

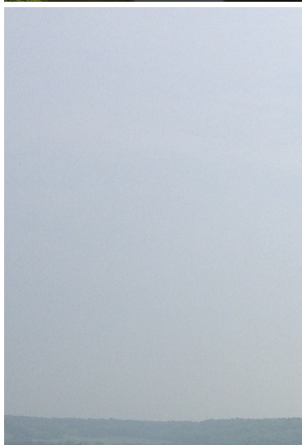


GREEN BELT REVIEW SITES & BOUNDARIES STUDY

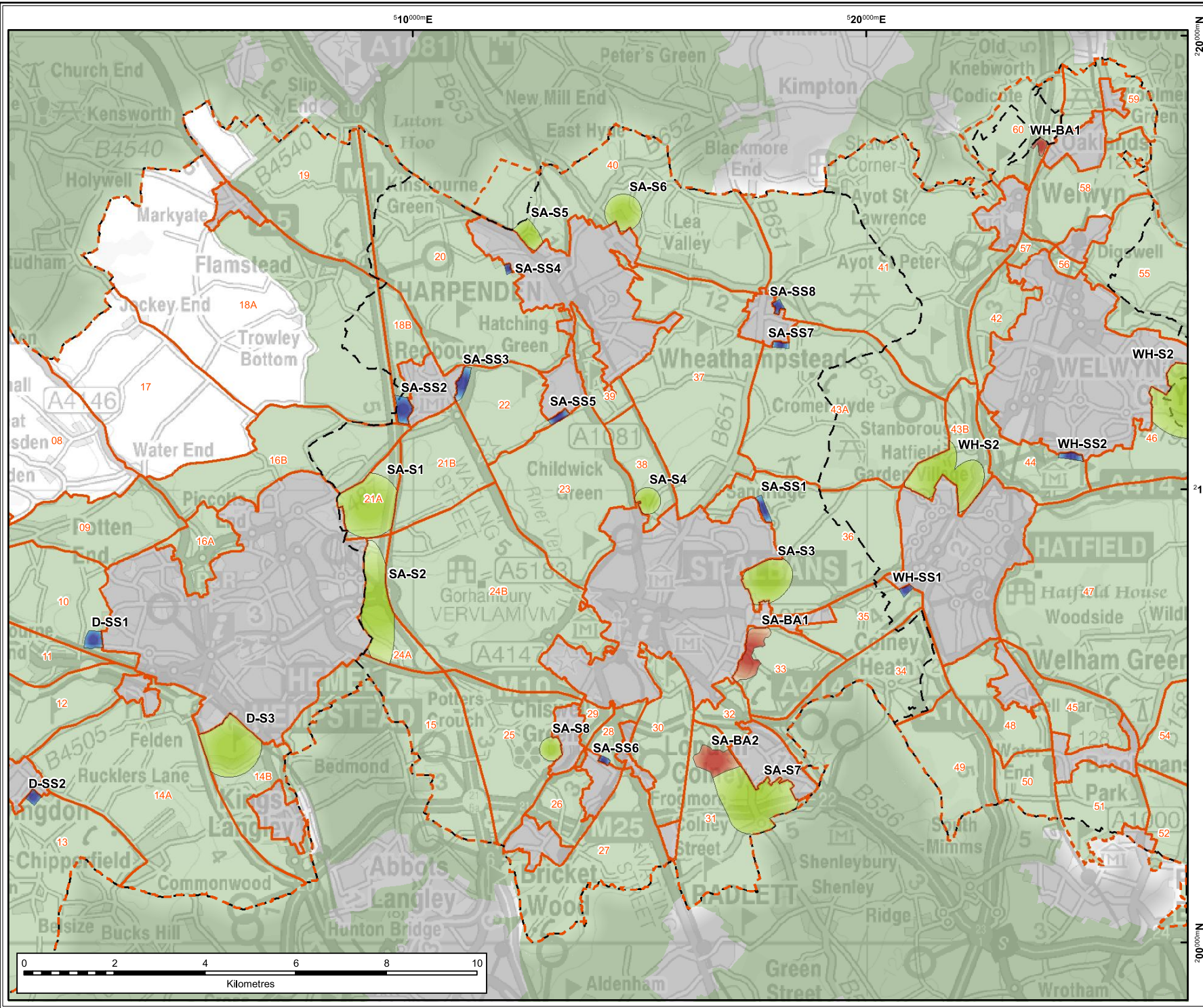
Prepared for St Albans City and District Only

REPORT

February 2014



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Name: Figure8.1.2_Least Contribution to GB_StAlbans



Key:

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

N

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

REVISION: B

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

**FIGURE 8.1.2.
Land Contributing Least Towards
Green Belt Purposes
St Albans District Council**

SCALE	PROJECT CODE
1:80,000 @ A3	JE30761
CONTENT	DRAWN
London.Gov Ordnance Survey	KW
CHECKED	DATE
RB	2/12/2013

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10. S8: Land at Chiswell Green

10.1. Context and Contribution towards Green Belt Purposes

- 10.1.1. The sub-area comprises land at Chiswell Green Lane at Chiswell Green (within Strategic ParcelGB25).
- 10.1.2. The sub-area lies within the St Stephen's Plateau landscape character area (Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment, Hertfordshire County Council, 2000-2005). The published landscape character assessment evaluates the condition and strength of character, and provides an overall objective for each landscape character area.
- 10.1.3. This comprises an undulating or gently sloping plateau. Land use is predominantly arable crops in an open field pattern, although smaller, pastoral fields are found in places, including within the sub-area. There are larger areas of woodland to the north (including ancient woodland), which create a sense of enclosure. The settlement pattern is dispersed, typically comprising individual farmsteads and houses. This pattern is connected by narrow winding lanes. Urban fringe influences are prominent, particularly motorway infrastructure and built edge of settlements. At a local level, Butterfly World forms a distinctive feature to the west of Chiswell Green. The condition of the landscape and strength of character is described as "moderate" and "weak" respectively. The overall objective for this landscape character area is to "improve and reinforce".

Review of Part 1 Study Green Belt purposes / Justification of identification of sub-area

- 10.1.4. Strategic Parcel GB25 significantly contributes towards 2 of the 5 Green Belt purposes: it safeguards the countryside and maintains the existing settlement pattern (providing a 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 particular 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.

Planning History

- 10.1.5. There are no extant planning permissions or outstanding applications related to Land at Chiswell Green. However land within the sub-area has been subject to promotional activities from potential developers.

10.2. Constraints

- 10.2.1. A summary of environmental, historic and other constraints within the sub-area area is set out below.



Summary of environmental and historic features

10.2.2. There are no environmental or historic constraints in relation to the sub-area.

Other potential constraints / features

10.2.3. There are no other constraints or features in relation to the sub-area.

10.3. Sustainable Patterns of Development

10.3.1. Sustainable patterns of development relate to how well the sub-area is integrated with existing urban areas. A summary of accessibility to local services and facilities including town and local centres, public transport, schools and public open space is set out below. Distances are approximate and have been measured as the direct and shortest distance between the edge of the sub-area and local service / facility.

Settlement role, size and function

10.3.2. The sub-area lies on the west edge of Chiswell Green, which is designated as a Specified Settlement (SS.2) within the St Albans City and District Council Plan.

Proximity to town centre, and local centres

10.3.3. The sub-area is situated on the west edge of Chiswell Green. Chiswell Green Local Centre is located to 200m to the east. How Wood Local Centre (LC24) is 1km to the southeast.

Public transport accessibility

10.3.4. Railway stations at How Wood and Park Street are located within 1.5km of the sub-area. A London Midland service passes through these stations offering direct connections to St Albans Abbey and Watford Junction. From Watford Junction, further connections are available to London.

10.3.5. Two bus routes run in close proximity to the site. Bus route 724 passes along Watford Road, 200m to the east of the site, providing a service to Harlow, Heathrow Airport, Hertford, Welwyn Garden City, St Albans, Hatfield and Watford. Bus route 321 also passes along Watford Road, providing connections to Watford, St Albans, Harpenden and Luton.

Proximity to schools

10.3.6. Killigrew Primary School lies within 800m to the northeast. Other primary schools are located at How Wood and Park Street. There are no secondary schools in Chiswell Green. Marlborough School is located 1.6km to the north in St Albans.



Proximity to public open space

- 10.3.7. How Wood woodland lies 600m to the southeast and Greenwood Park 600m to the northeast. Further towards St Albans lies Butt Field View open space (1.4km to the northeast), Holyrood Crescent open space (1.6km to the northeast) and Nether Way open space (1.4km to the north).

10.4. Landscape Appraisal and Sensitivity

- 10.4.1. A landscape appraisal of the sub-area has been undertaken to take account of landform, land cover, cultural dimensions, levels of enclosure and visual attributes. Each is discussed below.

Landform

- 10.4.2. The land form slopes gently to the south, falling from around Chiswell Green Lane (approximately 105m above Ordnance Datum (AOD)) towards the southern part of Noke Lane (approximately 85m AOD).

Land cover and land use

- 10.4.3. The sub-area primarily comprises agricultural land uses with a combination of arable crops, in a large, open field pattern and pasture. Pasture is enclosed in a smaller field pattern but frequently in a very regular form using post and rail fences. Agricultural land quality is typically Grade 3 although the eastern edge of the sub-area is shown as being urban (it is likely that the Grade 3 quality will extend to this land). There are occasional woodlands and groups of trees, particularly close to the edge of Chiswell Green. Butterfly World comprises a distinctive and unique feature in the landscape. St Albans Polo Club lies in the northern part of the sub-area and has influenced local landscape character and pattern. The sub-area also includes several dispersed residential properties, e.g. those along Chiswell Green Lane and Noke Lane. Noke Lane Business Centre also lies in the southern part of the sub-area.
- 10.4.4. Key ecological features comprise the remnant hedgerows and hedgerow trees, together with the areas of woodland. There are no ecological designations within the sub-area. Butterfly World represents a unique local feature and the gardens are designed to promote biodiversity.

Built and cultural heritage aspects

- 10.4.5. Key cultural and built elements in the sub-area comprise the dispersed properties and the remnant field pattern. In addition, Butterfly World also forms both a visitor attraction and educational resource. There are no known designated heritage assets within the sub-area.

Levels of enclosure

- 10.4.6. Enclosure is provided by a combination of landform and vegetation. The gradual slope of the landform limits the enclosure it provides, but this is augmented by the artificial landform that surrounds and encloses Butterfly World. Vegetation provides enclosure to a varying degree. To the north, east and south-east (excluding Butterfly World) the field pattern is medium to large, which combined with the poor/declining hedgerow pattern

gives rise to quite an open landscape, with views across the agricultural landscape. The bunding surrounding Butterfly World creates considerable local enclosure; in time, the young planting on these landforms will reinforce this. The area between Chiswell Green and Butterfly World includes small woodlands, copses and hedgerows, which (together with the made landforms around Butterfly World), provide a greater sense of enclosure. The existing settlement edge of Chiswell Green has a linear form and residential properties are clearly visible.

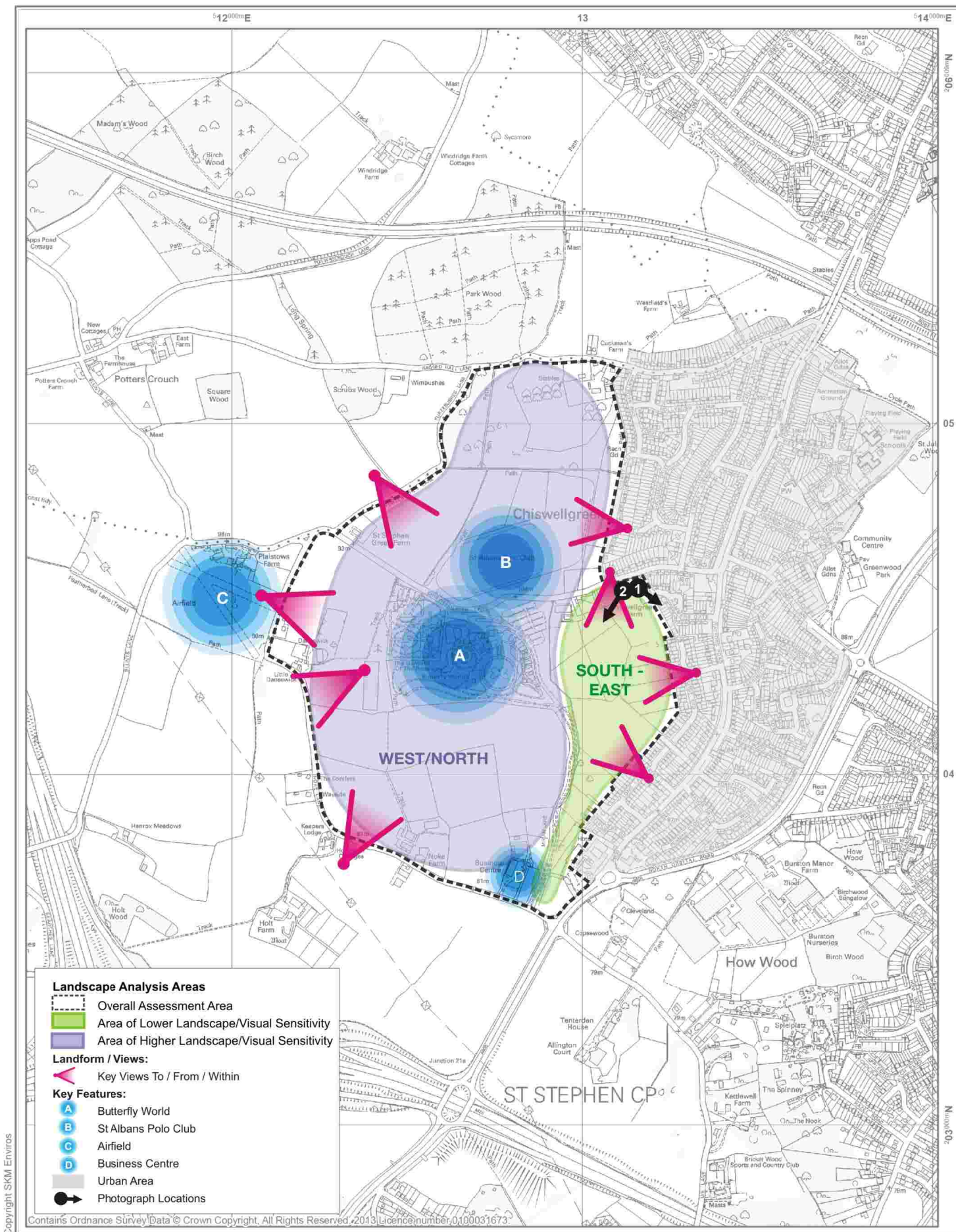
Visual attributes

- 10.4.7. Roads are frequently lined by tall hedges (although in places these are fragmented), which restricts views. Towards the western part of the sub-area, the open views over the agricultural landscape are notable. Views are much shorter in distance within the eastern part of the sub-area (between Butterfly World and Chiswell Green) due to a combination of local landform and vegetation.
- 10.4.8. Key visual sensitivities are likely to be localised and primarily associated with the adjacent residential edge of Chiswell Green.

Landscape sensitivity

- 10.4.9. This section considers the sensitivity of the landscape and the visual effects associated with potential development within the sub-area on landscape character.
- 10.4.10. This strategic sub-area lies on the western edge of Chiswell Green. The surrounding urban edges are quite well defined, although vegetation along or near properties results in some transition from rural to urban. While much of land within the sub-area is in agricultural use, the strength of character has been eroded by the loss of field boundaries, poor condition and introduction of new features, e.g. Butterfly World.
- 10.4.11. The nature of the landform and landscape pattern creates a distinctly different feel in different parts of the sub-area; with land to the east being more enclosed and land to the west being much more open and larger in scale. To the east of Butterfly World (and the associated access) a sense of enclosure provided by small areas of woodland, remnant hedgerows and local landform gives rise to a smaller scale landscape. However, further west, the landform together with poor condition of field boundaries results in an open landscape that blends into the wider countryside.
- 10.4.12. Key landscape features that make a valuable contribution are the small areas of woodland to the west of Chiswell Green and remaining hedgerows. The eastern part of the sub-area is of lower sensitivity due to its relationship with the adjacent urban edge, the loss of field pattern and its isolation from surrounding countryside by Butterfly World. The land in the western part of the sub-area is more sensitive due to its relative openness and visual connection with the wider countryside.
- 10.4.13. Consideration of the sensitivity of the sub-area (and specific parts within it) in relation to potential residential development, as informed by landscape character, settlement form, views and landscape value, is set out in the table below.
- 10.4.14. Key findings from the landscape and visual appraisal are illustrated in Figure 10.1. This is supported by annotated photographs set out in Figure 10.2.

	Part of Sub-Area	
Element	East	West
Landscape character	<p>Built development would affect openness of landscape character. However, the landform and vegetation provide enclosure, and would help contain and provide a framework for development. The land to the east of the access road to Butterfly World has more connection with the countryside to the west, but is separated from this by the road and this will increase as the young planting matures.</p> <p>Changes in the landscape have resulted in the loss of traditional boundaries and replacement with wooden post and rail fences. The remnant hedgerows and small areas of woodland comprise key features that help to maintain a sense of enclosure.</p>	<p>The landscape has a very open character and development would completely change this. Any changes to this landscape would be very conspicuous.</p> <p>Agricultural intensification is a key contributor to the current character and influences the openness of the landscape. Some of the boundaries still comprise hedgerows with hedgerow trees, but they are frequently very fragmented.</p>
Settlement form	Development would be adjacent to the western edge of Chiswell Green and to the east of Butterfly World (and associated access).	This area is separate from the edge of the settlement and relates more to the wider countryside.
Views/visual features	Key potential visual effects of new development would be at a local level. Notable effects would be in relation to residents on the western edge of Chiswell Green and dispersed properties within this part of the sub-area.	The openness of the landscape means development would be conspicuous from the surrounding landscape, with key visual receptors comprising the residents of dispersed properties and users of the small local roads.
Landscape value	No landscape, cultural heritage or ecological designations.	No landscape, cultural heritage or ecological designations.
Overall evaluation	Lower sensitivity	Higher sensitivity



Sites & Boundaries **Study for St Albans City** **and District Council**

Figure 10.1 Landscape and Visual Appraisal, Sub-Area 8 Land at Chiswell Green

SCALE
Not to Scale

CONTENT

SM

CHECKED

RB

PROJECT CODE
JE30761.02

DRAWN

JW

DATE

29/01/2014



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

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Photograph Location 1: View southeast from Chiswell Green Lane, near Chiswellgreen Farm



Photograph Location 2: View southwest from Chiswell Green Lane, near Chiswellgreen Farm



**Site & Boundaries Study
for St Albans City and
District Council**

FIGURE 10.2
*Photographs, Sub-Area 8
Land at Chiswell Green*

SCALE	N/A
CONTENT	SJM
CHECKED	RB

PROJECT CODE	JE30761.02
DRAWN	HLD
DATE	30/01/14

DWG: HLD4044.dwg

10.5. Boundary Review

- 10.5.1. Based upon the key findings of the assessment including landscape appraisal and sensitivity analysis, in addition to the consideration of the location of constraints and creation of sustainable patterns of development it is concluded that the most appropriate land for potential release from Green Belt for residential led development is the eastern part of the sub-area. This is the area bounded by a solid yellow line in Figure 10.3 below.
- 10.5.2. This land has clearly defined and has strong boundaries in all directions. The edge of Chiswell Green lies adjacent to the east, together with a short section of the North Orbital Road (A405). The southern boundary is formed by a short section of Noke Lane. The western boundary comprises the bunding around the edge of the car park for Butterfly World, together with the associated access road. The northern boundary is formed by Chiswell Green Lane.
- 10.5.3. Structural landscape planting along the western boundary would reinforce the edge with Butterfly World and the surrounding landscape. Similar planting along part of the northern boundary with Chiswell Green Lane could provide a similar function and reinforce the existing small woodland / trees along this edge.

Contribution towards Green Belt Purposes

- 10.5.4. This area of land does not significantly contribute towards any of the five Green Belt purposes. It makes a partial contribution towards safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. It makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging, preserving setting and maintaining the existing settlement pattern.

10.6. Indicative Layout and Potential Development Capacity

Indicative layout and rationale

- 10.6.1. The indicative layout for Site 8 is shown in Figure 10.3. The site boundary identified for potential Green Belt release is indicated by the solid yellow line.
- 10.6.2. The indicative illustrative layout of development within the site is indicated by the solid yellow areas (outlined by a dashed black line). These areas represent the locations where development would take place, including residential and supporting land uses (e.g. public open space; schools and other infrastructure as required). The layout follows a generic design approach which has been informed by:
- Site context – taking account of the key findings from the assessment to (where possible) avoid constraints, create sustainable patterns of development (integration with existing urban area), minimise the impact on areas of higher landscape sensitivity and fall within strong and defensible boundaries;
 - Phasing – to create an urban form and layout including development blocks which respect to site surroundings including the Green Belt, existing urban area(s) and other key features identified. Development blocks are sized at 1 to 3 hectares to match an indicative quantum of development that could be built out as stand-alone phases (typically 50 to 100-units per annum);
 - Identity – to ensure a sense of place within the landscape to create enclosure by respecting existing features such as hedgerows and woodland and where possible retaining historic agricultural plot lines or former hedgerows; and

- Visual screening – to suggest potential landscape mitigation measures to help maintain the integrity of the Green Belt.
- 10.6.3. The site layout is indicative and illustrative. It does not consider access arrangements, highways capacity, local infrastructure capacity and needs and other factors set out in para 1.3.3. It does not represent a master plan for the site. If the Council considers that the site is suitable for potential Green Belt release a detailed master planning exercise will need to be undertaken to include consultation with all stakeholders and the community.
- 10.6.4. Given the nature of the study to identify sites for potential Green Belt release and future development, identified layouts might include existing public open space and other existing activities. In such cases, St Albans City and District will need to consider implications in respect future master planning in relation to local needs and land ownerships.
- 10.6.5. The location of the site avoids identified constraints and is well integrated with the urban area which adjoins the site. However there is a relatively limited range of services and facilities in London Colney (in comparison to larger settlements). The site is also located within the area of lower landscape sensitivity within the sub-area; between the existing urban edge to the east and Butterfly World to the west. The site is recommended as suitable for residential-led development.
- 10.6.6. Existing landscape features, including the remnant field pattern and associated hedgerows and pockets of woodland are retained across the site and play a key role providing a framework for defining the layout. In terms of potential landscape measures, reinforcement of existing boundary vegetation is proposed to the west. This planting, in addition to the presence of Butterfly World, will help reduce the visual prominence of any potential development from surroundings.
- 10.6.7. Existing landscape features shown in the indicative layout drawings are illustrative only, included to provide an impression of the site and context. Where possible such features should be retained, but appropriate surveys may need to be undertaken as part of future assessment work. More precise guidance on the landscape features that should be retained could also be evaluated as part of design guidance for the sites, should such guidance need to be prepared. The proposed landscape mitigation shown on the indicative layout drawings should also be interpreted as indicative. Such proposals have been included to illustrate where landscape mitigation is suggested to be required, e.g. to reinforce boundaries of the site and around the edge of a site. It will be important that any mitigation relates to specific development proposals and link into on-site landscaping and / or public open space provision.

Residential development capacity

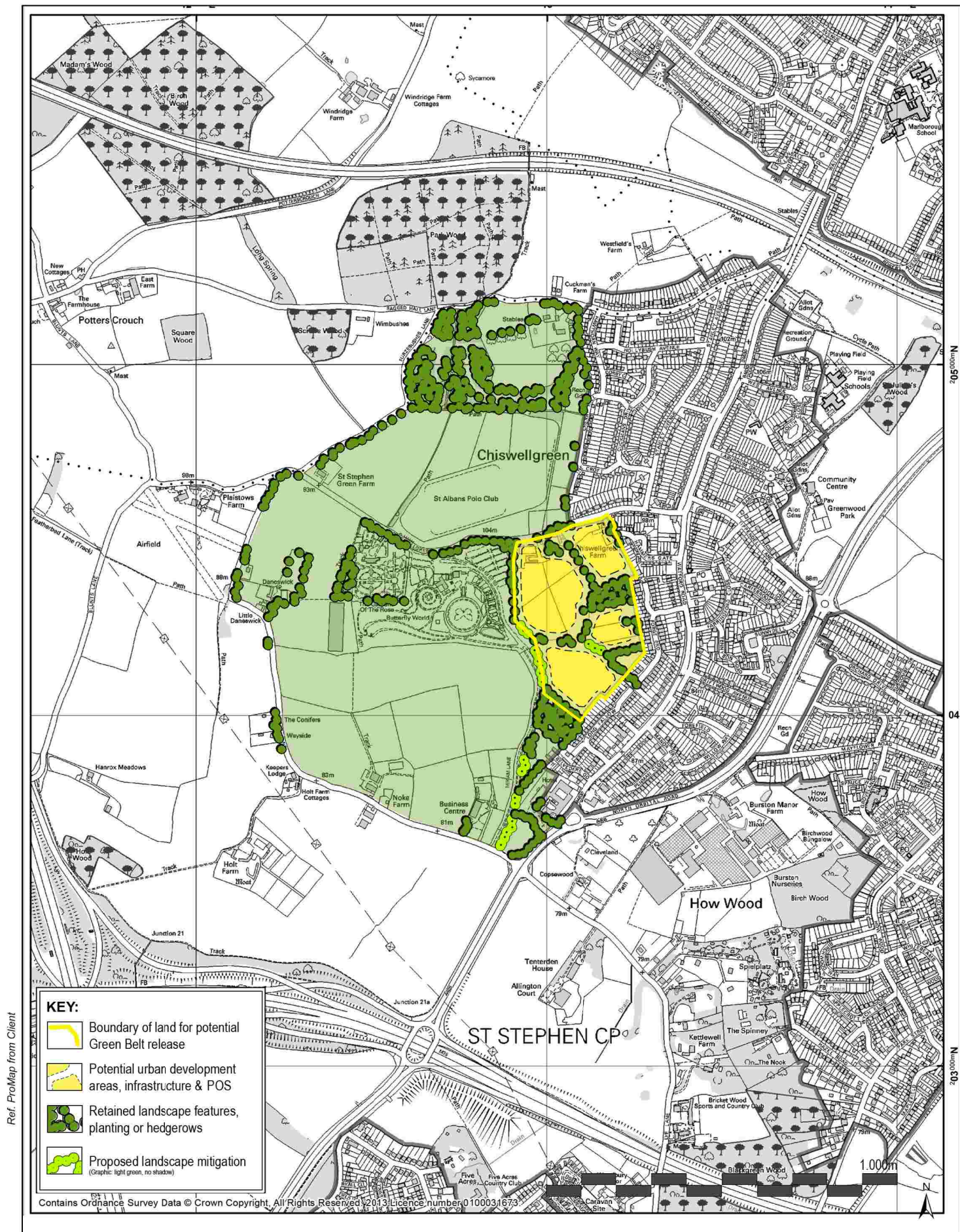
- 10.6.8. The site has a total area of approximately 15 hectares. This represents the gross (100%) site area and has then been used to calculate the development capacity for the site. The



development capacity calculation assumes that only 60% of the gross site area will be developed for housing (i.e. 9 hectares)¹¹.

- 10.6.9. The other 6 hectares of the site) would provide supporting infrastructure including public open space, roads, required services and facilities such as education or health activities; as well as any retained open land for landscaping.
- 10.6.10. An indicative range of residential development densities from 30 dwellings per hectare (dph) to 50dph have been used to estimate potential residential development capacity on the site. This range is supported by the SADC Local Plan Review 1994, though it is recognised that the density that is appropriate for each site will vary considerably depending on a wide range of factors, including the mix of housing types to be provided in response to local needs.
- 10.6.11. At 30dph, 9 hectares of land would yield 270 dwellings (30 x 9); and at 50 dph, the site would yield 450 dwellings.
- 10.6.12. All area figures (in hectares) relating to gross and net areas used to calculate potential residential capacity are round up to whole numbers.

¹¹ It is noted that the indicative layouts may show that the yellow blocks may cover more than 60% of the total site – if this is the case it does not alter the 60% net developable area for housing, and it is assumed that supporting infrastructure will be located within the blocks on land not used for housing.



**Sites and boundary study
for St Albans City and
District Council**

PROJECT: JE30761
DATE: Nov 2013
SCALE: Indicative

STAGE 2
Rev.Jan14/005

FIGURE 10.3 Indicative layout
Site 8 Land at Chiswell Green



11. Site Classification

11.1. Overview

- 11.1.1. This chapter considers the key findings from the assessment of each sub-area to evaluate the relative suitability of each site identified for potential Green Belt release and future development. It also considers the likely timescales for potential Green Belt release and future development.
- 11.1.2. The term 'site' relates to the area of land identified for potential Green Belt release. Nine sites have been identified in the preceding assessment of the eight strategic sub-areas (in Chapters 2 to 8 of this report¹²).
- 11.1.3. Therefore the approach to assess the relative suitability of sites considers only the four categories of assessment undertaken in this study as follows:
- Contribution towards the five Green Belt purposes assessed;
 - Environmental and historic constraints;
 - Integration with existing urban areas; and,
 - Landscape sensitivity.
- 11.1.4. The assessment of the above four categories in Chapters 3 to 10 considered only the characteristics within, and where relevant, surrounding each sub-area. This chapter provides a comparative analysis of all the sites in terms of their relative suitability for development to arrive at an overall classification (or ranking) of the sites.
- 11.1.5. For the purposes of evaluating the relative suitability of sites, all of the four categories have been weighted equally.
- 11.1.6. The first category provides an indication of the relative merits of the sites as candidates for Green Belt release. An updated purposes assessment has been undertaken to consider the performance of the sites only (as distinct from the larger sub area which was assessed in the Part 1 study). The assessment of contribution towards Green Belt purposes follows the same approach adopted in the Part 1 study; whereby sites make either a 'significant', 'partial' or 'limited or no' contribution.
- 11.1.7. The remaining three categories of assessment have been classified for each site as either:
- 'Higher suitability for potential Green Belt release and future development';
 - 'Medium suitability for potential Green Belt release and future development'; or
 - 'Lower suitability for potential Green Belt release and future development'.
- 11.1.8. The criteria applied in order to classify performance against the four assessment categories is set out below, followed by an overall summary of the performance of the nine sites.

¹² An additional site has been created as a result of sub-division of strategic sub-area 2, to reflect significant differences in performance against the four assessment categories within the sub-area.



- 11.1.9. ***It is important to note that the site evaluation and resultant ranking only considers factors assessed as part of this study. It does not consider development issues related to scale of development, site access, infrastructure needs (and existing capacity), delivery issues relating to market demand or land availability. Further assessment of these factors will need to be undertaken separately.***

Contribution towards Green Belt purposes

- 11.1.10. The first category of assessment relates to maintaining the integrity of the Green Belt only. It considers the contribution of each site towards the five Green Belt purposes assessed. The level of contribution against each purpose is classified as either:
- Significant;
 - Partial; or,
 - Limited or No.
- 11.1.11. Given the site-specific level of this assessment it should be noted that the levels of contribution for individual sites may differ from those identified for the larger area encompassed by the relevant Strategic Parcel assessed in the Part 1 study.
- 11.1.12. All sub-areas assessed in this study contribute least towards Green Belt purposes when compared with other Green Belt parcels in St Albans City and District.
- 11.1.13. The sites which contribute least towards the five Green Belt purposes are considered to be most suitable for potential Green Belt release.
- 11.1.14. Five of the nine sites make a significant contribution towards one of the five Green Belt purposes assessed: East of Hemel Hempstead North and South (Sites 1 and 2b), North of St Albans (Site 4) and Northwest and Northeast of Harpenden (Sites 5 and 6) make a significant contribution towards safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. These sites therefore make a higher level of contribution towards Green Belt purposes than the other sites assessed in this study.
- 11.1.15. One site: Land at Chiswell Green (Site 8) makes a limited or no contribution towards four of the five Green Belt purposes assessed. Therefore this site is considered to make the least contribution towards the Green Belt purposes as compared to all of the nine sites assessed.
- 11.1.16. The remaining three sites: Land East of Hemel Hempstead Central (Site 2a); East of St Albans (Site 3); and Land at London Colney (Site 7), all make a limited or no contribution towards three of the five purposes assessed. Therefore these sites are considered to make a mid-level (medium) contribution towards Green Belt purposes as compared to all of the nine sites assessed.

Environmental and Historic Constraints

- 11.1.17. This assessment relates specifically to those environmental, historic and other constraints identified in the assessment of each sub-area (in Chapters 3 to 11).
- 11.1.18. The performance of sites against the 'constraints' category of assessment is based on the criteria set out below. Sites with the least constraints are classified as demonstrating a 'higher' level of suitability for Green Belt release and future development.



Criteria for determining level of suitability for potential Green Belt release and future development: environmental and historic constraints

Level of Suitability	Description of Criteria
Higher	No constraints on-site and adjacent to the site. No impact on potential development.
Medium	No constraints on-site but some adjacent to the site. Limited impact on potential development.
Lower	Constraints (on-site or adjacent to the site) impact on potential development.

- 11.1.19. This study has taken account of these constraints in the process of identifying sites and therefore in most cases land with major / primary constraints will have been excluded from site selection. Sites which are subject to major constraints are discussed below.
- 11.1.20. Only one site - Land East of Hemel Hempstead Central (S2a) is subject to a primary constraint. The site lies within the Buncefield Oil Storage Depot HSE Consultation Zone. Approximately one third of the site is covered by the Consultation Zone which includes a Development Proximity Zone (DPZ), Inner Zone (IZ), Middle Zone (MZ) and Outer Zone (OZ). The HSE confirms that development is not unacceptable in this area; however, all planning applications in the DPZ must be referred to it, and various types of development, including residential will be heavily constrained by safety and risk considerations. Generally, for reasons given in chapter 4, this site is not considered suitable for residential development.
- 11.1.21. Other constraints are identified at Land West of London Colney (Site 7) which is located adjacent to the Napsbury Park Historic Park and Garden. The site therefore helps provide the setting to this historic feature and any future development will need to be planned in a sensitive manner.

Integration with Existing Urban Areas

- 11.1.22. The assessment of potential for integration with existing urban areas is a proxy for the extent to which development in that location would support a sustainable pattern of development. This is assessed in terms of the accessibility of a site to town and local centres, railway stations, public transport routes, schools, and public open space.
- 11.1.23. The performance of a site against the 'integration' category of assessment is based on the criteria set out below. Sites which are best integrated into existing settlements¹³ are classified as demonstrating a 'higher' level of suitability for Green Belt release and future development.

¹³ Integration in comparison to the whole of the strategic sub-area assessed.

Criteria for determining the level of suitability for potential Green Belt release and future development: integration

Level of Suitability	Description of Criteria
Higher	Site contributes to sustainable pattern of development – capable of full integration into the existing urban area with good accessibility by sustainable modes of transport to local services and open space.
Medium	Site capable of making a contribution to sustainable patterns of development through appropriate scale, form and mix of development to minimise the need for car based travel to local services and open space.
Lower	More difficult to make a contribution to sustainable development by virtue of its location in relation to local services and capability for integration into existing settlements.

- 11.1.24. The majority of sites are generally well integrated with existing settlements. This is because they all adjoin existing urban areas and, if released from the Green Belt for development, they offer the potential to provide sustainable urban extensions.
- 11.1.25. The sites adjoining St Albans and Harpenden (Sites 3, 4, 5, 6) are considered to be best integrated. They exhibit the highest levels of accessibility to existing town and local centres, railway stations, public transport routes and other local services and facilities. These urban areas are classified as first-tier settlements (in the Part 1 study) and are the only two 'towns' in St Albans City and District (as defined in the SADC Local Plan Review 1994).
- 11.1.26. Two sites: Site 7 at London Colney and Site 8 at Chiswell Green exhibit mid-levels of integration. Both urban areas are classified as second-tier settlements (in the Part 1 study) and are defined as specified settlements in SADC Local Plan Review 1994.
- 11.1.27. The sites East of Hemel Hempstead (Site 1, 2a and 2b) are considered to be least well integrated, in spite of the town's classification as a first-tier settlement (in the Part 1 study) and defined 'town' in the Dacorum Borough Plan. This is as a result of adjoining uses including: at Site 1, open land allocated for development in Dacorum requiring to come forward prior to any land beyond the urban edge, and at Site 2, a major employment area / industrial estate, which acts as a barrier to services in Hemel Hempstead.

Landscape Sensitivity

- 11.1.28. Landscape sensitivity is an assessment of the characteristics of the landscape and the degree of potential visual impact of future development of the site. It is based on the range of landscape appraisal criteria set out in the assessment of each sub-area.



- 11.1.29. The performance of a site against the 'landscape sensitivity' category of assessment is based on the criteria set out below. Sites demonstrating a lower landscape sensitivity¹⁴ have a higher capacity to accommodate development and are classified as demonstrating a 'higher' level of suitability for Green Belt release and future development.

Criteria for determining the level of suitability for potential Green Belt release and future development :landscape sensitivity

Level of Suitability	Description of Criteria
Higher	Site exhibits a lower level of landscape sensitivity and is subject to urban influences.
Medium	Site exhibits some landscape sensitivity and urban influence.
Lower	Site exhibits considerable landscape sensitivity, and is clearly separated from existing urban form.

- 11.1.30. Landscape sensitivity varies considerably across the nine sites. Three sites exhibit higher landscape sensitivity and lower suitability for Green Belt release in landscape terms: Land at East of Hemel Hempstead North and South (Sites 1 and 2b) and Northeast of Harpenden (Site 6). There is often a strong relationship between higher levels of landscape sensitivity and a significant Green Belt contribution towards safeguarding the countryside from encroachment (one of the five Green Belt purposes assessed). However, this is not always the case, as sites 4 and 7 exhibit strong countryside characteristics but lower landscape sensitivity.
- 11.1.31. The larger sites (North and South) at East Hemel Hempstead are considered to have higher landscape sensitivity partly due to the potential scale of development and partly through their visual connection with the wider landscape to the west. Northeast of Harpenden (Site 6) is located on the slope of the Lea Valley and for this reason is considered to have relatively high landscape sensitivity.
- 11.1.32. The three sites North of St Albans (Site 4), Northwest of Harpenden (Site 5) and at London Colney (Site 7) are considered to have medium landscape sensitivity to development.
- 11.1.33. The remaining sites (2a, 3, and 8) are considered to have the lower landscape sensitivity and therefore a higher suitability for potential release from the Green Belt. They exhibit lower landscape quality, fewer countryside characteristics and greater urban influence.
- 11.1.34. The definition of site boundaries and indicative site layouts presented in this report have taken account of existing landscape features and incorporated suggested landscape mitigation measures to help maintain the integrity of the Green Belt.

¹⁴ Lower landscape sensitivity in comparison to the whole of the strategic sub-area assessed.

11.2. Overall Ranking

11.2.1. The overall results of the sites suitability assessment are set out in Table 9.1 below. The results demonstrate the range of performance against the four categories (A-D) assessed as a basis for informing the overall suitability of each site for potential Green Belt release and future development. The colour coding highlights variations in site performance. Sites rated with a greater number of lighter shades are considered to be more suitable for potential Green Belt release than sites with darker shades.

Table 9.1. Performance of sites against all four assessment categories (sites listed in rank order of suitability)

ID	Site	A - Green Belt Purposes*			B - Constraints	C - Integration	D - Sensitivity	Tier	Rank
		Significant	Partial	Limited / No					
8	Land at Chiswell Green	0	1	4				1 st	1
3	East of St Albans	0	2	3				1 st	2
7	Land at London Colney	0	2	3				2 nd	3
4	North of St Albans	1	1	3				2 nd	4=
5	Northwest of Harpenden	1	1	3				2 nd	4=
6	Northeast of Harpenden	1	1	3				2 nd	6
2b	East of Hemel Hempstead (South)	1	1	3				3 rd	7=
1	East of Hemel Hempstead (North)	1	2	2				3 rd	7=
2a	East of Hemel Hempstead (Central)	0	2	3				3 rd	9

*numbers in relation to 'Green Belt Purposes' refer to the number of purposes scoring significant, partial and limited or no levels of contribution

- 11.2.2. Consideration of all four assessment categories (Green Belt purposes, constraints, integration and landscape sensitivity) enables sites to be ranked in order of relative suitability for potential Green Belt release and future development. The specific ranking is set out in the table. Also, based on a comparison of the overall performance of the nine sites, three tiers of sites are identified. The 1st tier is most suitable for potential Green Belt release and future development whereas the 3rd tier is least suitable. However, it should be stressed that all of the sites are considered potentially suitable for release, and that the ranking is a relative not absolute measure of suitability. A summary for each tier is provided below.
- 11.2.3. **Tier 1** sites do not significantly contribute towards any of the five Green Belt purposes and are classified as exhibiting 'higher' suitability for at least two of the three categories relating to constraints, integration and landscape sensitivity.
- 11.2.4. Site 8 at Chiswell Green is the most suitable site and Site 3 East of St Albans is the 2nd most suitable site. Site 3 is slightly less suitable than Site 8 due to its higher contribution towards the Green Belt purposes.
- 11.2.5. **Tier 2** sites make either: i) a significant contribution towards one of the five Green Belt purposes, or ii) are classified as exhibiting 'higher' suitability for two of the three categories relating to constraints, integration and landscape sensitivity.
- 11.2.6. Site 7 at London Colney is the 3rd most suitable site because it does not significantly contribute towards any of the five Green Belt purposes.
- 11.2.7. Sites 4 and 5 to the North of St Albans and North East of Harpenden are joint 4th most suitable for potential release. Site 6 Northeast of Harpenden is 6th most suitable. All three sites significantly contribute towards safeguarding the countryside from encroachment and exhibit medium or higher landscape sensitivity. They do however exhibit higher suitability against the constraints and integration criteria. In comparison, Site 6 is less suitable than Sites 4 and 5 as a result of scale of potential extent of Green Belt release in an area of higher landscape sensitivity.
- 11.2.8. **Tier 3** sites make either: i) a significant contribution towards one of the five Green Belt purposes, and / or ii) are classified as exhibiting 'lower' suitability for at least two of the three categories relating to constraints, integration and landscape sensitivity.
- 11.2.9. Sites 1 and 2b, East of Hemel Hempstead (North and South respectively) are joint 7th most suitable for release. Both sites significantly contribute towards safeguarding the countryside from encroachment and exhibit higher landscape sensitivity and medium suitability in respect of integration.
- 11.2.10. Site 2a (East of Hemel Hempstead Central) is separated from the settlement edge by the employment area / industrial estate. Most significantly this site is partially covered by the Buncefield HSE Consultation Zone which is a primary constraint to residential (though not employment related) development and some other types of non-residential use). For these reasons it is ranked lowest of all the sites assessed.
- 11.2.11. However, given the contiguous location of these three sites, and the need for co-ordinated cross-boundary planning between St Albans City and District Council and Dacorum Borough Council that will be essential if they are to be brought forward for development, it is considered that they should be planned for as an integrated urban extension and are therefore grouped into a single tier.



11.3. Timing of Potential Development

- 11.3.1. This section considers timescale for which sites could potentially be released from the Green Belt for potential development.
- 11.3.2. The timing of any residential development will be determined by the requirement to identify a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing against the St Albans City and District Council's housing requirement (NPPF para 47). This includes the requirement to identify specific, deliverable sites or broad locations for years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15.
- 11.3.3. The timing of development on the sites identified in this report will be determined, amongst other things, by two primary factors:
- When they will be ready for development (e.g. what lead times are necessary to undertake necessary preparatory work, or assemble the land); and
 - Over what time period a site will deliver completions (which will be significantly determined by the capacity of the housing market to absorb new product within a given location).
- 11.3.4. Determination of both these factors will require dialogue with both landowners and prospective developers; which the Council will undertake through the plan making process.
- 11.3.5. Based only on the assessment criteria employed in the study, Tier 1 sites are identified as short-term prospects, Tier 2 as medium-term and Tier-3 as longer term. It is considered that all sites are suitable to come forward within the plan period (next 20 years). However that the larger sites in Tiers 2 and 3 are unlikely to be all fully built out during this time period.
- 11.3.6. Given the overall residential capacity identified by the study and the absence of primary constraints we do not envisage that any of the nine sites identified for potential future development need, on the basis of their suitability for development, to be safeguarded, for Green Belt release beyond the period covered by the emerging Local Plan (i.e. 20+ years). However it may be necessary or appropriate to consider safeguarding in the context of the scale of development required in the plan period.

12. Conclusion and Recommendations

- 12.1.1. This Green Belt Sites and Boundaries Study has assessed eight strategic sub-areas which contribute least towards the five Green Belt purposes¹⁵ and identified nine sites for potential Green Belt release and future development. The sites are considered to be most suitable to accommodate development with least detriment to Green Belt purposes.
- 12.1.2. The key findings of this study comprise:
- Identification of nine sites which are considered to be most suitable for potential Green Belt release and future development. This is based upon a detailed assessment of: their contribution towards Green Belt purposes; environmental, historic and other primary constraints; capability of integration into existing settlements; and; landscape sensitivity.
 - Suggested detailed revisions to Green Belt boundaries in each of the sub-areas to identify sites for potential release from the Green Belt;
 - Estimated residential development capacities for each site based upon a density range of 30dph to 50dph¹⁶. Eight of the nine sites are recommended for residential-led development, and calculations take account of the need to provide ancillary uses and supporting infrastructure. Indicative site layouts show potential development blocks, and retained and proposed landscape features to help maintain the integrity of the Green Belt; and,
 - A ranking of sites in order of their suitability for potential Green Belt release and future development
- 12.1.3. In total, the nine sites offer the potential to deliver between **4,806** to **8,010** units across St Albans City and District (at 30dph to 50dph).
- 12.1.4. Based on the findings of the assessment, the sites have been grouped into three tiers in order of their suitability for potential Green Belt release and future development. This order is based upon:
- Contribution towards the five Green Belt purposes assessed;
 - Extent to which constraints to development have been avoided or can be overcome;
 - Potential for integration of development into the existing settlement pattern to help create sustainable patterns of development; and,
 - Landscape sensitivity and visual impact of potential development on the surrounding area.
- 12.1.5. Table 13.1 below summarises the estimated potential housing development capacity at each site, grouped by Tier.

¹⁵The Part 1 study identified the eight strategic sub-areas as contributing least towards the five Green Belt purposes assessed

¹⁶Dwellings per hectare

Table 13.1: Estimated residential capacity

ID	Site	Ranking Tier	Estimated Residential Capacity (30dph)	Estimated Residential Capacity(50dph)
8	Land at Chiswell Green	1st	270	450
3	East of St Albans	1st	990	1,650
7	Land at London Colney	2nd	252	420
4	North of St Albans	2nd	684	1,140
5	Northwest of Harpenden	2nd	324	540
6	Northeast of Harpenden	2nd	576	960
2b	East of Hemel Hempstead (South)	3rd	684	1,140
1	East of Hemel Hempstead (North)	3rd	1,026	1,710

12.1.6. In determining the overall development strategy for St Albans City and District, the Council will need to take into account a much wider range of considerations (beyond the scope of this study) to determine whether, how and when each of the nine sites identified for potential Green Belt release could realistically come forward for development. These considerations will necessarily include, among others:

- The overall level of 'objectively assessed need' for housing and other forms of development;
- The supply of housing that could be provided by non-Green Belt land;
- The supply of housing that could be provided by other Green Belt land not considered in this study, including small scale sub-area identified in the Part 1 study;
- Infrastructure requirements (relating to transport e.g. highways, and social infrastructure e.g. local services and facilities) associated with potential sites and alternative development locations and the associated implications for deliverability;
- The viability of the plan as a whole and any strategic development locations;
- The rate at which the market will absorb new housing, particularly on larger strategic sites;
- The availability of the land to deliver the potential development (willingness of the landowners to sell the land for development); and,
- Consultation with stakeholders, local community and adjoining local authorities.



- 12.1.7. It is acknowledged that there is likely to be pressure from housing developers to bring forward those sites which have least constraints and are most economically viable. The Council will need to consider how the Local Plan can introduce policy mechanisms to manage the potential release of land from the Green Belt to ensure that residential development comes forward in those areas which are in the most sustainable locations, and is phased appropriately throughout the Plan period and beyond.



Appendices



Appendix 1: Detailed Methodology



Stage 1: Sub-area Assessment

Task 1a: Review of Green Belt Contribution and Planning History

The introduction to each detailed strategic sub-area assessment includes a brief description of the sub-area and a summary of Part 1 findings in respect of the level of contribution the area makes towards the five Green Belt purposes.

The second task has been to undertake a desk-based review of relevant planning history. Data has been obtained from St Albans City and District Council. The main purpose of the review is to identify any land which might be subject to planning permission or outstanding applications within the sub-areas. Any relevant implications of the planning history have been taken into account in the assessment of capacity for development in the sub-areas.

Task 1b; Assessment of Environmental and Historic Constraints, Integration and Landscape Appraisal and Sensitivity

The detailed assessment adopts the approaches set out below in relation to each of the three assessment categories.

Environmental and Historic Constraints

Any environmental and historic features within or adjacent to the sub-area have been identified (from the part 1 Study) in the form of a desk-based study. Each feature has been classified as a primary or secondary constraint. In general primary constraints represent more insurmountable obstacles to development whereas secondary constraints may be overcome through appropriate mitigation (any mitigation measures have been considered in Stage 3).

Primary and secondary environmental and historic constraints are listed below.

- Primary constraints:
 - High risk fluvial flood plains (Zones 3a and b)
 - European nature conservation sites e.g. SPA, SAC, Ramsar sites
 - National Nature conservation sites e.g. SSSI
 - Registered parks and gardens, Country Parks
 - Ancient woodland
 - Scheduled Ancient Monuments
 - Safeguarded mineral zones
 - Safeguarded land
 - Cemeteries
 - Grade 1, 2 and 3a (Best and Most Versatile) agricultural land



- Ground Water Protection Zone – Grade 1
- Land quality – contaminated land.
- Secondary constraints:
 - Sites of Nature Conservation Importance, Local Nature Reserves, Green corridors
 - Public Rights of Way
 - Listed buildings and conservation areas
 - Archaeology priority zones
 - Public open space, Playing fields and Allotments.

Sustainable Patterns of Development and Integration

In accordance with the NPPF which states “when drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries local planning authorities should take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development” (para 84). Therefore the relationship with existing urban areas has been assessed in the form of a desk-based study. This component of the assessment provides information on how the strategic sub-areas might relate to existing urban areas. Factors considered relate to the following:

- Settlement role, size and function.
- Public transport accessibility;
- Proximity to town centre;
- Proximity to shops (local centres) and key services such as schools;
- Proximity to recreation facilities including urban open space; and,

This assessment has been undertaken using local plan proposals maps, GIS data provided by St Albans City and District Council and online data sources. In terms of measuring distances from the sub-area to local services and facilities, a straight line has been drawn from the closest edge of the sub-area to the closest service or facility within the adjoining urban area.

Landscape Appraisal

A landscape appraisal has been undertaken as an on-site assessment. This has been based upon the landscape inputs prepared as part of the Part 1 study to conduct more detailed and qualitative analysis of the characteristics of each sub-area.

The Part 1 study was undertaken at the strategic level and did not undertake a detailed assessment of sub-areas (within Strategic Parcels) and it recommended that all sub-areas require further assessment. Therefore Part 1 Strategic sub-areas have been refined to better represent ground conditions and to allow the assessment, especially in relation to landscape, to consider the edges, and land immediately beyond the edges of the initial indicative boundaries identified. This



level of assessment is required to fully appreciate the surrounding countryside and context of land which contributes least towards Green Belt purposes.

For each sub-area the landscape and visual appraisal examines and the following key attributes of character:

- Landform / topography;
- Land cover and land use;
- Built and cultural heritage aspects;
- Levels of enclosure; and.
- Visual attributes including views within and outwards (as well as considerate of the potential visual effects of any potential development on surrounding areas).

The landscape appraisal also refers to the South Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment.

Landscape Sensitivity

Following on from the landscape appraisal a landscape and visual sensitivity appraisal has been undertaken.

The key aim of the appraisal has been to identify the part (or parts) of each sub-area which is (are) of lower sensitivity. This has then helped to inform the definition of the areas which could potentially be removed from Green Belt designation and be capable of accommodating development. The appraisal has also been used to inform measures that may need to be incorporated in any future development to assist integration with the local landscape and reduce potential adverse visual effects.

The analysis is based on the guidance provided in the following documents:

- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition, The Landscape Institute with the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013);
- Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland, The Countryside Agency and SNH (2002); and
- Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland, Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity, The Countryside Agency and SNH.

It has involved a three-stage process, comprising the key steps of: initial landscape and visual review; evaluation of possible capacity for development in relation to sensitivity; and recommendations for suitable areas for potential development. Each stage has been described below.

Desk Study

As part of the desk study, the baseline landscape and visual resource was examined with reference to key published sources of information, including:

- The Hertfordshire Landscape Character Area Statements (published online)



- The SADC Local Plan Review 1994; and
- The MAGIC website;
- Ordnance Survey mapping at 1:50,000, 1:25,000 and 1:10,000 scales; and
- Aerial photography.

These sources provided an understanding of each sub-area, the local context, landform and the local policy context/designations. This allowed an understanding of the potential value, sensitivity and condition of the landscape for each sub-area.

Field Survey

Field survey was undertaken in September 2013 to review each sub-area and its context. This enabled an appreciation of each sub-area and its relationship with the surrounding landscape. The field survey involved observations made from publically accessible vantage points.

Analysis

The aim of the analysis is to provide an initial evaluation of the character of each sub-area in relation to its potential sensitivity to change (based on a general assumption of residential development). This included consideration of the possible effects that could arise from the potential residential development on townscape / landscape and visual receptors. The potential form and design of development for each sub-area is unknown, therefore the analysis is not a detailed landscape and visual impact assessment, but comprises an evaluation to help inform which part/parts of each sub-area appear to be more suitable for development. It also helped to inform the identification of potential revised Green Belt boundaries.

Predicted effects are quantified wherever possible. However, the nature of this appraisal requires an element of interpretation using professional judgement. In order to provide a level of consistency to the appraisal, the assignment of sensitivity to change, and appraisal of the potential townscape / landscape and visual effects that could arise from development have been based on certain key criteria, as set out below.

Evaluation of Landscape Sensitivity

The evaluation of townscape / landscape and visual sensitivity has considered the susceptibility to change and the value of the receptor. In the case of townscape / landscape receptors susceptibility is associated with the ability to accommodate potential development and value is reflected in designations and policies relating to their establishment (including features, elements and key characteristics). In relation to visual receptors, susceptibility is a function of the activity of a person and extent to which their attention is focussed on the townscape / landscape, and value is reflected in the designation or recognition of a particular view (e.g. through planning designation, inclusion on maps and locations marked with interpretive material).

The overall evaluation of sensitivity is based on the following table, and should be viewed as gradations rather than fixed categories.

	Sensitivity	
Criteria	Higher	Lower
Landscape character	Strong and coherent pattern evident Open landscape with wide visual connectivity with surrounding locations	Weak or declining landscape pattern Enclosed landscape with limited connection with surrounding locations
Settlement form	Strong connection with adjacent, existing built form	No relationship with adjacent built form
Landscape value	Nationally/internationally designated landscapes	No designation
Views/visual features	Considerable number of high-sensitivity receptors e.g. residents Very prominent landscape with clear views in and out	Low sensitivity receptors within surrounding areas e.g. industrialised locations Enclosed landscape with limited visual connectivity

Areas of Lower Sensitivity

The analysis of each sub-area has broken down the landscape into different areas where appropriate, and those areas that have been identified as having lower sensitivity defined on a map. It should be noted that there can be interactions between different criteria affect evaluations of sensitivity, e.g. a weak landscape pattern through the removal of field boundaries may reduce sensitivity, but the same change may increase openness and make any changes more conspicuous. Therefore the overall evaluation needs to balance the different criteria to reach a judgement in relation to which parts of the sub-areas are more or less sensitive.

For each sub-area, key features that should be retained have been noted, as well as outline recommendations made for landscape measures that should inform any proposed development layouts and treatments.

Those areas identified as least sensitive are taken forward to the next stage of analysis to identify potential developable areas associated revisions to Green Belt boundaries.



Stage 2: Site Assessment

Task 2a: Boundary Review

The landscape appraisal identified which parts/portions of each sub-area could potentially come forward for release while maintaining the overall integrity of the Green Belt. Key findings from the landscape sensitivity appraisal, in addition to the main outputs from the assessment of identified constraints and level of integration, plus Green Belt purposes assessment, were also considered to help identify an indicative site for potential release from the Green Belt for future development. Each sub-area has been reviewed in terms of component landscape parts within the sub-area and their (individual and collective) relationship to the surrounding Green Belt/ countryside setting. As part of this process, potential alterations to the Green Belt boundary are considered.

Therefore the detailed Green Belt boundary assessment to help identify each site within a sub-area has been undertaken in conjunction with the landscape capacity assessment. It has considered the characteristics of the edge of the lower sensitive area(s) in light of national policy advice to define a clear and defensible boundary.

The same criteria used to identify parcel boundaries (for the Part 1 study) has been implemented. However given the smaller area to be assessed (compared to Strategic Parcels) special consideration has been given to the less prominent features to define boundaries. In accordance with the NPPF and its rationale for defining Green Belt boundaries (para 85) and this identification has used recognisable and permanent physical features. Such features will include in order of importance:

- Prominent physical features including i) roads (motorways, A-roads and B-roads) or railway lines, or ii) buildings / urban development edge;
- Less prominent physical or natural features including pathways, water courses (rivers / streams), ridges, edges of woodland, car parks, playgrounds;
- Other features such as ownership boundaries marked by hedgerows or fence lines; and,
- Environmental designations.

Any proposed amendments to boundaries on those sites which may be considered to be least sensitive to change (and therefore have greater landscape capacity to accommodate development) do not cross recognisable features such as woodland, environmental designations or existing development. Amended boundaries are designed to be defensible over the long term to satisfy the Council that they will not need to be altered at the end of the development plan period or beyond (in respect of safeguarded land).

Where possible / appropriate potential measures to improve urban edges have been factored into the boundary review.

As a result of the boundary review the area of land identified for potential release from the Green Belt has been re-considered in light of its contribution towards the five Green Belt purposes.

Task 2b: Assessment of Developable Areas

For those areas of land classified being least sensitive, the most appropriate layout of development on each has been identified to ensure:

- Key landscape features are protected;
- Strongly defined Green Belt boundaries are retained / enhanced;
- Integration into existing urban areas is maximised; and,
- Appropriate areas for landscape mitigation / open space provision are retained.

The outcome of this task is a potential developable area, within the suggested revised Green Belt boundaries identified in the previous task. Tasks 2b and 2c are necessarily undertaken iteratively.

Task 2c: Indicative Development Capacity

The study brief requires the consultant team to prepare an indicative land use schedule for each defined strategic sub-area that identified a potential development capacity for those portions of the sub-areas that contributed least to Green Belt purposes.

In order to assess potential development capacity, certain broad assumptions have been made and are applicable to all sub-areas, namely:

- a) The **Gross Development Area** (GDA) defines that portion of the sub-area that could potentially be released for development. The remainder of the sub-area would remain Green Belt. Landscape mitigation measures may be required to maintain the integrity of the Green Belt within these sub-areas and forms a critical component in understanding which areas of land could be released.
- b) We have used the benchmark that up to 60% of the GDA would be developed (termed **Net Development Area**); the remainder 40% would be required to provide for public open space¹⁷, roads, and other infrastructure (including small scale social and community facilities);
- c) All developable land would come forward predominantly for residential development, with the exception of Site 2a which is identified exclusively for employment uses.
- d) . Specific need and location of land for new school provision does not form part of this study. The site area required by this land use has not been identified and the residential capacities of the larger sites would need to be reviewed should they be required to provide a significant area of land for this purpose; and,
- e) The consultant team is aware that certain planning applications have been granted or are under consideration on two sub-areas (at S3 East of St Albans and S4 North of St Albans).

¹⁷Requirement as defined per the Council's "Design and layout of new housing, 1998" standards and client correspondence.



The areas of land subject to the planning permission or public inquiry are excluded from this study.

Development Density

In order to assess development density, this study reviewed the Council's planning policy in terms of setting a density level for development that would be acceptable. While the policy stresses the need for high-density residential development, no actual range of dwellings/ hectare is set¹⁸. We have consequently used figures based on good practice guidance published by the HCA and CABE.

The *Urban Design Compendium* published by the Homes and Communities Agency (Llewelyn Davies Yeang, 2000) is recognised as a key best practice document in relation to assessing the design quality of development. It draws upon examples from across the UK and Europe and is intended to help guide policy development and practical application in new development and regeneration to help improve housing-led schemes and the promotion of sustainable new development. A density matrix is set out in Table 3.3, within Chapter 3 which considers 'creating urban structure'. Average densities are based on case studies analysed as part of the *Sustainable Residential Quality: Exploring the housing potential of large sites research* (LPAC, DETR, GOL, LT and HC, 2000). The matrix recommended that densities of **30 to 50 dph** should be applied to suburban development, along public transport corridors, for detached and linked houses.

This is considered to be relevant to the sub-areas assessed in St Albans given that they are located on the edges of existing settlements (not in town centres) and therefore exhibit suburban characteristics.

We have used the above density range (30 and 50 dph) to attain a low and high figure development capacity for each of the eight sub-areas. Actual development capacity will be subject to detailed masterplans being prepared for these sites; and for individual sites could fall outside of this range.

To cross-correlate the figures coming out of this broad assessment, we have reviewed the Council's St Albans Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2013) which states that 'There is a projected large growth (51%) in the requirement for 3-bed housing; 21% growth in the requirement for 1-bed; 20% growth in the requirement for 2-bed housing and a 7% increase in the requirement for 4 bed housing' (page 258). We have used this study, along with the Council's standards for private open space¹⁹ to determine minimum residential plot sizes.

¹⁸Ref. St Albans' Core Strategy Development Plan Document, Consultation on issues and options, Sustainability appraisal working paper, July 2007.

¹⁹ Ref. Council's "Design and layout of new housing, 1998"; Bungalow: 40sqm for first bed, and 20sqm for every additional bed; Flats: 20sqm for first bed of each flat, and 10sqm for every additional (pg20).



Our approach then uses the residential unit numbers to generate a population size, using the Council's figure of 2.5 persons/ unit (irrespective of unit size)²⁰. .

The residential unit numbers are also used to generate public open space requirements, using the Council's figures of 3sqm/ 5 units for schemes of 30+ units and additionally 1.2ha/1,000 persons for schemes of 100+ units²¹.

Stage 3: Site Classification

Task 3a: Site Classification

Based upon findings from the full assessment which considered four assessment categories (relation to contribution towards purposes, constraints, integration and landscape) each site identified within the sub-areas has been ranked in order of suitability for potential Green Belt release and future development.

Full details on the methodology used to classify sites is set out in Chapter 11.

It should be noted that the evaluation / classification method has been evolved significantly over that originally set out in the brief for the Study.

²⁰ St Albans Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2013)

²¹ St Albans Design and Advice Leaflet No 1 (November 1998)



www.globalskm.com