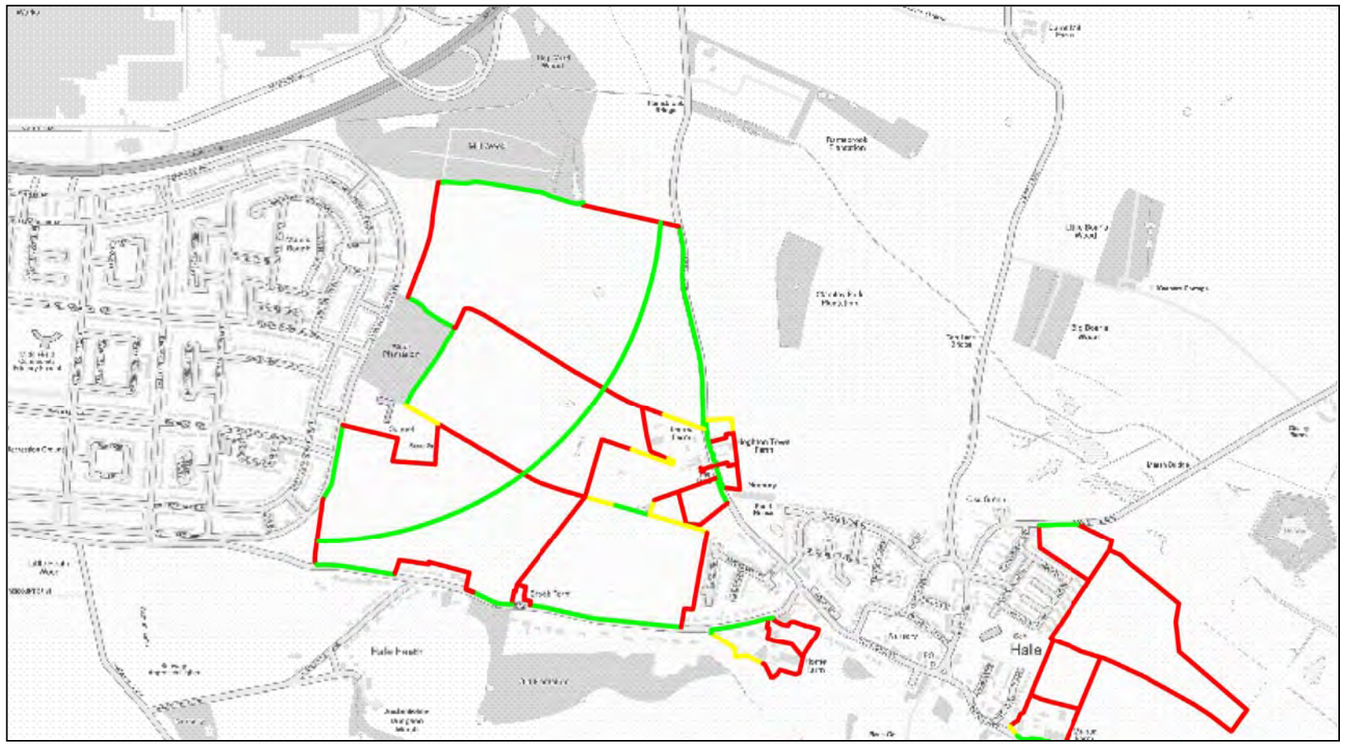
HALTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

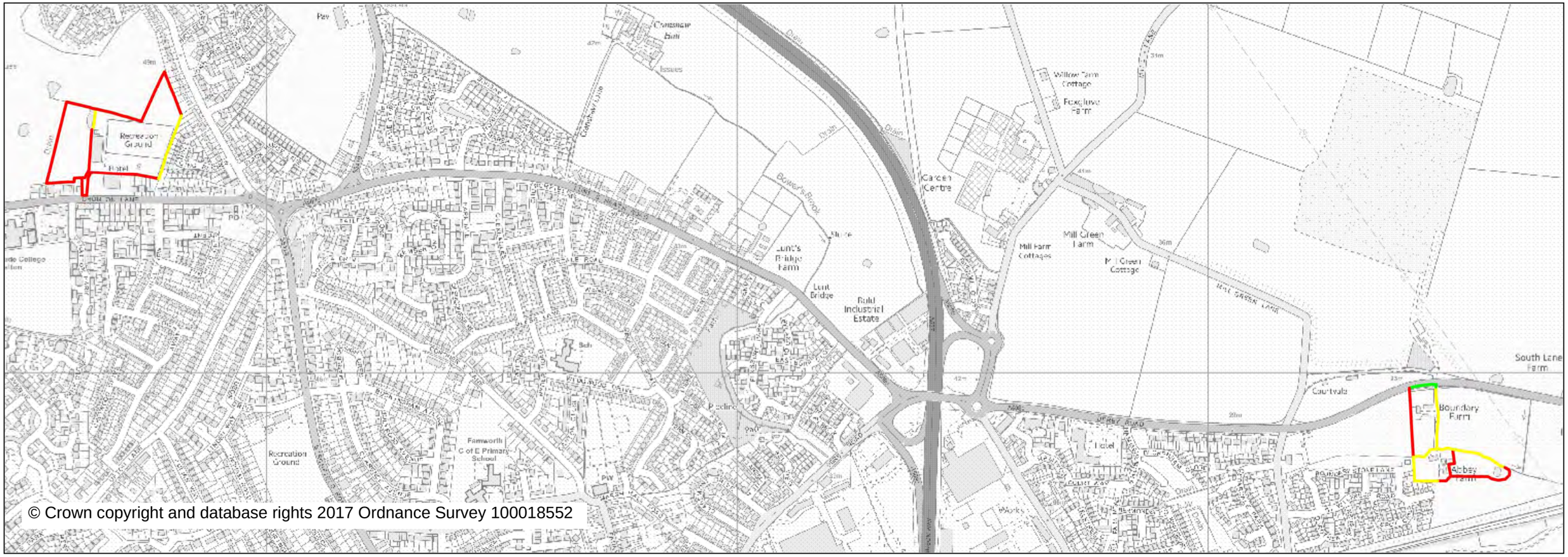
N



Strong boundary

Moderate boundary

Weak boundary



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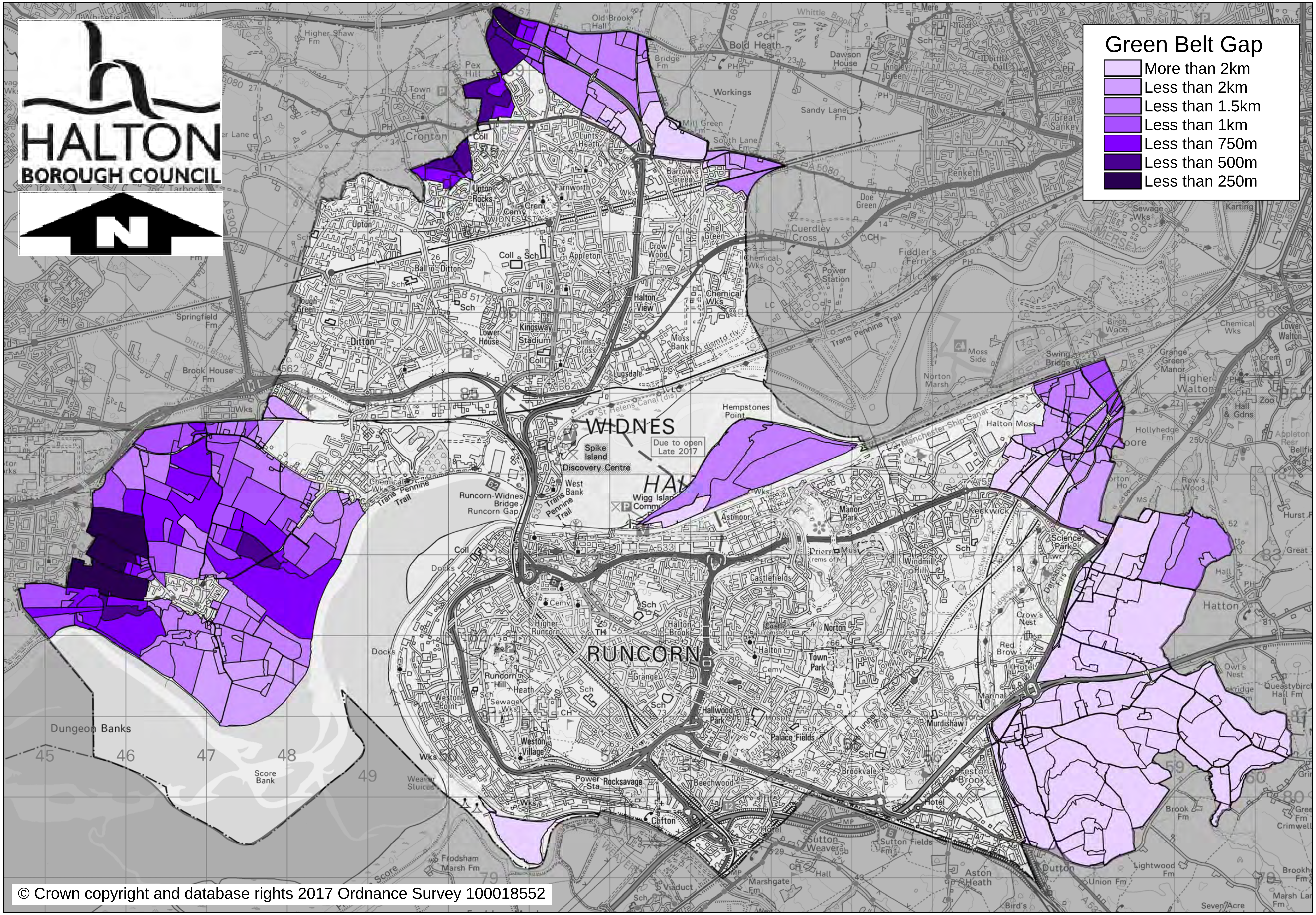

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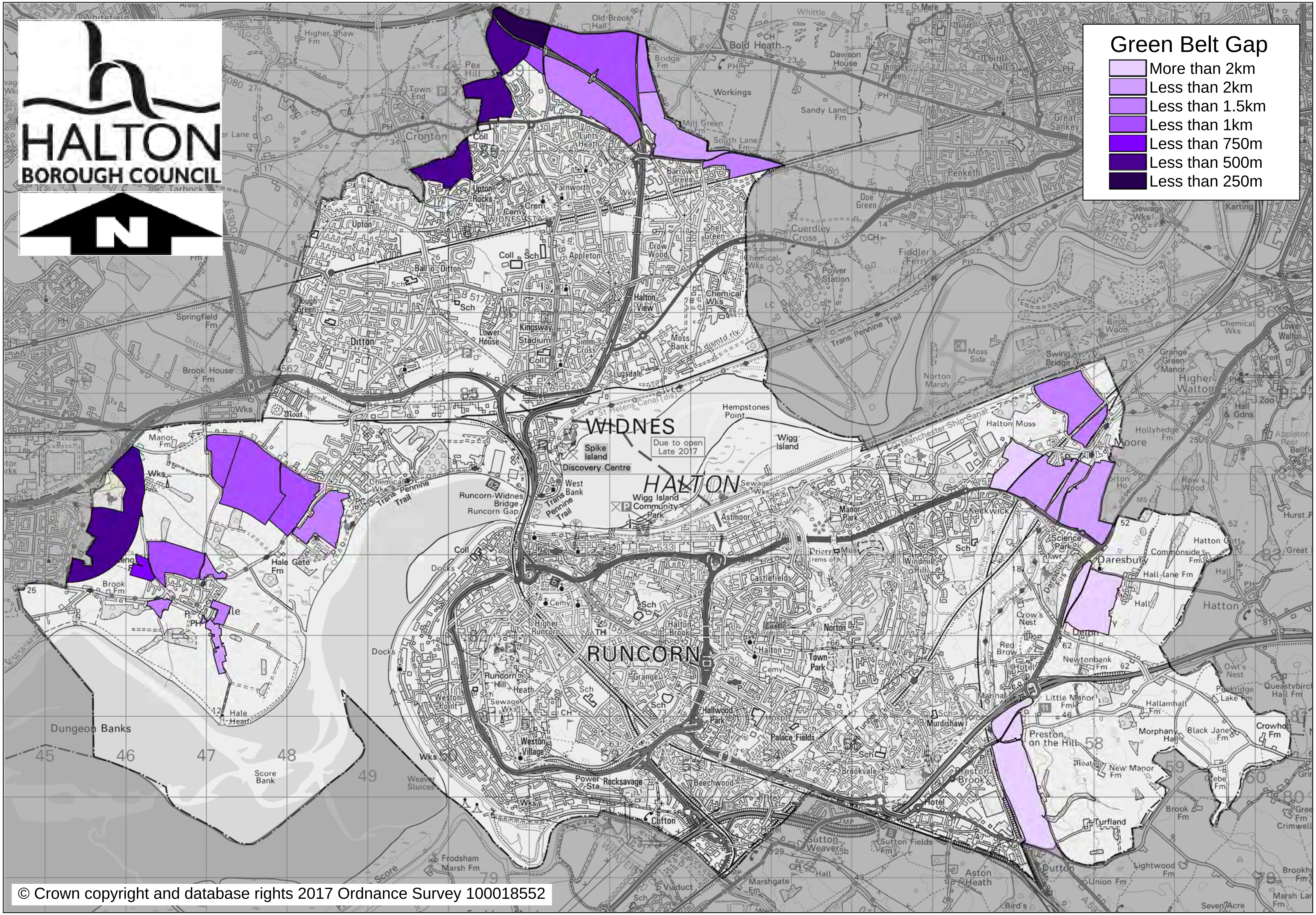
HALTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL
N
Green Belt Gap
More than 2km
Less than 2km
Less than 1.5km
Less than 1km
Less than 750m
Less than 500m
Less than 250m
WIDNES
HALTON
RUNCORN
Due to open
Late 2017
Spike Island
Discovery Centre
Runcorn-Widnes Bridge
Runcorn Gap
Wigg Island Community Park
Manchester Ship Canal
RIVER MERSEY
Trans Pennine Trail
Dungeon Banks
Score Bank
Hale Head
Hale Gate Fm
Ditton
Hough Green
Upton
Upton Rocks
Farnworth
Appleton
Cronton
Penketh
Great Sankey
Moore
Daresbury
Hatton
Preston on the Hill
Preston Brook
Castlefields
Halton Brook
Norton
Murdishaw
Palace Fields
Brookvale
Beechwood
Weston Village
Weston Point
Runcorn Hill
Halton Moss
Science Park
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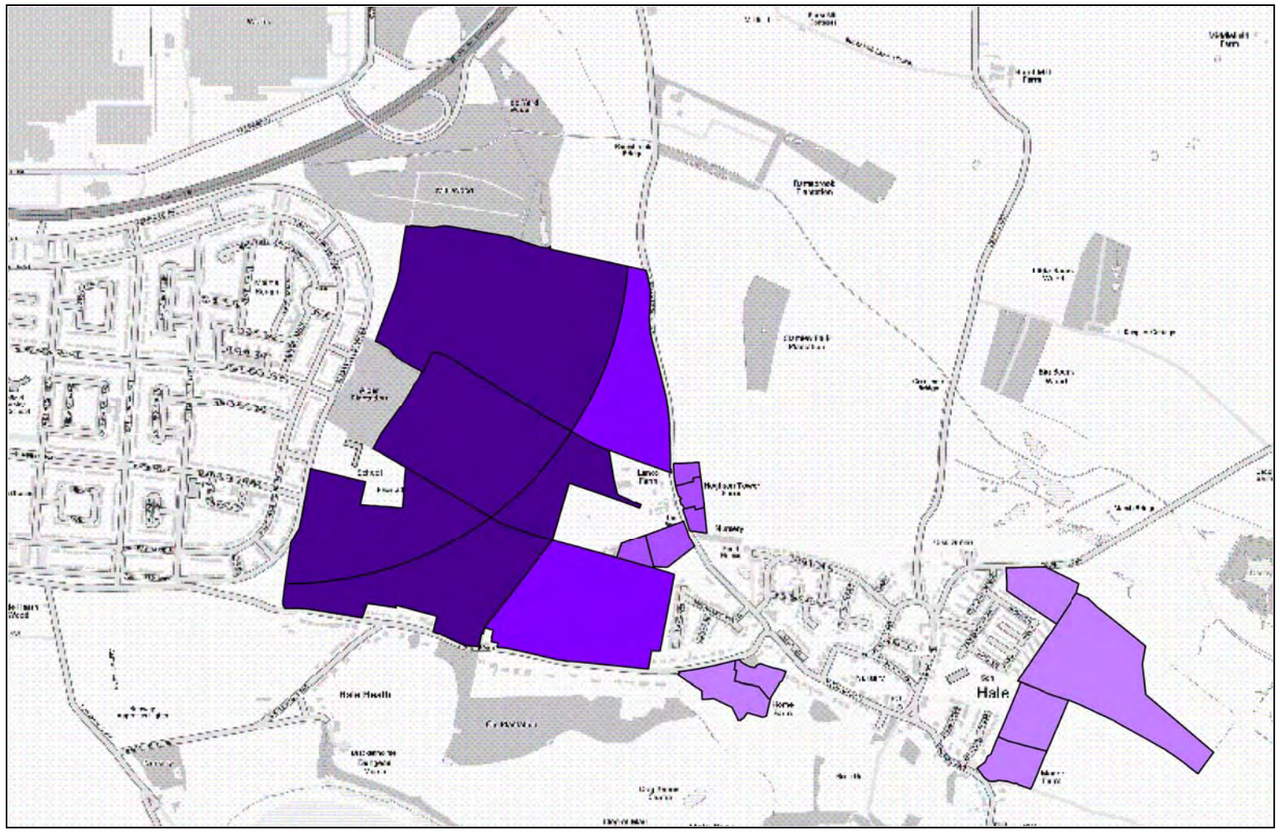
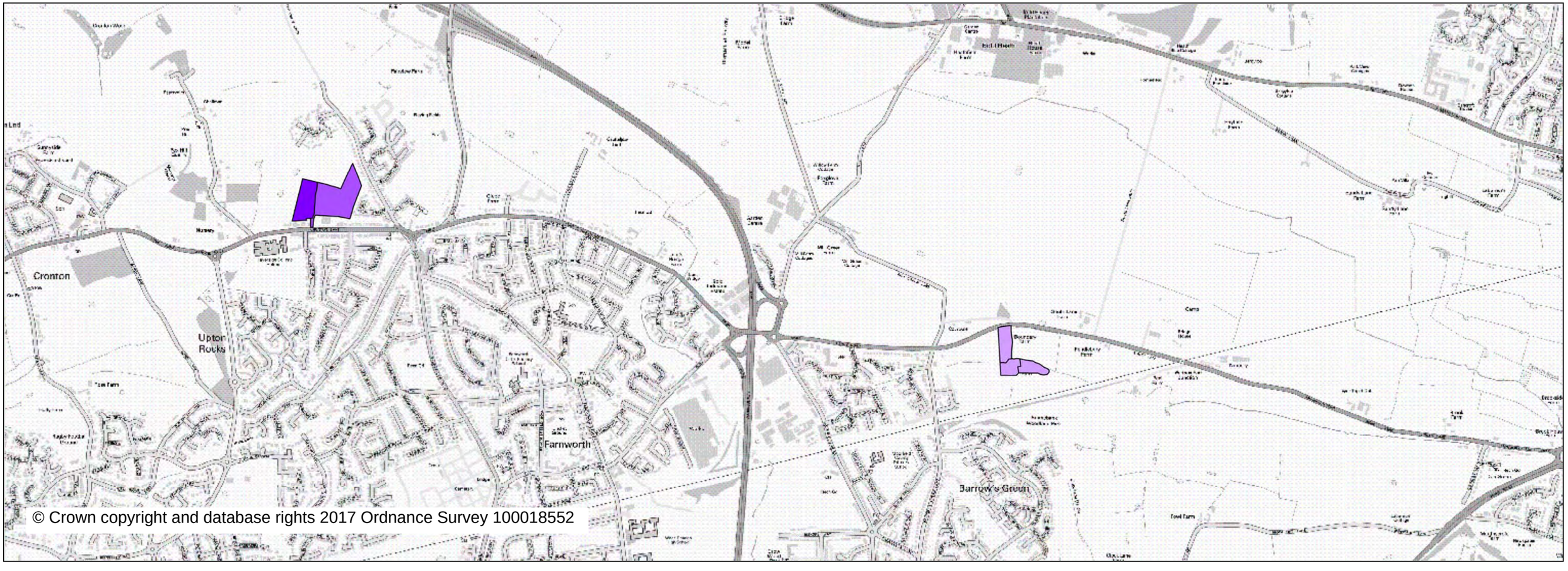
HALTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

N



Green Belt Gap

- Less than 2km
- Less than 1.5km
- Less than 1km
- Less than 750m
- Less than 500m



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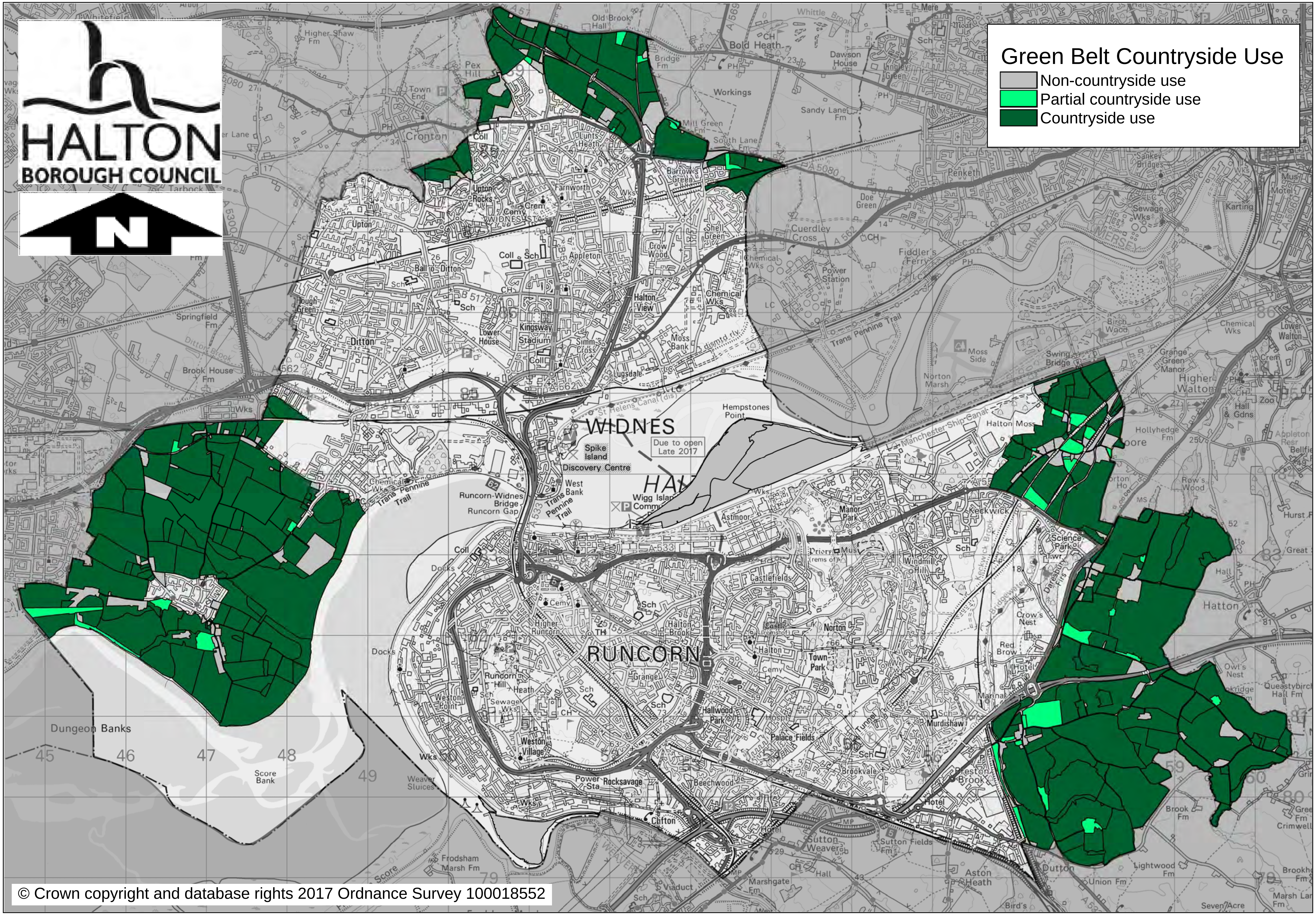

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
N
Green Belt Countryside Use
Non-countryside use
Partial countryside use
Countryside use
WIDNES
RUNCORN
Due to open Late 2017
Spike Island
Discovery Centre
Runcorn-Widnes Bridge
Runcorn Gap
Hempstones Point
Manchester Ship Canal
Trans Pennine Trail
River Mersey
Dungeon Banks
Score Bank
Weaver Sluices
Cronton
Upton
Ditton
Hough Green
Farnworth
Appleton
Halton View
Keckwick
Science Park
Murdishaw
Preston Brook
Hatton
Dutton
Castlefields
Norton
Halton
Weston Village
Weston Point
Hallwood Park
Palace Fields
Brookvale
Beechwood
Clifton
Sutton Weaver
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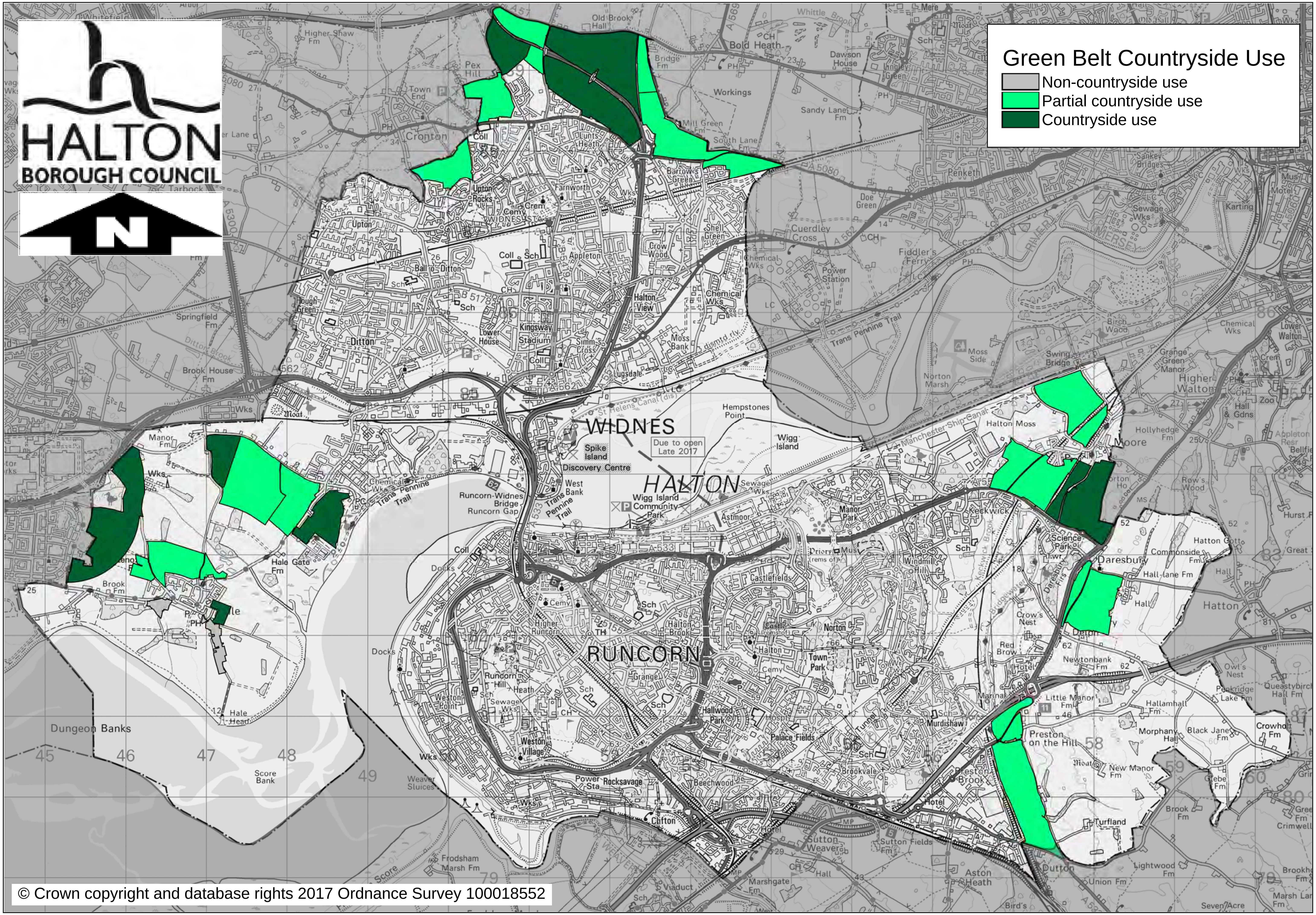
HALTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL
N
Green Belt Countryside Use
Non-countryside use
Partial countryside use
Countryside use
WIDNES
HALTON
RUNCORN
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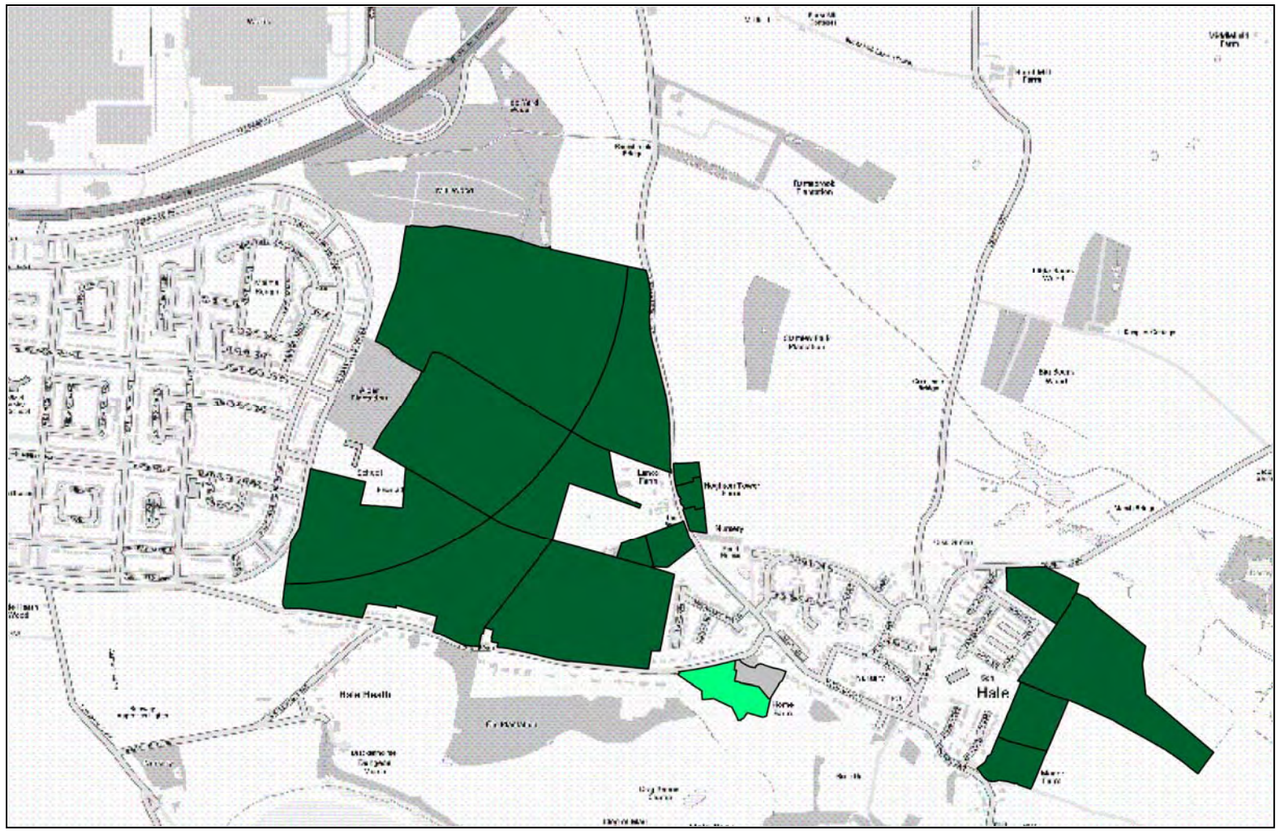
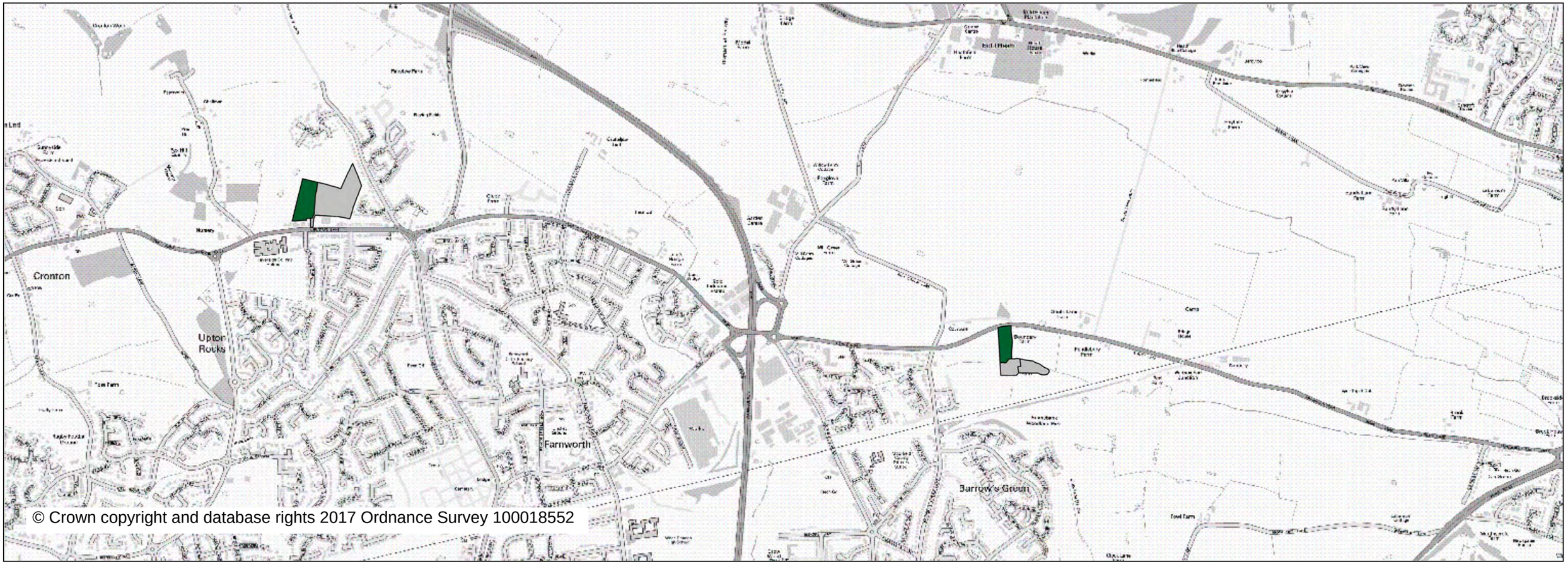
HALTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

N



Green Belt Countryside Use

- Non-countryside use
- Partial countryside use
- Countryside use



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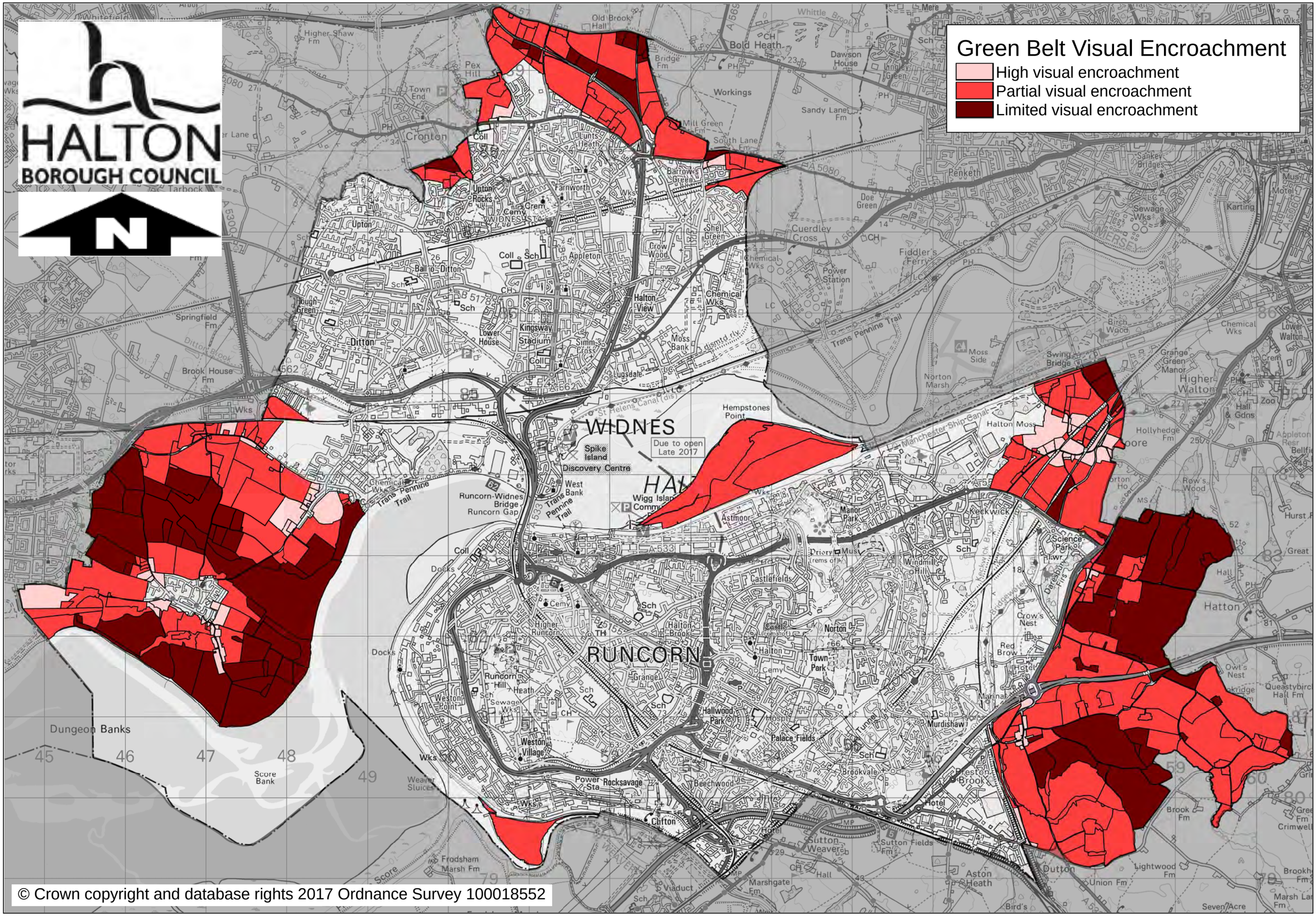
HALTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL
N
Green Belt Visual Encroachment
High visual encroachment
Partial visual encroachment
Limited visual encroachment
WIDNES
RUNCORN
Due to open Late 2017
Spike Island
Discovery Centre
Runcorn-Widnes Bridge
Runcorn Gap
Trans Pennine Trail
Manchester Ship Canal
St Helens Canal (dis)
Dungeon Banks
Score Bank
Hempstones Point
Halton Moss
Norton Marsh
Moss Side
Fiddler's Ferry
Power Station
Cuerdley Cross
Penketh
Sankey Bridges
Sewage Wks
Karting
Swing Bridge
Grange Green Manor
Higher Walton
Lower Walton
Chemical Wks
Birch Wood
Hollyhedge Fm
Hatton
Crow's Nest
Red Brow
Murdishaw
Norton
Halton
Town Park
Castlefields
Windmill Hill
Keckwick
Manor Park
Astmoor
Palace Fields
Hallwood Park
Brookvale
Beechwood
Rocksavage
Power Sta
Weston Village
Runcorn Hill
Higher Runcorn
Halton Brook
Grange
Weston Point
Docks
Clifton
Frodsham Marsh Fm
Sutton Weaver
Sutton Fields Fm
Aston Heath
Dutton
Marshgate Fm
Viaduct
Lightwood Fm
Union Fm
Brook Fm
Seven Acre
Bird's
Hotel
Preston Brook
Science Park
Hurst
Great Crimwell
Queastybirch Hall Fm
Owl's Nest
Appleton Resr
Hall & Gdns
Zoo
Row's Wood
Hollyhedge Fm
Norton Ho
Appleton
Appleton Cross
Lugsdale
Simms Cross
Moss Bank
Halton View
Chemical Wks
Shell Green
Crow Wood
Doe Green
Sandy Lane Fm
Mill Green Fm
South Lane Fm
Workings
Bold Heath
Dawson House
Langley Green
Mere
Whittle Brook
Old Brook Hall
Bridge Fm
Barrow's Green
Farnworth
Appleton
Lunts Heath
Upton Rocks
Upton
Ditton
Ball o' Ditton
Hough Green
Springfield Fm
Brook House Fm
Ditton Brook
Lower House
Kingsway Stadium
Cronton
Town End
Pex Hill
Higher Shaw Fm
Tarbock
Coll
Sch
Cemy
Crem
Wks
Docks
Score
Weaver Sluices
Viaduct
Hall
Hotel
Priory (rems of)
Castle
Tunnel
Hospl
Mansn
Mus
Motel
Karting
Sewage Wks
Chemical Wks
Power Station
Trans Pennine Trail
Swing Bridge
Manchester Ship Canal
Halton Moss
Norton Marsh
Moss Side
Fiddler's Ferry
Penketh
Cuerdley Cross
Doe Green
Sandy Lane Fm
Workings
Bridge Fm
Old Brook Hall
Whittle Brook
Mere
Bold Heath
Dawson House
Langley Green
Mill Green Fm
South Lane Fm
Barrow's Green
Farnworth
Upton Rocks
Upton
Ball o' Ditton
Hough Green
Ditton
Springfield Fm
Brook House Fm
Ditton Brook
Lower House
Kingsway Stadium
Simms Cross
Moss Bank
Halton View
Chemical Wks
Shell Green
Crow Wood
Appleton
Lugsdale
Cronton
Town End
Pex Hill
Higher Shaw Fm
Tarbock
Hempstones Point
Spike Island
Discovery Centre
West Bank
Runcorn-Widnes Bridge
Runcorn Gap
Trans Pennine Trail
Wigg Island Comm
Astmoor
Manor Park
Keckwick
Science Park
Priory (rems of)
Castlefields
Windmill Hill
Sch
Cemy
Docks
Coll
Higher Runcorn
Halton Brook
Norton
Halton
Town Park
Crow's Nest
Red Brow
Hotel
Runcorn Hill
Heath
Sewage Wks
Weston Point
Grange
Hallwood Park
Palace Fields
Murdishaw
Weston Village
Wks
Power Sta
Rocksavage
Beechwood
Brookvale
Preston Brook
Clifton
Frodsham Marsh Fm
Sutton Weaver
Sutton Fields Fm
Aston Heath
Dutton
Marshgate Fm
Viaduct
Lightwood Fm
Union Fm
Brook Fm
Seven Acre
Bird's
Score Bank
Dungeon Banks
45
46
47
48
49
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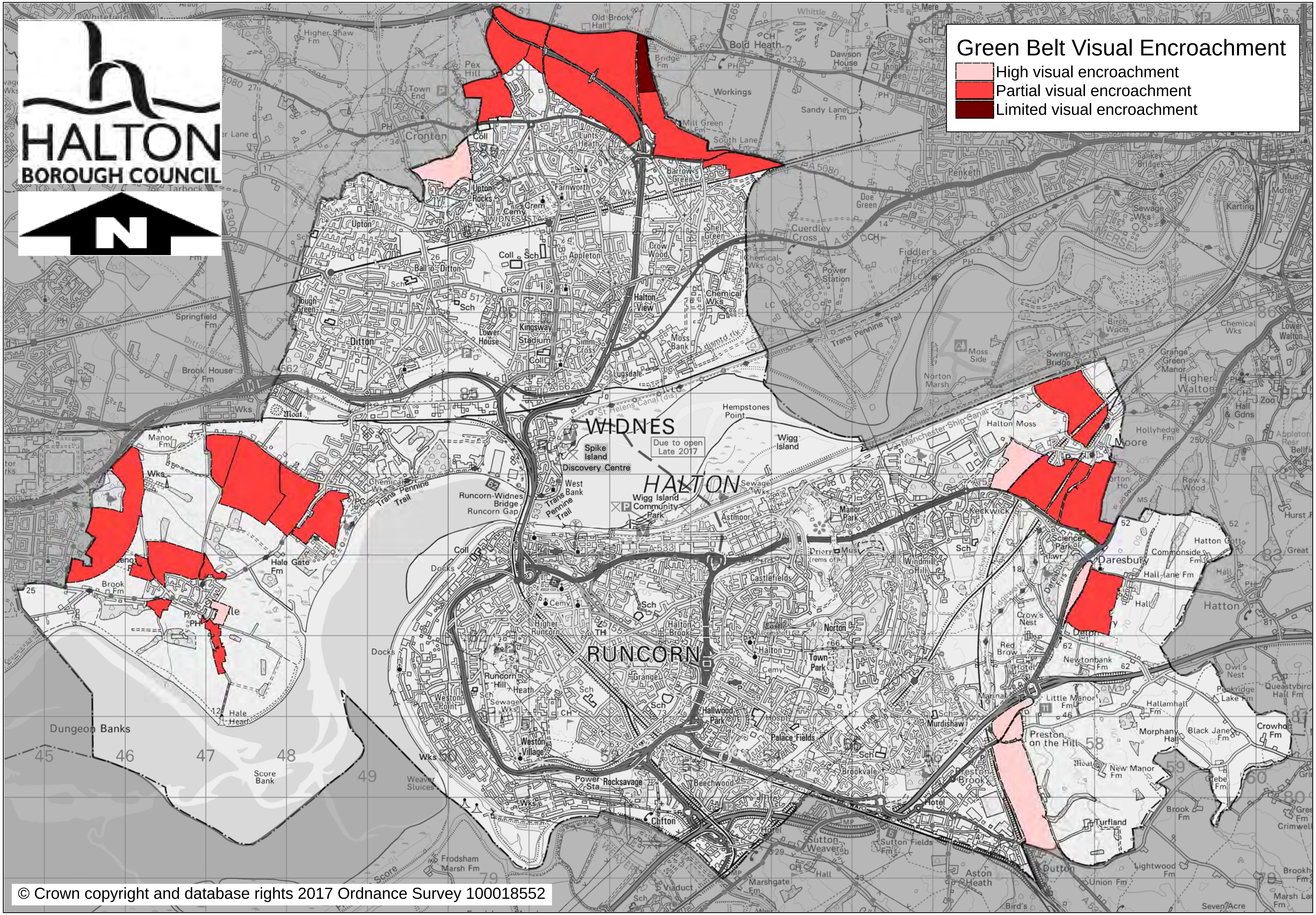

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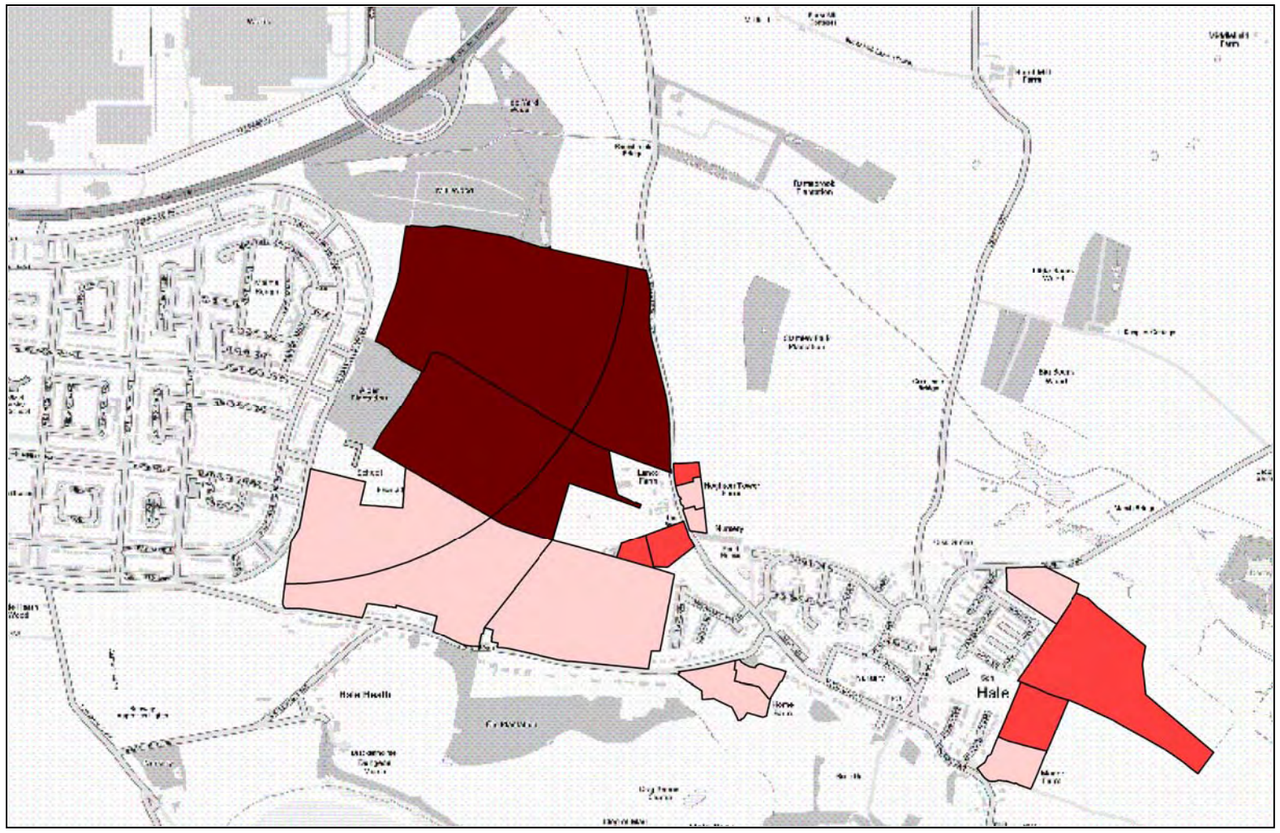
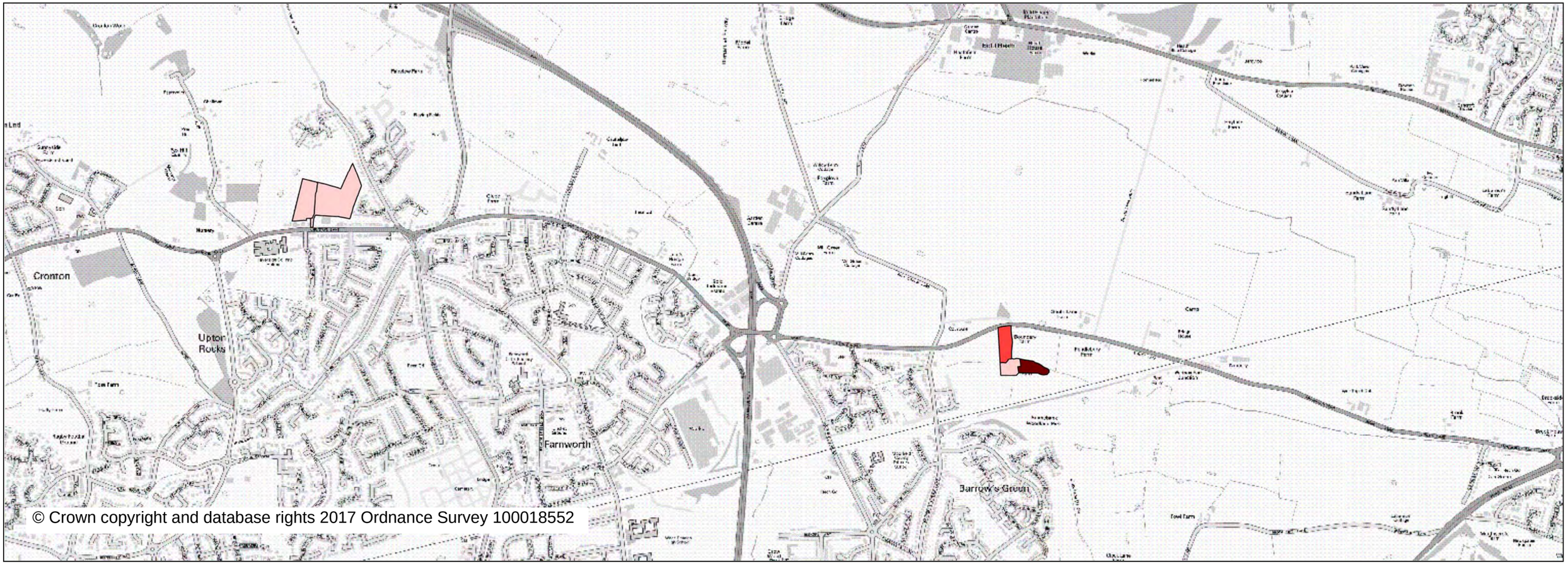
HALTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

N



Green Belt Visual Encroachment

- High visual encroachment
- Partial visual encroachment
- Limited visual encroachment



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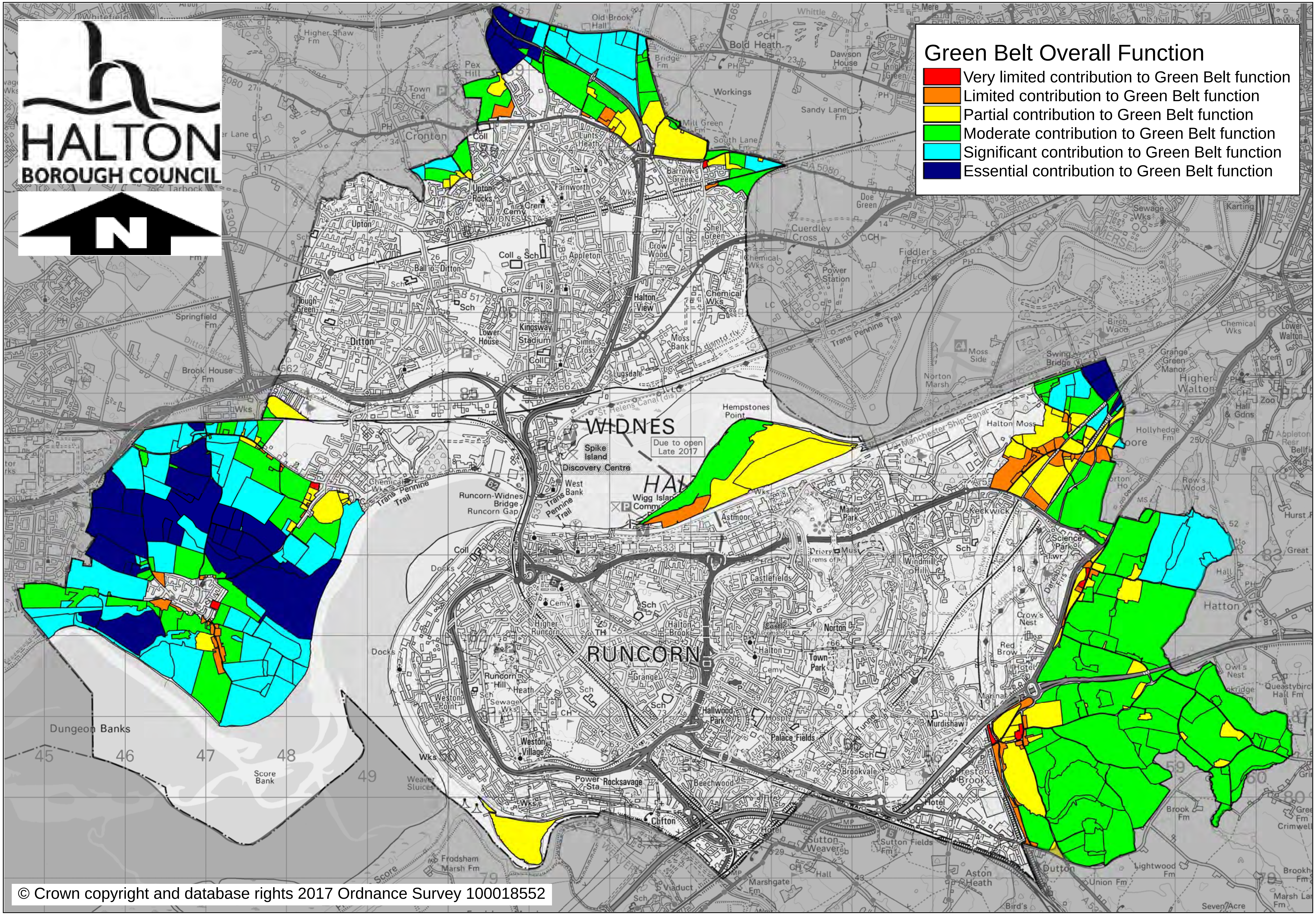
HALTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL
N
Green Belt Overall Function
Very limited contribution to Green Belt function
Limited contribution to Green Belt function
Partial contribution to Green Belt function
Moderate contribution to Green Belt function
Significant contribution to Green Belt function
Essential contribution to Green Belt function
WIDNES
RUNCORN
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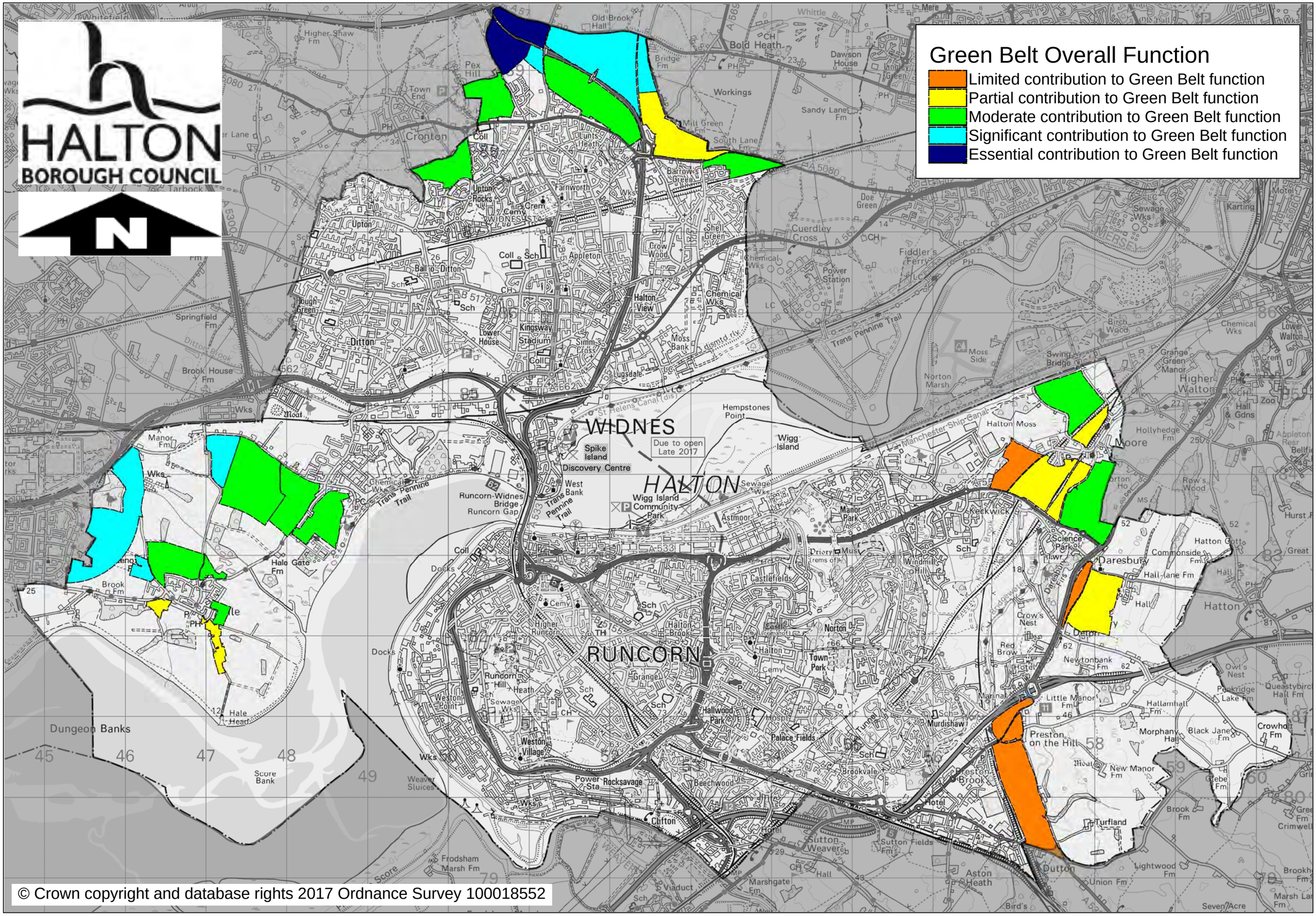

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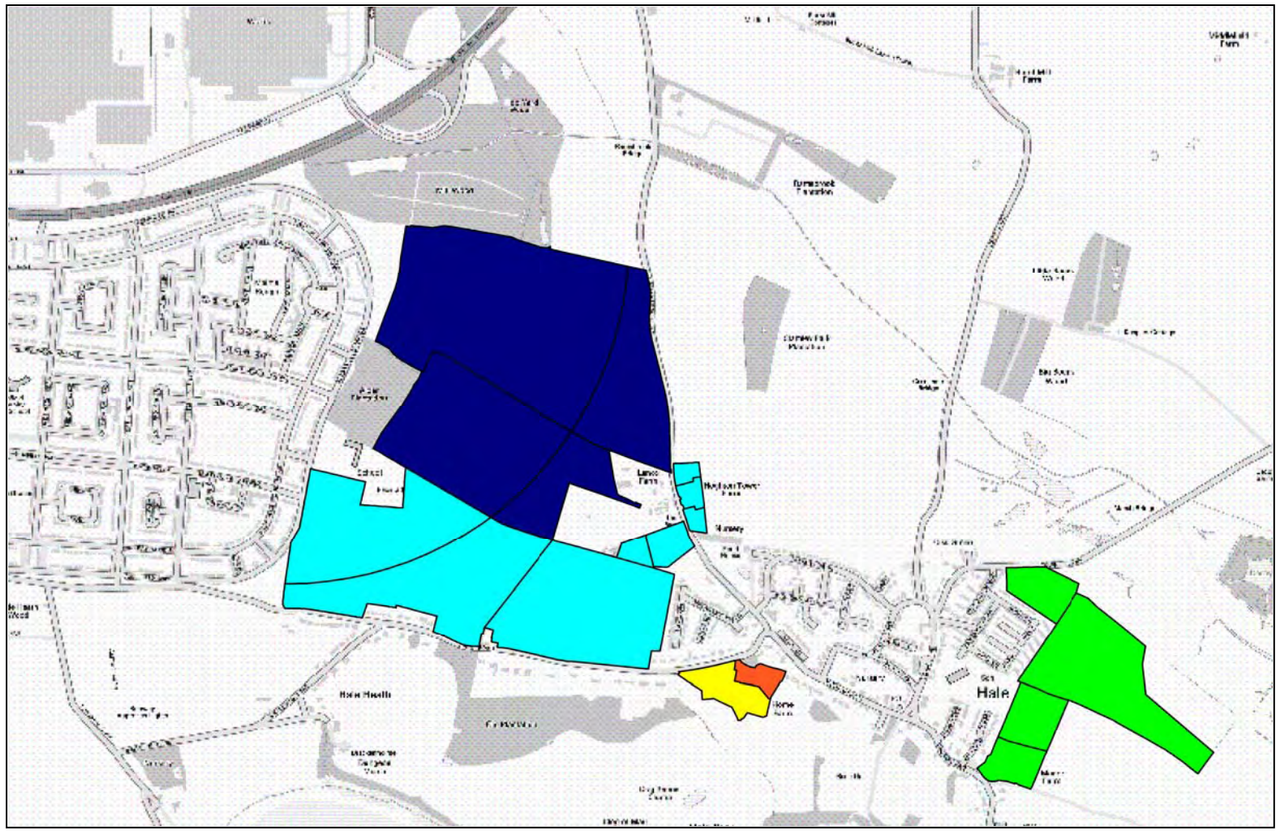
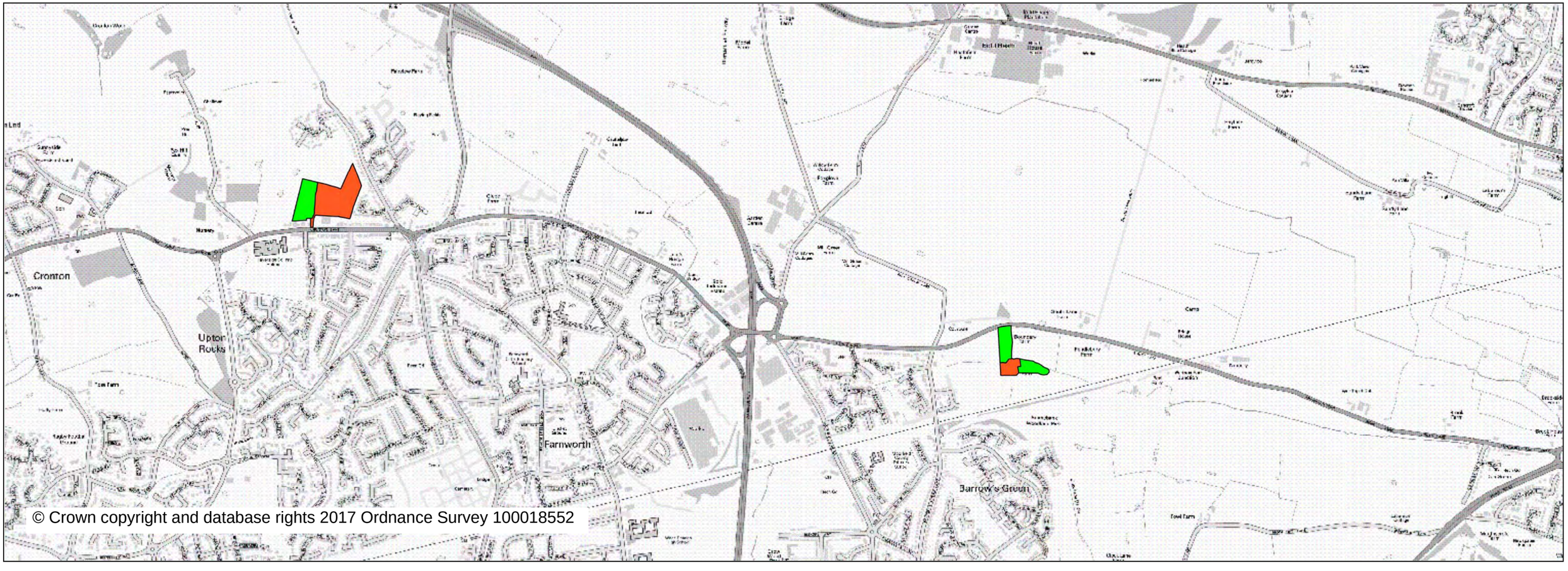
HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

N



Green Belt Overall Function

- Limited contribution to the Green Belt Function
- Partial contribution to the Green Belt Functior
- Moderate contribution to the Green Belt Function
- Significant contribution to the Green Belt Function
- Essential contribution to the Green Belt Function



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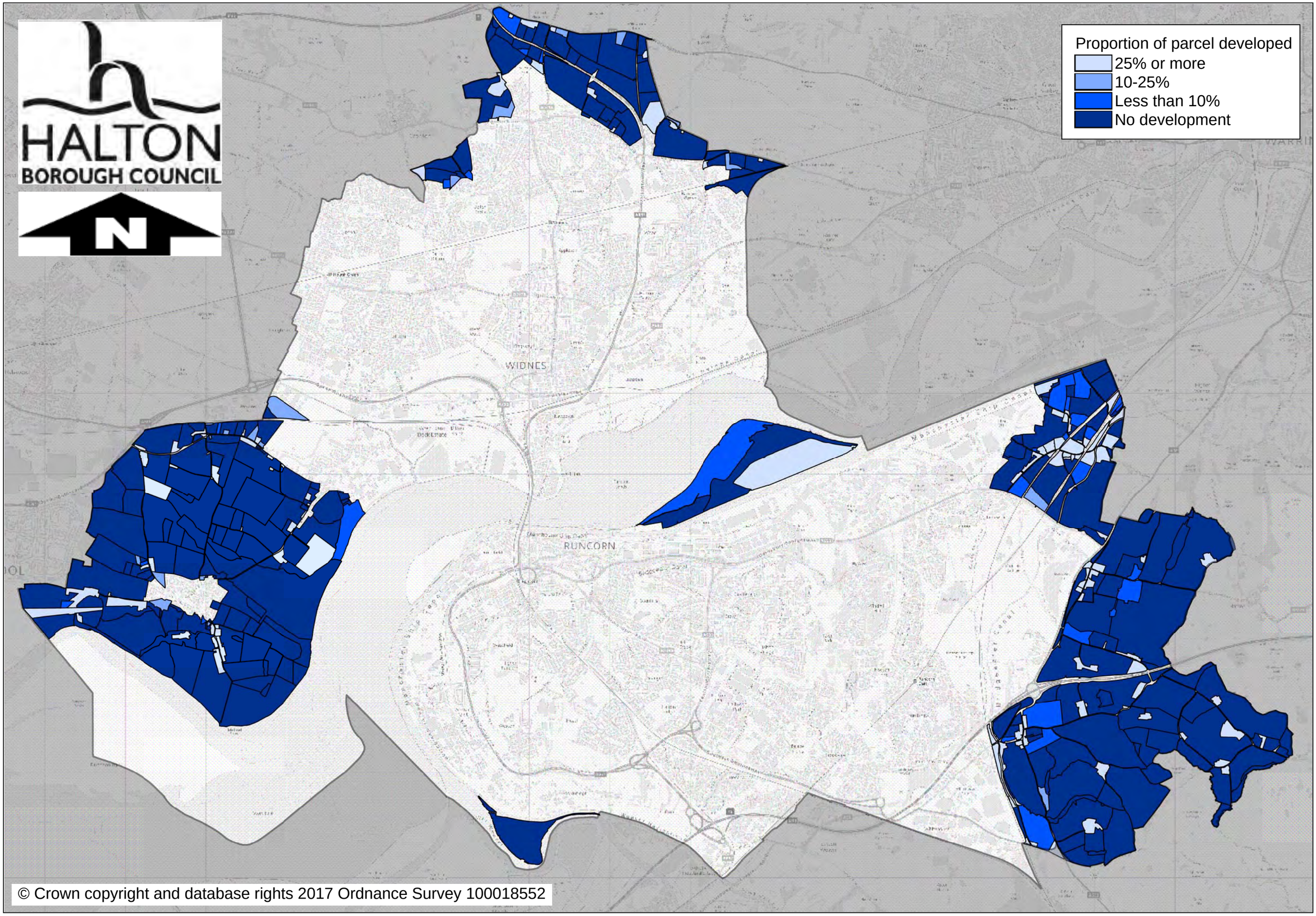

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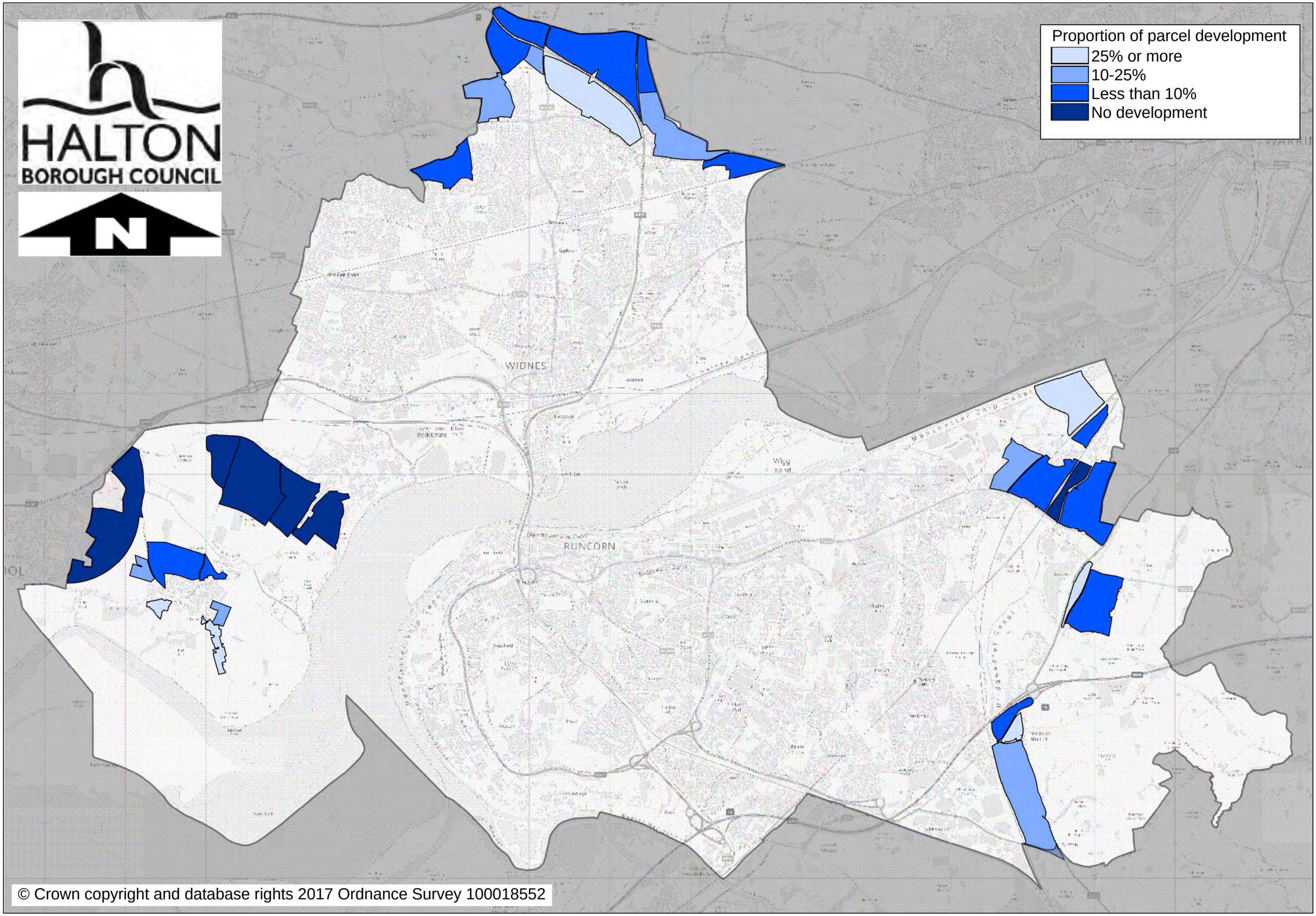
HALTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL
N
Proportion of parcel development
25% or more
10-25%
Less than 10%
No development
WIDNES
RUNCORN
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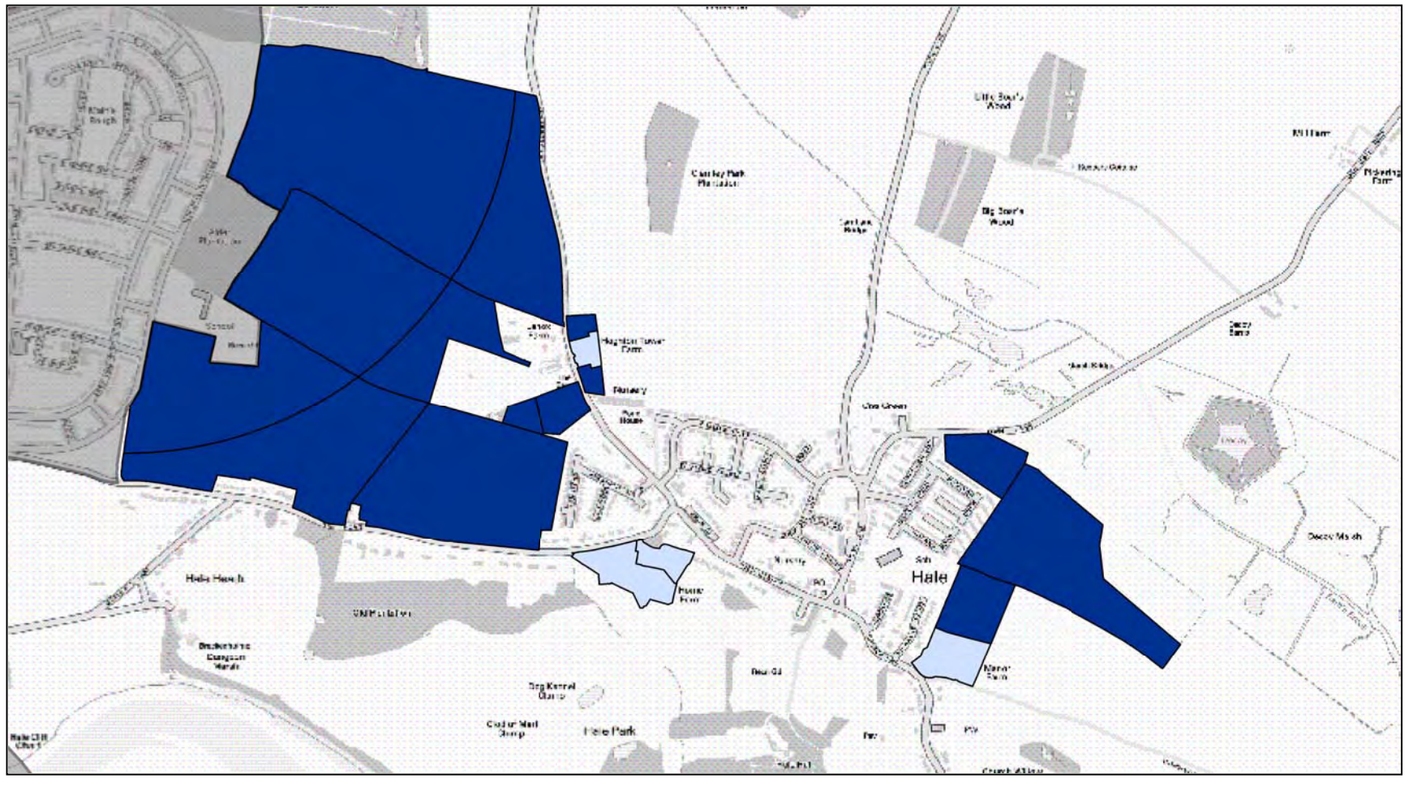
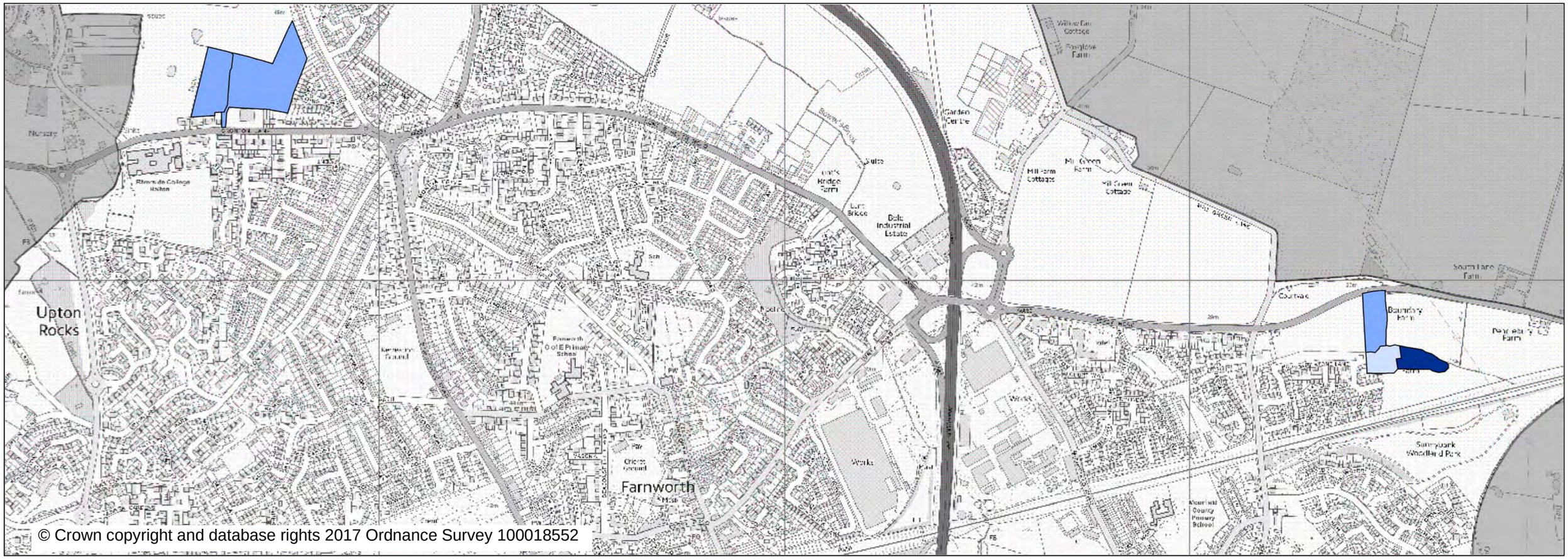
HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

N



Proportion of parcel developed
- 25% or more
- 10-25%
- No development



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