

**Appendix 1: Landscape Character and
Green Infrastructure**

Appendix 1: Landscape Character and Green Infrastructure in the Study Area

Section A: Introduction

- A1.1 The growth of the settlement patterns in the study area, as described in the Cheshire Landscape Character and Historic Landscape Character Assessments, has been examined in order to understand the relevance and significance of the remaining gaps between towns and villages.
- A1.2 In 2013, the Council gathered additional information on the existing local landscape designations - previously Areas of Special County Value (ASCVs) - in Cheshire East. The study identified the special character and qualities of these areas to augment information in the landscape character assessment. The European Landscape Convention recognises that all landscapes are of value whether they are designated or not. The ASCVs – now called local landscape designations – sit within the framework of the Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment.
- A1.3 Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is the distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently in a particular landscape. Particular combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use, field patterns and human settlement create character. Character makes each part of the landscape distinct and gives each its sense of place. Each character area has its own identity, even though it may share some generic characteristics with other areas.
- A1.5 Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) has helped to redefine the philosophy of how the historic environment is perceived and managed, enabling a shift from the traditional designation of sites, to an appreciation of both the landscape context of sites, as well as the value of the historic landscape as a whole. The Cheshire HLC project has recorded the visible evidence of human history, which forms the modern landscape. Extracts are provided below.

Section B: Summary of Evidence

- A1.6 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that 'the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils'.
- A1.7 The Policy Principles document Policy SE 4 'The Landscape'

reflects NPPF and advises that "the landscape character of the Borough is distinct. Development should protect, and where possible, enhance the character and local distinctiveness of the rural and urban landscape ... suitable and appropriate mitigation for the restoration of damaged landscape areas" is necessary in order to preserve and promote local distinctiveness and diversity.

- A1.8 The landscape character and historic landscape character assessments both emphasise the relevance and significance of the dispersed settlement pattern throughout the study area and of the remaining gaps between towns and villages. They describe a traditional dispersed pattern of scattered hamlets, large farms and moated halls which characterises the landscape. The HLC report considers that recent development on former agricultural land, particularly around Crewe, has "seriously eroded a pattern of some antiquity".
- A1.9 The HLC study, which forms the basis for the Cheshire East landscape strategy (in preparation) recommends management measures such as increasing "awareness and understanding of the historical development of towns, including ... the part that former areas of dispersed settlement play in the overall history of the settlement. Where possible this historic settlement pattern should be preserved" and "promoting good quality building design for all new developments, which respect and enhance the layout of the adjacent settlement, for example, developments which would significantly increase the nucleation in an area of dispersed settlement should be resisted."
- A1.10 The rapid growth of Crewe has very recently dramatically transformed the landscape. Continued substantial growth is proposed, which threatens to subsume a number of historic villages and towns, built up over centuries to support a predominantly agricultural economy. The distinctive identity of these small settlements is a matter of concern to many local residents and stakeholders, as evidenced by recent consultation responses.
- A1.11 The Green Space Strategy is intended to promote green space across Cheshire East in the creation of sustainable communities. The key themes of the Green Infrastructure Framework and the Green Infrastructure Action Plan for Crewe include improving connectivity and improving access for local communities to green spaces, places of work and

learning and proposals to restore Crewe's rural green setting. Proposed initiatives in the Action Plan can be applied to other settlements in Cheshire East. For example, proposals for the Cheshire Plain landscape character area include maintaining hedgerows and field corner copses, replacing hedgerow trees and retaining ponds to strengthen the fabric of the landscape; and for Urban Fringe areas, to create an attractive well wooded edge to towns and villages and provide access to the countryside.

- A1.12 The various landscape reports that are part of the Local Plan evidence base substantiate the concerns of residents and stakeholders and provide documented evidence to justify the Council's intention to maintain and strengthen the protection for open land between neighbouring settlements. "Suitable and appropriate mitigation for the restoration of damaged landscape areas" (Policy SE 4) should consist of strong planning policy protection for the remaining, often narrow, open gaps.

Section C: Growth of Settlements in the Study Area

- A1.13 At Nantwich, archaeological excavations to the west of the River Weaver at Kingsley Fields have revealed a large brine production site of Roman date. The complex appears to have been linked to the main Middlewich-Whitchurch Roman road by a side road, traces of which led north-westwards from the settlement. Extensive waterlogged remains of Roman and medieval date were found adjacent to the River Weaver in Nantwich.
- A1.14 It is apparent from information in the Domesday survey that by the eleventh century Nantwich had become the focus of this industry in the area. The medieval Cheshire 'wiches' or salt towns continued to thrive and Nantwich remained at the centre of the trade until the late-seventeenth century, when rock salt was discovered at Marbury to the north of Northwich. The canalisation of the River Weaver (Weaver Navigation) meant that coal could be imported and salt exported far more cheaply, leading to Northwich supplanting Nantwich as the centre of the trade.
- A1.14 The eighteenth century was the age of canals, and a network of waterways was built across the county by engineers such as James Brindley and Thomas Telford. Cheshire's first railway line opened at Crewe in 1837 and by 1875 a network

of lines had been established across the county. The creation of a direct line from Birmingham to Manchester by the Grand Junction Railway Company in 1843 led to Crewe becoming a major junction, and the site of the Company's (later the London and North Western Railway) engineering works. The establishment of these works led to the development of the new town in the nineteenth century, in a location which previously contained no nucleated settlements.

- A1.15 Settlement within the study area is typically very dispersed although over time some dispersed settlements have been subsumed into larger settlements. As late as the 1830s and 1840s, maps of the Cheshire Plain show low densities of nucleation across the lowland areas of the county. Settlement growth during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the rapid expansion of Crewe in the latter half of the twentieth century, combined with planning policies such as village envelopes, have led to a greater degree of nucleation in the settlement pattern. The report considers that this has "seriously eroded a pattern of some antiquity".

Section D: Landscape Character Areas

- A1.16 Cheshire East has a wealth of sites designated for their nature conservation value, including nine Ramsar sites - wetlands of international importance, 33 Sites of Special Scientific Interest - covering almost two per cent of the total land area, over 400 Local Wildlife Sites, 21 Regional Important Geological Sites and numerous statutory and non-statutory nature reserves. There are Ancient Woodlands, Registered Parks and Gardens and Conservation Areas (mapped **)
- A1.17 The Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment provides an up to date classification of the whole of Cheshire's landscape which can be used for making assessments of landscape character for development management and as a basis in the formulation of a Landscape Strategy in the future. This report has been used to identify the landscape character of the gaps between settlements and in particular the settlement patterns in the various parts of the study area (south of Middlewich, west of M6).

Landscape Type 7: East Lowland Plain - East Cheshire Flat Farmland

- A1.18 The Rivers Weaver, Dane and Bollin form the main drainage pattern, flowing to the north through the Cheshire Plain, which extends from the Peak Fringe to the Dee estuary.
- A1.19 The key characteristics of this type of landscape are gently undulating, often flat topography, small to medium sized fields used for pasture and arable farming, with intensive farming and large farm businesses in dispersed hamlets and farms. Hawthorn hedgerows and trees, some mixed species hedges, large numbers of small water bodies, scattered species rich grasslands and ancient woodlands and field sized coverts are seen, with remnants of medieval moated sites.

Gap between Acton and Nantwich

- A1.20 This is a predominantly flat landscape and the different patterns of enclosure strongly influence the character of the landscape. Near the A51 in the north of the area the landscape is open and expansive, with larger fields and thin or low hedges with few trees, allowing extensive views across the plain as far west as the Sandstone Ridge.
- A1.21 This character area has the greatest settlement density of the whole East Lowland Plain character type. There are a number of nucleated villages such as Bunbury, Wrenbury and Acton as well as hamlets and a scatter of dispersed farms and halls. Dorfold Hall and garden to the west of Nantwich has a Grade II Registered Park and Garden.

- A1.22 During the English Civil War, in 1643, Nantwich was occupied by parliamentary troops. Royalist troops subjected Nantwich to attack and then siege. The Battle of Nantwich was fought on 25 January 1644 to the north-west of the town, and saw the Royalists defeated by the combined Parliamentary relieving force and the Nantwich garrison.

- A1.23 The site of the battle is on the English Heritage Register of Battlefields. The Battlefield designation (extract from English Heritage) explains that "the landscape contains many historical elements other than the battlefield, such as a medieval moated site and a seventeenth-century almshouse." Remnants of the battle survive in the landscape as a series of entrenchments in Acton churchyard.

North-west Crewe/south-east to Haslington and east to Sandbach

- A1.24 This is a predominantly flat, large scale landscape with relatively few hedgerow trees or dominant hedgerows. This combines with the low woodland cover typical of the type to create an open landscape with long views in all directions to a distant skyline. Throughout the area a number of large isolated farmsteads provide points of focus within the field system.
- A1.25 Beyond the major urban centres, settlement consists mainly of dispersed farms and hamlets such as Bradfield Green, which is likely to be of some antiquity i.e. linked by footpaths and minor roads. Moated sites are located at Wood Hall Farm and at Minshull Vernon.

Issues affecting the Type 7 East Lowland Plain landscape character type

- A1.26 Issues include changes in farming practices, farm crops, and patterns of ownership. There is an on-going decline in traditional woodland management practices and loss of historic field patterns and historic parkland, with the replacement of hedgerows by fences. Reduction, fragmentation and deterioration of habitats, particularly the loss of ponds and of species rich acid grassland. Standardisation of roads and lanes, and incremental development, can lead to suburbanisation of rural properties and the expansion of settlements.

Landscape Type 10: Lower Farms and Woods – Undulating Farms and Woodland

- A1.27 Key characteristics of this landscape type are the low lying gently rolling topography, water bodies, high density of woodland, hedgerow boundaries and mature trees around irregular fields, but with a loss of boundaries to form large fields with fences. Medium sized settlements are mixed with dispersed farms and nucleated hamlets/ villages, with fenced horse paddocks.

LFW10: Gaps between Nantwich and Wollaston, and the gaps between Crewe and Shavington, Weston and Haslington, including Crewe Hall.

- A1.28 This gently undulating character area is located south of Sandbach and Crewe and runs as far west as Nantwich and east as far as Alsager. Fields are small-large in size and regular-irregular in pattern, reflecting the re-use and adaptation of medieval and post-medieval fields in the modern period.
- A1.29 This is a landscape of strong contrasts with many local variations. The area around Crewe Hall is small scale and verdant due to the presence of large blocks of woodland which curtail many views. Elsewhere around the edge of Crewe the landscape is relatively open, due to the combination of flat topography and low field boundaries, and is especially susceptible to the visual intrusion of large man-made structures and buildings which dominate the surrounding landscape.
- A1.30 The area is heavily influenced by its close proximity to Crewe. The nucleated settlements on the fringes of Crewe - Haslington, Hough, Shavington, Weston and Wheelock - have also undergone modern growth, as has Sandbach to the north. In recent years this area has experienced significant change to landscape character arising from the development of extensive new residential areas on former agricultural land.
- A1.31 The development at Wychwood Park near Weston, which includes a hotel and housing, is particularly noticeable where a new road system serves substantial properties constructed adjacent to a new golf course and is surrounded by extensive landscaped areas. Another golf course is located to the north-east of Crewe Hall. There is a background pattern of dispersed settlement, which is typical of the area before the development of Crewe.
- A1.32 Numerous important highways traversing this area have a substantial impact upon landscape character. The A500 is particularly high where it bridges the main north-south rail line and moving traffic is visible over an extensive area. Elsewhere major highways pass through deep cuttings and the roadside planting schemes are very conspicuous within the original field pattern.

- A1.33 A concentration of woodland occurs at Crewe Hall (listed Grade I) in the park and garden (listed on the English Heritage register as Grade II). Elsewhere woodland cover is limited. There are a number of high status halls in the area – Willaston, Hough and Weston – all of which are Grade II* and Haslington, which is Grade I.

Issues affecting the Type 10 Lower Farms and Woods landscape character type

- A1.34 This landscape is affected by an increase in demand for horsiculture, mineral extraction, changes in farming including changing patterns of land ownership and farm crops. As above, there is an on-going decline in traditional woodland management practices and loss of historic field patterns and historic parkland, with the replacement of hedgerows by fences. Reduction, fragmentation and deterioration of habitats, particularly the loss of ponds and of species rich hedgerows and ancient woodland. Standardisation of roads and lanes, and incremental development, can lead to suburbanisation of rural properties and the expansion of settlements.

Landscape Type 13: Incised River Valleys

- A1.35 Key characteristics of this landscape type are steep sided valleys, meandering river courses, high levels of woodland along the valleys, including ancient woodland, with tributaries in wooded cloughs. There are bridges and viaducts, isolated halls and farms and grassy banks including acid grassland.

R3 Upper Weaver Character Area includes the gap between Nantwich and Wistaston (NW Crewe).

- A1.36 Part of the Weaver Valley around Church Minshull to the north-west of Crewe was designated under Policy R2 of the Cheshire Structure Plan 2016 as an Area of Special County Value (ASCV), now proposed as a local landscape designation as described in the LUC report 'Cheshire East: Local Landscape Designations' (2013). Its special qualities include the variation between enclosure and openness which creates glimpses of the river winding through the undulating fields. Gaps in hedges/ trees create framed views some of which are open and distant over the distinctive river valley landscape of undulating fields.

- A1.37 This area has a very rural character with an absence of any large settlements apart from Church Minshull, a small nucleated village on the western bank of the Weaver. Settlement is low density and the area is characterised by dispersed hamlets and farms, often very substantial farmsteads with associated outbuildings and barns which punctuate the skyline on both sides of the valley. Isolated halls are also noted and much of this area comprises medieval enclosure, with hedgerow boundaries.

Issues affecting the Type 13 River Valley landscape character type

- A1.38 The valley landscapes are affected by the decline of ancient and semi-natural woodland habitats and fragmentation of clough woodlands. Some are affected by the encroachment of development and farming activities, or inappropriate management. Loss of wetland through drainage, decline of wetland habitats and wet grassland results from visitor pressure in some locations and the demand for improved public access networks and waterside locations for new housing.
- A1.39 As above, there is an on-going decline in traditional woodland management practices and loss of historic field patterns and historic parkland, with over-mature hedgerows. Standardisation of roads and lanes, and incremental development, can lead to suburbanisation of rural properties and the expansion of settlements.

Section E: Green Space Strategy and Green Infrastructure Action Plan for Crewe

- A1.40 Green Infrastructure (GI) is “a network of multifunctional greenspace, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities” (NPPF). The concept of multifunctionality is central to the GI approach to efficient and cost effective land use planning.
- A1.41 The Green Space Strategy is intended to promote green space across Cheshire East in the creation of sustainable communities. It takes up the broad statements made in the Sustainable Community Strategy and seeks to translate the aspirations into reality for the many local communities across Cheshire East, to ensure they have access to the green

space they need to live rich and fulfilling lives and to support a prosperous local economy.

A1.42 A number of documents relating to the various aspects of green infrastructure and open space underpin the Green Space Strategy. For example, two of the key elements in delivering sustainable development, outlined in NPPF, are promoting healthy communities and conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

A1.43 the Natural Environment White Paper 2011 seeks to strengthen the connections between people and nature and explains that everyone should have fair access to a good-quality natural environment, to connect with nature and enjoy its benefits.

A1.44 The Cheshire East Sustainable Community Strategy vision for 2025 states “we will continue to have an outstanding range of historic buildings, leisure facilities, nature conservation habitats, country parks, accessible countryside and green spaces for people to enjoy.” The Council, in partnership with Cheshire West and Chester Council and local authorities from NE Wales, has developed a strategic Green Infrastructure Framework to inform the Cheshire East Local Plan and a Green Infrastructure Action Plan for Crewe. Key themes include improving connectivity and improving access for local communities to green spaces, places of work and learning and proposals to restore Crewe’s rural green setting. Proposed initiatives in the Action Plan can be applied to other settlements in Cheshire East.

Green Space / Infrastructure Requirements are summarised as follows:

Crewe:

- consider improved accessibility to natural green space for north eastern residents/creation of natural municipal green area;
- Consider how to improve access to green corridors to residents in central and north-eastern Crewe;
- Investigate the provision of country park facilities alongside the expansion plans for Crewe.

Nantwich:

- Increased provision and quality of open spaces in the town;
- Size and quality of the Riverside

Haslington, Shavington:

- Investigate how to provide improved access to ‘natural and semi-natural Urban Greenspaces’;

A1.45 The Crewe GI Action Plan can help address some of these challenges by integrating GI within new and existing development and enabling people to access greenspaces more easily through a series of connected linear routes. Crewe’s river corridors can be re-invigorated with opportunities for recreation, providing a setting for building form and connected corridors for nature. Another unrealised asset is the countryside surrounding Crewe, although there is a need for restoring its character to provide a quality setting for the town.

A1.46 The Vision is that GI will improve the health and well being of residents, benefit biodiversity, make Crewe more resilient to climate change, improve the image of the town and help it to become a nationally significant economic centre.

A1.47 The Action Plan has several objectives relevant to the current study of gaps:

- Provide a multifunctional and connected GI network across the town;
- Develop opportunities for walking and cycling to improve leisure and recreation, commuting and links between urban and rural areas;
- Restore landscape character in Crewe’s countryside and improve access from the town’s ‘Green’ edge; and
- Promote and improve GI along the three water corridors – Leighton Brook, Valley Brook and Gresty Brook;

A1.48 The key actions of the GI Action Plan include the restoration of an attractive landscape character with increased tree cover; and greater availability of access links and rights of way from the town into the surrounding countryside.

Sources:

1. *Landscape Character Assessment (Cheshire County Council 2008)*
2. *Cheshire Historic Landscape Characterisation 2008 (Cheshire County Council & English Heritage 2008)*
3. *Cheshire East Green Space Strategy*
4. *Cheshire East Sustainable Community Strategy*
5. *Cheshire East Joint Green Infrastructure Framework*
6. *Green Infrastructure Action Plan for Crewe*
7. *Local Landscape Designations (draft report LUC 2013)*

Appendix 2: Green Gap Assessments

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1.0 Introduction

1.2 This appendix sets out the results of an initial assessment of the gaps between Crewe and Nantwich, the neighbouring villages and towns closest to the urban area. Owing to time limitations the study has concentrated on the narrowest parts of gaps. The assessment was based on a desk top review of existing mapping data provided by the Council, Google and Bing satellite mapping, and focused site visits. It should be noted that the gap surveys were undertaken in early August 2013 when trees and hedges were in full leaf. A further survey should be undertaken during winter to check and compare the visual assessment findings.

1.2 The appendix is structured as follows (*See Figure A2.1*):

Part 1: Existing Green Gaps

1.3 This section examines the Existing Green Gaps which were identified in the current adopted local plan Saved Policy NE.4:

A- Between Wistaston/Willaston and Nantwich;

B- Between Willaston/Rope/ Basford and Shavington;

C- Between Basford East and West Strategic Sites and Weston/ Basford; and

D- Between East Crewe and Haslington.

1.4 The main objective of this part of the review was to assess the current character of the gaps and to consider whether they were still capable of performing their original purpose, to prevent the merging of settlements, having regard to development proposals contained in the Development Strategy.

Part 2: Other Settlements

1.4 During the consultation process for the new Local Plan, concern has been raised by residents of the following settlements which feel vulnerable to future development, in particular the expansion of Crewe and Nantwich:

E- Acton (west of Nantwich);

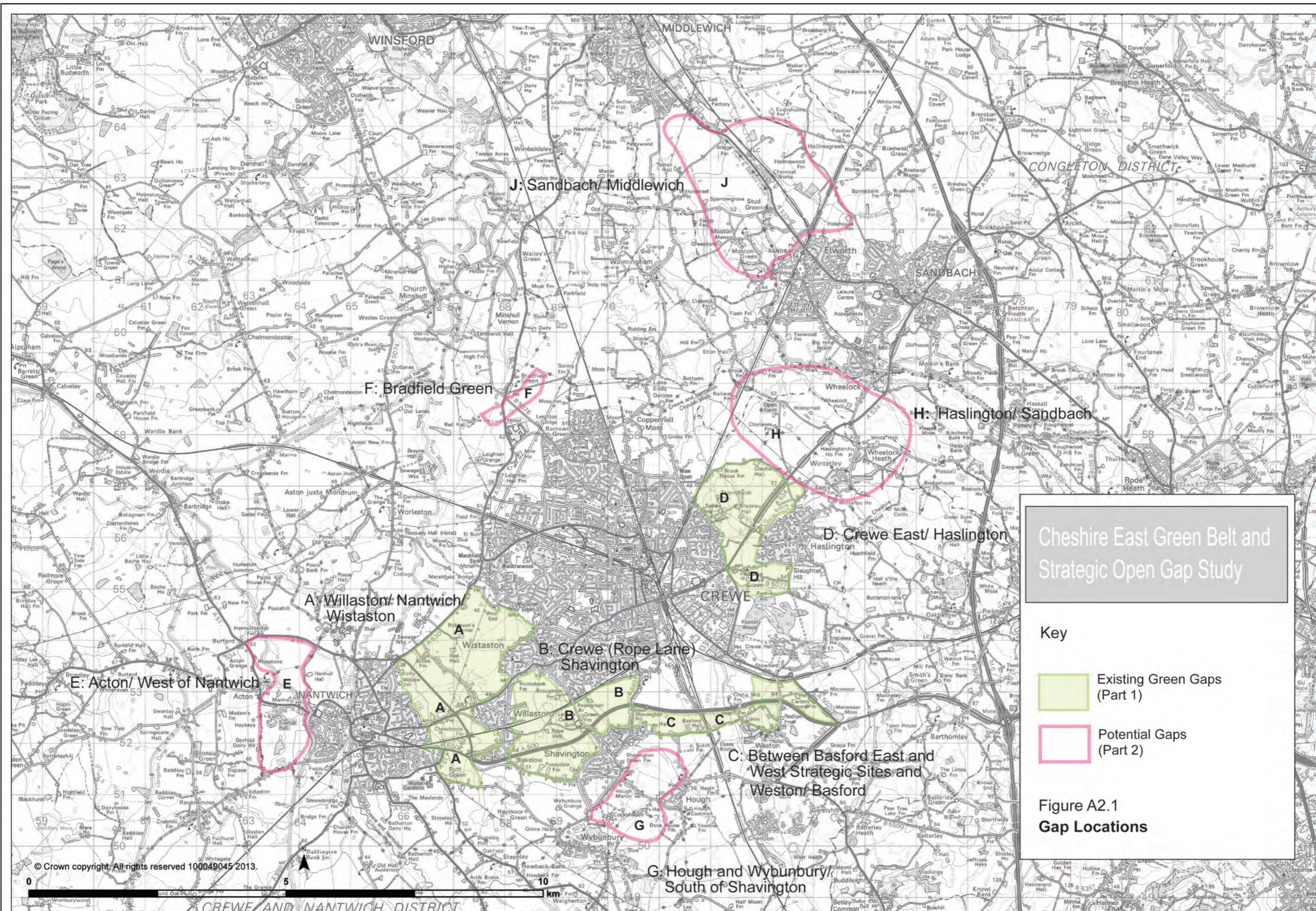
F- Bradfield Green and Minshull Vernon
(northwest of Leighton);

G- Hough and Wybunbury (South of Shavington);

H- Haslington and Sandbach and Middlewich; and

J-Sandbach and Middlewich.

1.5 For each of these settlements the study has considered the risk from merging as a result of current proposals set out in the Cheshire East Development Strategy and potential future development beyond the local plan period.



Cheshire East Green Belt and Strategic Open Gap Study

Key

- Existing Green Gaps (Part 1)
- Potential Gaps (Part 2)

Figure A2.1
Gap Locations

Part 1: Existing Green Gaps

A: Gap between Nantwich, Willaston, and Wistaston

Description and Purpose

A1.1 The gap separates the historic town of Nantwich from Wistaston, an existing outer western suburb of Crewe to the north east, and from the village of Willaston to the east (itself partly conjoined to the western edge of Crewe).

Land Use

A1.2 Predominantly open farmland, with the A51, and railway line. There is some development in the form of farms, large houses, hotels, ribbon housing development, school, and garden nurseries.

Settlement Character

A1.3 Nantwich is defined as a Key Service Centre in the Development Strategy and is one of two key historic towns in Cheshire East with a high quality Conservation Area and historic core. The Development Strategy provides for the Town to grow substantially to meet current and future housing needs and sets out proposals for mixed use development on a number of brown field and greenfield sites (*the location of proposed Strategic Sites is shown on Figure A2.2*).

A1.4 The eastern edge of Nantwich is characterised by relatively recent housing development, (constructed over the past 30 years) and is suburban in character. Willaston, although described as a village, has no formal hierarchy designation in the Local Plan. Its western edge is characterised by large detached properties, and is semi-rural in character at its edges. Wistaston, a south western suburb of Crewe, is characterised by modern medium density housing developments, and is suburban in character.

Landscape Character Assessment

A1.5 The area is utilised mainly as farmland and has a 'typical' Cheshire landscape, characterised by a flat topography, broken up with a dense network of field hedges, interspersed with hedgerow trees, some groups of trees and single mature trees. The tree screening associated with the A51, which crosses the gap in an east west direction, is a particularly dominant feature in the summer months.

A1.6 A railway line runs close to the southern edge of the gap in an east-west direction.

A1.7 The narrowest point of the gap between Nantwich and Willaston coincides with two major access roads to Nantwich, the A534 and B5074, each linking to a roundabout junction on the A51. Further structural landscaping in the vicinity of these junctions and along the route of these two roads may contribute to enhancing screening and perception of the gap between the two settlements

Environmental and Historic Designations

(see Figure A2.3)

A1.8 There are a number of ponds and prominent trees throughout the parcel. The gap is also adjacent to the Old Covert Site of Biological Importance, Hinging Bank Covert Site of Biological Importance and Rookery Bank Covert.

A1.9 Cheer Brook runs through the gap, and is zoned Flood Risk 2 and 3 by the Environment Agency.

A1.10 There are four Listed Buildings located within and adjacent to gap: Willow Farmhouse, Red Hall Farmhouse, Grade 2 and West End, Grade 2, and Willaston Hall - Grade II*

A1.11 The gap forms an important setting to the historic town of Nantwich. Views into the historic core of Nantwich are possible from a number of locations within the gap (in winter).

Public Routes (roads, footpaths) providing views in/out and access to countryside

A1.12 There is a network of several footpaths crossing the northern part of the gap (north of A534), with a smaller number to the south. All of the footpaths offer access to the open countryside, and views into the gap. Colleys Lane which dissects the northern part of gap offers views across the gap towards Nantwich to the south west and near its junction with A530 to Wistaston to the North East. Drivers using the A530 will have views across the Gap towards Wistaston, Willaston and Nantwich depending on direction of travel. Wistaston Green Road close to the North west edge of the gap, offers views to Nantwich to the South west. Newcastle Road towards the

south of the Gap allows a view of the gap at its narrowest between Nantwich and the South of Willaston.

A1.13 The A51 also dissects the gap but is in a shallow cutting and is well screened. Newcastle Road provides views at the narrowest part of the gap between Nantwich and Willaston. Views of the narrow gap between Nantwich and Willaston Road can also be seen from Wynbunbury Road towards the southern end of the gap.

Narrowest Point/s of Gap

A1.14 At its narrowest points the minimum gap between the south east edge of Nantwich and Willaston ranges from approximately 737m to 458m (*see Figure A2.4*).

Visual Assessment

A1.15 A visual assessment was undertaken at the two narrowest points of the gap. Photographs were taken to show the view available from four locations, either side of the Gap as shown on the following pages (*See also Figure A2.2*).

Gap Between Nantwich and Willaston (North)

Survey Location A1:
Looking East from Nantwich along A534

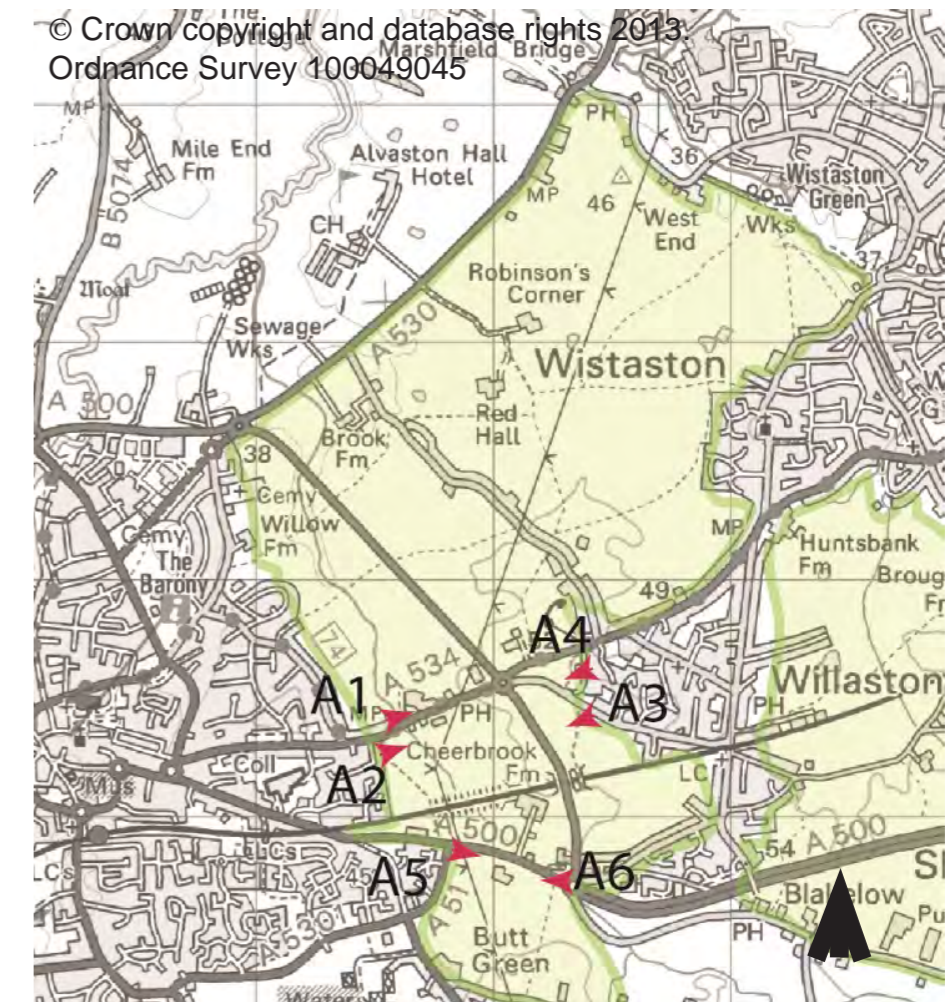


These photographs are taken looking eastwards into the gap from the tip of an existing finger of housing on the north side of the A534 (which represents the eastern edge of Nantwich in this location). The photographs illustrate the impact of other existing development within the gap alongside the A534 in this location, which continues up to and adjoining the junction with A51, which influence the sense of separation when travelling along the road and through the gap.

Survey Location A2:
Looking East from Nantwich



This photograph shows the view into the gap from the rear of Gingerbread Lane, adjoining the A534 at the eastern edge of Nantwich. The main features are the screening to the A51 on the horizon. The visual impression of the gap is much greater in this location, although reduced slightly by the impact of development along the A534. No development in Willaston can be seen from this location.



Survey Locations

Survey Location A3:
Looking West from Park Lane, Willaston

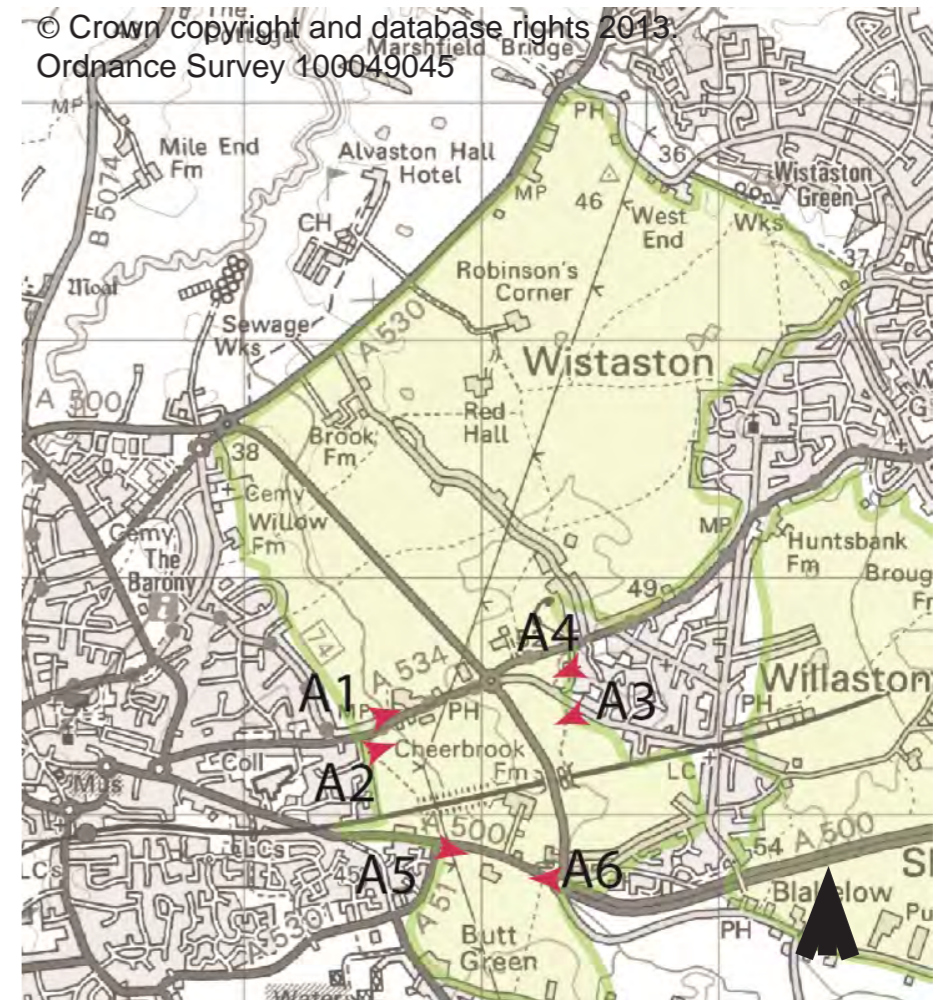


These photographs show the Gap looking towards Nantwich from Park Lane at the western edge of Willaston. The land rises slightly towards the A51 which is in slight cutting and well screened on the horizon. No views of Nantwich could be seen from this location.

Survey Location A4:
Looking West from Hall Drive, Willaston



This photograph was taken looking west into the gap from Hall Drive on the western edge of Willaston. No views of Nantwich were possible from this location.



Survey Locations

**Visual Assessment Summary
Gap Between Nantwich and Willaston (North)**

Does the gap provide views of open countryside close to where people live ?	Yes, (although the presence of development adjoining the northern side of the A534 reduced the impression of a gap when looking east out of Nantwich, or driving along this stretch of the road)
Is there a perception that the settlement is at risk of merging/ coalescence with Crewe ?	Yes, but only in the vicinity of the A534
Is there a clear visual break when passing from place to place ?	Yes, less so along the A534 between Gingerbread Lane and the A51 roundabout junction.
Are there signs of urban activity, road traffic movement, within the gap ?	Yes along the route of the A534. Although much of this development appears to be old, there are more recent developments including hotel accommodation at the Peacock Hotel, a plant nursery, detached houses and extensions; an older, former school building (now in use by a variety of businesses) is located at the junction of the A51.
Are there signs of erosion /sprawl /spread of sporadic development into the gap ?	There is a recent housing development on the eastern edge of Nantwich, with three storey town houses which, although not in the gap, have a significant impact on it.
Would future development on the edge of the urban area significantly reduce visual separation between settlements ?	Yes

Gap Between Nantwich and Willaston (South)

Survey Location A5:

Looking East along B5074 (Newcastle Road)



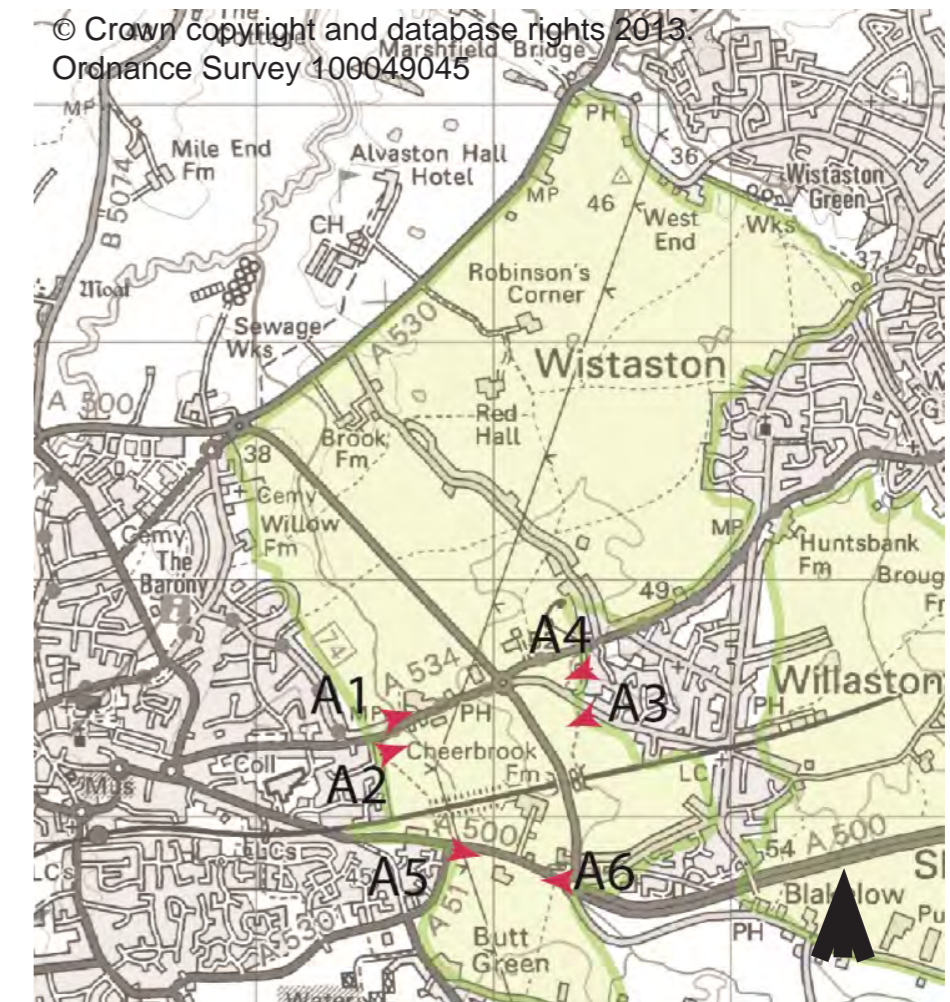
This photograph was taken at the junction of the B5074 (Newcastle Road) and Elwood Way at the eastern edge of Nantwich looking east towards Willaston. No view of Willaston is possible. The railway embankment and the screening to the A51 on the horizon are key features. There is a feeling of a gap between the two settlements despite the presence of farm buildings and some housing. The new development off Elwood Way includes three storey town houses, and it may be possible that residents would have views of Willaston when the leaves drop from the trees in winter.

Survey Location A6:

Looking West along B5074 (Newcastle Road)



This is the view looking west from a large house that forms the western most extent of Willaston (forming part of an old ribbon type development along the old route of Newcastle Road). There are no views of Nantwich.



Survey Locations

**Visual Assessment Summary
Gap Between Nantwich and Willaston (South)**

Does the gap provide views of open countryside close to where people live ?	Yes
Is there a perception that the settlement is at risk of merging/ coalescence with Crewe ?	No
Is there a clear visual break when passing from place to place ?	Yes
Are there signs of urban activity, road traffic movement, within the gap ?	Yes the B5074 is a busy road. There is also an occasional glimpse of HGVs on the A51 which runs in a north south direction through the gap, and a busy railway line
Are there signs of erosion /sprawl /spread of sporadic development into the gap ?	There is a recent housing development on the eastern edge of Nantwich, with three storey town houses which, although not in the gap, have a significant impact on it.

B: Gap between Between Willaston/Rope/ Basford and Shavington

Description and Purpose

B1.1 The gap in this area separates the south western suburb of Crewe (Rope) from the village of Shavington to the south.

Land Use

B1.2 Predominantly open farmland, with the A500 and railway line running in a north east direction through the gap. The railway line currently forms a strong southern boundary to Crewe. There is a school, recreation centre and new health centre located within the gap in this area.

Settlement Character

B1.3 Crewe is defined as a Principal Town in the Development Strategy, and is a 1st tier settlement in the proposed settlement hierarchy. This part of Crewe is characterised by a mix of pre-war, post war and recent housing developments and is suburban in character.

B1.4 The boundary of Crewe along the route of the B5701 (Crewe Road) is difficult to determine because of railway infrastructure and employment uses on the southern edge of the built up area. For the purposes of this assessment a substantial finger of housing on Crewe Road between the A500 and Gresty Green Road is assumed to be the edge of the gap in this location. The houses here are typically semi-detached inter war, and the character is suburban.

B1.5 Shavington is defined as a Local Service Centre in the Development Strategy, a 4th tier settlement. Shavington is a large village with a mix of housing from throughout the post war era including recent infill. It has more of a suburban feeling than a village because of its scale and housing typology.

Landscape Character Assessment

B1.5 The area is utilised mainly as farmland and has a 'typical' Cheshire landscape, characterised by a flat topography, broken up with a dense network of field hedges, interspersed with hedgerow trees, some groups of trees and single mature trees. The tree screening associated with the A500 which crosses the gap in an east west direction is a particularly dominant feature in summer time. A railway line runs along

the northern edge of the gap in north-east direction.

B1.6 The A500, and recent leisure and health developments adjoining the highway, have a distinct impact in appearing to reduce what is already a narrow gap in this location, and further structural landscaping may be beneficial.

Environmental and historic designations

(see Figure A2.3)

B1.7 Shavington Hall and Shavington Lodge (Grade II Listed Buildings) are located between Shavington and Basford village.

Public Routes (roads, footpaths) providing views in/out and access to countryside.

B1.8 Public footpath access into the gap in this area is limited to three routes not linking to form a network. Crewe Road (B5701) (to the East) and Rope Lane (to the West) link Shavington to Crewe. The A500 dissects the gap but is well screened in places. A railway line also runs through the gap along its northern edge

Narrowest Point/s of Gap

B1.9 At its narrowest the current gap between Crewe and Shavington is between approximately 450m and 680m (see Figure A2.4)

Visual Assessment

B1.10 A visual assessment was undertaken at the two narrowest gap location between Crewe and Shavington, and also at Basford. Photographs were taken to show the view available from three locations, either side (where possible) of the Gap as shown in the following pages. (see Figure A2.2 for survey locations)

Gap Between Crewe (Rope Lane) and Shavington

Survey Location B1:
Looking North along Rope Lane, from edge of Shavington towards Rope, Crewe

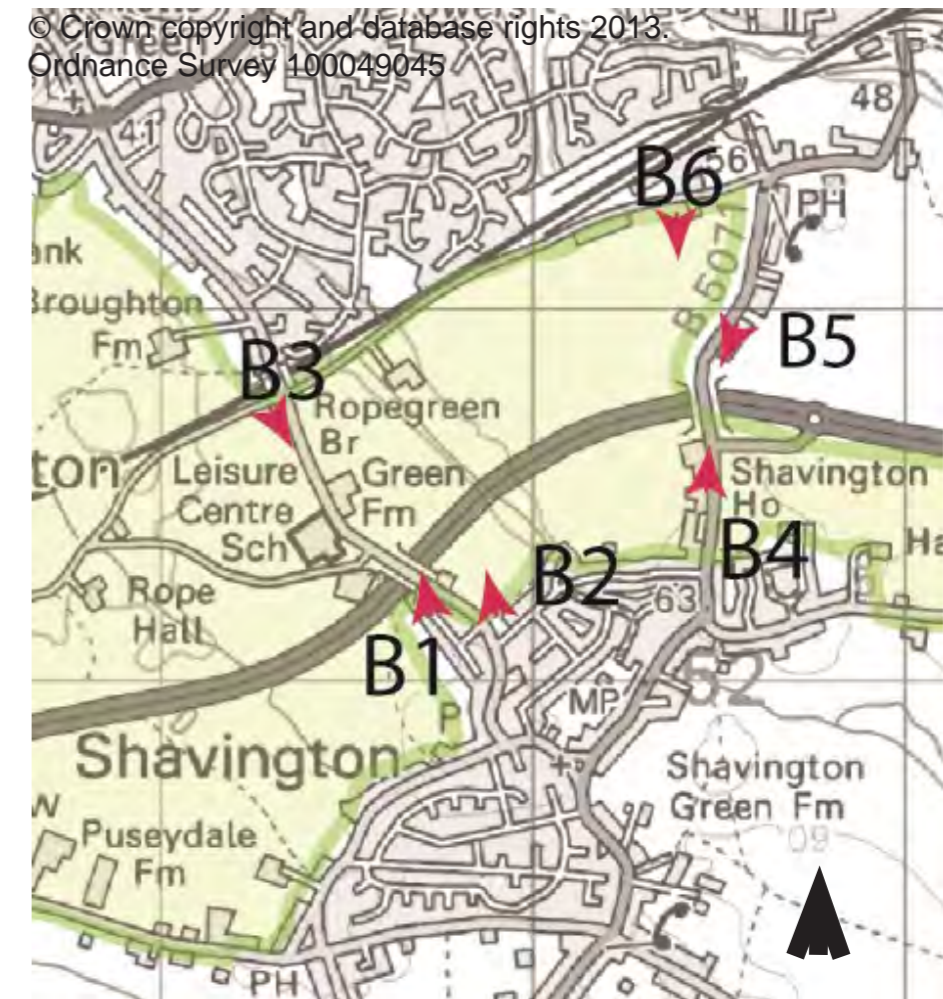


This photograph is taken from the north-western edge of Shavington looking north towards Crewe . There is no view of Crewe, and the main feature is the rising road ramp, and screening to the A500. There is no real feeling of a gap from this location owing to the dominance of the road bridge.

Survey Location D2:
Looking North from public footpath to rear of Vine Tree Avenue, Shavington



This photograph was taken to the rear of Vine Tree Avenue (junction with Rope Lane) on the edge of Shavington, and show the view across the gap looking north/north east from slightly further back into the village. No view of Crewe is possible. There is a distinct impression of a gap in this location.



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Ordnance Survey 100049045

Survey Locations

**Survey Location B3:
Looking South along Rope Lane towards Shavington**

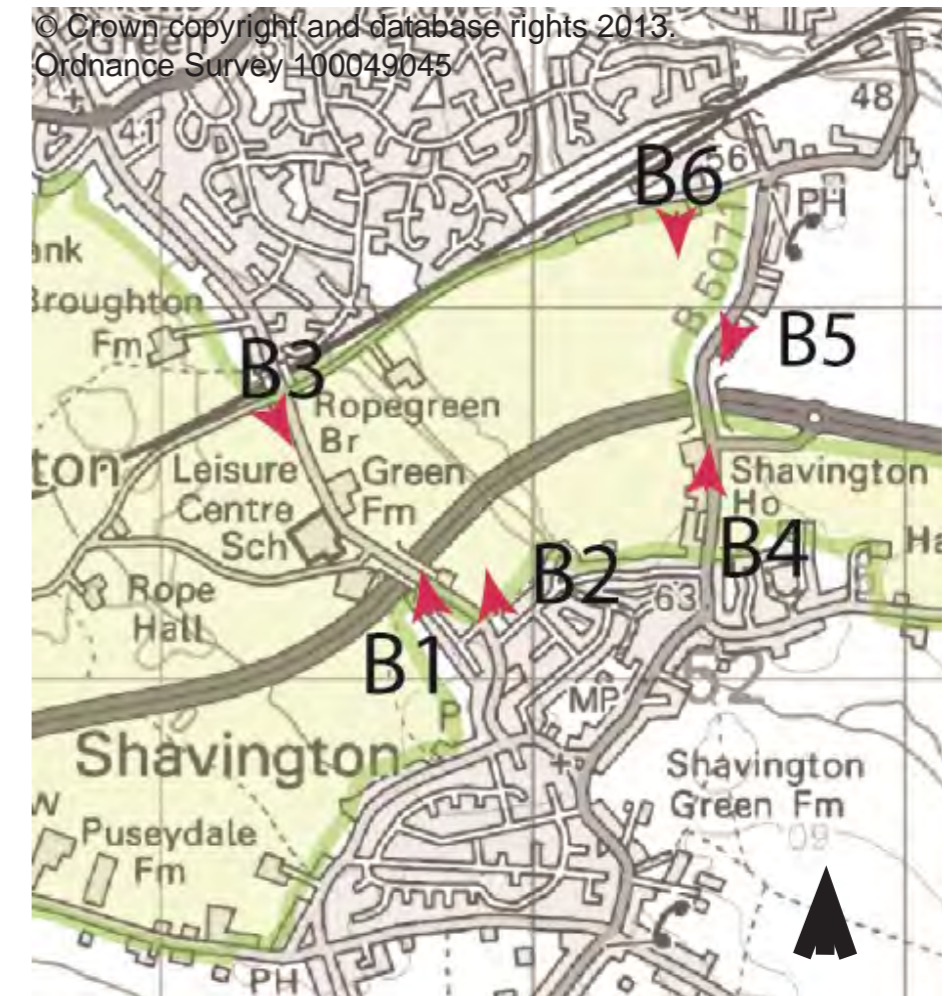


This photograph shows the view from the edge of Crewe on Rope Lane looking south towards Shavington. The sense of gap is reduced by the presence of buildings in the gap, including new health centre, school and sports facilities and farm buildings.

**Survey Location B4:
Looking from edge of Shavington north west along Crewe Road towards Crewe**



These photographs are taken adjoining a finger of housing on Crewe Road at the north east edge of Shavington looking towards Crewe. No view of Crewe is possible across the gap. The sense of gap here is reduced by the presence of employment uses up to the junction with the A500. The screening and street furniture associated with the A500 junction are the dominant features.



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Survey Locations

**Visual Assessment Summary
Gap Between Crewe (Rope Lane) and Shavington**

<p>Does the gap provide views of open countryside close to where people live ?</p>	<p>Yes, but constrained and mostly from main roads including Rope Lane, Crewe Road, and Gresty Lane. Residents of the main urban edge of Crewe have poor footpath access, and their views into the gap are likely to be constrained by railway infrastructure.</p>
<p>Is there a perception that the settlement is at risk of merging/ coalescence with Crewe ?</p>	<p>Yes, particularly due to several built developments within the gap.</p>
<p>Is there a clear visual break when passing from place to place ?</p>	<p>Yes, but minimal in some locations.</p>
<p>Are there signs of urban activity, road traffic movement, within the gap ?</p>	<p>Yes, Rope Lane and Crewe Road which are busy local roads cross the gap. A junction access from the A500 (which runs through the gap) is located within the gap. Gresty Lane along the northern edge of this part of the gap, is parallel in places with the railway line</p>
<p>Are there signs of erosion /sprawl /spread of sporadic development into the gap ?</p>	<p>Yes, new health facilities have been built within the existing gap. The school and associated sport facilities were already present in the gap, when it was first declared.</p>
<p>Would future development on the edge of the urban area significantly reduce visual separation between settlements ?</p>	<p>Yes, any additional development within the gap will significantly reduce the visual separation between Shavington and Crewe.</p>

Survey Location B5:

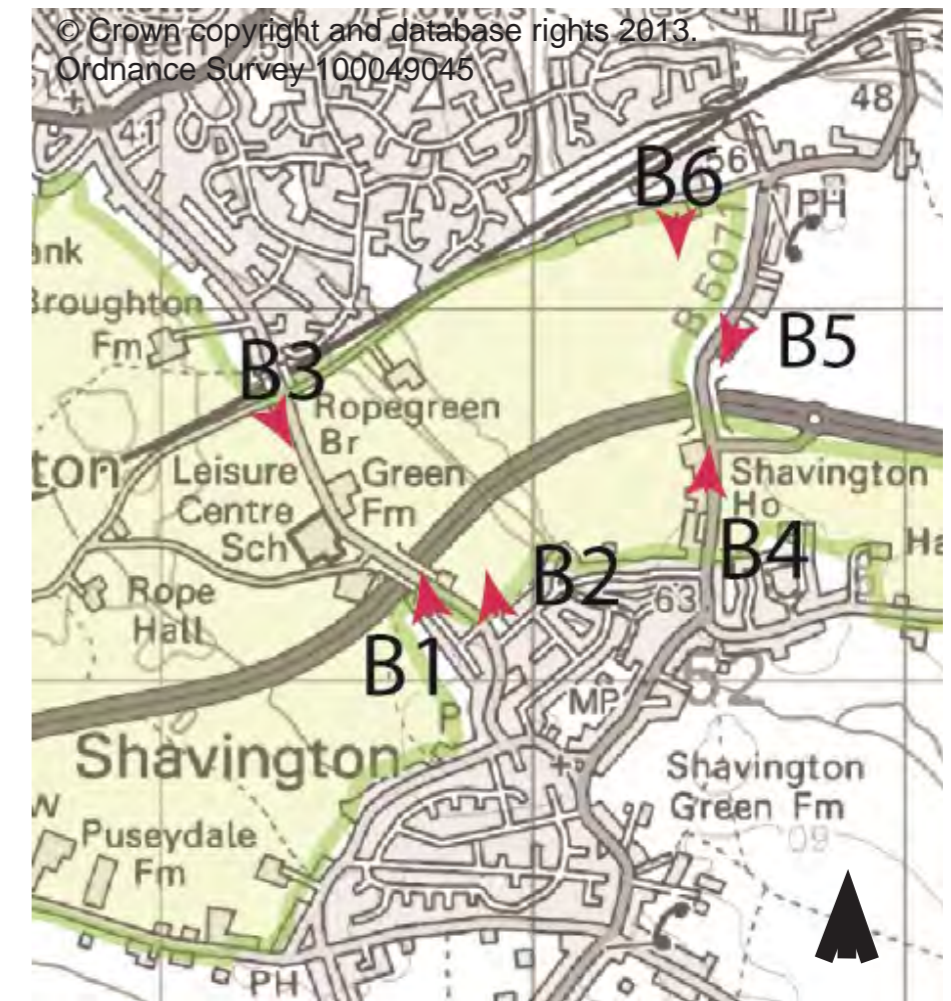


This photograph shows the view looking south-west towards Shavington from the edge of existing housing on Crewe Road just north of the A500. No view of Shavington is possible. However, there is little visual sense of a gap owing to the impact of new sports pitches and the bridge ramp over the A500.

Survey Location B6:



Photographs taken from junction of Gresty Lane and Crewe Road, looking south/ south west across the gap towards Shavington. No view of Shavington is possible. Houses on Crewe Road are visible. Also visible are lighting columns for the sports pitches next to the A500 off Crewe Road. At night these may impact on the sense of separation.



Survey Locations

Visual Assessment Summary
Gap Between Crewe (B5071-Crewe Road) and Shavington

Does the gap provide views of open countryside close to where people live ?	Yes, but constrained by limited footpath network, and development within the gap, including the A500 junction
Is there a perception that the settlement is at risk of merging/ coalescence with Crewe ?	Yes
Is there a clear visual break when passing from place to place ?	Yes but minimal. This may be further reduced following development of Basford West Strategic Mixed use site to the east of Crewe Road, adjoining the gap.
Are there signs of urban activity, road traffic movement, within the gap ?	Yes, Crewe Road is a busy local road. There is a major junction onto the A500 which crosses the gap, and there is a railway line running parallel with Gresty Lane along its northern edge
Are there signs of erosion /sprawl /spread of sporadic development into the gap ?	Yes, there are sports pitches, employment and farm shops within the gap in this location. There is a finger of inter war ribbon development.
Would future development on the edge of the urban area significantly reduce visual separation between settlements ?	yes

C: Gap between Basford West and East Strategic Sites and Weston/ Basford

Description and Purpose

- C1.1 The gap separates the proposed Basford East Strategic mixed use site from the Village of Weston to the south.

Land Use

- C1.2 Predominantly open farmland, with the A500 forming the northern edge of the gap.

Settlement Character

- C1.3 Weston is identified as a Sustainable Village in the Local Plan Development Strategy. It has a mix of housing ages and types and a distinctive village character, with a Conservation Area and a number of Listed Buildings.

- C1.4 Basford is a small linear village/hamlet, with predominantly post war housing. It has no distinct centre and lies within a rural setting.

- C1.5 The Development Strategy sets out proposals for two strategic mixed use sites served off the A500 - Basford West with 35 hectares of employment land and 300 houses, and Basford East with 45 hectares of employment land, 1000 houses in a green infrastructure framework and a green buffer.

Landscape Character Assessment

- C1.6 The area is utilised mainly as farmland and has a 'typical' Cheshire landscape, characterised by a flat topography, broken up with a dense network of field hedges, interspersed with hedgerow trees, some groups of trees and single mature trees. The tree screening associated with the A500, which crosses the gap in an east west direction, is a particularly dominant feature in summer time.

Environmental and historic designations

(See Figure A2.3)

- C1.7 Basford Brook runs through the parcel and there are areas identified as flood zones 2 and 3.

- C1.8 There are views of the Weston Conservation Area and a number of Listed Buildings within the village. There are also a number of other Listed buildings and features within or adjoining the gap, including Hollyhedge Farm House (Grade II*). There is a partial view of the Grade I Listed Crewe Hall and its Registered Park and Garden to the north (Grade II). *(registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by English Heritage for its special historic interest).*

- C1.9 An Allotment site is also located within the gap.

Public Routes (roads, footpaths) providing views in/out and access to countryside.

- C1.10 There are two footpaths which cross the gap, over or under the A500 and linking to the Crewe Hall Enterprise Park and the Grade 1 Listed Crewe Hall to the north. Whites Lane runs in an east west direction close to the A500. Main Road which forms the eastern boundary of the gap links Weston to the A5020 (Weston Road), crossing the A500

Narrowest Point/s of Gap

- C1.11 At its narrowest points the gap between the northern-most part of Weston Village will be approximately 290m from the edge of the proposed Basford East Strategic Site

Visual Assessment

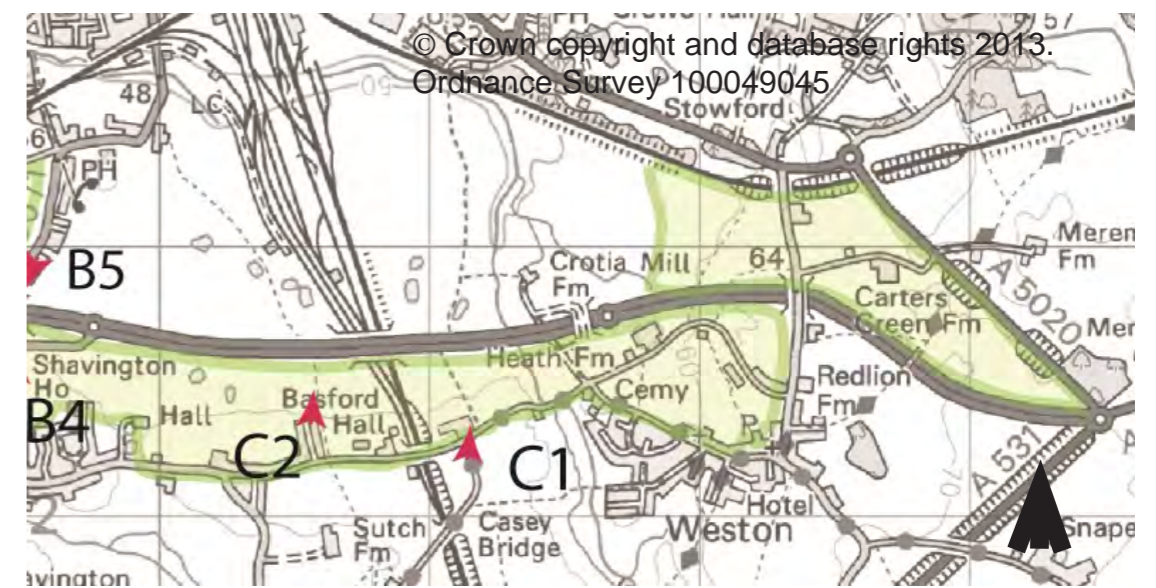
- C1.12 A visual assessment was undertaken at the two narrowest gap locations between Crewe and the villages of Basford and Weston. Photographs were taken to show the view available from two locations from the south of the A500 as shown in the following pages. Views from the northern edge of Crewe in this part of the gap were not possible owing to access difficulties. *(see Figure A2.2 for Survey locations)*

Gap between Proposed Basford East Strategic Site and Weston

Survey Location C1:
Looking North from Weston (junction of Cemetery Lane and Whites lane)



This photograph shows the view from the junction of Cemetery Lane and Whites Lane northwards across the gap between the north west of Weston and the proposed Basford East Strategic Site. The tree screen of the A500 can be seen on the horizon which illustrates how narrow the gap is in this location



Survey Locations

**Visual Assessment Summary
Gap Between Proposed Basford East Strategic Site and Weston**

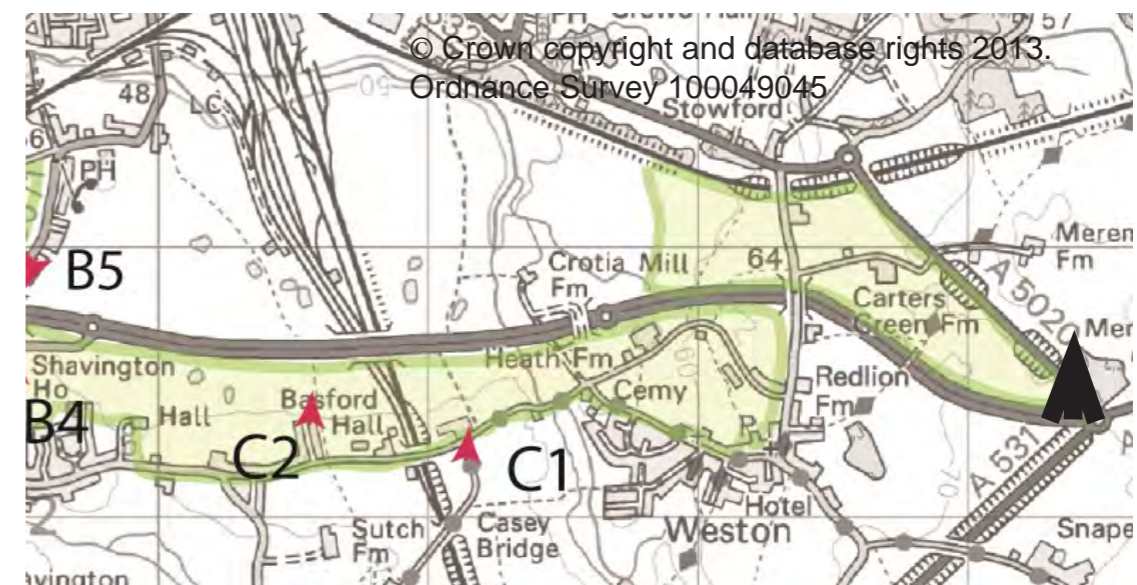
<p>Does the gap provide views of open countryside close to where people live ?</p>	<p>Yes. There is a public footpath running through this area, one either side of the railway, routed over the A500, linking to Weston Road (through proposed Basford East Site). This footpath will offer views of the gap between the A500 (and possibly of any tall future development on the Basford East Strategic Site) and the settlements of Weston.</p>
<p>Is there a perception that the settlement is at risk of merging/ coalescence with Crewe ?</p>	<p>No, but depending upon height of buildings on proposed Basford East Strategic Site – this may change</p>
<p>Is there a clear visual break when passing from place to place ?</p>	<p>Yes, when viewed from Main Road to the East.</p>
<p>Are there signs of urban activity, road traffic movement, within the gap ?</p>	<p>Only along Main Road, there are distant views of the tops of tall buildings to the north above a distant tree line</p>
<p>Are there signs of erosion /sprawl /spread of sporadic development into the gap ?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Would future development on the edge of the urban area significantly reduce visual separation between settlements ?</p>	<p>Yes. The gap between the A500/ Basford East Strategic Site is narrow.</p>

Gap between proposed Basford West Strategic Site and Basford

Survey Location C2:
Looking North from the northern end of Larch Avenue Basford



This photograph shows the view from the northern end of Larch Avenue (a short road running diagonally off Weston Lane, and marking the eastern edge of the village). The existing green gap is at its narrowest here with the A500 which forms the northern boundary of the gap. The A500 screening is a dominant feature. The lighting towers on the railway sidings to the north of the A500 can also be seen. The gap feels very narrow here. The narrowness of the gap may be exacerbated if tall buildings are erected on the proposed Basford West Strategic mixed use site to the north.



Survey Locations

Visual Assessment Summary
Gap Between proposed Basford West Strategic Site and Basford

<p>Does the gap provide views of open countryside close to where people live ?</p>	<p>Yes. There is a public footpaths running through this area, routed beneath and over the A500, linking to Gresty Road (through proposed Basford West Site). This footpath will offer views of the gap between the A500 (and possibly of any tall future development on the Basford West Strategic Site) and the settlement of Basford.</p>
<p>Is there a perception that the settlement is at risk of merging/ coalescence with Crewe ?</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Is there a clear visual break when passing from place to place ?</p>	<p>No direct link but a clear visual separation, when looking towards Crewe</p>
<p>Are there signs of urban activity, road traffic movement, within the gap ?</p>	<p>The A500 passes in shallow screened cutting and viaduct. Also the lighting towers of the railway siding to the north can also be seen.</p>
<p>Are there signs of erosion /sprawl /spread of sporadic development into the gap ?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Would future development on the edge of the urban area significantly reduce visual separation between settlements ?</p>	<p>Yes. The development of the proposed Basford West Strategic Mixed use Site will reduce the visual separation between Crewe and Basford.</p>

D: Gap between East Crewe and Haslington

Description and Purpose

D1.1 The gap separates the eastern suburbs of Crewe from the village of Haslington.

Gardens by English Heritage for its special historic interest) and the Grade 1 Listed Crewe Hall are located immediately to the south of the existing gap designation.

Land Use

D1.2 Predominantly open farmland (grade 2, 3 with some 4), with the A534 running (in shallow cutting) in an south west to north easterly direction.

Public Routes (roads, footpaths) providing views in/out and access to countryside.

D1.8 There are a number of public footpaths and a bridleway providing access into the open countryside within the gap in this area.

Settlement Character

D1.3 Crewe is defined as a Principal Town in the Development Strategy, and is a 1st tier settlement in the proposed settlement hierarchy. This part of Crewe is characterised by a mix of modern recent housing and employment developments and is suburban/ edge of settlement in character.

D1.9 Crewe Road provides the main road link between Haslington and eastern Crewe

Narrowest Point/s of Gap

D1.10 At its narrowest point the current gap is approximately 582m between Crewe Green Avenue (Haslington and Nigel Gresley Close/ Sydney Road (eastern Crewe)

D1.4 Haslington is defined as a Local Service Centre in the Development Strategy, a 4th tier settlement, and is a large village with a mix of housing ages and types, including modern small scale infill. It has more of a suburban feeling than a village because of its scale and housing typology.

Visual Assessment

D1.11 A visual assessment was undertaken at the narrowest gap location between Crewe Green Avenue, Haslington and Nigel Gresley Close/ Sydney Road (eastern Crewe). Photographs were taken from two locations either side of the gap as shown in the following pages. (see Figure A2.2 for survey locations)

Landscape Character Assessment

D1.5 The area is utilised mainly as farmland and has a 'typical' Cheshire landscape, characterised by a flat topography, broken up with a dense network of field hedges, interspersed with hedgerow trees, some groups of trees and single mature trees. The tree screening associated with the A534 which crosses the gap is a particularly dominant feature in summer time.

Environmental and historic designations

(See Figure A2.4)

D1.6 Parts of the gap are within Flood Zones 2 and 3.

D1.7 Crewe Green Conservation Area is located within the gap, together with several Listed Buildings. The Temple of Peace Wood and Rookery Wood (Grade II) Registered Garden (registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of Historic Parks and

Gap Between East Crewe and Haslington

Survey Location D1:

Gap Looking West from Haslington towards eastern Crewe



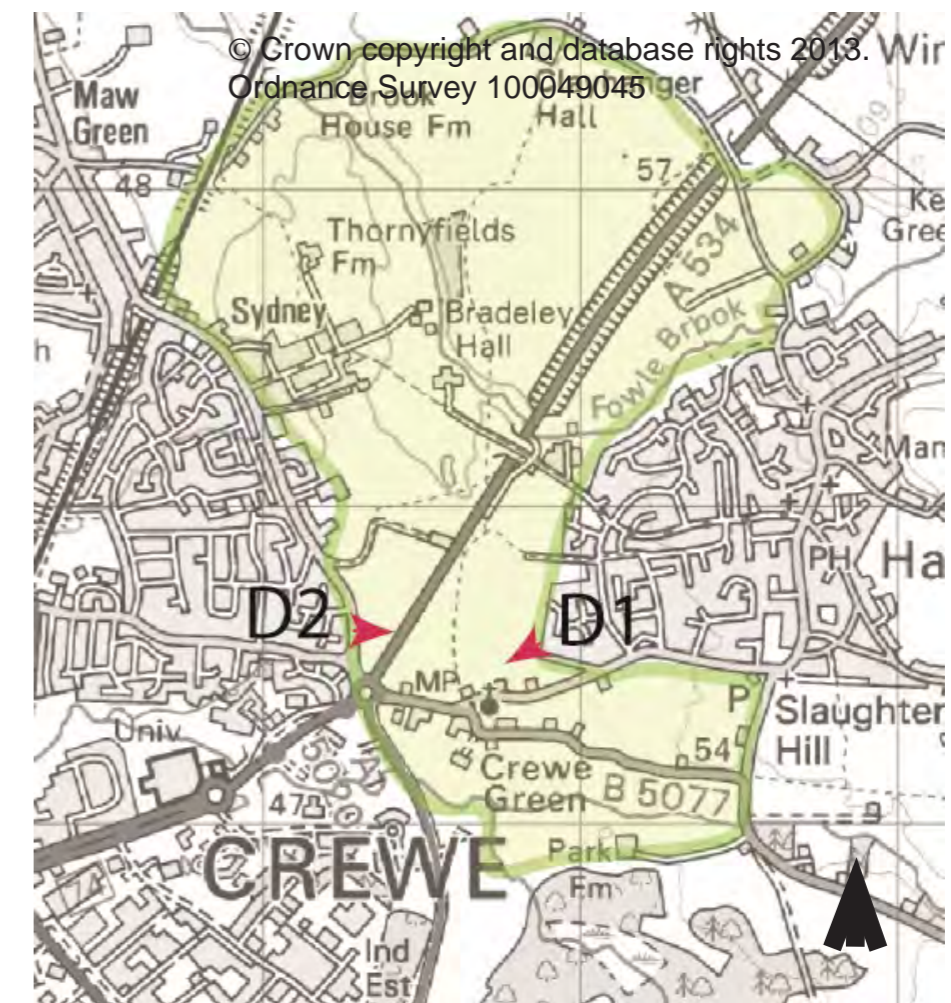
These photographs show the view looking west across the gap from the edge of Haslington (Crewe Green Avenue) towards eastern Crewe. Distant views of tall buildings are possible in places above tree line – these may be more visible in winter.

Survey Location B2:

Looking North from public footpath to rear of Vine Tree Avenue, Shavington



This photograph shows the view looking east towards Haslington from a point near to existing housing at the junction of Nigel Gresley Close and Sydney Road (edge of eastern Crewe). No views of Haslington are possible (roof tops of houses on Crewe Road within gap are visible). The main feature is the strong screening to the A534.



Survey Locations

**Visual Assessment Summary
Gap Between East Crewe and Haslington**

Does the gap provide views of open countryside close to where people live ?	Yes
Is there a perception that the settlement is at risk of merging/ coalescence with Crewe ?	Yes. The scale of development at the junction of A534 and A5020 is quite dramatic, and the gap with Haslington is relatively narrow.
Is there a clear visual break when passing from place to place ?	Yes
Are there signs of urban activity, road traffic movement, within the gap ?	Yes, Crewe Road and the A534 junction are within/ adjoining gap and are very busy routes.
Are there signs of erosion /sprawl /spread of sporadic development into the gap ?	No (Crewe Green Conservation Area is within the gap in this location)
Would future development on the edge of the urban area significantly reduce visual separation between settlements ?	Yes.

Part 2: Other Settlements

E: Gap between Acton and Nantwich

Description and Purpose

- E1.1 This proposed gap would ensure the separation of the historic town of Nantwich from the Village of Acton to the West, and in so doing to protect the setting and character of the historic town, and also of the Village itself.

Land Use

- E1.2 Predominantly open farmland. The Shropshire Union Canal runs along the western edge of Nantwich in a north south direction and then cuts across the proposed gap area of search in a north-west direction passing just to the north of Acton.

Settlement Character

- E1.3 Nantwich is defined as a Key Service Centre in the Development Strategy, and is a 2nd tier settlement in the proposed settlement hierarchy. The town is one of two key historic towns in Cheshire East and has a high quality Conservation Area and historic core. The Development Strategy provides for the Town to grow substantially to meet current and future housing needs and sets out proposals for mixed use development on a number of brownfield and greenfield sites, including the large Kingsley Fields Site to the north west of the town (see *Figure A2.2*). The western edge of Nantwich is characterised by relatively recent housing development, and is suburban in character.

- E1.4 Acton is a small village, with a Conservation Area and a number of Listed Buildings comprising mostly of 18th and 19th century buildings surrounding St Mary's Church, but with some post war housing stock. No major development proposals for the village are included in the Development Strategy.

Landscape Character Assessment

- E1.5 Acton village is set within the typical Cheshire landscape, in flat open countryside with minor undulations. Trees are the principal feature of the immediate countryside surrounding Acton. The presence of trees makes distant views from within the Conservation Area limited and in most places tree cover

and the presence of the buildings within the Conservation Area creates effective visual enclosure with only limited views out to the surrounding countryside available.

Environmental and historic designations (see *figure A2.3*)

Nantwich Civil War Battlefield Site

- E1.6 The Registered Civil War Battlefield of Nantwich is located within this area, to the immediate west of Nantwich, and comprises much of the northern portion of the proposed Green Belt designation.

Conservation Area

- E1.7 The Village of Acton has Conservation Area Status and there are several Listed Buildings located within its boundary.

Dorfold Hall and Grounds

- E1.8 The Southern part of the proposed Green Belt designation comprises the Dorfold Hall estate, and includes a Grade I listed Jacobean mansion and is registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by English Heritage for its special historic interest (Grade II*).

- E1.9 An area of Ancient Woodland is located within the grounds of Dorfold Hall.

Public Routes (roads, footpaths) providing views in/out and access to countryside.

- E1.10 There is some footpath access within this area, including a footpath that runs from the west of Welshmans Lane to the canal and on to Acton village. Views into the countryside and parkland are possible from this footpath and the footpath alongside the canal, along with roads which largely frame the area of search: Chester Road, Welshmans Lane, Cookoo Lane, A51, Monks Lane, Dig Lane, and Marsh Lane.

Narrowest Point/s of Gap

- E1.11 Should the proposed Kingsley Fields site be developed, the gap between its western edge and Acton would be approximately 712m

Visual Survey

- E1.12 Owing to the heavy tree and hedge cover it was difficult to obtain a useful photograph showing views out of Acton across the gap towards Kingsley Fields.

Visual Assessment Summary Gap Between Acton and Nantwich

<p>Does the gap provide views of open countryside close to where people live ?</p>	<p>Yes, but largely from roads however there are some footpath links in the area, including one adjacent to the canal, where views can be obtained across the open area. There is an existing footpath link from the west of Welshmans Lane, across the area, to the canal and then to Acton village; this provides the opportunity for a sustainable link to be created to Nantwich, from Acton, if the Kingsley Fields site is developed.</p>
<p>Is there a perception that the settlement is at risk of merging/ coalescence with Nantwich?</p>	<p>Not at the moment, but this perception may change if the Kingsley Fields site were to be developed. St Mary's Church Tower in Acton may be visible from this site, especially in winter.</p>
<p>Is there a clear visual break when passing from place to place ?</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Are there signs of urban activity, road traffic movement, within the gap ?</p>	<p>Yes, along the various roads</p>
<p>Are there signs of erosion /sprawl /spread of sporadic development into the gap ?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Would future development on the edge of the urban area significantly reduce visual separation between settlements ?</p>	<p>Yes, if any further development is west of the proposed Kingsley Fields site</p>

F: Bradfield Green and Minshull Vernon (northwest of Leighton)

Location

F1.1 Bradfield Green and Minshull Vernon are small villages to the north west of Leighton Hospital, on the main A530 Middlewich Road.

Description and Purpose of Gap

F1.2 The narrow gap between Bradfield Green and the Leighton Hospital site is important to safeguard the separate identity of this small village, to protect its rural setting and traditional character, and to prevent it merging with the built up areas of Crewe. There is a clear visual break passing from Bradfield Green towards Leighton, but this is narrow and mostly occupied by the road junction with the B5076.

Land Use and Settlement Character

F1.3 Predominantly undulating farmland with thick hedges, copses and woods on field boundaries and river valleys. The Shropshire Union Canal and the meandering course of the River Weaver both run along the western edge of Crewe in a north south direction to the west of Leighton and to the west of these villages.

F1.4 The gap between Bradfield Green and Leighton Hospital is perceived as narrow, with the buildings of the extensive hospital complex dominating the local landscape. Further to the south, the western edge of Crewe is characterised by relatively recent housing development, and is suburban in character.

Landscape Character Assessment

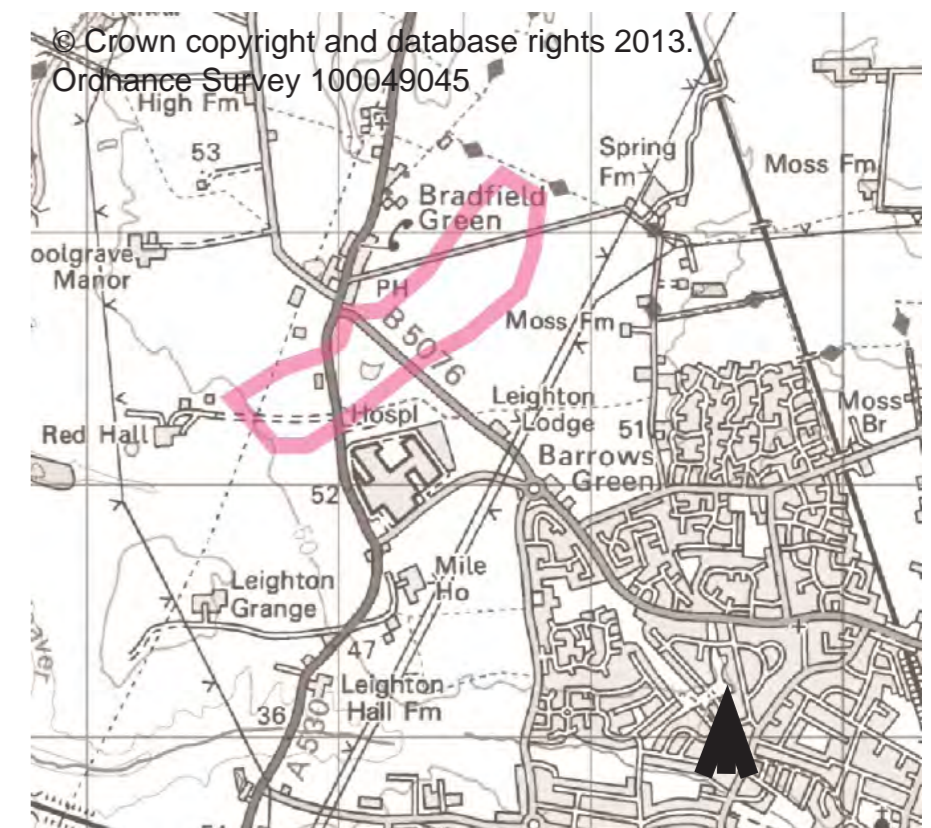
F1.5 Bradfield Green and Minshull Vernon are set within a typical Cheshire landscape, in open countryside with river valleys and streams. Trees and woods are the principal feature of the immediate countryside to the north of Leighton. In most places tree cover and the presence of the buildings within the small villages reduce the availability of views out into the surrounding countryside.

Visual Separation

F1.6 Planned development on the edge of the urban area around the northern edge of Leighton will significantly reduce the limited visual separation between Crewe and the village of Bradfield Green. The Development Strategy sets out a proposal to create a large sustainable neighbourhood at Leighton West, which will provide some 750 new homes, 5 hectares of employment land and expansion opportunities for Leighton Hospital (see Figure A2.2). Therefore the narrow gap between Bradfield Green and Leighton is a vulnerable location where coalescence could occur.

F1.7 The proposed Strategic Sites involve a significant extension of the existing urban areas into open countryside that could encroach into the small village of Bradfield Green and cause it to lose its rural identity. This will certainly be the case if future extensions to the proposed sustainable neighbourhood extend northwards towards Moss Lane (linking Leighton with Bradfield Green). Some form of protection for the existing gap, possibly by reducing the northerly extent of the proposed development area north of Leighton Hospital, will need to be considered.

F1.8 The Development Strategy suggests that a 'green' buffer will be established to the north of Leighton Hospital. If this open area is of sufficient width, if it is incorporated into the green infrastructure framework for the development and if it is subsequently maintained and protected from development in the long term, then this buffer could be used to safeguard the gap between Crewe and Bradfield Green.



Broad Location of Gap F: Bradfield Green and Minshull Vernon

G: Hough and Wybunbury (South of Shavington)

Location

G1.1 Hough and Wybunbury are small villages in open countryside to the south the A500 and to the south and south east of the local centre of Shavington. Concerns have been expressed by local residents in relation to the potential future impacts of the growth of Crewe around East and West Basford.

Description and Purpose of Gap

G1.2 The gaps between Hough, Wybunbury, Shavington and Weston, to the south of Crewe, are important to safeguard the separate identity of these small villages, to protect their rural setting and traditional character, and to prevent them from merging with the extended areas of Shavington. At present there is a clear visual break when passing from one settlement to another, but this will inevitably be eroded by proposed development at Shavington.

Land Use and Landscape Character

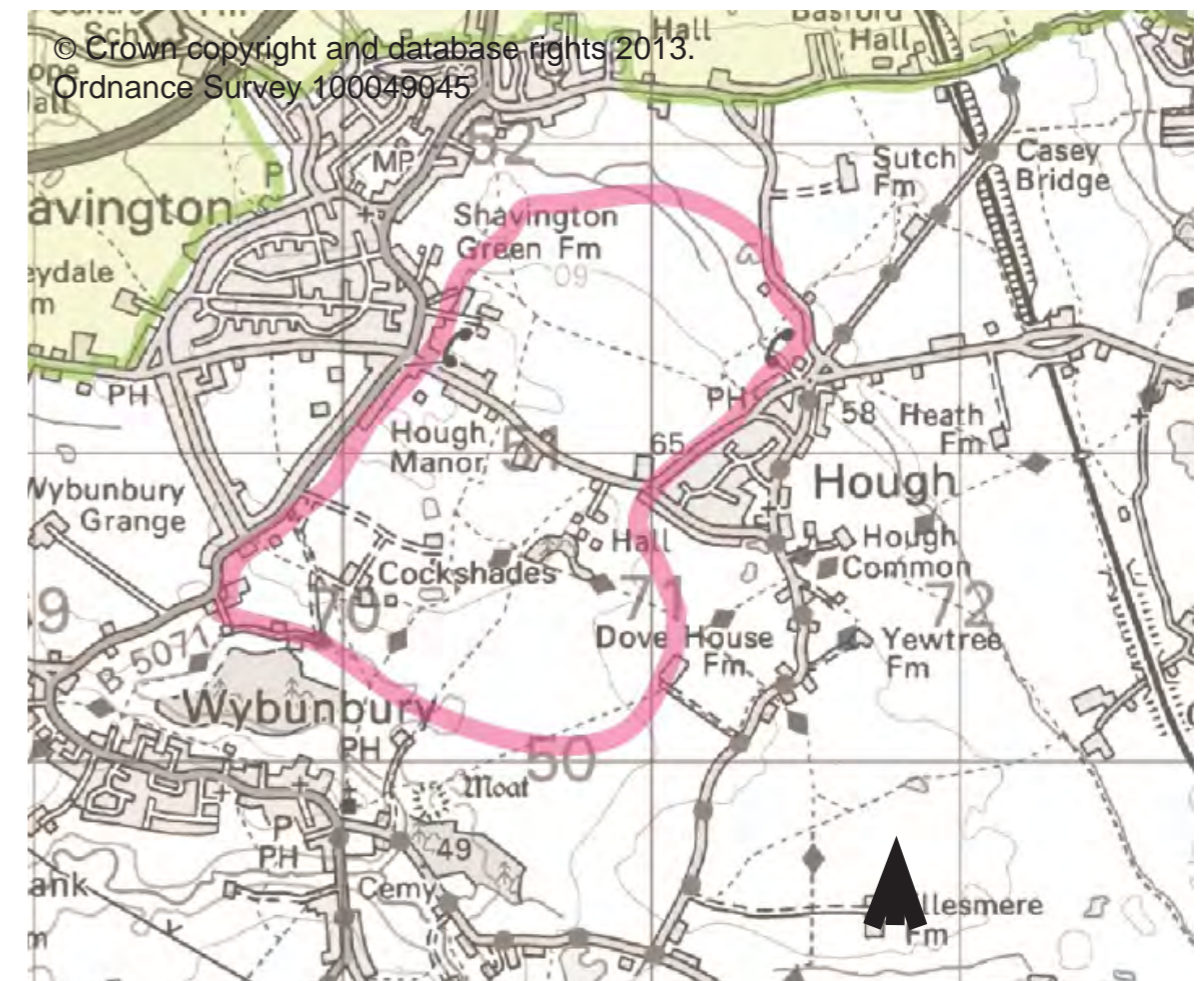
G1.3 The landscape character comprises predominantly flat farmland with thick hedges and copses on field boundaries. Hough and Wynunbury are set within a typical Cheshire landscape, in open countryside with streams, hedges and mature trees. Parts of the rural area around Wybunbury are designated as an SSSI, Ramsar site and Area of Special Conservation (national and international wildlife designations).

G1.4 The rural character of the villages of Hough and Wybunbury makes an important contribution to the openness of the countryside at this location. However, the local service centre of Shavington is characterised by relatively recent housing development, and is more suburban in character. In most places tree cover and the presence of buildings within these settlements reduce the availability of views out into the surrounding countryside.

Visual Separation

G1.5 The gap between Shavington and Wybunbury along the B5071 Stock Lane, and that between Shavington and Hough along the former A531 Newcastle Road, are at present perceived as strong visual breaks between small settlements.

G1.6 However, there is a large site with planning permission within Shavington Triangle and the Development Strategy sets out proposals for a second Strategic Site at Shavington (see Figure A2.2). Whilst, by themselves, these will have no significant impact on the current separation between the nearby villages of Shavington, Wybunbury and Hough, there is a risk that in future, following the completion of Basford East and West, these areas may become vulnerable to pressure for further development. Therefore the gaps between these three settlements are to some extent considered to be vulnerable locations, where future development may erode the openness of the countryside and the rural character of the smaller villages.



Broad Location of Gap G: Hough and Wybunbury (South of Shavington)

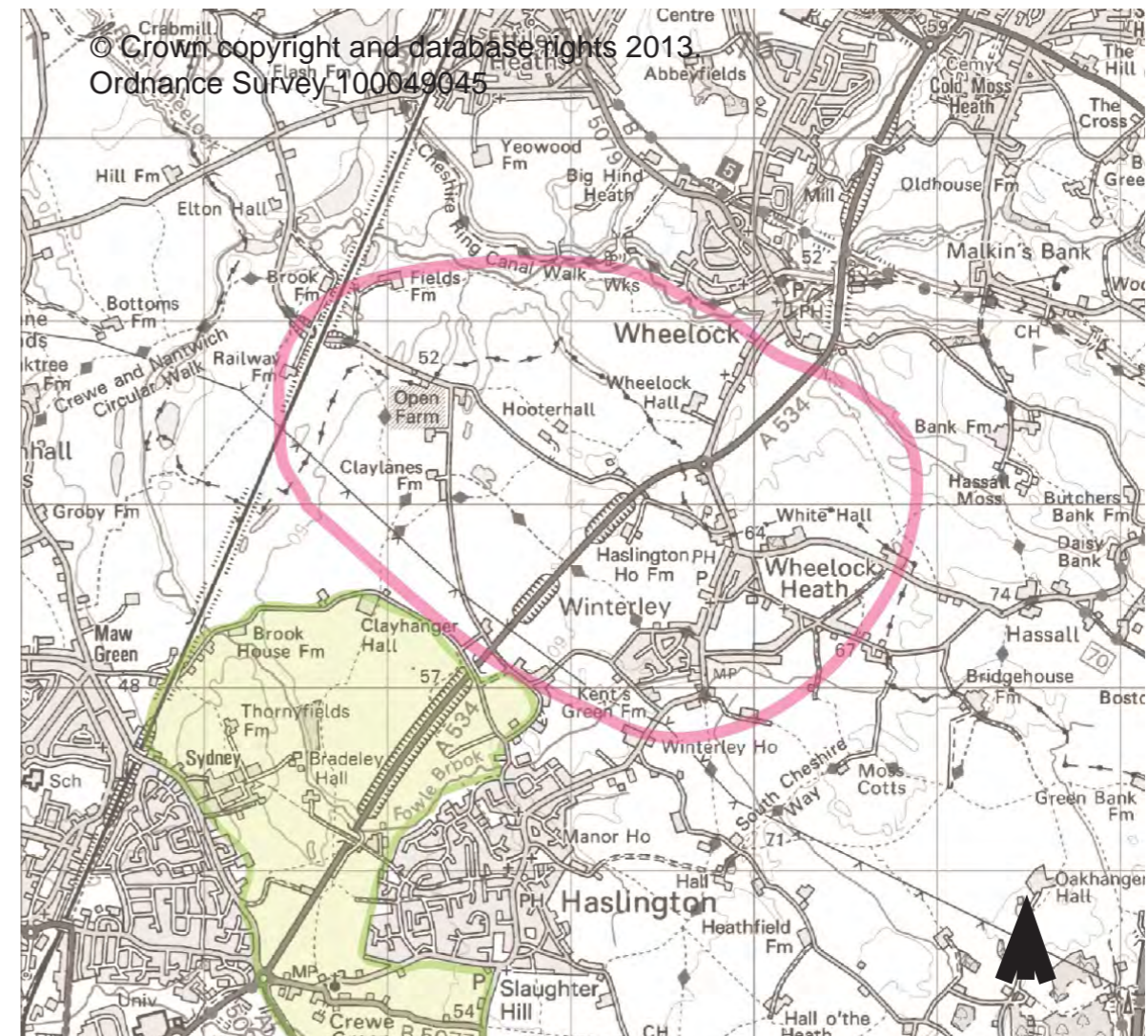
H: Haslington and Sandbach

Location

H1.1 For the purposes of this Study, the gap between Haslington and Sandbach is considered to be the land along the A534 Crewe Road that comprises predominantly open countryside, providing recreational access along established routes and paths. For the majority of its route, the main road is bounded by thick hedges and trees restricting the availability of views out across open countryside.

Visual Separation

H1.2 The gap from the edge of Haslington to the edge of Sandbach measures approximately 2.76 km and any future small scale development along current boundaries should not reduce, to any noticeable extent, the visual separation between these settlements. Therefore there is a negligible risk of coalescence of these neighbouring settlements within the plan period.



Broad Location of Gap H: Haslington and Sandbach

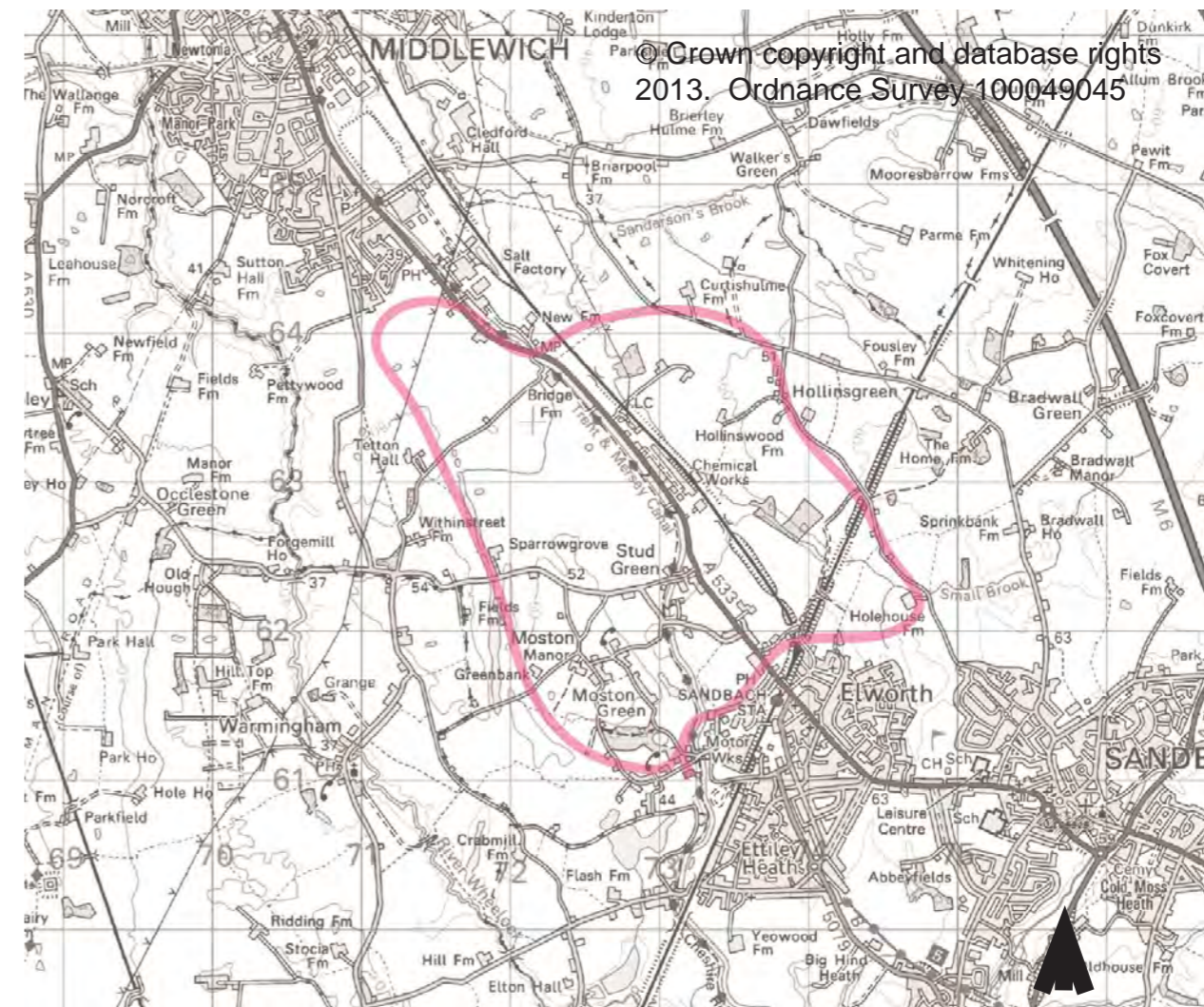
J: Sandbach and Middlewich

Location

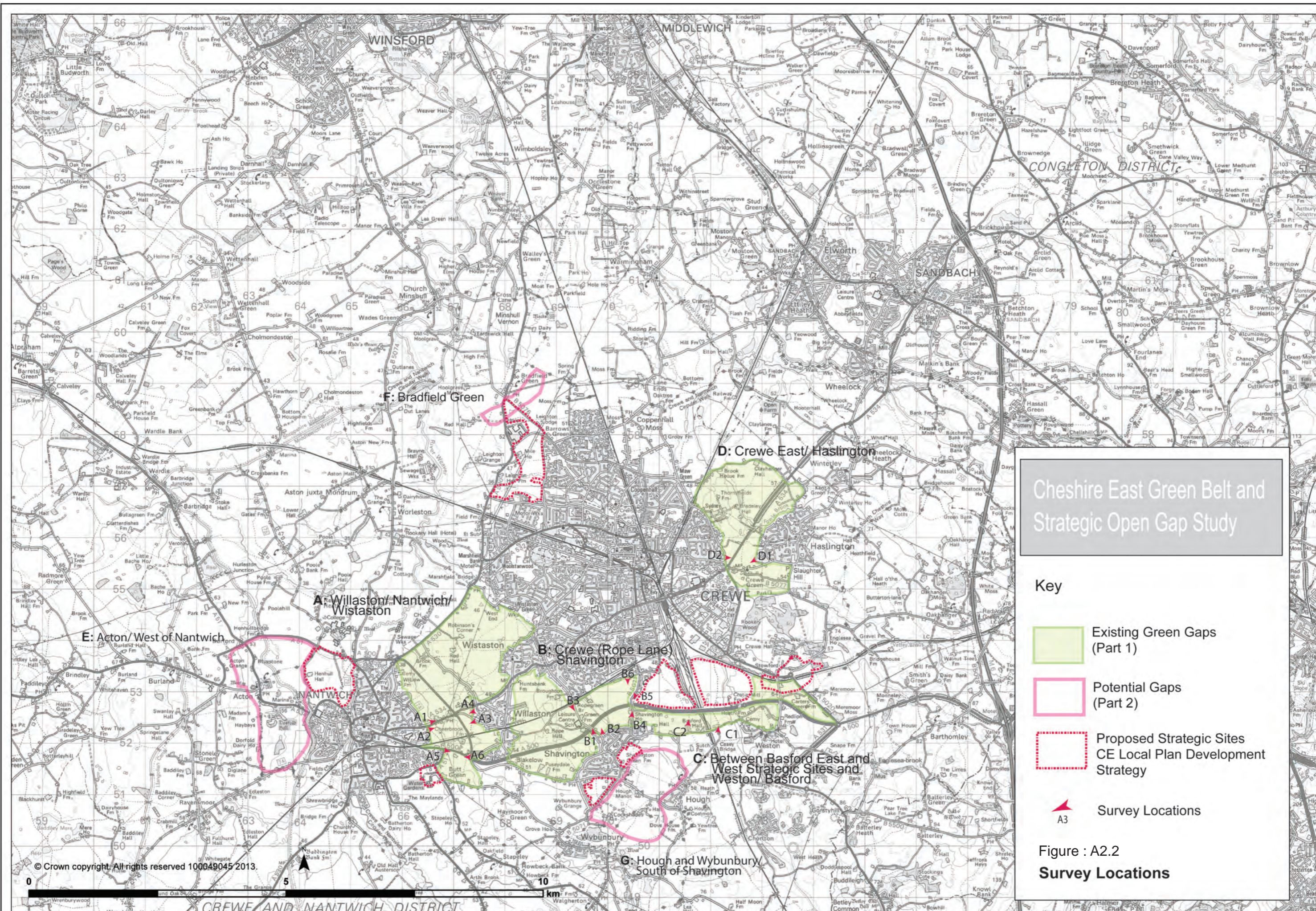
- J1.1 The gap between Middlewich, Elworth and Sandbach is defined by the open area of countryside seen from the A533 Booth Lane. The landscape character of the surrounding area comprises predominantly flat farmland with dense hedges on field boundaries.

Visual Separation

- J1.2 At present there is a clear visual break when travelling from Middlewich towards Sandbach, extending to approximately 3km up to the edge of Elworth. However, the redevelopment of the former Albion Chemical Works on Booth Lane (Strategic Site in the Development Strategy) significantly reduces the visual separation between these towns, leaving a relatively small area of open countryside on the edge of each. As the linear form of the redevelopment site runs parallel to the main road, a significant part of the visual gap is occupied by built (industrial) development in views from the road.
- J1.3 Proposed development to the east of Sandbach, around the M6 Junction 17, and around the east and west sides of Middlewich, will have no significant impact on the current separation between the towns. However there may be a risk that in future, following the redevelopment of Albion Works, the remaining gaps may become vulnerable to pressure for further development, although the coalescence of Middlewich with Sandbach is unlikely to occur. Therefore the gaps between these towns may become more vulnerable locations, where future development may erode the openness of the countryside and the rural character of the landscape.



Broad Location of Gap J: Sandbach and Middlewich

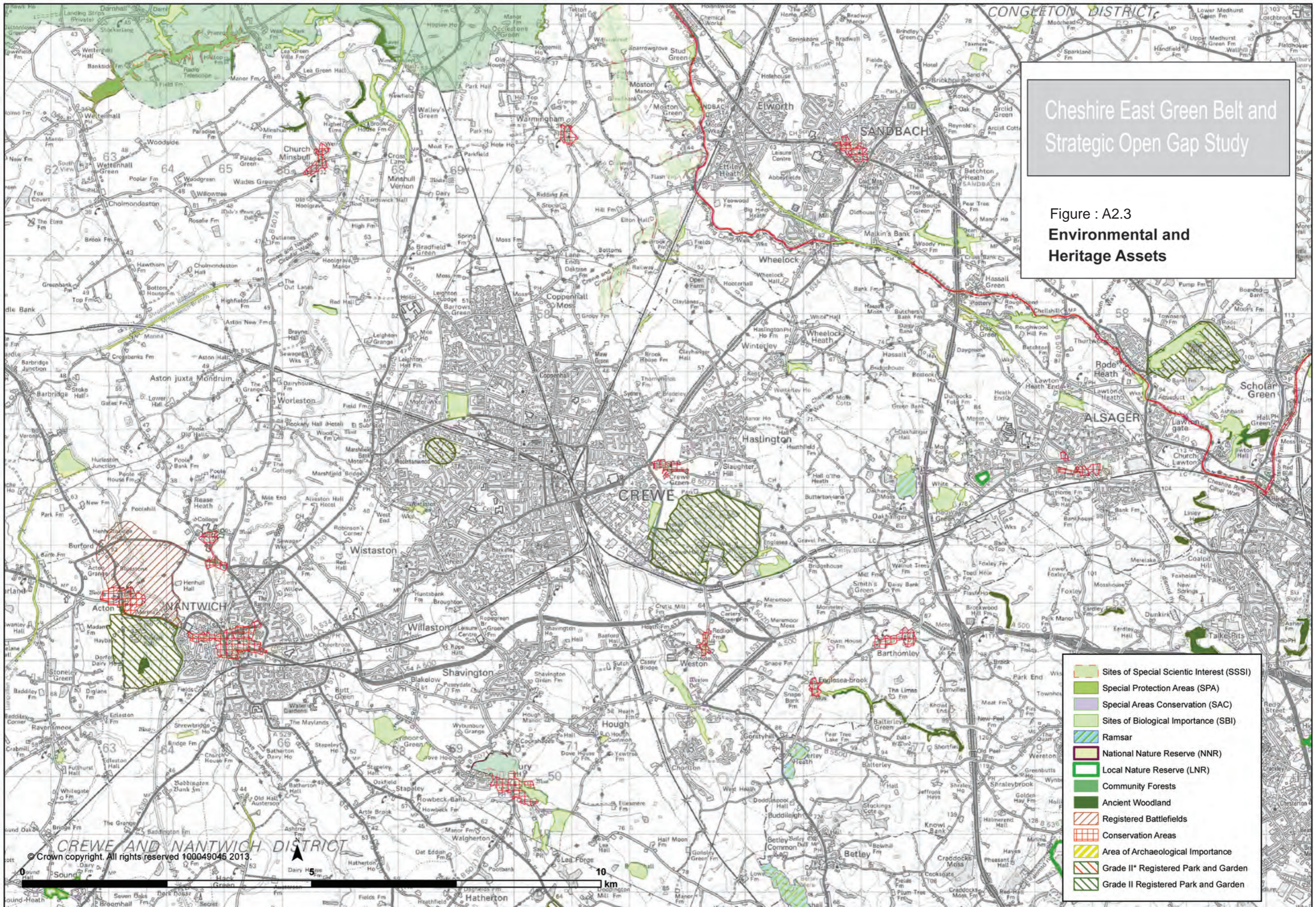


Cheshire East Green Belt and Strategic Open Gap Study

- Key**
- Existing Green Gaps (Part 1)
 - Potential Gaps (Part 2)
 - Proposed Strategic Sites CE Local Plan Development Strategy
 - Survey Locations

Figure : A2.2
Survey Locations

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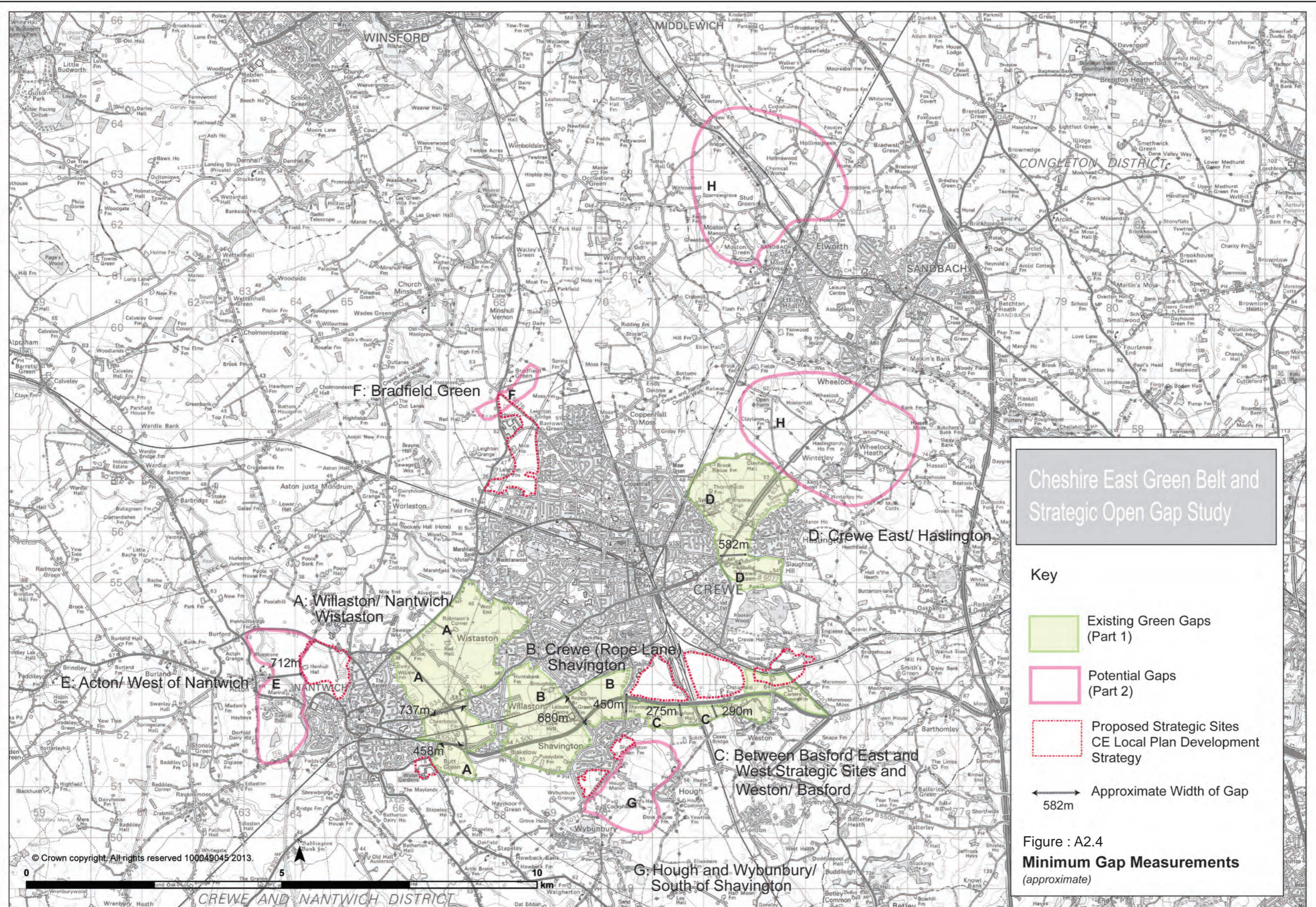


Cheshire East Green Belt and Strategic Open Gap Study

Figure : A2.3
Environmental and Heritage Assets

- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Special Protection Areas (SPA)
- Special Areas Conservation (SAC)
- Sites of Biological Importance (SBI)
- Ramsar
- National Nature Reserve (NNR)
- Local Nature Reserve (LNR)
- Community Forests
- Ancient Woodland
- Registered Battlefields
- Conservation Areas
- Area of Archaeological Importance
- Grade II* Registered Park and Garden
- Grade II Registered Park and Garden

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