

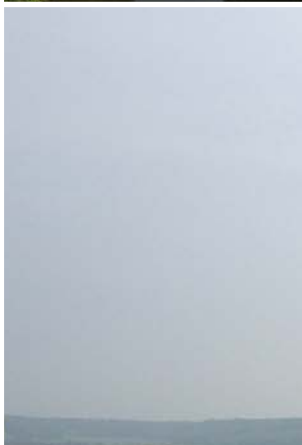


# GREEN BELT REVIEW PURPOSES ASSESSMENT

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

## FINAL REPORT

November 2013





# 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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# 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.

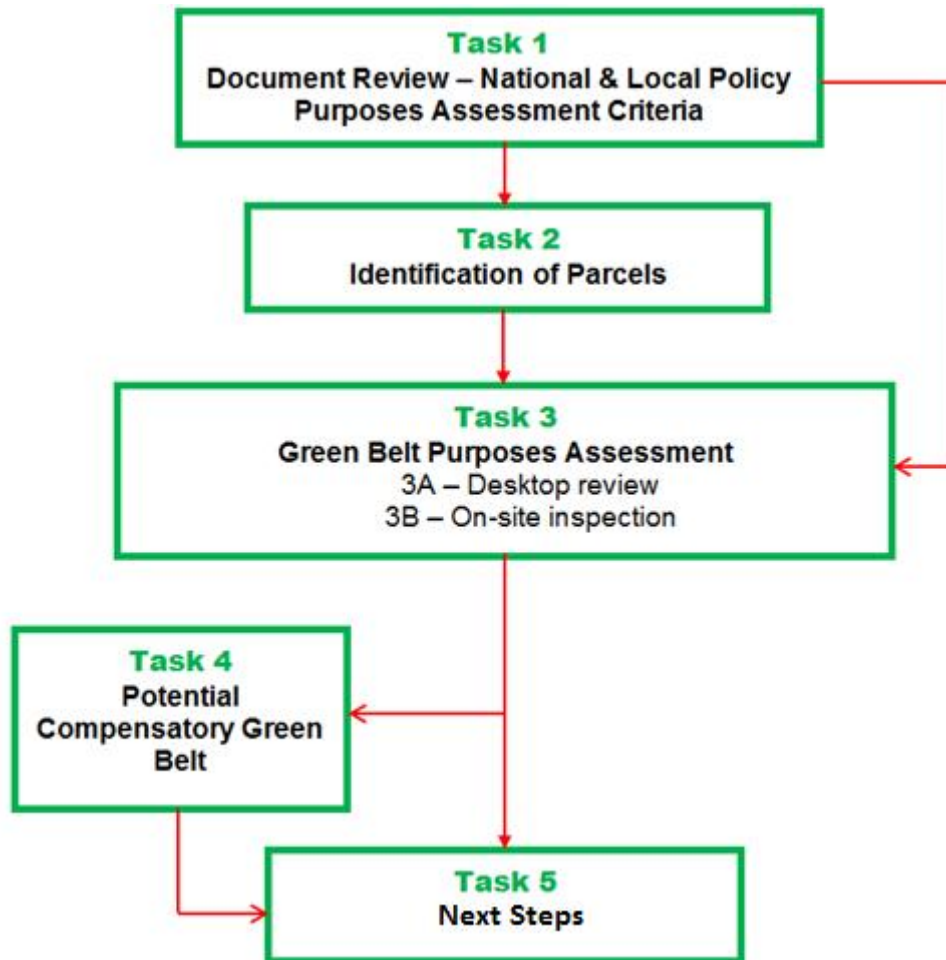
## **1.2. Approach to Assessment**

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 onto 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



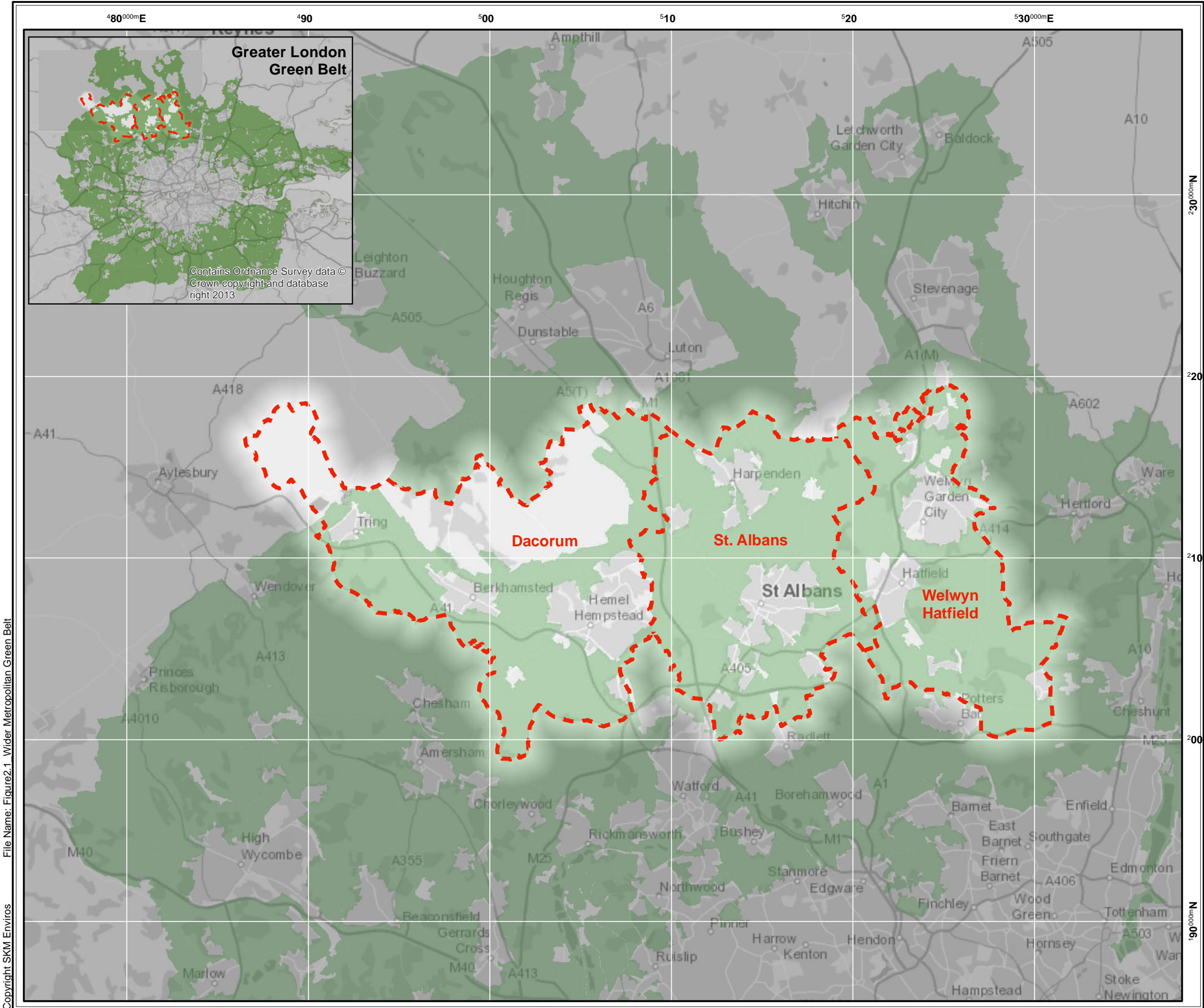
framework to protect the Green Belt over the following two decades. PPG2 (1988) added two purposes of the Green Belt:

- 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 Markyate. 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.



File Name: Figure2.1 Wider Metropolitan Green Belt

**Key:**

- Study Area
- Metropolitan Green Belt

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

**Scale:** 0 2 4 6 8 10 Kilometres

**REVISION:** D

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

**FIGURE 2.1 Wider Metropolitan Green Belt**

<b>SCALE</b>	<b>PROJECT CODE</b>
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<b>CONTENT</b>	<b>DRAWN</b>
OS OpenData	KW
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RB	30/11/2013

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## **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 pre-dated 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 seeks 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; and
  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 re-affirms 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; for 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 '[...] 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: '[...] 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.

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<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, Cliff Hague, Karryn Kirk, Alan Prior, Jeremy Raemaekers and Harry 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 Boles 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 Boles 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. Nick 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, Nick 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 Nick 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 onto 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 of Handforth, 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 for (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 extant at the date of their respective adoption. Core Strategy documents published since March 2012, published by Dacorum and Welwyn Hatfield (for 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>
	Hemel Hempstead	St Albans, Harpenden	Welwyn Garden City
	<i>Market Towns</i>		<i>Town</i>
	Berkhamsted, 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, Markyate	Bricket Wood, Chiswell Green, How Wood, London Colney, Park Street / Frogmore, Redbourn, Wheathampstead	Brookmans Park, Cuffley, Welham Green and Welwyn
			<i>Small excluded Villages and Settlements</i>
			Digswell, Oaklands & 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>	<i>All other settlements</i>	<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). It 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 need 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 &amp; 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>

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<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 inferring 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.H. 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(s).

**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(M) 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 [...] that zone of 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>	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.



### ***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(s) 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 function(s) 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.

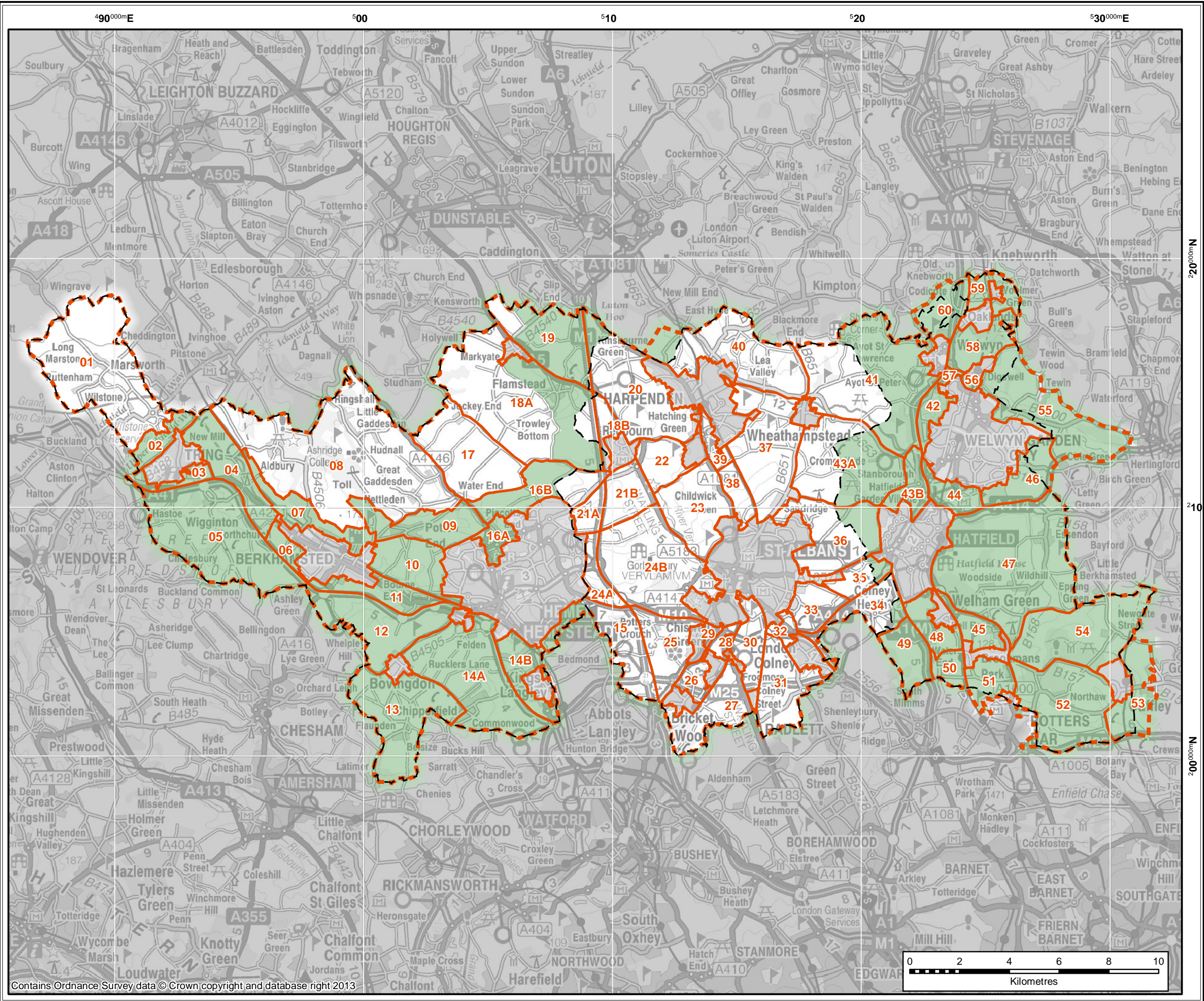
## 6. Strategic Parcel Plan

- 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 if 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 sub-divided 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.

File Name: Figure6.1\_Parcel Plan  
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- Key:**
- District Borough Boundary
  - Land Parcel Boundary
  - Study Area Outer Boundary
  - Green Belt

N

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





## 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 50km wide and only 10km 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.

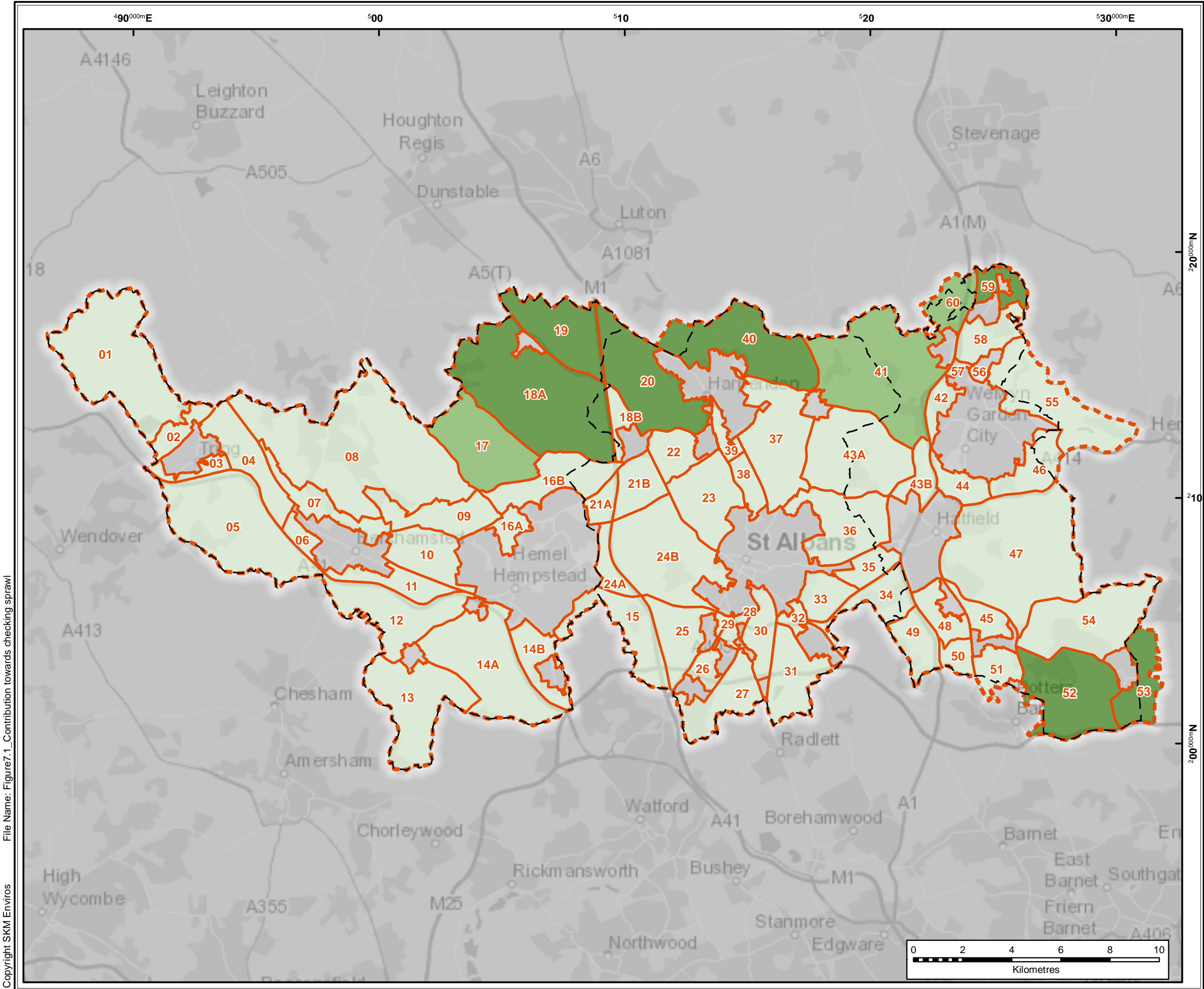


## **7.2. NPPF Purpose 1: To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas**

- 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 & GB40) located to the west and east of Harpenden 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 & GB60) to the west and north of Welwyn Garden City and to the north of Welwyn, Oaklands / 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 & 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

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**Key:**

- District Borough Boundary
- Land Parcel Boundary
- Study Area Outer Boundary

**Sprawl**

- Light Green: Limited or No Contribution
- Medium Green: Partial Contribution
- Dark Green: 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

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### 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

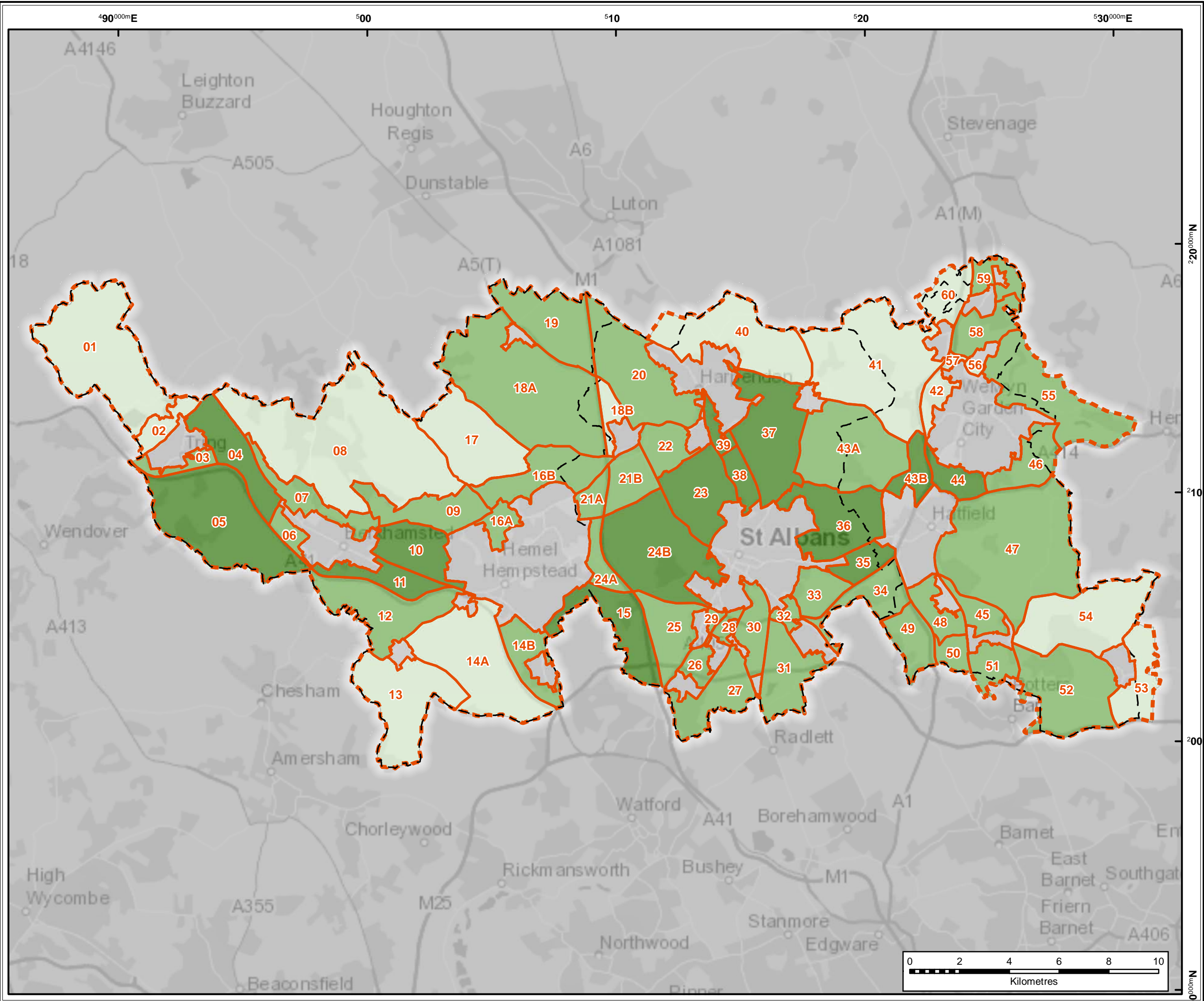
<sup>20</sup> Strategic Gaps to London are not set out given the overall strategic role of the Metropolitan Green Belt around London.



- 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 town are not located between 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements.

Name: Figure7.2\_Contribution towards preventing merging

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**Key:**

- Land Parcel Boundary
- District Borough Boundary
- Study Area Outer Boundary

**Merging**

- Limited or No Contribution
- Partial Contribution
- Significant Contribution

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
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CONTENT	DRAWN
Ordnance Survey	KW
CHECKED	DATE
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#### **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 horiculture, 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 / How 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. Of note, other parcels displaying high level of built development are located around Kings Langley (GB14B), between Potters Bar and Brookmans Park (GB50) and to the east of Oaklands 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

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<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 % 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.

Name: Figure7.3\_Contribution towards safeguarding countryside

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**Key:**

- Land Parcel Boundary
- District Borough Boundary
- Study Area Outer Boundary

**Countryside**

- 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**

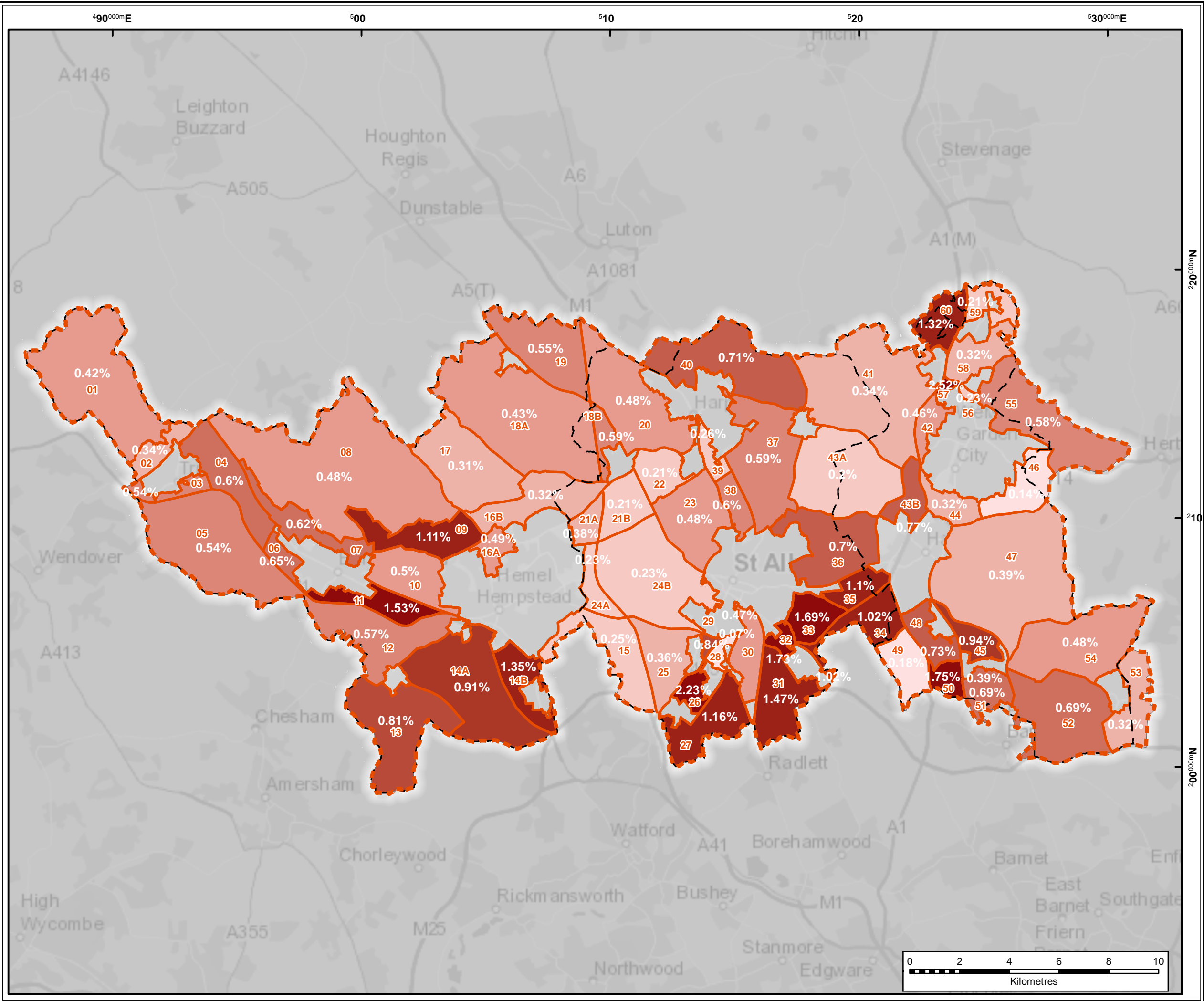
**FIGURE 7.3. Contribution towards Safeguarding the Countryside**

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

**SKM ENVIROS**

Name: Figure 7.4\_Proportion of built development

Copyright SKM Enviro



**Key:**

- Study Area Outer Boundary
- District Borough Boundary
- Land Parcel Boundary

**Percentage Built**

	0 - 0.20%
	0.21 - 0.30%
	0.31 - 0.40%
	0.41 - 0.50%
	0.51 - 0.60%
	0.61 - 0.70%
	0.71 - 0.80%
	0.81 - 0.90%
	0.91 - 1.00%
	1.01 - 1.50%
	1.51 - 2.52%

Count: 66  
Min: 0.07  
Max: 2.52  
Sum: 44.74  
Mean: 0.68  
S/D: 0.5

N

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 7.4.  
Proportion of  
Built Development (%)**

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





**7.5. NPPF Purpose 4: To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns**

7.5.1. Figure 7.5 shows the contribution of each parcel towards preserving the setting and special character of historic towns. It can be seen that many parcels make a significant or partial contribution towards this purpose. This is because the study area is in itself a rich and diverse historic environment, with Green Belt frequently providing a setting for conservation areas and historic parks and gardens. Overall, almost half of all parcels significantly contribute to this purpose.

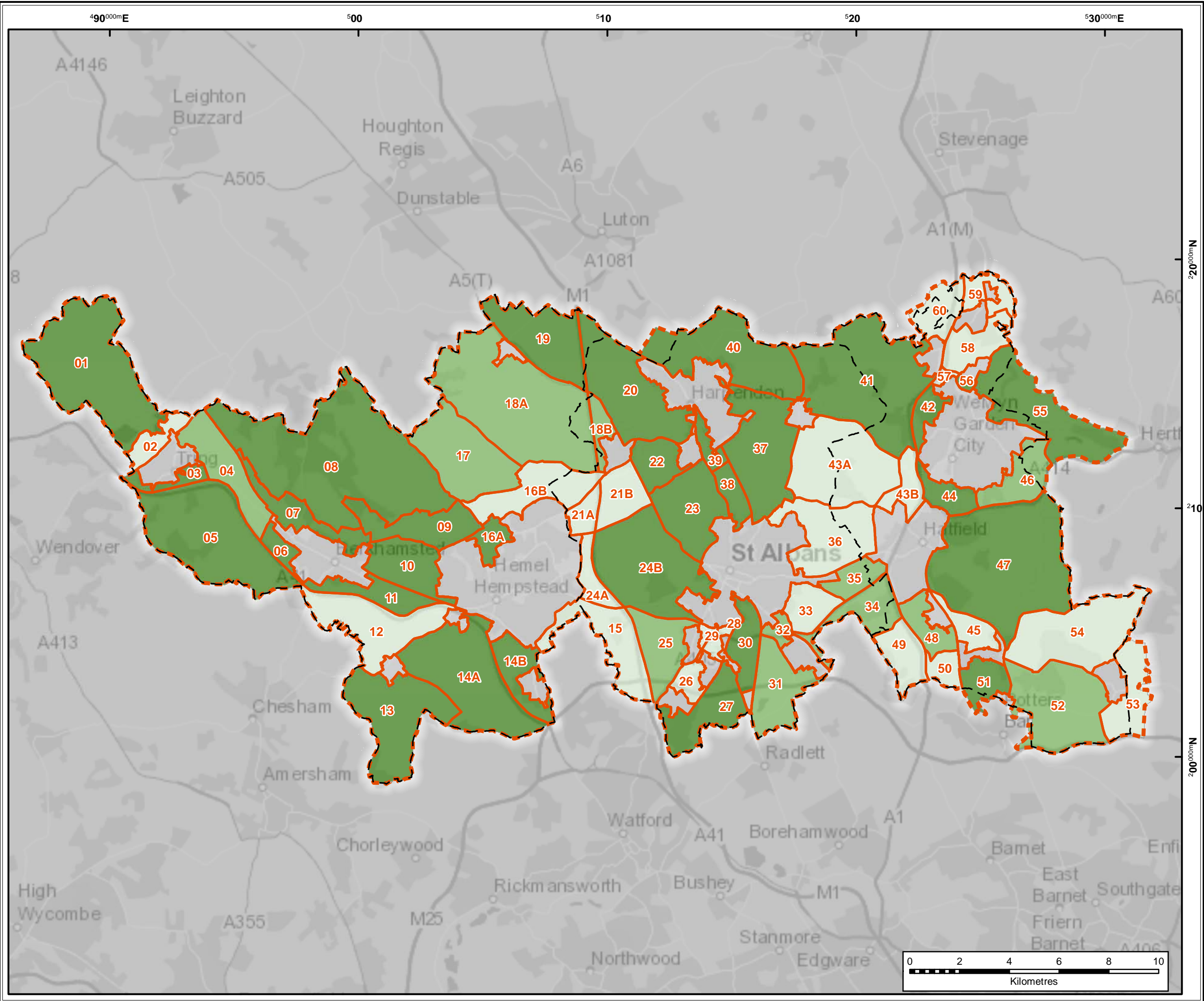
7.5.2. Key networks of parcels which preserve setting and special character are identified as being:

- around Berkhamsted (GB04, 06, 07, 08, 09, 10 & 11) which contains three conservation areas and is surrounded by historic villages as well as Berkhamsted Common. The Grand Union Canal and valley landform makes a key contribution towards preserving setting;
- to the south, west and north of St Albans (GB23, 24B, 30, 37, 38 & 39), especially to preserve views to the Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban;
- to the south, east and west of Welwyn Garden City (GB42, 44 & 55) to preserve the Garden City setting as well as surrounding Historic Parks and Gardens; and,
- to the east of Hatfield (GB47) to preserve the historic setting of Hatfield House.

7.5.3. The absence of historic places within or adjacent to a parcel accounts for any limited contribution towards this purpose.

File Name: Figure7.5\_Contribution towards preserving setting

Copyright SKM Enviros



**Key:**

- District Borough Boundary
- Land Parcel Boundary
- Study Area Outer Boundary

**Setting**

- Light Green: Limited or No Contribution
- Medium Green: Partial Contribution
- Dark Green: Significant Contribution

N

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

REVISION: F

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

**FIGURE 7.5.  
Contribution towards  
Preserving Setting**

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



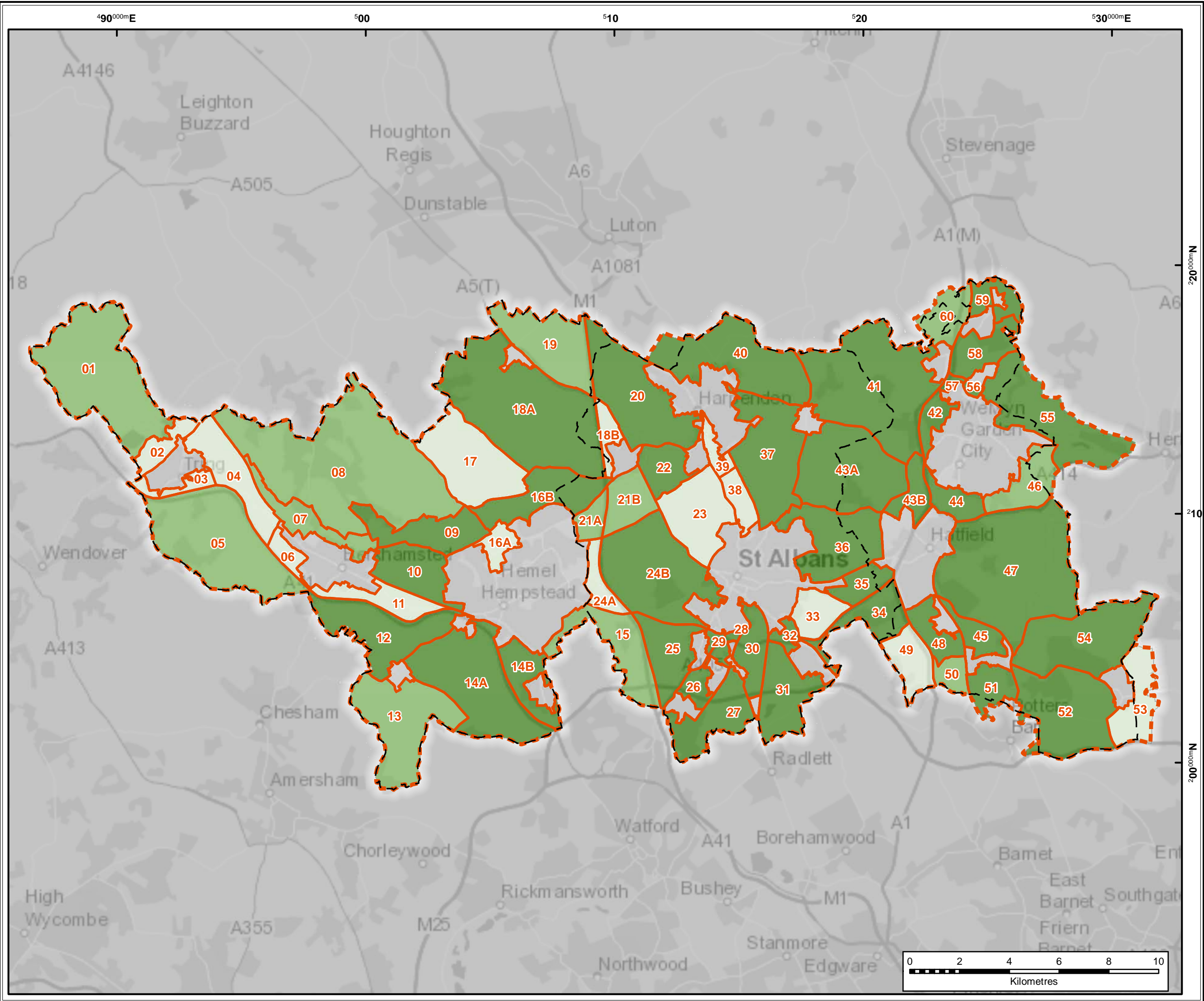


## **7.6. Local Purpose: To maintain the existing settlement pattern**

- 7.6.1. Figure 7.6 shows the contribution of each parcel towards maintaining the existing settlement pattern. It highlights that the majority of Green Belt land contributes towards this local purpose. A series of primary and secondary local gaps separate 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> tier settlements throughout the study area, as distinct from the strategic gaps identified by the second purpose to prevent merging of neighbouring towns.
- 7.6.2. The pattern of local gaps includes an inner network of parcels and two outer networks to the north and south. The inner band contains the majority of primary local gaps which separate 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements from 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> tier settlements, whereas the two outer bands accommodate most of the secondary local gaps which separate 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> tier settlements only.
- 7.6.3. This pattern mirrors the spatial distribution of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> tier settlements of which ten are located in Dacorum, 19 in St Albans and 22 in Welwyn Hatfield. This distribution of settlements shows that there are more towns and villages closer to London. Therefore the majority of parcels providing a significant contribution are located in the centre and east of the study area.

File Name: Figure7.6\_Maintaining settlement pattern

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## **7.7. Assessment of Non-Green Belt Land**

- 7.7.1. The study area includes a network of non-Green Belt parcels located in Dacorum comprising GB01, GB08, GB17, GB18A & part of GB19. The purposes assessment demonstrates that this non-Green Belt land makes a contribution towards Green Belt purposes. This land most significantly contributes towards the national Green Belt purpose of safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. This is the primary reason for its national landscape designation as The Chilterns AONB. It is important to recognise the distinction between the Green Belt and AONB designation. The Green Belt serves five purposes, and was primarily established to achieve urban containment, whereas the AONB designation mainly relates to protecting the landscape only. This area exhibits strong countryside and rural characteristics and levels of openness are generally high. This is demonstrated as the proportion of built development is very low at 0.4%.
- 7.7.2. The characteristics of the non-Green Belt land differ from Green Belt land in the rest of the study area in so far as it does not directly adjoin any 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements and only contains a total of three settlements listed in the Hierarchy Table 3.2<sup>25</sup>, which represents a very sparse scattering given the scale of the area. Therefore its contribution towards the separation of settlements function is limited. However it does contribute towards large strategic gaps between Luton and Dunstable to the north of the study area and Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted and Tring to the North West.
- 7.7.3. Some non-Green Belt land also contributes towards preserving historic places setting, especially GB01 and 08 which contain a number of conservation areas. Only GB18A makes a contribution towards checking sprawl the large built-up area of Luton and Dunstable to the north of the study area.
- 7.7.4. Therefore areas of non-Green Belt could realistically be designated as Green Belt as a compensatory measure. The justification for this is the relatively high level of contribution towards the Green Belt purposes from non-Green Belt land and in that non-Green Belt land is effectively already surrounded by Green Belt (as illustrated by Figure 2.1). At the strategic parcel level it is inappropriate and difficult to sub-divide the parcels into suggested new areas of Green Belt. Overall, the character of the land is relatively consistent and the area appears to lack strong natural or physical features which might form the edges of a revised Green Belt boundary. If compensatory Green Belt is sought, then it may be appropriate to undertake further assessment of the non-Green Belt areas to confirm the most appropriate boundaries.

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<sup>25</sup> Long Marston, Wilstone and Aldbury.



## **7.8. Summary of Purposes Assessment**

7.8.1. The primary roles of the Green Belt identified from the purposes assessment are set out in Figure 7.7. The map is a simplified diagrammatic representation of the complex ways in which Green Belt functions have effect in the study area. The Green Belt plays a significant role across the study area to contribute to the four national purposes and local Hertfordshire purpose as follows:

- Sprawl from built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable, and Stevenage is restricted by the outer northern and eastern land plus the southeast corner of the study area
- Neighbouring towns within the study area are prevented from merging by a series of strategic gaps across the centre of the study area. Larger strategic gaps extend outwards to the north, south and east to prevent merging with 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements outside of the study area.
- Safeguarding of the high quality countryside is evident across the study area, however some parcels display urban fringe characteristics.
- Preserving setting and special character of historic towns is strong but geographically dispersed across the study area.
- Primary and secondary local gaps to maintain the existing settlement pattern are also evident across the study area (however they are relatively absent from non-Green Belt land).

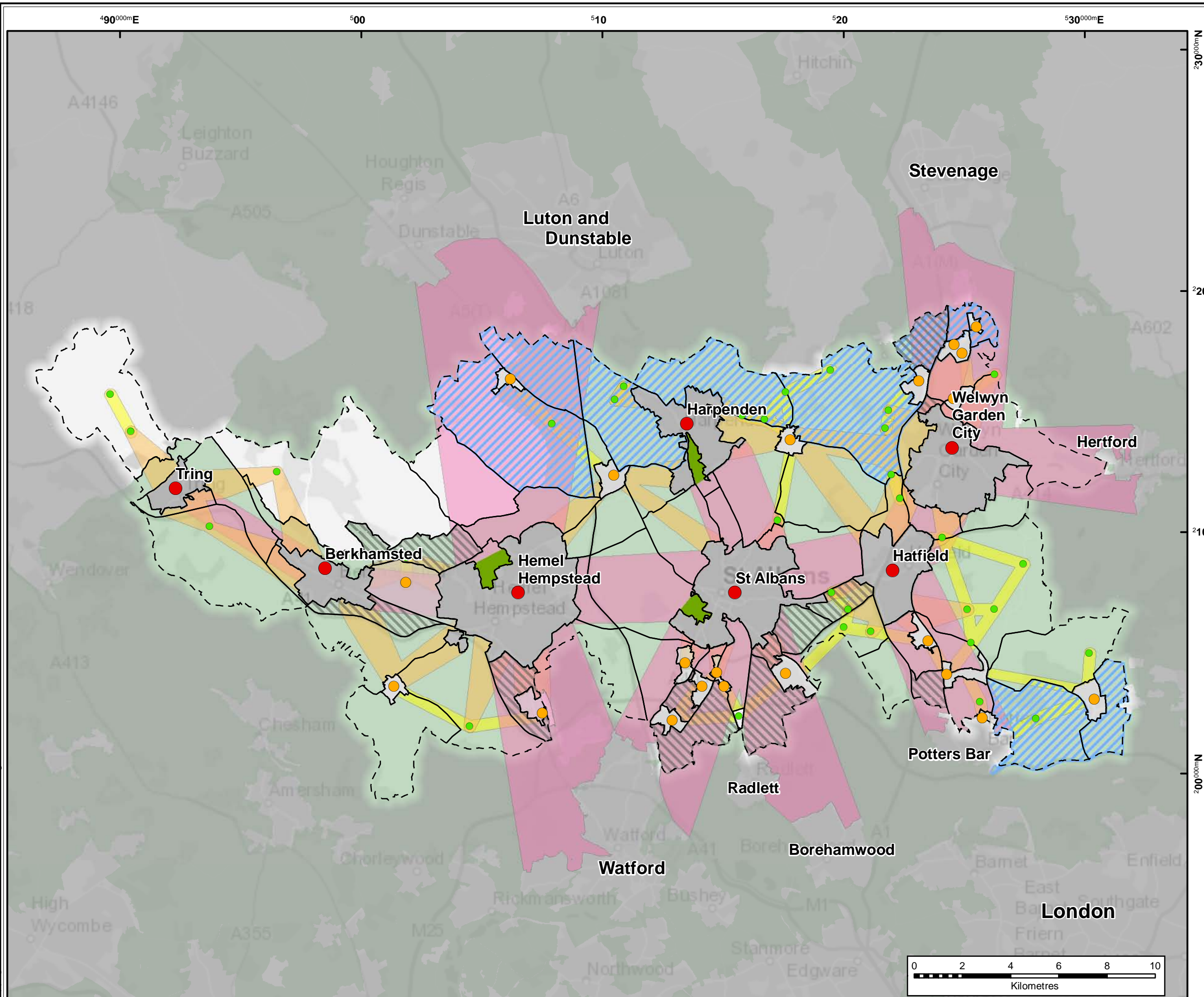


- 7.8.2. Urban fringe environments are generally more prevalent to the south of the study area because they are more often associated with the scatter of smaller settlements in close proximity, which is more evident towards London. This separation of settlements function is very significant in these areas especially in the light of increased development pressures, linked to existing urbanisation on the character of the area. This conclusion is supported by the proportion of built development analysis (see Figure 7.4). Countryside characteristics are generally stronger to the north, as a result of landscape quality, wider gaps between settlements and the stronger presence of rural land uses. As a result the contribution of Green Belt towards the protection countryside is stronger to the north.

## **7.9. Major Developed Sites (in Dacorum only)**

- 7.9.1. One of the objectives within the Study Brief was to consider whether any further major developed sites should be identified in Dacorum. Table 2 in the Dacorum Core Strategy (adopted September 2013) sets out seven major developed sites in the Green Belt. The purposes assessment revealed that there are limited additional large brownfield sites within the Dacorum Green Belt which might be suitable for major developed site designation. Therefore seven identified sites are considered to be sufficient and, based on the assessment of the area, appear to be exhaustive.

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Name: Figure 7.7 Green Belt Functions



**Key:**

- Project Study Area
- Land Parcel Boundary
- 1st Tier Settlement
- 2nd Tier Settlement
- Area with >1% Built-Up Area
- Check Sprawl
- Green Wedge
- Strategic Gap
- Primary Local Gap
- Secondary Local Gap
- Green Belt

**Settlement**

- 1st Tier
- 2nd Tier
- 3rd Tier



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

REVISION: H

**Green Belt Review for  
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**FIGURE 7.7.  
Green Belt Functions**

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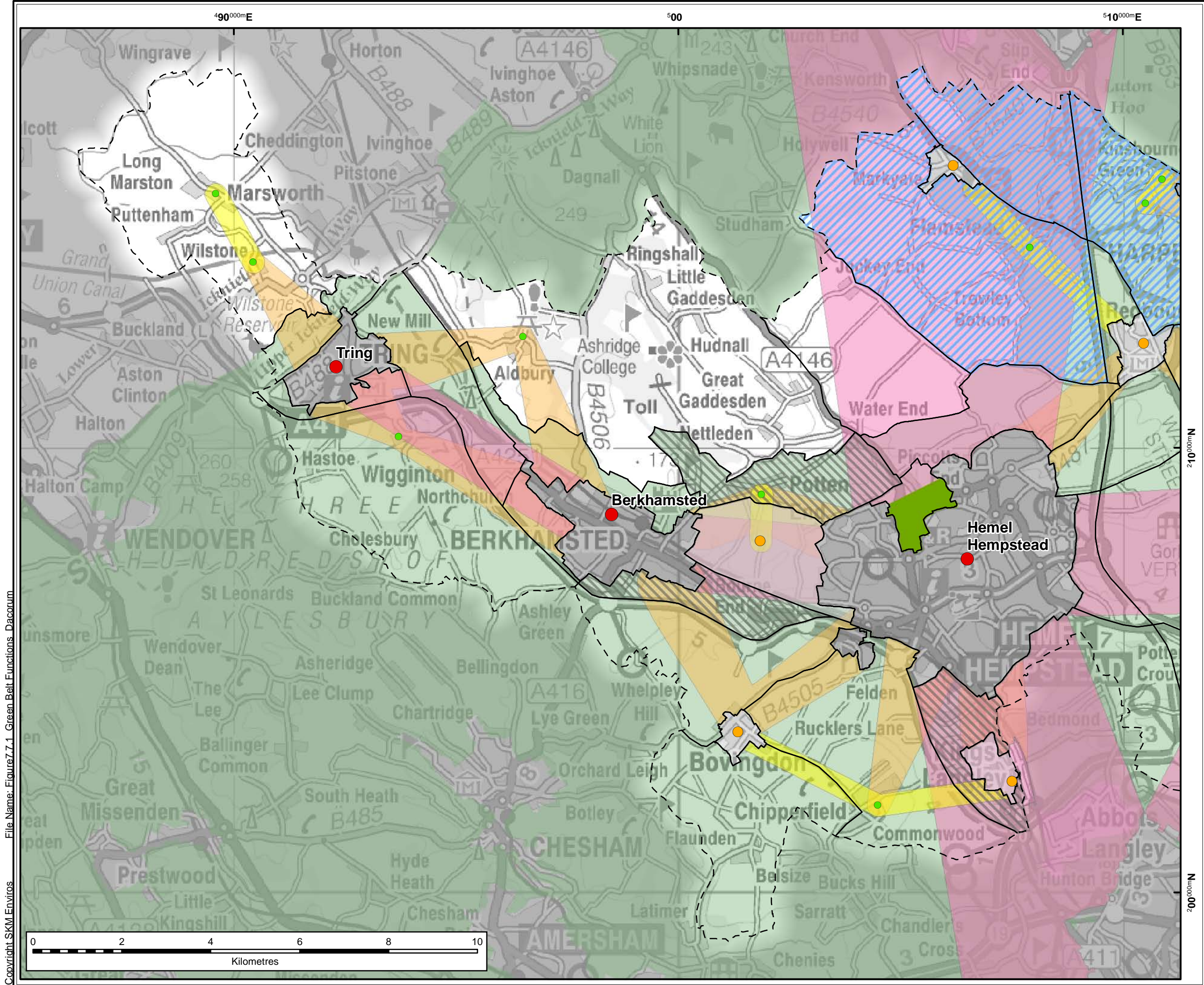
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3/12/2013





**Key:**

- Project Study Area
- Land Parcel Boundary
- 1st Tier Settlement
- 2nd Tier Settlement
- Area with >1% Built-Up Area
- Green Wedge
- Check Sprawl
- Secondary Local Gap
- Strategic Gap
- Primary Local Gap
- Green Belt

**Settlement**

- 1st Tier
- 2nd Tier
- 3rd Tier

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

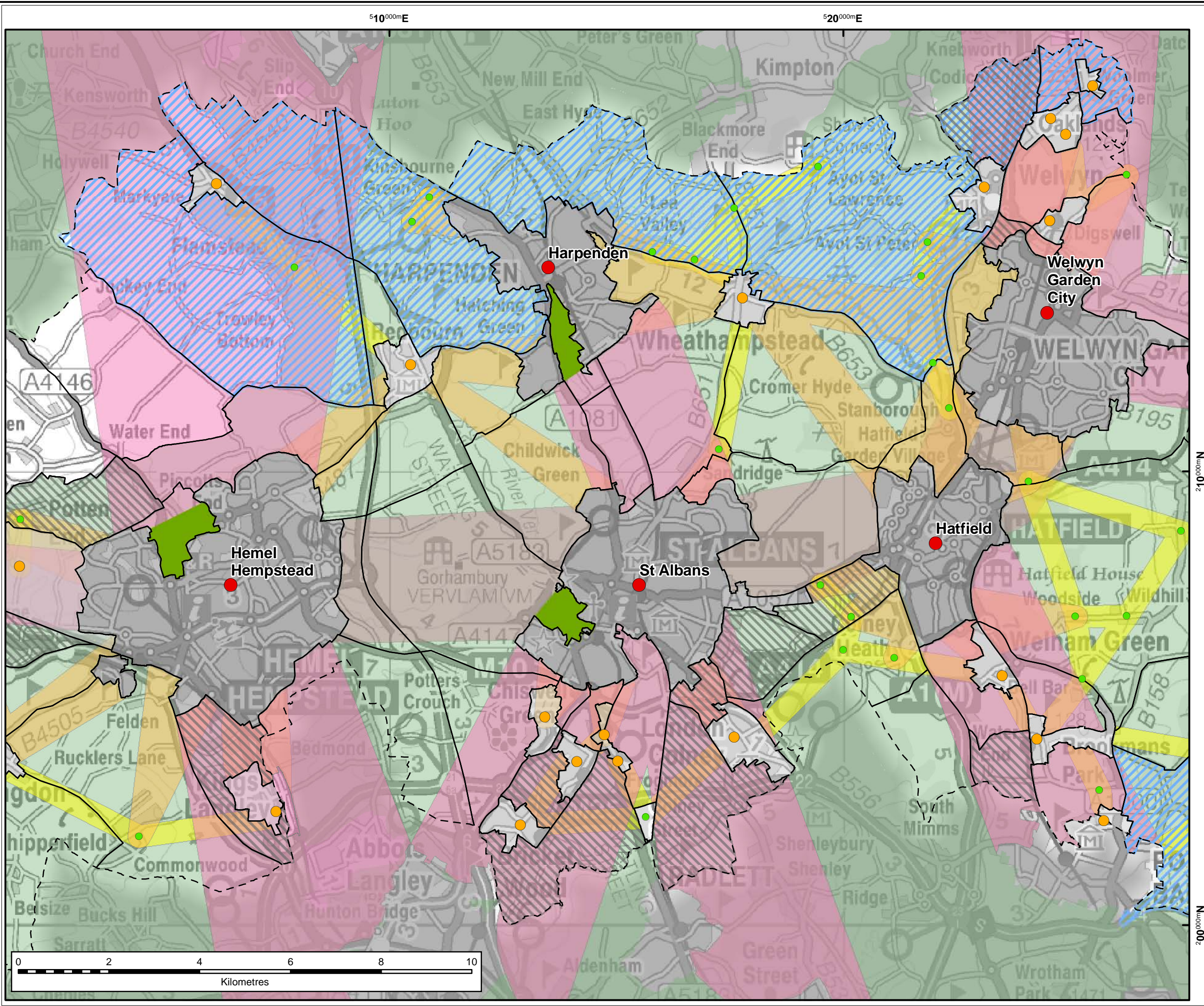
**FIGURE 7.7.1.**  
**Green Belt Functions**  
**Dacorum Borough Council**

SCALE	PROJECT CODE
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CHECKED	DATE
RB	3/12/2013



File Name: Figure 7.7.2 Green Belt Functions St Albans

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**Key:**

- Project Study Area
- Land Parcel Boundary
- 1st Tier Settlement
- 2nd Tier Settlement
- Area with >1% Built-Up Area
- Green Wedge
- Check Sprawl
- Strategic Gap
- Primary Local Gap
- Secondary Local Gap
- Green Belt

**Settlement**

- 1st Tier
- 2nd Tier
- 3rd Tier

N

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

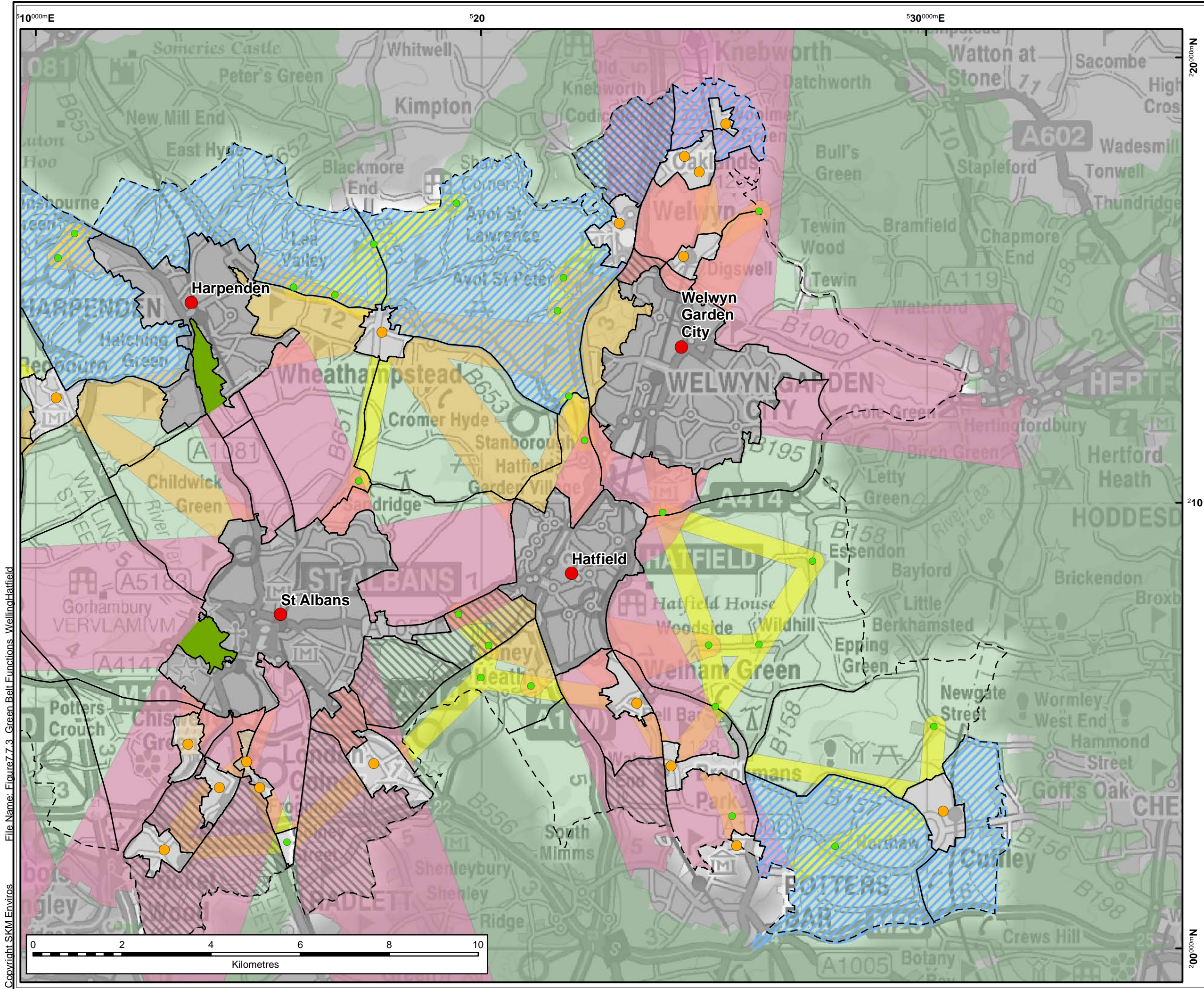
REVISION: H

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

**FIGURE 7.7.2.**  
**Green Belt Functions**  
**St Albans District Council**

SCALE	PROJECT CODE
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RB	3/12/2013





**Key:**

- Project Study Area
- Land Parcel Boundary
- 1st Tier Settlement
- 2nd Tier Settlement
- Area with >1% Built-Up Area
- Green Wedge
- Check Sprawl
- Strategic Gap
- Primary Local Gap
- Secondary Local Gap
- Green Belt

**Settlement**

- 1st Tier
- 2nd Tier
- 3rd Tier

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 7.7.3.  
Green Belt Functions  
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council**

SCALE	PROJECT CODE
1:80,000 @ A3	JE30761
CONTENT	DRAWN
	KW
CHECKED	DATE
RB	3/12/2013



File Name: Figure 7.7.3 Green Belt Functions Welwyn Hatfield



## 8. Land Contributing Least to Green Belt Purposes

### 8.1. Overview

- 8.1.1. Drawing on the findings of the purposes assessment, this section identifies land which contributes least towards the four national Green Belt purposes and the local Hertfordshire purpose. Green Belt land contributing least towards Green Belt purposes has been classified as either a strategic sub-area or a small scale sub-area. The strategic sub-areas are large scale with no defined boundaries whereas the small-scale sub-areas have more clearly defined edges.
- 8.1.2. These sub-areas of Green Belt land form part of individual strategic parcels defined in the study. When these sub-areas are considered as stand-alone areas, their limited contribution towards the four national purposes and local Hertfordshire purpose (relative to the overall performance of the strategic parcel as a whole) is evident. This judgement emerges from the overall purposes assessment, which took a view on the overall strategic performance of each parcel, as well as the existing levels of openness and the local landscape and urbanising features which help define the character of land. Therefore it is recognised, where appropriate, that some sub-areas do contribute towards the five purposes assessed. However this level of contribution is relatively low compared to other parts of the Green Belt.
- 8.1.3. On the basis of the assessment undertaken it is considered that some reduction in the size of the individual strategic parcels in which sub-areas have been identified would not significantly compromise the primary functions of the Green Belt or compromise the separation of existing settlements.
- 8.1.4. A brief description of each of these sub-areas is provided in Sections 8.2 and 8.3 below. Further assessment of all these sub-areas will be required to determine their precise boundaries and to consider the wider range of planning issues that will need to be taken into account when reviewing Green Belt boundaries in the context of Local Plan preparation. It is anticipated that these further assessments will be undertaken separately by each planning authority to form part of the evidence base to help the planning authorities '*determine the manner and degree to which change in the Green Belt could be considered without damaging the purposes for including land in the Green Belt and the degree to which harm to the Green Belt would result if development were to take place*<sup>26</sup>.
- 8.1.5. Given the non-strategic nature of the small-scale sub-areas identified those identified may not be exhaustive. This is because this Green Belt Review has been undertaken at a strategic level. It is therefore possible that additional potential small-scale boundary

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<sup>26</sup> Study Brief (St Albans, Dacorum and Welwyn Hatfield, 2013)



changes that would also not compromise the overall function of the Green Belt might be identified through a more detailed survey. It is also important to note that this study does not set out precise outer boundaries for any land considered to contribute least to Green Belt purposes. As previously stated, this work must be undertaken through separate studies by each planning authority.

- 8.1.6. Furthermore, some Green Belt land which has been subject to substantial development has been identified for potential detailed boundary adjustments, to more appropriately reflect current development boundaries. The suggested boundary changes take account of the reality of the position on the ground. Where boundaries have lost their integrity as a result of encroachment and piecemeal development they no longer provide a clear demarcation of the Green Belt. In such contexts, adjustment is about re-emphasising and strengthening the barrier to further development and about regaining policy clarity. The Green Belt land suggested for boundary adjustments is generally located at the edges of existing settlements. It is possible that other boundary adjustments may be identified in supplementary technical work prepared by planning authorities.
- 8.1.7. In respect of revisions to Green Belt boundaries, Dacorum have undertaken detailed work as part of their Site Allocations DPD. This work is currently in draft form, but indicates that some minor boundary adjustments are likely to be justified. These adjustments will be taken forward through the Council's Site Allocations process. They are not considered as part of this purposes assessment.
- 8.1.8. Land contributing least towards Green Belt purposes is discussed in more detail in 8.2, 8.3 and 8.4, and mapped in Figure 8.1 below.

## **8.2. Strategic sub-areas contributing least to Green Belt Purposes**

- 8.2.1. Strategic sub-areas identified for further assessment are described below and mapped in Figure 8.1. These areas of land which form part of wider strategic parcels identified for the purposes of assessment have no defined boundaries. They are considered to contribute least towards the four national Green Belt purposes and local Hertfordshire purpose. Further detailed assessment work will need to be undertaken to inform any decisions on the precise extent of these areas and the future role of specific areas of land within them. As previously stated, any Green Belt land judged as contributing least to national purposes will require further consideration in respect of wider issues, relating to infrastructure capacity, sustainability and landscape. These issues are not covered by this study but will need to be considered in Local Plans preparations.

### ***Dacorum (Strategic Land contributing least to Green Belt purposes)***

- 8.2.2. **D-S1 – Land enclosed by B488, A41 and west of Tring (GB03).** The strategic parcel contributes significantly towards 1 of the 5 Green Belt purposes whereby it preserves the setting of Tring and Tring Park. It also makes a partial contribution towards preventing merging (providing strategic gap between Tring and Berkhamsted) and maintains the existing settlement pattern. However, land to the west and southwest of Tring is considered to contribute least towards the Green Belt purposes. This sub-area is enclosed by the B488, A41 and west edge of Tring, and contains the Aylesbury Road. It is therefore subject to urban influence and localised levels of landscape enclosure as it is bound by physical features which interrupt the landscape and act as barriers to the wider countryside. In relation to the overall parcel assessment this sub-area does not make a significant contribution towards preserving setting. Furthermore, a reduction in the size of the parcel would not significantly compromise the primary functions of the Green Belt or the separation of existing settlements. Assessed in isolation the strategic sub-area makes a limited or no contribution towards all of the five Green Belt purposes assessed. It is noted that a section of this strategic parcel is allocated for removal from the Green Belt to accommodate new housing and associated development (Local Allocation LA5 within Dacorum's Core Strategy).

**D-S2 – Land enclosed by A41 and southeast Berkhamsted (GB11).** The strategic parcel contributes significantly towards 2 of the 5 Green Belt purposes whereby it prevents merging (of Berkhamsted and Hemel Hempstead) and preserves the setting of Winkwell and Berkhamsted. It also makes a partial contribution towards safeguarding the countryside. However, land enclosed by the A41 and southeast Berkhamsted is considered to contribute least towards the five Green Belt purposes. A reduction in the size of the strategic parcel would not significantly compromise the primary functions of the Green Belt or compromise the separation of existing settlements. The sub-area identified displays some strong urban influences as a result of being enclosed by the A41 and the edge of the residential area of Berkhamsted. It also contains a range of large-scale built development including Ashlyns School and BFI National Archives, both of



which are designated as Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt. Existing landscape planting and buffering is strong and this limits the visual appearance and views of physical features. It is noted that a small section of this strategic parcel is allocated for future removal from the Green Belt to accommodate new housing and associated development (Local Allocation LA4 within Dacorum's Core Strategy).

**D-S3 – Land south of Hemel Hempstead enclosed by the A41 and railway line, and in the vicinity of Rucklers Lane (GB14B).** The strategic parcel contributes significantly towards 2 out of 5 Green Belt purposes whereby it preserves the setting of Kings Langley, and maintains the existing settlement pattern (providing gap between Hemel Hempstead and Kings Langley). It also makes a partial contribution towards preventing merging and safeguarding the countryside. However, the sub-area identified is enclosed by A41 to the east and railway line and urban edge to the west is considered to contribute least towards the five Green Belt purposes. This land is enclosed by strong urban features and contains the relatively large-scale ribbon development along Rucklers Lane in the Green Belt. It therefore displays strong urban fringe characteristics. Assessed in isolation the strategic sub-area makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging or safeguarding the countryside. A reduction in the size of the strategic parcel would not significantly compromise the primary functions of the Green Belt or compromise the separation of existing settlements. It is also noted that part of the sub-area falls within an Area of Archaeological Significance, so plays a role in terms of preserving historic setting.

***St Albans (Strategic Land contributing least to Green Belt purposes)***

- 8.2.3. **SA-S1 & S2 – Land enclosed by east Hemel Hempstead and M1 (GB21A & GB24A).** The strategic parcels significantly contribute towards 1 out of the 5 Green Belt purposes whereby GB24A only safeguards the countryside from encroachment. The parcels however make a partial contribution towards preventing merging and maintaining the existing settlement pattern. The sub-areas identified are relatively free of built development and represent open landscapes, which are however interrupted by the M1. Urban influences are strong as the sub-areas are enclosed by clear and visually prominent physical settlement edges including commercial and industrial development at Hemel Hempstead, especially to the south, as well as the M1 which disrupts the character of the countryside. Therefore, a reduction in the size of the strategic parcel would not significantly compromise the primary functions of the Green Belt or the separation of existing settlements. This is particularly the case because the gap between Hemel Hempstead and St Albans is relatively wide at 3.8km and is generally not compromised by existing built development or other urbanising uses and features, apart from the M1. This land makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl or preserving setting.
- 8.2.4. **SA-S3 – Area enclosed by residential development at east St Albans along Sandpit Lane (GB36).** The strategic parcel contributes significantly 3 of the 5 Green Belt



purposes by preventing merging (of St Albans and Hatfield), safeguarding the countryside and maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing the gap between St Albans and Sandridge). It includes a number of built uses and urbanising influences. It is a relatively open landscape. On land to the east of St Albans which penetrates into the settlement, urban influences are particularly strong and there is significant built development within the Green Belt at Oaklands College, which has recently expanded. The land along Sandpit Lane is enclosed by three urban edges and this limits the contribution of this local area to the wider Green Belt and its important role in separating settlements. A reduction in the size of the strategic parcel at the sub-area location would have a limited impact on the overall role of the Green Belt and the physical separation of settlements. It would not reduce the existing minimum distance of the gap between St Albans and Hatfield which is 1.4km. This land makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preserving setting or maintaining the existing settlement pattern.

8.2.5. **SA-S4 – Enclosed land at north St Albans along Sandbridgebury Lane (GB38).** The strategic parcel significantly contributes towards 2 of the 5 Green Belt purposes whereby it prevents merging (of St Albans and Harpenden) and preserves the setting of Old Harpenden. It also makes a partial contribution towards safeguarding the countryside. The sub-area identified has relatively strong countryside characteristics as the landscape is a mix of open arable and some more enclosed areas in particular locations. However land along and around Sandbridgebury Lane penetrates into the north of St Albans to border existing development and settlement boundaries which contain it on at least two edges. This sub-area displays urban fringe characteristics and greater levels of localised landscape enclosure as a result of existing planting and field patterns and activities within the Green Belt including outdoor recreation. The small scale enclosed character of the sub-area makes it a valuable part of the countryside, but also provides screened from views from the wider strategic parcel. However, given the scale of the gap at 2.5km between St Albans and Harpenden, a reduction in the size of the strategic parcel would not significantly compromise the physical separation of settlements. This land makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl or preserving setting.

8.2.6. **SA-S5 – Enclosed land at north Harpenden in the vicinity of Luton Road, Couters End Lane and Ambrose Lane (GB40).** The strategic parcel contributes significantly towards 4 of the 5 Green Belt purposes. It checks sprawl from Luton and Dunstable, safeguards the countryside, preserves setting and maintains the existing settlement pattern. However, the sub-area identified to the north of Harpenden penetrates into the urban area and it displays urban influence. There is strong urban influence as substantial development has taken place along the Luton Road, with adjacent development forming an extended urban edge to Harpenden in the northwest. Therefore, assessed in isolation, it makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging or maintaining local gaps. Existing field patterns and boundary planting produces sense of local landscape enclosure, which creates a valuable part of the countryside, but also provides partially screened from views from the wider countryside



and surroundings. A reduction in the size of the strategic parcel would not significantly compromise the overall role of the Green Belt or compromise the separation of settlements.

- 8.2.7. **SA-S6 – Enclosed land at northeast Harpenden along Lower Luton Road, and extending to the vicinity of Whittings Close (GB40).** The strategic parcel contributes significantly towards 4 of the 5 Green Belt purposes. It checks sprawl from Luton and Dunstable, safeguards the countryside, preserves setting and maintains the existing settlement pattern. However, the relatively small (in comparison to the strategic parcel as a whole) sub-area identified to the northeast of Harpenden follows the angular urban edge which increases localised levels of enclosure and urban influence. In addition, existing field patterns and boundary planting create a greater sense of local landscape enclosure. This creates a valuable part of the countryside, but also provides partially screened views from the wider countryside and surroundings. At the strategic level, a reduction in the size of the parcel would not significantly compromise the overall role of the Green Belt or compromise the separation of settlements. Assessed in isolation the sub-area makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging, preserving setting and maintaining local gaps.
- 8.2.8. **SA-S7 – Land south and south west of London Colney (GB31).** The strategic parcel only contributes significantly towards 1 of the 5 Green Belt purposes whereby it maintains the existing settlement pattern. In terms of landscape character and physical openness the sub-area identified is subject to significant urbanising influence. Assessed in isolation, the sub-area to the south and south west of London Colney makes a limited or no contribution towards the primary role of the Green Belt to maintain the local gap between settlements. This is mainly because of the configuration of the urban edge in relation to adjoining Green Belt and the character of the landscape and relationship to the M25, which disrupts the countryside and acts as a major physical barrier. Given the scale and nature of the local gap, which contains the M25, a limited reduction in the size of the strategic parcel would not significantly compromise the physical separation of any settlements or primary role of the Green Belt.
- 8.2.9. **SA-S8 – Enclosed land at Chiswell Green Lane at Chiswell Green (GB25).** The strategic parcel significantly contributes towards 2 of the 5 Green Belt purposes whereby it safeguards the countryside and maintains the existing settlement pattern (providing gap between St Albans and Chiswell Green). It also makes a partial contribution towards preventing merging and preserving setting. However the sub-area identified on pasture land at Chiswell Green Lane displays urban fringe characteristics due to its proximity to the settlement edge and Butterfly World along Miriam Road to the west. This development bounds the outer extent of the pasture land and creates a physical barrier to the open countryside. The pasture land also displays greater levels of landscape enclosure due to localised planting along field boundaries. This creates potential to integrate development into the landscape with lower impact on views from the wider



countryside and surroundings. At the strategic level, a reduction in the size of the parcel would not significantly compromise the overall role of the Green Belt or compromise the separation of settlements. Assessed in isolation the land makes a limited or no contribution towards all Green Belt purposes.

***Welwyn Hatfield (Strategic Land contributing least to Green Belt purposes)***

- 8.2.10. **WH-S1 – Land at Hatfield Garden Village enclosed by north Hatfield, Coopers Green Lane (to the west) and A1(M) (GB43B).** The strategic parcel contributes significantly towards 2 of the 5 Green Belt functions. It prevents merging and maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing gaps between Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield with Stanborough). It also makes a partial contribution towards safeguarding the countryside. The sub-area identified as around Hatfield Garden Village and south of Coopers Green Lane penetrates the angular north edge of Hatfield. This creates increased localised levels of enclosure and containment. In addition, surrounding commercial and industrial development, residential area and the A1(M) represent strong urban influences on the sub-area. The location of the northern boundary to the sub-area requires careful consideration as the gap between Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City is narrow at 1km. However it is considered that a reduction in the size of the parcel will not significantly compromise the overall functions of the Green Belt, or separation of existing settlements. Given existing strong physical features bordering the sub-area it is partly screened from the surrounding countryside. Assessed in isolation this land contributes least towards Green Belt purposes. This land makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl or preserving setting.
- 8.2.11. **WH-S2 – Land southeast of Welwyn Garden City enclosed by the A414 (GB46 and GB55).** The strategic parcel contributes significantly towards 1 of the 5 Green Belt Purposes, whereby it safeguards the countryside. It also partial contributes towards preventing merging and maintaining the existing settlement pattern. The sub-area identified on land southeast of Welwyn Garden City enclosed by the A414 contains grassland and is partly used for pastoral agriculture. The settlement edge runs along the western edge and the A414 wraps around the southern and eastern extent of the site and these strong physical features act as urban influences on the site. Woodland to the north and southwest offers the potential to help integrate the area with surroundings. Assessed in isolation the parcel contributes least towards Green Belt purposes. The land does not significantly contribute towards preventing merging given the scale of the gap of 2.7km between Welwyn Garden City and Hertford. It makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preserving setting or maintaining the existing settlement pattern. It is noted that this strategic sub-area area of search crosses into East Hertfordshire therefore discussions with the adjoining planning authority area required. This is the only cross-boundary strategic sub-area identified in the study.



### **8.3. Small-scale sub-areas contributing least to Green Belt Purposes**

- 8.3.1. Small scale sub-areas within strategic parcels which contribute least towards the four national Green Belt purposes and local Hertfordshire purpose are summarised below and mapped in Figure 8.1. Each description provides a high level summary of the sub-area only. This land is non-strategic in nature and therefore is assumed that it will not significantly adversely impact upon the strategic function of the Green Belt. Given the strategic nature of this study, this land will need to be further assessed by planning authorities in more detail to fully consider wider issues which are not covered by in this report, but that should be considered in preparing Local Plans.

#### ***Dacorum (Small-scale sub-areas contributing least to Green Belt Purposes)***

- 8.3.2. **D-SS1 – Land west of Hemel Hempstead (GB10)** bound by Pouchen End Lane to the west, Chaulden Lane to the south and settlement edge to the east. The northern extent of the sub-area requires to be determined as a result of further assessment. Assessed in isolation this land makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging, preserving setting or maintaining local gaps. The land makes a relatively limited contribution to the primary functions of the Green Belt. It is noted that a section of strategic parcel GB10 is allocated for future removal from the Green Belt to accommodate new housing and associated development (Local Allocation LA3, Dacorum Core Strategy).
- 8.3.3. **D-SS2 – Land at southeast edge of Bovingdon (GB13)** at Homefield, off Green Lane. Assessed in isolation this land 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.

#### ***St Albans (Small-scale sub-areas contributing least to Green Belt Purposes)***

- 8.3.4. **SA-SS1 – Land at northeast edge of St Albans (GB36)** bound by House Lane to the east, and settlement edge to the south and west. The northern extent of the area runs level with Pirton Close. Assessed in isolation this sub-area makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging, preserving setting or maintaining local gaps.
- 8.3.5. **SA-SS2 – Land at southwest edge of Redbourn (GB18B)** enclosed by the M1 to the west in the vicinity of Gaddesden Lane. Assessed in isolation this sub-area makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging, safeguarding the countryside, preserving setting or maintaining local gaps.
- 8.3.6. **SA-SS3 – Land at southeast edge of Redbourn (GB22)** enclosed by A5183. Assessed in isolation this sub-area makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging, safeguarding the countryside, preserving setting or maintaining local gaps.



- 8.3.7. **SA-SS4 – Land at west of Harpenden (GB20)** south of Falconers Field and north of Roundwood Park School. Assessed in isolation this sub-area makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging, preserving setting or maintaining local gaps.
- 8.3.8. **SA-SS5 – Land south of Harpenden (GB22)** enclosed by Beesonend Lane to the south and settlement edge to the north and east. Assessed in isolation the sub-area makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging, preserving setting or maintaining local gaps.
- 8.3.9. **SA-SS6 – Land north of How Wood (GB28)** enclosed by Tippetdell Lane to north and settlement edge to south, east and west. Assessed in isolation this very small sub-area makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging, safeguarding the countryside, preserving setting or maintaining local gaps.
- 8.3.10. **SA-SS7 – Land south of Wheathampstead (GB43A)** to south of Hill Dyke Road and enclosed by Dyke Lane to the east and settlement edge to the west. The southern extent of the land runs level with Beech Crescent. Assessed in isolation this very small sub-area makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging, preserving setting or maintaining local gaps.
- 8.3.11. **SA-SS8 – Land east of Wheathampstead (GB41)** to east of Bocket View. Assessed in isolation this very small sub-area makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging, preserving setting or maintaining local gaps.

***Welwyn Hatfield (Small-scale sub-areas contributing least to Green Belt Purposes)***

- 8.3.12. **WH-SS1 – Land west of Hatfield (GB35)** to south of Wilkins Green Lane urban edge and west of Ellenbrook Lane. The southern extent of the land runs to the cyclepath to the south of the existing play area at Ellenbrook Lane. Assessed in isolation this sub-area makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging, preserving setting or maintaining local gaps.
- 8.3.13. **WH-SS2 – Land south of Welwyn Garden City (GB44)** to the south of Golden Dell, enclosed by Ascots Lane to the south and settlement edge to the east. The west boundary has the potential to extend beyond Hollybush Lane. Assessed in isolation this sub-area makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging, preserving setting or maintaining local gaps.



#### **8.4. Boundary Adjustments**

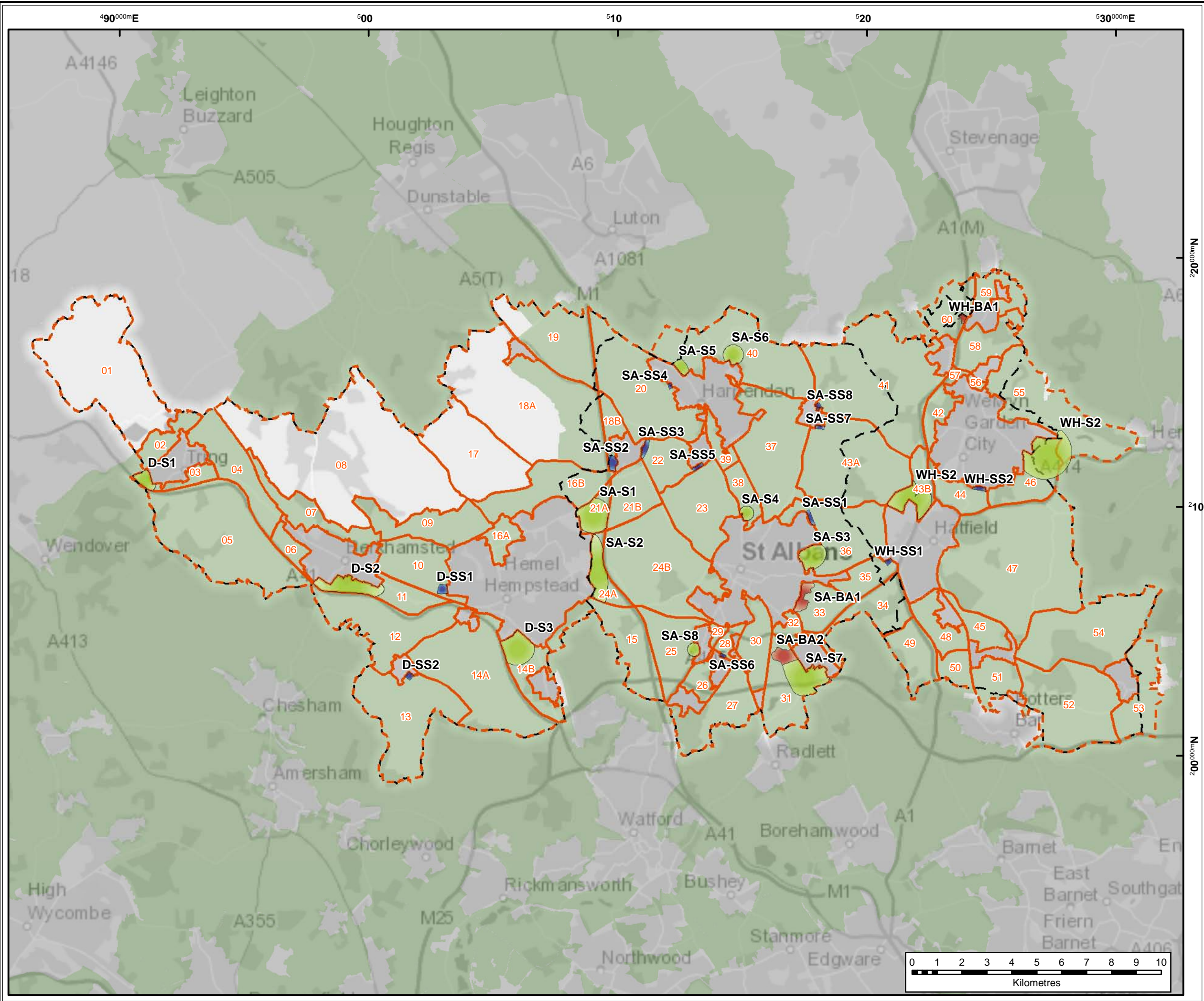
8.4.1. Land recommended for boundary adjustments as a result of development within the Green Belt is listed below and mapped in Figure 8.1.

- SA-BA1 – Development at Highfield Park along southeast edge of St Albans (GB33)
- SA-BA2 – Development at Napsbury Park to west of London Colney (GB31)
- WH-BA1 – Development at The Avenue to west of A1(M) adjoining west of Oaklands village (GB60).

8.4.2. Boundary changes are recommended in light of the purposes assessment and field visits, which have identified Green Belt land which has been subject to substantial development. As a result this land no longer contributes towards the four national Green Belt purposes and the local Hertfordshire purpose. Development has caused the Green Belt boundary to be compromised and therefore it is suggested that it is redrawn along the new built edges. This adjustment of the Green Belt boundary will result in a cleaner and clearer edge and a reaffirmation of the importance of landscape openness and policy permanence beyond that edge.

8.4.3. Further boundary adjustment may be identified by planning authorities in separate supplementary technical studies.

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



**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**

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



**Key to Figure 8.1 Land Contributing Least towards Green Belt Purposes**

<b>Strategic sub-areas</b>	
D-S1	Land enclosed by B488, A41 and west of Tring (GB03)
D-S2	Land enclosed by A41 and southeast Berkhamsted (GB11)
D-S3	Land south of Hemel Hempstead enclosed by the A41 and railway line, and in the vicinity of Rucklers Lane (GB14B)
SA-S1&S2	Land enclosed by east Hemel Hempstead and M1 (GB21A & GB24A)
SA-S3	Area enclosed by residential development at east St Albans along Sandpit Lane (GB36)
SA-S4	Enclosed land at north St Albans along Sandbridgebury Lane (GB38)
SA-S5	Enclosed land at north Harpenden in the vicinity of Luton Road, Couters End Lane and Ambrose Lane (GB40)
SA-S6	Enclosed land at northeast Harpenden along Lower Luton Road, and extending to the vicinity of Whitings Close (GB40)
SA-S7	Land south and south west of London Colney (GB31)
SA-S8	Enclosed land at Chiswell Green Lane at Chiswell Green (GB25)
WH-S1	Land at Hatfield Garden Village enclosed by north Hatfield, Coopers Green Lane (to the west) and A1(M) (GB43B)
WH-S2	Land southeast of Welwyn Garden City enclosed by the A414 (GB46 and GB55)
<b>Small Scale sub-areas</b>	
D-SS1	Land west of Hemel Hempstead (GB10)
D-SS2	Land at southeast edge of Bovingdon (GB13)
SA-SS1	Land at northeast edge of St Albans (GB36)
SA-SS2	Land at southwest edge of Redbourn (GB18B)
SA-SS3	Land at southeast edge of Redbourn (GB22)
SA-SS4	Land at west of Harpenden (GB20)
SA-SS5	Land south of Harpenden (GB22)
SA-SS6	Land north of How Wood (GB28)
SA-SS7	Land south of Wheathampstead (GB43A)
SA-SS8	Land east of Wheathampstead (GB41)
WH-SS1	Land west of Hatfield (GB35)
WH-SS2	Land south of Welwyn Garden City (GB44)
<b>Boundary Adjustments</b>	
SA-BA1	Development at Highfield Park along southeast edge of St Albans (GB33)
SA-BA2	Development at Napsbury Park to west of London Colney (GB31)
WH-BA1	Development at The Avenue to west of A1(M) adjoining west of Oaklands village (GB60)

## 9. Conclusions and Next Steps

### 9.1. Conclusions

- 9.1.1. Today, almost seventy years since the original designation of the Metropolitan Green Belt and over fifty years since the first definition of the Hertfordshire Green Belt boundaries, the Green Belt continues to perform an important role in<sup>27</sup> checking the restricted expansion of large built-up areas, preventing neighbouring towns from merging by providing strategic gaps and preserving the special character of towns. It also safeguards the high quality countryside from encroachment and assists urban regeneration<sup>28</sup> as well as maintaining the existing settlement pattern<sup>29</sup> by providing local gaps.
- 9.1.2. Most land within the study area exhibits high levels of openness, in terms of visual openness and an absence of built development, which is considered to be an essential characteristic of the Green Belt.
- 9.1.3. A clear distinction is evident and has been maintained between land which is built-up and part of existing settlements and the adjacent surrounding countryside, and this is in large part a result of the success of the Green Belt designation.
- 9.1.4. The study identifies the key functions of the Green Belt, which effectively deliver the five purposes as set out in national and local planning policy. All strategic parcels in the Green Belt, at least in part, clearly perform a key role and need to be given maximum protection into the future. The main roles are represented in the simplified diagram in Figure 7.7.
- 9.1.5. However, a number of sub-areas within some of the strategic parcels have been assessed as making the least contribution towards Green Belt purposes.
- 9.1.6. Therefore the degree to which different parts of the Green Belt contribute to its overall success varies across the study area. The assessment identifies both larger (strategic sub-areas) and smaller scale areas of land which could be considered for further assessment, where a reduction in the size of the strategic parcels within which they lie would not significantly compromise the overall functions of the Green Belt.
- 9.1.7. The assessment against the four national purposes and the local Hertfordshire purpose also indicates that some boundary adjustments could be made without compromising the achievement of the overall purposes of the Green Belt. Potential adjustments could clarify the Green Belt's boundaries and reassert its significance as a key policy tool.

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<sup>27</sup> Three Green Belt purposes from Circular 42/55

<sup>28</sup> Two Green Belt purposes added by Draft PPG2 (1988)

<sup>29</sup> Local Green Belt purposes set out in Hertfordshire Structure Plan



## 9.2. Next Steps

- **To protect and strengthen the existing Green Belt designation.** This has been achieved by identifying land which significantly contributes towards Green Belt purposes. In addition, the primary roles and functions, which deliver the purposes assessed, have been represented in the simplified diagram in Figure 7.7. It is vital that these functions are protected and maintained. These functions relate to checking sprawl, preventing merging, safeguarding the countryside, preserving setting and maintaining the local settlement pattern (which remains an important local characteristic of the study area).
- **To further consider land identified as contributing least towards Green Belt purposes.** Strategic sub-areas within parcels which have been assessed as contributing least to the four national Green Belt purposes and local Hertfordshire purpose have been identified for further assessment. This study has not defined the boundaries for these sub-areas or undertaken detailed analysis of sub-areas. Therefore this land will need to be subject to further consideration by each planning authority in respect of wider issues, relating to infrastructure capacity, sustainability and landscape issues which have not been examined in this study but must be considered in preparing the Local Plans in which any boundary changes can be set out if required.



## Appendices

## Appendix 1: Hertfordshire Planning Policy

The original concept of the Metropolitan Green Belt (MGB) affected only the southern half of the County.

In terms of detailed planning policy, the Green Belt in Hertfordshire was first formalised in the County Development Plan, which was published in 1951 and approved by the Minister of Housing and Local Government in December 1958 (under the Town and Country Planning Act 1947). The initial Green Belt designation was carried forward by the County Council in the First Review of the County Development Plan, published in 1964 and approved in 1971 (under the Town and Country Planning Act 1962).

This Plan also introduced a general policy approach that the whole of Hertfordshire be treated as if it were MGB, so as to prevent further coalescence of historic settlement patterns within the MGB. This policy was applied pending submission of the first of the new Structure Plans which examined the future extent of the Green Belt in more detail.

The Hertfordshire County Structure Plan (1976) continued the approach of the County Development Plan *'as if everything was Green Belt'* and proposed an enlargement of the MGB to cover whole of the rural County, excluding only towns and major built up areas. This was because it was considered that greater road and rail accessibility had extended London's influence northwards.

However this proposal was rejected by the SoS as it did not accord with the main purposes of the Green Belt (as set out in Ministry of Housing and local Government Circular 42/55) especially regarding key purposes of checking unrestricted sprawl of built-up areas and safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

In response, a revised proposal was accepted for *'a limited extension of the MGB to cover those areas nearest to London which are under the heaviest pressure and where there is a risk of coalescence of settlements'*. Consequently, Modification Policy (2) provided for *'the maintenance of a Green Belt in the south of the County as part of the Metropolitan Green Belt about 12 – 15 miles deep with limited extensions along the main radial transport corridors'*. Detailed boundary definition was the responsibility of new Local Plans.

Consideration of national purposes as well as local inner boundaries led to tight boundaries being drawn around settlements and limited designation of safeguarded land, with the exception of Welwyn Hatfield.

Significantly, the Hertfordshire County Structure Plan (2.1.5) also explicitly explained the longstanding concept of local (County) functions of the Green Belt to maintain the settlement pattern. Local functions were described as serving *'to support County policies for countryside and leisure'* whilst *'maintaining the existing urban form, preventing coalescence, preserving green wedges and keeping countryside open'*.



The County Structure Plan Alterations No 1 (1980) did not change general Green Belt policy and prepared alterations to deal with longer term development needs whereby the SoS approved an enlargement of the Green Belt (as a result of review of the North Hertfordshire Area Statement). This was known as Green Belt to the East of Luton and not part of the MGB but described as complementary to the South Bedfordshire Green Belt.

The Hertfordshire County Structure Plan Review (1986) responded to new Government guidance including Circular 14/84 which emphasised the Government's strong commitment to Green Belts. Local Plans had been adopted at this time with detailed outer and inner Green Belt boundaries, which were generally tight to settlement boundaries. The County Council interpreted Government policy in a Hertfordshire context (Para 2.23 – 4) and undertook *'some minor adjustments to inner Green Belt boundaries around some towns better to secure their permanence and make them more readily defensible on a long term basis, without undermining the basic objectives of Green Belt policy as now expressed by Government'*.

Circular 18/84 and Circular 22/80 sought to avoid creating ribbons or isolated pockets of development and supported policies for separating villages from towns. This was seen as a further justification for the local role of Green Belt in maintaining the existing settlement pattern. Consequently, the Structure Plan proposed additions to the general extent of the Green Belt and updated Green Belt Policy (2) to *'where defining the boundaries of the Green belt around settlements this will be done by reference to the degree of long term expansion of the built up area acceptable in the context of the stated purpose of the Green Belt'*.

The Hertfordshire County Structure Plan Review – Incorporating Alterations (1990) addressed Green Belt issues in the context of PPG2 and was approved in 1991. The overall approach to Green Belt was unchanged.

The Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review 1991 – 2011 (1998) updated Green Belt policy. It explicitly referred to Green Belt East of Luton being maintained as part of the South Bedfordshire Green Belt. The Policy also allowed for inner boundary reviews to allow for development at major settlements and a strategic development.

The Hertfordshire Structure Plan Roll Forward to 2016 (2002) was to include extensive research and consultation on urban capacity and Green Belt pressures. However the process was overtaken by the implementation of a new statutory regional planning system to replace structure plans under the 2004 Act. This research went on to inform the Regional Spatial Strategy (East of England Plan) which was formally revoked in 2012 with Green Belt designation powers now lying with local planning authorities.

Overall no strategic changes to Green Belt to accommodate development have taken place.

## Appendix 2: Local Planning Policy

### Dacorum

Dacorum Core Strategy (September 2013) was submitted for examination in June 2012, with modifications published in January 2013 and the Inspector's Report published in July 2013. This document will replace strategic policies in the Dacorum Local Plan which was adopted in 2004. The remaining Local Plan policies will be replaced by subsequent Development Plan Documents.

### *Green Belt Policy*

The Core Strategy incorporating Modifications (2013) states that the **Green Belt** will be protected from 'inappropriate development' and will 'remain essentially open in character'. Policy CS5, for the Green Belt, is based on national policy which is interpreted as protecting openness and character of the Green Belt, local distinctiveness and the physical separation of settlements. Only small scale development will be permitted provided that it has 'no significant impact on the character or appearance of the countryside'. It is therefore interpreted that the all of the Green Belt is countryside. There is also reference to the economic function of the Green Belt CS5, whereby appropriate development in the Green Belt 'supports the rural economy and the maintenance of the wider countryside'. In addition, Policy CS6 relates to Selected Small Villages in the Green Belt where any development must be sympathetic to surroundings including the countryside and protect character and appearance of villages.

The Dacorum Local Plan (2004) states that the Green Belt must remain as essentially open in order to:

- Check the spread of London and towns around it, including Luton;
- Prevent Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted, Tring, Kings Langley, Bovington, Markyate and other settlements merging into one another;
- Help safeguard the surrounding countryside from encroachment;
- Direct development to the towns and large villages to assist in regeneration and ensure land is fully used there; and
- Preserve the special character of historic settlements.

### *Other Green Belt related Policy*

The wider **historic environment** is recognised in the vision of the Core Strategy (2013) and conserving and enhancing the function and character of market towns, villages and countryside is recognised as a Strategic Objective. This reinforces the Green Belt specific policy.

The emerging **spatial strategy** focusses development in Hemel Hempstead with limited opportunities in market towns and large villages. There will be development restraint in small villages in the Green Belt and rural area and other small villages as set out in the Settlement Hierarchy. The countryside is protected and is recognised as an area where primarily open land



uses such as farming and forestry should flourish. In relation to settlements, the **role of the countryside** is explained below, and will inform the purposes assessment criteria.

- Hemel Hempstead – maintain physical separation from smaller villages and hamlets and protect Gade and Bulbourne valleys which provide strong landscape setting.
- Berkhamsted – prevent coalescence with Bourne End and Dudswell, and maintain unique valley setting.
- Tring – maintain clearly defined boundaries (with Icknield Way to the north, Pendley Estate to the east and Chilterns AONB to the south) and maintain buffer between Aston Clinton and new development around Aylesbury.
- Bovingdon – protect character of the village and provide strong physical buffer between Hemel Hempstead.
- Kings Langley – protect character of the village, prevent coalescence with Hemel Hempstead and stop formation of Watford suburb.
- Markyate – protect the setting of the village (the Ver Valley) and maintain green buffer separating Dunstable and Luton.

With regard to design, it is recognised that impacts of **views** on open land or the countryside need to be considered by new development. In terms of development guidelines, Dacorum's Spatial Awareness Framework considers the character of the settlement as one of five items, especially in relation to defined countryside borders, **landscape setting, historic setting**, settlement pattern and key views (Figure 11).

*Key Messages to inform Purposes Assessment Criteria:*

- All of the Green Belt is the countryside, where farming and forestry are key land uses
- The Green Belt specifically checks the spread of London and Luton and prevents merging of Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted, Tring, Kings Langley, Bovingdon, Markyate and other settlements
- Historic environment recognised as important feature, and countryside plays a role in maintaining setting and providing views.



## St Albans

St Albans District Local Plan Review was adopted in 1994, with the majority of policies saved in 2004. The Council is currently preparing a Strategic Local Plan. Text below only refers to the 1994 Local Plan.

### ***Green Belt Policy***

The **Metropolitan Green Belt** is set out as the first Key Structuring Policy (Chapter 2), and references the five national purposes as set out in PPG2 (para 2.1). It notes: i) the positive role Green Belt have in providing access to the open countryside, ii) the essential characteristic of permanence, and iii) that boundaries should not be amended or development allowed if land becomes derelict.

Policy 1 defines the Green Belt, setting out excluded settlements and land. It also sets out a list of development allowed in the Green Belt (based on PPG2) including mineral extraction, agriculture, sport and recreation, appropriate rural uses and conversions of existing buildings. To support this, it goes on to explain requirements for any new development in the Green Belt, relating to integration with the existing landscape, siting, design and external appearance, landscape mitigation and avoidance of harm to ecological value, in addition to other Plan policies which need to be considered.

### ***Other Green Belt related Policy***

The Introduction 'places a high priority on the need to defend the **Green Belt** against inappropriate development and to protect the character of towns and villages' (para 1.5). The Plan identifies 17 **conservation areas** in Policy 85, which are to be preserved or enhanced. With regards to **landscape**, the Plan recognises the effectiveness of Green Belt policy places pressure on the undeveloped or underdeveloped land in urban areas and therefore the full role of urban green space needs to be considered. The District's **countryside** is designated as Green Belt (para 12.1). Policy 1 specifies countryside land uses as agriculture, forestry, recreation and wildlife conservation.

Policy 114 relates to St Albans City Centre, and refers to **Zones of Visibility** (Figure 16) whereby public viewpoints from around the city are identified beyond the settlement boundary. Furthermore, in Part 3 of the Plan, the Green Belt is referred to in **Policy Area Statements**. Of particular note, for the Napsbury Hospital Site, redevelopment guidelines state that the maintenance of the strategic **Green Belt gap** between St Albans and London Colney is an important objective (para 19.24).

The **Settlement Strategy**, includes towns, specified settlements and Green belt settlements. Policy 2 seeks to 'protect and enhance the essential character of existing settlements'.

Policies 4, 5 and 6 relate to new housing sites and new housing in settlements, and where appropriate refer to Green Belt, and other issues, to provide **planning guidelines**. It is also



commented that new development, especially in Green Belt settlements must not detract from the character or setting of a settlement and be acceptable in light of Policy 70 with regards to design and layout. Similarly, Policy 20 relating to employment sites provides planning guidelines referencing the Green Belt where appropriate. In addition, specific guidance is provided for development at and reuse of hospital sites in the Green Belt in Policies 60 and 61 (supported by more detailed advice in Policies 137 and 138) and guidance for schools in the Green Belt is set out in Policies 65 and 66. Policy 77 set out the requirements to re-use and adapt buildings in the Green Belt. Supporting text explains no harm should be caused to the purposes of the Green Belt (para 8.26).

With regards to **leisure**, Policy 91, identifies medium intensity uses (such as golf courses, riding stables and motor sports as set out in Policy 96) will normally be permitted in the Green Belt (outside landscape conservation areas). **Tourism** is recognised as an important industry as St Albans was the third most popular destination in the former Thames and Chilterns Tourist Board area. The rich variety of historic features including The Cathedral and Abbey Church of Saint Alban represent key visitor attractions. Therefore, indirectly Green Belt can help preserve such features and ensure they remain popular attractions.

There are area of Grade 2 **agricultural land** in the District (para 12.3), located to the east and west of St Albans (Figure 12). District contains scattering of plantations and some ancient semi-natural woodlands (para 12.7). A landscape conservation area runs from the north and east of Harpenden, around Wheathampstead, down to the west of St Albans (Figure 14).

*Key Messages to inform Purposes Assessment Criteria:*

- Countryside uses include agriculture, forestry, recreation and wildlife conservation
- Emphasis on character of settlements and zones of visibility to St Albans Cathedral are protected
- Green Belt gap between St Albans and London Colney to be maintained specifically mentioned to be maintained. This provides an example of the maintenance of a local gap so help maintain the existing settlement pattern.



## Welwyn Hatfield

Welwyn Hatfield Emerging Core Strategy was subject to consultation between November 2012 and January 2013. The current District Plan for Welwyn Hatfield was adopted in 2005, with the majority of policies saved in 2008.

### **Green Belt Policy**

Policy CS4, of the The Emerging Core Strategy (2012), relates to Green Belt boundaries and safeguarded land, and states that there will be a continuing emphasis on the retention of long-standing Green Belt restraint and Green Belt boundaries that will endure during and beyond the plan period. However, in order to meet the overall housing target during the plan period, safeguarded land will need to be brought forward and land will need to be exceptionally released from the Green Belt. The supporting text explains that Green Belt boundaries should only be changed in exceptional circumstances (para 6.17). The policy also states that there might be a need to allocate safeguarded land, between the urban area and the Green Belt. Policy CS7, on the type and mix of housing, states that, in sustainable locations the redevelopment or re-use of **Major Developed Sites** in the Green Belt will be undertaken. Such sites are also referred to in CS20 whereby any development must be compatible with the Green Belt location.

Green Belt policy, in the District Plan (2005) sets out the five national purposes from PPG2 (para 4.6) and explains the positive role the Green Belt can play (para 4.7). It aims to maintain the Green Belt (2.25) by directing development to existing settlements, particularly previously developed land, whilst preserving the quality of the countryside and supporting the purposes of the Green Belt. It explains the **settlement pattern** is characterised by a number of medium sized towns and villages, situated along main road and railway routes radiating northwards from London and separated by narrow bands of countryside. There are also small villages and sporadic ribbon developments within the countryside in more isolated and less accessible locations (this comment is repeated in the emerging Core Strategy). This settlement pattern gives the district unique qualities and should be preserved (para 4.2). The Green Belt is recognised as one of the main policy tools for maintaining this pattern and ensuring urban concentration (para 4.3). The main objectives of the Green Belt and settlement pattern are to (para 4.5):

- maintain the Green Belt as the principal means of restraining the physical expansion of the district's urban areas
- maintain the existing settlement pattern in the district
- concentrate development into the district's main towns and settlements
- maintain areas of special restraint between the urban area and the Green Belt, to be safeguarded to meet future growth needs beyond the Plan period and thereby ensure the permanence of the Green Belt boundaries.

The glossary to the emerging Core Strategy (2012), defines the **Green Belt** (D.17) with the aim of keeping land permanently open and to restrict urban sprawl, protect the countryside from development, keep neighbouring settlements separate, preserve historic towns and help in the regeneration of urban areas. **Safeguarded land** (D.49) is defined as land safeguarded between



the urban area and the Green Belt in order to meet longer-term development needs, in order to ensure the protection of the Green Belt beyond the plan period. Also, **urban sprawl** (D.53) is defined as 'the uncontrolled or unplanned extension of urban areas into the countryside'. Policies CS11 and CS13 relate to protecting critical assets including heritage assets and in particular the historic environment of Welwyn Garden City.

#### ***Other Green Belt related Policy***

The Spatial Vision comments that partnerships with HCC, neighbouring planning authorities and landowners will bring forward new and improved strategic green infrastructure, which in particular increases access and reinforces the role of the Green Belt between Hatfield and Smallford and to the east of Welwyn Garden City.

The Vision and Borough-wide strategic objectives include the need to meet development needs over the plan period in a form which maintains the existing settlement pattern, protects areas of highest environmental value, prevents coalescence of our towns and villages and releasing a limited amount of land from the Green Belt to ensure that its boundaries will not need reviewing before 2034.

With regard to how much growth will required, the great importance the government attaches to Green Belts is recognised whereby the fundamental aims include preventing urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open, altering boundaries only in exceptional circumstances and ensuring that they endure beyond the plan period taking account of the need to promote sustainable development (para 5.7).

The council acknowledges the need to protect sensitive landscapes, the importance of maintaining the general extent of the Green Belt and restraining urban sprawl together with the need to positively plan for growth that contributes to ambitions for the economy, helping to increase the supply of housing in sustainable locations for a growing population with changing household characteristics (para 5.11).

Policy CS3, relates to the Settlement Strategy, whereby the primary focus for new development will be in and around Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield. Elsewhere, new development will be strictly limited to that which is compatible with its green belt location and rural setting.

A key local priority will continue to be the maintenance of the general extent of the Green Belt, keeping land permanently open, preventing urban sprawl and neighbouring towns and villages from merging into one another, safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, preserving the setting and special character of historic towns and assisting urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of urban land. However, in order to ensure that sufficient land is available in sustainable locations throughout the plan period to meet the borough's housing (and any necessary associated development) requirements, a review of Green Belt boundaries will be exceptionally required around the edge of the borough's towns (para 6.14).



In terms of future growth locations the Council supports the principle of development on land at a broad location to the east of Welwyn Garden City (but within East Hertfordshire). Any new development or extensions in the Green Belt will need to be in conformity with national policy and be assessed against a series of criteria covering the impact of Green Belt criteria set out in Government policy (para 15.28 and 16.33).

*Key Messages to inform Purposes Assessment Criteria:*

- Green Belt is the principle policy tool for maintaining the existing settlement pattern
- Urban sprawl is the uncontrolled or unplanned extension of urban areas into the countryside
- Green Belt important between Hatfield and Smallford.

## Appendix 3: Landscape Character

### Landscape Character Appraisal

England is divided into National Character Areas (NCAs), areas of landscape character which are defined by landscape, biodiversity, geo-diversity and cultural and economic activity. The study area is covered by three NCAs as set out in Figure 4.1:

- NCA 110: The Chilterns, which covers much of the north and west of the study area;
- NCA 111: North Thames Basin, which lies in the east of the study area; and,
- NCA 88: Bedfordshire Claylands, which covers a small area on the north western edge of the study area.

Together these three areas describe the landscape character of the study area in the following ways.

#### *NCA 110: Chilterns*

The extensively wooded and farmed Chilterns landscape is underlain by chalk bedrock that rises up from the London Basin to form a northwest facing escarpment offering long views over the adjacent vales. Small streams flow on chalk through deep slope valleys or from the scarp foot, passing through numerous small settlements. Views are enclosed within branching valleys, sunken route ways and extensive woodland and hedgerow-enclosed fields. In the northwest of the study area in Dacorum, the special qualities of the natural and built features of the countryside are recognised by the designation of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It is important to note that part of the AONB in Dacorum is excluded from the Green Belt.

The Chilterns are one of the most wooded landscapes in England, with the area particularly renowned for its extensive native beech woods and ancient woodland on extensive clay-with-flint deposits. The countryside is a patchwork of mixed agriculture with woodland, with extensive areas of good quality agricultural land associated with lower-lying areas and river valleys. Pre-18th century fields are defined by ancient, often sinuous hedged boundaries whilst the historic chalk downland preserves prehistoric archaeology and supports rare and scarce chalk grassland plants.

#### *NCA 111: Northern Thames Valley*

The North Thames Basin NCA is further divided into sub-character areas of which the study area is covered by the Hertfordshire Plateau and River Basin. This is a diverse landscape with a series of broad valleys containing the major rivers Ver, Colne and Lea with extensive areas of broadleaved woodlands being the principal features of the area. The landform is varied with a high broad arable plateau divided by more wooded and pastured river valleys. Field patterns vary from the small organic shapes found in the north to regular rectangular fields, the result of 18<sup>th</sup> century enclosures. The woodland cover comprises a number of small ancient beech and oak woods found mainly in



the valleys to the west. The area comprises much transitional countryside as rural Hertfordshire merges into the northern London suburbs. Hertfordshire's large towns, the M25 and M1 motorways, railway line and prominent electricity pylons are also a major influence on character.

*NCA 88: Bedfordshire Claylands*

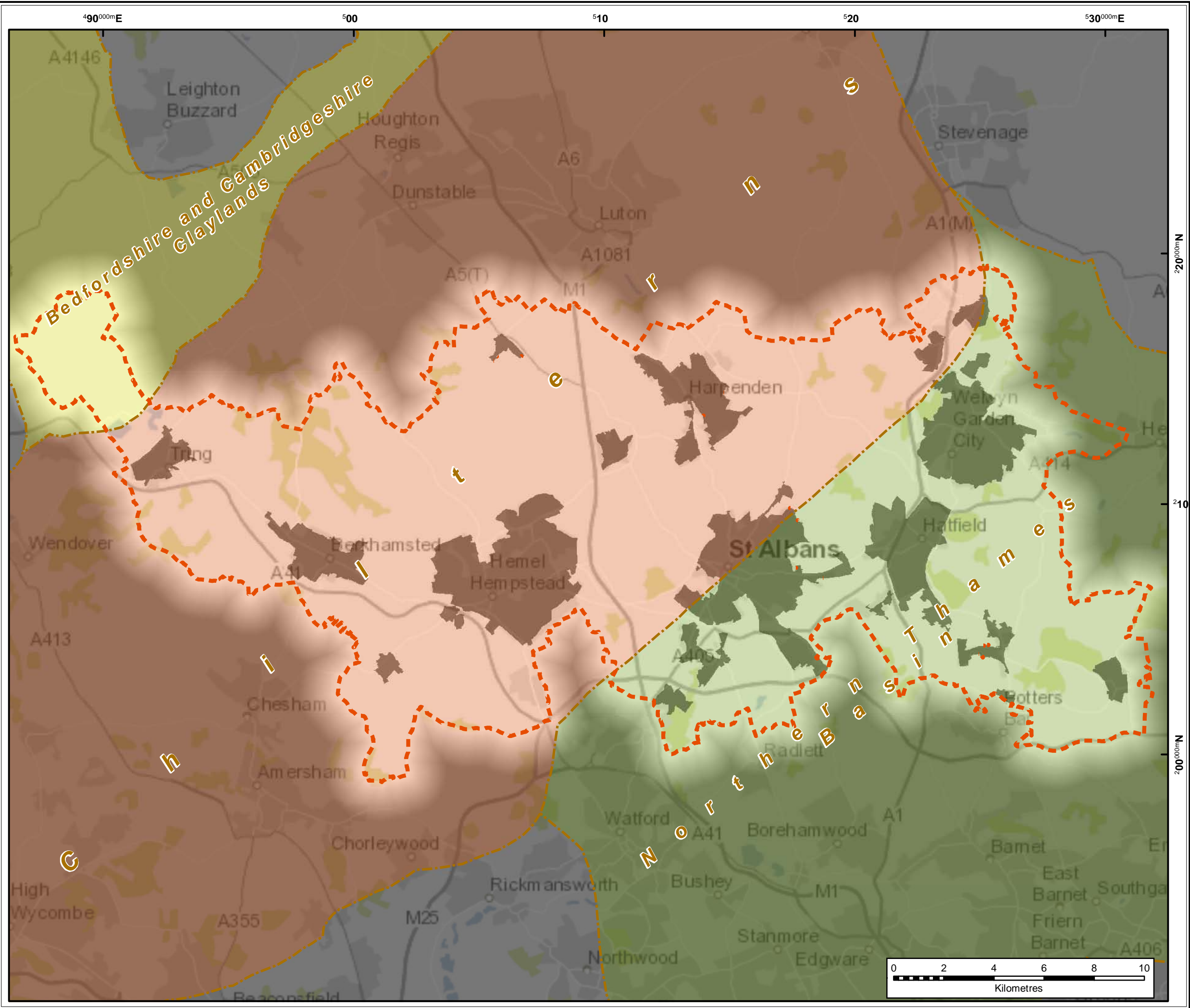
This NCA covers a small area to the northwest of the study area where the low lying Bedfordshire Claylands meet the chalk escarpment of the Chilterns. They comprise gently undulating topography and plateau areas, divided by broad shallow valleys with predominantly an open and intensive arable landscape. Fields are bounded by either open ditches or sparse closely trimmed hedges and woodland cover is variable. Settlements cluster around transport corridors with smaller, dispersed settlements elsewhere, incorporating a diversity of building materials including brick, thatch and stone.

***Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment***

The Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) was undertaken between 2000 & 2005 by Hertfordshire County Council and follows Natural England's NCA classification to provide 232 detailed district-scale Landscape Character Area Statements. For the purposes of this Green Belt review these areas are considered to be too small to be studied independently in detail especially due to the strategic nature of parcels to be assessed. Therefore the full LCA report should be consulted for deeper background and context on landscape description and evaluation.

Name: FigureA3.1 National Character Areas

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- Key:**
- Study Area Outer Boundary
  - NCA Boundary
  - NCA 88: Bedfordshire Claylands
  - NCA 110: The Chilterns
  - NCA 111: North Thames Basin



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

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

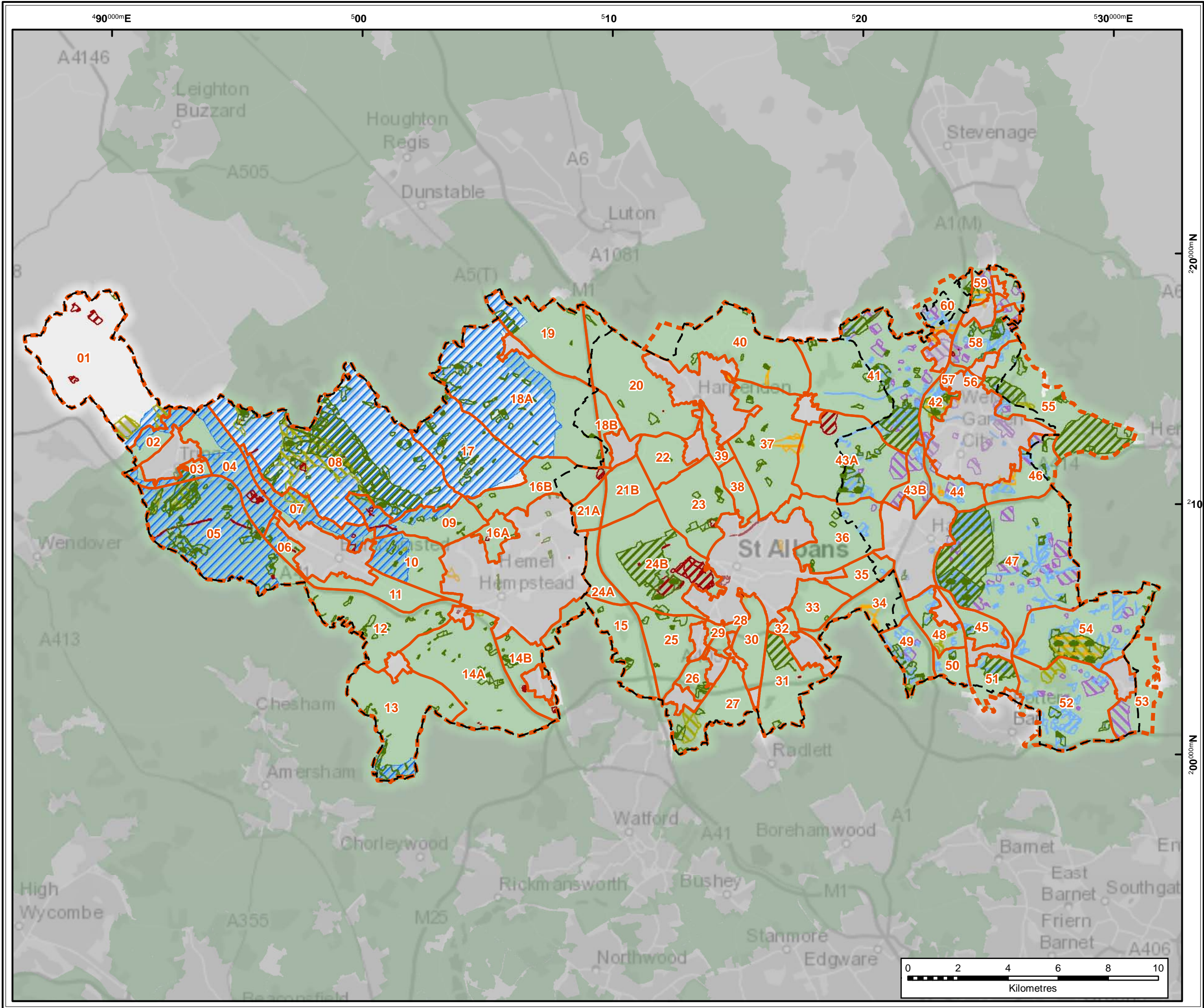
**FIGURE A3.1.**  
**National Character Areas**

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## **Appendix 4: Environmental and Historic Features**



- Key:**
- - District Boundary
  - Land Parcel Boundary
  - Study Area Outer Boundary
  - Ancient Woodland
  - Scheduled Monuments
  - Parks And Gardens
  - SSSI
  - Local Nature Reserve
  - County Wildlife Site
  - Area Of Archaeological Significance
  - Area of outstanding natural beauty
  - Metropolitan Green Belt



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

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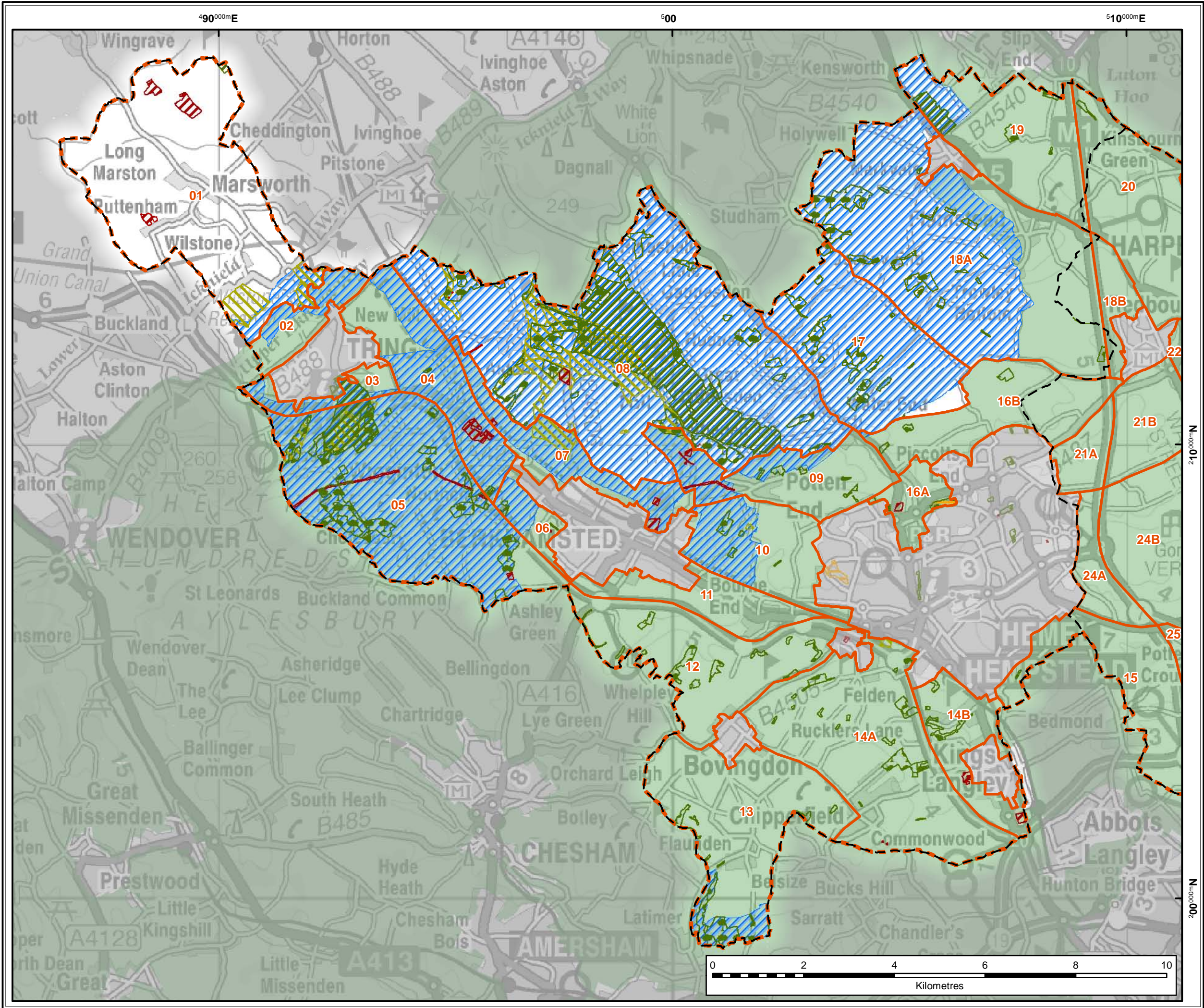
### Green Belt Review for St Albans, Dacorum and Welwyn Hatfield

**FIGURE A4.1.  
Environmental Features**

SCALE	PROJECT CODE
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Natural England Ordnance Survey	KW
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- Key:**
- - District Boundary
  - Land Parcel Boundary
  - Study Area Outer Boundary
  - Ancient Woodland
  - Scheduled Monuments
  - Parks And Gardens
  - SSSI
  - Local Nature Reserve
  - County Wildlife Site
  - Area Of Archaeological Significance
  - Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
  - Metropolitan Green Belt



Coordinate System: British National Grid  
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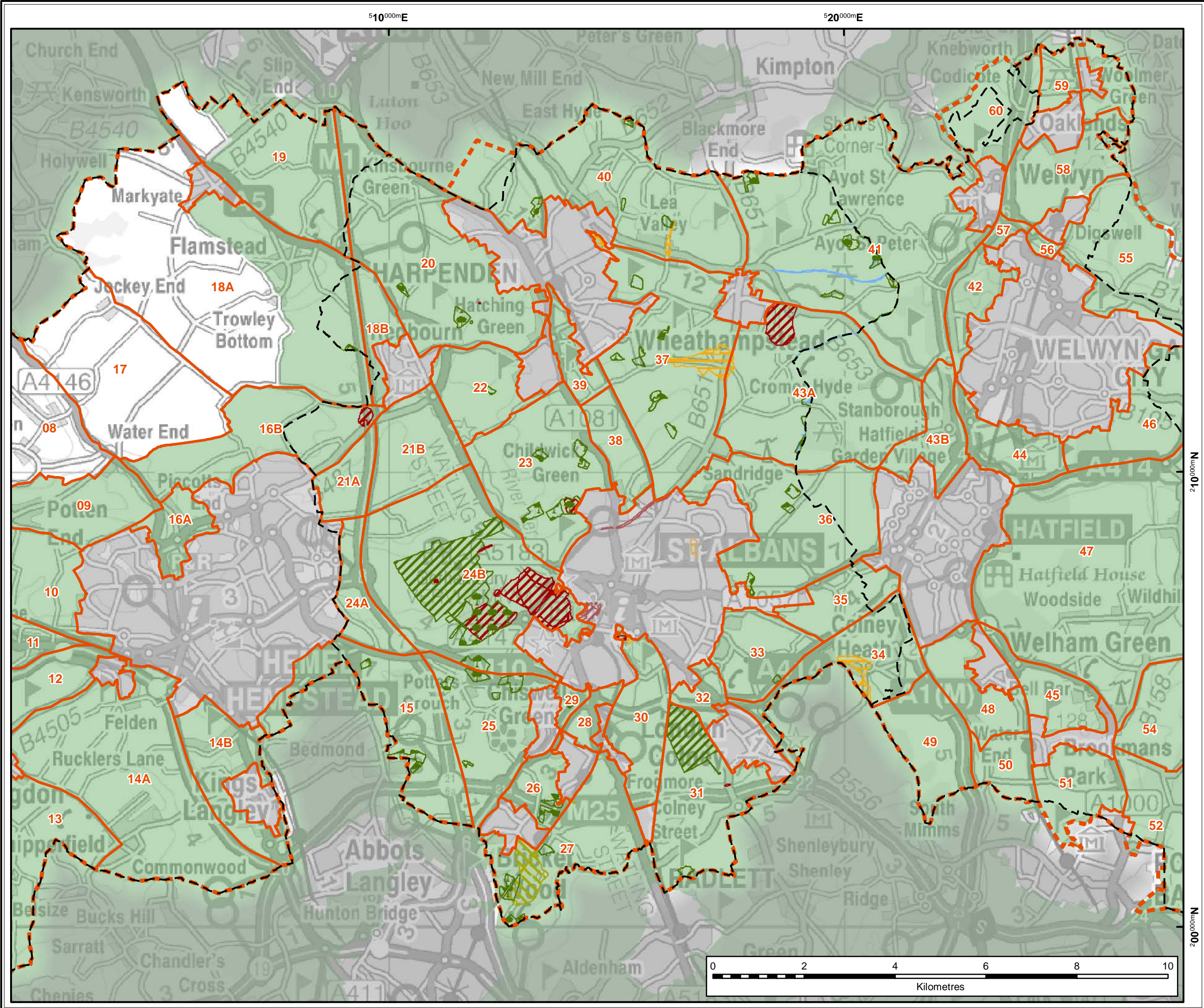
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### Green Belt Review for St Albans, Dacorum and Welwyn Hatfield

**FIGURE A4.1.1.  
Environmental Features**

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Natural England Ordnance Survey	KW
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**Key:**

- - District Boundary
- Land Parcel Boundary
- Study Area Outer Boundary
- Ancient Woodland
- Scheduled Monuments
- Parks And Gardens
- SSSI
- Local Nature Reserve
- County Wildlife Site
- Area Of Archaeological Significance
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Metropolitan Green Belt



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 A4.1.2.  
Environmental Features**

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Ordnance Survey

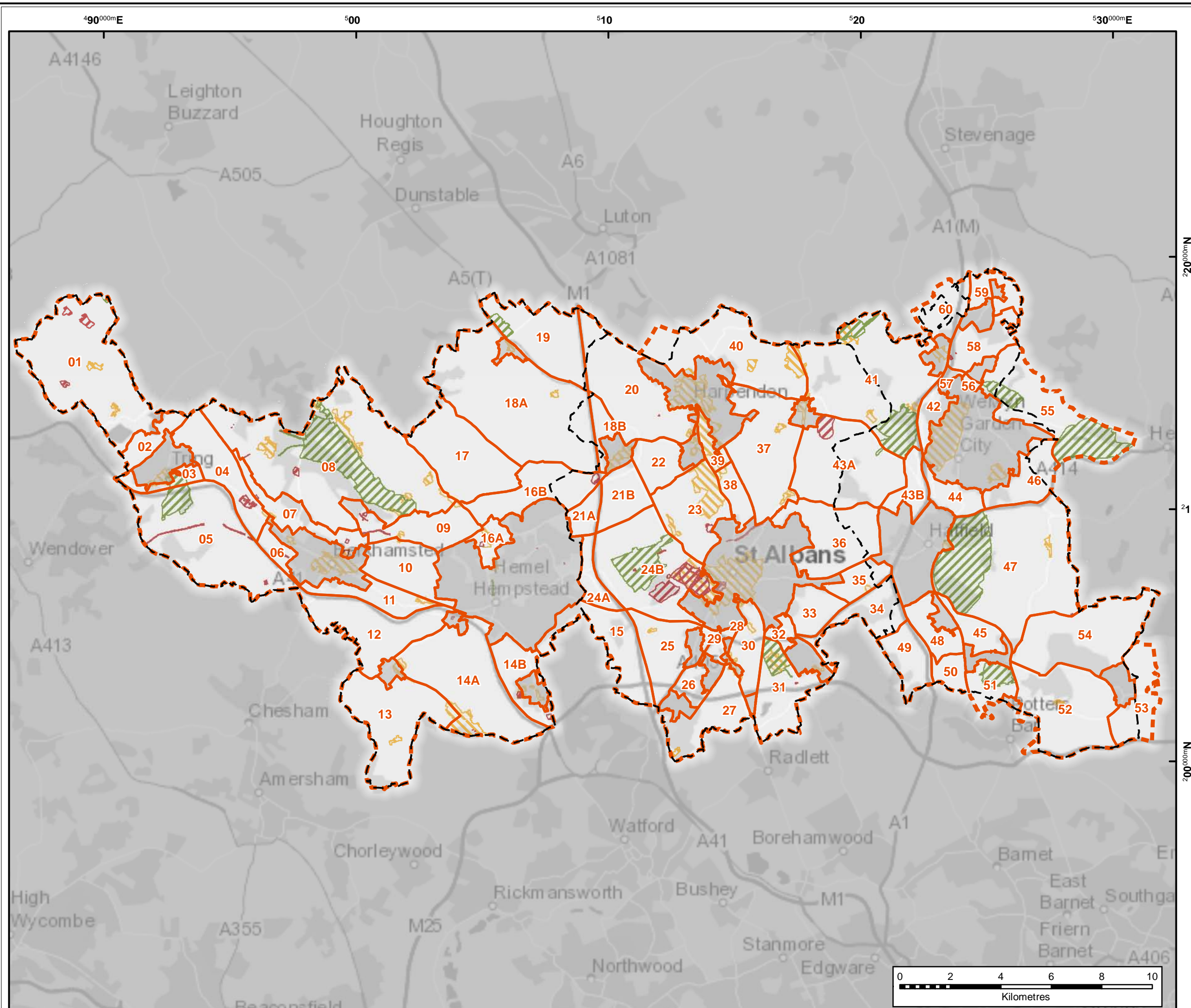
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**Key:**

-  District Boundary
-  Land Parcel Boundary
-  Study Area Outer Boundary
-  Scheduled Monuments
-  Parks And Gardens
-  Conservation Areas



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 A4.2.**  
**Historic Designation**

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Ordnance Survey

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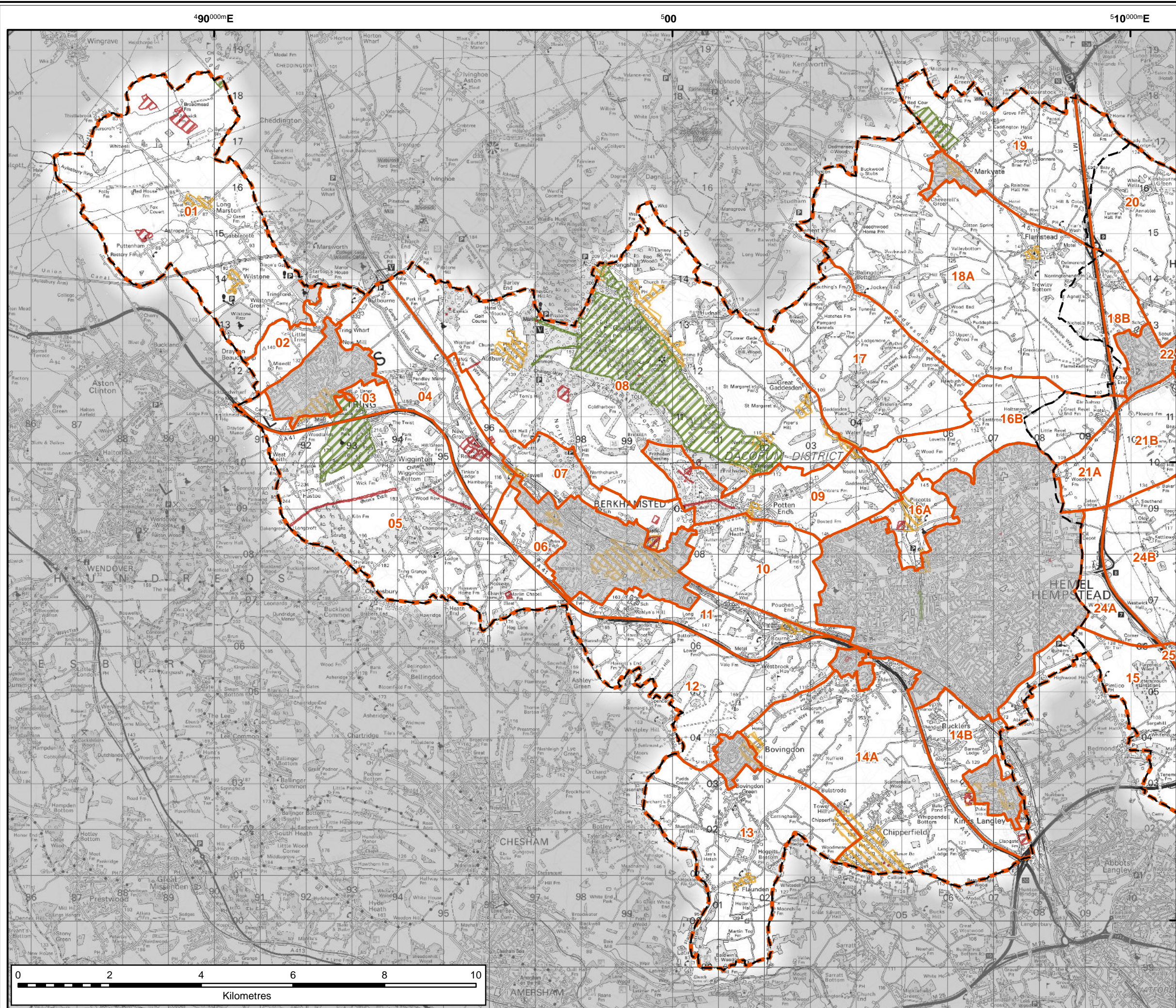
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- Key:**
- - District Boundary
  - Land Parcel Boundary
  - Study Area Outer Boundary
  - Scheduled Monuments
  - ▨ Parks And Gardens
  - ▨ Conservation Areas



Coordinate System: British National Grid  
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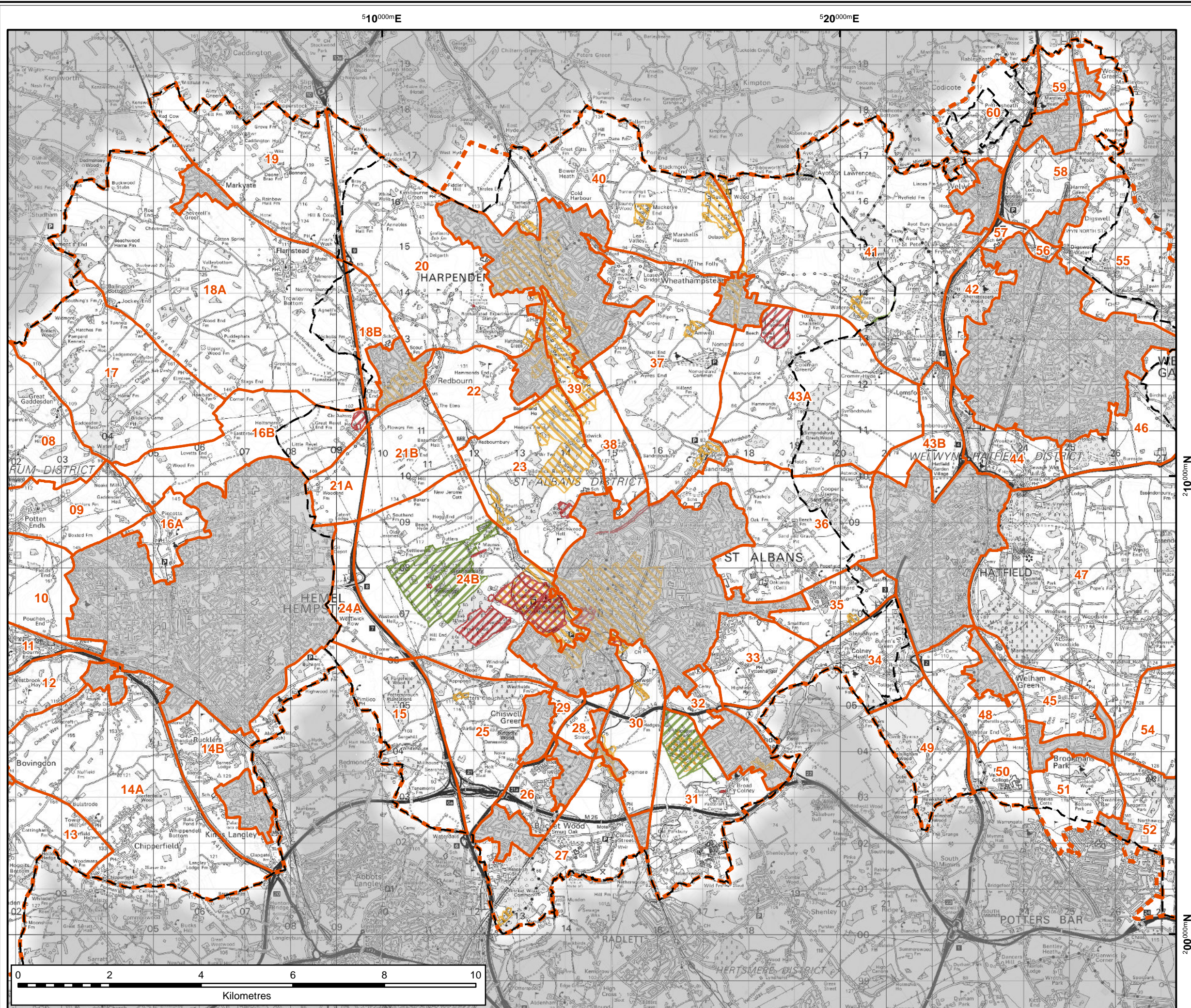
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## Green Belt Review for St Albans, Dacorum and Welwyn Hatfield

**FIGURE A4.2.1.  
Historic Designation**

SCALE	PROJECT CODE
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- Key:**
- - District Boundary
  - Land Parcel Boundary
  - Study Area Outer Boundary
  - Scheduled Monuments
  - Parks And Gardens
  - Conservation Areas



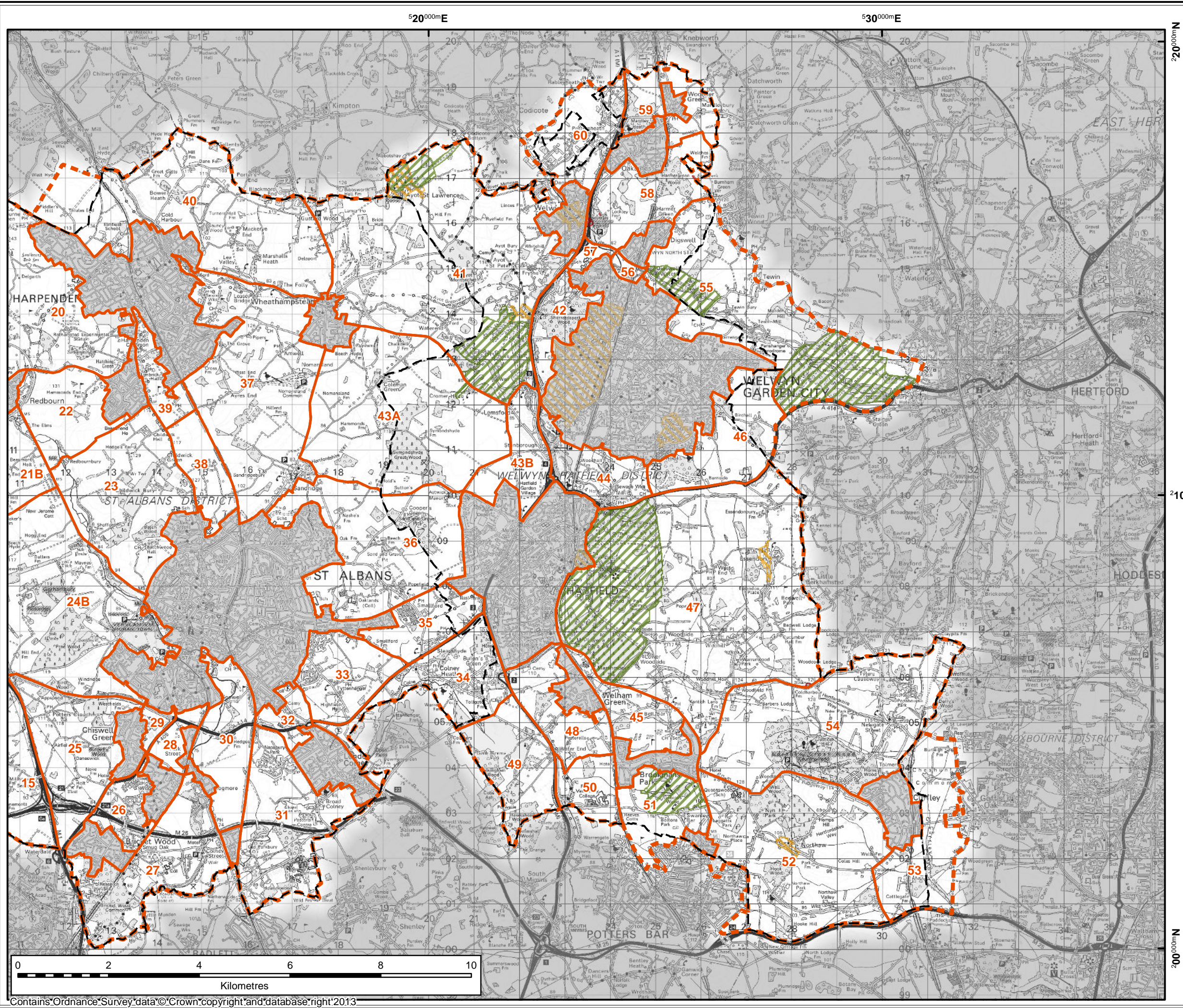
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Datum: OSGB 1936  
Units: Meter

REVISION: E

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

**FIGURE A4.2.2.  
Historic Designation**

SCALE	PROJECT CODE
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**Key:**

- - District Boundary
- Land Parcel Boundary
- - - Study Area Outer Boundary
- ▨ Scheduled Monuments
- ▨ Parks And Gardens
- ▨ Conservation Areas

**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 A4.2.3.  
Historic Designation**

<b>SCALE</b>	<b>PROJECT CODE</b>
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## Appendix 4: Rationale for Strategic Parcels

### Rationale for defining Strategic Parcels

01	<b>Non-Green Belt Land to North West of Tring</b> – the parcel allows for the assessment of non-Green Belt land which forms part of the large block of land to the north of Tring. It also contains 3 <sup>rd</sup> tier settlements.
02	<b>Green Belt Land to North West of Tring</b> – the parcel is defined to assess Green Belt land to the northwest of Tring and follows the B488. It allows for the assessment of the interface between designated Green Belt land.
03	<b>Green Belt Land to South West of Tring</b> – the parcel is defined to assess the west and southern edge of Tring which is enclosed by the A41, as well as the B488. It also allows for the assessment of historic setting and visual perception from the A41.
04	<b>Green Belt Land to North of Tring</b> – the parcel is defined by strong physical features including the railway line and A41. Assessment of visual perception from these major routes is possible as well as the assessment of the narrow stretch of land between 1 <sup>st</sup> tier settlements of Tring and Berkhamsted.
05	<b>Green Belt Land between Tring and Berkhamsted</b> – the parcel contains part of the part block of land to the south of the study area and allows for the assessment of the gap between 1 <sup>st</sup> tier settlements of Tring and Berkhamsted. Assessment of visual perception from the A41 is possible.
06	<b>Green Belt Land to South West of Berkhamsted</b> – the parcel allows for the assessment of the southwest edge of Berkhamsted which is enclosed by the A41.
07	<b>Green Belt Land to North of Berkhamsted</b> – the parcel is defined by the Green Belt boundary to allow the assessment of the narrow stretch of land to the north of Berkhamsted. It allows for the assessment of the interface between designated Green Belt land.
08	<b>Non-Green Belt Land in Childerns AONB</b> – the parcel allows for the assessment of non-Green Belt land, enclosed by Green Belt, to the north of Berkhamsted. Historic setting will be an important factor for the assessment to consider.
09	<b>Green Belt Land in Childerns AONB to North West of Hemel Hempstead</b> – the parcel is defined by the Green Belt boundary and allows for the assessment of the northern gap between 1 <sup>st</sup> tier settlements of Berkhamsted and Hemel Hempstead. It also allows for the assessment of the interface between designated Green Belt land.
10	<b>Green Belt Land between Berkhamsted and Hemel Hempstead</b> – the parcel allows for the assessment of the gap between 1 <sup>st</sup> tier settlements of Berkhamsted and Hemel Hempstead. The boundary to the south follows the railway line and allows an assessment of the impact of this major physical feature.
11	<b>Green Belt Land to South East of Berkhamsted</b> – the parcel allows for the assessment of the gap between 1 <sup>st</sup> tier settlements of Berkhamsted, especially the southern edge, and Hemel Hempstead. It is also enclosed by the railway line and A41.
12	<b>Green Belt Land to South East of Berkhamsted</b> – the parcel allows for the assessment of the

	southern gap between 1 <sup>st</sup> tier settlements of Berkhamsted and Hemel Hempstead, as well as Bovingdon.
13	<b>Green Belt Land to South of Bovingdon</b> – the parcel is part of the larger block of countryside to the south of the study area and allows for an assessment of land to the south of Bovingdon.
14	<b>Green Belt Land to South West of Hemel Hempstead</b> – the parcel is GB land located to the SW of Hemel Hempstead and to the N of Bovingdon, Chipperfield and Kings Langley. It has been drawn to represent a gap between settlements.
15	<b>Green Belt Land South East of Hemel Hempstead</b> – the parcel allows for assessment of a part of the radial gap between Hemel Hempstead and Watford (Abbots Langley). The defined area also allows for visual perception and impact on character from major routes (M1 and M25).
16	<b>Green Belt Land to North of Hemel Hempstead</b> – the parcel is defined to allow for an assessment of the northern urban fringe of Hemel Hempstead and includes part of the gap to Redbourn. Sub-division is possible where part of the parcel penetrates the northern boundary of Hemel Hempstead.
17	<b>Non-Green Belt Land North of Hemel Hempstead</b> – parcel is defined to allow for the assessment of non-Green Belt land which is enclosed by Green Belt.
18	<b>Green Belt and Non-Green Belt land to North West of Redbourne</b> – parcel is defined to allow the assessment of both Green Belt and non-Green Belt land. It contains the M1, a major physical feature which has been used to sub-divide the parcel.
19	<b>Partial Green Belt Land to North of Markyate</b> – the parcel is defined to allow the assessment of part of the central section of the gap between Hemel Hempstead and Luton and Dunstable (large built-up area).
20	<b>Green Belt Land to West of Harpenden</b> – the parcel is defined to allow consideration of the gap separating Harpenden and surrounding settlements including Luton and Dunstable (to the north of the study area) and Redbourn.
21	<b>Green Belt Land to South of Redbourn</b> – the parcel is part of a large block of countryside between 1 <sup>st</sup> tier settlements, as well as Redbourn, and it has been subdivided to reflect physical features (M1).
22	<b>Green Belt Land to East of Redbourn</b> – the parcel is part of a large block of countryside between first tier settlements. The defined area allows for an assessment of the gap between southwest Harpenden and Redbourn.
23	<b>Green Belt Land to South West of Harpenden</b> – the parcel is part of a large block of countryside between first tier settlements. The defined area allows for assessment of the gap between northwest St Albans and southwest Harpenden, along the edge of the A1081 corridor to assess visual perception of the Green Belt from this key route.
24	<b>Green Belt Land to East of Hemel Hempstead</b> – the parcel is part of a large block of countryside between Hemel Hempstead and St Albans, and has subdivided to reflect physical features (M1). The area is defined by key route corridors and also allows for the assessment of heritage issues in relation to St Albans.
25	<b>Green Belt Land to West of Chiswell Green</b> – the parcel boundaries reflect main road lines of the M1 and M25 which lie within the gaps to Hemel Hempstead and Watford, as well as A414 and A405.

26	<b>Green Belt Land to North of Bricket Wood</b> – this parcel allows for detailed assessment of the narrow gap between 2 <sup>nd</sup> tier settlements of How Wood and Bricket Wood, which includes the M25.
27	<b>Green Belt Land to S of How Wood</b> – the parcel is defined to allow for an assessment of the northern part of a large block of countryside at the Ver / Colne Valley and gaps, including the M25, to Watford and Radlett beyond the south edge of the study area. It also allows for an assessment of visual perception from the M1.
28	<b>Green Belt Land to N of How Wood (S of St Albans)</b> – the parcel allows for detailed assessment the narrow gap between 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> tier settlements (St Albans and Park Street / Frogmore and How Wood, which also contains and is bordered by major roads.
29	<b>Green Belt Land to N of Chiswell Green (S of St Albans)</b> – the parcel allows for detailed assessment of a clearly defined but small local gap between first and second tier settlements (St Albans / Chiswell Green). This is a parcel that is heavily influenced by major roads and visual perception around them.
30	<b>Green Belt Land to East of Park Street / Frogmore (S of St Albans)</b> – the parcel follows the Ver / Colne Valley and allows for assessment of gaps from St Albans to Colney Street to the M25.
31	<b>Green Belt Land to South of London Colney</b> – the parcel is defined to allow for the assessment of gaps from south of St Albans and from London Colney and Colney Street to Radlett to the south of the study area. The parcel also allows for visual perception from the M25 to be assessed.
32	<b>Green Belt Land between St Albans and London Colney</b> – the parcel allows for detailed assessment of the narrow gap between St Albans and London Colney. It is also contains major roads.
33	<b>Green Belt Land to SE of St Albans</b> – the parcel allows for an assessment of land at the edge of St Albans containing Highfield Park which parts part of the gap to Hatfield. Parcel boundaries follow main roads including the A414.
34	<b>Green Belt Land between Hatfield and London Colney</b> – the parcel is defined around the Colne Valley and allows assessment of the gap between London Colney and Hatfield. Parcel boundaries follow main roads including the A414 and contains 3 <sup>rd</sup> tier settlements.
35	<b>Green Belt Land between St Albans and Hatfield</b> – the parcel is defined to allow assessment of the narrowest part of the gap between St Albans and Hatfield, which includes 3 <sup>rd</sup> tier settlements. Parcel boundaries follow main roads including the A1057.
36	<b>Green Belt Land between St Albans and Hatfield (N)</b> – the parcel allows for the assessment of a large block of countryside between St Albans and Hatfield. Parcel boundaries follow main roads including the A1057.
37	<b>Green Belt Land between St Albans and Harpenden</b> – the parcel is defined to allow for an assessment of the large block of countryside between St Albans, Harpenden and Wheathampstead. Parcel boundaries follow main routes between the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> tier settlements.
38	<b>Green Belt Land to North of St Albans</b> – the parcel allows assessment of the southern section of the radial gap between St Albans and Harpenden. Parcel boundaries follow the A1081.
39	<b>Green Belt Land to South of Harpenden</b> – the small parcel is defined to allow the assessment of the

	northern section of the gap between Harpenden and St Albans, including Harpenden Common and in line with the A1081.
40	<b>Green Belt Land to North of Harpenden</b> – the parcel allows assessment of the large area of land to the north of Harpenden to Wheathampstead, which joins with the South Bedfordshire Green Belt. It includes a number of 3 <sup>rd</sup> tier settlements.
41	<b>Green Belt Land to West of Welwyn village</b> – the parcel is defined to allow the assessment of a large area of land between Wheathampstead and Welwyn Garden City / A1(M). It includes a number of 3 <sup>rd</sup> tier settlements.
42	<b>Green Belt Land to West of Welwyn Garden City</b> – the parcel allows for assessment of narrow stretch of land between the A1(M) and Welwyn Garden City.
43	<b>Green Belt Land to North West of Hatfield</b> – this parcel allows assessment of a large block of land between a number of settlements including St Albans, Wheathampstead, Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield. It is defined by roads including B561 and B563. Given the scale of the parcel sub-division is possible to assess the narrower gap between Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City which includes the A1 (M).
44	<b>Green Belt Land between Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City</b> – the parcel is defined to allow the assessment of the narrow gap between 1 <sup>st</sup> tier settlements of Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City. Boundaries are defined by main roads including A1(M) and A414.
45	<b>Green Belt Land North of Brookmans Park</b> – the small parcel forms part of the large block of countryside in the east of the study area. It allows for the assessment of land to the north of Brookmans Park extending to Hatfield and adjoining Welham Green. The northeast boundary is defined by the A1000.
46	<b>Green Belt Land South West of Welwyn Garden City</b> – the parcel forms part of the large block of countryside in the east of the study area, and crosses into East Hertfordshire. It allows for assessment of the land to the south west of Welwyn Garden City which is enclosed by the A414.
47	<b>Green Belt Land East of Hatfield</b> – the parcel forms a significant part of the large block of countryside in the east of the study area. It allows for assessment of land east of Hatfield which is characterised by historic features. North and south boundaries follow main roads. It also contains 3 <sup>rd</sup> tier settlements.
48	<b>Green Belt Land South of Hatfield</b> – the small parcel allows for the assessment of land around Welham Green and narrow gap to Hatfield. The A1(M) forms the west boundary.
49	<b>Green Belt Land South of Hatfield (at edge of WH)</b> – the parcel forms part of the large block of countryside to the south of the study area. The A1(M) forms the east boundary.
50	<b>Green Belt Land to West of Potters Bar</b> – the small parcel allows for the assessment of the narrow gap between the west of Brookmans Park and Potters Bar.
51	<b>Green Belt Land between Brooklands Park and Potters Bar</b> – the small parcel allows for the assessment of the narrow gap between the central area of Brookmans Park and Potters Bar.
52	<b>Green Belt Land to West of Cuffley</b> – the parcel allows for the assessment of the gap between Potters Bar and Cuffley. Boundaries are defined by the M25 and A1000.

53	<b>Green Belt Land to East of Cuffley</b> – the narrow parcel allows for the assessment of land at the southeast edge of the study area which is closest to London, as well as part of the gap to Goffs Oak. The southern boundary extends along the M25.
54	<b>Green Belt Land to North of Cuffley</b> – the parcel forms part of the large block of countryside in the east of the study area. It allows for assessment of land between Brookmans Park and Cuffley.
55	<b>Green Belt Land to North West of Welwyn Garden City</b> – the parcel allows for the assessment of land along the northwest edge of Welwyn Garden City and cross into East Hertfordshire.
56	<b>Green Belt Land to between Welwyn Garden City and Digswell</b> – the very small parcel allows for the assessment of the narrow gap between 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> tier settlements of Welwyn Garden City and Digswell.
57	<b>Green Belt Land to between Welwyn Garden City and Welwyn</b> – the very small parcel allows for the assessment of the narrow gap between 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> tier settlements of Welwyn Garden City and Welwyn.
58	<b>Green Belt Land to South of Oaklands</b> – the parcel allows for the assessment of the land between second tier settlements (of Oaklands, Welwyn village and Digswell). It has been drawn to assess these gaps between settlements.
59	<b>Green Belt Land to North of Oaklands</b> – the parcel allows for the assessment of Green Belt land at the north west edge of the study area to the north of Oaklands.
60	<b>Green Belt Land to East of Oaklands</b> – the parcel allows for the assessment of Green Belt land at the north west edge of the study area to the east of Oaklands and north of Welwyn village.



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