

**DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL  
SITE ALLOCATIONS DPD EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC**

**MATTER 4 STATEMENT  
HOUSING**

**LAND SOUTH-EAST OF HOMEFIELD, BOVINGDON**

**ON BEHALF OF TAYLOR WIMPEY**

**TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED)  
PLANNING AND COMPULSORY PURCHASE ACT 2004**

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## CONTENTS:

INTRODUCTION	1
QUESTION 2	1
QUESTION 3	3
QUESTION 4	3
QUESTION 14	4

## APPENDICES (BOUND SEPARATELY):

### APPENDIX 1:

GREEN BELT REVIEW STAGE 1 – MAIN REPORT AND RELEVANT EXTRACTS;  
SKM, NOVEMBER 2013

### APPENDIX 2:

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL AND GREEN BELT REVIEW; CSA, MARCH 2015

## Introduction

- 1.1 These representations are prepared on behalf of Taylor Wimpey which has land interests in land at Homefield, Bovingdon. Taylor Wimpey is promoting the site as an omission site for inclusion in the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) and has made a series of representations to that document, accompanied by technical evidence in support of the allocation of the site.
- 1.2 This Matter 4 statement should be read in conjunction with the **Matter 6** Statement also submitted in support of the site.

### **Q2. Specifically, should more housing be allocated and if so would this be possible prior to the completion of the Green Belt review?**

- 1.3 More housing should be allocated. The Place Strategy for Bovingdon does not adequately provide for the overall Core Strategy target of 130 dwellings in the village during the plan period. The single allocation at site LA6 (Chesham Road) has a theoretical capacity for only 60 dwellings (discussed further below in relation to Inspector's Question 4) leaving a further 70 dwellings to be identified in Bovingdon to accord with the Place Strategy and the spatial distribution of housing set out in the Core Strategy. Taylor Wimpey consider the Site Allocations DPD is therefore unsound as it cannot be considered effective. The allocation of additional suitable sites in Bovingdon, such as land south-east of Homefield, offers a remedy to this soundness issue.
- 1.4 Aside from the housing numbers, other Core Strategy objectives, such as those to provide a high level of affordable housing as well as additional open space, are also at risk of not being met. The extent to which a single allocated site can achieve these (particularly where there are concerns that the full number of allocated dwellings cannot be comfortably met) is naturally limited, and an additional allocation will go some way further towards meeting these objectives in Bovingdon.
- 1.5 It is therefore necessary for the Site Allocations DPD to allocate additional land in Bovingdon to ensure the objectives of the Place Strategy can be achieved.
- 1.6 It is considered that additional housing can be allocated prior to the completion of the Green Belt Review particularly as certain sites have been subject to more detailed consideration through Stage 1 of the Green Belt Review (main report and

relevant extracts at **Appendix 1**). Land south-east of Homefield, referred to within the Stage 1 Review as 'D-SS2 – Land at southeast edge of Bovingdon (GB13) at Homefield, off Green Lane', is identified as one of only two sub-sections of Green Belt in Dacorum borough which least fulfil the purposes of Green Belt. Paragraph 8.3.3 of the Green Belt Review states that

*"Assessed in isolation this land [site D-SS2] makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging or maintaining local gaps. The sub-area makes a relatively limited contribution to the primary functions of the Green Belt"*.

- 1.7 A study by CSa at **Appendix 2** provides further evidence that the site performs a limited role in terms of the Green Belt functions. Chapter 6 of the study considers parcels around Bovingdon for their suitability for release from the Green Belt; paragraph 6.8 advises in respect of land south-east of Homefield that:

*"This area is well contained in views from the wider area and development would not encroach particularly on the adjoining countryside. In addition, development in this location would not impact on any known heritage assets; contribute to coalescence; and a planned release of land could be accommodated without resulting in urban sprawl. Accordingly, growth in this direction would not significantly impact on the objectives of the Green Belt"*

- 1.8 The findings of the Stage 1 Green Belt Review and the CSa study therefore show that land south-east of Homefield makes a limited contribution to the functions of the Green Belt and is suitable for release at this stage.

- 1.9 Further justification of the appropriateness of the site can be found in the Call for Sites submission which is attached at the appendix of our **Matter 6** statement.

- 1.10 To ensure the soundness of the Site Allocations DPD it is recommended that land south-east of Homefield is allocated in order to provide an effective means of fully realising the Place Strategy and Core Strategy objectives for Bovingdon.

**Q3. In the light of Government’s stated objective in paragraph 47 of the National Planning Policy Framework of boosting significantly the supply of housing, should the Council be seeking to constrain the release of the Local Allocations? If so, what is the rationale for this?**

- 1.11 The Council should not be seeking to constrain the release of the Local Allocations. The Local Allocations comprise six sites but clearly there is potential at this stage to allocate additional sites beyond those Local Allocations given the soundness concerns raised by Taylor Wimpey and other representors. This would also assist the Council in meeting increased housing needs which have emerged through the Strategic Housing Market Assessment which was released after the adoption of the Core Strategy and better reflects the Objectively Assessed Needs of the borough. Land south-east of Homefield is one site which can assist in this.

**Q4. Is it assumed that all sites, both commitments and allocations, will be developed during the Plan period? Are all of these sites likely to be developed? What account is taken of windfalls? What rate of windfall development is anticipated over the Plan period?**

- 1.12 Site LA6 does not realistically have the capacity to accommodate the full 60 dwellings without resorting to artificially increased densities and building heights or the provision of minimal public open space. As such it cannot be assumed that the allocated site will be developed for the number of units allocated during the Plan period. As set out in our response to Inspector’s Question 2, this necessitates the allocation of additional land in Bovingdon.
- 1.13 The approach to windfall raises soundness concerns, since of the 130 dwelling target for Bovingdon in the Core Strategy, only 60 are to come forward through allocated sites leaving a further 70, or 54% of the total, to come forward through windfall. The plan is therefore not positively prepared since it does not make proper provision for meeting the full identified target for Bovingdon. This heavy reliance on windfall sites means it will be difficult to achieve the Core Strategy objectives of providing a high level of affordable housing as well as additional open space. Many windfall sites are small in scale and therefore may not be required to provide affordable housing under the 10-dwelling threshold set by Government, and may not be able to contribute significant amounts of public open space. Larger allocated sites offer better opportunities to achieve these objectives. Allocation of land south-east of Homefield will therefore help to ensure that the Plan is positively prepared.

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**Q14. Is the type and size of housing provided/planned meeting/likely to meet the needs of the area?**

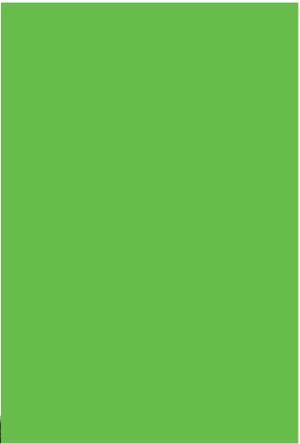
- 1.14 No. As set out above, the Plan's heavy reliance on windfall sites risks a smaller number of affordable homes coming forward through the Plan period. Therefore, the type of housing planned is unlikely to meet the needs of the area. Land south-east of Homefield can deliver 35% affordable housing (up to 61 units) in accordance with Core Strategy Policy CS19. Allocation of the site will better ensure that the Plan is effective in terms of delivery of affordable housing.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Green Belt Review Stage 1 – Main Report and Relevant Extracts SKM, November 2013**

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Landscape and Visual Appraisal and Green Belt Review CSa, March 2015**

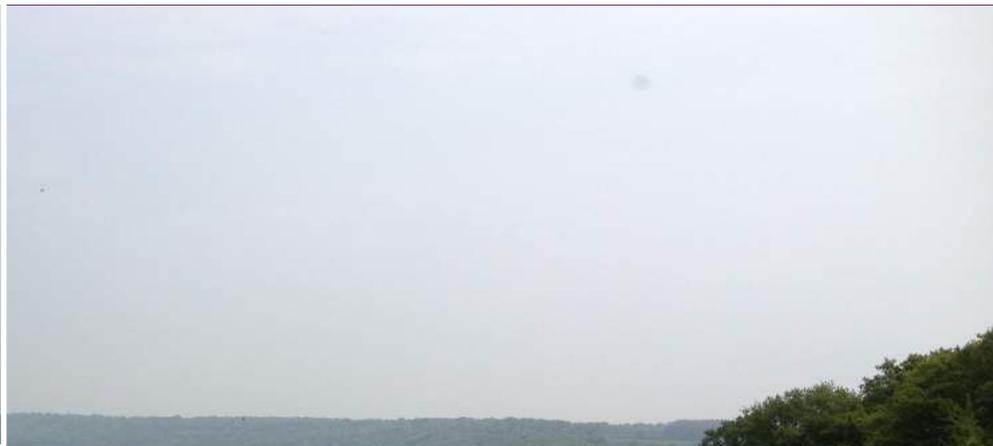


**GREEN BELT REVIEW PURPOSES ASSESSMENT**

Prepared for Dacorum Borough Council, St Albans City and District Council and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

**FINAL REPORT**

November 2013



SINCLAIR KNIGHT MERZ  
**SKM**



# Green Belt Review: Purposes Assessment

(Prepared for Dacorum Borough Council, St Albans City and District  
Council and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council)

## FINAL REPORT

■ November 2013

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## Contents

<b>1.</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1.	Study Objectives	1
1.2.	Approach to Assessment	2
1.3.	Disclaimer	4
<b>2.</b>	<b>Green Belt and National Policy Context</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1.	Green Belt Context	5
2.2.	PPG2 Green Belts	8
2.3.	National Planning Policy Framework	9
2.4.	Role and Effectiveness of Green Belt Policy	11
<b>3.</b>	<b>Local Policy</b>	<b>18</b>
3.1.	Local Plan Review	18
<b>4.</b>	<b>Best Practice Review</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Green Belt Purposes Assessment Criteria</b>	<b>23</b>
5.1.	Role and Purpose of the Green Belt	23
5.2.	Defining Purposes Assessment Criteria	24
5.3.	Desktop Review and On-site Assessment	31
5.4.	Land Contributing Least to Green Belt Purposes	31
5.5.	Presenting the Assessment	32
<b>6.</b>	<b>Strategic Parcel Plan</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>Key Findings</b>	<b>37</b>
7.2.	NPPF Purpose 1: To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	39
7.3.	NPPF Purpose 2: To prevent neighbouring towns from merging	41
7.4.	NPPF Purpose 3: To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	44
7.5.	NPPF Purpose 4: To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	49
7.6.	Local Purpose: To maintain the existing settlement pattern	51
7.7.	Assessment of Non-Green Belt Land	53
7.8.	Summary of Purposes Assessment	54
7.9.	Major Developed Sites (in Dacorum only)	55
<b>8.</b>	<b>Land Contributing Least to Green Belt Purposes</b>	<b>57</b>
8.1.	Overview	57
8.2.	Strategic sub-areas contributing least to Green Belt Purposes	59



8.3.	Small-scale sub-areas contributing least to Green Belt Purposes	64
8.4.	Boundary Adjustments	66
9.	Conclusions and Next Steps	69
9.1.	Conclusions	69
9.2.	Next Steps	70
	Appendices	71
	Appendix 1: Hertfordshire Planning Policy	72
	Appendix 2: Local Planning Policy	74
	Dacorum	74
	St Albans	76
	Welwyn Hatfield	78
	Appendix 3: Landscape Character	81
	Landscape Character Appraisal	81
	Appendix 4: Environmental and Historic Features	84
	Appendix 4: Rationale for Strategic Parcels	93



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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Study Objectives

1.1.1. SKM has been commissioned to undertake an independent Green Belt Review on behalf of Dacorum Borough Council, St Albans City and District Council, and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council. This study has been undertaken in collaboration with Professor Nick Gallent from University College London (UCL).

1.1.2. The Study Brief is clear in its aspiration to deliver a review that provides a robust assessment of the various functions of different areas of Green Belt:

*The Councils require the selected consultant to carry out the following services: To carry out an independent and comprehensive Green Belt review for the Dacorum, St Albans and Welwyn Hatfield administrative areas. This should include the definition of sub areas and provision of advice on the role that each sub area plays in fulfilling the fundamental aim of the Green Belt and the five purposes set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. The study objectives are to:*

1. *Examine best practice in Green Belt Reviews in order to identify and agree a methodology for the study;*
2. *Review the existing Green Belt in the study area, including the aim and purposes and define sub areas for analysis;*
3. *Take full account of the wider Metropolitan Green Belt;*
4. *Review the role of each of the sub areas (seen as 'strategic parcels') in the context of the NPPF and consider the extent to which each contributes to the fundamental aim of retaining openness and the purposes of including land in the Green Belt;*
5. *Rank and score the strategic parcels by how well they contribute to the fundamental aim and purposes of Green Belts;*
6. *Consider whether, in the context of the NPPF, other areas of countryside in the study area should be proposed as Green Belt;*
7. *Provide advice on the efficacy and consistency of existing local policies applying to the Green Belt in the study area; and*
8. *For land within Dacorum Borough, consider whether any further, 'major developed sites' should be identified, in addition to those listed in Table 2 in the Dacorum Core Strategy.*

*In relation to point 4 above, the definition of the sub areas will necessitate clearly identifiable and well justified boundaries. In order to form logical sub areas they may need to extend into adjoining local authority areas.*

*Clear evidence for, and full explanation and justification of, conclusions is essential.*



- 1.1.3. The Green Belt Review is required to be undertaken to inform the future planning strategies for each authority as follows:
- Dacorum – The Core Strategy (September 2013) refers to a partial review of the strategy by 21017/18. This will include a reassessment of the role and function of the Green Belt and reflects recommendations of the Inspector's Report.
  - St Albans – To inform the emerging Local Plan and to meet NPPF requirements in the context of recent Inspector's decisions at Local Plan examinations.
  - Welwyn Hatfield – Representations to the Emerging Core Strategy consultation (November 2012 – January 2013) referred to the lack of a Green Belt review and this work is required to inform the next stage of plan preparation.

## 1.2. Approach to Assessment

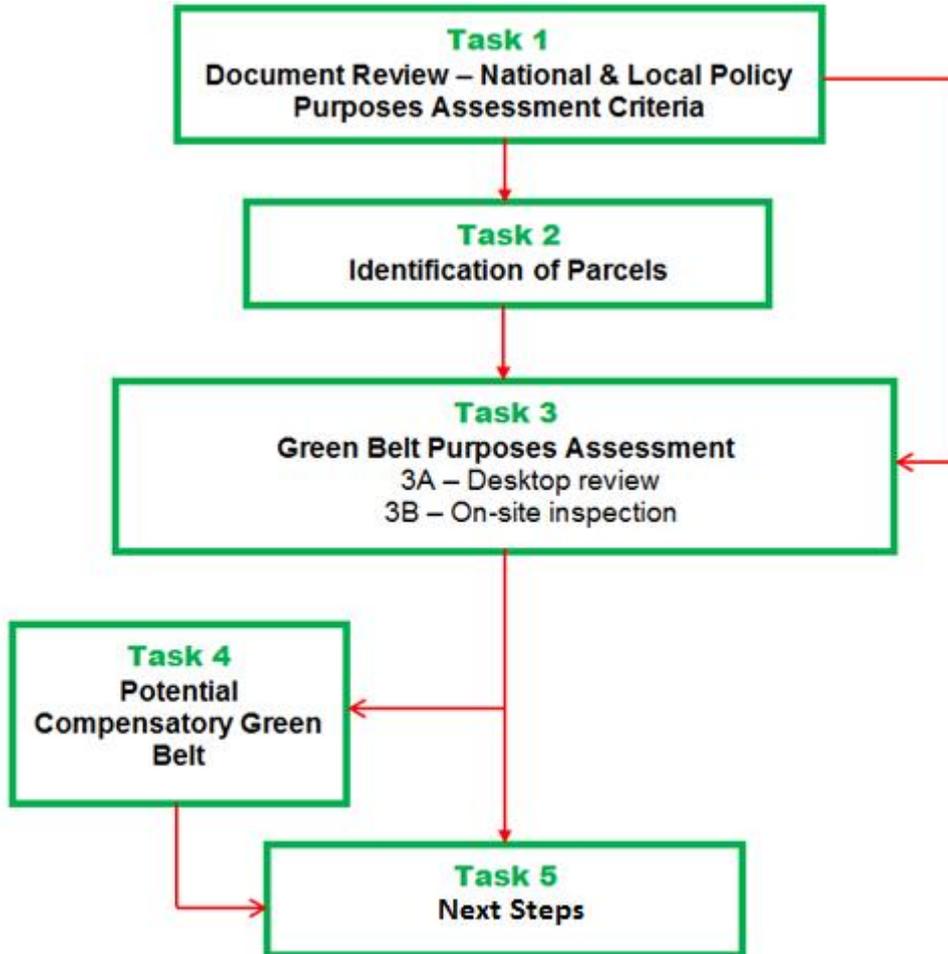
1.2.1. The agreed approach to the study comprises five tasks as set out in Figure 1.1 below. Task 1 covers a Document Review of relevant national and local planning policy and describes the role and purpose of the Green Belt. This has been used to refine the methodology and set out specific purposes assessment criteria and the approach to the assessment. Task 2 identified strategic land parcels in the study area to be assessed against the purposes criteria. Tasks 3 and 4 were undertaken simultaneously to assess the level of contribution each strategic parcel (including Green Belt and non-Green Belt land) makes or could make towards each Green Belt purpose. Task 5 summarises key findings, conclusions and next steps.

1.2.2. This report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2: National Policy and Green Belt Context
- Chapter 3: Local Policy
- Chapter 4: Best Practice Review
- Chapter 5: Purposes Assessment Criteria
- Chapter 6: Parcel Plan
- Chapter 7: Key Findings
- Chapter 8: Land Contributing Least to Green Belt Purposes
- Chapter 9: Conclusions and Next Steps.



Figure 1.1: Method Diagram





### **1.3. Disclaimer**

- 1.3.1. This Green Belt Review has been undertaken solely for the purposes of informing the local plan making process. It does not constitute planning policy for any of the three planning authorities which commissioned the study.
- 1.3.2. The Green Belt designation carries significant weight as a material consideration in planning policy and development management. Government policy is explicit that changes to Green Belt designations should be made through the Local Plan process, in the context of promoting sustainable development as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 1.3.3. The main purpose of the study is to undertake a strategic review of all Green Belt land across the three planning authorities to identify the contribution of the Green Belt towards national Green Belt purposes as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This will identify both the primary functions of the Green Belt, which deliver the national purposes, and identify areas of Green Belt land which are considered to contribute least towards national purposes. This land will be subject to further assessment in separate studies undertaken by each planning authority to consider wider issues not covered by this study, but that must be considered in preparing a Local Plan. The outcome of this study will therefore provide only one piece of evidence among a wide range of considerations that must be taken into account before deciding on any changes to Green Belt boundaries. Such issues include infrastructure capacity, the availability of land for development, sustainability and landscape.
- 1.3.4. Given the strategic nature of this study it has not identified precise revised boundaries of land which is considered to contribute least towards Green Belt purposes. This task will be undertaken separately by each planning authority.



## 2. Green Belt and National Policy Context

### 2.1. Green Belt Context

#### *National Context*

- 2.1.1. The Green Belt is one of the oldest and most powerful planning policy instruments although the role and function of the Green Belt, and supporting policy mechanisms have evolved over time.
- 2.1.2. The Metropolitan Green Belt now covers almost half a million hectares and 92% is undeveloped. The Hertfordshire Structure Plan (1998) stated that approximately 63% of the County (excluding urban areas) is covered by Green Belt. Of the total 90,000 hectares, almost 35,000 hectares of Green Belt is designated in Dacorum, St Albans and Welwyn Hatfield. The Metropolitan Green Belt, including the study area, is set out in Figure 2.1.
- 2.1.3. The principle of the Green Belt originates back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when Ebenezer Howard demonstrated the potential role of a rural belt to preserve the countryside around free-standing Garden Cities. These ideas were further developed by Raymond Unwin in the 1930s and by Patrick Abercrombie through the Greater London Plan which in 1944 first designated a Green Belt Ring around London, in response to urban expansion. As far as the study area is concerned, this covered a ring around the Capital south of a line roughly from Hemel Hempstead to St Albans and Hertford.
- 2.1.4. This created the Metropolitan Green Belt which today is the largest of England's 14 Green Belts. Circular 42/55 went on to set the three main functions of the Green Belt as:
1. Checking growth of large built-up areas
  2. Preventing neighbouring settlements from merging and,
  3. Preserving the special character of towns.
- 2.1.5. Housing Minister, Duncan Sandys, encouraged local authorities to consider designating Green Belts around towns and cities.
- 2.1.6. The Government produced further Green Belt guidance in 1962 emphasising the strict control of development and the presumption against building in the Green Belt except in special circumstances. Subsequently, Circular 14/84 further stated that the essential characteristic of Green Belts is permanence and that boundaries should be altered only in exceptional circumstances.
- 2.1.7. Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 (PPG2) Green Belts was first issued in 1988 and subsequently replaced in 1995 and further amended in 2001. It provided the policy



framework to protect the Green Belt over the following two decades. PPG2 (1988) added two purposes of the Green Belt:

4 To safeguard the countryside and,

5 To assist urban regeneration.

- 2.1.8. The publication of the National Planning Policy Framework in March 2012 replaced PPG2 and provides current national Green Belt policy. The policy approaches taken by PPG2 and the NPPF are summarised and compared below.

### ***Hertfordshire Context Summary***

- 2.1.9. In response to Government policy on strategic Green Belt issues and pressure for an expansion of towns in the County, the Hertfordshire County Development Plan (1958) designated the area in the south of the County as Green Belt. Similarly, the Southern Bedfordshire Green Belt was designated at land to the north around settlements including Luton and Dunstable by Bedfordshire County Council in 1960. Green Belt was designated around Stevenage by the Hertfordshire County Structure Plan First Review (1971). Structure Plan Reviews went on to add to the Hertfordshire Green Belt along main communication corridors: the northern part of Welwyn Hatfield was designated in the late 1970s and, other northern additions were designated through the 1980s, including land around Maryate. As a result, the Hertfordshire Green Belt extended the Metropolitan Green Belt outwards and joined the South Bedfordshire Green Belt to the north. From the first County Development Plan the general policy approach clearly intended the Green Belt to prevent further coalescence and preserve historic settlement patterns within the overall Belt around London. This demonstrates that maintaining the existing settlement pattern is one of the core and founding objectives of the Hertfordshire Green Belt.
- 2.1.10. The most recently adopted Structure Plan (1998) did not recommend a countywide Green Belt review, stating: *'An essential characteristic of the Green Belt is its permanence and its protection in Hertfordshire must be maintained as far as can be seen ahead, with the Structure Plan providing the strategic policy framework for planning at local level'*. The Structure Plan continued to emphasise that one of the objectives for land use planning was to *'maintain the settlement pattern of small to medium sized towns through the location of development and maintenance of a Green Belt'*. In recent years, only small changes to the Green Belt have been approved through the development plan process.
- 2.1.11. A more detailed description of the Hertfordshire context and policy framework provided in subsequent Structure Plan Reviews is provided in Appendix 1.





## 2.2. PPG2 Green Belts

- 2.2.1. PPG2 Green Belts was first issued in 1988, replaced in 1995 and then amended in 2001. PPG2 (1988) added two purposes to the existing Green Belt policy: 4) to safeguard the countryside and, 5) to assist urban regeneration. Below all reference to PPG2 concerns the most recently published version of the document.
- 2.2.2. In addition, to help the long-term protection of the Green Belt beyond the plan period, PPG2 also advocated that safeguarded land or 'white land' should be allocated between the urban area and Green Belt which may be required to meet long-term development requirements (para 2.12). Such land should be genuinely capable of development when needed (Annex B). Safeguarded land has only been used in the past in some districts of Hertfordshire in response to particular circumstances. In the study area, only Welwyn Hatfield has safeguarded land intended for housing. Dacorum has an area originally safeguarded for special employment uses but subsequently reallocated for housing. Only a very limited area of safeguarded land has been designated in Hertfordshire previously. This has been due to the fragile nature of the Green Belt, the dispersed and scattered settlement pattern and continuous development pressures. The possibility of allocating safeguarded land will need to be re-examined in new Local Plans. More detail on safeguarded land in Welwyn Hatfield is set out in Appendix 2. The approach taken was carefully considered through a series of Structure Plans and supported by Examination Panels and Government. More detail on countywide planning is set out in Appendix 1.
- 2.2.3. PPG2 also explained that proposals for new Green Belts should be first considered in Regional or Strategic Guidance or Structure Plans<sup>1</sup>. Local authorities must then demonstrate why normal policy would not be adequate, whether any major changes in circumstances have made the adoption necessary and the consequences for sustainable development (para 2.14). This criteria is discussed in more detail in respect of the NPPF in 2.3 below.
- 2.2.4. PPG2 additionally sought local planning authorities to consider the future of Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt. These sites were defined as including airfields, factories, hospitals, power stations, water and sewage treatment works which often predated Green Belt designation. The guidance explained that these sites remain subject to Green Belt policy: however infilling and redevelopment is not considered inappropriate when the purposes of the Green Belt are not impacted upon and when the scale, height and size of proposals do not exceed existing conditions (Annex C). The reference to Major Developed Sites is has now been replaced by 'brownfield' sites in the Green Belt in the NPPF. It is considered this alteration has been made to reflect a more flexible approach and recognises opportunities for a wider range of previously developed sites.

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<sup>1</sup> The regional and county tiers of the planning system have subsequently been abolished through changes to primary legislation.



2.2.5. PPG2 also made the following key points in relation to quality and scale of the Green Belt, which are important to understanding the evolution of NPPF Green Belt policy. Firstly, the quality of the landscape is not relevant to the inclusion of land within a Green Belt (para 1.7). This is an important consideration for Green Belt reviews. Secondly, wherever practicable the Green Belt should be several miles wide (para 2.9). This reference is not included in the NPPF, and this change is considered to reflect the varied characteristics of Green Belt land and its various functions.

### 2.3. National Planning Policy Framework

2.3.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in 2012. It replaced and consolidated planning policy statements and guidance notes into a single framework. References to NPPF paragraphs are set out in brackets.

2.3.2. The NPPF sees continued protection of Green Belts (17) and states that *'the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open'* (79). It continues to identify openness and permanence as essential characteristics of the Green Belt. Green Belts serve five purposes (80), as originally set out in PPG2 (1988):

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

2.3.3. As with previous Green Belt policy, inappropriate development should not be approved except in very special circumstances (87). Similarly, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, which might arise during the preparation or review of Local Plans (83). This current Green Belt review is part of that wider review process. Furthermore, Green Belts should be permanent and capable of enduring beyond the plan period, and set a framework for the Green Belt and settlement policy in Local Plans. The NPPF reaffirms the approach taken in PPG2 towards the definition of Green Belt boundaries, in stating that, when doing so, local authorities should (84):

- Ensure consistency with the Local Plan strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development
- Not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open
- Where necessary, identify areas of safeguarded land between the urban area and the Green Belt, in order to meet longer-term development needs stretching well beyond the plan period
- Make clear that the safeguarded land is not allocated for development at the present time. Planning permission for the permanent development of safeguarded land



should only be granted following a Local Plan review which proposes the development

- Satisfy themselves that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the development plan period and,
- Define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.

2.3.4. The NPPF also continues to encourage Local Authorities to plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt [81]. This can be achieved by providing opportunities for access, outdoor sport and recreation, and enhancing landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity or improving damaged and derelict land. These land uses have been interpreted as exhibiting open characteristics which are an essential component of the Green Belt.

2.3.5. With regard to sustainable development, the NPPF states that when reviewing Green Belt boundaries, local planning authorities should take into account the need to promote sustainable patterns of development [84]. Sustainable patterns of development are not defined in policy. However, today they are considered to relate to taking into account a range of additional factors beyond contribution towards Green Belt purposes. These factors might include local development needs and transport issues. Any other issues required to inform the local plan preparation process to produce a long-term spatial growth strategy could be seen as relevant. With regard to sustainability, it is necessary to recognise the wider and updated context of how sustainable development is defined in the NPPF. Updated policy states it should contribute towards social, economic and environmental objectives. However, what is significant is that, as demonstrated in planning decisions and appeals, the weight given to each objective varies on a case-by-case basis.

2.3.6. The NPPF also states that new Green Belt should only be established in exceptional circumstances or example, when planning for new settlements or major urban extensions [82]. Local authorities need to justify any proposals in accordance with the criteria set out in the NPPF. This expanded policy reference has been subject to wider debate at the national level in relation to the potential provision of compensatory Green Belt in response to permitting development on Green Belt land. Furthermore, the NPPF promotes the principles of Garden Cities, which historically have included establishing Green Belts [52].

2.3.7. In summary, the NPPF supports the long-standing principles of Green Belt protection. The core principles of the national framework effectively remain the same however the objectives of the planning system have continued to evolve, reflecting current land use pressures and social trends. The Government's priority is to deliver growth and sustainable development through harmonising, wherever and whenever possible, the economic, environmental and social processes that deliver functioning places. Policy also reinforces the plan-led system which gives planning authorities the power to



undertake Green Belt reviews to help inform emerging spatial strategies for Local Plans and Core Strategies. The role and function of the Green Belt needs to be considered within this overarching context.

- 2.3.8. Most importantly, the five Green Belt purposes, plus recognition of openness and permanence as essential characteristics, remain the basis of national policy for the Green Belt.
- 2.3.9. Finally, it must be acknowledged that the Localism Act (2012) has significantly impacted on the way local authorities plan for the Green Belt. As noted above with the abolition of regional planning, local authorities have responsibility for Green Belt planning without strategic guidance through County or Regional Plans. The parallel introduction of the Duty-to-Cooperate requires an element of strategic (greater than local) planning and co-ordination between local authorities on cross boundary issues such as Green Belt review. This study provides an example of such cross boundary working.

## 2.4. Role and Effectiveness of Green Belt Policy

### *Effectiveness of Green Belt Policy*

- 2.4.1. The effectiveness of Green Belt policy has been considered in previous work for the Countryside Agency (2003)<sup>2</sup>. Drawing on prior studies, it concluded that whilst policy was generally successful in checking unrestricted sprawl and preventing towns from merging, the other three purposes were more difficult to evaluate. In particular, the third purpose (to safeguard the countryside) was considered to overlap with the first two and it was not clear whether Green Belt restraint in peripheral town areas necessarily protected historic centres. This work illustrated that the five functions overlap and are certainly not discrete, sometimes making assessments of policy efficacy difficult. This has been addressed in the assessment methodology for the study as set out in Chapter 6.
- 2.4.2. Although the 2003 Countryside Agency study noted above concluded that Green Belt policy achieves specific success in checking unrestricted sprawl and preventing towns from merging, a growing number of voices have questioned the broader value of the policy. Christine Whitehead - a professor of economics at the LSE - has suggested that London's Green Belt should be scrapped so policy makers can (i) concentrate on what is worth saving and use what is not appropriately (2003: 27)<sup>3</sup>. Her statement draws attention to the quality of some of the protected Green Belt land (but see Paragraph 2.2.7 and the PPG2 (2001) affirmation that quality is not a consideration in designation: the argument here is that quality should count). Currently all land within designated Green Belt areas enjoys the same protection, but as some commentators have pointed out,

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<sup>2</sup> Bartlett School of Planning (2003) Urban Fringe: Policy, Regulatory and Literature Research, Countryside Agency: Cheltenham

<sup>3</sup> Whitehead, C. (2003) Interview Material, in Urban Regeneration: The New Agenda for British Housing, Creating new Communities, London, Building for Life and English Partnerships.



some of it is of little amenity value in itself and some is derelict and most is intensively farmed at considerable expense to the taxpayer, while the public has no general rights of access (Smith, 2001: 7<sup>4</sup>). Bovill has argued that the Green Belt policy should be kept under review like other planning policies: 'such a review process would probably result in a reduction in the quantity of green belt land with a consequent increase in the quality of the land remaining' (Bovill, 2002: 12<sup>5</sup>). Therefore Bovill's view is that reviews of boundaries are likely to have positive consequences. Another common criticism of Green Belt policy has been that the designations are too rigid and permanent and that a more flexible approach is needed. This view seems to sit well with the subtle shift in policy philosophy set out in the NPPF (see above). Ron Tate, former convenor of the Royal Town Planning Institute's planning policy panel and the Institute's President in 2005, has suggested that: 'we are stuck in a time warp, with the assumption that Green Belts have a life of their own regardless of the planning context' (Dewar, 2002: 8<sup>6</sup>).

- 2.4.3. Further to this, over recent years the impact of Green Belt designation on sustainable patterns of development has been a subject of academic and professional debate. It has been argued that the Green Belt can shift development pressures beyond the edges of urban centres further away from central employment areas, which has the effect of increasing commuting flows. This increased level of travel is considered to be unsustainable. The counter-argument is that Green Belt can assist urban renewal, promoting principles of the compact city by focusing higher density development in central areas to reduce the need to travel. However the key issue, which is especially prominent today, is that urban land supply is limited, and therefore there is increased pressure for development within the Green Belt. This debate is discussed as part of the Review of Green Belt Policy in Scotland<sup>7</sup>.

Over the last decade, some of these ideas have entered Government thinking on Green Belt. The NPPF opens the door more clearly to boundary change during the plan review process and it also draws attention to the ways in which local authorities should plan for beneficial use, providing opportunities for access and recreation, Government appears to remain committed to maintaining the broad functions of the Green Belt and, specifically to designating new Green Belt in instances where local reviews result in the deletion of existing Green Belt designations. This is further demonstrated by recent Ministerial Statements and speeches which are reviewed below.

<sup>4</sup>Smith N. (2001) 'Green belt policy in need of update for public spaces', Planning 1419, 18.5.01, 7

<sup>5</sup>Bovill P. (2002) 'Loosening the green belt', Regeneration and Renewal, 17 May, 12.

<sup>6</sup>Dewar D. (2002) 'Is it time to loosen the belt?', Planning 1470, 24.5.02, 8.

<sup>7</sup> Review of Green Belt Policy in Scotland (2004) Glen Bramley, Clive Hague, Karryn Kirk, Alan Prior, Jeremy Raemaekers and Barry Smith (School of the Built Environment, Heriot-Watt University) with Andrew Robinson and Rosie Bushnell (Robinson Associates)



### ***Ministerial Statements and Speeches on Green Belt Policy***

- 2.4.4. Since the publication of the NPPF, there has been a great deal of parliamentary debate, reported in Hansard and in the professional and popular press, but which has not yet been subject to broader independent scrutiny. Since his appointment as the new Planning Minister in Autumn 2012, Nick Clegg has issued five Ministerial Statements on the Green Belt. His key messages reflect national policy and emphasise the protection of the Green Belt. The fundamental aim remains to protect against urban sprawl and provides a green lung around towns and cities (18 September 2012). Statements reiterate the content of the NPPF and clearly explain that openness and permanence are essential characteristics of the Green Belt (18 September 2012).
- 2.4.5. Most forms of new development are inappropriate in the Green Belt (15 January 2013) and brownfield land in the Green Belt should be better used in a way which is consistent with Green Belt policy (15 January 2013). Any change of use of existing buildings in the Green Belt should be assessed in the light of all material considerations, including Green Belt policy. It is the intention to allow redundant and empty buildings to be brought back into productive use, increasing rural housing for local people and promoting regeneration (10 April 2013). Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances (18 September 2012). Any changes to Green Belt boundaries must be made through the local plan process which involves consultation with local people and formal examination in public (18 September 2012).
- 2.4.6. Besides issuing Ministerial Statements, Nick Clegg has made several other remarks concerning the Green Belt. At all times, it is important to acknowledge the Government's overriding objective is to boost economic growth. Firstly, in September 2012, he controversially said that the Green Belt is safe for now during his first House of Commons speech as Planning Minister. However, this is considered to predominantly reflect and promote the potentially more responsive planning system introduced by the NPPF generally, rather than a signal that Green Belt land is no longer protected.
- 2.4.7. At the same time, Chancellor George Osborne called for speedier planning and more Green Belt land swaps to help boost house building (in September 2012). He called for increased flexibility through greater use of existing powers to swap Green Belt land, enabling development on some sites in exchange for new land being categorised as Green Belt. An early example of such a swap proposal is provided in Cheshire East, where the Chancellor's Tatton constituency lies.
- 2.4.8. In late 2012, the Government highlighted an example of de-allocating Green Belt land in Cambridgeshire. The local plan, which was adopted in 2006, saw 215 hectares of green belt land released for development. Key lessons learned as part of the process include



the joint-working between councils, early public consultation and preparing a comprehensive evidence base to support plans.

- 2.4.9. Nic Boles then went on to directly tackle the problem of housing delivery in November 2012 by stating that the amount of developed land across England should increase from nine to 12 per cent. Importantly, and subsequently, he confirmed that development should take place on open land, not the Green Belt. During the same month, a survey<sup>8</sup> claimed that in response to the NPPF 42 local authorities were preparing to release over 3,500 hectares of Green Belt land for development and only designate less than 700 hectares of new Green Belt. Above all, this appears to confirm that planning authorities are undertaking Green Belt reviews to help inform future growth strategies. In May 2013, Nic Boles commented that building homes on Greenfield land will create more human happiness than preserving fields and that Councils refusing to sanction more house building were deeply irresponsible.
- 2.4.10. The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) continues to play an important role in responding strongly to the above remarks and have argued that the NPPF is being used to impose unnecessary greenfield development in the face of local opposition. In August 2013, a briefing from CPRE stated that ministers need to go further to protect the Green Belt, and planning policy on the Green Belt needs clarifying to protect it from over-development. It was commented that hard decisions are needed to help ensure both urban regeneration and protection of the Green Belt. In July 2013, an all-party parliamentary group set up by MPs concerned about protecting the Green Belt from development held its first meeting with Nic Boles to express concerns about development on Green Belt land. The group is made up of about 50 MPs and has the support of campaigning charities Civic Voice and CPRE.
- 2.4.11. Other bodies have also referred to the role of Green Belt in recent reports. The Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR)<sup>9</sup> has argued for a need to re-classify low-grade Green Belt land to enable the construction of new towns and garden cities, echoing the remarks made by Whitehead and others a decade ago. Furthermore, the European Commission (June 2013) has suggested that the Green Belt is hampering the UK's economic recovery by acting as a brake on the supply of new housing.
- 2.4.12. Finally, it should be acknowledged that the Green Belt is clearly a controversial and emotive topic. This is because, understandably, people and communities greatly value the green or open land that sometimes envelopes their communities. This attachment means that any potential threats to the future of the Green Belt can be expected to be met by strong and passionate responses.

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<sup>8</sup> Undertaken by The Telegraph article from 24 Nov 13

<sup>9</sup> IPPR (2012) 'No Place to Call Home', IPPR: London



***Implementation of the NPPF: Expectation of Comprehensive Green Belt Review and Idea of Compensatory Green Belt Provision***

- 2.4.13. Local Plan Examination Inspector's Reports provide useful pointers on the implications of national policy. Following the publication of the NPPF a number of Inspector's Reports have recommended the undertaking of comprehensive Green Belt reviews, but to date none have referenced the process for potential compensatory provision.
- 2.4.14. Post NPPF, PINS Inspectors Reports on Local Plan Examinations, have commented that comprehensive Green Belt reviews are required to be undertaken as part of the plan-making process. Inspectors findings from Rushcliffe and Dacorum examinations set out below clearly highlight the need for strategic and comprehensive reviews to be undertaken as part of the plan preparation process.
- 2.4.15. The explanatory note to support the Planning Inspectors Letter<sup>10</sup> on the Rushcliffe Core Strategy (March 2012, submitted for examination November 2012) states that *given the strategic nature of Green Belts, they should be established in Local Plans and only altered in exceptional circumstances. Hence, a Green Belt Review, if necessary, should have taken place as the Core Strategy was being prepared and before it was finalised and submitted* (para 5.3). It also confirms that on-going revisions to Green Belt boundaries are not acceptable and *the Green Belt should not be reviewed on an ad hoc basis through future DPDs*.
- 2.4.16. Further to this, the Inspectors Report (2013) into the Dacorum Core Strategy states that *The NPPF confirms that great weight should continue to be attached to the protection of the green belt and it is clear that boundaries should be established in the local plan. However, at the time a local plan is being prepared or reviewed consideration should be given to the boundaries, so that they are capable of enduring beyond the plan period. Among the considerations to be addressed are the level of consistency between the green belt and meeting requirements for sustainable development; whether or not the five purposes of the green belt are being fulfilled; the need to identify safeguarded land; and the need to be confident that the boundaries will not have to be altered at the end of the plan period* (para 19).
- 2.4.17. Significantly this recommends that over the course of the boundary review sustainability factors need to be considered in addition to national purposes. Para 21 goes on to acknowledge a comprehensive Green Belt review is currently being undertaken *in order to ensure that a justifiable balance between meeting housing need and protecting the green belt can be secured. Without such comprehensive evidence a robust conclusion on the potential for the identification of additional housing sites, either for the medium/long term (as potential sites within the urban areas decrease) or for beyond the plan period,*

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<sup>10</sup> Dated 27 November 2012



*cannot be satisfactorily drawn*. This emphasises the importance of a strong evidence base to underpin local plans or core strategies.

- 2.4.18. Any proposals for new or compensatory Green Belt designations still need to satisfy a comprehensive set of criteria to ensure long-standing objectives justify a new area of Green Belt. There are limited examples of such compensatory Green Belt provision in emerging Local Plans. This practice is in its early stages and has been monitored throughout this study. The two examples below reveal how new policy is beginning to be applied in practice and that the option of compensatory Green Belt should be stated as part of emerging policy if appropriate.
- 2.4.19. An early example is Cheshire East Council which proposed to swap part of its Green Belt for new settlements whilst creating new Green Belt elsewhere in the Borough<sup>11</sup>. The draft Local Plan proposes to release up to 80 hectares of Green Belt land for 1,800 new homes on council-owned farmland east and north, near Wilmslow, as well as two new 1,000 home villages to the south east of Crewe. At the same time, Policy CS3 designates a new area of Green Belt totalling approximately 800 hectares around Nantwich to preserve the character of the historic town and prevent it merging with Crewe and surrounding villages. The Council is currently preparing the Core Strategy for submission in 2013. Another example is set out in the emerging Local Plan for Central Bedfordshire whereby *as part of a future review of the Development Strategy, Central Bedfordshire Council will consider the option of Compensatory Green Belt. This is the process of identifying and allocating suitable land that meets the 5 Green Belt criteria, in order to offset the loss of Green Belt in one location by providing new Green Belt elsewhere*<sup>12</sup>. [para 2.29]

### **Conclusion**

- 2.4.20. In conclusion, any Green Belt review and local policy related to the Green Belt needs to be prepared directly in accordance with national policy as set out in the NPPF. This policy continues to advocate the five purposes of the Green Belt and states openness and permanence as essential characteristics. However, overall it does suggest a more flexible approach in the context of sustainable development and economic growth. Analysis shows that the five purposes overlap to a significant extent and therefore any Green Belt review needs to set clear and well-defined assessment criteria to reflect national policy. Also, the responsibility for Green Belt designation now lies with local planning authorities following the revocation of regional strategies and the dismantling of the regional planning apparatus.
- 2.4.21. Given the uncomfortable combination of Government objectives to boost the economy and stimulate house building on the one hand, and people's attachment to the Green Belt

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<sup>11</sup> East Cheshire Draft Local Plan [January 2013]

<sup>12</sup> Development Strategy [Green Belt Technical Note [January 2013]



on the other, it is inevitable that the future of the Green Belt will continue to prompt a mix of responses. The NPPF provides a balanced framework, founded on long-standing objectives to protect the Green Belt.

- 2.4.22. However, there is presently a significant and unresolved plan-making issue in terms of the way in which the Inspectorate applies or interprets the NPPF in light of local circumstances. This has particular significance for restraint policies such as Green Belt. In August 2013, research by Planning Magazine revealed that there had been a post-NPPF rise in Green Belt appeal success. There was a 5% increase to 36% of successful appeals on all types of development in the Green Belt from the 12 months prior to March 2012 compared to the following 12 months to March 2013. The figure for housing projects rose to 34% from 26%. This evidence could be interpreted in a number of ways, however most significantly it does suggest that the NPPF provides a slightly more flexible approach towards development management decisions in the Green Belt.
- 2.4.23. The Government remains strongly committed to the Green Belt. However the NPPF view of sustainable development and the emerging local interpretation by the Planning Inspectorate as evidenced through Local Plan Inspector's reports, suggests a greater degree of flexibility over boundary adjustments and land swaps through the local plan process than previously under PPG2. This combined with the Duty to Co-operate clearly indicates a greater role or expectation of comprehensive and strategic Green Belt Reviews within the context of overall cross boundary development requirements than has previously been the case, it also implies greater geographical flexibility in terms of the location of compensatory provision.



### 3. Local Policy

#### 3.1. Local Plan Review

- 3.1.1. Both adopted Local Plans and emerging Core Strategies have been reviewed. The local policy review is summarised below in light of the NPPF. More detailed reviews for each planning authority are set out in Appendix 2.
- 3.1.2. For the three planning authorities, all adopted Local Plans were prepared in the context of and in accordance with the principles of the version of PPG2 which was relevant at the date of their respective adoption. Core Strategy documents published since March 2012, published by Dacorum and Welwyn Hatfield or the latter as consultation versions only have been written in light of policy set out in the NPPF.
- 3.1.3. The role of the Green Belt in maintaining the existing settlement pattern as a network of towns and villages scattered across the study area which are separated by stretches of countryside in the Green Belt is prominent in all existing and emerging Local Plans in the study area.
- 3.1.4. Each Local Plan gives attention to the five Green Belt purposes set out in national policy and emphasises openness as an essential characteristic of the Green Belt. Key messages from the interpretation of each national purpose in relation to local circumstances are summarised in Table 3.1 below.

**Table 3.1. Interpretation of National Policy**

<i>To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas</i>	Urban sprawl is defined by Welwyn Hatfield as the uncontrolled or unplanned extension of urban areas into the countryside. The Green Belt performs a key role in checking sprawl from London and other major settlements.
<i>To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another</i>	A range of key local gaps to prevent coalescence are also identified in local policy. However, text references to specific gap locations are not considered to be exhaustive.
<i>To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment</i>	The relationship between the Green Belt and the countryside is close, however not synonymous. Countryside land uses include agriculture, forestry, recreation and wildlife conservation.
<i>To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns</i>	The historic environment is referenced throughout local policy and the role of the countryside to provide setting is identified. Conservation areas contain historic features.
<i>To assist in urban regeneration</i>	This purpose is generally recognised as applicable in creating an urban focus for development.

3.1.5. Spatial strategies accord with Government objectives by targeting development at primary settlements with limited growth permitted in settlements within the Green Belt. To undertake the Green Belt review, this study has combined the settlement hierarchies from each planning authority and classified each settlement into one of three tiers. All 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> tier settlements are excluded from the Green Belt, whereas 3<sup>rd</sup> tier settlements are washed over by the Green Belt with the exception of those beyond the outer boundary in Dacorum. This settlement classification is set in Table 3.2 below.

**Table 3.2. Interpretation of Local Settlement Hierarchy**

<b>Tier</b>	<b>Dacorum</b>	<b>St Albans</b>	<b>Welwyn Hatfield</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> tier – Primary settlements, key urban areas</b>	<i>Main Centre for Development and Change</i>	<i>Towns</i>	<i>Main Town</i>
	Emel Hempstead	St Albans, Harpenden	Welwyn Garden City
	<i>Market Towns</i>		<i>Town</i>
	Berghamsted, Tring		Hatfield
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> tier – Secondary settlements, large villages</b>	<i>Large Villages</i>	<i>Specified Settlements / Large Villages</i>	<i>Large excluded Villages</i>
	Bovingdon, Kings Langley, Marleyate	Briclet Wood, Chiswell Green, How Wood, London Colney, Park Street / Frogmore, Redbourn, Wheathampstead	Brookmans Park, Cusley, Welham Green and Welwyn
			<i>Small excluded Villages and Settlements</i>
		Digswell, Oafields, Mardley Heath and Woolmer Green, and Little Heath	
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> tier – Other settlements, small villages</b>	<i>Small Villages in Green Belt</i>	<i>Green Belt Settlements</i>	<i>Green Belt Villages</i>
	Chipperfield, Flamstead, Potten End, Wigginton	Annables, Kinsbourne Green, Colney Heath, Folly Fields, Gustard Wood, Lea Valley Estate, Radlett Road, Frogmore, Sandridge, Sleapshyde, Smallford	Essendon, Lemsford, Newgate Street and Northaw.
	<i>Small Villages in rural area</i>	All other settlements	<i>Small Green Belt Villages and Settlements</i>
	Aldbury, Long Marston, Wilstone		Ayot Green, Ayot St Lawrence, Ayot St Peter, Bell Bar, Bullens Green, part of Burnham Green, Mill Green, Stanborough, Swanley Bar, Wild Hill and Woodside.
	All other settlements		All other settlements

3.1.6. New Green Belt and potential compensatory Green Belt provision is not referenced in local policy. This is because the designation of new Green Belt has not generally been encouraged in national policy in recent years. New and emerging Local Plans are currently facing this issue. However, this area of policy is uncertain in respect of



interpretation of the restrictive wording in the NPPF. Opportunities in the study area are limited to Dacorum.

- 3.1.7. In the past, safeguarded land has only been sparingly used by some districts in Hertfordshire and has been a response to particular site circumstances. In the study area, Welwyn Hatfield and Dacorum have used safeguarded land policies in a limited way (see para. 2.2.2 above for context).
- 3.1.8. Dacorum's Core Strategy does not propose any safeguarded land in the Green Belt however open land outside of the Green Belt is reserved to meet future development needs. The Council's view at Examination was that the concept of safeguarding land is difficult to apply effectively in areas of high development pressure, and there is also generally poor public understanding and acceptance of the idea of setting aside land for very long term development. Welwyn Hatfield's emerging Local plan work does envisage use of safeguarded land. The approach adopted by Dacorum reflects the history of Green Belt policy development in Hertfordshire (see Appendix 1) and encapsulates the issues now faced by the three planning authorities in the study area in responding to current interpretations of policy and guidance on Green Belt boundary changes and safeguarded land. The possibility of allocating safeguarded land in the future will be needed to be carefully re-considered as part of the future Plans.
- 3.1.9. Overall, the key messages from the local policy review show that Green Belt performs a range of roles in accordance with national policy. However it has also fulfilled a very important local purpose to maintain the existing settlement pattern by protecting the gaps between settlements and the open land that is part of the character of those settlements. All three authorities now face the challenge of interpreting the NPPF in a local context and thereby having to review the role that Green Belt plays alongside other policy considerations in promoting sustainable development.



## 4. Best Practice Review

- 4.1.1. Previous Green Belt studies have taken a variety of approaches to assessing the functionality of green belt against the national purposes. It is useful to reflect on what can be learnt from a sample of these studies. To that end, the following pre and post-NPPF studies have reviewed:
- Broxbourne (Scott Wilson, 2008)
  - Coventry (SSR, 2009)
  - Redbridge (SKM, 2010)
  - Gloucester, Cheltenham & Tewkesbury (AMEC, 2011)
  - Stevenage (AMEC, 2013) and,
  - Bath & North East Somerset (Arup, 2013)
- 4.1.2. Each study is different, has been devised in response to a specific brief and is tailored to assess the characteristics of a specific part of the Green Belt. For example, Coventry and Stevenage are centred on a dominant urban area, Redbridge and Broxbourne are more dominated by urban fringe characteristics, and Bath & North East Somerset relate to more scattered settlement patterns. In spite of differences, common themes are evident.
- 4.1.3. With regard to interpretation of national purposes into measurable assessment criteria, the most important finding is that the Green Belt review needs to present clear definitions of terms as part of the interpretation of national policy, as this informs the specific questions. For example, it is vital to define terms such as 'sprawl', 'built-up areas', 'neighbouring towns', 'the countryside', 'encroachment' and 'historic towns'. The reviewed studies apply a range of interpretations to these terms, linked to local circumstances.
- 4.1.4. All studies reviewed sought to fully understand the local role and purpose of the Green Belt, developing assessment criteria to reflect local circumstances. In other words it is important to view national purposes in the local context, developing a view of how Green Belt delivers against localised objectives (for example by preventing villages or separated neighbourhoods from coalescing rather than just major urban areas). For example in Redbridge each national purpose was underpinned by an interpretive local purpose, and in Bath & North East Somerset a local purpose was defined to supplement the five national purposes.
- 4.1.5. In all studies reviewed the criteria used to assess the Green Belt were thoroughly justified and written in accordance with national policy. Studies demonstrate that the criteria to be used to undertake the Green Belt assessment need to take the form of a set of clear but specific questions for each purpose. The Cheltenham and Stevenage studies provide



good examples of such questions. The approach to scoring assessments varies. Some studies apply various versions of a traffic light system (such as Stevenage) to grade performance of parcels whereas others apply more complex scoring systems (such as Broxbourne). These key findings indicate that for this current Green Belt review a more qualitative approach to scoring using the traffic light approach should be implemented.

- 4.1.6. The approach to defining boundaries is consistent throughout studies and accords with national policy, whereby recognisable natural and physical features are used where possible.
- 4.1.7. The fifth purpose has been discounted from a number of studies. The notion that the presence of Green Belt assists regeneration is a generalisation. Fulfilment of this purpose can be inferred where nearby development projects have occurred on previously development land, but this inference raises two questions.
- Firstly, would that development have otherwise occurred in the part of the Green Belt being assessed (i.e. if it were not Green Belt) or on another part of the Green Belt (i.e. is this specific part of the Green Belt performing the fifth function)?
  - Secondly, if there have been no nearby projects on previously developed land, does this mean that the Green Belt designation does not assist regeneration, or that other factors (for example, the land market) are preventing land recycling opportunities from coming forward for development?
- 4.1.8. Therefore it is impossible to judge how a specific part of the Green Belt contributes to local regeneration even though it might be assumed that preventing development on greenfield sites (across an area) will result in more development being directed, necessarily, to brownfield sites
- 4.1.9. In conclusion, it is important to acknowledge that the characteristics of the Green Belt vary throughout the country and therefore it is essential that any Green Belt review takes account of local circumstances to help create clear, specific (well-defined) and measurable assessment criteria, which should be justified in accordance with national policy.



## 5. Green Belt Purposes Assessment Criteria

### 5.1. Role and Purpose of the Green Belt

- 5.1.1. Before setting and explaining the detailed purposes assessment criteria appropriate to this study, it is important to take account of the study findings on the role and purpose of the Green Belt in the study area at both a strategic and local level.
- 5.1.2. The metropolitan Green Belt was first established as a ring around London in 1944. From 1958, the Hertfordshire Green Belt was created through outward expansion of the Green Belt from London and new designation of Green Belt around expanding settlements to the north, including Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage (originally a planned new town beyond the Green Belt). Therefore the original role of the Green Belt was to predominantly prevent sprawl. In the southern part of the study area, the Green Belt contributes to preventing the uncontrolled expansion of the capital and in the north it was to prevent the spread southwards of large built-up areas such as Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage.
- 5.1.3. Further to this, and taken as a whole at the local level, the Green Belt acts an important tool for maintaining the existing settlement pattern across Hertfordshire. The need to preserve this special element of environmental character and quality is currently referenced in the Welwyn Hatfield Emerging Core Strategy (2012) and was previously a key objective of the 1998 Structure Plan. The scattered network of all settlements separated by different sized gaps is evident across Hertfordshire. Most clearly 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements including Tring, Berkhamsted, Hemel Hempstead, St Albans, Harpenden, Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City are separated by strategic gaps of Green Belt land. This pattern extends along key route corridors both east-west across the study area and north-south, particularly in St Albans and Welwyn Hatfield.
- 5.1.4. The existing settlement pattern is also maintained as a result of the spacing of smaller settlements, with Green Belt land providing local gaps.



## 5.2. Defining Purposes Assessment Criteria

5.2.1. A Green Belt review has to differentiate the function and relative value of the Green Belt on an area specific basis. The study will therefore examine the function of a series of parcels of Green Belt land defined at a strategic level.

5.2.2. This section explains the assessment criteria for the Green Belt Review. The first task, prior to the assessment, has been to divide the whole study area (including Green Belt and non-Green Belt land) into strategic parcels. Each parcel will then be assessed against the assessment criteria. Non-Green Belt land is included in accordance with required of the study Brief. The parcel plan is set out in Chapter 6. The criteria primarily relate to the first four national Green Belt purposes set out in the NPPF:

1. To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas
2. To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another
3. To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment and,
4. To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.

5.2.3. Each of the four national purposes has been assessed in light of how they are expressed in national policy. Therefore interpretations of national policy wording are clearly set out in Table 5.1 to inform the assessment criteria.

5.2.4. In addition, careful consideration of local objectives and the role of the Green Belt within the Hertfordshire context justify the assessment of a local purpose which relates to maintaining the existing settlement pattern. The Green Belt performs an important local separation function.

5.2.5. For the local purpose additional definitions of terms taken from local planning policy are presented in Table 5.2. The existing settlement pattern in the study area is complex and dispersed. This represents a particular characteristic of Hertfordshire whereby there is no dominant town but instead many towns in close proximity and spread along main routes of communication that radiate from London. There are also numerous large and small villages scattered across the area. This local purpose assessment reflects the conclusion discussed above.

5.2.6. Additional definitions applied to the purposes assessment overall are set out in Table 5.3.

**Table 5.1. Definition of Terms for National Purposes**

<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Definition of Terms to be applied in Assessment</b>
<i>To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas</i>	<p><b>Sprawl</b> – spread out over a large area in an untidy or irregular way  (Oxford Dictionary online)</p> <p><b>Large built-up areas</b> – in the context of this study are London, Luton, Dunstable and Stevenage, where outward expansion (particularly to the south) was controlled as an original purpose of the Green Belt.</p>
<i>To prevent neighbouring towns from merging</i>	<p><b>Neighbouring towns</b> – 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements (see Table 3.2 Settlement hierarchy)</p> <p><b>Merging</b> – this can be by way of general sprawl (above) or</p> <p><b>Ribbon development</b> – the building of houses along a main road, especially one leading out of a town or village (Oxford Dictionary Online). This includes historical patterns of, or current pressures for, the spread of all forms of development along movement corridors, particularly major roads.</p> <p><b>Strategic gap</b> – provides the space between 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements to 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements only.</p>
<i>To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment</i>	<p><b>Encroachment</b> – a gradual advance beyond usual or acceptable limits  (Oxford Dictionary online)</p> <p><b>The countryside</b><sup>13</sup> – open land with an absence of built development and urbanising influences, and characterised by rural land uses including agriculture and forestry. Relevant landscape character or quality designations will be taken into account in assessing the role of the Green Belt in safeguarding countryside.<sup>14</sup></p> <p><b>Openness</b> – absence of built development or other urbanising elements (not openness in a landscape character sense - topography and woodland / hedgerow cover)</p>

<sup>13</sup> Countryside is the land and scenery of a rural area (Oxford Dictionary Online)

<sup>14</sup> This is very much a functional view of the countryside inerring that development is generally inappropriate, indeed, Functional conceptions of rural spaces point to the inappropriateness of development and give legitimacy to particular pastoral and primary land-uses such as farming and forestry. Conceptions centred on ideas of political economy tend to view the countryside as a space of low consumption and economic inactivity. And a dominant social construction of rural areas is of places linked to nature and of communities that should reject the pace of change associated with cities (see Cloke, P., Mooney, P. and Marsden, T. (2006) The Handbook of Rural Studies, Sage: London, pp. 20-21) The functional view, qualified by landscape character measures, provides the working definition for this review.

<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Definition of Terms to be applied in Assessment</b>
<i>To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns</i>	<b>Historic town</b> □ settlement or place <sup>15</sup> with historic features identified in local policy or through conservation area or other historic designation □

**Table 5.2. Definition of Terms for the Local Hertfordshire Purpose**

<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Definition of Terms to be applied in Assessment</b>
<i>To broadly maintain the existing settlement pattern</i>	<p><b>Settlement pattern</b> □ this pattern is created as a result of the location and separation of all settlements including main towns, market towns, large villages, small villages and other villages and hamlets within the Study area. A particular characteristic of the area is the physical and visual separation of many smaller settlements by gaps that vary in width.</p> <p><b>Primary local gap</b> □ provides the space between 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements to 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> tiers settlements only.</p> <p><b>Secondary local gap</b> □ provides the space between 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> tier settlements to 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> tier settlements only.</p>

**Table 5.3. Definition of Additional Terms applied in the assessment**

<b>Definition of Terms to be applied in Assessment</b>
<p><b>Well-maintained gap</b> □ absence of built development from the spaces between settlements.</p> <p><b>Concealed</b> □ landscape features such as planting / hedgerows / trees which hide physical features including settlements and roads, railway lines.</p> <p><b>Major transport corridors</b> □ M25, M1, A1 and railway lines.</p> <p><b>Level of built development</b> □ built-up areas or buildings as a % of total land area within a parcel based on 1:10 000 OS mapping □</p> <p><b>Urban Fringe / Peri-urban environment</b> – land or area that is a transition which begins with the edge of the fully built up urban area and becomes progressively more rural whilst still remaining a clear mix of urban and rural land uses and influences before giving way to the wider countryside □ Countryside Agency, 2002: no page number<sup>16</sup> □</p> <p><b>Green wedge</b> □ open land which runs into urban area, rather than around urban area.</p>

5.2.7. A series of standard questions in Table 5.4 below provide a consistent framework for assessment. Interpretations made utilise the definitions above.

<sup>15</sup> The term 'place' allows for the consideration of Historic Parks and Gardens

<sup>16</sup> Countryside Agency (2002) The state and potential of agriculture in the urban fringe, unpublished project brief, Cheltenham, CA

**Table 5.4. Purposes Assessment Criteria Questions**

<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Definition of Purpose to be applied in Assessment</b>
<i>To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas</i>	<p>1 <input type="checkbox"/> Does the parcel act, in itself, as an effective barrier against sprawl from large built-up areas outside of the study area specifically London, Luton <input type="checkbox"/> Dunstable and Stevenage <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>2 <input type="checkbox"/> Does the parcel contribute, as part of a wider network of parcels, to a strategic barrier against the sprawl of these built-up areas <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<i>To prevent neighbouring towns from merging</i>	<p>3 <input type="checkbox"/> Does the parcel provide, or form part of, a gap or space between existing 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements (neighbouring towns) <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>4 <input type="checkbox"/> What is the distance of the gap between the settlements <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>5 <input type="checkbox"/> Is there evidence of ribbon development on major route corridors <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>6 <input type="checkbox"/> What is the visual perception of the gap between settlements from major route corridors <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>7 <input type="checkbox"/> Would a reduction in the gap compromise the separation of settlements in physical terms <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>8 <input type="checkbox"/> Would a reduction in the gap compromise the separation of settlements and the overall openness of the parcel visually <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<i>To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment</i>	<p>9 <input type="checkbox"/> What countryside / rural characteristics exist within the parcel including agricultural or forestry land uses and how is this recognised in established national and local landscape designations <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>10 <input type="checkbox"/> Has there already been any significant encroachment by built development or other urbanising elements <input type="checkbox"/> Specify the proportion <input type="checkbox"/> of built development in the parcel <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<i>To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns</i>	<p>11 <input type="checkbox"/> What settlements or places with historic features exist within the parcel <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>12 <input type="checkbox"/> What is the relationship and connection (in the form of character, views and visual perception) between the parcel and historic feature <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>13 <input type="checkbox"/> Does the parcel provide an open setting or a buffer against encroachment by development around settlements or places with historic features <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<b>Local Purpose</b>	<b>Assessment Criteria</b>
<i>Maintaining existing settlement pattern</i>	14 <input type="checkbox"/> Same assessment as 2 <sup>nd</sup> purpose, applied to spaces and gaps between the tiers of settlement below 1 <sup>st</sup> to 1 <sup>st</sup> tier.



### ***Consideration of Landscape, Environment and Historic Features***

- 5.2.8. The landscape characteristics and environmental and historic features of the study area have been recorded and used to inform the Green Belt assessment. They are mapped in Appendices 3 and 4. They provide baseline information about the study area and enable a good understanding of the relationship between the features and the purposes of the Green Belt in particular locations.
- 5.2.9. Environmental designations are important in relation to the third national Green Belt purpose as aspects of biodiversity, forestry and wildlife conservation can be viewed as constituent ingredients of the countryside. Mapping historic features is clearly of relevance to understanding the role that Green Belt plays in relation to the fourth function to preserve the setting of historic towns. The unique built environment and heritage contributes towards shaping the local landscape and is an important part of the identity of each area.
- 5.2.10. Environmental features comprise primary environmental designations, including ancient woodland, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA), Local Nature Reserves, RAMSAR sites and the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Historic places comprise Conservation Areas, historic parks and gardens and scheduled ancient monuments. One of the key criteria to drawing the strategic parcels states that parcel boundary should not divide existing designations, and therefore the location of such features is essential to the study.
- 5.2.11. Landscape character has been reviewed at a strategic level in Appendix 3 to help inform the assessment. In addition an assessment of built development, as a proportion within each parcel has also been calculated. These findings help inform all purposes. For example landscape features including the absence of built development can help maintain gaps between settlements, strengthen countryside character, help preserve historic setting and act as a barrier to sprawl, as well as contributing to levels of visual openness.
- 5.2.12. Overall consideration of landscape, environment and historic features underpins all aspects of the parcel assessment. The analysis is essential to evaluate the parcel against the individual purposes. It also has a central role in the judgement of where Green Belt land is identified which makes the least contribution towards the four national purposes and the local Hertfordshire purpose.
- 5.2.13. Further explanation of the approach to assessment is provided for each of the Green Belt purposes below.



***To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas***

- 5.2.14. The first national purpose performs a barrier role. This purpose is assessed at the strategic level whereby it underpins the establishment of the Green Belt<sup>17</sup> in the sense that the original strategic purpose was to check sprawl from London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage<sup>17</sup>. In respect of this purpose, the need to create a barrier against the uncontrolled expansion of these large built-up areas located to the north and south of the study area was the main reason for creation of the Hertfordshire and South Bedfordshire Green Belts.

***To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another***

- 5.2.15. The second national purpose performs an interstitial role, whereby gaps or spaces between settlements exist and have a clear role in preventing coalescence. This purpose is considered to play the most significant role in maintaining the existing settlement pattern of towns (as referred to in the national definition). However this purpose can also be related to smaller settlements because it also ensures their separation. This second point is separated and examined under the additional local purpose identified. For the national purpose the assessment focuses on the spaces and gaps between 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements (which are considered to be neighbouring towns). Though not specifically defined as such in local policy, these spaces have been considered to represent strategic gaps. A distinction is drawn between a strategic gap and a primary local gap according to whether the gap is to another town or to a 2<sup>nd</sup> tier settlement.

***To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment***

- 5.2.16. The third purpose performs a protective role, to safeguard the countryside. The countryside is defined as open land with an absence of built development and urbanising influences, and characterised by rural open land uses including agriculture and forestry. It is therefore closely connected to the assessment of the level of openness which is similarly defined as an absence of built development and urbanising influences. To support this analysis the percentage of built development per parcel has been calculated. Landscape characteristics also influence the perception of character and quality of countryside. The assessment therefore includes examination of topography, woodland and tree cover and presence of hedgerows / boundary planting which can define views and perceptions of openness in the landscape. This perception of openness is in turn influential in the way Green Belt area performs against the national functions. On the one hand landscape enclosure can conceal urban features and built development in close proximity and interrupt views of settlements and urbanised features. On the other hand it is also important to note that these areas can display high quality landscapes (which include smaller fields and spaces enclosed by changes of level or

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<sup>17</sup> An alternative or local interpretation of sprawl might consider built-up areas to include existing settlements excluded from the Green Belt.



planting including trees and hedgerows adjoining inner Green Belt boundaries and urban edges, where the visual impact of the land is at a minimum. An attempt is therefore made to assess visual perception of openness in a landscape sense, which is important to the functional assessment. The calculation of the proportion of built development within each parcel also helps describe the level of visual openness, which is defined as an absence of built development. However it is acknowledged that this is a difficult concept to judge, particularly at strategic level.

5.2.17. Countryside, urban fringe and urbanising characteristics and influences have been taken into account as part of the assessment. It is important to note that some urban fringe land uses which are acceptable under Green Belt policy (e.g. outdoor recreational activities) may include elements of built development that have an urbanising influence and reduce openness.

5.2.18. Open land uses of a countryside character are considered to include agriculture, forestry, outdoor recreation and areas of biodiversity in accordance with national policy. The assessment also considers environmental or landscape quality designations as part of the countryside analysis. However they are not the determining factors in respect of judgements on the extent to which the Green Belt fulfils this national purpose.

***To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns***

5.2.19. The fourth purpose performs a girdle role, as a green ring around historic settlements or to provide the landscape context to historic features that preserves setting by keeping land open. This purpose goes beyond a simple definition of historic towns and relates to the identification of all the key historic places across the study area in both urban and rural settings. Existing designations of historic value and interest such as conservation areas, historic parks and gardens and scheduled ancient monuments have been used to identify historic places relevant to this assessment. Both the physical and visual relationship between the Green Belt and these places has been assessed. Setting and character in context and, in particular, perceptions of openness, especially in relation to an absence of built development and / or integration with the wider countryside, are important factors.

***To assist urban regeneration***

5.2.20. The fifth national purpose has been screened out. Assisting urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land is considered to be more complex to assess than the other four purposes because the relationship between the Green Belt and recycling of urban land is influenced by a range of external factors including local plan policies, brownfield land availability and the land / development market. Due to the fact that the local policy review demonstrates that there is a limited supply of available or unallocated brownfield land in St Albans, Dacorum and Welwyn Hatfield it is considered that the Green Belt as a whole has successfully and uniformly



fulfilled this purpose. Therefore all parcels would perform equally well and any attempt to differentiate would be meaningless.

***To maintain the existing settlement pattern***

- 5.2.21. This local purpose was identified as a planning objective in the 1998 Hertfordshire Structure Plan and continues to be articulated within local policy. The Green Belt maintains the existing settlement pattern by providing a range of spaces and gaps between all settlements. Therefore the assessment criteria has followed those questions applied to the second purpose, but focuses on land between non-1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements. Though not specifically defined as such in local policy, these spaces have been considered to represent primary or secondary local gaps.

***Non-Green Belt Land and Brownfield Land***

- 5.2.22. The study has assessed non-Green Belt land rural areas in Dacorum beyond the outer Green Belt boundary against the same criteria as Green Belt land. All of this non-Green Belt land is identified in the strategic parcel plan in Chapter 6.

**5.3. Desktop Review and On-site Assessment**

- 5.3.1. The purposes assessment has been undertaken in two stages: as a desktop review and on-site inspection. This first stage of the assessment has been undertaken at a strategic level whereby mapping including Local Plan proposals maps and environmental and historic features mapping as set out in Appendix 4 and aerial photography has been used to initially assess the contribution each parcel makes towards each of the four relevant Green Belt national purposes and the local Hertfordshire purpose.
- 5.3.2. Information gathered during desk-based activities has been used to provide the basis for the second stage of the assessment whereby each parcel was visited over a two-week period 17th June 2013 – 28th June 2013. This assessment enabled more detailed analysis of the contribution each parcel makes towards the four relevant Green Belt national purposes and local Hertfordshire purpose.

**5.4. Land Contributing Least to Green Belt Purposes**

- 5.4.1. The purposes assessment evaluates the contribution that Green Belt and non-Green Belt land makes towards each of the four national purposes and the local Hertfordshire purpose. From this start point, the assessment has then identified areas of land which contribute least to Green Belt purposes. The identification of these areas also relies heavily on consideration of local factors such as urban form, landscape characteristics and urbanising influences.
- 5.4.2. Land considered to contribute least has been recommended for further detailed assessment. This will involve more detailed analysis of the landscape in the assessment areas alongside consideration of wider issues required by the Local Plan but not



considered in this study [see Disclaimer in Chapter 1] it is therefore important to recognise that a decision for further assessment of land cannot be taken as a firm recommendation for a particular change to a Green Belt boundary.

- 5.4.3. Land identified as contributing least towards Green Belt purposes has been classified as strategic land or small scale sub-areas of parcels. In addition, Green Belt land which has already been subject to substantial development has been recommended for boundary adjustment, to reflect current development boundaries.

## 5.5. Presenting the Assessment

- 5.5.1. Each parcel has been assessed against each of the four national Green Belt purposes and local Hertfordshire purpose. A colour coding classification system has been used to summarise the assessment against each purpose. The classification denotes the outcome of the assessment of the contribution a parcel, or sub-divided section of a parcel, makes to each of the Green Belt purposes.

<b>Dark green</b>	Significant contribution to GB purposes
<b>Mid green</b>	Partial contribution to GB purposes
<b>Light green</b>	Limited or no contribution to GB purposes

- 5.5.2. For each purpose, supporting text explains how the classification has been arrived at. The presentation of the classification for each purpose assists in understanding and assessing the value of the various roles performed by the parcel. This approach to individually assessing four national purposes, plus one well-justified local purpose, allows for a clear and transparent evaluation that sets out the information needed to judge the overall contribution of the parcel.
- 5.5.3. An overall assessment of the contribution the parcel makes to the Green Belt has been provided as a written evaluation only. There has been no overall classification at this point as this is considered too crude to capture the inter-relationship between performance against all the purposes.
- 5.5.4. This overall assessment has resulted in the sub-division of some parcels to reflect a finer grain assessment of parts of the parcel that contribute least against more than one of the purposes and are therefore the areas that may need to be considered for potential release from the Green Belt if development needs necessitate.



***Parcel Assessment Sheets***

- 5.5.5. Parcel Assessment Sheets set out in Annex 1, provided as a separate document describe the level of contribution of each parcel towards each of the Green Belt purposes. They also consider the existing level of built development in the Green Belt, visual openness and countryside character. They conclude by summarising the principal functions of the parcel and next steps for land which is identified as contributing least towards Green Belt purposes. The analysis responds to each question set out in Table 6.3 but it has been produced in a concise manner to provide a strategic overview of the parcel that avoids repetition.



## 6. Strategic Parcel Plan

6.1.1. The Green Belt has been sub-divided into strategic parcels of land for assessment against the purposes criteria. The parcel boundaries generally follow well-defined physical features and the outer boundary of the study area generally follows the client authorities' administrative boundaries. In general parcel boundaries are based upon the following criteria:

- Boundaries should be aligned to natural or physical features where possible e.g. water courses, prominent hedgerows, roads, railway lines
- Boundaries should not split woodland or main areas of trees or existing settlements, existing housing or urban development and,
- Where large settlements, fully located within the study area, adjoin administrative boundaries the parcels fully wrap around the settlement to allow a complete assessment.

6.1.2. In total 66 strategic parcels have been identified as set out in Figure 6.1.

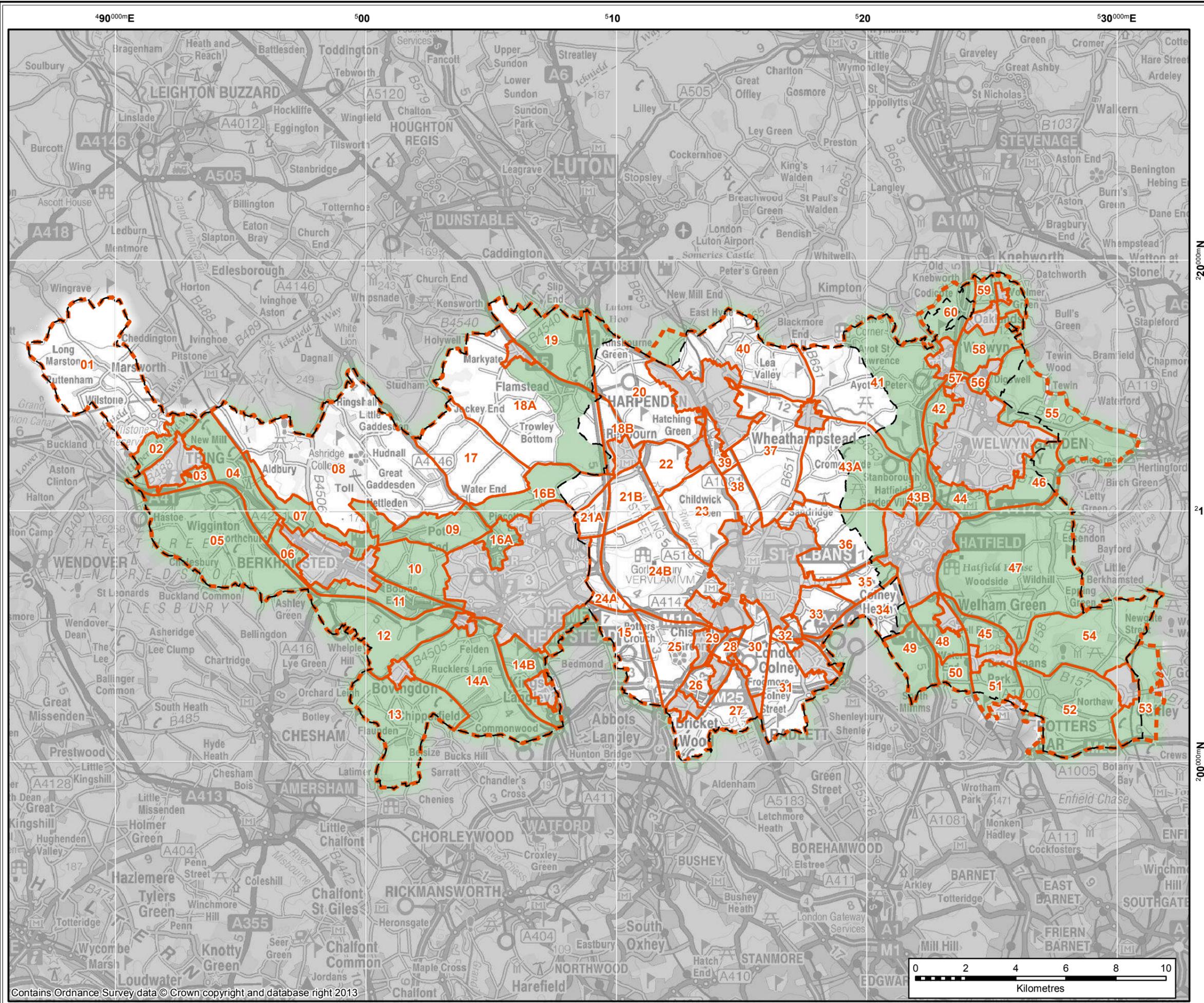
6.1.3. The desk-based review initially identified 60 strategic parcels and this total subsequently rose to 66 as a result of the on-site assessment, when refinements to boundaries were made in order to better reflect conditions on the ground. Five strategic parcels contain non-Green Belt designated land. This land has been included in the assessment in accordance with the Brief which requires potential compensatory Green Belt land to be considered. Where appropriate and especially through on-site examination, parcels have been sub-divided. Sub-division has taken place in part of a strategic parcel exhibits different characteristics and / or performs a different role or function to another part of the same parcel. This has helped enable more accurate description of Green Belt functions and how well land contributes towards the four national purposes and local Hertfordshire purpose.

6.1.4. In some cases the outer boundary of the study area crosses into adjoining local planning authorities. Land within adjoining local planning authorities (i.e. those outside the area covered by the three client authorities) is included within a strategic parcel when it meets one or more of the following criteria:

- where the administrative boundary is tightly drawn around a settlement which is entirely located within Dacorum, St Albans or Welwyn Hatfield examples of such settlements and locations include the south and east of Welwyn Garden City (GB46 and 55), east of Cuffley (GB53) and northwest of Harpenden (GB40) and,
- where the administrative boundary closely follows, but does not adjoin, the edge of settlements outside of the study area for example at Potters Bar (GB51 and 52) in this case a full 360 degree assessment of Potters Bar has not been undertaken.



- 6.1.5. Strategic parcels have been allocated two digit GB codes. If a parcel has been subdivided the two digit code remains and a letter has been added. For example if GB01 is divided into two it comprises GB01A and GB01B. A description and rationale for each parcel is set out in Appendix 5.



- Key:**
- District Borough Boundary
  - Land Parcel Boundary
  - Study Area Outer Boundary
  - Green Belt



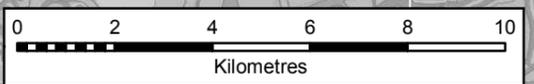
Coordinate System: British National Grid  
 Projection: Transverse Mercator  
 Datum: OSGB 1936  
 Units: Meter

REVISION: H

**Green Belt Review for  
 St Albans, Dacorum and  
 Welwyn Hatfield**

**FIGURE 6.1.  
 Strategic Parcel Plan**

SCALE	PROJECT CODE
1:145,000 @ A3	JE30761
CONTENT	DRAWN
London.Gov Ordnance Survey	KW
CHECKED	DATE
RB	2/12/2013



File Name: Figure6.1\_Parcel Plan





## 7. Key Findings

7.1.1. All parcels have been assessed against four of the national Green Belt purposes and one local purpose.

- NPPF Purpose 1: To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas
- NPPF Purpose 2: To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another
- NPPF Purpose 3: To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment
- NPPF Purpose 4: To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns and,
- Local Purpose: To maintain the existing settlement pattern.

7.1.2. The local purpose has been added to reflect Hertfordshire planning policy and local characteristics of the study area.

7.1.3. As explained above the fifth national purpose to assist regeneration, has not been assessed at a parcel level.

7.1.4. The Green Belt in the study area generally performs well against all four national Green Belt purposes and the local Hertfordshire purpose. Overall, the purposes assessment demonstrates that every parcel makes at least a partial contribution to one of the five Green Belt purposes assessed. All but two parcels make at least a significant contribution to one national purpose, when considering the four national Green Belt purposes only<sup>18</sup>. This shows that the vast majority of the Green Belt in Dacorum, St Albans and Welwyn Hatfield contributes towards achieving national Green Belt purposes as set out in the NPPF.

7.1.5. However analysis also demonstrates that levels of contribution differ across the study area and also within some strategic parcels. The assessment shows the different level of emphasis on the various purposes. Safeguarding the countryside from encroachment overlaps in many areas with preventing settlements from sprawling and merging and maintaining the existing settlement pattern. Preservation of historic places is a more limited role in some specific areas. This countryside in the study, a swathe of mainly arable farmland 50m wide and only 10m from the edge of London at its southern extreme, is well maintained in spite of development pressures and proximity to major urban areas. It contains and separates over 50 settlements<sup>19</sup> ranging from large towns to small washed over villages. There are few environments so close to world cities which have been able to maintain such a clear distinction between built-up areas and

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<sup>18</sup> Discounting the local purpose to maintain the existing settlement pattern

<sup>19</sup> As set out in Table 3.2.



countryside. In spite of this general picture urban fringe, rather than countryside, characteristics are displayed in parts of the study area.

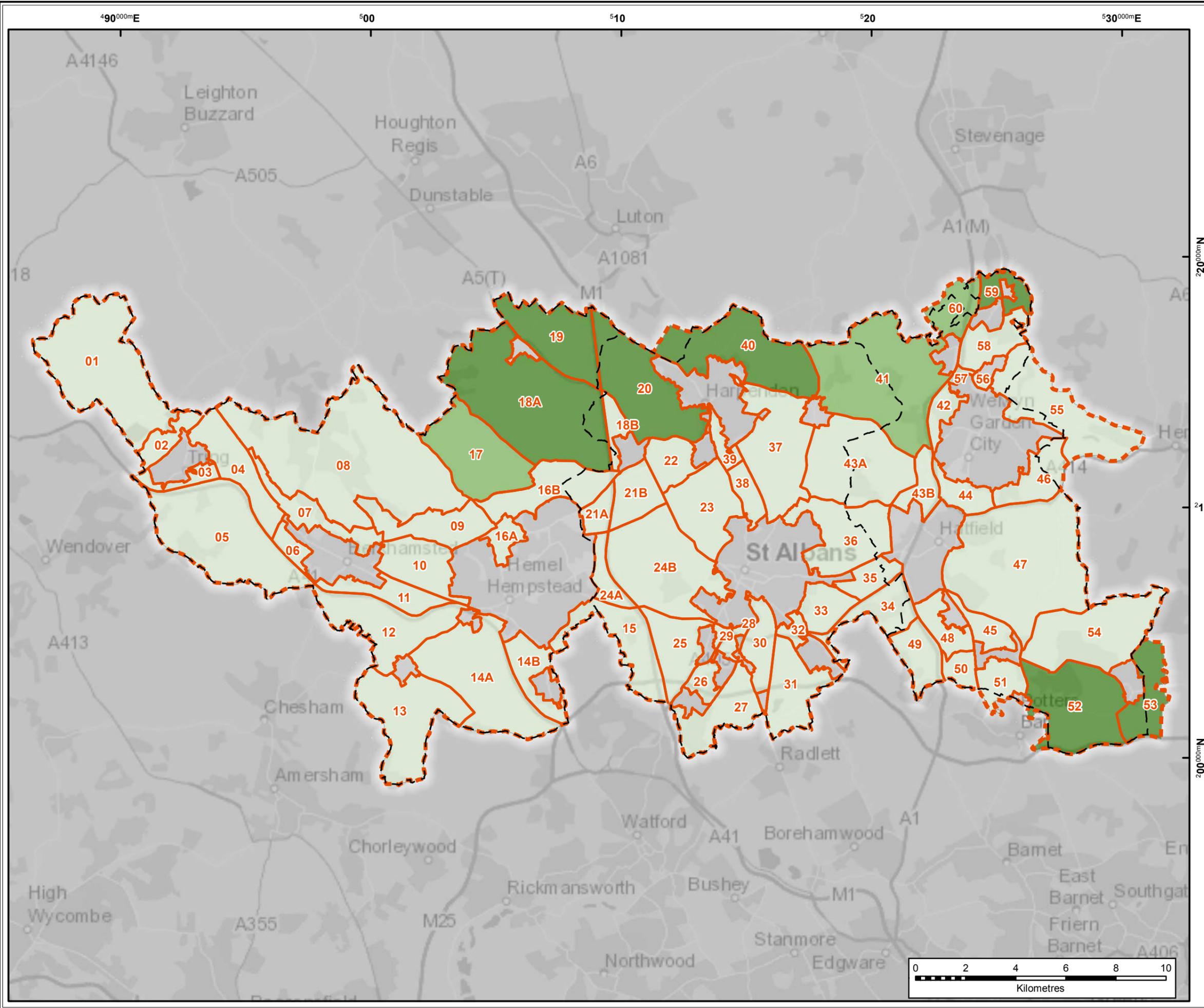
- 7.1.6. The Green Belt contribution to each of the four national purposes and local Hertfordshire purpose is analysed in more detail below. This analysis relates to all 66 parcels, including Green Belt and non-Green Belt land. It provides a review of the role that the parcels play towards achieving each Green Belt purpose assessed. The level of contribution towards each purpose is also mapped to enable the identification of networks of parcels which work together to achieve a particular purpose.
- 7.1.7. In general, the study area also exhibits high levels of physical openness, which is the essential characteristic that Green Belt seeks to maintain. This is illustrated through the analysis of levels of built development in the Green Belt which are very low overall. This is particularly telling at the strategic level whereby the absence of built development is clearly a cross-parcel feature of the countryside. The character and quality of the landscape in many parts of the study area means that visual perceptions of openness are also generally strong. This is because topography, hedgerows and woodland often screen settlement edges and urban fringe activities from view.
- 7.1.8. Contribution towards each of the Green Belt purposes is discussed in this chapter and maps showing the level of contribution towards each purpose are provided. As explained above it is important to emphasise that an overall performance classification /map is not provided. This is because such analysis might be misleading as the potentially variable contribution towards individual purposes might be masked by an average or aggregate rating.
- 7.1.9. Areas of Green Belt land which are evaluated as contributing least to the four national purposes and local Hertfordshire purpose are identified in Chapter 8.



## 7.2. NPPF Purpose 1: To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

- 7.2.1. Figure 7.1 shows the contribution of each parcel towards checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas. The methodology defines large built-up areas, in this context, as London, Luton and Dunstable, and Stevenage.
- 7.2.2. It can be seen that there are two distinct areas of land which contribute most towards this purpose. The first runs along the north edge of the study area from the east of Dacorum through the north of St Albans to the north of Welwyn Hatfield. This land, located in Dacorum, is also covered by The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The second is located in the southeast corner of the study area in Welwyn Hatfield, where the study area is closest to the northern extent of London.
- 7.2.3. A network of parcels including GB18A, GB19, GB20 to GB40 located to the west and east of the area form an effective barrier to check the southwards expansion of Luton and Dunstable located to the north of the study area. Notably, this network of parcels includes GB18A, which is non-Green Belt land and is part of the Chilterns AONB. This national landscape designation minimises opportunities for development and has itself acted as an effective barrier to sprawl. This network continues eastwards to include GB41, GB59 to GB60 to the west and north of Welwyn Garden City and to the north of Welwyn, Oafields / Mardley Heath and Woolmer Green, to form a barrier to check the southwards expansion of Stevenage.
- 7.2.4. Sprawl northwards from London is primarily checked by GB52 to GB53 which are located to east of Potters Bar and around Cuffley. This land contributes towards the gap between London and the study area.
- 7.2.5. Because of the location of the study area, no parcel of land directly borders the urban areas of London, Luton and Dunstable or Stevenage. Rather, the parcels assessed for this review work in unison with other Green Belt land, beyond the boundaries of the three client local authorities, to provide effective barriers to sprawl.
- 7.2.6. The remaining parcels make only a limited contribution, or no contribution, towards checking the sprawl of the defined large built-up areas.

File Name: Figure7.1\_Contribution towards checking sprawl



- Key:**
- District Borough Boundary
  - Land Parcel Boundary
  - Study Area Outer Boundary
- Sprawl**
- Limited or No Contribution
  - Partial Contribution
  - Significant Contribution



Coordinate System: British National Grid  
 Projection: Transverse Mercator  
 Datum: OSGB 1936  
 Units: Meter

REVISION: D

**Green Belt Review for  
 St Albans, Dacorum and  
 Welwyn Hatfield**

**FIGURE 7.1.  
 Contribution towards  
 Checking Sprawl**

SCALE	PROJECT CODE
1:145,000 @ A3	JE30761
CONTENT	DRAWN
Ordnance Survey	KW
CHECKED	DATE
RB	30/11/2013



### 7.3. NPPF Purpose 2: To prevent neighbouring towns from merging

7.3.1. Figure 7.2 shows the contribution of each parcel towards preventing neighbouring towns from merging. It can be seen that there is a clear central band of Green Belt land which runs from west-east through the heart of the study area, covering Dacorum, St Albans and Welwyn Hatfield, which makes a significant or partial contribution to this purpose.

7.3.2. This band of Green Belt forms a series of strategic gaps which separate the 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements of Tring, Berkhamsted, Hemel Hempstead, St Albans, Harpenden, Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City. The Green Belt also provides buffers facing 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements outside of the study area including Luton and Dunstable, Stevenage, Watford (including Abbots Langley), Hertford and Potters Bar. Overall, almost half of all parcels make a significant or partial contribution towards maintaining strategic gaps. Table 8.1 below shows the networks of parcels which form each strategic gap.

**Table 8.1. Strategic Gaps**

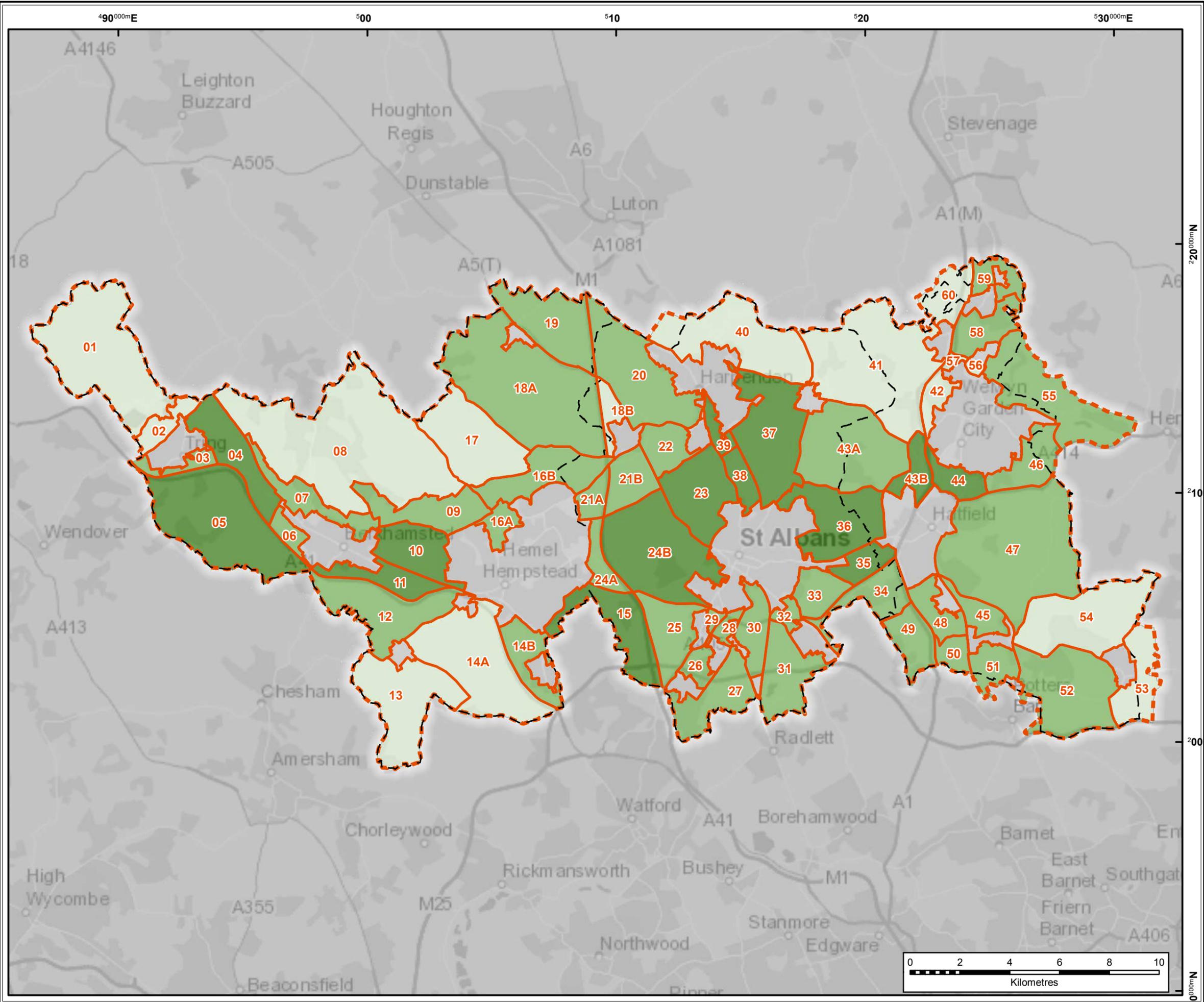
Strategic Gap	Network of Parcels	Gap
<b>Within the Study Area</b>		
Tring - Berkhamsted	GB03, 04, 05, 06 & 07	4.5km
Berkhamsted - Hemel Hempstead	GB09, 10, 11 & 12	2.6km
Hemel Hempstead - St Albans	GB15, 21, 23, 24 & 25	4.2km
St Albans - Harpenden	GB23, 37, 38 & 39	2.5km
St Albans - Hatfield	GB33, 34, 35 & 36	1.3km
Hatfield - Welwyn Garden City	GB43A & B & 44	1km
<b>Separating 1st Tier Settlements within the study area from settlements outside<sup>20</sup></b>		
Hemel Hempstead - Watford (Abbots Langley)	GB14B & 15	3.2km
Hemel Hempstead - Luton and Dunstable	GB16A & B, 18A & 19	10km
St Albans - Watford (including Garston)	GB25, 26, 27, 28, 29 & 30	4.8km
St Albans - Radlett	GB30 & 31	4.8km
St Albans - Borehamwood	GB31, 32, 33 & 34	8.2km
Harpenden - Luton and Dunstable	GB20	5km
Welwyn Garden City - Hertford	GB46 & 55	2.7km
Welwyn Garden City - Stevenage	GB56, 57, 58, 59 & 60	7km
Hatfield - Potters Bar	GB45, 47, 48, 50 & 51	4.8km

<sup>20</sup> Strategic Gaps to London are not set out given the overall strategic role of the Metropolitan Green Belt around London.



- 7.3.3. Six strategic gaps are identified which separate 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements located within the study area. In addition there are nine strategic gaps which separate 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements within the study area from settlements outside of the study area (see above).
- 7.3.4. Strategic gaps display a range of characteristics. In the west of the study area (to the west of the city of St Albans), strategic gaps are relatively large, well-maintained and are largely free from significant development. In the east of the study area, on the other hand, gaps are either: i) generally narrower such as the one between St Albans and Hatfield and Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City, and / or ii) contain a greater amount of large-scale development including 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> tier settlements such as between St Albans and Watford, Hatfield and Potters Bar and Welwyn Garden City and Stevenage. The larger strategic gaps generally comprise a number of parcels whereas narrow strategic gaps are formed by only a single parcel. However, both small and large gaps play an important role in the prevention of merging.
- 7.3.5. This pattern of strategic gaps is a result of the spatial distribution of large settlements and urban areas across and around the study area, which is the result of growth around railway stations prior to the Green Belt boundaries being established.
- 7.3.6. There is significant development pressure on parcels which form narrower gaps as these are bounded by two potential sources of encroachment. As a consequence the narrower strategic gaps often display urban fringe characteristics (a hybrid of urban and rural uses). They are pressure points, and any reduction in their width may heighten that pressure and weaken the case for protection as physical and visual openness is eroded.
- 7.3.7. The perception or visibility of the Green Belt in strategic gaps, is variable, but relatively strong throughout the study area. Major transport corridors including the M25, M1 and A1(M) provide interspersed views of the Green Belt, and are in themselves generally well concealed by landscape features including planting. On the ground, strategic gaps are often enhanced by significant landscape buffering around settlements. Parcels which make a limited contribution, or no contribution, towards preventing merging of neighbouring towns are not located between 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements.

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 Name: Figure7.2\_Contribution towards preventing merging



- Key:**
- Land Parcel Boundary
  - District Borough Boundary
  - Study Area Outer Boundary
- Merging**
- Limited or No Contribution
  - Partial Contribution
  - Significant Contribution

N

Coordinate System: British National Grid  
 Projection: Transverse Mercator  
 Datum: OSGB 1936  
 Units: Meter

REVISION: E

**Green Belt Review for  
 St Albans, Dacorum and  
 Welwyn Hatfield**

**FIGURE 7.2.**  
**Contribution towards  
 Preventing Merging**

SCALE	PROJECT CODE
1:145,000 @ A3	JE30761
CONTENT	DRAWN
Ordnance Survey	KW
CHECKED	DATE
RB	30/11/2013





#### **7.4. NPPF Purpose 3: To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment**

- 7.4.1. Figure 7.3 shows the contribution of each parcel towards safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. Strong, rural and countryside characteristics are evident throughout Dacorum, St Albans and Welwyn Hatfield. The majority of parcels (over two-thirds) significantly contribute towards this purpose.
- 7.4.2. As set out in the methodology the countryside is open land with a general absence of built development and urbanising influences, and is characterised by rural land uses including agriculture and forestry. This is often reflected in existing landscape character or quality designations. This is a functional definition of the countryside and emphasises what the countryside is for and is not for. It is the definition most widely used in policy and in decision making and is often combined with measures of landscape quality. Open land uses are considered to include agriculture, forestry, outdoor recreation and areas of biodiversity.
- 7.4.3. Countryside characteristics are generally strong across the Green Belt in the study area as agriculture is the main land use. Undulating open arable farmland, characterised by medium to large sized fields, is most common across the Green Belt and between settlements. Pastoral farmland is more common close to settlement edges on smaller field patterns, which display a greater sense of enclosure due to boundary planting.
- 7.4.4. There is also considerable woodland across the study area, including scattered pockets of ancient woodland. This is also very important for preserving historic setting, as set out in 7.5 below. Areas of woodland are most common in the east part of the study area, especially in Welwyn Hatfield.
- 7.4.5. Outdoor recreational activities such as large open sports facilities, parks and playing fields and golf courses are also common land uses in the Green Belt and are most frequent at settlement edges. As explained in the methodology, these land uses are acceptable uses within the Green Belt but represent typical urban fringe activities whereby there is a transition from built-up settlements to the open countryside.
- 7.4.6. National landscape designations in the form of The Chilterns AONB cover non-Green Belt land in the study area. This land is located in the north of Dacorum.
- 7.4.7. Overall the combination of agricultural land uses, scattered woodland, range of recreational activities and AONB clearly show that countryside characteristics are generally strong throughout the study area. Existing Green Belt boundaries play an important role in safeguarding this countryside land, including both open undulating farmland and more enclosed wooded areas. These countryside areas have been subject to relatively limited levels of encroachment.



- 7.4.8. In spite of this, some parcels and smaller areas of parcels display non-countryside characteristics. These are evident in two forms, including: 1 urban fringe characteristics at the edge of settlements, and 2 ribbon development within the countryside.
- 7.4.9. Land exhibiting urban fringe characteristics (a hybrid of rural and urban uses) is located at settlement edges in close proximity to built-up urban development including housing, or commercial and industrial activities. In some cases this development spills over into the Green Belt in the form of encroachment or ribbon development, especially in the form of large single dwellings. Typical urban fringe land uses include recreational activities<sup>21</sup> as well as horticulture, secondary schools, garden centres and sewage works. As a result of development in the Green Belt, this land is more likely to display lower levels of openness due to the presence of development but often there can be a greater level of landscape enclosure due to smaller field patterns. This has some impacts that are positive (trees and hedges conceal built development features) whereas fencing and walls act as more urban influences on visual perceptions of openness.
- 7.4.10. In order to clarify which parcels exhibit the strongest countryside characteristics and associated greatest levels of visual openness (as a result of an absence of development), the level of built development within each parcel has been estimated<sup>22</sup>. The percentage of total built development within each parcel taken as a proportion of total parcel area is mapped in Figure 7.4.
- 7.4.11. This map supports the findings of the on-site assessment in relation to the level of contribution that each parcel makes towards safeguarding the countryside from encroachment<sup>23</sup>. Parcels contributing least towards this purpose are generally clustered around the city of St Albans. They include GB26 (located between Bricket Wood and Chiswell Green / Low Wood), GB32 (located between St Albans and London Colney) and GB35 (located between St Albans and Hatfield, containing Smallford). Other parcels which are part of this network to the south of St Albans displaying high<sup>24</sup> levels of built development include GB26, 27, 31, 32 & GB33. (Note, other parcels displaying high level of built development are located around Kings Langley (GB14B), between Potters Bar and Brookmans Par (GB50) and to the east of Oafields village (GB60).
- 7.4.12. In addition, some areas of the Green Belt within the study area have been subject to ribbon development, which can in certain locations dilute the strength of countryside character. The majority of ribbon development is along minor routes rather than major transport corridors. Such development also commonly extends from 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> tier

<sup>21</sup> However it should be noted that recreational activities are encouraged as beneficial uses in the Green Belt and are important as they help meet social infrastructure the needs of local communities.

<sup>22</sup> Level of built development is based on GIS analysis of 1:10000 OS Mapping. It should therefore be noted that they are likely to be slightly lower than in reality as only buildings set out on OS Maps have been analysed.

<sup>23</sup> However it is important to note that development might pre-date Green Belt designation

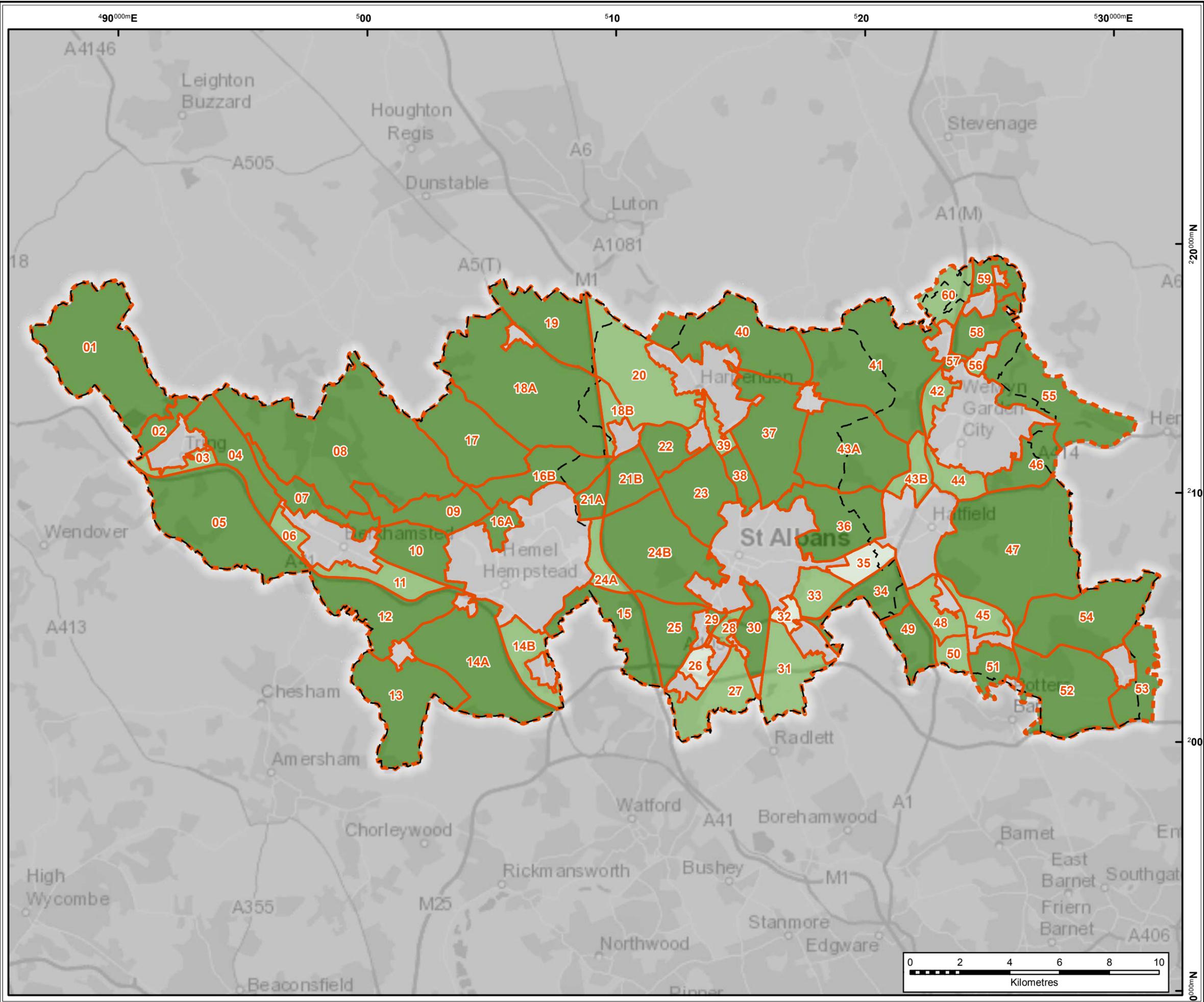
<sup>24</sup> Parcel contains over 1% of built development



settlements 'washed over by the Green Belt' as opposed to 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements which generally exhibit stronger and more well-defined settlement boundaries. This is evident as detached homes on large plots are scattered across the study area mainly in more rural locations which display countryside characteristics. Development along minor roads extending from smaller settlements may sometimes be a key pressure facing the smaller strategic gaps [see Paragraph 7.3.6].

- 7.4.13. Major transport corridors and A-roads are also common and noticeable urban influences within the Green Belt. It is noteworthy that these routes are often well concealed by landscaping but remain audibly intrusive. Therefore they are often not seen but are frequently heard. The effect of this landscape buffering along routes, as well as around settlements, is to retain a strong visual connection across the countryside and a sense of openness. From the ground, the undulating nature of the landscape means that the rhythm of the countryside is strong across the study area. For example, this is demonstrated in the strategic gap between Tring and Berkhamsted where there is a strong visual connection between GB04, 05, 07 & 08 in spite of road and rail physical features on the ground.
- 7.4.14. The purposes assessment has also identified three sub-areas of Green Belt land which form green wedges into 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements. Green wedges are linear in character and run into urban areas rather than around them. These are located at GB16A in Gadebridge Park to the north of Hemel Hempstead, GB39 in Harpenden Common to the south of Harpenden and GB24B in Verulamium Park to the west of St Albans.
- 7.4.15. A number of large scale and relatively recently-developed residential areas have also been identified in the Green Belt. These schemes represent encroachment into the Green Belt. The main examples are located at Highfield Park in GB33 and Napsbury Park in GB31. All of these areas are located in St Albans. When assessed in isolation they are considered to make a limited contribution towards Green Belt purposes.

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- Key:**
- Land Parcel Boundary
  - District Borough Boundary
  - Study Area Outer Boundary
- Countryside**
- Limited or No Contribution
  - Partial Contribution
  - Significant Contribution



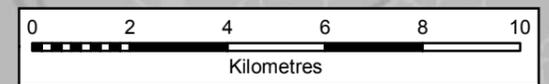
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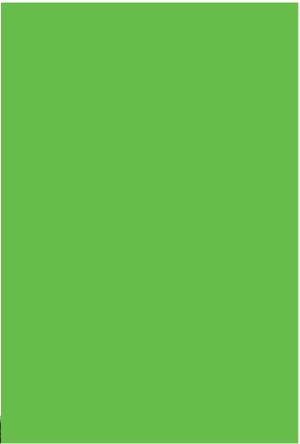
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**Green Belt Review for  
 St Albans, Dacorum and  
 Welwyn Hatfield**

**FIGURE 7.3.  
 Contribution towards  
 Safeguarding the Countryside**

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1:145,000 @ A3	JE30761
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Ordnance Survey	KW
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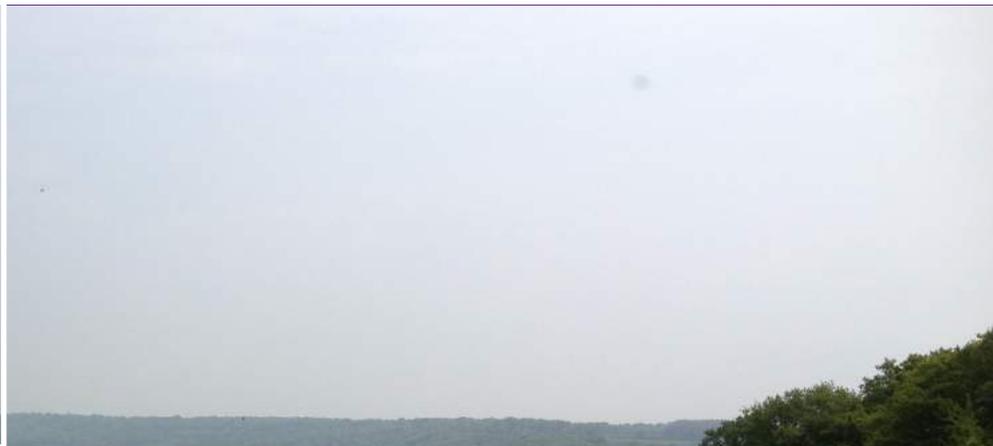
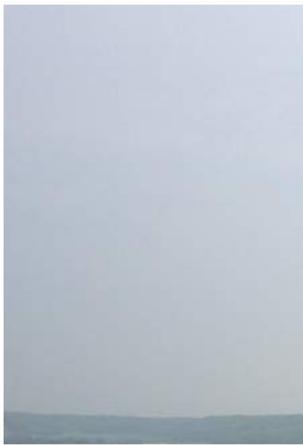




**GREEN BELT REVIEW PURPOSES ASSESSMENT**  
 (Prepared for Dacorum Borough Council, St Albans City and District Council and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council)

**Annex 1 – Parcel Assessment Sheets for Dacorum Borough Council**

November 2013



SINCLAIR KNIGHT MERZ  
**SKM**

## Introduction

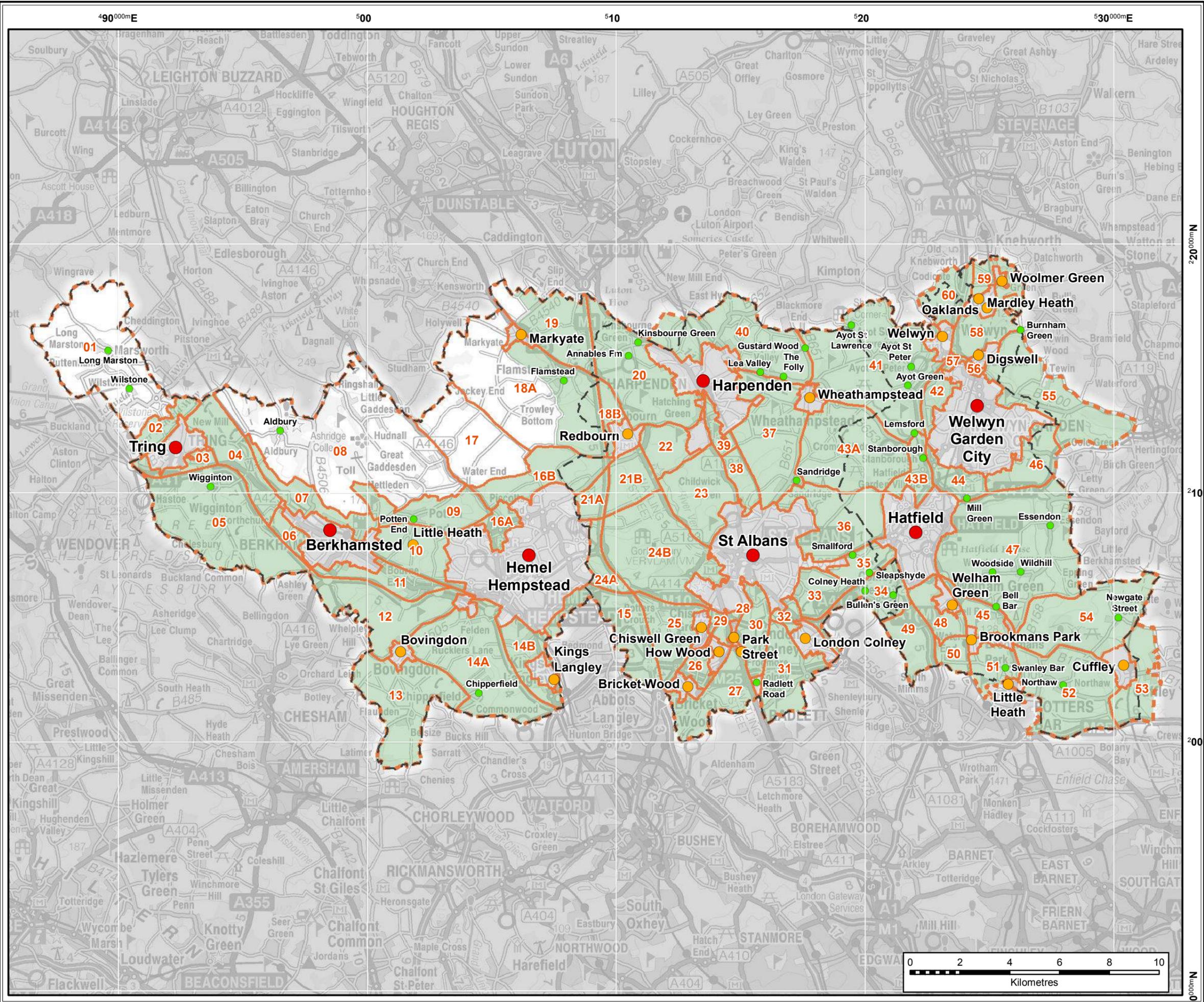
This document forms an Annex to the Green Belt Review Purposes Assessment undertaken on behalf of on behalf of Dacorum Borough Council, St Albans City and District Council, and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.

The parcel assessment sheets in this annex relate to Dacorum Borough Council only.

The maps overlaid show the strategic parcel boundaries. Figure 8.1 taken from the Green Belt Review Purposes Assessment Final Report shows areas of land which contribute least towards the Green Belt purposes. These have been identified under 'Next Steps' in the relevant Parcel Assessment Sheets, and classified as Strategic Sub Areas and Small Scale Sub Areas in the Final Report.

The Final Report also contains more detailed information on methodology and environmental and historic features mapping.

File Name: Strategic Parcel Plan\_20131025  
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- Key:**
- District Borough Boundary
  - Land Parcel Boundary
  - Study Area Outer Boundary
  - Green Belt
- Settlement**
- 1st Tier
  - 2nd Tier
  - 3rd Tier



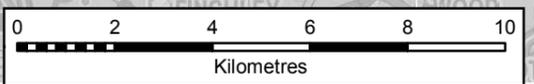
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**Green Belt Review for  
 St Albans, Dacorum and  
 Welwyn Hatfield**

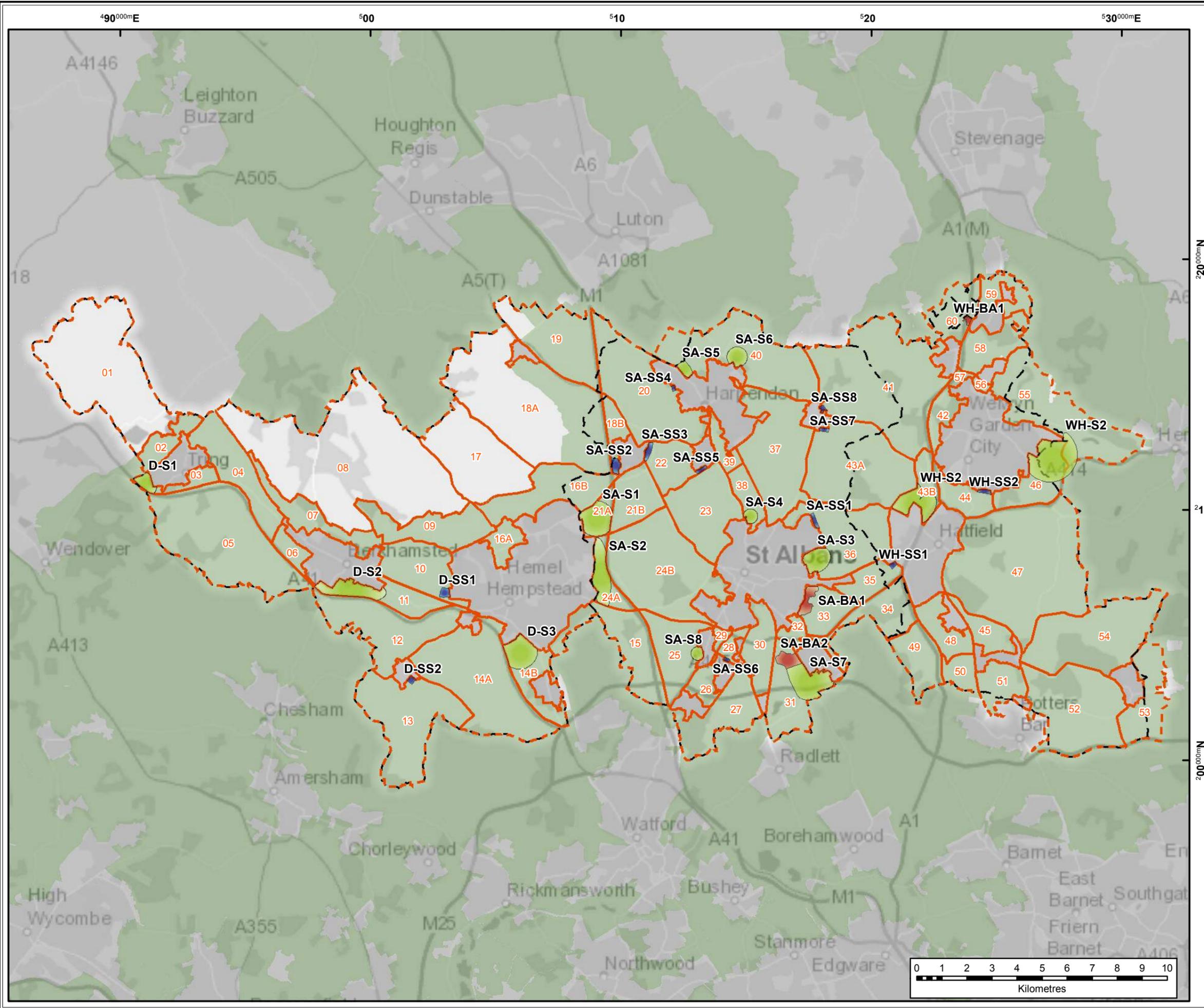
**Strategic Parcel Plan**

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- Key:**
- Boundary Adjustment
  - Small Scale Sub-Area
  - Strategic Sub-Area
  - Study Area Outer Boundary
  - District Borough Boundary
  - Land Parcel Boundary
  - Green Belt



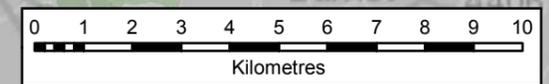
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### Green Belt Review for St Albans, Dacorum and Welwyn Hatfield

**FIGURE 8.1.**  
**Land Contributing Least Towards Green Belt Purposes**

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London.Gov Ordnance Survey	KW
CHECKED	DATE
RB	2/12/2013

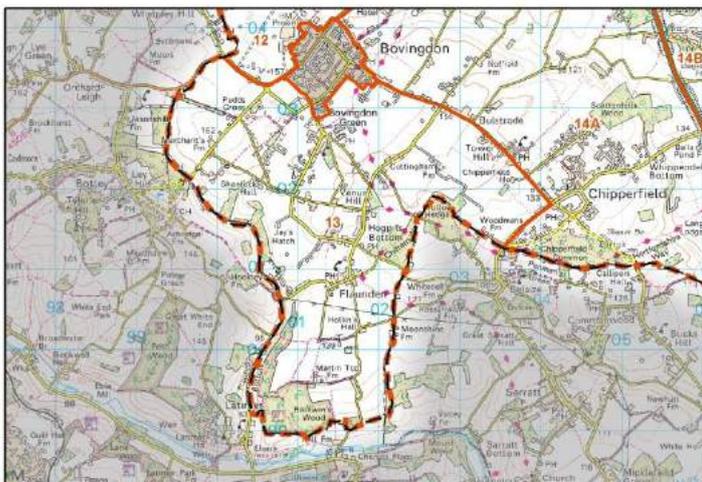


The Assessment Criteria □ for the Green Belt Review Purposes Assessment is set out below. The □ methodology is set out in Chapter 5 □ of the Final Report.

<b>NATIONAL PURPOSES</b>	
<b>To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas</b>	
1□	Does the parcel act, in itself □, as an effective barrier to prevent sprawl □ from large built-up areas outside □ of the study area specifically London, Luton □ Dunstable and Stevenage □
2□	Does the parcel contribute, as part □ of a wider network □ of parcels, to a strategic barrier that prevents the sprawl □ of these areas □
<b>To prevent neighbouring towns from merging</b>	
3□	Does the parcel provide, or □ form part □ of, a gap or space between existing 1 <sup>st</sup> tier settlements □ neighbouring towns □
4□	What is the distance □ of the gap between the settlements □
5□	Is there evidence □ of ribbon development on major route corridors □
6□	What is the visual perception □ of the gap between settlements □ from major route corridors □
7□	Would a reduction in the gap compromise the separation □ of settlements in physical terms □
8□	Would a reduction in the gap compromise the separation □ of settlements and the overall openness □ of the parcel in terms □ of visual perception □
<b>To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment</b>	
9□	What countryside / rural characteristics exist within the parcel including agricultural or □ forestry land uses and how is this recognised in established national and local landscape designations □
10□	Has there already been any significant encroachment by built development or other urbanising elements □ Specify the level □ of built development in the parcel □
<b>To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns</b>	
11□	What settlements or places with historic □ features exist within the parcel □
12□	What is the relationship and connection □ in the □ form □ of character, views and visual perception □ between the parcel and historic □ feature □
13□	Does the parcel provide an open setting or a buffer against encroachment by development around settlements or places with historic □ features □
<b>HERTFORDSHIRE PURPOSE</b>	
<b>Maintaining existing settlement pattern</b>	
14□	Does the parcel provide, or □ form part □ of, a gap or space between existing 1 <sup>st</sup> tier settlements □ neighbouring towns □
15□	What is the distance □ of the gap between the settlements □
16□	Is there evidence □ of ribbon development on major route corridors □
17□	What is the visual perception □ of the gap between settlements □ from major route corridors □
18□	Would a reduction in the gap compromise the separation □ of settlements in physical terms □
19□	Would a reduction in the gap compromise the separation □ of settlements and the overall openness □ of the parcel in terms □ of visual perception □
<b>Presentation of Contribution to Green Belt Purposes</b>	
<b>Significant contribution to GB purpose</b>	
<b>Partial contribution to GB purpose</b>	
<b>Limited or no contribution to GB purpose</b>	

## GB13 –Green Belt Land to the South of Bovingdon

**Description:** The parcel is located to the south of Bovingdon extending south to the edge of the study area. It is 1,087 ha in size and comprises a large gently undulating chalk plateau.



**Land use:** Predominately arable farmland, plus Bovingdon Brickworks (MDS), caravan site (travelling show-people) and playing fields.

View to northwest from Flaunden Lane towards Bovingdon showing strong open and rural characteristics as well as development in the Green Belt



Example of enclosed southeast edge of Bovingdon displaying enclosure and urban influence



## Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards safeguarding the countryside and preserving the setting of Flaunden and Chipperfield. Partial contributions towards maintaining the existing settlement pattern. Overall the parcel contributes significantly to 2 out of 5 purposes.

<b>GB13 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment</b>		<b>Contribution</b>
<b>To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas</b>		<b>LIMITED OR NO</b>
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl		
<b>To prevent neighbouring towns from merging</b>		<b>LIMITED OR NO</b>
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 <sup>st</sup> tier settlements.		
<b>To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment</b>		<b>SIGNIFICANT</b>
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in medium sized arable fields with some pasture, bound by dense hedgerows and frequent hedgerow trees. Fragmented small pockets of deciduous woodland are scattered over the parcel with larger areas of ancient woodland, particularly at Baldwin's Wood in the south. Urban features include the Brickworks and other development and unclassified settlements. Dispersed ribbon development and large single dwellings extend along minor routes, particularly from Bovingdon Green to Flaunden and Chipperfield. As a result the parcel exhibits mixed levels of visual openness. Land to the southeast of Bovingdon in particular displays greater levels of enclosure due to landscape features and urban influence due to residential edges.		
<b>To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns</b>		<b>SIGNIFICANT</b>
The parcel contains Flaunden and part of Chipperfield Conservation Areas and is adjacent to Bovingdon Conservation Area. It forms part of the wider setting for the historic villages of Latimer and Chenies to the south of the parcel in Chiltern District. The Green Belt acts as an immediate open and rural historic setting, providing views to and from the countryside.		
<b>To maintain existing settlement pattern</b>		<b>PARTIAL</b>
The parcel provides the secondary local gap between Bovingdon 2 <sup>nd</sup> and Chipperfield 3 <sup>rd</sup> which is 2.1km. The gap is large and has been subject to ribbon development which limits the perception of the gap. Any small scale reduction in the gap could be likely to compromise separation of the settlements in physical terms, or levels of visual openness.		

### **Level of openness and countryside character**

**Existence of built development** The level of built development is low at 0.8%. Residential ribbon development has spread from villages and hamlets along narrow country lanes.

**Visual Openness** The parcel has limited opportunities for open views due to the densely hedged narrow lanes and there are few focal points or vistas within the landscape.

**Countryside Character** Predominantly agricultural but the settlement pattern comprises a number of villages which have spread across the plateau organically, leaving settlement edges loose and indistinct in many places.

### **GB13 – Next Steps**

Land at southeast edge of Bovingdon at Homefield, off Green Lane is recommended for further assessment as a small scale sub-area ID-SS2. Assessed in isolation this land makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging or maintaining local gaps. The land makes a relatively limited contribution to the primary functions of the Green Belt.



Date: March 2015

Land at ome ield,  
Bovingdon

## **Landscape and Visual Appraisal and Green Belt Review**

Prepared by  
CSa Environmental Planning

On behalf   
Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd

Report No: **CSa/2614/01**

Date: March 2015

Land at omefield,  
Bovingdon

## Landscape and Visual Appraisal and Green Belt Review

Prepared by  
CSa Environmental Planning

On behalf   
Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd



Remarks	Date	Prepared by	Authorised by	File Ref
	23.03.15	RC	CA	2614/01

Report No: CSa/2614/01

<b>CONTENTS</b>		Page
<b>1.0</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Site Context</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Landscape Policy Context</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Site Description and Visibility</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Suitability of the Site to Accommodate Development</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Appraisal of Potential Sites within the Green Belt at Bovingdon</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>7.0</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>21</b>

## **Appendices**

Appendix A:	Site Location Plan
Appendix B:	Aerial Photograph (including Photo Locations)
Appendix C:	Photographs
Appendix D:	MAGiC Map Extract and Heritage Information
Appendix E:	Purposes Assessment Criteria Questions from SKM Green Belt Review
Appendix F:	Figure 8.1: Land Contributing Least Towards Green Belt Purposes from SKM Green Belt Review
Appendix G:	Parcel Assessment Sheets for Dacorum Borough Council
Appendix H:	Bovingdon Spatial Strategy for the Village, Options for Growth
Appendix I:	Review of Green Belt Options
Appendix J:	Landscape and Visual Effects Tables
Appendix K:	Methodology

# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

## Background

- 1.1 CSa Environmental Planning has been instructed by Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd to provide a landscape and visual appraisal of land at Homefield, Bovingdon, Hertfordshire. The Site is being promoted for residential development through Dacorum Borough Council's (DBC) Call for Sites which will inform the preparation of the new Local Plan.
- 1.2 The Site lies within the Green Belt Policy in the DBC adopted Core Strategy. It is identified in the Bovingdon Spatial Strategy as part of a wider option (option 4) which has potential for future development.
- 1.3 This appraisal describes the existing landscape character and quality of the Site and its visual characteristics. The report then goes on to discuss the ability of the Site to accommodate development and any potential landscape or visual impacts on the wider area. It also considers whether the Site is suitable for release from the Green Belt with regard to the objectives set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 1.4 In addition, this document provides a landscape overview of the land at the periphery of the settlement and considers its capacity to accommodate residential development in landscape and Green Belt terms. The findings of this overview are set out in the tables at **Appendix I** and summarised in Section 6 of this document.

## Methodology

- 1.5 This appraisal is based on a Site visit undertaken by a suitably qualified and experienced Landscape Architect in March 2015. Weather conditions at the time of the appraisal were overcast and visibility was moderate to good.
- 1.6 In landscape and visual impact appraisals, a distinction is drawn between landscape effects (i.e. effects on the character or quality of the landscape irrespective of whether there are any views of the landscape, or viewers to see them) and visual effects (i.e. effects on people's views of the landscape, principally from any residential properties, but also from public rights of way and other areas with general public access). This report therefore considers the potential impact of development on both landscape character and visibility. The methodology utilised in this appraisal is contained in **Appendix K** at the rear of this document.
- 1.7 Photographs contained within this document (**Appendix C**) were taken using a digital camera with a lens focal length approximating to 50mm, to give a similar depth of vision to the human eye. In some instances images have been combined to create a panorama.

## 2.0 SITE CONTEXT

### Site Context

- 2.1 The Site occupies a square parcel of land which is currently used as a paddock. The northern Site boundary abuts dwellings at Austin Mead and New Tree Drive, the eastern boundary abuts the Hertfordshire Long Distance Footpath and pastoral fields, the southern boundary adjoining rough grassland, and the eastern boundary is defined by the dwellings at Green Lane and Homefield. The location of the Site is shown on the location plan and aerial photograph in **Appendices A and B**.
- 2.2 The Site contains an area of scrub, located centrally within the paddock. The remainder of the field has been left to pasture with all significant landscape features located at the Site periphery providing the Site with strong sense of containment from the wider countryside.
- 2.3 Bovingdon is a village located approximately 5 km south west of Hemel Hempstead and approximately 4.5 km south east of Berkhamsted. The village is also located relatively close to Junction 20 of the M25, which is approximately 6 km south east of the village.
- 2.4 Distinctive features of the village include Bovingdon Airfield, now disused, which currently provides a venue for markets, tractor days and tv / film production. In addition to the airfield, situated at the northern extent of the village, is Her Majesty's Prison (HMMP) The Mount. Bovingdon also has a brick works which is located south west of the village at Leyhill Road and been producing bricks for over 100 years.
- 2.5 Bovingdon is a large village with the historic core of the settlement located around the High Street and the Church of St. Lawrence. Bovingdon Conservation Area is also located in this area and is shown on the plan at **Appendix D**.
- 2.6 The majority of the residential development at Bovingdon is located to the south of the High Street and occurred post 1960. Development at Austins Mead dates from around this time, however development at New Tree Close was built later than this, post 1980.

### National Landscape Character

- 2.7 The Character Map of England, a national appraisal of landscape character by the Countryside Agency (now Natural England) identifies the Site as lying within the Chilterns character area (Area 110).
- 2.8 The Character Map describes the Chilterns as a mixture of arable, grassland and woodland and the numerous commons reflect the dominance of poor agricultural land. Ancient Woodland has remained on areas of extensive clay-

with-flint deposits. There are, however, not inconsiderable areas of good quality agricultural land that are associated with the lower lying areas and river valleys.

- 2.9 The Profile notes that The Chilterns are one of the most wooded lowland landscapes in England and the area is particularly renowned for its extensive native beechwoods, several of which are designated.
- 2.10 The Profile describes the area as containing nucleated settlements of medieval origin and land farmed since prehistory is found alongside watercourses and springs in the through-valleys and at the foot of the scarp. Elsewhere, dispersed farmsteads dating from the medieval period and mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century development around commons are characteristic of the plateau.
- 2.11 There are extensive rights of way, commons, open access downland, woodland and some farmland which provides access across the countryside. The Thames Path, the Ridgeway and the Grand Union Canal are high Profile recreation routes. Locally promoted routes include the Chilterns cycleway. Private leisure uses, including golf courses and horse paddocks are common near urban centres.

### **County Landscape Character**

- 2.12 Hertfordshire County Council have prepared a landscape character assessment for the County which divides it into a series of landscape typologies and classifies Bovingdon and the Site within the Wooded Plateau Farmlands character type. The character type is described, for the most part, as a settled, early enclosed landscape with frequent Ancient Woodlands, associated with a rolling, in places undulating glacial plateau, dissected by numerous shallow valleys.

### **District Landscape Character**

- 2.13 A study of the landscape character of Dacorum Borough was commissioned by the Chilterns Conservation Board, Dacorum Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council from The Landscape Partnership in 2002. The Assessment divides the district into a number of character areas with Bovingdon lying within the Bovingdon and Chipperfield Plateau.
- 2.14 The Assessment describes the plateau as a large, gently undulating plateau which supports a mixed farming pattern. There are fragmented areas of semi natural woodland cover, together with variable, but generally species diverse hedgerows which filter and frame views of the area. The key characteristics are described as follows:
- Expansive, gently undulating plateau
  - Mixed arable and pasture farmland

- Isolated and fragmented woodland cover
- Medium to large fields to the east with remote feel
- Settlement pattern comprising a number of villages which spread across the plateau in loose organic forms
- Densely hedged narrow lanes
- Semi derelict feel to large scale redundant or industrial sites and
- Few focal points and vistas.

2.15 The distinctive features of the character area are described as:

- Flauden cottages and Gilbert Scott parish Church
- Bovingdon Brickworks
- Bovingdon Airfield-Sunday Market and Prison
- Westbrook Day House, puddingstone summerhouse and historic parkland
- Views across Sheethanger Common from Felden
- Westbrook Day lodges/estate buildings and
- Felden water tower.

### **Statutory and Non-Statutory Designations**

2.16 The Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside Map (MAGIC) indicates that the Site is not covered by any statutory or non-statutory designations for landscape character or quality.

### **Conservation Area and Listed Buildings**

2.17 There are no listed buildings within or adjacent to the Site. The nearest listed building is located in Bovingdon Conservation Area of which the nearest extent is located approximately 100 metres from the north west corner of the Site **Refer to Appendix D**. There is no-intervisibility between the Site and the Conservation Area.

### **Public Rights of Way**

2.18 The Hertfordshire Long Distance Route runs along the northern part of the eastern boundary. The Long Distance Route heads north west out of Bovingdon. It converges with the Chiltern Long Distance Footpath

approximately 100 metres north of the northern Site boundary. There is a public footpath which runs in an approximately north east, - south west direction, branching from the Hertfordshire Long Distance Route, approximately 130 metres from the eastern boundary. The wider landscape contains a number of further public footpaths and bridleways.

### **Tree Preservation Orders**

- 2.19 None of the trees within or adjacent to the Site are covered by Tree Preservation Orders (TPO). This was confirmed by Dacorum Borough Council, via email on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2015.

## 3.0 LANDSCAPE POLICY CONTEXT

### National Planning Policy

- 3.1 The NPPF states that *'the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.'*
- 3.2 Paragraph 80 of the NPPF, sets out the five purposes of the Green Belt, which are as follows:
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 old derelict and other urban land.

### Local Policy Context

- 3.3 Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) adopted their Core Strategy on 25th September 2013. The Core Strategy is the first of a suite of documents which will make up the new Local Plan for Dacorum Borough Council and therefore does not replace all the policies contained within the adopted Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011. A number of these policies have been saved and continue to form part of the Development Plan for Dacorum Borough until they are superseded by emerging planning policy.
- 3.4 The Site lies outside of the settlement boundary and is located within the Green Belt.

### Adopted Core Strategy

- 3.5 **Policy CS5: The Green Belt** states that the Council will apply national Green Belt policy to protect the openness and the character of the Green Belt, local distinctiveness and the physical separation of settlements. There will be no general review of the Green Belt boundary through the Site Allocations DPD, although local allocations under Policies CS2 and CS3 will be permitted.
- 3.6 With the Green Belt, small-scale development will be permitted including
- a Building for the uses defined as appropriate in national policy
  - b The replacement of existing buildings for the same use
  - c Limited extensions to existing buildings

d) The appropriate reuse of permanent, substantial buildings and

e) The redevelopment of previously developed sites, including major developed sites which will be defined on the Proposals Map provided.

3.7 **Policy CS4: Towns and Large Villages** states that development will be guided to the appropriate areas within settlements. In residential areas appropriate residential development is encouraged.

3.8 **Policy CS25: Landscape Character** states that all development will help conserve and enhance Dacorum's natural and historic landscape. Proposals will be assessed for their impact on landscape features to ensure that they conserve or improve the prevailing landscape quality, character and condition and take full account of Dacorum Landscape Character Assessment, Historic Landscape Characterisation and advice contained within the Hertfordshire Historic Environment Record.

3.9 **Policy CS26: Green Infrastructure** states that The Green Infrastructure Network will be protected, extended and enhanced. Habitat management zones, projects and more detailed policies will be set out in Supplementary Planning Document and related Action Plans.

3.10 National and local Biodiversity Action Plans will be supported. Designated sites will be protected and opportunities taken to link them with the wider Green Infrastructure Network. Development and management action will contribute towards:

- The conservation and restoration of habitats and species
- The strengthening of biodiversity corridors
- The creation of better public access and links through green space and
- A greater range of uses in urban green spaces.

### **Bovingdon Place Strategy from the Adopted Core Strategy 2013**

3.11 The local objectives for Bovingdon are:

- Provide around 130 new homes between 2006 and 2031
- See to provide a residential care home
- Provide new open space
- Safeguard the unique employment uses, such as Bovingdon Brickworks and MP The Mount and
- Resolve parking issues along the High Street.

- 3.12 The Bovingdon Place Strategy identifies one allocation for the village of Proposal LA6 at Chesham Road / Molyneau Avenue for around 60 new homes and open space.

### **Core Strategy Supporting Documents**

#### **Spatial Strategy for the Village of Bovingdon (June 2009)**

- 3.13 Dacorum Borough Council have prepared a spatial strategy for the village of Bovingdon to support the Core Strategy and the document was used in the consultation period before the adoption of the Core Strategy.
- 3.14 The spatial strategy identifies four options for growth within Bovingdon as identified on the plan at **Appendix H**, which includes the Site at Homefield as part of option 2.

#### **Green Belt Review Purposes Assessment (November 2013)**

- 3.15 A Green Belt Review has been prepared for Dacorum Borough Council, St Albans City and District Council and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council by Sinclair Knight Merz (SKM) in November 2013.
- 3.16 Paragraph 1.1.2 of the report states that the brief is as follows:

*To carry out an independent and comprehensive Green Belt review for the Dacorum, St. Albans and Welwyn Hatfield administrative areas. This should include the definition of sub areas and provision of advice on the role that each sub area plays in fulfilling the fundamental aim of the Green Belt and the five purposes set out in the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF'). The study objectives are to:*

- *Examine best practice in Green Belt Reviews in order to identify and agree a methodology for the study;*
- *Review the existing Green Belt in the study area, including the aim and purposes and define sub areas for analysis;*
- *Take full account of the wider Metropolitan Green Belt;*
- *Review the role of each of the sub areas (seen as 'strategic parcels') in the context of the NPPF and consider the extent to which each contributes to the fundamental aim of retaining openness and the purposes of including land in the Green Belt;*
- *Rank and score the strategic parcels by how well they contribute to the fundamental aim and purposes of Green Belts;*
- *Consider whether, in the context of the NPPF, other areas of countryside in the study area should be proposed as Green Belt;*

- *Provide advice on the efficacy and consistency of existing local policies applying to the Green Belt in the study area; and*
- *For land within Dacorum Borough, consider whether any further, ‘major developed sites’ should be identified, in addition to those listed in Table 2 in the Dacorum Core Strategy.*

3.17 The SKM report examines the function of a series of parcels of Green Belt land defined at a strategic level. Each parcel will be assessed against the assessment criteria. The assessment criteria primarily relate to the first four national Green Belt purposes set out in the NPPF. In addition, the SKM report considers the local objectives and the role of the Green Belt within the Hertfordshire context, which the SKM report states, justifies the assessment of a local purpose which relates to maintaining the existing settlement pattern.

3.18 The fifth purpose of the NPPF has been screened out in the SKM report. The SKM report states that by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land is considered to be more complex to assess than the other four purposes stated in the NPPF because the relationship between the Green Belt and recycling of urban land is influenced by a range of external factors including local plan policies, brownfield land and availability of the land / development market.

*Parcel GB 13 – Green Belt Land to the South of Bovington*

3.19 The SKM report includes parcel assessment sheets for each Borough. Annex 1 contains the assessment sheets for Dacorum Borough within which the Site, is identified within Parcel GB13 and as sub parcel D-SS2. The parcel assessment sheet can be found at **Appendix G**.

3.20 Parcel GB13 comprises a broad swathe of land which extends south of Bovington as far as the Dacorum district boundary. Sub-parcel D-SS2 is a discrete land parcel, which includes the Site, located at the edge of the settlement.

3.21 In summary the sheet identifies that the wider parcel makes little or no contribution to purposes 1 and 2 of the NPPF Green Belt Purposes, a significant contribution to NPPF purposes 3 and 4, and partial contribution to the local Hertfordshire purpose.

3.22 In terms of the sub-parcel D-SS2 which include the Site, the assessment states that:

*‘the land at southeast Bovington at Homefield, is recommended for further assessment as a small scale sub-area (D-SS2). Assessed in isolation this land makes limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging or maintaining local gaps. The land makes relatively limited contribution to the primary functions of the Green Belt.’*

## 4.0 SITE DESCRIPTION AND VISIBILITY

### Site Description

- 4.1 The Site occupies a square parcel of land which is currently used as a paddock. The northern Site boundary abuts dwellings at Austin Mead and New Tree Drive, the eastern boundary abuts the Hertfordshire Long Distance Footpath and pastoral fields, the southern boundary adjoins fields of rough grassland, and the western boundary lies alongside dwellings at Green Lane and Homefield.
- 4.2 The Site is currently grazed by horses and contains an area of scrub vegetation located centrally within the paddock. The remaining landscape features are contained at the Site boundaries with tall, mature trees, scrub and vegetation located at the peripheries of the Site. The established vegetation to the eastern and southern boundaries, gives the Site a strong sense of enclosure from the wider countryside.
- 4.3 There are a number of mature trees at the northern and western boundaries where the Site abuts residential dwellings. In these locations the boundary also consists of garden fences and hedges, with less in the way of scrub vegetation than the eastern and southern boundaries.
- 4.4 There are approximately 9 dwellings at Austin Mead whose gardens back onto the northern Site boundary, and a further 7 dwellings at New Tree Drive and at Green Lane and Homefield whose gardens back onto the northern and western Site boundaries respectively.
- 4.5 There is access into the Site, via field gates from both New Tree Drive and Homefield. The Hertfordshire Way Long Distance Footpath runs adjacent to the northern part of the eastern boundary before heading southwards across the adjacent field.

### Landscape Quality and Value

- 4.6 The Site occupies a square parcel of land and adjoins the existing urban area of Bovingdon to the north and west. The land gently falls away to the south and the boundaries of the adjoining fields contain mature trees and hedgerows. The Site is used as a paddock and has an undistinguished urban fringe character. Accordingly, the Site is considered to be of medium to low landscape quality.

- 4.7 There are no public rights of way which cross the Site, however the Hertfordshire Way Long Distance Footpath (WLDF) runs parallel to the northern half of the eastern boundary. Views from this section of the footpath, which is located close to the Site, are heavily influenced by the existing urban area and also by the mature vegetation at the Site and adjoining field boundaries. There are no known heritage assets located within or at close proximity to the Site. The Site is therefore considered to have a medium to low landscape value.

### Topography

- 4.8 The Site is located on a relatively level parcel of land at approximately 155 metres Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). The land to the south gently falls away to approximately 149 metres AOD at Faulden Lane and to the north and north east of the Site, beyond the urban area of Bovingdon, the land remains at 155 metres AOD falling away further north to 140 metres AOD. The disused Bovingdon Airfield and MP The Mount are located on the west side of Bovingdon at approximately 160 metres AOD. The airfield is a large open expanse of land and views of it cannot be seen from the Site.

### Visibility

- 4.9 An appraisal of the visibility of the Site was undertaken and a series of photographs taken from public vantage points, rights of way and public highways. The viewpoints are illustrated on the aerial photograph at **Appendix B** and the photographs contained in **Appendix C**.
- 4.10 From our appraisal it is apparent that views of the Site are limited to near distance views from the adjoining fields, housing and public right of way by a combination of boundary vegetation and sub-urban development. The key views of the Site are described in the tables contained in **Appendix J** and are summarised below.

### Near Distance Views

- 4.11 There are near distance views from the dwellings at New Tree Drive, Austins Mead (**Photograph 15**), Homefield and Green Lane (**Photograph 03**). Dwellings at Green Lane are set within larger plots than those at Austins Mead and New Tree Avenue resulting in views being more heavily filtered by rear garden vegetation. Dwellings at New Tree Drive and Austins Mead are partially filtered by existing vegetation at the northern Site boundaries but have views from ground and first floor elevations.
- 4.12 From the southern end of New Tree Avenue there are partial views of the Site over the farm access gate. There is a similar situation at Homefield where partial views of the Site are available over the field gate.

- 4.13 From the Hertfordshire Way Long Distance Footpath (HWLDF) which runs adjacent to the northern half of the eastern boundary, heavily filtered views of the Site are available through the trees at the eastern boundary (Photograph 05). From further along the HWLDF at the southerly extent of the neighbouring field, heavily filtered views of the Site can be seen through the trees and vegetation at the eastern Site boundary vegetation (Photograph 08).
- 4.14 Further along the HWLDF, south of the Site, views of the Site are prevented by intervening vegetation and by the gentle falling of local landform (Photographs 09 and 10). From Bovingdon Conservation Area, views of the Site are prevented by the intervening urban area.

#### **Middle and Long Distance Views**

- 4.15 From Chipperfield Road and public footpath, approaching the village from the south east views of the Site are prevented by intervening vegetation and landform (Photograph 21).
- 4.16 North east of the Site at the Chiltern Way Long Distance Footpath (CWLDF) views of the Site are prevented by the built up area of Bovingdon (Photographs 17 and 16).
- 4.17 In middle distance views from the HWLDF and the public footpath which crosses it views are obscured by intervening vegetation and landform (Photographs 19, 10 and 11). Similarly from Flaunden Road (Photograph 20) views of the Site are screened by existing vegetation and the intervening landform.

## 5.0 SUITABILITY OF THE SITE TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT

5.1 The following section assesses the ability of the Site to accommodate residential development and any potential impacts on the character of the landscape and visual amenity, or on the objectives of the Green Belt policy. The key landscape and visual effects are summarised on the tables in **Appendix J**, and described in the relevant section below.

5.2 The key development and landscape principles, which should be adopted by future development proposals, are summarised below:

- Retention of the existing vegetation at the Site boundaries, in particular those at the eastern and southern peripheries
- Respect the amenity of the existing properties at New Tree Drive, Austins Mead and Homefield where dwellings have partial / open views into the Site
- Respect the amenity of properties at Green Lane where properties have filtered views into the Site
- Vehicular access to be provided from Homefield with potential for a secondary vehicular and pedestrian access from New Tree Drive
- Retain vegetation adjacent to the Hertfordshire Way Long Distance Footpath and respect the amenity of this footpath in the layout of the Site
- Provide pedestrian connections from the Site to the WLDF

5.3 In the following section a brief commentary is made on the effects of developing the Site against a series of landscape criteria.

### Relationship to Existing Development

5.4 The proposed development area is well related to the existing housing at Bovington which extends alongside the northern and western boundaries of the Site. To the south west is additional housing and open space beyond which is an area of playing fields. A short distance south west is a collection of farm buildings which separate the Site from the wider countryside.

### Landscape Features

5.5 There are no landscape features contained within the Site which would pose a constraint to development and there are significant opportunities for landscape enhancements at the boundaries of the Site and within areas of new open space.

## Public Rights of Way

- 5.6 There are no public rights of way which cross the Site. The nearest public right of way is the CWLDF which runs adjacent to the northern half of the eastern boundary of the Site, the footpath then crosses the adjacent field diagonally and heads in a south easterly direction. There are opportunities to provide connections from the Site to the footpath whilst also retaining the path along its current route and respecting its setting through the retention of existing vegetation at the Site boundaries.

## Visibility

- 5.7 The visual appraisal set out in Section 4 identifies that views of the Site are limited to near distance views from the adjoining field, housing and CWLDF. The Site is well contained in middle and long distance views by virtue of the local topography and existing vegetation in the landscape.

## North

- 5.8 Dwellings at New Tree Drive and Austins Mead are partially filtered by existing vegetation at the northern Site boundary and within the rear gardens of the properties which back onto the Site. These dwellings have relatively short rear gardens and views of development will be available from rear gardens, ground and first floor windows. Future development proposals should adopt appropriate back to back distances and privacy standards in order to respect the visual amenity of these dwellings.
- 5.9 From the CWLDF north of Bovingdon, views of the Site are prevented by the intervening urban area and landform. Similarly, views from within the Bovingdon Conservation Area are prevented by the intervening vegetation and landform.

## East

- 5.10 Views from the CWLDF adjacent to the Site are heavily filtered by the existing boundary vegetation, and loss of visual amenity will be limited, particularly given its proximity to the existing urban area.
- 5.11 From the CWLDF at the south easterly corner of the adjacent field, views of the Site will remain heavily filtered through the existing vegetation. From this point onwards, heading in a south easterly direction, views of the Site from the CWLDF are prevented by intervening vegetation at field boundaries and the gentle falling away of the land.
- 5.12 From the public footpath and from Chipperfield Road to the east, views of the Site are prevented by the vegetation at field boundaries and the local topography.

## South

- 5.13 A public footpath branches from the WLDf and heads in south westerly direction towards Bovingdon Green, passing an extensive area of nursery glass houses. From this footpath views of the Site are precluded by mature vegetation at field boundaries and by the local topography. From Bovingdon Green, the situation is similar – views of the Site are precluded by intervening vegetation and also by development at Green Lane.
- 5.14 Middle and long distance views from the public footpaths and roads, south of the Site are prevented by intervening vegetation and landform.

## West

- 5.15 There are a small number of filtered views from the dwellings at Green Lane whose rear gardens back onto the Site. Garden vegetation and trees at the Site boundary filter a number of the available views however, a small number of properties will gain views of development at the Site. Appropriate back to back distances and new landscape planting at the western boundary will help to respect the amenity of these properties.
- 5.16 Dwellings at Green Lane are set within larger plots than those at Austins Mead and New Tree Avenue resulting in views being more heavily filtered by rear garden vegetation, minimising any loss of visual amenity resulting from development at the Site.
- 5.17 The majority of the built up area of Bovingdon is located to the west of the Site at Green Lane and the B4505. This significant area of development results in views of the Site being unavailable from the west. The disused airfield and MP The Mount are located on the western and north western extents of the village. Although the airfield is a relatively large, flat and open expanse the intervening built up area of the village and the slight level change across the area result in views of the Site being unavailable from this location. This situation applies to the MP The Mount also, which is located adjacent to the airfield.
- 5.18 Beyond the airfield to the west, the land falls away and scattered areas of woodland are a common feature, which prevent views of the Site.

## Landscape Character and Quality

- 5.19 As discussed in the previous section, the Site does not carry any statutory or non-statutory designations for landscape character or quality it is well related to the existing urban area and has a somewhat urban fringe character. The proposals can respect the existing landscape assets of the Site and provide opportunities for landscape enhancements within areas of open space and at the Site boundaries.

5.20 Furthermore, as a result of the Site's proximity to the existing urban area of Bovingdon, and the well vegetated nature of the adjoining landscape, residential development at the Site will have no material impact on the character of the wider landscape. Accordingly, a well-conceived layout in this location will not appear at odds with its suburban setting and the proposals could be accommodated without significantly impacting on the character of the immediate landscape or townscape.

### **Compliance with Planning Policy and Landscape Guidance**

5.21 The proposals lie outside the existing settlement boundary and thus within the countryside. The Site is however, well related to the existing urban area, in a sustainable location and would represent a planned release of land to meet an identified housing need.

5.22 The Site can accommodate appropriate development at the edge of the settlement, in a manner which respects the scale and amenity of the surrounding residential area. It will not impact on the setting of any heritage assets and can retain the majority of the existing landscape features, as well as make provision for new planting. As a result, the proposals will not offend the landscape policies in the Adopted Core Strategy.

### **Green Belt Policy**

5.23 The SKM Green Belt Review highlights that the Site, identified as sub-parcel D-SS2, makes limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging or maintaining local gaps. The land therefore makes a relatively limited contribution to the primary functions of the Green Belt.

5.24 We would concur with these findings for the following reasons:

- The Site is well related to the existing urban area and development would be a planned release of land and would not constitute urban sprawl
- The Site benefits from robust, defensible boundaries and is contained in views such that new housing development would not encroach on the wider countryside
- Development would not impact on any known heritage assets and
- Development would not lead to coalescence.

5.25 In addition, there are limited opportunities for brown field regeneration within the existing settlement area at Bovingdon and therefore a planned release of green field land would not prejudice urban regeneration within the settlement.

## 6.0 APPRAISAL OF POTENTIAL SITES WITHIN THE GREENBELT AT BOVINGDON

6.1 In addition to the appraisal of the land at Homefield, this document considers the ability of the Green Belt land on the periphery of the village to accommodate residential development and any potential landscape and visual constraints. Dacorum Borough Council's Spatial Strategy for the Village of Bovington (June 2009), has identified four options for growth within the village, all of which are located within the Green Belt. A plan identifying the location of each of the areas is contained in **Appendix H**, and they are as follows:

- Option 1: Duckhall Farm
- Option 2: Rear of Green Lane (including the Site)
- Option 3: Grange Farm
- Option 4: North of Chesham Road

6.2 Our appraisal of the four options are summarised in the tables at **Appendix I** and the findings of this appraisal are briefly summarised below.

6.3 The appraisal considers the potential for release of these greenfield parcels against the five functions of the Green Belt as stated in the NPPF, which are as follows:

- 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 old derelict and other urban land.

6.4 The NPPF states at paragraph 79 and 80, that the essential character of the Green Belts is their openness, their permanence and their ability to serve the functions as set out above. The Framework notes that when defining Green Belt boundaries, local authorities should take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development and ensure that there would be sufficient safeguarded land outside the Green Belt in order to meet the long term development needs of the area. It goes on to say that the Green Belt boundaries should be defined clearly along physical features which are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.

- 6.5 Dacorum Borough Council commissioned SKM to carry out an assessment of the Green Belt around Bovington. The SKM Green Belt Review Purposes Assessment divides the periphery of the village into three broad study areas (GB12, GB13 and GB14A) and assesses how these parcels perform against the five purposes of the NPPF.
- 6.6 Due to the scale of the assessed parcels, the report makes general comments on their function against the objectives of the Green Belt. In the case of Bovington, the report identifies one distinct sub parcel for further consideration. It notes that the sub parcel, D-SS2, which includes the land south of Green Lane as making little contribution to the Green Belt objectives.
- 6.7 Option 1, is located on the north west periphery of the village and occupies an area of rough grassland dissected by multiple hedgerows and trees which would pose constraint to development at this location. The two most southerly fields of this option are bounded by the existing urban area at Bovington, with Duckhall Farm and Honours Farm, both listed buildings, indented into the southern end. The more northerly stretch of this land, however, would extend the existing urban envelope, encroaching on the wider countryside and would erode the gap between Bovington and a small collection of dwellings further along the Kempstead Road.
- 6.8 Option 2, is located to the rear of Green Lane, New Tree Drive and Austins Mead and is well related to the existing urban area of Bovington. The option comprises roughly three fields and part of an adjoining field, which contain mature, well vegetated boundaries. This area is well contained in views from the wider area and development would not encroach particularly on the adjoining countryside. In addition, development in this location would not impact on any known heritage assets contribute to coalescence and a planned release of land could be accommodated without resulting in urban sprawl. Accordingly, growth in this direction would not significantly impact on the objectives of the Green Belt.
- 6.9 Option 3, is located on the south western edge of Bovington and comprises of large fields sub-divided by wire fences with some evidence of use as playing fields. This option contains mature vegetation to its eastern boundary with less to the north and west allowing views to the neighbouring disused Bovington Airfield. Green Lane runs adjacent to the southern boundary of this option and currently has a relatively rural feel. Development in this location would result in a significant expansion to the south of the village. It would encroach on the adjoining countryside and would be visible in views from the south and the approach to the village along B4505.

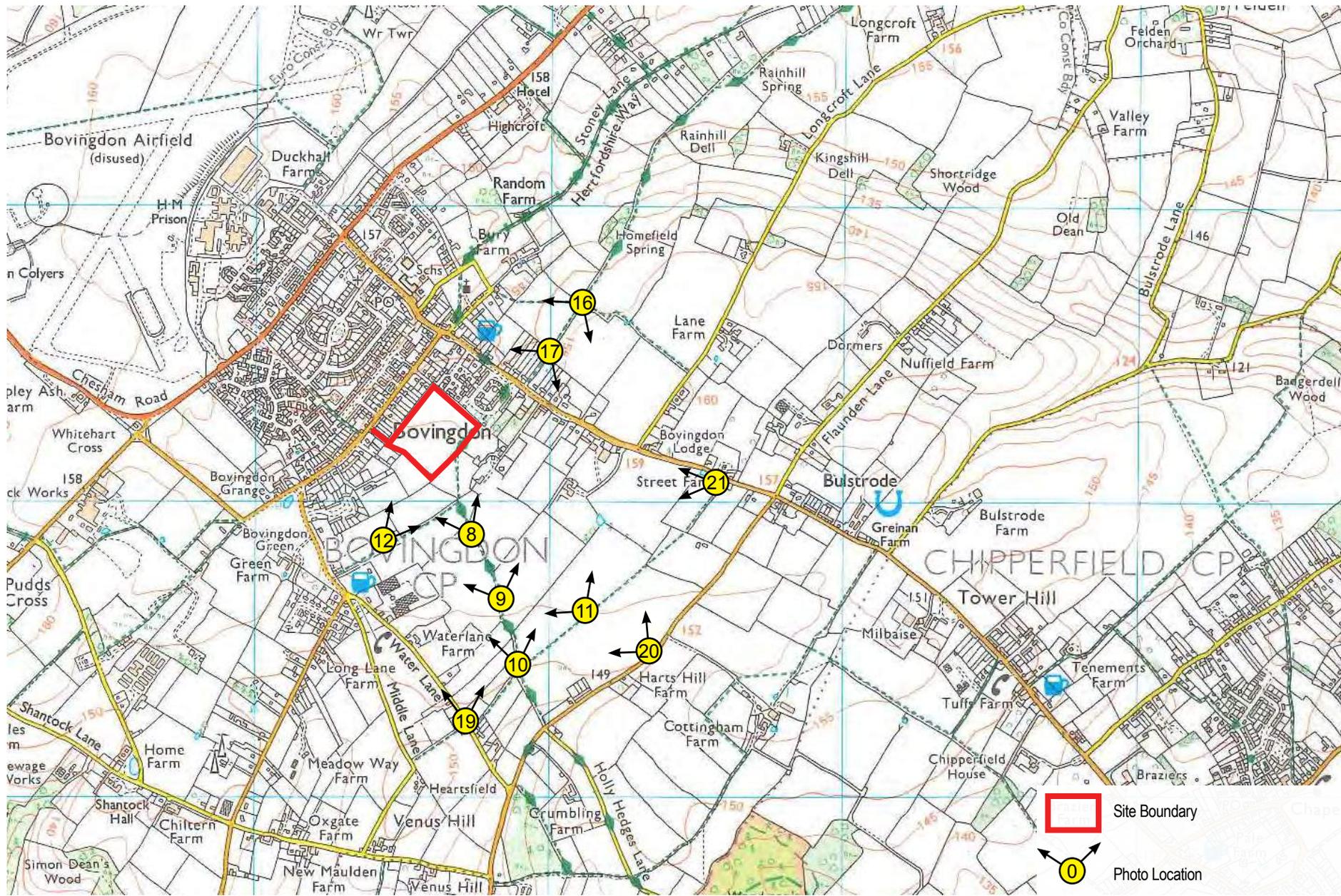
- 6.10 Option 4 is located east and west of Molyneau Avenue. The parcel east of Molyneau Avenue is overgrown and birch and scrub have begun to colonise the land. This part of the option is well contained in views and is surrounded by development on all sides except the west, where the disused airfield is located. This area forms part of a local allocation in the Core Strategy and its removal from the Green Belt would do little to compromise the Green Belt objectives. West of Molyneau Avenue is the disused Bovingdon airfield of which the part closest to the B4505 is included in the option. This is relatively open in views owing to the absence of any significant landscape features. Development here would extend beyond the existing village extents and would impact on open land at the edge of the village.

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The Site is bound by New Tree Avenue and Austins Mead to the north, Homefield and Green Lane to the west, rough grassland fields to the south and by the WLDF and pastoral agricultural land to the east. The Site is being promoted for residential development through Dacorum Borough Council's DBC Call for Sites to inform preparation of the new Local Plan.
- 7.2 The Site lies within the Green Belt, however it has been identified within a recent Green Belt Review, undertaken by Dacorum Borough Council, to be considered as suitable for further assessment as it *'makes limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging or maintaining local gaps. The land makes relatively limited contribution to the primary functions of the Green Belt.'*
- 7.3 There are no policies for landscape character or quality covering the Site or the adjoining land and the Site contains no TPO trees. It is relatively undistinguished in landscape character.
- 7.4 The Site is well contained in views from the wider countryside due to the mature vegetation at the Site boundaries and the nature of the local topography. It is well related to the existing pattern of development and housing in this location would not encroach significantly on the wider countryside to the south. In addition, our appraisal found that the Site makes little contribution to the first four objectives of the Green Belt as set out in the NPPF.
- 7.5 This appraisal also considered opportunities for development at the four options as identified in Dacorum Borough Council's Spatial Strategy for the village of Bovingdon. In this respect, the appraisal found that option 2 and part of option 4 (the allocated site east of Molyneau Avenue) would provide the most logical release of land from the Green Belt and provide the least impact in landscape terms.
- 7.6 Our overall conclusion is that, in accordance with a coherent and well thought out layout, the scheme will not result in any significant landscape or visual effects or have a material impact on the character of the local landscape or existing settlement and is suitable for release from the Green Belt.

## **Appendix A**

Location Plan  
CSa/2614/101



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Project Homefield, Bovingdon  
Title Location Plan  
Client Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd

Date March 2015  
Scale Not to Scale  
Drawn JC Checked RC

Drawing Number CSa/2614/101  
Revision -

**Appendix B**

Aerial Photograph  
CSa/2614/100



## **Appendix C**

Photographs  
CSa/2614/103

Northern Site Boundary

Southern Site Boundary



Photograph 01

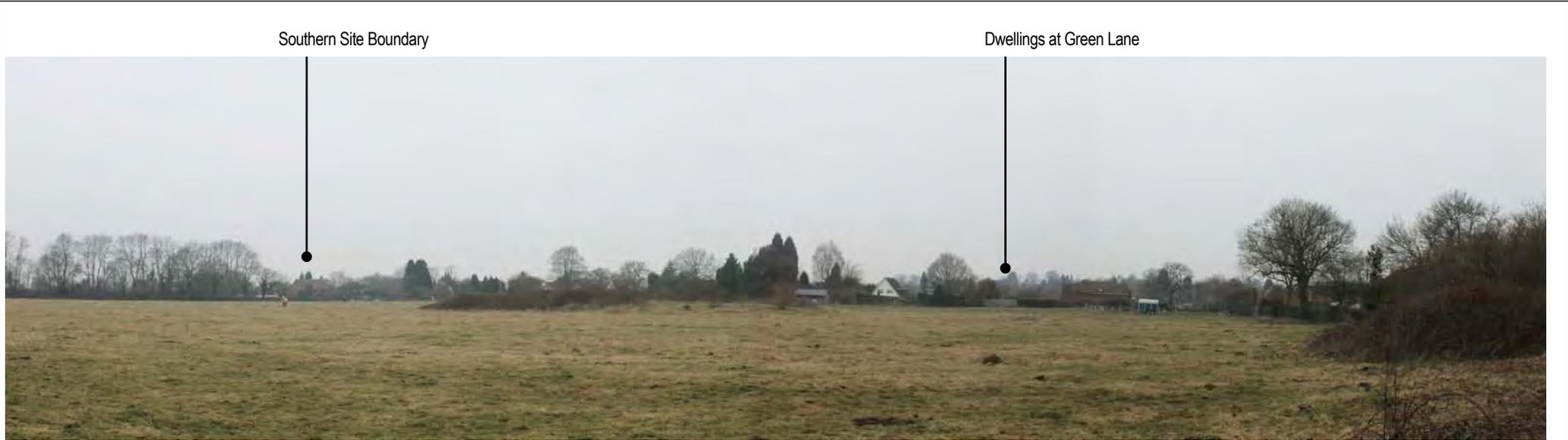
Western Site Boundary

Dwellings at Homefield

Dwellings at Yew Tree Drive



Photograph 02



Photograph 03



The Hertfordshire Way Long Distance Footpath looking north

Photograph 04



The Hertfordshire Way Long Distance Footpath looking north

Photograph 05

Project	Homefield, Bovington
Title	Photosheets
Client	Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd

Date	March 2015
Drawn	ES
Checked	RC

Drawing Number	CSa/2614/103
Revision	-



Photograph 06



Photograph 07

The Hertfordshire Way Long Distance Footpath

Eastern Site Boundary



Photograph 08

The Hertfordshire Way Long Distance Footpath



Photograph 09

The Hertfordshire Way Long Distance Footpath



Photograph 10



View from public footpath South of the Site. Photograph 11



View from public footpath south west of the Site. Photograph 12



Photograph 13

Project	Homefield, Bovington	Date	March 2015		Drawing Number	CSa/2614/103	
Title	Photosheets	Drawn	ES	Checked	RC	Revision	-
Client	Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd						

Southern Site Boundary

Eastern Site Boundary



Photograph 14

Dwellings at Yew Tree Close and Austins Mead



Photograph 15

Project	Homefield, Bovington
Title	Photosheets
Client	Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd

Date	March 2015	
Drawn	ES	Checked RC

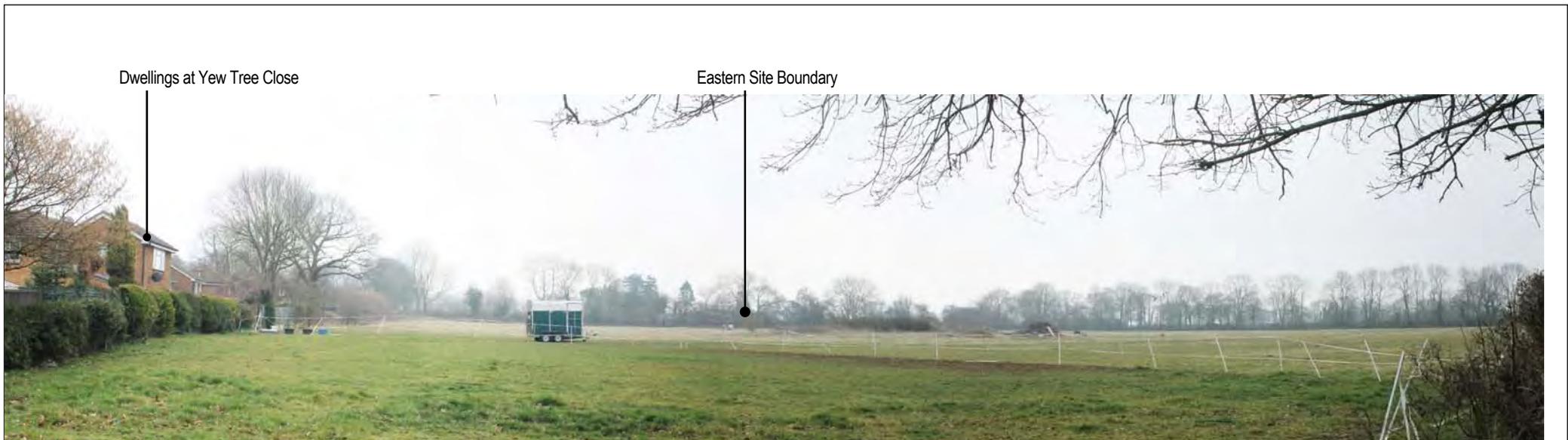
Drawing Number	CSa/2614/103
Revision	-



View from The Chiltern Way Long Distance Footpath. Photograph 16



The Chiltern Way Long Distance Footpath. Photograph 17



View of the Site from Homefield. Photograph 18



View from public footpath South of the Site. Photograph 19



View from Flaunden Lane. Photograph 20

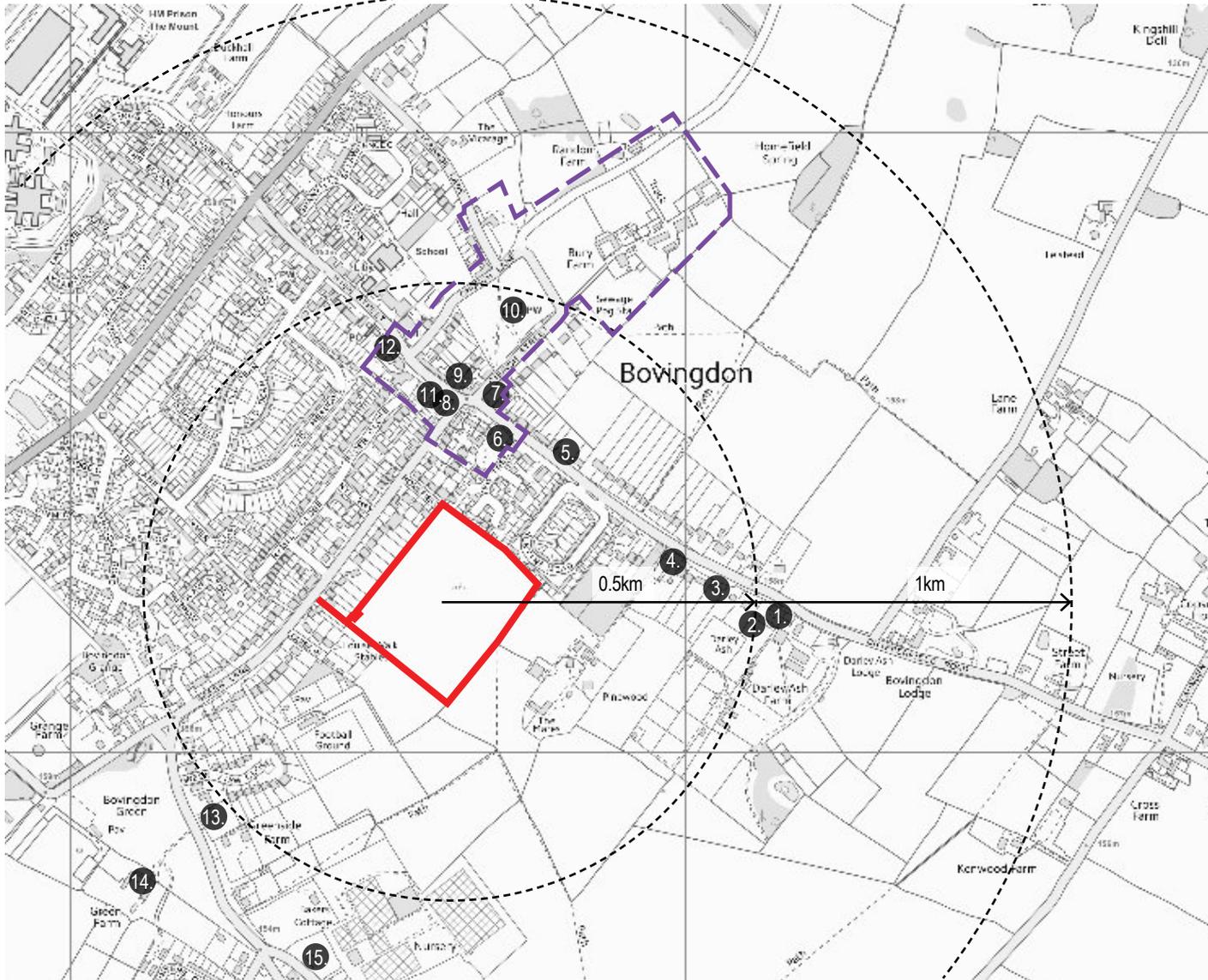


View from public footpath to the South east. Photograph 21

Project	Homefield, Bovington	Date	March 2015		Drawing Number	CSa/2614/103	
Title	Photosheets	Drawn	ES	Checked	RC	Revision	-
Client	Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd						

## **Appendix D**

Magic Map Extract  
CSa/2614/102



- Site Boundary
- 0.5 & 1km Radius
- Approximate Extent of Bovingdon Conservation Area

**1. Listed Buildings (England)**

1. Entrance Barn at Rent Street Barns, Chipperfield Road Grade II
2. Rent Street Barn, Chipperfield Road, Grade II\*
3. The White Cottage, Chipperfield Road, Grade II
4. Ivy Cottage, Lantern Cottage & Primrose Cottage, Chipperfield Road, Grade II
5. Forge Cottage, Chipperfield Road, Grade II
6. Yew Tree Cottage, Chipperfield Road, Grade II
7. Bull Cottage, Chipperfield Road, Grade II
8. 106 & 108 High Street, Grade II
9. The Bell Public House, High Street, Grade II
10. Church of St. Lawrence, Church Street, Grade II\*
11. The Wheatsheaf, High Street, Grade II
12. Bovingdon Cottage & Tumbleweed Cottage, Grade II
13. Red Lion Cottage, Green Lane, Grade II
14. Green Farmhouse & attached Farm Buildings, Green Lane, Grade II
15. Water Lane Cottage, Water Lane, Grade II

Project	Home Field, Bovingdon
Title	Magic Map Extract
Client	Taylor Wimpey Strategic

Date	March 2015
Scale	Not to Scale
Drawn	JC
Checked	RC

Drawing Number	CSa/2614/102
Revision	-

## **Appendix E**

Purposes Assessment Criteria Questions from SKM Green Belt Review

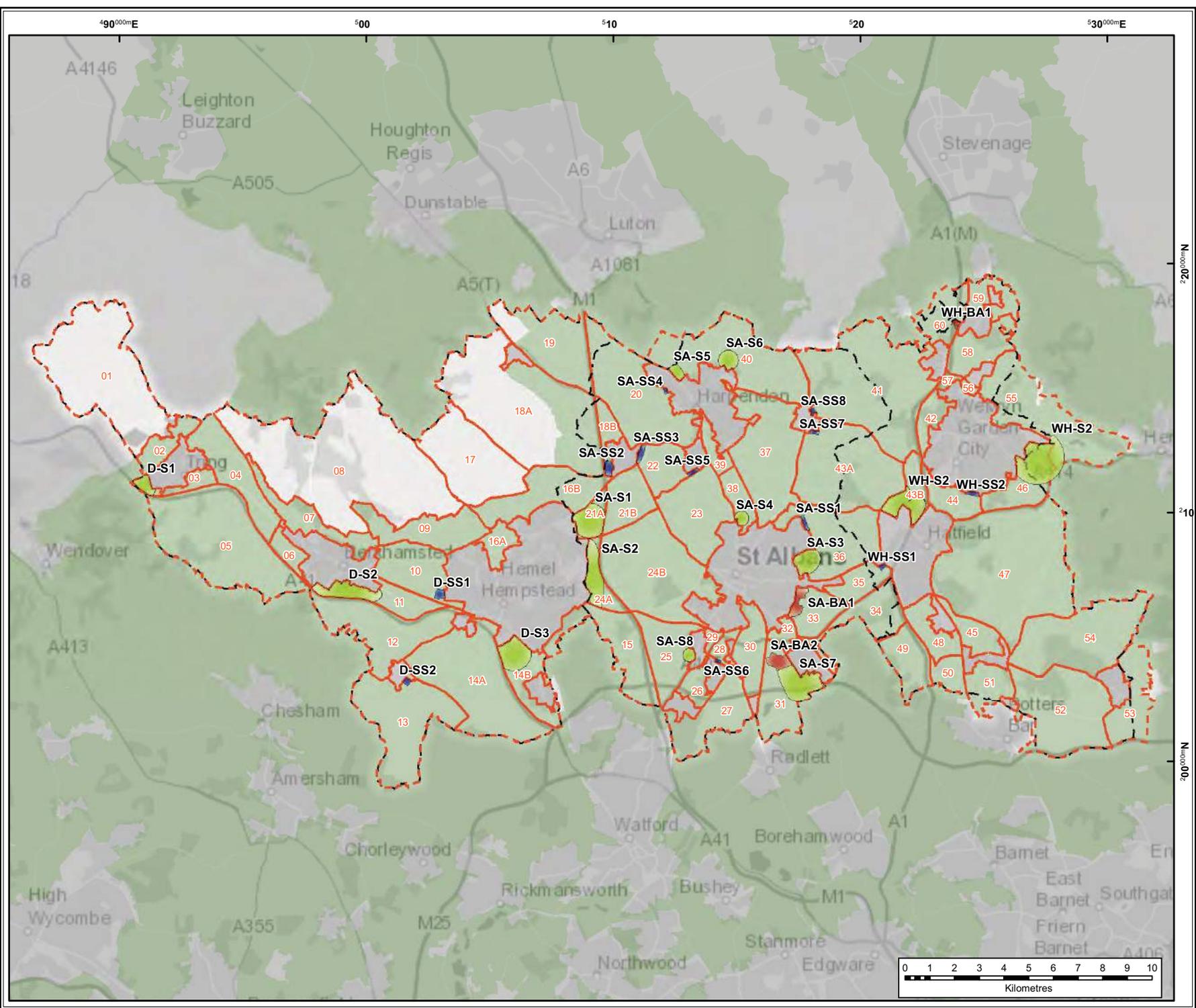
**Table 5.4. Purposes Assessment Criteria Questions**

<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Definition of Purpose to be applied in Assessment</b>
<i>To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas</i>	1) Does the parcel act, in itself, as an effective barrier against sprawl from large built-up areas outside of the study area specifically London, Luton & Dunstable and Stevenage? 2) Does the parcel contribute, as part of a wider network of parcels, to a strategic barrier against the sprawl of these built-up areas?
<i>To prevent neighbouring towns from merging</i>	3) Does the parcel provide, or form part of, a gap or space between existing 1 <sup>st</sup> tier settlements (neighbouring towns)? 4) What is the distance of the gap between the settlements? 5) Is there evidence of ribbon development on major route corridors? 6) What is the visual perception of the gap between settlements from major route corridors? 7) Would a reduction in the gap compromise the separation of settlements in physical terms? 8) Would a reduction in the gap compromise the separation of settlements and the overall openness of the parcel visually?
<i>To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment</i>	9) What countryside / rural characteristics exist within the parcel including agricultural or forestry land uses and how is this recognised in established national and local landscape designations? 10) Has there already been any significant encroachment by built development or other urbanising elements? (Specify the proportion (%) of built development in the parcel)
<i>To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns</i>	11) What settlements or places with historic features exist within the parcel? 12) What is the relationship and connection (in the form of character, views and visual perception) between the parcel and historic feature? 13) Does the parcel provide an open setting or a buffer against encroachment by development around settlements or places with historic features?
<b>Local Purpose</b>	<b>Assessment Criteria</b>
<i>Maintaining existing settlement pattern</i>	14) Same assessment as 2 <sup>nd</sup> purpose, applied to spaces and gaps between the tiers of settlement below 1 <sup>st</sup> to 1 <sup>st</sup> tier.

## Appendix F

Figure 8.1: Land Contributing Least Towards Green Belt Purposes from SKM  
Green Belt Review

Copyright SKM Enviros  
Name: Figure8.1\_Least Contribution to GB



**Key:**

- Boundary Adjustment
- Small Scale Sub-Area
- Strategic Sub-Area
- Study Area Outer Boundary
- District Borough Boundary
- Land Parcel Boundary
- Green Belt

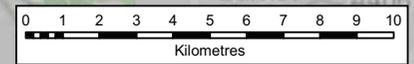
Coordinate System: British National Grid  
 Projection: Transverse Mercator  
 Datum: OSGB 1936  
 Units: Meter

REVISION: H

### Green Belt Review for St Albans, Dacorum and Welwyn Hatfield

**FIGURE 8.1.**  
**Land Contributing Least  
Towards Green Belt  
Purposes**

<b>SCALE</b>	<b>PROJECT CODE</b>
1:145,000 @ A3	JE30761
<b>CONTENT</b>	<b>DRAWN</b>
London.Gov Ordnance Survey	KW
<b>CHECKED</b>	<b>DATE</b>
RB	2/12/2013

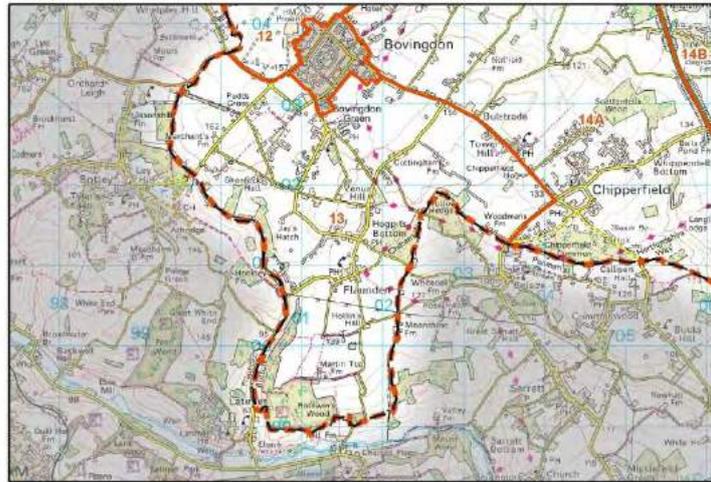


## **Appendix G**

Parcel Assessment Sheets for Dacorum Borough Council

## GB13 –Green Belt Land to the South of Bovingdon

**Description:** The parcel is located to the south of Bovingdon extending south to the edge of the study area. It is 1,087 ha in size and comprises a large gently undulating chalk plateau.



**Land use:** Predominately arable farmland, plus Bovingdon Brickworks (MDS), caravan site (travelling show-people) and playing fields.

View to northwest from Flaunden Lane towards Bovingdon showing strong open and rural characteristics as well as development in the Green Belt



Example of enclosed southeast edge of Bovingdon displaying enclosure and urban influence



## Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards safeguarding the countryside and preserving the setting of Flaunden and Chipperfield. Partial contributions towards maintaining the existing settlement pattern. Overall the parcel contributes significantly to 2 out of 5 purposes.

<b>GB13 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment</b>		<b>Contribution</b>
<b>To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas</b>		<b>LIMITED OR NO</b>
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl		
<b>To prevent neighbouring towns from merging</b>		<b>LIMITED OR NO</b>
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 <sup>st</sup> tier settlements.		
<b>To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment</b>		<b>SIGNIFICANT</b>
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in medium sized arable fields with some pasture, bound by dense hedgerows and frequent hedgerow trees. Fragmented small pockets of deciduous woodland are scattered over the parcel with larger areas of ancient woodland, particularly at Baldwin's Wood in the south. Urban features include the Brickworks and other development and unclassified settlements. Dispersed ribbon development and large single dwellings extend along minor routes, particularly from Bovingdon Green to Flaunden and Chipperfield. As a result the parcel exhibits mixed levels of visual openness. Land to the southeast of Bovingdon in particular displays greater levels of enclosure due to landscape features and urban influence due to residential edges.		
<b>To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns</b>		<b>SIGNIFICANT</b>
The parcel contains Flaunden and part of Chipperfield Conservation Areas and is adjacent to Bovingdon Conservation Area. It forms part of the wider setting for the historic villages of Latimer and Chenies to the south of the parcel in Chiltern District. The Green Belt acts as an immediate open and rural historic setting, providing views to and from the countryside.		
<b>To maintain existing settlement pattern</b>		<b>PARTIAL</b>
The parcel provides the secondary local gap between Bovingdon 2 <sup>nd</sup> and Chipperfield 3 <sup>rd</sup> which is 2.1km. The gap is large and has been subject to ribbon development which limits the perception of the gap. Any small scale reduction in the gap could be likely to compromise separation of the settlements in physical terms, or levels of visual openness.		

### **Level of openness and countryside character**

**Existence of built development** The level of built development is low at 0.8%. Residential ribbon development has spread from villages and hamlets along narrow country lanes.

**Visual Openness** The parcel has limited opportunities for open views due to the densely hedged narrow lanes and there are few focal points or vistas within the landscape.

**Countryside Character** Predominantly agricultural but the settlement pattern comprises a number of villages which have spread across the plateau organically, leaving settlement edges loose and indistinct in many places.

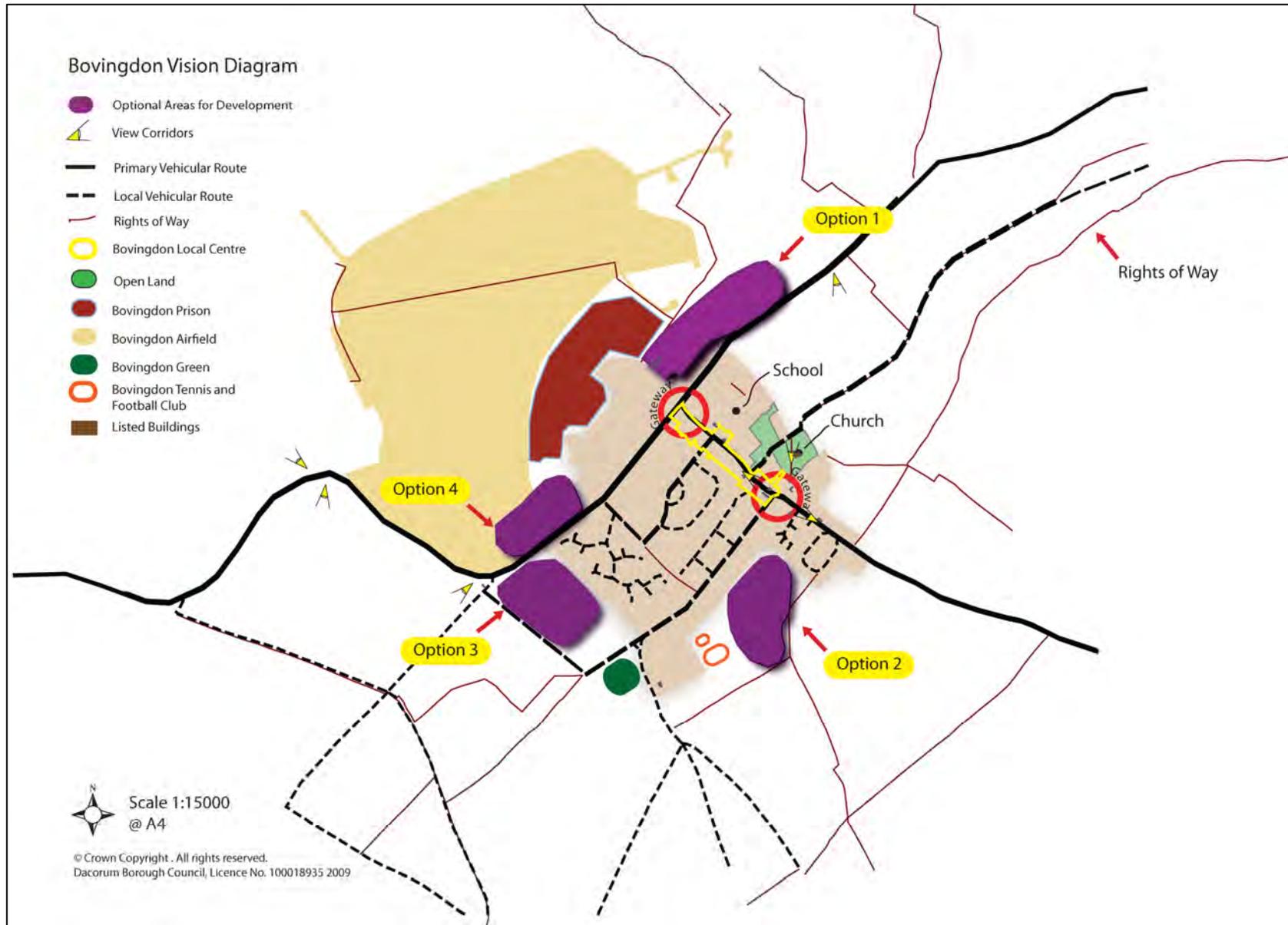
### **GB13 – Next Steps**

Land at southeast edge of Bovingdon at Homefield, off Green Lane is recommended for further assessment as a small scale sub-area ID-SS2. Assessed in isolation this land makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging or maintaining local gaps. The land makes a relatively limited contribution to the primary functions of the Green Belt.

## **Appendix H**

Bovingdon Spatial Strategy for the Village, Options for Growth

**Figure 3.1 – Bovingdon Vision Diagram**



## **Appendix I**

Review of Green Belt Options

OPTION 1

**Duckhall Farm**

SITE PHOTO



LANDSCAPE POLICY

CS5: The Green Belt  
Outside Settlement Boundary and therefore located in the countryside

LANDSCAPE QUALITY AND VALUE

Medium / Low and Low

LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

Low / Medium

GREEN BELT REVIEW BY DACORUM  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

May increase urban sprawl, provides local wildlife corridors, important part of the surrounding countryside.

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY & HERITAGE ASSETS

Not publically accessible, Public footpath adjacent to part of Western boundary. Duckhall Farm and Honours Farm, indented into the south of the option are Listed Buildings

SITE DESCRIPTION

Option 1 occupies an area of rough grassland dissected by multiple hedgerows with trees located at the northern edge of Bovingdon. The southern fields of the option are surrounded by development to the east, south and HMP The Mount to the west. The northern fields extend beyond the existing built up area of Bovingdon and provide a gap between the village and a small number of dwellings at Hempstead Road.

LANDSCAPE / GREEN BELT ASSESSMENT

The option is well related to the existing settlement at its southern end, however the middle and northern extents of the option extend further than existing development at the settlement and would result in coalescence with a number of dwellings along the Hempstead Road. It is considered to be of medium landscape quality and is dissected by a large number of mature hedgerows and trees, which would constrain development on this option, along with the Listed Buildings at the southern end of the Option. Development at this location would encroach into the countryside and would be visible along the road on the approach to the village.



 Option 1

 Public Right of Way

OPTION 2	<b>Rear of Green Lane</b>
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**SITE PHOTO**



LANDSCAPE POLICY	CS5: The Green Belt Outside Settlement Boundary and therefore located in the countryside
LANDSCAPE QUALITY AND VALUE	Medium / Low and Low
LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY	Medium / Low
GREEN BELT REVIEW BY DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL	Accessible to village centre, option forms part of the wider countryside. Forms sub-parcel D-SS2, which is suggested to contribute little to the Green Belt purposes
PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY & HERITAGE ASSETS	The Hertfordshire Way Long Distance Footpath runs adjacent to the eastern boundary. No heritage assets.

**SITE DESCRIPTION**

Option 2 comprises 1 large field, 2 smaller and part of an adjoining field. The fields are currently being used for typical urban fringe uses such as horse grazing. The fields have mature trees and vegetation to their boundaries and are well related to the existing urban area to the north and west.

**LANDSCAPE / GREEN BELT ASSESSMENT**

The option is well related to the existing housing area, with development to the north, west and east and with playing fields to the south. It would not encroach particularly onto the adjoining countryside but the mature, well vegetated boundaries of the fields would provide defensible boundaries, a robust edge to development and minimise views from the surrounding countryside. Development at this location could compliment the existing settlement pattern. No heritage assets will be impacted upon.

**AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH**



OPTION 3	<b>Grange Farm</b>
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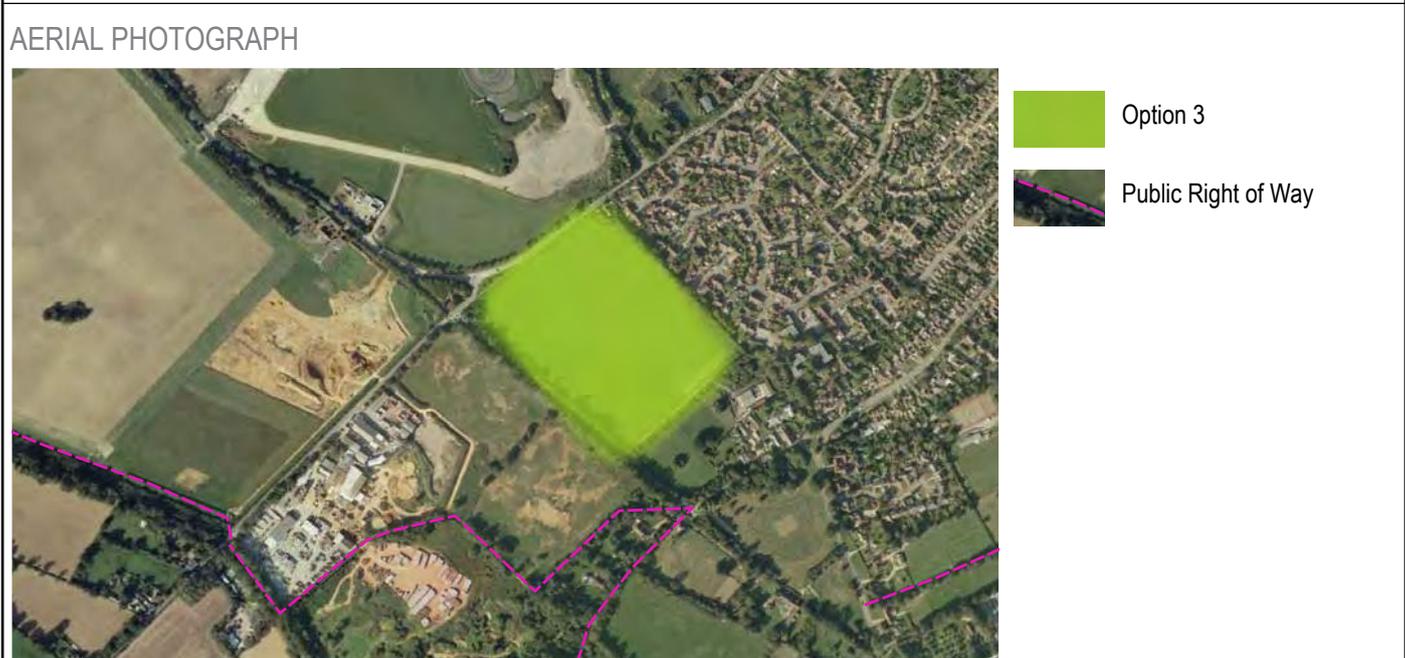
LANDSCAPE POLICY	CS5: The Green Belt Outside Settlement Boundary and therefore located in the countryside
LANDSCAPE QUALITY AND VALUE	Medium / Low and Low
LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY	Medium
GREEN BELT REVIEW BY DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL	Further from village centre, represents a gap between brickworks and village, prominent from existing roads and important part of countryside
PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY & HERITAGE ASSETS	No public rights of way, Grade II listed building is located close to the north western corner of the option

**SITE DESCRIPTION**

Option 3 comprises two fields sub-divided by post and wire fences with some evidence of use as playing fields. The eastern boundary contains mature trees, with the other boundaries containing fewer trees and some hedgerow planting. The western boundary abuts the B4505 and the disused airfield. The southern boundary abuts Green Lane which has a rural character.

**LANDSCAPE / GREEN BELT ASSESSMENT**

Development at this location would result in a significant expansion to the south of the village, beyond the built up area of Bovingdon and would impact on the rural character and countryside of Green Lane. Partial views of development would be available from the disused airfield. Development would also be visible from the approach into the village along the B4505.



<b>OPTION 4</b>	<b>North Chesham Road</b>
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<b>LANDSCAPE POLICY</b>	CS5: The Green Belt Outside Settlement Boundary and therefore located in the countryside Option 4 east: Location Allocation 6 - Chesham Road/Molyneux Avenue
<b>LANDSCAPE QUALITY AND VALUE</b>	Low and Medium / Low
<b>LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY</b>	East Site - Low    West Site - Medium
<b>GREEN BELT REVIEW BY DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL</b>	Seperated from village by relatively busy road, further from village centre, airfield side is prominent from Chesham Road, wildlife corridor.
<b>PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY &amp; HERITAGE ASSETS</b>	No public rights of way cross the site or are located in close proximity. No heritage assets.

**SITE DESCRIPTION**  
 The area east of Molyneaux Avenue is overgrown with scrub and birch. The area is enclosed by existing development to the north, east and west with the disused airfield to the south. The area west of Molyneaux Avenue comprises part of the disused airfield, located close to the B4505.

**LANDSCAPE / GREEN BELT ASSESSMENT**  
 The option east of Molyneaux Avenue is well related to the existing urban area of Bovingdon with robust boundaries and connections to Molyneaux Avenue and the B4505. The option west of Molyneaux Avenue is more open in character as a result of its previous use as an airfield. Development at this location would extend the settlement beyond its current limites and would be more readily apparent from the surroundings, particularly on the approach to the village along the B4505.



## **Appendix J**

### **Landscape and Visual Effects Tables**

## LANDSCAPE/TOWNSCAPE EFFECTS

Direct effects on landscape features	Quality & Sensitivity	Existing Conditions	Impact and Mitigation	Magnitude of Change	Effect
<b>Hedgerows</b>	Medium	There are hedgerows at the boundaries of the Site, some are field hedgerows and others form parts of rear garden boundaries.	The existing hedgerows can be retained and incorporated into the layout. New hedgerow planting can be included as part of the proposals.	Low	Slight Beneficial
<b>Trees / scrub</b>	Medium	There are mature trees at all of the boundaries particularly the eastern and southern boundaries.	The trees can be retained and incorporated into the layout as part of the scheme. Retention of the existing trees will allow the Site to retain its strong sense of enclosure from the wider countryside. New tree planting can also be provided as part of the proposals.	Low	Slight Beneficial
<b>Rough grassland</b>	Medium / Low	The Site currently comprises an area of rough grassland grazed by horses.	The majority of the existing grassland land will be lost and replaced with suburban housing and open space.	High	Moderate Adverse
<b>Heritage assets</b>	N/A	No registered assets within the Site.	None	Neutral	Neutral
<b>Public Rights of Way</b>	Medium	The Hertfordshire Way Long Distance Footpath ('HWLDF') runs adjacent to the northern half of the eastern boundary.	The footpath can be retained along its existing route and with the retention of trees at the eastern boundary views of the Site will continue to be filtered.	Neutral	Neutral
Indirect effects on landscape character		Existing Conditions	Impact and Mitigation	Magnitude of Change	Effect
<b>Neighbouring area</b>	Medium	The surrounding urban area comprises a mix of post 1960s development with some older development at Green Lane.	The Site is contained by the surrounding urban area such that it makes little contribution to the wider landscape / townscape setting. There will be views from the adjoining dwellings at Green Lane, Yew Tree Drive and Austins Mead but the existing trees and vegetation at the Site boundaries prevent views from the wider landscape and townscape.	High – for those properties immediate to the Site.  Low - for the surrounding area	Moderate Adverse  Negligible
<b>Landscape Value</b>	Medium / Low	The Site is not publically accessible and contains no recognised heritage assets. The HWLDF runs adjacent to part of the eastern boundary. Due to its contained nature it makes little contribution to the wider townscape.	There are few public views of the Site and as it is not publically accessible it is unlikely to be highly valued.	Medium / Low	Slight Adverse
<b>Cumulative impacts</b>		No known cumulative impacts.			

## VISUAL EFFECTS

Viewpoint	Sensitivity	Existing Conditions	Proposals and mitigation	Magnitude of Change	Visual Effect
<b>Views from properties at Yew Tree Drive and Austins Mead</b>	High	Views are available from gardens, ground and first floor windows of the rear of the properties which back onto the Site. A small number of views are filtered by existing vegetation at the Site boundary or within the gardens.	The Site layout can be designed to minimise impact on the residential properties and in addition new planting can be provided to allow a buffer between the existing dwellings and the development.	High	Moderate Adverse
<b>Views from properties at Green Lane</b>	Medium	There a number of dwellings which back onto the western boundary of the Site with a small number of properties gaining views into the Site. These views are filtered by existing vegetation at the Site boundaries and within the gardens.	The existing filtered views will be replaced with glimpses of new development which will be more apparent from some dwellings than others.	Medium	Slight / Moderate Adverse
<b>Views from the Hertfordshire Way Long Distance Footpath ('HWLDF') (Photograph 04 &amp;05)</b>	Medium	Views from the short stretch of the footpath which runs adjacent to the eastern boundary have heavily filtered views of the Site through the trees at the boundaries.	The footpath currently runs through Austins Mead and development at the Site will result in the footpath running adjacent to development for a short distance longer than at present. The retention, however, of the existing trees will result in views of the development remaining heavily filtered.	Medium	Slight Adverse
<b>Views the HWLDF (Photograph 06)</b>	Medium	From the southern corner of the adjacent field along the HWLDF heavily filtered views of the Site are seen through the boundary vegetation.	The existing vegetation will remain and will continue to filter views from this location. The filtered views, however will be of the development.	Negligible	Slight Adverse
<b>Bovingdon Conservation Area</b>	High	There are no views of the Site from the Conservation Area.	None required.	Neutral	Neutral
<b>HWLDF south of the Site (Photograph 10)</b>	Medium	There are no views of the Site from this section of the footpath.	None required.	Neutral	Neutral
<b>The Chiltern Way Long Distance Footpath (Photographs 16 &amp; 17)</b>	Medium	There are no views of the Site from the footpath north west of the Site and the village.	None required.	Neutral	Neutral
<b>Chipperfield Road (Photograph 21)</b>	Medium	There are no views of the Site from the approach into the village or the public footpath.	None required.	Neutral	Neutral

## **Appendix K**

### Methodology

## CSa Methodology for Landscape and Visual Appraisals

- M1 In landscape and visual appraisal, a distinction is normally drawn between **landscape/townscape effects** i.e. effects on the character or quality of the landscape (or townscape) irrespective of whether there are any views of the landscape, or viewers to see them and **visual effects** i.e. effects on people's views of the landscape, principally from residential properties, but also from public rights of way and other areas with public access. Thus, a development may have extensive landscape effects but few visual effects (i.e. for example, there are no properties or public viewpoints nearby) or few landscape effects but substantial visual effects (i.e. for example, the landscape is already degraded or the development is not out of character with it, but can clearly be seen from many residential properties and/or public areas).
- M2 The assessment of landscape visual effects is less amenable to scientific or statistical analysis than some environmental topics and inherently contains an element of subjectivity. However, the appraisal should still be undertaken in a logical, consistent and rigorous manner, based on experience and judgement, and any conclusions should be able to demonstrate a clear rationale. To this end, various guidelines have been published, the most relevant of which (for appraisals of the effects of a development, rather than of the character or quality of the landscape itself) form the basis of the assessment and are as follows:-
- Guidelines for Landscape Visual Impact Assessment, produced jointly by the Institute of Environmental Assessment and the Landscape Institute (GLA 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 2013) and
  - Landscape Character Assessment, Guidance for England and Scotland, 2002, to which reference is also made. This stresses the need for a holistic assessment of landscape character, including physical, biological and social factors.

### LANDSCAPE/TOWNSCAPE EFFECTS

- M3 Landscape/townscape quality is a subjective judgement based on the value and significance of a landscape/townscape. It will often be informed by national, regional or local designations made upon it in respect of its quality e.g. AONB. Sensitivity relates to the ability of that landscape/townscape to accommodate change.

Landscape sensitivity can vary with:-

- (i) existing land use;
- (ii) the pattern and scale of the landscape;
- (iii) visual enclosure/openness of views, and distribution of visual receptors;
- (iv) the scope for mitigation, which would be in character with the existing landscape; and
- (v) the value placed on the landscape.

- M4 There is a strong inter-relationship between landscape/townscape quality and sensitivity as high quality landscapes/townscapes usually have a low ability to accommodate change.
- M5 For the purpose of our appraisal, landscape/townscape quality and sensitivity has been combined and is assessed using the criteria in Table LE1. Typically, landscapes/townscapes which carry a quality designation and which are otherwise attractive or unspoilt will in general be more sensitive, while those which are less attractive or already affected by significant visual detractors and disturbance will be generally less sensitive.
- M6 The concept of landscape/townscape value is also considered, in order to avoid consideration only of how scenically attractive an area may be, and thus to avoid undervaluing areas of strong character but little scenic beauty. Landscape value is:

*'The relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society, bearing in mind that a landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons.'*

- M7 Nationally valued landscapes are recognised by designation, such as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which have particular planning policies applied to them. Nationally valued townscape are typically those covered by a Conservation Area or similar designation.
- M8 The magnitude of change is the scale, extent and duration of change to a landscape arising from the proposed development and was assessed using the criteria in Table LE2.
- M9 Landscape/townscape effects were assessed in terms of the interaction between the magnitude of the change brought about by the development and the sensitivity of the landscape resource affected. The landscape/townscape effects can be either beneficial or adverse.
- M10 In this way, landscapes of the highest sensitivity and quality, when subjected to a high magnitude of change from the proposed development, are likely to give rise to substantial landscape effects which can be either adverse or beneficial. Conversely, landscapes of low sensitivity and quality, when subjected to a low magnitude of change from the proposed development, are likely to give rise to only slight or neutral landscape effects. Beneficial landscape effects may arise from such things as the creation of new landscape features, changes to management practices and improved public access.

### **VISUAL EFFECTS**

- M11 Visual effects are concerned with people's views of the landscape/townscape and the change that will occur. Like landscape effects, viewers or receptors are categorised by their sensitivity. For example, views from private dwellings are generally of a higher sensitivity than those from places of work.
- M12 In describing the content of a view the following terms are used:-
- No view - no views of the development
  - Glimpse - a fleeting or distant view of the development, often in the context of wider views of the landscape
  - Partial - a clear view of part of the development only
  - Filtered - views to the development which are partially screened, usually by intervening vegetation - the degree of filtering may change with the seasons
  - Open - a clear view to the development.
- M13 The sensitivity of the receptor was assessed using the criteria in Table E1.
- M14 The magnitude of change is the degree in which the views may be altered as a result of the proposed development and will generally decrease with distance from its source, until a point is reached where there is no discernible change. The magnitude of change in regard to the views was assessed using the criteria in Table E2.
- M15 Visual effects were then assessed in terms of the interaction between the magnitude of the change brought about by the development and also the sensitivity of the visual receptor affected.
- M16 Photographs were taken with a digital camera with a lens that approximates to 50mm, to give a similar depth of view to the human eye. In some cases images have been joined together to form a panorama. The prevailing weather and atmospheric conditions, and any effects on visibility are noted.
- Mitigation & Residual Effects**
- M17 Mitigation measures are described as those measures, including any process or activity, designed to avoid, reduce and compensate for adverse landscape and/or visual effects of the proposed development.

M18 In situations where proposed mitigation measures are likely to change over time, as with planting to screen a development, it is important to make a distinction between any likely effects that will arise in the short-time and those that will occur in the long-term or residual effects once mitigation measures have established. In this assessment, the visual effects of the development have been considered at completion of the entire project and once any landscape mitigation has had an opportunity to establish.

M19 Mitigation measures can have a residual, positive impact on the effects arising from a development, whereas the short-term impact may be adverse.

#### **ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS**

M20 The appraisal concisely considers and describes the main landscape and visual effects resulting from the proposed development. The narrative text demonstrates the reasoning behind judgements concerning the landscape and visual effects of the proposals. Where appropriate the text is supported by tables which summarise the sensitivity of the views/landscape, the magnitude of change and describe any resulting effects.

#### **CUMULATIVE EFFECTS**

M21 Cumulative effects are *'the additional changes caused by a proposed development in conjunction with other similar developments or as the combined effect of a set of developments, taken together.'*

M22 In carrying out landscape appraisal it is for the author to form a judgement on whether or not it is necessary to consider any planned developments and to form a judgement on how these could potentially affect a project.

Table LE 1

LANDSCAPE / TOWNSCAPE QUALITY AND SENSITIVITY

	Very High	High	Medium	Low
Description of the Landscape/Townscape	<p><b>Landscape Quality:</b> Intact and very attractive landscape which may be nationally recognised/designated for its scenic beauty. e.g. National Park or Area of Outstanding National Beauty</p> <p><b>Townscape Quality:</b> A townscape of very high quality which is unique in its character, and recognised nationally/internationally. e.g. World Heritage Site</p> <p><b>Sensitivity:</b> A landscape/townscape with a very low ability to accommodate change because such change would lead to a significant loss of valuable features or elements, resulting in a significant loss of character and quality. Development of the type proposed would be discordant and prominent.</p>	<p><b>Landscape Quality:</b> A landscape, usually combining varied topography, historic features and few visual detractors. A landscape known and cherished by many people from across the region. e.g. County Landscape Site such as a Special Landscape Area.</p> <p><b>Townscape Quality:</b> A well designed townscape of high quality with a locally recognised and distinctive character e.g. Conservation Area</p> <p><b>Sensitivity:</b> A landscape/townscape with limited ability to accommodate change because such change would lead to some loss of valuable features or elements, resulting in a significant loss of character and quality. Development of the type proposed would likely be discordant with the character of the landscape/townscape.</p>	<p><b>Landscape Quality:</b> Non-designated landscape area, generally pleasant but with no distinctive features, often displaying relatively ordinary characteristics.</p> <p><b>Townscape Quality:</b> A typical, pleasant townscape with a coherent urban form but with no distinguishing features or designation for quality.</p> <p><b>Sensitivity:</b> A landscape/townscape with reasonable ability to accommodate change. Change would lead to a limited loss of some features or elements, resulting in some loss of character and quality. Development of the type proposed would not be especially discordant.</p>	<p><b>Landscape / Townscape Quality:</b> Unattractive or degraded landscape/townscape, affected by numerous detracting elements e.g. industrial areas, infrastructure routes and un-restored mineral extractions.</p> <p><b>Sensitivity:</b> A landscape/townscape with good ability to accommodate change. Change would not lead to a significant loss of features or elements, and there would be no significant loss of character or quality. Development of the type proposed would not be discordant with the landscape/townscape in which it is set.</p>

**Footnote:**  
 1. A distinction has been drawn between landscape/townscape quality and sensitivity. Quality is as a subjective judgement on perception and value of a landscape/townscape and may be informed by any national, regional or local designations for its quality. Sensitivity relates to the ability of that landscape/townscape to accommodate change.

**Table LE 2 LANDSCAPE / TOWNSCAPE MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE**

	High	Medium	Low	Negligible	Neutral
<b>Description of the Change predicted</b>	Total loss of or severe damage to key characteristics, features or elements.				
		Partial loss of or damage to key characteristics, features or elements			
			Minor loss of or alteration to one or more key landscape/townscape characteristics, features or elements		
				Very minor loss or alteration to one or more key landscape/townscape characteristics, features or elements	
					No loss or alteration of key landscape/townscape characteristics, features or elements

**Table LE 3 LANDSCAPE / TOWNSCAPE EFFECTS**

	Substantial	Moderate	Slight	Neutral
<b>Description of the Effect</b>	<p>The proposals are damaging to the landscape/townscape in that they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are at variance with the landform, scale and pattern of the landscape/townscape;</li> <li>• are visually intrusive and would disrupt important views;</li> <li>• are likely to degrade or diminish the integrity of a range of characteristic features and elements and their setting;</li> <li>• will be damaging to a high quality or highly vulnerable landscape/townscape;</li> <li>• cannot be adequately mitigated.</li> </ul>			
		<p>The proposals are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• out of scale or at odds with the landscape;</li> <li>• are visually intrusive and will adversely impact on the landscape/townscape;</li> <li>• not possible to fully mitigate;</li> <li>• will have an adverse impact on a landscape/townscape of recognised quality or on vulnerable and important characteristic features or elements.</li> </ul>		
			<p>The proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• do not quite fit the landform and scale of the landscape/townscape;</li> <li>• will impact on certain views into and across the area;</li> <li>• cannot be completely mitigated for because of the nature of the proposal or the character of the landscape/townscape;</li> <li>• affect an area of recognised landscape/townscape quality.</li> </ul>	
				<p>The proposals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• complement the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape/townscape;</li> <li>• incorporate measures for mitigation to ensure that the scheme will blend in well with the surrounding landscape/townscape;</li> <li>• avoid being visually intrusive and adversely affecting the landscape/townscape;</li> <li>• maintain or improve existing landscape/townscape character.</li> </ul>

**Footnote:**

1. Each level (other than neutral) of change identified can be either regarded as 'beneficial' or 'adverse'.

Table VE 1

VISUAL SENSITIVITY

	High	Medium	Low
Description of the Receptor	<p>Residential properties with predominantly open views from windows, garden or curtilage. Views will normally be from ground and first floors and from two or more windows of rooms in use during the day.</p> <p>Users of Public Rights of Way with predominantly open views in sensitive or unspoilt areas.</p> <p>Non-motorised users of minor or unclassified roads in the countryside.</p> <p>Visitors to recognised viewpoints or beauty spots.</p> <p>Users of outdoor recreational facilities with predominantly open views where the purpose of that recreation is enjoyment of the countryside - e.g. Country Parks, National Trust or other access land etc.</p>	<p>Residential properties with partial views from windows, garden or curtilage. Views will normally be from first floor windows only, or an oblique view from one ground floor window, or may be partially obscured by garden or other intervening vegetation.</p> <p>Users of Public Rights of Way with restricted views, in less sensitive areas or where there are significant existing intrusive features.</p> <p>Users of outdoor recreational facilities with restricted views or where the purpose of that recreation is incidental to the view e.g. sports fields.</p> <p>Schools and other institutional buildings, and their outdoor areas.</p> <p>Users of minor or unclassified roads in the countryside, whether motorised or not.</p>	<p>People in their place of work.</p> <p>Users of main roads or passengers in public transport on main routes.</p> <p>Users of outdoor recreational facilities with restricted views and where the purpose of that recreation is unrelated to the view e.g. go-karting track.</p>

Table VE 2		VISUAL MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE				
		High	Medium	Low	Negligible	Neutral
Description of the Change predicted	Dominating changes over all or most of the view(s).					
	Major changes over a large proportion of the view(s).					
	Major changes over a small proportion of the view(s).					
	Minor changes over a large proportion of the view(s).					
	No discernable change to the view(s)					

Table VE 3		VISUAL EFFECTS				
		Substantial	Moderate	Slight	Insignificant	Neutral
Description of the Effect	The proposals would cause significant damage (or improvement) to a view from a sensitive receptor, or less damage (or improvement) to a view from a more sensitive receptor, and would be an obvious or dominant element in the view.					
	The proposals would cause some damage (or improvement) to a view from a sensitive receptor, or less damage (or improvement) to a view from a more sensitive receptor, and would be a readily discernible element in the view.					
	The proposals would cause limited damage (or improvement) to a view from a receptor of medium sensitivity, but would still be a noticeable element within the view, or greater damage (or improvement) to a view from a receptor of low sensitivity.					
	The proposals would not significantly change the view but would still be discernible.					
	No change in the view.					

**Footnote:**

1. Each level (other than neutral) of change identified can be either regarded as 'beneficial' or 'adverse'.