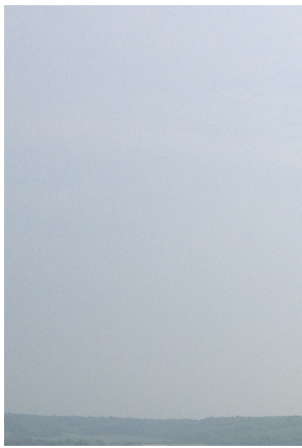


**GREEN BELT REVIEW SITES & BOUNDARIES STUDY**  
**Prepared for St Albans City and District Only**  
**REPORT**  
**December 2013**





# St Albans Sites & Boundaries Study

FOR ISSUE

December 2013

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**THIS REPORT HAS BEEN PREPARED FOR ST ALBANS CITY AND DISTRICT COUNCIL PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING ON 18<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2013.**

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Overview

- 1.1.1. SKM has been commissioned to undertake a Green Belt Sites & Boundaries Study on behalf of St Albans City and District Council.
- 1.1.2. The aim of the study is to deliver a review that provides a robust assessment of the strategic sub-areas identified in St Albans City and District from the Green Belt Review: Purposes Assessment for Dacorum, St Albans and Welwyn Hatfield (November 2013). This document is referred to as the 'Part 1 study' in this Report.
- 1.1.3. The main objective of the study is to undertake further assessment of selected areas of Green Belt land (identified as strategic sub-areas in the Part 1 study). These sub-areas were assessed as contributing least towards the five Green Belt purposes against which all Green Belt land in SADC was assessed in the Part 1 study. Green Belt land and boundaries within and around these strategic sub-areas have been assessed in greater detail in this study to identify parcels of land which may potentially be favourable for release from the Green Belt and any associated revisions to Green Belt boundaries. The findings of the study will inform future choices by the Council on how to strike the balance between development needs and Green Belt restraint.
- 1.1.4. Small scale sub-areas identified in the Part 1 Study, also recommended for further assessment, have not been subject to assessment in this study.

## Study Objectives

- 1.1.5. The Project Brief for the Sites & Boundaries study identifies the scope of work required by the Council. This sets out the following objectives:
  - Further investigation of primary and secondary environmental constraints on individual parcels / sites;
  - Landscape value analysis as an integral component of the detailed assessment;
  - An assessment of the contribution of sites to sustainable patterns of development to inform subsequent sustainability appraisal;
  - A detailed review of boundaries for those strategic sub-areas shortlisted for assessment;
  - Development of a ranking system which identifies those parcels/sites most favourable for potential release from the Green Belt;
  - Recommendations for revised Green Belt boundaries to be capable of enduring 20 years after the end of the Plan period (i.e. until 2050); and,
  - Recommendations for areas of land which should be safeguarded for future development needs beyond the Plan period.



## **1.2. Structure of Report**

- 1.2.1. The strategic sub-areas assessed in this report cover land which is considered to contribute least towards the five Green Belt purposes assessed in the Part 1 study. This report provides:
- a strategic SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) assessment for each of the eight strategic sub-areas;
  - a summary of Part 1 findings to explain how each of the sub-areas of Green Belt land contributes towards Green Belt purposes;
  - an analysis of constraints (relating to the environmental, historic and other designations), sustainable patterns of development and landscape capacity;
  - potential developable areas of land (within the strategic sub-areas) which might be able to accommodate change / future development;
  - proposals for clear and defensible revisions to Green Belt boundaries for each of the sub-areas assessed;
  - an estimate of potential development capacity for each developable area identified;;
  - a classification of the potentially developable areas as short to medium term (5 to 20 year) prospects or safeguarded land to meet longer term needs (20+ years).
- 1.2.2. Any recommendations within this report – on land which is considered to contribute least towards the five Green Belt purposes assessed – aim to respect and retain the integrity of the Green Belt.

## **1.3. Disclaimer**

- 1.3.1. The Sites & Boundaries Study forms part of the Council's evidence base for the local plan and is intended for use in plan-making only. It should be read in conjunction with Green Belt Review: Purposes Assessment for Dacorum, St Albans and Welwyn Hatfield (November 2013). Neither document constitutes planning policy.
- 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 outcome of this study will therefore provide only one piece of evidence among a wide range of independent studies and considerations that must be taken into account before the Council can decide on any changes to Green Belt boundaries. Such wider issues not considered by this study relate to infrastructure capacity (in relation to transport and services), the availability of land for development (in relation to the market and land ownership) and sustainability<sup>1</sup>.
- 1.3.4. All land measurements in this study are approximate.

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<sup>1</sup> Sustainability is different to 'sustainability patterns of development' (as assessed in this study). Sustainability relates to range of environmental, economic and social factors as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Overview

2.1.1. The methodology applied to the Sites & Boundaries Study has broadly followed that set out in the approach originally proposed by SKM's tender proposal to St Albans. However, the order of these tasks has been slightly amended to help present the assessment in a more logical and transparent manner. Table 2.1 presents the original method alongside the revised final method for ease of comparison. .

**Table 2.1: Proposed and Updated Approach**

Original Approach	Updated Approach
<b>STAGE 1 – Desktop Review</b>	<b>STAGE 1 – Review of Part 1 Study and SWOT</b>
Task 1a: Review of Contribution and SWOT Analysis	Task 1a: Review of Contribution and SWOT Analysis
Task 1b: Sieve Analysis and Shortlisting	<i>Removed as all eight sites assessed</i>
	Task 1b: Review of Site Promotion Material
<b>STAGE 2 – Site Assessment</b>	<b>STAGE 2 – Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment</b>
Task 2a: Review of Site Promotion Material	<i>Moved to Stage 1</i>
Task 2b: Landscape Capacity Assessment	Task 2a: Landscape Sensitivity Assessment
Task 2c: Detailed Boundary Review	Task 2b: Detailed Boundary Review
Task 2d: Assessment of Developable Areas	Task 2c: Assessment of Developable Areas
Task 2e: Site Classification	Task 2d: Land Use Schedules and Plans
<b>STAGE 3: Capacity Assessment</b>	<b>STAGE 3: Site Classification</b>
Task 3a: Land use schedules and Plans	Task 3a: Site Classification

2.1.2. A summary of the approach and amendments to the original method are set out below:

- Task 1b: Sieve Analysis and Shortlisting has been excluded from the study as the agreed approach with St Albans recognised the need to fully undertake an assessment of all eight strategic sub-areas, and therefore none were discounted.
- This report presents the full assessment (Tasks 1a, 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d and 3a) for each strategic sub-area in Chapters 4 to 12.
- Task 1a SWOT analysis, which provides a summary of the detailed assessment findings, is set out as part of each site assessment.
- Task 2e Site Classification, which classifies potential Green Belt land for release as either: i) Short or medium-term (5-20 years) prospects, or ii) Safeguarded land to meet longer term needs (20+ years), is set out at the end of each assessment in light of key findings and is also summarised in Chapter 12.





## 2.2. Approach to Review of Sites & Boundaries

2.2.1. A standard write-up has been prepared for each Strategic sub-area (hereafter referred to as 'sub-areas') assessed which follows the order of tasks set out in the methodology.

2.2.2. Each task is summarised below in Table 2.2.

**Table 2.2: Description of Tasks**

Approach	Description of Task
<b>STAGE 1</b>	<b>Review of Part 1 Study and SWOT</b>
Task 1a: Review of Contribution and SWOT Analysis	Chapter 3 – summaries key findings on each sub-area from analysis relating to constraints, sustainable patterns of development and integration and landscape assessment.
<b>STAGE 2</b>	<b>Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment</b>
Task 2a: Review of Site Promotion Material	Review of relevant planning histories on each sub-area.
Task 2b: Landscape Sensitivity Assessment	On-site assessment to identify area(s) within each sub-area least landscape sensitivity to change.
Task 2c: Detailed Boundary Review	The purpose of this task is to define clear and defensible revisions to Green Belt boundaries around land identified for potential release from the Green Belt
Task 2d: Assessment of Developable Areas	Identification of gross potential developable area within each sub-area which could potentially accommodate change and be released from the Green Belt.
Task 3a: Land Use Schedules and Plans	Estimation of residential development capacity based on net residential density assumptions ranging from 30 to 50 dwellings per hectare (du/ph <sup>2</sup> ). Provision of land use schedules and indicative masterplans for each site.
<b>STAGE 3</b>	<b>Classification of Sites</b>
Task 2e: Site Classification	Based upon assessment findings, each potential Developable Area has been classified as either a 'short to medium-term (5 -20 years) prospect', or 'safeguarded land to meet longer term needs (20+ years)'. This is based on three criteria relating to analysis of constraints, integration and visibility.

<sup>2</sup> Based on HCA *urban design compendium* published (Ilewelyn davies yeang, 2000)



## 2.3. Glossary of Terms

2.3.1. To support the assessment of sites and boundaries definitions of key terms used in the study are set out below:

- **Part 1 Study** – Green Belt Review: Purposes Assessment for Dacorum, St Albans and Welwyn Hatfield (November 2013)
- **Strategic Parcel** – assessment area for Part 1 Study. The study was sub-divided into 66 strategic parcels across the three local authorities.
- **Strategic sub-area** – area of Green Belt land which contributes least to the five Green Belt purposes assessed in the Part 1 Study. Eight strategic sub-areas form the starting point for this study.
- **Sustainable Patterns of Development** – in the context of this study this relates to the following core planning principle set out in the NPPF (para 17): ‘planning should actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable’.
- **Sustainable Development** – as defined in paragraphs 6 – 10 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- **Landscape sensitivity** – a reflection of the susceptibility to change and value of a given landscape
- **Shelterbelts** – a linear area of woodland, often planted to provide shelter or visual enclosure
- **Susceptibility to change** – the ability of a landscape receptor to accommodate change without undue consequences
- **Landscape value** – typically reflected in designations or policies that seek to protect landscape character or elements
- **Visual receptor** – a person likely to see a particular view
- **Visual sensitivity** – a reflection of the potential susceptibility of a person or group of people to a change in a view, it is influenced by the activity of a person (or group of people) and the extent to which their attention may be focussed on the view
- **Gross Development Area** – a defined area of land which is considered potentially suitable to come forward for development.
- **Net Development Area** – the area of land within a potential development site that would be subject to actual built development (i.e. excludes larger public open space, strategic landscaping and infrastructure).
- **Net Density** – expressed in this study as dwellings per hectare (dph), is a measurement of the number of homes on a site which includes only those areas that will be used for housing and directly associated uses (e.g. access roads, car parking, private gardens, incidental open space and landscaping, children’s play areas).



## **2.4. Sites Assessment**

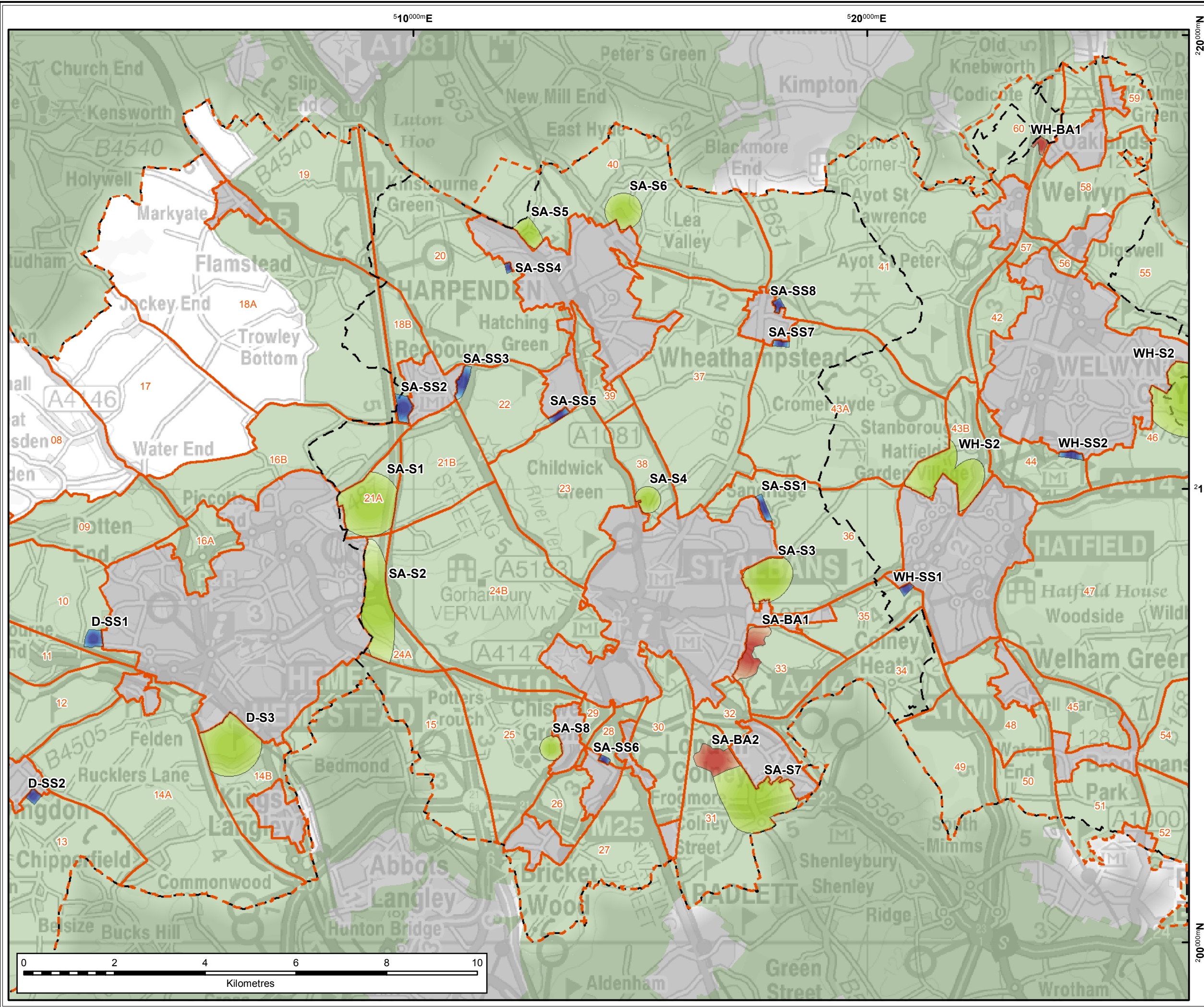
2.4.1. Eight strategic sub-areas identified from the Part 1 study which contribute least towards five Green Belt purposes are subject to further assessment by this Study, as follows:

- S1: East of Hemel Hempstead (north)
- S2: East of Hemel Hempstead (south)
- S3: East of St Albans
- S4: North of St Albans
- S5: Northwest of Harpenden
- S6: Northeast of Harpenden
- S7: Land at London Colney
- S8: Land at Chiswell Green.

2.4.2. The findings for each sub-area assessment are presented in Chapters 3 to 10.

2.4.3. The location of the strategic sub-areas and constraints are set out in maps overleaf (both maps are extracted from the Part 1 Study).

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



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

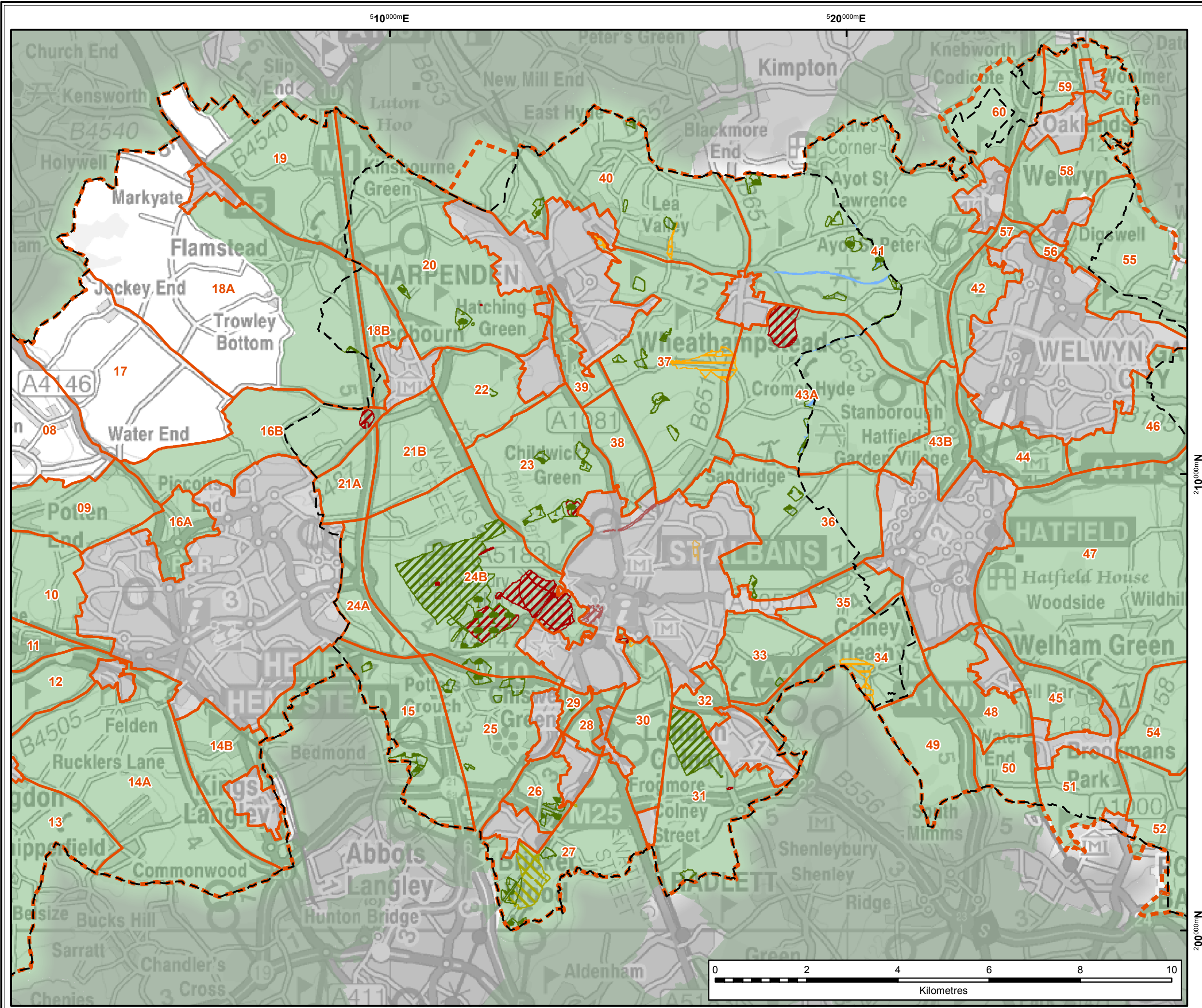
REVISION: B

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

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

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





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



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

REVISION: E

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

**FIGURE A4.1.2.  
 Environmental Features**

SCALE	PROJECT CODE
1:80,000 @ A3	JE30761
CONTENT	DRAWN
Natural England Ordnance Survey	KW
CHECKED	DATE
RB	30/11/2013



Copyright SKM Enviro Name: FigureA4.1.2\_Environmental Features

### **3. S1: East of Hemel Hempstead (north)**

#### **3.1. Site Context and Contribution towards Green Belt Purposes**

- 3.1.1. The Strategic sub-area comprises land enclosed by east Hemel Hempstead and M1 (in Strategic Parcel GB21A). The sub-area lies within the Upper Ver Valley and Buncefield Plateau landscape character areas (South Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment).
- 3.1.2. The Upper Ver Valley comprises a broad open valley (in relation to the sub-area a dry valley) with gentle slopes and extensive views. Large arable fields on the valley slopes are characteristic, with some small areas of pasture. Field boundaries have frequently been removed or are fragmented giving rise to a more open landscape. The cultural pattern follows the alignment of the valley, including the B487 and a disused railway line. There are small areas of woodland and shelterbelts within this part of the character area. Settlement pattern is limited; greatest near the B487, but elsewhere it comprises individual farmsteads and houses. Urban development on the edge of Hemel Hempstead influences the western part of the character area. The condition of the landscape and strength of character is described as “good” and “moderate” respectively. The overall objective for this landscape character area is to “conserve and strengthen”.
- 3.1.3. The Buncefield Plateau is an undulating plateau extending to the east of Hemel Hempstead. The undulating landform is a consequence of several dry valleys that cross it. Arable farmland in a large, regular field pattern is the key land use. The M1 motorway is a dominant feature, which interrupts landscape pattern. The industrial element on the edge of Hemel Hempstead is a conspicuous element that influences character.

#### *Review of Green Belt Purposes Assessment / Justification of identification of strategic sub-area*

- 3.1.4. This sub area is located within Strategic Parcel GB24A which significantly contributes towards 1 out of the 5 Green Belt purposes; safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. However, the parcel does make a partial contribution towards preventing merging and maintaining the existing settlement pattern. The two sub-areas identified (S1 and S2) 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.



### 3.2. SWOT Analysis

3.2.1. The analysis of strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats in the sub-area is based upon the assessment of constraints, sustainable patterns of development and landscape appraisal.

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Absence of primary constraints</li> <li>▪ Close to a range of services and facilities in Hemel Hempstead</li> <li>▪ Continuity with parts of continuity with parts of the urban form of Hemel Hempstead</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of strong boundary features in places</li> <li>▪ Accessibility – 5km to Hemel Hempstead railway station</li> <li>▪ Could isolate an area of agricultural land to the east</li> <li>▪ Potentially visible from countryside north of Hemel Hempstead Road</li> <li>▪ Listed buildings within the sub-area, meaning setting issues may be relevant</li> <li>▪ Overhead lines could restrict development</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Potential integration with housing (H18) and employment (E4) allocations</li> <li>▪ Potential integration with Green Corridor</li> <li>▪ Landscape improvement (in accordance with LDA designation)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cross boundary issues as site adjoins Dacorum Borough Council</li> <li>▪ Connection with development in sub-area 2 may influence development</li> </ul>

### 3.3. Constraints

#### *Summary of Environmental and Historic Features*

3.3.1. A Green Corridor (The Nicky Lane) runs from the northeast edge of Hemel Hempstead across the northern section of the sub area, and along the south of Redbourn to central Harpenden. .

3.3.2. A Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) is located in the northwest corner of the sub-area. It is bound by Gaddesden Lane to the north, the M1 to the east and Hemel Hempstead Road (B487) to the south. This area of land should be protected as it is recognised as a primary constraint.

#### *Other Potential Constraints / Features*

3.3.3. The site lies northeast of the Buncefield HSE exclusion zone (which is discussed in more detail in respect of S2).



- 3.3.4. The site adjoins existing open land designated for future housing and employment uses at H18 and E4 respectively on the Dacorum Local Plan Proposals Map (2004).

#### **3.4. Sustainable Patterns of Development**

##### *Proximity to town centre, and local centres*

- 3.4.1. Hemel Hempstead town centre is located approximately 3.6km to the south west of the sub-area. One local centre, Woodhall Farm, is located 500m to the north west. A second local centre, The Heights, is located approximately 1.7km to the south west.
- 3.4.2. It is also understood that a new local centre is to be established in the heart of Maylands to the south west of the sub-area. The precise location of this local centre is not yet known and will be established through the East Hemel Hempstead Area Action Plan.

##### *Public transport accessibility*

- 3.4.3. Hemel Hempstead rail station is located 5km to the south west of the sub-area. The station offers a regular service, approximately every 10-15 minutes, into London Euston during peak hours. The station also provides direct links to Clapham Junction, Milton Keynes Central and Birmingham New Street.
- 3.4.4. Bus services from the sub-area to Hemel Hempstead town centre and rail station are available via route No. 2 which runs along Redbourn Road, less than 200m to the north west of the sub-area boundary. Bus route 259 also runs along Redbourn Road and provides a service to Redbourn town centre. From Hemel Hempstead bus station, bus routes to London, St Albans, Stevenage Watford, Rickmansworth, Aylesbury, Chesham and Amersham are also available.

##### *Proximity to schools*

- 3.4.5. The nearest Secondary School to the sub-area is The Astley Cooper Secondary School which is located approximately 1.2km to the west of the sub-area boundary.
- 3.4.6. A number of Primary Schools lie within 1.2km of the sub-area including Brockswood Primary School (500m to the north west), Holtsmere Junior School (800m to the west) and Maple Grove Primary School (1.2km to the west).

##### *Proximity to public open space*

- 3.4.7. A number of areas of public open space lie in close proximity to the site including Cupid Green and playing fields (800m to the west) and High Wood (700m to the northwest). To the west and south of the Hemel Hempstead Industrial Estate lies Widmore Wood (1 km to the south west), Maylands Wood (1.4km to the south west), High Street Green playing field (1.4km to the south west), Yew Tree Wood (1.4km to the west) and Coppingsfield Sports Ground (1.2km to the south).
- 3.4.8. The Nicky Lane Cycle Path (Green Corridor) also passes through the northern part of the sub-area and provides a cycle link into Hemel Hempstead town centre and to Redbourn.





*Scale of sub-area compared to settlement role, size and function*

- 3.4.9. The sub-area is located within the St Albans City and District Council but adjoins the boundary with the Dacorum borough. The sub-area is situated on the north eastern outskirts of Hemel Hempstead. Hemel Hempstead is classed as a 'Town' in the Dacorum Borough Local Plan. Hemel Hempstead has been identified as the 'Main Centre for Development and Change' in the Dacorum borough as recognised in the Dacorum Core Strategy 2013. It will be the focus for new homes, jobs and infrastructure, including new leisure and cultural facilities and improved public transport links. Hemel Hempstead town has a population of approximately 5,684 people accounting for 3.92% of the Borough's total population according to the 2011 Census.
- 3.4.10. The sub-area is located in the ward of Redbourn (St Albans City and District Council), which has a resident working age population of 3,900 (16-64 year olds) accordingly to the Census 2011. This represents 4.4% of the working age population of the wider St Albans City and District Council.

**3.5. Landscape appraisal**

- 3.5.1. A landscape appraisal has been undertaken to take account of landform / topography, land cover, cultural dimensions, levels of enclosure and visual attributes. Each is discussed below.

*Landform / topography*

- 3.5.2. The landform comprises gently sloping ground, falling from Buncefield Plateau towards the dry valley to the north, beyond which the land rises again. The more elevated slopes are up to 135m AOD, falling to approximately 105m AOD within the dry valley. The landform is a notable feature, which combined with the land-use and cover gives rise to relatively long distance views in places.

*Land cover and land use*

- 3.5.3. The sub-area primarily comprises agricultural land uses, predominately arable crops, in a large, open field pattern. There are also some small areas of pasture in places, typically around farmsteads and dispersed properties. Agricultural land quality is Grade 2 within the southern part of the sub-area, reducing the Grade 3 further north. There are occasional small woodlands/groups of trees within the sub-area.
- 3.5.4. Key ecological features comprise the remnant hedgerows and hedgerow trees, together with the small areas of woodland. The disused railway to the south of Hemel Hempstead Road (B487) comprises a distinctive linear habitat. There are no ecological designations within the sub-area.

*Cultural dimensions*

- 3.5.5. Key current cultural dimensions within the sub-area relate to the settlement pattern, field pattern and road network. Three Listed Buildings lie within the sub-area, including buildings within Wood End Farm and Wood End Farm Cottages. The Aubreys Fort (Scheduled Monument) lies to the north-east.



#### *Levels of enclosure*

- 3.5.6. The nature of the landform is the primary influence on the level of enclosure, with the limited tree cover and large scale field pattern giving rise to a visually open landscape in places. This is particularly the case for upper slopes where there are clear views over the valley and surrounding landscape. The falling landform gives rise to a greater sense of enclosure with the base of the valley.
- 3.5.7. The existing settlement edges of Hemel Hempstead vary in their prominence. To the north the residential properties are surrounded by established trees and hedgerows, restricting views of the urban edge. Further south, the increased scale of the industrial development to the south of Punch Bowl Lane and Three Cherry Trees Lane means it comprises a more prominent element. It is also noted that the agricultural land to the east of Cherry Tree Lane results in separation between the sub-area and Hemel Hempstead and this land could become isolated should development in the sub-area take place.

#### *Visual attributes including views within and outwards as well as the visual impact on adjacent development.*

- 3.5.8. The most notable visual attribute is the open views over the surrounding landscape that can be obtained from the elevated ground. There are few notable focal points within the sub-area, with key features being the dispersed farmsteads and residential properties. Overhead power lines cross the sub-area and comprise a conspicuous visual feature.
- 3.5.9. The nature of the landform and land cover means new development could comprise a conspicuous element. The existing landscape framework within the south-west part of the sub-area, including smaller field pattern provides a greater sense of enclosure and new development would be more discrete.

### **3.6. Landscape Sensitivity and Boundary Review**

#### *Landscape Sensitivity*

- 3.6.1. This section considers the potential landscape and visual effects associated with change or potential future development on the current landscape character, as identified in the on-site assessment.
- 3.6.2. This strategic sub-area lies on the north-east edge of Hemel Hempstead. The surrounding urban edges are strong and clearly defined by the adjacent development and road network, although the prominence of this urban edge is variable. The landscape is rural and while some features have been lost or eroded it still has a countryside feel.
- 3.6.3. The nature of the land cover/pattern means that the south-western part of the sub-area is more contained and any future change would be less conspicuous. The northern and western parts of the sub-area are more open and have a stronger visual connection with the surrounding countryside.
- 3.6.4. Sensitivity to change varies throughout the sub-area. The south-western part is of lower sensitivity as it is more influenced by the urban edge and greater enclosure is provided by the landscape pattern. The land to the east and north of the sub-area is more sensitive,

due to a combination of the reducing influence of the settlement edge and the openness of the landscape. Sensitivity analysis is set out in the table below:

	<b>Part of Sub-Area</b>	
<b>Element</b>	<b>West</b>	<b>East/North</b>
Landscape character	<p>Built development would affect openness of landscape character. However, the existing landscape pattern provides a degree of enclosure and would help contain and provide a framework for development.</p> <p>Agricultural intensification has resulted in loss of field boundaries and has altered landscape pattern, although this remains relatively small in scale. Some of the boundaries still comprise hedgerows with hedgerow trees. There are also a number of dispersed residential properties and a farmstead and the context of these would change completely as a result of new development</p>	<p>Greater connection with surrounding rural landscape, although there are some detracting features e.g. mineral working and associated elements.</p> <p>Agricultural intensification has resulted in loss of field boundaries and has altered landscape pattern. Some of the boundaries still comprise hedgerows with hedgerow trees.</p>
Settlement form	Development would be continuous with parts of Hemel Hempstead, but there is an area or agricultural land that could be isolated as a consequence of development of this part of the sub-area.	Increased distance from settlement edge and more limited visual connection. Without development further east, development of this area is likely to appear unconnected and illogical.
Views/visual features	Key potential visual effects of new development would be at a local level. Notable effects would be in relation to residents within the sub-area, and people travelling along the local road network. Trees and hedgerows would provide some visual containment.	The relative openness of the landscape would mean development could be visually prominent.
Landscape value	<p>No landscape or ecological designations.</p> <p>Listed Buildings at Wood End Farm and Wood End Cottages.</p>	<p>No landscape or ecological designations.</p> <p>Scheduled Monument (The Aubreys Fort) to the north of (and outside) the sub-area.</p>
Overall evaluation	Lower sensitivity	Higher sensitivity



### ***Boundary Review***

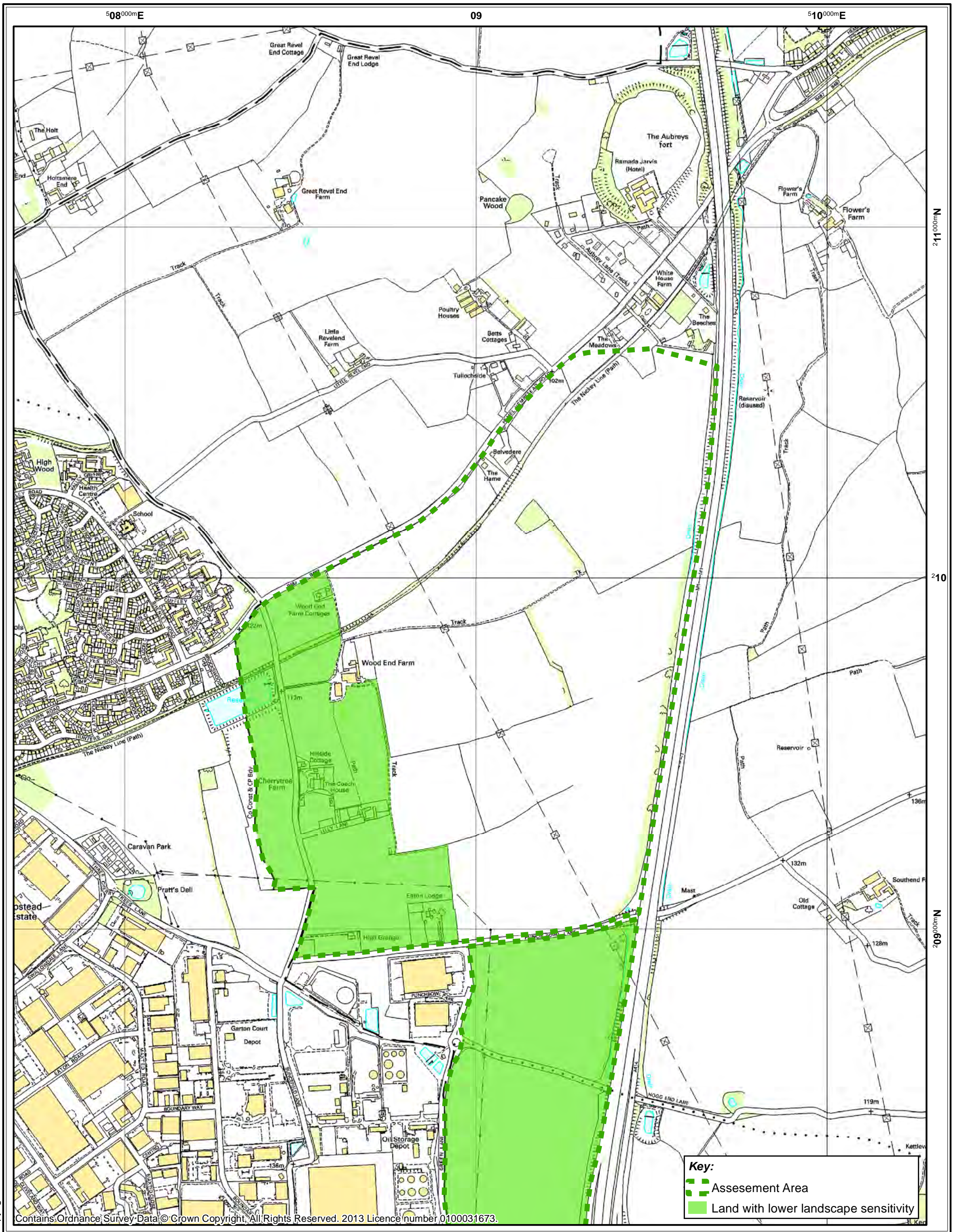
- 3.6.5. It is concluded that the most appropriate land for release from Green Belt designation is the eastern part of the sub-area.
- 3.6.6. This land has clearly defined edges along the north and south; Hemel Hempstead Road (B487) and Punch Bowl Lane respectively. The eastern edge comprises the administrative boundary with Dacorum Borough Council. While much of this boundary does not comprise a defined feature on the ground an illogical area of Green Belt would remain if it is to follow the alignment of Cherry Tree Lane. It is also recognised that land further west (within Dacorum) is not designated as Green Belt, and is allocated for development. Therefore, there is an aspiration for the land use to change and therefore the baseline context of this sub-area may differ from the current situation. The eastern boundary partly comprises a combination of tracks and field boundaries. The south-east part of the boundary does not follow a physical feature on the ground, but is aligned with a servitude (set back) from overhead electricity transmission lines. The rationale for this is that the overhead lines are likely to restrict development further east and the alignment of this part of the boundary would complement the proposed edge for sub-area 2.
- 3.6.7. Additional structural landscape planting would be beneficial, particularly along parts of the eastern edge, to create a suitable physical feature. This approach would help to define and integrate a new urban edge.

### **3.7. Potential Development Capacity**

- 3.7.1. The indicative layout for S1 is shown in Figure 4.2. Potential development capacity is set out below:
- Indicative layout area: 61 hectares.
  - Predominant land-use: C3 Residential.
  - At a net density of 30dph this would generate 1,093 residential units.
  - At a net density of 50dph this would generate 1,822 residential units.

#### *Potential Landscape Measures*

- 3.7.2. Reinforcement of existing boundary vegetation (i.e. hedgerows) would help to accommodate new development and reduce its visual prominence from surrounding countryside. Such planting would also be consistent with established vegetation around the north-east edge of Hemel Hempstead.
- 3.7.3. Key landscape features:
- Remaining hedgerows/hedgerow trees
  - Heritage assets (Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monument)
  - Disused railway line
  - Edge of Hemel Hempstead.



**Green Belt Part 2  
Landscape Sensitivity Appraisal**

**Figure 4.1. S1:  
East of Hemel Hempstead (north)**

SCALE  
1:10,000 @ A3

CONTENT

Ordnance Survey

CHECKED

RB

PROJECT CODE  
JE30761

DRAWN

JA

DATE

12/12/2013

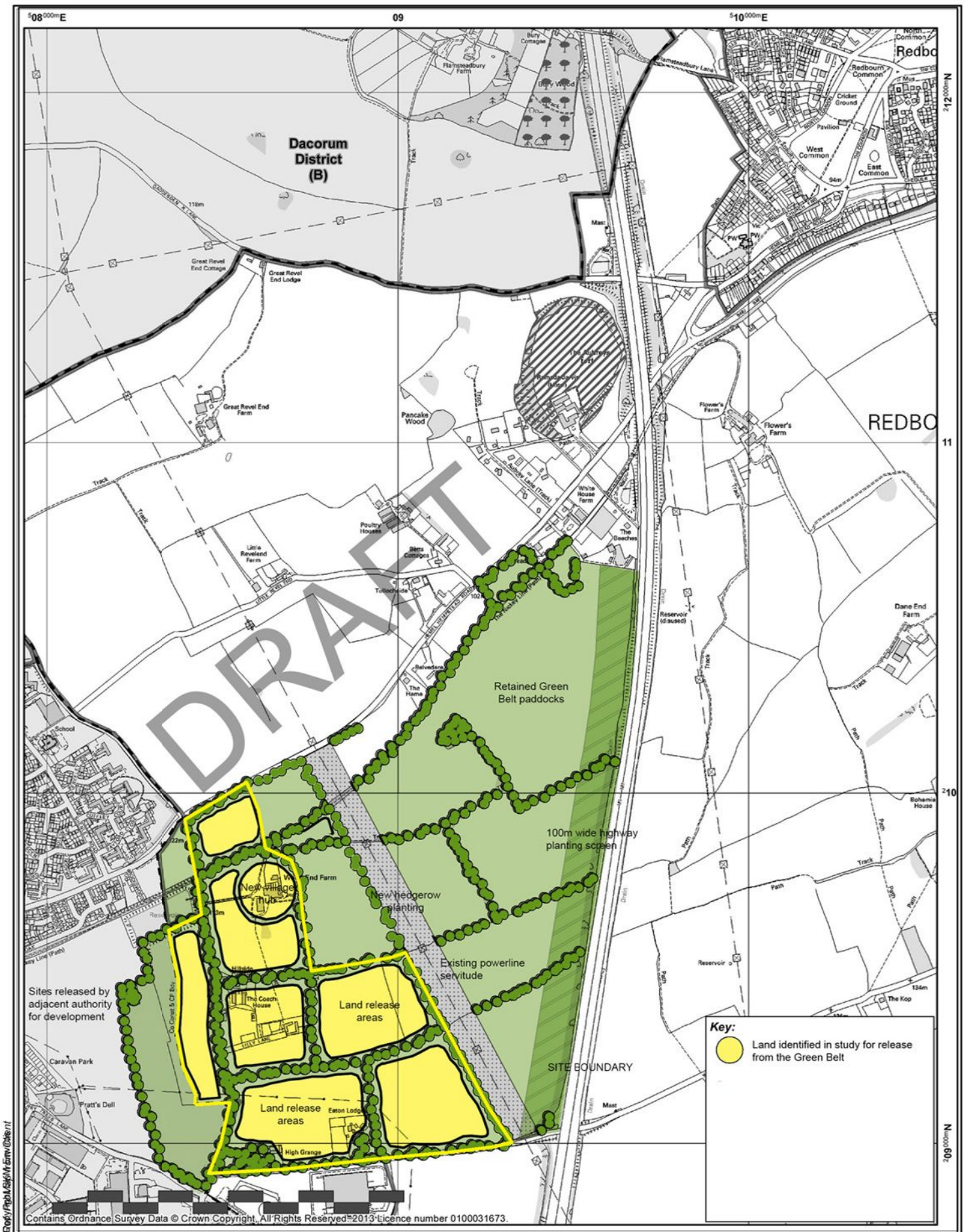


Coordinate System: British National Grid  
Projection: Transverse Mercator  
Datum: OSGB 1936  
Units: Meter

REVISION: A

MXD: 002/g001

SINCLAIR KNIGHT MERZ  
**SKM ENVIROS**



**Green Belt Review for  
St Albans, Dacorum and  
Welwyn Hatfield - PART 2**

**FIGURE 4.2 Indicative Layout  
Site 1 East of Hemel Hempstead (north)**



PROJECT: JE30761  
DATE: NOV 2013  
DRAWN: PHD

Rev.DEC/v002  
SCALE: NTS



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## 4. S2: East of Hemel Hempstead (south)

### 4.1. Site Context and Review of Contribution towards Green Belt Purposes

- 4.1.1. The Strategic sub-area comprises land enclosed by east Hemel Hempstead and M1 (Strategic Parcel GB24A).
- 4.1.2. The sub-area lies within the Buncefield Plateau and St Stephen's Plateau landscape character areas (South Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment).
- 4.1.3. The Buncefield Plateau is an undulating plateau extending to the east of Hemel Hempstead. The undulating landform is a consequence of several dry valleys that cross it. Arable farmland in a large, regular field pattern is the key land use. The M1 motorway is a dominant feature, which interrupts landscape pattern. The industrial element on the edge of Hemel Hempstead is a conspicuous element that influences character. The condition of the landscape and strength of character is described as "poor" and "strong" respectively. The overall objective for this landscape character area is to "restore condition to maintain character".
- 4.1.4. The sub-area lies within the St Stephen's Plateau landscape character area (South Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment). This comprises an undulating or gently sloping plateau. Land use is predominately arable crops in an open field pattern, although smaller, pastoral fields are found in places, including within the sub-area. There are larger areas of woodland to the north (including ancient woodland), which create a sense of enclosure. The settlement pattern is dispersed, typically comprising individual farmsteads and houses. This pattern is connected by narrow winding lanes. Urban fringe influences are prominent, particularly motorway infrastructure and built edge of settlements. The condition of the landscape and strength of character is described as "moderate" and "weak" respectively. The overall objective for this landscape character area is to "improve and reinforce".

#### *Review of Green Belt Purposes Assessment / Justification of identification of strategic sub-area*

- 4.1.5. This sub area is located with strategic parcel GB24 which significantly contributes towards 1 out of the 5 Green Belt purposes; safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. However, it does make a partial contribution towards preventing merging and maintaining the existing settlement pattern. The two 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 both 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.



## 4.2. SWOT Analysis

4.2.1. The analysis of strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats in the sub-area is based upon the assessment of constraints, sustainable patterns of development and landscape appraisal.

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Adjoins key employment area in East Hemel Hempstead</li> <li>▪ Close to range of services and facilities in Hemel Hempstead</li> <li>▪ Potential for clearly defined boudaries</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Site lies within Buncefield HSE exclusion zone</li> <li>▪ Accessibility – 4.7km to Hemel Hempstead railway station</li> <li>▪ Occupies relatively elevated position</li> <li>▪ Overhead lines could restrict development</li> <li>▪ Land to the south is more sensitive due to landscape character</li> <li>▪ Several listed buildings, particularly adjacent to the southern part of the sub-area</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Key site for employment development</li> <li>▪ Sensitive design may help reduce visibility of existing urban form</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cross boundary issues as site adjoins Dacorum Borough Council</li> <li>▪ Connection with development in sub-area 1 may influence development</li> </ul>

## 4.3. Constraints

### *Summary of Environmental and Historic Features*

4.3.1. There are no environmental or historic constraints in the sub-area.

### *Other Potential Constraints / Features*

4.3.2. The northern part of the sub-area lies within the Buncefield HSE exclusion zone. The sub-area is covered by the Development Proximity Zone (DPZ), Inner Zone (IZ), Middle Zone (MZ) and Outer Zone (OZ). All development proposals within the DPZ are to be referred to HSE. The DPZ represents a primary constraint to development whereas other zones represent secondary constraints.

## 4.4. Sustainable Patterns of Development

### *Proximity to town centre, and local centres*





- 4.4.1. Hemel Hempstead town centre is located approximately 3.2km to the west of the sub-area. Leverstock Green local centre is located 700m to the south west. Other nearby local centres are Adeyfield (1.8km to the west) and Bennetts End (2km to the south west).
- 4.4.2. It is also understood that a new local centre is to be established in the heart of Maylands, to the west of the sub-area. The precise location of this local centre is not yet known and will be established through the East Hemel Hempstead Area Action Plan.

*Public transport accessibility*

- 4.4.3. Hemel Hempstead rail station is located 4.7km to the south west. The station offers a regular service into central London, approximately every 10-15 minutes into London Euston during peak hours. The station also provides direct links to Clapham Junction, Milton Keynes Central and Birmingham New Street.
- 4.4.4. Bus services from the sub-area to Hemel Hempstead town centre and rail station are available via route No. 758 which runs along Breakspear Way. This route also provides a bus service into London. Bus routes 300 and 301 to St Albans and Stevenage and the 320 to Watford and Rickmansworth also run along St Albans Road before turning off down Leverstock Greenway approximately 800m to the west of the site.
- 4.4.5. From Hemel Hempstead bus station, bus routes to Aylesbury, Chesham and Amersham are also available.

*Proximity to schools*

- 4.4.6. The nearest Secondary Schools to the sub-area are the Longdean School which is located approximately 1.7km to the south west and the Adeyfield School, located approximately 1.6km to the west.
- 4.4.7. Within 1.2km of the site lies one Primary School, Leverstock Green C of E Primary School which is located approximately 400m to the south west. Slightly further afield lies Hobbs Hill Wood Primary School (1.6km to the south west) and St Albert the Great Catholic Primary School (1.6km to the south west).

*Proximity to public open space*

- 4.4.8. A number of areas of public open space lie in close proximity to the site. Westwick Farm and Leverstock Green situated along Green Lane, bound the south western boundary of the sub-area. Woodwells cemetery and Coppinsfield sports ground also bound the west of the site to the north of Breakspear Way.
- 4.4.9. Other open spaces in the wider area include Mayland Wood and playing field (1.3km to the west), Widmore Wood (1.5km to the west) and areas of open space adjoining the grounds of Longdean School (1.2km to the south west).

*Scale of sub-area compared to settlement role, size and function*

- 4.4.10. The sub-area is located within the St Albans City and District Council but immediately on the boundary with the Dacorum Borough. The sub-area is situated on the eastern outskirts of Hemel Hempstead. Hemel Hempstead is classed as a 'Town' in the Dacorum



Borough Local Plan. Hemel Hempstead has been identified as the Main Centre for Development and Change in the borough as recognised in the Dacorum Core Strategy 2013. It will be the focus for new homes, jobs and infrastructure, including new leisure and cultural facilities and improved public transport links. Hemel Hempstead town has a population of approximately 5,684 people accounting for 3.92% of the Borough's total population according to the 2011 Census.

- 4.4.11. The sub-area itself is located in the ward of Redbourn (St Albans City and District Council), which has a resident population (16-64 year olds) of 3,900. This represents approximately 4.4% of the resident working age population of the wider St Albans City and District Council.

#### **4.5. Landscape appraisal**

- 4.5.1. The landscape appraisal, required of a Green Belt review, has been undertaken to take account of landform / topography, land cover, cultural dimensions, levels of enclosure and visual attributes. Each is discussed below.

##### *Landform / topography*

- 4.5.2. The landform comprises gently sloping ground, falling from Buncefield Plateau towards the shallow dry valley to the south, beyond which the land rises again. The more elevated land is up to approximately 137m AOD, falling to approximately 115m AOD within the dry valley.

##### *Land cover and land use*

- 4.5.3. The sub-area primarily comprises agricultural land uses, predominately arable crops, in a large, open field pattern. There are also some small areas of pasture in places, typically around farmsteads and dispersed properties. Agricultural land quality is a mix of Grade 2 and Grade 3. There are occasional small woodlands/groups of trees within the sub-area, there is also immature planting along the edges of the M1 motorway.
- 4.5.4. Key ecological features comprise the remnant hedgerows and hedgerow trees, together with the small areas of woodland. There are no ecological designations within the sub-area.

##### *Cultural dimensions*

- 4.5.5. Key current cultural dimensions within the sub-area relate to the settlement pattern, field pattern and road network. A number of Listed Buildings also lie around the sub-area (e.g. along Westwick Row and Hemel Hempstead Road), plus one Listed Building within the sub-area (Breakspears). The Registered Park and Garden of Gorhambury (Grade II) and associated heritage assets lay approximately 900 to the east/north-east.

#### *Levels of enclosure*

- 4.5.6. The nature of the landform is the primary influence on the level of enclosure, with the limited tree cover and medium to large scale field pattern giving rise to a visually open landscape in places. This is particularly the case for more elevated locations, where there are clear views over shallow valley within the sub-area and surrounding landscape.
- 4.5.7. The existing settlement edges of Hemel Hempstead vary in their prominence and contribution to enclosure. To the south the residential edge of Hemel Hempstead is more discrete to the associated vegetation, although this does enclose part of the sub-area. The industrial estate further north is much more prominent and forms a clear edge, with the building restricted views to the west.

#### *Visual attributes including views within and outwards as well as the visual impact on adjacent development.*

- 4.5.8. The nature of the landform and land-use/cover allows open views over the surrounding landscape in places, however roadside vegetation frequently restricts such views. Where views are available the key views are in an easterly direction. The M1 Motorway forms a conspicuous element, defining the eastern edge of the sub-area. Overhead power lines are visible in places, particularly locations within the northern part of the sub-area.
- 4.5.9. In the southern part of the sub-area the existing settlement pattern is quite discrete, with the key conspicuous element being the Breakspear Park office development. The edge of existing residential development within Leverstock Green is more discrete, especially along Westwick Row. Further north, the industrial estate forms a prominent local feature. There are clear views into the sub area from adjacent roads, including the M1 motorway (although the view from this primary route will change as adjacent new planting establishes and matures).
- 4.5.10. The nature of the landform and land cover means new development could comprise a conspicuous element throughout the sub-area. The landform, character and pattern means development in the southern part of the sub-area will contrast greatest with the existing landscape. However, in the northern part, any development would be continuous with the existing industrial estate.

## **4.6. Landscape Sensitivity and Boundary Review**

### *Landscape Sensitivity*

- 4.6.1. This section considers the potential landscape and visual effects associated with change or potential future development on the current landscape character, as identified in the on-site assessment.



- 4.6.2. This strategic sub-area lies on the east / south-east edge of Hemel Hempstead. The surrounding urban edges are variable in strength, being more apparent and clearly defined by the adjacent development and road network in the northern part of the sub-area. The landscape is rural and while some features have been lost or eroded it still has a countryside feel, particularly in the southern part of the sub-area.
- 4.6.3. The nature of the land cover/pattern means that while the northern part of the sub-area is more elevated, the continuity with the existing urban edge and presence of the industrial estate will reduce the extent of future change. The southern part of the sub-area (south of the A414) comprises an area where the landscape pattern is more intact and there are fewer detracting elements, meaning any change would be much more apparent and the nature of the landform is likely to present challenges to the integration of development whilst minimising effects on the Green Belt.
- 4.6.4. Sensitivity to change varies throughout the sub-area. The northern part is of lower sensitivity as it is more influenced by the urban edge and greater enclosure is provided by the landscape pattern. The land further south within the sub-area is more sensitive, particularly due to a combination of the reducing influence of the settlement edge, the landform and the condition of the existing landscape.

*Sensitivity analysis:*

	<b>Part of Sub-Area</b>	
<b>Element</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>South</b>
Landscape character	<p>Built development would affect openness of landscape character. However, the adjoining industrial estate and M1 Motorway would reduce the perception of change.</p> <p>Agricultural intensification has resulted in loss of field boundaries and has altered to some extent. However the key attribute relates to how this land comprises a relatively narrow strip between the industrial estate and M1 Motorway, resulting in a strong urban fringe feel.</p>	<p>This part of the sub area Greater connection with surrounding rural landscape, although there are some detracting features e.g. mineral working and associated elements.</p> <p>Agricultural intensification has resulted in loss of some field boundaries although the remaining pattern forms an apparent feature in the landscape. Most of the boundaries still comprise hedgerows with hedgerow trees.</p>
Settlement form	<p>Development would be continuous with the industrial estate on the edge of Hemel Hempstead.</p>	<p>Increased distance from settlement edge and much more limited connection (with this increasing with the more southerly part of the sub-area.</p>
Views/visual features	<p>Key potential visual effects of new development would be quite localised, but the elevation of the land means that it could be conspicuous in mid-range views. Carefully designed development could</p>	<p>The relative openness of the landscape would mean development could be visually prominent. This would particularly be the case at a local level, but also within some mid-range views e.g. land to the</p>



	improve the appearance of this industrial edge to Hemel Hempstead.	east of the M1 motorway.
Landscape value	No landscape or ecological designations.  Listed Building to the north of the A414.	No landscape or ecological designations.  Listed Buildings along Westwick Row and A4147.
Overall evaluation	Lower sensitivity	Higher sensitivity

***Boundary Review***

- 4.6.5. It is concluded that the most appropriate land for release from Green Belt designation is the northern part of the sub-area.
- 4.6.6. This land has clearly defined, visually prominent and strong edges in all directions. The M1 motorway lies to the east, the A414 to the south, green lane and / or industrial development to the west and Punch Bowl Lane to the north.
- 4.6.7. Additional planting, particularly around parts or all of the northern, eastern and southern boundaries would complement existing boundaries and new planting alongside the M1 motorway. Planting could also provide local environmental enhancement, help to integrate the edges of new development and could to reduce the visibility of the existing industrial structures from the surrounding landscape.

**4.7. Potential Development Capacity**

- 4.7.1. The indicative layout for S2 is shown in Figure 5.2. Potential development capacity is set out below:
- Indicative layout area: 56 hectares.
  - Predominant land-use: Employment.
  - At a net density of 30dph this would generate 1,005 residential units.
  - At a net density of 50dph this would generate 1,675 residential units.

*Potential Landscape Measures*

- 4.7.2. Within the northern part of the sub-area carefully designed development, with an appropriate landscape strategy could help to integrate new structures and reduce the visibility of the existing urban edge.
- 4.7.3. Key landscape features:
- Remaining hedgerows/hedgerow trees
  - Grade 2 agricultural land
  - Gentle landform and relatively open view across
  - Urban edge and M1 Motorway.







## **5. S3: East of St Albans**

### **5.1. Site Context and Contribution towards Green Belt Purposes**

- 5.1.1. The Strategic sub-area comprises land enclosed by residential development at east St Albans along Sandpit Lane (Strategic Parcel GB36).
- 5.1.2. The sub-area lies within the De Havilland Plain landscape character area (South Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment). It comprises an area of level topography and adverse mix of uses and an incoherent pattern. The sub-area lies within the southern part of the character area, where there is mix of mineral extraction, urban fringe development and Oaklands College, which is described as having as disjointed and mixed character.

#### *Review of Green Belt Purposes Assessment / Justification of identification of strategic sub-area*

- 5.1.3. The Strategic Parcel (GB36) contributes significantly towards 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.

### **5.2. Planning History**

- 5.2.1. Proposals (5/2009/2471) for mixed use development including residential, education and sports facilities. Planning permission granted on appeal. The site is located in the southwest section of the sub-area at Beaumont School and land to north of Winches Farm Hatfield Road St Albans.





### 5.3. SWOT Analysis

5.3.1. The analysis of strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats the sub-area is based upon the assessment of constraints, sustainable patterns of development and landscape appraisal.

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of primary constraints on site</li> <li>▪ Very close to range of services and facilities in St Albans</li> <li>▪ Adjoins key bus route linking St Albans and Hatfield (W-E)</li> <li>▪ Oaklands College comprises a key area of existing development</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Existing schools and playing fields within sub-area</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Potential integration with the existing urban form</li> <li>▪ Existing landscape pattern could help provide a framework for new development</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Emerging planning applications may result in piecemeal development that could lack coherence overall</li> </ul>

### 5.4. Constraints

#### *Summary of Environmental and Historic Features*

- 5.4.1. There is a small pocket of ancient woodland at Home Wood to the north of the Hatfield Road (A1057) and southwest of Oaklands College. This is recognised as a primary constraint.
- 5.4.2. Archaeological remains are identified in the south of the sub-area. There is one post-medieval remains within the main college campus and two, undated and iron age / Roman remains to the north of the Hatfield Road and east of Oaklands College<sup>3</sup>.

#### *Other Potential Constraints / Features*

- 5.4.3. Agricultural land quality is Grade 2 or 3, with the better quality land found immediately around the College and between Hatfield Road and East Drive/ south Drive.

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<sup>3</sup>Smallford Campus, Oaklands College, St Albans, Hertfordshire – An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment for Oaklands College (October 2004)



- 5.4.4. There are two Public Rights of Way (PRoW) within the sub-area including a bridleway and footpath following the alignment of North Drive, East Drive and South Drive.
- 5.4.5. There is also a minerals former minerals working adjacent to Oaklands Lane.

## **5.5. Sustainable Patterns of Development**

### *Proximity to town centre, and local centres*

- 5.5.1. The sub-area is situated on the eastern outskirts of St Albans town. St Albans town centre is located approximately 2.2km to the west of the sub-area. The designated Green Belt settlement of Smallford (GBS.9) lies 1.1km to the east.
- 5.5.2. The local centre at Central Drive(LC.8) is located 200m to the west of the site.

### *Public transport accessibility*

- 5.5.3. St Albans rail station is located approximately 2km to the west of the sub-area. The station offers regular services along the First Capital Connect Line to London (St Pancras International within 20 minutes at peak times), and between Luton and Bedford to Brighton. St Albans Abbey rail station is also located 3.3km to the south west of the site. This station provides a London Midland service between St Albans and Watford Junction.
- 5.5.4. There are a number of bus services which run near to the sub area. Immediately to the north, bus route 653 runs along Sandpit Lane providing connections to St Albans town centre and Welwyn Garden City.
- 5.5.5. Approximately 300m to the south, bus routes 300, 301, 304, 305, 330, 601, 602, 657, 658, 724 and 725 run along Hatfield Road. These services provide connections into St Albans town centre but also to Stevenage, Hemel Hempstead, Hitchin, Welham Green, Hatfield, Watford, Redbourn, London Colney, Harlow and Heathrow Airport.

### *Proximity to schools*

- 5.5.6. Two secondary schools are located in close proximity to the site: Beaumont School lies immediately to the west of the site along Oakwood Drive and Nicholas Breakspear Catholic School lies 800m to the south. Verulaem Boys Secondary School lies 2km to the west of the site. Oaklands College for further education also lies 300m to the south of the site.
- 5.5.7. Oakwood Primary School lies immediately to the west of the site along Oakwood Drive and Camp Primary and Nursery School lies 1.2km to the south west. Slightly further away is Windemere Primary School located approximately 1.4km to the south west.

### *Proximity to public open space*

- 5.5.8. Longacres playing field and open space lies 500m to the south west and Fleetville open space is 1km to the south west along Hatfield Road. The Wick Local Nature Reserve is



situated 500m to the north west. Further open spaces are located towards St Albans town centre.

- 5.5.9. Alban Way, a dismantled railway and green corridor runs in an east to west direction approximately 600m to the south. This offers a designated walking and cycling route between St Albans and Hatfield.

*Scale of sub-area compared to settlement role, size and function*

- 5.5.10. The sub-area lies within the St Albans City and District Council on the eastern outskirts of St Albans town. St Albans is designated as one of only two towns in the St Albans City and District Council plan (Town T1). The population of St Albans town stands at 58,000 (Census 2011), representing approximately 41% of the population of the wider St Albans City and District Council which stands at 141,900.
- 5.5.11. The sub-area predominantly lies within the Marshalswick North ward, although the southernmost part of the sub-area lies within the Colney Heath ward. The resident population (16-64 year olds) of the Marshalswick North ward is 4,100 and of the Colney Heath ward is 4,000 (Census 2011). This represents approximately 4.6% and 4.5% of the resident working age population of the St Albans City and District Council respectively.

## **5.6. Landscape appraisal**

- 5.6.1. The landscape appraisal, required of a Green Belt review, has been undertaken to take account of landform / topography, land cover, cultural dimensions, levels of enclosure and visual attributes. Each is discussed below.

*Landform / topography*

- 5.6.2. The landform is slightly domed towards the centre of the site (where the College buildings are located); the sub-area is level with the adjacent southern edges, but considerably raised along the northern edge. It slopes gradually downwards to integrate with the surrounding east and western boundary, at between approximately 75m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) and 100m AOD, and generally slopes from east to west. Adjacent land is a comparable elevation although a notable factor is the slightly steeper slopes where the land falls towards Sandpit Lane.

*Land cover and land use*

- 5.6.3. The sub-area comprises a range of intensively used land uses including built development as well as agricultural land.
- 5.6.4. The main built use relates to education. The most significant built development in the green belt is Oaklands College, located in the centre of the sub-area, which has expanded overtime. The campus contains sports pitches associated with the college. There are also other sports facilities in the sub area which are unrelated to the college.
- 5.6.5. *The sub-area also contains Verulam School playing fields, Beaumont School (and associated playing fields) and Oakwood primary school to the west. These schools and playing fields adjoin the east edge of St Albans.*



- 5.6.6. The remainder of the sub-area is primarily used as for arable agricultural uses. Agricultural land quality is Grade 2 or 3. Higher quality land is located immediately around the College and in the south of the sub-area, between Hatfield Road and East Drive/south Drive.
- 5.6.7. The field pattern is variable, typically medium, but smaller in size immediately around the College or western edge of the sub-area. Fields are bound by a mix of hedgerows and post and wire fences. The field pattern on the northern portion (adjacent to Sandpit Land) has been eroded by the apparent removal of hedgerows, being replaced by more regular boundaries formed by post and wire fences. This gives rise to a more visually open character, which contrasts with the smaller field pattern seen elsewhere within the sub-area.
- 5.6.8. The college forms a key and relatively prominent element within the local landscape, both in terms of the presence of the built form and the focus of activity. The sub-area is therefore subject to relatively high levels of activity and key movements of traffic, staff and students in the south of the sub-area, along South Drive between the College and Hatfield Road. The east of the sub-area also experience relatively higher levels of activity due to the presence of primary and secondary schools.
- 5.6.9. Other notable land use elements within the sub-area include pockets of mature woodland such as ancient woodland at Home Wood, a plant nursery, dispersed residential properties (e.g. along East Drive) and a former minerals working , adjacent to Oaklands Lane.
- 5.6.10. There are Public Rights of Way across the sub-area namely: a bridleway and footpath following the alignment of North Drive, East Drive and South Drive.
- 5.6.11. Key ecological features within the sub-area comprise the woodlands (including Home Wood ancient woodland), hedgerows and Boggymead Spring. There are no ecological designations within the sub-area.

#### *Cultural dimensions*

- 5.6.12. The key current cultural dimension is the educational uses outlined above including surrounding agricultural uses which are linked with educational activities at Oaklands College.
- 5.6.13. The landscape forms part of a past historic design, although much of this has been lost through changes to the College and surroundings. Remnants of the designed landscape are still evident in some places including the former gate house at the eastern end of East Drive and avenue of trees that line the same approach. The view across this landscape from Hatfield Road also gives an impression of the remnant historic landscape. There are no known designated heritage assets within the sub-area or immediate surroundings.

#### *Levels of enclosure*

- 5.6.14. For the purposes of this study, a sense of enclosure is defined as either (a) the presence of vegetation; (b) the visual impact of landform; or (c) the presence of built development.
- 5.6.15. The most visually open landscapes are towards the north or east, associated with larger fields and where some traditional boundaries have been removed. Smaller scale spaces



are found around Oaklands College and in the western part of the sub-area. The more enclosed landscape is created by established hedgerows and areas of woodland e.g. Home Wood to the south-west of the College. The falling land towards Sandpit Lane also creates a sense of enclosure and smaller scale landscape at a local level.

- 5.6.16. The existing settlement edges of St Albans have a strong and clearly defined form, with the urban edges typically comprising quite rigid lines extending along the primary and local road network. These edges create a sense of enclosure and provide a major urban influence (both in physical and visual terms) on the character of the adjacent landscape within the sub-area. The level of containment by St Albans settlement edge is high, and the presence of built development at Oaklands College interrupts the landscape and connection with the wider countryside.

*Visual attributes including views within and outwards as well as the visual impact on adjacent development.*

- 5.6.17. Key visual attributes include the remnants of the designed landscape and Oaklands College, which are visible from publically accessible locations within and around the sub-area.
- 5.6.18. The sense of movement and activity is also considered to be a visual component, particularly towards/adjacent to the southern edge (associated with the College and Hatfield Road). Views across the sub-area are readily available from surrounding roads, with localised vegetation/hedgerows providing some restriction.
- 5.6.19. The limited variation in landform, both within the sub-area and the surroundings means that key visual sensitivities are likely to be localised and primarily associated with the adjacent residential areas/roads and public rights of way.

## **5.7. Landscape Sensitivity and Boundary Review**

### *Landscape Sensitivity*

*This section considers the potential landscape and visual effects associated with change or potential future development on the current landscape character, as identified in the on-site assessment.*

- 5.7.1. This strategic sub-area lies on the eastern edge of St Albans. The surrounding urban edges are strong and clearly defined by the adjacent development and road network. Much of landscape has been modified and field boundaries have been lost. There are some historic features that relate to a previous historic landscape, but these are dispersed throughout the sub-area and little coherence or legibility remains as the historic character has been eroded by incremental development/change, and in some places dereliction.
- 5.7.2. The nature of the landform and immediate context means that the western half of the sub-area is relatively visually isolated / self-contained and its contribution to the wider landscape to the east is more limited. As a result the eastern half of SSA3 has a much stronger visual connection to the surrounding countryside.
- 5.7.3. Key landscape features that make a valuable contribution are the remnants of the historic landscape, the field pattern where it remains more intact (e.g. around Oaklands College),



pockets of established/mature woodland (e.g. Home Wood). It is important that any future development recognises the value of these key features of the sub-area and also maintains a degree of connection between them whilst minimising fragmentation.

- 5.7.4. Sensitivity to change varies throughout the sub-area. The western part is of lowest sensitivity as it is influenced by the strong adjacent urban edge and erosion of field pattern. The rising ground is a potential constraint and the relationship this has with residential properties to the north of Sandpit Lane is likely to be an important consideration in respect of any future use of the land.
- 5.7.5. The land to the north-east of the sub-area is sensitive, primarily due to the reducing influence of the settlement edge and associated urban development i.e. its separation from St Albans.
- 5.7.6. The southern part of the sub-area is sensitive due to the more visible aspects of the former historic landscape and higher agricultural land quality. The industrial estate and residential development to the south of Hatfield Road is a key influence on character and context. However the views across the Hatfield Road, into the sub-area, comprise a positive attribute at the local level.

*Sensitivity analysis:*

	Part of Sub-Area		
Element	West	North-east	South
Landscape character	<p>While built development would affect openness of landscape character the extent of effects are likely to be limited. The existing landscape pattern provides a degree of enclosure and would help contain and provide a framework for development.</p> <p>Agricultural intensification has resulted in loss of field boundaries and has altered landscape pattern. Some of the boundaries still comprise hedgerows with hedgerow trees. Playing fields occupy western edge of the sub area. There are small areas of woodland,</p>	<p>Greater connection with surrounding rural landscape, although there are some detracting features e.g. mineral working and associated elements.</p> <p>Few features of notable value, traditional field boundaries have largely been removed and replaced in parts with a new pattern. There is some woodland and remnants of the historic designed landscape.</p>	<p>Openness of the existing landscape would be lost, however this attribute is already influenced the by linear development to the south of Hatfield Road.</p> <p>Few features of notable value. Agricultural intensification has resulted in loss of field boundaries and has altered landscape pattern. Small area of woodland associated with Boggymead Spring. Remnants of historic designed landscape, e.g. parts of East Drive.</p>



	including ancient woodland at Home Wood.		
Settlement form	Development would complement and be continuous with the adjacent urban form to the east, north and south.	Increased distance from settlement edge and more limited visual connection. Without development further east, development of this area is likely to appear unconnected and illogical.	Development of this area could link with the urban form, but this is likely to reinforce ribbon development along Hatfield Road (A1057) and could add to the perception of sprawl.
Landscape value	No landscape designations.  Listed buildings to the south (on Kay Walk)  No ecological designation, but Home Wood comprises ancient woodland	No landscape, cultural heritage or ecological designations.	No landscape designations.  Listed building adjacent to Hatfield Road.  No ecological designation, but Home Wood comprises ancient woodland
Views/visual features	Key potential visual effects of new development would be at a very local level. Notable effects would be in relation to surrounding residents, people travelling along Sandpit Lane and users of the bridleway along North Drive. Areas of woodland and hedgerows would provide some visual containment.	Key views would be from Sandpit Lane/Oaklands Lane, dispersed residential properties and surrounding countryside.	Key views would be from Hatfield Road, Oaklands Lane, residents on the edge of St Albans and residents of Smallford.
Overall evaluation	Lower sensitivity	Higher sensitivity	Higher sensitivity

**Boundary Review**

5.7.7. It is concluded that the most appropriate land for release from Green Belt designation is the western part of the sub-area.



- 5.7.8. This land has clearly defined, visually prominent and strong edges to the north and west along the existing settlement edge of St Albans and Sandpit Lane. The boundary to the south would comprise a combination of hedgerows and woodland. The boundary to the east would comprise North Drive, Oaklands College and Home Wood.
- 5.7.9. While North Drive comprises a clearly define feature on the ground, there would be benefits if this edge is reinforced by additional planting. This would provide structure, form and greater visual separation from the land to the east. Such planting would also potentially add new corridors to the landscape and reduce the potential for fragmentation of existing landscape features, particularly Home Wood.

## **5.8. Potential Development Capacity**

- 5.8.1. The indicative layout for S3 is shown in Figure 6.2. Potential development capacity is set out below:
- Indicative layout area: 39 hectares.
  - Predominant land-use: C3 Residential.
  - At a net density of 30dph this would generate 697 residential units.
  - At a net density of 50dph this would generate 1,162 residential units.

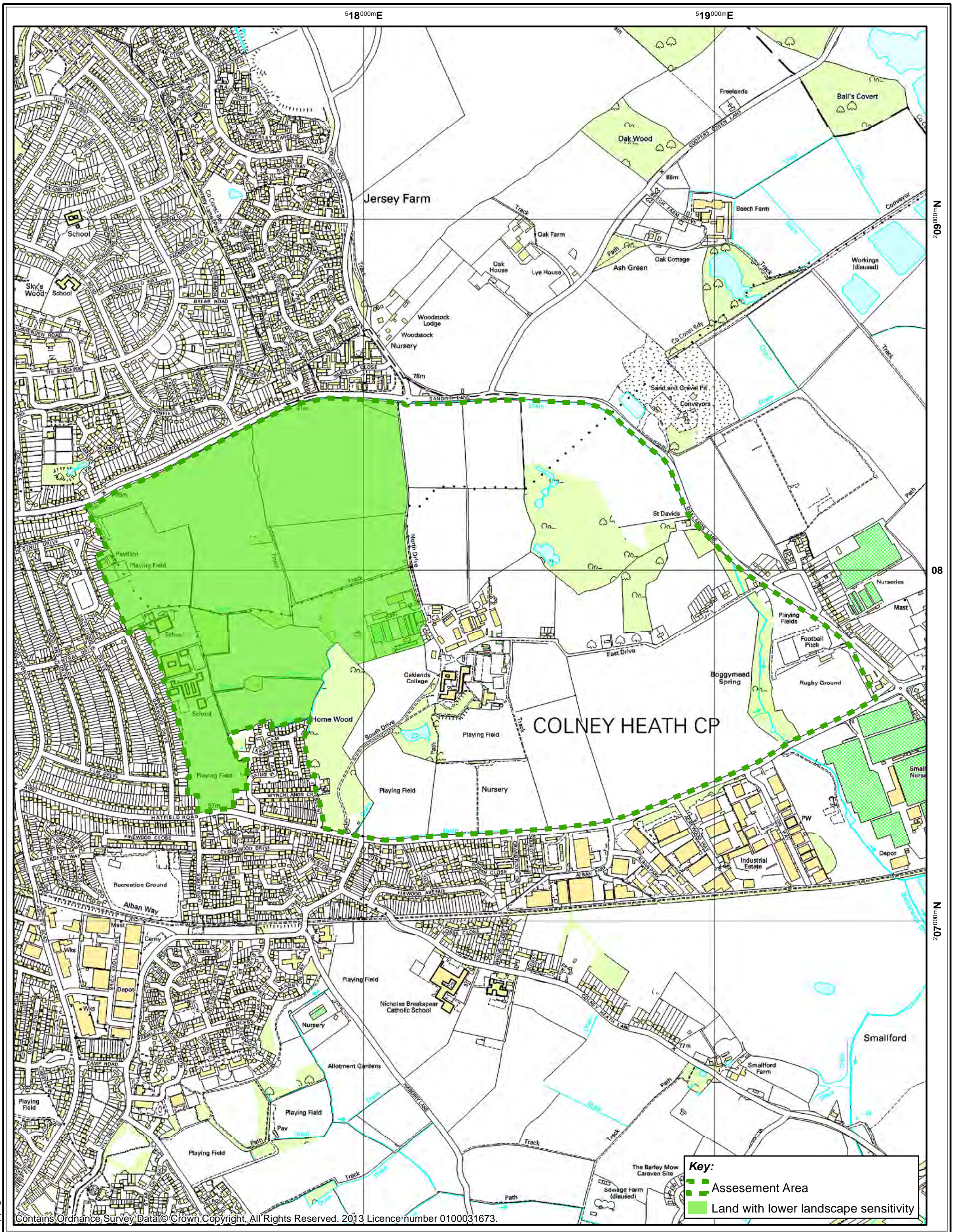
### *Potential Landscape Measures*

- 5.8.2. The weakest edge is to the north-east (along North Drive), also noting that this track appears to form part of a remnant historic landscape. New planting along this edge would provide a clear edge and greater structure.

### Key landscape features:

- Remaining hedgerows/hedgerow trees
- Areas of woodland, including ancient woodland
- Remnants of the historic designed landscape
- Existing playing fields.





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**Green Belt Part 2  
Landscape Sensitivity Appraisal**

**Figure 6.1. S3:  
East of St Albans**

SCALE  
1:10,000 @ A3

CONTENT  
Ordnance Survey

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PROJECT CODE  
JE30761

DRAWN  
JA

DATE  
12/12/2013



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

REVISION: A      MXD: 002/g001





Ref. ProMap from Client

**Green Belt Review for  
St Albans, Dacorum and  
Welwyn Hatfield - PART 2**

**FIGURE 7.2** Indicative Layout  
Site 4 North of St Albans



PROJECT: JE30761  
DATE: NOV 2013  
DRAWN: PHD

Rev.DEC/v002  
SCALE: NTS



## 6. S4: North of St Albans

### 6.1. Site Context and Contribution towards Green Belt Purposes

- 6.1.1. The Strategic sub-area comprises land at north St Albans along Sandbridgebury Lane (GB38).
- 6.1.2. The sub-area lies within the Ayre's End Valleys and Ridges landscape character area (South Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment). This comprises a network of interconnecting dry valleys overlooked by small areas of plateau on the fringes. Small and medium sized areas of woodland are located on the upper slopes of the valleys, which combined with the landform, creates a visual containment. However, large arable fields on the plateau areas give rise to a more open landscape in places. There is a greater prevalence of recreational uses adjacent to urban settlements, including Woollam Playing Fields within the western part of the sub-area (adjacent to the A1081). Narrow winding lanes and equestrian uses emphasise the rural character. Settlement pattern is sparse; typically individual or small clusters of properties. It is a relatively quiet area, with few detracting features (exceptions to this being the A1081 and mainline railway).

#### *Review of Green Belt Purposes Assessment / Justification of identification of strategic sub-area*

- 6.1.3. Strategic Parcel (GB38) makes a significant contribution towards 2 of the 5 Green Belt purposes: by preventing merging (of St Albans and Harpenden) and preserving 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 screening 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.

#### *Planning History*

- 6.1.4. Proposals (5/2012/2713) for residential development and two tennis courts and public open space refused planning permission in January 2013. Due for Public Inquiry which is currently deferred to await outcome of the second application (5/2011/2857). Site is located off Harpenden Road.

## 6.2. SWOT Analysis

6.2.1. The analysis of strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats to the sub-area is based upon the assessment of constraints, sustainable patterns of development and landscape appraisal.

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of primary constraints</li> <li>▪ 2km to St Albans railway station</li> <li>▪ Close to range of services and facilities in St Albans</li> <li>▪ Close to key bus route (N-S)</li> <li>▪ Local enclosure provided by railway, and urban edge to the south and east</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Existing schools and playing fields within sub-area</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Link to sports facilities</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Emerging planning applications may result in piecemeal development that could lack coherence overall</li> </ul>

## 6.3. Constraints

### *Summary of Environmental and Historic Features*

6.3.1. There is a stretch of ancient woodland across the southeast edge of the sub-area.

### *Other Potential Constraints / Features*

6.3.2. There are no other constraints in relation to the sub-area.

## 6.4. Sustainable Patterns of Development

### *Proximity to town centre, and local centres*

6.4.1. The sub-area is situated on the northern outskirts of St Albans town. St Albans town centre is located approximately 2.3km to the south. Sandridge, which is located approximately 1.5km to the north west of the sub-area is designated as Green Belt settlement GBS.7 within the St Albans City and District Council plan.

6.4.2. There is one local centre within 1km of the sub-area. Beech Road local centre is situated 600m to the south east along Beech Road. Approximately 1.3km to the south lies Sandridge Road local centre.

### *Public transport accessibility*

6.4.3. St Albans rail station is located 2.4km to the south of the sub-area. The station offers regular services along the First Capital Connect Line to London (St Pancras International within 20 minutes at peak times), and between Luton and Bedford to Brighton. St Albans



Abbey rail station is also located 3.2km to the south of the site. This station provides a London Midland service between St Albans and Watford Junction.

- 6.4.4. Bus route 321 runs from Harpenden in the north to Chiswell Green in the south west, passing , approximately 400m to the west of the sub-area, along Harpenden Road. This service passes through St Albans town centre but does not offer a direct service to St Albans rail station. Bus routes 304 and 620 run along St Albans Road and Sandridge Road, approximately 800m to the south of the sub-area, providing services between Sandridge and St Albans city centre.
- 6.4.5. Bus services to Hatfield and Hemel Hempstead are available from St Albans city centre.

*Proximity to schools*

- 6.4.6. There are three secondary schools in close proximity to the sub-area., St Albans Girls School is located immediately to the south west on Sandridgebury Lane. The Townsend Church of England School is also located 500m to the west and Sandringham School 1.3km to the south east.
- 6.4.7. There are two primary schools within close proximity to the sub-area. These are the Margaret Wix Primary School (600m to the south west) and Wheatfields Infant School (1km to the south east). Slightly further away lies the Skyswood Primary School (1.6km to the south east).

*Proximity to public open space*

- 6.4.8. The sub-area is well-served by areas of public open space. Jersey Farm Woodland Park is designated as formal public open space (OS.6) in the St Albans City and District Council plan and is located 900m to the east of the sub-area. Other nearby open spaces include Beech Bottom Dyke (400m to the south), Ellis Fields (200m to the south), New Greens Avenue open space (400m to the west) and William Bird open space (1km to the west).
- 6.4.9. A number of areas of woodland lie within the vicinity of the site including Kilmart's Spring wood (900m to the north west), Green Wood (1km to the north west) and Batch Wood (900m to the west).

*Scale of sub-area compared to settlement role, size and function*

- 6.4.10. The sub-area lies within the St Albans City and District Council on the northern outskirts of St Albans town. St Albans is designated as one of only two towns in the St Albans City and District Council plan (Town T1). The population of St Albans town stands at 58,000 (Census 2011), representing approximately 41% of the population of the wider St Albans City and District Council which stands at 141,900.
- 6.4.11. The sub-area itself is located within the Marshalswick South ward which has a resident population (16-64 year olds) of 4,400 (Census 2011). This represents approximately 5% of the total resident working age population of the wider St Albans City and District Council.



## 6.5. Landscape appraisal

- 6.5.1. The landscape appraisal, required of a Green Belt review, has been undertaken to take account of landform / topography, land cover, cultural dimensions, levels of enclosure and visual attributes. *Each is discussed below.*

### *Landform / topography*

- 6.5.2. The landform comprises a relatively level area that falls gently to the south and east, from approximately 125m AOD around Woollam Playing Fields to approximately 105m AOD south of Sandridgebury Lane. The landform influences the nature of views that can be optioned, with the lower land around Sandridgebury Lane feeling more enclosed, whereas the higher ground nearer to Greens Cottages and Cheapside Farm is more open, with greater visual connection with the surrounding landscape. The railway line to the east is also positioned on an embankment, which also influences the sense of enclosure.

### *Land cover and land use*

- 6.5.3. The sub-area primarily comprises agricultural land uses, predominately arable crops, in a medium to large field pattern. Agricultural land quality is Grade 3. There is limited tree cover within the sub-area, although woodland towards the edges is a feature, as are occasional small groups of trees/hedgerow trees. The strip of woodland adjacent to the industrial estate at Porters Wood provides visual separation from the urban edge and there is also a more wooded appearance to the landscape along the western edge. It is also noted that a new strip of tree planting has been introduced either side of the lane that extends to the north of Sandridgebury Lane. Other notable land uses within the sub-area include St Albans Girls' School to the south-west and Woollam Playing Fields towards the north-west. There are occasional dispersed residential properties and a farm.
- 6.5.4. Key ecological features comprise the remnant hedgerows and hedgerow trees, together with the areas of woodland. There are no ecological designations within the sub-area.

### *Cultural dimensions*

- 6.5.5. There are no known designated heritage assets within the sub-area. Cultural influences include the uses/settlement pattern on the edge of St Albans, transport network and remaining field pattern.

### *Levels of enclosure*

- 6.5.6. The level of enclosure is influenced by a combination of the landform, surrounding tree cover and railway embankment. The land around Sandridgebury Lane has the greatest sense of enclosure due to these factors. The land further north has a more open appearance, with visual connections with the surrounding landscape.



- 6.5.7. The existing settlement edges of St Albans comprise relatively discrete elements. While buildings are visible, the intervening vegetation softens its appearance and reduces its prominence.

*Visual attributes including views within and outwards as well as the visual impact on adjacent development.*

- 6.5.8. The visual attributes are influenced by the levels of enclosure described above. The land around Sandridgebury Lane is more contained and views more restricted. The more elevated land further north, particularly around Woolams Palying Fields has longer distance views and more visual links with the surrounding landscape. Woolams Playing Fields comprises a notable visual element and focal point.
- 6.5.9. The transport infrastructure to the west (Harpenden Road/A1081) and east (railway line) are visual components and add a sense of movement either side of the sub-area.
- 6.5.10. The landform and vegetation means that key visual sensitivities are likely to be more localised for the southern part of the sub-area and primarily associated with the adjacent residential areas, roads, railway line and public rights of way.

## **6.6. Landscape Sensitivity and Boundary Review**

### *Landscape Sensitivity*

- 6.6.1. This section considers the potential landscape and visual effects associated with change or potential future development on the current landscape character, as identified in the on-site assessment.
- 6.6.2. This strategic sub-area lies on the northern edge of St Albans. The surrounding urban edges are relatively discrete due to vegetation. The landscape has been modified and field boundaries have been lost although the field pattern that remains is quite intact with continuous hedgerows and frequent hedgerow trees in places. There are also signs of local landscape enhancement e.g. the new area of tree planting either side of the lane that extends north from Sandridgebury Lane.
- 6.6.3. The nature of the landform and immediate context means that the southern of the sub-area is relatively visually isolated / self-contained and its contribution to the wider landscape more limited. However, the northern part of the sub-area has greater visual connection with the surrounding countryside.
- 6.6.4. Sensitivity to change varies throughout the sub-area, with the southern part being of lower sensitivity. The landform, railway embankment and surrounding vegetation result in a greater sense of enclosure and there is evidence of the urban edge. Further north, sensitivity increases with the increased elevation and the greater openness/visual connection with the surrounding landscape.



*Sensitivity analysis:*

Element	Part of Sub-Area	
	South	North
Landscape character	<p>Built development would affect openness of landscape character. The landform, railway and northern edge of St Albans embankment provide enclosure and would help contain development. The recently planted vegetation on the northern edge of this area would also form a clear edge as it establishes and matures.</p> <p>Changes in the landscape have resulted in some loss of hedges, but those that remain are quite intact and continuous. The remnant hedgerows and small areas of woodland comprise key features that help to create a framework for development and maintain a sense of enclosure.</p>	<p>The landscape has a more open character development would be more contrasting. Any changes to this landscape would be more conspicuous.</p> <p>Field pattern is comparable with the southern part of the sub area, both in terms of size and boundaries. There are dispersed residential properties and this pattern would be lost if the land is developed.</p>
Settlement form	<p>Development would be adjacent to and continuous with the northern edge of St Albans. The edge of St Albans also extends northwards along Harpenden Road/A1081, alongside the south west edge of the sub-area.</p>	<p>This area is separate from the edge of the settlement and relates more to the wider countryside.</p>
Views/visual features	<p>Key potential visual effects of new development would be at a local level. Notable effects would be in relation to residents on the edge of St Albans and dispersed properties within the northern part of the sub-area, users of local roads train passengers and walkers.</p>	<p>The openness of the landscape would mean development would be conspicuous from the surrounding landscape, with key visual receptors comprising the residents of dispersed properties, walkers and train passengers.</p>
Landscape value	<p>No landscape, cultural heritage or ecological designations.</p>	<p>No landscape, cultural heritage or ecological designations.</p>
Overall evaluation	<p>Lower sensitivity</p>	<p>Higher sensitivity</p>





### ***Boundary Review***

- 6.6.5. It is concluded that the most appropriate land for release from Green Belt designation is the southern part of the sub-area.
- 6.6.6. This land has clearly defined and strong edges in most directions. The urban edge of St Albans lies adjacent to the south and west, together with the hedgerow surrounding part of Woollam Playing Fields. The western edge is defined by the adjacent railway line. Physical features along the northern edge are less definitive. Part of it comprises a continuous hedgerow and the entire length of this proposed edge has recently been planted with young trees, which should, in time, create a clear edge.
- 6.6.7. Ensuring the establishment of the recent tree planting will be important in creating a clear physical boundary along the northern edge and this could be augmented with additional planting to the south. Similar structural landscape planting on the western side of the railway would also help to integrate new development, create continuous habitat with the existing vegetation along this edge and be continuous with the established strip of woodland alongside the industrial estate to the south.

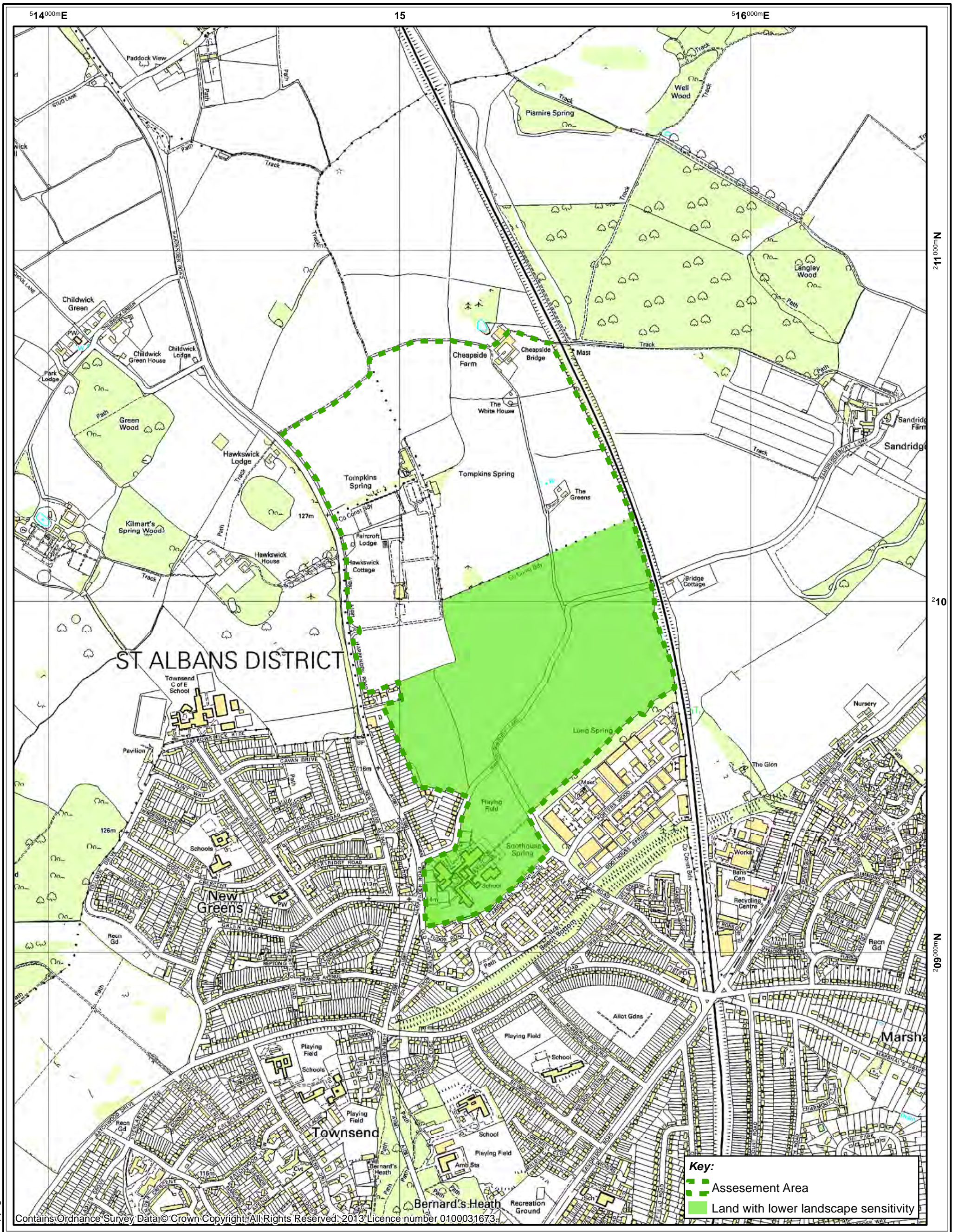
### **6.7. Assessment of Potential Developable Area**

#### *Potential Landscape Measures*

- 6.7.1. Ensuring the establishment of the new planting along the edge of the southern part of this sub-area would be important to reinforce local enclosure and provide a clearly defined edge.
- 6.7.2. Key landscape features:
- Remaining hedgerows/hedgerow trees
  - Adjacent small areas of woodland
  - Railway line on embankment
  - Woolams Playing Fields and St Albans Girls' School

### **6.8. Potential Development Capacity**

- 6.8.1. The indicative layout for S4 is shown in Figure 7.2. Potential development capacity is set out below:
- Indicative layout area: 51 hectares.
  - Predominant land-use: C3 Residential.
  - At a net density of 30dph this would generate 910 residential units.
  - At a net density of 50dph this would generate 1,516 residential units.



**Green Belt Part 2  
 Landscape Sensitivity Appraisal**

**Figure 7.1. S4:  
 North of St Albans**

SCALE  
 1:10,000 @ A3

CONTENT  
 Ordnance Survey

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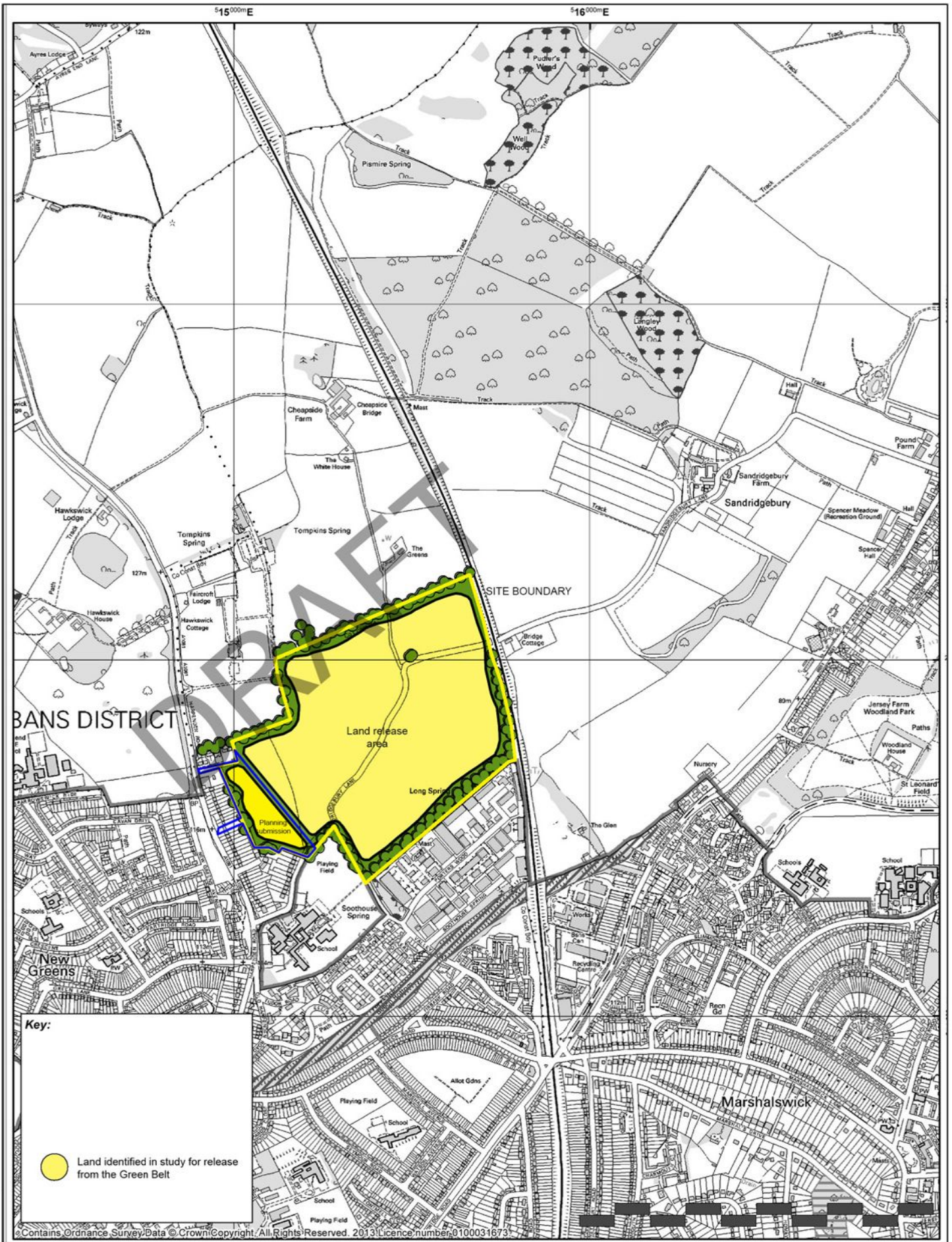
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Coordinate System: British National Grid  
 Projection: Transverse Mercator  
 Datum: OSGB 1936  
 Units: Meter

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Ref. ProMap from Client

**Green Belt Review for  
St Albans, Dacorum and  
Welwyn Hatfield - PART 2**

**FIGURE 6.2** Indicative Layout  
Site 3 East of St Albans



PROJECT: JE30761  
DATE: NOV 2013  
DRAWN: PHD

Rev.DEC/v002  
SCALE: NTS



## 7. S5: Northwest of Harpenden.

### 7.1. Site Context and Contribution towards Green Belt Purposes

- 7.1.1. The Strategic sub-area comprises land land at north Harpenden in the vicinity of Luton Road, Couters End Lane and Ambrose Lane (in strategic parcel GB40).
- 7.1.2. The sub-area lies within the Thrales End Plateau and Upper Lea Valley landscape character areas (South Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment).
- 7.1.3. Land use is primarily agricultural; arable crops, within a large, open regular field pattern. Settlement is sparse outside the urban areas. There are woodland areas on the edge of Harpenden, mixed with a hospital and institutional establishments.
- 7.1.4. The Upper Lea Valley is a narrow meandering river corridor with strong slopes to the north and south. Arable crops comprise a key land use, typically within a large open field pattern. There are no ecological designations within the sub-area. However, the sub-area lies within a Landscape Conservation Area (as defined in the St Albans City and District Council Local Plan Review 1994). Cooters End Farm is a Listed Building and a further Listed Building lies adjacent to Luton Road (A1081). Highfield Oval, to the south, forms part of Harpenden Conservation Area.

#### *Review of Green Belt Purposes Assessment / Justification of identification of strategic sub-area*

- 7.1.5. Strategic parcel GB40 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.



## 7.2. SWOT Analysis

7.2.1. The analysis of strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats in the sub-area is based upon the assessment of constraints, sustainable patterns of development and landscape appraisal.

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No primary constraints on site</li> <li>▪ 1.5km to Harpenden railway station</li> <li>▪ Very close to range of services and facilities in Harpenden</li> <li>▪ Existing urban form extends up the valley side to the south west of Luton Road</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mixed strength of boundaries</li> <li>▪ Sloping landform</li> <li>▪ Exposed landscape on top of ridge</li> <li>▪ Potential visual connections with historic designed landscapes, particularly on the ridge</li> <li>▪ Weak boundaries in places</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Potential for landscape enhancement (in accordance with LCA designation)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ None identified</li> </ul>

## 7.3. Constraints

### *Summary of Environmental and Historic Features*

7.3.1. There is a pocket of ancient woodland (Westfield Wood) located to the northeast section of the site.

### *Other Potential Constraints / Features*

7.3.2. The sub-area is designated as a Landscape Conservation Area within the St Albans Local Plan (1994). In accordance with Policy 104, within these priority landscape areas, the Council will seek to preserve and enhance the quality of the countryside and will not grant permission for any development that would adversely affect the high landscape quality.

## 7.4. Sustainable Patterns of Development

7.4.1. The sub-area provides the following credentials in relation to connectivity to public transport, proximity to services and facilities and settlement integration to help achieve sustainable patterns of development.

### *Proximity to town centre, and local centres*

7.4.2. The sub-area is situated on the northern outskirts of Harpenden. Harpenden town centre is located approximately 1km to the south east of the site.



- 7.4.3. It is within 1km two local centres; 95-105 Luton Road (less than 100m to the south east) and 50-54 Westfield Road (800m to the east).

*Public transport accessibility*

- 7.4.4. Harpenden rail station is located approximately 1.5km to the south east of the sub-area. The station offers regular services along the First Capital Connect Line to London (St Pancras International within 25 minutes at peak times), and between Luton and Bedford to Brighton via Gatwick Airport.
- 7.4.5. The area is served by a number of bus routes. Bus routes 321, 636 and 637 run along Luton Road to the south of the site. These routes provide services to Harpenden town centre, Watford, St Albans, London Colney, Hatfield and Luton.

*Proximity to schools*

- 7.4.6. There are a number of secondary schools in the surrounding area. Roundwood Park School lies approximately 700m to the south of the site on Roundwood Park and Sir John Lawes School 1.4km to the east. The King's School, an independent Christian School for both pre-school and secondary school pupils is situated immediately to the east of the site along Ambrose Lane. St Georges co-education day and boarding school is also located approximately 1km to the south east of the site.
- 7.4.7. Wood End Primary School lies 700m to the south west of the site, Harpenden pre-school and nursery lies 400m to the south east, St Hilda's Primary School for Girls lies 600m to the south and Manland Primary School, approximately 1.3km to the east.

*Proximity to public open space*

- 7.4.8. There are a number of relatively small areas of public open space in the vicinity of this sub-area including Roundwood Lane open space 200m to the south, Tuffnells Way open space 700m to the west and the slightly larger Derwent Road open space 1km to the west.
- 7.4.9. The Nickey Line, a disused railway which now forms a cycling and walking path also runs approximately 300m to the south east of the site. This path provides links to Hemel Hempstead and Redbourn.

*Scale of sub-area compared to settlement role, size and function*

- 7.4.10. The sub-area lies within the St Albans City and District Council on the northern outskirts of Harpenden. Harpenden is designated as one of only two towns in the St Albans City and District Council plan (Town T2).
- 7.4.11. The Census 2011 indicates that the population of Harpenden built up area stands at 30,240, representing approximately 21% of the population of the wider St Albans City and District Council which stands at 141,900 (all people).



- 7.4.12. The sub-area itself lies within the Harpenden North ward which has a resident population (16-64 year olds) of 4,300 (Census 2011). This represents approximately 5% of the resident working age population of the St Albans City and District Council.

## **7.5. Landscape appraisal**

- 7.5.1. The landscape appraisal, required of a Green Belt review, has been undertaken to take account of landform / topography, land cover, cultural dimensions, levels of enclosure and visual attributes. Each is discussed below.

### *Landform / topography*

- 7.5.2. The landform comprises a rounded ridge between Luton Road (A1081) and the River Lea. The land rises from approximately 110m AOD and 90m AOD to the south and north respectively, to over 130m on top of the ridge. The rounded landform is a notable feature, which combined with the land-use and cover gives rise to an open landscape.

### *Land cover and land use*

- 7.5.3. The sub-area primarily comprises agricultural land uses, predominately arable crops, in a large, open field pattern. Agricultural land quality is Grade 3. There are occasional woodlands/groups of trees, focussed around The King's School (also named Elmfield School on maps) and the north and south of Harpenden Hospital (including the ancient woodland of Westfield Wood. The sub-area also includes several dispersed residential properties and The King's School.
- 7.5.4. Key ecological features comprise the remnant hedgerows and hedgerow trees, together with the areas of woodland. There are no ecological designations within the sub-area.

### *Cultural dimensions*



- 7.5.5. The key current cultural dimension within the sub-area is the built development, notably The King's School. There are no known designated heritage assets within the sub-area. In a wider context there are historic designed landscapes, including Luton Hoo and East Hyde Park, with possible tracks linking Luton Hoo and Thrales End (within the sub-area)

*Levels of enclosure*

- 7.5.6. The nature of the landform is the primary influence on the level of enclosure, with the limited tree cover and large scale field pattern giving rise to a visually open landscape. This is particularly the case for upper slopes where there are clear views over the surrounding landscape. The falling landform gives rise to a greater sense of enclosure with the valleys either side of the ridge.
- 7.5.7. The existing settlement edges of St Albans have a strong and quite abrupt form, particularly to the south, where the settlement pattern cuts across the landform or occupies one side of the valley.

*Visual attributes including views within and outwards as well as the visual impact on adjacent development.*

- 7.5.8. The most notable visual attribute is the open views over the surrounding landscape that can be obtained from the ridge. The general lack of enclosure, due to the large field pattern and relatively limited tree cover and hedgerow pattern, gives rise to open long distance views. There is visual connection with the surrounding designed historic landscapes of Luton Hoo and East Hyde Park. A greater sense of enclosure occurs within the southern part of the sub area, due to the vegetation along the northern edge of St Albans and around The King's School, however the open agricultural landscape to be north and landform still results in relatively open view. At the landform falls the sense of enclosure increases, but there are still views across the valley. There are also views to the sub-area from the opposite sides of the valleys (particularly from north east side of the Lea Valley).
- 7.5.9. The King's School forms a local focal point and occupies a relatively elevated position within the sub-area. The urban development on the northern edge of Harpenden is clearly visible in views to the south east (from the ridge and south west part of the sub-area).
- 7.5.10. The nature of the landform means that there are important visual sensitivities, particularly in relation to elevated locations. Views to and from the valleys to the north east and south west are more limited, but the rising landform means and changes area likely to be clearly seen, but within a more localised area. Key visual sensitivities are likely to be related to the residents roads users (both within and adjacent to the sub-area. It is also noted that the Chiltern Way crosses the sub-area, following the route of Cooters end Lane.

## **7.6. Landscape Sensitivity and Boundary Review**

*Landscape Sensitivity*

*This section considers the potential landscape and visual effects associated with change or potential future development on the current landscape character, as identified in the on-site assessment.*





- 7.6.1. This strategic sub-area lies on the northern edge of Harpenden. The surrounding urban edges are strong and clearly defined by the adjacent development and road network. Much of landscape has been modified and field boundaries have been lost.
- 7.6.2. The nature of the landform and has considerable influence on the potential to accommodate new development. The valley to the west is relatively contained, whereas the top of the plateau is very open with considerable visual connection with the surrounding landscape.
- 7.6.3. Key landscape features that make a valuable contribution are landform and the openness of views that can be obtained and The King's School, which forms a local focal point.
- 7.6.4. Sensitivity to change varies throughout the sub-area. The south-western part is of lowest sensitivity as it is more enclosed by the landform and the adjacent urban edges are prominent and locally influence character. The rising ground is key constraint (and landscape more sensitive) as any development on elevated areas is likely be very visible over a wide area and there is likely to be limited connection with the existing landscape pattern.

*Sensitivity analysis:*

Element	Part of Sub-Area	
	South-west	East/North
Landscape character	<p>Built development would affect openness of landscape character. However, the landform provides enclosure and together with the existing hedgerow along Ambrose Lane, would help contain development.</p> <p>Agricultural intensification has resulted in loss of field boundaries and has altered landscape pattern, although in this part of the sub-area the road network has restricted the extent of such change.</p>	<p>The landscape has a very open character development would completely change this. Any changes to this landscape would be very conspicuous and seen over a wide area.</p> <p>Agricultural intensification is a key contributor to the current character and influences the openness of the landscape. Some of the boundaries still comprise hedgerows with hedgerow trees, but they are frequently very fragmented.</p>
Settlement form	<p>Development would be continuous with the northern edge of Harpenden, which extends to the southern edge of this part of the sub-area and built form is already established on the opposite site of the valley.</p>	<p>The northern edge of Harpenden extends close to this part of the sub-area, but the connection is reduced by the intervening woodland (notably Westfield Wood). Development would also detract from The King's School, which forms a local focal point.</p>
Views/visual features	<p>Key potential visual effects of new development would be at a local level. Notable effects would be in relation to residents within the sub-area e.g. Cooters</p>	<p>The openness of the landscape would mean development would be visually prominent from the surrounding</p>

	End Farm, residents of properties on the opposite side of the valley and people travelling along the local road network.	landscape.
Landscape value	Lies within a locally designated Landscape Conservation Area.  Cooters End Farm is a Listed Building.  There are no ecological designations.	Lies within a locally designated Landscape Conservation Area.  Cooters End Farm is a Listed Building. Highfield Oval forms part of Harpenden Conservation Area.  There are no ecological designations, but Westfield Wood is ancient woodland.
Overall evaluation	Lower sensitivity	Higher sensitivity

### **Boundary Review**

- 7.6.5. It is concluded that the most appropriate land for release from Green Belt designation is the south-western part of the sub-area.
- 7.6.6. This land has clearly defined features to the south-east and south west, comprising the edges of St Albans and Luton Road (A1081). The north-east edge is more variable; part comprises Ambrose Lane and hedgerows around Cooters End Farm. A section of hedgerow extends further north west from Cooters End Farm, but this ends within the field and does not link with the vegetation alongside Luton Road. Ordnance Survey mapping suggests that a field boundary previous extended between the remaining hedgerow and Luton Road, and this would need to be reinstated to create a physical boundary along this edge.
- 7.6.7. Structural landscape planting along the north east edge of the proposed area (including reinstatement of the hedgerow as described above) would help to integrate new development and provide more separation from the landscape to the north / north-east.

### **7.7. Assessment of Potential Developable Area**

#### *Potential Landscape Measures*

- 7.7.1. Reinforcement of the vegetation along Ambrose Lane would help to strengthen local character and provide separation between urban development and the countryside. Such planting would also help the ensure The King's School remains a local focal point.
- 7.7.2. Key landscape features:
- Openness of the landscape
  - Visual links with historic landscapes from elevated locations
  - The King's School as a focal point
  - Adjacent urban edges to the south/south-west

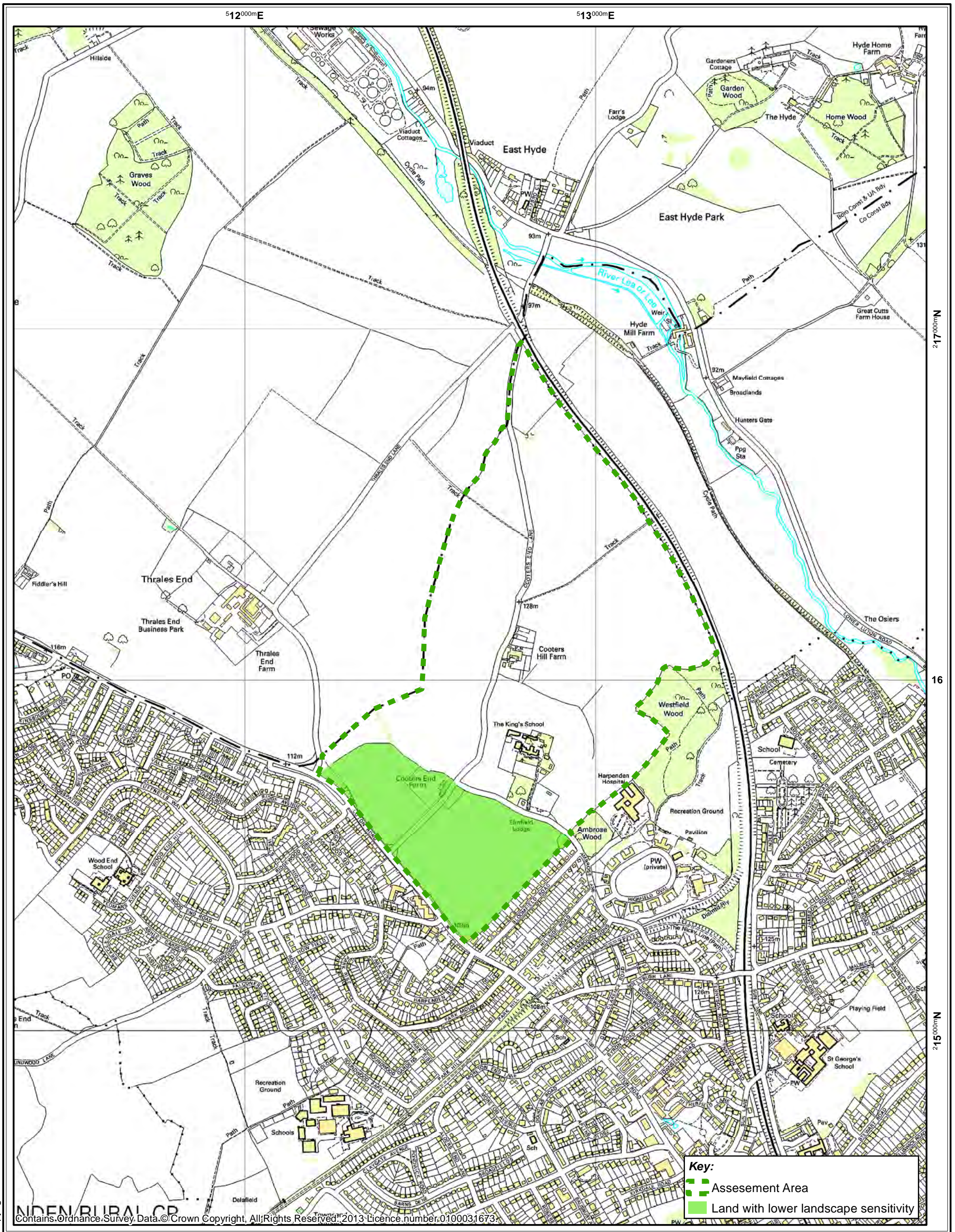


- Railway line to the north-east

## **7.8. Potential Development Capacity**

7.8.1. The indicative layout for S5 is shown in Figure 8.2. Potential development capacity is set out below:

- Indicative layout area: 18 hectares.
- Predominant land-use: C3 Residential.
- At a net density of 30dph this would generate 319 residential units.
- At a net density of 50dph this would generate 531 residential units.



**Green Belt Part 2  
Landscape Sensitivity Appraisal**

**Figure 8.1. S5:  
Northwest of Harpenden**

SCALE  
1:10,000 @ A3

CONTENT  
Ordnance Survey

CHECKED  
RB

PROJECT CODE  
JE30761

DRAWN  
JA

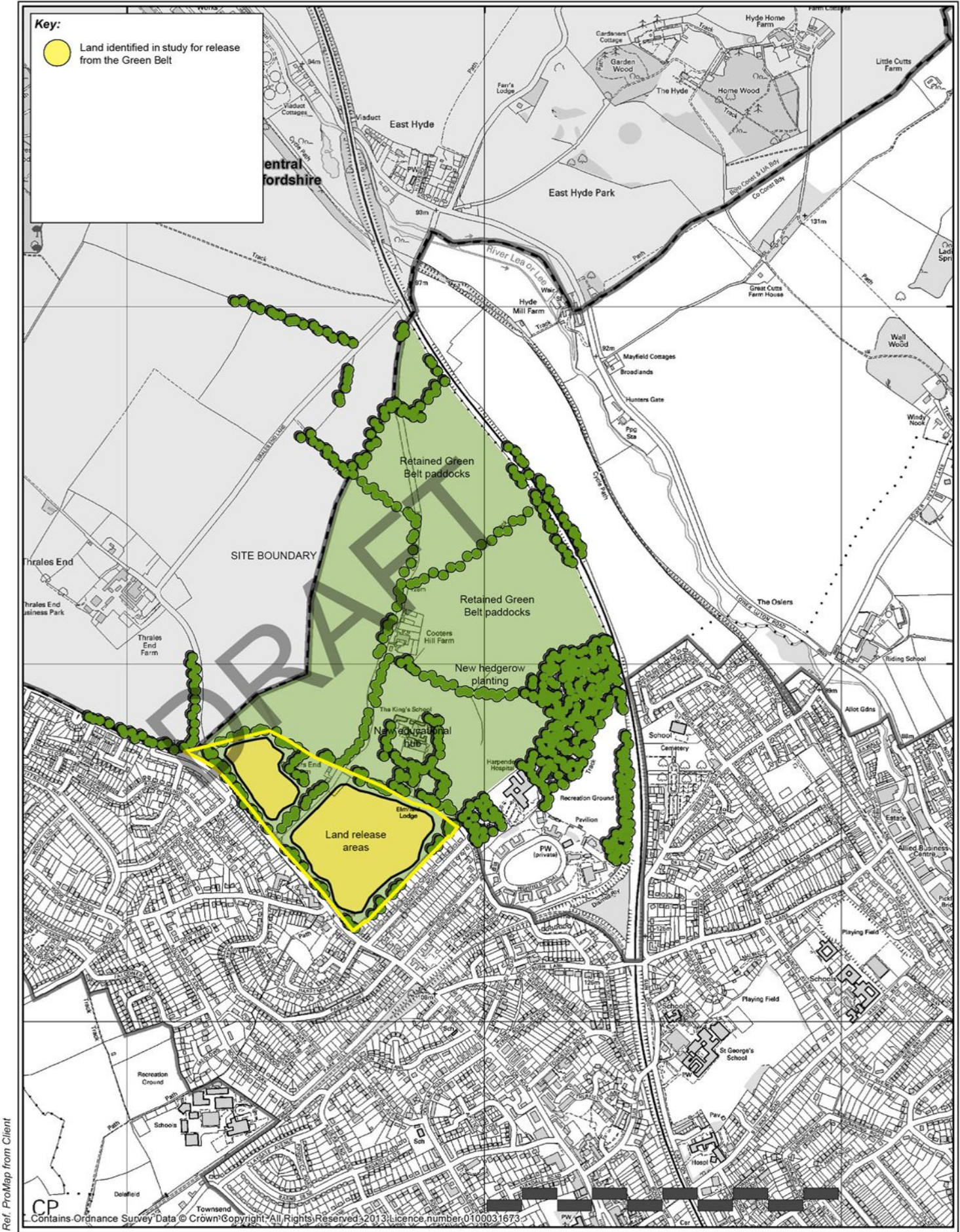
DATE  
12/12/2013



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

REVISION: A      MXD: 002/g001





**Green Belt Review for  
St Albans, Dacorum and  
Welwyn Hatfield - PART 2**

PROJECT: JE30761  
DATE: NOV 2013  
DRAWN: PHD

Rev.DEC/v002  
SCALE: NTS

**FIGURE 8.2** Indicative Layout  
Site 5 North-west of Harpenden

## 8. S6: Northeast of Harpenden

### 8.1. Site Context and Contribution towards Green Belt Purposes

- 8.1.1. The Strategic sub-area comprises land at northeast Harpenden along Lower Luton Road, and extending to the vicinity of Whitings Close within Strategic Parcel GB40.
- 8.1.2. The sub-area lies within the Upper Lea Valley and Blackmore End Plateau landscape character areas (South Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment).
- 8.1.3. The Upper Lea Valley is a narrow meandering river corridor with strong slopes to the north and south. Arable crops comprise a key land use, typically within a large open field pattern.
- 8.1.4. Blackmore End Plateau comprises an elevated agricultural landscape with extensive arable fields. A smaller field pattern occurs closer the settlements and land use often comprises pasture; and this applies to much of the sub-area. .
- 8.1.5. There are no ecological designations within the sub-area. However, the sub-area lies within a Landscape Conservation Area (as defined in the St Albans City and District Council Local Plan Review 1994). Cooters End Farm is a Listed Building and a further Listed Building lies adjacent to Luton Road (A1081). Highfield Oval, to the south, forms part of Harpenden Conservation Area.

#### *Review of Green Belt Purposes Assessment / Justification of identification of strategic sub-area*

- 8.1.6. Strategic parcel (GB40) 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 or maintaining local gaps.



## 8.2. SWOT Analysis

8.2.1. The analysis of strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats the sub-area is based upon the assessment of constraints, sustainable patterns of development and landscape appraisal.

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ No primary constraints on site</li> <li>■ 1.7km from Harpenden railway station</li> <li>■ Very close to range of services and facilities in Harpenden</li> <li>■ Clear physical boundaries to the south, east and west</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Sloping landform</li> <li>■ Weaker boundaries along the northern edge</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Potential for landscape enhancement (in accordance with LCA designation)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ None identified</li> </ul>

## 8.3. Constraints

### *Summary of Environmental and Historic Features*

8.3.1. There is a pocket of ancient woodland (Sweeney Wood) located on the edge of the northeast section of the site.

### *Other Potential Constraints / Features*

8.3.2. There is land designated in relation to the Countryside and Rights of Way Act at the northwest edge of the site.

8.3.3. The site is designated as a Landscape Conservation Area within the St Albans Local Plan (1994). In accordance with Policy 104, within these priority landscape areas, the Council will seek to preserve and enhance the quality of the countryside and will not grant permission for any development that would adversely affect the high landscape quality.

## 8.4. Sustainable Patterns of Development

### *Proximity to town centre, and local centres*

8.4.1. The sub-area is situated on the north eastern outskirts of Harpenden. Harpenden town centre is located approximately 1.6km to the south west of the site.

8.4.2. The sub area is within 1km of two local centres; Lower Luton Road (LC17) which is 400m to the south west and Station Road (LC18) which is 700m to the south.

### *Public transport accessibility*

8.4.3. Harpenden rail station is located approximately 1.7km to the south west of the sub-area. The station offers regular services along the First Capital Connect Line to London (St



Pancras International within 25 minutes at peak times), and between Luton and Bedford to Brighton via Gatwick Airport.

- 8.4.4. The area is served by a number of bus routes. Bus routes 657 and HA1 run immediately past the site to the west along Lower Luton Road offering services to Harpenden town centre and a local service around Harpenden itself, Redbourn, St Albans and Hatfield. Further to the south west along Lower Luton Road, approximately 400m from the site, run bus routes 45, 366 and 636 providing further services to Harpenden town centre, Stevenage, Luton, Hatfield, Welwyn Garden City and London Colney.

*Proximity to schools*

- 8.4.5. There are three secondary schools in relatively close proximity to the sub-area. Sir John Lawes School is located 800m to the south west and St George's co-educational day and boarding school is situated 1.3km also to the south west. The King's School, an independent Christian primary and secondary school is located 1.8km to the west of the site.
- 8.4.6. Sauncey Wood Primary School is situated less than 200m from the site to the south along Pickford Hill and Manland Primary School 800m to the south west. Slightly further afield lies Crabtree Infant and Junior school, approximately 1.3km to the south.

*Proximity to public open space*

- 8.4.7. Open spaces in the vicinity of the site include Batford Open Space which is formally designated as new public open space in the St Albans City and District Council plan (OS 1) and approximately 600m to the south. Tallents Crescent open space lies 500m to the south east and Marshalls Heath Local Nature Reserve is situated 1.2km to the south east.
- 8.4.8. The Lee Valley Walk and green corridor runs in a north to south direction approximately 600m to the west. This forms part of a 50 mile walking and cycling path that runs between Leagrave near Luton and the Thames at Limehouse, east London.

*Scale of sub-area compared to settlement role, size and function*

- 8.4.9. The sub-area lies within the St Albans City and District Council on the north eastern outskirts of Harpenden. Harpenden is designated as one of only two towns in the St Albans City and District Council plan (Town T2).
- 8.4.10. The Census 2011 indicates that the population of Harpenden built up area (BUA) stands at 30,240, representing approximately 21% of the population of the wider St Albans City and District Council which stands at 141,900 (all people).
- 8.4.11. The sub-area itself lies across two wards, Harpenden East and Wheathampstead. Harpenden east has a resident population (16-64 year olds) of 4,600 and Wheathampstead of 3,800 (Census 2011). This represents approximately 5.2% and 4.3% of the resident working age population of the St Albans City and District Council respectively.



## **8.5. Landscape appraisal**

- 8.5.1. The landscape appraisal, required of a Green Belt review, has been undertaken to take account of landform / topography, land cover, cultural dimensions, levels of enclosure and visual attributes. Each is discussed below.

### *Landform / topography*

- 8.5.2. The landform rises from the Lea Valley to the edge of the plateau to the north-east. The land rises from approximately 90m AOD to the west, to approximately 130m AOD on the edge of the plateau. The rising landform is a notable feature, which combined with the land-use and cover gives rise to an open landscape. The landform is particularly distinctive near Bower Heath Lane, where it almost forms a bowl shape.

### *Land cover and land use*

- 8.5.3. The sub-area primarily comprises agricultural land uses, predominately pasture, in a large, open field pattern. Fields are bounded by a mix of hedgerows (sometimes fragmented or overgrown) and fences. Agricultural land quality is Grade 3. There are occasional small areas of woodland/woodland belts on the north-east edge of the sub-area, e.g. alongside Common Lane. The sub-area also includes several residential properties alongside Bower Heath Road. Low density, detached housing also lies to the east of Common Lane. The edges of Harpenden lie to the south and east.
- 8.5.4. Key ecological features comprise the remnant hedgerows and hedgerow trees, together with the areas of woodland on the edge of the sub-area. There are no ecological designations within the sub-area.

### *Cultural dimensions*

- 8.5.5. The key notable cultural heritage feature is the remnant field pattern. There are no known designated heritage assets within the sub-area.

### *Levels of enclosure*

- 8.5.6. The nature of the landform and land cover gives rise to a visually open landscape. This is particularly the case for upper slopes where there are clear views over the surrounding landscape. The falling landform gives rise to a greater sense of enclosure due to the slopes of the Lea Valley.
- 8.5.7. The existing settlement edges of Harpenden have a strong and quite abrupt form, particularly to the south, where the settlement pattern cuts across the landform.

### *Visual attributes including views within and outwards as well as the visual impact on adjacent development.*

- 8.5.8. The most notable visual attribute is the open views over the surrounding landscape that can be obtained from the edge of the plateau. There are also clear views across to the sub-area from the opposite side of the valley.
- 8.5.9. The landform and pattern means that visual sensitivities are likely to be associated with both adjacent and more distant receptors. Key local visual receptors are likely to include



adjacent residential areas/roads and public rights of way. The woodland will create strong visual enclosure to the north east/east, but there are open view across the valley from locations to the east, including residents, road users, a railway line and a section of the Chiltern Way long distance path.

## 8.6. Landscape Sensitivity and Boundary Review

### *Landscape Sensitivity*

- 8.6.1. This section considers the potential landscape and visual effects associated with change or potential future development on the current landscape character, as identified in the on-site assessment.
- 8.6.2. This strategic sub-area lies on the northern edge of Harpenden. The surrounding urban edges are strong and clearly defined by the adjacent development. Much of landscape has been modified and field boundaries have been lost.
- 8.6.3. The combination of the landform and settlement form influences the potential to accommodate new development. The valley side comprise a more enclosed part of the landscape, while the plateau edge is more open. The existing settlement edge forms a conspicuous element from several locations and extends along part of the plateau edge.
- 8.6.4. The southern parts of the sub-area are of lower sensitivity, particularly as the existing urban edge is both conspicuous and is irregular and, in places, has limited connection with the underlying landform. The rising ground may comprise a key constraint as any development on elevated areas would be visible over a wider area.
- 8.6.5. There are few landscape features that comprise notable elements as much of the pattern has been removed. There are some remnant hedgerows within the sub-area provide some structure, but these are focussed towards the edges. Woodland areas on the east/north-east edges of the sub-area also make a positive contribution and provide a degree of local enclosure.
- 8.6.6. The northern part of the sub-area is more sensitive as the field pattern is more intact, it is more distant from the urban edge and the relative elevation would make development more conspicuous.

### *Sensitivity analysis:*

	<b>Part of Sub-Area</b>	
<b>Element</b>	<b>South-western and south</b>	<b>North</b>
Landscape character	<p>The landform and limited vegetation create an open landscape and built development would affect this component of landscape character.</p> <p>Changes in the landscape have resulted in the loss of traditional boundaries and replacement with wooden post and rail</p>	<p>The more intact field pattern provides a greater sense of enclosure. Development would influence openness and change the character of the landscape.</p> <p>While this represents a relatively small part of the sub-area, it also includes a more intact landscape, with hedgerows</p>



	fences. The remnant hedgerows comprise key features that help to maintain some integrity in the landscape and a sense of enclosure.	continuing to contribute to landscape character.
Settlement form	This part of the sub-area lies adjacent to the north-eastern edge of Harpenden. Part of the eastern edge also lies adjacent to low density development to the east of Common Lane.	This area is separate from the edge of the settlement and relates more to the wider countryside. It is also located adjacent to a small cluster of properties located along Bowen Heath Lane.
Views/visual features	Potential visual effects of new development would be at both a local level and wider. Key local visual receptors comprise the residents on this edge of Harpenden, road users and people using local Public Rights of Way (including those within the sub-area). Wider effects are likely particularly in relation to visual effects on receptors on the south west side of the Lea Valley, particularly more elevated developments within the sub-area.	The elevation of this part of the sub-area means potential visual effects would also be experienced locally (particularly residents and people using local Public Rights of Way). However, the potential visibility would be reduced by the structure provided by the established hedgerows.
Landscape value	Lies within a locally designated Landscape Conservation Area.  There are no cultural heritage or ecological designations.	Lies within a locally designated Landscape Conservation Area.  There are no cultural heritage or ecological designations.
Overall evaluation	Lower sensitivity	Higher sensitivity

### ***Boundary Review***

- 8.6.7. It is concluded that the most appropriate land for release from Green Belt designation is the southern and western part of the sub-area.
- 8.6.8. This land has clearly defined edges in most directions. The urban edges of Harpenden lie adjacent to the south and west, together with Lower Luton Road (B653). The majority of the eastern edge comprises Common Lane. The northern boundary is the weakest; while sections are formed by established hedgerows, other parts comprise fences.
- 8.6.9. Structural landscape / hedgerow planting along the northern edge of the proposed area would create a clearer edge, help to integrate new development and provide more separation from the landscape to the north.



## 8.7. Potential Development Capacity

8.7.1. The indicative layout for S6 is shown in Figure 9.2. Potential development capacity is set out below:

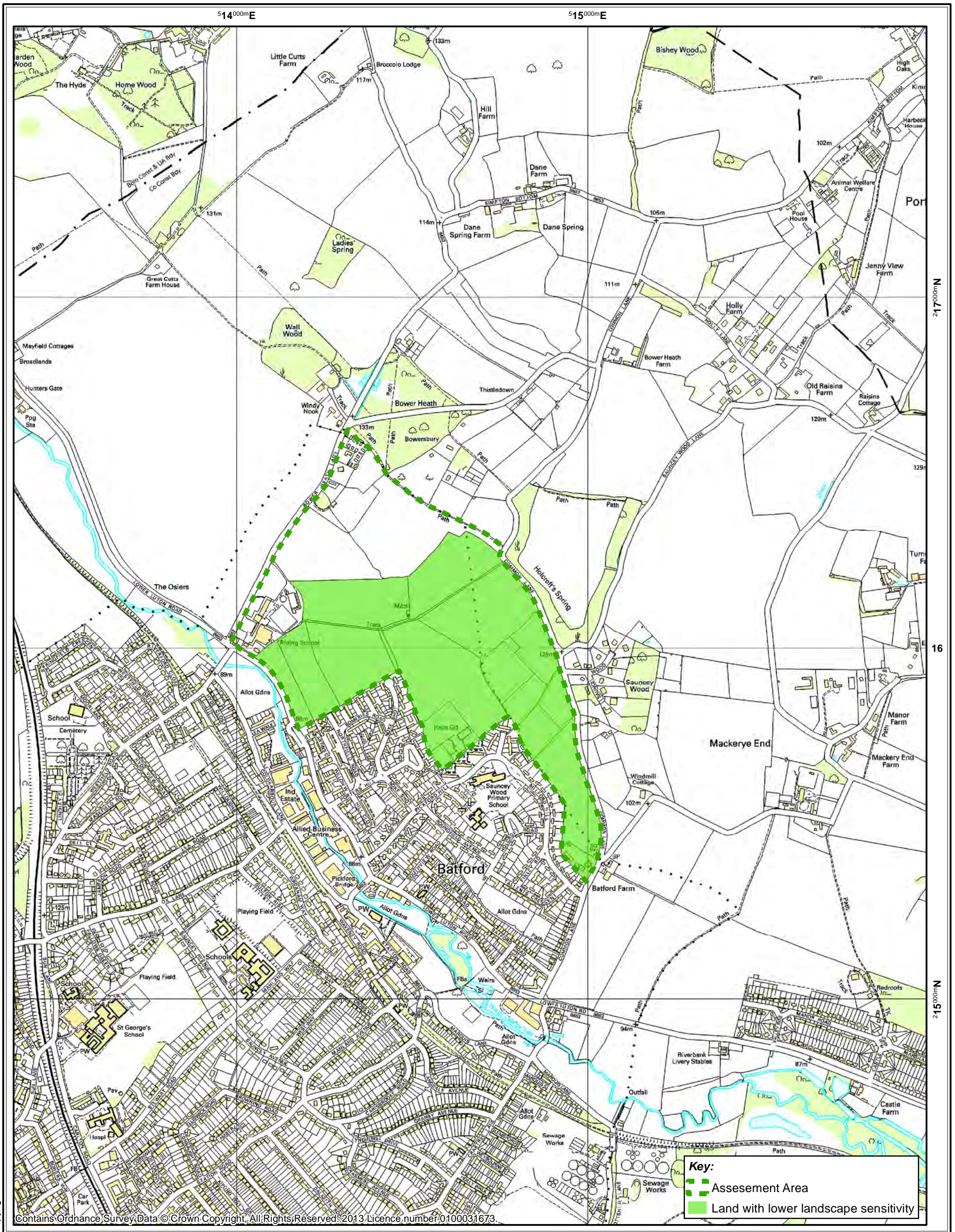
- Indicative layout area: 38 hectares.
- Predominant land-use: C3 Residential.
- At a net density of 30dph this would generate 687 residential units.
- At a net density of 50dph this would generate 1,145 residential units.

### *Potential Landscape Measures*

8.7.2. Reinforcement on of the vegetation alongside Common Lane would help to maintain the current character of this route. Strong structural planting within as part of new development, particularly on more elevated slopes would help to soften its appearance, particularly when viewed across the valley.

8.7.3. Key landscape features:

- Landform falling from the edge of the plateau to the Lea Valley
- Open views from elevated locations
- Adjacent urban edges to the south/south-west
- Declining landscape pattern due to boundary removal



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**Green Belt Part 2  
Landscape Sensitivity Appraisal**

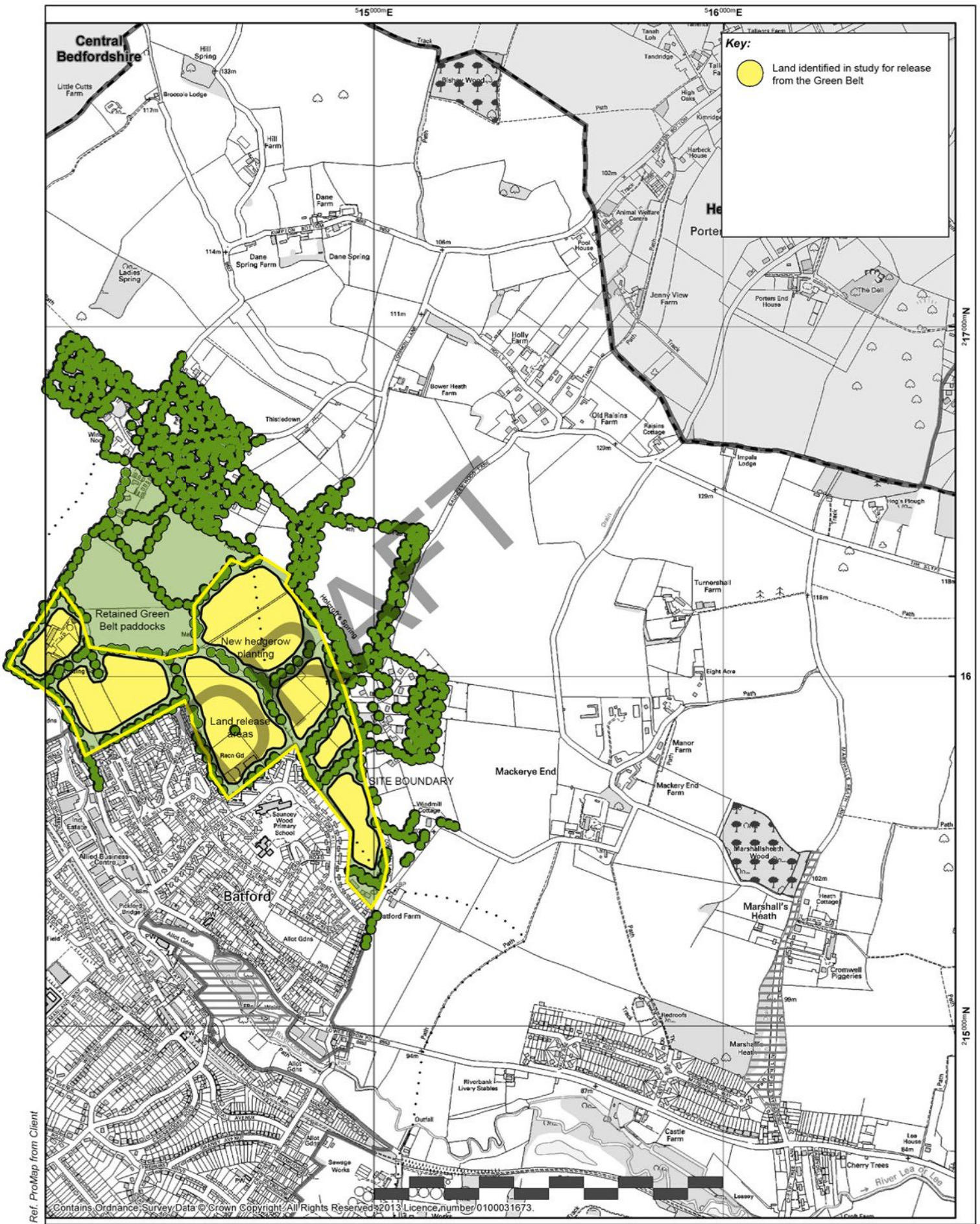
**Figure 9.1. S6:  
Northeast of Harpenden**

SCALE	1:10,000 @ A3	PROJECT CODE	JE30761
CONTENT	Ordnance Survey	DRAWN	JA
CHECKED	RB	DATE	12/12/2013

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

REVISION: A      MXD: 002/g001





**Green Belt Review for  
 St Albans, Dacorum and  
 Welwyn Hatfield - PART 2**

**FIGURE 9.2** Indicative Layout  
 Site 6 North-east of Harpenden



PROJECT: JE30761  
 DATE: NOV 2013  
 DRAWN: PHD

Rev.DEC/v002  
 SCALE: NTS





## **9. S7: Land at London Colney**

- 9.1.1. The assessment of this strategic sub-area has been excluded from this report because the assessment has not yet been completed.
- 9.1.2. The study team is awaiting further information on the implications of the former landfill site to the south of London Colney as a constraint on the use of part of the sub-area for alternative uses. It is intended to present the findings of this assessment on 18 December.



## 10. S8: Land at Chiswell Green

### 10.1. Site Context and Contribution towards Green Belt Purposes

- 10.1.1. The Strategic sub-area comprises land at Chiswell Green Lane at Chiswell Green (within Strategic Parcel GB25).
- 10.1.2. The sub-area lies within the St Stephen's Plateau landscape character area (South Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment). This comprises an undulating or gently sloping plateau. Land use is predominately arable crops in an open field pattern, although smaller, pastoral fields are found in places, including within the sub-area. There are larger areas of woodland to the north (including ancient woodland), which create a sense of enclosure. The settlement pattern is dispersed, typically comprising individual farmsteads and houses. This pattern is connected by narrow winding lanes. Urban fringe influences are prominent, particularly motorway infrastructure and built edge of settlements. At a local level, Butterfly World forms a distinctive feature to the west of Chiswell Green.

#### *Review of Green Belt Purposes Assessment / Justification of identification of strategic sub-area*

- 10.1.3. Strategic parcel (GB25) significantly contributes towards 2 of the 5 Green Belt purposes: 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.





## 10.2. SWOT Analysis

10.2.1. The analysis of strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats the sub-area is based upon the assessment of constraints, sustainable patterns of development and landscape appraisal.

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No primary constraints on site</li> <li>▪ 1.4km to railway stations at How Wood and Park Street</li> <li>▪ Proximity to key bus route</li> <li>▪ Strong boundary features (e.g. Butterfly World and settlement edge)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ None identified</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Remnant landscape pattern and areas of woodland could help integrate development</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ None identified</li> </ul>

## 10.3. Constraints

### *Summary of Environmental and Historic Features*

10.3.1. There are no environmental or historic constraints in relation to the site.

### *Other Potential Constraints / Features*

## 10.4. Sustainable Patterns of Development

### *Proximity to town centre, and local centres*

10.4.1. The sub-area is situated on the western outskirts of Chiswell Green. Chiswell Green is designated as a Specified Settlement (SS.2) within the St Albans City and District Council Plan.

10.4.2. Chiswell Green centre is also designated as Local Centre. Tippendell Lane, Watford Road and is located 300m to the north east of the site. A second Local Centre is located at How Wood (LC24), approximately 1km to the south east.

### *Public transport accessibility*

10.4.3. The nearest rail stations to the site are How Wood, located 1.4km to the south east or Park Street, situated 1.4km to the east. A London Midland service passes through these stations offering direct connections to St Albans Abbey and Watford Junction. From Watford Junction, further connections are available to London.

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



passes along Watford Road, providing connections to Watford, St Albans, Harpenden and Luton.

*Proximity to schools*

- 10.4.5. There are no secondary schools in Chiswell Green. The closest secondary school is the Samuel Ryder Academy located 3.8km to the north east.
- 10.4.6. There is four primary school within proximity of the sub area; . Killigrew Primary School is situated 800m to the north east; How Wood Primary School is located 1.3km to the south east; Park Street Church of England Primary School is 1.5km to the south east; and Park Street Primary School is 1.6 km to the south east.

*Proximity to public open space*

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

*Scale of sub-area compared to settlement role, size and function*

- 10.4.8. The sub-area lies within the St Albans City and District Council on the western outskirts of the Chiswell Green settlement. Chiswell Green is designated as a Specified Settlement (SS.2) within the St Albans City and District Council Plan.
- 10.4.9. The site lies within the ward of St Stephen which comprises a resident working age population (16-64) of 4,100. This represents 4.7% of the total working age population of the wider St Albans City and District Council.

**10.5. Landscape appraisal**

- 10.5.1. The landscape appraisal, required of a Green Belt review, has been undertaken to take account of landform / topography, land cover, cultural dimensions, levels of enclosure and visual attributes. Each is discussed below.

*Landform / topography*

- 10.5.2. The landform slopes gently to the south, falling from around Chiswell Green Lane (approximately 105m AOD), towards the southern part of Noke Lane (approximately 85m AOD).

*Land cover and land use*

- 10.5.3. The sub-area primarily comprises agricultural land uses, with a combination of arable crops, in a large, open field pattern and pasture. Pasture is enclosed in a smaller field pattern, but frequently in a very regular form using post and rail fences. Agricultural land quality is typically Grade 3, although the eastern edge of the sub-area is shown as being urban (it is likely that the Grade 3 quality will extend to this land too). There are occasional woodlands/groups of trees, particularly close to the edge of Chiswell Green. Butterfly World comprises a distinctive feature in the landscape. St Albans Polo Club lies in the northern part of the sub-area and has influenced local landscape character and



pattern. The sub-area also includes several dispersed residential properties e.g. those along Chiswell Green Lane and Noke Lane. Noke Lane Business Centre also lies in the southern part of the sub-area.

- 10.5.4. Key ecological features comprise the remnant hedgerows and hedgerow trees, together with the areas of woodland. There are no ecological designations within the sub-area. Butterfly World represents a unique local feature and the gardens are designed to promote biodiversity.

#### *Cultural dimensions*

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

#### *Levels of enclosure*

- 10.5.6. Enclosure is provided by a combination of landform and vegetation. The gradual slope of the landform limits the enclosure it provides, but this is augmented by the artificial landform that surrounds and encloses Butterfly World. Vegetation provides enclosure to a varying degree. To the north, east and south-east (excluding Butterfly World) the field pattern is medium to large, which combine with the poor/declining hedgerow pattern gives rise to quite an open landscape, with views across the agricultural landscape. Butterfly World represents a unique feature in the landscape and the surrounding bunding creates considerable enclosure, and, in time, the young planting on these landforms will reinforce this. The area between Chiswell Green and Butterfly World includes small woodlands/copses and hedgerows which (together with the made landforms around butterfly world, provide a greater sense of enclosure. The existing settlement edge of Chiswell Green has a linear form and residential properties are clearly visible.

#### *Visual attributes including views within and outwards as well as the visual impact on adjacent development.*

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

## **10.6. Landscape Sensitivity and Boundary Review**

### *Landscape Sensitivity*

*This section considers the potential landscape and visual effects associated with change or potential future development on the current landscape character, as identified in the on-site assessment.*



- 10.6.1. This strategic sub-area lies on the western edge of Chiswell Green. The surrounding urban edges are quite well defined, although vegetation along or near properties results in a bit of transition from rural to built up. While much of land within the sub-area is in agricultural use, the strength of character has been eroded by the loss or poor condition of field boundaries and introduction of new features e.g. Butterfly World.
- 10.6.2. The nature of the landform and land landscape pattern creates a distinctly different feel, with land to the east being more enclosed and land to the west being much more open and larger in scale. To the east of Butterfly World (and the associated access) a sense of enclosure provided by small areas of woodland, remnant hedgerows and local landform gives rise to a smaller scale landscape. However, further west the landform, together with the loss or poor condition of field boundaries result in an open landscape that blends into the wider countryside.
- 10.6.3. Key landscape features that make a valuable contribution are the small areas of woodland to the west of Chiswell Green, remnants of the hedgerows historic landscape. The eastern part of the sub-area is of lower sensitivity due to its relation with the adjacent urban edge, the loss of field pattern and its isolation from surrounding countryside by Butterfly World. The land in the western part of the sub-area is not particularly sensitive due to weakness of its character. However, this weakness has resulted in an open landscape where there is little framework to help absorb change, which limits its capacity to accommodate new development.

*Sensitivity analysis:*

Element	Part of Sub-Area	
	East	West
Landscape character	<p>Built development would affect openness of landscape character. However, the landform and vegetation provide enclosure, would help contain and provide a framework for development. The land to the east of the access road to Butterfly World has more connection with the countryside to the west, but is separated from this by the road and this will increase as the young planting matures.</p> <p>Changes in the landscape have resulted in the loss of traditional boundaries and replacement with wooden post and rail fences. The remnant hedgerows and small areas of woodland comprise key features that help to maintain a sense of enclosure.</p>	<p>The landscape has a very open character development would completely change this. Any changes to this landscape would be very conspicuous.</p> <p>Agricultural intensification is a key contributor to the current character and influences the openness of the landscape. Some of the boundaries still comprise hedgerows with hedgerow trees, but they are frequently very fragmented.</p>
Settlement form	Development would be adjacent to the western edge of Chiswell Green and to	This area is separate from the edge of the settlement and relates more to the wider



	the east of Butterfly World (and associated access).	countryside.
Views/visual features	Key potential visual effects of new development would be at a local level. Notable effects would be in relation to residents on the western edge of Chiswell Green and dispersed properties within this part of the sub area.	The openness of the landscape would mean development would be conspicuous from the surrounding landscape, with key visual receptors comprising the residents of dispersed properties and users of the small local roads.
Landscape value	No landscape, cultural heritage or ecological designations.	No landscape, cultural heritage or ecological designations.
Overall evaluation	Lower sensitivity	Higher sensitivity

### ***Boundary Review***

- 10.6.4. It is concluded that the most appropriate land for release from Green Belt designation is the eastern part of the sub-area.
- 10.6.5. This land has clearly defined and strong boundaries in all directions. The edge of Chiswell Green lies adjacent to the east, together with a short section of the North Orbital Road (A405). The southern boundary is formed by a short section of Noke Lane. The western boundary comprises the bunding around the edge of the car park for Butterfly World, together with the associated access road. The northern boundary is formed by Chiswell Green Lane.
- 10.6.6. Structural landscape planting along the western boundary would reinforce the edge with Butterfly World and the surrounding landscape. Similar planting along part of the northern boundary with Chiswell Green Lane could provide a similar function and reinforce the existing small woodland / trees along this edge.

### **10.7. Potential Development Capacity**

- 10.7.1. The indicative layout for S2 is shown in Figure 5.2. Potential development capacity is set out below:
- Indicative layout area: 19 hectares.
  - Predominant land-use: C3 Residential.
  - At a net density of 30dph this would generate 343 residential units.
  - At a net density of 50dph this would generate 571 residential units.



*Potential Landscape Measures*

10.7.2. Retention of the remnant field pattern, trees and woodland would be beneficial and could help provide a framework for new development. Additional planting alongside the access road to Butterfly World (particularly the southern part) could help to provide further visual separation between Chiswell Green and the surrounding countryside.

10.7.3. Key landscape features:

- Butterfly World and associated elements
- Small areas of woodland
- Edge of Chiswell Green
- Declining landscape pattern due to boundary removal.



**Green Belt Part 2  
Landscape Sensitivity Appraisal**

**Figure 11.1 S8:  
Land at Chiswell Green**

SCALE  
1:10,000 @ A3

CONTENT  
Ordnance Survey

CHECKED  
RB

PROJECT CODE  
JE30761

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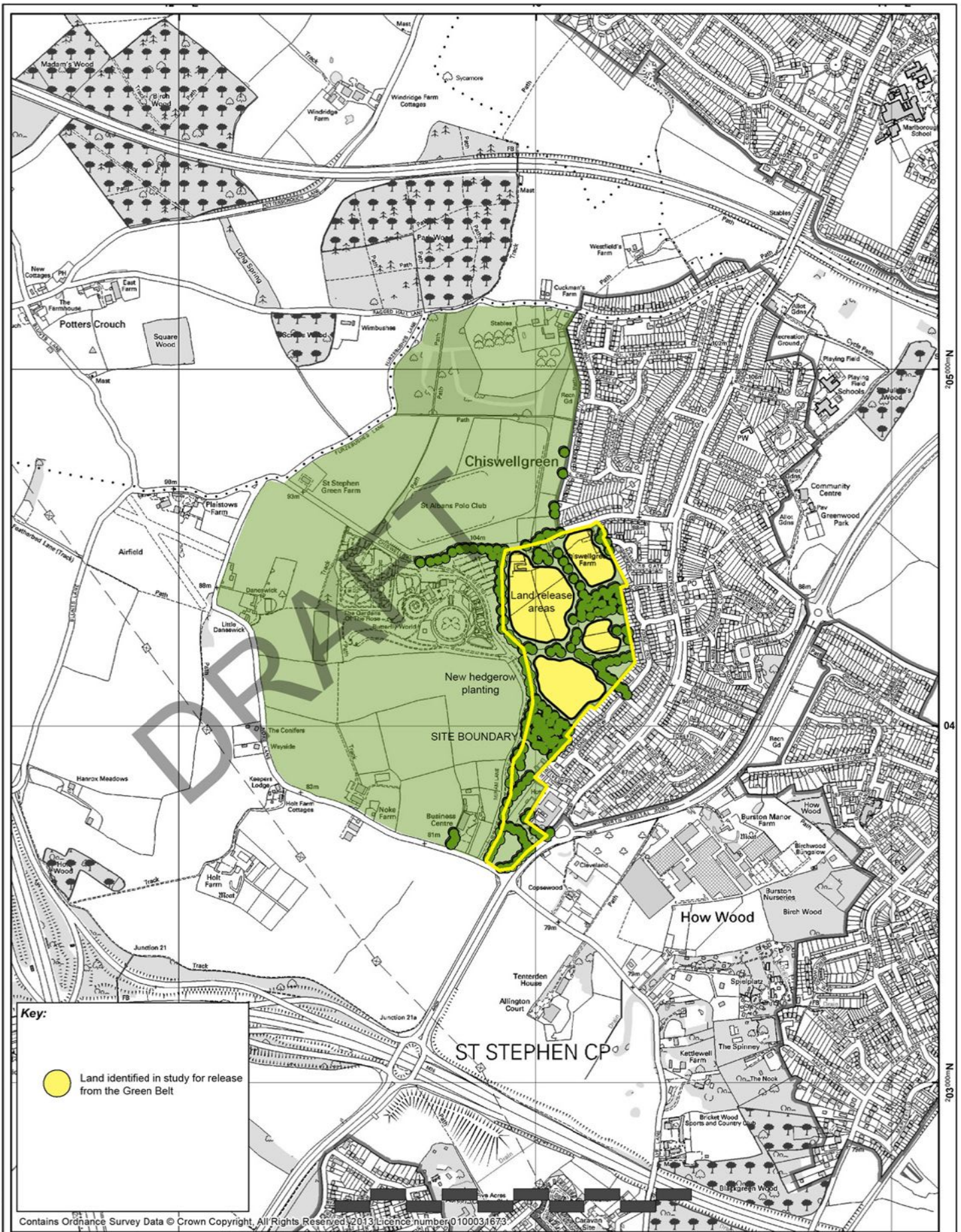
DATE  
12/12/2013




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

REVISION: A MXD: 002/g001

SINCLAIR KNIGHT MERZ  
**SKM ENVIROS**



**Key:**

 Land identified in study for release from the Green Belt

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**Green Belt Review for  
St Albans, Dacorum and  
Welwyn Hatfield - PART 2**

**FIGURE 11.2** Indicative Layout  
Site 8 Land at Chiswell Green



PROJECT: JE30761  
DATE: NOV 2013  
DRAWN: PHD

Rev.DEC/v002  
SCALE: NTS



Ref. ProMap from Client





## 11. Site Classification

### 11.1. Overview

11.1.1. Based upon findings from the full assessment, each strategic sub-area has been classified in respect of the time horizon over which it has been considered suitable to be brought forward for potential development, as follows:

- Short or medium-term (5-20 years)
- Safeguarded land to meet longer term needs (20 years +).

11.1.2. This classification is be based upon three criteria:

- 1) Constraints – the challenges posed by identified constraints to development
- 2) Integration – sustainability of patterns of development, integration with existing settlements and compatibility with landscape character
- 3) Sensitivity – landscape sensitivity and potential visual impact of development.

11.1.3. Further explanation of the criteria is set out in Appendix 1: Detailed Methodology.

### 11.2. Summary of Results

11.2.1. Land is identified as potentially suitable for Green Belt release in the following sub areas over the short to medium-term (5-20 years):

- S3: East of St Albans
- S4: North of St Albans
- S5: Northwest of Harpenden
- S6: Northeast of Harpenden
- S8: Land at Chiswell Green.

Potential Safeguarded Land is identified in the following sub-areas as being suitable to meet longer term needs (20+ years):beyond the Local Plan period:

- S1: East of Hemel Hempstead (north)
- S2: East of Hemel Hempstead (south).

11.2.2. S7: Land at London Colney will be classified once the sub-area assessment is completed.



- 11.2.3. As an outcome from the Part 1 Study, all sites are considered to contribute least towards the five Green Belt purposes assessed.
- 11.2.4. Each potential area of land recommended as a short to medium-term prospect to come forward over the next 5 to 20 years is summarised below:
- **S8: Land at Chiswell Green** – the site is not subject to significant primary constraints to development. It offers the potential to become integrated to form a new community on the west edge of Chiswell Green where the landscape least sensitive to change. Of the seven sub-areas assessed, S8 (and S2) is considered to contribute least towards the five Green Belt purposes assessed.
  - **S3: East of St Albans** – the site is not subject to significant primary constraints to development. It offers the potential to become well integrated to form a new community on the east edge of St Albans where the landscape least sensitive to change. Of the seven sub-areas assessed, S2 (and S8) is considered to contribute least towards the five Green Belt purposes assessed.
  - **S4: North of St Albans** – the site is not subject to significant primary constraints to development. It offers the potential to become well integrated to form a new community on the north edge of St Albans where the landscape least sensitive to change.
  - **S5: Northwest of Harpenden** – the site is not subject to significant primary constraints to development. It offers the potential to become well integrated to form a new community on the northwest edge of Harpenden where the landscape least sensitive to change. However the landform is sloping and this increases potential visibility and represents an obstacle to change.
  - **S6: Northeast of Harpenden** – the site is not subject to significant primary constraints to development. It offers the potential to become well integrated to form a new community on the northeast edge of Harpenden where the landscape least sensitive to change. However the landform is sloping and this increases potential visibility and represents an obstacle to change.
- 11.2.5. Each area of land recommended as safeguarded land to meet longer term needs to come forward in 20+ years is summarised below:
- **S1: East of Hemel Hempstead (north)** – the site is not subject to significant primary constraints to development. In the long term, it offers the potential to become integrated to form a new community on the east edge of Hemel Hempstead. This is due to the land allocated for housing and employment development on existing open urban land within Dacorum Borough Council to the west of the site. The site should not come forward until this land has been developed and any plans should be designed to be well integrated into this adjoining area.
  - **S2: East of Hemel Hempstead (south)** – the site is located within Buncefield HSE exclusion zone which represents a potential primary constraint to development. Given the location of the site, recommended land uses would relate to employment over housing. It offers the potential to become integrated to form part of the east edge of Hemel Hempstead where the landscape least sensitive to change.



11.2.6. A summary of results is set out in Table 12.1 below.

<b>Site</b>	<b>Constraints</b>	<b>Integration</b>	<b>Sensitivity</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
<b>1</b>	High	Medium	Low	Safeguarded	20+ years
<b>2</b>	Low	Medium	High	Safeguarded	20+ years
<b>3</b>	High	High	Medium	Short - Medium	5 - 20 years
<b>4</b>	High	Medium	High	Short - Medium	5 - 20 years
<b>5</b>	High	High	Low	Short - Medium	5 - 20 years
<b>6</b>	High	High	Low	Short - Medium	5 - 20 years
<b>8</b>	High	High	High	Short	5 - 20 years



## 12. Conclusion and Recommendations

- 12.1.1. The further detailed assessment of strategic sub-areas of Green Belt in St Albans City and District Council has identified specific areas of Green Belt land which are considered least sensitive to potential development as a result of detailed amendments to Green Belt boundaries.
- 12.1.2. Those areas subject to assessment correspond to the strategic sub areas recommended for further investigation in the Green Belt Purposes Assessment undertaken on behalf of St Albans City and District Council, Dacorum Borough Council and Welwyn Hatfield Council (termed the 'Part 1 Study'). These areas are considered to contribute least to the five purposes assessed.
- 12.1.3. The assessment findings for seven of the eight strategic sub-areas in St Albans City and District are presented in this report. The findings for Site 7 (Land at London Colney) are subject to the receipt of additional information on existing environmental constraints. The results of this assessment will be incorporated into an updated Report as soon as possible.
- 12.1.4. The findings of this study comprise:
- The identification of land within each sub-area which is considered to be least sensitive to change in the form of residential development;
  - Proposed detailed revisions to Green Belt boundaries in each of the sub-areas to take account of the areas identified for potential release from the Green Belt; and,
  - Estimated residential development capacities for each potential area of Green Belt release, based upon indicative layouts and stated density assumptions which seek to maintain the integrity of the Green Belt, and minimise visual impacts and avoid environmental constraints.
- 12.1.5. Applying density standards of 30dph and 50dph these sites (excluding sub-area 7) can collectively deliver between 5,054 (30dph) and 8,422 (50dph) units across St Albans City and District.
- 12.1.6. As a result of the assessment, the study has attempted to classify (as high, medium or low impact) each potential area of Green Belt release in terms of:
- the extent to which environmental constraints to development can be overcome;
  - the potential for integration into the existing settlement pattern and compatibility with landscape character; and
  - potential visual impact on the surrounding area.
- 12.1.7. This has been used to provide initial guidance to the Council on the timing of potential release of each potential area as either:
- a) Short to Medium term (5-20 years) – within the Local Plan period
  - b) Safeguarded land to meet longer term needs (20+ years) – beyond the Local Plan period.



12.1.8. A summary of the estimated potential housing development capacity and site classification for each area of potential Green Belt release is provided in the table below.

**Table 13.1: Estimated residential capacity**

<b>Strategic Sub Area</b>	<b>Estimated Residential Capacity (30dph)</b>	<b>Estimated Residential Capacity (50dph)</b>	<b>Site Classification</b>
S1: East of Hemel Hempstead (north)	1,093	1,822	Safeguarded land (20+ years)
S2: East of Hemel Hempstead (south)	1,005	1,675	Safeguarded land (20+ years)
S3: East of St Albans	697	1,162	Short to Medium term (5-20 years)
S4: North of St Albans	910	1,516	Short to Medium term (5-20 years)
S5: Northwest of Harpenden	319	531	Short to Medium term (5-20 years)
S6: Northeast of Harpenden	687	1,145	Short to Medium term (5-20 years)
S7: Land at London Colney	TBC	TBC	TBC
S8: Land at Chiswell Green	343	571	Short to Medium term (5-20 years)
All (excluding SSA7)	5,054	8,422	Short to Medium term (5-20 years)

12.1.9. It is important to note that in determining the overall spatial strategy for the district, the Council will need to take into account a much wider range of considerations (beyond the scope of this study) to decide whether, how and when any of these potential areas for Green Belt release should come forward for development. These considerations will necessarily include, among others:

- The overall level of 'objectively assessed need' for housing;
- The supply of housing that could be provided by non-Green Belt land;
- Infrastructure requirements associated with alternative development locations and the associated implications for deliverability;
- The viability of the plan as a whole and any strategic development locations;
- The rate at which the market will absorb new housing – particularly on larger strategic sites.

12.1.10. There is likely to be pressure from housing developers to bring forward those sites which have least constraints and are most economically viable. The Council will need to consider how the Local Plan can introduce policy mechanisms to manage the potential release of land for housing to ensure that small scale residential development comes



forward first in those areas which are in the most sustainable locations, while strategic sites are phased appropriately throughout the Plan period and beyond.



## Appendices



## Appendix 1: Detailed Methodology

### Stage 1: Desk Top Review

#### *Task 1a: Review of Green Belt Contribution and Strategic Sub-areas, and SWOT Analysis*

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

The SWOT analysis is presented as part of each sub-area assessment to set out a summary of key findings from the detailed assessment in relation to:

- Landscape Appraisal
- Environmental and Historic Constraints
- Sustainable Patterns of Development and Integration.

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

#### *Landscape Appraisal*

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

The Part 1 study was undertaken at the strategic level and did not undertake a detailed assessment of sub-areas (within strategic parcels) and it recommended that all sub-areas require further assessment. Therefore Part 1 Strategic sub-areas have been refined to better represent ground conditions and to allow the assessment, especially in relation to landscape, to consider the edges, and land immediately beyond the edges of the initial indicative boundaries identified. This level of assessment is required to fully appreciate the surrounding countryside and context of land which contributes least towards Green Belt purposes.

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

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

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





### *Environmental and Historic Constraints*

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

Primary and secondary environmental and historic constraints are listed below.

- Primary constraints:
  - High risk fluvial flood plains (Zones 3a and b)
  - European nature conservation sites e.g. SPA, SAC, Ramsar sites
  - National Nature conservation sites e.g. SSSI
  - Registered parks and gardens, Country Parks
  - Ancient woodland
  - Scheduled Ancient Monuments
  - Safeguarded mineral zones
  - Safeguarded land
  - Cemeteries
  - Grade 1, 2 and 3a (Best and Most Versatile) agricultural land
  - Ground Water Protection Zone – Grade 1
  - Land quality – contaminated land.
- Secondary constraints:
  - Sites of Nature Conservation Importance, Local Nature Reserves, Green corridors
  - Public Rights of Way
  - Listed buildings and conservation areas
  - Archaeology priority zones
  - Public open space, Playing fields and Allotments.

### *Sustainable Patterns of Development and Integration*

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



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

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

### ***Task 1a Review of Planning History and Site Promotion Material***

The final task of Stage 1 has been to undertake a desk-based review of relevant planning history or site promotional exercises. Data has been attained from St Albans City and District Council. The main purpose of the review is to identify any land which might be subject to planning permission or appeal within the sub-areas. Any such land has been excluded from the study.

## **Stage 2: Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment**

### ***Task 2a Landscape and Visual Sensitivity Appraisal***

Following on from the landscape appraisal (as part of Stage 1 SWOT analysis) a landscape and visual sensitivity appraisal has been undertaken.

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

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

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

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



### *Desk Study*

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

- The Hertfordshire Landscape Character Area Statements (published online)
- The District Local Plan Review 1994; and
- The MAGIC website;
- Ordnance Survey mapping at 1:50,000, 1:25,000 and 1:10,000 scales; and
- Aerial photography.

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

### *Field Survey*

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

### *Analysis*

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

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

### *Evaluation of Sensitivity*

The evaluation of townscape / landscape and visual sensitivity has considered the susceptibility to change and the value of the receptor. In the case of townscape / landscape receptors susceptibility is associated with the ability to accommodate potential development and value is reflected in designations and policies relating to their establishment (including features, elements and key characteristics). In relation to visual receptors, susceptibility is a function of the activity of a person and extent to which their attention is focussed on the townscape / landscape, and value is



reflected in the designation or recognition of a particular view (e.g. through planning designation, inclusion on maps and locations marked with interpretive material).

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

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

#### Areas of Lower Sensitivity

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

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



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

### ***Task 2b: Detailed Boundary Review***

The landscape appraisal identified which parts/portions of each sub-area could potentially come forward for release while maintaining the overall integrity of the Green Belt. The consultants reviewed each sub-area in terms of component landscape parts within the sub-area and their (individual and collective) relationship to the surrounding Green Belt/ countryside setting. As part of this process, potential alterations to the Green Belt boundary are proposed.

A detailed Green Belt boundary assessment for each parcel of land has been undertaken in conjunction with the landscape capacity assessment. It has considered the characteristics of the edge of the least sensitive area(s) in light of national policy advice to define a clear and defensible boundary. It takes into account factors investigated as part of the SWOT in relation to landform, topography, enclosure and visual attributes.

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

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

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

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

### ***Task 2c: Assessment of Developable Areas***



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

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

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

### ***Task 2d: Assessing Potential Development Capacity – Land use Schedules and Concept Plans***

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

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

- a) The **Gross Development Area (GDA)** defines that portion of the sub-area that could potentially be released for development. The remainder of the sub-area would remain Green Belt. Landscape mitigation measures may be required to maintain the integrity of the Green Belt within these sub-areas and forms a critical component in understanding which areas of land could be released.
- b) In accordance with urban design practise, we have used the benchmark that up to 60% of the GDA would be developed (termed **Net Development Area**); the remainder 40% would be required to provide for public open space<sup>4</sup>, roads and public facilities;
- c) All developable land would come forward predominantly for residential development, but a provision has been made for employment use on the two largest Development Areas identified (Site 1 and Site 2). The employment use allows for general commercial activity that one typically finds in the UK High Street (retail, office, etc) and potentially for an employment cluster/estate<sup>5</sup>. The exact site area required by this land use has not been defined by the client and consequently this is open for further discussion;
- d) A collective provision has been made for the provision of public facilities, with specific reference to the potential need to provide additional schools sites that such an increase in

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<sup>4</sup> Requirement as defined per the Council's "Design and layout of new housing, 1998" standards and client correspondence.

<sup>5</sup> The client noted that sub-areas S1 and S2 may incorporate employment use compatible with the surrounding area of Hemel Hempstead Industrial Estate.



population might require. Specific need and location do not form part of this study and are not addressed further. The exact site area required by this land use has not been defined by the client and consequently this is open for further discussion;

- e) The consultant team is aware that certain planning applications have been granted or are under consideration on two sub-areas. The areas of land subject to the planning permission or public inquiry are excluded from this study; and,
- f) Certain sub-areas have physical constraints to development such as the Buncefield oil depot exclusion zone (Site 2), a former land-fill (Site 8), overhead power-lines (Site 1); or have a planning designation that may restrict development. These constraints were not a consideration in terms of identifying the potential developable area and would need to be considered in greater detail prior to the allocation of any site for development through the Local Plan process.

#### *Development Density*

In order to assess development density, this study reviewed the Council's planning policy in terms of setting a density level for development that would be acceptable. While the policy stresses the need for high-density residential development, no actual range of dwellings/ hectare is set<sup>6</sup>. We have consequently used figures based on good practice guidance published by the HCA and CABE.

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

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

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

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<sup>6</sup> Ref. St Albans' Core Strategy Development Plan Document, Consultation on issues and options, Sustainability appraisal working paper, July 2007.



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

Our approach then uses the residential unit numbers to generate a population size, using the Council's figure of 2.5 persons/ unit (irrespective of unit size)<sup>8</sup>. This figure accords with St Albans' suburban location in relation to Greater London where the GLA Housing Space Standards 2021 use 2.15 persons/ unit.

The residential unit numbers are also used to generate public open space requirements, using the Council's figures of 3sqm/ 5 units for schemes of 30+ units and additionally 1.2ha/1,000 persons for schemes of 100+ units<sup>9</sup>.

### **Stage 3: Site Classification**

#### ***Task 3a: Site Classification***

Based upon findings from the full assessment, each strategic sub-area has been classified in respect of the time horizon over which it has been considered suitable to be brought forward for potential development, as follows:

- Short or medium-term (5-20 years)
- Safeguarded land to meet longer term needs (20 years +).

This classification will be based upon three criteria:

- 4) Constraints – the degree to which any constraints to development can be overcome
- 5) Integration – sustainability of patterns of development, integration with existing development and compatibility with landscape character
- 6) Landscape sensitivity / Visibility – potential visual impact of development.

Each of the above has been scored using a three-tier ranking system to set out either positive, neutral or negative impacts of the assessment. A breakdown of detailed criteria is set out below.

Constraints:

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<sup>7</sup> Ref. Council's "Design and layout of new housing, 1998"; Bungalow: 40sqm for first bed, and 20sqm for every additional bed; Flats: 20sqm for first bed of each flat, and 10sqm for every additional (pg20).

<sup>8</sup> St Albans Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2013)

<sup>9</sup> St Albans Design and Advice Leaflet No 1 (November 1998)





<b>High</b>	No constraints to development on-site
<b>Medium</b>	Constraints to development on-site, require mitigation measures
<b>Low</b>	Constraints to development on-site, prevent further development

Integration

<b>High</b>	Site contributes to sustainable pattern of development – capable of full integration into the existing urban area with good accessibility by sustainable modes of transport to local services and open space.
<b>Medium</b>	Site capable of making a contribution to sustainable patterns of development through appropriate scale, form and mix of development to minimise the need for car based travel to local services and open space.
<b>Low</b>	Very difficult to make a contribution to sustainable development by virtue of its location in relation to local services and capability for integration into existing settlements.

Landscape Sensitivity / Visibility

<b>High</b>	High landscape capacity to accommodate development
<b>Medium</b>	Medium landscape capacity to accommodate development
<b>Low</b>	Low landscape capacity to accommodate development.

Sites scoring three ‘High’ classifications have been ranked the highest and most suitable for short term development.



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