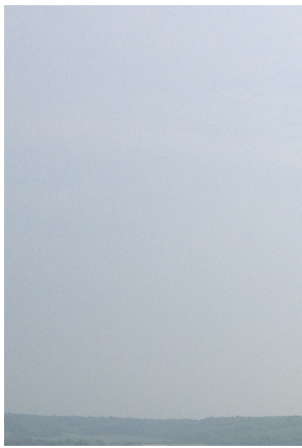


**GREEN BELT REVIEW SITES & BOUNDARIES STUDY**  
**Prepared for St Albans City and District Only**  
**REPORT**  
**February 2014**



SINCLAIR KNIGHT MERZ  
**SKM**



# St Albans Green Belt Review: Sites and Boundaries Study

## FINAL REPORT

- February 2014

Sinclair Knight Merz  
New City Court  
20 St Thomas Street  
London  
SE1 9RS  
United Kingdom  
T +44 (0)20 7939 6100  
F +44 (0)20 7939 6103  
[www.globalskm.com](http://www.globalskm.com)

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Overview

- 1.1.1. SKM has been commissioned to undertake a Green Belt Sites and Boundaries Study on behalf of St Albans City and District Council (SADC).
- 1.1.2. The aim of the study is to deliver a review that provides a detailed and robust assessment of each of the eight strategic sub-areas in St Albans City and District identified for further investigation in the Green Belt Review: Purposes Assessment for Dacorum, St Albans and Welwyn Hatfield (November 2013); hereafter referred to as the 'Part 1 study'.
- 1.1.3. These eight strategic 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. The findings of this follow-on study will inform future choices by the Council on how to strike the balance between development needs and Green Belt restraint.
- 1.1.4. The main objectives of this Green Belt Sites and Boundaries Study are to:
  - Identify potential sites (with boundary lines) within the strategic sub-areas (identified in the Part 1 study) for potential release from the Green Belt for future development;
  - Estimate the potential development capacity of each site; and,
  - Rank the sites in terms of their suitability for potential Green Belt release.

The small scale sub-areas identified in the Part 1 Study, and also recommended for further assessment, do not fall within the scope of this subsequent Sites and Boundaries Study.

## 1.2. Scope of Work

- 1.2.1. The Project Brief for the Sites and Boundaries study identifies the scope of work required by the Council, as follows:
  - 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.



### **1.3. Structure of Report**

1.3.1. 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 an assessment of each of the strategic sub-areas using a standard report structure as follows:

- Context and Contribution towards Green Belt Purposes;
- Constraints;
- Sustainable Patterns of Development;
- Landscape Appraisal and Sensitivity;
- Boundary Review; and,
- Indicative Layout and Potential Development Capacity.

### **1.4. Disclaimer**

1.4.1. The Sites & Boundaries Study forms part of the Council's evidence base for its 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.

1.4.2. 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 (NPPF).

1.4.3. The outcome of this study will therefore provide only one piece of evidence among a wide range of studies and considerations that must be taken into account before the Council can decide on any changes to Green Belt boundaries. Wider issues not considered by this study include infrastructure capacity (in relation to transport and local services and facilities), the availability of land for development (in relation to the market and land ownership), site access and District wide sustainability issues<sup>1</sup>.

1.4.4. All land measurements in this study are approximate.

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<sup>1</sup>District wide 'sustainability' relates to the original concept of sustainability in respect of environmental, economic and social factors and impacts that are taken into account in planning decisions - as defined in Paragraphs 6 – 10 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This is different to 'sustainability patterns of development' (as assessed in this study) and defined in paragraph 2.3.1 of this report.



## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Overview

- 2.1.1. The methodology for the Sites & Boundaries Study was devised by SKM in response to the Council's tender brief for its overall Green Belt Review (Parts 1 and 2). This methodology has been broadly applied as originally proposed. 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 – Sub-area Assessment</b>
Task 1a: Review of Contribution and SWOT Analysis	Task 1a: Review of Contribution towards Green Belt Purposes and review of relevant Planning History
Task 1b: Sieve Analysis and Shortlisting	<i>Removed as all eight sites assessed</i>
	Task 1b: Assessment of Constraints; Integration and Landscape Appraisal and Sensitivity
<b>STAGE 2 – Site Assessment</b>	<b>STAGE 2 –Site Assessment</b>
Task 2a: Review of Site Promotion Material	<i>Moved to Stage 1</i>
Task 2b: Landscape Capacity Assessment	Task 2a: Boundary Review and contribution to Green Belt purposes
Task 2c: Boundary Review	Task 2b: Assessment of Developable Areas
Task 2d: Assessment of Developable Areas	Task 2c: Indicative Development Capacity
Task 2e: Site Classification	<i>Moved to Stage 3 (swap with Development Capacity)</i>
<b>STAGE 3 –Development Capacity</b>	<b>STAGE 3 –Site Classification</b>
Task 3a: Land use schedules and Plans	Task 3a: Evaluation of site suitability for potential Green Belt release and future development

- 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 3 to 10. The SWOT analysis has been removed as it only previously provided a summary of assessment findings.

- Task 2e Site Classification has been refined to evaluate the suitability of sites for potential Green Belt release and future development in a consistent and transparent manner. Site Classification is set out in Chapter 11.

## 2.2. Approach to Review of Sites and Boundaries

- 2.2.1. The findings of the further assessment work undertaken are reported separately for each strategic sub-area (hereafter referred to as 'sub-areas') to an identical structure which follows the order of tasks set out in the methodology (see Appendix) and summarised in Table 2.2 below.

**Table 2.2: Description of Tasks**

Approach	Description of Task
<b>STAGE 1 – Sub-area Assessment</b>	Assessment of sub-area only
Task 1a: Review of Contribution towards Green Belt Purposes and review of relevant Planning History	Summarises key findings of Part 1 Study to explain why sub-area contributes least towards Green Belt purposes. Considers relevant planning history including planning applications and policy.
Task 1b: Assessment of Environmental and Historic Constraints; Integration and Landscape Appraisal / Sensitivity	Desk-based and on-site assessment of Environmental and Historic Constraints; Integration (sustainable patterns of development) and Landscape Appraisal and Sensitivity.
<b>STAGE 2 –Site Assessment</b>	Assessment of site only (identified using key findings from Sub-area assessment).
Task 2a: Boundary Review and contribution to Green Belt purposes	Assessment of boundary characteristics including strength of boundaries to define the sites. Summary of contribution towards Green Belt purposes of site only.
Task 2b: Assessment of Developable Areas	Summary of rationale for illustrative site layout including proposed landscape mitigation measures (if required).
Task 2c: Indicative Development Capacity	Estimation of residential development capacity based on net residential density assumptions ranging from 30 to 50 dwellings per hectare (dph). <sup>2</sup>
<b>STAGE 3 –Site Classification</b>	Classification of sites.
Task 3a: Evaluation of site suitability for potential Green Belt release and future development	Based upon assessment findings, each site is ranked and evaluated in terms of its suitability for potential Green Belt release for future development.

<sup>2</sup> Based on HCA *urban design compendium* published (Llewelyn 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:

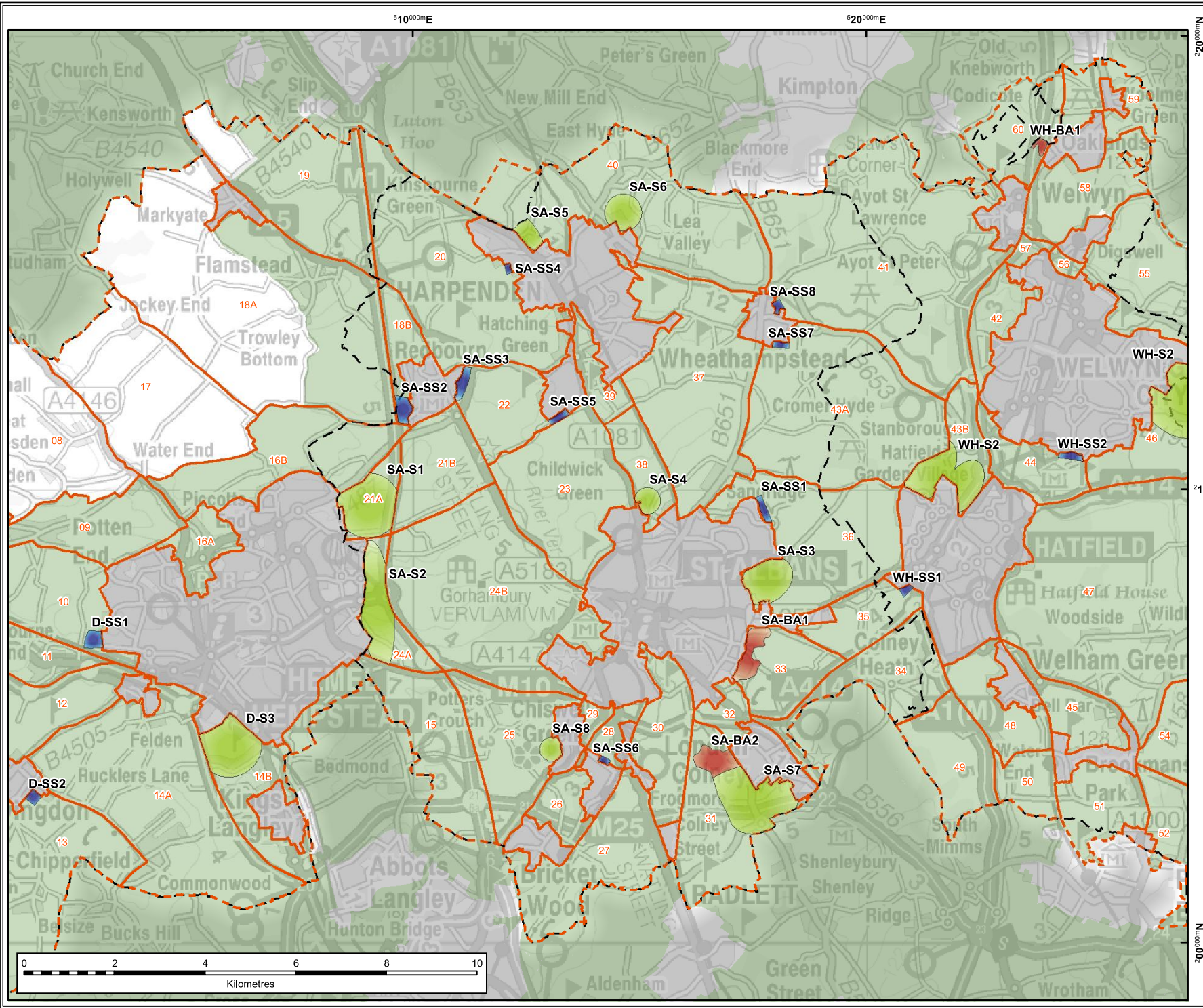
- **Part 1 Study** – Green Belt Review: Purposes Assessment for Dacorum, St Albans and Welwyn Hatfield (November 2013).
- **Strategic Parcel** – assessment area for Part 1 Study. The study was sub-divided into 66 Strategic Parcels across the three local authorities.
- **Strategic sub-area / sub-area** – 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.
- **Site** – area of land located with strategic sub-area which is identified for potential release from the Green Belt.
- **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 (NPPF) in respect of environmental, economic and social factors and impacts that are taken into account in planning decisions.
- **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.
- **Specified Settlement** – large village excluded from the Green Belt set out in St Albans City and District Council (SADC) Local Plan Review (1994).
- **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. Assessment of Sites and Boundaries**

- 2.4.1. The Part 1 study identified eight strategic sub-areas in SADC as contributing least towards five Green Belt purposes. These eight areas are the subject of 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; and,
  - S8: Land at Chiswell Green.
- 2.4.2. The location of the strategic sub-areas and constraints are set out in maps overleaf (both maps are extracted from the Part 1 Study).
- 2.4.3. The findings for each strategic sub-area assessment are presented in Chapters 3 to 10.

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Name: Figure8.1.2\_Least Contribution to GB\_StAlbans



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



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

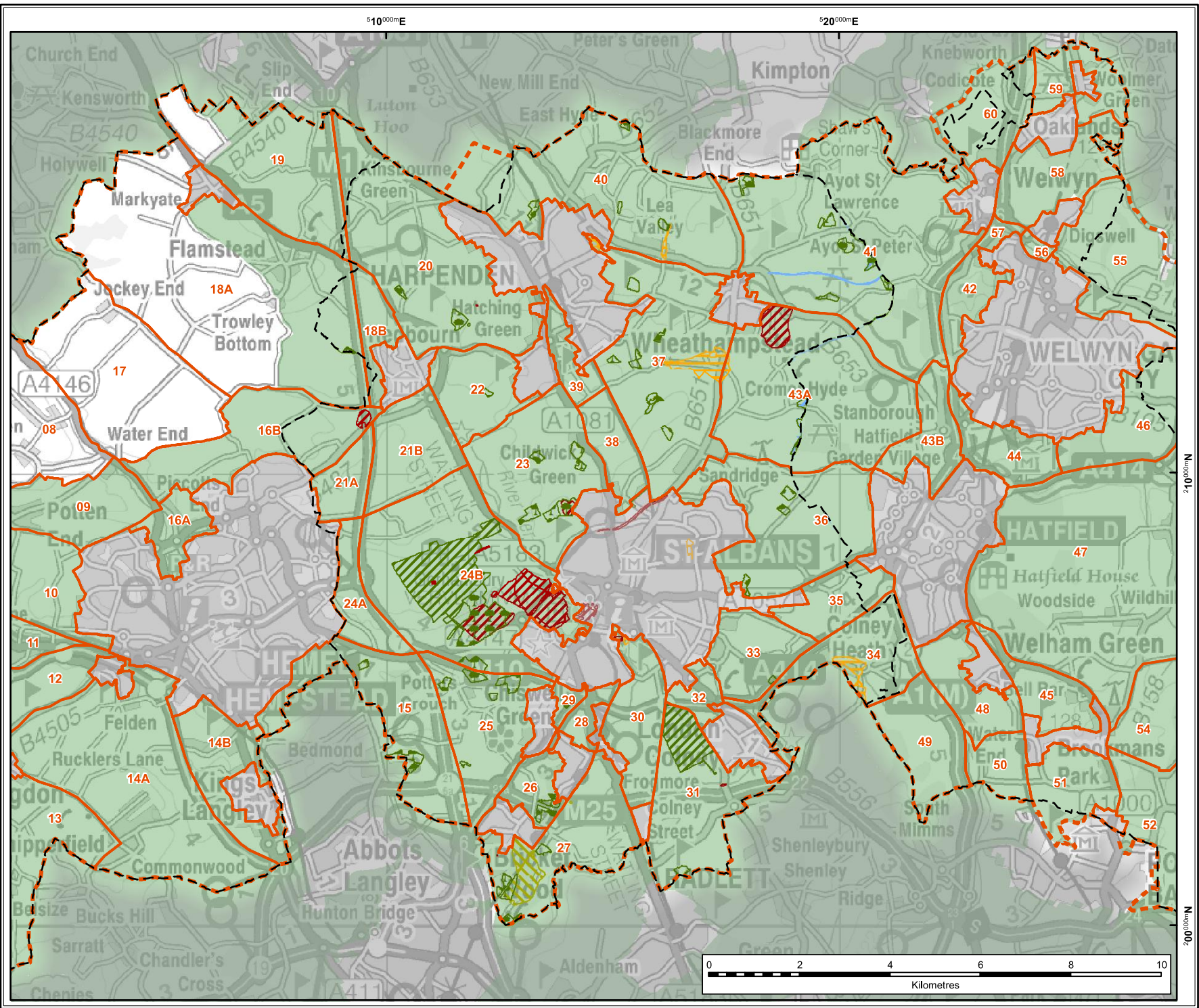
REVISION: B

### 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



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

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

- 3.1.1. The sub-area comprises land enclosed by east Hemel Hempstead and the M1 motorway within Strategic Parcel GB21A. The sub-area lies within the Upper Ver Valley and Buncefield Plateau landscape character areas (Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment, Hertfordshire County Council, 2000-2005). The published landscape character assessment evaluates the condition and strength of character, and provides an overall objective for each landscape character area.
- 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 existing transport 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, being greatest near the B487, but elsewhere it comprises individual farmsteads and houses. Development on the edge of Hemel Hempstead influences the western part of the character area, adding urban influences. The condition of the landscape and strength of character are 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/commercial structures on the edge of Hemel Hempstead are conspicuous elements that add urban/urban fringe characteristics. The condition of the landscape and strength of character are described as “poor” and “strong” respectively. The overall objective for this landscape character area is to “restore condition to maintain character”.

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

- 3.1.4. Strategic Parcel GB21A significantly contributes towards one of the five Green Belt purposes; safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. It makes a partial contribution towards preventing merging and maintaining the existing settlement pattern. It helps to maintain the gaps from Hemel Hempstead to Harpenden and Redbourn. The sub-area identified is relatively free of built development and forms part of an open landscape which is interrupted by the M1 motorway. Urban influences are evident as the sub-area is close to the urban edge and close to visually prominent development including Hemel Hempstead industrial estate as well as the M1 motorway 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. The gap between Hemel Hempstead and other settlements is relatively large and is generally not compromised by existing built development or other urbanising uses and features, apart from the M1 motorway. The sub-area makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl or preserving setting.



### *Planning History*

- 3.1.5. There are no existing planning extant permissions or outstanding applications pertaining to land East of Hemel Hempstead. However the land has been subject to planning promotion activities from potential developers.
- 3.1.6. The now revoked East of England Plan (2008) stated in *Policy SS7 Green Belt* that 'the broad extent of Green Belts in the East of England is appropriate, and should be maintained. However, strategic reviews of Green Belt boundaries are needed 'in certain areas' to meet regional development needs at the most sustainable locations'. A specific location referenced in the policy was 'Hemel Hempstead, involving land in Dacorum and probably St Albans District'. Prior to this, the Hertfordshire Housing Development and Spatial Strategy Audit undertaken for the East of England Regional Assembly in 2004 identified this land as having 'good potential' for housing post-2011.
- 3.1.7. Most recently the Dacorum Core Strategy (2013) sets out a vision diagram for East Hemel Hempstead Area Action Plan. The indicative area to be covered by the AAP crosses the borough boundary into St Albans City and District Council. This boundary will be determined by St Albans City and District Council.

### **3.2. Constraints**

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

#### *Environmental and historic Features*

- 3.2.2. A Green Corridor (The Nickey Line) with footpath and cycleway 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.
- 3.2.3. A Scheduled Monument (SM), The Aubreys (fort/camp), is located to the northeast of the assessment area. It is bound by Gaddesden Lane to the north, the M1 motorway 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*

- 3.2.4. The sub-area lies northeast of the Buncefield HSE Consultation Zone (which is discussed in more detail in respect of sub-area 2 in Chapter 4). The area is also affected by underground oil pipelines which cut across the site in a north south direction and may affect development capacity.
- 3.2.5. The eastern boundary of the sub-area runs along the edge of the M1 motorway and the western edge adjoins existing open land designated for future housing and employment uses in Policies H18 and E4 respectively of the Dacorum Local Plan Proposals Map (2004). This land is highlighted as Spencer's Park as part of the East Hemel Hempstead Area Action Plan in the Dacorum Core Strategy (2013). Planned land uses in the eastern Hemel Hempstead area within Dacorum have changed in recent years to concentrate employment development in the gateway area around the Motorway junction and redesignate Spencer's Park (formerly allocated for special technological development) for housing.



### **3.3. Sustainable Patterns of Development**

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

#### *Settlement role, size and function*

- 3.3.2. The sub-area is located on the northeast edge of Hemel Hempstead along the boundary between St Albans City and District and Dacorum Borough. Hemel Hempstead town is identified as the 'Main Centre for Development and Change' in the Borough 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 almost 90,000 residents.

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

- 3.3.3. Hemel Hempstead town centre is located 3.6km to the southwest of the western edge of the sub-area.
- 3.3.4. Local centres at Woodhall Farm and The Heights are located 500m northwest and 1.7kmsouthwest of the sub-area respectively. A new local centre is to be established in the heart of Maylands, within the East Hemel Hempstead AAP, 2km to the southwest.

#### *Public transport accessibility*

- 3.3.5. Hemel Hempstead railway station is located 5km to the southwest of the sub-area. The station offers a regular service, approximately every 10-15 minutes, to London Euston during peak hours. The station also provides direct links to Clapham Junction, Milton Keynes Central and Birmingham New Street.
- 3.3.6. 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 northwest of the sub-area boundary. Bus route 259 also runs along Redbourn Road and provides a service to Redbourn town centre.

#### *Proximity to schools*

- 3.3.7. Two primary schools lie within 800m of the sub-area: Brockswold Primary School (500m to the north-west) and Holtsmere Junior School (800m to the west). The Astley Cooper Secondary School is located 1.2km to the west.

#### *Proximity to public open space*

- 3.3.8. Only two public open spaces lie within 800m of the sub-area at Cupid Green and High Wood to the west. Beyond Hemel Hempstead Industrial Estate lies Widmore Wood, Maylands Wood, High Street Green playing field, Yew Tree Wood and Coppingsfield Sports Ground. The Nickey Line Cycle Path (Green Corridor) also passes through the northern part of the strategic sub-area and provides a cycle link into Hemel Hempstead town centre and to Redbourn.



### **3.4. Landscape Appraisal and Sensitivity**

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

#### *Landform*

- 3.4.2. 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 Above Ordnance Datum (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*

- 3.4.3. The sub-area primarily comprises agricultural land uses, predominantly 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 to Grade 3 further north. There are occasional small woodlands and groups of trees within the sub-area.
- 3.4.4. Key ecological features comprise the remnant hedgerows and hedgerow trees, together with the small areas of woodland. The Nickey Lane (Green Corridor) is a disused railway to the south of Hemel Hempstead Road (B487) comprises a distinctive linear habitat. There are no ecological designations within the sub-area.

#### *Built and cultural heritage aspects*

- 3.4.5. Key cultural heritage influences 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*

- 3.4.6. 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 on upper slopes where there are clear views over the valley and surrounding landscape. The falling landform gives rise to a greater sense of enclosure within the base of the valley.
- 3.4.7. 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 the urban edge of Hemel Hempstead.



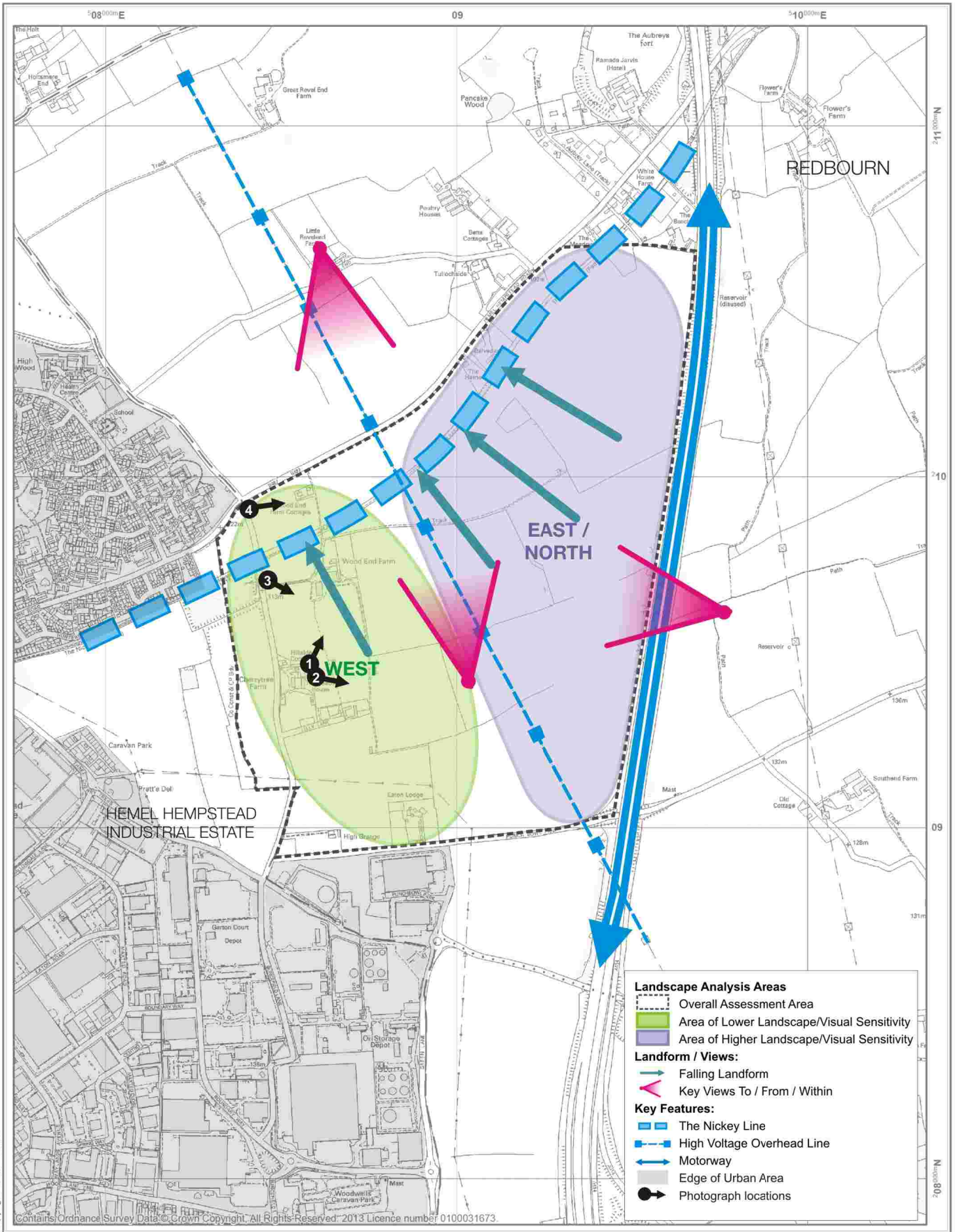
*Visual attributes*

- 3.4.8. 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.

*Landscape sensitivity*

- 3.4.9. This section considers the sensitivity of the landscape and the visual effects associated with potential development within the sub-area on landscape character.
- 3.4.10. 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 is considered to represent countryside.
- 3.4.11. The nature of the land cover/pattern means that the south-western part of the sub-area is more contained and any future change in this part 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. The visual perception of the gap between Hemel Hempstead and Redbourn is also an important consideration, and development within the western part of the sub-area close to the existing settlement would reduce visual prominence and have less influence on this aspect.
- 3.4.12. 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.
- 3.4.13. Consideration of the sensitivity of the sub-area (and specific parts within it) in relation to potential residential development, as informed by landscape character, settlement form, views and landscape value, is set out in the table below.
- 3.4.14. Key findings from the landscape and visual appraisal are illustrated in Figure 3.1. This is supported by annotated photographs set out in Figure 3.2.

	<b>Part of Strategic Sub-Area (see Figure 4.1 Landscape Sensitivity Mapping)</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 several 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	<p>Development would be continuous with parts of Hemel Hempstead, but there is an area of agricultural land that could be isolated as a consequence of development of this part of the sub-area. The alignment of change with the existing urban form would help reduce any effect on the perception of the gap between Hemel Hempstead and Redbourn.</p>	<p>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. There would be greater potential to erode the visual perception of the gap between Hemel Hempstead and Redbourn.</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, and people travelling along the local road network. Trees and hedgerows would provide some visual containment.</p>	<p>The relative openness of the landscape would mean development could be visually prominent.</p>
Landscape value and other designations	<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	<b>Lower sensitivity</b>	<b>Higher sensitivity</b>



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**Figure 3.1 Landscape and Visual**  
**Appraisal, Sub-Area 1 East of**  
**Hemel Hempstead (North)**

N

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



Photograph Location 1: View north/northeast from footpath near Hillside Cottage/The Coach House



Photograph Location 2: View southeast from footpath near Hillside Cottage/The Coach House



Photograph Location 3: View east/southeast from Cherry Tree Lane, near Wood End Farm



Photograph Location 4: View east from Cherry Tree Lane, near junction with Hemel Hempstead Road/Redbourn Road (B487)



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Plot date: Jan 31, 2014 - 10:39am

File name: HLD4037.dwg

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**FIGURE 3.2**  
*Photographs, Sub-Area 1  
East of Hemel Hempstead (North)*

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### **3.5. Boundary Review**

- 3.5.1. Based upon the key findings of the assessment including landscape appraisal and sensitivity analysis, in addition to the consideration of the location of constraints and creation of sustainable patterns of development it is concluded that the most appropriate land for potential release from Green Belt for residential led development is the eastern part of the sub-area. This is the area bounded by a solid yellow line in Figure 3.3 below.
- 3.5.2. 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 administrative boundary does not comprise a defined feature on the ground, an illogical area of undeveloped land may remain if the area to be released from Green Belt is aligned with Cherry Tree Lane (which forms a clearer boundary). 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 the future baseline context of this sub-area is likely to be very different from the current situation.
- 3.5.3. 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 (see Chapter 4).
- 3.5.4. 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.

#### *Contribution towards Green Belt purposes*

- 3.5.5. This area of land only significantly contributes towards safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. It makes a partial contribution towards preventing neighbouring towns from merging and maintaining the existing settlement pattern. A primary function of this land is to provide the gap between Hemel Hempstead and Redbourn. It makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl and preserving setting.

### **3.6. Indicative Layout and Potential Development Capacity**

#### *Indicative layout and rationale*

- 3.6.1. The indicative layout for Site 1 is shown in Figure 3.3. The site boundary identified for potential Green Belt release is indicated by the solid yellow line.
- 3.6.2. The indicative illustrative layout of development within the site is indicated by the solid yellow areas (outlined by a dashed black line). These areas represent the locations where development would take place, including residential and supporting land uses (e.g. public open space; schools and other infrastructure as required). The layout follows a generic design approach which has been informed by:

- Site context – taking account of the key findings from the assessment to (where possible) avoid constraints, create sustainable patterns of development (integration with existing urban area), minimise the impact on areas of higher landscape sensitivity and fall within strong and defensible boundaries;
  - Phasing – to create an urban form and layout including development blocks which respect to site surroundings including the Green Belt, existing urban area(s) and other key features identified. Development blocks are sized at 1 to 3 hectares to match an indicative quantum of development that could be built out as stand-alone phases (typically 50 to 100-units per annum);
  - Identity – to ensure a sense of place within the landscape to create enclosure by respecting existing features such as hedgerows and woodland and where possible retaining historic agricultural plot lines or former hedgerows; and
  - Visual screening – to suggest potential landscape mitigation measures to help maintain the integrity of the Green Belt.
- 3.6.3. The site layout is indicative and illustrative. It does not consider access arrangements, highways capacity, local infrastructure capacity and needs and other factors set out in para 1.3.3. It has not been possible to take account of any restrictions that may be imposed by the underground oil pipeline which passes across the site. The layout does not represent a master plan for the site. If the Council considers that the site is suitable for potential Green Belt release a detailed master planning exercise will need to be undertaken to include consultation with all stakeholders and the community.
- 3.6.4. Given the nature of the study to identify sites for potential Green Belt release and future development, identified layouts might include existing public open space and other existing activities. In such cases, St Albans City and District will need to consider implications in respect future master planning in relation to local needs and land ownerships.
- 3.6.5. The location of the site avoids identified constraints and is broadly located within the area of lower landscape sensitivity within the sub-area. . It offers the potential to provide an integral component of any future sustainable urban extension to Hemel Hempstead, if allocated for development and form part of the East Hemel Hempstead Area Action Plan. Joint working between St Albans City and District Council and Dacorum Borough Council will be required to ensure the integrated planning of this area.
- 3.6.6. Existing landscape features, including hedgerows and the Nickey Way are retained by the indicative layout. In terms of potential landscape measures, reinforcement of existing vegetation (around and within the land) would help screen potential development and reduce visual prominence from surrounding countryside. New planting along the existing power line servitude would help strengthen the eastern edge of the site. Buffer planting is also recommended along this edge with screening along the M1 motorway corridor. Such planting would need to be consistent with the established vegetation around the northeast edge of Hemel Hempstead.
- 3.6.7. Existing landscape features shown in the indicative layout drawings are illustrative only, included to provide an impression of the site and context. Where possible such features should be retained, but appropriate surveys may need to be undertaken as part of future assessment work. More precise guidance on the landscape features that should be retained could also be evaluated as part of design guidance for the sites, should such guidance need to be prepared. The proposed landscape mitigation shown on the indicative layout drawings should also be interpreted as indicative. Such proposals have been included to illustrate where landscape mitigation is suggested to be required, e.g. to





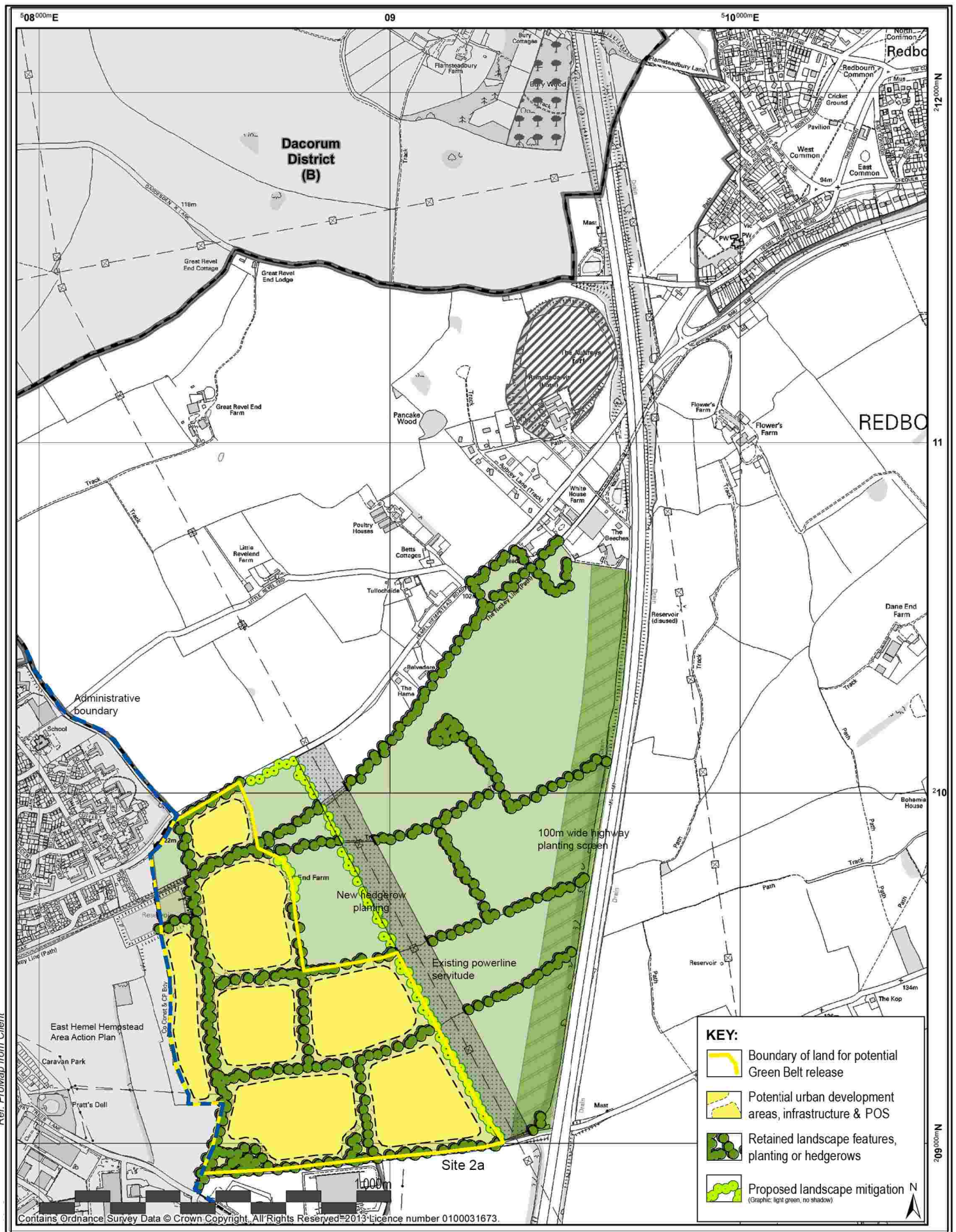
reinforce boundaries of the site and around the edge of a site. It will be important that any mitigation relates to specific development proposals and link into on-site landscaping and / or public open space provision.

*Residential development capacity*

- 3.6.8. The site has a total area of approximately 57 hectares. This represents the gross (100%) site area and has then been used to calculate the development capacity for the site. The development capacity calculation assumes that only 60% of the gross site area will be developed for housing (i.e. 34 hectares)<sup>3</sup>.
- 3.6.9. The other 23 hectares of the site would provide supporting infrastructure including public open space, roads, required services and facilities such as education or health activities; as well as any retained open land for landscaping.
- 3.6.10. An indicative range of residential development densities from 30 dwellings per hectare (dph) to 50dph have been used to estimate potential residential development capacity on the site. This range is supported by the SADC Local Plan Review 1994, though it is recognised that the density that is appropriate for each site will vary considerably depending on a wide range of factors, including the mix of housing types to be provided in response to local needs.
- 3.6.11. At 30dph, 34 hectares of land would yield 1,026 dwellings (30 x 34); and at 50dph, the site would yield 1,710 dwellings (50 x 34).
- 3.6.12. All area figures (in hectares) relating to gross and net areas used to calculate potential residential capacity are round up to whole numbers.

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<sup>3</sup>It is noted that the indicative layouts may show that the yellow blocks may cover more than 60% of the total site – if this is the case it does not alter the 60% net developable area for housing, and it is assumed that supporting infrastructure will be located within the blocks on land not used for housing.



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PROJECT: JE30761 STAGE 2  
DATE: Nov 2013 Rev. Jan 14/005  
SCALE: Indicative

**FIGURE 3.3** Indicative layout  
Site 1 East of Hemel Hempstead (north)



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

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

- 4.1.1. The sub-area comprises land enclosed by east Hemel Hempstead and M1 motorway within Strategic Parcel GB24A.
- 4.1.2. The sub-area lies within the Buncefield Plateau and St Stephen's Plateau landscape character areas (Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment, Hertfordshire County Council, 2000-2005). The published landscape character assessment evaluates the condition and strength of character, and provides an overall objective for each landscape character area.
- 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 the landscape pattern. The industrial/commercial structures on the edge of Hemel Hempstead are conspicuous elements that add urban/urban fringe characteristics. The condition of the landscape and strength of character are 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 St Stephen's Plateau landscape character area (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 are described as "moderate" and "weak" respectively. The overall objective for this landscape character area is to "improve and reinforce".

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

- 4.1.5. Strategic Parcel GB24 significantly contributes towards one of the five Green Belt purposes; safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The parcel does make a partial contribution towards preventing merging and maintaining the existing settlement pattern. It helps form the gap between Hemel Hempstead and St Albans. The sub-area is relatively free of built development and represents an open landscape, which is interrupted by the M1 motorway. Urban influences are strong as the sub-area is enclosed by clear and visually prominent physical settlement edges including Hemel Hempstead industrial estate and commercial development as well as the M1 motorway which disrupts the character of the countryside. 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 is generally not compromised by existing built development or other urbanising uses and features, apart from the M1 motorway. The sub-area makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl or preserving setting.

### *Planning History*

- 4.1.6. There are no extant planning permissions or outstanding planning applications pertaining to East of Hemel Hempstead. However the land has been subject to planning promotion activities from potential developers.
- 4.1.7. The now revoked East of England Plan (2008) stated in *Policy SS7 Green Belt* that 'the broad extent of Green Belts in the East of England is appropriate, and should be maintained. However, strategic reviews of Green Belt boundaries are needed' in the certain areas 'to meet regional development needs at the most sustainable locations'. A specific location referenced in the policy was 'Hemel Hempstead, involving land in Dacorum and probably St Albans District'. Prior to this, the Hertfordshire Housing Development and Spatial Strategy Audit undertaken for the East of England Regional Assembly in 2004 identified this land as having 'good potential' for housing post-2011.
- 4.1.8. Most recently the Dacorum Core Strategy (2013) sets out a vision diagram for East Hemel Hempstead Area Action Plan. The indicative area to be covered by the AAP crosses the borough boundary into St Albans City and District Council. This boundary will be determined by St Albans City and District Council.

## **4.2. Constraints**

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

### *Environmental and historic features*

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

### *Other potential constraints / features*

- 4.2.3. To the north of Breakspear Way, the sub-area lies within the Buncefield Oil Storage Depot HSE Consultation Zone. Approximately one third of the site is covered by the Consultation Zone which includes a Development Proximity Zone (DPZ), Inner Zone (IZ), Middle Zone (MZ) and Outer Zone (OZ). The HSE confirms that development is not unacceptable in this area; however, all planning applications in the DPZ must be referred to it. Underground oil pipelines cut across the site and may affect development capacity.

## **4.3. Sustainable Patterns of Development**

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

### *Settlement role, size and function*

- 4.3.2. The sub-area is located on the east edge of Hemel Hempstead along the boundary between St Albans City and District Dacorum Borough. 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. The town has a population of almost 90,000.

*Proximity to town centre, and local centres*

- 4.3.3. Hemel Hempstead town centre is located approximately 3.2km to the west of the sub-area. Only one local centre is located within 1km of the sub-area at Leverstock Green to the southwest. A new local centre is to be established in the heart of Maylands at the junction of Maylands Ave and Wood lane End through the East Hemel Hempstead Area Action Plan.

*Public transport accessibility*

- 4.3.4. Hemel Hempstead and Apsley railway stations are located approximately 4.7km to the southwest of the sub-area. The station offers a regular service to 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.
- 4.3.5. 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 to London. Bus routes 300 and 301 to St Albans and Stevenage and the 320 to Watford and Rickmansworth also run along St Albans Road.

*Proximity to schools*

- 4.3.6. All schools are located to the west of Hemel Hempstead industrial estate. Leverstock Green Primary School is located within 1.2km of the sub-area.

*Proximity to public open space*

- 4.3.7. A number of public open spaces lie in close proximity to the site. Westwick Farm and Leverstock Green situated along Green Lane, which bounds the southwestern boundary of the sub-area. Woodwells cemetery and Coppinsfield sports ground also bound the west of the site to the north of Breakspear Way.
- 4.3.8. In general, the southern half of the sub-area is better integrated with Hemel Hempstead. To the north of Breakspear Way the existing industrial estate creates a barrier between the town and any potential site.

**4.4. Landscape Appraisal and Sensitivity**

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

*Landform*

- 4.4.2. 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*

- 4.4.3. The sub-area primarily comprises agricultural land uses, predominantly 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 and groups of trees within the sub-area, and there is also immature planting along the edges of the M1 motorway.
- 4.4.4. 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.

#### *Built and cultural heritage aspects*

- 4.4.5. Key cultural heritage aspects 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 900m to the east/north-east.

#### *Levels of enclosure*

- 4.4.6. 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 the shallow valley within the sub-area and surrounding landscape.
- 4.4.7. The existing settlement edges of Hemel Hempstead vary in their prominence and contribution to enclosure. To the south of Breakspear Way the residential edge of Hemel Hempstead is well screened by adjacent 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 buildings restricting views to the west.

#### *Visual attributes*

- 4.4.8. 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.



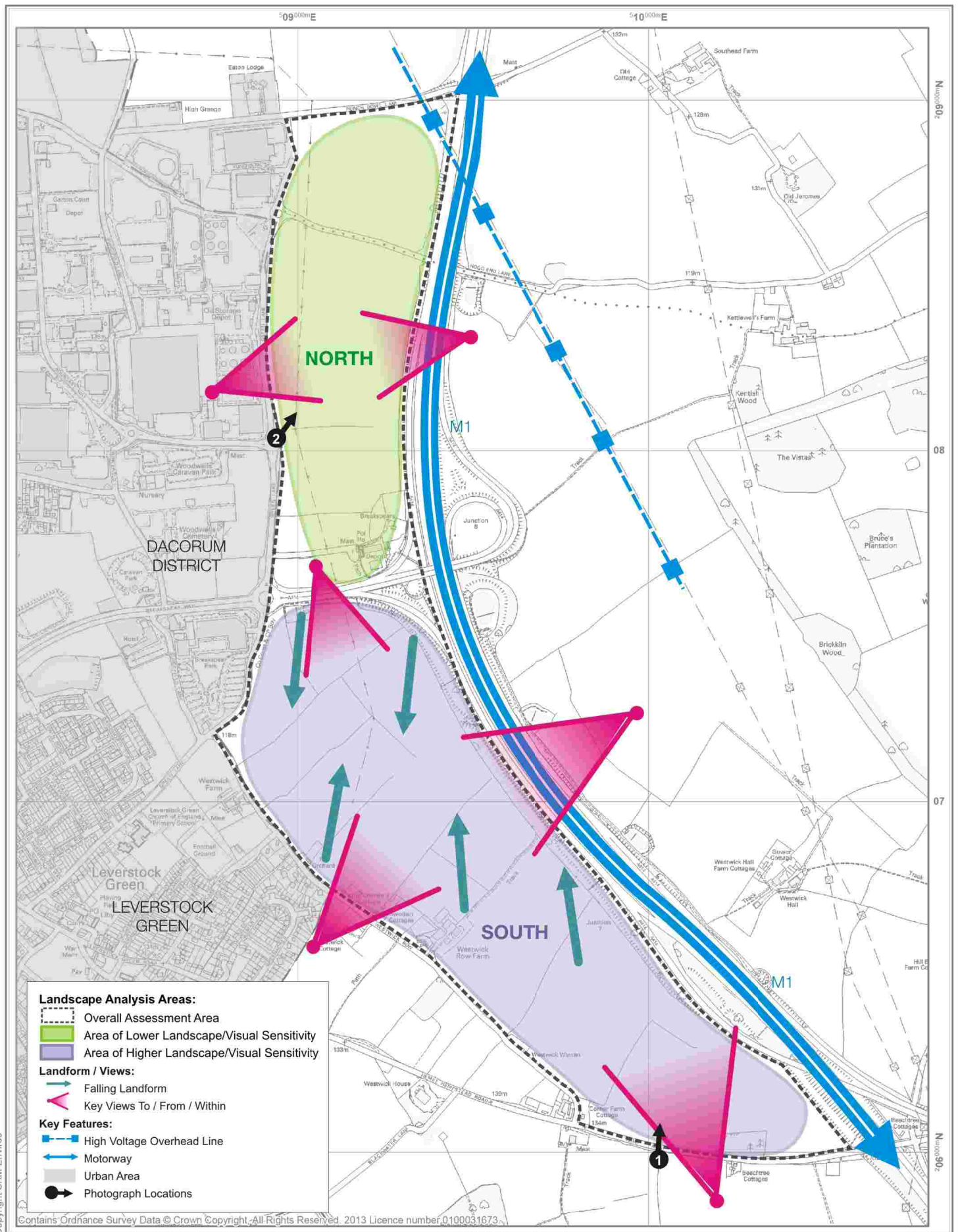
- 4.4.9. South of Breakspear Way the existing settlement pattern is screened by vegetation, with the key conspicuous element being the Breakspear Park office development. The edge of existing residential development within Leverstock Green is much less prominent, especially along Westwick Row. Further 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).
- 4.4.10. 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 where land is agricultural and enclosed by hedgerows. Westwick Row comprises a narrow hedge-lined road and there is small scale built development, including several listed buildings. The nature of the landform also allows clear views over the shallow valley to the east of Westwick Row (where vegetation permits).

*Landscape sensitivity*

- 4.4.11. This section considers the sensitivity of the landscape and the visual effects associated with potential development within the sub-area on landscape character.
- 4.4.12. 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 to the south of Breakspear Way will contrast most with the existing landscape. New development close to Hemel Hempstead has the potential to be conspicuous due to a combination of the landform and the limited visual prominence of the existing urban form. However, it is noted that development immediately to the east of Hemel Hempstead would be continuous with the existing urban form and the M1 motorway would comprise a strong boundary.
- 4.4.13. 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 to the south of Breakspear Way 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.
- 4.4.14. Consideration of the sensitivity of the sub-area (and specific parts within it) in relation to potential residential development, as informed by landscape character, settlement form, views and landscape value, is set out in the table below.
- 4.4.15. Key findings from the landscape and visual appraisal are illustrated in Figure 4.1. This is supported by annotated photographs set out in Figure 4.2.

	<b>Part of Sub-Area</b>	
<b>Element</b>	<b>North (of Breakspear Way)</b>	<b>South (of Breakspear Way)</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 has a 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	Development would be continuous with the industrial estate on the edge of Hemel Hempstead.	The northern half of land to the south is connected to the settlement edge however this decreases as land falls away to the south.
Views/visual features	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 improve the appearance of this industrial edge to Hemel Hempstead.	The relative openness of the landscape would mean development could be visually prominent, including sections of Westwick Row, the M1 motorway and Breakspear Way. This would particularly be the case at a local level, but also within some mid-range views e.g. land to the 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





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



**Figure 4.1 Landscape and Visual**  
**Appraisal, Sub-Area 2 East of**  
**Hemel Hempstead (South)**

Photograph Location 1: View north from Hemel Hempstead Road (A4147)



Photograph Location 2: View northeast from Green Lane



Ref: I:\Enviros\Design\PROJECTS\JE\EA\JE30761\

Plot date: Jan 31, 2014 - 10:07am

File name: HLD4038.dwg

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

**FIGURE 4.2**  
**Photographs, Sub-Area 2**  
**East of Hemel Hempstead (South)**

SCALE	N/A	PROJECT CODE	JE30761.02
CONTENT	SJM	DRAWN	HLD
CHECKED	RB	DATE	30/01/14

DWG: HLD4038.dwg



## 4.5. Boundary Review

- 4.5.1. Based upon the key findings of the assessment including landscape appraisal and sensitivity analysis, in addition to the consideration of the location of constraints and creation of sustainable patterns of development. The land has been sub-divided in response to the different characteristics of each site, especially in relation to constraints, urban integration and landscape sensitivity. Sites 2a (to the north) and 2b (to the south) are described in more detail below and in section 4.6 and these areas are bounded by a solid yellow line in Figure 3.3 below.
- 4.5.2. Site 2a has clearly defined, visually prominent, and strong edges in all directions. The M1 motorway lies to the east, the A414 Breakspear Way to the south, Green Lane and industrial development to the west and Punch Bowl Lane to the north. 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.
- 4.5.3. Site 2b has clearly defined boundaries to the north, east and west; the A414 (Breakspear Way), M1 motorway and Green Lane/Westwick Row respectively. It is proposed that the southeast edge should be continuous with the existing alignment of Hemel Hempstead. Therefore, the southern edge of the land for potential development would lie part way across a field with no adjacent boundary. However, it is suggested that woodland structure planting be introduced to reduce any potential visual prominence of development.

### *Contribution towards Green Belt purposes*

- 4.5.4. Only Site 2b significantly contributes towards safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, whereas Site 2a makes a partial contribution towards this purpose. Both sites make a partial contribution towards preventing neighbouring towns from merging and a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging and preserving setting.

## 4.6. Indicative Layout and Potential Development Capacity

### *Indicative layout and rationale*

- 4.6.1. The indicative layout for Sites 2a and 2b are shown in Figure 4.3. The site boundary identified for potential Green Belt release is indicated by the solid yellow line.
- 4.6.2. The indicative illustrative layout of development within the site is indicated by the solid yellow areas (outlined by a dashed black line). These areas represent the locations where development would take place, including residential and supporting land uses (e.g. public open space; schools and other infrastructure as required). The layout follows a generic design approach which has been informed by:
- 4.6.3. Site context – taking account of the key findings from the assessment to (where possible) avoid constraints, create sustainable patterns of development (integration with existing urban area), minimise the impact on areas of higher landscape sensitivity and fall within strong and defensible boundaries;

- Phasing – to create an urban form and layout including development blocks which respect to site surroundings including the Green Belt, existing urban area(s) and other key features identified. Development blocks are sized at 1 to 3 hectares to match an indicative quantum of development that could be built out as stand-alone phases (typically 50 to 100-units per annum);
  - Identity – to ensure a sense of place within the landscape to create enclosure by respecting existing features such as hedgerows and woodland and where possible retaining historic agricultural plot lines or former hedgerows; and
  - Visual screening – to suggest potential landscape mitigation measures to help maintain the integrity of the Green Belt.
- 4.6.4. The site layout is indicative and illustrative. It does not consider access arrangements, highways capacity, local infrastructure capacity and needs and other factors set out in para 1.3.3. It has not been possible to take account of any restrictions that may be imposed by the underground oil pipeline which passes across the site. It does not represent a master plan for the site. If the Council considers that the site is suitable for potential Green Belt release a detailed master planning exercise will need to be undertaken to include consultation with all stakeholders and the community.
- 4.6.5. Given the nature of the study to identify sites for potential Green Belt release and future development, identified layouts might include existing public open space and other existing activities. In such cases, St Albans City and District will need to consider implications in respect future master planning in relation to local needs and land ownerships.
- 4.6.6. Both sites are located to the East of Hemel Hempstead. Site 2a is located to the north of Breakspear Way and Site 2b is to the south.
- 4.6.7. Site 2a is located within the land of lower landscape sensitivity within the sub-area however part of this land is covered by the Buncefield HSE Consultation Zone. For this reason as well as the general quality of the likely residential environment in such close proximity to large-scale industrial activities it is considered that residential development is unlikely to be suitable on the site. This recommendation is also informed by the proximity of the narrow site to the M1 motorway as well as the site's weaker integration with the existing urban area. It is therefore recommended that this site is suitable for non-residential uses only.
- 4.6.8. Site 2b is located within land that is of higher landscape sensitivity area within the sub-area and forms part of the wider landscape to the east (beyond the M1 motorway). However the site avoids identified constraints and has the potential to be well integrated with adjacent urban areas. Taking into account this combination of characteristics the southern edge of the site is recommended to align with the existing southern edge of Hemel Hempstead. The site is therefore recommended suitable for residential-led development.
- 4.6.9. The sites have the potential to provide an urban extension to Hemel Hempstead if allocated for development and form part of East Hemel Hempstead Area Action Plan. Joint working between St Albans City and District Council and Dacorum Borough Council will be required to ensure integrated planning of this area.
- 4.6.10. For both Sites 2a and 2b, existing landscape features, including hedgerows, especially those along field patterns stretching out from southeast Hemel Hempstead are retained. In terms of potential landscape measures, additional planting is proposed to extend



existing hedgerows to the eastern edge of the sites where 100m wide structural landscape planting is proposed to run along the edge of the M1 motorway to reduce the impact of the motorway in respect of visibility and noise. These measures will also help reduce the visibility of any future development from the key transport corridor and wider countryside.

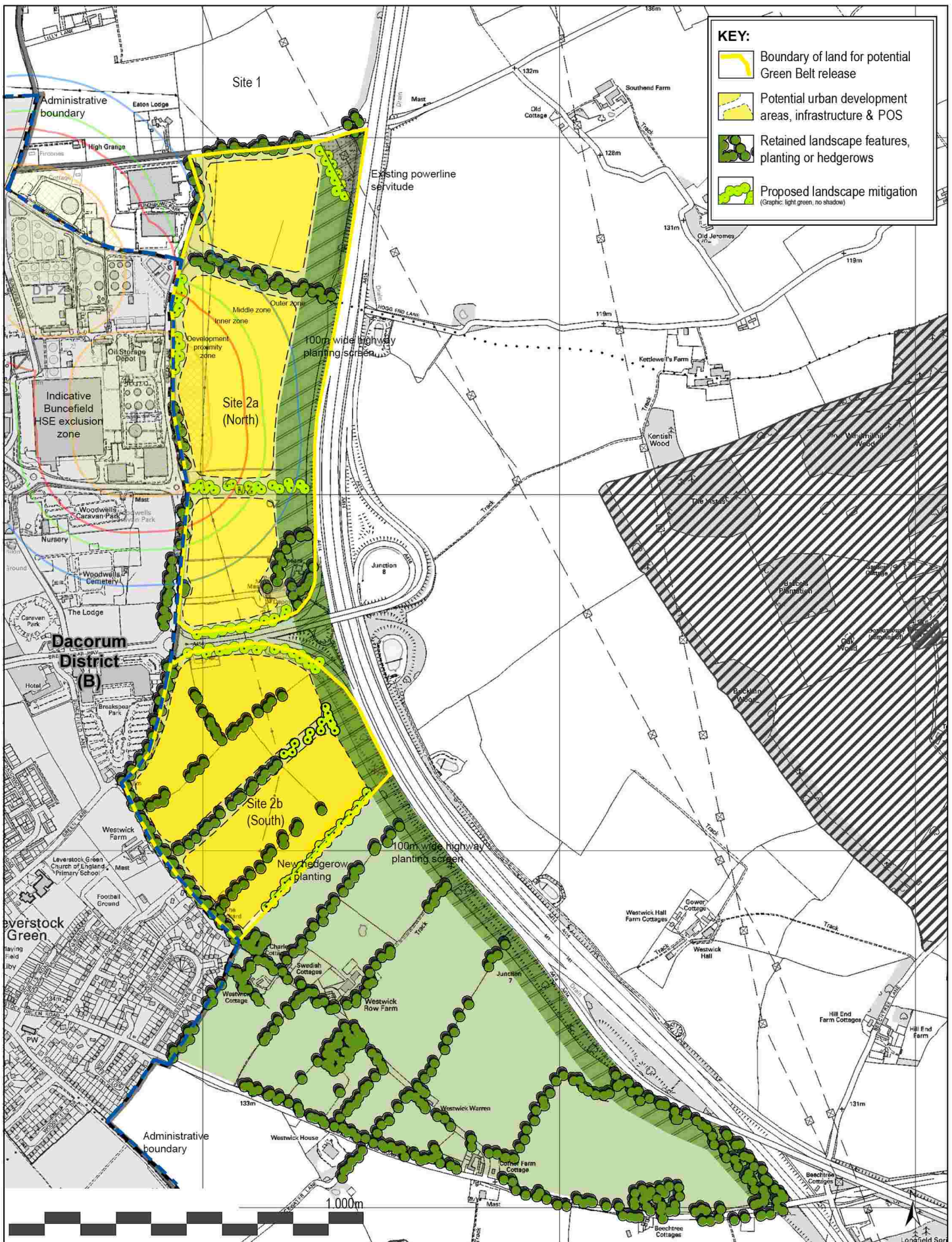
- 4.6.11. Specifically for Site 2b it is suggested that woodland structure planting be introduced in remaining part of this field (to the southeast) as this would create a suitable boundary and (once established) reduce the visual prominence of any development.
- 4.6.12. Existing landscape features shown in the indicative layout drawings are illustrative only, included to provide an impression of the site and context. Where possible such features should be retained, but appropriate surveys may need to be undertaken as part of future assessment work. More precise guidance on the landscape features that should be retained could also be evaluated as part of design guidance for the sites, should such guidance need to be prepared. The proposed landscape mitigation shown on the indicative layout drawings should also be interpreted as indicative. Such proposals have been included to illustrate where landscape mitigation is suggested to be required, e.g. to reinforce boundaries of the site and around the edge of a site. It will be important that any mitigation relates to specific development proposals and link into on-site landscaping and / or public open space provision.

#### *Residential Development Capacity*

- 4.6.13. Site 2a has a total area of approximately 38 hectares. This represents the gross (100%) site area and has then been used to calculate the development capacity for the site. The development capacity calculation assumes that only 60% of the gross site area will be developed for housing (i.e. 23 hectares)<sup>4</sup>.
- 4.6.14. The other 15 hectares of the site would provide supporting infrastructure including public open space, roads, required services and facilities such as education or health activities; as well as any retained open land for landscaping.
- 4.6.15. An indicative range of residential development densities from 30 dwellings per hectare (dph) to 50dph have been used to estimate potential residential development capacity on the site. This range is supported by the SADC Local Plan Review 1994, though it is recognised that the density that is appropriate for each site will vary considerably depending on a wide range of factors, including the mix of housing types to be provided in response to local needs.
- 4.6.16. At 30dph, 23 hectares of land would yield 684 dwellings (30 x 23); and at 50dph, the site would yield 1,140 dwellings (50 x 23).
- 4.6.17. All area figures (in hectares) relating to gross and net areas used to calculate potential residential capacity are round up to whole numbers.

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<sup>4</sup>It is noted that the indicative layouts may show that the yellow blocks may cover more than 60% of the total site – if this is the case it does not alter the 60% net developable area for housing, and it is assumed that supporting infrastructure will be located within the blocks on land not used for housing.



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

**FIGURE 4.3** Indicative layout Site 2a and 2b East of Hemel Hempstead (south)

PROJECT: JE30761      STAGE 2  
 DATE: Nov 2013      Rev. Jan 14/005  
 SCALE: Indicative



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

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

- 5.1.1. The sub-area comprises land enclosed by residential development at east St Albans along Sandpit Lane within Strategic Parcel GB36.
- 5.1.2. The sub-area lies within the De Havilland Plain landscape character area (Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment, Hertfordshire County Council, 2000-2005). The published landscape character assessment evaluates the condition and strength of character, together with an overall objective for each landscape character area. It comprises an area of level topography and a diverse mix of uses, within a somewhat incoherent pattern. The sub-area lies within the southern part of the character area, where there is a mix of mineral extraction, urban fringe development and Oaklands College, which is described as having a disjointed and mixed character.

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

- 5.1.3. Strategic Parcel GB36 contributes significantly towards three of the five 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 but represents a relatively open landscape. The sub-area which penetrates into St Albans, urban influences are particularly strong and there is significant built development within the Green Belt at Oaklands College, which has recently expanded. The land 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 gaps from St Albans to Hatfield and Smallford. The sub-area makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preserving setting or maintaining the existing settlement pattern.

#### *Planning History*

- 5.1.4. Planning permission was granted on appeal at Beaumont School and land to north of Winches Farm Hatfield Road. The permission (ref: 5/2009/2471) is for mixed use development including residential, education (extension to the existing school) and sports facilities.
- 5.1.5. A planning application (5/2013/2589) was submitted in 2013 for development of 348 new homes at Oaklands College to the south of Sandpit Lane. The planning application is currently under consideration. Other land within the sub-area Green Belt at Oaklands has been subject to recent development for sports facilities.

### **5.2. Constraints**

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



*Summary of environmental and historic features*

- 5.2.2. 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.
- 5.2.3. Archaeological remains are present in the south of the sub-area. There are 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>5</sup>.

*Other potential constraints / features*

- 5.2.4. 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.
- 5.2.5. 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.
- 5.2.6. There is also a known minerals resource within the local area, which is reflected in the active minerals operations to the northeast of Oaklands Lane. Ordnance Survey mapping also suggests the presence of a former minerals working in the eastern part of the sub-area. This minerals resource and any requirement to safeguard it for future use may affect future development of parts of the sub-area.

**5.3. Sustainable Patterns of Development**

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

*Settlement role, size and function*

- 5.3.2. The sub-area lies on the east edge of St Albans City, which is designated as one of only two towns in the St Albans City and District Council Local Plan (Town T1). The population of St Albans City is 58,000 (Census 2011).

*Proximity to town centre, and local centres*

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

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<sup>5</sup>Smallford Campus, Oaklands College, St Albans, Hertfordshire – An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment for Oaklands College (October 2004)





#### *Public transport accessibility*

- 5.3.4. St Albans railway 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 railway station is also located 3.3km to the southwest of the sub-area. This station provides a London Midland service between St Albans and Watford Junction.
- 5.3.5. 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. Approximately 300m to the south of the sub-area, 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*

- 5.3.6. Oakwood Primary School lies immediately to the west of the sub-area along Oakwood Drive and Camp Primary and Nursery School lies 1.2km to the southwest. Windemere Primary School located approximately 1.4km to the southwest.
- 5.3.7. The sub-area contains Beaumont Secondary School and Oaklands College. Nicholas Breakspear Catholic School lies 800m to the south and Verulam Boys Secondary School lies 2km to the west.

#### *Proximity to public open space*

- 5.3.8. The sub-area contains a number of playing fields and school grounds. There are also a range of surrounding open spaces within 1km of the sub-area including Longacres to the southwest, Fleetville along Hatfield Road and the Wick Local Nature Reserve to the northwest.
- 5.3.9. Alban Way, a dismantled railway and Green Corridor runs in an east to west direction approximately 600m to the south of the sub-area. It is a designated walking and cycling route between St Albans and Hatfield.

### **5.4. Landscape Appraisal and Sensitivity**

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



#### *Landform*

- 5.4.2. 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 eastern and western boundaries, at between approximately 75m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) and 100mAOD, and generally slopes from east to west. Adjacent land is at a comparable elevation, although a notable factor is the slightly steeper slopes where the land falls towards Sandpit Lane.

#### *Land cover and land use*

- 5.4.3. The sub-area comprises a range of intensively used land, including built development as well as agricultural land.
- 5.4.4. 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 over time and has recently been redeveloped to accommodate significant additional educational activity arising from a rationalisation of college sites in the area. The campus contains sports pitches associated with the college. There are also other sports facilities in the sub-area that are unrelated to the college.
- 5.4.5. The sub-area also contains Verulam School detached playing fields, Beaumont School (and associated playing fields) which is has planning permission to expand and develop new housing, and Oakwood primary school to the west. These schools and playing fields adjoin the east edge of St Albans.
- 5.4.6. The remainder of the sub-area is agricultural land, used for arable crops and pasture. 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.
- 5.4.7. The field pattern is variable, typically medium, but smaller in size immediately around the College and 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 Lane) has been eroded by the apparent removal of hedgerows, which have been 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.
- 5.4.8. 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 experiences relatively higher levels of activity, due to the presence of primary and secondary schools.
- 5.4.9. 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 mineral working, adjacent to Oaklands Lane.



- 5.4.10. 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.
- 5.4.11. 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.

*Built and cultural heritage aspects*

- 5.4.12. Key built dimensions are the educational uses outlined above including surrounding agricultural uses that are linked with educational activities at Oaklands College.
- 5.4.13. The landscape forms part of a past historic design, although much of this has been lost through development at 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*

- 5.4.14. 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.
- 5.4.15. 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 provided 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*

- 5.4.16. 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.
- 5.4.17. The sense of movement and activity is also notable, particularly towards and 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.
- 5.4.18. 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 and roads, and public rights of way.



- 5.4.19. The visual perception of the gap between St Albans and Smallford is also a consideration and development within this sub-area has the potential to alter this. The gap between the settlements is very small on the southern side of the sub-area.
- 5.4.20. The combined nature of the landform and immediate context means that the western half of the sub-area is relatively visually isolated and self-contained and its contribution to the wider landscape to the east is more limited. As a result the eastern half of the sub-area has a much stronger visual connection to the surrounding countryside.

#### *Landscape Sensitivity*

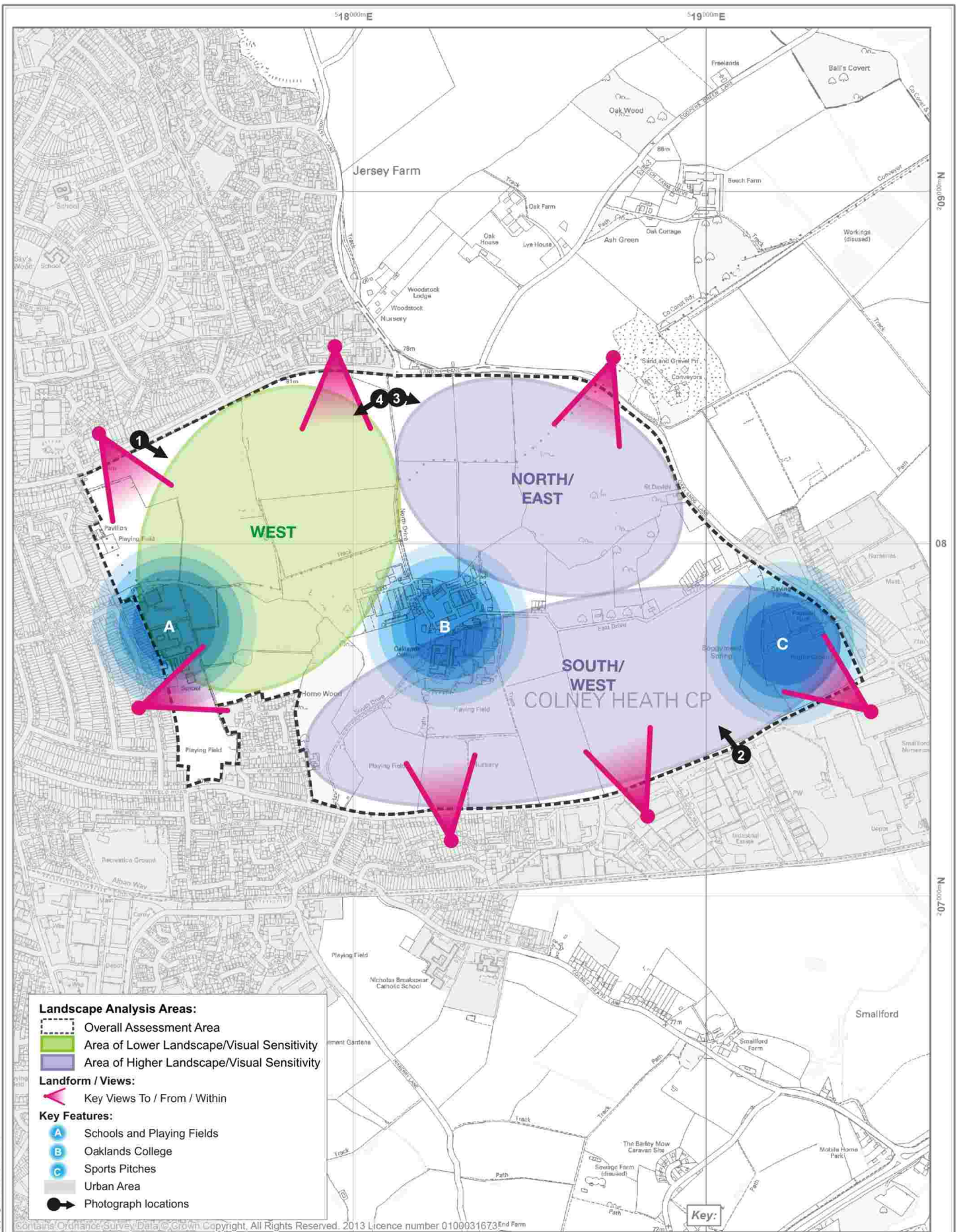
- 5.4.21. This section considers the sensitivity of the landscape and the visual effects associated with potential development within the sub-area on landscape character.
- 5.4.22. The surrounding urban edges are strong and clearly defined by the adjacent development and road network. Much of landscape has been modified and field boundaries have been lost. There are some 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 and change and, in some places, dereliction (e.g. the former lodge on East Drive).
- 5.4.23. 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) and 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.
- 5.4.24. 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, and the relationship this has with residential properties to the north of Sandpit Lane, is a potential constraint and is likely to be an important consideration in respect of any future use of the land.
- 5.4.25. 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).
- 5.4.26. The sensitivity of the southern part of the sub-area relates 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 are key influences on character and context. However the views across the Hatfield Road, into the sub-area, comprise a positive attribute at the local level.
- 5.4.27. Consideration of the sensitivity of the sub-area (and specific parts within it) in relation to potential residential development, as informed by landscape character, settlement form, views and landscape value, is set out in the table below.
- 5.4.28. Key findings from the landscape and visual appraisal are illustrated in Figure 5.1. This is supported by annotated photographs set out in Figure 5.2.



	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, including ancient woodland at Home Wood.</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>
Settlement form	<p>Development would complement and be continuous with the adjacent urban form to the east, north and south.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>
Landscape value	<p>No landscape designations.</p> <p>Listed buildings to the south (on Kay Walk)</p> <p>No ecological designation, but Home Wood comprises ancient</p>	<p>No landscape, cultural heritage or ecological designations.</p>	<p>No landscape designations.</p> <p>Listed building adjacent to Hatfield Road.</p> <p>No ecological designation, but Home Wood comprises ancient</p>



	<b>Part of Sub-Area</b>		
<b>Element</b>	<b>West</b>	<b>North-east</b>	<b>South</b>
	woodland		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



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

**Figure 5.1 Landscape and  
Visual Appraisal, Sub-Area 3  
East of St Albans**

SCALE	Not to Scale	PROJECT CODE	JE30761.02
CONTENT		DRAWN	
	SM		JW
CHECKED		DATE	29/01/2014
	RB		



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



Photograph Location 1: View southeast from Sandpit Lane



Photograph Location 2: View north/northwest from Hatfield Road (A1057), near junction with Lyon way



Photograph Location 3: View east from North Drive



Photograph Location 4: View west/southwest from North Drive



Ref: I:\Enviros\Design\PROJECTS\JE\A\JE30761\

Plot date: Jan 31, 2014 - 10:53am

File name: HLD4039.dwg

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

**FIGURE 5.2**  
*Photographs, Sub-Area 3  
East of St Albans*

SCALE	N/A	PROJECT CODE	JE30761.02
CONTENT	SJM	DRAWN	HLD
CHECKED	RB	DATE	30/01/14

DWG: HLD4039.dwg







## 5.5. Boundary Review

- 5.5.1. Based upon the key findings of the assessment including landscape appraisal and sensitivity analysis, in addition to the consideration of the location of constraints and creation of sustainable patterns of development it is concluded that the most appropriate land for potential release from Green Belt for residential led development is the western part of the sub-area. This is the area bounded by a solid yellow line in Figure 4.3 below.
- 5.5.2. 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.
- 5.5.3. 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.

### *Contribution towards Green Belt purposes*

- 5.5.4. This area of land does not significantly contribute towards any of the five Green Belt purposes. It makes a partial contribution towards safeguarding the countryside from encroachment and maintaining the existing settlement pattern. The site layout does not reduce the gap (at its shortest distance) between St Albans and Smallford. It also makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging and preserving setting.

## 5.6. Indicative Layout and Potential Development Capacity

### *Indicative layout and rationale*

- 5.6.1. The indicative layout for Site 3 is shown in Figure 5.3. The site boundary identified for potential Green Belt release is indicated by the solid yellow line.
- 5.6.2. The indicative illustrative layout of development within the site is indicated by the solid yellow areas (outlined by a dashed black line). These areas represent the locations where development would take place, including residential and supporting land uses (e.g. public open space; schools and other infrastructure as required). The layout follows a generic design approach which has been informed by:
- Site context – taking account of the key findings from the assessment to (where possible) avoid constraints, create sustainable patterns of development (integration with existing urban area), minimise the impact on areas of higher landscape sensitivity and fall within strong and defensible boundaries;
  - Phasing – to create an urban form and layout including development blocks which respect to site surroundings including the Green Belt, existing urban area(s) and other key features identified. Development blocks are sized at 1 to 3 hectares to match an indicative quantum of development that could be built out as stand-alone phases (typically 50 to 100-units per annum);



- Identity – to ensure a sense of place within the landscape to create enclosure by respecting existing features such as hedgerows and woodland and where possible retaining historic agricultural plot lines or former hedgerows; and
  - Visual screening – to suggest potential landscape mitigation measures to help maintain the integrity of the Green Belt.
- 5.6.3. The site layout is indicative and illustrative. It does not consider access arrangements, highways capacity, local infrastructure capacity and needs and other factors set out in para 1.3.3. It does not represent a master plan for the site. If the Council considers that the site is suitable for potential Green Belt release a detailed master planning exercise will need to be undertaken to include consultation with all stakeholders and the community.
- 5.6.4. Given the nature of the study to identify sites for potential Green Belt release and future development, identified layouts might include existing public open space and other existing activities. In such cases, St Albans City and District will need to consider implications in respect future master planning in relation to local needs and land ownerships.
- 5.6.5. The location of the site avoids identified constraints, is well integrated with the urban area which adjoins the site on three edges. It also located within the area of lower landscape sensitivity within the sub-area. The site is therefore recommended suitable for residential-led development.
- 5.6.6. The existing planning permission site is highlighted by the solid blue line. This area of land is not taken into account when calculating potential residential capacity.
- 5.6.7. Existing landscape features, including hedgerows and pockets of woodland (including Home Wood – ancient woodland) are retained across the site and play a key role in defining the suggested layout. In terms of potential landscape measures, reinforcement of existing boundary vegetation is proposed especially alongside North Drive. This will reduce the visual prominence of new development from surrounding countryside and separate the site from existing development in the Green Belt at Oaklands College.
- 5.6.8. Existing landscape features shown in the indicative layout drawings are illustrative only, included to provide an impression of the site and context. Where possible such features should be retained, but appropriate surveys may need to be undertaken as part of future assessment work. More precise guidance on the landscape features that should be retained could also be evaluated as part of design guidance for the sites, should such guidance need to be prepared. The proposed landscape mitigation shown on the indicative layout drawings should also be interpreted as indicative. Such proposals have been included to illustrate where landscape mitigation is suggested to be required, e.g. to reinforce boundaries of the site and around the edge of a site. It will be important that any mitigation relates to specific development proposals and link into on-site landscaping and / or public open space provision.

*Residential development capacity*

- 5.6.9. The site has a total area of approximately 55 hectares. This represents the gross (100%) site area and has then been used to calculate the development capacity for the site. The

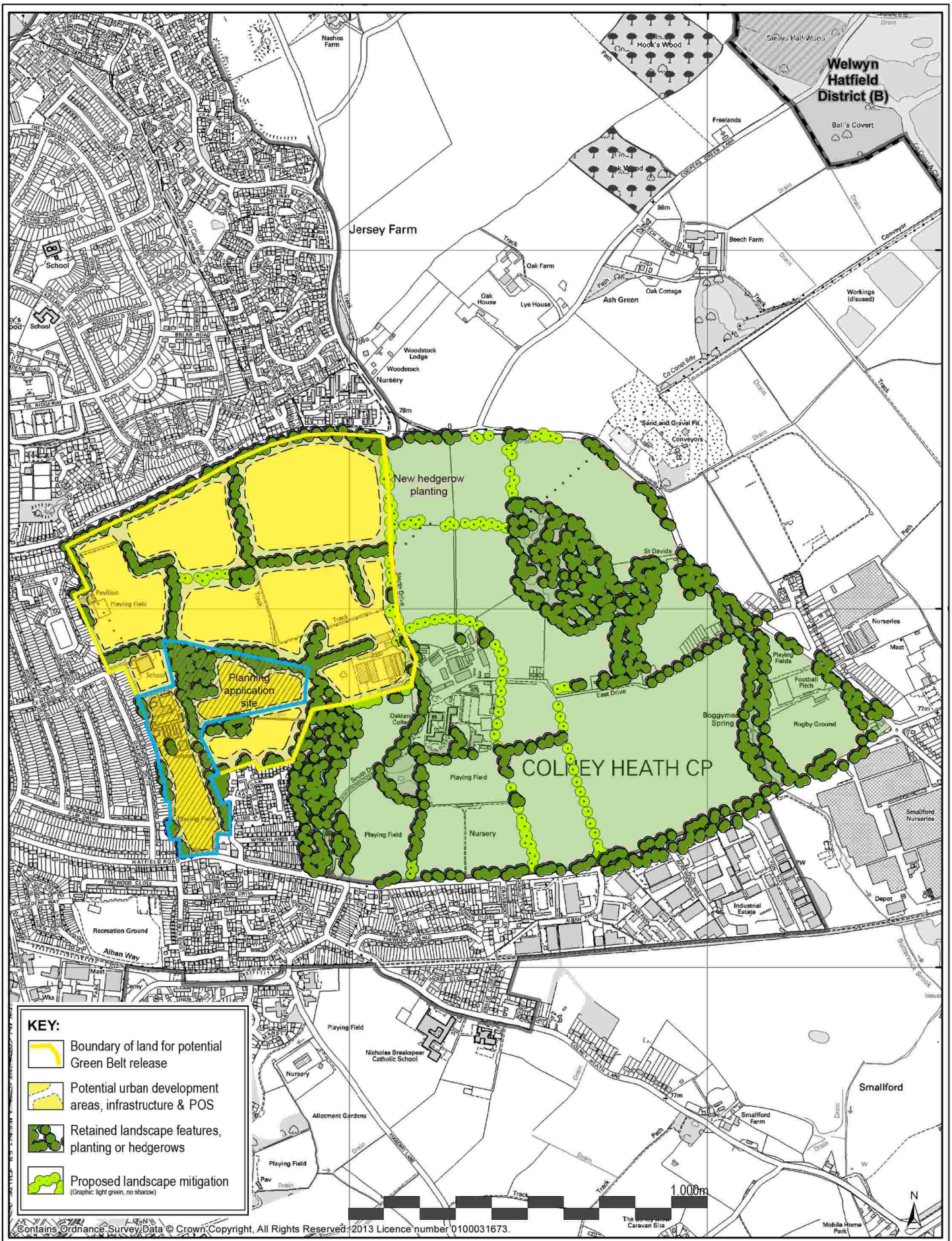


development capacity calculation assumes that only 60% of the gross site area will be developed for housing (i.e.33 hectares)<sup>6</sup>.

- 5.6.10. The other 22 hectares of the site would provide supporting infrastructure including public open space, roads, required services and facilities such as education or health activities; as well as any retained open land for landscaping.
- 5.6.11. An indicative range of residential development densities from 30 dwellings per hectare (dph) to 50dph have been used to estimate potential residential development capacity on the site. This range is supported by the SADC Local Plan Review 1994, though it is recognised that the density that is appropriate for each site will vary considerably depending on a wide range of factors, including the mix of housing types to be provided in response to local needs.
- 5.6.12. At 30dph, 22 hectares of land would yield 990 dwellings (30 x 33); and at 50dph, the site would yield 1,650 dwellings (50 x 33).
- 5.6.13. All area figures (in hectares) relating to gross and net areas used to calculate potential residential capacity are round up to whole numbers

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<sup>6</sup>It is noted that the indicative layouts may show that the yellow blocks may cover more than 60% of the total site – if this is the case it does not alter the 60% net developable area for housing, and it is assumed that supporting infrastructure will be located within the blocks on land not used for housing.



Ref. ProMap from Client

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

PROJECT: JE30761  
DATE: Nov 2013  
SCALE: Indicative

STAGE 2  
Rev. Jan 14/005

**FIGURE 5.3** Indicative layout  
Site 3 East of St Albans



St Albans City and  
District Council



SINCLAIR KNIGHT MERZ

## 6. S4: North of St Albans

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

- 6.1.1. The sub-area comprises land at north St Albans along Sandridgebury Lane within Strategic ParcelGB38.
- 6.1.2. The sub-area lies within the Ayre's End Valleys and Ridges landscape character area (Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment, Hertfordshire County Council, 2000-2005). The published landscape character assessment evaluates the condition and strength of character, and provides an overall objective for each landscape character area.
- 6.1.3. The Upper Ver Valley 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 sense of 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 reflect the rural character. The settlement pattern is sparse; typically individual or small clusters of properties. It is a relatively quiet area, with few detracting urbanising features (exceptions to this being the A1081 and mainline railway).

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

- 6.1.4. Strategic ParcelGB38 makes a significant contribution towards two of the five 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 Sandridgebury 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 relatively large scale of the gap between St Albans and Harpenden, a reduction in the size of the Strategic Parcel would not significantly compromise the physical separation of settlements. The sub-area makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl or preserving setting.

#### *Planning History*

- 6.1.5. A series of planning applications have been submitted for sites within the sub-area located immediately east of the built-up area along the A1081 Harpenden Road. Each application has been refused permission from 2011 to 2013 and each decision has been upheld by the Inspector at appeal. However the Court of Appeal (in December 2013) backed the High Court ruling (from September 2013) to overturn the Inspector's refusal of 116 new homes and further appeals are due to be heard.



## **6.2. Constraints**

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

### *Summary of environmental and historic features*

- 6.2.2. There is an area of ancient woodland across the southeast edge of the sub-area.

### *Other potential constraints / features*

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

## **6.3. Sustainable Patterns of Development**

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

### *Settlement role, size and function*

- 6.3.2. The sub-area lies on the north edge of St Albans City. St Albans is designated as one of only two towns in the St Albans City and District Council Local Plan (Town T1) and has a population of 58,000 (Census 2011).

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

- 6.3.3. The sub-area is situated on the north edge of St Albans (City). St Albans town centre is located approximately 2.3km to the south. Beech Road local centre is located 600m to the southeast and Sandridge Road local centre is 1.3km to the south.
- 6.3.4. The village of Sandridge is located 1.5km to the northwest of the sub-area. It is designated as Green Belt settlement GBS.7 within the St Albans City and District Council Local Plan.

### *Public transport accessibility*

- 6.3.5. St Albans City railway station is located 2.3km 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 railway 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.



- 6.3.6. Bus route 321 runs from Harpenden in the north to Chiswell Green in the southwest, 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 railway 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. Bus services to Hatfield and Hemel Hempstead are also available from St Albans city centre.

*Proximity to schools*

- 6.3.7. There are two primary schools within 1km of the sub-area at Margaret Wix Primary School to the southwest and Wheatfields Infant / Primary School to the southeast. Skyswood and St John Fisher Primary Schools are located 1.6km to the southeast.
- 6.3.8. The sub-area is adjacent to St Albans Girls School to the southwest along Sandridgebury Lane. Also, the Townsend Church of England School is also located 500m to the west and Sandringham School 1.3km to the southeast.

*Proximity to public open space*

- 6.3.9. There are a range of public open spaces within 1km of the sub-area. These include Jersey Farm Woodland Park to the east, Ellis Fields and Beech Bottom Dyke to the south, and New Greens Avenue and William Bird to the west.

**6.4. Landscape Appraisal and Sensitivity**

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

*Landform*

- 6.4.2. The landform comprises a relatively level area that falls gently to the south and east, from approximately 125m above Ordnance Datum (AOD) around Woollam Playing Fields to approximately 105m AOD south of Sandridgebury Lane. The landform influences the nature of views experienced, 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 influences the sense of enclosure.

*Land cover and land use*

- 6.4.3. The sub-area primarily comprises agricultural land uses, predominantly 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 and 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.

- 6.4.4. Key ecological features comprise the remnant hedgerows and hedgerow trees, together with the areas of woodland. There are no ecological designations within the sub-area.

*Built and cultural heritage aspects*

- 6.4.5. 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*

- 6.4.6. 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. The existing settlement edges of St Albans are not very conspicuous. While buildings are visible, the intervening vegetation softens its appearance and reduces its prominence.

*Visual attributes*

- 6.4.7. 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 Woollam Playing Fields has longer distance views and more visual links with the surrounding landscape. Woollam Playing Fields comprises a notable visual element and focal point.
- 6.4.8. The transport infrastructure to the west (Harpenden Road/A1081) and east (railway line) introduces visual components that add a sense of movement either side of the sub-area.
- 6.4.9. The combination of 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.

*Landscape sensitivity*

- 6.4.10. This section considers the sensitivity of the landscape and the visual effects associated with potential development within the sub-area on landscape character.
- 6.4.11. The surrounding urban edges are relatively contained 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).
- 6.4.12. 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 the urban edge is visible. Further north, sensitivity increases with the increased elevation and the greater and visual connection with the surrounding landscape.

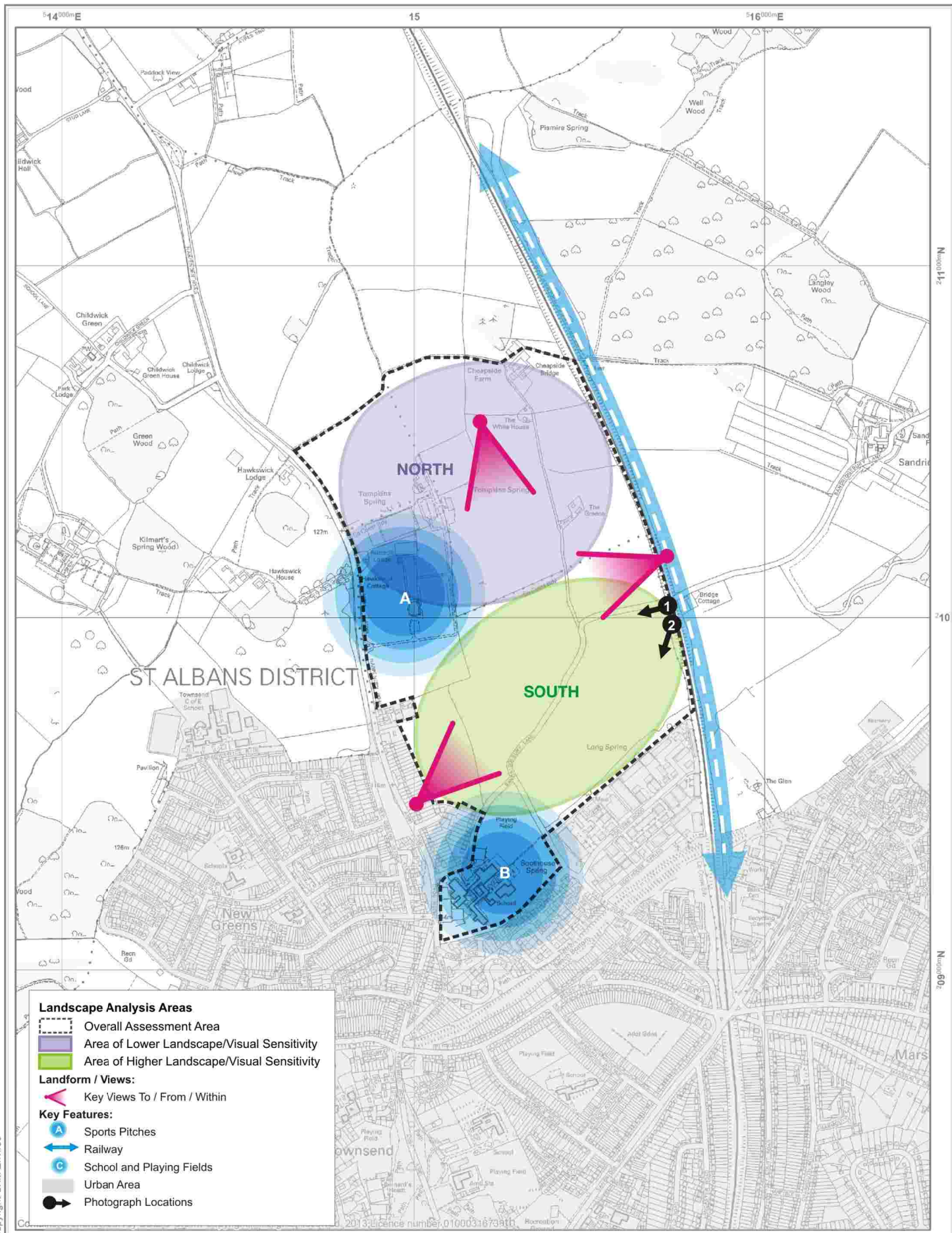




- 6.4.13. Consideration of the sensitivity of the sub-area (and specific parts within it) in relation to potential residential development, as informed by landscape character, settlement form, views and landscape value, is set out in the table below.
- 6.4.14. Key findings from the landscape and visual appraisal are illustrated in Figure 6.1. This is supported by annotated photographs set out in Figure 6.2.



	<b>Part of Sub-Area</b>	
<b>Element</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>North</b>
Landscape character	<p>Built development would affect openness of landscape character. The landform, railway embankment and northern edge of St Albans 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 and development would be more contrasting than in the south. 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 southwest 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, dispersed properties within the northern part of the sub-area, and 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>



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

SCALE  
 Not to Scale

PROJECT CODE  
 JE30761.02

CONTENT

DRAWN

**Figure 6.1 Landscape and**  
**Visual Appraisal, Sub-Area 4**  
**North of St Albans**

SM  
 CHECKED  
 RB

JW  
 DATE  
 29/01/2014



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



Photograph Location 1: View south/southwest from footpath to the south of Sandridgebury Lane



Photograph Location 2: View west/southwest from footpath to the south of Sandridgebury Lane



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Plot date: Jan 31, 2014 - 10:53am

File name: HLD4040.dwg

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

**FIGURE 6.2**  
*Photographs, Sub-Area 4  
North of St Albans*

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## 6.5. Boundary Review

- 6.5.1. Based upon the key findings of the assessment including landscape appraisal and sensitivity analysis, in addition to the consideration of the location of constraints and creation of sustainable patterns of development it is concluded that the most appropriate land for potential release from Green Belt for residential led development is the southern part of the sub-area. This is the area bounded by a solid yellow line in Figure 6.3 below.
- 6.5.2. 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.
- 6.5.3. 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.

### *Contribution towards Green Belt purposes*

- 6.5.4. This area of land only significantly contributes towards safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. It makes a partial contribution towards maintaining the existing settlement pattern. It makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging and preserving setting.

## 6.6. Indicative Layout and Potential Development Capacity

### *Indicative layout and rationale*

- 6.6.1. The indicative layout for Site 4 is shown in Figure 6.3. The site boundary identified for potential Green Belt release is indicated by the solid yellow line.
- 6.6.2. The indicative illustrative layout of development within the site is indicated by the solid yellow areas (outlined by a dashed black line). These areas represent the locations where development would take place, including residential and supporting land uses (e.g. public open space; schools and other infrastructure as required). The layout follows a generic design approach which has been informed by:
- Site context – taking account of the key findings from the assessment to (where possible) avoid constraints, create sustainable patterns of development (integration with existing urban area), minimise the impact on areas of higher landscape sensitivity and fall within strong and defensible boundaries;
  - Phasing – to create an urban form and layout including development blocks which respect to site surroundings including the Green Belt, existing urban area(s) and other key features identified. Development blocks are sized at 1 to 3 hectares to match an indicative quantum of development that could be built out as stand-alone phases (typically 50 to 100-units per annum);

- Identity – to ensure a sense of place within the landscape to create enclosure by respecting existing features such as hedgerows and woodland and where possible retaining historic agricultural plot lines or former hedgerows; and
  - Visual screening – to suggest potential landscape mitigation measures to help maintain the integrity of the Green Belt.
- 6.6.3. The site layout is indicative and illustrative. It does not consider access arrangements, highways capacity, local infrastructure capacity and needs and other factors set out in para 1.3.3. It does not represent a master plan for the site. If the Council considers that the site is suitable for potential Green Belt release a detailed master planning exercise will need to be undertaken to include consultation with all stakeholders and the community.
- 6.6.4. Given the nature of the study to identify sites for potential Green Belt release and future development, identified layouts might include existing public open space and other existing activities. In such cases, St Albans City and District will need to consider implications in respect future master planning in relation to local needs and land ownerships.
- 6.6.5. The location of the site avoids identified constraints, is well integrated with the urban area which adjoins the site on two edges and is located within the area that is of lower landscape sensitivity within the sub-area. The site is therefore recommended suitable for residential-led development.
- 6.6.6. The existing outstanding planning application site is highlighted by the solid blue line. This area of land is not taken into account when calculating potential residential capacity.
- 6.6.7. Existing landscape features, including boundary hedgerows are retained and help define the site. Due to existing features and the context of the site, limited landscape measures are suggested. Existing hedgerows and woodland help screen the site from the wider countryside, existing residential development, Woollams Playing Fields and the railway line. It will be important to ensure the recent planting along the northern edge is retained and allowed to mature as this will reduce the prominence of new development from the countryside to the north. The layout also proposes to be built around Sandbridgebury Lane.
- 6.6.8. Existing landscape features shown in the indicative layout drawings are illustrative only, included to provide an impression of the site and context. Where possible such features should be retained, but appropriate surveys may need to be undertaken as part of future assessment work. More precise guidance on the landscape features that should be retained could also be evaluated as part of design guidance for the sites, should such guidance need to be prepared. The proposed landscape mitigation shown on the indicative layout drawings should also be interpreted as indicative. Such proposals have been included to illustrate where landscape mitigation is suggested to be required, e.g. to reinforce boundaries of the site and around the edge of a site. It will be important that any mitigation relates to specific development proposals and link into on-site landscaping and / or public open space provision.

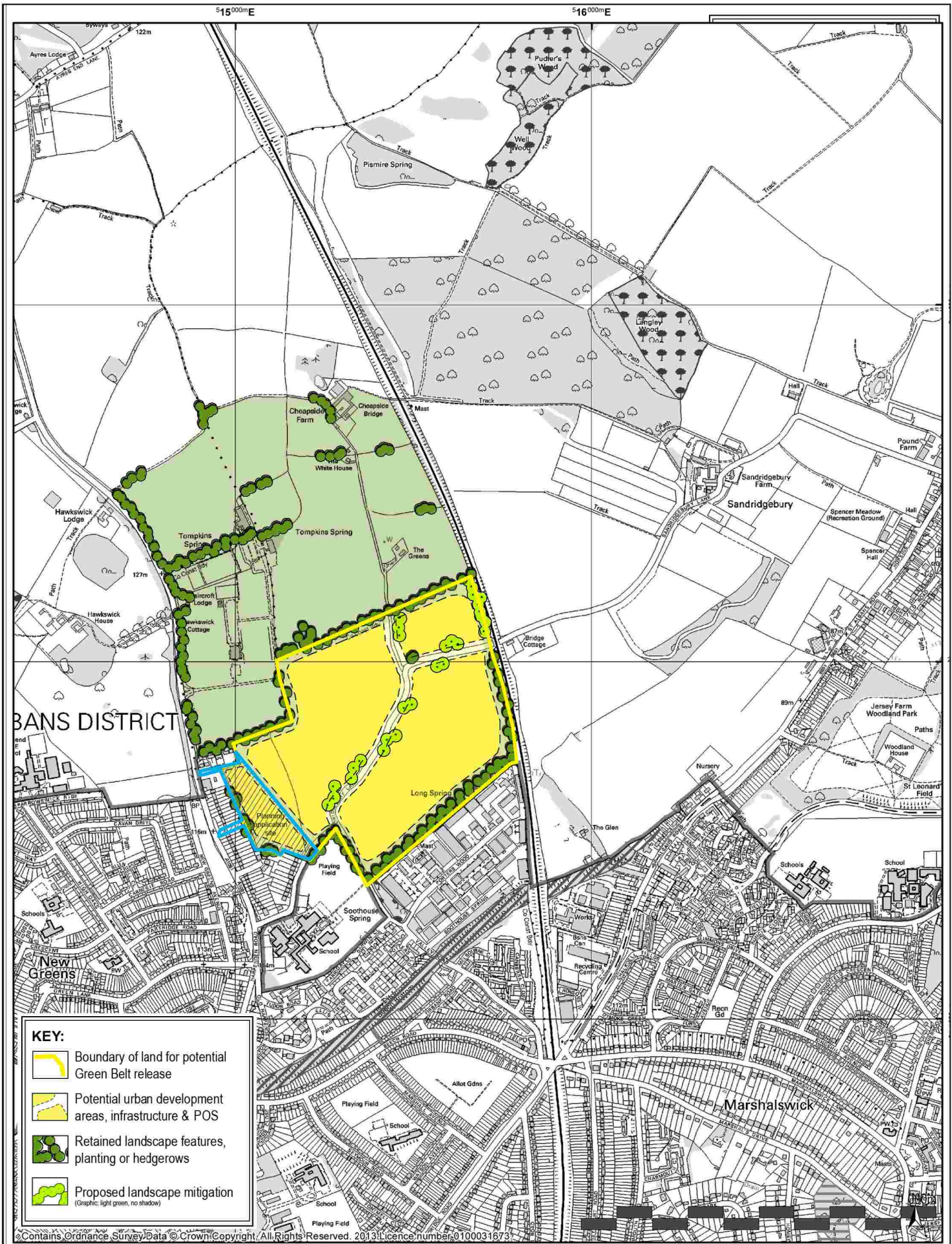


*Residential development capacity*

- 6.6.9. The site has a total area of approximately 38 hectares. This represents the gross (100%) site area and has then been used to calculate the development capacity for the site. The development capacity calculation assumes that only 60% of the gross site area will be developed for housing (i.e. 23 hectares)<sup>7</sup>.
- 6.6.10. The other 15 hectares of the site would provide supporting infrastructure including public open space, roads, required services and facilities such as education or health activities; as well as any retained open land for landscaping.
- 6.6.11. An indicative range of residential development densities from 30 dwellings per hectare (dph) to 50dph have been used to estimate potential residential development capacity on the site. This range is supported by the SADC Local Plan Review 1994, though it is recognised that the density that is appropriate for each site will vary considerably depending on a wide range of factors, including the mix of housing types to be provided in response to local needs.
- 6.6.12. At 30dph, 23 hectares of land would yield 684 dwellings (30 x 23); and at 50dph, the site would yield 1,140 dwellings (50 x 23).
- 6.6.13. All area figures (in hectares) relating to gross and net areas used to calculate potential residential capacity are round up to whole numbers

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<sup>7</sup> It is noted that the indicative layouts may show that the yellow blocks may cover more than 60% of the total site – if this is the case it does not alter the 60% net developable area for housing, and it is assumed that supporting infrastructure will be located within the blocks on land not used for housing.



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

PROJECT: JE30761      STAGE 2  
 DATE: Nov 2013      Rev. Jan 14/005  
 SCALE: Indicative

**FIGURE 6.3** Indicative layout Site 4 North of St Albans



Ref. ProMap from Client





## **7. S5: Northwest of Harpenden**

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

- 7.1.1. The sub-area comprises land at north Harpenden in the vicinity of Luton Road, Cooters End Lane and Ambrose Lane within Strategic Parcel GB40.
- 7.1.2. The sub-area lies within the Thrales End Plateau and Upper Lea Valley landscape character areas (Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment, Hertfordshire County Council, 2000-2005). The published landscape character assessment evaluates the condition and strength of character, and provides an overall objective for each landscape character area.
- 7.1.3. Land use is primarily agricultural, consisting of 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. 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”.
- 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. Designed historic landscapes on surrounding upper slopes are visible, including East Hyde Park and Luton Hoo. The built edge of Harpenden can appear intrusive. The condition of the landscape and strength of character are both described as “moderate”. The overall objective for this landscape character area is to “improve and conserve”.
- 7.1.5. There are no ecological designations within the sub-area. However, the sub-area lies within a Landscape Conservation Area (as defined in the SADC 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 Part 1 Study Green Belt purposes / Justification of identification of sub-area*

- 7.1.6. 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 sub-area identified to the north of Harpenden penetrates into the urban area and displays urban influence as substantial development has taken place along the Luton Road, forming an extended urban edge to northwest Harpenden beyond the edge of the sub-area. Therefore, assessed in isolation, the sub-area makes a limited or no contribution towards checking sprawl, preventing merging or maintaining local gaps. Existing field patterns and boundary planting produces a sense of local landscape enclosure, which creates a valuable part of the countryside, but also provides partial screening 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.



### *Planning History*

- 7.1.7. There are no outstanding planning permissions or recent permissions pertaining or relevant to Northwest of Harpenden.

## **7.2. Constraints**

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

### *Summary of environmental and historic features*

- 7.2.2. There is a pocket of ancient woodland (Westfield Wood) located to the northeast section of the sub-area.

### *Other potential constraints / features*

- 7.2.3. The sub-area is designated as a Landscape Conservation Area within the SADC Local Plan Review 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.

## **7.3. Sustainable Patterns of Development**

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

### *Settlement role, size and function*

- 7.3.2. The sub-area lies on the northwest edge of Harpenden, which is designated as one of only two towns in the SADC Local Plan Review 1994 (Town T2). The Census 2011 indicates that the population of Harpenden built up area stands at 30,240.

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

- 7.3.3. The sub-area is situated on the north edge of Harpenden. Harpenden town centre is located approximately 1km to the southeast of the sub-area. There are two local centres at 95-105 Luton Road 100m to the southeast and 50-54 Westfield Road 800m to the east.

### *Public transport accessibility*

- 7.3.4. Harpenden railway station is located approximately 1.5km to the southeast 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.



- 7.3.5. The sub-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*

- 7.3.6. There are three primary schools in close proximity of the sub-area: Wood End Primary School is 400m to the south and Harpenden pre-school and nursery and St Hilda's Primary School is 700m to the southeast.
- 7.3.7. The southeast edge of the sub-area is adjacent to The King's pre-school and secondary school. Roundwood Park Secondary School lies approximately 700m to the south, St Georges co-education day and boarding school is located approximately 1km to the southeast, and Sir John Lawes School 1.4km to the east.

*Proximity to public open space*

- 7.3.8. There are a number of relatively small areas of public open space in the vicinity of the 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.
- 7.3.9. The Nickey Line, a disused railway which now forms a cycling and walking path runs approximately 300m to the southeast of the sub-area. This path provides links to Hemel Hempstead and Redbourn.

**7.4. Landscape Appraisal and Sensitivity**

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

*Landform*

- 7.4.2. The landform comprises a rounded ridge between Luton Road (A1081) and the River Lea. The land rises from approximately 110m above Ordnance Datum (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 that combined with the land-use and cover gives rise to a visually open landscape.

*Land cover and land use*

- 7.4.3. The sub-area primarily comprises agricultural land uses, predominantly arable crops, in a large, open field pattern. Agricultural land quality is Grade 3. There are occasional woodlands and groups of trees, focussed around The King's School and to 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.
- 7.4.4. Key ecological features comprise the remnant hedgerows and hedgerow trees, together with the areas of woodland. There are no ecological designations within the sub-area.



#### *Built and cultural heritage aspects*

- 7.4.5. The key human influences within the sub-area are the agricultural pattern and 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*

- 7.4.6. 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 within the valleys either side of the ridge.
- 7.4.7. 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 or occupies one side of the valley.

#### *Visual attributes*

- 7.4.8. 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 Harpenden and around The King's School; however, the open agricultural landscape to the north, combined with landform, still results in relatively open views. As 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 the northeast side of the Lea Valley).
- 7.4.9. 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).
- 7.4.10. 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 changes to the area are likely to be clearly visible, although within a more localised area. Key visual sensitivities are likely to be related to the residents and roads users 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.

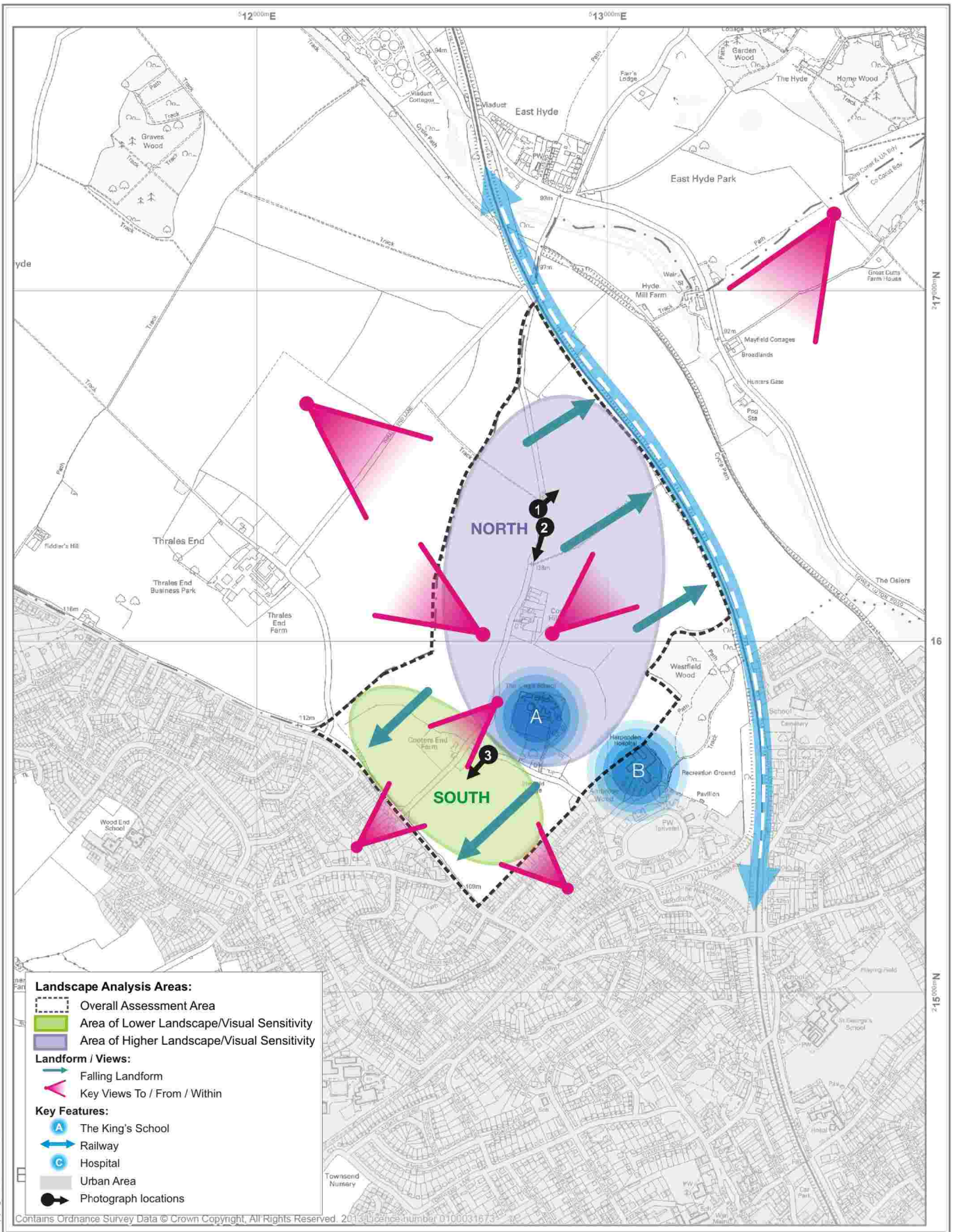
#### *Landscape Sensitivity*

- 7.4.11. This section considers the sensitivity of the landscape and the visual effects associated with potential development within the sub-area on landscape character.



- 7.4.12. The nature of the landform 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.
- 7.4.13. Key landscape features that make a valuable contribution are landform and the openness of views that can be obtained, as well as The King's School, which forms a local focal point.
- 7.4.14. Sensitivity 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 a key constraint (and the 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.
- 7.4.15. Consideration of the sensitivity of the sub-area (and specific parts within it) in relation to potential residential development, as informed by landscape character, settlement form, views and landscape value, is set out in the table below.
- 7.4.16. Key findings from the landscape and visual appraisal are illustrated in Figure 7.1. This is supported by annotated photographs set out in Figure 7.2.

	<b>Part of Sub-Area</b>	
<b>Element</b>	<b>South-west</b>	<b>East/North</b>
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 side 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 End Farm, residents of properties on the opposite side of the valley and people travelling along the local road network).</p>	<p>The openness of the landscape would mean development would be visually prominent from the surrounding landscape.</p>
Landscape value	<p>Lies within a locally designated Landscape Conservation Area.</p> <p>Cooters End Farm is a Listed Building.</p> <p>There are no ecological designations.</p>	<p>Lies within a locally designated Landscape Conservation Area.</p> <p>Cooters End Farm is a Listed Building. Highfield Oval forms part of Harpenden Conservation Area.</p> <p>There are no ecological designations, but Westfield Wood is ancient woodland.</p>
Overall evaluation	Lower sensitivity	Higher sensitivity



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

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**Figure 7.1 Landscape and Visual Appraisal, Sub-Area 5 Northwest of Harpenden**

Photograph Location 1: View northeast from Cooters End Lane



Photograph Location 2: View south/southwest from Cooters End Lane



Photograph Location 3: View southwest from Ambrose Lane, near junction with Cooters End Lane



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Plot date: Jan 31, 2014 - 10:52am

File name: HLD4041.dwg

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**FIGURE 7.2**  
*Photographs, Sub-Area 5  
Northwest of Harpenden*

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## 7.5. Boundary Review

- 7.5.1. Based upon the key findings of the assessment including landscape appraisal and sensitivity analysis, in addition to the consideration of the location of constraints and creation of sustainable patterns of development it is concluded that the most appropriate land for potential release from Green Belt for residential led development is the south-western part of the sub-area. This is the area bounded by a solid yellow line in Figure 7.3 below.
- 7.5.2. This land has clearly defined features to the south-east and southwest, 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 previously extended between the remaining hedgerow and Luton Road, and this would need to be reinstated to create a physical boundary along this edge.
- 7.5.3. Structural landscape planting along the northeast 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.

### *Contribution towards Green Belt purposes*

- 7.5.4. This area of land only significantly contributes towards safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. It makes a partial contribution towards checking sprawl. It makes a limited or no contribution towards preventing merging and preserving setting and maintaining the existing settlement pattern.

## 7.6. Indicative Layout and Potential Development Capacity

### *Indicative layout and rationale*

- 7.6.1. The indicative layout for Site 5 is shown in Figure 7.3. The site boundary identified for potential Green Belt release is indicated by the solid yellow line.
- 7.6.2. The indicative illustrative layout of development within the site is indicated by the solid yellow areas (outlined by a dashed black line). These areas represent the locations where development would take place, including residential and supporting land uses (e.g. public open space; schools and other infrastructure as required). The layout follows a generic design approach which has been informed by:
- Site context – taking account of the key findings from the assessment to (where possible) avoid constraints, create sustainable patterns of development (integration with existing urban area), minimise the impact on areas of higher landscape sensitivity and fall within strong and defensible boundaries;
  - Phasing – to create an urban form and layout including development blocks which respect to site surroundings including the Green Belt, existing urban area(s) and other key features identified. Development blocks are sized at 1 to 3 hectares to match an indicative quantum of development that could be built out as stand-alone phases (typically 50 to 100-units per annum);



- Identity – to ensure a sense of place within the landscape to create enclosure by respecting existing features such as hedgerows and woodland and where possible retaining historic agricultural plot lines or former hedgerows; and
  - Visual screening – to suggest potential landscape mitigation measures to help maintain the integrity of the Green Belt.
- 7.6.3. The site layout is indicative and illustrative. It does not consider access arrangements, highways capacity, local infrastructure capacity and needs and other factors set out in para 1.3.3. It does not represent a master plan for the site. If the Council considers that the site is suitable for potential Green Belt release a detailed master planning exercise will need to be undertaken to include consultation with all stakeholders and the community.
- 7.6.4. Given the nature of the study to identify sites for potential Green Belt release and future development, identified layouts might include existing public open space and other existing activities. In such cases, St Albans City and District will need to consider implications in respect future master planning in relation to local needs and land ownerships.
- 7.6.5. The location of the site avoids identified constraints and is well integrated with the urban area which adjoins the site on two edges. It is located within the area of lower landscape sensitivity within the sub-area however the potential visual connection with the wider landscape especially from elevated sections of the site is noted and is considered by the indicative layout. The site is therefore recommended suitable for residential-led development.
- 7.6.6. Existing landscape features, including hedgerows are retained and are proposed to be strengthened especially within the site and on the northwest boundary to help define the site and screen potential development from the wider countryside to the north and respect visual links with historic landscapes from elevated locations.
- 7.6.7. Existing landscape features shown in the indicative layout drawings are illustrative only, included to provide an impression of the site and context. Where possible such features should be retained, but appropriate surveys may need to be undertaken as part of future assessment work. More precise guidance on the landscape features that should be retained could also be evaluated as part of design guidance for the sites, should such guidance need to be prepared. The proposed landscape mitigation shown on the indicative layout drawings should also be interpreted as indicative. Such proposals have been included to illustrate where landscape mitigation is suggested to be required, e.g. to reinforce boundaries of the site and around the edge of a site. It will be important that any mitigation relates to specific development proposals and link into on-site landscaping and / or public open space provision.

*Residential development capacity*

- 7.6.8. The site has a total area of approximately 18 hectares. This represents the gross (100%) site area and has then been used to calculate the development capacity for the site. The

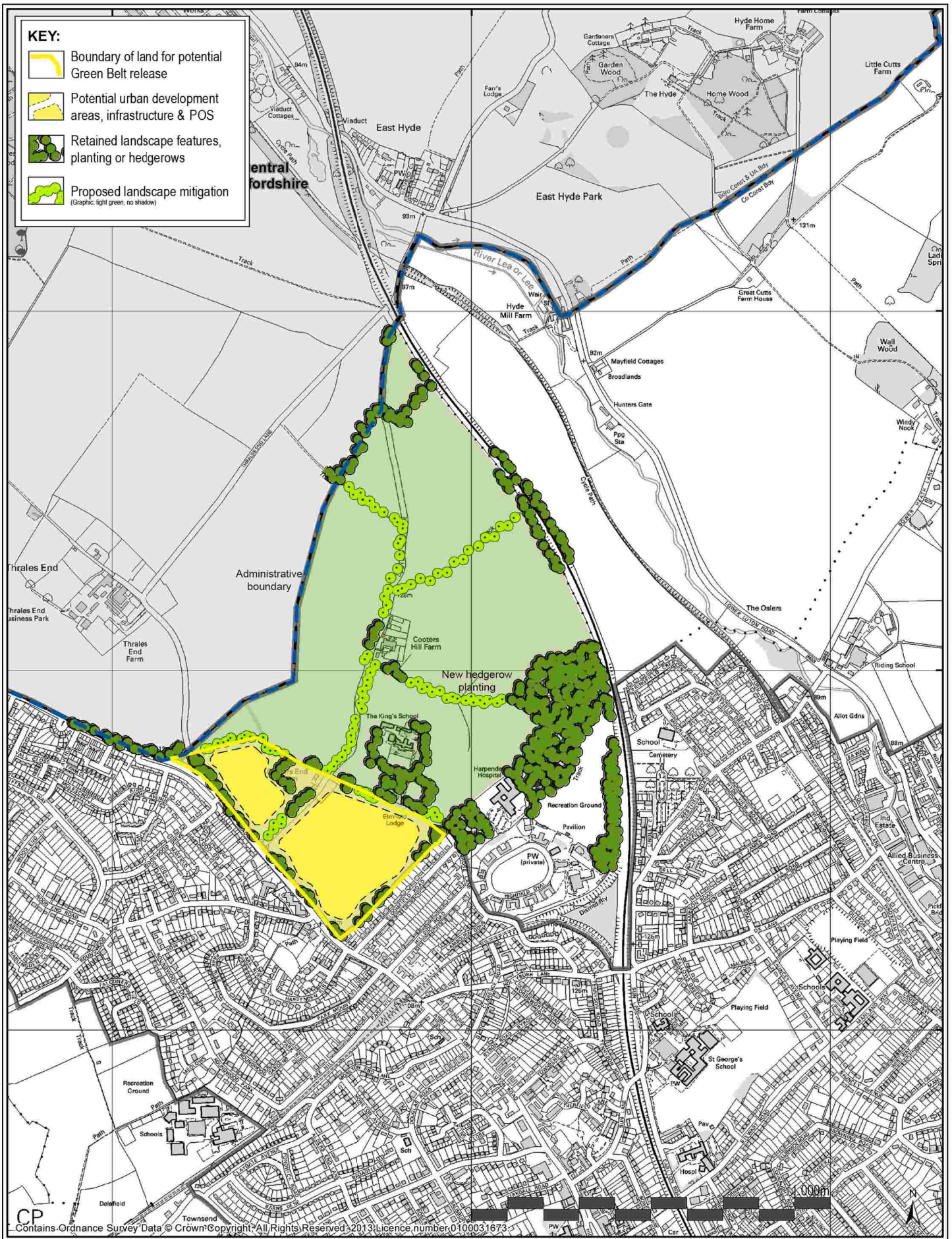


development capacity calculation assumes that only 60% of the gross site area will be developed for housing (i.e. 11 hectares)<sup>8</sup>.

- 7.6.9. The other 7 hectares of the site would provide supporting infrastructure including public open space, roads, required services and facilities such as education or health activities; as well as any retained open land for landscaping.
- 7.6.10. An indicative range of residential development densities from 30 dwellings per hectare (dph) to 50dph have been used to estimate potential residential development capacity on the site. This range is supported by the SADC Local Plan Review 1994, though it is recognised that the density that is appropriate for each site will vary considerably depending on a wide range of factors, including the mix of housing types to be provided in response to local needs.
- 7.6.11. At 30dph, 11 hectares of land would yield 324 dwellings (30 x 11); and at 50dph, the site would yield 540 dwellings (50 x 11).
- 7.6.12. All area figures (in hectares) relating to gross and net areas used to calculate potential residential capacity are round up to whole numbers

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<sup>8</sup>It is noted that the indicative layouts may show that the yellow blocks may cover more than 60% of the total site – if this is the case it does not alter the 60% net developable area for housing, and it is assumed that supporting infrastructure will be located within the blocks on land not used for housing.



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DATE: Nov 2013      Rev. Jan 14/005  
SCALE: Indicative

**FIGURE 7.3** Indicative layout  
Site 5 North-west of Harpenden



## **8. S6: Northeast of Harpenden**

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

- 8.1.1. The 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 (Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment, Hertfordshire County Council, 2000-2015). The published landscape character assessment evaluates the condition and strength of character, and provides an overall objective for each landscape character area.
- 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. Designed historic landscapes on surrounding upper slopes are visible, including East Hyde Park and Luton Hoo. The built edge of Harpenden can appear intrusive. The condition of the landscape and strength of character are both described as “moderate”. The overall objective for this landscape character area is to “improve and conserve”.
- 8.1.4. Blackmore End Plateau comprises an elevated agricultural landscape with extensive arable fields. A smaller field pattern occurs closer to the settlements and land use often comprises pasture. There are discrete small areas of woodland scattered through the character area, including ancient woodlands. Villages have strong vernacular character and there are historic houses with associated parklands. The condition of the landscape and strength of character are both described as “moderate”. The overall objective for this landscape character area is to “improve and conserve”.
- 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 SADC 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 Part 1 Study Green Belt purposes / Justification of identification of sub-area*

- 8.1.6. Strategic Parcel GB40 contributes significantly towards four of the five 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.



### *Planning History*

- 8.1.7. There are no extant planning permissions or outstanding planning applications pertaining to or relevant to Northeast of Harpenden.

## **8.2. Constraints**

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

### *Summary of environmental and historic features*

- 8.2.2. There is a pocket of ancient woodland (Sweeney Wood) located on the edge of the northeast section of the sub-area.

### *Other potential constraints / features*

- 8.2.3. There is land that comprises open access land (as defined by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000) adjacent to the northwest edge of the sub-area.
- 8.2.4. The sub-area is designated as a Landscape Conservation Area within the SADC Local Plan Review 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.

## **8.3. Sustainable Patterns of Development**

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

### *Settlement role, size and function*

- 8.3.2. The sub-area lies to the northeast of Harpenden, which is designated as one of only two towns in the St Albans City and District Council plan (Town T2). The Census 2011 indicates that the population of Harpenden is over 30,000.

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

- 8.3.3. The sub-area is situated on the northeast of Harpenden. Harpenden town centre is located approximately 1.6km to the southwest. Two local centres are located in close proximity to the sub-area at Lower Luton Road (LC17) and Station Road (LC18) which are 400m and 700m to the south.



#### *Public transport accessibility*

- 8.3.4. Harpenden railway station is located approximately 1.7km to the southwest 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.
- 8.3.5. The sub-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 southwest 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*

- 8.3.6. Two primary schools are located within 800m of the sub-area. Sauncey Wood Primary School is situated less than 200m to the south and Manland Primary School is 800m to the southwest. Slightly further afield lies Crabtree Infant and Junior School, 1.3km to the south.
- 8.3.7. There is a secondary school within 800m of the sub-area at Sir John Lawes School to the southwest. In addition, St George's co-educational day and boarding school is situated 1.3km to the southwest and The King's School is located 1.8km to the west.

#### *Proximity to public open space*

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

### **8.4. Landscape Appraisal and Sensitivity**

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

#### *Landform*

- 8.4.2. The landform rises from the Lea Valley to the edge of the plateau in the north-east. The land rises from approximately 90m above Ordnance Datum (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.



#### *Land cover and land use*

- 8.4.3. The sub-area primarily comprises agricultural land uses, predominantly pasture, in a large and 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 and 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 (B652), including Green acres Equestrian Centre at the junction with Lower Luton Road (B653). Low density, detached housing also lies to the east of Common Lane (Sauncey Wood). The edges of Harpenden lie to the south and east.
- 8.4.4. 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.

#### *Built and cultural heritage aspects*

- 8.4.5. 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*

- 8.4.6. The nature of the landform and land cover gives rise to a visually open landscape on the upper slopes where there are clear views over the surrounding landscape. As the land falls towards the Lea Valley the landform gives rise to a greater sense of enclosure.
- 8.4.7. 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*

- 8.4.8. 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 towards the sub-area from the opposite side of the valley (e.g. from Cooters End Lane).
- 8.4.9. The combination of 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 creates visual enclosure to the north-east/east, but there are open views across the valley from locations to the west including residents, road users, a railway line and a section of the Chiltern Way long distance path.

#### *Landscape sensitivity*

- 8.4.10. This section considers the sensitivity of the landscape and the visual effects associated with potential development within the sub-area on landscape character.
- 8.4.11. 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.

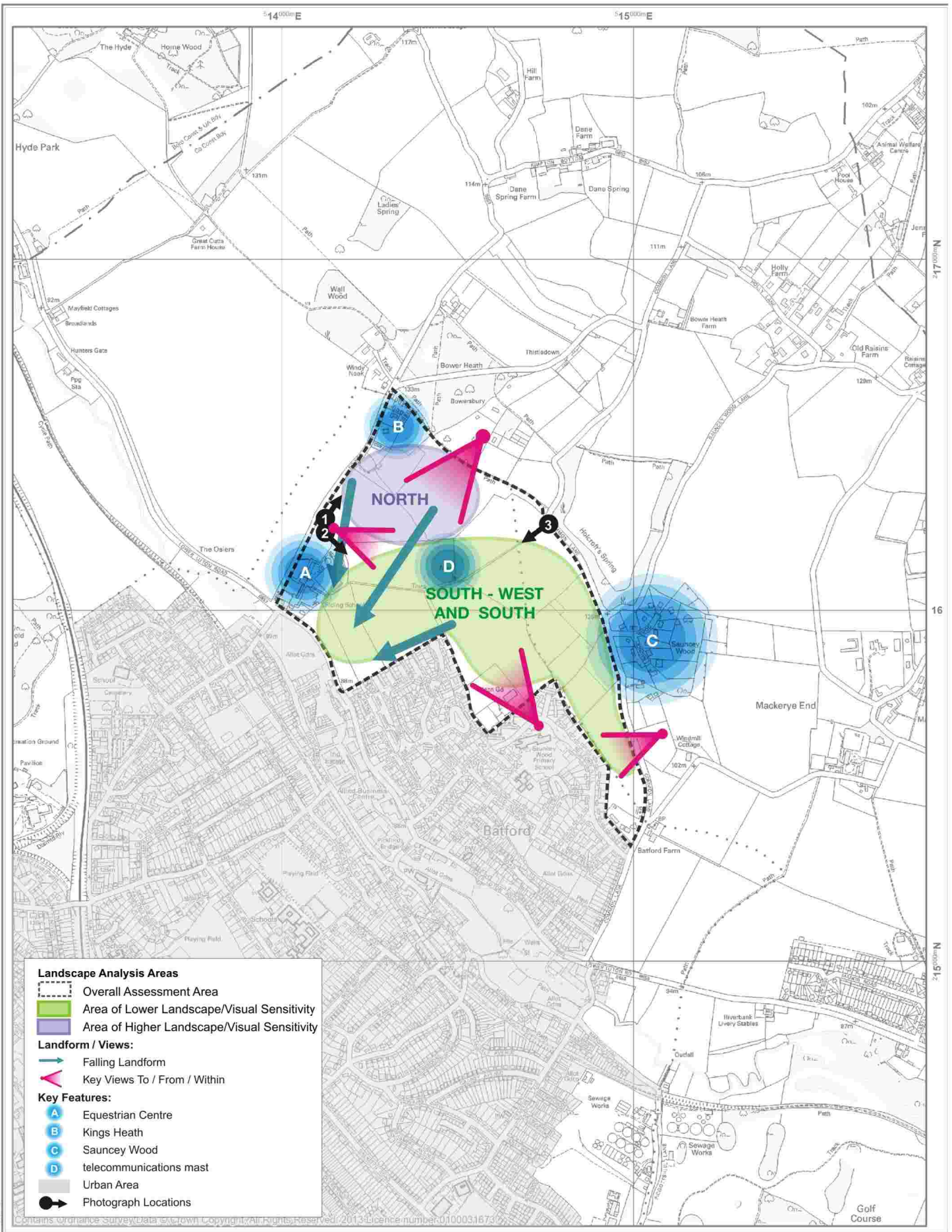




- 8.4.12. The combination of the landform and settlement form influences the potential to accommodate new development. The lower valley side comprises a more enclosed part of the landscape, while the plateau edge is more open. The existing settlement edge forms a conspicuous element in places (e.g. Common Lane) and extends along part of the plateau edge.
- 8.4.13. The southern parts of the sub-area are of lower sensitivity, particularly as the existing urban edge is both conspicuous and irregular and in places, has limited connection with the underlying landform. Development on more elevated parts of this sub-area would be visible over a wider area, however this would be consistent with, and seen in the context of the existing urban form.
- 8.4.14. 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 which provide a degree of 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 local enclosure.
- 8.4.15. 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.
- 8.4.16. Consideration of the sensitivity of the sub-area (and specific parts within it) in relation to potential residential development, as informed by landscape character, settlement form, views and landscape value, is set out in the table below.
- 8.4.17. Key findings from the landscape and visual appraisal are illustrated in Figure 3.1. This is supported by annotated photographs set out in Figure 3.2.



	<b>Part of Sub-Area</b>	
<b>Element</b>	<b>South-west 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 fences. The remnant hedgerows comprise key features that help to maintain some integrity in the landscape and a sense of enclosure.</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 continuing to contribute to landscape character.</p>
Settlement form	<p>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.</p>	<p>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 Bower Heath Lane.</p>
Views/visual features	<p>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 southwest side of the Lea Valley, particularly more elevated developments within the sub-area.</p>	<p>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.</p>
Landscape value	<p>Lies within a locally designated Landscape Conservation Area.</p> <p>There are no ecological designations or cultural heritage.</p>	<p>Lies within a locally designated Landscape Conservation Area.</p> <p>There are no ecological designations or cultural heritage issues.</p>
Overall evaluation	Lower sensitivity	Higher sensitivity



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**Figure 8.1 Landscape and  
Visual Appraisal, Sub-Area 6  
Northeast of St Albans**

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Projection: Transverse Mercator  
Datum: OSGB 1936  
Units: Meter

SINCLAIR KNIGHT MERZ  
**SKM ENVIROS**

Photograph Location 1: View northeast from footpath near Bower Heath Lane (B652)



Photograph Location 2: View southeast from footpath near Bower Heath Lane (B652)



Photograph Location 3: View southwest from Common Lane



**Site & Boundaries Study  
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**FIGURE 8.2**  
*Photographs, Sub-Area 6  
Northeast of St Albans*

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## 8.5. Boundary Review

- 8.5.1. Based upon the key findings of the assessment including landscape appraisal and sensitivity analysis, in addition to the consideration of the location of constraints and creation of sustainable patterns of development it is concluded that the most appropriate land for potential release from Green Belt for residential led development is the southern and western part of the sub-area. This is the area bounded by a solid yellow line in Figure 8.3 below.
- 8.5.2. 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 eastern edge comprises Common Lane. The northern boundary would comprise a track across the agricultural land, between Common Lane and Greenacres Equestrian Centre, together with a short section of Bower Heath Lane (B652).
- 8.5.3. Structural landscape / hedgerow planting along the northern edge of the proposed area would create a clearer and more defensible edge, help to integrate new development and provide more separation from the landscape to the north.

### *Contribution towards Green Belt purposes*

- 8.5.4. This area of land only significantly contributes towards safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. It makes a partial contribution towards checking sprawl. It makes a limited or no contribution towards preventing merging and preserving setting and maintaining the existing settlement pattern.

## 8.6. Indicative Layout and Potential Development Capacity

### *Indicative layout and rationale*

- 8.6.1. The indicative layout for Site 6 is shown in Figure 8.3. The site boundary identified for potential Green Belt release is indicated by the solid yellow line.
- 8.6.2. The indicative illustrative layout of development within the site is indicated by the solid yellow areas (outlined by a dashed black line). These areas represent the locations where development would take place, including residential and supporting land uses (e.g. public open space; schools and other infrastructure as required). The layout follows a generic design approach which has been informed by:
- Site context – taking account of the key findings from the assessment to (where possible) avoid constraints, create sustainable patterns of development (integration with existing urban area), minimise the impact on areas of higher landscape sensitivity and fall within strong and defensible boundaries;
  - Phasing – to create an urban form and layout including development blocks which respect to site surroundings including the Green Belt, existing urban area(s) and other key features identified. Development blocks are sized at 1 to 3 hectares to match an indicative quantum of development that could be built out as stand-alone phases (typically 50 to 100-units per annum);
  - Identity – to ensure a sense of place within the landscape to create enclosure by respecting existing features such as hedgerows and woodland and where possible retaining historic agricultural plot lines or former hedgerows; and

- Visual screening – to suggest potential landscape mitigation measures to help maintain the integrity of the Green Belt.
- 8.6.3. The site layout is indicative and illustrative. It does not consider access arrangements, highways capacity, local infrastructure capacity and needs and other factors set out in para 1.3.3. It does not represent a master plan for the site. If the Council considers that the site is suitable for potential Green Belt release a detailed master planning exercise will need to be undertaken to include consultation with all stakeholders and the community.
- 8.6.4. Given the nature of the study to identify sites for potential Green Belt release and future development, identified layouts might include existing public open space and other existing activities. In such cases, St Albans City and District will need to consider implications in respect future master planning in relation to local needs and land ownerships.
- 8.6.5. The location of the site avoids identified constraints and is well integrated with the urban area which penetrates the site. It is located with the area of lower landscape sensitivity within the sub-area, of which part is bound by the settlement edge and Common Lane, however open views from elevated sections of the site combined with the falling landform from the edge of the plateau to the Lea Valley is noted and is considered by the indicative layout and suggested landscape mitigation. The site is therefore recommended suitable for residential-led development.
- 8.6.6. Existing landscape features, including hedgerows are retained. In terms of potential landscape measures, reinforcement of vegetation is proposed on the northern edge of the site. This would help the layout align with Common Lane. Planting along Common Lane would also help strengthen the character of this route. In addition, structural planning within the site especially on more elevated slopes would help to soften the appearance of any potential development, particularly when viewed across the valley.
- 8.6.7. Existing landscape features shown in the indicative layout drawings are illustrative only, included to provide an impression of the site and context. Where possible such features should be retained, but appropriate surveys may need to be undertaken as part of future assessment work. More precise guidance on the landscape features that should be retained could also be evaluated as part of design guidance for the sites, should such guidance need to be prepared. The proposed landscape mitigation shown on the indicative layout drawings should also be interpreted as indicative. Such proposals have been included to illustrate where landscape mitigation is suggested to be required, e.g. to reinforce boundaries of the site and around the edge of a site. It will be important that any mitigation relates to specific development proposals and link into on-site landscaping and / or public open space provision.

*Residential development capacity*

- 8.6.8. The site has a total area of approximately 32 hectares. This represents the gross (100%) site area and has then been used to calculate the development capacity for the site. The

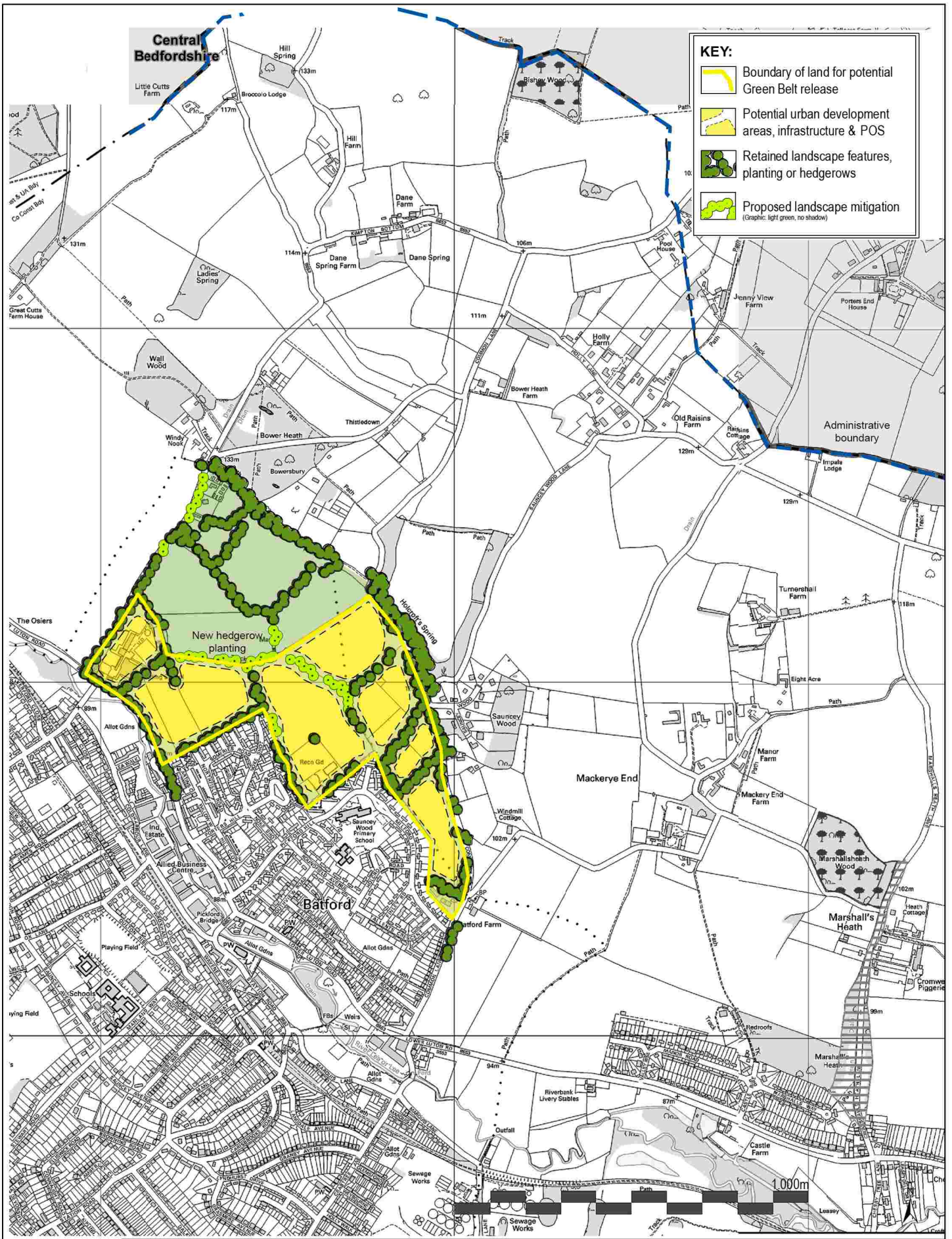


development capacity calculation assumes that only 60% of the gross site area will be developed for housing (i.e. 19 hectares)<sup>9</sup>.

- 8.6.9. The other 13 hectares of the site would provide supporting infrastructure including public open space, roads, required services and facilities such as education or health activities; as well as any retained open land for landscaping.
- 8.6.10. An indicative range of residential development densities from 30 dwellings per hectare (dph) to 50dph have been used to estimate potential residential development capacity on the site. This range is supported by the SADC Local Plan Review 1994, though it is recognised that the density that is appropriate for each site will vary considerably depending on a wide range of factors, including the mix of housing types to be provided in response to local needs.
- 8.6.11. At 30dph, 20 hectares of land would yield 576 dwellings (30 x 19); and at 50dph, the site would yield 960 dwellings (50 x 19).
- 8.6.12. All area figures (in hectares) relating to gross and net areas used to calculate potential residential capacity are round up to whole numbers

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<sup>9</sup>It is noted that the indicative layouts may show that the yellow blocks may cover more than 60% of the total site – if this is the case it does not alter the 60% net developable area for housing, and it is assumed that supporting infrastructure will be located within the blocks on land not used for housing.



Ref. ProMap from Client

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

PROJECT: JE30761  
DATE: Nov 2013  
SCALE: Indicative

STAGE 2  
Rev. Jan 14/005

**FIGURE 8.3** Indicative layout  
Site 6 North-east of Harpenden







## 9. S7: Land at London Colney

### 9.1. Context and Contribution towards Green Belt Purposes

- 9.1.1. The sub-area comprises land to the south and southwest of London Colney within Strategic Parcel GB31.
- 9.1.2. The sub-area lies within the Vale of St Albans landscape character area (Hertfordshire Landscape Character Assessment, Hertfordshire County Council, 2000-2005). The published landscape character assessment evaluates the condition and strength of character, and provides an overall objective for each landscape character area.
- 9.1.3. The Vale of St Albans comprises the broad shallow basin of the River Colne. It is a flat area, with very limited topographic variation. It is a predominantly arable landscape with few small- or medium-sized copses. There are active and restored mineral extraction sites along the course of the River Colne (including restored sites in the vicinity of the sub-area). There are institutional parklands associated with historic psychiatric hospitals at Napsbury and Harperbury. Urban fringe influences are prominent, notably the M25 corridor, pylons and built development. In the context of the sub-area the All Saints Pastoral Centre forms a key landmark. The condition of the landscape and strength of character is described as 'poor' and "weak" respectively. The overall objective for this landscape character area is to "reconstruct".
- 9.1.4. There are no landscape designations within or adjacent to the sub-area. Broad Colney Lakes Nature Reserve (locally designated) lies in the eastern part of the sub-area, adjacent to the southern edge of London Colney. There are several Listed Buildings at All Saints Pastoral Centre, together with a marker on Broad Colney Bridge. There is also a cluster of Listed Buildings within London Colney, focussed around where High Street/Barnet Road crosses the River Colne. This part of London Colney is also designated as a Conservation Area, including a small section of the sub-area. Colney Chapel moated site, a Scheduled Monument, lies within the sub-area, to the west of Shenley Lane. Napsbury Park lies to the north of the sub-area, and is designated as a Registered Park and Garden.

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

- 9.1.5. Strategic Parcel GB31 only contributes significantly towards one of the five Green Belt purposes: maintenance of the existing settlement pattern. In terms of landscape character and physical openness the sub-area identified is subject to significant urbanising influence. Assessed in isolation, the sub-area to the south and southwest of London Colney makes a limited or no contribution towards the primary role of the Green Belt to maintain the local gap between settlements. This is mainly because of the configuration of the urban edge in relation to adjoining Green Belt and the character of the landscape and relationship to the M25, which disrupts the countryside and acts as a major physical barrier. Given the scale and nature of the local gap, which contains the M25, a limited reduction in the size of the Strategic Parcel would not significantly compromise the physical separation of any settlements or primary role of the Green Belt.



### *Planning History*

- 9.1.6. There are no extant planning permissions or outstanding planning applications related to Land at London Colney. However land within the sub-area has been subject to promotional activities from potential developers. The mineral extraction, landfill and restoration history of the area is extensive and relevant.
- 9.1.7. To the north of the sub-area the former Napsbury Hospital site, set with Napsbury Park Historic Park and Garden, has been redeveloped to provide housing.

## **9.2. Constraints**

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

### *Summary of environmental and historic features*

- 9.2.2. Napsbury Park Historic Park and Garden adjoins the northern edge of the west part of the sub-area.
- 9.2.3. Land to the south of London Colney contains a Country Park designation which covers the area of land from the southern edge of London Colney to the M25. Broad Colney Lakes, a local nature reserve, is also located along the southern edge of London Colney, to the north of the southern part of the sub-area.
- 9.2.4. Information provided by SADC indicates that Land to the south adjoins an open area of land which has previously be subject to quarrying and landfill. Since the 1930s 'quarrying of sand and clay' and the 'operation of sand and gravel pits' have taken place. An 'unknown filled ground (pit, quarry etc)' is also present whereby records show that the Bell Lane Tip first accepted waste in 1973 and last accepted waste in 1980. The tip accepted inert, commercial and household wastes. No surveys of the condition of the land have been undertaken as part of this study.

### *Other potential constraints / features*

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

## **9.3. Sustainable Patterns of Development**

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

### *Settlement role, size and function*

- 9.3.2. The sub-area is on the edge of London Colney, which is designated as a Specified Settlement (SS.4) within the St Albans District Plan. London Colney ward has a population of 9,500 (Census 2011).



*Proximity to town centre, and local centres*

- 9.3.3. The sub-area is situated to the south and west of London Colney. The settlement centre (the primary shopping frontage) is located less than 500m from the western boundary of the sub-area and the southern boundary adjoins Colney Fields Shopping Park.
- 9.3.4. There are no local centres within 1km of the sub-area.

*Public transport accessibility*

- 9.3.5. There are no railway stations in London Colney. Radlett railway station is located 3km to the southwest and St Albans is 4.5km to the northwest. A First Capital Connect service passes through Radlett providing services to Luton, St Albans and London with services running into London approximately every 10 minutes during peak hours.
- 9.3.6. Local train services are also available from How Wood railway station, located 3.2km to the west offering services to St Albans Abbey and Watford Junction.
- 9.3.7. Bus services run along Barnet Road approximately 200m to the northeast of the sub-area. The services include routes 84, 602, 636, 658 and 659 providing links to London Colney High Street, St Albans, New Barnet, Potters Bar, Welwyn Garden City, Hatfield, Watford, Luton, Borehamwood and Redbourn.

*Proximity to schools*

- 9.3.8. There are a number of primary schools in London Colney including London Colney primary school, Bowmans Green primary school and St Bernadette primary school. There are no secondary schools in London Colney.

*Proximity to public open space*

- 9.3.9. Broad Colney Lakes, a local nature reserve adjoins the north edge of the south part of the sub-area, London Colney also contains Morris recreation ground (OS.8), Five Acres and Alsop Close

**9.4. Landscape Appraisal and Sensitivity**

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

*Landform*

- 9.4.2. The landform is relatively level, lying at approximately 65m to 70m AOD. There are gentle and/or localised variations in landform, including slopes down to the River Colne and slopes down to towards the M25. The steepest slopes are around the edges of Broad Colney Lakes Nature Reserve.

#### *Land cover and land use*

- 9.4.3. The sub-area primarily comprises agricultural land uses, with a mix of crops and pasture, in a medium-to-large field pattern. Agricultural land quality is mainly Grade 3, with a small area of Grade 2 land in the vicinity of the Pastoral Centre. There are occasional small woodlands or groups of trees, particularly within Broad Colney Lakes Nature Reserve and near the Pastoral Centre. The Nature Reserve and Pastoral Centre form distinctive elements and focal points within the sub-area. Much of the land to the south of London Colney (and the Nature Reserve) has been designated as a Country Park, broadly corresponding with an area that comprises restored workings (based on OS map annotations and additional information provided by SADC). There are a number of Public Rights of Way through the sub-area, including a section of Watling Chase Trail. A small industrial/commercial land use (understood to be a car depot) lies to the east of Shenley Lane.
- 9.4.4. Key ecological features comprise the river corridor and associated nature reserve, hedgerows and hedgerow trees, and areas of woodland.

#### *Built and cultural heritage aspects*

- 9.4.5. Built and cultural heritage aspects are prominent within and around the sub-area and recognised in the designations outlined in the landscape context section above. The heritage assets at the Pastoral Centre and Napsbury Park are prominent local elements and, while the setting and/or elements of these have changed, they still have connections with the surrounding landscape. Napsbury Park has undergone considerable change in recent years, being redeveloped to provide housing. The Conservation Area (and associated Listed Building) within London Colney also comprises a sensitive element on the edge of the sub-area, as well as forming a local focal point, particularly around the crossing of the River Colne.
- 9.4.6. The use of the land south of London Colney as a Country Park is a relatively recent change within the sub-area, linking with the Nature Reserve to the north.

#### *Levels of enclosure*

- 9.4.7. Enclosure is variable throughout the sub-area. The relatively level terrain means the vegetation and certain built elements are key factors in relation to enclosure. Most containment is found within Broad Colney Nature Reserve and around the Pastoral Centre. Conversely the restored workings to the south of the Nature Reserve represent the most open part of the landscape, including clear views to the rising ground to the south, although this may change as the Country Park evolves.
- 9.4.8. The existing settlement edges of London Colney have a strong form in places, particularly along the western edge of London Colney, where the settlement follows the alignment of Shenley Lane. The new development with Napsbury Park is also clearly visible from locations, adding a new relatively urban component to the historic landscape.



#### *Visual attributes*

- 9.4.9. Key views into/from the eastern part of the sub-area relate to the rising ground to the south. From the western part of the sub-area, there are also visual connections with the rising landscape to the south, and also with the gently undulating land to the west. The area within/adjacent to Broad Colney Lakes Nature Reserve comprises the most visually enclosed part of the sub-area, due to local landform and vegetation.
- 9.4.10. The Pastoral Centre and buildings within Napsbury Park form prominent elements and focal points both within the sub-area and the surrounding landscape. The M25 (and associated movement and noise) is a notable element on the southern edge of the sub-area. The superstore on the eastern edge of the sub-area is an obvious feature, and contrasts with the surrounding residential development.
- 9.4.11. Key visual sensitivities are likely to be associated with surrounding residential properties and Public Rights of Way (both around and within the sub-area).

#### *Landscape sensitivity*

- 9.4.12. Landscape sensitivity and visual effects associated with potential change or potential future development within the sub-area on the current landscape character is considered to help identify any site(s) for potential Green Belt release.
- 9.4.13. Much of landscape has been modified and field boundaries have been lost. The greatest disruption is in the south-eastern part of the sub-area, where it appears that historic mineral workings (and subsequent restoration) have altered the landform and landscape pattern. Heritage assets are a key component of the western part of the sub-area, with visual and physical relationships with the adjacent landscape. However it is noted that Napsbury Park has undergone considerable change in recent years as a result of residential development.
- 9.4.14. The nature of the landform and immediate context means that parts of the sub-area are relatively visually isolated or self-contained, i.e. Broad Colney Nature Reserve and the land immediately to the west of the superstore.
- 9.4.15. Key landscape features that make a valuable contribution are the heritage assets, the field pattern where it remains more intact, Broad Colney Nature Reserve and small areas of established/mature woodland (e.g. Home Wood). The network of Public Rights of Way, together with the country park allocation, results in an accessible landscape.
- 9.4.16. Sensitivity to change varies throughout the sub-area. The eastern edge is of lowest sensitivity as it is influenced by the adjacent urban edge, particularly the superstore, with enclosure also provided by the surrounding vegetation. The adjacent Conservation Area and Listed Buildings within London Colney and potential relationship with any development proposals would require careful consideration.
- 9.4.17. The land further west (west of Watling Chase Trail) is more open with few boundary features or elements to enclose the landscape. There are also visual connections with the Pastoral Centre, including views from the M25. This land also comprises the larger part of the Country Park.



- 9.4.18. The land within the western part of the sub-area (west of Shenley Lane) is also more sensitive. It comprises a more open agricultural landscape in places. It also includes, and forms the setting for, a number of heritage assets.
- 9.4.19. Consideration of the sensitivity of the sub-area (and specific parts within it) in relation to potential residential development, as informed by landscape character, settlement form, views and landscape value, has been set out in the table below.
- 9.4.20. Key findings from the landscape and visual appraisal are illustrated in Figure 9.1. This is supported by annotated photographs set out in Figure 9.2.

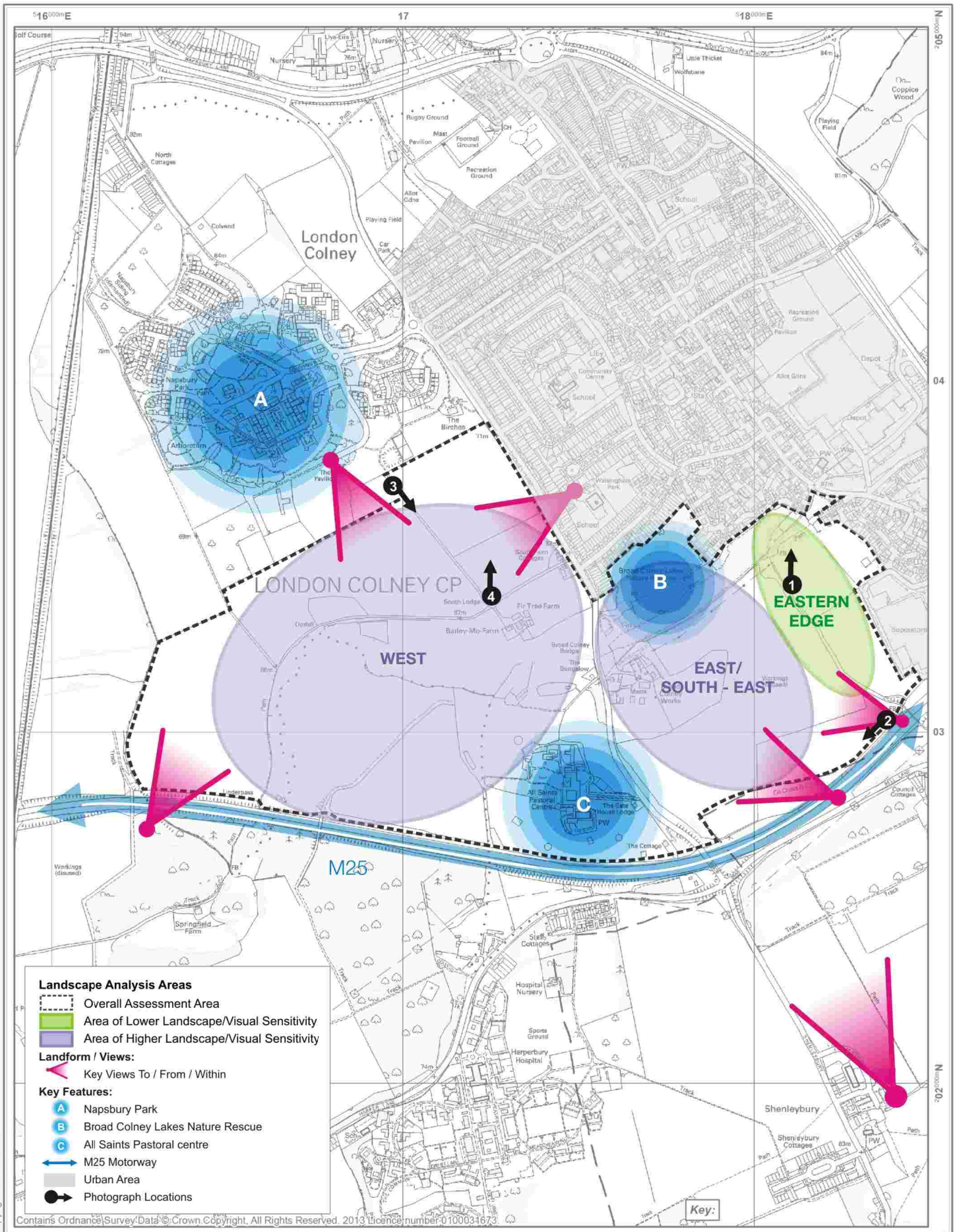


Element	Part of Sub-Area		
	<i>Eastern edge</i>	<i>South-east</i>	<i>West</i>
<i>Landscape character</i>	<p>While built development would affect openness of landscape character, the extent of effects is likely to be limited. The existing landscape pattern and adjacent urban edge provide a degree of enclosure, and would help contain and provide a framework for development.</p> <p>Hedgerows remain and form a framework to the landscape. The Country Park designation may change the landscape pattern and features in the future.</p>	<p>Open landscape with few features that provide enclosure. Greater connection with surrounding rural landscape to the south, although there are some detracting features, particularly the M25.</p> <p>Few features of notable value; field boundaries have largely been removed through previous mineral extraction. A new landscape pattern may be influenced by the Country Park designation. There is also visual connection with the Pastoral Centre.</p>	<p>Openness of the existing landscape would be lost; however, this attribute is already influenced the by urban edge and redevelopment of Napsbury Park.</p> <p>Includes features of recognised value, particularly heritage assets at the Pastoral Centre. Napsbury Park lies adjacent to the north and has visual and physical connections (the latter comprising South Lodge and a former southern approach to the former hospital site).</p> <p>Much of the land is in agricultural use and, while some boundaries remain intact, others have been removed.</p>
<i>Settlement form</i>	<p>Development would complement and be continuous with the adjacent urban form to the east.</p>	<p>Landscape features, particularly Broad Colney Nature Reserve, result in separation from the southern edge of London Colney.</p>	<p>Development would be continuous with the adjacent urban form to the east and development within Napsbury Park.</p>
<i>Landscape value</i>	<p>No landscape designations.</p> <p>Listed Buildings and Conservation Area within London Colney.</p> <p>Country Park designation applies to part of this area.</p>	<p>No landscape or cultural heritage designations</p> <p>Includes Broad Colney Nature Reserve.</p> <p>Country Park designation applies to part of this area.</p>	<p>No landscape or ecological designations.</p> <p>Listed buildings, particularly at the Pastoral Centre.</p> <p>Napsbury Park (adjacent to the north) is a Registered Park and Garden.</p>



Element	Part of Sub-Area		
	<i>Eastern edge</i>	<i>South-east</i>	<i>West</i>
<i>Views/visual features</i>	Key potential visual effects of new development would be at a local level. Notable effects would be in relation to surrounding residents and people using Public Rights of Way. Hedgerows and urban form would provide some visual containment.	Openness would result in wider visual effects, although the Nature Reserve would provide some containment to the north. Key views are likely to be from the M25 and rising ground to the south. Development could affect the views to the Pastoral Centre.	Openness would result in wider visual effects, particularly from areas to the south and west. Key views would be from adjacent residential areas to the north and east, Shenley Lane, Public Rights of Way/permissive paths, and the railway line to the west.  Potential effects on the visual setting of the Pastoral Centre and Napsbury Park.
<b>Overall evaluation</b>	Lower sensitivity	Higher sensitivity	Higher sensitivity





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

SCALE

Not to Scale

PROJECT CODE

JE30761.02

CONTENT

DRAWN

CHECKED

DATE

SM

JW

RB

29/01/2014



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

SINCLAIR KNIGHT MERZ  
**SKM ENVIROS**

**Figure 9.1 Landscape and  
Visual Appraisal, Sub-Area 7  
Land at London Colney**

Photograph Location 1: View north/northeast from footpath within eastern part of assessment area



Photograph Location 2: View west/southwest from footpath within eastern part of assessment area (at footbridge over M25)



Photograph Location 3: View southeast from footpath at the edge of Napsbury Park



Photograph Location 4: View north from bridleway west of London Colney, near South Lodge/Barley-Mo-Farm/Fir Tree Farm



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

**FIGURE 9.2**  
**Photographs, Sub-Area 7**  
**Land at London Colney**

SCALE	N/A	PROJECT CODE	JE30761.02
CONTENT	SJM	DRAWN	HLD
CHECKED	RB	DATE	30/01/14

DWG: HLD4043.dwg

## 9.5. Boundary Review

- 9.5.1. Based upon the key findings of the assessment including landscape appraisal and sensitivity analysis, in addition to the consideration of the location of constraints and creation of sustainable patterns of development it is concluded that the most appropriate land for potential release from Green Belt for residential led development is the western part of the sub-area. This is the area bounded by a solid yellow line in Figure 9.3 below.
- 9.5.2. The land to the southwest of London Colney is clearly defined to the east through a combination of the settlement edge and Shenley Lane. The northern edge is bound by a wooden fence, although beyond this lies part of Napsbury Park, which comprises a clearly defined limit to development. The south-east and south-west boundaries comprise a combination of hedgerow and tracks (which are also Public Rights of Way or permissive paths). While the latter boundaries are clearly defined on the ground, structural landscape planting would help to define the edge and separate the settlement edge from the adjacent landscape.
- 9.5.3. The land on the eastern edge of the sub-area also has clearly defined edges in almost all directions, with the urban edge of London Colney to the east, M25 to the south, and hedgerows to the west. Broad Colney Nature Reserve and River Colne lie along the northern edge, and this edge may require reinforcement to provide separation between these features and new development. However due to historic workings and landfill on land adjacent it is considered that at this stage this site should not be considered for potential development in the absence of a thorough understanding of ground conditions.

### *Contribution to Green Belt purposes*

- 9.5.4. This area of land does not significantly contribute towards any of the five purposes. It makes a partial contribution towards safeguarding the countryside from encroachment and 7preserves setting. A limited or no contribution is made towards preventing merging and maintaining the existing settlement pattern.

## 9.6. Indicative Layout and Potential Development Capacity

### *Indicative layout and rationale*

- 9.6.1. The indicative layout for Site 7 is shown in Figure 9.3. The site boundary identified for potential Green Belt release is indicated by the solid yellow line.
- 9.6.2. The indicative illustrative layout of development within the site is indicated by the solid yellow areas (outlined by a dashed black line). These areas represent the locations where development would take place, including residential and supporting land uses (e.g. public open space; schools and other infrastructure as required). The layout follows a generic design approach which has been informed by:
- Site context – taking account of the key findings from the assessment to (where possible) avoid constraints, create sustainable patterns of development (integration with existing urban area), minimise the impact on areas of higher landscape sensitivity and fall within strong and defensible boundaries;
  - Phasing – to create an urban form and layout including development blocks which respect to site surroundings including the Green Belt, existing urban area(s) and other key features identified. Development blocks are sized at 1 to 3 hectares to match an

- indicative quantum of development that could be built out as stand-alone phases (typically 50 to 100-units per annum);
- Identity – to ensure a sense of place within the landscape to create enclosure by respecting existing features such as hedgerows and woodland and where possible retaining historic agricultural plot lines or former hedgerows; and
  - Visual screening – to suggest potential landscape mitigation measures to help maintain the integrity of the Green Belt.
- 9.6.3. The site layout is indicative and illustrative. It does not consider access arrangements, highways capacity, local infrastructure capacity and needs and other factors set out in para 1.3.3. It does not represent a master plan for the site. If the Council considers that the site is suitable for potential Green Belt release a detailed master planning exercise will need to be undertaken to include consultation with all stakeholders and the community.
- 9.6.4. Given the nature of the study to identify sites for potential Green Belt release and future development, identified layouts might include existing public open space and other existing activities. In such cases, St Albans City and District will need to consider implications in respect future master planning in relation to local needs and land ownerships.
- 9.6.5. The site has potential to be relatively well integrated with the urban area however there is a relatively limited range of services and facilities in London Colney (in comparison to larger settlements) and no railway station.
- 9.6.6. Site 7 to the west of London Colney is located with an area of higher landscape sensitivity within the sub-area and also contributes towards the setting of Napsbury Park Registered Park and Garden, which directly adjoins the site. These factors impact upon the scale of the site and have influenced the extent of the proposed area for potential Green Belt release. Specifically the western edge is defined by the field boundary due to the limited presence of similar features further west and due to the visual and physical connections between Napsbury Park and the land to the south. . The site is therefore recommended suitable for residential-led development.
- 9.6.7. Existing landscape features, including hedgerows are retained on both sites where possible. Site 7 would benefit from additional structural landscape planting to create strong edges and define the site. Such planting would need to be consistent with the established vegetation at Napsbury Park Historic Park and Garden.
- 9.6.8. Existing landscape features shown in the indicative layout drawings are illustrative only, included to provide an impression of the site and context. Where possible such features should be retained, but appropriate surveys may need to be undertaken as part of future assessment work. More precise guidance on the landscape features that should be retained could also be evaluated as part of design guidance for the sites, should such guidance need to be prepared. The proposed landscape mitigation shown on the indicative layout drawings should also be interpreted as indicative. Such proposals have been included to illustrate where landscape mitigation is suggested to be required, e.g. to reinforce boundaries of the site and around the edge of a site. It will be important that any mitigation relates to specific development proposals and link into on-site landscaping and / or public open space provision.

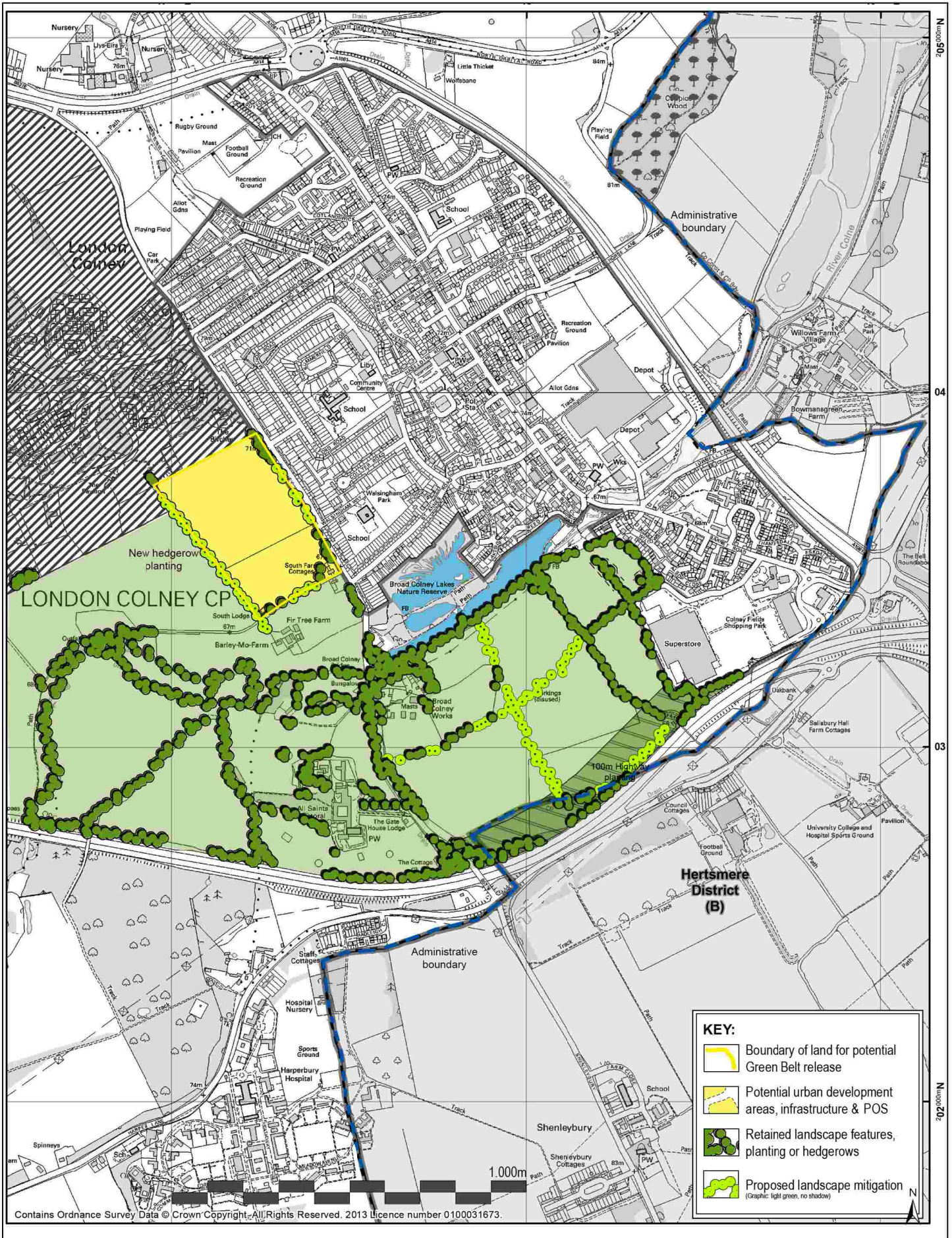


*Residential development capacity*

- 9.6.9. The site has a total area of approximately 14 hectares. This represents the gross (100%) site area and has then been used to calculate the development capacity for the site. The development capacity calculation assumes that only 60% of the gross site area will be developed for housing (i.e. 8 hectares)<sup>10</sup>.
- 9.6.10. The other 6 hectares of the site would provide supporting infrastructure including public open space, roads, required services and facilities such as education or health activities; as well as any retained open land for landscaping.
- 9.6.11. An indicative range of residential development densities from 30 dwellings per hectare (dph) to 50dph have been used to estimate potential residential development capacity on the site. This range is supported by the SADC Local Plan Review 1994, though it is recognised that the density that is appropriate for each site will vary considerably depending on a wide range of factors, including the mix of housing types to be provided in response to local needs.
- 9.6.12. At 30dph, 8 hectares of land would yield 252 dwellings (30 x 8); and at 50dph, the site would yield 420 dwellings (50 x 8).
- 9.6.13. All area figures (in hectares) relating to gross and net areas used to calculate potential residential capacity are round up to whole numbers.

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<sup>10</sup>It is noted that the indicative layouts may show that the yellow blocks may cover more than 60% of the total site – if this is the case it does not alter the 60% net developable area for housing, and it is assumed that supporting infrastructure will be located within the blocks on land not used for housing.



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

PROJECT: JE30761      STAGE 2  
DATE: Nov 2013      Rev. Jan 14/005  
SCALE: Indicative

**FIGURE 9.3** Indicative layout  
Site 7 Land at London Colney





## 10. S8: Land at Chiswell Green

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

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

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

- 10.1.4. Strategic Parcel GB25 significantly contributes towards 2 of the 5 Green Belt purposes: it safeguards the countryside and maintains the existing settlement pattern (providing a gap between St Albans and Chiswell Green). It also makes a partial contribution towards preventing merging and preserving setting. However, the sub-area identified on pasture land at Chiswell Green Lane displays particular urban fringe characteristics due to its proximity to the settlement edge and Butterfly World along Miriam Road to the west. This development bounds the outer extent of the pasture land and creates a physical barrier to the open countryside. The pasture land also displays greater levels of landscape enclosure due to localised planting along field boundaries. This creates potential to integrate development into the landscape with lower impact on views from the wider countryside and surroundings. At the strategic level, a reduction in the size of the parcel would not significantly compromise the overall role of the Green Belt or compromise the separation of settlements. Assessed in isolation the land makes a limited or no contribution towards all Green Belt purposes.

#### *Planning History*

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

### 10.2. Constraints

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



*Summary of environmental and historic features*

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

*Other potential constraints / features*

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

**10.3. Sustainable Patterns of Development**

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

*Settlement role, size and function*

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

*Proximity to town centre, and local centres*

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

*Public transport accessibility*

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

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

*Proximity to schools*

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





#### *Proximity to public open space*

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

### **10.4. Landscape Appraisal and Sensitivity**

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

#### *Landform*

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

#### *Land cover and land use*

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

#### *Built and cultural heritage aspects*

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

#### *Levels of enclosure*

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



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

#### *Visual attributes*

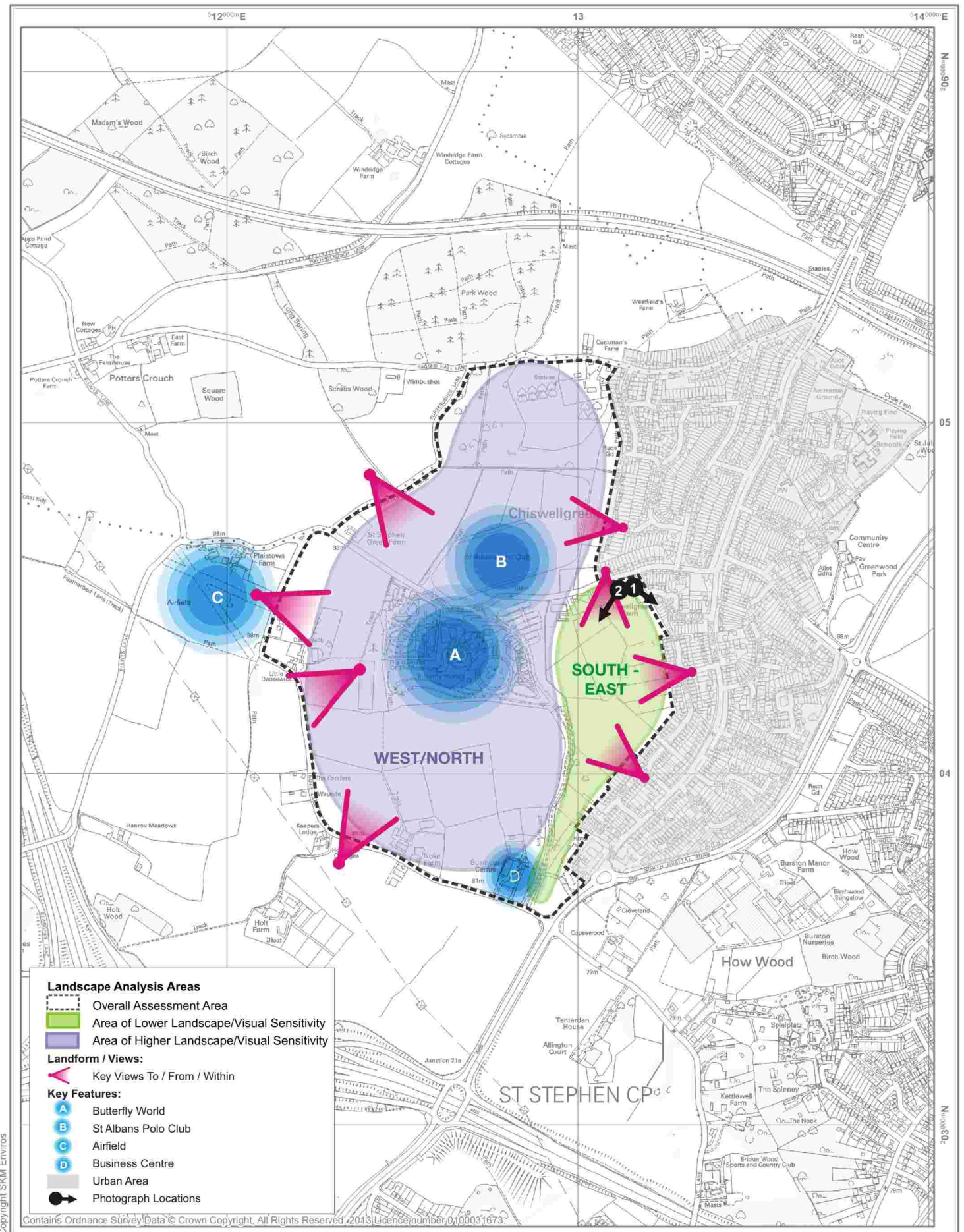
- 10.4.7. Roads are frequently lined by tall hedges (although in places these are fragmented), which restricts views. Towards the western part of the sub-area, the open views over the agricultural landscape are notable. Views are much shorter in distance within the eastern part of the sub-area (between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

#### *Landscape sensitivity*

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



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



**Sites & Boundaries  
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and District Council**

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

SCALE	PROJECT CODE
Not to Scale	JE30761.02
CONTENT	DRAWN
SM	JW
CHECKED	DATE
RB	29/01/2014



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



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



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



Ref: I:\Enviros\Design\PROJECTS\JE\EA\JE30761\

Plot date: Jan 31, 2014 - 10:38am

File name: HLD4044.dwg

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**Site & Boundaries Study  
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District Council**

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

SCALE	N/A	PROJECT CODE	JE30761.02
CONTENT	SJM	DRAWN	HLD
CHECKED	RB	DATE	30/01/14

DWG: HLD4044.dwg



## 10.5. Boundary Review

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

### *Contribution towards Green Belt Purposes*

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

## 10.6. Indicative Layout and Potential Development Capacity

### *Indicative layout and rationale*

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



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

*Residential development capacity*

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



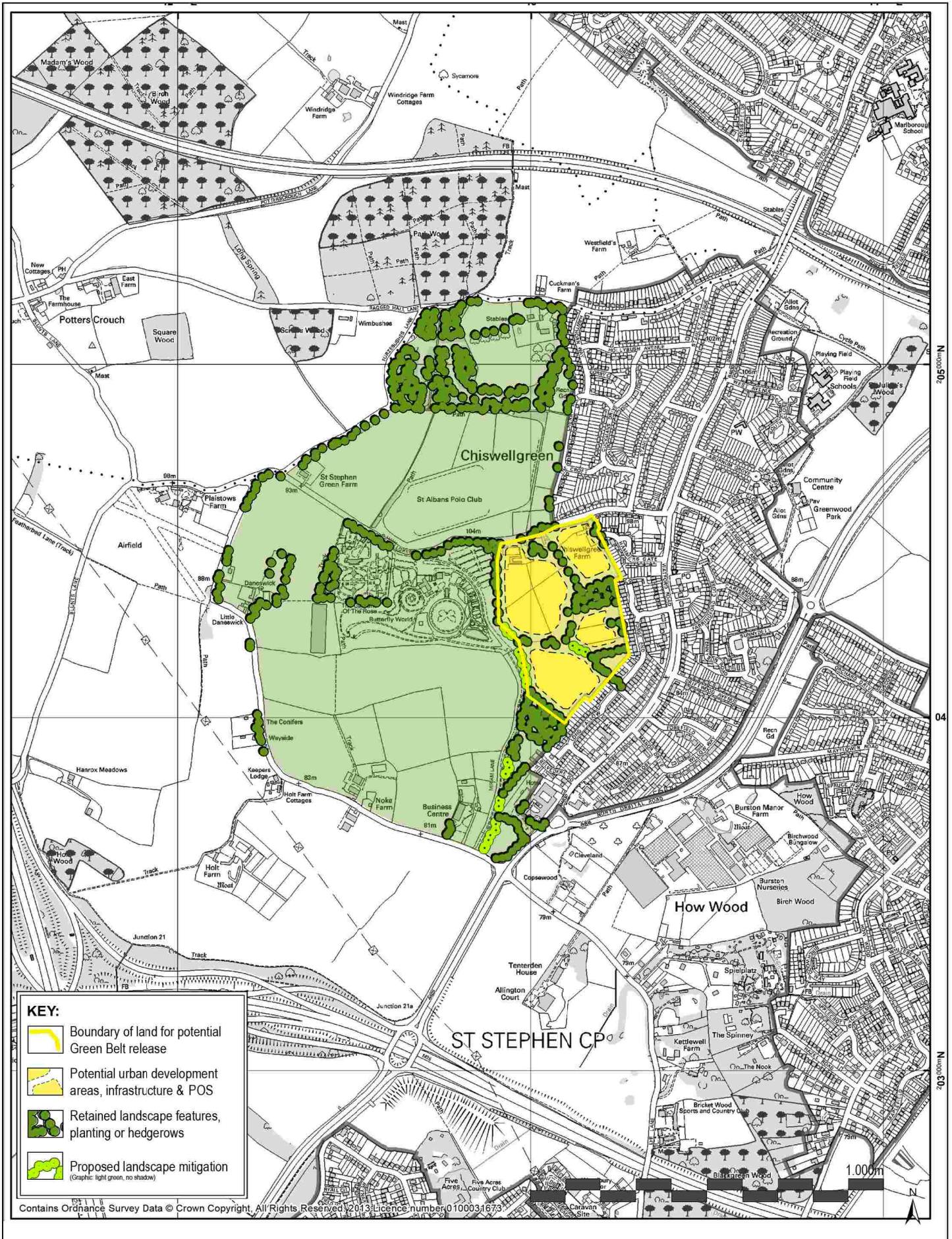
development capacity calculation assumes that only 60% of the gross site area will be developed for housing (i.e. 9 hectares)<sup>11</sup>.

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

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





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

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 SCALE: Indicative

**FIGURE 10.3** Indicative layout Site 8 Land at Chiswell Green



## 11. Site Classification

### 11.1. Overview

- 11.1.1. This chapter considers the key findings from the assessment of each sub-area to evaluate the relative suitability of each site identified for potential Green Belt release and future development. It also considers the likely timescales for potential Green Belt release and future development.
- 11.1.2. The term 'site' relates to the area of land identified for potential Green Belt release. Nine sites have been identified in the preceding assessment of the eight strategic sub-areas (in Chapters 2 to 8 of this report<sup>12</sup>).
- 11.1.3. Therefore the approach to assess the relative suitability of sites considers only the four categories of assessment undertaken in this study as follows:
- Contribution towards the five Green Belt purposes assessed;
  - Environmental and historic constraints;
  - Integration with existing urban areas; and,
  - Landscape sensitivity.
- 11.1.4. The assessment of the above four categories in Chapters 3 to 10 considered only the characteristics within, and where relevant, surrounding each sub-area. This chapter provides a comparative analysis of all the sites in terms of their relative suitability for development to arrive at an overall classification (or ranking) of the sites.
- 11.1.5. For the purposes of evaluating the relative suitability of sites, all of the four categories have been weighted equally.
- 11.1.6. The first category provides an indication of the relative merits of the sites as candidates for Green Belt release. An updated purposes assessment has been undertaken to consider the performance of the sites only (as distinct from the larger sub area which was assessed in the Part 1 study). The assessment of contribution towards Green Belt purposes follows the same approach adopted in the Part 1 study; whereby sites make either a 'significant', 'partial' or 'limited or no' contribution.
- 11.1.7. The remaining three categories of assessment have been classified for each site as either:
- 'Higher suitability for potential Green Belt release and future development';
  - 'Medium suitability for potential Green Belt release and future development'; or
  - 'Lower suitability for potential Green Belt release and future development'.
- 11.1.8. The criteria applied in order to classify performance against the four assessment categories is set out below, followed by an overall summary of the performance of the nine sites.

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



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

### **Contribution towards Green Belt purposes**

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

### **Environmental and Historic Constraints**

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



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

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

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

**Integration with Existing Urban Areas**

- 11.1.22. The assessment of potential for integration with existing urban areas is a proxy for the extent to which development in that location would support a sustainable pattern of development. This is assessed in terms of the accessibility of a site to town and local centres, railway stations, public transport routes, schools, and public open space.
- 11.1.23. The performance of a site against the ‘integration’ category of assessment is based on the criteria set out below. Sites which are best integrated into existing settlements<sup>13</sup> are classified as demonstrating a ‘higher’ level of suitability for Green Belt release and future development.

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<sup>13</sup>Integration in comparison to the whole of the strategic sub-area assessed.



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

Level of Suitability	Description of Criteria
<b>Higher</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>Lower</b>	More difficult to make a contribution to sustainable development by virtue of its location in relation to local services and capability for integration into existing settlements.

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

**Landscape Sensitivity**

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



11.1.29. The performance of a site against the 'landscape sensitivity' category of assessment is based on the criteria set out below. Sites demonstrating a lower landscape sensitivity<sup>14</sup> have a higher capacity to accommodate development and are classified as demonstrating a 'higher' level of suitability for Green Belt release and future development.

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

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

11.1.30. Landscape sensitivity varies considerably across the nine sites. Three sites exhibit higher landscape sensitivity and lower suitability for Green Belt release in landscape terms: Land at East of Hemel Hempstead North and South (Sites 1 and 2b) and Northeast of Harpenden (Site 6). There is often a strong relationship between higher levels of landscape sensitivity and a significant Green Belt contribution towards safeguarding the countryside from encroachment (one of the five Green Belt purposes assessed). However, this is not always the case, as sites 4 and 7 exhibit strong countryside characteristics but lower landscape sensitivity.

11.1.31. The larger sites (North and South) at East Hemel Hempstead are considered to have higher landscape sensitivity partly due to the potential scale of development and partly through their visual connection with the wider landscape to the west. Northeast of Harpenden (Site 6) is located on the slope of the Lea Valley and for this reason is considered to have relatively high landscape sensitivity.

11.1.32. The three sites North of St Albans (Site 4), Northwest of Harpenden (Site 5) and at London Colney (Site 7) are considered to have medium landscape sensitivity to development.

11.1.33. The remaining sites (2a, 3, and 8) are considered to have the lower landscape sensitivity and therefore a higher suitability for potential release from the Green Belt. They exhibit lower landscape quality, fewer countryside characteristics and greater urban influence.

11.1.34. The definition of site boundaries and indicative site layouts presented in this report have taken account of existing landscape features and incorporated suggested landscape mitigation measures to help maintain the integrity of the Green Belt.

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

## 11.2. Overall Ranking

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

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

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

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

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





### **11.3. Timing of Potential Development**

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

## 12. Conclusion and Recommendations

- 12.1.1. This Green Belt Sites and Boundaries Study has assessed eight strategic sub-areas which contribute least towards the five Green Belt purposes<sup>15</sup> and identified nine sites for potential Green Belt release and future development. The sites are considered to be most suitable to accommodate development with least detriment to Green Belt purposes.
- 12.1.2. The key findings of this study comprise:
- Identification of nine sites which are considered to be most suitable for potential Green Belt release and future development. This is based upon a detailed assessment of: their contribution towards Green Belt purposes; environmental, historic and other primary constraints; capability of integration into existing settlements; and; landscape sensitivity.
  - Suggested detailed revisions to Green Belt boundaries in each of the sub-areas to identify sites for potential release from the Green Belt;
  - Estimated residential development capacities for each site based upon a density range of 30dph to 50dph<sup>16</sup>. Eight of the nine sites are recommended for residential-led development, and calculations take account of the need to provide ancillary uses and supporting infrastructure. Indicative site layouts show potential development blocks, and retained and proposed landscape features to help maintain the integrity of the Green Belt; and,
  - A ranking of sites in order of their suitability for potential Green Belt release and future development
- 12.1.3. In total, the nine sites offer the potential to deliver between **4,806** to **8,010** units across St Albans City and District (at 30dph to 50dph).
- 12.1.4. Based on the findings of the assessment, the sites have been grouped into three tiers in order of their suitability for potential Green Belt release and future development. This order is based upon:
- Contribution towards the five Green Belt purposes assessed;
  - Extent to which constraints to development have been avoided or can be overcome;
  - Potential for integration of development into the existing settlement pattern to help create sustainable patterns of development; and,
  - Landscape sensitivity and visual impact of potential development on the surrounding area.
- 12.1.5. Table 13.1 below summarises the estimated potential housing development capacity at each site, grouped by Tier.

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

<sup>16</sup>Dwellings per hectare

**Table 13.1: Estimated residential capacity**

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

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

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



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



## Appendices



## **Appendix 1: Detailed Methodology**



## **Stage 1: Sub-area Assessment**

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

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

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

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

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

#### *Environmental and Historic Constraints*

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

Primary and secondary environmental and historic constraints are listed below.

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



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

#### *Sustainable Patterns of Development and Integration*

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

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

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

#### *Landscape Appraisal*

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

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





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

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

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

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

#### *Landscape Sensitivity*

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

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

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

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

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

#### *Desk Study*

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

- The Hertfordshire Landscape Character Area Statements (published online)



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

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

#### *Field Survey*

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

#### *Analysis*

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

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

#### *Evaluation of Landscape Sensitivity*

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

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



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.



## **Stage 2: Site Assessment**

### ***Task 2a: Boundary Review***

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

### **Task 2c: Indicative Development Capacity**

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

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

- a) The **Gross Development Area (GDA)** defines that portion of the sub-area that could potentially be released for development. The remainder of the sub-area would remain Green Belt. Landscape mitigation measures may be required to maintain the integrity of the Green Belt within these sub-areas and forms a critical component in understanding which areas of land could be released.
- b) We have used the benchmark that up to 60% of the GDA would be developed (termed **Net Development Area**); the remainder 40% would be required to provide for public open space<sup>17</sup>, roads, and other infrastructure(including small scale social and community facilities);
- c) All developable land would come forward predominantly for residential development, with the exception of Site 2a which is identified exclusively for employment uses.
- d) . Specific need and location of land for new school provision does not form part of this study. The site area required by this land use has not been identified and the residential capacities of the larger sites would need to be reviewed should they be required to provide a significant area of land for this purpose; and,
- e) The consultant team is aware that certain planning applications have been granted or are under consideration on two sub-areas (at S3 East of St Albans and S4 North of St Albans).

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



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

### *Development Density*

In order to assess development density, this study reviewed the Council's planning policy in terms of setting a density level for development that would be acceptable. While the policy stresses the need for high-density residential development, no actual range of dwellings/ hectare is set<sup>18</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 (Llewelyn Davies Yeang, 2000) is recognised as a key best practice document in relation to assessing the design quality of development. It draws upon examples from across the UK and Europe and is intended to help guide policy development and practical application in new development and regeneration to help improve housing-led schemes and the promotion of sustainable new development. A density matrix is set out in Table 3.3, within Chapter 3 which considers 'creating urban structure'. Average densities are based on case studies analysed as part of the *Sustainable Residential Quality: Exploring the housing potential of large sites research (LPAC, DETR, GOL, LT and HC, 2000)*. The matrix recommended that densities of **30 to 50 dph** should be applied to suburban development, along public transport corridors, for detached and linked houses.

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

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

To cross-correlate the figures coming out of this broad assessment, we have reviewed the Council's St Albans Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2013) which states that 'There is a projected large growth (51%) in the requirement for 3-bed housing; 21% growth in the requirement for 1-bed; 20% growth in the requirement for 2-bed housing and a 7% increase in the requirement for 4 bed housing' (page 258). We have used this study, along with the Council's standards for private open space<sup>19</sup> to determine minimum residential plot sizes.

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

<sup>19</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).



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>20</sup>.

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>21</sup>.

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

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

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

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

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

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<sup>20</sup> St Albans Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2013)

<sup>21</sup> St Albans Design and Advice Leaflet No 1 (November 1998)



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