

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT LOCAL COUNCILS' LIAISON COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Monday, 15 June 2015 **Time:** 7.30 - 9.15 pm

Place: Council Chamber,
Civic Offices, High Street,
Epping

**Members
Present:**

Representing Epping Forest District Council:

Councillor(s): E Webster (Chairman), K Angold-Stephens, B Rolfe and M Sartin

Other Councillors:

Councillor(s): Mrs S Jackman, A Grigg, G Mohindra, R Morgan, J Philip, C P Pond, B Surtees, L Wagland, G Waller, C Whitbread and J H Whitehouse

Representing Essex County Council:

County Councillor(s): M McEwen and J M Whitehouse

Representing Local Councils:

J Dagley (City of London - Epping Forest), S Patel, A Patel, S Watson (Buckhurst Hill Parish Council), R Alvin, K White (Chigwell Parish Council), D Baird, L Burrows (Epping Town Council), V Evans, A Pegrum, A Jones (Epping Upland Parish Council), M Burgess (Lambourne Parish Council), E K Walsh (Loughton Town Council), A Jones (Moreton, Bobbingworth & The Lavers Parish Council), T Arnold, C Evans (Nazeing Parish Council), T Blanks, A J Buckley, S De Luca, G Mulliner, R Spearman (North Weald Bassett Parish Council), J Browning, C Feetham, A Middlehurst (Ongar Town Council), H Nicholas, N Wilkinson (Roydon Parish Council), R Northwood (Sheering Parish Council), M Francis, R E Russell (Stapleford Abbots Parish Council), D Davenport (Stapleford Tawney Parish Council), M Fitch, K Richmond and G Shiell (Waltham Abbey Town Council)

Apologies:

Epping Forest District Council –

Councillor(s): A Boyce

Essex County Council –

Councillor(s): J Knapman and Mrs V Metcalfe

Parish/Town Councils: -

A Raven (Lambourne Parish Council) and G McEwen (High Ongar Parish Council)

Officers Present: D Macnab (Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Neighbourhoods), K Polyzoides (Assistant Director (Policy & Conservation)), K Bean (Planning Policy Manager), A Thorn (Principal Planning Officer), A Botha (Planning Officer) and G J Woodhall (Democratic Services Officer)

By Invitation: A Blom-Cooper (Consultant) and Hayes (Consultant)

1. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Deputy Chief Executive explained that this meeting would not be webcast as it was a special single item meeting in the form of a briefing. The meeting was originally intended to be held in the Committee Rooms in a different format, but the many responses to attend had led to the relocation to the Council Chamber. It was never the intention to webcast this meeting, however, the standard Local Councils Liaison Committee agenda template had been used without amendment. All the Local Councils in attendance would be issued with a Green Belt Review pack at the end of the meeting, which would include:

- the Green Belt Review presentation from this evening;
- the draft Green Belt Review Stage I report;
- the Settlement Hierarchy Technical Paper; and
- a Questionnaire for feedback on the Settlement Hierarchy.

The Chairman apologised for the agenda stating that the meeting would be webcast.

2. MINUTES

Resolved:

- (1) That the minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2015 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

3. ISSUES RAISED BY LOCAL COUNCILS

The Deputy Chief Executive provided the Committee with an update on the current progress with the Local Plan and the proposed next steps following the agreement of the Local Development Scheme by the Cabinet on 11 June 2015. An overview of the important lessons learnt from recent Examinations in Public of Local Plans would be given, along with the advice received from Counsel regarding the development of the Epping Forest Local Plan. The next item on the agenda would brief the Committee on Stage I of the Green Belt Review and the evidence for the Settlement Hierarchy.

The Council's Local Plan Consultant stated that the Local Plan would have a presumption in favour of sustainable development, would look to meet the development needs of the District until 2033 whilst also protecting the District's most precious assets, and would provide a framework for where, when and how future development occurred in the District. An overview of the history of the Local Plan preparation was given, before the Committee was reminded that the process also included the Duty to Co-Operate and a forum for discussions with neighbouring authorities on cross boundary issues had already been established. An update on the Evidence Base was provided, and the Local Development Scheme recently agreed by the Cabinet envisaged the public consultation on the draft Local Plan taking place between July and September in 2016, before the

Examination In Public in the early months of 2018. The following steps in the development of the Local Plan were scheduled for the next twelve months:

- July 2015 – Green Belt Review Stage I and Local Plan Viability;
- September 2015 – the Objectively Assessed Housing & Employment Need;
- April 2016 – Workshops on the draft Local Plan; and
- July 2016 – agreement of the draft Local Plan for public consultation.

The Planning Policy Manager informed the Committee that District Councillors had recently attended a Briefing given by Counsel on the lessons for the Council from recent Examinations in Public for Local Plans prepared by other local authorities, and further advice on producing a sound Local Plan based on these experiences. The main points of that Briefing was summarised for the Committee, and the theme running throughout the Briefing for the Council was “Do it once, do it right, do it well!”

During a question and answer session, the Committee was informed that a new junction for the M25 would be considered as part of the Transport Assessment, and that the London Borough of Enfield was also considering this as well. The Committee was reassured that there would be a full public consultation on the draft Local Plan prior to its Examination in Public, and that the length of this consultation had been extended as it was scheduled for the Summer period. The Committee was informed that the purpose of this meeting was to report on the Stage I Review of the Green Belt to the Local Councils, and that the Local Councils would be fully involved in Stage II. This was reiterated by the Leader of the District Council.

Resolved:

- (1) That the update on the preparation of the new Local Plan be noted.

4. EPPING FOREST LOCAL PLAN - GREEN BELT REVIEW PHASE I

The Committee received a presentation from the Planning Policy Officer concerning Stage I of the Review of the Green Belt. This presentation started with some background information for the Committee before reporting on:

- the next steps and the timetable for Stage II of the Review;
- the methodology utilised for Stage I of the Review;
- the five purposes of the Green Belt, as defined by paragraph 80 of the National Planning Policy Framework;
- the coverage of the Green Belt in the Epping Forest District;
- assessment of the 61 Green Belt parcels within the District against the first four purposes of the Green Belt;
- a map showing the boundaries of the Green Belt parcels within the District;
- assessment against the first purpose of the Green Belt;
- a map showing the contribution of each parcel to the first purpose;
- assessment against the second purpose of the Green Belt;
- a map showing the current distances between the towns within the District;
- a map showing the contribution of each parcel to the second purpose;
- assessment against the third purpose of the Green Belt;
- a map showing the current encroachment upon the countryside;
- a map showing the contribution of each parcel to the third purpose;
- assessment against the fourth purpose of the Green Belt;
- a map showing the contribution of each parcel to the fourth purpose;
- assessment against the fifth purpose of the Green Belt, although it was highlighted that this was not actually performed.
- The aggregate scores for each parcel of Green Belt; and

- A map indicating the aggregated scores for each parcel as either weak, moderate or strong in their contribution towards the purposes of the Green Belt.

The Senior Planning Policy Officer then continued the presentation regarding Stage II of the Review of the Green Belt, reporting on:

- the methodology for identifying broad locations for Stage II;
- establishing a settlement hierarchy;
- the five categories of services and facilities for the Epping Forest District settlement hierarchy;
- the scores for the 26 settlements that had been assessed;
- the draft settlement categories and what each settlement was classified as;
- a map of the draft settlement hierarchy;
- the environmental constraints for development;
- a map showing the location of the environmental constraints;
- the parameters used to define the areas of search for new development, adjusted for the existence of defensible boundaries where appropriate;
- a map indicating the broad locations for Stage II of the Green Belt Review; and
- three questions for consideration by the Local Councils during the consultation period for Stage I of the Review:
 - have the right type of services and facilities been identified for assessment?
 - have the existing services and facilities been correctly identified for each of the settlements? has anything been missed?
 - have the settlements within the District been placed in appropriate categories?

The Committee expressed concern about the requirement to respond to the Stage I Review by 29 June, in order to draft a report for the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 23 July 2015; this was only 2 weeks from the date of this meeting and would require additional meetings to be organised by the Local Councils.

The Deputy Chief Executive acknowledged that some of the timescales within the recently agreed Local Development Scheme were short, but Planning Policy Officers would need to include the comments from the Local Councils in their report to the Cabinet next month. However, the Deputy Chief Executive recognised the concern of the Committee and undertook to consult with the Planning Policy Portfolio Holder on this matter.

The Committee expressed a number of further concerns, which included the top-down approach seemingly employed by the District Council for the Review of the Green Belt, as it was felt to be critical that each Town or Parish Council was consulted about their area. It was also suggested that as four years had elapsed since the initial Issues and Options Consultation, an extra two or three months to allow the Local Councils to be consulted properly over the first stage of the Green Belt Review would not have a detrimental impact upon the Local Plan process. It was opined that there always seemed to be a lack of consultation with the Local Councils, and that it was more important to get the Review right with input from the Town and Parish Councils.

It was also felt that the text on the printed copies of the presentations handed out was too small, and that this meeting should have been webcast to allow the presentations to be reviewed. The Deputy Chief Executive reassured the Committee that electronic copies of the presentations would be made available to the Local Councils. The process required input from Local Councils to ensure that sound judgements were reached. It was highlighted that a delay until September would benefit the Local Councils in considering their response, and would enable the consultation period to be reduced from the 14 weeks currently planned.

In response to questions from the Committee, the Senior Planning Policy Officer stated that Air and Noise Pollution had been excluded at this stage as it required a site by site analysis, but would be assessed at a later stage. As Chigwell and Chigwell Row were separate District Council wards, they had been considered as two separate settlements. However, if Local Councillors felt that they should be classified as one settlement then they were urged to make that clear in their response to the Consultation. It was agreed that names would be added to the various maps to improve legibility.

The Senior Planning Policy Officer stated that Stage II of the Green Belt Review would look at a wider range of factors, such as landscape impact. It was reiterated that all the parcels of land included in Stage II of the Review would undergo further analysis before a decision was taken to release. It was important to stress that sites being put forward to Phase II were not necessarily considered solely for potential release, but sites might be put through on the basis of their importance to be reaffirmed or to explore the potential of developing better defensible boundaries. The Review itself was a single piece of evidence to be used for the Local Plan. It was accepted that a simplistic approach had been taken to the analysis of services and facilities in settlements. For example, if a settlement had a Primary School then that was classed as a facility, regardless of the size of the school or how many pupils it had. Only medical or educational facilities provided by the State had been included, although Dentists were an exception to this.

The Committee had further concerns about the engagement of the public with the Local Plan. It was felt that there needed to be better communication regarding timescales and processes to the Local Councils and the public if the Council was to avoid implementing a contentious Local Plan. It was also noted that no consideration had been given to the location of listed buildings, and that no Local Plan workshops including Town and Parish Councils had been organised by the District Council since 2013.

The Leader of the District Council informed the Committee that he would examine the options for both the date of the July Cabinet meeting and the timescale for that Cabinet meeting over the next few days. However, the Leader warned that the next scheduled Cabinet meeting after July was not until 3 September, and the Council would get criticised if the Local Plan process was unduly delayed.

Resolved:

(1) That the technical analysis of the Stage I Review of the Green Belt be noted and that the date for feedback on the documents would be advised.

5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Committee noted that there was no other urgent business for consideration.

6. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Chairman noted that the Local Councils had expressed a desire that the meetings of this Committee should not be held on a Monday evening, and a number of alternative dates had been provided for the remaining meetings in the municipal year. It was highlighted that the Essex Police & Crime Commissioner had already agreed to attend the meeting scheduled for Monday 16 November 2015, and that this date would have to remain in situ. However, the Chairman suggested that the meetings scheduled for July 2015 and March 2016 be moved to Tuesday 7 July and Tuesday 29 March respectively.

Resolved:

(1) That the meetings of the Local Councils Liaison Committee currently programmed for Monday 6 July 2015 and Monday 21 March 2016 be rescheduled to Tuesday 7 July 2015 and Tuesday 29 March 2016 respectively.

CHAIRMAN

Epping Forest District Local Plan update 15 June 2015



Objectives for today

- Brief on the current progress with the Local Plan and next steps
- Provide an overview of key messages from recent examinations and Counsel advice
- Provide a briefing on Stage 1 of the Green Belt Review and Settlement hierarchy evidence



EF District Local Plan

- Context of a presumption in favour of sustainable development
- Will plan ahead positively, to meet development needs to 2033, whilst protecting the most precious assets
- A framework for where, when and how development occurs in the District – used for planning applications and land allocations



The journey so far

Community Visioning 2010



Evidence Gathering including
Sustainability Appraisal



Community Choices July to October 2012



Analysis of community and stakeholder
views and further evidence gathering

Duty to cooperate

- Setting up of officer and member group of the Cooperation for Sustainable Development Board
- Terms of reference/governance arrangements agreed
- Forum for discussions on cross boundary strategic issues e.g. green belt, transport, housing and employment need

Update on the evidence base

- Strategic Housing Market Assessment
- Economic assessment
- Strategic Transport Assessment
- Green Belt Review
- Provision for GRT
- Viability assessment
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
- Strategic Land Availability Assessment

The Local Development Scheme

- Cabinet report with revised timetable agreed on 11 June 2015
- Consultation on a draft plan/preferred option July - September 2016
- Pre-submission publication April/May 2017
- Submission for examination October 2017
- Examination early 2018

The next steps (1)

- Reports to Cabinet on 23 July 2015 on Green Belt Review Stage 1 and on Plan Viability
- Agree the District's objectively assessed housing and employment need – September 2015

The next steps (2)

- The preferred approach draft plan – workshop briefings April 2016
- Draft plan setting out preferred approach and options considered by Cabinet for consultation in July 2016



Lessons from recent examinations – Counsel's advice

- Government Policy and Guidance
- Objectively assessed need
- Duty to cooperate/Delivery
- Need for a comprehensive Green Belt Review
- Provision for the Gypsy Romany Traveller Community
- Relationship between Local and Neighbourhood Plans

Producing a sound plan

– Counsel's advice

- Evidence base – up to date, accepted and proportionate
- Progression – from draft plan to adoption
- Do it once, do it right, do it well!

Questions?

DRAFT GREEN BELT REVIEW (STAGE 1)

15 June 2015



Background

- Methodology approach agreed at 23 June 2014 Cabinet
- Methodology developed further following Counsel advice
- Draft Methodology circulated to 'Co-operation for Sustainable Development Group'
- Physical site surveys from June - Nov 2014
- Officer Workshops 12 March 2015

Next Steps & Timetable



Local Council Liaison Committee briefing:
15 June 2015

Interviews consultants for Stage 2 Green Belt Review:
w/c 22 June 2015

Cabinet to consider Green Belt Review Stage 1 Report
and Broad Areas for further assessment in Stage 2:
23 July 2015

Preparation of Stage 2 Green Belt Review:
August - November 2015

Final Report:
December 2015



GBR Stage 1 Methodology

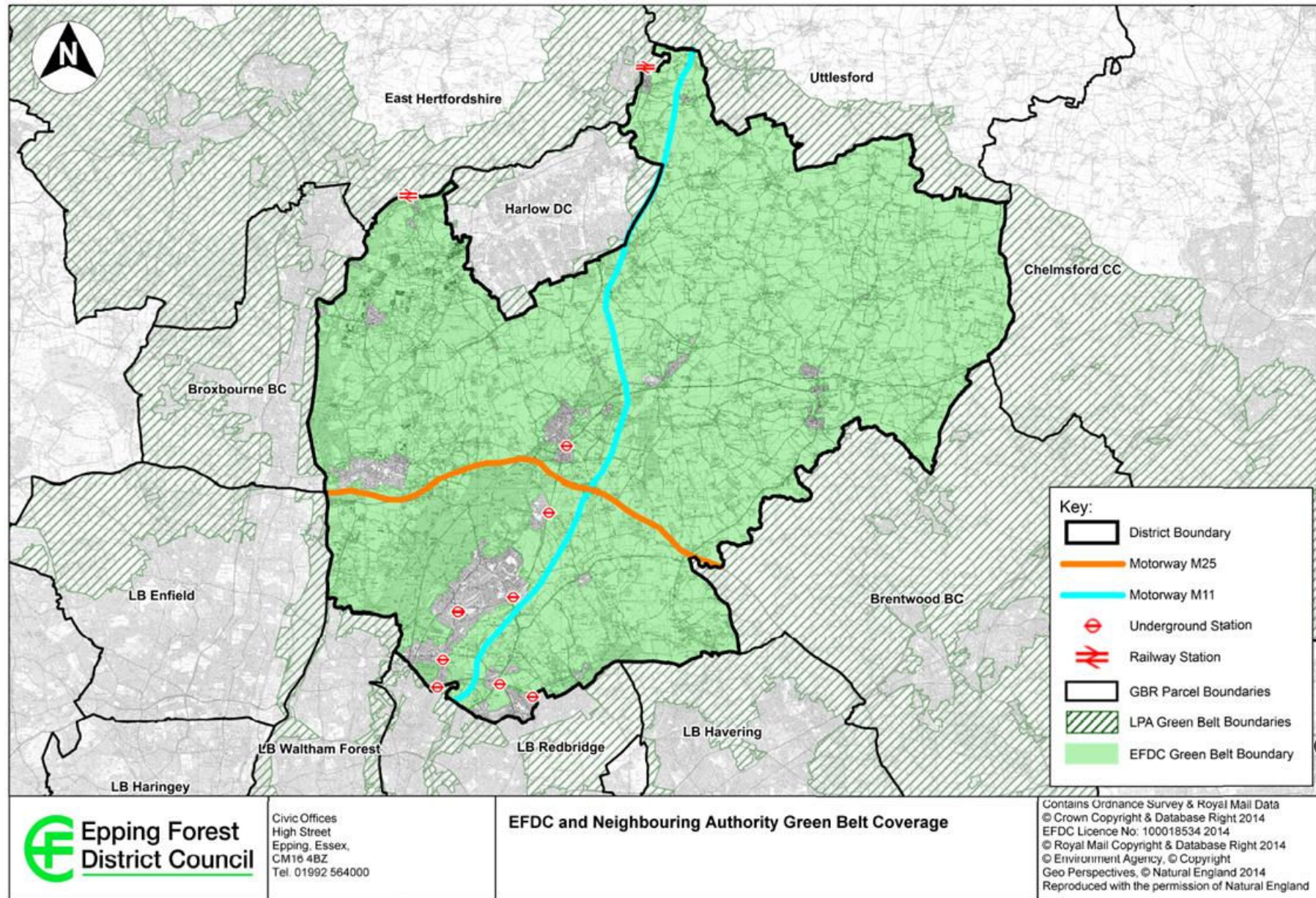
Appraise the District's Green Belt against the national GB purposes whilst also taking into account environmental constraints to accommodate further development.

Five Purposes of the Green Belt

NPPF Para 80:

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

Metropolitan Green Belt

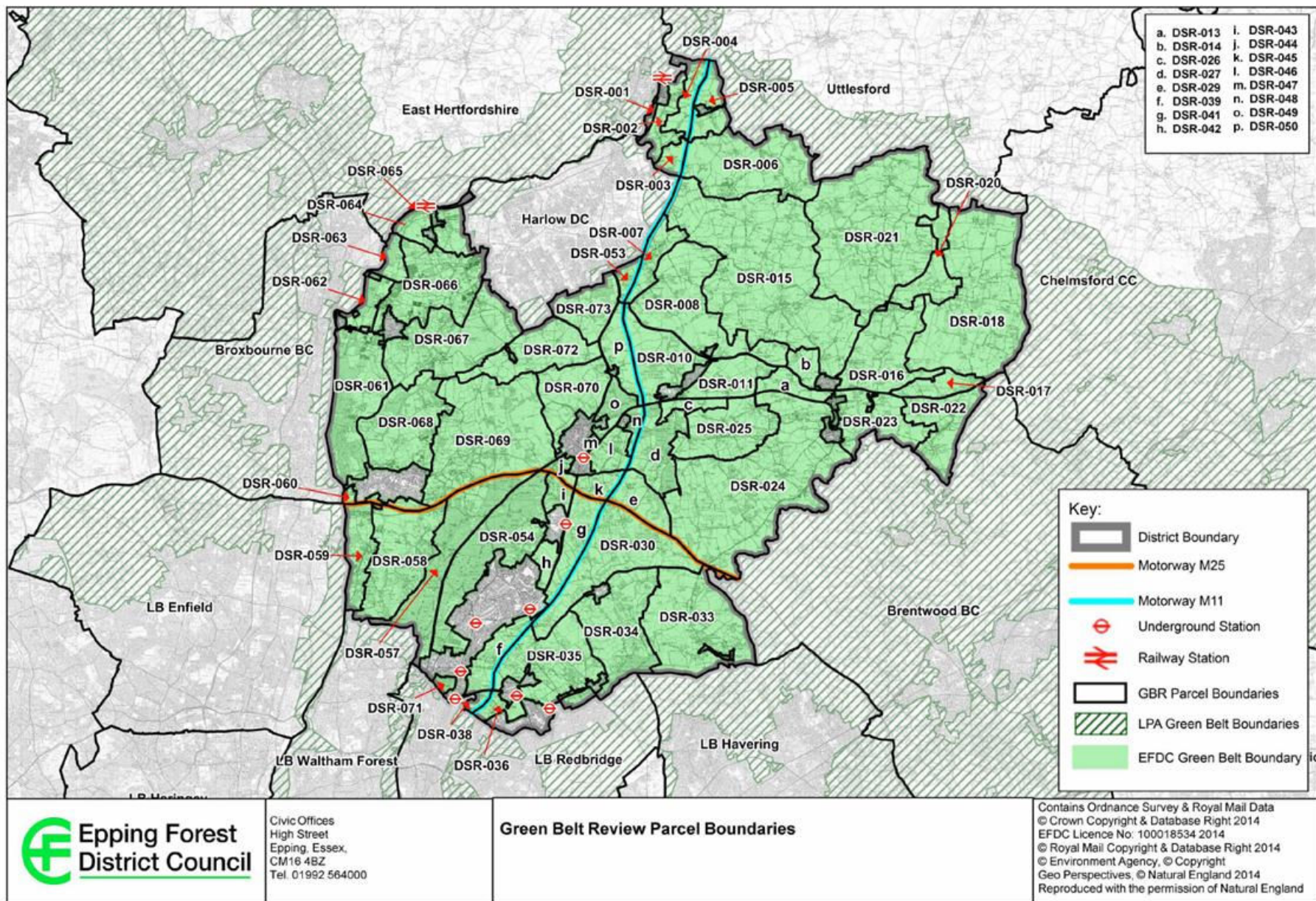


Green Belt Parcels

- Landscape Character Assessment (2010) as starting point
- 61 total parcels in the report (as a result of refinement and merging of some parcels)
- Parcel Assessment Criteria (17 Questions)
- Each parcel assessed against the first 4 purposes of the Green Belt with Purpose 5 assessed on a strategic basis

Score	
0	No Contribution
1	Weak
2	Relatively Weak
3	Moderate
4	Relatively Strong
5	Strong

Green Belt Parcels

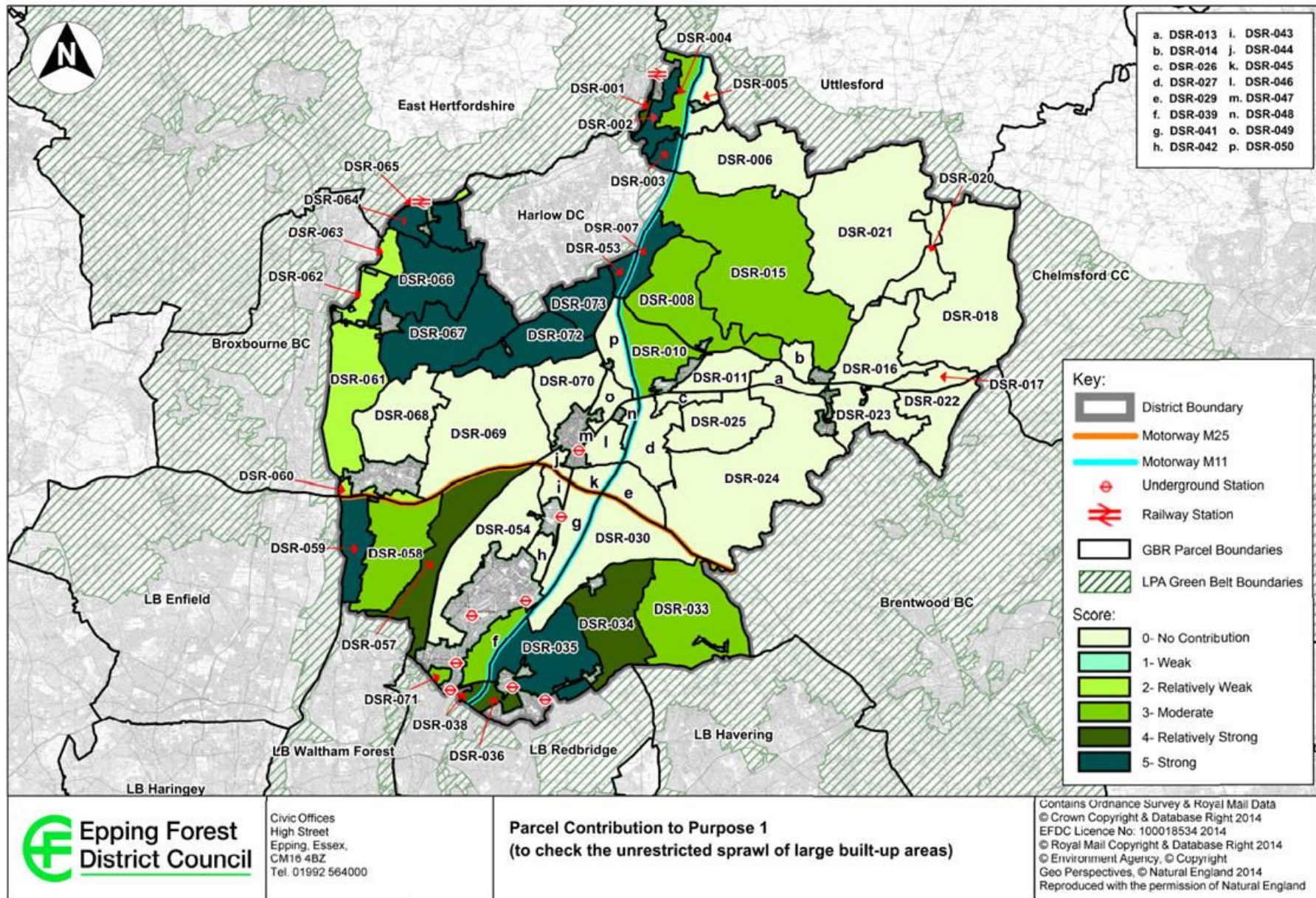


Assessment – 1st purpose

Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas

- Does the parcel prevent sprawl from large built up areas outside of the study area? – London, Harlow, Cheshunt & Hoddesdon
- Are there defensible boundaries which prevent the sprawl of these settlements?

Assessment – 1st purpose

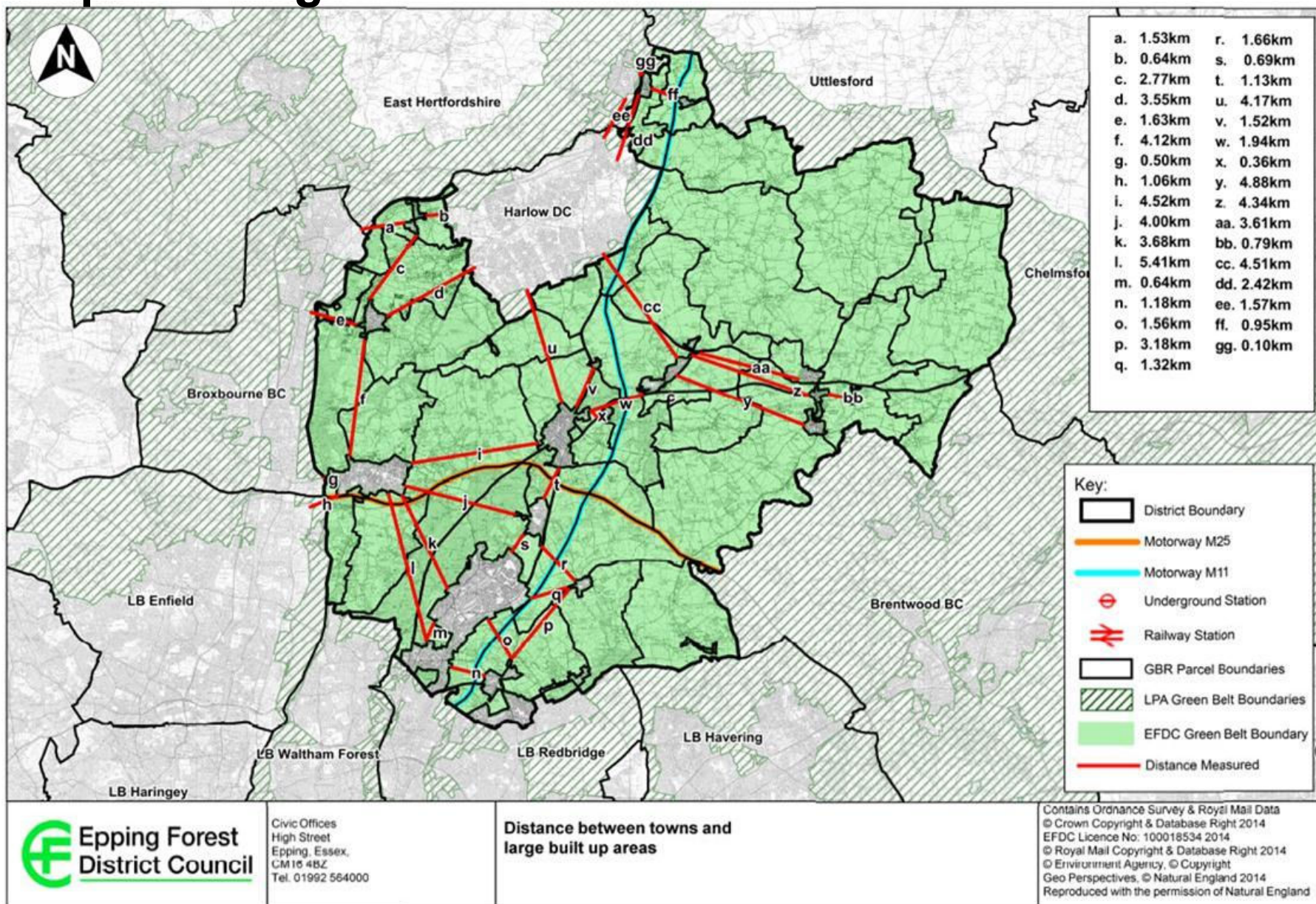


Assessment – 2nd purpose

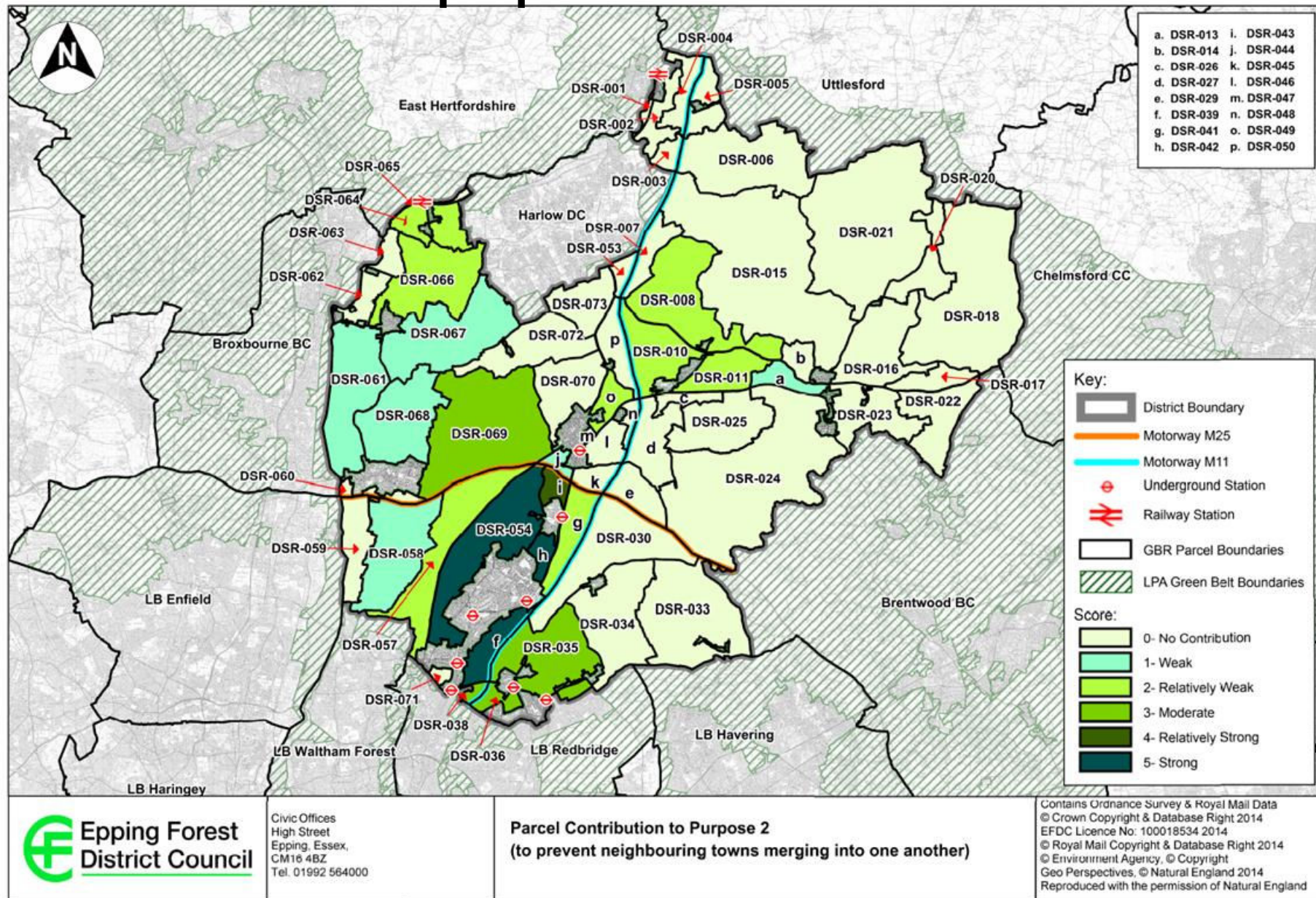
Prevent neighbouring towns from merging

- “Towns” are Epping, Waltham Abbey, Loughton / Debden, Chigwell, Buckhurst Hill, Chipping Ongar, North Weald Bassett, Theydon Bois, Roydon and Lower Nazeing
- Does the parcel form a gap between these “towns”, are there any defensible boundaries, and how wide is any gap?
- Is there evidence of ribbon development, and what is the perception of any gap between the “towns”?

Map showing distances between towns



Assessment – 2nd purpose

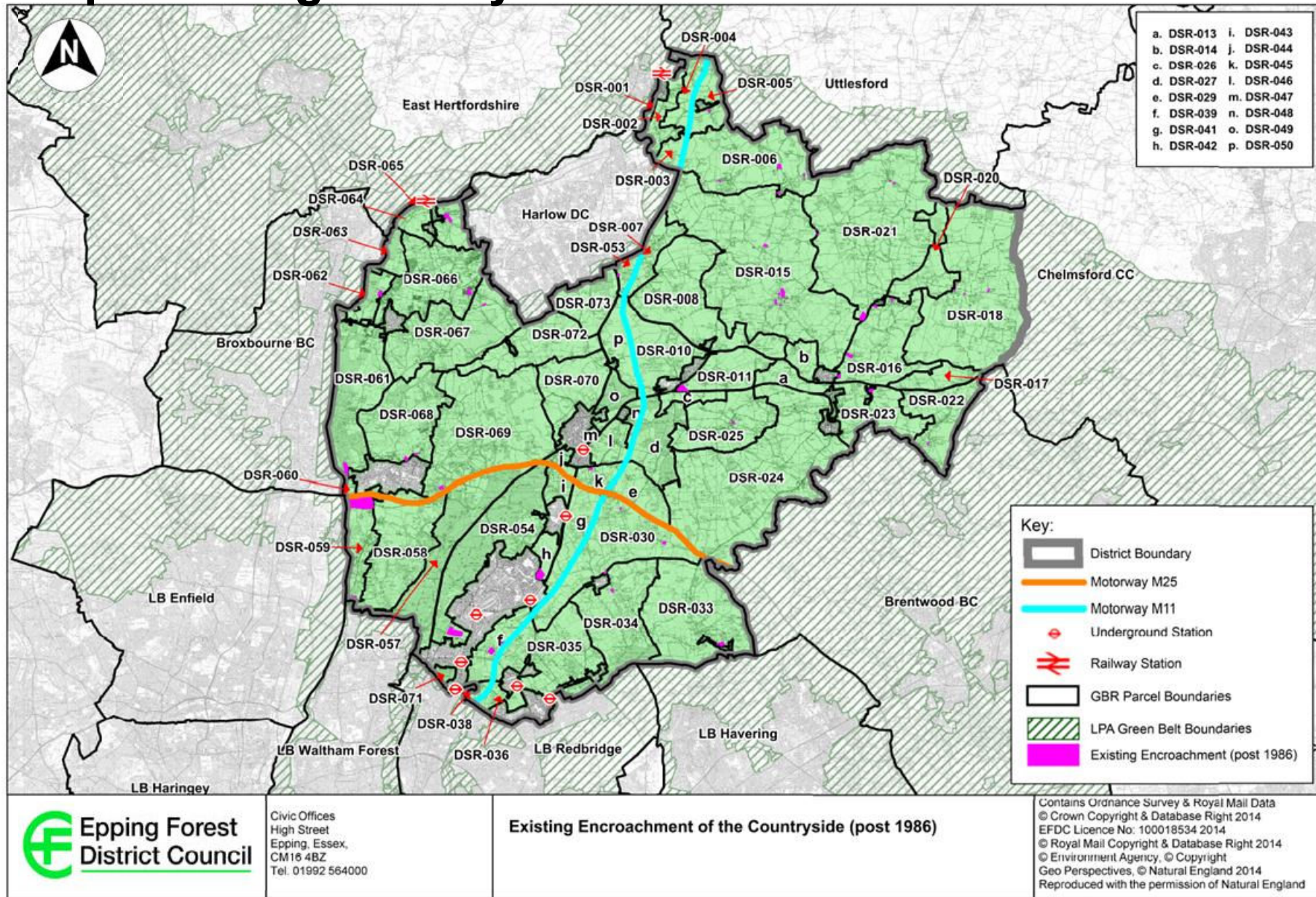


Assessment – 3rd purpose

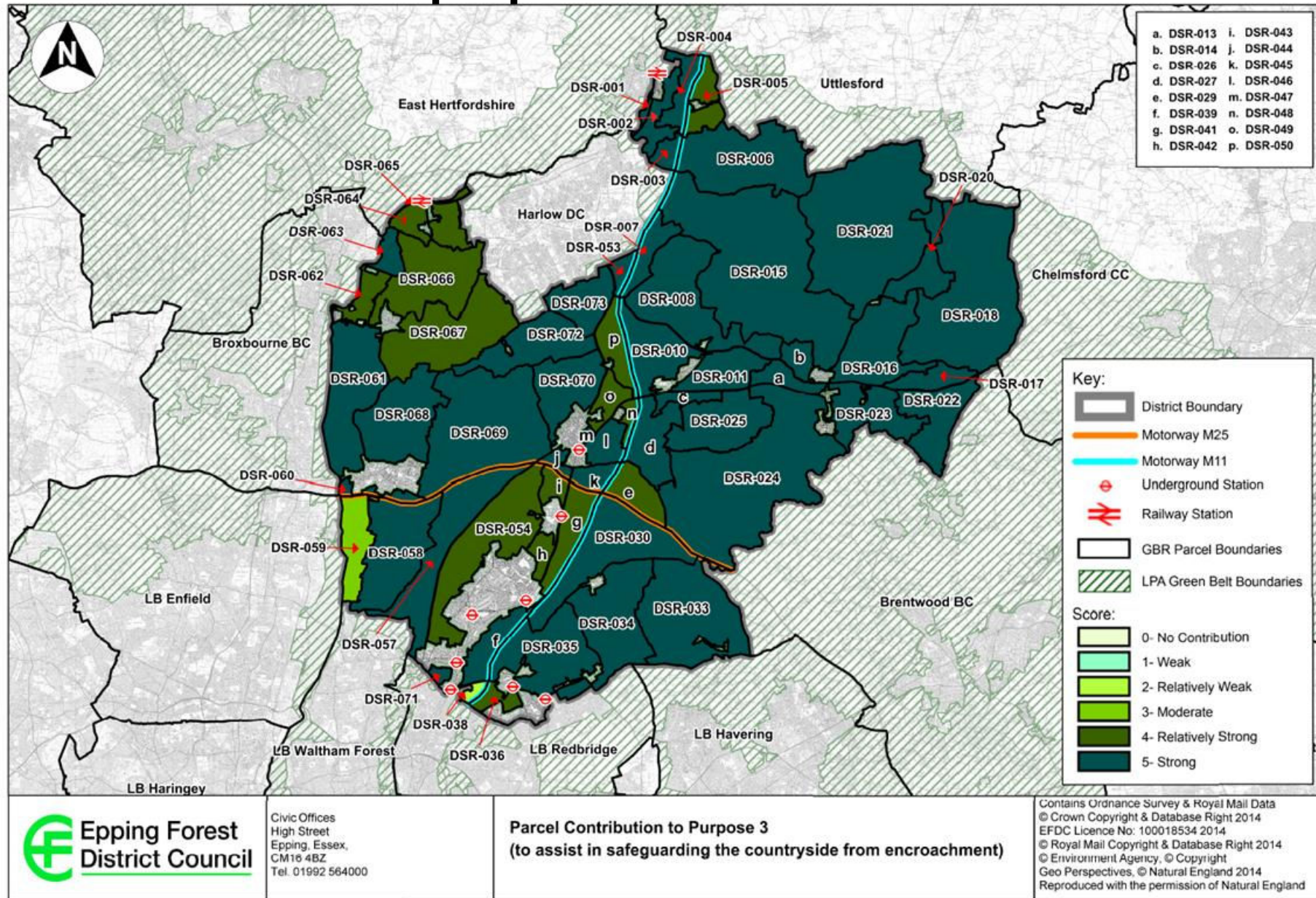
Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

- Are there existing uses that are considered appropriate in the Green Belt?
- Does the topography of the land provide a mechanism to prevent encroachment?
- Has there already been significant encroachment by built development?

Map showing countryside encroachment



Assessment – 3rd purpose

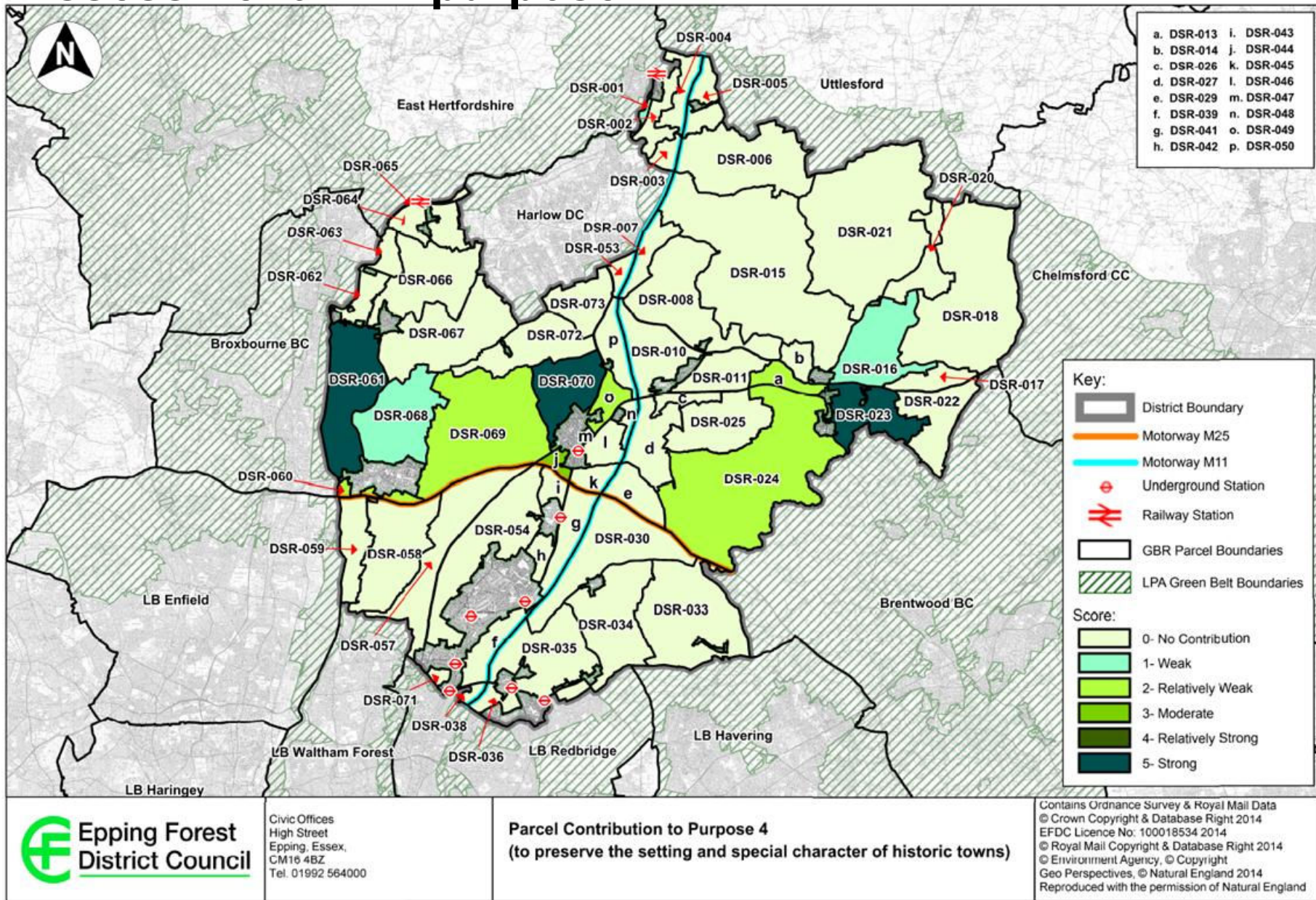


Assessment – 4th purpose

Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

- Chipping Ongar, Epping and Waltham Abbey within the district, and Sawbridgeworth on the district boundary to the north, are identified as historic towns
- How does the Green Belt designation contribute to the setting of historic towns?
- Would the removal of the Green Belt designation cause harm to the setting and significance of the historic towns?

Assessment – 4th purpose



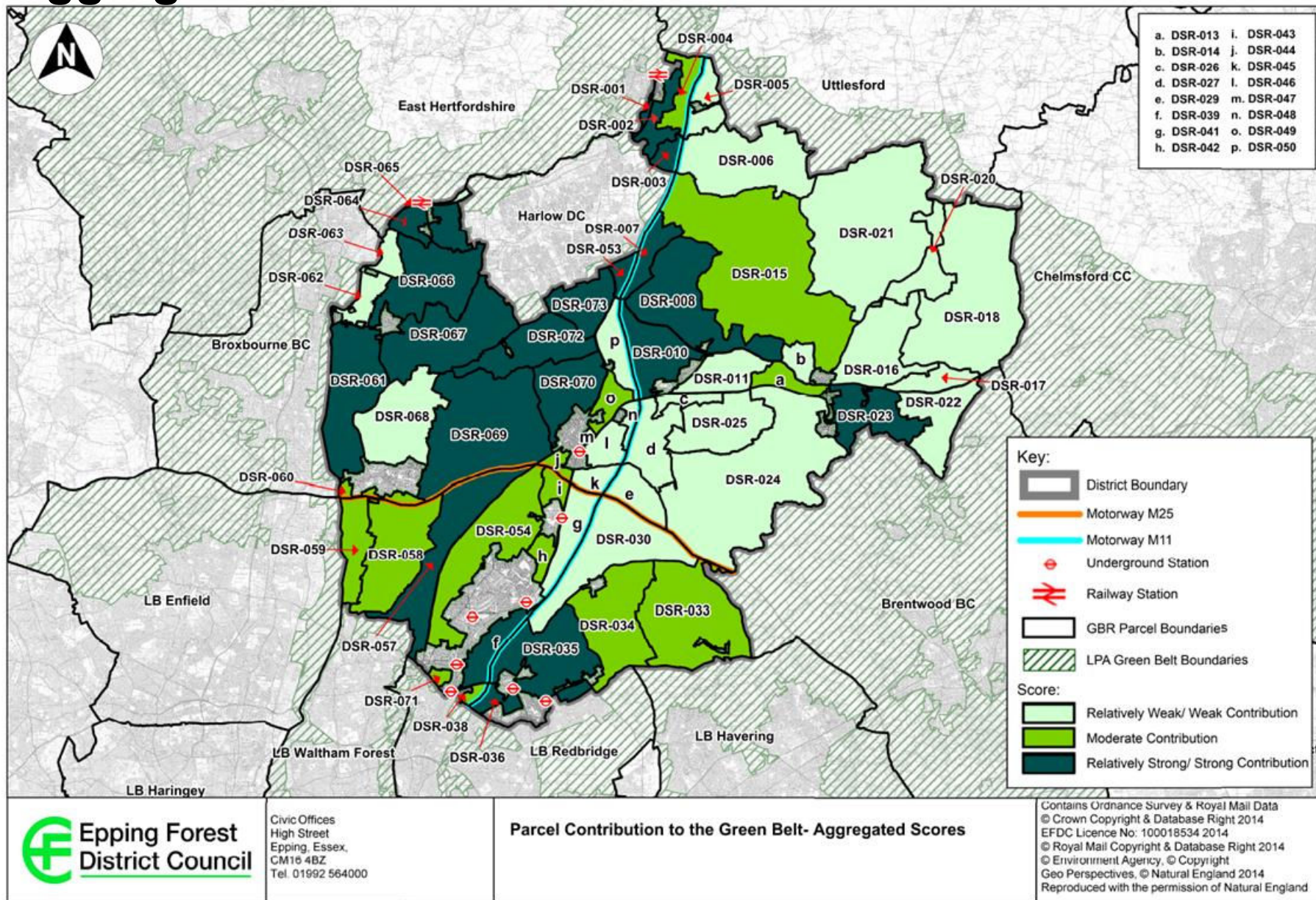
Assessment – 5th purpose

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

Aggregate scores

- Each of the first 4 purposes have been scored between 0-5
- Aggregate score out of 20 possible
- Highest score 13 (E of Buckhurst Hill, N W & E Chigwell, Lee Valley Park)
- Lowest score 4 (N E & S Thornwood, E of Coopersale, NE M11/M25 interchange)
- No parcel scored a 0 against every purpose
- Further sieving exercise was required to determine broad locations that should be considered in more detail

Aggregate scores



Methodology for identifying broad locations for Stage 2

1. Establish a settlement hierarchy
2. Identify and map environmental constraints
3. Application of distance buffers from key services
4. Areas adjusted using defensible boundaries where they exist

Establishing a settlement hierarchy

- There is no set methodology for identifying a settlement hierarchy
- Services and facilities that have been identified all contribute to how a settlement functions

EFDC Draft Settlement Hierarchy - Services & facilities

Category	
Education	Nursery, Primary School, Secondary School, Higher Education
Health	GP, Dentist, Opticians, Pharmacy, Hospital
Transport	Bus service, Rail Station, Underground Station
Retail	Post Office, Local Shop, Supermarket, ATM, Bank
Community facilities/Services	Community Hall, Fire Station, Leisure Centre, Library, Police Station, Pub, Public Car Park, Recycling Facilities, Youth Centre

EFDC Draft Settlement Hierarchy - Scores

Categories:

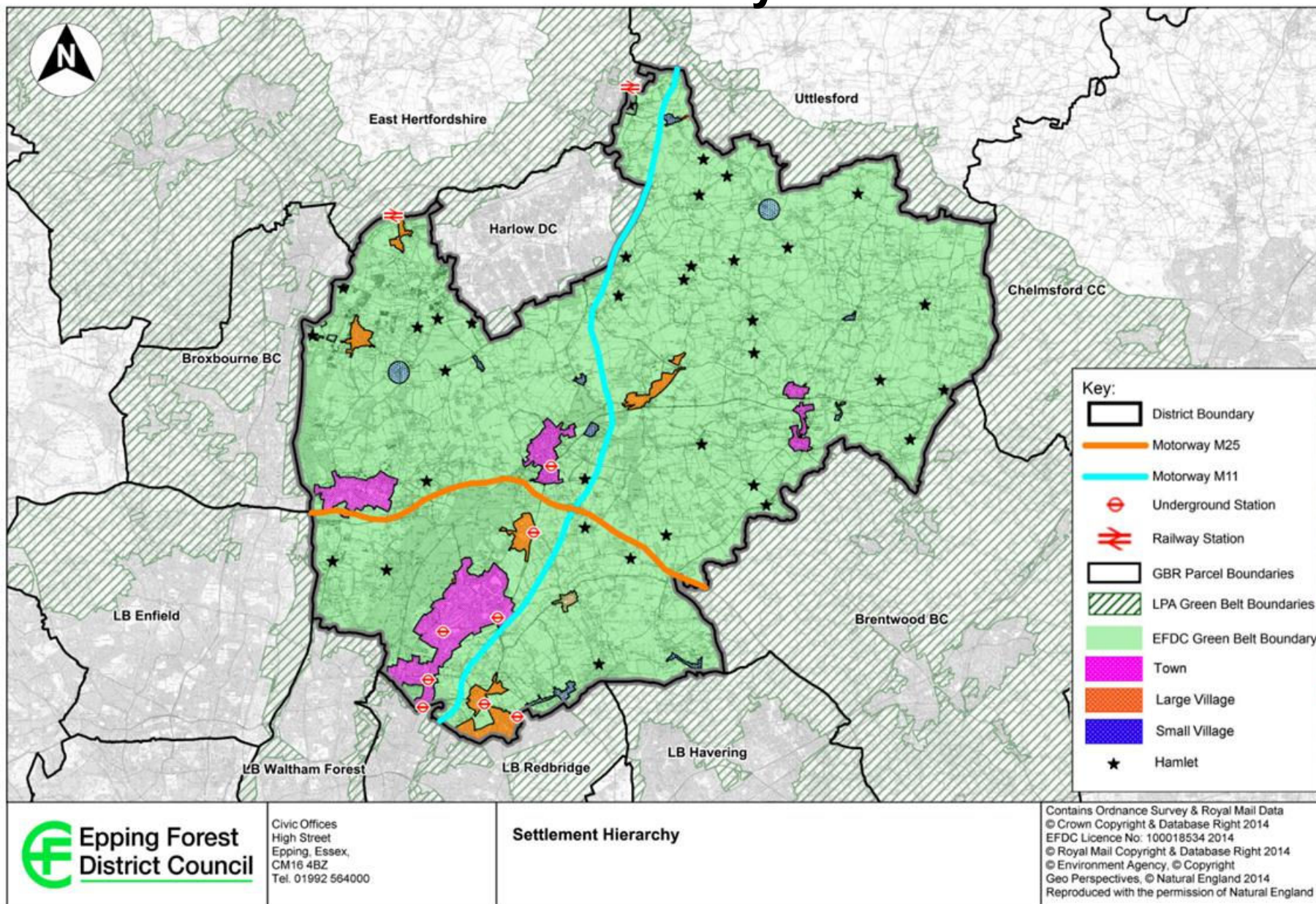
Town:	20 - 26	points
Large village:	12 - 19	points
Small village:	6 - 11	points
Hamlet:	0 - 5	points

Settlement	Score
Abridge	12
Buckhurst Hill	21
Bumbles Green	6
Chigwell	21
Chigwell Row	6
Chipping Ongar	23
Coopersale	9
Epping	26
Epping Green	7
Fyfield	8
High Beach	4
High Ongar	8
Loughton-Debden	26
Lower Nazeing	12
Lower Sheering	4
Matching Green	6
Moreton	5
North Weald	15
Roydon	16
Sewardstone	7
Sheering	9
Stapleford Abbots	8
Theydon Bois	17
Thornwood	9
Waltham Abbey	24
Willingale	5

Draft Settlement Categories

Category	Settlement
<u>Town (20-26)</u> Good service and facilities, including good public transport access. Settlements provide higher order services & facilities.	Buckhurst Hill, Chipping Ongar, Epping, Loughton-Debden, Waltham Abbey
<u>Large village (12-19)</u> Moderate facilities including reasonable public transport access (bus or train/Central Line). Can meet moderate local demands for “everyday” services.	Abridge, Chigwell, Lower Nazeing, North Weald, Roydon, Theydon Bois
<u>Small Village (6-11)</u> Few facilities, and patchy public transport access.	Bumbles Green, Chigwell Row, Coopersale, Epping Green, Fyfield, High Ongar, Matching Green, Sheering, Stapleford Abbots, Thornwood.
<u>Hamlet (0-5)</u> Very limited services/facilities, often no discernible centre.	Abbess Roding, Beauchamp Roding, Berners Roding, Bobbingworth, Broadley Common, Bumble’s Green, Dobb’s Weir, Fiddlers Hamlet, Foster Street, Hare Street, Hastingwood, High Beach, High Laver, Jacks Hatch, Lambourne End, Little Laver, Long Green, Lower Sheering, Magdalen Laver, Matching, Matching Tye, Moreton, Newman End, Nine Ashes, Norton Heath, Norton Mandeville, Roydon Hamlet, Sewardstone, Sewardstonebury, Stanford Rivers, Stapleford Tawney, Theydon Garnon, Theydon Mount, Tilegate Green, Toot Hill, Upper Nazeing, Upshire, Willingale.

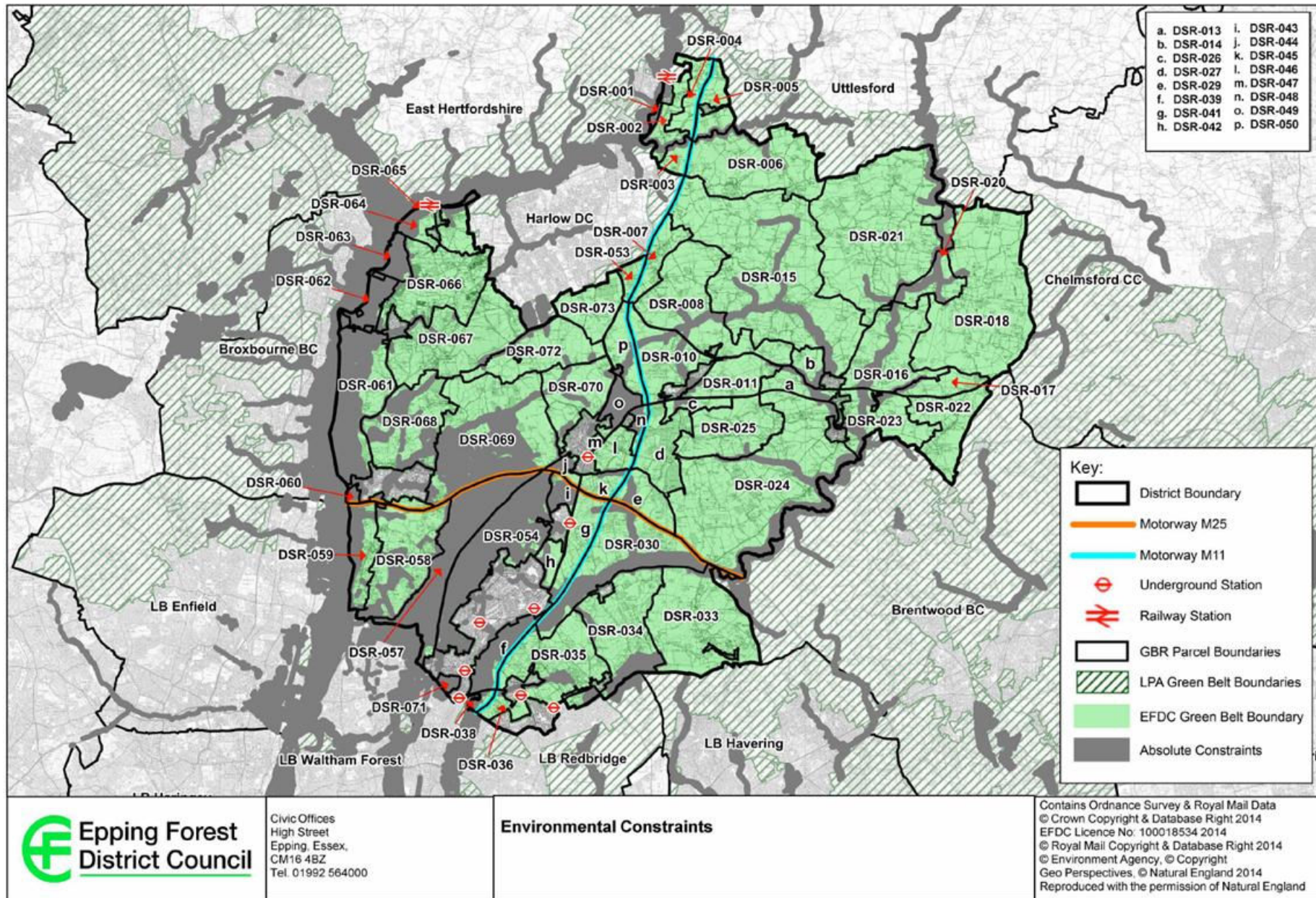
EFDC Draft Settlement Hierarchy



Environmental constraints

- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (April 2015) – showing zones 2, 3 and 3b (Zone 1 applies to all land outside of zones 2, 3 and 3b)
- Special Protection Areas (SPA)
- Special Areas of Conservation (SAC)
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Local Nature Reserves (LNR)
- City of London Corporation Epping Forest Buffer land (land owned and managed by the City of London Corporation, which is not part of the formal part of the Forest, but is not available for development)

Environmental Constraints

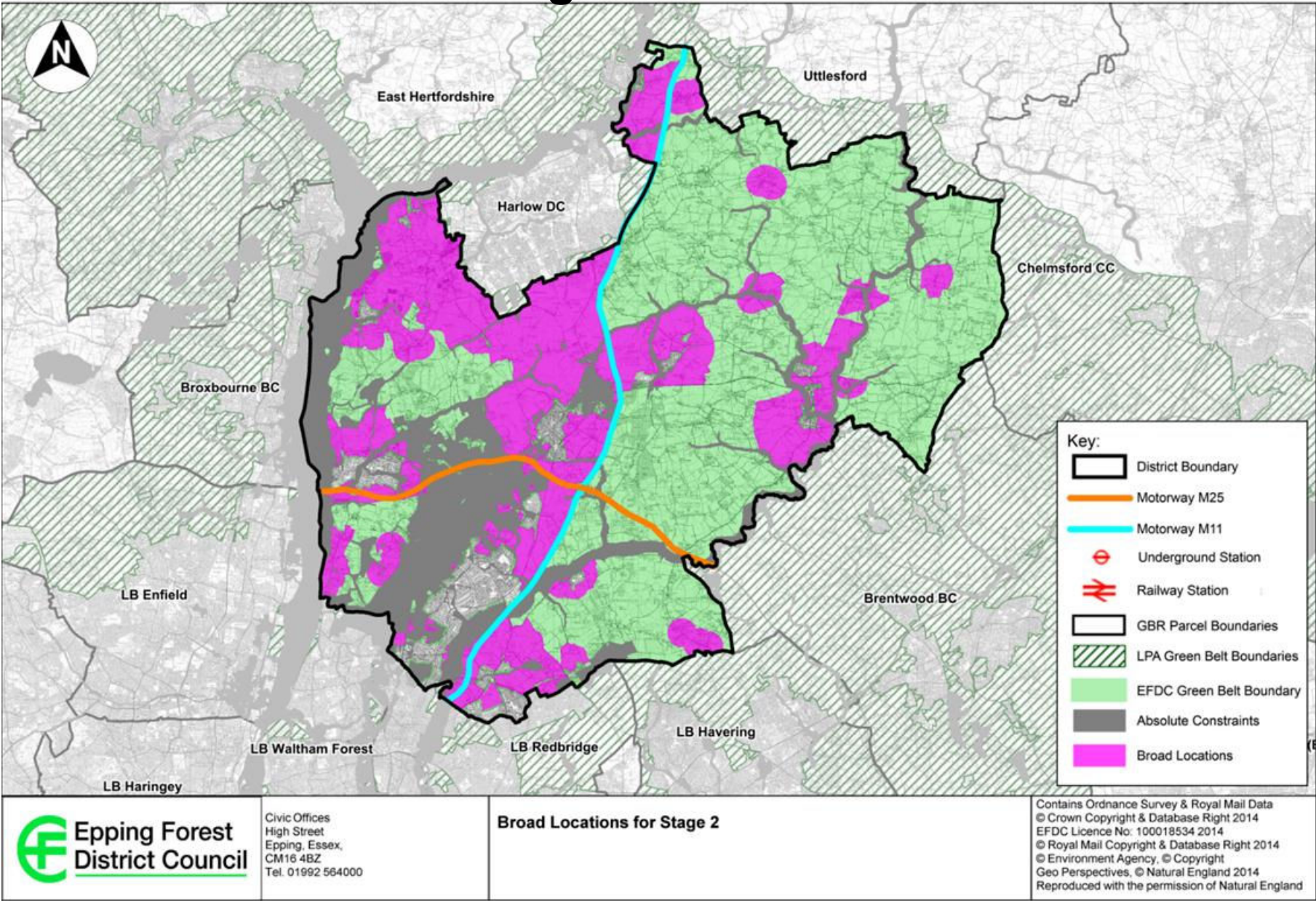


Areas of Search

- Towns – 2km from rail/Central Line station, bus stops & existing town centre boundary
- Large village – 1 km from rail/Central Line station, bus stops & existing local shopping parades
- Small village – 0.5km from rail/Central Line station, bus stops & existing local shopping parades

All to be adjusted to defensible boundaries where available/appropriate

Broad locations for Stage 2



Questions to consider...

- Have the right types of services and facilities been identified for assessment?
- Have the existing services and facilities have been correctly identified for each of the settlements? Has anything been missed?
- Have the settlements in the district been placed in appropriate categories?

Questions?

Comments to be received
by the Planning Policy team
no later than
Monday 29 June 2015.

LDFconsult@eppingforestdc.gov.uk