

Green Belt Assessment and HOM 2.16: Soundness Objection

Stockport Local Plan Regulation 19 Green Belt Topic Paper 2026

The Green Belt Assessment (GBA), including Appendix A, does not provide a proportionate, consistent or sufficiently analytical basis for releasing land from the Green Belt. Its general methodology relies too heavily on “grey belt” classification, while giving inadequate attention to openness, permanence, countryside encroachment, cumulative effects and reasonable alternatives. These weaknesses are particularly serious for HOM 2.16 at High Lane, a proposed allocation of 1,000 homes within the sensitive Hazel Grove–High Lane gap.

1.0 POSITIVELY PREPARED

The assessment does not demonstrate that Green Belt release produces a sustainable pattern of development. For HOM 2.16, proximity to a bus stop and Middlewood Way is not a substitute for a full sustainability assessment. The evidence does not adequately address A6 congestion, limited public transport and active-travel choices, access to employment and services, infrastructure constraints, or the capacity of a rural village to absorb growth on this scale. Nor does it show that more sustainable urban-adjacent or lower-harm alternatives were exhausted. The allocation is therefore not positively prepared.

2.0 JUSTIFIED

The GBA does not provide proportionate evidence or a robust comparison of reasonable alternatives. Grey belt status is treated as a shortcut to release, although it does not establish development suitability, assess openness or permanence, or displace Green Belt Purpose C. Appendix A’s treatment of HOM 2.16 is narrative rather than analytical: it contains no quantified openness assessment, viewshed or landscape-sensitivity analysis, scale-based harm assessment, or credible appraisal of the long-term defensibility of Middlewood Way.

The cumulative assessment is especially weak. Although Appendix A identifies HOM 2.16 alongside HOM 2.18, HOM 2.39 and HOM 2.40, it does not model their combined effects on settlement separation, landscape character, openness, transport, ecology or High Lane’s identity. It also acknowledges that development would significantly weaken the separation between Hazel Grove and High Lane, yet concludes that release would not fundamentally undermine Green Belt purposes. That unresolved contradiction, together with the absence of a transparent alternatives assessment, means HOM 2.16 is not justified.

3.0 EFFECTIVE

The allocation is not supported by a credible delivery strategy. The evidence does not establish how transport, schools, health services, water and wastewater capacity, or mine-entry remediation would be funded, phased and delivered. It also fails to assess cross-boundary effects on Cheshire East, including Poynton and Disley. Without committed mitigation, infrastructure phasing and effective joint working, the proposed scale of development cannot be regarded as deliverable; HOM 2.16 is therefore not effective.

4.0 CONSISTENT WITH NATIONAL POLICY

The assessment does not demonstrate exceptional circumstances for selecting High Lane specifically, nor why 1,000 homes must be placed in this rural location rather than on more sustainable or less harmful alternatives. It fails to show that the revised Green Belt boundary would endure, that openness would be protected, or that further eastward release would be resisted. Development at HOM 2.16 would weaken the Hazel Grove–High Lane gap and extend built development into open countryside, conflicting with the objectives of preventing sprawl and safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The allocation is therefore not consistent with national Green Belt policy.

5.0 REQUESTED OUTCOME

For these reasons, the GBA is an inadequate basis for releasing HOM 2.16 and the allocation is unsound against all four soundness tests. The preferred remedy is to **remove HOM 2.16 from the Local Plan**. If it is not removed, it should be **substantially reduced, to 100 or less as per the HLVNF 2025 survey, and re-evaluated** through a transparent comparison with reasonable alternatives, supported by cumulative-impact modelling, quantitative openness and landscape assessment, a defensible-boundary and permanence review, cross-boundary assessment, and a funded, phased infrastructure strategy. Until that work is completed, the allocation should not proceed at its proposed scale.