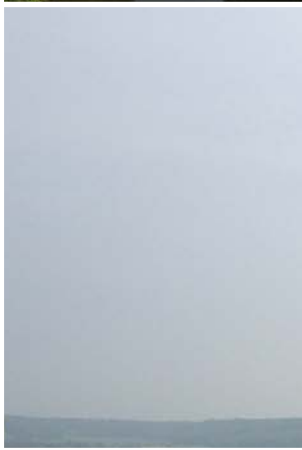


GREEN BELT REVIEW PURPOSES ASSESSMENT

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

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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

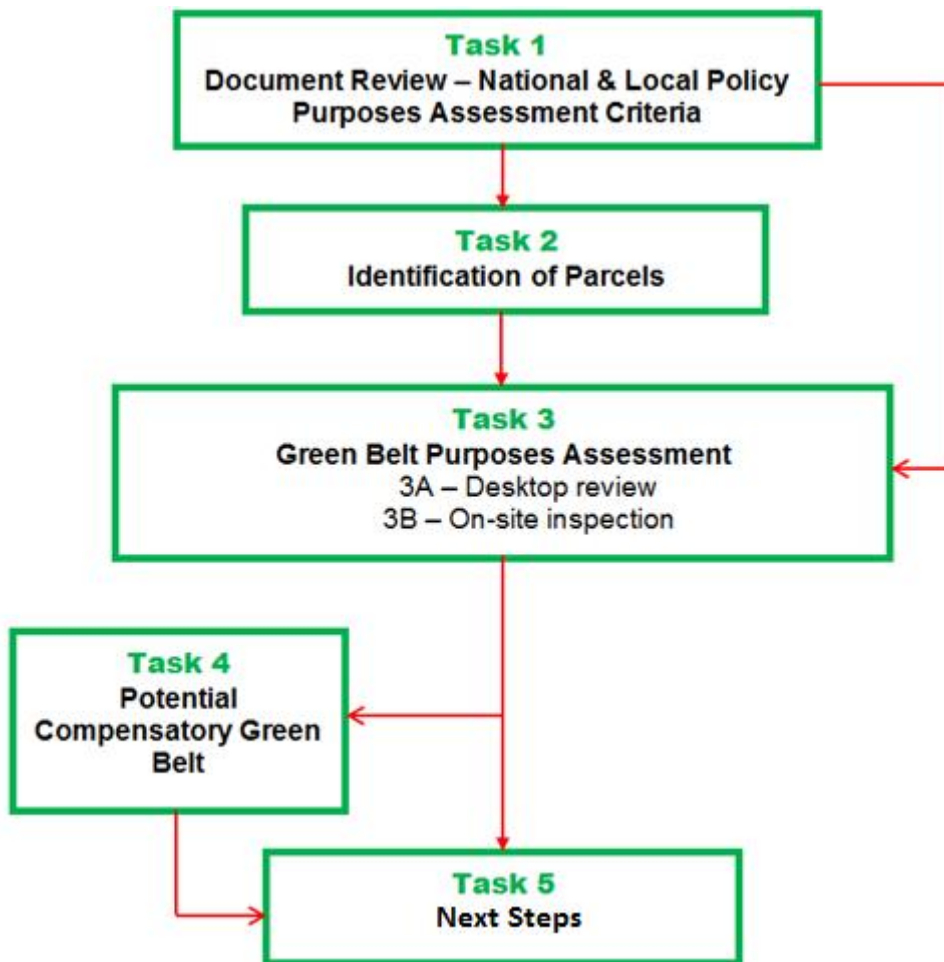
1.2.1. The agreed approach to the study comprises five tasks as set out in Figure 1.1 below. Task 1 covers a Document Review of relevant national and local planning policy and describes the role and purpose of the Green Belt. This has been used to refine the methodology and set out specific purposes 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 19th 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.

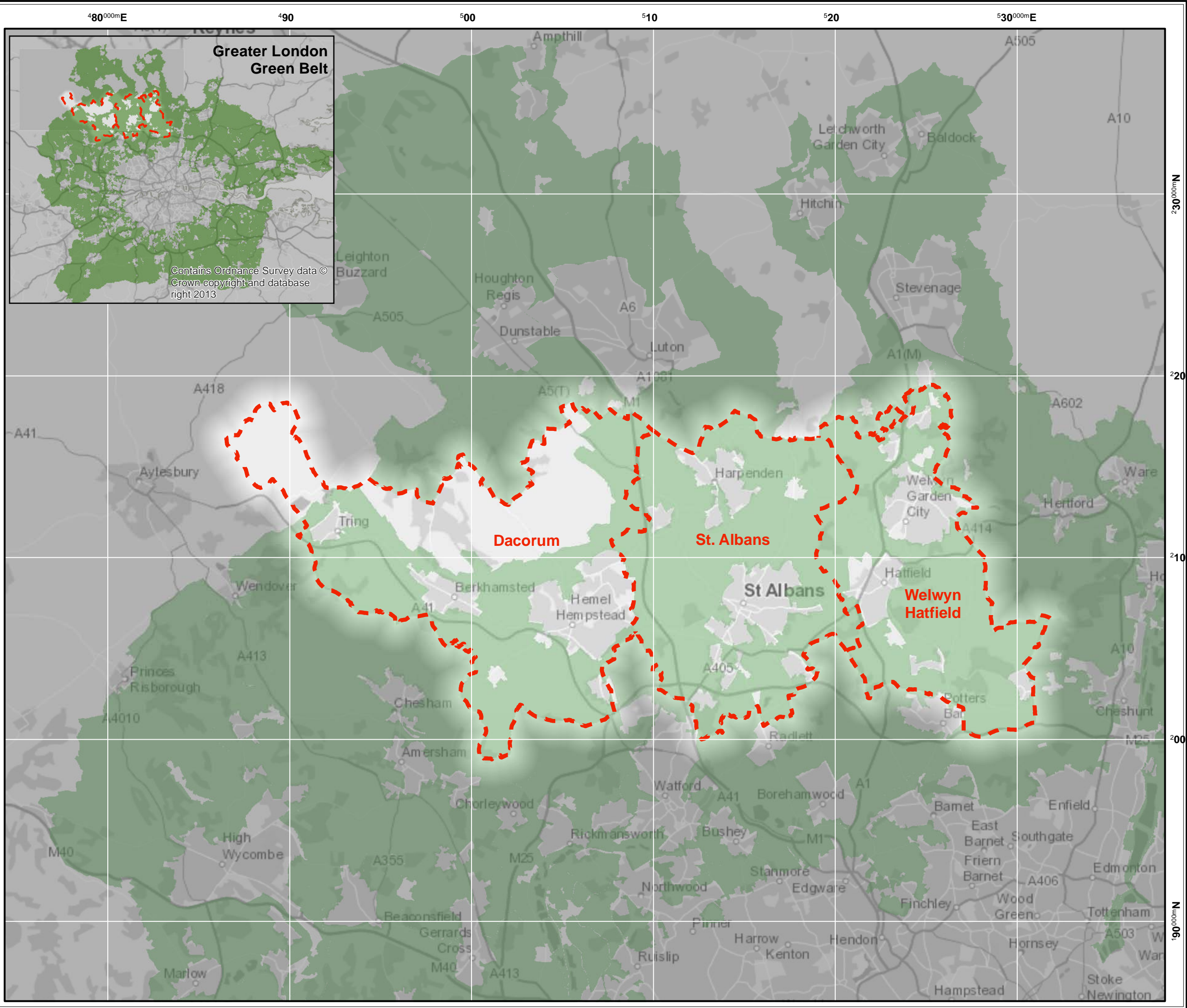
2.1.8. The publication of the National Planning Policy Framework in March 2012 replaced PPG2 and provides current national Green Belt policy. The policy approaches taken by PPG2 and the NPPF are summarised and compared below.

Hertfordshire Context Summary

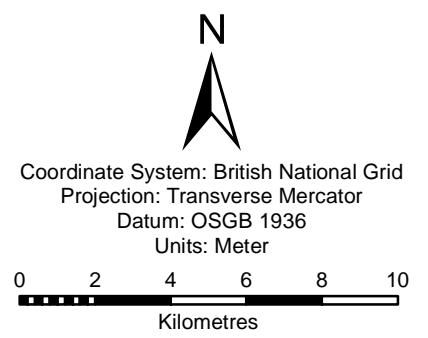
2.1.9. In response to Government policy on strategic Green Belt issues and pressure for an expansion of towns in the County, the Hertfordshire County Development Plan (1958) designated the area in the south of the County as Green Belt. Similarly, the Southern Bedfordshire Green Belt was designated at 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.



Key:
- - - Study Area
■ Metropolitan Green Belt



REVISION: D

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

**FIGURE 2.1
 Wider Metropolitan
 Green Belt**

SCALE	PROJECT CODE
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CONTENT	DRAWN
OS OpenData	KW
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File Name: Figure2.1 Wider Metropolitan Green Belt



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 Plans¹. Local authorities must then demonstrate why normal policy would not be adequate, whether any major changes in circumstances have made the adoption necessary and the consequences for sustainable development (para 2.14). This criteria is discussed in more detail in respect of the NPPF in 2.3 below.
- 2.2.4. PPG2 additionally sought local planning authorities to consider the future of Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt. These sites were defined as including airfields, factories, hospitals, power stations, water and sewage treatment works which often predated Green Belt designation. The guidance explained that these sites remain subject to Green Belt policy: however infilling and redevelopment is not considered inappropriate when the purposes of the Green Belt are not impacted upon and when the scale, height and size of proposals do not exceed existing conditions (Annex C). The reference to Major Developed Sites is has now been replaced by 'brownfield' sites in the Green Belt in the NPPF. It is considered this alteration has been made to reflect a more flexible approach and recognises opportunities for a wider range of previously developed sites.

¹ 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)². 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)³. 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,

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

³ 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)⁴. 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: 12⁵). 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: 8⁶).

- 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 Scotland⁷.

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.

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

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

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

⁷ 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 survey⁸ 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)⁹ 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.

⁸ Undertaken by The Telegraph (article from 24 Nov 13)

⁹IPPR (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 Letter¹⁰ 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,*

¹⁰ Dated 27 November 2012



cannot be satisfactorily drawn'. This emphasises the important 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 Borough¹¹. 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*¹². (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

¹¹ East Cheshire Draft Local Plan (January 2013)

¹²Development 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 1st and 2nd tier settlements are excluded from the Green Belt, whereas 3rd 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

Tier	Dacorum	St Albans	Welwyn Hatfield
1st tier – Primary settlements, key urban areas	<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
2nd tier – Secondary settlements, large villages	<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	
3rd tier – Other settlements, small villages	<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, Sleafshyde, Smallford	Essendon, Lemsford, Newgate Street and Northaw.
	<i>Small Villages in rural area</i>	All other settlements	<i>Small Green Belt Villages and Settlements</i>
	Aldbury, Long Marston, Wilstone		Ayot Green, Ayot St Lawrence, Ayot St Peter, Bell Bar, Bullens Green, (part of) Burnham Green, Mill Green, Stanborough, Swanley Bar, Wild Hill and Woodside.
	All other settlements		All other settlements

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



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

- 3.1.7. In the past, safeguarded land has only been sparingly used by some districts in Hertfordshire and has been a response to particular site circumstances. In the study area, Welwyn Hatfield and Dacorum have used safeguarded land policies in a limited way (see para. 2.2.2 above for context).
- 3.1.8. Dacorum's Core Strategy does not propose any safeguarded land in the Green Belt however open land outside of the Green Belt is reserved to meet future development needs. The Council's view at Examination was that the concept of safeguarding land is difficult to apply effectively in areas of high development pressure, and there is also generally poor public understanding and acceptance of the idea of setting aside land for very long term development. Welwyn Hatfield's emerging Local plan work does envisage use of safeguarded land. The approach adopted by Dacorum reflects the history of Green Belt policy development in Hertfordshire (see Appendix 1). 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 1st 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

Purpose	Definition of Terms to be applied in Assessment
<i>To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas</i>	<p>Sprawl – ‘spread out over a large area in an untidy or irregular way’ (Oxford Dictionary online).</p> <p>Large built-up areas – in the context of this study are London, Luton & Dunstable and Stevenage, where outward expansion (particularly to the south) was controlled as an original purpose of the Green Belt.</p>
<i>To prevent neighbouring towns from merging</i>	<p>Neighbouring towns – 1st tier settlements (see Table 3.2 Settlement Hierarchy)</p> <p>Merging – this can be by way of general sprawl (above) or;</p> <p>Ribbon development – ‘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>Strategic gap – provides the space between 1st tier settlements to 1st tier settlements only.</p>
<i>To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment</i>	<p>Encroachment– ‘a gradual advance beyond usual or acceptable limits’ (Oxford Dictionary online).</p> <p>The countryside¹³ – 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.¹⁴</p> <p>Openness – absence of built development or other urbanising elements (not openness in a landscape character sense - topography and woodland / hedgerow cover).</p>

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

¹⁴ 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.

Purpose	Definition of Terms to be applied in Assessment
<i>To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns</i>	Historic town – settlement or place ¹⁵ 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

Purpose	Definition of Terms to be applied in Assessment
<i>To broadly maintain the existing settlement pattern</i>	<p>Settlement pattern – 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>Primary local gap – provides the space between 1st tier settlements to 2nd or 3rd tiers settlements only.</p> <p>Secondary local gap – provides the space between 2nd or 3rd tier settlements to 2nd or 3rd tier settlements only.</p>

Table 5.3. Definition of Additional Terms applied in the assessment

Definition of Terms to be applied in Assessment
<p>Well-maintained gap – absence of built development from the spaces between settlements.</p> <p>Concealed – landscape features such as planting / hedgerows / trees which hide physical features including settlements and roads, railway lines.</p> <p>Major transport corridors – M25, M1, A1(M) and railway lines.</p> <p>Level of built development – built-up areas or buildings as a % of total land area within a parcel (based on 1:10 000 OS mapping).</p> <p>Urban Fringe / Peri-urban environment – 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 number¹⁶)</p> <p>Green wedge – 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.

¹⁵ The term 'place' allows for the consideration of Historic Parks and Gardens

¹⁶ 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

Purpose	Definition of Purpose to be applied in Assessment
<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 st 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?
Local Purpose	Assessment Criteria
<i>Maintaining existing settlement pattern</i>	14) Same assessment as 2 nd purpose, applied to spaces and gaps between the tiers of settlement below 1 st to 1 st 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 Stevenage¹⁷. 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 1st 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 2nd 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

¹⁷ 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-1st 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.

Dark green	Significant contribution to GB purposes
Mid green	Partial contribution to GB purposes
Light green	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.

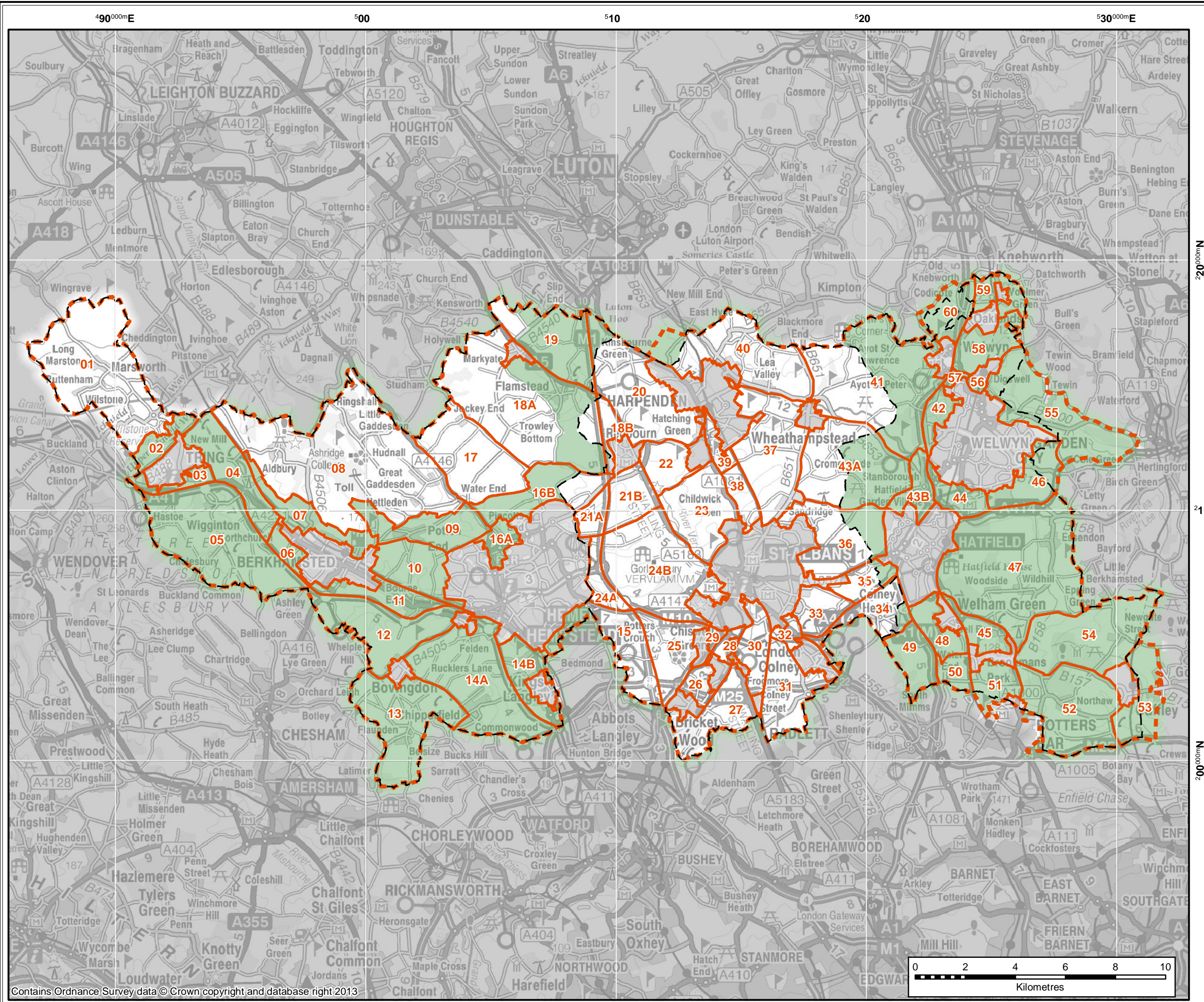


6. Strategic Parcel Plan

- 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.



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



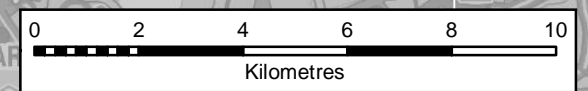
Coordinate System: British National Grid
 Projection: Transverse Mercator
 Datum: OSGB 1936
 Units: Meter

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

**FIGURE 6.1.
 Strategic Parcel Plan**

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



File Name: Figure6.1_Parcel Plan

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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 only¹⁸. 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 settlements¹⁹ 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

¹⁸ Discounting the local purpose 'to maintain the existing settlement pattern'

¹⁹ 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.

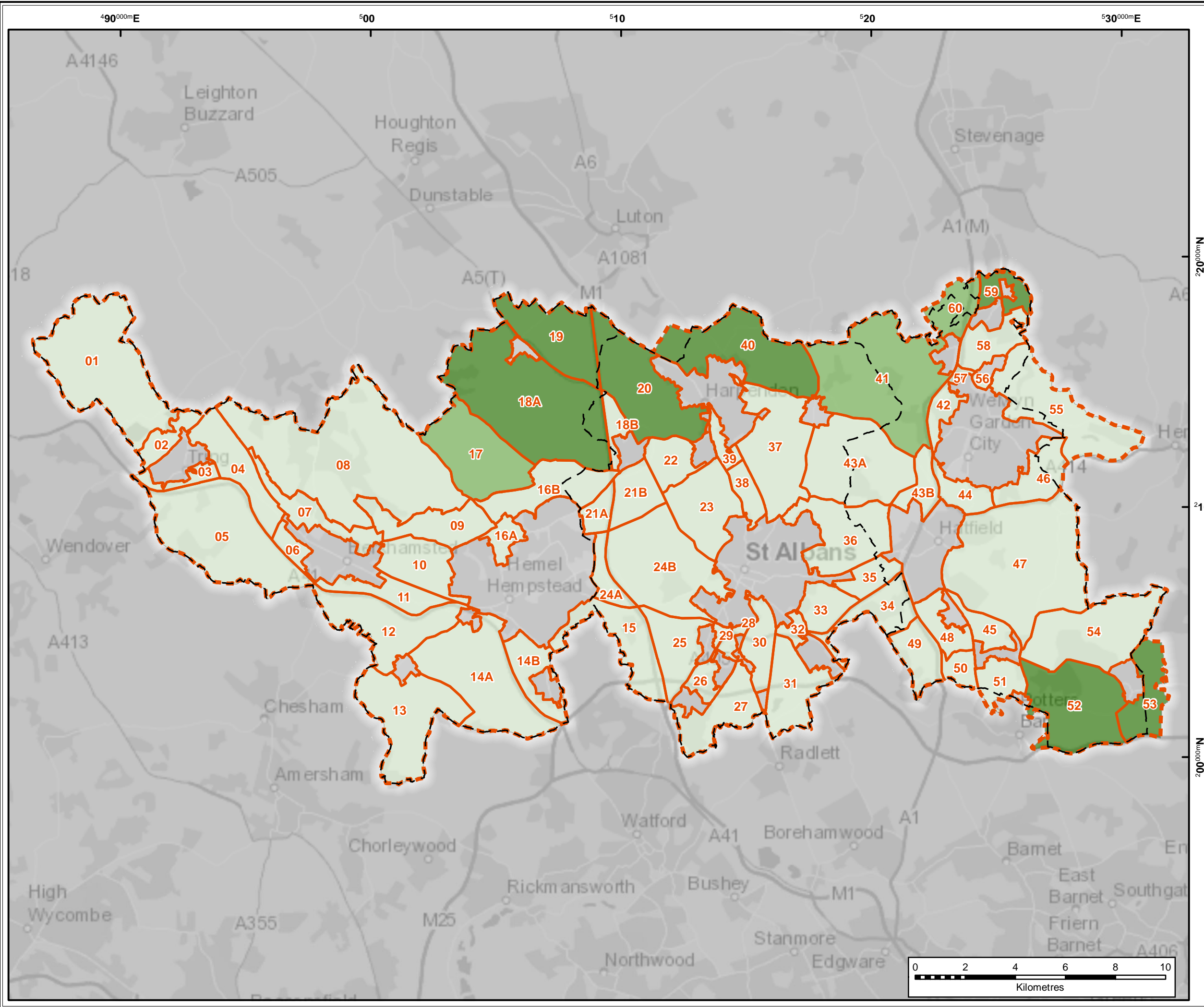
- 7.1.6. The Green Belt contribution to each of the four national purposes and local Hertfordshire purpose is analysed in more detail below. This analysis relates to all 66 parcels, including Green Belt and non-Green Belt land. It provides a review of the role that the parcels play towards achieving 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



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



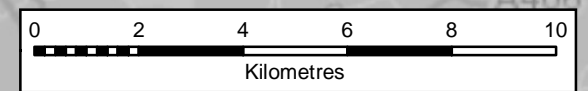
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 Projection: Transverse Mercator
 Datum: OSGB 1936
 Units: Meter

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**Green Belt Review for
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**FIGURE 7.1.
 Contribution towards
 Checking Sprawl**

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



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

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

7.3.2. This band of Green Belt forms a series of strategic gaps which separate the 1st tier settlements of Tring, Berkhamsted, Hemel Hempstead, St Albans, Harpenden, Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City. The Green Belt also provides buffers facing 1st 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

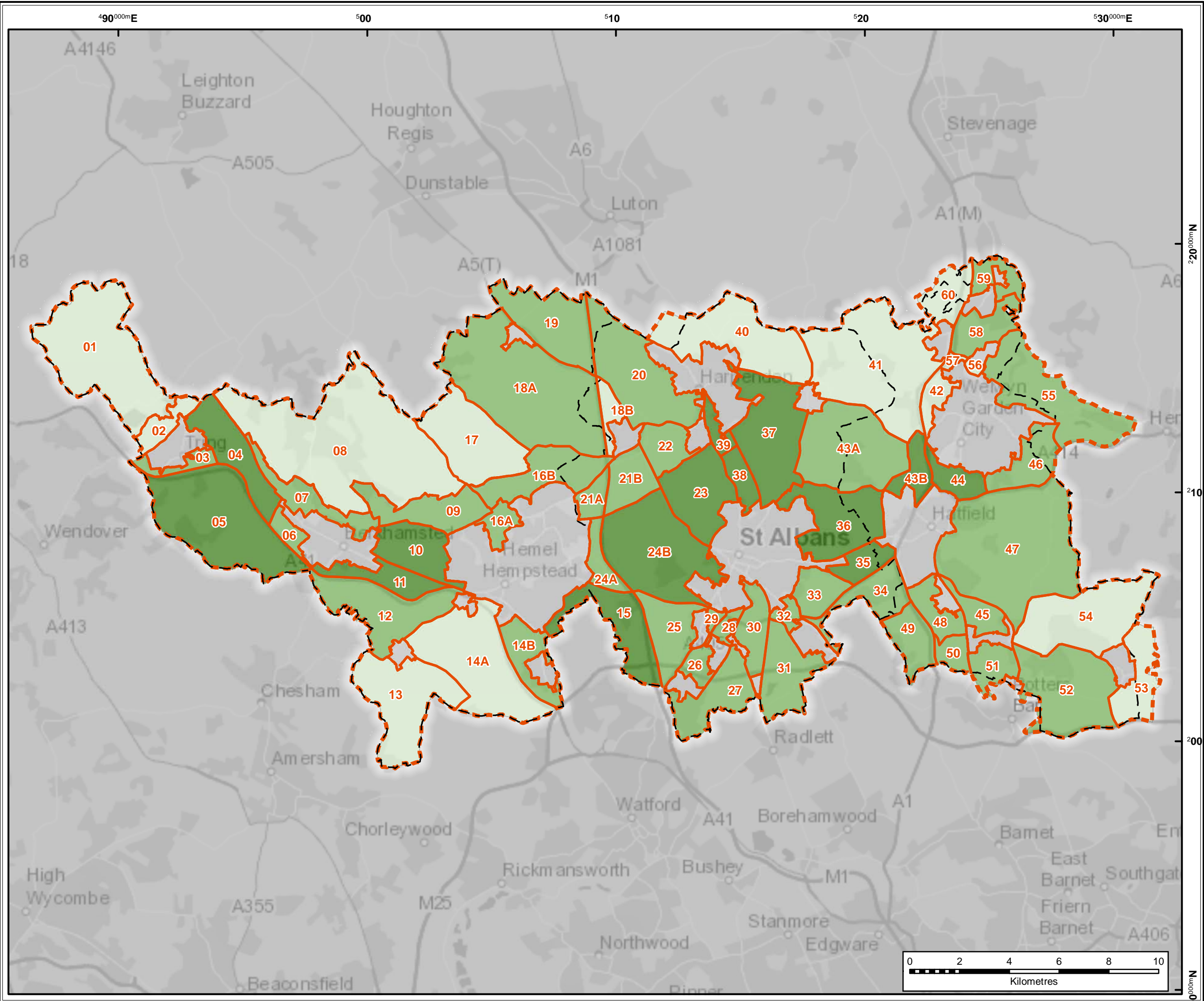
Strategic Gap	Network of Parcels	Gap
Within the Study Area		
Tring - Berkhamsted	GB03, 04, 05, 06 & 07	4.5km
Berkhamsted - Hemel Hempstead	GB09, 10, 11 & 12	2.6km
Hemel Hempstead - St Albans	GB15, 21, 23, 24 & 25	4.2km
St Albans - Harpenden	GB23, 37, 38 & 39	2.5km
St Albans - Hatfield	GB33, 34, 35 & 36	1.3km
Hatfield - Welwyn Garden City	GB43A & B & 44	1km
Separating 1st Tier Settlements within the study area from settlements outside²⁰		
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

²⁰ 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 1st tier settlements located within the study area. In addition there are nine strategic gaps which separate 1st 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 2nd and 3rd 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 1st tier settlements.

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Name: Figure7.2_Contribution towards preventing merging



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

N

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

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**Green Belt Review for
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**FIGURE 7.2.
Contribution towards
Preventing Merging**

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Ordnance Survey	KW
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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 activities²¹ 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 estimated²². 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 encroachment²³. 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 high²⁴ 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 2nd and 3rd tier

²¹However 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.

²²Level 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.

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

²⁴Parcel contains over 1% of built development



settlements (washed over by the Green Belt) as opposed to 1st 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 1st tier settlements. Green wedges are linear in character and run into urban areas rather than around them. These are located at GB16A in Gadebridge Park to the north of Hemel Hempstead, GB39 in Harpenden Common to the south of Harpenden and GB24B in Verulamium Park to the west of St Albans.
- 7.4.15. A number of large scale and relatively recently-developed residential areas have also been identified in the Green Belt. These schemes represent encroachment into the Green Belt. The main examples are located at Highfield Park (in GB33) and Napsbury Park (in GB31). All of these areas are located in St Albans. When assessed in isolation they are considered to make a limited contribution towards Green Belt purposes.

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Name: Figure 7.3_Contribution towards safeguarding countryside



- 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

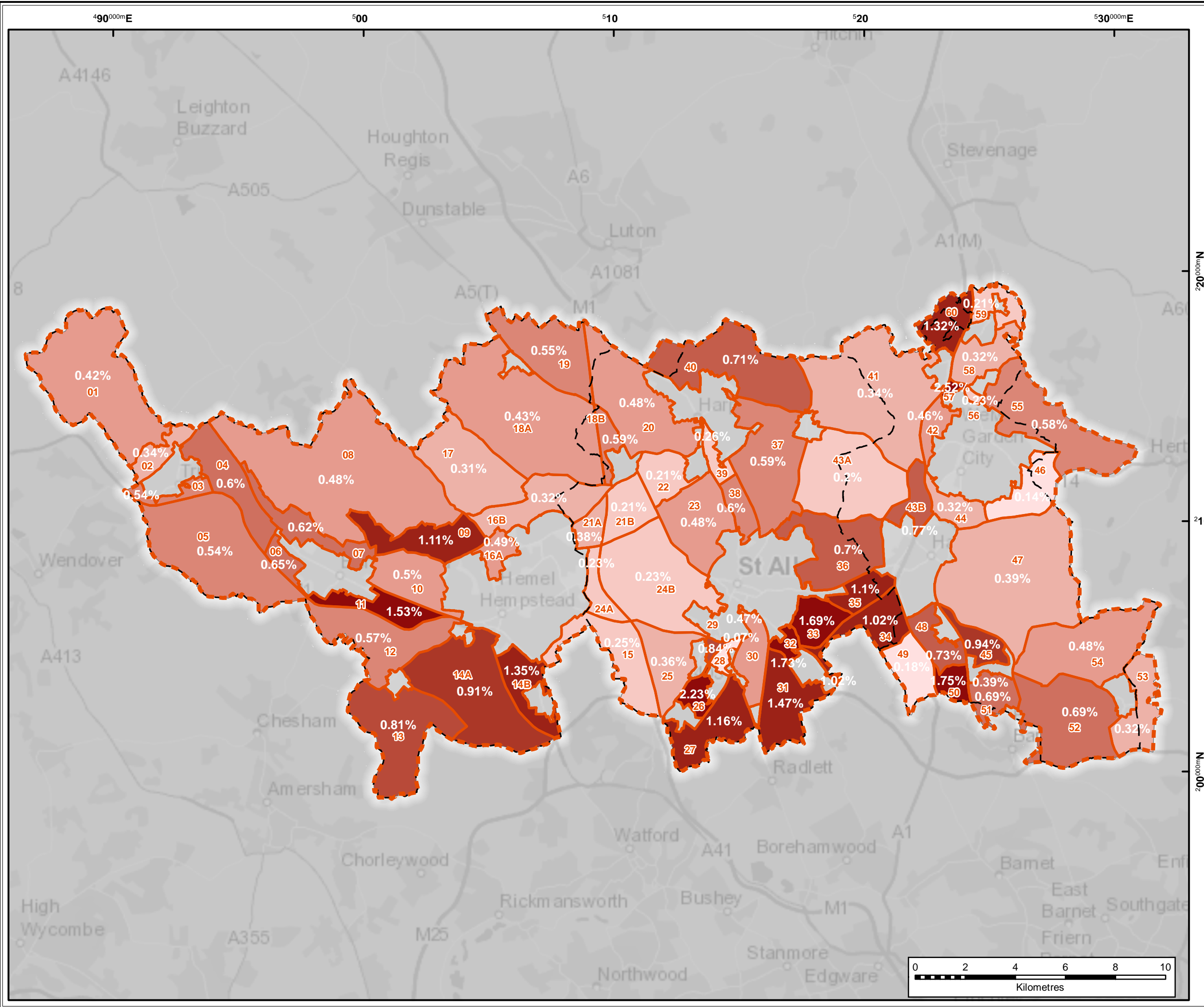
**Green Belt Review for
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Welwyn Hatfield**

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



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Name: Figure7.4_Proportion of built development



- 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



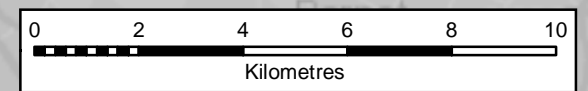
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Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: OSGB 1936
Units: Meter

REVISION: D

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

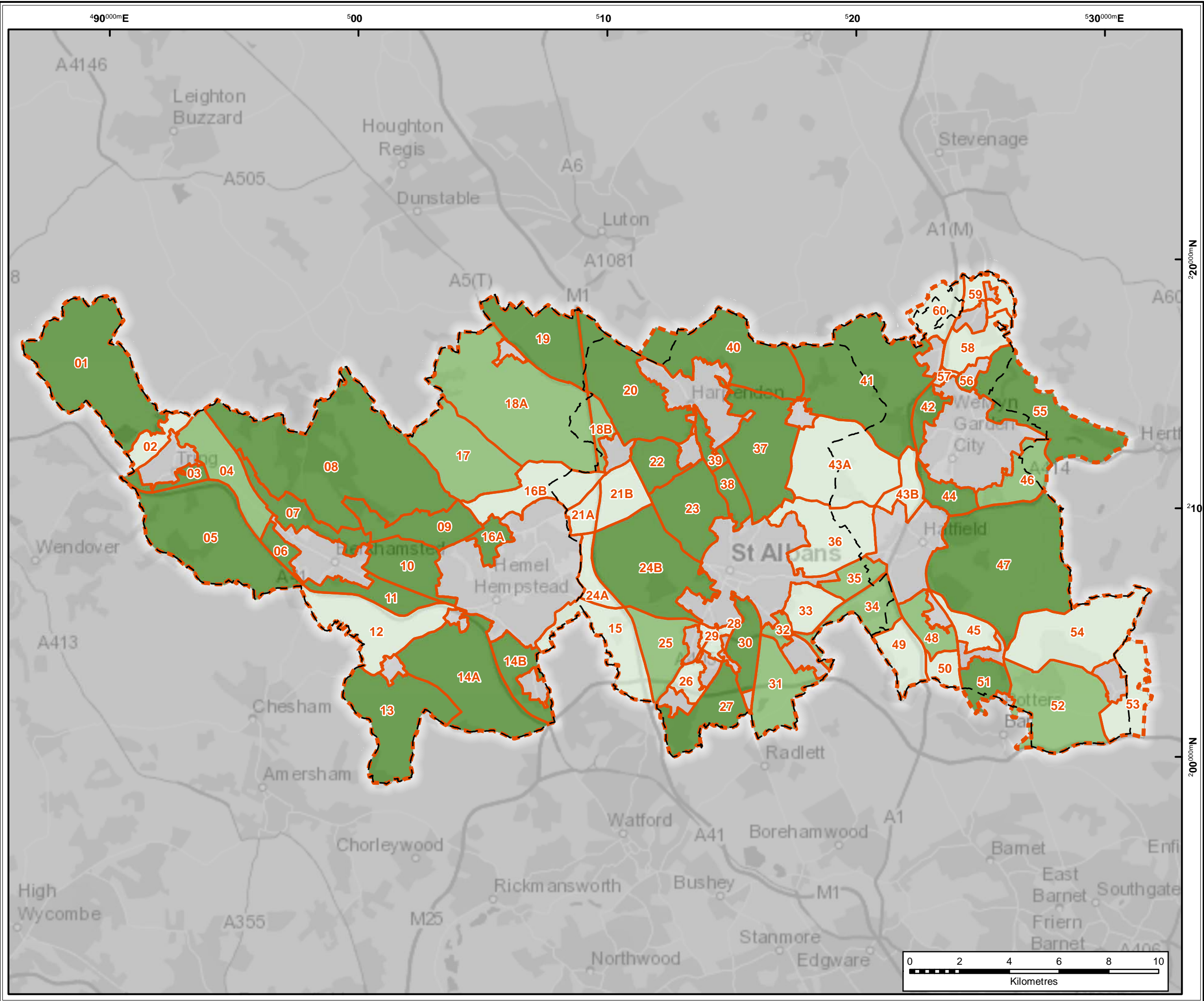




7.5. NPPF Purpose 4: To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

- 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



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



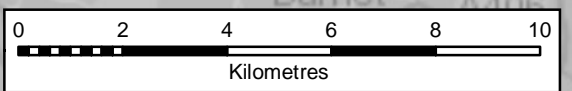
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 Datum: OSGB 1936
 Units: Meter

REVISION: F

**Green Belt Review for
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 Welwyn Hatfield**

**FIGURE 7.5.
 Contribution towards
 Preserving Setting**

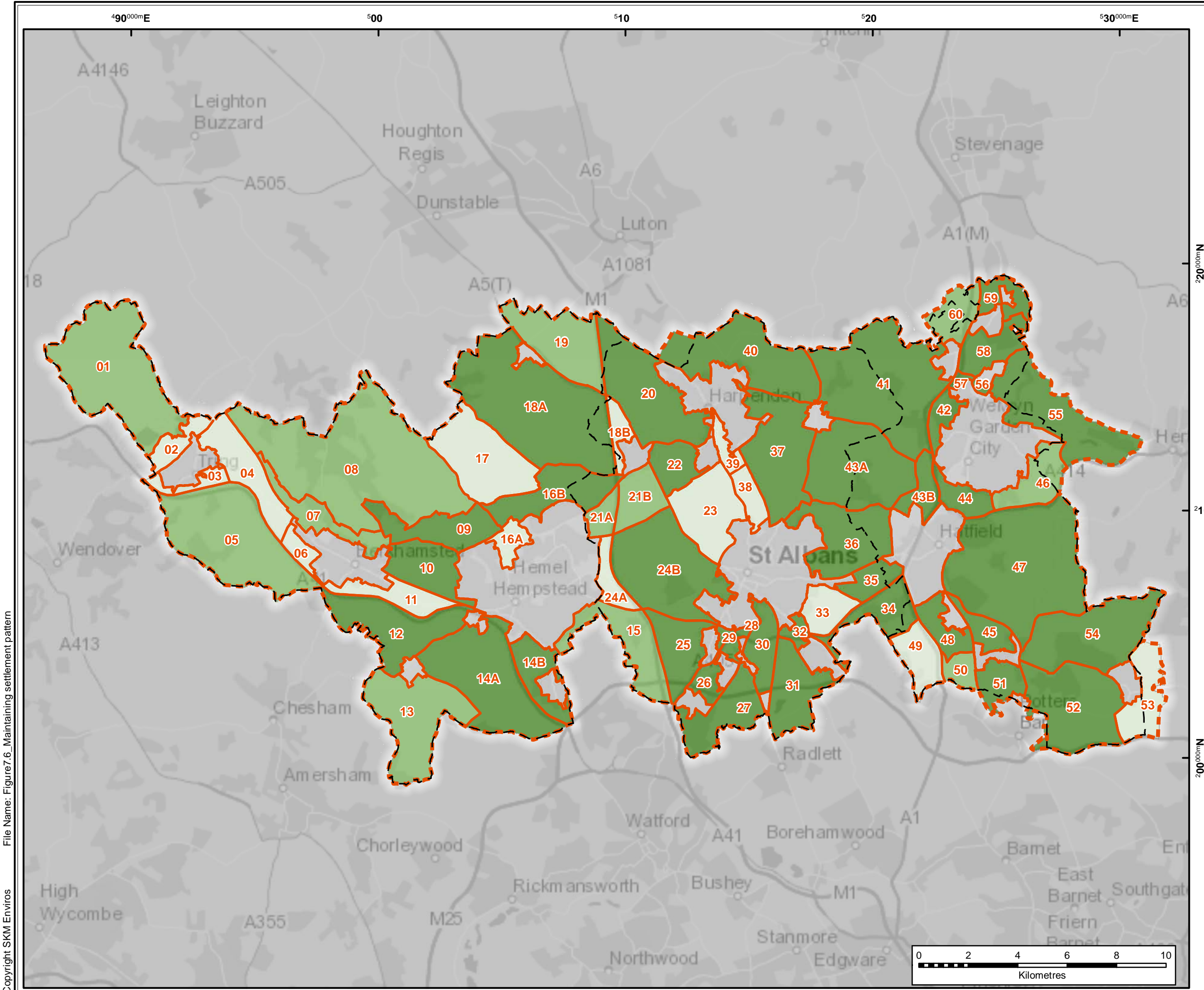
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CONTENT	DRAWN
Ordnance Survey	KW
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7.6. Local Purpose: To maintain the existing settlement pattern

- 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 1st, 2nd and 3rd 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 1st tier settlements from 2nd and 3rd tier settlements, whereas the two outer bands accommodate most of the secondary local gaps which separate 2nd and 3rd tier settlements only.
- 7.6.3. This pattern mirrors the spatial distribution of 2nd and 3rd 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.



Key:

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

Pattern

- Limited or No Contribution
- Partial Contribution
- Significant Contribution

N

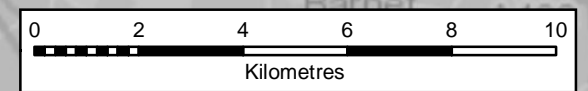
Coordinate System: British National Grid
 Projection: Transverse Mercator
 Datum: OSGB 1936
 Units: Meter

REVISION: D

**Green Belt Review for
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 Welwyn Hatfield**

FIGURE 7.6.
**Contribution towards Maintaining
 the Settlement Pattern**

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



File Name: Figure7.6_Maintaining settlement_pattern



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 1st tier settlements and only contains a total of three settlements listed in the Hierarchy Table 3.2²⁵, 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.

²⁵ 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:

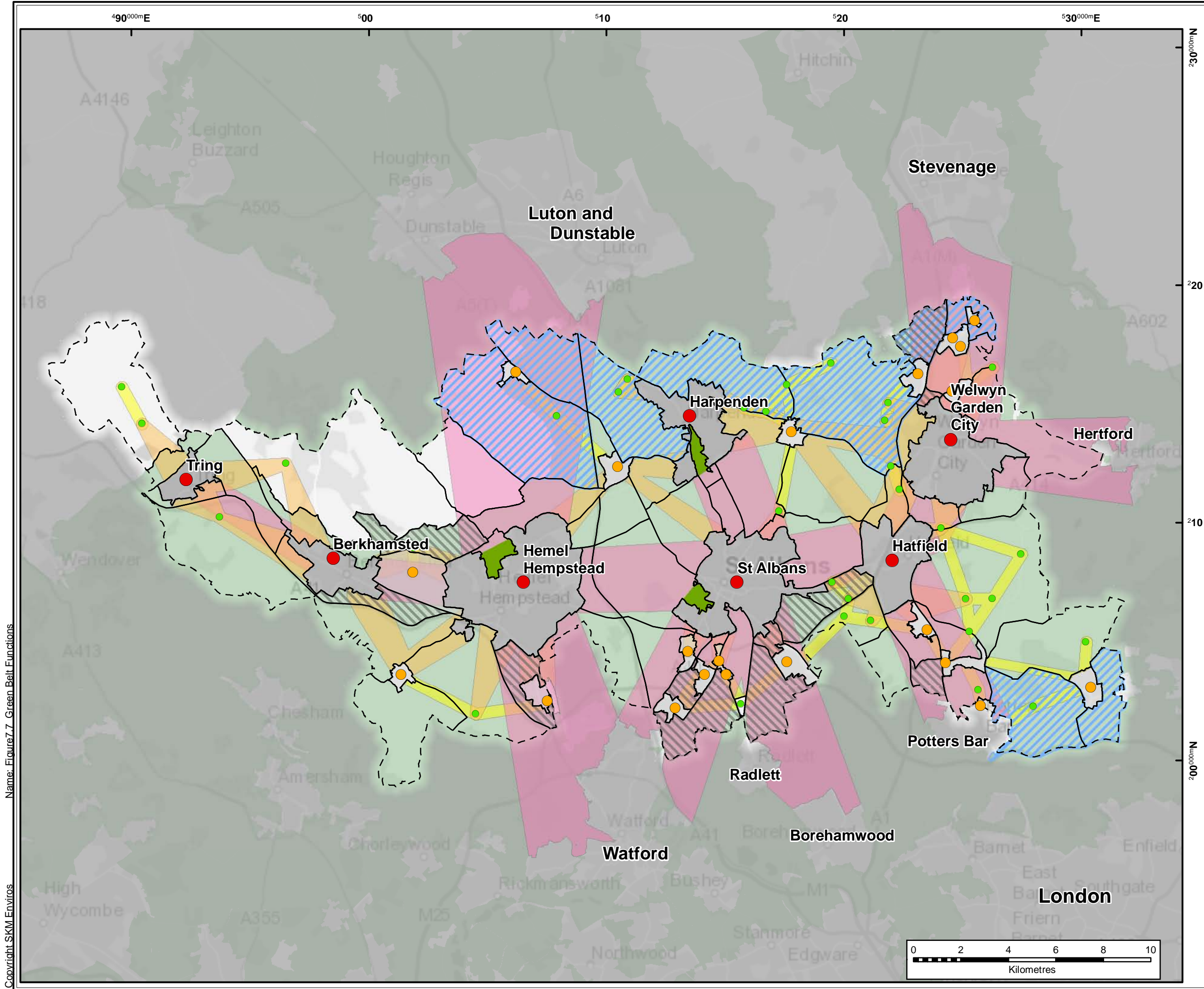
- Sprawl from built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable, and Stevenage is restricted by the outer northern and eastern land plus the southeast corner of the study area
- Neighbouring towns within the study area are prevented from merging by a series of strategic gaps across the centre of the study area. Larger strategic gaps extend outwards to the north, south and east to prevent merging with 1st 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.



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

N

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

REVISION: H

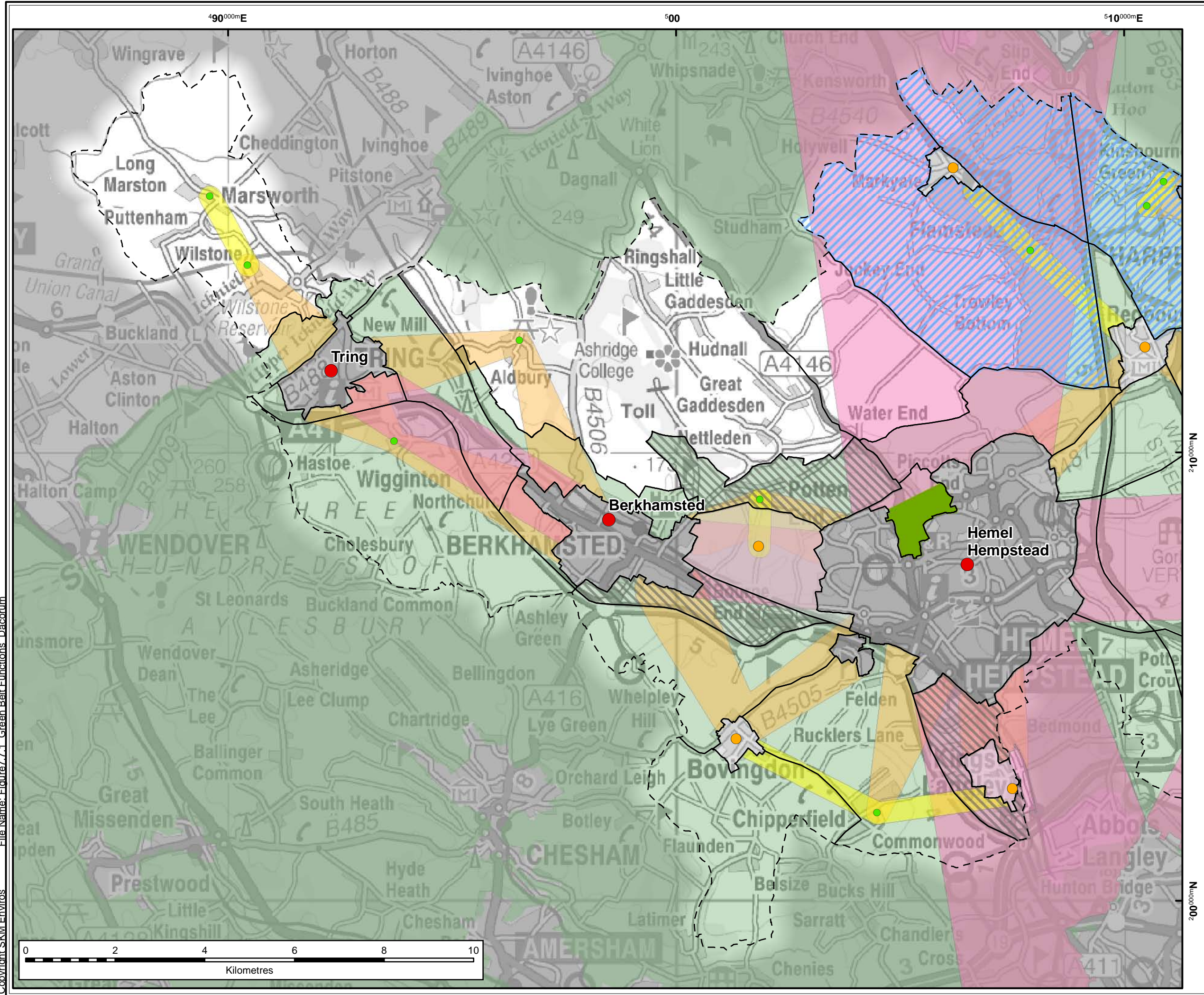
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**FIGURE 7.7.
 Green Belt Functions**

SCALE	PROJECT CODE
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RB	3/12/2013



Name: Figure 7.7 Green Belt Functions
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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
- Secondary Local Gap
- Strategic Gap
- Primary Local Gap
- Green Belt

Settlement

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

N

Coordinate System: British National Grid
 Projection: Transverse Mercator
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 Units: Meter

REVISION: H

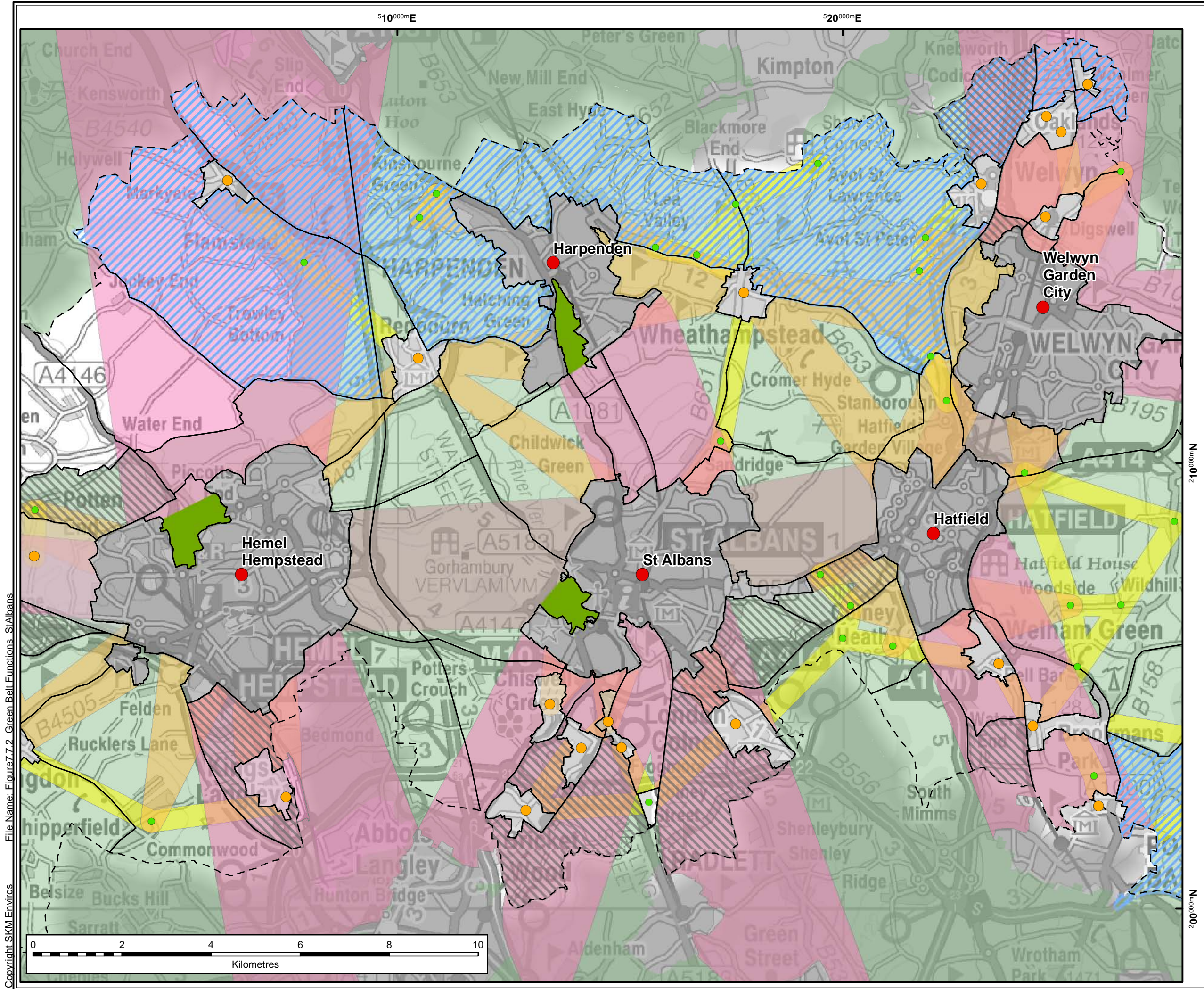
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 Welwyn Hatfield**

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

SCALE	PROJECT CODE
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RB	3/12/2013



File Name: Figure7.7.1_Green Belt Functions_Dacorum



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

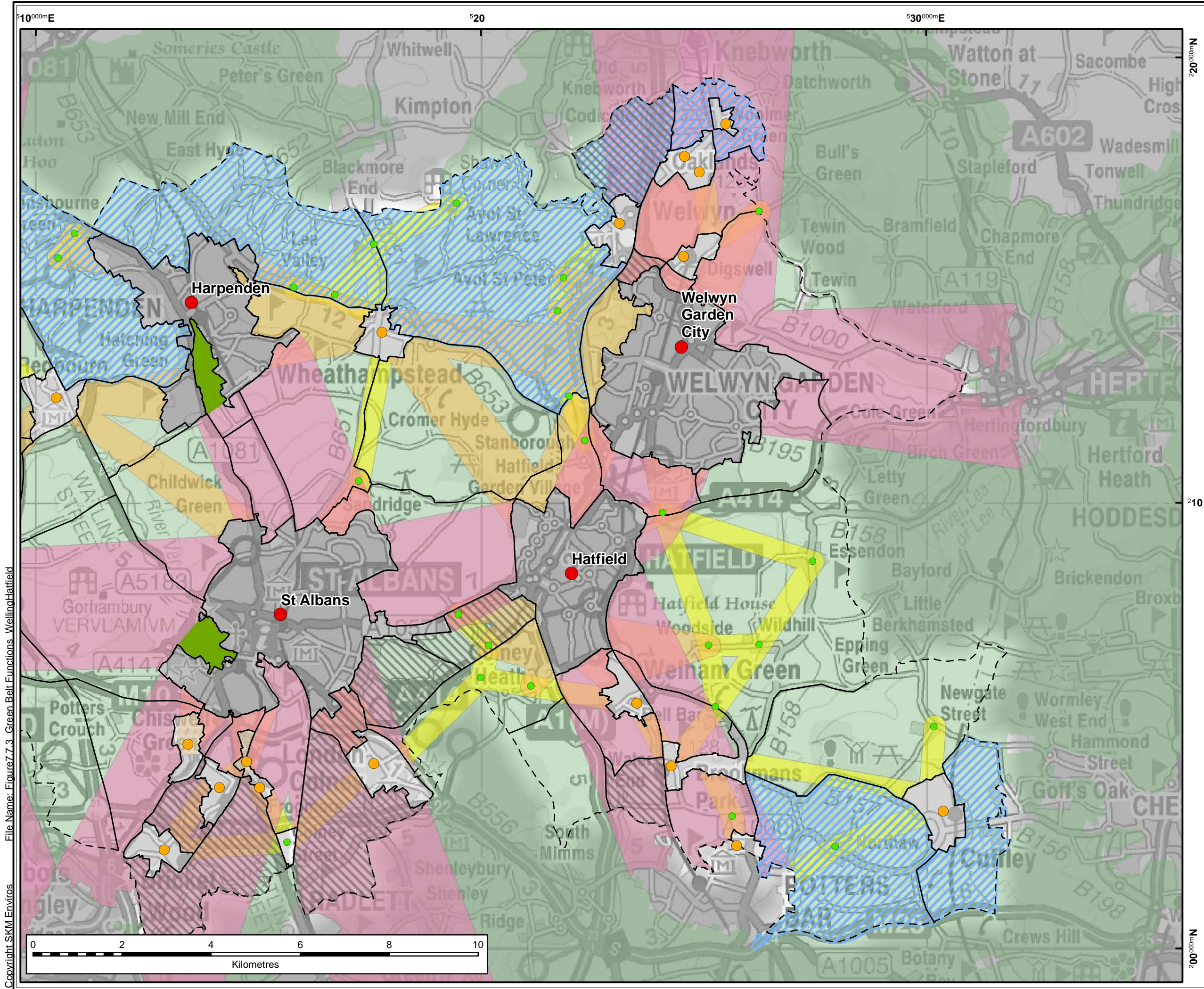
Green Belt Review for St Albans, Dacorum and Welwyn Hatfield

FIGURE 7.7.2. Green Belt Functions St Albans District Council

SCALE	PROJECT CODE
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CONTENT	DRAWN
	KW
CHECKED	DATE
RB	3/12/2013



File Name: Figure7.7.2_Green Belt Functions - StAlbans



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 7.7.3.
 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_WelwynHatfield



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*²⁶.
- 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

²⁶ 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 Bovington (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 Tippendell 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 Brocket 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)

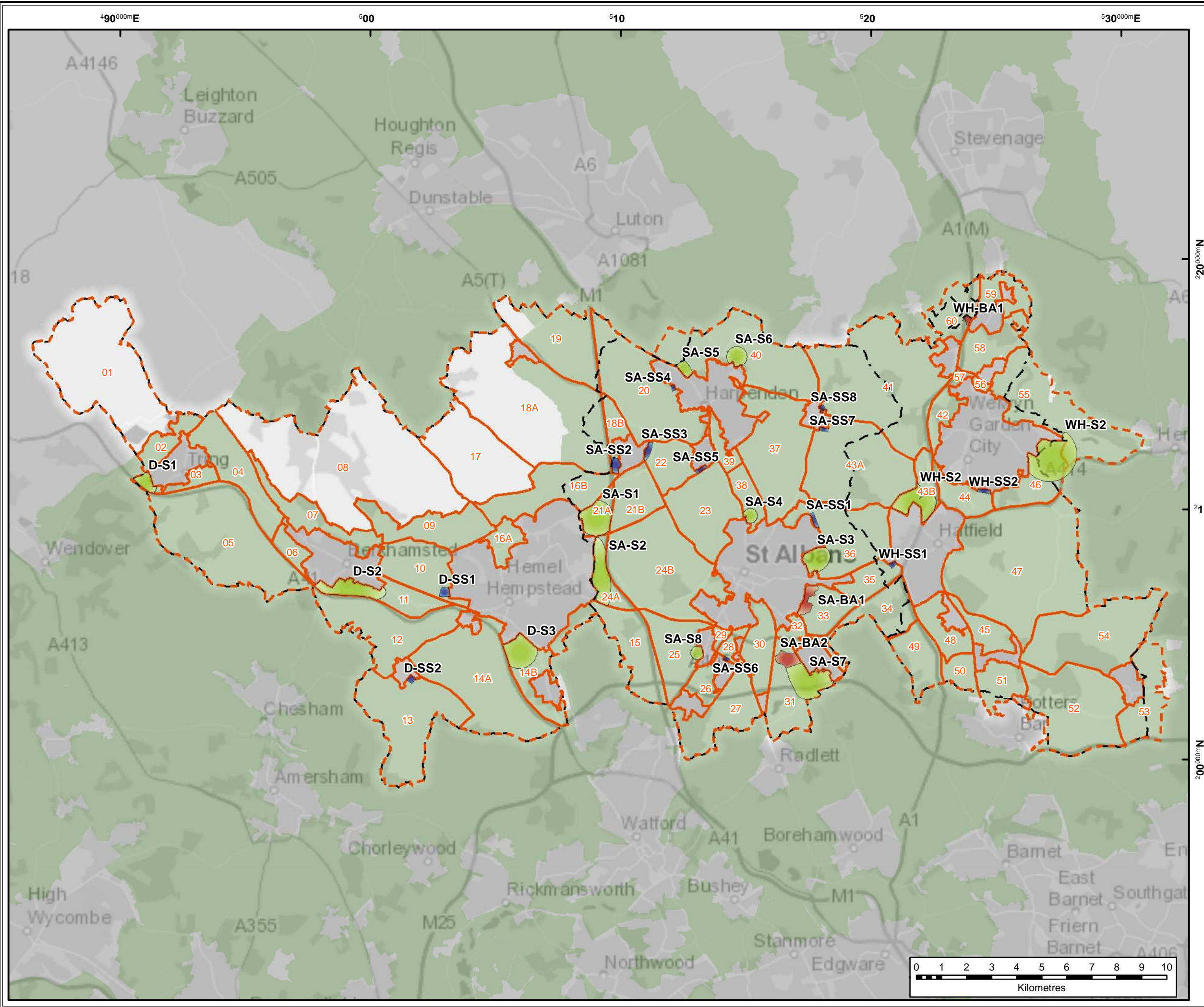
- 8.3.12. **WH-SS1 – Land west of Hatfield (GB35)** to south of Wilkins Green Lane urban edge and west of Ellenbrook Lane. The southern extent of the land runs to the cyclepath to the south of the existing play area at Ellenbrook Lane. Assessed in isolation this sub-area makes a limited or no contribution 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.

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Name: Figure8.1_Least Contribution to GB



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



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

REVISION: H

Green Belt Review for St Albans, Dacorum and Welwyn Hatfield

FIGURE 8.1.
Land Contributing Least Towards Green Belt Purposes

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

Strategic sub-areas	
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)
Small Scale sub-areas	
D-SS1	Land west of Hemel Hempstead (GB10)
D-SS2	Land at southeast edge of Bovington (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)
Boundary Adjustments	
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 in²⁷ 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 regeneration²⁸ as well as maintaining the existing settlement pattern²⁹ 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.

²⁷ Three Green Belt purposes from Circular 42/55

²⁸ Two Green Belt purposes added by Draft PPG2 (1988)

²⁹ 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 rain 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 Hampstead 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 18th century enclosures. The woodland cover comprises a number of small ancient beech and oak woods found mainly in



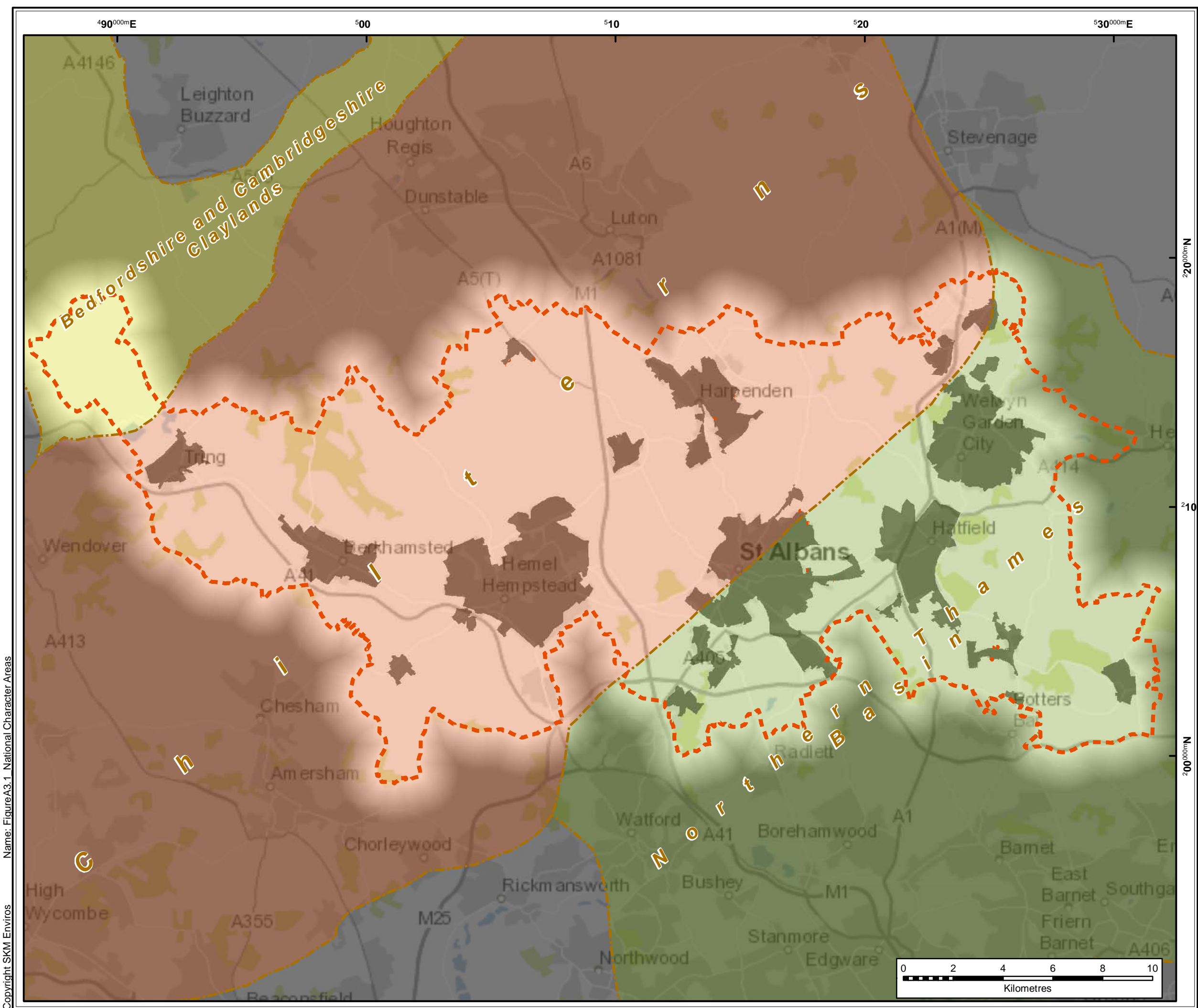
the valleys to the west. The area comprises much transitional countryside as rural Hertfordshire merges into the northern London suburbs. Hertfordshire's large towns, the M25 and M1 motorways, railway line and prominent electricity pylons are also a major influence on character.

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.



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



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

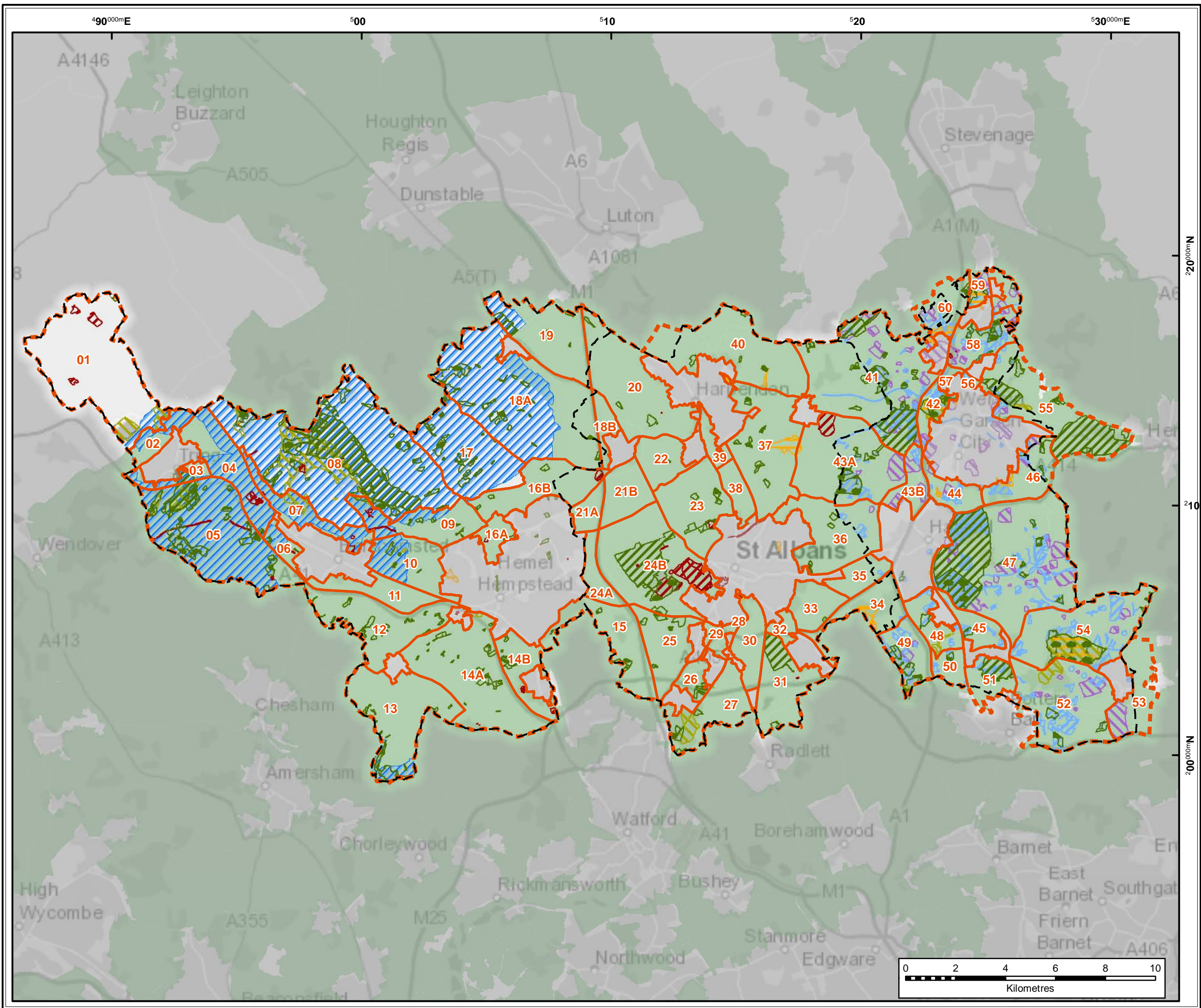
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Appendix 4: Environmental and Historic Features



- 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



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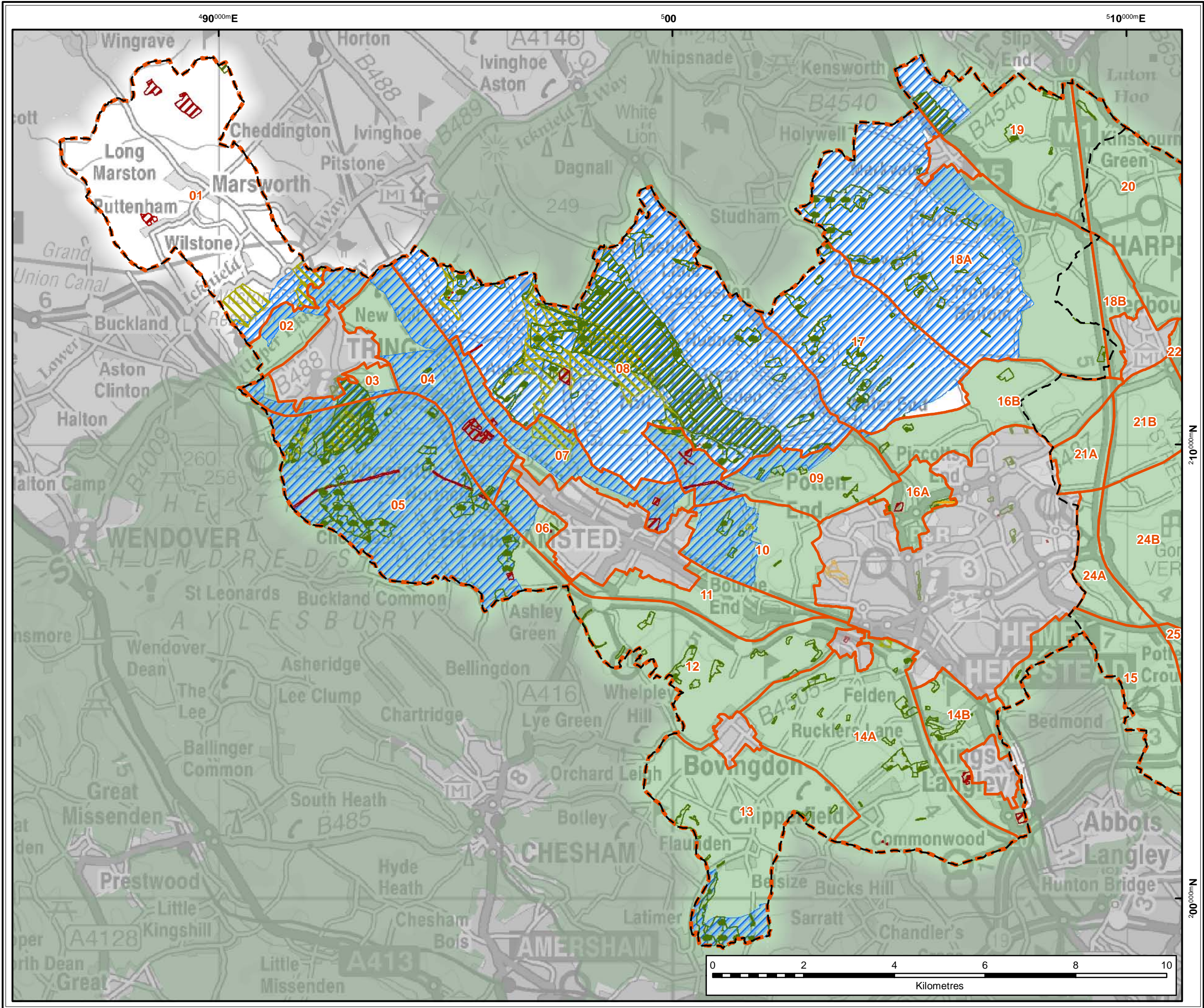
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**FIGURE A4.1.
 Environmental Features**

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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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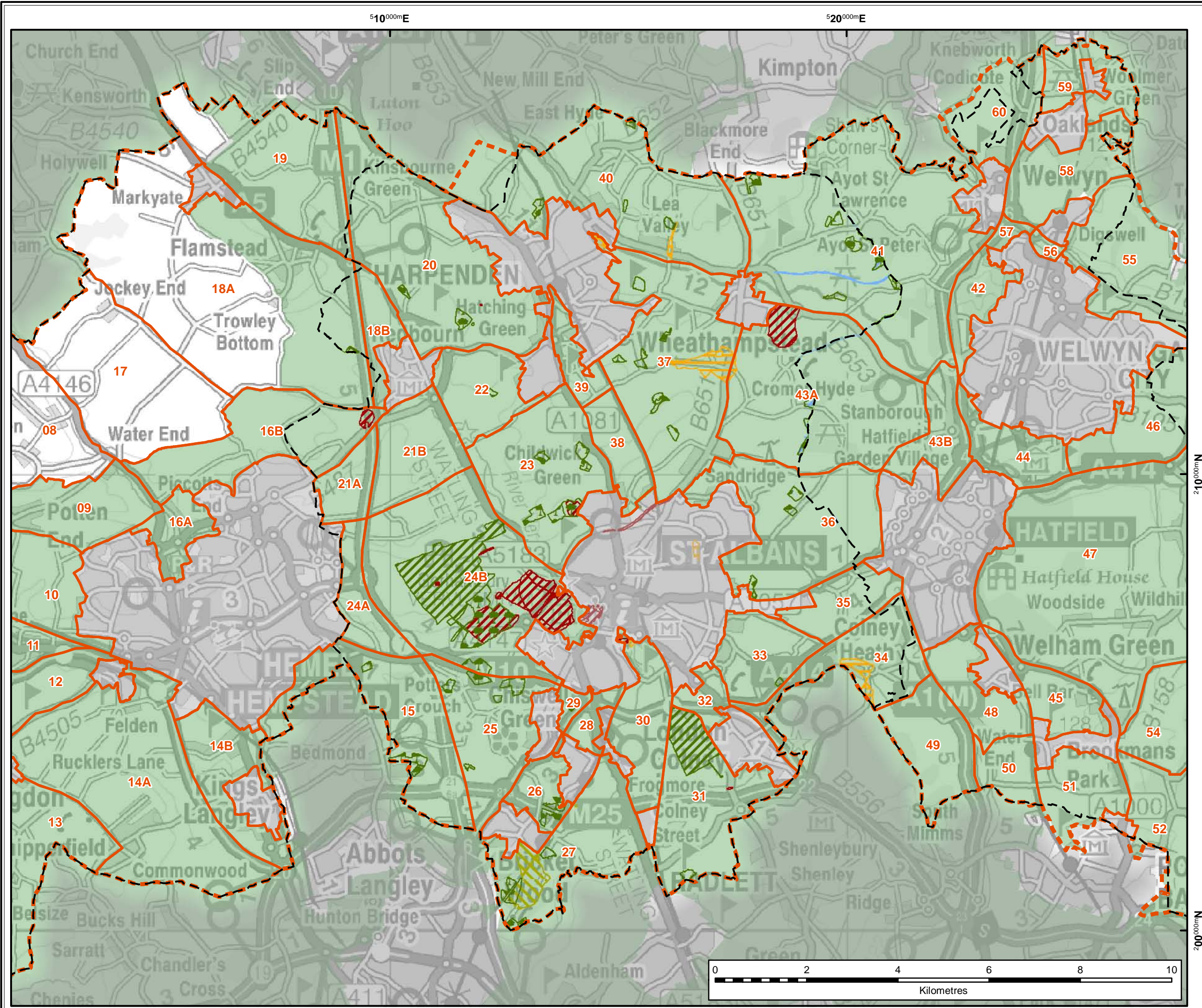
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**FIGURE A4.1.1.
 Environmental Features**

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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
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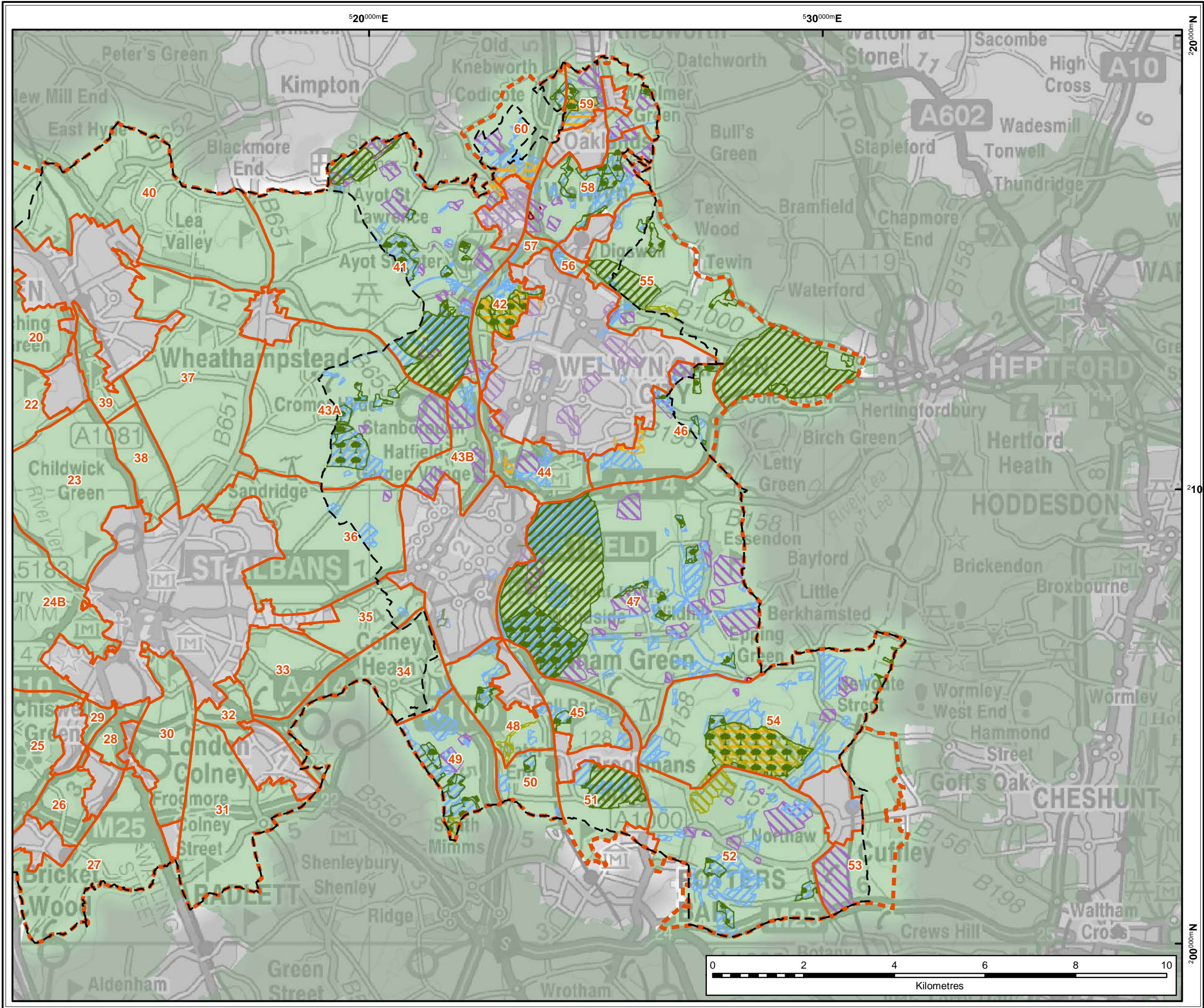
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**FIGURE A4.1.2.
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- Key:**
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 - Land Parcel Boundary
 - Study Area Outer Boundary
 - Ancient Woodland
 - Scheduled Monuments
 - Parks And Gardens
 - SSSI
 - Local Nature Reserve
 - County Wildlife Site
 - Area Of Archaeological Significance
 - Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
 - Metropolitan Green Belt



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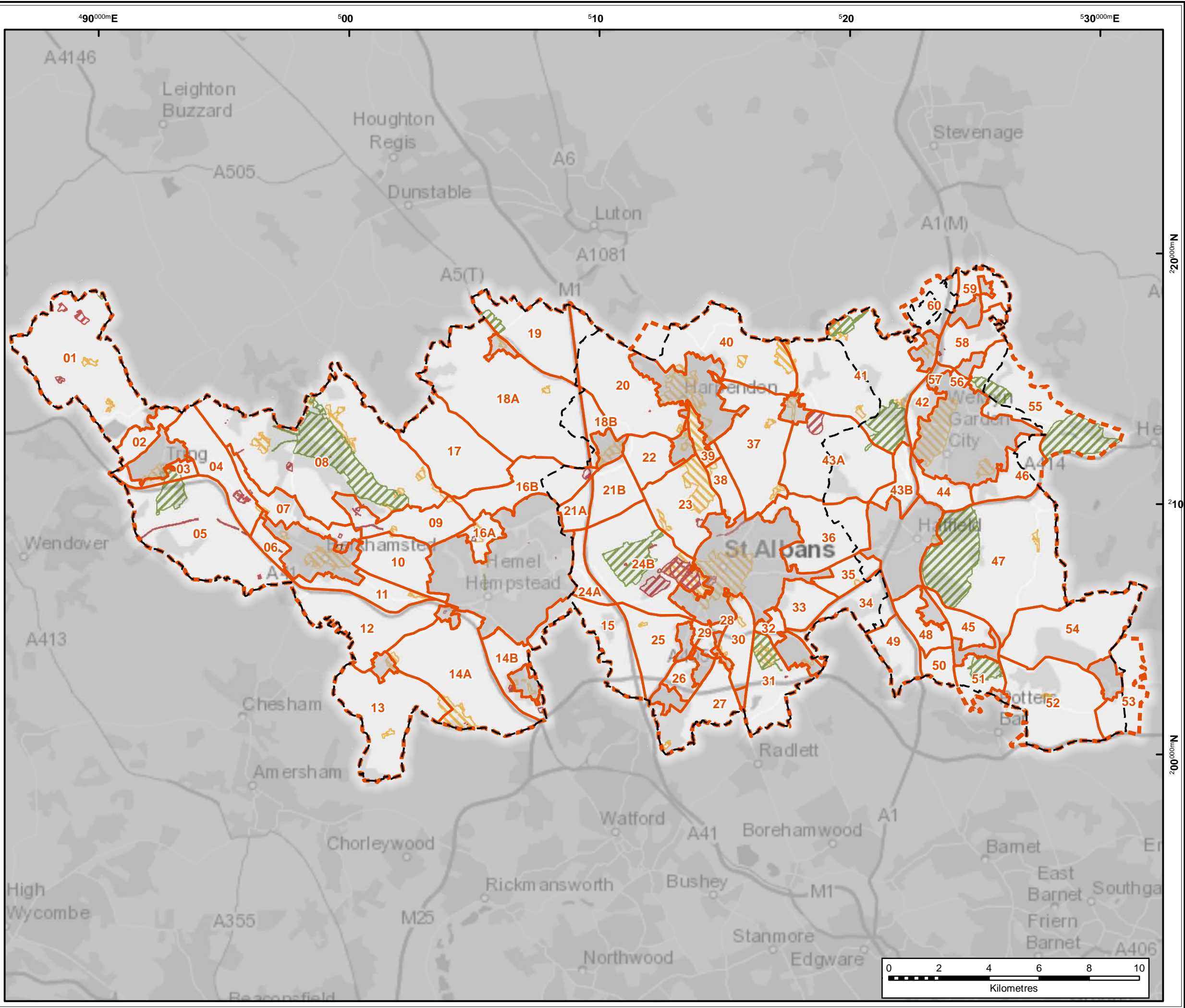
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**FIGURE A4.1.3.
 Environmental Features**

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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
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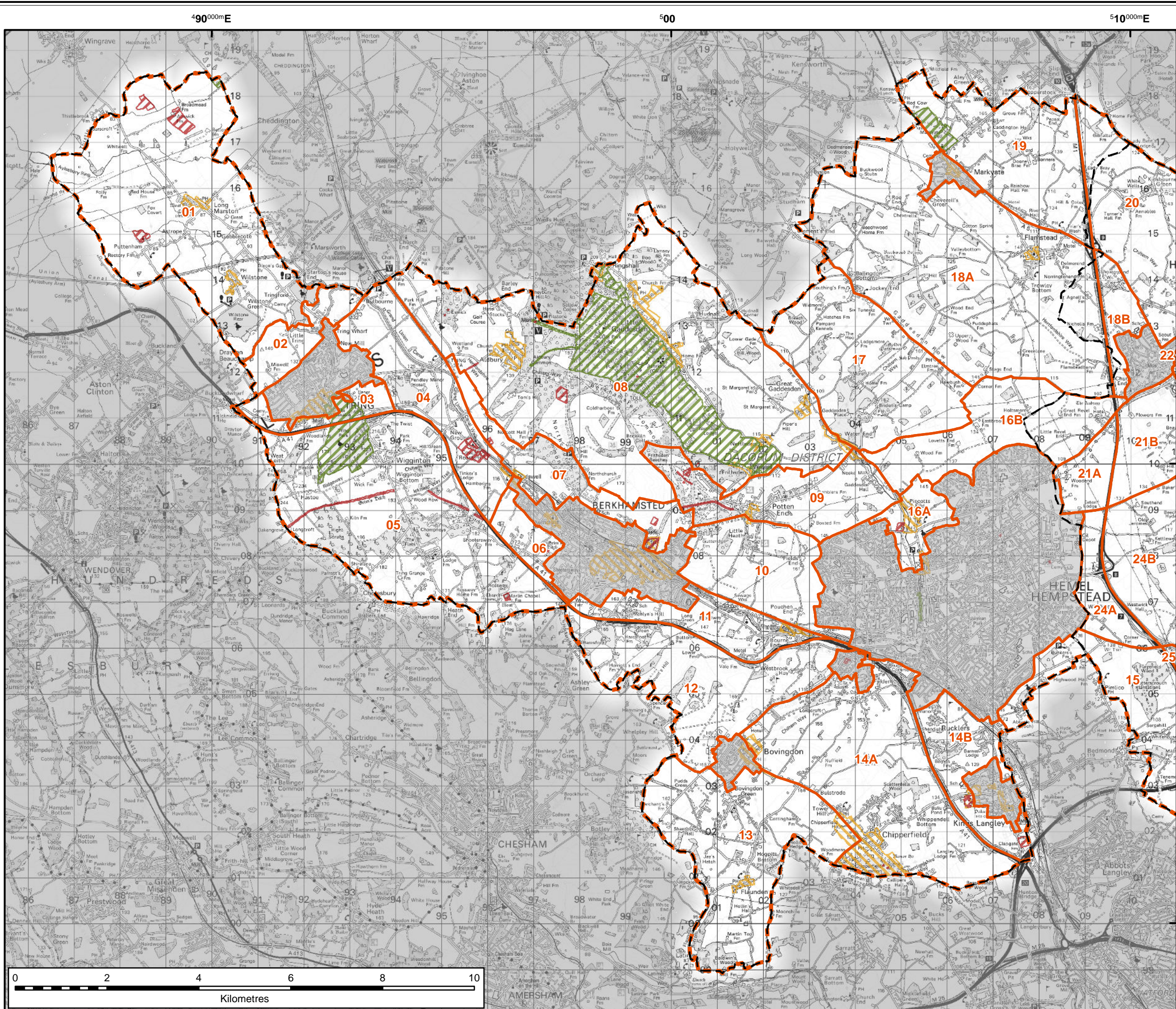
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**FIGURE A4.2.
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 - Study Area Outer Boundary
 - ▨ Scheduled Monuments
 - ▨ Parks And Gardens
 - ▨ Conservation Areas



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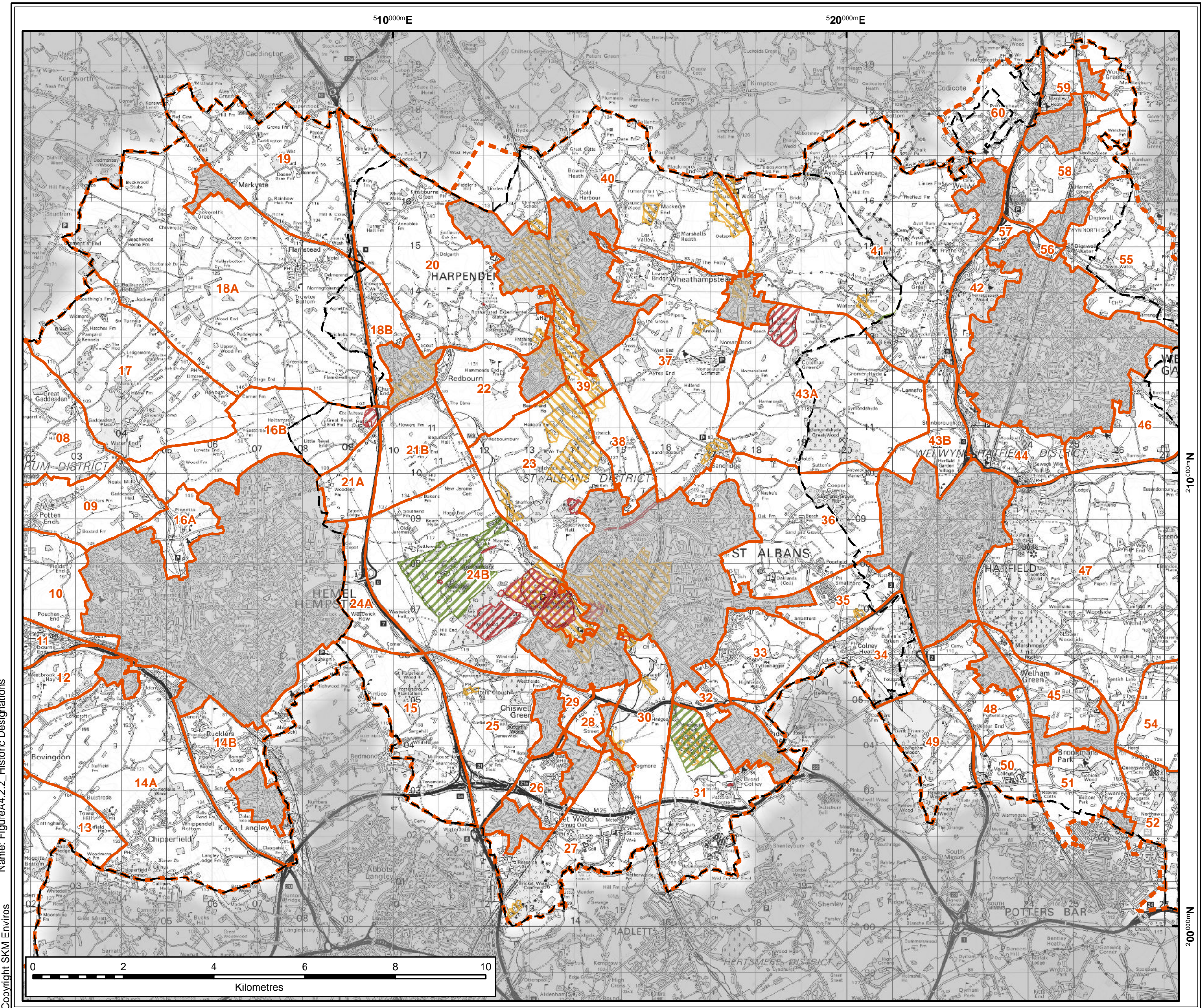
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**FIGURE A4.2.1.
 Historic Designation**


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 - ▨ Parks And Gardens
 - ▨ Conservation Areas

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**FIGURE A4.2.2.
 Historic Designation**

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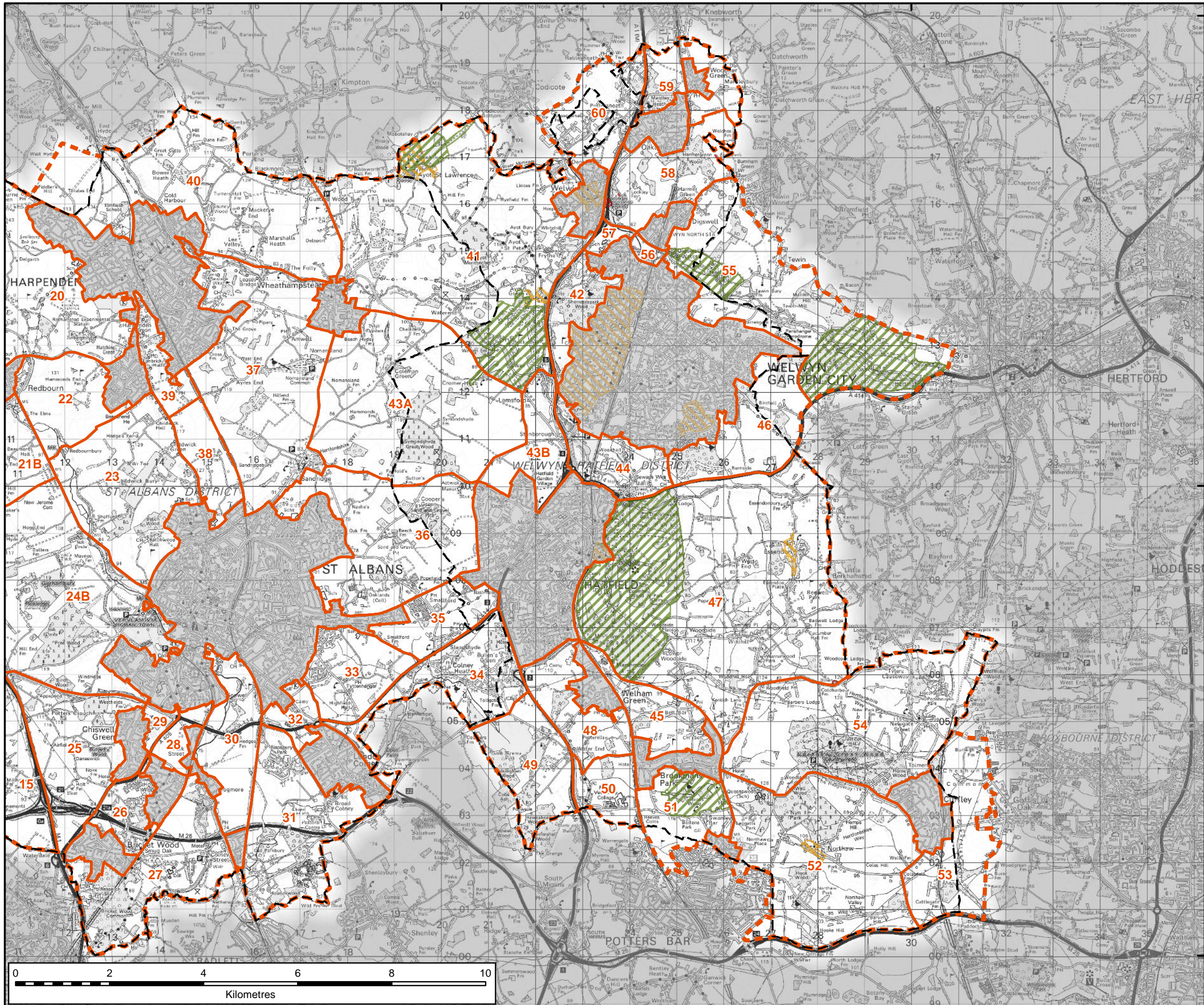
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20°00'N



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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**Green Belt Review for
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**FIGURE A4.2.3.
 Historic Designation**

SCALE	PROJECT CODE
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Appendix 4: Rationale for Strategic Parcels

Rationale for defining Strategic Parcels

01	Non-Green Belt Land to North West of Tring – 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 rd tier settlements.
02	Green Belt Land to North West of Tring – 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	Green Belt Land to South West of Tring – 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	Green Belt Land to North of Tring – 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 st tier settlements of Tring and Berkhamsted.
05	Green Belt Land between Tring and Berkhamsted – 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 st tier settlements of Tring and Berkhamsted. Assessment of visual perception from the A41 is possible.
06	Green Belt Land to South West of Berkhamsted – the parcel allows for the assessment of the southwest edge of Berkhamsted which is enclosed by the A41.
07	Green Belt Land to North of Berkhamsted – 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	Non-Green Belt Land in Childerns AONB – 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	Green Belt Land in Childerns AONB to North West of Hemel Hempstead – the parcel is defined by the Green Belt boundary and allows for the assessment of the northern gap between 1 st tier settlements of Berkhamsted and Hemel Hempstead. It also allows for the assessment of the interface between designated Green Belt land.
10	Green Belt Land between Berkhamsted and Hemel Hempstead – the parcel allows for the assessment of the gap between 1 st 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	Green Belt Land to South East of Berkhamsted – the parcel allows for the assessment of the gap between 1 st tier settlements of Berkhamsted, especially the southern edge, and Hemel Hempstead. It is also enclosed by the railway line and A41.
12	Green Belt Land to South East of Berkhamsted – the parcel allows for the assessment of the

	southern gap between 1 st tier settlements of Berkhamsted and Hemel Hempstead, as well as Bovingdon.
13	Green Belt Land to South of Bovingdon – 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	Green Belt Land to South West of Hemel Hempstead – 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	Green Belt Land South East of Hemel Hempstead – 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	Green Belt Land to North of Hemel Hempstead – 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	Non-Green Belt Land North of Hemel Hempstead – parcel is defined to allow for the assessment of non-Green Belt land which is enclosed by Green Belt.
18	Green Belt and Non-Green Belt land to North West of Redbourne – 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	Partial Green Belt Land to North of Markyate – 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	Green Belt Land to West of Harpenden – 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	Green Belt Land to South of Redbourn – the parcel is part of a large block of countryside between 1 st tier settlements, as well as Redbourn, and it has been subdivided to reflect physical features (M1).
22	Green Belt Land to East of Redbourn – 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	Green Belt Land to South West of Harpenden – 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	Green Belt Land to East of Hemel Hempstead – 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	Green Belt Land to West of Chiswell Green – 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	Green Belt Land to North of Bricket Wood – this parcel allows for detailed assessment of the narrow gap between 2 nd tier settlements of How Wood and Bricket Wood, which includes the M25.
27	Green Belt Land to S of How Wood – 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	Green Belt Land to N of How Wood (S of St Albans) – the parcel allows for detailed assessment the narrow gap between 1 st and 2 nd tier settlements (St Albans and Park Street / Frogmore and How Wood, which also contains and is bordered by major roads.
29	Green Belt Land to N of Chiswell Green (S of St Albans) – 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	Green Belt Land to East of Park Street / Frogmore (S of St Albans) – the parcel follows the Ver / Colne Valley and allows for assessment of gaps from St Albans to Colney Street to the M25.
31	Green Belt Land to South of London Colney – 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	Green Belt Land between St Albans and London Colney – the parcel allows for detailed assessment of the narrow gap between St Albans and London Colney. It is also contains major roads.
33	Green Belt Land to SE of St Albans – 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	Green Belt Land between Hatfield and London Colney – 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 rd tier settlements.
35	Green Belt Land between St Albans and Hatfield – the parcel is defined to allow assessment of the narrowest part of the gap between St Albans and Hatfield, which includes 3 rd tier settlements. Parcel boundaries follow main roads including the A1057.
36	Green Belt Land between St Albans and Hatfield (N) – 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	Green Belt Land between St Albans and Harpenden – 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 st and 2 nd tier settlements.
38	Green Belt Land to North of St Albans – the parcel allows assessment of the southern section of the radial gap between St Albans and Harpenden. Parcel boundaries follow the A1081.
39	Green Belt Land to South of Harpenden – 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	Green Belt Land to North of Harpenden – 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 rd tier settlements.
41	Green Belt Land to West of Welwyn village – 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 rd tier settlements.
42	Green Belt Land to West of Welwyn Garden City – the parcel allows for assessment of narrow stretch of land between the A1(M) and Welwyn Garden City.
43	Green Belt Land to North West of Hatfield – 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	Green Belt Land between Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City – the parcel is defined to allow the assessment of the narrow gap between 1 st tier settlements of Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City. Boundaries are defined by main roads including A1(M) and A414.
45	Green Belt Land North of Brookmans Park – 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	Green Belt Land South West of Welwyn Garden City – 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	Green Belt Land East of Hatfield – 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 rd tier settlements.
48	Green Belt Land South of Hatfield – 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	Green Belt Land South of Hatfield (at edge of WH) – 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	Green Belt Land to West of Potters Bar – the small parcel allows for the assessment of the narrow gap between the west of Brookmans Park and Potters Bar.
51	Green Belt Land between Brooklands Park and Potters Bar – the small parcel allows for the assessment of the narrow gap between the central area of Brookmans Park and Potters Bar.
52	Green Belt Land to West of Cuffley – the parcel allows for the assessment of the gap between Potters Bar and Cuffley. Boundaries are defined by the M25 and A1000.



53	Green Belt Land to East of Cuffley – 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	Green Belt Land to North of Cuffley – 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	Green Belt Land to North West of Welwyn Garden City – the parcel allows for the assessment of land along the northwest edge of Welwyn Garden City and cross into East Hertfordshire.
56	Green Belt Land to between Welwyn Garden City and Digswell – the very small parcel allows for the assessment of the narrow gap between 1 st and 2 nd tier settlements of Welwyn Garden City and Digswell.
57	Green Belt Land to between Welwyn Garden City and Welwyn – the very small parcel allows for the assessment of the narrow gap between 1 st and 2 nd tier settlements of Welwyn Garden City and Welwyn.
58	Green Belt Land to South of Oaklands – 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	Green Belt Land to North of Oaklands – 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	Green Belt Land to East of Oaklands – 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.



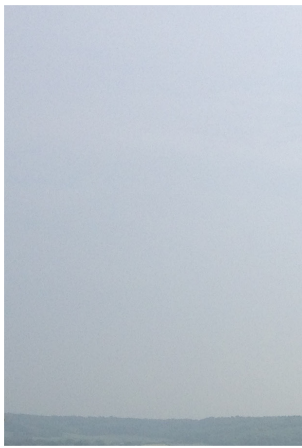
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GREEN BELT REVIEW PURPOSES ASSESSMENT
(Prepared for Dacorum Borough Council, St Albans City and District Council and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council)

Annex 1 – Parcel Assessment Sheets for St Albans City and District Council

November 2013



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Introduction

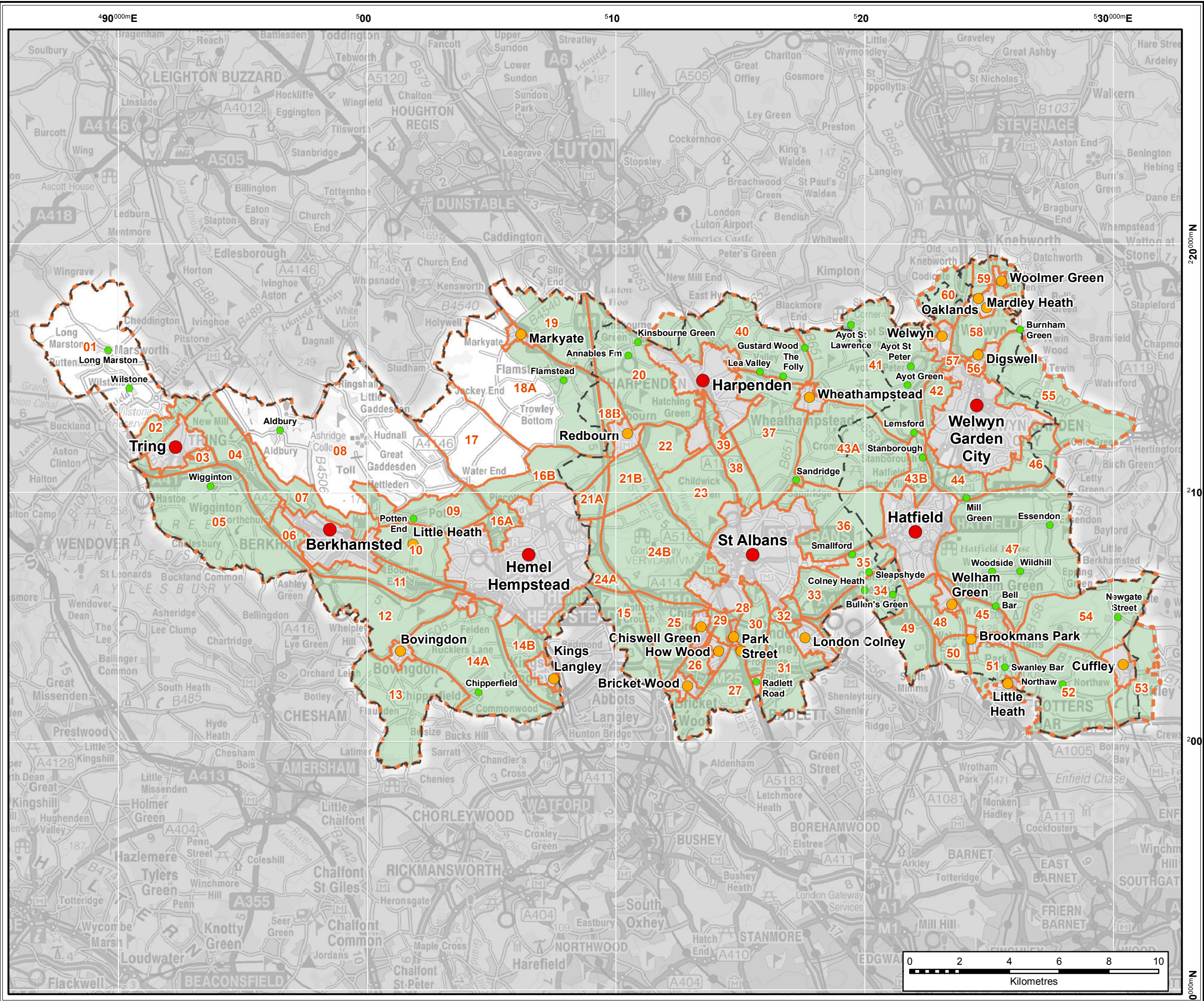
This document forms an Annex to the Green Belt Review Purposes Assessment undertaken on behalf of on behalf of Dacorum Borough Council, St Albans City and District Council, and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.

The parcel assessment sheets in this annex relate to St Albans City and District Council only.

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

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

File Name: Strategic Parcel Plan_20131025



Key:

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

Settlement

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

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

REVISION: G

Green Belt Review for St Albans, Dacorum and Welwyn Hatfield

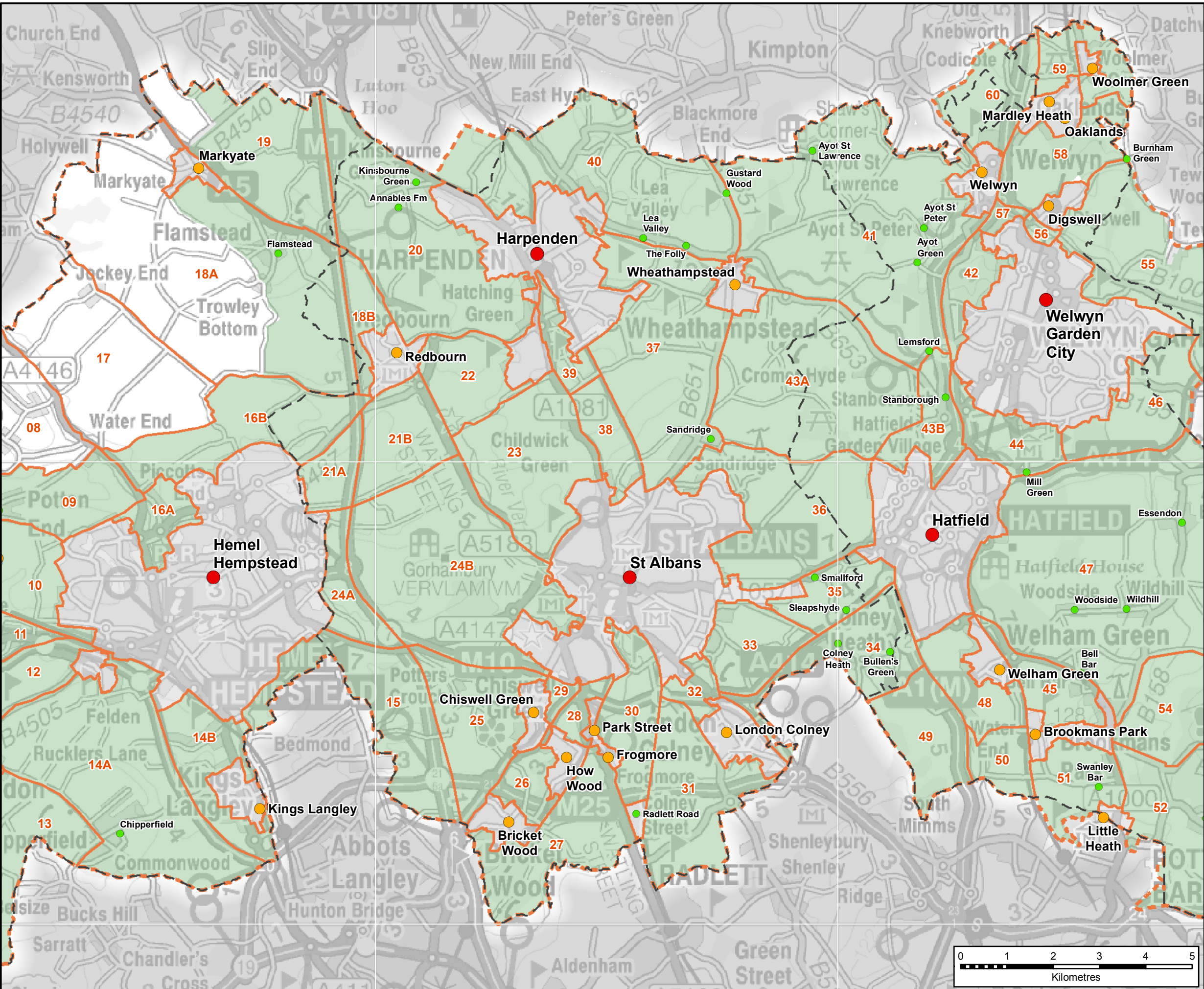
Strategic Parcel Plan

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CONTENT	DRAWN
London.Gov Ordnance Survey	KW
CHECKED	DATE
RB	30/11/2013



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520000mE



Key:

- District Borough Boundary
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REVISION: G

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

**Strategic Parcel Plan
 St Albans**

SCALE
 1:80,000 @ A3

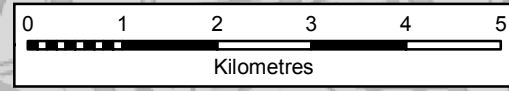
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 Ordnance Survey

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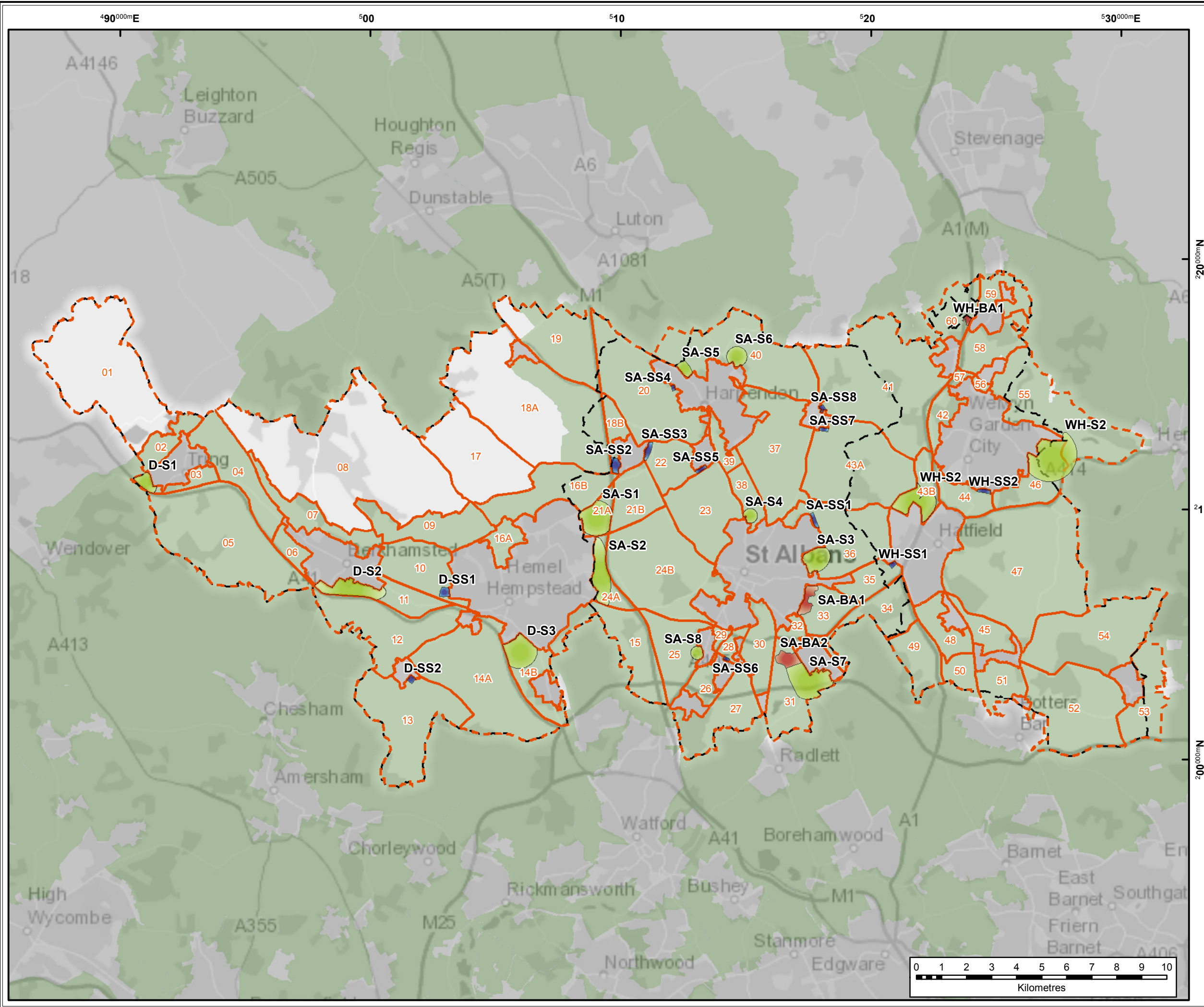
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 30/11/2013



File Name: Strategic Parcel Plan - StAlbans - 20131025
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 Name: Figure8.1_Least Contribution to GB



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



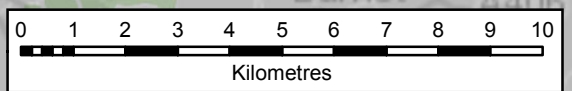
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 Units: Meter

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Green Belt Review for St Albans, Dacorum and Welwyn Hatfield

FIGURE 8.1.
Land Contributing Least Towards Green Belt Purposes

SCALE	PROJECT CODE
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CONTENT	DRAWN
London.Gov Ordnance Survey	KW
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RB	2/12/2013

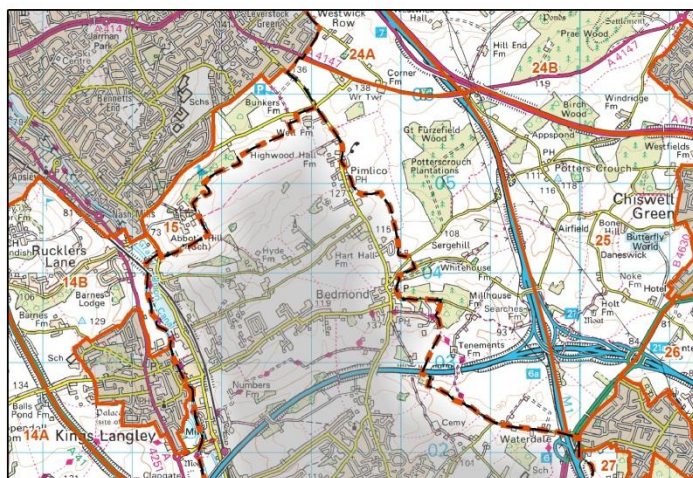


The Assessment Criteria for the Green Belt Review Purposes Assessment is set out below. The full methodology is set out in Chapter 5 of the Final Report.

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

GB15 –Green Belt Land Southeast of Hemel Hempstead

Description The parcel is located to the southeast of Hemel Hempstead. The boundary to the south runs along Tom's Lane and the M1 marks the eastern boundary along the edge of the study area. It is 669 ha in size and forms a low flat plateau landscape which falls very gradually to the River Gade valley on the western boundary of the parcel, whereas the east is more undulating and includes a number of small ridges.



Land use Mix of arable and pasture farmland, plus industrial uses, educational and recreational uses.

View to northwest from M1 shows open and rural nature of the parcel



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards preventing merging (of Hemel Hempstead and Watford – Abbots Langley), and safeguarding the countryside. Partial contribution towards maintaining the existing settlement pattern. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 2 out of 5 Green Belt purposes.

GB15 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	LIMITED OR NO	
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging	SIGNIFICANT	
The parcel helps provide with GB14B the strategic gap between Hemel Hempstead and Watford (Abbot Langley), located in Watford Borough Council to the south of the study area. This gap is 2km in total. There is some evidence of ribbon development along minor routes and there are strong views of the parcel from the M1. Any small scale reduction in the gap would be unlikely compromise the separation of settlements in physical terms, or overall visual openness.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	SIGNIFICANT	
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in a mixture of arable and pasture fields with equine land. Fields are of medium sized and enclosed by high hedgerows interspersed with mature hedgerow trees. There are also several sizable mixed woodland blocks to the east including ancient woodland at Hanging and Piecorner Woods. To the west of the parcel there is scattered and ribbon development, mainly along Bedmond Road. The main urban influences are the M1 and M25 which are audibly intrusive. The southwest boundary of Hemel Hempstead acts as strong linear boundary to encroachment. Levels of visual openness are generally high.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	LIMITED OR NO	
The parcel does not provide setting for any historic places.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern	PARTIAL	
The parcel contributes to the primary local gap between Hemel Hempstead with Kings Langley (2 nd). It also contributes with GB25 to secondary local gaps from Hemel Hempstead / Kings Langley to Chiswell Green (3 rd) and Bricket Wood (3 rd) which are 5.2km and 1.1km wide respectively. These gaps are well maintained (relatively free of development) and contain the M1. Given the scale of gaps any small scale reduction would be unlikely to compromise the separation of settlements in physical terms, or overall visual openness.		

Level of openness and countryside character

Existence of built development The level of built development is very low at 0.2%. There is ribbon development along several lanes including limited industrial activities. The wireless mast at Hyde Lane is an obtrusive and notable vertical feature within the landscape. The M25 and M1 are the major detracting features to the area.

Visual Openness To the north and west, the parcel is generally enclosed with the flat landscape with high hedgerows limiting longer distance views across the farmland. To the east, with the exception of the views from the motorways, views are frequently short distance due to the prevalence of woodland. The undulating terrain allows for more open views to the wooded edge from the arable land. The scale of fields and dense hedges means the landscape is generally well contained.

Countryside Character A visually contained simple agricultural landscape with a settled character arising from the number of traditional farms together with more modern 20th century housing. The major roads of the M1 and M25 interject two large scale transport corridors into this rural character with substantial associated noise.

GB16B –Green Belt Land to North of Hemel Hempstead

Description The parcel is located to the north of Hemel Hempstead and follows the Green Belt boundary to the north and to the M1 edge beside Redbourn to the east. It is 656 ha in size and forms an area of gently undulating upland chalk plateau.



Land use Predominately arable farmland.

View to northwest from Dodds Lane / edge of Potten End



View to south towards Hemel Hempstead



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards safeguarding the countryside and maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing gap between Hemel Hempstead and Redbourn). Partial contribution towards preventing merging. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 2 out of 5 purposes.

GB16B – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		PARTIAL
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements. However it contributes with GB18A & 19 to separate Hemel Hempstead and Luton and Dunstable (to the north of the study area in Bedfordshire). The gap is 10km in total, and mainly covered by the Chilterns AONB to the north and therefore contains limited built development. Any scale of reduction in the gap would be unlikely to compromise the separation of existing 1 st tier settlements in physical terms, or overall visual openness.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in arable farmland with large scale fields and scattered farmsteads interspersed with discrete woodland blocks and copses, including a single pocket of ancient woodland. There are a number of semi urban land uses including horse paddocks and recreational activities along the north edge of Hemel Hempstead but this does not comprise a strong boundary. There is very limited evidence of urban influences and no encroachment. Levels of visual openness are very high.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel adjoins Piccotts End and Water End Conservation Areas. It represents an open rural setting providing views into and from the open countryside to the north and west. The parcel also contains a SAM.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel contributes with GB21A towards the primary local gap between Hemel Hempstead and Redbourn (2 nd). This large gap is 2.1km and is relatively clear from development however it contains the M1. Any minor reduction in the gap would be unlikely to compromise the separation of settlements in physical or visual terms and overall openness.		

Level of openness and countryside character

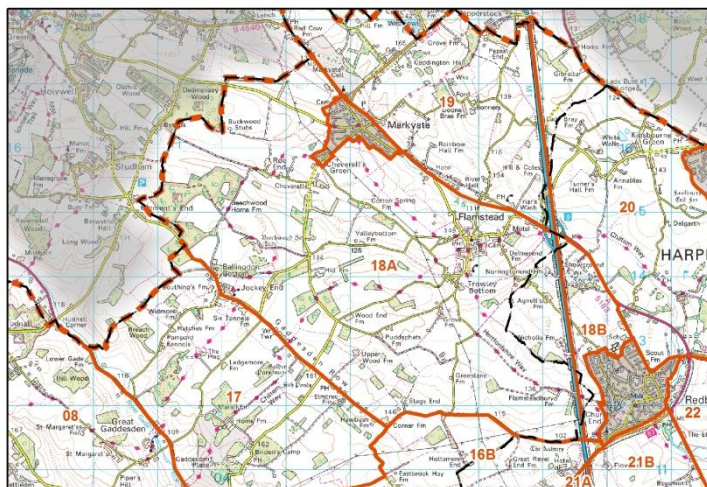
Existence of built development The level of built development is very low at 0.3%. There is limited residential ribbon development spreading from villages and hamlets along narrow country lanes.

Visual Openness The open landscape provides opportunities for long to mid-distance views to the surrounding countryside and to Hemel Hempstead.

Countryside Character The parcel is predominantly agricultural with a distinct boundary to the urban edge.

GB18A – Partial Green Belt Land to West of Markyate

Description The parcel is partial-Green Belt land located to the west of Markyate. It extends from the northern edge of the Green Belt surrounding Hemel Hempstead to the edge of the study area to the north. The eastern boundary is marked by the A5 / M1. Green Belt land is designated in the eastern part of the parcel. It is 2,234 ha and is formed by a series of narrow, gently undulating chalk ridges, above the dry valleys of Markyate, in the upper Ver valley. Most of the parcel is within the Chilterns AONB.



Land use Predominated arable farmland, plus sewage works.

View to east from Clements Lane displays strong open and rural characteristics



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards checking sprawl from Luton and Dunstable, safeguarding the countryside and maintaining the existing settlement pattern. Partial contribution towards preventing merging and preserving the setting of Flamstead and Markyate. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 3 out of 5 Green Belt purposes.

GB18A – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel is located to the south of Luton and Dunstable. It forms a strong connection with a wider network of parcels to the north to restrict sprawl. It includes an area of the Luton and Dunstable Green Belt in the northern section of the parcel		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		PARTIAL
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements. However it contributes with GB16B & 19 to separate Hemel Hempstead and Luton and Dunstable (to the north of the study area in Bedfordshire). The gap is 10km in total, and mainly covered by the Chilterns AONB to the north and therefore contains limited built development. Any small scale reduction in the gap would be unlikely to compromise the separation of existing 1 st tier settlements in physical but would reduce overall visual openness as the parcel does not directly adjoin 1 st tier settlements.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in open arable farmland with large scale fields bound by hedgerows and hedgerow trees. There are isolated pockets of wooded pasture, and estate parkland and patches of pasture and horticulture closer to settlements, predominantly on the ridges. It is more wooded to the northwest with sizable areas of ancient woodland including Great Branwin's Wood, Gravelpit Wood and Dedmansey Wood. Most of the parcel also lies within the Chilterns AONB. There is very limited built development apart from the linear village of Flamstead. Patches of light industrial development also border the major route of the Roman Watling Street (A5). The M1 represents the main urban influence which is concealed but audibly intrusive. Levels of visual openness are very high in general.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		PARTIAL
The parcel contains Flamstead Conservation Area and adjoins Markyate Conservation Area. The Green Belt acts as an immediate open and rural historic setting, providing views to and from the countryside.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel provides secondary local gaps between Markyate (2 nd) to Flamstead (3 rd) and Redbourn (2 nd) which are 1.5km and 4.6km respectively. Gaps are large and well maintained (relatively free of development) and there is no ribbon development. The gap to Redbourn contains the M1 however it is well concealed. The parcel also contributes to the primary local gap between Hemel Hempstead and 2 nd and 3 rd tier settlements. Given the scale and nature of gaps, any small reduction would be unlikely to compromise the separation of settlements or overall visual openness.		

Level of openness and countryside character

Existence of built development The level of built development is low at 0.4%. Patches of light industrial development border the major arterial route of the Roman Watling Street (A5).

Visual Openness Due to the nature of the landform and the high hedges boundaries, the parcel is essentially concealed from views. This varies around Flamstead on the ridge although the area is no more than locally visible throughout.

Countryside Character The parcel has a rural character but the busy A5 and M1 corridors add strong urban influences.

GB18B –Green Belt Land to West of Redbourn

Description: The parcel is located to the west of Redbourn. It is bounded to the west by the M1 and by the settlement edge to the south east. The parcel is relatively small at 162 ha in size and covers an area of flat land to the north and gently undulating land to the west of the settlement.



Land use: Predominantly arable farmland, plus recreation ground and playing fields.

View to north from southwest corner of Redbourn displays lower levels of openness



View to south from M1 along west edge of Redbourn



Principal Function / Summary

Partial contribution towards safeguarding the countryside and preserving the setting for Redbourn. Overall the parcel does not significantly contribute towards any of the 5 Green Belt purposes.

GB18B – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		PARTIAL
The parcel displays a mix of urban fringe and rural and countryside characteristics. It contains open arable farmland with large fields bound by hedgerows and hedgerow trees and isolated patches of pasture bordering the M1 corridor. Narrow woodland blocks screen the motorway which is the main urban influence and it is audibly intrusive. Other urban fringe development includes a nursery, recreation ground and school playing fields on the northern edge of Redbourn. Levels of visual openness are generally high but vary throughout the parcel especially along the narrow east and west edges of the settlement which are enclosed by physical features.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		PARTIAL
The parcel adjoins Redbourn Conservation Area. It provides a link to the countryside to the west of the settlement however views to and from the parcel are limited.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel contributes with GB18A to the secondary local gap between Redbourn (2 nd) and Flamstead (3 rd). There is no ribbon development however the gap contains the M1, which is concealed. Due to the scale and nature of the gap, any small reduction would be unlikely to compromise the separation of settlements in physical terms, but would reduce overall levels of visual openness across the parcel.		

Level of Openness and Countryside Character

Existence of built development The level of built development is low at 0.6%. There are some scattered developments along the Dunstable Road and Harpenden Lane.

Visual Openness Long distance views are limited by the embankments of the M1 to the south of the parcel.

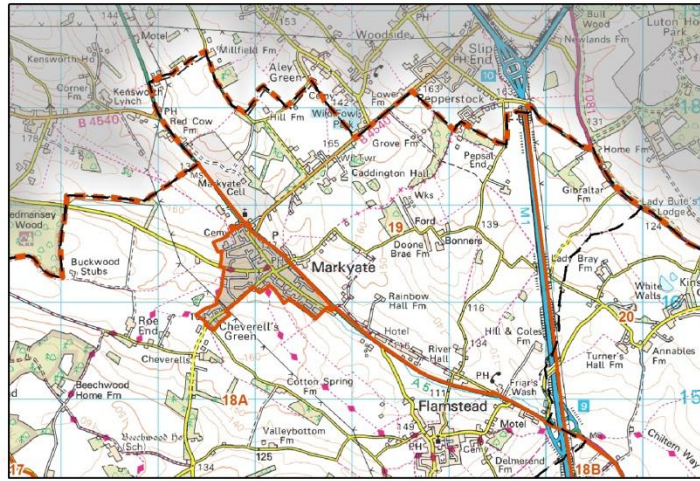
Countryside Character The landscape close to the M1 is notably disturbed and the constant presence of large lorries and the influence of the transport system in this area is strong. The north and west boundaries of Redbourn are well defined.

GB18B – Next Steps

Land at southwest edge of Redbourn is recommended for further assessment as a small scale sub-area (SA-SS2). The sub-area is enclosed by the M1 to the west in the vicinity of Gaddesden Lane. Assessed in isolation this land makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging, safeguarding the countryside, preserving setting or maintaining local gaps.

GB19 – Partial Green Belt Land to North of Markyate

Description The parcel is located to the north of Markyate. It is primarily Green Belt, although there is a small non-Green Belt area. This non-Green Belt area is within the Chilterns AONB and extends to the northern edge of the study area. It is 813 ha in size and comprises a series of narrow, gently undulating chalk ridges, including the dry valleys of Markyate, in the upper Ver valley.



Land use Predominately arable farmland, plus Markyatecell Park and shooting ground.

View to east towards M1 shows that motorway is visible.



View to northwest towards Markyate displays strong open and rural characteristics.



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards checking sprawl from Luton and Dunstable, safeguarding the countryside and preserving the setting of Markyatecell Park and Markyate. Partial contribution towards preventing merging and maintaining the existing settlement pattern. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 3 of the 5 Green Belt purposes.

GB19 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel is located south of Luton and Dunstable and forms a strong connection with a wider network of parcels to the north to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		PARTIAL
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements. However it contributes with GB16B & 18 to separate Hemel Hempstead and Luton and Dunstable (to the north of the study area in Bedfordshire). The gap is 10km in total, and mainly covered by the Chilterns AONB to the north and therefore contains limited built development. Any reduction in the gap would not compromise the separation of existing 1 st tier settlements in physical terms but would be likely to reduce the overall visual openness of the parcel, which does not directly adjoin 1 st tier settlements.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in open arable farmland with large scale fields bound by hedgerows and hedgerow trees. It also contains the estate parkland of Markyate Park, and pasture and horticulture uses are located close to settlements, predominantly on the ridges. A small area of the parcel is within the Chilterns AONB, which restricts development. There are limited urban features and no significant encroachment apart from intermittent ribbon development along minor routes from Markyate. The major urban influence is the M1 which is well concealed by planting and is audibly intrusive. Levels of visual openness are high in general.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel contains Markyatecell Park HPG dating back to 1145 and adjoins Markyate Conservation Area. The Green Belt acts as an immediate open and rural historic setting, providing views to and from the countryside.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		PARTIAL
The parcel contributes to separation of Markyate (2 nd) and Caddington and Slip End (in Central Bedfordshire to the north of the study area). These local gaps are 2.2km and 2.4km respectively and contain limited ribbon development on routes extending to the northeast and southeast from Markyate. Any small scale reduction in the gaps would be unlikely to compromise the separation of settlements in physical terms or overall visual openness.		

Level of Openness and Countryside Character

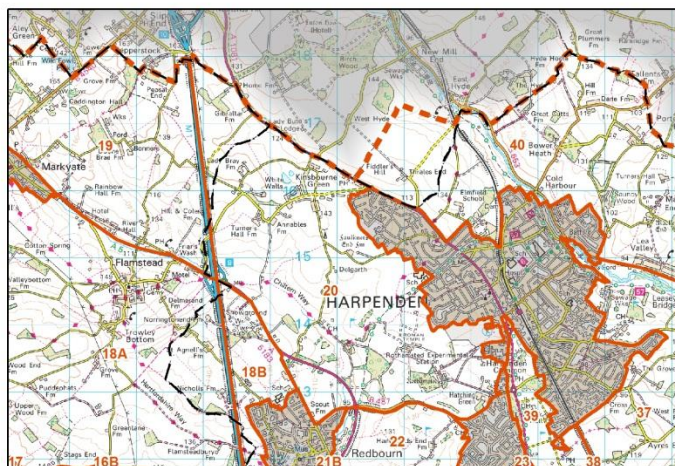
Existence of built development The level of built development is low at 0.6%. There is some ribbon development adjacent to the Roman Watling Street A5 / Ver valley.

Visual Openness Within the parcel views are framed and filtered by landform and overgrown hedgerows and woodland belts.

Countryside Character The parcel has a rural character but the busy A5 and M1 corridors add strong urban influences.

GB20 –Green Belt Land to West of Harpenden

Description The parcel is located to the west of Harpenden, extending to the north edge of the study area and partly to the M1 to the west. It is 1,150 ha in size and covers a long linear plateau which slopes gently away in two directions from Kinsbourne Green, forming the upper slopes of valleys to the northeast and to the southwest. The central area is mainly flat with slight undulations while the area to the south has more marked undulations.



Land use Predominantly arable agricultural, plus recreational activities and research facilities including Rothamsted estate and park, rugby club, tennis club and hotel.

Falconers Field displays greater sense of enclosure



View to southeast from Watery Lane along M1



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards checking sprawl from Luton and Dunstable, preserving the setting of Harpenden and Redbourn, and maintaining the existing settlement pattern. Partial contribution towards safeguarding the countryside. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 3 of the 5 Green Belt purposes.

GB20 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel is located south of Luton and Dunstable and forms a strong connection with a wider network of parcels to the north to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		PARTIAL
The parcel displays a wide mix of urban fringe and rural and countryside characteristics. It predominantly contains large arable fields with hedgerow boundaries and hedgerow trees, and to the north there is mixed arable and pasture farmland around the rough grassland of the open Kinsbourne Green common. The central part of the parcel exhibits some urban influences including the Rothamsted Agricultural Experimental Station comprising a large manor house and parkland, surrounded by small, geometric, field plots (created for crop experiments). Notably, the west edge of Harpenden exhibits more localised levels of built enclosure as a result of surrounding residential development. There is also evidence of encroachment as recent housing development in the Green Belt is evident at Geescroft Walk and Meadow View, and encroachment at Hatching Green. The M1 also represents a key urban influence on the parcel and is less well concealed but audibly intrusive. Levels of visual openness are high in general but vary throughout the parcel.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel adjoins Harpenden and Redbourn Conservation Areas. The Green Belt acts as an immediate open and rural historic setting, providing views to and from the countryside.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel provides the primary local gap to separate Harpenden (1 st) and Redbourn (2 nd). This large at 2.0k m and is largely open however is does contain the Experimental Station. Any reduction in the gap would be unlikely to comprise the separation of settlements in physical or visual terms, or overall openness. The parcel also provides a very narrow secondary local gap between Harpenden and Annables Kinsbourn Green (3 rd) which represents ribbon development extending from the northwest of Harpenden along The Common. Any reduction in this gap would compromise the separation of settlements in physical terms, and affect overall levels of visual openness.		

Level of openness and countryside character

Existence of built development The level of built development is low at 0.5%. Kinsbourne Green represents a wayside development of large single dwellings along the edge of a common with no real centre.

Visual Openness Views are generally framed and filtered by treed hedgerows. The central Rothamsted Park area is concealed by a combination of access restrictions and the presence of vegetation in the form of field hedgerows and parkland avenues. Lower and partial hedgerows to the north of this area, around Kinsbourne Green, allow longer views of the more open landscape.

Countryside Character The parcel has a rural character but there are recreational uses such as schools, a rugby club and golf courses adjacent to the urban fringe as well as the busy M1 corridor to the west.

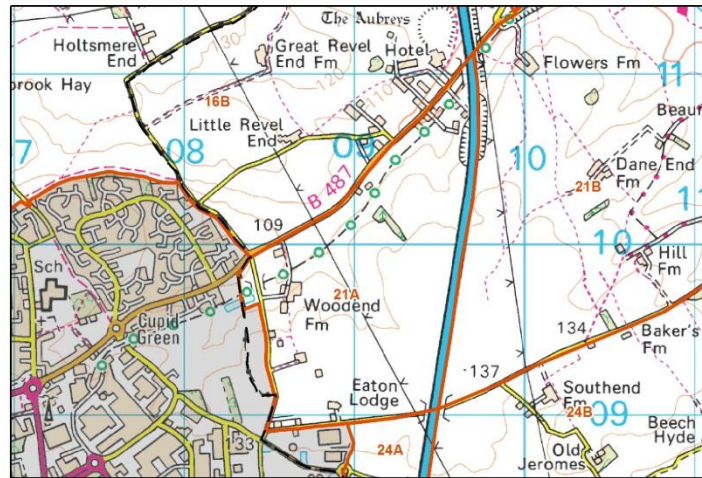
GB20 – Next Steps

Land at west of Harpenden is recommended for further assessment as a small-scale sub area (SA-SS4). The sub-area is located south of Falconers Field and north of Roundwood Park School. Assessed in isolation this land makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging, preserving setting or maintaining local gaps.

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GB21A –Green Belt Land to the Northeast of Hemel Hempstead

Description The parcel is Green Belt land located to the northeast of Hemel Hempstead. It extends from the northeast edge of Hemel Hempstead to the M1. It is 175ha and comprises undulating chalk slopes with a clay soil. The landform gradually flattens to the south of the parcel.



Land use Predominantly arable farmland.

View to East towards M1 from edge of Hemel Hempstead shows concealed nature of M1



View to northwest along M1



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. Partial contribution towards preventing merging (of Hemel Hempstead and Harpenden) and maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing gap between Hemel Hempstead and Redbourn). Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 1 out of the 5 Green Belt purposes.

GB21A – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas and does not form a strong connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		PARTIAL
Parcel does not fully separate 1 st tier settlements however it does form part of a network of parcels with GB21B & 22 to provide a strategic gap between Hemel Hempstead and Harpenden. There is no evidence of ribbon development. Any small scale reduction in the gap across the parcel would be unlikely to compromise the separation of settlements in physical terms, but would reduce levels of openness across the parcel.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in open arable farmland and punctuated by a small quantity of deciduous tree belts. Fields are generally arable and medium sized, bound by high mature hedgerows with hedgerow trees. There are very limited urban influences / built development and no evidence of significant encroachment. The M1 represents the main urban influence and interrupts the parcel's integration with the wider countryside. This strong physical feature is relatively well concealed by planting but is audibly intrusive. The east urban edge of Hemel Hempstead is partly undeveloped. Cherry Tree Lane contains a caravan park and land allocated for housing development. Levels of visual openness are high mainly due to the absence of built development and countryside characteristics are dominant.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel does not contain any Conservation Areas but does contain a SAM at The Aubreys.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		PARTIAL
The parcel helps provide the primary local gap between Hemel Hempstead (1 st) and Redbourn (2 nd) with GB21B. The gap between settlements is 2.2km. It is large and well maintained (relatively free of development), and contains the M1 which is well concealed by landscape planting and is visually, reasonably well integrated into the countryside. The parcel is highly visible from the M1 and the gap between settlements is clear from the Hemel Hempstead Road. There is no evidence of ribbon development. Any small scale reduction in the gap would be unlikely to compromise the separation of settlements but would reduce visual openness of the parcel.		

Level of openness and countryside character

Existence of built development Levels of built development are low at 0.4%. The parcel contains little built development, apart from the M1 motorway, despite its proximity to the edge of Hemel Hempstead.

Visual Openness The landform and open fields allow for long distance views from many locations, and these views give the parcel an open visual character. The prevalence of roadside trees results in views from the neighbouring residential area of Hemel Hempstead being mostly contained by vegetation.

Countryside Character The parcel is bound by the urban edge of Hemel Hempstead and the M1 motorway and their proximity increases the parcel's urban edge character. However, within the parcel there is little through traffic on the roads and the area has a remote and unvisited nature.

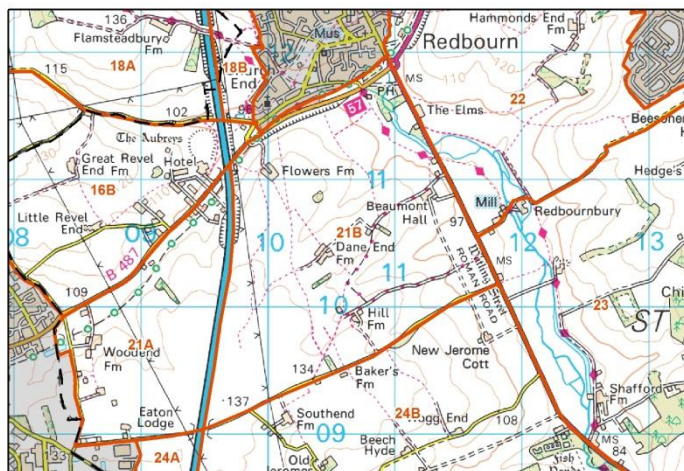
GB21A – Next Steps

Land enclosed by east Hemel Hempstead and M1 in GB21A & GB24A is recommended for further assessment as a strategic sub-area (SA-S1). In light of the functions of the strategic parcels the strategic sub-area 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.

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GB21B –Green Belt Land to South of Redbourn

Description The parcel is Green Belt land located to the south of Redbourn. It is bounded to the west by the M1 and to the east by St Albans Road / Redbourn Road (A5183). It is 382ha in size and comprises undulating chalk slopes which fall to two dry valley tributaries to the River Ver, which runs adjacent to the eastern boundary of the parcel, with its wooded valley touching the north western corner.



Land use Predominately arable farmland.

View to northwest into the parcel



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. Partial contribution towards preventing merging (of Hemel Hempstead and Harpenden) and maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing gap between Hemel Hempstead and Redbourn). Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 1 out of the 5 purposes.

GB21B – Green Belt Purposes Assessment	Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas and does not form a strong connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.	
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging	PARTIAL
Parcel does not fully separate 1 st tier settlements, however it does form part of a network of parcels with GB21A and GB22 to provide a strategic gap between Hemel Hempstead and Harpenden. There is no evidence of ribbon development. Any small scale reduction in the gap would be unlikely to compromise the separation of settlements in physical terms or overall visual openness.	
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in open undulating arable farmland. Fields are generally large to medium-scale and are bound by hedgerows with hedgerow trees and occasional tree belts. There are very limited urban influences / built development. The M1 is the main urban influence which is visually and audibly intrusive. The southern edge of Redbourn is strong and linear. In general the parcel displays high levels of visual openness.	
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	LIMITED OR NO
The parcel adjoins Redbourn Conservation Area. However due to landscape features and planting there is limited visual connection to the Green Belt.	
To maintain existing settlement pattern	PARTIAL
The parcel helps to provide the primary local gap to separate Hemel Hempstead (1 st) and Redbourn (2 nd) with GB21A. This gap is 2.1km and is large and well-maintained. It is also aided by the M1 however due to the relatively concealed visual nature of the motorway landscape feature and planting contribute to providing the gap. The parcel is also highly visible from the M1 and the gap between settlements is clear from the Hemel Hempstead Road. Due to the scale and nature of the gap, any small scale reduction would be unlikely to compromise the separation of settlements or overall visual openness.	

Level of openness and countryside character

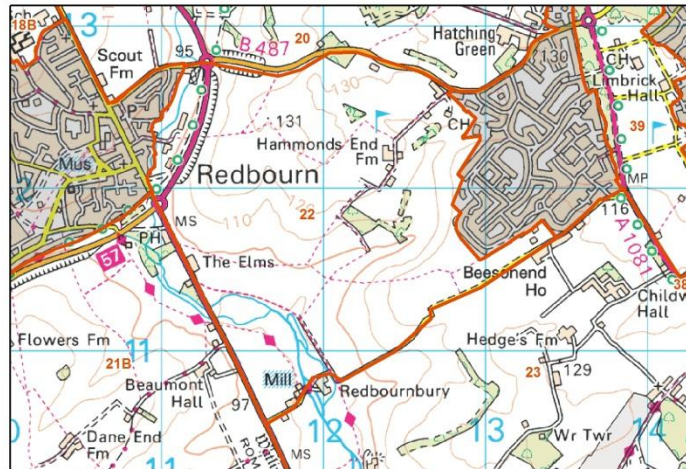
Existence of built development The level of built development is very low at 0.2%. The parcel contains little built development apart from the M1 motorway and a wireless mast at Punchbowl Lane.

Visual Openness The rolling landform and open fields allow for long distance views from many locations and these views give the parcel a very open visual character.

Countryside Character The parcel is bound by the M1 motorway and its proximity increases the parcel's urban influence. However within the parcel, settlement comprises only scattered farmsteads, with little through traffic on the roads and thus the area has a remote and unvisited nature.

GB22 –Green Belt Land to East of Redbourn

Description The parcel is Green Belt land located to the east of Redbourn and extends to the western edge of the south of Harpenden. It is bordered to the west by St Albans Road / Redbourn Road (A5183). It is 330ha in size and forms part of a larger block of countryside between first tier settlements (Hemel Hempstead, Harpenden and St Albans). It comprises undulating chalk slopes which fall to the River Ver which runs to the west of the parcel.



Land use Predominately arable farmland, plus Harpenden golf course.

View to southeast from southeast edge of Redbourn



View to northwest along Beesonend Lane towards Harpenden



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards safeguarding the countryside and maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing gap between Harpenden and Redbourn). Partial contribution towards preventing merging (of Hemel Hempstead and Harpenden) and preserving the setting of Redbourn. Overall the parcel contributes significantly to 2 out of 5 purposes.

GB22 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas and is not connected to a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl. .		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		PARTIAL
Parcel does not fully separate 1 st tier settlements. However, it does form part of a network of parcels with GB21A and GB21B to provide a strategic gap between Hemel Hempstead and Harpenden. There is no evidence of ribbon development and no limited visual perception from major route corridors. Any small scale reduction in the gap would be unlikely to compromise the separation of settlements in physical terms or overall visual openness.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in open undulating arable farmland. Fields vary in scale and are bound by hedgerows with hedgerow trees and occasional tree belts. Smaller fields along the valley floor are used for pasture and cattle graze the river banks to the south of Redbourn. There some limited urbanising influences, especially from the golf course, though this is a course that is well integrated into a countryside landscape. There is no urban encroachment. The Harpenden south western urban edge provides a strong settlement boundary. However some land at settlement edges is more enclosed due to localised landscape features / hedgerows and is bound by urban development land, such as at Beesonend Lane. Levels of visual openness are generally high throughout the parcel.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		PARTIAL
The parcel adjoins Redbourn Conservation Area. However the visual connection is partial due to development along the eastern edge of the settlement. It also contributes to setting of Harpenden Conservation Area which is part of adjoining GB23.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
Significant contribution. The parcel provides a strategic gap between Harpenden (1 st) and Redbourn (2 nd). This gap is 2.0km and is well maintained (relatively free of development). Given the scale and nature of the gap, any small scale reduction would be unlikely to compromise the separation of settlements or overall visual openness.		

Level of Openness and Countryside Character

Existence of built development The level of built development is very low at 0.2%. The parcel contains very little built development.

Visual Openness The open slope character permits extensive views across the arable landscape resulting in a visual unity in the area. Hedgerows that border the lanes are located high on steep banks, preventing views to and from many lanes.

Countryside Character A rural landscape which is relatively remote despite its proximity to urban centres and the influence of golf. There are few urban influences.

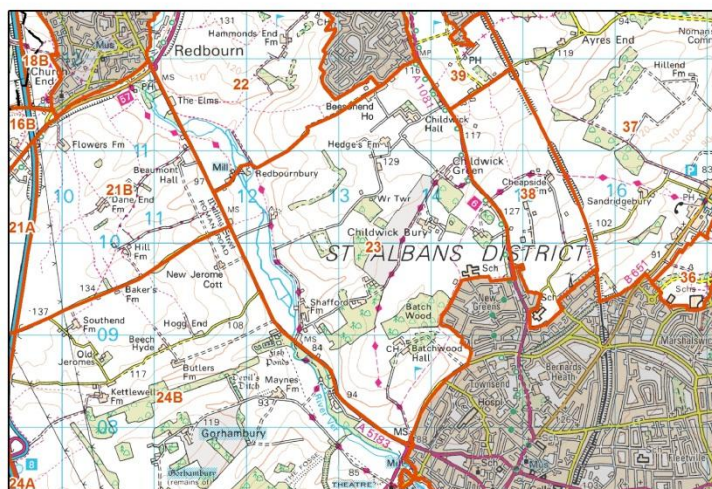
GB22 – Next Steps

Two small scale sub-areas are recommended for further assessment. Firstly, Land at southeast edge of Redbourn enclosed by A5183 (SA-SS3) when assessed in isolation this land makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging, safeguarding the countryside, preserving setting or maintaining local gaps. Secondly, Land south of Harpenden enclosed by Beesonend Lane to the south and settlement edge to the north and east (SA-SS5) when assessed in isolation the land makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging, preserving setting or maintaining local gaps.

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GB23 –Green Belt Land to Southwest of Harpenden

Description The parcel is Green Belt land located to the southwest of Harpenden and extends to the northern edge of St Albans. It is bordered to the west by the A5183 and the east by the A1081. It is 737 ha in size and lies on the elevated plateau east of the Ver Valley. The area is mainly flat with some minor local variations in landform



Land use Predominantly grassland but with some substantial woodland. Includes, estate parkland, Toulmin Drive Sports Club and Batchwood Golf and Tennis Centre.

View to southeast from Redbourn Road



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards preventing merging (of St Albans and Harpenden), safeguarding the countryside and preserving the setting of Childwickbury and Shafford Mill. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 3 of the 5 Green Belt purposes.

GB23 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas and does not form a strong connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel provides the strategic gap between St Albans and Harpenden. The gap is 2.4km. It is large, open and well maintained (relatively free of development) and contains Childwickbury and Shafford Mill Conservation Areas. The perception of the gap is strong along the A1081. .Given its scale and nature any reduction in gap would be unlikely to compromise the separation of settlements in physical or visual terms, or the overall openness of the parcel. There is no evidence of ribbon development.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in grassland / pasture on either estate parkland or within fields, interspersed by sizable areas of woodland including some ancient woodland. To the south the parkland landscape combines with deciduous woodland, ornamental grounds and recreational uses, including a golf course and school playing fields. To the north medium scale arable fields are bound by hedgerows and hedgerow trees. There are very limited urban features and no significant encroachment. The edge of St Albans provides a strong urban boundary. Levels of visual openness are high in general.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		SIGNIFICANT
Parcel contains Childwickbury and Shafford Mill Conservation Areas, and a SAM. Batchwood to the south of the parcel also provides an important viewpoint (zone of visibility) of the historic roofscape of St Albans. The parcel also contains a SAM. The Green Belt provides an immediate historic setting and direct views to and from the open countryside.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel does not separate any 2 nd or 3 rd tier settlements.		

Level of openness and countryside character

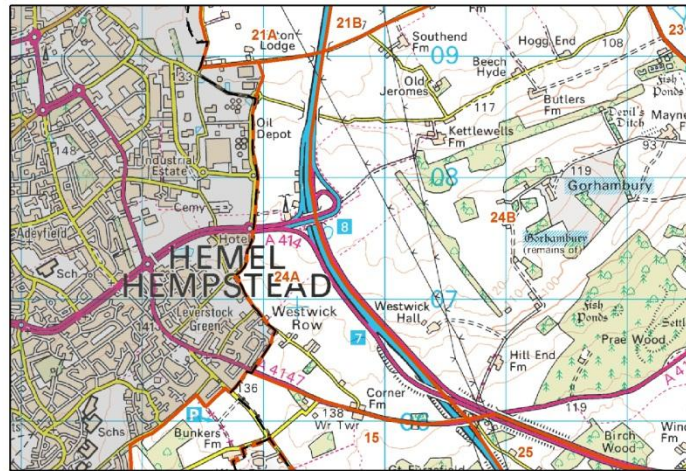
Existence of built development The level of built development is low at 0.5%. There is some development on the northern edge of St Albans including at Batchwood Hall / Townsend School.

Visual Openness To the south the interlocking character of the woodland, particularly on the fringes of the area, helps to create a strong sense of containment from the surrounding areas, including the northern edge of St. Albans. To the north where the enclosure is more limited there are open views to the Ver valley.

Countryside Character The area retains a generally rural and countryside character with a high quality well managed landscape. Limited semi-rural influences include a horse stud, sports grounds and waste treatment plant.

GB24A –Green Belt Land to East of Hemel Hempstead

Description The parcel is Green Belt land located to the east of Hemel Hempstead. The boundary to the west follows the M1 and to the south follows Hemel Hempstead Road (A4147). It is 217 ha in size and comprises undulating chalk slopes on the western side of the Ver Valley gradually flattening to the south. GB24 has been sub-divided along the M1 which represents a strong physical feature which interrupts the landscape.



Land use Predominantly arable farmland.

View to south along Hogg Lane towards east edge of Hemel Hempstead showing industrial edge



View to northeast from Westwick View along east edge of Hemel Hempstead showing concealed nature of M1 and impact of embankment on long-distance views



Principal Function / Summary

Partial contribution towards preventing merging of St Albans and Harpenden. It is important to note that this conclusion is drawn as a result of parcel sub-division along the M1 corridor. Overall the parcel does not significantly contribute towards any of the 5 Green Belt purposes.

GB24A – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		PARTIAL
The parcel contributes (with GB24B) to a strategic gap between Hemel Hempstead and St Albans. The total gap is 3.8km, of which the majority is provided by GB24B. Overall the gap is large, and includes the M1 which is relatively well shielded by landscape features including planting and raised landform. There is no evidence of ribbon development. Any minor reduction in the gap, especially to the west of the M1, would not compromise the physical separation of settlements, or overall visual openness.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		PARTIAL
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in open arable farmland with medium sized fields bound by hedgerows with hedgerow trees. There is very limited built development however urban influences are strong as the parcel is enclosed by the predominantly industrial and commercial eastern edge of Hemel Hempstead and the M1 corridor which physically interrupts the landscape and is audibly intrusive. Buffer planting along the edge of the M1 is recent and will mature, and the rising landform helps to conceal the M1 from the edge of Hemel Hempstead and restricts views to (and integration with) the wider countryside. The urban edge is strong and there is no encroachment. Levels of openness are varied and views beyond the parcel are limited due to the M1 embankment.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel does not provide setting for any historic places.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel does not separate any 2 nd or 3 rd tier settlements.		

Level of Openness and Countryside Character

Existence of built development The level of built development is very low at 0.2%. The limited built development within the parcel includes agricultural buildings and a hotel.

Visual Openness The undulating landform gives long distance views from many locations although these are frequently filtered by intervening hedgerows and the raised M1.

Countryside Character The narrow parcel is bound by an industrial edge of Hemel Hempstead and the M1 motorway and their proximity and prominence increases the urban influence on the parcel.

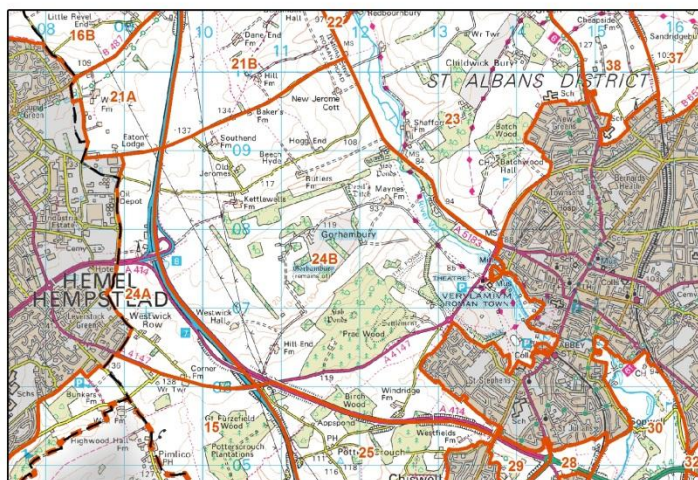
GB24A – Next Steps

Land enclosed by east Hemel Hempstead and M1 in GB24A & GB21A is recommended for further assessment as a strategic sub-area (SA-S2). In light of the functions of the strategic parcels the strategic sub-area 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.

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GB24B –Green Belt Land to West of St Albans (Cathedral Setting)

Description The parcel is located to the west of St Albans. It is bounded to the east by M1 and to the south by the M10. It is 1372ha in size and comprises undulating ridges and dry valleys associated with the western slopes of the River Ver Valley. GB24 has been sub-divided along the M1 which represents a strong physical feature which interrupts the landscape.



Land use Mix of arable and pastoral farmland, plus Verulamium Park and Gorhambury Estate.

Green Belt setting of Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban from Verulamium Park



View to southeast showing strong open and rural characteristics



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards preventing merging (of St Albans and Hemel Hempstead), safeguarding the countryside, preserving the setting St Albans and St Michaels and Gorhambury estate, and maintaining the existing settlement pattern. Overall the parcel contributes significantly to 4 out of 5 purposes.

GB24B – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel provides (with GB24A) a strategic gap between Hemel Hempstead and St Albans. The total gap is 3.8km. Overall the gap is large and well maintained (relatively free of development). There is no evidence of ribbon development. Any minor reduction in the gap would be unlikely to compromise the separation of settlements in physical or visual terms, or the overall level of visual openness.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in a mixture of arable and pasture fields bound by hedgerows and hedgerow trees and interspersed with frequent woodland belts. This land encircles the large estate parkland of Gorhambury and Prae Wood ancient woodland to the south. There is very limited built development apart from farm buildings. The key urban influence is the M1 and M10 which are both audibly intrusive and the M1 in particular interrupts the landscape. Land adjoining St Albans displays some urban influence as Verulamium Park acts as a green wedge which penetrates the west of the settlement providing a link from the town centre to the open countryside. Levels of visual openness are generally very high mainly due to an absence of any form of built development.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel contains St Albans Conservation Area including St Michael's village and Gorhambury estate HPG. Most importantly, the Green Belt preserves an open and historic setting to the Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban, providing views to and from the countryside. The parcel also contains Roman remains of Verulamium which is a SAM.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel contributes (with GB25 & GB29) to the primary local gap between St Albans and Chiswell Green (2 nd). This narrow gap is 0.2km. It is free from significant development apart from the M10/ A414 which are intrusive at this point. There is relatively strong perception of the gap from the A414. Given the scale of the gap any minor reduction would be likely to compromise the separation of settlements in physical and visual terms, and overall visual openness.		

Level of openness and countryside character

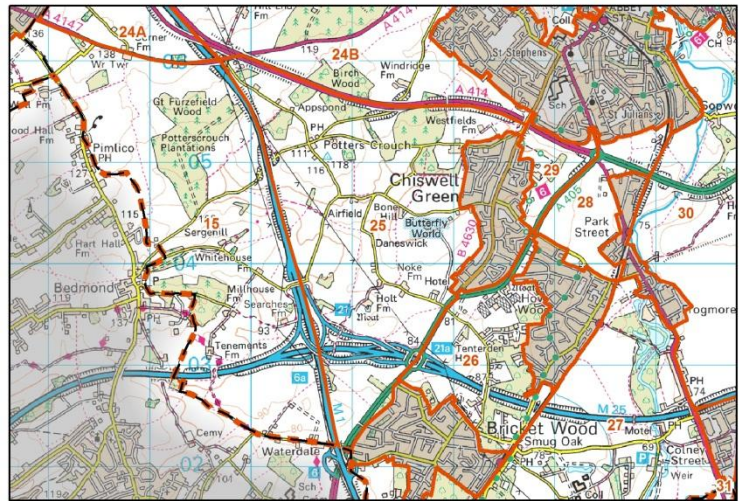
Existence of built development The level of built development is very low at 0.2%. There is very little development within the parcel but the M1/ M10/ represent visually and audibly intrusive features at the boundaries of the parcel.

Visual Openness The wooded nature of the parcel limits views to shorter distances creating a strong sense of containment. To the north and west of the parcel the land is more open.

Countryside Character The patchwork of agriculture, woodland and estate parkland gives a rural character to much of the landscape with electricity pylons and the M1 corridor.

GB25 –Green Belt Land to West of Chiswell Green

Description The parcel is located to the west of Chiswell Green and extends to the south to Bricket Wood. The boundary to the north follows the M10 and to the west follows the M1. It is 522ha in size and forms an undulating chalk plateau with a number of gently sloping dry valleys.



Land use Mix of arable and pastoral farmland.

View to south from A414 / B4630 towards Chiswell Green showing narrow local gap to settlement



Southwest edge of Chiswell Green displays greater sense of enclosure and proximity to urban edge



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards safeguarding the countryside and maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing gap between St Albans and Chiswell Green). Partial contribution towards preventing merging and preserving setting. Overall the parcel contributes significantly to 2 out of 5 purposes.

GB25 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED / NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		PARTIAL
The parcel contributes to the strategic gap between St Albans and Watford. It is well maintained (relatively free of development) but contains the M25 and M1. The parcel is visible from the M1. There is no ribbon development although Butterfly World represents built development in the Green Belt. However, given the relationship between the parcel and the gap between Bricket Wood and Watford / Abbots Langley any reduction in openness would compromise the separation of settlements in physical and visual terms.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in a mixture of arable and pasture medium sized fields bound by hedgerows and hedgerow trees. Ancient woodland and the coniferous plantation at Park Wood are located in the north. The M25, M1 and M10 represent the key urban influences which are highly audible intrusive. Settlement boundaries are generally strong. However Butterfly World represents development in the Green Belt to the west of Chiswell Green which interrupts the connection of land at the urban edge to the surrounding countryside. Land between this development and Chiswell Green displays higher levels of localised landscape enclosure. Levels of openness are generally high but subject to variation.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		PARTIAL
The parcel contains Potters Crouch Conservation Area. The Green Belt provides historic setting and views to and from the open countryside. However given the scale of the historic place contribution is partial.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel contributes (with GB24B & GB29) to the primary local gap separating St Albans and Chiswell Green (2 nd). This gap is narrow at 0.2km. It is well maintained (relatively free of development) and contains the M10 / A414. However landscape features and planting conceal the main road from settlements. There is limited visibility of the gap from the A414 however is evident from the Watford Road (B4630). The parcel also helps contribute (with GB26) to the secondary local gap between Chiswell Green and Bricket Wood (2 nd). This gap is 1.1km. Given the scale of both gaps, any reduction would compromise the separation of settlements in physical and visual terms, as well as overall visual openness.		

Level of Openness and Countryside Character

Existence of built development The level of built development is low at 0.4%. Butterfly World and the M1, and M25 represent the main built features in the parcel.

Visual Openness Wooded horizons are common to the north limiting views to the middle distance. Whilst to the east, the west built edge of Chiswell Green is prominent and outward views are interrupted.

Countryside Character The historic agricultural land use pattern and countryside character is intact in some parts of the parcel but in others has been interrupted by the network of roads and junctions and built development including Butterfly World.

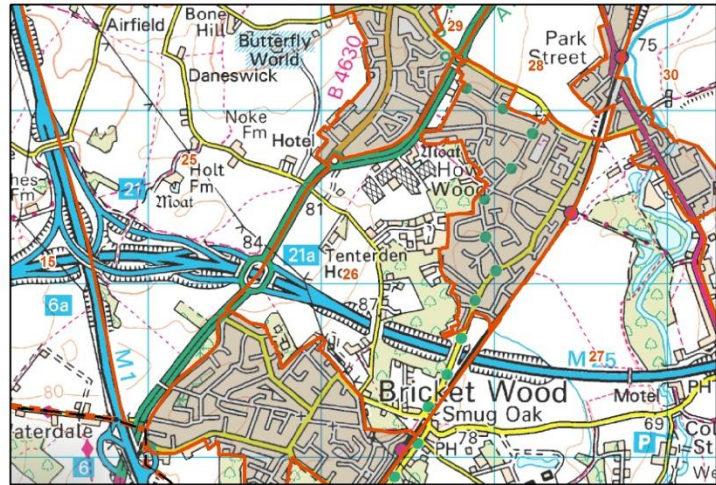
GB25 – Next Steps

Enclosed land at Chiswell Green Lane at Chiswell Green is recommended for further assessment as a strategic sub-area (SA-S8). In light of the function of the strategic parcel, 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.

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GB26 –Green Belt Land to North of Bricket Wood

Description The parcel is located to the north of Bricket Wood and the south of Chiswell Green / How Wood. The boundary to the west follows the North Orbital Road (A405) and to the east follows the railway line. The parcel is very small at 156 ha and comprises a gently undulating chalk plateau rising gently to the southeast.



Land use Predominantly arable farmland, plus inactive, unrestored, tipped areas, education, industrial, horticultural uses, Bricket Wood Sports and Country Club and Burston Garden Centre.

Land northeast of Bricket Wood showing enclosed and neglected characteristics



Narrow enclosed Green Belt gap between Chiswell Green and How Wood



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing gaps between Chiswell Green, How Wood and Bricket Wood). Partial contribution towards preventing merging. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 1 of the 5 Green Belt purposes.

GB26 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment	Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.	
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging	PARTIAL
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements however (with GB27, 28, 29 & 30) it provides the strategic gap between St Albans and Watford (Abbots Langley) to the south of the study area. This gap is 4.8km and contains the settlements of Chiswell Green, How Wood, Bricket Wood, Park Street / Frogmore and Radlett Road. Therefore any reduction in the gap would have a limited impact on the overall separation of 1 st tier settlements in physical or visual terms but would have a greater impact on 2 nd tier settlements and local levels of visual openness.	
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	LIMITED OR NO
Partial contribution. The parcel displays a mix of urban and rural characteristics. It contains arable land often bound by tall poorly managed hedgerows and there are a few pasture fields in addition to woodland to the east including ancient woodland. Open scrubland is found on the tipped site to the north of the M25. There is scattered built development including the garden centre, and single large dwellings. The M25 is also a key urban influence which dissects the parcel and is predominantly well concealed by planting but is highly audibly intrusive. Therefore urban influences are evident and the mix of built activities results in variable levels of visual openness.	
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	LIMITED OR NO
The parcel does not provide setting for any historic places.	
To maintain existing settlement pattern	SIGNIFICANT
The parcel provides secondary local gaps between 2 nd tier settlements of Chiswell Green, How Wood and Bricket Wood. The gap between Chiswell Green and How Wood is extremely narrow at 0.1km, whereby at the north and south edges of the settlements it is the width of the North Orbital Road (A405). The central section of this gap acts as a green finger between settlements. The secondary local gap between Chiswell Green / How Wood to Bricket Wood ranges from 0.6km to 1km and contains the M25. There is limited perception of the gap or settlements from the M25 due to planting and tree cover which screens the motorway. The motorway corridor itself also contributes something to the general openness of the gap from other viewpoints within it. Any small scale reduction in the gaps would be likely to compromise the separation of settlements in physical and visual terms, as well as overall visual openness.	

Level of openness and countryside character

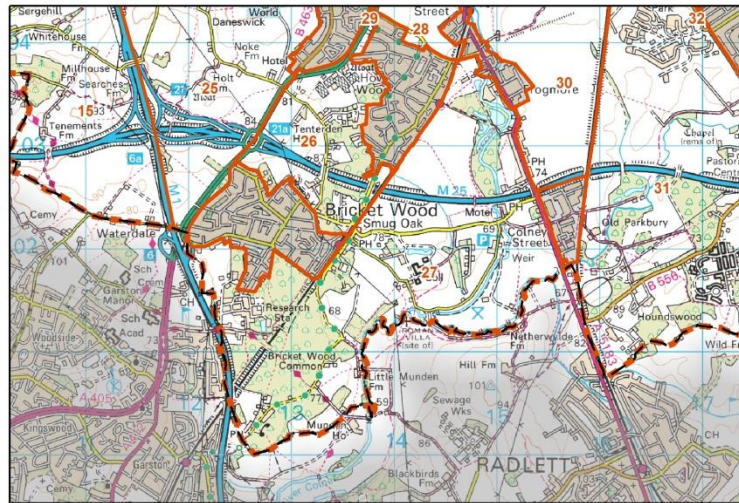
Existence of built development The level of built development is very high at 2.2%. The area has undergone significant change in the 20th century and contains built development especially in the north of the parcel at urban edges in addition to the M25.

Visual Openness Views are relatively contained both from outside and within the parcel with the widest vistas along the motorway corridor which is generally well screened by planting and woodland.

Countryside Character Contains a mix of land uses, displays urban fringe characteristics and woodland. The countryside has been eroded by built uses and exhibits some areas of poor management and dereliction.

GB27 –Green Belt Land to South of How Wood

Description The parcel is located to the south of How Wood / Bricket Wood. It is bounded to the west by the railway line along the edge of How Wood and Bricket Wood only whereas the east edge is contiguous with Frogmore and Radlett Road. To the south the boundary follows the M1 and edge of the study area. The parcel is 580 ha in size forming a gently undulating chalk plateau which falls to the meandering river Colne valley.



Land use Mix of arable and pasture farmland, plus Training College, Research Centre and recreational activities.

View to west of Colney Street



River Ver along Drop Lane



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing the gap between Bricket Wood and Watford – Abbots Langley). Partial contribution towards preventing merging, safeguarding the countryside and preserving setting. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 1 of the 5 Green Belt purposes.

GB27 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		NO OR LIMITED
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		PARTIAL
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements. However it contributes (with GB26, 28, 29 & 30) to the strategic gap between St Albans and Watford (Abbots Langley) in the south of the study area. This gap is 4.8km and contains the settlements of Chiswell Green, How Wood, Bricket Wood, Park Street / Frogmore and Radlett Road. Any small scale reduction in the gap would have a limited impact on the overall separation of 1 st tier settlements in physical or visual terms but would have a greater impact on 2 nd tier settlements and local levels of visual openness.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		PARTIAL
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics to the north in a mixture of arable and pasture fields bound by hedgerows and hedgerow trees and riparian corridor following the Colne Valley. To the south, Bricket Wood Common (SSSI) contains lowland heath and ancient woodland. The main urban influence is the M25 which interrupts the landscape and is audibly intrusive. Built development and encroachment is evident in the south which displays more built development in the Green Belt. Most significantly, the BRE Research Centre represents encroachment. Other development is scattered to the south of the M25 which is also bordered by Colney Street industrial area and ribbon development is evident along the Radlett Road south of Park Street / Frogmore. Levels of visual openness are varied due to the mix of strong countryside and urban fringe characteristics.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		PARTIAL
The parcel contains Old Bricket Wood Conservation Area. The Green Belt provides an immediate historic setting and short views into the countryside especially to Bricket Wood Common.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
Most significantly, the parcel provides the primary local gap between Bricket Wood (2 nd) and Watford (Abbots Langley) in Watford Borough Council / Three Rivers District to the south of the study area. This gap is very narrow at 0.5km and contains the BRE Research Centre and M1, which is concealed by planting. Due to existing development in the gap, any further reduction in the gap would compromise the separation of settlements in physical and visual terms as well as local levels of visual openness. The parcel also provides the secondary local gap to separate How Wood (2 nd) and Park Street / Frogmore (2 nd). This gap is also very narrow and ranges from 0.1km to 0.3km. The secondary local gap from Park Street / Frogmore (2 nd) to Radlett Road (3 rd) is subject to ribbon development along the Radlett Road. Due to the scale and nature of gaps any small scale reduction would compromise the separation of settlements and visual openness.		

Level of openness and countryside character

Existence of built development The level of built development is high at 1.2%. The M25 divides the parcel and substantial built development is located at the BRE Research centre to the south of Bricket Wood in addition to Hanstead House former training complex

Visual Openness Views are relatively contained both from outside and within the parcel due to the scale of the

parcel and level of built development within the parcel

Countryside Character The parcel is impacted by settlement and also has been dissected by the M25, both of which add semi urban influences. The countryside and historic character is well preserved in Bricket Wood Common and in areas adjacent to the Colne valley.

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GB28 –Green Belt Land to North of How Wood

Description The Parcel is located to the north of How Wood and south of St Albans. The boundary to the west follows the A405 and the east aligns with the railway line to the north of Park Street. The parcel is small at 83 ha in size and comprises an undulating chalk plateau which is flat to the south and rises gently to the northeast.



Land use Predominantly arable farmland.

Narrow gap between Park Street / Frogmore and How Wood



Non-Green Belt land at Tippendell Lane represents an anomaly in the boundary



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing gaps between St Albans and Park Street / Frogmore and How Wood). Partial contribution towards preventing merging and safeguarding the countryside. Overall the parcel contributes significantly to 1 of the 5 purposes.

GB28 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		PARTIAL
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements however it contributes (with GB26, 27, 29 &) to the strategic gap between St Albans and Watford (Abbots Langley) to the south of the study area. This gap is 4.8km and contains the settlements of Chiswell Green, How Wood, Bricket Wood, Park Street / Frogmore and Radlett Road. Therefore any reduction in the gap would have a limited impact on the overall separation of 1 st tier settlements in physical or visual terms but would have a significant impact on the separation between 1 st and 2 nd tier settlements and local levels of visual openness.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		PARTIAL
The parcel displays some typical rural and countryside characteristics to the north in a mixture of arable fields bound by hedgerows and occasional hedgerow trees interspersed with some small blocks of woodland, whereas to the south pasture fields are enclosed with fencing. In spite of this, urban influences are strong through the proximity of settlement edges and A414 and A405 which run through the parcel. These are concealed by the general landscape and tree / hedgerow cover in some areas but are audibly intrusive. Settlement boundaries enclose the majority of the parcel reinforcing urban fringe characteristics. Levels of visual openness are variable and generally contained		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel does not provide setting for any historic places.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel provides primary local gaps between St Albans and Park Street / Frogmore (2 nd) and How Wood (2 nd). Gaps are 0.4km and 1.1km respectively. Both gaps are narrow, especially to Park Street / Frogmore. In spite of containing the A414/A405 these major roads are well integrated into the landscape and are concealed to provide a limited perception of the gap or settlements from the routes. The gaps are well-maintained and any reduction would be likely to compromise the separation of settlements in physical and visual terms, and overall visual openness.		

Level of openness and countryside character

Existence of built development The level of built development is very low at 0.1%. The A414 and A405 dissect the parcel and an electricity substation and travellers site are also present.

Visual Openness Views are relatively contained by hedgerows both from outside and within the parcel.

Countryside Character The parcel is bounded by settlement, divided by the A414 and A405 and has areas of horse paddocks and an electricity substation which all add semi urban influences.

GB28 – Next Steps

Land north of How Wood is recommended for further assessment as a small scale sub-area (SA-SS6). The sub-area is enclosed by Tippendell Lane to north and settlement edge to south, east and west. Assessed in isolation this very small area of makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging, safeguarding the countryside, preserving setting or maintaining local gaps.

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GB29 –Green Belt Land to North of Chiswell Green (South of St Albans)

Description The parcel is located to the north of Chiswell Green, and south of St Albans. The boundary to the east follows A405 and the west aligns with the Watford Road (B4630). It is small at 42 ha in size and is part of a chalk plateau which is flat to the north of the parcel and gradually falls to the A414 in the north.



Land use Predominantly open land including Greenwood Park, and education and recreational space.

Greenwood Park recreation ground towards concealed A414



Narrow primary local gap between St Albans and Chiswell Green, showing the concealed A414



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards safeguarding the countryside and maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing the gap between St Albans and Chiswell Green). Partial contribution towards preventing merging. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 2 of the 5 Green Belt purposes.

GB29 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		PARTIAL
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements, however it contributes (with GB26, 27, 28 & 30) to the strategic gap between St Albans and Watford (Abbots Langley) to the south of the study area. This gap is 4.8km and contains the settlements of Chiswell Green, How Wood, Bricket Wood, Park Street / Frogmore and Radlett Road. Therefore any small scale reduction in the gap would have a limited impact on the overall separation of 1 st tier settlements in physical or visual terms but would have a significant impact on separation between 1 st and 2 nd tier settlements and local levels of visual openness.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in Greenwood Park which comprises open land and scattered ancient woodland to the north and playing fields and sports pitches to the south. The main urban influence is the A414 which is partly concealed but audibly intrusive. Settlement boundaries are strong and there is no significant built development into the Green Belt. Levels of openness are generally high.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel does not provide setting for any historic places.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel contributes with GB 24B & GB29 to provide the primary local gap separating St Albans and Chiswell Green (2 nd). This narrow gap is 0.2km. It is well maintained (relatively free of development), and contains the A414 which is integrated and concealed within the landscape. Though narrow the gap has a significant impact on perceptions of urbanisation. The narrow gap is evident from the Watford Road (B4630). Any reduction would be likely to compromise the separation of settlements in physical and visual terms, and overall visual openness.		

Level of openness and countryside character

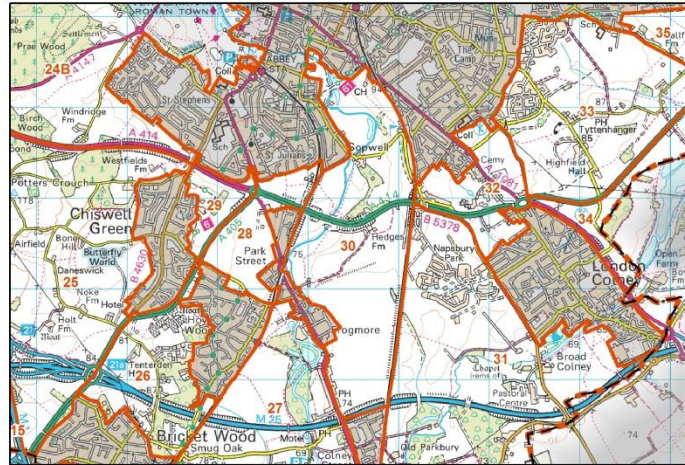
Existence of built development The level of built development is low at 0.8%. The A414 bounds the parcel to the north, with built development related to the sports facilities and community centre at Greenwood Park.

Visual Openness Open views are obtained from the sloping open land to the north of the parcel. The southern part of the park is relatively contained both from outside and within the area.

Countryside Character Non countryside influences include the busy major roads and recreational activities with Greenwood Park.

GB30 –Green Belt Land to East of Park Street / Frogmore

Description The parcel is located to the east of Park Street / Frogmore and south of St Albans. The boundary to the west follows Radlett Road and to the east aligns with the railway line. It is 347ha in size and follows the River Ver to its confluence with the River Colne forming a meandering floodplain with a broad shallow basin.



Land use Mix of arable farmland and Sopwell estate parkland, plus Watercress Wildlife Association and Verulam Golf Course.

View to Cathedral and Abbey Church of Saint Alban from green wedge north of Sopwell



Park Street / Frogmore ribbon development



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards safeguarding the countryside, preserving the setting of Sopwell and St Albans, and maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing gaps between St Albans and Park Street / Frogmore). Partial contribution towards preventing merging. Overall the parcel contributes significantly to 3 of the 5 purposes.

GB30 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED / NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		PARTIAL
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements however it contributes (with GB26, 27, 28 & 29) to the strategic gap between St Albans and Watford (Abbots Langley) to the south of the study area. This gap is 4.8km and contains the settlements of Chiswell Green, How Wood, Bricket Wood, Park Street / Frogmore and Radlett Road. Therefore any reduction in the gap would have a limited impact on the overall separation of 1 st tier settlements in physical or visual terms but would have a greater impact on the separation of 2 nd tier settlements and local levels of visual openness.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays some typical rural and countryside characteristics but also accommodates significant recreational land uses including Sopwell parkland and Verulam golf course in the north. Beyond this arable fields are bound by hedgerows with pasture frequently close to the watercourses. The parcel is also contains the well restored mineral workings (Radlett Airfield). The main urban influences are the M25 and A414 which dissect the site. Both are well concealed in the landscape, but highly audibly intrusive. Land to the north of Sopwell acts as a green wedge into St Albans. There is limited built development and settlement boundaries are generally strong meaning the urban fringe is well connected to the wider countryside. However there is ribbon development along the Radlett Road south of Park Street / Frogmore to Colney Street industrial park. The countryside landscape is generally open in character with limited tree and hedgerow cover.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel contains Sopwell Conservation area. Most significantly it also provides open and historic setting to the Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban providing views to and from the countryside.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel provides the primary local gap between St Albans and Park Street / Frogmore (2 nd). The narrow gap is 0.4km and contains the A414 which is well integrated into the landscape. Landscape features and planting enhance the perception of the gap and lessen the urban influence arising from the proximity of settlements and the road. Any reduction would be likely to compromise the separation of settlements in physical and visual terms, and overall visual openness. The gap from Park Street / Frogmore (2 nd) to Radlett Road (3 rd) Colney Street industrial area is very limited due to ribbon development along the Radlett Road.		

Level of openness and countryside character

Existence of built development The level of built development is low at 0.5%. The parcel is divided by the M25 and affected by the A414. There is some ribbon development along the radial routes out of St Albans.

Visual Openness Long views are obtained across the relatively flat and open landscape from many locations although views are limited in wooded areas particularly in the south of the parcel and in some locations along the river corridors.

Countryside Character A mosaic of settlements, parkland, farmland and a meandering floodplain grazed by livestock contribute to a settled countryside character.

GB31 –Green Belt Land South of London Colney

Description The parcel is located to the south and west of London Colney where the southern boundary extends to the edge of the study area. The parcel is 613 ha in size and comprises a gently undulating landform in the north whereas the broad shallow basin of the upper River Colne is located in the south.



Land use Mix of estate parkland and farmland, plus Napsbury Park and Radlett Golf Centre.

Napsbury Park, subject to redevelopment in the Green Belt



View to northeast from M25 to southwest corner of London Colney displays open and rural characteristics



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing the gaps between London Colney, Park Street / Frogmore and Radlett Road). Partial contribution towards safeguarding the countryside and preserving the setting of Napsbury Park and London Colney. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 1 of the 5 Green Belt purposes.

GB31 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		PARTIAL
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements. However it contributes (with GB 30 and GB32) to the strategic gap between St Albans and Radlett / Borhamwood which are significant settlements outside the study area. This gap is 7 km but contains the 2 nd tier settlement of London Colney. Any small scale reduction in the gap would have a limited impact on the overall separation of 1 st tier settlements in physical or visual terms.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		PARTIAL
The parcel displays a mix of urban fringe and rural and countryside characteristics. There are areas of estate parkland throughout the parcel, and arable fields bound by hedgerows to the south with pasture are located close to watercourses. It also contains rough grassland with gravel pit lakes at Broad Colney nature reserve, and deciduous woodland is dominant to the south of the M25. There is evidence of urban development and encroachment throughout the parcel, especially at Napsbury Park, former hospital redeveloped for housing. Land south of the M25, which dissects the site and is audibly intrusive, also exhibits urban fringe characteristics due in particular to the presence of the Harperbury Hospital site and associated uses / activities. Therefore there is encroachment into the Green Belt. Levels of visual openness are variable throughout the parcel mainly due to the presence of built development.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		PARTIAL
The parcel contains Napsbury Park HPG and adjoins London Colney Conservation Area. The Green Belt provides a historic setting and views to and from the countryside Though much of Napsbury Park has been redeveloped the Parkland is still an important aspect of the historic setting.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel contributes with GB30 to the secondary local gap between London Colney (2 nd) and Park Street / Frogmore (2 nd) and Radlett Road (3 rd). Gaps are 1.9km and 1.8km respectively. The redevelopment of Napsbury Park reduces the gap which is also contains the concealed railway line which provides limited views on to the Green Belt. Any reduction in these gaps would be unlikely to compromise the separation of settlements in physical or visual terms, or overall visual openness.		

Level of Openness and Countryside Character

Existence of built development The level of built development is high at 1.5%. Napsbury Hospital has been redeveloped as a major residential settlement because its enclosed setting is distinct and not particularly apparent from the rest of the parcel. Some ribbon development exists on the B556 to the south.

Visual Openness The parcel is generally open to the north and more enclosed to the south where it is more wooded although there are some extensive panoramas over arable fields towards the Shenley ridge to the south.

Countryside Character The level of built development, Estate parkland and the busy M25 corridor contribute significant semi urban influences to the parcel.

GB31 – Next Steps

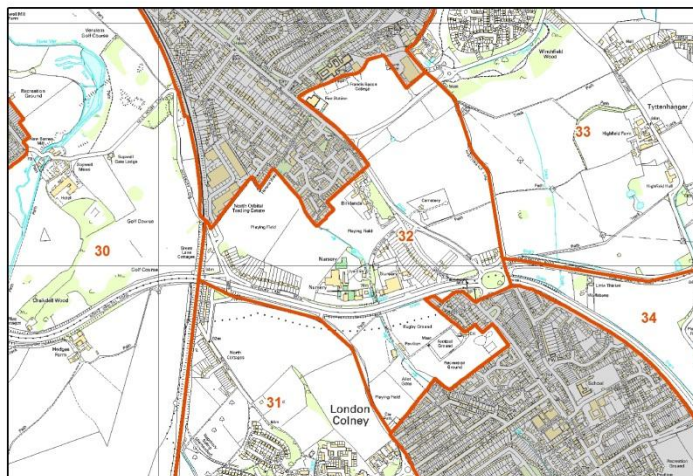
Land south and south west of London Colney is recommended for further assessment as a strategic sub-area (SA-S7). In light of the functions of the strategic parcel, the sub-area is subject to significant urbanising influence. Assessed in isolation, the sub-area to the south and south west of London Colney 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.

Development at Napsbury Park to west of London Colney is recommended for further assessment as a potential boundary adjustment (SA-BA2). Green Belt land has been subject to substantial development and as a result this land no longer contributes towards the 5 Green Belt purposes.

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GB32 –Green Belt Land between St Albans and London Colney

Description The parcel is located to the south of St Albans and the north of London Colney. The boundary to the west follows the railway line and to the east follows Nightingale Lane. It is 101 ha in size and generally flat landform with some minor local variations.



Land use Mix of arable farmland, plus parkland, (Birklands Park), Nuffield Health Centre, garden centre retail development, numerous recreational opens spaces (Columbans Sports Ground, Verulamians Rugby Football Club, school playing fields, allotments and London Road Cemetery).

View to towards St Albans from Nightingale Lane



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards maintain the existing settlement pattern (providing gap between St Albans and London Colney). Partial contribution towards preserving the setting of Napsbury Park. Overall the parcel contributes significantly to 1 of the 5 purposes.

GB32 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel displays a mix of strong urban fringe in addition to rural and countryside characteristics. Open arable fields are of medium scale bounded by hedges and hedgerow trees. There are also several recreational activities in sports fields, allotments and parkland. Evidence of built development, mainly in the form of large housing and other buildings is situated along London Road between settlements and along Napsbury Lane. The A414 also dissects the parcel and is audibly intrusive. The variety of land uses lead to an incoherent character and strong urban fringe characteristics. Levels of visual openness are therefore variable due to the presence of built development.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		PARTIAL
The parcel adjoins Napsbury Park HPG. However this area has been subject to recent redevelopment it still represents an important historic feature..		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel provides the primary local gap between St Albans (1 st) and London Colney (2 nd). The gap is 0.6km. It is narrow and subject to ribbon development along and to the west of London Road. Therefore the gap is eroded which limits visual perception of the Green Belt. Any reduction would significantly compromise the separation of settlements in physical and visual terms, or overall visual openness.		

Level of openness and countryside character

Existence of built development The level of built development is high at 1.7%. Built development has been undertaken at Napsbury and ribbon development has taken place on the A414 with nurseries, a garden centre and a business park.

Visual Openness Views both from outside and within the parcel are generally well screened by roadside vegetation. The extent of built development within and on the perimeter of the area is generally well concealed by vegetation.

Countryside Character There are semi urban influences throughout the parcel which is disrupted by the A414.

GB33 –Green Belt Land to Southeast of St Albans

Description The parcel adjoins the southeast edge of St Albans. It follows Nightingale Lane to the west and the North Orbital A414 and Colney Heath Lane to the east. The parcel is 317 ha in size and comprises a gently undulating landscape from the urban edge to the countryside.



Land use Mix of arable farmland, plus Highfield Park and sewage farm (disused).

Highfield Park, large scale housing development in the Green Belt



View to east from Nightingale Lane towards St Albans



Principal Function / Summary

Partial contribution towards preventing merging (of St Albans and Hatfield) and safeguarding the countryside. Overall the parcel does not significantly contribute to any of the 5 Green Belt purposes.

GB33 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		PARTIAL
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements. However it contributes with GB34, 35 and 36 towards the strategic gap between St Albans and Hatfield. As a whole, the gap contains some built development and ribbon development associated with 3 rd tier settlements in the Green Belt. Overall, any small scale reduction in the gap would be unlikely compromise the separation of 1 st tier settlements in physical or visual terms, or overall visual openness.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		PARTIAL
The parcel displays a mix of urban fringe uses in addition to rural and countryside characteristics. It contains medium sized arable fields with hedgerow boundaries and hedgerow trees and small woodland belts, plus a network of hedges, field trees and tree belts close to the settlement edge. There is large scale built development and encroachment at Highfield Park at the edge of St Albans where housing development has occurred within the Green Belt (in a parkland setting which also incorporates significant recreational areas This land displays strong urban fringe characteristics. Levels of visual openness are variable but generally high.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel does not provide setting for any historic places.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel does not separate any 2 nd or 3 rd tier settlements. However it does contribute towards providing the gap from St Albans to London Colney.		

Level of openness and countryside character

Existence of built development The level of built development is high at 1.7%. Built development has been undertaken at Highfield Park and there is some ribbon residential development to the south of the parcel.

Visual Openness Views both from outside and within the parcel are generally well screened by landform and roadside vegetation along the narrow lanes and dual carriageways.

Countryside Character A semi-rural landscape contained by adjacent urban areas and transport routes. The A414 provides a source of noise and visual intrusion on the landscape.

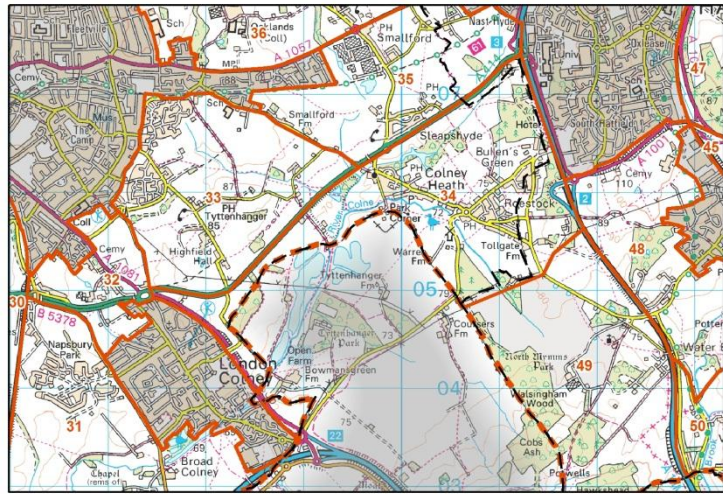
GB33 – Next Steps

Development at Highfield Park along southeast edge of St Albans is recommended for further assessment as a potential boundary adjustment (SA-BA1). Green Belt land has been subject to substantial development and as a result this land no longer contributes towards the 5 Green Belt purposes.

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GB34 –Green Belt Land between Hatfield and London Colney

Description The parcel is located to the southwest of Hatfield and the northeast of London Colney. The boundary to the north follows the North Orbital A414 to the south follows Coursers Road. It is 419 ha in size and comprises the broad and shallow basin of the meandering upper River Colne.



Land use Predominantly arable farmland and heathland. It includes significant areas of water in lakes created by sand and gravel working and some blocks of woodland.

Colney Heath and Bullens End narrow local gap



View to north shows strong rural and open characteristics



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards safeguarding the countryside and maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing gap between Hatfield and London Colney). Partial contribution towards preventing merging (of St Albans and Hatfield) and preserving the setting of London Colney, Sleepshyde and Tyttenhanger Park. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 2 of the 5 Green Belt purposes.

GB34 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED / NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		PARTIAL
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements. However it contributes with GB33, 35 and 36 towards the strategic gap between St Albans and Hatfield. As a whole, the gap contains some built development and ribbon development associated to 3 rd tier settlements in the Green Belt. Overall, any minor reduction in the gap would be unlikely compromise the separation of 1 st tier settlements in physical or visual terms, or overall visual openness.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics, especially to the south, in medium sized arable fields with hedgerow boundaries, sheep pasture and substantial riverine wetland habitats along the Colne, and areas of heath and semi natural grassland which are locally important at Colney Heath. Tyttenhanger Park and Hall is located to the south. There is evidence of linear built development in the north part of the parcel which contains Colney Heath and Bullens Green. The A1(M) is also a major urban influence which is audibly intrusive. Levels of openness are generally high especially to the south due to an absence of built development.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		PARTIAL
The parcel adjoins London Colney and Sleafshyde conservation areas however visual connection or views are limited by local routes and wooded areas. Tyttenhanger Park the setting of the Hall is encircled by sand and gravel working and mounds of overburden and spoil, with associated conveyor belts and plant at present but future restoration should remedy this impact in countryside character..		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
<p>The parcel provides a range of gaps. It provides the primary local gap between Hatfield (1st) and London Colney (2nd) and contributes with parcels GB33 to GB36 and GB43B to the overall gap with St Albans. The gap is large at 4.3km but contains ribbon development at Colney Heath (3rd) and Bullens End (3rd). The gap to the south to Colney Heath is 2.6km and well maintained (relatively free of development) however the gap to the north is more built up and narrower at 1.7km.</p> <p>Therefore any reduction in the gaps would compromise the separation of settlements in physical and visual terms to the north, and local levels of visual openness. A minor reduction to the south would lead to a less significant impact.</p>		

Level of openness and countryside character

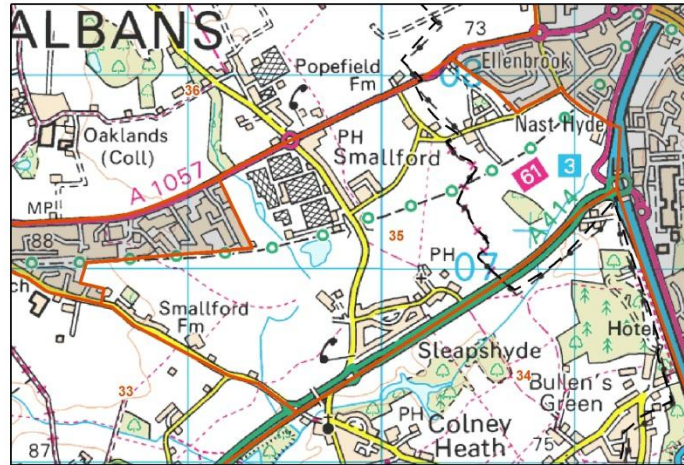
Existence of built development The level of built development is low at 1.0%. Some ribbon development has taken place especially around villages to the north and east of the parcel.

Visual Openness The parcel is generally open to the north and more enclosed to the south where it is more wooded although there are some extensive panoramas over arable fields towards the Shenley ridge to the south.

Countryside Character Riverine character with many sites subject to past gravel working now restored to pasture, lakes or water meadow along the Colne. Well wooded to the south.

GB35 –Green Belt Land between St Albans and Hatfield (Smallford)

Description The parcel is located to the east of St Albans and the west of Hatfield. The boundary to the south follows the North Orbital A414 to the north follows the Hatfield Road. It is 250 ha in size and forms a virtually flat clay plain.



Land use Predominantly arable farmland and grass land, plus industrial, commercial and recreational activities.

Smallford, ribbon development in the Green Belt extending from St Albans



Land along Ellenbrook Lane displaying greater sense of enclosure and urban influence



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards preventing merging (of St Albans and Hatfield) and maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing gaps between St Albans and Hatfield with Smallford and Sleepshyde). Partial contribution towards preserving the setting of Sleepshyde. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 2 of the 5 Green Belt purposes.

GB35 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel provides a strategic gap to separate St Albans and Hatfield. The gap is 1.2km and has been subject to ribbon development extending from St Albans along the Hatfield Road including the village of Smallford and associated development including industrial and commercial activities and housing in the Green Belt. There is also ribbon development in the form of large housing along Colney Heath Lane extending southeast from St Albans, and along Wilkins Green Lane close to Ellenbrook to the west of Hatfield. Any small scale reduction in the gap would be unlikely to further compromise the separation of settlements in physical or visual terms however it would negatively impact on overall visual openness. This is because there is already relatively significant ribbon development along the Hatfield Road and therefore the perception of the gap is limited.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel displays mix of strong urban and rural and countryside characteristics due to significant encroachment. It contains medium scale arable fields with hedgerow boundaries and hedgerow trees, as well as areas of heath, semi natural grassland and ponds at Smallford gravel pits. However there is significant built development at Smallford, Sleepshyde and the edge of St Albans and Hatfield resulting on encroachment into open countryside. Therefore settlement boundaries display strong urban fringe characteristics. In particular, Hatfield urban edge, especially along Ellenbrook Lane and close to Great Nast Hyde House, exhibits a greater sense of localised landscape enclosure as a result of the influence of existing residential edges and development and activities in the Green Belt. Therefore levels of visual openness are mixed throughout the site due to contrasting characteristics.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		PARTIAL
The parcel contains Sleepshyde Conservation Area. The Green Belt acts as an immediate open and rural historic setting, providing views to and from the countryside. Due to scale of the feature this is noted as a partial contribution.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel provides primary local gaps between St Albans and Hatfield with Smallford (3 rd) and Sleepshyde (3 rd). Both gaps are approximately 1.2km and 0.5km respectively. The gap to St Albans is especially narrow and there is limited perception of the gap and openness from the main routes due to scattered and ribbon development. Any reduction in gaps, especially to the west, would further compromise the separation of settlements in physical and visual terms, or overall visual openness.		

Level of openness and countryside character

Existence of built development The level of built development is high at 1.1%. There is evidence of ribbon development along the A1057 Hatfield Road at Smallford, including nursery buildings as well as commercial and industrial development.

Visual Openness There is a network of hedges, field trees and tree belts to the urban areas that visually contain the largely arable character.

Countryside Character A medium scale landscape contained by adjacent urban areas and transport routes.

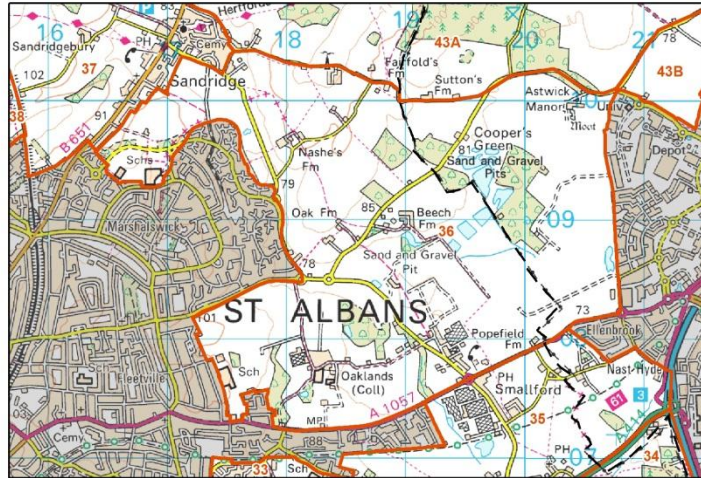
GB35 – Next Steps

Land west of Hatfield to south of Wilkins Green Lane urban edge and west of Ellenbrook Lane is recommended for further assessment as a small scale sub-area (WH-SS1). The southern extent of the sub-area runs to the cyclepath to the south of the existing play area at Ellenbrook Lane. Assessed in isolation this very small area of land makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging, preserving setting or maintaining local gaps.

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GB36 –Green Belt Land between St Albans and Hatfield (North)

Description The parcel is located to the east of St Albans and the west of Hatfield. The boundary to the south follows the Hatfield Road / St Albans Road West and to the north aligns with Woodcock Hill / Coopers Green Lane to Sandridge. It is 864 ha in size and forms an extensive flat clay plain, more undulating to the north.



Land use Predominately arable farmland, plus Watling Chase Community Forest, Ellenbrook Park, Hatfield Aerodrome, Oaklands College / educational campus, Home Office centre, sports centre and playing fields.

Land at House Lane displays urban influence and greater sense of enclosure



View to south from Woodcock Hill shows strong rural and open characteristics



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards preventing merging (of St Albans and Hatfield), safeguarding the countryside and maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing the gap between St Albans and Sandridge). Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 3 of the 5 Green Belt purposes.

GB36 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel provides the strategic gap to separate St Albans and Hatfield. The gap is 1.2km. It is large and generally well maintained (relatively free of development), in comparison to GB35. However it is subject to development at Oaklands College and ribbon development at Smallford. There is a strong visual perception of the Green Belt from the Hatfield Road. Any reduction in the gap, assuming it is located away from Smallford, would be unlikely to further compromise the separation of settlements in physical or visual terms, or overall levels of visual openness.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in large scale arable fields with hedgerow boundaries and hedgerow trees and is interspersed by woodland blocks with areas of ancient woodland to the north. There is a parkland landscape at Oaklands College with substantial areas of playing fields. There is evidence of urban features, especially at the former Hatfield aerodrome which is partially redeveloped with a new business park including visually dominant buildings. To the west there is a mix of urban fringe development as Oaklands College has recently been subject to expansion, representing further development in the Green Belt. The west part of the parcel, which contains development in the Green Belt, is enclosed by the St Albans settlement boundary on three edges. It therefore exhibits strongest levels of urban influence and represents a more enclosed area of land especially along Sandpit Lane and House Lane. Therefore levels of visual openness vary throughout the parcel but are high in general.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel does not provide setting for any historic places.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel contributes with GB37 to the primary local gap to separate St Albans and Sandridge (3 rd). This gap is narrow at 0.4km and ribbon development is evident between the settlements along St Albans Road, at Sandridge, and therefore there is limited perception of the Green Belt. Any reduction in the gap would be likely to compromise the separation of settlements in physical and visual terms, or local levels of visual openness.		

Level of openness and countryside character

Existence of built development The level of built development is low at 0.7%. There is evidence of ribbon development on the A1057 Hatfield Road at Smallford with commercial buildings, nurseries and the large development at the Oaklands campus.

Visual Openness There is a network of hedges, field trees and tree belts that visually contain the largely arable character. Around the Oaklands and Hatfield aerodrome sites views are more open.

Countryside Character The parcel is unified by the level topography yet has a diverse mix and incoherent

pattern of uses with the semi urban campus developments dominating.

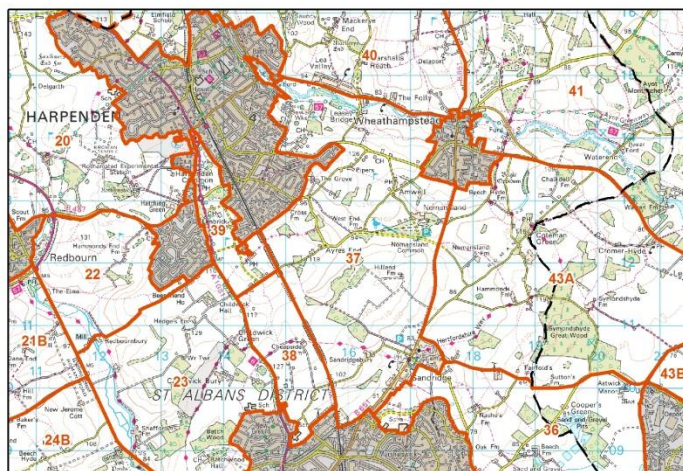
GB36 – Next Steps

Area enclosed by residential development at east St Albans along Sandpit Lane is recommended for further assessment as a strategic sub-area (SA-S3). In light of the functions of the strategic parcel, the sub-area 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.

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GB37 –Green Belt Land between St Albans and Harpenden

Description The parcel is located to the north of St Albans and the southwest of Harpenden. The boundary to the west follows the railway line and the east aligns with the High Street (B651) to Wheathampstead. The boundary to the north follows the Lower Luton Road. The parcel is 1,098 ha in size and comprises an undulating landscape of plateau areas and dry valleys.



Land use Predominantly arable farmland, plus Nomansland Common, heathland and recreational activities including Aldwickbury Park golf course, Wheathampstead golf course and Wheathampstead Cricket Club.

View to northwest from north edge of Sandridge displays strong rural and open characteristics



View to south edge of Harpenden from Railway line shows how planting conceals the settlement



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards preventing merging (of St Albans and Harpenden), safeguarding the countryside, preserving the setting of Sandridge and Amwell, and maintaining the existing settlement pattern (to provide the gap between St Albans and Wheathampstead). Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 4 of the 5 Green Belt purposes.

GB37 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel contributes with GB38 & GB39 to the strategic gap to separate St Albans and Harpenden. The gap is large at 2.6km and is well maintained (relatively free of development). There is strong perception of the Green Belt between settlements from the railway line. Any minor reduction would be unlikely to compromise the separation of settlements in physical or visual terms, or overall levels of visual openness.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in large arable fields with hedgerow boundaries and hedgerow trees with some equestrian pasture. The Nomansland Common forms a small but distinctive area located in a dry valley and surrounded by farmland creating a sense of remoteness detached from urbanising influences. There is very limited evidence of built development except to the central west edge of Harpenden which is non-linear and adjoins sewage works, as well as ribbon development along St Albans Road to Sandridge to the south. Levels of openness are very high in general due to an absence of built development.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel includes Sandridge and Amwell Conservation Areas and is in close proximity to Old Harpenden Conservation Area. The Green Belt acts as an immediate undulating open and rural historic setting, providing views to and from the countryside.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel provides the primary local gap to separate St Albans and Wheathampstead (2 nd). The gap is large at 4.0km and well maintained (relatively free of development) and visible from the Wheathampstead Road / Harpenden Road. The parcel also contributes with GB36 to the primary local gap to separate St Albans and Sandridge (3 rd). This gap is narrow at 0.4km and contains ribbon development along St Albans Road and therefore there is limited perception of the gap from the road. The parcel also provides a large secondary local gap to separate Wheathampstead (2 nd) and Sandridge (3 rd). Apart from the gap between St Albans and Sandridge, any minor reduction in gaps would be unlikely to compromise the separation of settlements in physical and visual terms, or overall visual openness.		

Level of Openness and Countryside Character

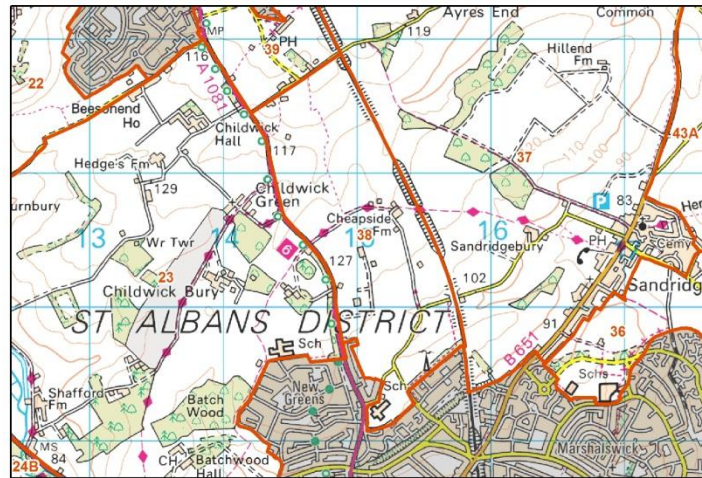
Existence of built development The level of built development is low at 0.6%.

Visual Openness The visual containment is aided by the prominent small and medium sized woods located on the upper reaches of the valley sides. The plateau areas are more open with large arable fields and intermittent clipped hedgerows.

Countryside Character The parcel has a rural nature with agricultural use and narrow lanes. On the fringes of the adjacent urban settlements there is a greater emphasis on semi urban recreational activities including playing fields, equestrian activity and golf.

GB38 –Green Belt Land North of St Albans

Description The parcel is located to the north of St Albans. The boundary to the north runs along Aryes End Lane. To the west the boundary follows the Harpenden Road (A1081) and to the east aligns with the railway line. It is 206 ha in size and comprises an undulating landscape of plateau areas and dry valleys.



Land use Predominantly arable farmland, plus Woollam playing fields.

View to southeast from of Woolham playing fields, displays open countryside characteristics



Land at Sandridgebury Lane exhibits a greater sense of enclosure and urban influence



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards preventing merging (of St Albans and Harpenden), safeguarding the countryside and preserving the setting of Childwickbury and Harpenden. Overall the parcel significantly contributes towards 3 of the 5 Green Belt purposes.

GB38 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment	Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.	
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging	SIGNIFICANT
The parcel contributes (with GB37 & GB39) to the strategic separation of St Albans and Harpenden. The gap is large at 2.6km and is largely open and there is no ribbon development. There is strong perception of the Green Belt between settlements from the A1081 and railway line. Due to the scale and nature of the gap, any small scale reduction would be unlikely to compromise the separation of settlements in physical or visual terms, or the overall openness of the parcel.	
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in large regular arable fields with hedgerow boundaries and hedgerow trees with pasture closer to St Albans. Woollam playing fields is also located in the centre of the parcel. There is very limited evidence of development and no encroachment. The Green Belt penetrates the northern edge of St Albans and contains semi-urban uses such as the sports centre. It includes areas which exhibit a greater sense of localised landscape enclosure due to smaller field patterns and planting, which is also represents an important part of the landscape. Surrounding residential edges also increase containment in this area. Levels of visual openness are generally high but variable.	
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	SIGNIFICANT
The parcel contains Childwickbury Conservation Area. The Green Belt acts as an immediate open and rural historic setting, providing views to and from the countryside.	
To maintain existing settlement pattern	LIMITED OR NO
The parcel does not separate any 2 nd or 3 rd tier settlements.	

Level of Openness and Countryside Character

Existence of built development The level of built development is low at 0.6%. There is limited scattered development across the parcel, comprising mainly outdoor recreational activities.

Visual Openness Despite the close proximity of a number of towns the distant and enclosing views are largely formed and framed by vegetation or landform. The parcel is visually well contained..

Countryside Character A rural character with semi urban recreational activities closer to urban areas including playing fields, equestrian activity, golf and community woodland.

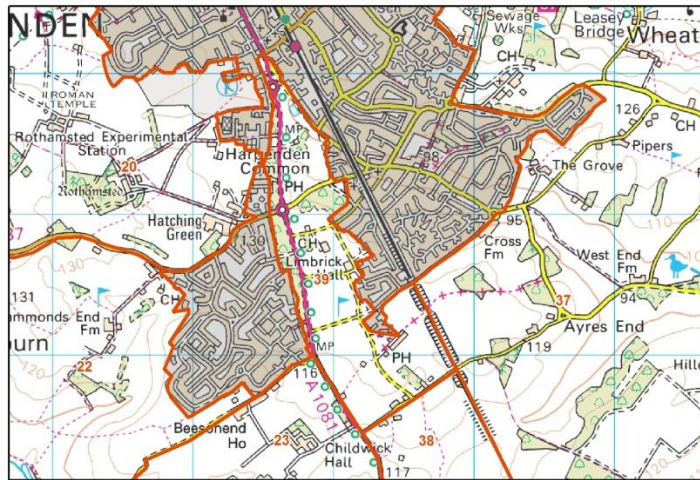
GB38 – Next Steps

Enclosed land at north St Albans along Sandbridgebury Lane is recommended for further assessment as a strategic sub-area (SA-S4). In light of the functions of the strategic parcel, 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.

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GB39 –Green Belt Land South of Harpenden

Description The parcel is located to the south of Harpenden. The boundary to the south aligns with Aryes End Lane. It is narrow and 137 ha in size and forms a shallow undulating dry valley sloping from the southeast.



Land use Predominantly grassland, plus farmland, Harpenden Common heathland and recreational activities including Harpenden Cricket Club and Golf Course.

View to north from Walkers Road of Harpenden Common, displays parkland characteristics



View to south from Harpenden, whereby the green wedge exhibits urban fringe characteristics



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards preventing merging (of St Albans and Harpenden) and preserving the setting of Harpenden Conservation Area. Partial contribution towards safeguarding the countryside. Overall the parcel significantly contributes towards 2 of the 5 purposes.

GB39 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel contributes (with GB37& GB38) to the strategic separation of St Albans and Harpenden. The gap is large at 2.6km and is well maintained (relatively free of development) by Harpenden Common which acts as a green wedge, and there is no ribbon development. There is a perception of the Green Belt between settlements from the A1081 and railway line. The parcel is relatively narrow to the north and therefore any reduction would be likely to compromise the separation of west and east Harpenden neighbourhoods in physical and visual terms, and lead to a reduction in the overall openness of the parcel. A reduction would have a limited impact on the overall strategic gap to the south.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		PARTIAL
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in open rough grassland with clusters of oaks and patches of gorse. Patches of regenerated scrub woodland are interspersed besides the golf course. There is evidence of urban features due to the narrow shape of the parcel and sense of enclosure from settlement boundaries along Harpenden Common. Therefore the parcel represents a green wedge. Levels of visual openness are high mainly due to an absence of built development. However given the narrow shape of the wedge and the proximity of settlement edges, especially to the north, an urban fringe environment is created. The St Albans Road (A1081) which runs through the north part of the parcel also represents a strong urban influence. Although part of the Common is semi-wild, it is dominated by parkland characteristics which form a green wedge into central Harpenden.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel contains part of Harpenden Conservation Area. The Green Belt acts as an immediate open and rural historic setting, providing views to and from the countryside.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel does not separate any 2 nd or 3 rd tier settlements.		

Level of openness and countryside character

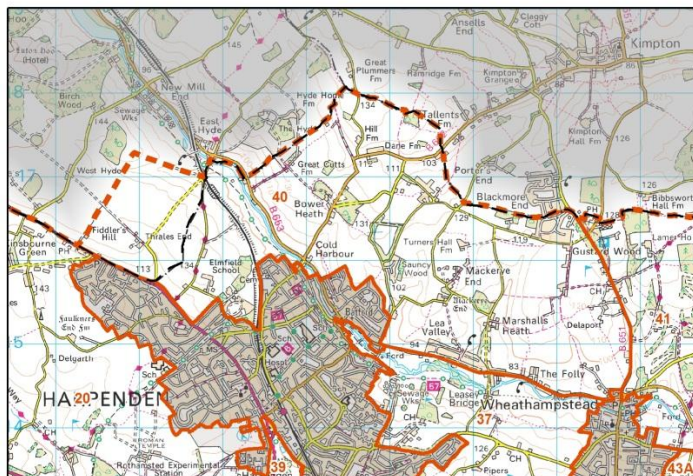
Existence of built development The level of built development is very low at 0.3%. There has been very limited built development within the parcel.

Visual Openness To the north the parcel is more enclosed due to woodland coverage but to the south the land is very open with panoramic views to Harpenden providing a gateway and setting to the town.

Countryside Character The parcel has a semi-rural character with narrow lanes, open grassland and unmanaged copses adjacent to semi urban recreational activities, including sports fields, equestrian activity and golf courses.

GB40 –Green Belt Land North of Harpenden

Description The parcel is located to the north of Harpenden and extends to the SADC administrative boundary to the north and crosses into Central Bedfordshire to enable the assessment of the northwest edge of Harpenden. The east edge extends to Wheathampstead. It is 1,277 ha in size and forms an undulating chalk plateau which rises to either side of the enclosed narrow valley of the River Lea.



Land use Predominantly arable farmland, plus education and recreational activities including allotments, Greenacres Equestrian and Mid Herts Golf Course.

View to east from Cooters Green Lane



Land along Luton Road



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards checking sprawl from Luton and Dunstable, safeguarding the countryside, preserving the setting of Harpenden, Gustard Wood and Mackerye End, and maintaining the existing settlement pattern. Partial contribution towards preventing merging. Overall the parcel significantly contributes towards 4 of the 5 purposes.

GB40 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel is located south of Luton and Dunstable and forms a strong connection with a wider network of parcels to the north to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		PARTIAL
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements, however it contributes towards the strategic gap between Harpenden and Luton and Dunstable (in Bedfordshire to the north of the study area). The gap is 5km and largely open. Any small to medium-reduction in the gap would be unlikely to compromise the separation of 1 st tier settlement in physical and visual terms, and overall openness.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in open arable farmland punctuated by some small blocks of mixed woodland. Large sized fields are bound by hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees including small blocks of ancient woodland. The River Lea valley has a riparian habitat with water meadows; and closer to the Harpenden edge, pasture, recreational parks and estate parkland are found. There is evidence of development in the form of the villages of Lea Valley, The Folly (along Lower Luton Road) and Gustard Wood, as well as scattered built development. The north and northeast edge of Harpenden exhibits some areas with a greater sense of localised landscape enclosure and stronger urban influence due to landscape features and planting as well as proximity to the urban edge. Levels of visual openness are generally high but can be lower at settlement edges due to landscape buffering.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel contains Harpenden, Gustard Wood and Mackerye End Conservation Areas. The Green Belt acts as an immediate open and rural historic setting, providing views to and from the countryside.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel provides a range of gaps between 1 st , 2 nd and 3 rd tier settlements. Most significantly, it contributes with GB37 to provide the primary local gap to separate Harpenden and Wheathampstead (2 nd). The gap is 1.4km and contains punctuated ribbon development along the Lower Luton Road at Lea Valley(3 rd) and The Folly (3 rd). This reduces the perception of the Green Belt and creates a series of relatively narrow local gaps between all settlements. Therefore, any reduction in the gap would be likely to compromise the separation of settlements in physical and visual terms, and adversely affect local levels of openness. The parcel also provides primary local gaps of 1.7km and 3.5km from Harpenden and Wheathampstead (2 nd) to Gustard Wood (3 rd). These gaps are larger and remain mainly open. Any minor reduction would not compromise the separation of settlements or the openness of the parcel.		

Level of Openness and Countryside Character

Existence of built development The level of built development is low at 0.7%. There is little evidence of built development within the parcel other than the small long standing settlements within the Green Belt.

Visual Openness The landform and open fields allow for long distance views from many locations and these views give the parcel an open visual character. A relative scarcity of roadside hedgerow trees, particularly to the west, results in panoramic views from more elevated locations. The Lea valley is more enclosed with narrow winding lanes and a higher percentage of tree cover.

Countryside Character The parcel comprises well established traditional open rolling farmland with the river Lea valley displaying a contrasting enclosed sylvan riverine character. There are no major transport routes in the parcel.

GB40 – Next Steps

Two strategic sub-areas have been identified for further assessment. The first is enclosed land at north Harpenden in the vicinity of Luton Road, Couters End Lane and Ambrose Lane (SA-S5). In light of the functions of the strategic parcel, 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.

The second strategic sub-area is enclosed land at northeast Harpenden along Lower Luton Road, and extending to the vicinity of Whitings Close (SA-S6). In light of the functions of the strategic parcel, 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.

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GB41 –Green Belt Land West of Welwyn

Description The parcel is located to the west of Welwyn and extends to Wheathampstead and Gustard Wood to the west. The north boundary follows the edge of the study area and the south boundary aligns with Marford Road (B653). It is 1,905 ha in size and forms an undulating chalk plateau either side of the enclosed narrow river Lea valley and river Mimram.



Land use Mix of arable farmland and woodland, plus estate parkland, The Frythe (MDS) and Brocket Park Golf Course.

View to northeast from Whitehill towards Welwyn shows open setting and strong rural character



View from Brocket View at Wheathampstead displays urban fringe characteristics and enclosure



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards safeguarding the countryside, preserving the setting of Wheathampstead, Gustard Wood, Ayot St Lawrence, Ayot Green and Waterend, and maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing gaps between Welwyn Garden City to Welwyn, Ayot St Peter, Ayot Green and Lemsford. Partial contribution towards checking sprawl. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 3 of the 5 purposes.

GB41 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		PARTIAL
The parcel is located south of Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage and forms a connection with a wider network of parcels to the northwest to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements. However it forms part of a network with GB37, GB40, GB42 & GB43 to provide strategic gap between Welwyn Garden City and Harpenden. The A1(M) is relatively well screened but allows some views to, and perception, of the gap. Any reduction in the gap would be unlikely to compromise the separation of 1 st tier settlements.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in open arable farmland punctuated by some small blocks of mixed woodland. The large fields are generally bound by hedgerows with hedgerow trees. There is a high percentage of woodland including ancient woodland. The river Lea valley has a riparian habitat and frequent water meadows follow the water course. There is limited evidence of built development apart for 3 rd tier settlements, and there is no significant encroachment. The main urban influence (on the east part of the parcel only) is the A1(M) which is relatively well concealed but audibly intrusive. Some land displays urban fringe characteristics such as along the east edge of Wheathampstead. Levels of visual openness are high in general mainly due to an absence of built development.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel contains a range of conservation areas at Wheathampstead, Gustard Wood, Ayot St Lawrence, Ayot Green and Waterend. It also adjoins Welwyn Conservation Area and contains Brocket Park and Ayot House HPGs. The Green Belt acts as an immediate open and rural and pastoral setting, providing views to and from the countryside, and especially along the River Lea in relation to Wheathampstead.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel provides a series of gaps between 1 st , 2 nd and 3 rd tier settlements. Most significantly, it separates Welwyn Garden City (1 st) beyond the A1(M), to Welwyn (2 nd), Ayot St Peter (3 rd) Ayot Green (3 rd) and Lemsford (3 rd). These primary local gaps are narrow and therefore any small scale reduction would be likely to significantly compromise the separation of settlements in physical and visual terms, and the overall level of visual openness. The parcel also provides the secondary local gap between Wheathampstead (2 nd) and Welwyn (2 nd). The large gap is 4.5km and relatively well maintained (relatively free of development) and therefore any reduction (in the east only) would be unlikely to compromise the separation of settlements and overall visual openness. In general there is limited evidence of ribbon development, and the perception of open countryside is strong from routes within the parcel.		

Level of Openness and Countryside Character

Existence of built development The level of built development is low at 0.3%. There is little evidence of built development within the parcel.

Visual Openness The rolling landform and open fields allow for long distance views from many locations, including the estate parkland of Brocket Park, giving the parcel an open visual character. The Lea Valley is more enclosed with a higher percentage of tree cover.

Countryside Character The parcel comprises well established traditional open rolling farmland with the River Lea Valley displaying a contrasting enclosed sylvan riverine character. The small winding country lanes and lack of large scale settlements gives the parcel a quiet rural character.

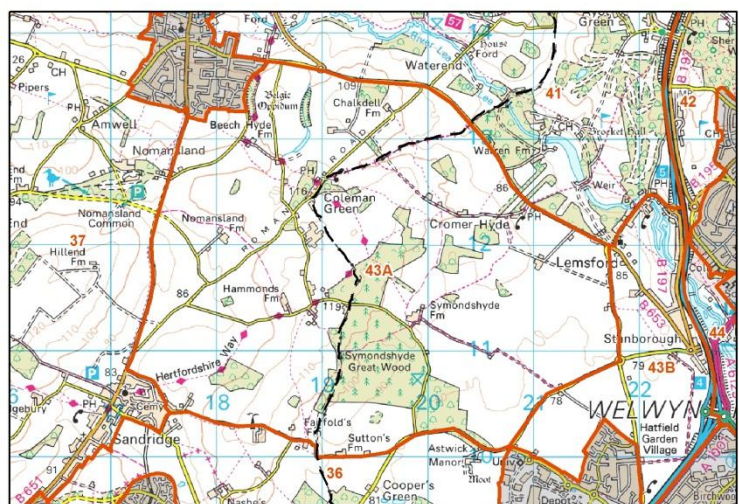
GB41 – Next Steps

Land east of Wheathampstead (GB41) to east of Brocket View is recommended for further assessment as a small scale sub-area (SA-SS8). Assessed in isolation this very small sub-area land makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging, preserving setting or maintaining local gaps.

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GB43A –Green Belt Land between Wheathampstead and Hatfield

Description The parcel is located to the southeast of Wheathampstead and extends to the northwest tip of Hatfield. It extends to Sandridge to the southwest and follows the Woodcock Hill to the south. It is 1,232ha in size and forms a large scale undulating chalk plateau.



Land use Predominantly arable farmland and woodland.

View to north from Coopers Green Lane, from northwest tip of Hatfield displays strong open and rural characteristics



View to south of Wheathampstead from Hill Dyke Road displays a greater sense of enclosure



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards safeguarding the countryside and maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing the gap between St Albans and Wheathampstead). Partial contribution towards preventing merging (of Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield with Harpenden). Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 2 of the 5 purposes.

GB43A – Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		PARTIAL
The parcel does not directly separate 1 st tier settlements. However, it forms a large section of a network of parcels (with GB37, GB40, GB41, GB42 & GB43B) which provide the strategic gap between Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield with Harpenden. Any scale of reduction in the gap would be unlikely to compromise the separation of 1 st tier settlements.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in large scale arable fields bound by hedgerows with hedgerow trees. There is a high percentage of woodland with a large area of ancient woodland at Symondshyde Great Wood. There is very limited evidence of built development and no significant encroachment. However the south edge of Wheathampstead exhibits a greater sense of enclosure and urban influence. Levels of visual openness are very high in general mainly due to an absence of built development. It displays a very different character to GB43B which contains more urban fringe features.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel adjoins Sandridge Conservation Area and Brocket Park HPG, whereby part of the park enters the parcel. The Green Belt acts as an immediate open and rural historic setting, providing views to and from the countryside.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel contributes with GB43B to the strategic gap between Welwyn Garden City (1 st) and Wheathampstead (3 rd). The gap is 4.5km and is large and well maintained (relatively free of development) with no evidence or ribbon development. Due to the scale and nature of the gap, any reduction would be unlikely to compromise the separation of settlements in physical or visual terms, or the overall level of visual openness.		

Level of openness and countryside character

Existence of built development The level of built development is very low at 0.2%. There is very limited evidence of built development within the parcel.

Visual Openness Rolling landform / open fields allow long distance views but wooded areas are more enclosed.

Countryside Character The parcel comprises a patchwork of traditional open rolling farmland with woodland. Small winding country lanes give the parcel a quiet rural character.

GB43A – Next Steps

Land south of Wheathampstead to south of Hill Dyke Road and enclosed by Dyke Lane to the east and settlement edge to the west, is recommended for further assessment as a small scale sub-area (SA-SS7). The southern extent runs level to Beech Crescent. Assessed in isolation this very small area of land makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging, preserving setting or maintaining local gaps.



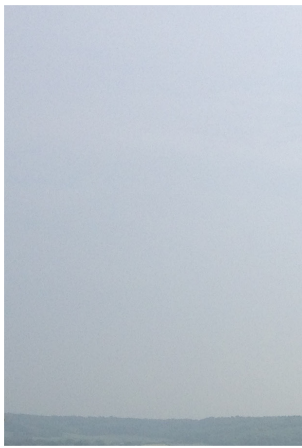
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GREEN BELT REVIEW PURPOSES ASSESSMENT
(Prepared for Dacorum Borough Council, St Albans City and District Council and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council)

Annex 1 – Parcel Assessment Sheets for Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

November 2013



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Introduction

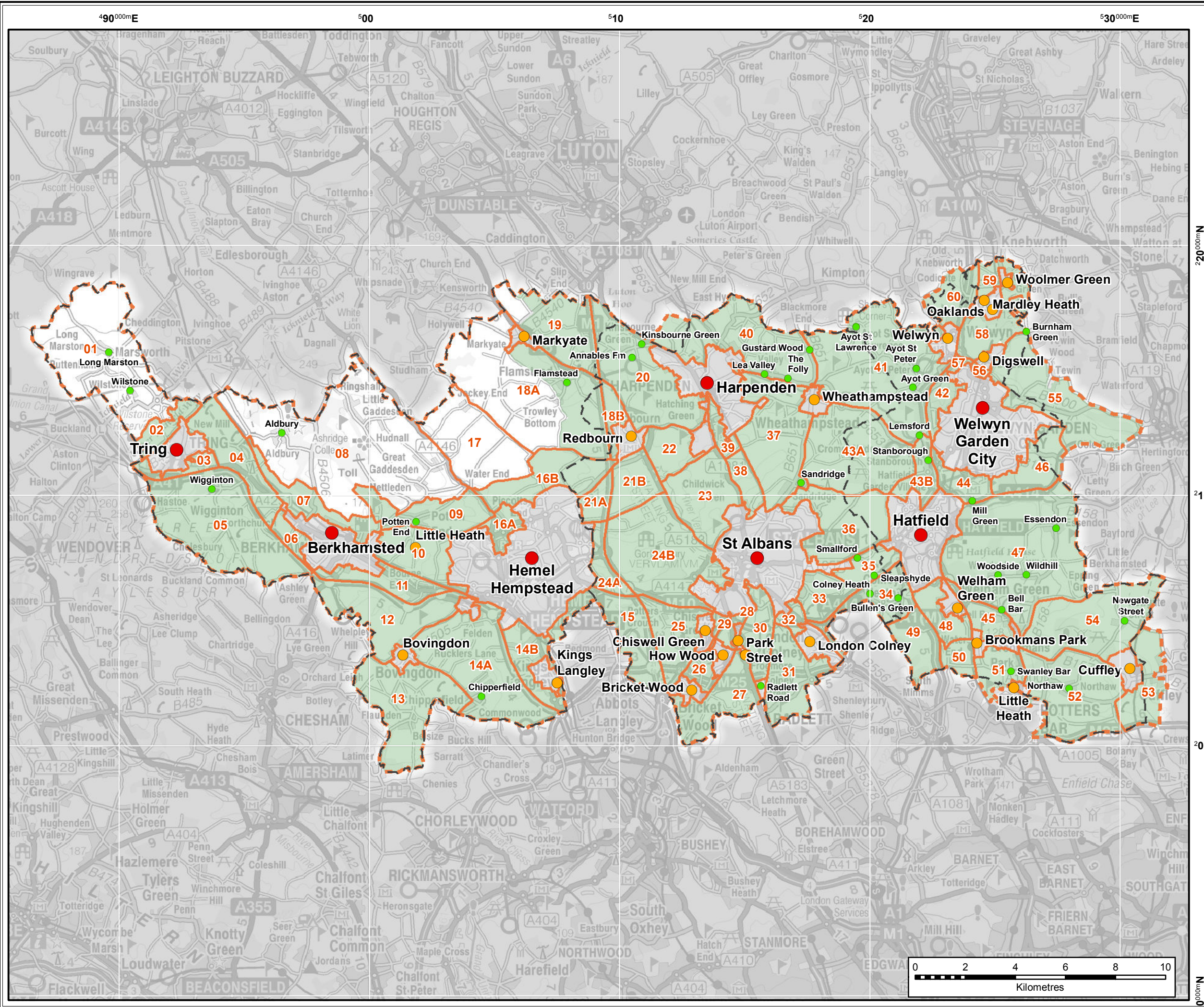
This document forms an Annex to the Green Belt Review Purposes Assessment undertaken on behalf of on behalf of Dacorum Borough Council, St Albans City and District Council, and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.

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

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

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

File Name: Strategic Parcel Plan_20131025



- Key:**
- District Borough Boundary
 - Land Parcel Boundary
 - Study Area Outer Boundary
 - Green Belt
- Settlement**
- 1st Tier
 - 2nd Tier
 - 3rd Tier



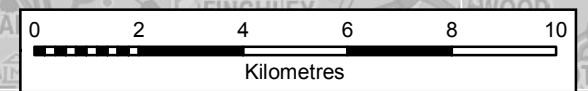
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 Units: Meter

REVISION: G

Green Belt Review for St Albans, Dacorum and Welwyn Hatfield

Strategic Parcel Plan

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CONTENT	DRAWN
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CHECKED	DATE
RB	30/11/2013



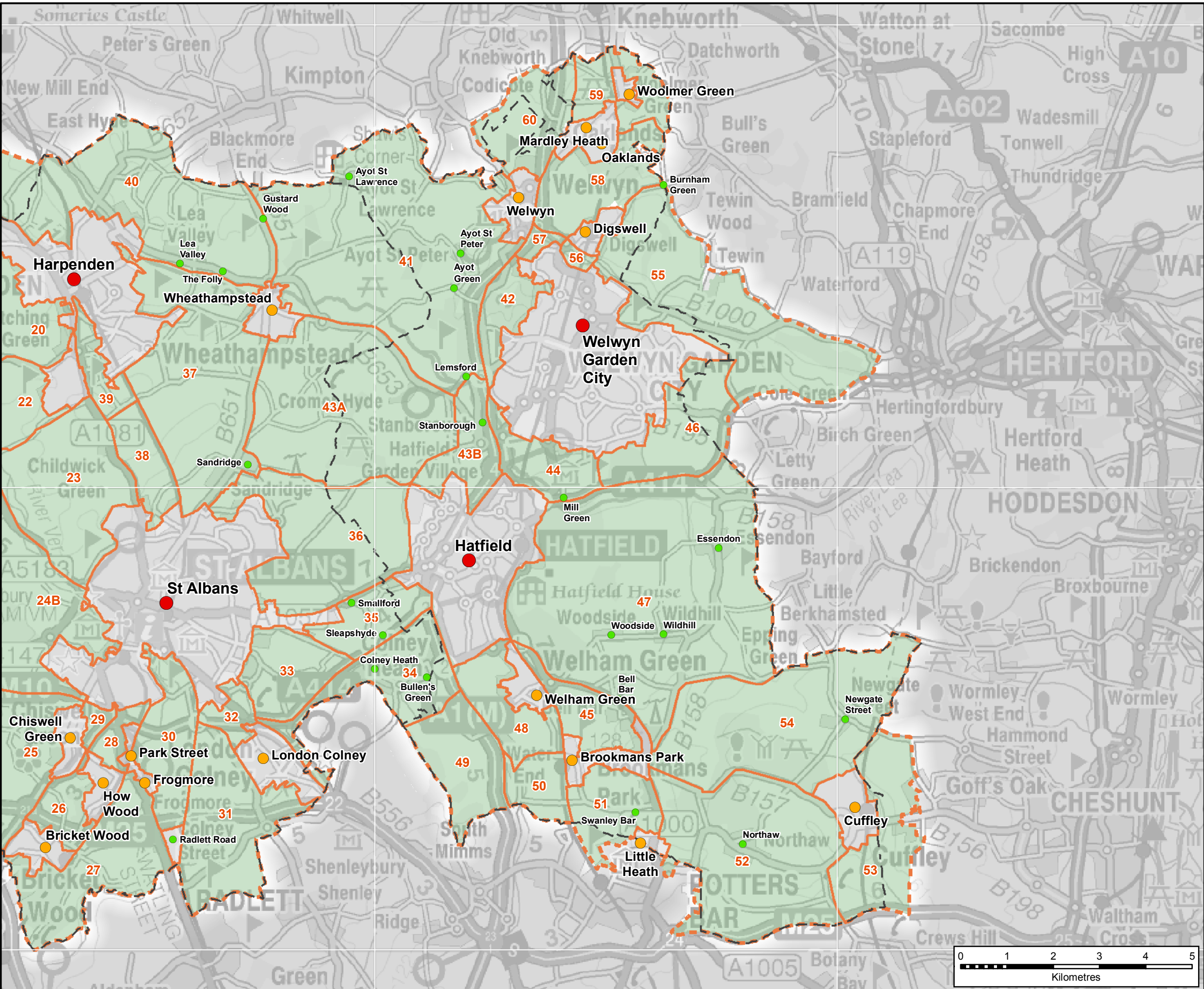
520000mE

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200000mN



- Key:**
- District Borough Boundary
 - Land Parcel Boundary
 - Study Area Outer Boundary
 - Green Belt
- Settlement**
- 1st Tier
 - 2nd Tier
 - 3rd Tier



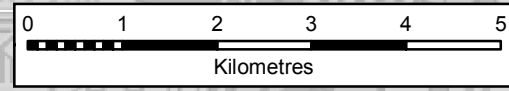
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 Units: Meter

REVISION: G

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

**Strategic Parcel Plan
 Welwyn Hatfield**

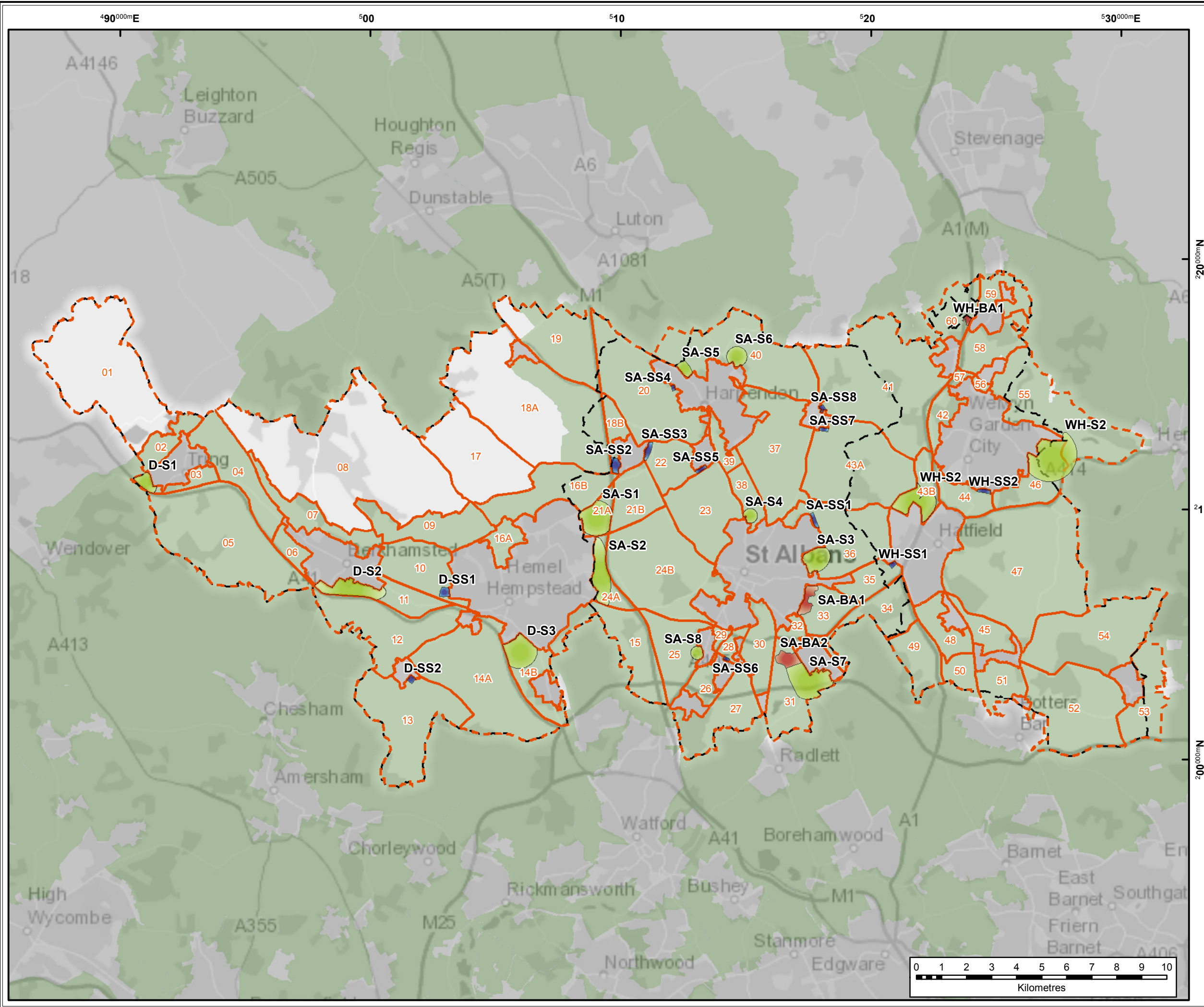
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CONTENT	DRAWN
London.Gov Ordnance Survey	KW
CHECKED	DATE
RB	30/11/2013



File Name: Strategic Parcel Plan - WelwynHatfield - 20131025
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 Name: Figure8.1_Least Contribution to GB



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



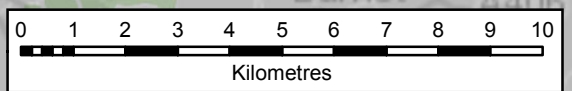
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REVISION: H

Green Belt Review for St Albans, Dacorum and Welwyn Hatfield

FIGURE 8.1.
Land Contributing Least Towards Green Belt Purposes

SCALE	PROJECT CODE
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CONTENT	DRAWN
London.Gov Ordnance Survey	KW
CHECKED	DATE
RB	2/12/2013

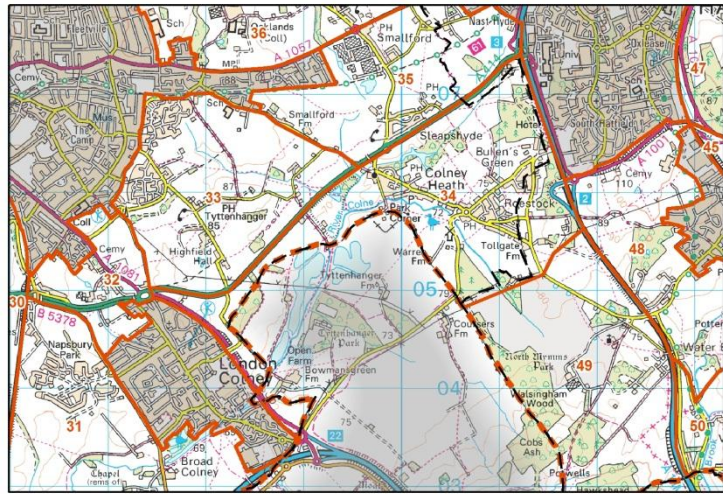


The Assessment Criteria for the Green Belt Review Purposes Assessment is set out below. The full methodology is set out in Chapter 5 of the Final Report.

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

GB34 –Green Belt Land between Hatfield and London Colney

Description The parcel is located to the southwest of Hatfield and the northeast of London Colney. The boundary to the north follows the North Orbital A414 to the south follows Coursers Road. It is 419 ha in size and comprises the broad and shallow basin of the meandering upper River Colne.



Land use Predominantly arable farmland and heathland. It includes significant areas of water in lakes created by sand and gravel working and some blocks of woodland.

Colney Heath and Bullens End narrow local gap



View to north shows strong rural and open characteristics



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards safeguarding the countryside and maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing gap between Hatfield and London Colney). Partial contribution towards preventing merging (of St Albans and Hatfield) and preserving the setting of London Colney, Sleepshyde and Tyttenhanger Park. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 2 of the 5 Green Belt purposes.

GB34 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED / NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		PARTIAL
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements. However it contributes with GB33, 35 and 36 towards the strategic gap between St Albans and Hatfield. As a whole, the gap contains some built development and ribbon development associated to 3 rd tier settlements in the Green Belt. Overall, any minor reduction in the gap would be unlikely compromise the separation of 1 st tier settlements in physical or visual terms, or overall visual openness.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics, especially to the south, in medium sized arable fields with hedgerow boundaries, sheep pasture and substantial riverine wetland habitats along the Colne, and areas of heath and semi natural grassland which are locally important at Colney Heath. Tyttenhanger Park and Hall is located to the south. There is evidence of linear built development in the north part of the parcel which contains Colney Heath and Bullens Green. The A1(M) is also a major urban influence which is audibly intrusive. Levels of openness are generally high especially to the south due to an absence of built development.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		PARTIAL
The parcel adjoins London Colney and Sleafshyde conservation areas however visual connection or views are limited by local routes and wooded areas. Tyttenhanger Park the setting of the Hall is encircled by sand and gravel working and mounds of overburden and spoil, with associated conveyor belts and plant at present but future restoration should remedy this impact in countryside character..		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
<p>The parcel provides a range of gaps. It provides the primary local gap between Hatfield (1st) and London Colney (2nd) and contributes with parcels GB33 to GB36 and GB43B to the overall gap with St Albans. The gap is large at 4.3km but contains ribbon development at Colney Heath (3rd) and Bullens End (3rd). The gap to the south to Colney Heath is 2.6km and well maintained (relatively free of development) however the gap to the north is more built up and narrower at 1.7km.</p> <p>Therefore any reduction in the gaps would compromise the separation of settlements in physical and visual terms to the north, and local levels of visual openness. A minor reduction to the south would lead to a less significant impact.</p>		

Level of openness and countryside character

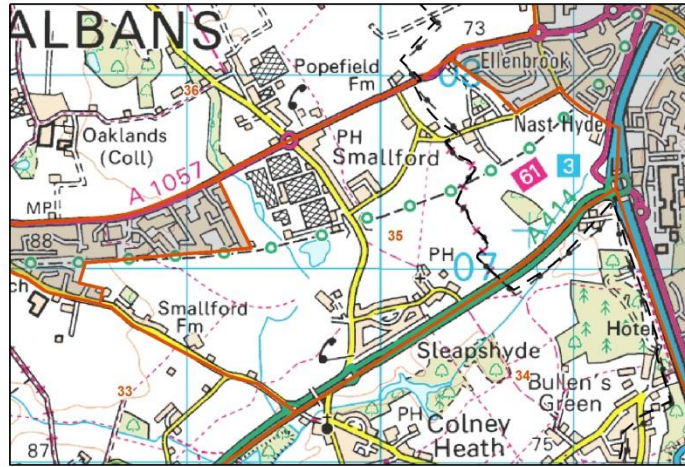
Existence of built development The level of built development is low at 1.0%. Some ribbon development has taken place especially around villages to the north and east of the parcel.

Visual Openness The parcel is generally open to the north and more enclosed to the south where it is more wooded although there are some extensive panoramas over arable fields towards the Shenley ridge to the south.

Countryside Character Riverine character with many sites subject to past gravel working now restored to pasture, lakes or water meadow along the Colne. Well wooded to the south.

GB35 –Green Belt Land between St Albans and Hatfield (Smallford)

Description The parcel is located to the east of St Albans and the west of Hatfield. The boundary to the south follows the North Orbital A414 to the north follows the Hatfield Road. It is 250 ha in size and forms a virtually flat clay plain.



Land use Predominantly arable farmland and grass land, plus industrial, commercial and recreational activities.

Smallford, ribbon development in the Green Belt extending from St Albans



Land along Ellenbrook Lane displaying greater sense of enclosure and urban influence



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards preventing merging (of St Albans and Hatfield) and maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing gaps between St Albans and Hatfield with Smallford and Sleepshyde). Partial contribution towards preserving the setting of Sleepshyde. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 2 of the 5 Green Belt purposes.

GB35 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel provides a strategic gap to separate St Albans and Hatfield. The gap is 1.2km and has been subject to ribbon development extending from St Albans along the Hatfield Road including the village of Smallford and associated development including industrial and commercial activities and housing in the Green Belt. There is also ribbon development in the form of large housing along Colney Heath Lane extending southeast from St Albans, and along Wilkins Green Lane close to Ellenbrook to the west of Hatfield. Any small scale reduction in the gap would be unlikely to further compromise the separation of settlements in physical or visual terms however it would negatively impact on overall visual openness. This is because there is already relatively significant ribbon development along the Hatfield Road and therefore the perception of the gap is limited.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel displays mix of strong urban and rural and countryside characteristics due to significant encroachment. It contains medium scale arable fields with hedgerow boundaries and hedgerow trees, as well as areas of heath, semi natural grassland and ponds at Smallford gravel pits. However there is significant built development at Smallford, Sleepshyde and the edge of St Albans and Hatfield resulting on encroachment into open countryside. Therefore settlement boundaries display strong urban fringe characteristics. In particular, Hatfield urban edge, especially along Ellenbrook Lane and close to Great Nast Hyde House, exhibits a greater sense of localised landscape enclosure as a result of the influence of existing residential edges and development and activities in the Green Belt. Therefore levels of visual openness are mixed throughout the site due to contrasting characteristics.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		PARTIAL
The parcel contains Sleepshyde Conservation Area. The Green Belt acts as an immediate open and rural historic setting, providing views to and from the countryside. Due to scale of the feature this is noted as a partial contribution.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel provides primary local gaps between St Albans and Hatfield with Smallford (3 rd) and Sleepshyde (3 rd). Both gaps are approximately 1.2km and 0.5km respectively. The gap to St Albans is especially narrow and there is limited perception of the gap and openness from the main routes due to scattered and ribbon development. Any reduction in gaps, especially to the west, would further compromise the separation of settlements in physical and visual terms, or overall visual openness.		

Level of openness and countryside character

Existence of built development The level of built development is high at 1.1%. There is evidence of ribbon development along the A1057 Hatfield Road at Smallford, including nursery buildings as well as commercial and industrial development.

Visual Openness There is a network of hedges, field trees and tree belts to the urban areas that visually contain the largely arable character.

Countryside Character A medium scale landscape contained by adjacent urban areas and transport routes.

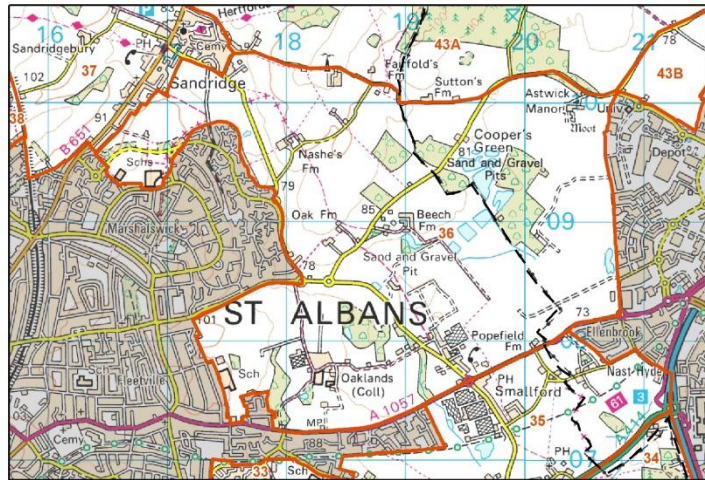
GB35 – Next Steps

Land west of Hatfield to south of Wilkins Green Lane urban edge and west of Ellenbrook Lane is recommended for further assessment as a small scale sub-area (WH-SS1). The southern extent of the sub-area runs to the cyclepath to the south of the existing play area at Ellenbrook Lane. Assessed in isolation this very small area of land makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging, preserving setting or maintaining local gaps.

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GB36 –Green Belt Land between St Albans and Hatfield (North)

Description The parcel is located to the east of St Albans and the west of Hatfield. The boundary to the south follows the Hatfield Road / St Albans Road West and to the north aligns with Woodcock Hill / Coopers Green Lane to Sandridge. It is 864 ha in size and forms an extensive flat clay plain, more undulating to the north.



Land use Predominately arable farmland, plus Watling Chase Community Forest, Ellenbrook Park, Hatfield Aerodrome, Oaklands College / educational campus, Home Office centre, sports centre and playing fields.

Land at House Lane displays urban influence and greater sense of enclosure



View to south from Woodcock Hill shows strong rural and open characteristics



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards preventing merging (of St Albans and Hatfield), safeguarding the countryside and maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing the gap between St Albans and Sandridge). Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 3 of the 5 Green Belt purposes.

GB36 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel provides the strategic gap to separate St Albans and Hatfield. The gap is 1.2km. It is large and generally well maintained (relatively free of development), in comparison to GB35. However it is subject to development at Oaklands College and ribbon development at Smallford. There is a strong visual perception of the Green Belt from the Hatfield Road. Any reduction in the gap, assuming it is located away from Smallford, would be unlikely to further compromise the separation of settlements in physical or visual terms, or overall levels of visual openness.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in large scale arable fields with hedgerow boundaries and hedgerow trees and is interspersed by woodland blocks with areas of ancient woodland to the north. There is a parkland landscape at Oaklands College with substantial areas of playing fields. There is evidence of urban features, especially at the former Hatfield aerodrome which is partially redeveloped with a new business park including visually dominant buildings. To the west there is a mix of urban fringe development as Oaklands College has recently been subject to expansion, representing further development in the Green Belt. The west part of the parcel, which contains development in the Green Belt, is enclosed by the St Albans settlement boundary on three edges. It therefore exhibits strongest levels of urban influence and represents a more enclosed area of land especially along Sandpit Lane and House Lane. Therefore levels of visual openness vary throughout the parcel but are high in general.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel does not provide setting for any historic places.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel contributes with GB37 to the primary local gap to separate St Albans and Sandridge (3 rd). This gap is narrow at 0.4km and ribbon development is evident between the settlements along St Albans Road, at Sandridge, and therefore there is limited perception of the Green Belt. Any reduction in the gap would be likely to compromise the separation of settlements in physical and visual terms, or local levels of visual openness.		

Level of openness and countryside character

Existence of built development The level of built development is low at 0.7%. There is evidence of ribbon development on the A1057 Hatfield Road at Smallford with commercial buildings, nurseries and the large development at the Oaklands campus.

Visual Openness There is a network of hedges, field trees and tree belts that visually contain the largely arable character. Around the Oaklands and Hatfield aerodrome sites views are more open.

Countryside Character The parcel is unified by the level topography yet has a diverse mix and incoherent

pattern of uses with the semi urban campus developments dominating.

GB36 – Next Steps

Area enclosed by residential development at east St Albans along Sandpit Lane is recommended for further assessment as a strategic sub-area (SA-S3). In light of the functions of the strategic parcel, the sub-area 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.

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GB41 –Green Belt Land West of Welwyn

Description The parcel is located to the west of Welwyn and extends to Wheathampstead and Gustard Wood to the west. The north boundary follows the edge of the study area and the south boundary aligns with Marford Road (B653). It is 1,905 ha in size and forms an undulating chalk plateau either side of the enclosed narrow river Lea valley and river Mimram.



Land use Mix of arable farmland and woodland, plus estate parkland, The Frythe (MDS) and Brocket Park Golf Course.

View to northeast from Whitehill towards Welwyn shows open setting and strong rural character



View from Brocket View at Wheathampstead displays urban fringe characteristics and enclosure



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards safeguarding the countryside, preserving the setting of Wheathampstead, Gustard Wood, Ayot St Lawrence, Ayot Green and Waterend, and maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing gaps between Welwyn Garden City to Welwyn, Ayot St Peter, Ayot Green and Lemsford. Partial contribution towards checking sprawl. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 3 of the 5 purposes.

GB41 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		PARTIAL
The parcel is located south of Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage and forms a connection with a wider network of parcels to the northwest to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements. However it forms part of a network with GB37, GB40, GB42 & GB43 to provide strategic gap between Welwyn Garden City and Harpenden. The A1(M) is relatively well screened but allows some views to, and perception, of the gap. Any reduction in the gap would be unlikely to compromise the separation of 1 st tier settlements.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in open arable farmland punctuated by some small blocks of mixed woodland. The large fields are generally bound by hedgerows with hedgerow trees. There is a high percentage of woodland including ancient woodland. The river Lea valley has a riparian habitat and frequent water meadows follow the water course. There is limited evidence of built development apart for 3 rd tier settlements, and there is no significant encroachment. The main urban influence (on the east part of the parcel only) is the A1(M) which is relatively well concealed but audibly intrusive. Some land displays urban fringe characteristics such as along the east edge of Wheathampstead. Levels of visual openness are high in general mainly due to an absence of built development.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel contains a range of conservation areas at Wheathampstead, Gustard Wood, Ayot St Lawrence, Ayot Green and Waterend. It also adjoins Welwyn Conservation Area and contains Brocket Park and Ayot House HPGs. The Green Belt acts as an immediate open and rural and pastoral setting, providing views to and from the countryside, and especially along the River Lea in relation to Wheathampstead.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel provides a series of gaps between 1 st , 2 nd and 3 rd tier settlements. Most significantly, it separates Welwyn Garden City (1 st) beyond the A1(M), to Welwyn (2 nd), Ayot St Peter (3 rd) Ayot Green (3 rd) and Lemsford (3 rd). These primary local gaps are narrow and therefore any small scale reduction would be likely to significantly compromise the separation of settlements in physical and visual terms, and the overall level of visual openness. The parcel also provides the secondary local gap between Wheathampstead (2 nd) and Welwyn (2 nd). The large gap is 4.5km and relatively well maintained (relatively free of development) and therefore any reduction (in the east only) would be unlikely to compromise the separation of settlements and overall visual openness. In general there is limited evidence of ribbon development, and the perception of open countryside is strong from routes within the parcel.		

Level of Openness and Countryside Character

Existence of built development The level of built development is low at 0.3%. There is little evidence of built development within the parcel.

Visual Openness The rolling landform and open fields allow for long distance views from many locations, including the estate parkland of Brocket Park, giving the parcel an open visual character. The Lea Valley is more enclosed with a higher percentage of tree cover.

Countryside Character The parcel comprises well established traditional open rolling farmland with the River Lea Valley displaying a contrasting enclosed sylvan riverine character. The small winding country lanes and lack of large scale settlements gives the parcel a quiet rural character.

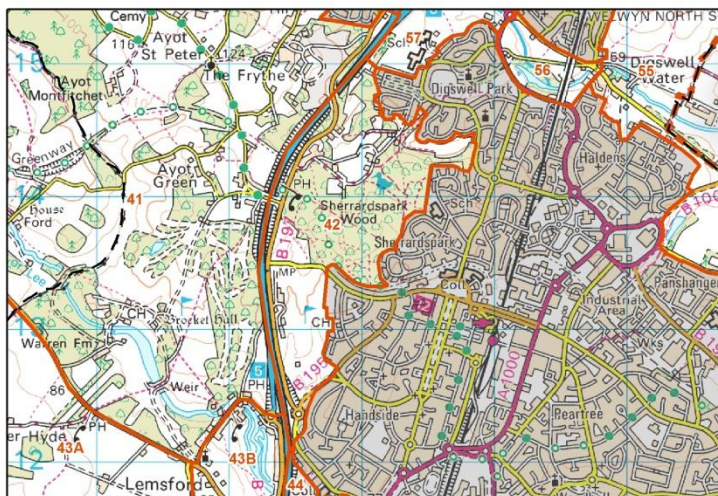
GB41 – Next Steps

Land east of Wheathampstead (GB41) to east of Brocket View is recommended for further assessment as a small scale sub-area (SA-SS8). Assessed in isolation this very small sub-area land makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging, preserving setting or maintaining local gaps.

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GB42 –Green Belt Land West of Welwyn Garden City

Description The parcel is located to the west of Welwyn Garden City and extends to align with the A1(M). The boundary to the north aligns with Crossway. It is narrow and is 189ha in size and forms a gently undulating plateau along the edge of Welwyn Garden City.



Land use Predominantly woodland including Sherrardspark Wood, Digswell Park plus reservoirs (covered), Welwyn Garden City Golf Course, playing fields and nursery.

Sherrardswood Wood



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards preserving the setting of Welwyn Garden City and Brocket Park, and maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing gaps between Welwyn Garden City and Ayot St Lawrence, Ayot St Peter, Ayot Green and Lemsford. Partial contribution towards safeguarding the countryside. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 2 of the 5 purposes.

GB42 – Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements. However it forms part of a network of parcels (with GB37, GB40, GB41 & GB43) which provide a strategic gap between Welwyn Garden City and Harpenden. The A1(M) is relatively well screened but allows some views to, and perception, of the gap. Any scale reduction in the gap would be unlikely to compromise the separation of 1 st tier settlements.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		PARTIAL
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in dominant mature woodland with Sherrardspark Wood covering much of the area. To the south there is a golf course surrounded by a few arable and pasture fields. Boundaries are generally hedgerows with occasional hedgerow trees. There is limited evidence of built development however urban influences are strong as narrow parcel is tightly enclosed by the concealed but audibly intrusive A1(M) and urban edge of Welwyn Garden City. This creates a semi-urban fringe environment. Levels of visual openness are variable due to a strong sense of enclosure as the parcel displays a mix of urban and rural characteristics.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel adjoins Welwyn Garden City conservation area and Bocket Park HPG. The Green Belt acts as an immediate open and rural historic setting, providing views to and from the countryside.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel contributes with GB41 the primary local gaps between Welwyn Garden City and a number of 3 rd tier settlements including Ayot St Lawrence, Ayot St Peter, Ayot Green and Lemsford. The narrow gaps range from 0.4 km to 1.6 km and contain the A1(M) however this route is well concealed and but offers some views onto the Green Belt. There is limited evidence of ribbon development. Therefore, any reduction in the gaps would be likely to compromise the separation of settlements in physical and visual terms, and the overall level of visual openness.		

Level of openness and countryside character

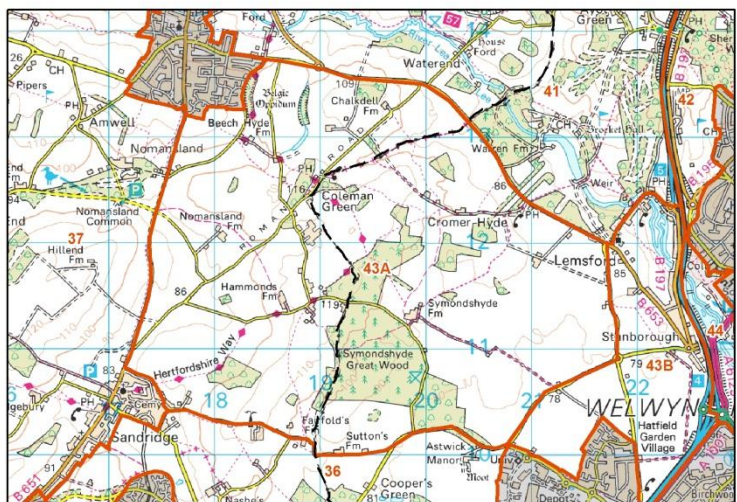
Existence of built development The level of built development is low at 0.5%. The busy A1(M) runs along the western boundary and is audibly intrusive. There is also housing along Rectory Road.

Visual Openness The parcel has an enclosed landscape due to the screening effects of the frequent wooded areas and high hedgerows.

Countryside Character The parcel is sandwiched between the built form of Welwyn Garden City and the busy A1(M) and is split north – south between deciduous woodland and the manicured fairways and greens of Welwyn Garden City Golf Club.

GB43A –Green Belt Land between Wheathampstead and Hatfield

Description The parcel is located to the southeast of Wheathampstead and extends to the northwest tip of Hatfield. It extends to Sandridge to the southwest and follows the Woodcock Hill to the south. It is 1,232ha in size and forms a large scale undulating chalk plateau.



Land use Predominantly arable farmland and woodland.

View to north from Coopers Green Lane, from northwest tip of Hatfield displays strong open and rural characteristics



View to south of Wheathampstead from Hill Dyke Road displays a greater sense of enclosure



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards safeguarding the countryside and maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing the gap between St Albans and Wheathampstead). Partial contribution towards preventing merging (of Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield with Harpenden). Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 2 of the 5 purposes.

GB43A – Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		PARTIAL
The parcel does not directly separate 1 st tier settlements. However, it forms a large section of a network of parcels (with GB37, GB40, GB41, GB42 & GB43B) which provide the strategic gap between Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield with Harpenden. Any scale of reduction in the gap would be unlikely to compromise the separation of 1 st tier settlements.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in large scale arable fields bound by hedgerows with hedgerow trees. There is a high percentage of woodland with a large area of ancient woodland at Symondshyde Great Wood. There is very limited evidence of built development and no significant encroachment. However the south edge of Wheathampstead exhibits a greater sense of enclosure and urban influence. Levels of visual openness are very high in general mainly due to an absence of built development. It displays a very different character to GB43B which contains more urban fringe features.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel adjoins Sandridge Conservation Area and Brocket Park HPG, whereby part of the park enters the parcel. The Green Belt acts as an immediate open and rural historic setting, providing views to and from the countryside.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel contributes with GB43B to the strategic gap between Welwyn Garden City (1 st) and Wheathampstead (3 rd). The gap is 4.5km and is large and well maintained (relatively free of development) with no evidence or ribbon development. Due to the scale and nature of the gap, any reduction would be unlikely to compromise the separation of settlements in physical or visual terms, or the overall level of visual openness.		

Level of openness and countryside character

Existence of built development The level of built development is very low at 0.2%. There is very limited evidence of built development within the parcel.

Visual Openness Rolling landform / open fields allow long distance views but wooded areas are more enclosed.

Countryside Character The parcel comprises a patchwork of traditional open rolling farmland with woodland. Small winding country lanes give the parcel a quiet rural character.

GB43A – Next Steps

Land south of Wheathampstead to south of Hill Dyke Road and enclosed by Dyke Lane to the east and settlement edge to the west, is recommended for further assessment as a small scale sub-area (SA-SS7). The southern extent runs level to Beech Crescent. Assessed in isolation this very small area of land makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging, preserving setting or maintaining local gaps.

GB43B –Green Belt Land at Hatfield Garden Village

Description The parcel is located to the northwest of Hatfield around Hatfield Garden Village and extends to the north to Lemsford. It is bordered to the east by the A1(M) and to the west it follows Coopers Green Lane. It is 255 ha in size and covers a flat chalk plateau which falls to the valley of the River Lea to the east.



Land use Predominantly arable farmland, plus allotments.

View to east from Green Lanes



View to northeast from Hatfield Avenue displays urban influence and greater sense of enclosure



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards preventing merging (of Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield with Harpenden) and maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing gaps between Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield with Stanborough). Partial contribution towards safeguarding the countryside. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 2 of the 5 purposes.

GB43B – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel does not directly separate 1 st tier settlements. However, it makes a significant contribution (with GB37, GB40, GB41, GB42 & GB43A) to a strategic gap between Welwyn Garden City and Hatfield with Harpenden. The strategic gap between Hatfield and Welwyn Hatfield is 1.5 km at its narrowest. It includes built development at Stanborough and the A6129. Any small scale reduction in the gap would be unlikely to comprise the separation of settlements in physical and visual terms, or overall visual openness.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		PARTIAL
The parcel displays a mix of countryside and urban fringe characteristics. It contains arable fields bounded by hedgerows with hedgerow trees and the River Lea is lined by riparian habitats with trees and water meadow pasture. There is evidence of urban features as the main urban influences are the A1(M) which is concealed by audibly intrusive. There is also built development at Lemsford and Stanborough, whereby ribbon development runs along the B653 and Great North Road (B197). The Green Belt penetrates the northwest settlement edge of Hatfield, especially around Hatfield Garden Village and therefore displays strongest urban influences. Combined with a smaller field patterns and landscape features there is a greater sense of localised landscape enclosure compared with GB43A. Levels of visual openness are varied throughout the parcel.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel adjoins Brocket Park HPG. However due to planting the Green Belt provides limited views and historic setting.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel provides primary local gaps between Welwyn Garden City (1 st) and Hatfield (1 st) and with Stanborough (3 rd). The gaps are 1.0km and 0.4m respectively. Gaps are relatively narrow and subject to strong urban influence due to the A1(M). Ribbon development also exists along the B197. Therefore any small scale reduction from Hatfield would be likely to compromise the separation of settlements in physical and visual terms, and local levels of visual openness.		

Level of openness and countryside character

Existence of built development The level of built development is low at 0.8%. There is built development at Stanborough and Lemsford. The parcel is also impacted by the A1(M).

Visual Openness Plateau areas to the west are relatively hidden due to the hedged field boundaries. The A1(M) is generally screened by roadside vegetation but sections built on embankment are visible locally.

Countryside Character The landscape of large arable fields is influenced by the A1(M) corridor and the neighbouring large scale commercial buildings of northern Hatfield add an urban dimension.

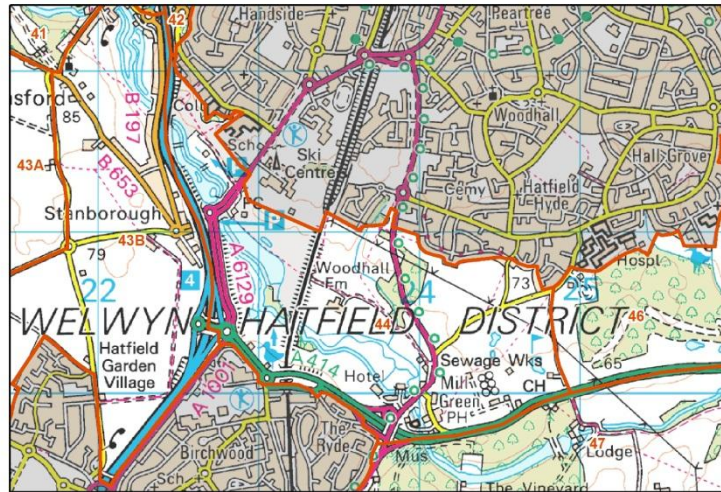
GB43B – Next Steps

Land at Hatfield Garden Village enclosed by north Hatfield, Coopers Green Lane (to the west) and A1(M) is recommended for further assessment as a strategic sub-area (WH-S1). In light of the functions of the strategic parcel, 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.

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GB44 –Green Belt Land between Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City

Description The parcel is located between Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City. The boundary to the west aligns with the A1(M) and to the east follows Gypsy Lane. The small parcel is 257 ha in size and forms the flat valley floor of the river Lea.



Land use Mix of farmland, plus Stanborough Park including boating lake and sailing lake, Mill Green Museum and Mill, Mill Green Wastewater Treatment Works, golf course, caravan site and hotel.

Lake at Stanborough Park, an example of recreational activities in the Green Belt



Elliot Close, to the south of Welwyn Garden City, displays urban influence and greater sense of enclosure



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards preventing merging (of Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City) and maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing the gap between Welwyn Garden City and Stanborough). Partial contribution towards safeguarding the countryside. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 2 of the 5 Green Belt purposes.

GB44 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel provides a strategic gap to separate Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City. The gap is 1.0km. It is narrow and well maintained (relatively free of development). There is evidence of development at Mill Green, however the urban edge to the south is considered to be stronger than to the north. There is visual perception of the gap from the railway line and A6129 however not from the A1(M). Any minor reduction in the gap would be unlikely to comprise the separation of settlements in physical and visual terms, or the level of overall visual openness.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		PARTIAL
The parcel displays a mix of countryside and urban fringe characteristics. It contains both pastoral and arable farmland in medium sized fields enclosed by hedgerows and tree belts. There is also recreational parkland with former mineral extraction sites restored to fishing lakes at Stanborough Park. Derelict meadows are a feature of the area, with scrub and trees giving it a well vegetated appearance. There is strong evidence of urban influences, especially main roads including the A1(M), A1000, A414 and A6129 and railway line which provide views on to the Green Belt and are audibly intrusive. There is also built development around Mill Green which is very close to the Hatfield edge. There are examples of land to the south of Welwyn Garden City which exhibit a greater sense of localised landscape enclosure and urban influence at Elliot Close and Ascots Lane. Levels of visual openness are varied throughout the parcel due to a contrasting mix of rural and urban fringe characteristics.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel does not provide setting for any historic places.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel provides the primary local gap to separate Welwyn Garden City and Stanborough (3 rd). The gap is 0.4km. It is narrow and contains Stanborough Park and the A1(M) which is well concealed by landscape features and planting. It also separates Hatfield and Mill Green (3 rd). This very narrow gap is 0.5km. Therefore, any reduction in gaps would be likely to compromise the separation of settlements in physical and visual terms, and local levels of visual openness.		

Level of openness and countryside character

Existence of built development The level of built development is very low at 0.3%. The parcel contains golf courses, sports grounds, a sewage works and the busy route corridors of the A1(M), A6129, A1000 and A414 are located within the parcel.

Visual Openness Within the parcel views are enclosed by trees within the river valley and by local hedgerows and tree belts. Views are possible directly into the parcel from road corridors where they pass on embankment.

Countryside Character The parcel comprises pastoral farmland and riverine parkland within a flat valley landform which is edged by built form and bordered by busy roads and is bisected by a railway, all of which add urban influences.

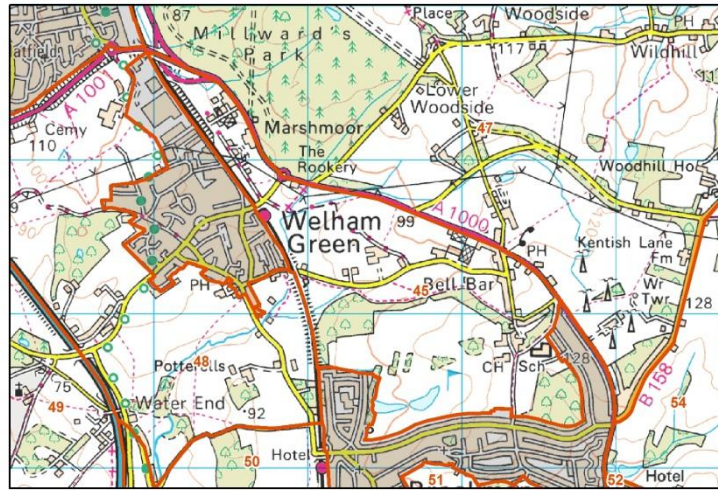
GB44 – Next Steps

Land south of Welwyn Garden City is recommended for further assessment as a small scale sub-area (WH-SS2). The sub-area is located 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 very small area land makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging, preserving setting or maintaining local gaps.

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GB45 –Green Belt Land North of Brookmans Park

Description The parcel is located to the north of Brookmans Park and extends to the south eastern corner of Hatfield and aligns with the east edge of Welham Green. The boundary to the north is contiguous with the Great North Road (A1000). It is 239 ha in size and forms part of the gently undulating South Hertfordshire plateau.



Land use Predominantly arable farmland, plus Brookmans Park Golf Course, nurseries, education, caravan park / mobile home park and kennels.

Bulls Lane at Welham End



Narrow gap to Bell Bar



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing the gap between Welham Green and Brookmans Park). Partial contribution towards preventing merging (of Hatfield and Potters Bar) and safeguarding the countryside. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 1 of the 5 purposes.

GB45 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		PARTIAL
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements, however it contributes (with GB48, 49 & 50) to the strategic gap between Hatfield and Potters Bar. This gap is 5km in total and contains Welham Green and Brookmans Park. Therefore any small scale reduction in the gap would be unlikely to compromise the separation of 1 st tier settlements in physical and visual terms but would have a greater impact on 2 nd tier settlements.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		PARTIAL
The parcel displays a mix of countryside and urban fringe characteristics. It contains open arable farmland punctuated by frequent small blocks of mixed woodland, including ancient woodland. A large percentage of the parcel is covered by Brookmans Park Golf Course which is interspersed with belts of mature trees. There is evidence of urban features / built development mainly at Bell Bar and the caravan sites and travelling show-people's site to the east of Welham Green between the railway line and Great North Road. Therefore there has been limited encroachment. The mix of activities, in addition to major route corridors, provides urban fringe characteristics. Routes are well concealed but audibly intrusive. Levels of visual openness are varied throughout the parcel.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel adjoins Hatfield Park HPG. However the connection is dissected by the Great North Road and therefore preservation of setting is limited.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel contributes to the secondary local gap between Welham Green (2 nd) and Brookmans Park (2 nd). The gap is 0.6km. It is narrow, and aided by the railway line, but well-maintained by landscape features. There is evidence of ribbon development at Bell Bar to the northeast of Brookmans Park and the west side of the A1000 Great North Road at Marshmoor. There is limited visual perception of the Green Belt at these narrow gaps north east of Brookmans Park from the Great North Road. Any reduction would be likely to compromise the separation of settlements in physical and visual terms, and local levels of visual openness.		

Level of openness and countryside character

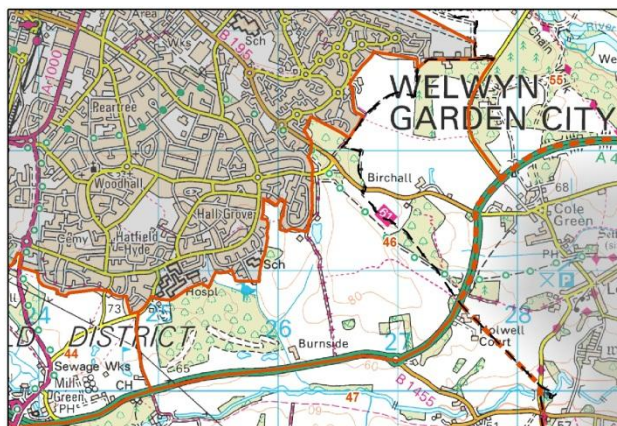
Existence of built development The level of built development is low at 0.9%. A cluster of small fields to the north of Bulls Lane have been developed with smallholdings and nurseries. Ribbon residential development is also present within the parcel.

Visual Openness Roadside hedgerows, hedgerow trees and tree belts enclose the parcel and restrict views.

Countryside Character Arable farmland is located adjacent to semi-rural influences such as the golf course.

GB46 – Green Belt Land to Southeast of Welwyn Garden City

Description The parcel is Green Belt land located to the southeast of Welwyn Garden City and runs into East Hertfordshire. The boundary to the south aligns with the Hertford Road (A414) and to the northeast with Panshanger Lane. It wraps around the edge of Welwyn Garden City and is 440 ha in size. It forms an undulating chalk plateau which rises to either side of the enclosed narrow valley of the river Lea.



Land use Predominantly arable farmland, plus The Commons, caravan park, golf course, waste and recycling facilities, aquatic centre and garden centre.

View towards concealed A414 from Moneyhole Lane



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards safeguarding the countryside. Partial contribution towards preventing merging and maintaining the existing settlement pattern. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 1 of the 5 purposes.

GB46 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		PARTIAL
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements. However it contributes with GB55 to provide the strategic gap to Hertford. This gap is large, well maintained (relatively free of development) and the Green Belt is visible from the A414. Due to the scale of the gap, any reduction in the gap would be unlikely to compromise the separation of settlement in physical or visual terms, or the level of overall visual openness.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in large scale arable fields with hedgerow boundaries and significant number of deciduous woodlands, including ancient woodland, and tree belts with areas of recreation and small pasture, especially close to Welwyn Garden City. Part of The Commons is a local nature reserve and there is an extensive mineral extraction site at Holwell Hyde has been restored to pasture, arable and a fishing lake. There is limited built development or encroachment however the parcel exhibits strong urban fringe characteristics especially along the settlement edge which penetrates by the Green Belt which contains a mix of uses and is enclosed by the concealed but audibly intrusive A414. Some areas of the parcel provide a greater sense of localised landscape enclosure and stronger urban influence especially to the southeast of Welwyn Garden City. Levels of visual openness are variable but generally high.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel adjoins Hatfield Park HPG and Panshanger HPG. However the connection is dissected by Panshanger Lane and therefore preservation of setting is limited.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		PARTIAL
The parcel contributes to providing the primary local gap to Cole Green (in to the south of the study area) beyond the A414. This gap is 1.6 km and is free from development. Any minor reduction in the gap would be unlikely to compromise the separation of settlements in physical or visual terms, or the level of visual openness.		

Level of openness and countryside character

Existence of built development The level of built development is very low at 0.1%. Built development within the parcel comprises a caravan park, sports and recreation grounds, and various waste management facilities and aggregates extraction at Birchall Lane.

Visual Openness The southern edge of Welwyn Garden City is well screened by vegetation and the relatively flat landform and high percentage of woodland prevents long distance views from many areas.

Countryside Character An urban fringe belt around the eastern flanks of Welwyn Garden City with a diverse range of land uses. The wooded Commons, recreation grounds and mineral extraction on Birchall Lane give an urban fringe influence with the area to the east more rural with arable cultivation and blocks of woodland.

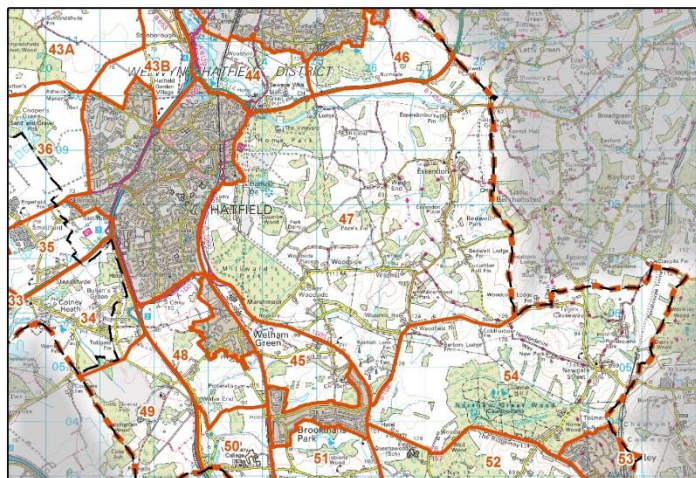
GB46 – Next Steps

Land southeast of Welwyn Garden City (also located in GB55) enclosed by the A414 is recommended for further assessment as a strategic sub-area (WH-S2). In light of the functions of the strategic parcel, 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 issue in relation to a strategic sub-area identified in the study.

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GB47 – Green Belt Land East of Hatfield

Description The parcel is located to the east of Hatfield and extends to WHBC administrative boundary. The boundary to the north aligns with the Hertford Road (A414) and to the south the Great North Road (A1000) and Kentish Lane / Woodfield Lane. It contains Hatfield Park providing setting to Hatfield House. It is large at 2,322 ha and forms a clay plateau which falls to the river Lea valley in the north with gently undulating slopes and intermittent stream valleys.



Land use Mix of activities including estate parkland at Hatfield House, plus Brookmans Park Transmitting Station, farmland.

Hatfield House setting



View to Historic Park and Garden shows woodland within strong open and rural setting



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards safeguarding the countryside, preserving the setting of Hatfield Park and Hatfield House, and maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing gap between Essendon, Woodside, Wildhill and Bell Bar. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 3 of the 5 purposes.

GB47 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics as Hatfield House Historic Park & Garden is an extensive area of parkland with large woodland blocks and pockets of farmland with parkland trees. It is characterised by the extensive range of formal planting and landscape features and the land is also used for mixed forestry plantations and dairy farming. In the east part of the parcel there are large scale arable fields with a transition to smaller scale fields in the south, divided by hedgerows and wooded belts. There is also a golf course on former parkland at Bedwell Park. There is limited evidence of urban features and built development apart from at 3 rd tier settlements and Brookmans Park Transmitting Station. There is no encroachment and the east edge of Hatfield acts as a strong barrier. Levels of visual openness are very high mainly due to an absence of built development.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel contains Hatfield Park HPG and Hatfield House, as well as Essendon conservation area. The Green Belt provides an immediate historic and open setting with views to and from the countryside. Hatfield House is one of the finest historic buildings in England and is located on the western boundary of both the parcel and the HPG. The house is the focal point of the Park with designed views running from it. Peripheral estate architecture enforces the parkland character and defines its strong boundary. Two main axis cut the Park into four large compartments and landscape features such as the walled vineyard bridging the river Lea and the formal gardens around the house are nationally important. Large areas of forestry plantations conceal some of the historic parkland trees.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel provides a number of secondary local gaps between a range of 3 rd tier settlements including Essendon, Woodside, Wildhill and Bell Bar. Gaps are well maintained (relatively free of development) and range from 2.8km to 1.0km, the narrowest between Woodside and Wildhill. There is no significant ribbon development. Any reduction in gaps would be unlikely to compromise separation of settlements, apart from between Woodside and Wildhill, and localised levels of openness. There are also primary local gaps being all 3 rd tier settlements and Hatfield. There is no risk of merging due to Hatfield Park HPG.		

Level of Openness and Countryside Character

Existence of built development The level of built development is low at 0.4%. Some semi-rural influences with the golf course at Bedwell Park but generally little development.

Visual Openness Public views into Hatfield Park are limited by strong boundaries and dense woodland blocks. Internally, long vistas are framed by double avenues and woodland rides. Farmland with parkland trees provides picturesque views across the estate from within. The extensive forestry plantations create a coniferous skyline which is locally prominent.

Countryside Character It is a tranquil area, apart from occasional noise from the A414, arable farmland on shallow slopes is a fairly typical feature of the county. Generally unsettled, with isolated farms and tiny hamlets within hidden valleys.

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GB48 –Green Belt Land between Hatfield and Welham Green

Description This small parcel is located to the south of Hatfield and aligns with the west edge of Welham Green to Warrengate Road / Bradmore Lane to the south and A1(M) to the E. It is 287 ha in size and forms a gently undulating plateau which falls gradually to the valley of the Mimms Hall Brook.



Land use Predominantly agricultural activities. Farms, arable and pastoral farmland, , recreation ground, playing fields, medical centre, kennels, Former Central Resources Library (MDS) and Welwyn Hatfield District Lawn Cemetery and park and ride.

View to south from Dixons Hill Road shows strong open and rural characteristics



View to north from Dellsome Lane



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing the gap between Hatfield and Welham Green). Partial contribution towards preventing merging and safeguarding the countryside. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 2 of the 5 purposes.

GB48 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment	Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.	
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging	PARTIAL
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements however it contributes (with GB45, 49 & 50) to the strategic gap between Hatfield and Potters Bar. This gap is 5km in total and contains Welham Green and Brookmans Park. Therefore any reduction in the gap would be unlikely to compromise the separation of 1 st tier settlements in physical and visual terms but would have a greater impact on 2 nd tier settlements.	
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	PARTIAL
The parcel displays a mix of urban and rural characteristics. It contains arable farmland with medium scale fields bound by hedgerows, and small fields of pasture with fenced boundaries at settlement edges. There is an area of ancient woodland at Bush Wood to the west of Welham Green and a number of small ponds on the higher ground associated with farms and woodlands. A riparian treed landscape with water pasture surrounds Water End, which includes an SSSI, and the Mimms Hall Brook. There is evidence of built development at the former Central Resources Library, along Dixons Hill Road extending from Welham Green and at Warrengate Lane. The main urban influences are the A1(M), Great North Road and railway line which are visible and audibly intrusive. There are also large scale industrial units along Travellers Lane. Levels of visual openness are high in general.	
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	PARTIAL
The northern part of the parcel provides historic setting of Old Hatfield Conservation Area and the Hatfield Park Historic Park and Garden. There is clear inter-visibility from the Green Belt.	
To maintain existing settlement pattern	SIGNIFICANT
The parcel provides the primary local gap between Hatfield (1 st) and Welham Green (2 nd). This gap is narrowest by the railway line and widens to the west. The gap is narrowest at less than 0.2km. It contains the Southway, which separates Welham Green industrial units from Hatfield. There is limited perception of the gap from the Southway due to high planting. The parcel also provides the secondary local gap to separate Welham Green (2 nd) and Brookmans Park (2 nd) with GB45. This gap is narrow at 0.6km. Any reduction in the gaps would be likely to compromise the separation of settlements in physical and visual terms, and local levels of visual openness.	

Level of openness and countryside character

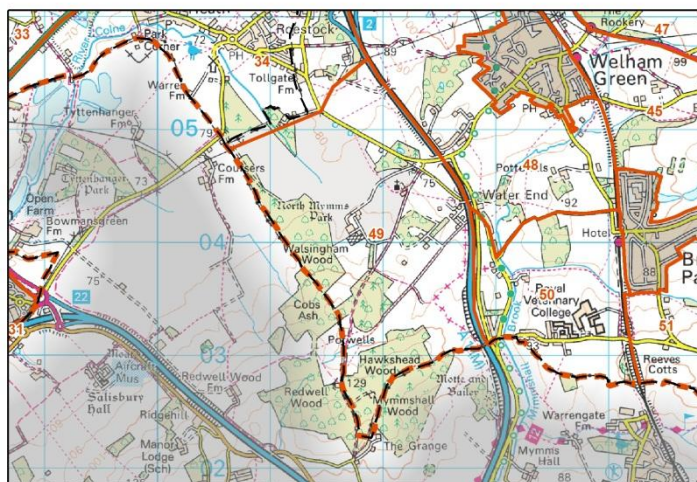
Existence of built development The level of built development is low at 0.7%. There is some ribbon residential development at Welham Green and surrounding the borders of the major routes to the north and east of the parcel.

Visual Openness The extent of built development within and on the perimeter of the area is generally well concealed by hedgerows and roadside vegetation.

Countryside Character The area is confined to the west, north and west by major transport corridors of the A1(M), the A1001 and the railway line respectively. These combined with the settlement at Welham Green give the parcel an urban edge rather than a rural character.

GB49 –Green Belt Land to South of Hatfield

Description The parcel is located to the south of Hatfield, beyond the southwest tip of the settlement. It aligns A1(M) to the east, and broadly follows the edge of the study area to the south. It is 373 ha in size and the northern area is gently undulating with the slopes rising to the pronounced end of the Shenley ridge with a number of secondary valleys.



Land use Predominantly arable farmland, plus forestry and reservoir (covered).

View to south from Tolgate Road shows strong countryside characteristics



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards safeguarding the countryside. Partial contribution towards preventing merging (providing the gap between Hatfield and Potters Bar). Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 1 of the 5 purposes.

GB49 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		PARTIAL
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements however it contributes (with GB45, 48 & 50) to the strategic gap between Hatfield and Potters Bar. This gap is 5km in total and contains Welham Green and Brookmans Park. Therefore any reduction in the gap would be unlikely to compromise the separation of 1 st tier settlements in physical and visual terms but would have a greater impact on 2 nd tier settlements.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in a patchwork of large scale arable fields with hedgerow boundaries, grazed estate parkland with mature trees and deciduous woodland with substantial areas of ancient woodland. The parcel exhibits strong historic continuity, combining parkland on the lower slopes with extensive woodlands on the upper slopes and crown of a pronounced ridge. There is very limited evidence of urban features / built development and no encroachment. Levels of visual openness are very high across the parcel due to an absence of built development.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel does not provide setting for any historic places.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel does not separate 2 nd or 3 rd tier settlements.		

Level of Openness and Countryside Character

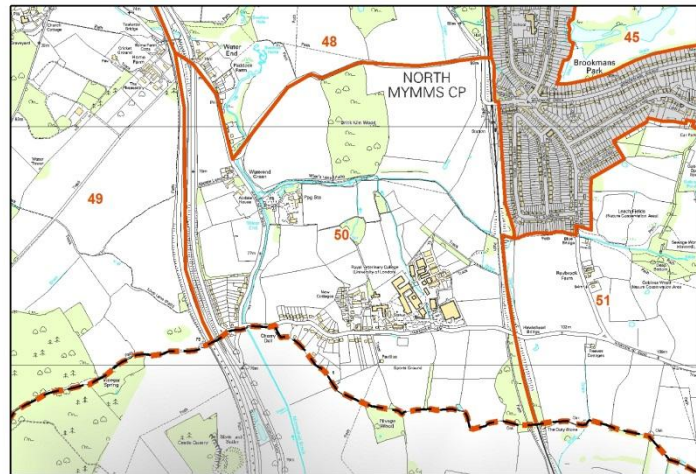
Existence of built development The level of built development is very low at 0.2%. the busy M25 and A1(M) are close to the edge of the parcel

Visual Openness The parcel is generally open although more enclosed to the south due to woodland and there are some extensive panoramas over arable fields towards Shenley ridge.

Countryside Character The estate farmland is surrounded by arable fields and interspersed by extensive woodland to give a rural character to the parkland.

GB50 –Green Belt Land to West of Brookmans Park

Description The parcel is located to the west of Brookmans Park and extends to run alongside the northwest edge of Potters Bar. To the east it follows the A1(M) to the edge of the study area to the south. It is 169ha in size and forms a gently undulating plateau which falls gradually to the valley of the Mimmshall Brook to the north and west.



Land use Predominantly arable farmland, plus educational campus, hotel, King George V Recreation Ground, Royal Veterinary College (MDS), Lady Elizabeth Byney Playing Field and Waste services and recycling centre.

View to south from Bradmore Lane towards Veterinary College



View to west from Brookmans Park railway station



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing the gap between Brookmans Park and Potters Bar). Partial contribution towards preventing merging and safeguarding the countryside. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 1 of the 5 purposes.

GB50 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		PARTIAL
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements; however it contributes (with GB45, 48 & 49) to the strategic gap between Hatfield and Potters Bar. This gap is 5km in total and contains Welham Green and Brookmans Park. Therefore any reduction in the gap would be unlikely to compromise the separation of 1 st tier settlements in physical and visual terms but would have a greater impact on 2 nd tier settlements.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		PARTIAL
The parcel displays a mix of urban and rural characteristics. It contains arable farmland with medium scale fields bound by hedgerows, and smaller fields of pasture with fenced boundaries near settlements and surrounding the Veterinary College. There are pockets of woodland belts with a small area of ancient woodland. There is evidence of urban features and built development in the mix of uses in the Green Belt including the Royal Veterinary College (MDS), which has a local visual impact. The other main urban influence is the A1(M) which is well concealed but audibly intrusive. There is evidence of ribbon development in the form of large housing extending along Hawkhead Lane (to the west from the Royal Veterinary College) and Warrengate Lane and Swanland Road (close to the motorway). This represents encroachment. Levels of visual openness are generally high but variable due to the mix of built development, and countryside characteristics dominate.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel does not provide setting for any historic places.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel provides the primary local gap to separate Brookmans Park and Potters Bar. The gap is 1.2km. It adjoins the railway line however landscape features and planting conceal this route. Given development in the Green Belt at the Veterinary College, any reduction to the gap would be likely to compromise the separation of settlements in physical and visual terms, and overall visual openness.		

Level of openness and countryside character

Existence of built development The level of built development is very high at 1.7%. There is considerable development surrounding Hawkshead Lane including the Veterinary College (MDS) and ribbon residential development and development at Swanley Bar.

Visual Openness The extent of built development within the area is generally well concealed by high hedgerows and roadside vegetation.

Countryside Character The area is confined to the west and east by major transport corridors of the A1(M) and the railway line. These combined with residential ribbon development give the parcel a semi urban quality.

GB51 –Green Belt Land between Brookmans Park and Little Heath

Description The parcel is located between Brookmans Park and Little Heath (adjoining Potters Bar). The boundary to the west follows the railway line and to the east aligns with the Great North Road (A1000). The southern edge crosses into Hertsmere. It is 287 ha in size and comprises a clay plateau with ridgelines forming a series of parallel dips and slopes with a central ridge.



Land use: Predominantly parkland, plus farmland, Boltons Park Farm (Royal Veterinary College) campus and Gobions open space.

View from Hawshead Road showing open gap between Little Heath / Potters Bar and Brookmans Park



View to southwest edge of Brookmans Park



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards safeguarding the countryside, preserving setting and maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing the gap between Brookmans Park and Little Heath / Potters Bar). Partial contribution towards preventing merging. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 3 of the 5 Green Belt purposes.

GB51 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		PARTIAL
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements however it contributes (with GB45, 48 & 50) to the strategic gap between Hatfield and Potters Bar. This gap contains settlements of Welham Green and Brookmans Park. Given the scale of the gap, any small scale reduction would be unlikely to compromise the separation of 1 st tier settlements in physical. It would be likely to have a greater impact on 2 nd tier settlements and local levels of visual openness.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in parkland to the north of Potters Bar and at Gobions Park HPG which provides a historical framework for a variety of recreational pursuits including a golf course which acts as a buffer to the south. There are also medium sized arable fields bounded by hedgerows without tree lines and some irregularly shaped fenced pasture fields surrounding the second Royal Veterinary College building (the main college campus is located in GB50). There is built development at Swanley Bar and surrounding ribbon development which extends from Little Heath. Levels of visual openness are high in general.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		SIGNIFICANT
Parcel contains Gobions Open Space HPG. The Green Belt acts as an immediate open and rural historic setting, providing views to and from the countryside.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel provides the local gap to separates Brookmans Park (2 nd) and Little Heath (2 nd) which is part of Potters Bar. The gap is 1.2 km and contains Swanley Bar (3 rd) wherefrom ribbon development extends to the south to Little Heath. This gap is very narrow at less than 0.2 km. Any small scale reduction in gaps would be unlikely to comprise the physical separation of the settlements, but would reduce localised levels of visual openness.		

Level of Openness and Countryside Character

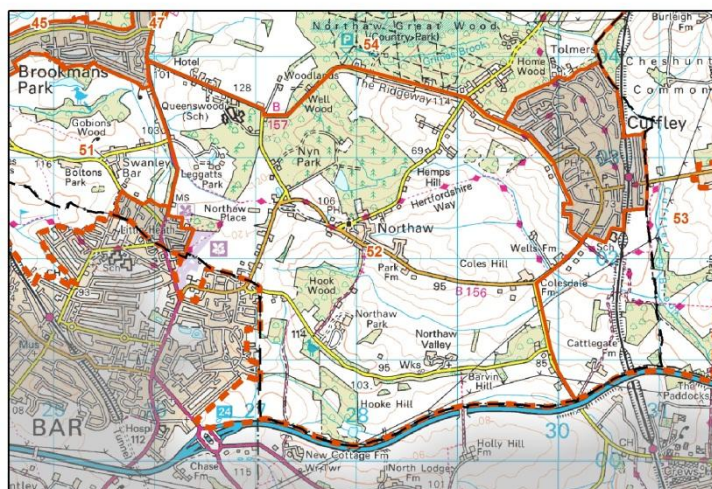
Existence of built development The level of built development is low at 0.7%. A golf course at Potters Bar and some limited built development at the Royal Veterinary College.

Visual Openness Hawkshead Road follows the top of the ridge separating Potters Bar and Brookmans Park. This landform limits views between the settlements and provides a rural visual barrier, whilst long distance views are obtained to the north and south. The woodland to the south of Brookmans Park restricts views to the edge of the settlement. In the valleys and woodlands the landscape is more enclosed.

Countryside Character A rather fragmented landscape with a strong semi urban influence from the estate parklands and golf courses. The area has a more rural character along Hawkshead Road, where it is relatively open with long views.

GB52 –Green Belt Land West of Cuffley

Description The parcel is located to the west of Cuffley and extends to the east edge of Potters Bar and the Great North Road (A1000). The boundary to the north aligns with The Ridgeway (B157) and to the south with the M25 along the edge of the study area. The west edge crosses into Hertsmere. It is 1,154 ha in size and forms part of the undulating clay with flints plateau defined by slopes and narrow ridgelines which create a series of parallel dips and valley bowls.



Land use Predominantly arable farmland and estate parkland, plus Northaw Park, Great Northaw Wood (SSSI in north only) and Queenswood School (MDS).

View to west from Cuffley showing wide open local gap



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards checking sprawl from London, safeguarding the countryside and maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing gaps between Brooklands Park, Little Heath / Potters Bar and Cuffley). Partial contribution towards preserving setting. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 3 of the 5 Green Belt purposes.

GB52 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel is located to the north of London. It forms a strong connection with a wider network of parcels to the south to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in arable land whereby the field pattern becomes more organic further north and west as fields are smaller, associated with the historic parkland and settlement boundaries. The smaller, often linear fields are used for horse grazing and are bound by a mixture of ancient relic hedgerows and post-and-wire fences. Estate parkland is found at Nyn Park and mature plantation and ancient woodland is scattered across the parcel. Well Wood, adjoining the Great Wood (GB54) is a designated SSSI. There is evidence of scattered ribbon development in the form of large single dwellings, principally along The Ridgeway (B157) extending from the northwest edge of Cuffley, and along Vineyards Road to Northaw and Coopers Lane extending from northeast edge of Potters Bar. The main urban influence is the M25, which is concealed by planting but audibly intrusive. Levels of visual openness are generally high with long views over the parcel evident especially from Cuffley. However a greater sense of localised landscape enclosure from boundary planting and buffering and residential edges is evident along the east edge of Potters Bar.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		PARTIAL
The parcel contains Northaw Conservation Area. The Green Belt acts as an immediate open and rural historic setting, providing views to and from the countryside.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel contributes with GB54 provides a local gap to separates Brooklands Park (2 nd) and Little Heath (3 rd) / Potters Bar with Cuffley (2 nd). The gap is 3.6 km. It contains Northaw from which ribbon development extends but is generally free from development. Therefore any small scale reduction in the gap (away from the north of Potters Bar and north Cuffley) would be unlikely to compromise the physical separation of settlements however local levels of visual openness would be reduced. The Green Belt is partly visible from the M25 however settlements are well concealed by planting.		

Level of Openness and Countryside Character

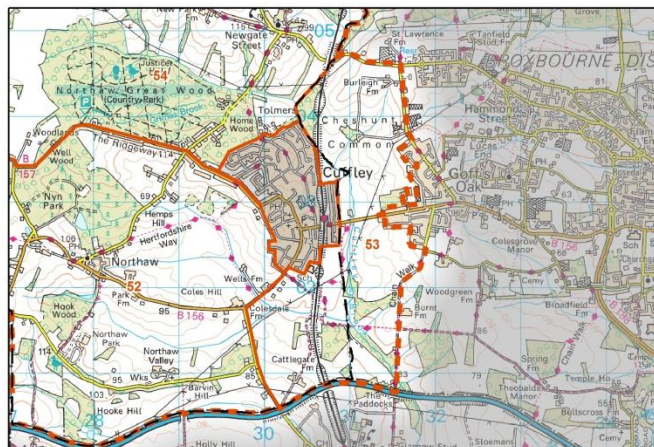
Existence of built development The level of built development is low at 0.7%. Built development is generally confined to linear strips of large individual houses such as at the Ridgeway.

Visual Openness Within estate parkland fenced boundaries, large blocks of woodland and high hedgerows create a strong sense of enclosure. From more agricultural locations and elevated areas such as the western edge of Cuffley views are panoramic and open.

Countryside Character A tranquil area, apart from the boundary with the M25 to the south, with sloping arable farmland and wooded estate parkland common. An enclosed character due to the bowl landform, and generally sparsely inhabited although ribbon development has spread along the Ridgeway from Cuffley.

GB53 –Green Belt Land South of Cuffley

Description The parcel is located to the south and east of Cuffley and extends along the M25 and then follows the southeast edge of the study area. The east edge of the parcel crosses into Broxbourne. It is 475 ha in size and form the deep valley of Cuffley Brook which flows north-south through the parcel.



Land use Predominantly arable farmland, Cuffley Football Club.

Local gap between Goffs Oak and Cuffley (in the distance)



View to the concealed M25 from south from Cattlegate Road, south of Cuffley



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards checking sprawl from London, safeguarding the countryside and maintaining the existing settlement pattern. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 3 of the 5 Green Belt purposes.

GB53 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel is located to the north of London. It forms a strong connection with a wider network of parcels to the south to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in arable farmland, with blocks of woodland to the south. Also, large open fields with limited boundaries are located on former common land and linear tree belts follow the course of the Cuffley Brook. There is limited built development however the main urban influences are the well concealed M25 and railway line which are audibly intrusive. The valley setting enables strong visibility of Cuffley and Goff's Oak (located in Broxbourne) to the east of the parcel boundary. The Cuffley settlement edges acts as a strong barrier to encroachment. Levels of visual openness are generally high across the parcel, especially on higher slopes.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel does not provide setting for any historic places.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel contributes to the provision of the local gap from separates Cuffley (2 nd) to Goffs Oak (located on Broxbourne to the east of the study area). At its narrowest the gap is 0.5 km and it follows Cuffley Brook and is well maintained (relatively free of development). The parcel also provides a gap to built development at Crews Hill beyond the M25 to the south. There is perception of the Green Belt from Cuffley Hill (B156). Any small scale reduction in the gap could compromise the physical separation of settlements, and local levels of visual openness.		

Level of openness and countryside character

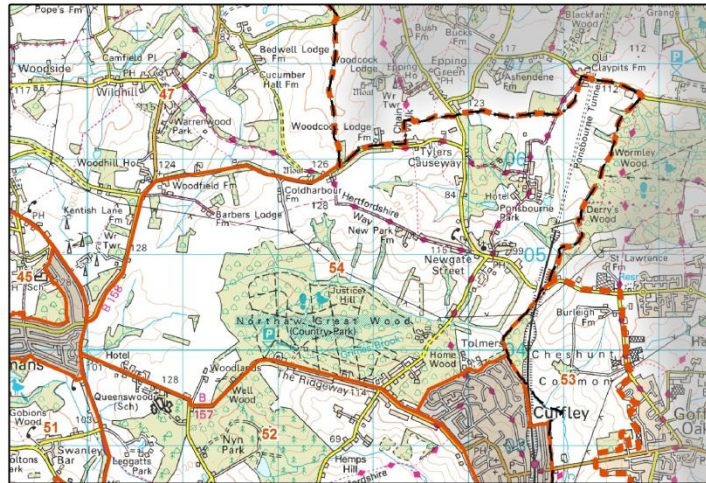
Existence of built development The level of built development is very low at 0.3%. There is limited agricultural related development and a primary school close to the railway line to the south of Cuffley.

Visual Openness To the south there are open arable fields with some blocks of woodland which rise up to the railway line. Therefore views are variable across the parcel and are often limited by roadside vegetation and tree belts.

Countryside Character Views to the urban edges and the presence of the railway in the valley and the M25 on the southern boundary represent urban influences. There is open arable farmland over the valley which clearly divides settlements and local topography is made more obvious by the arable monoculture which reinforces the simplicity of the valley landform.

GB54 –Green Belt Land North of Cuffley

Description The parcel is located to the north of Cuffley and extends to the WHBC administrative boundary. The boundary to the northeast follows Kentish Lane (B158) / Woodfield Lane / Tylers Causeway. It is 1,155 ha in size and forms a gently undulating plateau rising to ridges in various locations.



Land use Northaw Great Wood (SSSI) and arable farmland.

View to east, shows strong countryside characteristics



View to southwest to Northaw Great Wood



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards safeguarding the countryside and maintaining the existing settlement pattern between Brookmans Park and Cuffley. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 2 of the 5 Green Belt purposes.

GB54 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in the extensive Northaw Great Wood (SSSI) and large scale ancient woodland, which is a strong feature of the parcel. It is surrounded by arable slopes of medium sized fields with dense hedgerows to the west and parkland pasture and arable farmland with linked woodland to the northeast. There is very limited built development apart from Newgate Street which is subject to limited ribbon development to the west and south. There is also scattered ribbon development along the north edge of the parcel along Tylers Causeway. There is no evidence of significant encroachment. Levels of visual openness are generally high.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel does not provide setting for any historic places.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel contributes with GB52 provides a local gap to separates Brookmans Park (2 nd) and Cuffley (2 nd). The gap is 3.5km and is well maintained (relatively free of development) by Northaw Great Wood however it contains limited ribbon development to the east close to Cuffley. Newgate Street (3 rd) is also located 0.9km to the north of Cuffley (3 rd). Any small to medium scale reduction in the gap would be unlikely to compromise the physical separation of settlements, or the local levels of visual openness.		

Level of openness and countryside character

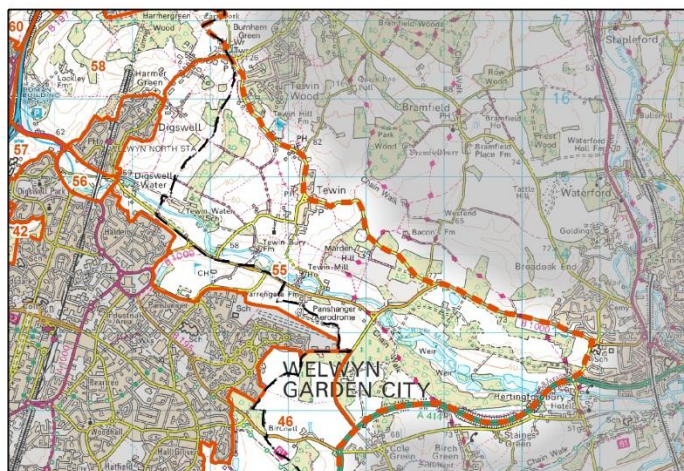
Existence of built development The level of built development is low at 0.5%. Built development is generally confined to linear strips of large single dwellings such as at Ridgeway and Newgate Street.

Visual Openness The extent of built development within the parcel is generally well concealed by high hedgerows and roadside vegetation. Within the parcel, woodland views are very limited but in more open locations they are frequently long distance.

Countryside Character A tranquil area with little settlement. Generally a rural character although busy roads on the boundaries add to a feeling of urban pressure.

GB55 –Green Belt Land Northeast of Welwyn Garden City

Description The parcel is located along the northeast edge of Welwyn Garden City and extends to the edge of Herford along Thieves Lane to the west, Tewin to the north and the A414 to the south. The east edge of the parcel crosses into East Hertfordshire. It is 1,108 ha in size and runs along part of the River Mimram valley which adjoins floodplain and series of minor parallel dry tributary valleys with undulating slopes.



Land use Mix of arable and pasture farmland, plus Panshanger aerodrome and recreational activities including Welwyn Garden City Football Ground and Panshanger Golf Course.

View to Tewin, showing open valley setting



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards safeguarding the countryside, preserving the setting of Welwyn Garden City and Tewin Water, and maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing the gap between Welwyn Garden City and Digswell). Partial contribution towards preventing merging. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 3 of the 5 Green Belt purposes.

GB55 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITDE / NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		PARTIAL
The parcel contributes to providing the strategic gap to separate Welwyn Garden City and Hertford (in East Hertfordshire to the east of the study area). The gap is 3.3km and is well maintained (relatively free of development) by the River Mimram valley. There is strong visibility of the gap from the B1000. Any scale reduction in the gap would be unlikely to compromise the separation of settlements in physical or visual terms or overall visual openness, but might impact on the gap between 1 st and 2 nd tier settlements.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in a mix of pasture and wetland vegetation in the River Mimram floodplain (including two SSSIs adjoin the edge of the parcel) and arable fields and broadleaf woodland on valley slopes. The area adjoining Digswell is a south facing strongly undulating slope consisting of mixed arable farmland and woodland, with south facing views over the Mimram to Welwyn Garden City. Black Fan Valley and Panshanger and Tewin Water HPGs are also an important feature of the parcel. There is very limited built development and limited ribbon development at the edge of Digswell. The north edge of Welwyn Garden City provides a strong barrier to encroachment and is well concealed by heavy planting. Levels of visual openness are generally high mainly due to an absence of built development and the valley landscape providing long views.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel contains Tewin Water HPG and adjoins Panshanger HPG. The Green Belt acts as an immediate open and rural historic setting to Welwyn Garden City by providing views to and from the countryside.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel contributes, with GB56, to a local gap to separate Welwyn Garden City (1 st) with Digswell (2 nd). This very narrow gap is 0.1km. The parcel also provides local gaps from Burham Green (3 rd) to both Digswell (2 nd) and Welwyn Garden City which are 0.8km and 2.2km respectively. Gaps contain built development along Hamer Green Lane / New Road and therefore there is limited visibility of the Green Belt. Any reduction in the gaps (especially in respect of Digswell) would comprise the separation of settlement in physical and visual terms, and local levels of visual openness.		

Level of openness and countryside character

Existence of built development The level of built development is low at 0.4%. There is limited built development at the edge of Digswell in Old Forge Close close to the Hertford Road.

Visual Openness Within the parcel there are views to the the east and north across the River Mimram Valley..

Countryside Character The parcel is well connected to the surrounding countryside. There are few roads within the area within the very contained landscape.

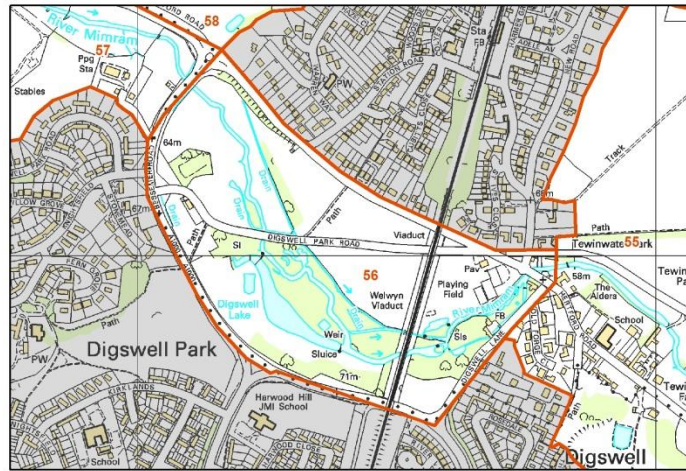
GB55 – Next Steps

Land east of Welwyn Garden City (also located in GB46) enclosed by the A414 is recommended for further assessment as a strategic sub-area (WH-S2). In light of the functions of the strategic parcel, 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 issue in relation to a strategic sub-area identified in the study.

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GB56 –Green Belt Land between Welwyn Garden City and Digswell

Description The parcel is located between Welwyn Garden City and Digswell. It is 28 ha in size and forms part of the River Mimram valley and its floodplain.

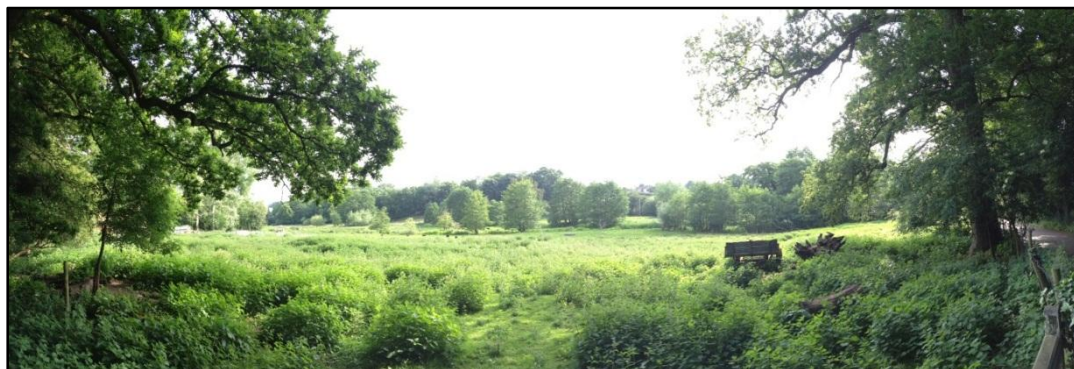


Land use Predominantly pasture and wetland vegetation, including Digswell Lake Nature Reserve.

View to east towards railway viaduct from Digswell Park Road



View to north from Digswell Park Road shows woodland



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards preserving the setting of Welwyn Garden City and maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing the gap between Welwyn Garden City and Digswell). Partial contribution towards preventing merging and safeguarding the countryside. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 2 of the 5 Green Belt purposes.

GB56 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		PARTIAL
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements however it contributes with GB57, 58, 59 & 60 to provide the strategic gap between Welwyn Garden City and Stevenage. This gap contains settlements of Welwyn, Digswell, Oaklands and Mardley Heath and Woolmer Green. Given the scale of the gap, any small scale reduction would be unlikely to compromise the separation of 1 st tier settlements in physical terms, and significantly reduce levels of visual openness across the parcel. It would however be likely to compromise the separation of 1 st and 2 nd tier settlements.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		PARTIAL
The parcel displays a mix of strong urban and rural characteristics as it is very small and predominantly enclosed by the urban edges of Welwyn Garden City and Digswell. Other urban influences include the railway, in the form of a large brick viaduct, and the A1000 and B1000 which are visible from the Green Belt and are audibly intrusive. The parcel represents a pocket of countryside comprising a mix of pasture and wetland vegetation in the floodplain and broadleaf woodland on the valley slopes, including a nature reserve which restricts visibility of Welwyn Garden City. It provides a verdant pastoral landscape with riverine vegetation and a hidden rural character despite being located so close to the urban fringe. Levels of visual openness are high in general but vary throughout the parcel.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel provides green setting to Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area. Views to the small patch of Green Belt are provided from the top of Digswell Road which extends from the town centre.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel provides the important local gap to separates Welwyn Garden City (1 st) and Digswell (2 nd). The very narrow gap is 0.1km. It is well maintained (relatively free of development) and visible from the A1000 and B1000. Any scale of reduction in the gap would compromise the physical separation of settlements, or overall visual openness.		

Level of openness and countryside character

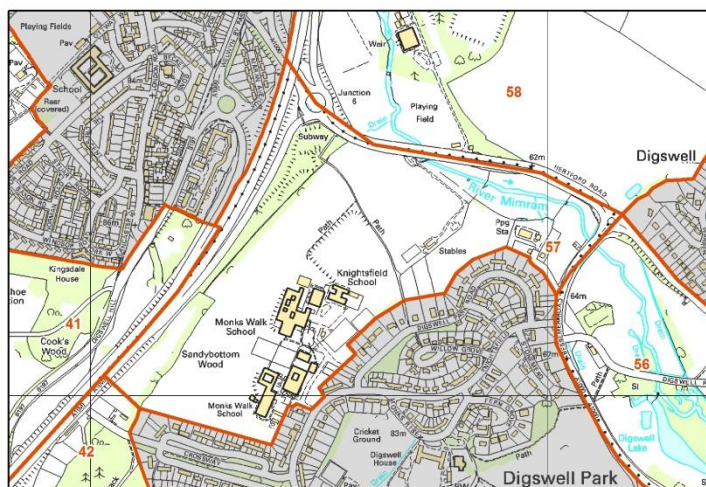
Existence of built development The level of built development is very low at 0.2%. There is little built development within the parcel.

Visual Openness Within the parcel the landscape is open with linear views along the river corridor. The surrounding areas of built development are well shielded from each other visually by vegetation.

Countryside Character The rural and relative remote character of the parcel is interrupted by a lack of tranquillity due to ever-present traffic and train over the railway viaduct. The scale of the landscape elements is small to medium and it has a very contained, coherent character.

GB57 –Green Belt Land between Welwyn Garden City and Welwyn

Description The parcel Green Belt Land to between Welwyn Garden City and Welwyn. It is 38 ha in size and forms part of the floodplain of the river Mimram valley.



Land use Predominantly pasture and wetland vegetation, plus Monks Walk School (MDS).

View to southwest from Herford Road shows countryside characteristics and landscape buffer to Welwyn Garden City which conceals the settlement



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards safeguarding the countryside and maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing the gap between Welwyn Garden City and Welwyn). Partial contribution towards preventing merging. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 2 of the 5 Green Belt purposes.

GB57 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		PARTIAL
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements however it contributes with GB56, 58, 59 & 60 to provide the strategic gap between Welwyn Garden City and Stevenage. This gap contains settlements of Welwyn, Digswell, Oaklands and Mardley Heath and Woolmer Green. Given the scale of the gap, any small scale reduction would be unlikely to compromise the significantly reduce levels of visual openness across the parcel. It would be likely to compromise the separation of 1 st to 2 nd tier settlements.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays a mix of urban and rural and countryside characteristics as it is very small but is visually connected to the countryside to the north. It contains a mosaic of pasture with wetland vegetation surrounding the river and some playing fields. Key urban influences include the A1(M) and A1000. A woodland belt screens the A1(M) which is built on embankment, however both are audibly intrusive. There is limited built development apart from Monks Walk School which represents encroachment into the Green Belt. In spite of the urban fringe location the parcel displays mainly countryside characteristics and levels of visual openness are high in general.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel does not provide setting for any historic places.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel provides the important local gap to separates Welwyn Garden City (1 st) and Welwyn (3 rd). The narrow gap is 0.4km. It contains a school and the A1(M), from which there is mixed visibility of the Green Belt. Any scale of reduction in the gap would compromise the physical separation of settlements, or overall visual openness.		

Level of openness and countryside character

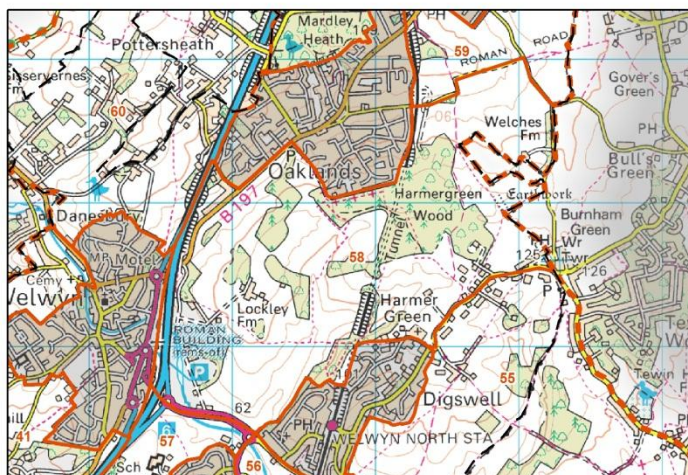
Existence of built development The level of built development is very high at 2.5%, however this is partly due to the small scale of the parcel, there is built development at Monks Walk School (MDS) and at the A1(M) and A1000 routes.

Visual Openness Within the parcel the landscape is open with views across the Mimram valley. The A1(M) is well shielded and concealed by planting.

Countryside Character The scale of the landscape elements is small to medium and due to the physical routes across the parcel, giving a semi-urban character. It is not tranquil, with constant distant noise from road traffic.

GB58 –Green Belt Land to South of Oaklands

Description The parcel is located to the south of Oaklands and sits between Welwyn and Digswell. It is 383 ha in size and forms a south facing undulating spur which rises from the Mimram valley on the south eastern edge of the parcel.



Land use Predominantly arable farmland.

View to south from south of Oaklands shows strong open and rural characteristics



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards safeguarding the countryside and maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing gaps between Welwyn, Digswell and Oaklands). Partial contribution towards preventing merging. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 2 of the 5 Green Belt purposes.

GB58 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is located away from large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage. It does not form a connection with a wider network of parcels to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		PARTIAL
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements however it contributes with GB56, 57, 59 & 60 to provide the strategic gap between Welwyn Garden City and Stevenage. This gap contains settlements of Welwyn, Digswell, Oaklands and Mardley Heath and Woolmer Green. Given the scale of the gap, any scale reduction would be unlikely to compromise the separation of 1 st tier settlements in physical terms. It would however significantly impact on the physical separation of 2 nd tier settlements and local levels of visual openness.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in a strong pattern of mixed large sized arable fields and mature oak woodland including large pockets of ancient woodland, with some parkland features around Lockleys Farm. Some pasture land is located close to settlement edges. There is very limited evidence of built development and encroachment, apart from limited ribbon development along Hamer Green Lane extending north from Digswell. The main urban influences are the A1(M) and railway line, which are audibly intrusive and well concealed by planting but offer some views to the Green Belt especially due to the raised nature of the parcel. This ensures the Green Belt is more remote from development and retains a degree of tranquillity. Overall visual levels of openness are high in general, especially due to the elevated nature of the parcel.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel is west of Welwyn Conservation Area, however due to landscape buffering along the settlement edge and A1(M), the visual connection between the historic place and Green Belt is limited. It also contains two SAMs.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel provides local gaps to separate 2 nd tier settlements of Welwyn, Digswell and Oaklands from each other as well as contributing to the important local gap (with GB57) to Welwyn Garden City and local gap to Burnham Green (3 rd). Focusing on local gaps between the 2 nd tier settlements only, the narrowest gap is from Welwyn to Oaklands at 1.2km. It contains the A1(M) and B197. The gaps between Digswell to Welwyn and Oaklands are 0.8km and 1.1km respectively and are well maintained (relatively free of development). Overall any small scale reduction in gaps could compromise the physical separation of settlements, and reduce local levels of visual openness.		
Level of openness and countryside character		
Existence of built development The level of built development is very low at 0.3%. Some residential ribbon development around Digswell. It is likely that there has been some loss of parkland around Lockleys to arable cultivation but relic hedgerow oaks remain.		
Visual Openness In more elevated and open locations views are frequently long distance but lower down they are limited by landform and vegetation.		
Countryside Character A large scale area of rolling arable land interspersed with frequent woodland, some of which is ancient woodland. Although it is located between and close to three settlements the long distance views obtained from elevated areas and the landform impart an isolated character.		

GB59 –Green Belt Land to North of Oaklands surrounding Woolmer Green

Description The parcel is located to north of Oaklands and Mardley Heath and surrounds Woolmer Green, It is 234 ha in size and forms an undulating southwest facing slope with a few local variations.



Land use Predominantly arable farmland.

Gap between Woolmer Green and Oaklands showing open view to east



Southwest of Woolmer Green



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards checking sprawl from Stevenage, safeguarding the countryside and maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing the gap between Mardley Heath / Oaklands and Woolmer Green). Partial contribution towards preventing merging. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 3 of the 5 Green Belt purposes.

GB59 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel is located to the south Stevenage. It forms a strong connection with a wider network of parcels to the north to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		PARTIAL
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements however it contributes with GB56, 57, 58 & 60 to provide the strategic gap between Welwyn Garden City and Stevenage. This gap contains settlements of Welwyn, Digswell, Oaklands and Mardley Heath and Woolmer Green. Given the scale of the gap, any small scale reduction would be unlikely to compromise the physical separation of 1 st tier settlements. It would be likely to have a greater impact on 2 nd tier settlements and local levels of visual openness.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics in large sized open arable farmland with absent field boundaries due to a lack of hedges. There are also some small pockets of ancient woodland and a local nature reserve to the north of Mardley Heath / Oaklands. There is limited evidence of built development. Oaklands / Mardley Wood provides strong settlement boundaries whereas the Woolmer Green edge exhibits greater levels of localised enclosure as a result of the shape of the settlement boundary especially to the east and southeast. The main urban influence is the A1(M) which is concealed by planting but is audibly intrusive, as well as the B197 and railway line. Overall levels of visual openness are very high due to an absence of development, and connection to the wider countryside to the north and slopes provide longer distance views.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel does not provide setting for any historic places.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFICANT
The parcel contributes to the important local gap to separate Mardley Heath / Oaklands (2 nd) and Woolmer Green (2 nd) from Knebworth and Datchworth, and beyond to Stevenage (in North Hertfordshire to the north of the study area). The gap to Knebworth is narrowest from Woolmer Green at 0.6 km. The parcel also provides a very narrow local gap to separate Mardley Heath / Oaklands (2 nd) and Woolmer Green (2 nd). It is 0.1km and contains the railway line and there is only perception of the Green Belt to the east from the connecting London Road (B197). Any small scale reduction in the gaps could comprise the physical separation of settlements and reduce visual openness.		

Level of openness and countryside character

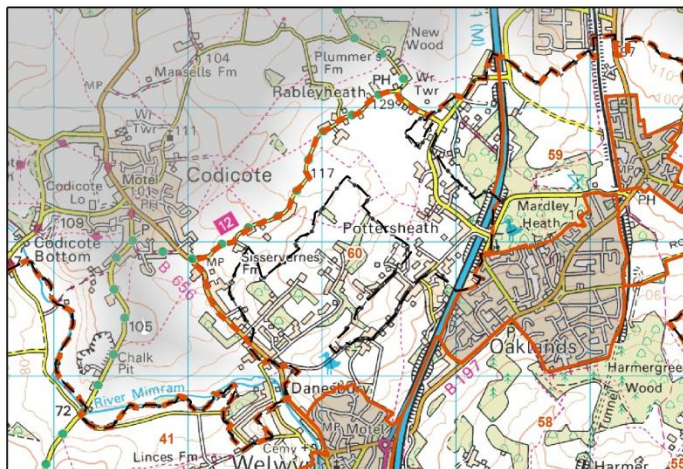
Existence of built development The level of built development is very low at 0.2%. Little new built development although residential development has an indistinct edge at Woolmer Green. The A1(M) corridor is screened by woodland but although it is not visible, there is a permanent noise impact.

Visual Openness This is generally an open parcel with extensive views towards Stevenage from some locations.

Countryside Character The area is rural but Woolmer Green contains 20th century settlement and the parcel exhibits a conflict between the old and new.

GB60 –Green Belt Land to North of Welwyn

Description The parcel is located to the north of Welwyn. It broadly follows the outer edge of the study area and crosses into North Hertfordshire. It is 337 ha in size and comprises undulating slopes with localised deep depressions formed by dry valleys.



Land use Predominantly arable farmland.

View to south from north of the parcel showing countryside characteristics



View to north from Rollswood Road displaying greater sense of enclosure



Principal Function / Summary

Significant contribution towards maintaining the existing settlement pattern (providing the gap between Welwyn and Mardley Heath / Oaklands). Partial contribution towards checking sprawl from London, preventing merging and safeguarding the countryside. Overall the parcel contributes significantly towards 1 of the 5 Green Belt purposes.

GB60 – Green Belt Purposes Assessment		Contribution
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas		PARTIAL
The parcel is located to the south Stevenage. It forms a connection with a wider network of parcels to the north to restrict sprawl.		
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging		PARTIAL
The parcel does not fully separate neighbouring 1 st tier settlements however it contributes with GB56, 57, 58 & 59 to provide the strategic gap between Welwyn Garden City and Stevenage. This gap contains settlements of Welwyn, Digswell, Oaklands and Mardley Heath and Woolmer Green. Given the scale of the gap, any minor reduction would be unlikely to compromise the separation of 1 st tier settlements in physical or visual terms. It would be likely to have a greater impact on the separation of 2 nd tier settlements and levels of visual openness.		
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment		PARTIAL
The parcel displays typical rural and countryside characteristics however it has been subject to a relatively large proportion of built development. The south is primarily residential with large single dwellings often built in relic parkland fracturing the pattern of small pastoral fields and wooded belts, including ancient woodland. To the north there are medium scale arable fields with wooded belts on former heathland. There is evidence of built development through widespread scattered residential ribbon development. Encroachment is visible along The Avenue, which extends from Oaklands where there is little distinction between Green Belt and non-Green Belt land. Danesbury Park Road, Pottersheath Road and Codicote Road are also subject to ribbon development. Another key urban influence is the A1(M), which is audibly intrusive and from which there are strong views of the Green Belt including the wider countryside to the north. Levels of visual openness are varied with a greater sense of enclosure to the south and longer views to the north due to an absence of development.		
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns		LIMITED OR NO
The parcel does not provide setting for any historic places.		
To maintain existing settlement pattern		SIGNIFIACNT
The parcel contributes with GB58 to the local gap between Welwyn (2 nd) and Oaklands and Mardley Heath (2 nd). This gap is 0.6km. It also provides gaps to Codicote (in North Hertfordshire to the north of the study area). All gaps contain ribbon development. Any minor reduction in gaps would be unlikely to compromise the separation of settlements in physical and visual terms, but could impact on overall levels of visual openness.		

Level of openness and countryside character

Existence of built development The level of built development is very high at 1.3%. There is a widespread residential ribbon development giving a more developed and urban character in the south of the parcel.

Visual Openness There is a more enclosed character to the south with more open views across arable fields and hill sides to the north.

Countryside Character To the north the parcel is more rural but to the south frequent residential development and recreational activities provide a semi urban quality.

GB60 – Next Steps

Development at The Avenue to west of A1(M) adjoining west of Oaklands village is recommended for further assessment as potential boundary adjustment (WH-BA1). Green Belt land has been subject to substantial development and as a result this land no longer contributes towards the 5 Green Belt purposes.

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