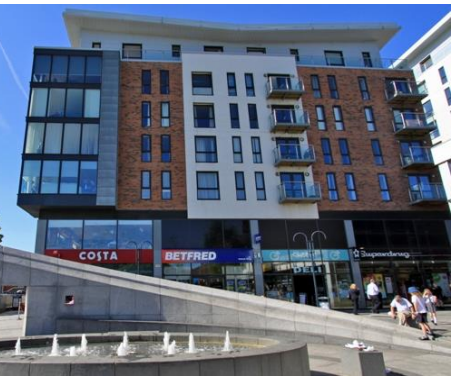


# Bury Local Plan

## Topic Paper 8

# Open Land



October 2018

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# 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Open Land Topic Paper is one of a series that has been prepared as part of the process of evidence gathering to support Bury's emerging Local Plan. The full range of Topic Papers deal with the following:
- 1 – Housing
  - 2 – Economy and Employment
  - 3 – Town Centres and Main Town Centre Uses
  - 4 – Communities, Health and Wellbeing
  - 5 – Carbon Reduction and Air Quality
  - 6 – Flood Risk
  - 7 – Natural Environment
  - 8 – Open Land
  - 9 – Built Environment
  - 10 – Transport and Physical Infrastructure
- 1.2 The principal aim of the Topic Paper is to set out current key policies, plans and strategies relating to this topic area that will form the framework for the development of the Local Plan and to present a profile of the Borough that will highlight key issues, problems and challenges that the Local Plan should ultimately seek to deal with.
- 1.3 This will subsequently help to shape and influence the direction and focus of the Local Plan's planning policies, designations and site allocations.
- 1.4 It is intended that the Topic Papers will be 'living' documents that can, if necessary, be updated to reflect the most up-to-date circumstances. **For example, some of the evidence contained within the Topic Papers has been drawn from evidence that has been developed to support the draft Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF). Any subsequent amendments to the GMSF and/or its supporting evidence, will be reflected in the evidence supporting Bury's Local Plan.**

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## 2 Key Policies, Plans and Strategies

- 2.1 One of the key early stages in the process is to review other policies, plans and strategies which are of relevance to this particular topic area and which will help to inform and influence the direction of the Local Plan. Clearly, there is a need for the Local Plan to be consistent with planning policy at different levels.
- 2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out Government policy in respect of planning matters and this is supported by Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). This sets out the broad planning framework within which development plans are produced.
- 2.3 Sub-regionally, the emerging Greater Manchester Spatial Framework will establish strategic policies and site allocations across Greater Manchester. This document will, once adopted, form part of Bury's development plan alongside the Local Plan.
- 2.4 There are also a range of other plans and strategies that, whilst not being policy, are considered to be of relevance to the Borough from an open land perspective.

### National Planning Policy Framework

- 2.5 In July 2018, the Government issued the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Central to the NPPF is the Government's objective of achieving sustainable development and it highlights that achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways:
  - **an economic objective** – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
  - **a social objective** – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
  - **an environmental objective** – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently,

minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

2.6 Paragraph 134 of the NPPF states that Green Belt serves five purposes:

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

2.7 Paragraph 136 states that, once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified, through the preparation or updating of plans. Strategic policies should establish the need for any changes to Green Belt boundaries, having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so they can endure beyond the plan period. Where a need for changes to Green Belt boundaries has been established through strategic policies, detailed amendments to those boundaries may be made through non-strategic policies, including neighbourhood plans.

2.8 Paragraph 137 states that, before concluding that exceptional circumstances exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries, the strategic policy-making authority should be able to demonstrate that it has examined fully all other reasonable options for meeting its identified need for development. This will be assessed through the examination of its strategic policies, which will take into account the preceding paragraph, and whether the strategy:

- makes as much use as possible of suitable brownfield sites and underutilised land;
- optimises the density of development in line with the policies in chapter 11 of this Framework, including whether policies promote a significant uplift in minimum density standards in town and city centres and other locations well served by public transport; and
- has been informed by discussions with neighbouring authorities about whether they could accommodate some of the identified need for development, as demonstrated through the statement of common ground.

## The Greater Manchester Spatial Framework

2.9 Once adopted, the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF) will form an integral part of Bury's wider development plan. Consultation on the first draft GMSF ended in January 2017 and there are proposals to issue a second draft for consultation shortly.

2.10 One of the key issues for the GMSF to consider is the levels of needs for new housing and employment floorspace. In doing so, the GMSF will need to

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consider whether these needs can be accommodated on land within the existing urban area or whether it is necessary to identify other land outside the existing urban area. However, this is a strategic issue that is being dealt with through the GMSF and is not currently an issue to be considered through the Local Plan.

# 3 Local Profile

3.1 The Bury UDP contains policies which designate areas of open land for protection and seek to control development within these areas. This includes policies relating to Green Belt, Other Protected Open Land, River Valleys, West Pennine Moors. This chapter provides an overview of Bury’s current areas of open land.

## Green Belt

3.2 As stated above, the GMSF is being jointly prepared by the ten constituent Greater Manchester authorities, providing not only the strategic context on issues such as Green Belt but also more detail around housing and employment land and associated infrastructure.

3.3 Bury’s Local Plan will deal with local and more detailed matters connected to Green Belt policy. This may, for example, include development management policies applying to areas of Green Belt (as identified through the GMSF), such as the approach taken towards development within village settlements, agricultural workers’ dwellings, equestrian development and visual amenity.

The GMSF will deal with the identification of a Green Belt boundary across Greater Manchester and the Local Plan will deal with local and more detailed Green Belt matters

## Other Protected Open Land

3.4 UDP Policy OL2/1 sought to protect open land between the edge of the built-up area and the inner edge of the Green Belt as Other Protected Open Land (OPOL) and generally limits development to uses such as agriculture and outdoor recreation in order to protect the open character of the land.

3.5 The UDP Inspector’s Report indicated that the OPOL was not needed to meet housing needs at the time but that it would need to be considered when looking at future housing targets for the Borough, given the tightness of the Green Belt against much of Bury’s urban area.

3.6 Furthermore, recent appeal decisions on greenfield land that sit outside of the Green Belt indicate that such sites are being released for housing development.

3.7 As specified under the section on Green Belt, the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework will be considering the sub-region’s needs for housing and employment floorspace and whether there is a need to amend the

There is no longer a justification for Other Protected Open Land

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current Green Belt boundary in order to meet these needs. It is considered that there is no longer a justification for protecting OPOL as the land is required to help meet housing needs and will help to minimise the removal of land from the Green Belt.

- 3.8 Bury's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) has concluded that most of the OPOL sites are considered to have some potential to accommodate development and planning permissions have already been granted for residential development on some sites. However, the status of the Chesham Road site as a Local Nature Reserve has led to this site being discounted as a potential housing site.

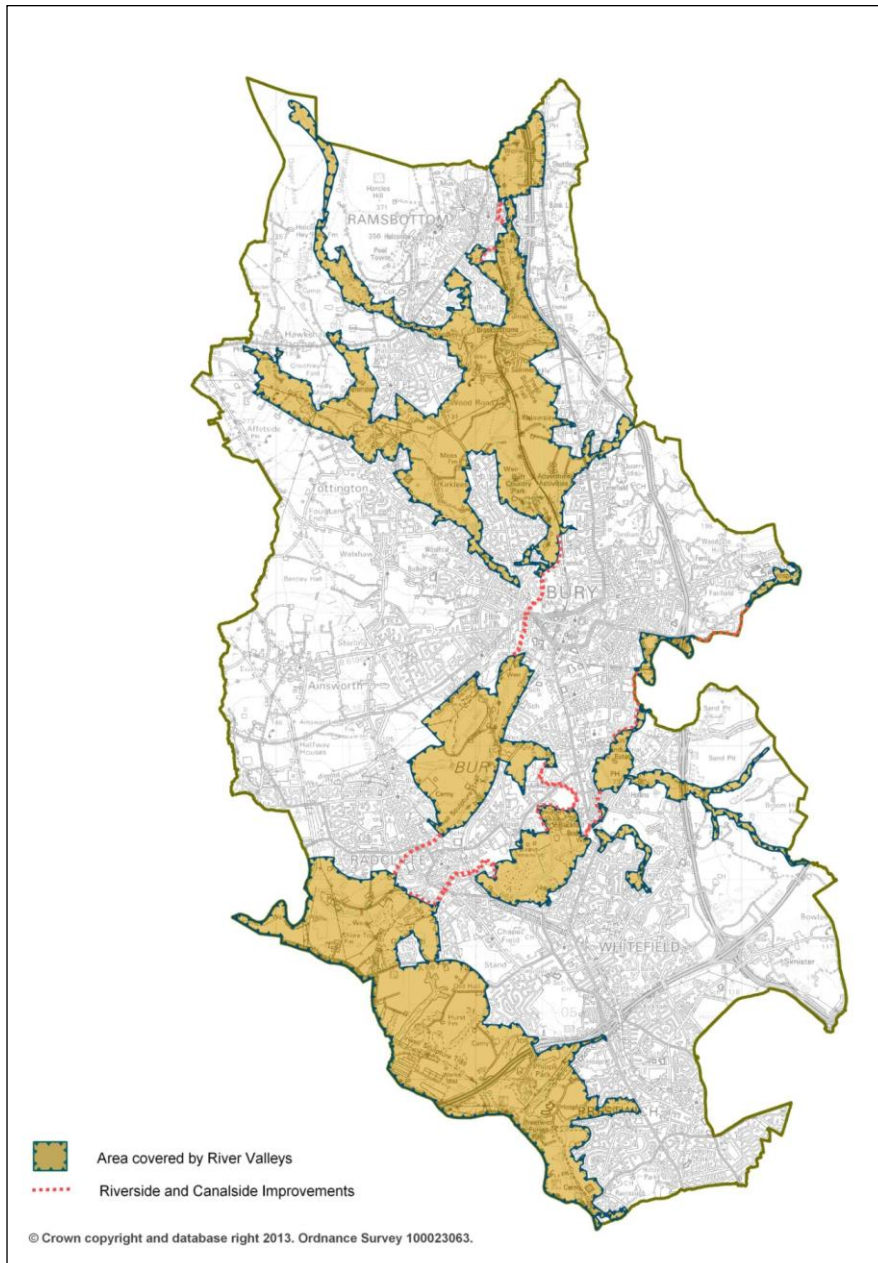
## River Valleys and West Pennine Moors

### River Valleys

- 3.9 The river valleys of Greater Manchester are both major geographical features and of great significance to the sub-region. Water power was a driver for the historical development of the area but the valleys also provide landscape character and important places for wildlife and recreation.
- 3.10 UDP Policy OL5/1 identifies the designation of the river valleys as defined on the Proposals Map, which included the main valleys of the River Irwell and River Roch and their tributaries. Policy OL5/2 relates to development within River Valleys and generally restricts development to uses similar to those that are deemed appropriate in the Green Belt.
- 3.11 Policy OL5/3 on Riverside and Canalside Development in Urban Areas is aimed at protecting and enhancing those parts of the river corridor adjacent urban areas which could provide improved access alongside and frontage onto the river.
- 3.12 Figure 1 shows the designations for both OL5/1 (River Valleys) and OL5/3 (River/Canalside Improvements in Urban Areas).



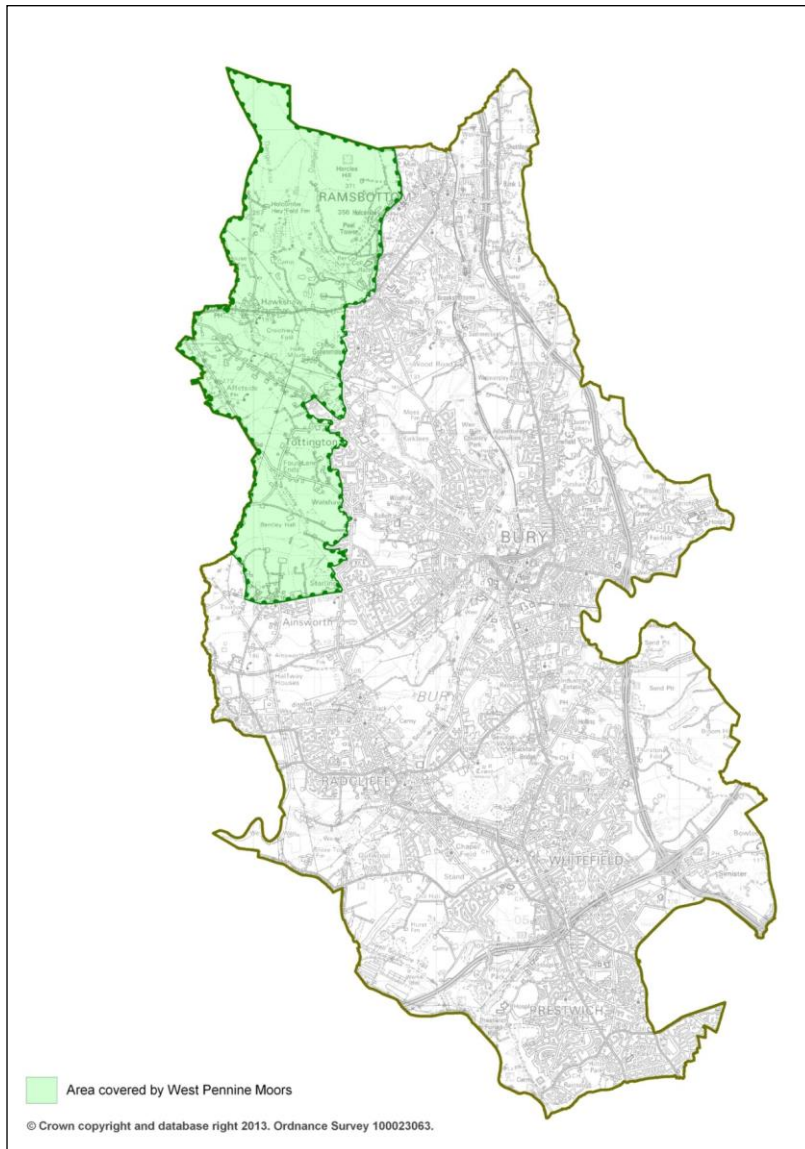
Figure 1 - River Valley and Riverside/Canalside Improvement areas



## West Pennine Moors

- 3.13 The north-west corner of the Borough, covering a broad area from Holcombe Moor in the north to Ainsworth in the south, is part of a wider area known as the 'West Pennine Moors'. This is an upland outlier from the Pennines situated north of Greater Manchester and south of the East Lancashire towns of Blackburn and Burnley (see Figure 2).
- 3.14 Policy OL7/2 of the Bury UDP defines the West Pennine Moors area on the Proposals Map and states that the Council will 'control development and manage recreational activity and public access, so as to reduce any possible detrimental effects these may have on the important character of the area'.

Figure 2 - West Pennine Moors



## Establishing a Green Infrastructure network

- 3.15 Whilst the UDP policies relating to River Valleys and the West Pennine Moors have been a useful tool in protecting and enhancing the areas they cover, environmental policy has progressed with increased emphasis on climate change and 'Green Infrastructure'.

The River Valley and West Pennine Moors designations are in need of review

- 3.16 The Borough's River Valleys, in particular, fulfil a variety of roles that fit neatly with the climate change and Green Infrastructure agendas. For example, from a biodiversity perspective, they provide habitat corridors for wildlife and, in relation to climate change they can contribute towards flood storage/attenuation, carbon sinks and temperature moderation. Green Infrastructure is considered further in the Natural Environment Topic Paper.

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## 4 Summary of Key Issues

- 4.1 This Open Land Topic Paper has highlighted a number of Key Issues that need to be considered in taking the Local Plan forward. These Key Issues are considered to be as follows:

<b>Key Issues for Open Land:</b>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The GMSF will deal with the identification of a Green Belt boundary across Greater Manchester and the Local Plan will deal with local and more detailed Green Belt matters.</li><li>▪ There is no longer a justification for Other Protected Open Land.</li><li>▪ The River Valleys and West Pennine Moors designations are in need of review.</li></ul> |
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