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Greater Cambridge Green Belt Assessment

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 LUC was commissioned by Cambridge City Council (CCC) and South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) to undertake an independent and objective assessment of the performance of all Green Belt land across the two districts, which together form Greater Cambridge. The strategic Green Belt Assessment will form an important piece of evidence informing the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan being prepared jointly by CCC and SCDC.

1.2 This report sets out the findings of the Green Belt assessment.

Study aim and scope

1.3 The aim of the study is to provide an independent, robust and transparent assessment which

- identifies variations in openness and the extent to which land contributes to the purposes of the Green Belt; and
- uses this to determine variations in the potential harm to those Green Belt purposes of releasing land within Greater Cambridge from the designation.

1.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the role and function of Green Belt and defines the purposes of the designation. These purposes have been applied locally as the 'Cambridge Green Belt Purposes', which are set out in the 2018 CCC and SCDC Local Plans as being to:

- preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre
- maintain and enhance the quality of its setting

- prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city.

1.5 . The NPPF Green Belt purposes are set out within Chapter 2 of this report, and the focus of this study on the Cambridge Green Belt purposes is explained as part of the Scope of Assessment section within Chapter 3.

1.6 The focus on potential harm to the Green Belt purposes has arisen from case law, as established in *Calverton Parish Council v Greater Nottingham Councils and others* (2015), which indicates that planning judgments setting out the ‘exceptional circumstances’ for the amendment of Green Belt boundaries require consideration of the ‘nature and extent of harm’ to the Green Belt and ‘the extent to which the consequent impacts on the purposes of the Green Belt may be ameliorated or reduced to the lowest reasonably practicable extent’.

1.7 The purpose of this study is not to identify land that is suitable for development, or to set out the exceptional circumstances for releasing land from the Green Belt, and the assessment does not consider any specific potential development sites identified through Calls for Sites or other processes. However, by identifying variations in Green Belt harm at a suitably granular level, the study provides outputs that will, alongside wider evidence relating to other environmental/sustainability considerations, inform decisions regarding the relative merits of meeting the Councils’ development needs in different locations.

1.8 The study is a comprehensive one, assessing all Green Belt land within the Greater Cambridge area. This represents a broadening of scope from the previous Green Belt study, carried out in 2015 as part of the evidence base for the then-emerging CCC and SCDC Local Plans, which focused on the ‘inner’ Green Belt area adjacent to the city of Cambridge ([\[See reference 1\]](#)).

Consultation

1.9 Local planning authorities have a duty to cooperate [See reference 2] with neighbouring authorities, and with other prescribed bodies, on strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries. Paragraph 20 of the NPPF sets out the strategic topics for which Local Plan strategic policies should be prepared, including population and economic growth and associated development and infrastructure and facilities, climate change and the conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment. All these topics either have a direct or indirect link to land designated as Green Belt.

1.10 A Method Statement for this study was, therefore, issued for consultation with the stakeholders with whom the Council has a duty to cooperate. This included Historic England and the relevant neighbouring local planning authorities (that is those adjoining the administrative boundary of SCDC), namely East Cambridgeshire, West Suffolk, Uttlesford, North Hertfordshire, Central Bedfordshire, Braintree and Huntingdonshire.

1.11 Consultation responses were reviewed and taken into consideration in the preparation of this study. These responses were summarised in a consultation log and are included as Appendix C of this report.

Report authors

1.12 This report has been prepared by LUC on behalf of CCC and SCDC. LUC has completed Green Belt studies at a range of scales for over 45 English local planning authorities in the past five years. All of those that have subsequently been subject to scrutiny at Local Plan Examination have been found to be robust.

Report structure

1.13 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2: sets out the national and local policy context, an overview of Green Belt within CCC and SCDC and a summary of the previous Green Belt studies that have been undertaken;
- Chapter 3: outlines the methodology that was used to undertake the assessment of harm;
- Chapter 4: summarises the findings of the assessment; and
- Chapter 5: outlines next steps that should be considered when proposing to make changes to the Green Belt.

1.14 A glossary of key terms is included at Appendix E.

Chapter 2

Green Belt Policy and Context

2.1 This chapter provides a summary of national and local Green Belt policy and sets out the evolution of the Cambridge Green Belt. It also briefly summarises the previous Green Belt studies that have been produced for CCC, SCDC and neighbouring East Cambridgeshire District.

National planning policy and guidance

National Planning Policy Framework

2.2 Government policy on the Green Belt is set out in chapter 13 of the adopted National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) [See reference 3]. Protecting Green Belt Land. Paragraph 137 of the NPPF states that “the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence”.

2.3 This is elaborated in NPPF paragraph 138, which states that Green Belts serve five purposes, as set out below.

The purposes of Green Belt

- 1) To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.
- 2) To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.

- 3) To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
- 4) To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.
- 5) To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

2.4 The NPPF emphasises in paragraphs 139 and 140 that local planning authorities should establish and, if justified, only alter Green Belt boundaries through the preparation of their Local Plans. It goes on to state that “once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified, through the preparation or updating of plans. Strategic policies should establish the need for any changes to Green Belt boundaries having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so they can endure beyond the plan period”.

2.5 When defining Green Belt boundaries NPPF paragraph 143 states local planning authorities should:

- demonstrate consistency with Local Plan strategy, most notably achieving sustainable development;
- not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open;
- safeguard enough non-Green Belt land to meet development needs beyond the plan period; and
- define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.

2.6 Current planning guidance makes it clear that the Green Belt is a strategic planning policy constraint designed primarily to prevent the spread of built development and the coalescence of urban areas. The NPPF goes on to state “local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance

landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land” (paragraph 145).

2.7 It is important to note, however, that these positive roles should be sought for the Green Belt once designated. The lack of a positive role, or the poor condition of Green Belt land, does not necessarily undermine its fundamental role to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Openness is not synonymous with landscape character or quality.

2.8 Paragraph 147 and 148 state that “inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances... ‘Very special circumstances’ will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations”.

2.9 New buildings are inappropriate in the Green Belt, albeit with some exceptions which are set out in two closed lists. The first is in paragraph 149 which sets out the following exceptions:

- “buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
- the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;
- the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- limited infilling in villages;
- limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan; and

- limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:
 - not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development, or
 - not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.”

2.10 Finally, paragraph 150 sets out other forms of development that are not inappropriate provided they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt. These include:

- “mineral extraction;
- engineering operations;
- local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;
- the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;
- material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation or for cemeteries or burial grounds); and
- development, including buildings brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.”

Planning Practice Guidance

2.11 The NPPF's Green Belt policies are supplemented by additional National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). The guidance sets out some of the factors that should be taken into account when considering the potential impact of development on the openness of Green Belt land. The factors referenced are not presented as an exhaustive list, but rather a summary of some common

considerations borne out by specific case law judgements. The guidance states openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects [See reference 4]. Other circumstances which have the potential to affect judgements on the impact of development on openness include:

- the duration of development and its remediability to the original or to an equivalent (or improved) state of, openness; and
- the degree of activity likely to be generated by development, such as traffic generation.

2.12 The guidance also elaborates on paragraph 142 of the NPPF which requires local planning authorities to set out ways in which the impact of removing land from the Green Belt can be offset through compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of the remaining Green Belt land. The guidance endorses the preparation of supporting landscape, biodiversity or recreational need evidence to identify appropriate compensatory improvements, including:

- “new or enhanced green infrastructure;
- woodland planting;
- landscape and visual enhancements (beyond those needed to mitigate the immediate impacts of the proposal);
- improvements to biodiversity, habitat connectivity and natural capital;
- new or enhanced walking and cycle routes; and
- improved access to new, enhanced or existing recreational and playing field provision.”

2.13 Finally, the guidance offers some suggested considerations for securing the delivery of identified compensatory improvements – the need for early engagement with landowners and other interested parties to obtain the necessary local consents, establishing a detailed scope of works and identifying a means of funding their design, construction and maintenance through planning conditions, section 106 obligations and/or the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Planning Advisory Service Guidance

2.14 Neither the NPPF nor NPPG provide guidance on how to undertake Green Belt studies. However, the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) published an advice note [See reference 5] in 2015 that discusses some of the key issues associated with assessing the Green Belt. Reference to the PAS guidance is included in the Methodology section in Chapter 3 where relevant.

Evolution of the Cambridge Green Belt

2.15 The origins of the Cambridge Green Belt go back to the Plan for Cambridge produced by Professor Sir William Holford and H. Miles Wright in 1950 [See reference 6]. In this, the authors set out several qualities which they considered most people would want to retain and that would be diminished or lost with large-scale growth. These included: the University; the central open spaces; plenty of gardens and allotments; short distance between homes and the central shops; the countryside near the town; and a distinctive market town character.

2.16 They suggested a 'green line' should be permanently safeguarded, beyond which building should not be permitted in order to prevent coalescence with Girton, Cherry Hinton and Grantchester. As part of this they also added that 'green wedges' along the river should be kept open to keep the countryside near the centre of the towns on its west side, and that development should be excluded from the foothills of the Gogs. It also recognised that villages near the city boundary would require 'green belts' between them and the town.

2.17 From the Holford and Miles Wright plan, the emergence of the concept of a city with a special character and compact size which should be protected by a 'Green Belt' can be seen.

2.18 The first County Development Plan was approved by the Minister in 1954. In the Cambridge area, this was closely based on the Holford and Miles Wright

plan, in particular by aiming to restrain population growth of the city and disperse new population into the surrounding villages.

2.19 The inner boundary of the Cambridge Green Belt around the city was first defined in Town Map No.1 (Amendment No. 2), which was approved by the Minister in 1965. Town Map No. 2 defined the boundaries around the necklace villages and, whilst not formally approved by the minister, was a material consideration in determining planning applications. The concepts within the early County Plan and Town Maps were later evolved within Structure Plans and Local Plans.

2.20 The Cambridgeshire Structure Plan 1980 was the first structure plan for the Cambridge area; this recognised the importance of the Green Belt in helping to withstand development pressures both from Cambridge itself and the London area, by protecting the open countryside around the city and ensuring that surrounding villages don't coalesce. This was addressed in Policy P19/3 which established that Green Belt boundaries and the degree of expansion of settlements will be acceptable in the context of "the desirability of checking the further expansion of Cambridge; of preserving its special character; and of preventing communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another". The Cambridgeshire Structure Plan 1980 was replaced by the 1989 and then subsequently the 1995 Cambridgeshire Structure Plan, which maintained the general thrust of Green Belt policy from the 1980 Plan.

2.21 In 1988 the Planning Policy Guidance 2 'Green Belts' (PPG2) was published. This national guidance reaffirmed the importance of Green Belts and added two additional purposes for including land within a Green Belt: to safeguard surrounding countryside from encroachment and to assist in urban regeneration. It also amended the aim of preserving the special character of towns to make it clear that it should only apply to historic towns and their setting. In a House of Commons written answer, the Secretary of State for the Environment at the time (Mr Chope) indicated that "Of all the Green Belt purposes listed in planning policy guidance note 2, that of 'preserving the special character of historic towns' is especially relevant to the Green Belts referred to by the hon. Member", which were York, Chester, Bath, Oxford and Cambridge. The Cambridge Green Belt Local Plan 1992 (prepared by

Cambridgeshire County Council in collaboration with CCC, SCDC and East Cambridgeshire District Council), established new boundaries for the Cambridge Green Belt, reviewing those made previously in the Town Plans. The main change was to the northern fringe of the city, with the release of a large area of Green Belt land in part due to the changed character following the construction of the Cambridge Northern Bypass (A14) and in part to cater for long-term development needs. The 1996 Cambridge Local Plan (Cambridge City Council 1996) took forward the boundaries of the Green Belt that had been established in the 1992 Green Belt Local Plan, with only minor adjustments in the west of the city.

2.22 This was followed by a further and more strategically significant review (required by Policy 24 of the Regional Planning Guidance for East Anglia - RPG6), which led to locations for Green Belt release being identified in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 and detailed boundary changes subsequently made in the Cambridge Local Plan 2006 and the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework 2007-2010. Many of these sites have been, or are now being, developed (such as Eddington, Clay Farm and Trumpington Meadows).

2.23 The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 also set out the current Cambridge Green Belt purposes and reaffirmed that Cambridge's historic nature is the reason for the existence of its Green Belt. With regard to the relationship to the National Green Belt purposes - as set out at the time in Planning Policy Guidance Note 2: Green Belts (1995) - paragraph 8.10 of the Examination in Public Panel Report (2003) [See reference 7] stated "it is not the role of the Structure Plan simply to reiterate national policy – it should interpret national policy as it relates to the strategic or local context. In the case of Cambridge it only has a Green Belt because it is a historic city. It follows that all five purposes of Green Belts ... are not necessarily relevant to this Green Belt". This made it clear that plans should consider local context, rather than reiterating national policy on Green Belt.

2.24 Paragraph 8.11 of the Panel Report went on to state that there are two purposes that are critical to the Cambridge Green Belt: the primary purpose being to preserve the special character of Cambridge and to maintain the

quality of its setting; and the secondary purpose being to prevent further coalescence of settlements. In regard to the special character of Cambridge, paragraph 8.9 of the Panel Report stated that the vision for Cambridge is of a “compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre” and that “apart from its unique historic character, of particular importance to the quality of the city are the green spaces within it, the green corridors which run from open countryside into the urban area, and the green separation which exists to protect the integrity of the necklace of villages. All of these features, together with views of the historic core, are key qualities which are important to be safeguarded in any review of Green Belt boundaries”. It also suggests that all this could be the starting point for future Green Belt Reviews.

2.25 The Panel Report also recommended the Cambridge Green Belt Purposes as being to: “Preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre; Maintain and enhance the quality of its setting; prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city”. These became Policy 9/2a of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003.

2.26 Following the adoption of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003, the Cambridge Local Plan 2006 was subject to public examination. The inspector’s report on the 2006 Local Plan recommended that the purposes set out in the 2003 Structure Plan should be reiterated within the 2006 Local Plan for completeness and to ensure the special purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt are clearly understood. The Cambridge Local Plan 2006 was subsequently adopted with the Green Belt purposes set out. The Cambridge purposes were also set out in the South Cambridgeshire Core Strategy 2007, which formed part of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework.

2.27 The Cambridge Local Plan (2006) (CLP 2006) and South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework (adopted between 2007 and 2010) (SCLDF) introduced a step change in levels of planned growth, and released significant land from the Cambridge Green Belt and allocated a number of urban extensions to the city in the south, north west, north east and east. Very little new development was proposed in the rural area, although a significant amount of housing already planned in villages under previous plans was still being built.

2.28 The wording of the Cambridge Purposes was subsequently carried forward to the current Cambridge Local Plan 2018 (CLP 2018) and the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 (SCLP 2018), and these are expressly intended to provide a basis from which to assess impact on change. The Inspectors' Local Plan Examination report [See reference 8] in 2018 accepted the continued validity of the three Cambridge Green Belt purposes as an application of national policy in a local context, reflecting “the importance of Cambridge as a historic city and the particular role of the Green Belt in preserving its setting”.

The Green Belt around Cambridge Today

2.29 The Green Belt is drawn tightly around Cambridge, completely encircling the city. Figure 2.1 shows the extent of the Green Belt in and around Cambridge. As set out in the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government Local Authority Green Belt Statistics for England: 2018 to 2019 (as of 31st March 2019) [See reference 9], there are 23,230ha of Green Belt land within South Cambridgeshire and 970ha within Cambridge City, extending around 3 to 5 miles from the edge of the City. This incorporates a number of inset villages lying within South Cambridgeshire District.

Recent changes to the Green Belt

2.30 As noted, significant land was taken out of the Green Belt by the CLP 2006 and SCLDF 2007-2010, predominantly in the form of urban extensions. In addition, further releases were made through the Cambridge North West Area Action Plan (AAP) and Cambridge East AAP. These changes around the edge of Cambridge necessitated a re-evaluation of the Green Belt through the 2012 and 2015 Inner Green Belt Studies (described below), which the CLP 2018 noted as showing that “...the remaining areas of Green Belt have increased in

value as they are now closer to the city's edge and less Green Belt land remains to perform the unique roles played by the Cambridge Green Belt".

2.31 At the time the 2015 Cambridge Inner Green Belt Study was undertaken, a number of these urban extension sites, including some outwith the Green Belt on the urban edge, were either permitted or under construction and were therefore taken into account as part of the study. These are shown on the Policies Maps and include:

- The West Cambridge Area of Major Change – located on land released from the Green Belt in the CLP 2006, allocated for educational and associated uses related to Cambridge University (Proposal Site M13, CLP 2018);
- North West Cambridge – on land between Maddingley Road and Huntingdon Road released from the Green Belt in the North West Cambridge AAP 2009, allocated for educational and associated uses related to Cambridge University;
- Land between Huntingdon Road and Histon Road Area of Major Change – located on land released from the Green Belt in the CLP 2006 and SCLDF, allocated for residential development (included as Proposal Site R43 in the CLP 2018 and Strategic Site SS/2 in the SCLP 2018);
- Cambridge Biomedical Campus (including Addenbrooke's Hospital) Area of Major Change – located on the southern edge of the city on land released from the Green Belt in the CLP 2006, allocated for biomedical and biotechnology uses (included as Proposal Sites M15 in the CLP 2018); and
- The Southern Fringe Areas of Major Change – on land released from the Green Belt in the CLP 2006 and SCLDF, allocated for residential development and associated educational and community facilities at Clay Farm, Trumpington Meadows, Glebe Farm and Bell School (Proposal Sites R42 a, b, c and d in the CLP 2018).

2.32 However, since 2015 further development on the above sites has occurred or is under way, as set out below. In addition, a number of small sites on the

edge of Cambridge were released from the Green Belt within the 2018 Local Plans, some of which have been subsequently developed.

- Cambridge Biomedical Campus Area of Major Change – substantial further development has occurred along Francis Crick Way, including development fronting onto Green Belt land along the Hobson’s Brook Green Corridor;
- The Southern Fringe Areas of Major Change – development is now largely complete in all areas;
- West Cambridge – further development has occurred to the east, along JJ Thomson Avenue;
- Land between Huntingdon Road and Histon Road Area of Major Change – substantial development has occurred on the area to the south of (that is Proposal Site R43 of the CLP 2018);
- North West Cambridge – substantial development has occurred around Eddington Avenue; and
- ‘Fulbourn Road West 1 and 2’ (Proposal Sites GB3 and GB4, CLP 2018), employment use development currently under construction, with GB4 largely complete.

2.33 Development within the urban extension sites has taken place within land already released from the Green Belt and as such has not led to any further changes the Green Belt boundary. However, this additional development may have increased the urbanising influence on adjacent areas of Green Belt, such as in the vicinity of Hobson’s Brook to the south and in the vicinity of Girton to the north-west of the city. This will be relevant when considering the relationship between Green Belt land and Cambridge, or other inset settlements (see Chapter 3, Step 3 below).

2.34 The following sites have also been released from the Green Belt but are either yet to be developed or are partially developed:

- Two small sites on the south-eastern edge of Cambridge (Proposal Sites GB3 and GB4) have been released and partially developed. This has clearly changed the urban edge of the city, albeit these two sites are

partially enclosed by existing areas of built development and the development has occurred in the context of existing relatively large-scale built forms at the adjacent Peterhouse Technology Park. In addition, the development parameters set out in Policy 27 of the CLP 2018 requires the creation of a generous landscape edge to the south of the sites to help create an appropriate buffer and distinctive city edge, and an appropriate profile and setting against the Green Belt. These measures, if implemented as intended, should help to reduce potential urbanising impact on the adjacent Green Belt;

- Land between Huntingdon Road and Histon Road Major Development Site – area to the north (Strategic Site SS/2 of the SCLP 2018). A small area to the northwest of the NIAB HQ building has been built out;
- Cambridge Biomedical Campus Extension, released from the Green Belt under Policy E/2 of the SCLP 2018. One building under construction;
- ‘Land north and south of Worts’ Causeway’ (Proposal Sites GB1 and GB2, Cambridge Local Plan 2018), released from the Green Belt in the CLP 2018 to provide small-scale housing developments. Development parameters set out in Policy 27 of the CLP 2018 requires the creation of a generous landscape edge to the south of the sites to help create an appropriate buffer and distinctive city edge, and an appropriate profile and setting against the Green Belt. These measures, if implemented as intended, should help to reduce potential urbanising impact on the adjacent Green Belt. Development of GB2 (19/1168/OUT - Newbury Farm, Babraham Road) was approved on 02 September 2020, whilst an application for GB1 (20/01972/OUT) was being considered at the time of writing;
- Allocated Housing Sites at Comberton, Impington and Sawston, released from the Green Belt under Policy H/1 of the SCLP 2018; and
- The Cambridge East AAP Site, released from the Green Belt primarily by the CLP 2006. The 2018 Local Plans state that there is an opportunity to deliver residential development on parts the East Cambridge Site during the plan period (that is Proposal Sites R41 (Land north of Coldham’s Lane), R45 (Land north of Newmarket Road) and R47 (Land north of Cherry Hinton) of the CLP 2018; and Strategic Sites SS/3 (Cambridge

East) of the SCLP 2018). The rest of the Cambridge East site is safeguarded for longer term development beyond 2031 and the corridor of Green Belt running from Coldham's Common to Teversham will remain as Green Belt. Planning permission has also been granted for the Wing Development Land North of Newmarket Road, Fen Ditton (S/2682/13/OL) for up to 1300 homes; and for Land North of Cherry Hinton, Coldham's Lane (S/1231/18/OL) for a maximum of 1200 dwellings. Construction has started at the former.

2.35 Built development on these sites will undoubtedly cause further changes to the built up edge of Cambridge and may have an urbanising influence on adjacent Green Belt land. Further analysis of the impact of recent and future changes will be undertaken as part of this assessment, which will include fieldwork. This will form the basis for assessing how the remaining Green Belt may be affected the changes.

Existing Local Plans

Cambridge City Council

2.36 The Cambridge Local Plan (adopted October 2018) is the current statutory development plan for Cambridge City Council. This replaced the Cambridge Local Plan 2006 and sets out policies and proposals for future development and spatial planning requirements to 2031.

2.37 Section 2 of the Local Plan sets out the Spatial Strategy for Cambridge. The vision for Cambridge is "...of a compact, dynamic city, located within the high quality landscape setting of the Cambridge Green Belt". To achieve this vision, several Strategic Objectives are set out, which includes "...6. protect and enhance the landscape setting of the city, which comprises the Cambridge Green Belt, the green corridors penetrating the urban area, the established network of multi-functional green spaces, and tree canopy cover in the city".

2.38 Policy 4: ‘The Cambridge Green Belt’ states that “...New development in the Green Belt will only be approved in line with Green Belt policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (2012)”. The supporting text for Policy 4 goes on to say that “the Green Belt preserves the unique setting and special character of the city and includes green corridors that penetrate deep into the urban and historic heart of Cambridge”. The National Green Belt Purposes and the Cambridge Green Belt Purposes are set out on page 30, the latter being:

- “preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre
- maintain and enhance the quality of its setting
- prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city”.

2.39 Paragraph 2.56 states that, given the level of need for homes and jobs, it is considered that exceptional circumstances exist to release a number of small areas of the Green Belt.

2.40 The sites for release are set out under Policy 27: ‘Site specific development opportunities’, which states that “sites GB1 and GB2 (Land north and south of Wort’s Causeway) ... are to be released from the Cambridge Green Belt for residential development of up to 430 dwellings...” and that “the development of sites GB3 and GB4 (Fulbourn Road West 1 and 2) ... will be supported for employment use...”.

South Cambridge District Council

2.41 The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (adopted September 2018) is the current statutory development plan for South Cambridgeshire District Council. This replaced parts of the South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Plan (2007-2010) and sets out policies and proposals for the period 2010 to 2031.

2.42 The Spatial Strategy sets out the vision and objectives and development needs for the district. Policy S/2: 'Objectives' of the Local Plan states that "the vision for the local plan will be secured through the achievement of 6 objectives", including "... b. To protect the character of South Cambridgeshire, including its built and natural heritage, as well as protecting the Cambridge Green Belt...".

2.43 Policy S/4: 'Cambridge Green Belt' states that "a Green Belt will be maintained around Cambridge that will define the extent of the urban area. The detailed boundaries of the Green Belt in South Cambridgeshire are defined on the Policies Map, which includes some minor revisions to the inner boundary of the Green Belt around Cambridge and to the boundaries around some inset villages. New development in the Green Belt will only be approved in accordance with Green Belt policy in the National Planning Policy Framework".

2.44 The supporting text for Policy S/4 goes on to say that whilst the fundamental aim of Green Belts is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open, a specific function of some Green Belts such as Cambridge is to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.

2.45 The established purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt are set out on page 25, which are a duplication of those set out in the Cambridge Local Plan. In addition, a number of factors that define the special character of Cambridge are listed as follows:

- "Key views of Cambridge from the surrounding countryside;
- A soft green edge to the city;
- A distinctive urban edge;
- Green corridors penetrating into the city;
- Designated sites and other features contributing positively to the character of the landscape setting;
- The distribution, physical separation, setting, scale and character of Green Belt villages; and

- A landscape that retains a strong rural character”.

2.46 Paragraph 2.33 states that, given the level of need for homes and jobs, it is considered that exceptional circumstances exist to release a number of small areas of the Green Belt. These include a site between Huntingdon Road and Histon Road as an extension to the housing allocation carried forward from the Local Development Framework (Policy SS/2) and a site on Fulbourn Road as an extension to the Peterhouse Technology Park (Policy E/3).

2.47 Paragraph 2.34 goes on to say that, additionally land is released from the Green Belt around three villages - Sawston, Impington and Comberton - (Policy H/1) to meet the overall need for housing and to provide a flexible and responsive package of sites that will best meet identified needs.

Previous Green Belt studies

The Cambridge Sub-Region Study, 2001

2.48 Colin Buchanan and Partners were commissioned by the Standing Conference of East Anglia Local Authorities under Policy 21 of RPG6 to carry out a review of the sub-region [See reference 10], in order to inform the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan.

2.49 The study included a Green Belt Review at Section 7. This established that the primary purpose of the Green Belt was “to preserve the special character of Cambridge and to maintain the quality of its setting”; and that the secondary purpose was “to prevent further coalescence of settlements”. The study also defined ‘special character’ as “in addition to the City’s historic core and associated university colleges”, comprising “the green corridors and wedges connecting the city with the countryside; and the separation between settlements to ensure their clear identity”. Setting was defined as “views of the city; and the placement and character of villages surrounding the city and the interface between the city and the countryside”.

2.50 Following a broad overview of the Green Belt, the study identified a number of sites for further study. These were sites that did not possess characteristics that were recognised as being of particular importance.

Inner Green Belt Study, 2002

2.51 This was an in-house working document produced by CCC, which informed the preparation of the 2006 Cambridge Local Plan, but was later made available to enable its inclusion as a Core Document for the Local Plan Inquiry. It assessed the importance of various sectors and parcels on the city edge to the purposes of the Green Belt, and then of the potential impact of developing these sites. It was carried out to assist specifically in identifying sites that could be released from Green Belt for development close to Cambridge without harm to the purposes of Green Belt or the setting of the City.

2.52 The results of the survey are set out in the Sector Tables within the report, although no accompanying plan is available (reference to 'Plan X' only within the report) showing where the sectors are located.

Cambridge Green Belt Study: A Vision for the Future of Cambridge and its Green Belt Setting, 2002

2.53 LDA were appointed by SCDC to assess whether there was scope for urban expansion to the east of the city, without harming Green Belt purposes. The focus of the study was specifically on the fourth purpose (National) – that is 'to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns' – which is of particular relevance to Cambridge. The requirement for the study arose due to the differing views of CCC and SCDC at the time on the extent of development that should be allowed to the east of the city.

2.54 In comparison to the 2002 CCC Inner Green Belt Study, the SCDC study took a wider, more strategic look at the broader Green Belt around the City and how it benefited both the city and the general area. It described at a broad scale the factors that contribute to the setting and special character of Cambridge, and the qualities to be safeguarded to preserve this setting and special character; followed by a detailed assessment of the east side of Cambridge.

2.55 The study highlighted several “qualities that contribute positively to the setting and special character of Cambridge, and which are essential to the Green Belt purposes”, as follows:

- “A large historic core relative to the size of the city as a whole
- A city focussed on the historic core
- Short and/or characteristic approaches to Cambridge from the edge of the city
- A city of human scale easily crossed by foot and by bicycle
- Key views of Cambridge from the landscape
- Significant areas of distinctive and supportive townscape and landscape
- Topography providing a framework to Cambridge
- A soft green edge to the city
- Green fingers into the city
- Designated sites and areas enriching the setting of Cambridge
- Long distance footpaths and bridleways providing links between Cambridge and the open countryside
- Elements and features contributing positively to the character of the landscape setting
- The distribution, physical separation, setting, scale and character of necklace villages
- A city set in a landscape which retains a strong rural character.”

2.56 The study concluded that there was some potential to develop parts of five of the areas suggested in the then draft Structure Plan (north of Newmarket Road, North of Cherry Hinton, Cambridge Airport, Clay Farm and areas east and south of Trumpington, and between Huntingdon Road and Histon Road), without causing significant detriment to Green Belt purposes; but not at the two others sites identified (south of Addenbrooke's Hospital and between Madingley Road and Huntingdon Road). The detailed assessment of East Cambridge concluded that there was potential to develop land west of Airport Way and north of Newmarket Road, but that land east of the Airport (that is around Teversham, Fulbourn and east of Cherry Hinton) could not be developed without causing significant detriment to Green Belt purposes.

2.57 In 2003 LDA were commissioned to undertake a study of land to the west of Trumpington Road, for which a requirement was included within the 2003 Structure Plan.

Appraisal of the Inner Green Belt, 2012

2.58 This was a broad appraisal of the inner Green Belt boundary carried out by CCC that sat alongside the Issues and options Report (2012). It considered the context of earlier land releases and how they had affected the revised inner Green Belt boundary. The appraisal specifically reconsidered zones of land immediately adjacent to the City in terms of the principles and function of the Green Belt; but did not identify specific areas with potential for further release.

2.59 As with the 2002 Study, the methodology used in the appraisal was based on the principles of landscape and visual assessment, albeit much simplified due to not being concerned with potential further release.

2.60 The appraisal drew conclusions on broad zones of the City edge which had more or less importance when measured against Green Belt criteria. It found that "...areas where the City is viewed from higher ground or generally has open aspects, or where the urban edge is close to the city centre are more sensitive and cannot accommodate change easily. Areas of the City that have

level views and where the edge has mixed foreground can accommodate change more easily. On a comparative basis these areas have a lesser importance to the setting of the City and to the purposes of Green Belt”.

Inner Green Belt Boundary Study, 2012

2.61 This study was jointly undertaken by officers of CCC and SCDC. It drew on and reviewed the CCC 2002 Inner Green Belt Study and built on and was consistent with the broad appraisal of the Inner Green Belt boundary that CCC undertook in 2012. The purpose of the study was to provide an up-to-date evidence base for the emerging Local Plans at that time. In particular it aimed to help the Councils reach a view on whether there were specific areas of land that could be considered for release from the Green Belt and allocated for development, without significant harm to Green Belt purposes.

2.62 The study followed a similar methodology to that used in the CCC 2002 Inner Green Belt Study, the difference being that the 2012 study was a joint study and therefore the assessment criteria have been agreed between the two councils. As with the 2002 study, a sensitivity score of major/high indicates an area was important to the purposes of the Green Belt and very sensitive to change; a sensitivity score of medium/low/negligible indicated that any change to the Green Belt boundary would have limited effect on Green Belt purposes.

2.63 Conclusions on the importance of land to the purposes of the Green Belt and level of impact on those purposes were set out in the Sector Tables and accompanying plans. Plan 4 illustrates the sectors and their significance rating. It can be seen that the majority of the sectors were assessed as having a ‘Very High’ or ‘High’ sensitivity, with some small sectors of ‘Medium’ sensitivity to the south and south east, and several relatively large sectors of ‘Medium’ and ‘Low’ to the east.

2.64 The examination of the emerging Local Plans was suspended in May 2015. The inspectors set out their preliminary conclusions in a letter dated 20th May 2015, which stated: “...the two authorities have individually and jointly

undertaken a review of the inner Green Belt boundary during the course of the plan preparation ... A number of respondents have questioned the methodology employed in the Green Belt Review and we have found it difficult, in some cases, to understand how the assessment of 'importance to the Green Belt' has been derived from underlying assessments of importance to setting, character and separation...". In response to these comments CCC and SCDC commissioned LDA to undertake a further study of the inner Green Belt in 2015.

Cambridge Inner Green Belt Study, 2015

2.65 LDA were commissioned by CCC and SCDC in 2015 to undertake the Cambridge Inner Green Belt Study. This followed the suspension of the Examinations of their respective Local Plans in May 2015 and issues raised by the inspector in regard to the methodology employed in the earlier jointly prepared Inner Green Belt Review of 2012 [\[See reference 11\]](#).

2.66 The 2015 study did not employ a scoring system; instead a more qualitative process was followed, whereby each area was assessed for its importance to Green Belt purposes and then consideration was given as to whether there was potential to release land for development without significant harm to Green Belt purposes. The study took account of both National (NPPF) Green Belt purposes (with the exception of purpose 5) and the Cambridge Green Belt purposes. Although reference was made to both the NPPF and Cambridge purposes, the focus of the report was very much on the qualities of Cambridge and its surrounding landscape and how they contribute to the performance of Green Belt purposes. 16 qualities were identified, adapted from policy documents and previous studies (in particular the 2002 Cambridge Green Belt Study by LDA), as follows:

- "A large historic core relative to the size of the city as a whole.
- A city focussed on the historic core.
- Short and/or characteristic approaches to the hist. core from edge of the city.
- A city of human scale easily crossed by foot and by bicycle.

- Topography providing a framework to Cambridge.
- Long distance footpaths and bridleways providing access to the countryside.
- Key views of Cambridge. from surrounding landscape.
- Significant areas of distinctive and supportive townscape and landscape.
- A soft green edge to the city.
- Good urban structure with well-designed edges to the city.
- Green corridors into the city.
- The distribution, physical and visual separation of the necklace villages.
- The scale, character, identity and rural setting of the necklace villages.
- Designated sites and areas enriching the setting of Cambridge.
- Elements and features contributing to the character and structure of the landscape.
- A city set in a landscape which retains a strongly rural character.”

2.67 A total of 19 sectors of the Inner Green Belt were identified, with most divided into sub-sectors, and the 16 qualities were used as the criteria for assessment. The assessment demonstrated that all areas of land within the study area (with the exception of sub-area 8.2 – ‘Small field north east of rugby club’ to the south of Trumpington) are important to Green Belt purposes, albeit with the reasons differing from one area to another as follows:

- “West of the city, the inner Green Belt plays a critical role in maintaining the impression of a compact city, with countryside close to the historic core. The rural character of the land emphasises this and is seen as the foreground in views from approaches to the city, the M11 and the countryside west of the M11.
- South-east of the city, the rising land of Gog Magog Hills is a distinctive element of the setting of Cambridge, and is visible in views from within and across the city. The foothills extend to the urban edge in places;

elsewhere, flatter land at the foot of the hills is also important as the foreground to the city in views from elevated land.

- East of the city, the Fen and Fen Edge landscapes, while less visible than the Gog Magog Hills, are an equally close link to the historic origins of the city at the meeting point of three landscapes.
- East and south of the city, extensive areas of 20th century development have created an impression of urban sprawl. Significant further expansion in these directions could start to threaten Cambridge's identity as a city dominated by its historic core. The Inner Green Belt Land in these areas plays a critical role in preventing further expansion of the city and increasing urban sprawl.
- Green corridors into the city have long been accepted as a key component of its character. It is very important that these green corridors are preserved.
- Areas of land on all sides of the city form a rural setting of necklace villages or contribute to separation between villages and Cambridge or between the villages themselves. Areas surrounding the three innermost villages of Grantchester, Teversham and Fen Ditton are of particular importance but areas of Inner Green Belt also provide separation from other villages such as Great Shelford, Fulbourn, Girton and Histon".

2.68 Consideration was also given to whether it was possible to release certain areas from the Green Belt for development without significant harm to Green Belt purposes. A number of such areas were identified around south and south-east Cambridge. In each case parameters were set for any development to avoid significant harm to the purposes of the Green Belt. This informed the sites released from the Green Belt in the 2018 Local Plans.

2.69 The 2015 study was found to be robust within the Inspectors' Local Plan Examination report [See reference 12] in 2018 and remains a valid evidence base document. It is considered to be an appropriate evidence base document, in particular the 16 qualities of the Cambridge Green Belt are identified which can be used as the basis for subsequent Green Belt assessments such as this.

Neighbouring authorities' studies

East Cambridgeshire District

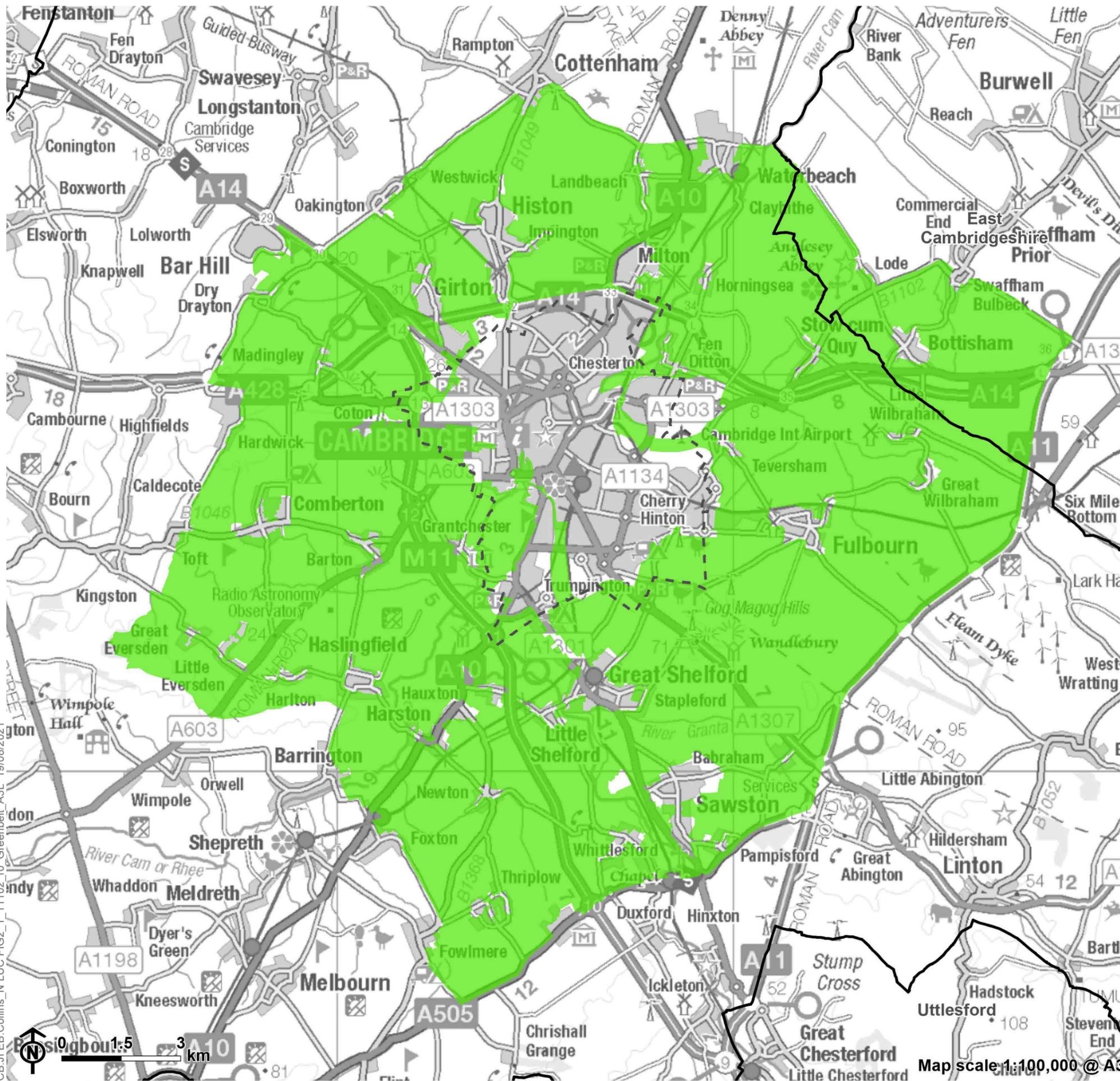
2.70 The Cambridge Green Belt includes approximately 1,910 hectares of East Cambridgeshire District, covering areas around the villages of Bottisham, Lode and Swaffham Bulbeck. The Green Belt Assessment of 2005 is the most recent assessment of the Green Belt in East Cambridgeshire District, although this was not available on the Council's website at the time of writing.

2.71 The East Cambridgeshire District Council document 'Policy LP4 – Green Belt' (November 2017) sets out that as part of preparation for the now withdrawn Draft Local Plan, the council did not take forward a suggestion to undertake a comprehensive review of the Green Belt boundary. The reason stated for this is that "...paragraph 83 of the NPPF (2012) suggests that this should only be altered in 'exception circumstances'", and that "as sufficient land outside the Green Belt is available to meet the development needs of East Cambridgeshire, there is no justification to undertake a suggested review for this Local Plan".

Figure 2.1

Extent of the Green Belt in Greater Cambridge

- Greater Cambridge
- Local Authority boundary
- Green Belt



CB:JIEB:Collins_N LUC FIG2_1_11102_r0_Greenbelt_A3L 19/08/2021

Chapter 3

Green Belt Assessment Methodology

3.1 This chapter sets out the methodology that was used to undertake the assessment of contribution to the Cambridge Green Belt purposes and the variations in harm to the Cambridge Green Belt purposes that would result from the release of Green Belt land. It includes:

- An overview of the assessment approach.
- Consideration of how the study relates to the previous Green Belt assessment (carried out in 2015).
- The scope of the assessment, in terms of the Green Belt purposes assessed, the physical extent of the study area and areas excluded from the study.
- The steps undertaken to produce ratings and supporting analysis for parcels of land showing variations in contribution and harm to the Green Belt purposes.

3.2 There is no defined approach set out in national planning policy or guidance as to how Green Belt studies should be undertaken. The approach that was consulted upon in this method statement is based on LUC's extensive experience of undertaking Green Belt studies for over 45 local authorities, several of which have been tested through Examination and found to be sound.

3.3 Throughout the methodology, green boxes are included to clarify the proposed method or to highlight evidence, such as policy, guidance and case law, which supports the approach.

Overview of Assessment Approach

3.4 The focus of this study was to assess the contribution of land to the Cambridge Green Belt purposes and the harm that is likely to result from expanding existing inset settlements (or settlements bordering the Green Belt's outer edge). The term 'inset settlement' is used throughout this report to refer to any settlement that is surrounded by Green Belt land, including the main urban area of Cambridge and the surrounding inset villages.

3.5 The identification of variations in harm to the Cambridge Green Belt purposes that would result from the release of land is underpinned by an assessment of the contribution that different areas of land make to those purposes. Criteria were defined for the assessment of contribution to each of the purposes. There are specific considerations relevant to each of the purposes, but also common factors which, to varying degrees, affected the level of contribution to each of the purposes: these include variations in Green Belt 'openness' and variations in the extent to which land is considered 'distinct' from an inset settlement.

3.6 Ratings and supporting analysis are provided to show variations in the contribution land makes to each of the Cambridge Green Belt purposes, in the context of the expansion of Cambridge and each inset settlement, and parcels were defined to reflect these variations.

3.7 Rather than considering pre-defined parcels, parcels were defined by applying an analysis process that works outwards from each inset settlement until parcels with a strong distinction (that is a strong perceived level of separation) from the inset settlement have been identified. This recognises that with distance from these edges the level of distinction from the inset settlement only increase, not diminish. This approach was based on the assumption that any growth was most likely to take place extending out from the main urban area of Cambridge and existing inset villages, or villages adjacent to the outer Green Belt boundary. Beyond the strongly distinct parcels, land was subdivided into 'outer areas'. As with the parcels, these outer areas were rated for

contribution, reflecting any significant variations in the relevance of the Cambridge Green Belt purposes.

3.8 Having identified variations in contribution, each parcel includes an assessment of the impact on the integrity of the neighbouring land that would result if the parcel were released from the Green Belt. These two considerations were combined to give overall ratings for harm associated with the parcels defined around Cambridge and each inset settlement. The assessment of harm was considered as a progression out from the edge of Cambridge or an inset settlement – that is, as an extension of an existing settlement rather than creation of a new inset settlement. Sub-parcels were identified where necessary to reflect any variations in harm within an individual parcel.

3.9 The creation of new inset areas / new stand-alone settlements was not considered as part of this study. The analysis of variations in contribution to the Green Belt purposes gives an indication as to locations where new inset development would be more or less likely to affect contribution to those purposes. Supplementary analysis will be required to assess the harm associated with any specific new development scenarios that CCC and SDCC would like to investigate.

Relationship with Previous Green Belt Assessments

3.10 As noted, the 2015 Cambridge Inner Green Belt Study by LDA is considered to be an appropriate evidence base document. This new Study takes the 16 qualities of Cambridge and its surrounding landscape that were identified in the 2015 Study (summarised in Chapter 2), along with the special character of Cambridge and its setting described in the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018, as a starting point for establishing the assessment methodology.

3.11 However, in contrast this Study covers the whole of the Green Belt in Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire, rather than just the 'inner' Green Belt area. It also reflects various updates to the NPPF, NPPG, and good practice (in the light of case law and Local Plan Examinations) that have occurred since the 2015 Study was completed.

3.12 The 2015 Study employed a qualitative approach to the assessment, with analysis of the qualities forming a large part of the study. Parcels were checked and refined by LDA and then assessed for their importance to Green Belt purposes and then consideration was given as to whether there was potential to release land for development without significant harm to Green Belt purposes. This Study differs by focussing on identifying and rating variations in contribution and the potential harm to the Green Belt purposes that would result from the release of land across the whole assessment area. This provides the Councils with a clear, objective means for comparison of different development options, regardless of their location.

Scope of Assessment

Green Belt purposes

3.13 Chapter 2 sets out the policy context for the study. This contextual information has informed the assessment criteria and the definitions of key terms used in the Green Belt assessment set out below.

3.14 As established within a House of Commons written answer in regard to PPG2 in (1988) and established by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan (2003), Cambridge's historic nature is the reason for the existence of its Green Belt. The 2003 Structure Plan also set out the Cambridge Green Belt purposes, intended specifically as a way of identifying what is important about the historic character and setting of Cambridge.

3.15 The Examination in Public Panel Report (2003) made it clear that the Cambridge Green Belt purposes should be considered an application of the National (NPPF) Green Belt purposes in the local context, rather than as additional purposes; and that it therefore follows that not all five of the National purposes are necessarily relevant to the Cambridge Green Belt. The report went on to suggest that key qualities of Cambridge should be the starting point for any future Green Belt Reviews.

3.16 The wording of the Cambridge Purposes has been carried forward to the current 2018 Local Plans, and this is expressly intended to provide a basis from which to assess impact on change. The Inspectors' Local Plan Examination reports for the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (SCLP) and the Cambridge Local Plan (CLP) in 2018 accepted the continued validity of the three Cambridge Green Belt purposes as an application of national policy in a local context, reflecting "the importance of Cambridge as a historic city and the particular role of the Green Belt in preserving its setting". As such it was not considered necessary in this study to assess the NPPF purposes as well as the Cambridge purposes, as it is clear that the latter are not additional to the former.

3.17 The assessment methodology for this study was therefore based on the three Cambridge Green Belt purposes, which are to:

1. Preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre.
2. Maintain and enhance the quality of its setting.
3. Prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city.

Consideration of Green Belt purposes

The Inspector's interim findings (H Stephens) to Durham City Council (November 2014) clarified that assessments against the Green Belt purposes should form the basis of any justification for releasing land from the Green Belt, and in reviewing land against the purposes, Green Belt studies should consider the reasons for a Green Belt's designation.

The Inspector's Letter (L Graham) to Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire Councils (May 2015) emphasised that Green Belt studies should make clear "how the assessment of 'importance to Green Belt' has been derived" from assessments against the individual purposes of the Green Belt and highlighted the importance of revisions to Green Belt boundaries to "take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development, as required by Paragraph 85 [2012 NPPF, paragraph 139 of the 2019 NPPF] [even if] such an exercise would be carried out through the SEA/SA process." – Examination Letter Reference: CCC/SCDC/Insp/Prelim.

This Study includes a comprehensive assessment of land parcels for their contribution to Green Belt purposes as well as the harm of releasing land for development in the context of the Cambridge Green Belt purposes, with full consideration of the reasons for the Green Belt's designation.

The assessment does not draw conclusions about what land should be released for development as that will require an analysis of wider sustainability factors which the Councils will take into account in reaching a conclusion as to whether there are exceptional circumstances to justify the release of Green Belt land.

3.18 As noted above, the Inspectors’ Local Plan Examination report for the SCLP and CLP in 2018 accepted the continued validity of the three Cambridge Green Belt purposes as an application of national policy in a local context. As Cambridge is an ‘historic city’, NPPF Purpose 4 (‘To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns’) is clearly the most relevant, and all the Cambridge purposes are related to this in some way. However, there are also inter-relationships between the Cambridge purposes and the other NPPF Green Belt purposes, as set out in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Inter-relationship between Cambridge Purposes and NPPF Purposes

Cambridge Purpose	NPPF Purpose	Comment
1. Preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre.	1. To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.	Cambridge Purpose 1 deals with the compact nature of the city and as such is directly related to the issue of urban sprawl, meaning that this purpose captures the essence of NPPF purpose 1.
2. Maintain and enhance the quality of its setting.	3. To assist in the safeguarding of the countryside from encroachment. 4. To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.	Cambridge Purpose 2 is clearly related to NPPF Purpose 4, as noted above, but is also closely related to NPPF Purpose 3, owing to the strong rural character of Cambridge’s setting. Whilst both NPPF Purpose 4 and 3 will be covered under Cambridge Purpose 2, NPPF Purpose 4 is given relatively more weight. This allows more meaningful variations in contribution and harm to be drawn out in the

Cambridge Purpose	NPPF Purpose	Comment
		specific context of Cambridge.
3. Prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city.	2. To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.	Cambridge Purpose 3 is closely related to NPPF Purpose 2. However, the focus here is not on gaps between ‘towns’ specifically, but on the gaps between Cambridge and the surrounding necklace of villages and on the gaps between individual villages themselves - both those within the inner necklace and those more distant.

3.19 A number of policy documents and previous studies, including the SCLP 2018 and the 2015 Cambridge Inner Green Belt Study, identified several special qualities/characteristics related to the setting of Cambridge. There is a level of consistency between these, and for the purpose of this study these have been distilled down to several features or aspects relevant to the quality of Cambridge’s setting. Notwithstanding the inter-relationships between many of these qualities, and that some may apply to more than one purpose, the section below groups the qualities into the Cambridge purpose to which they most closely relate and this has informed the criteria for the assessment.

Qualities/characteristics of the Cambridge Green Belt

1. Preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre.

Special character of Cambridge and its setting (South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018):

- A soft green edge to the City.
- A distinctive urban edge.

Qualities (Cambridge Inner Green Belt Study 2015):

- A large historic core relative to the size of the city as a whole.
- A city focussed on the historic core.
- A city of human scale easily crossed by foot and by bicycle.
- Good urban structure with well-designed edges to the city.
- A soft green edge to the city.

2. Maintain and enhance the quality of its setting.

Special character of Cambridge and its setting (South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018):

- Key views of Cambridge from the surrounding countryside.
- Green corridors penetrating into the City.
- Designated sites and other features contributing positively to the character of the landscape setting.
- A landscape which retains a strong rural character.

Qualities (Cambridge Inner Green Belt Study 2015):

- Short and/or characteristic approaches to the historic core from edge of the city.
- Topography providing a framework to Cambridge.
- Significant areas of distinctive and supportive townscape and landscape.
- Green corridors into the city.
- Long distance footpaths and bridleways providing access to the countryside.
- Key views of Cambridge from the surrounding landscape.
- The scale, character, identity and rural setting of the necklace villages.
- Designated sites and areas enriching the setting of Cambridge.
- Elements and features contributing to the character and structure of the landscape.
- A city set in a landscape which retains a strongly rural character.

3. Prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city.

Special character of Cambridge and its setting (South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018):

- The distribution, physical separation, setting, scale and character of Green Belt villages.

Qualities (Cambridge Inner Green Belt Study 2015):

- The distribution, physical and visual separation of the necklace villages.

Physical extent of study area

3.20 All land within the Green Belt was assessed, to ensure comprehensive coverage. In addition to the main urban area of Cambridge, the South Cambridgeshire villages below (listed clockwise from the north-west and from inner to outer villages) are inset from, or adjoin the outer edge of, the Green Belt:

- Girton
- Oakington/Westwick
- Histon/Impington
- Cottenham
- Milton
- Landbeach
- Waterbeach
- Horningsea
- Fen Ditton
- Stow-cum-Quy
- Teversham
- Little Wilbraham
- Great Wilbraham
- Fulbourn
- Babraham
- Great Shelford/Stapleford
- Sawston
- Pampisford
- Little Shelford

- Whittlesford
- Heathfield
- Hauxton
- Harston
- Newton
- Thriplow
- Fowlmere
- Foxton
- Grantchester
- Haslingfield
- Harlton
- Barrington
- Barton
- Little Eversden
- Great Eversden
- Comberton
- Toft
- Coton
- Hardwick
- Madingley
- Bar Hill and Dry Drayton

3.21 Consideration was also given to whether the contribution to the Green Belt purposes made by any land in South Cambridgeshire is affected by proximity to the East Cambridgeshire villages of Bottisham (inset from the Green Belt) or Lode (which lies on the edge of the Green Belt).

Consideration of development sites

The Inspector's Letter (M Middleton) to Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council (December 2017) highlighted the need for assessing a wider area than just promoted development sites. The Inspector found the Phase 1 of the review was too strategic to draw out finer grained variations in Green Belt performance and Phase 2 of the review, although more detailed, failed to assess all potential development sites, and did not examine all potentially suitable areas. – Examination Document Reference EX39. A fine grain assessment of all areas adjacent to inset settlements was undertaken in this Study to ensure that it provides the correct level of detail to draw out variations in the potential harm of releasing land for development.

Exclusions

3.22 Land covered by any 'absolute' constraint to development – that is to say areas within which development would not be permitted – was excluded from the assessment process. Absolute constraints, which are shown on Figure 3.1, include the following:

- Special Areas of Conservation;
- Special Protection Areas;
- Ramsar sites;
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- Ancient woodland;
- Scheduled Monuments;
- Registered Parks and Gardens;
- Common Land; and

- National Nature Reserves.

3.23 Areas with designations that might represent a constraint to development but which are not considered ‘absolute’, such as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Local Nature Reserves and Flood Zones, were not excluded from the assessment.

3.24 It is important to note that, although the areas of absolute constraint were not assessed for harm, any function they may perform as areas of open land and/or as boundary features – which may well have a bearing on the assessment of harm that would be caused from the release of adjacent unconstrained Green Belt land – was taken into consideration.

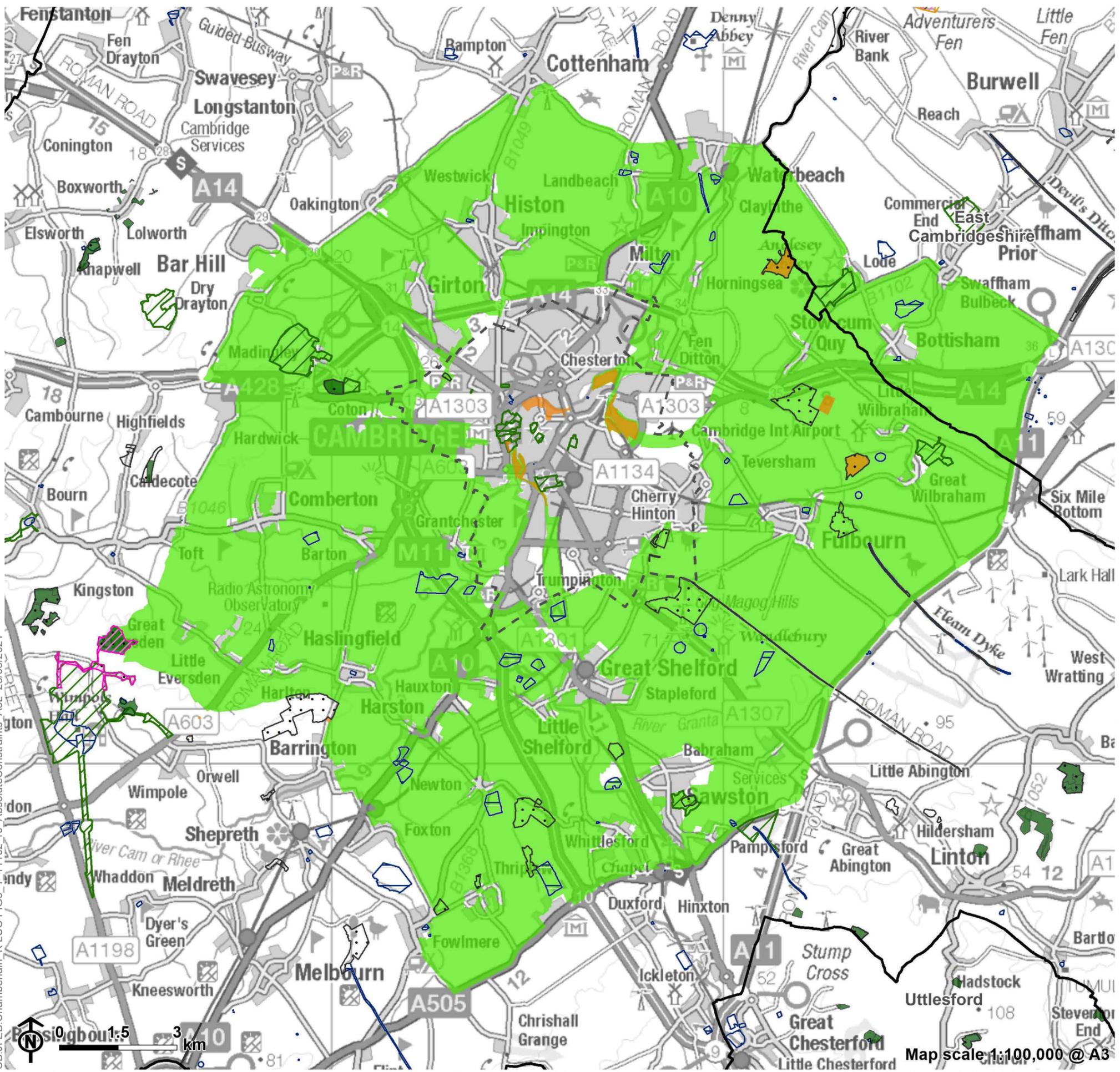
Exclusion of constrained land

The Inspector’s Letter (M Middleton) to Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council (December 2017) noted that there was no need to assess land that is unlikely to ever be developed:

“There are of course sites, which for other purposes are unlikely to ever be developed. I would include the statutory conservation sites... and the major heritage assets in this category but the final choice should be a rational value judgement on the importance of the protection. It nevertheless seems pointless to me to carry out a detailed Green Belt assessment for such sites however they are defined.” – Examination Document Reference EX39.

For this reason, this study does not assess the harm of releasing land where development would not be permitted – that is, land subject to an absolute constraint.

Figure 3.1
Development constraints in the study area



- Greater Cambridge
- Local Authority boundary
- Green Belt
- Absolute constraints**
- Natural heritage**
- Special Area of Conservation
- Special Protection Area
- Ramsar
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- National Nature Reserve
- Ancient woodland inventory
- Cultural heritage**
- Scheduled monument
- Registered park & garden
- Other**
- CRoW registered common land

CB:JIEB:Chamberlain_K LUC FIG3_1_11102_r0_AbsoluteConstraints_A3L 23/08/2021

0 1.5 3 km

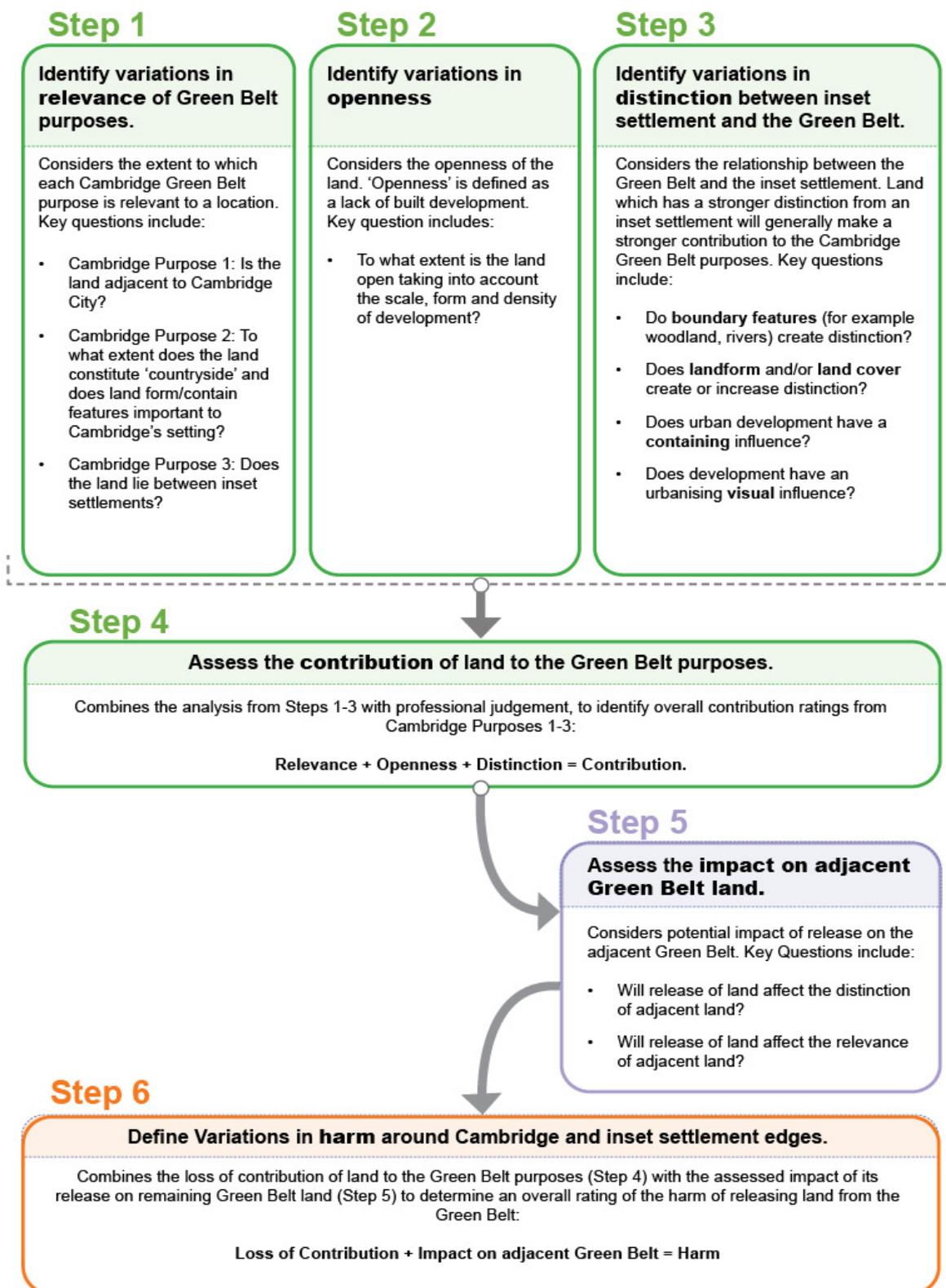
Map scale 1:100,000 @ A3

Harm Assessment Steps

3.25 The process of applying the assessment criteria set out above was carried out as a series of six steps, as shown in Figure 3.2.

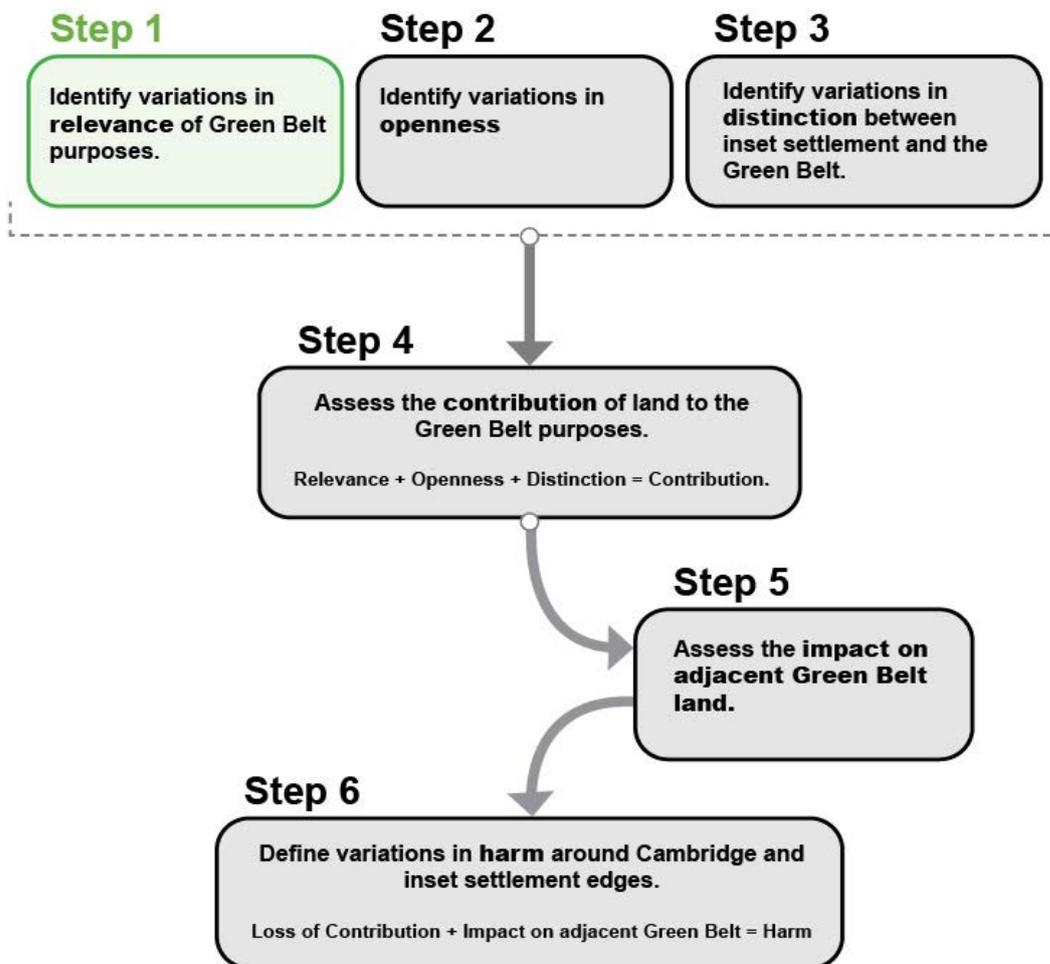
3.26 Step 1 was applied across all of the Green Belt area for each Cambridge Green Belt purpose, to gain an initial understanding of the study area. The subsequent Steps 2 - 4 identified the variations in contribution to the Cambridge Green Belt purposes around the edge of the inset settlements, resulting in the definition of parcels to reflect these variations. Steps 5 and 6 then considered (alongside the findings of Step 4) the potential harm of releasing land from the Green Belt. Each step is explained in further detail in the paragraphs below. A worked example of a parcel assessment, explaining the application of the methodology is included in Appendix D.

Figure 3.2: Harm assessment steps overview



Step 1: Identify variations in relevance of Green Belt Purpose

Figure 3.3: Step 1 of harm assessment



3.27 This first step considered factors specific to each Cambridge Green Belt purpose that affect the extent to which each purpose is 'relevant' to any given location. These are described in detail in Step 4.

3.28 For Cambridge Purpose 1 (Preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre) the purpose is relevant only to land around the City, and the extent to which land contributes to this

purpose is dependent on the variations in openness and in the degree of distinction from the edge of Cambridge that are applied in Steps 2 and 3.

3.29 In assessing the relevance of land to Cambridge Purpose 2 (Maintain and enhance the quality of its setting), a two-element approach was taken considering:

- Element 1 – the extent to which land constitutes countryside (that is to say has a rural character) based on its usage and distinction from an inset settlement. The first element - the assessment of rural character - was based on variations in openness and in the degree of distinction but was applied to all settlements rather than just Cambridge.
- Element 2 – the extent to which land forms or contains other features or aspects that contribute to the quality of Cambridge’s setting. This is a separate consideration which is not informed by openness and distinction. For the second element an analysis was undertaken of key views and visual inter-relationships; green corridors; approaches to the historic core and wider city; designated sites and landscape elements that contribute to character; the scale character, identity and rural setting of the Green Belt villages; and the topography providing a framework to the city. These elements were mapped, in order to identify variations in the relevance of each.

3.30 For Cambridge Purpose 3 (Prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city), an analysis was undertaken of the distribution of villages in and around the Green Belt and the physical features that separate and/or connect them from each other or from Cambridge, in order to determine the fragility of each settlement gap, as set out below.

3.31 Green Belt land has the potential to play a very strong role with regards to Cambridge Purpose 3 – that is, the gap between neighbouring villages or between Cambridge and a neighbouring village is very fragile – if:

- Land lies in a gap which is very narrow, but which maintains clear separation;

- Land lies in a narrow gap, and has no significant separating feature(s);
- Land lies in a narrow gap, and urbanising development between the two reduces perceived separation.

3.32 Green Belt land has the potential to play a stronger role with regards to Cambridge Purpose 3 – that is, the gap between neighbouring villages or between Cambridge and a neighbouring settlement is fragile – if:

- Land lies in a gap which is narrow, but which maintains clear separation and has some significant separating feature(s);
- Land lies in a gap which is narrow, taking into consideration intervening urbanising development, but which has significant separating feature(s) to preserve perceived separation;
- Land lies in a moderate gap, but with no significant separating feature(s);
- Land lies in a moderate gap, but urbanising development between the two reduces perceived separation and increases the fragility of the gap.

3.33 Green Belt land has the potential to play some role with regards to Cambridge Purpose 3 – that is, the gap between neighbouring villages or between Cambridge and a neighbouring settlement is moderate – if:

- Land lies in a moderate gap, but there are some significant separating feature(s);
- Land lies in a narrow gap, but existing urbanising development already links them;
- Land lies in a wide gap, but urbanising development between the two reduces perceived separation;
- Land lies in a gap which is moderate, taking into consideration intervening urbanising development, but which has significant separating feature(s) to preserve perceived separation;
- Land is peripheral to a narrow gap.

3.34 Green Belt land has less potential to play a role with regards to Cambridge Purpose 3 – that is, the gap between neighbouring villages or between Cambridge and a neighbouring settlement is robust – if:

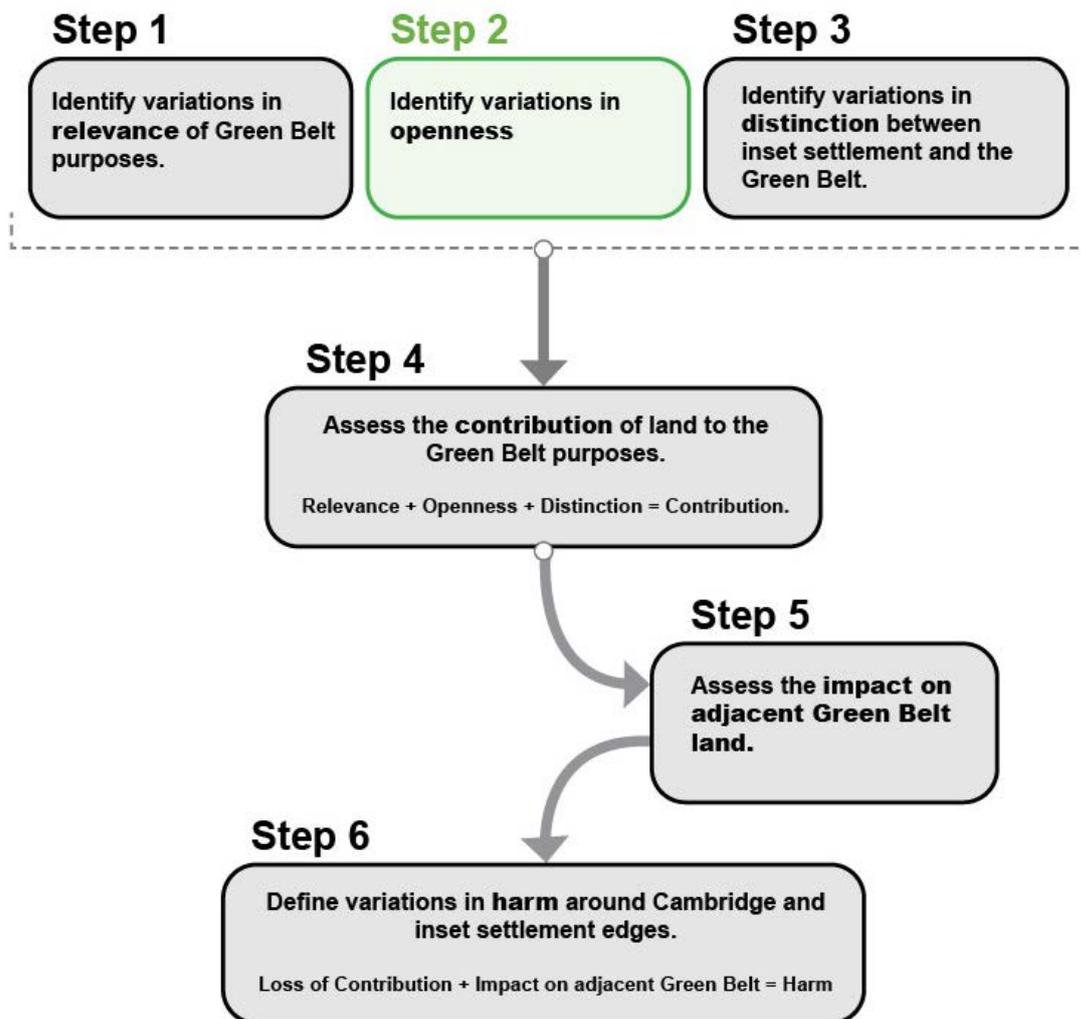
- Land lies in a wide gap, with some significant separating feature(s);
- Land is peripheral to a moderate gap;
- There is a wide gap. Urbanising development reduces gaps but there are some significant separating feature(s).

3.35 Green Belt land will not play a role with regards to Cambridge Purpose 3 if:

- Land does not lie between neighbouring villages or between Cambridge and a neighbouring village.

Step 2: Identify variations in Green Belt openness

Figure 3.4: Step 2 of harm assessment



3.36 The NPPF identifies openness as an ‘essential characteristic’ of the Green Belt, rather than a function or purpose. The presence of ‘urbanising development’ within the Green Belt can diminish the contribution of land to all of the Cambridge Green Belt purposes.

3.37 Green Belt openness relates to lack of ‘inappropriate built development’ rather than to visual openness; thus, both undeveloped land which is screened from view by landscape elements (for example tree cover) and development which is not considered ‘inappropriate’, are still ‘open’ in Green Belt terms. Visual openness is however still relevant when considering the degree of distinction between an urban area and the wider countryside – this is addressed at Step 3 below.

3.38 The assessment of openness first considered the appropriateness of development. Where development was not ‘appropriate’, it considered the extent, scale, form and density of development, in order to make a judgement on the degree of openness.

3.39 At a very localised scale, any inappropriate development can be considered to diminish openness, but small areas of isolated development have negligible impact in this respect, and have not therefore be defined and assessed as separate parcels of land.

3.40 Any larger areas of Green Belt land which are judged to be developed to an extent that they lack the ‘essential characteristic’ of openness were considered to make no contribution to Green Belt purposes. Those above 1ha in size were defined and mapped, and excluded from the parcelling process.

Appropriate development

Appropriate development within the Green Belt cannot, according to case law, be considered to have an urbanising influence and therefore harm Green Belt purposes. The Court of Appeal decision in R (Lee Valley Regional Park Authority) v Epping Forest DC [2016] EWCA Civ 404 included, at paragraph 20, reference to openness in relation to appropriate development:

“Implicit in the policy in paragraph 89 of the NPPF is a recognition that agriculture and forestry can only be carried on, and buildings for those activities will have to be constructed, in the countryside, including countryside in the Green Belt. Of course, as a matter of fact, the construction of such buildings in the Green Belt will reduce the amount of Green Belt land without built development upon it. But under NPPF policy, the physical presence of such buildings in the Green Belt is not, in itself, regarded as harmful to the openness of the Green Belt or to the purposes of including land in the Green Belt. This is not a matter of planning judgment. It is simply a matter of policy. Where the development proposed is an agricultural building, neither its status as appropriate development nor the deemed absence of harm to the openness of the Green Belt and to the purposes of including land in the Green Belt depends on the judgment of the decision-maker. Both are inherent in the policy.” – Neutral Citation Number: [2016] EWCA Civ 404.

For the purposes of this study, development deemed to be ‘appropriate’ within the Green Belt (as defined in the closed lists within paragraphs 149 and 150 of the NPPF) was not considered to constitute an urban land use, or an urban influence in the countryside. However, what is deemed to be appropriate development in the NPPF had to be carefully considered as developments such as the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments are only considered appropriate as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

Caution was therefore exercised in the application of what is defined as an appropriate use. It is not possible within a Strategic Green Belt study to review each form of development within the Green Belt and ascertain whether it was permitted as appropriate development or not, unless it is

clear cut. For example, buildings for agriculture and forestry were deemed to be appropriate development regardless of whether they preserve the openness, or conflict with Green Belt purposes. For other land uses such as outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments, a considered view was taken on the extent to which the proposed land use has affected Green Belt purposes, for example by affecting openness, or encroaching on the perception of countryside that is the sense of distinction between the urban area and countryside. This is of relevance to the assessment approach for all of the Green Belt purposes.

Samuel Smith Old Brewery (Tadcaster) and Oxton Farm v North Yorkshire County Council and Darrington Quarries Ltd (2018) involved a challenge to a planning permission for a 6-hectare quarry extension in the Green Belt. Although paragraph 90 of the 2012 NPPF states that “mineral extraction” is not “inappropriate development” in the Green Belt, it was found that the Council failed to take into account visual impacts when considering whether the proposal would “preserve the openness of the Green Belt” as required in paragraph 90 of the NPPF. Lord Justice Lindblom found that the council had limited its consideration of the effects of the proposed development on the openness of the Green Belt to spatial impact and nothing more, despite the fact that, on the council’s own assessment of the likely effects of the development on the landscape, visual impact on openness was “quite obviously” relevant to its effect on the openness of the Green Belt.

This judgement was subsequently overturned in the Supreme Court (on the application of Samuel Smith Old Brewery (Tadcaster) and others) (Respondents) v North Yorkshire County Council (Appellant) [2020] UKSC 3. Contrary to the Court of Appeal Ruling in 2018, visual impact was found not to be an obligatory consideration when assessing Green Belt. It was found that “a proper reading of the NPPF in its proper historic context, visual quality of landscape is not in itself an essential part of openness for which the Green Belt is protected.” “The concept of ‘openness’ in paragraph

90 of the NPPF is a broad policy concept which is the counterpart of urban sprawl and is linked to the purposes to be served by the Green Belt. Openness is not necessarily a statement about the visual qualities of the land, nor does it imply freedom from all forms of development.”

3.41 Examples of land which lacks urbanising influences, and is therefore considered to be open in Green Belt terms, include:

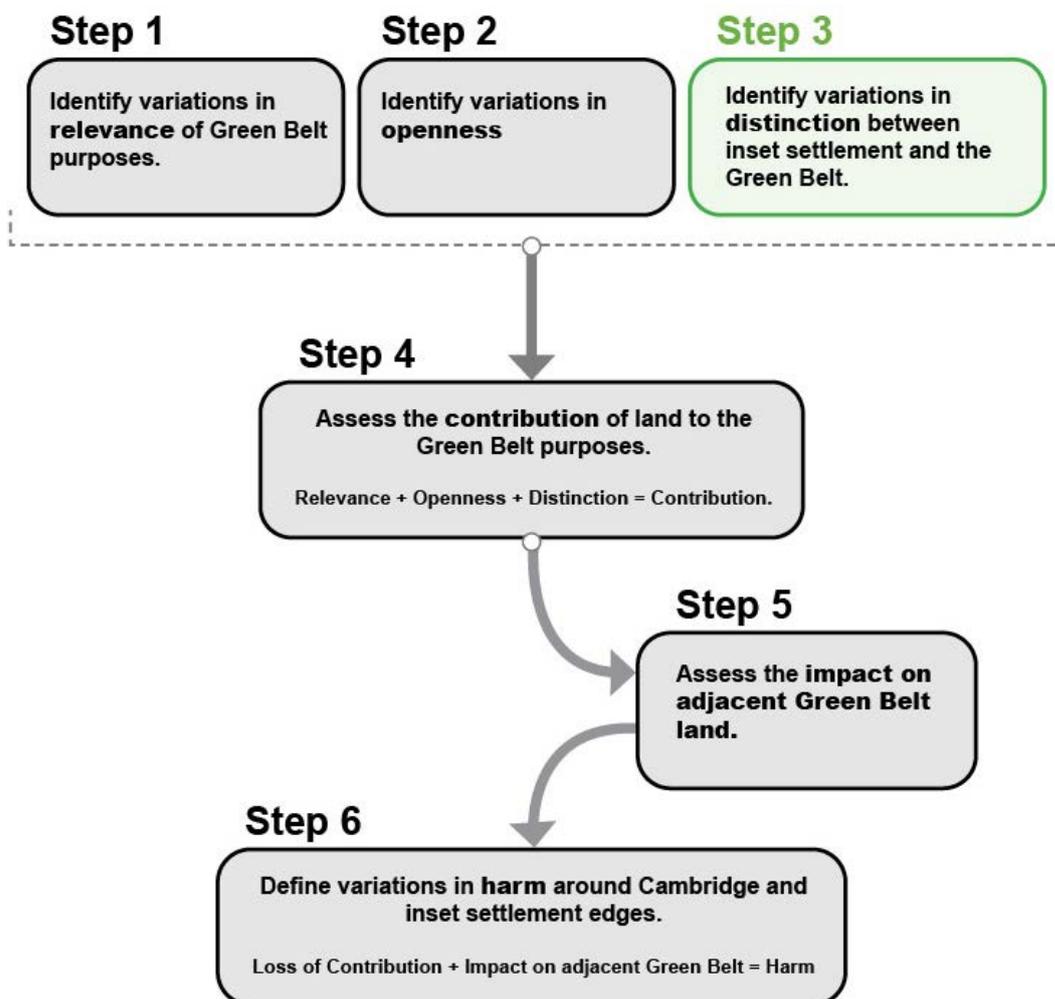
- Any land without built form;
- Agricultural/horticultural/forestry buildings (for example Farms or glasshouses);
- Mineral extraction or engineering operations that preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it; and
- Low density or small-scale rural settlement.

3.42 Examples of urbanising development which could potentially reduce Green Belt openness, include:

- Buildings other than those for agriculture/horticulture/forestry;
- Solar farms; and
- Car parks.

Step 3: Identify variations in the distinction between inset settlements and the Green Belt

Figure 3.5: Step 3 of harm assessment



3.43 Having considered in general terms the variations in the relevance of each of the Cambridge Green Belt purposes, the next step in the assessment process identified more localised variations in the relationship between Green Belt land and development within Cambridge or the inset villages.

3.44 The assessment of ‘distinction’ considered the strength of relationship between Green Belt land and an inset settlement. Land that is more strongly related to an inset settlement makes a weaker contribution to Cambridge Purposes 1 and 3, and to the first element of Cambridge Purpose 2, which considers rural character in terms of separation from urbanising influences.

3.45 For the second element of Cambridge Purpose 2, which considers the contribution of specific aspects/features to the quality of Cambridge’s setting, there is no direct correlation between degree of relationship with the urban area and Green Belt contribution. In contrast to Cambridge Purposes 1 and 3, and the first element of Cambridge Purpose 2, land which has a strong relationship with the City can often make a greater rather than lesser contribution because of its greater prominence in the City’s setting.

The analysis process

3.46 The process of assessing distinction was carried out for each inset settlement. The analysis was applied as a progression out from each settlement edge, recognising that with distance from that settlement the level of distinction will only increase, not diminish.

3.47 The distinction between land within the Green Belt and an inset area considered four inter-related elements, which are considered in the following paragraphs. These are:

- Boundary features;
- Landform and land cover;
- Urbanising visual influence; and
- Urbanising containment.

3.48 Consideration of these elements was combined, using professional judgement, to give a rating on a 4-point scale (weak, moderate, strong, or very

strong distinction). Supporting text indicates the pertinence of each of the 4 elements, and notes any particular weighting applied.

How do boundary features create distinction?

3.49 Consideration was first given to the nature of any physical boundary features. The strength attributed to different types of boundary are indicated below. Stronger boundary features are considered to have more permanence.

3.50 The initial analysis of land adjacent to an inset area considered only the Green Belt boundary, but progressing further from the urban area, the cumulative impact of multiple boundary featured increases distinction.

3.51 Even in the absence of significant boundary features, distinction from an urban area increases with distance, so this was factored into the judgement. Conversely, if boundary features are close together their combined impact can be diminished by lack of distance to separate them.

3.52 Parts of the Cambridge Green Belt comprise expansive open areas of arable land lacking boundary features, landform/land cover or urban containment strong enough to mark a change in distinction between an inset settlement and the countryside. In these areas, only views and distance are the varying factors of distinction.

3.53 In some parts of the Cambridge Green Belt there is an absence of readily recognisable physical boundary features (that is to say strong enough to mark a change in distinction between an inset settlement and Green Belt land), such as a continuous and well-established hedgerow, tree-line, a stream, or a sharp change in landform. In these cases the assessment considered the visual prominence of development within the inset settlement, together with distance from the inset edge, in order to determine where to define outer parcel boundaries. Nearby visible landscape features were used where possible, even where too weak to mark a change in distinction – for example a field boundary defined by a grassland strip – but in some cases parcel boundaries unavoidably

cross open ground. Such boundaries should be recognised as representing a gradual rather than precise or marked change.

Strength of boundary features

3.54 The following section provides definitions and examples of the strength of boundary features.

Strong boundary

- Physical feature significantly restricts access and forms consistent edge.
- For example:
 - Woodland block.
 - Motorway or dual carriageway; railway; River/floodplain; sharp change in landform.

Moderate boundary

- Clear physical feature and relatively consistent edge, but already breached or easily crossed.
- For example:
 - Linear tree cover.
 - Mature, well-treed hedgerow.
 - Main road.
 - Stream.
 - Moderate change in landform.
 - Regular garden/building boundaries with substantial tree cover.

Weak boundary

- No significant physical definition – edge may be blurred.
- For example:
 - Irregular and/or degraded garden/building boundaries or hedgerows.
 - Estate/access road.
 - Some development crosses boundary.

Does landform and/or land cover increase distinction?

3.55 Landform and land cover may serve as boundary features, as indicated above, but this may extend into a broader feature which creates greater distinction, for example a woodland, lake or valley.

Does visual openness increase distinction?

3.56 This is not concerned with the scenic quality of views, but the extent to which an absence of visual association with an inset settlement may increase association with the open Green Belt countryside or, conversely, the extent to which the visual dominance of development within an inset settlement may increase association with that settlement.

3.57 Caution was used when considering views, recognising that seasonal variations and boundary maintenance regimes can have a significant impact.

3.58 As noted under Step 2, the absence of visual openness does not diminish openness in Green Belt terms; however it is accepted that there is a visual dimension to the perception of openness that can have a bearing on the distinction between inset settlements and countryside.

Absence of urban influence and visual impact

Turner v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and East Dorset District Council (2016) was an appeal heard in the High Court relating to a previous appeal judgement in which a refusal for planning permission in the Green Belt by East Dorset District Council was upheld. The High Court appeal was dismissed, but the judgement concluded that:

“The question of visual impact is implicitly part of the concept of ‘openness of the Green Belt’ as a matter of the natural meaning of the language used in para. 89 of the NPPF... There is an important visual dimension to checking ‘the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas’ and the merging of neighbouring towns... openness of aspect is a characteristic quality of the countryside, and ‘safeguarding the countryside from encroachment’ includes preservation of that quality of openness. The preservation of ‘the setting ... of historic towns’ obviously refers in a material way to their visual setting, for instance when seen from a distance across open fields.” – Neutral Citation Number: [2016] EWCA Civ 466.

This study considered visual openness in the assessment of whether land is distinct or not from the urban edge.

Does urban development have a containing influence?

3.59 With reference to the variations in openness noted at Step 2 above, the study considered whether existing development to some degree contains an

area of open Green Belt land, thus reducing its distinction from the inset settlement. Where there is significant containment, development might be considered to constitute 'infill' rather than expansion of the inset settlement.

3.60 Urbanising development could be located within the inset area or washed over by the Green Belt. In some cases, land on the fringe of, but within an inset settlement (that is to say, outwith the Green Belt), may not currently be developed, but unless the development of such land is constrained by other factors or designations (see Paragraph 3.22) the assumption was made that it will be developed, and that it therefore cannot be considered 'open' in Green Belt terms.

Infill Development

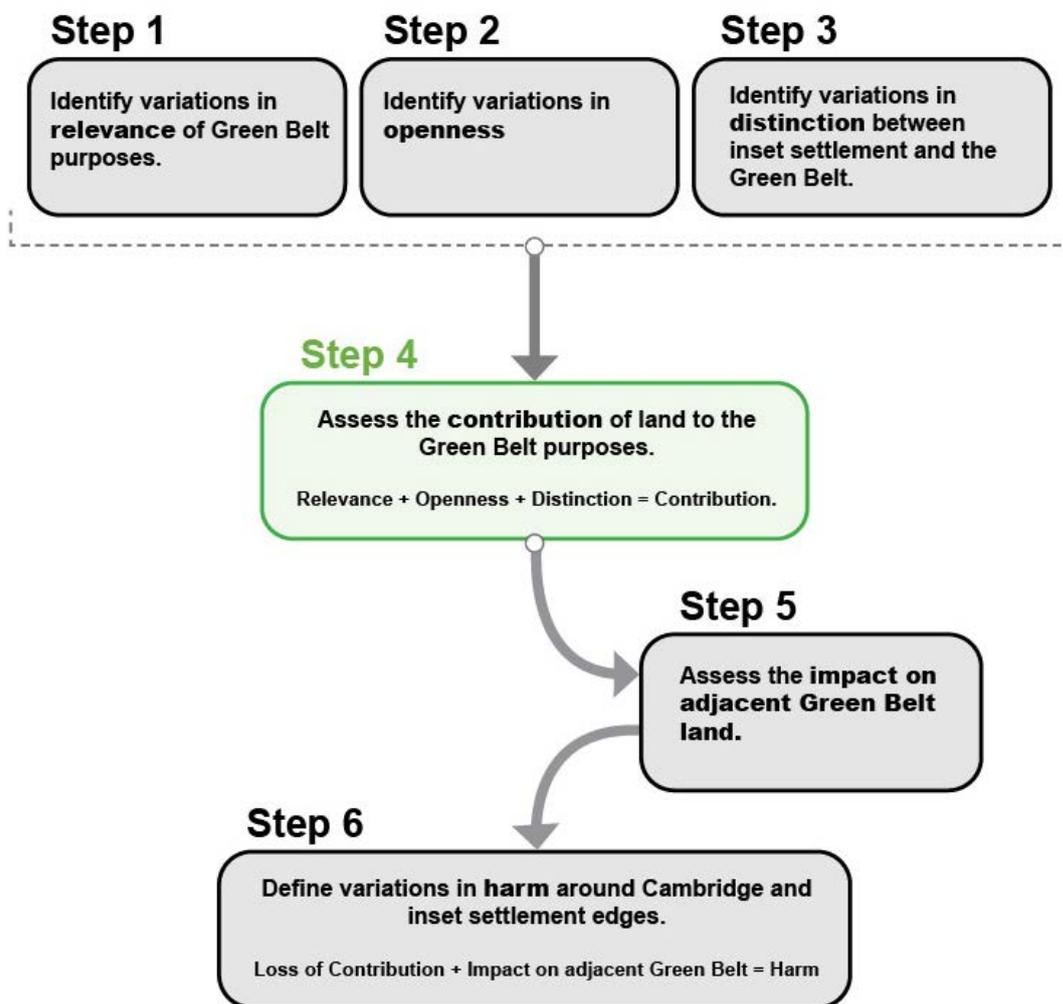
Paragraph 149 of the NPPF notes that 'limited infilling' is not inappropriate within the Green Belt. – Paragraph 145.

PAS guidance states that development that would effectively be 'infill', due to the land's partial enclosure by development, would have a relatively limited impact in terms of Green Belt contribution. – PAS Planning on the Doorstep.

This study considered the degree of containment from existing urban development in the assessment of whether land is distinct or not from the urban edge.

Step 4: Assess the contribution of land to the Green Belt Purposes and define parcels

Figure 3.6: Step 4 of harm assessment



3.61 In this step the analysis from each of the previous steps is considered with reference to the guideline rating levels identified in Tables 3.5 - 3.7. It should be stressed that, rather than simply combining the ratings from steps 1, 2 and 3 in a mechanical/mathematical way, professional judgement was applied in each individual case to identify an overall contribution rating for each Green Belt

purpose. Each area of variation in contribution to one or more of the purposes was defined as a parcel, with contribution ratings and supporting analysis provided. As noted in Paragraph 3.53 above, parcel boundaries that do not follow a defined physical feature were defined in cases where there was considered to be a gradual change in the relationship between an inset settlement area and Green Belt land.

3.62 Contribution to the Green Belt purposes was rated on a 5-point scale (significant, relatively significant, moderate, relatively limited and limited/no contribution). Supporting text to justify the ratings consistently references those criteria identified as relevant to each purpose, using consistent terminology for ease of comparison. Parcels were given a reference code relating them to the settlement in question (for example. HA1 = Haslingfield parcel 1 and WA3 = Waterbeach parcel 3).

3.63 The contribution ratings for each purpose were not added up to give a cumulative overall contribution rating, as a significant contribution to one rating may in itself indicate that the land is making a significant contribution to function of the Green Belt.

3.64 The process of defining parcels was carried out by applying an analysis process that works outwards from each inset settlement until parcels which have strong distinction from the settlement were identified. Land beyond the zones of strongly distinct parcels around each settlement were assessed as 'outer areas' (see Paragraph 3.136 below).

3.65 Where settlements are relatively close together, an area of land may make a different level of contribution in relation to its distinction from one settlement than it does in relation to another settlement. This is noted in the assessment analysis where relevant.

3.66 The paragraphs below discuss the relevance of each of the Cambridge Green Belt purposes, in order to identify criteria by which variations in contribution were identified and assessed.

Does the land have the potential to play a role with regard to Cambridge Purpose 1: to preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre?

3.67 ‘Compactness’ was identified in the Plan for Cambridge by Holford and Myles Wright of 1950 as being an important characteristic of the city. Cambridge has a relatively large historic core in comparison to the size of the city as a whole, and this was identified a special quality in the 2015 Cambridge Inner Green Study. This special quality depends not only on the large and intact historic core, but also on the fact that it is large relative to the size of the city as a whole (that is to say it hasn’t been overpowered by more recent development as is the case with many other towns and cities with historic cores).

3.68 Another special quality identified in the 2015 Inner Green Belt Study was ‘a city of human scale easily crossed by foot and by bicycle’, which is a direct factor of the city’s compactness. The wording of Cambridge purpose 1 specifically refers to ensuring that Cambridge remains a compact city; the other elements of the purpose – that is, Cambridge being a ‘dynamic city’ and having a ‘thriving historic centre’ – are more a product of keeping the city compact rather than separate elements that the Green Belt can be seen to contribute to.

3.69 Preserving the compact nature of the city is clearly related to the issue of preventing urban sprawl and therefore NPPF Purpose 1 (‘To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas). Urban ‘sprawl’ would alter the perception of the city’s scale, increasing the size of the city and thus reducing the relative size of the historic core.

3.70 However, in assessing the impact of releasing land in the context of a strategic Green Belt study, no assumptions about the form or design of possible future development can be made, therefore any expansion of the main urban

area of Cambridge was considered as having potential to be 'sprawl' or to 'reduce the compactness' of the city.

3.71 Criteria used to assess contribution to Cambridge Purpose 1 are set out in Table 3.2 below. For land to contribute to preserving the unique character of Cambridge as a compact city it needed to be located in the immediate vicinity of Cambridge. The extent of the hinterland around Cambridge within which land can be considered to make a contribution to Cambridge Purpose 1 depended upon the presence of physical features which influence the perceived relationship between the urban area and open land, and the strength of the relationship between Green Belt land and the urban area determined the extent to which the release and development of land on the edge of Cambridge would be seen as expanding the city.

3.72 Land which is open (considered at Step 2) made a stronger contribution than land which had some degree of development of a form that is considered urbanising. Land which had a stronger relationship with the urban area (considered at Step 3) made a weaker contribution to preventing its sprawl, whilst land which was more distinct from the urban area, and which had a stronger relationship with the wider countryside, made a stronger contribution as development in such areas would more evidently constitute a significant expansion of the city.

3.73 In this regard, other related special qualities identified within the Cambridge Inner Green Study are the 'soft green edge to the city' and 'good urban structure with well-designed edges to the city'. The study noted that a distinctive feature of Cambridge is its appearance as a densely treed city with soft green edge merging into an agricultural landscape, and the interface between city and countryside was also referred to as being an aspect of Cambridge's special character within a study by Colin Buchanan and Partners in 2001. The 'soft green edge to the city' and 'a distinctive urban edge' are, amongst others, also included as aspects of the special character and setting of Cambridge in the SCLP 2018. Soft green edges (for example, woodland blocks or tree belts) have the potential to influence the perceived relationship between the urban area and open land, and this was taken into account as part of the analysis of distinction.

Table 3.2: Criteria used to inform the assessment of contribution to Cambridge Purpose 1

Significant contribution to purpose	Land is open and close to the main urban area of Cambridge. It has at least strong distinction from the urban edge.
Relatively significant contribution to purpose	<p>Land is open and close to the main urban area of Cambridge. It has moderate distinction from the urban edge; or</p> <p>Land is relatively open and close to the main urban area of Cambridge. It has at least strong distinction from the urban edge; or</p> <p>Land is perceived as being within the main urban area of Cambridge but is open, has at least strong distinction from the urban edge and is physically and visually connected to the wider Green Belt.</p>
Moderate contribution to purpose	<p>Land is open and close to the main urban area of Cambridge. It has weak distinction from the urban edge; or</p> <p>Land is open and relatively close to the main urban area of Cambridge, but intervening land provides at least strong distinction from the urban edge; or</p> <p>Land is perceived as being within the main urban area of Cambridge but is open, has moderate distinction from the urban edge and is physically and visually connected to the wider Green Belt; or</p> <p>Land is relatively open and close to the main urban area of Cambridge. It has moderate distinction from the urban edge; or</p> <p>Land is relatively developed and close to the main urban area of Cambridge. It has at least strong distinction from the urban edge; or</p> <p>Land is perceived as being within the main urban area of Cambridge, is relatively open, has at least strong distinction from the urban edge and is physically and visually connected to the wider Green Belt; or</p> <p>Land is isolated within the main urban area of Cambridge but is open and has at least strong distinction from the urban edge.</p>
Relatively limited contribution to purpose	Land is open and is physically and visually connected to the wider Green Belt, but is perceived as being within the main urban area of Cambridge and has weak distinction from the urban edge; or

	<p>Land is relatively open and close to the main urban area of Cambridge. It has weak distinction from the urban edge; or</p> <p>Land is relatively developed and close to the main urban area of Cambridge. It has moderate distinction from the urban edge; or</p> <p>Land is relatively open and is physically and visually connected to the wider Green Belt, but is perceived as being within the main urban area of Cambridge and has moderate distinction from the urban edge; or</p> <p>Land is isolated within the main urban area of Cambridge but is open and has moderate distinction from the urban edge.</p>
<p>Limited or No contribution to purpose</p>	<p>Land is relatively developed and close to the main urban area of Cambridge. It has moderate distinction from the urban edge; or</p> <p>Land is relatively open and is physically and visually connected to the wider Green Belt, but is perceived as being within the main urban area of Cambridge and has weak distinction from the urban edge; or</p> <p>Land is open but is isolated within the main urban area of Cambridge and has weak distinction from the urban edge; or</p> <p>Land is not open; or</p> <p>Land is not close to the main urban area of Cambridge.</p>

Does the land have the potential to play a role with regard to Cambridge Purpose 2: to maintain and enhance the quality of its setting?

3.74 Cambridge Purpose 2 is clearly related to NPPF Purpose 4 ('To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns'). As noted above, Cambridge has an intact historic core which is large relative to the size of the city as a whole and therefore, is a 'Historic Town' in the context of NPPF Purpose 4.

3.75 NPPF Purpose 4 makes specific reference to 'historic towns', not to individual heritage assets or smaller settlements such as villages and hamlets; however Green Belt studies have offered a range of interpretations.

Definition of historic towns considered under NPPF Purpose 4

An extract from Hansard in 1988 clarifies which historic settlements in England were considered 'historic towns' in the context of the Green Belt purposes. The Secretary of State for the Environment clarified in answer to a parliamentary question that the purpose of preserving the special character of historic towns is especially relevant to the Green Belts of York, Chester, Bath, Oxford and Cambridge. Durham has since been added to this list. – HC Deb 08 November 1988 vol 140 c148W: Green Belt.

This is supported by the PAS guidance which states: that "This purpose is generally accepted as relating to very few settlements in practice." – PAS Planning on the Doorstep.

3.76 In addition, Cambridge Purpose 2 is closely related to NPPF Purpose 3 ('to assist in the safeguarding of the countryside from encroachment'), owing to the strong rural character of Cambridge's setting. However, as noted more weight was given to aspects relevant to NPPF Purpose 4, as this allowed more meaningful variations in contribution and harm to be drawn out in the specific context of Cambridge.

3.77 As noted, in assessing the relevance of land in regard to Cambridge Purpose 2, a two-element approach was therefore taken: the extent to which land constitutes countryside (that is to say has a rural character) based on its usage and distinction from an inset settlement was considered; along with the extent to which land forms or contains other features or aspects that contribute to the quality of Cambridge's setting.

Element 1: Rural character

3.78 'A landscape which retains a strong rural character' was identified as an aspect of special character of Cambridge and its setting within the SCLP 2018 and was identified as a quality relevant to Green Belt purposes in the 2015 Inner Green Belt Study. This built on earlier studies, including the Plan for Cambridge by Holford and Miles Wright in 1950, which identified the countryside near the town as a quality to be retained; and the study by Colin Buchanan and Partners in 2001, which defined setting as being partly related to the interface between the city and the countryside.

3.79 The predominant land use within the Cambridge Green Belt is arable farmland with some localised areas of pasture and water meadows, resulting in an over-riding rural character for much of the surrounding landscape. This provides a setting to Cambridge when seen in key views, provides a setting to the surrounding villages and contributes to people's perception of the city when travelling along key approaches. The rural setting is especially apparent to the west and south-west of the city, where open agricultural land lies in close proximity to the historic core. Soft green edges to the city contribute to this by reducing the influence of the urban area on the adjacent rural landscape. The

rural landscape also plays a key role in the foreground or backdrop of views towards Cambridge, and in the setting of the surrounding villages.

3.80 The extent to which land can be considered to contribute to the rural character of Cambridge's setting is determined on the basis of its usage, its openness (considered at Step 2) and on the extent to which it relates to an inset settlement, or to the wider countryside – that is to say the degree of distinction from the settlement (considered at Step 3). The condition of land is not taken into consideration: the poor condition of Green Belt land does not necessarily undermine its fundamental role of preventing urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open.

3.81 Land may, through its usage, have a stronger relationship with an adjacent inset settlement and, as a result, not be considered 'countryside' to the same degree as other open land. It may be characterised by a use which, although it may be 'appropriate' within the Green Belt (see consideration of openness at Step 2), is more strongly associated with the urban area – for example school playing fields, university sports fields or recreation grounds.

3.82 Criteria associated with the contribution made by rural character to Cambridge Green Belt Purpose 2 are set out below.

Element 2: Features that contribute to the quality of Cambridge's setting

3.83 A number of previous studies and plans, including the SCLP 2018 and the 2015 Inner Green Belt Study, identified several special qualities/characteristics related to the setting of Cambridge. There is a level of consistency between these, and for the purposes of this study the special qualities were distilled down to the following features or aspects relevant to the quality of Cambridge's setting.

3.84 Variations in the degree of openness and in the extent of distinction between Cambridge and its surrounding countryside were not necessarily relevant to the identification of variations in the quality of Cambridge's setting. Indeed, the opposite may be true in that landscape elements which have a closer association with the city are more likely to play a significant role in its setting than features which have a stronger detachment from it.

3.85 It is recognised that land which is defined as Green Belt, and also land which is not defined as Green Belt (for example, areas of distinctive and supportive townscape), can both contribute to historic character and setting of Cambridge. However, as the latter pertain to areas outside the Green Belt, they do not lie within the scope of consideration of the Cambridge Purpose 2 but are relevant to the wider consideration of whether 'exceptional circumstances' exist to justify the release of Green Belt land.

3.86 The following paragraphs identify six categories of feature or aspect that were considered when determining the relevance of Cambridge Purpose 2, and criteria for assessing their contribution to Cambridge Green Belt Purpose 2 are set out in Table 3.3 below.

1 – Visual interrelationships between Cambridge and the surrounding countryside

3.87 This quality is related to the visual inter-relationship between the city and the surrounding landscape (that is where Cambridge and/or its setting can be seen and experienced). Views across the city skyline with its distinctive landmarks are particularly important, and views of the historic core were one of the aspects stated in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan (2003) to be of particular importance to the quality of the city. The Cambridge Skyline SPD [See reference 13] identifies a number of principal landmarks – both historic and modern structures – including those which mark the historic core of the city (for example King's College Chapel, All Saints Church, the spire of The Church of Our Lady and the English Martyrs, and the University Library).

The Cambridge Skyline SPD also identifies a number of strategic viewpoints from which views towards the Cambridge can be obtained.

3.88 From certain areas low level views are available towards the historic core of the city, with several distinctive towers and church spires visible on the skyline beyond a soft green urban edge and/or surrounding rural landscape, including from areas to the west and south-west in the vicinity of Grantchester and the M11. However, from some areas views are more distant and/or dominated by later development and/or disturbed by detracting elements (for example large buildings or an indistinct urban edge); and from other areas views are limited due to relatively flat to gently undulating topography and intervening landscape elements (for example hedgerows and woodland blocks), and/or the presence of extensive intervening urban development, particularly to the north, east and south of the city.

3.89 There are also a number of key elevated views (including those identified within the Cambridge Skyline SPD and the 2015 Inner Green Belt Study) that afford clearer views towards the city. These allow an appreciation of some the other qualities of Cambridge and its broader setting, including the compact nature of the city; its rural landscape setting; the distribution, scale and character of the surrounding villages; the soft green urban edge to the city; and the topography providing a framework for the city. Key viewpoints include: Red Meadow Hill in Coton Countryside Reserve to the west; Chapel Hill, Haslingfield to the south-west; St Margaret's Mount to the south; Little Trees Hill, Magog Down to the south-east; and Limekiln Road to the south-east.

3.90 In addition, areas of elevated land forming a rural backdrop in views across the city is an important aspect of the setting of Cambridge. This includes the Gog Magog Hills to the south-east, which are seen beyond the city in views from the west; and the elevated Western Claylands to the west of the city around Madingley, Barton and Coton, which are visible beyond the city in views from the south and east.

2 – Green corridors penetrating into the City

3.91 The Holford and Miles Wright plan referred to “green wedges along the river” as being an important quality to the setting of Cambridge. This was also referenced in the study by Colin Buchanan and Partners and Cambridge LCA. Green corridors are linear areas of green space that penetrate from the open countryside into the urban area of Cambridge and form a key defining element of its setting. Key green corridors include:

- the River Cam corridor, which passes unbroken through the heart of the city from the south-west to the north-east and is a key defining historic feature of Cambridge emphasising the proximity of open countryside to the historic core;
- The Vicar’s Brook and Hobson’s Brook corridor, which provides the open setting for an important approach from the south (including along the railway line);
- The western corridor which extends as far as Grange Road to the west, which forms one of the closest areas of open countryside to the historic core; and
- The East Cambridge corridor, including Coldham’s Common, which is a significant green space extending from the Cam corridor out towards the eastern edge of the city (this includes a finger of Green Belt retained as part of the Major development Site and safeguarded land at Cambridge East).

3 – Short and/or characteristic approaches to the historic core and other key approaches to the city

3.92 Short and/or characteristic approaches to the historic core was identified as a quality in the 2015 Inner Green Belt Study. This is associated both with compactness (considered as part of Cambridge Purpose 1) and the perception

of Cambridge as a historic city when approaching and arriving. Approach routes provide viewpoints from which most visitors see the city and gain an initial perception of it. Pedestrian and cycle links provide access between open countryside and the city, particularly areas close to green corridors and areas to the west where the city centre is close to the open countryside.

3.93 The 2015 Inner Green Belt Study analysed the length and character of approaches to the city. The shortest and most characteristic approaches to the historic core were identified as being to the south and west, and include Madingley Road, Barton Road, Grantchester Road, Huntingdon Road and Trumpington Road, as well as rural approaches along the Cam Corridor. These routes in particular play an important role in the setting of Cambridge, creating positive perceptions of the city on arrival. In the 2015 Inner Green Belt Study road approaches were also described as being either green/treed, suburban or commercial. However, as this relates predominantly to the routes as they pass through the urban area, it isn't considered relevant to the assessment of Green Belt performance. River approaches along the Cam Corridor from the north-east (along the River Way and Harcamlow Way) and south-west (from Grantchester via Grantchester Meadows) are also generally attractive, green and distinctive. There are also often views of landmark towers and spires within the historic core.

3.94 Railway approaches from the south (from London) are generally green and rural in character, as the railway passes through the green corridor associated with Hobson's Brook, albeit with the large-scale development at Addenbrooke's Hospital visible. Those from the north (from Ely) and east (from Ipswich) in contrast pass through extensive built up areas, albeit passing through Green Belt land for a short length at Stourbridge Common and Coldham's Common respectively.

3.95 Other key approaches to the wider city also play a role in contributing to people's perception of Cambridge. These include: Huntingdon Road from the north-west; the B1049 (Histon Road) from the north; the A10 (Ely Road) from the north-east; the A14 and A1303 (Newmarket Road) from the east; Balsham Road/Cambridge Road and the A1307 (Babraham Road) from the south-east; the A1301 (Cambridge Road) and the M11 from the south; the A10 (Cambridge

Road), Chapel Hill/Barton Road and the A603 (Hillside/Wimpole Road) from the south-west; and the B1046 (Barton Road/Comberton Road) from the west.

4 – Designated sites and other features contributing positively to the character of the landscape setting

3.96 All features, sites and areas covered by designation are elements that can contribute positively to the character of the landscape and the setting and special character of Cambridge and people's experience of it. These include:

- Conservation Areas covering parts of Cambridge (in particular close to the historic core) and the majority of villages (wholly or partly);
- Registered Parks and Gardens (for example Anglesey Abbey, Madingley Hall, the American Military Cemetery, Sawston Hall and Wilbraham Temple);
- numerous Scheduled Monuments scattered throughout the landscape, including prehistoric earthworks (for example. Wandlebury Camp), Roman Roads (for example Worstead Street) and Medieval moated sites (for example Moated site at Manor Farm south of Grantchester);
- numerous listed buildings, concentrated primarily within the villages;
- Country Parks (for example at. Coton and Wandlebury);
- Registered Common land (for example Coe Fen and Coldham's Common);
- Public Rights of Way (PRoW), including long distance trails (such as. the Whitwell Way, the Fen Rivers Way and Harmcamlow Way), footpaths and bridleways, which provide access to the countryside around Cambridge; and
- Cycle Routes, including National Cycle Routes (such as 11 and 51) and Regional Routes (such as 24).

5 – The scale, character, identity and rural setting of the Green Belt villages

3.97 This was identified as a quality relevant to Green Belt purposes in the 2015 Inner Green Belt Study and was identified as an aspect of special character of Cambridge and its setting within the SCLP 2018 (along with the distribution and physical separation which are considered as part of Cambridge Purpose 3 below). The study by Colin Buchanan and Partners in 2001 also defined setting as being partly related to the placement and character of villages surrounding the city.

3.98 The varying size, character and identity of the villages is an important aspect of the setting of Cambridge. 20th century development around some villages has caused a degree of coalescence (for example Histon and Impington and Great Shelford and Stapleford) which has compromised the identity of the individual settlements. The villages which experienced significant growth in the 20th century have generally become less distinctive than those which have changed little. Within the latter group, the historic character and relationship with the surrounding landscape generally remains largely intact. Many of these smaller villages have also retained their characteristic linear form (such as Fen Ditton) or nucleated form (for example Grantchester). The rural setting is also a fundamental part of the character of villages, with many retaining a strong sense of being within a rural landscape distinct from Cambridge despite their proximity to the city. This in turn contributes to the wider rural setting of Cambridge. The Green Belt has a critical role in protecting these qualities.

6 – Topography providing a framework to the city

3.99 Cambridge developed at crossing point of the River Cam, sited on dry land adjacent to the river. It was also positioned at the meeting point of three landscapes, allowing access to their resources: undrained wetlands and fens to the north and east (wildfowl, fish and reeds); forested claylands to the west

(timber and game); and chalk ridges to south and east (pasture and arable land).

3.100 The position of Cambridge at the meeting point of the three landscape, remains apparent through topography and the pattern of elements and features that are fundamental to the character of the different landscapes (such as ditches and streams within the fen and clayland landscapes, and spring fed streams on the chalk ridge landscapes).

3.101 The Skyline CCC SPD and Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment (Cambridge LCA) [See reference 14] highlight the notion of Cambridge being a contained town sitting in a partial bowl of low lying landscape with higher ground to the south-east, south and west and low lying fens to the north and east. To the south-east lies a broad chalk ridge up to 74m above ordnance datum (AOD) at the Gog Magog Hills; and to the west a two gault clay ridges up to 63m AOD. Lower ground is also associated with the River Cam, lying below 5m AOD. The city has not developed up onto the sides of hills to the west and south-east, or onto the floodplains of the River Cam or its tributaries or the fens. The relationship of the city to the surrounding topography is one of the key defining qualities of Cambridge and its setting.

3.102 Some features in particular (such as the Cam River and its floodplain and the Gog Magog Hills) are fundamental to the setting and special character of Cambridge. The Holford and Miles Wright plan referred to the importance of excluding development from “the foothills of the Gogs”. The Cambridge LCA (2003) also recognises the significance of topography in contributing to setting and special character, identifying high ground as “Defining Character” (that is, a key resource that is essential to the special qualities of Cambridge and its setting).

Table 3.3: Criteria used to inform the assessment of contribution to Cambridge Purpose 2

<p>Significant contribution to purpose</p>	<p>Land forms/contains one or more features/aspects of particular importance to the quality of Cambridge’s setting (for example key views of Cambridge including its historic core; location within a Green Corridor in proximity to the historic core; location on or close to a short and/or characteristic approach to the historic core). Reduced openness, land use or weak distinction from an inset settlement do not diminish these qualities; or</p> <p>Land forms/contains several features/aspects of importance (for example views of the wider city; location within a Green Corridor but at a distance from the historic core; location on or close to a key approach to the wider city). Reduced openness, land use or weak distinction from an inset settlement do not diminish these qualities.</p>
<p>Relatively significant contribution to purpose</p>	<p>Land forms/contains one or more features/aspects of importance to the quality of Cambridge’s setting. Reduced openness, land use or weak distinction from an inset settlement do not diminish these qualities; or</p> <p>Land forms/contains several features/aspects that contribute to the quality of Cambridge’s setting (for example view towards Cambridge but dominated by more modern peripheral development; location within a Green Corridor but separated from historic core by more modern intervening development; location on the periphery of a key approach to the wider city). Reduced openness, land use or weak distinction from an inset settlement do not diminish these qualities; or</p> <p>Land use is not associated with an inset settlement, land is open and it has a strong distinction from any inset settlements, and therefore has a strong rural character; and forms/contains some features/aspects that contribute to the quality of Cambridge’s setting.</p>
<p>Moderate contribution to purpose</p>	<p>Land use is not associated with an inset settlement, land is open and it has a strong distinction from any inset settlements, and therefore has a strong rural character; it may also form/contain limited features/aspects that contribute to the quality of Cambridge’s setting; or</p> <p>Land forms/contains no features/aspects that contribute specifically to the quality of Cambridge’s setting, but land use is not associated with an inset settlement, land is open and it has</p>

	<p>a strong distinction from any inset settlements, and therefore has a strong rural character; or</p> <p>Land use is not associated with an inset settlement, land is open but does not have strong distinction from any inset settlements and therefore has some rural character; but forms/contains some features/aspects that contribute to the quality of Cambridge's setting; or</p> <p>Land has development and/or uses which weaken its rural character, but has a strong distinction from an inset settlement and also forms/contains some features/aspects that contribute to the quality of Cambridge's setting.</p>
<p>Relatively limited contribution to purpose</p>	<p>Land use is not associated with an inset settlement, land is open and does not have a strong distinction from an inset settlement, and therefore has some rural character; it may also form/contain limited features/aspects that contribute to the quality of Cambridge's setting; or</p> <p>Land use is not associated with an inset settlement, land is open and does not have a strong distinction from any inset settlements, and therefore has some rural character. It contains no features/aspects that contribute specifically to the quality of Cambridge's setting; or</p> <p>Land has development and/or uses which weakens its rural character, but has a strong distinction from an inset settlement. It does not form or contain any features/aspects that contribute to the quality of Cambridge's setting; or</p> <p>Land has development and/or uses which weaken its rural character, and does not have a strong distinction from an inset settlement, but forms/contains some features/aspects that contribute to the quality of Cambridge's setting.</p>
<p>Limited or No contribution to purpose</p>	<p>Land has development of a scale that substantially weakens its rural character, but has some distinction from an inset settlement. It does not form or contain any features/aspects that contribute to the quality of Cambridge's setting; or</p> <p>Land has a use which associates it with an inset settlement and a weak distinction from an inset settlement. It does not form or contain any features/aspects that contribute to the quality of Cambridge's setting; or</p> <p>Land is not open, and the development within it does not contribute to the quality of Cambridge's setting.</p>

Does the land have the potential to play a role with regard to Purpose 3: to prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city?

3.103 Cambridge Purpose 3 is closely related to NPPF Purpose 2 ('to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another'). However, the focus here is not on gaps between 'towns' specifically, but on the gaps between Cambridge and the inner necklace of villages and on the gaps between the individual villages themselves - both those within the inner necklace and those more distant.

3.104 The distribution, physical separation, setting, scale and character of Green Belt villages was identified as an aspect of special character of Cambridge and its setting within the SCLP 2018 and the 2015 Inner Green Belt Study. It relates primarily to the distribution of villages around Cambridge and the extent of separation from the city; as well as the extent of separation between the villages themselves. The 2015 study stated that the inner necklace villages play a particularly important role in the immediate setting of Cambridge; and that the rural landscape separating these from Cambridge and from each other plays a critical role in preserving separate identities and therefore the immediate setting of the city. It also stated that the more distant villages also play a role as people see them as they travel into Cambridge and they are seen in panoramic views of the city.

3.105 In addition to the large built up area of Cambridge, all inset villages (listed in Paragraph 3.20 and shown on Figure 2.1) were identified as relevant to Cambridge Purpose 3. Also, the surrounding of an inset settlement with Green Belt, when defining the Cambridge Green Belt, reflects an intention that the merging of that settlement with other development should be avoided. In order to determine the role of land between the settlement and the Green Belt outer edge in maintaining this settlement integrity, the assessment also treated the gap between an inset settlement and the outer edge of the Green Belt as a gap

between settlements, regardless of whether any urban development currently exists beyond the Green Belt outer edge.

3.106 The concept of ‘merging’ is clear but assessing the extent to which land between settlements contributes to preventing this is less so. However, it is generally acknowledged that the role open land plays in preventing the merging of settlements is more than a product of the size of the gap between them. Assessments therefore usually consider both the physical and visual role that intervening Green Belt land plays in preventing the merging of settlements.

3.107 The analysis at Step 1 looked at the separation between settlements. Physical proximity was the initial consideration, but both built and natural landscape elements can act to either decrease or increase perceived separation – for example inter-visibility, a direct connecting road or rail link or a shared landform may decrease perceived separation, whereas a separating feature such as a woodland block or hill may increase the perception of separation.

3.108 The relevance analysis identified that land that is juxtaposed between settlements makes a contribution to this purpose, and the stronger the relationship between the settlements – that is to say the more fragile the gap – the stronger the potential contribution to this purpose of any intervening open land. The relevance of Cambridge Purpose 3 also tailed off with increased distance from both settlements – that is where land is judged to become more peripheral to the ‘gap’.

3.109 Where settlements are very close, a judgement was made as to whether their proximity is such that the remaining open land does not play a critical role in maintaining a distinction between the two settlements, that is to say that the characteristics of the open land relate more to the settlements’ areas themselves than to the open land in between.

3.110 Contribution to Cambridge Purpose 3 therefore depended in part on an analysis of the strength of a gap between two (or more) inset settlements but also, when considering individual parcels of land, on the openness of each

parcel (assessed at Step 2 of the assessment process) and on the analysis of distinction between each specific settlement and adjacent land (Step 3). Land within a gap that is clearly distinct from both settlements, and that does not have development within it that reduces perceived rural separation, will make a stronger contribution than land which is more closely associated with one settlement or the other. The criteria used to assess contribution to Cambridge Purpose 3 are set out in Table 3.4 below.

Physical and visual role of preventing merging

PAS guidance, which is commonly referenced in Green Belt studies, states that distance alone should not be used to assess the extent to which the Green Belt prevents neighbouring towns from merging into one another. The PAS guidance also refers to settlement character and the character of land in between as being relevant considerations when looking at retaining separate identities. – PAS Planning on the Doorstep.

Table 3.4: Criteria used to inform the assessment of contribution to Cambridge Purpose 3

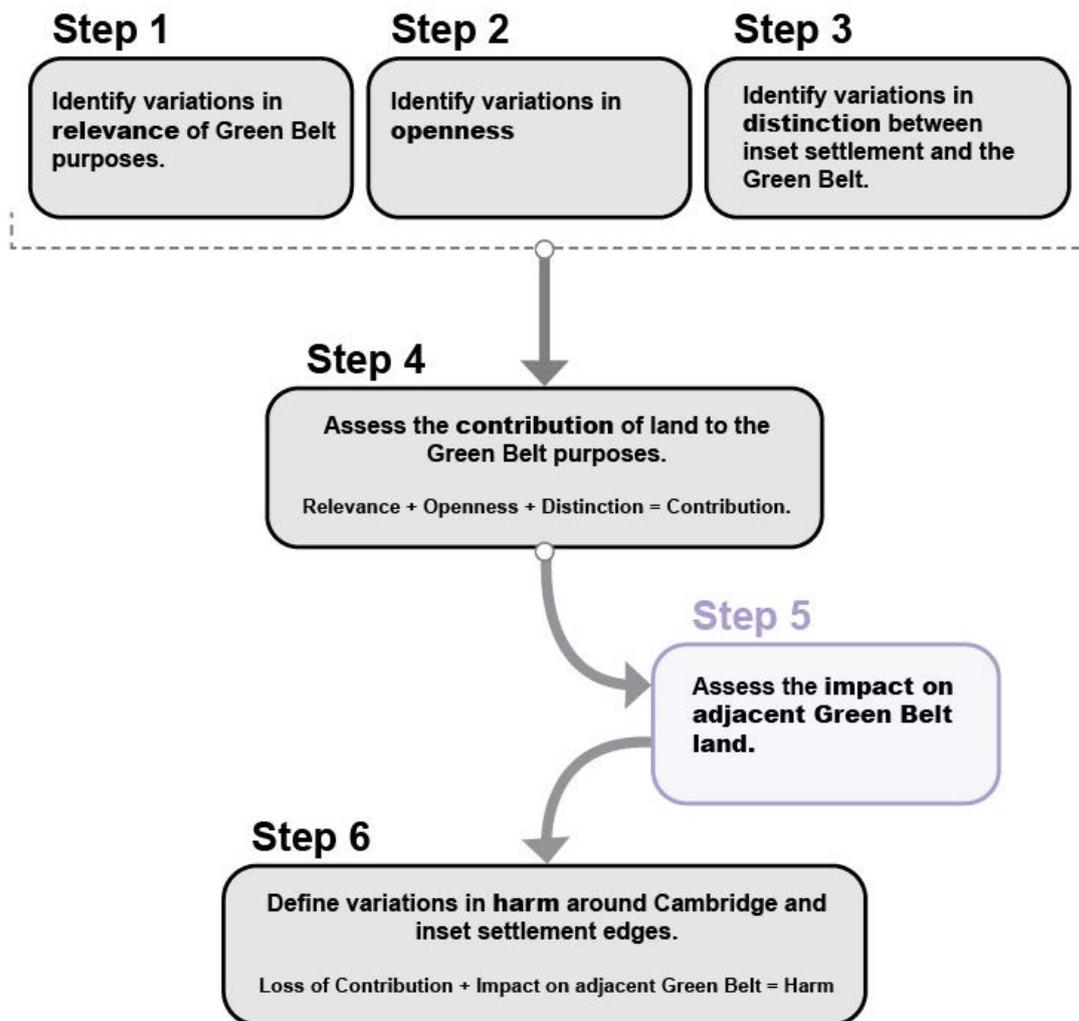
Significant contribution to purpose	Land is open, lies in a gap which is very fragile and has moderate or at least strong distinction from the inset settlement edge; or Land is open, lies in a gap which is fragile and has at least strong distinction from the inset settlement edge; or Land is relatively open and lies in a very fragile gap between settlements. It has at least strong distinction from the inset settlement edge.
Relatively significant contribution to purpose	Land is open and lies in a very fragile gap between distinct settlements. It has weak distinction from the inset settlement edge; or

	<p>Land is relatively open and lies in a very fragile gap between settlements. It has moderate distinction from the inset settlement edge.</p> <p>Land is open and lies in a fragile gap between distinct settlements. It has moderate distinction from the inset settlement edge; or</p> <p>Land is open and lies in a moderate gap between settlements. It has at least strong distinction from the inset settlement edge; or</p> <p>Land is relatively open and lies in a fragile gap between settlements. It has at least strong distinction from the inset settlement edge; or</p> <p>Land is relatively developed and lies in a very fragile gap between settlements. It has at least strong distinction from the inset settlement edge.</p>
<p>Moderate contribution to purpose</p>	<p>Land is open and lies in a fragile gap between distinct settlements. It has weak distinction from the inset settlement edge; or</p> <p>Land is relatively open and lies in a very fragile gap between distinct settlements. It has weak distinction from the inset settlement edge; or</p> <p>Land is open and lies in a moderate gap between settlements. It has moderate distinction from the inset settlement edge; or</p> <p>Land is relatively open and lies in a fragile gap between settlements. It has moderate distinction from the inset settlement edge; or</p> <p>Land is relatively developed and lies in a very fragile gap between settlements. It has moderate distinction from the inset settlement edge; or</p> <p>Land is open and lies in a robust gap between settlements. It has at least strong distinction from the inset settlement edge; or</p> <p>Land is relatively open and lies in a moderate gap between settlements. It has at least strong distinction from the inset settlement edge; or</p> <p>Land is relatively developed and lies in a fragile gap between settlements. It has at least strong distinction from the inset settlement edge.</p>
<p>Relatively limited contribution to purpose</p>	<p>Land is open and lies in a moderate gap between settlements. It has weak distinction from the inset settlement edge; or</p> <p>Land is relatively open and lies in a fragile gap between settlements. It has weak distinction from the inset settlement edge; or</p>

	<p>Land is relatively developed and lies in a very fragile gap between distinct settlements. It has weak distinction from the inset settlement edge; or</p> <p>Land is open and lies in a robust gap between settlements. It has moderate distinction from the inset settlement edge; or</p> <p>Land is relatively open and lies in a moderate gap between settlements. It has moderate distinction from the inset settlement edge; or</p> <p>Land is relatively developed and lies in a fragile gap between settlements. It has moderate distinction from the inset settlement edge.</p>
<p>Limited or No contribution to purpose</p>	<p>Land is open and lies in a robust gap between settlements. It has weak distinction from the inset settlement edge; or</p> <p>Land is relatively open and lies in a moderate gap between settlements. It has weak distinction from the inset settlement edge; or</p> <p>Land is relatively developed and lies in a fragile gap between settlements. It has weak distinction from the inset settlement edge; or</p> <p>Land is not open; or</p> <p>Land does not lie between neighbouring settlements.</p>

Step 5: Assess impact of release on adjacent Green Belt land

Figure 3.7: Step 5 of harm assessment



3.111 Adjacent Green Belt land is defined in this study as the land that lies next to and/or in close proximity to land/parcels being assessed for potential release.

3.112 This step considered the potential impact of the release of land on the adjacent Green Belt, with the following assumptions:

- The released land will not be open;
- Physical boundary features marking the edges of allocation sites will be largely retained; and
- Future development within a parcel would be of a similar scale to existing development at the edge of Cambridge or within the inset settlement edge, unless otherwise specified.

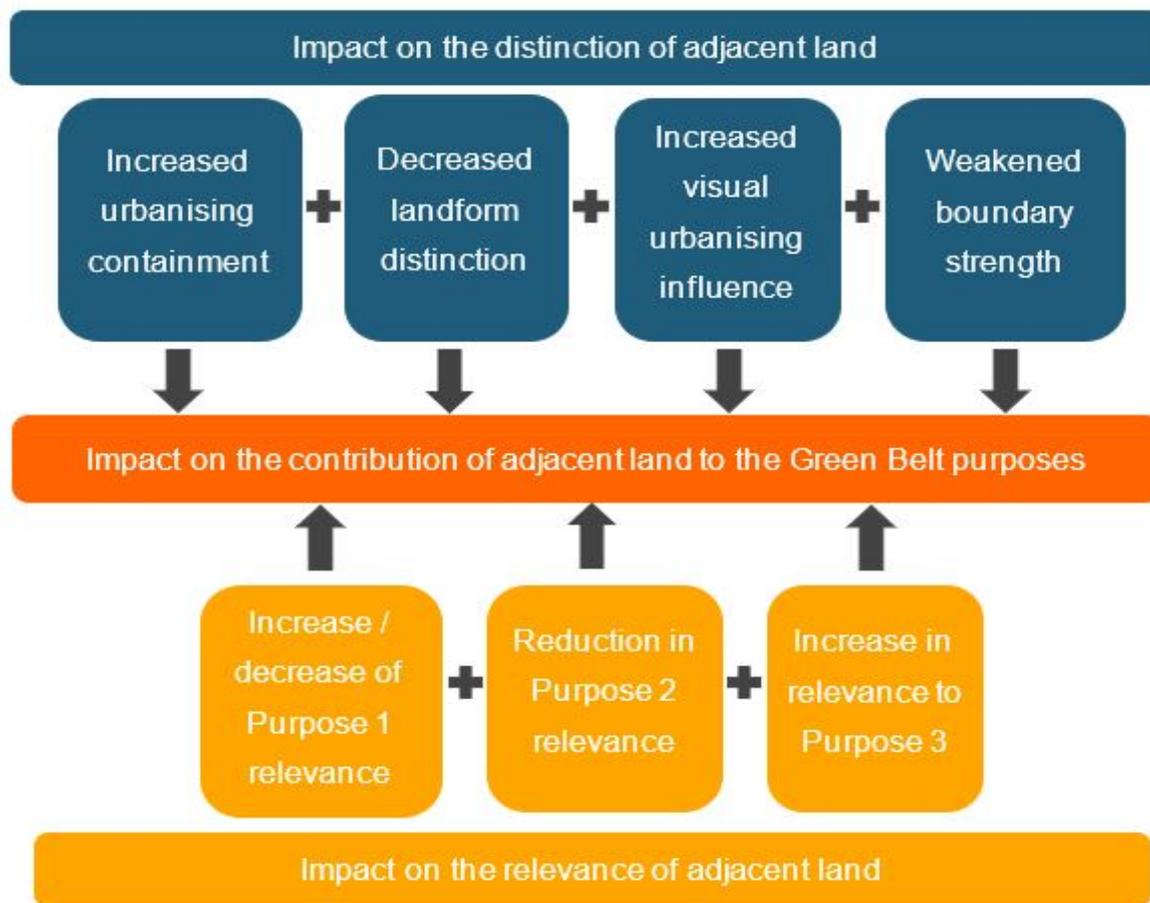
3.113 These assumptions reflect the fact that the visual influence of urban development, and the distance Green Belt land is from that development, can both have a bearing on judgements as to whether the remaining Green Belt would be weakened. It is necessary to assume that the land will be developed in order to reflect potential adverse impact, but it is recognised that there is potential for mitigation measures such as boundary strengthening and density of development within an inset area to influence this. Although the nature of development on released land could have some bearing on the strength of adjacent retained Green Belt land, it is unlikely to radically alter assessment outcomes.

3.114 The impact of release on adjacent Green Belt was considered with reference to the same components that were considered as part of Stages 1 and 3 to determine contribution to Green Belt purposes: distinction from inset settlements and relevance of each purpose. Openness has no bearing on the impact on adjacent land (as the assessment will assume no loss of openness on adjacent land).

3.115 Any potential cross-boundary issues, such as cases where release of land within South Cambridgeshire would harm the integrity of Green Belt land outside of the District, were also addressed.

3.116 Figure 3.8 illustrates the elements that were considered when assessing the impact of release on adjacent Green Belt land, and the paragraphs below explain this in more detail.

Figure 3.8: Variations in impact of release on adjacent land



Impact on distinction

3.117 The weakening of distinction of adjacent Green Belt land from the inset settlement by the release of a parcel of land affects the contribution of the adjacent land to Green Belt Purposes, and therefore increases the harm of release of the parcel of land.

3.118 The release of land could affect the distinction of adjacent Green Belt land in a number of ways, including by:

- Weakening boundaries – for example a release of land crossing a strong and consistent separating feature, such as a railway line, and replacing it with a weaker boundary, such as a hedgerow, would weaken distinction;

but moving the Green Belt boundary to a strong and consistent separating feature would maintain the distinction of Green Belt land beyond.

- Changing landform distinction – for example land on a valley side which is currently distinct from a hilltop settlement could lose that distinction if adjacent slopes are released.
- Increasing visual urban influence – land that was previously some distance from the nearest urbanising influences may be in closer proximity, particularly if there is limited visual separation.
- Leaving a narrower area of land located closer to an inset edge – for example release of land might leave a narrow field, with a clear outer boundary to the wider Green Belt, adjacent to the expanded inset area. Such an area would be less distinct from the inset area than might be the case in a more open landscape, that is where land extends a significant distance from the inset edge before reaching a clear outer boundary with the wider Green Belt.
- Increasing urbanising containment – for example land which currently faces onto inset development on one ‘front’ could become partially enclosed by the extended inset settlement area.

Impact on relevance

3.119 Release of land could also affect the extent to which a Green Belt purpose is considered relevant. Both increases and decreases in relevance can occur, resulting in either an increase or decrease in contribution to the Green Belt purpose, and in either case, as described below, the impact will lead to an increase in potential harm.

3.120 With regard to the relevance of the Cambridge Green Belt purposes, the analysis considered:

- Whether the release of land would result in the containment within the City of land that was previously considered on its edge, thus diminishing its contribution to preventing any further sprawl (Cambridge Purpose 1); or

- Whether any of the qualities of Cambridge's setting would be diminished by the release of land (Cambridge Purpose 2); or
- Whether the strength of any settlement gaps would be diminished (Cambridge Purpose 3).

Assessing the level of impact on adjacent land

3.121 The contribution to Green Belt purposes of adjacent land can be weakened in the ways described above, regardless of whether the adjacent land makes a stronger or weaker contribution to the Green Belt purposes than the released parcel. However, when it comes to considering the level of harm from release of the parcel, it is only the impact on adjacent land that makes a stronger contribution to Green Belt purposes (than the land within the parcel) that affects the assessed level of harm from release of the parcel.

3.122 This is because weaker contributing adjacent land could be released in conjunction with stronger contributing land without increasing overall harm. Therefore, if the adjacent land is being retained and not released, that cannot increase harm, even if there is an impact on the contribution of weaker performing adjacent land.

3.123 The assessment of impact on adjacent Green Belt made it clear where release will have an impact on land that makes a stronger contribution to the Green Belt purposes (which could therefore increase harm) and where release will affect land which does not make a stronger contribution (and which therefore cannot increase harm).

3.124 Six rating levels for impact on adjacent Green Belt were used, ranging from major to negligible. Table 3.5 provides guidance notes and examples for ratings of impact on adjacent land, but different combinations will result in different ratings. The table does not provide a comprehensive list of potential combinations.

Table 3.5: Factors affecting the impact of release on adjacent Green Belt land

Impact on adjacent Green Belt	Notes	Examples
Major impact	<p>The merging of inset settlements that are currently distinct would be considered a major impact, although this would be an impact on Green Belt functionality more than an impact on adjacent Green belt land; or</p> <p>A combination of moderate-major impacts.</p>	<p>Example 1 - Release of land would result in the merging of Purpose 3 settlements that are currently distinct. This would be a major impact.</p> <p>Example 2 - Release would reduce a narrow gap between Purpose 3 settlements to a very narrow gap, and would also weaken the role of land which is of importance to the quality of Cambridge's setting. Together these would be a major impact.</p>
Moderate-major impact	<p>A significant change affecting a purpose of high relevance; or</p> <p>A combination of moderate impacts.</p>	<p>Example 1 - Release of land would significantly increase the urbanising visual influence and containment of adjacent land and would breach the strong boundary feature. This would be a moderate-major impact.</p> <p>Example 2 - Release of land would result in containment of land located adjacent to Cambridge, such that it would now be perceived as being within the main urban area. It would also weaken the Green Belt boundary and increase urbanising visual influence. In combination this would be a moderate-major impact.</p>
Moderate impact	<p>A reduction in distinction sufficient to cause a reduction in contribution by two levels</p>	<p>Example 1 - Release of land would result in containment of land located adjacent to Cambridge, such that it would</p>

Impact on adjacent Green Belt	Notes	Examples
	<p>(for example from significant to moderate); or</p> <p>A moderate change affecting a purpose of higher relevance, or</p> <p>A combination of minor-moderate impacts.</p>	<p>now be perceived as being within the main urban area. This would be a moderate impact in terms of relevance of Purpose 1.</p> <p>Example 2 - Release would diminish the role of land which contributes to the quality of Cambridge's setting. This would be a moderate impact.</p>
Minor-moderate impact	<p>A reduction in distinction sufficient to cause a reduction in contribution by one level (for example from strong to relatively strong); or</p> <p>A limited change affecting a purpose of higher relevance; or</p> <p>A combination of minor impacts.</p>	<p>Example 1 - Release of land would increase the urbanising visual influence and containment of adjacent land. This would be a minor-moderate impact.</p> <p>Example 2 - Release of land would reduce the landform distinction of adjacent land and would result in the creation of a robust gap between Purpose 3 settlements that were previously considered too far apart to be 'neighbouring'. This would be a minor-moderate impact.</p>
Minor impact	<p>A reduction in distinction, but not enough to cause a reduction in contribution; or</p> <p>A limited change affecting a purpose of lower relevance.</p>	<p>Example 1 - Release of land would reduce the landform distinction of adjacent land. This would be a minor impact.</p> <p>Example 2 - Release would result in the creation of a robust gap between Purpose 3 settlements, which were previously considered too far apart to be 'neighbouring'. This would be a minor impact.</p>

Impact on adjacent Green Belt	Notes	Examples
No/Negligible impact	<p>Only Green Belt land that does not make a stronger contribution to any purpose would be affected by the release of land; or</p> <p>Release of land would result in negligible impact on the distinction of, and the relevance of, all Green Belt purposes of adjacent Green Belt land.</p>	<p>Example 1 - Adjacent Green Belt land does not make a stronger contribution to any of the Green Belt purposes.</p> <p>Example 2 - Release of land would not impact the distinction of adjacent Green Belt land or relevance of this land to Green Belt purposes. This would be a negligible impact.</p>

Impact on distinction

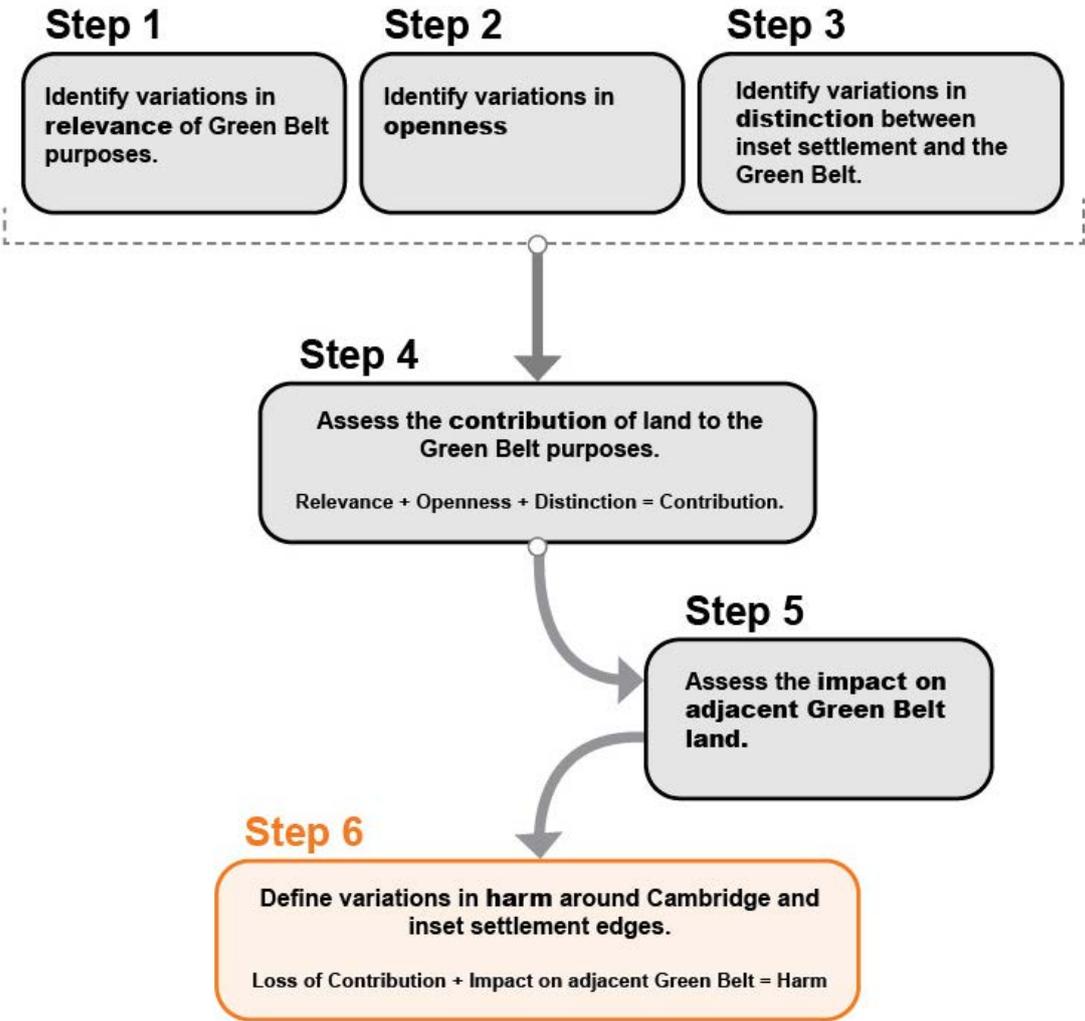
PAS guidance notes the types of areas of land that might seem to make a relatively limited contribution to the Green Belt, or which might be considered for development through a review of the Green Belt according to the five Green Belt purposes, including:

- Land where development would be well contained by the landscape.
- Land where a strong boundary could be created with a clear distinction between ‘town’ and ‘country’. – PAS Planning on the Doorstep.

This study considered the degree of containment from existing urban development and boundary strength in the assessment of whether land is distinct or not from the urban edge.

Step 6: Define variations in harm to the Green Belt purposes

Figure 3.9: Step 6 of harm assessment



3.125 The assessed loss of contribution of land to the Green Belt purposes (Step 4) was combined with the assessed impact of its release on remaining land designated as Green Belt (Step 5) to determine an overall rating of the harm of releasing land from the Green Belt for each of the defined parcels.

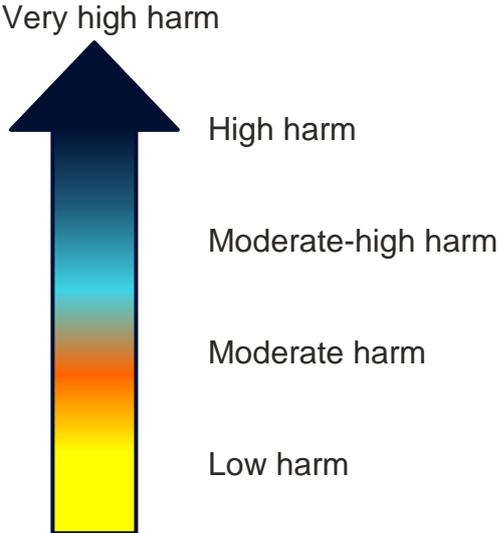
3.126 Where release of a parcel also, in order to form an expansion of the inset settlement, necessitated the release of intervening land, the loss of contribution is that associated with the highest-contributing parcel. If, for example, a potential release includes land which make a relatively strong contribution to Purpose 3 and land which makes a moderate contribution to Purpose 3, the overall contribution is relatively strong, and therefore would be a relatively strong loss of contribution were it to be released.

3.127 If a parcel of land could potentially be released as part of the expansion of more than one settlement, the analysis identified any variations in harm to the Green Belt purposes that would be associated with release out from one settlement or the other.

3.128 Consideration was then given to the potential to reduce harm by releasing only part of the parcel – by defining an area which if released would have less impact on the integrity of the adjacent Green Belt. Where such potential was identified the parcel was divided into sub-areas, with separate harm ‘scenarios’ described and rated for each. A minimum size of 1ha was applied to this process, anything less being considered too small an area to constitute a potential ‘strategic’ release of land.

3.129 It is recognised that specific areas of Green Belt land promoted for release and development will frequently not coincide with the boundaries of parcels defined in this study, but the harm rating given to a parcel or sub-area of it should be assumed to apply to any strategic scale release of land within that area.

3.130 Green Belt harm was rated using a five-point scale ranging from very high to low harm:



3.131 Figure 3.10 provides an indication as to how loss of contribution to the Green Belt purposes (Step 4) and the impact on adjacent Green Belt (Step 5) influence the overall harm of Green Belt release. A stronger contribution to multiple purposes, a very strong level of distinction from the inset settlement (resulting in a particular strong contribution to one or more purposes) and a higher level of impact on adjacent land will typically increase harm, whilst a weaker contribution and lower impact on adjacent land will reduce harm. It should be stressed that, rather than simply combining loss of contribution ratings and the impact on adjacent Green Belt ratings in a mechanical/mathematical way, professional judgement was used in each individual case to consider and evaluate how much weight to attach to each contributing element. Table 3.6 provides benchmark examples of overall harm ratings, but different combinations result in different ratings. Clear and detailed justification is provided for all ratings given in relation to how the overall judgement of Green Belt harm is reached. The use of rational professional judgement in balancing the considerations in relation to the assessment of harm is deemed to be appropriate as set out by previous Local Plan Examination Inspectors [See reference 15].

Figure 3.10: Guidelines for taking harm on the basis of contribution to Green Belt purposes and impact of release on adjacent Green Belt

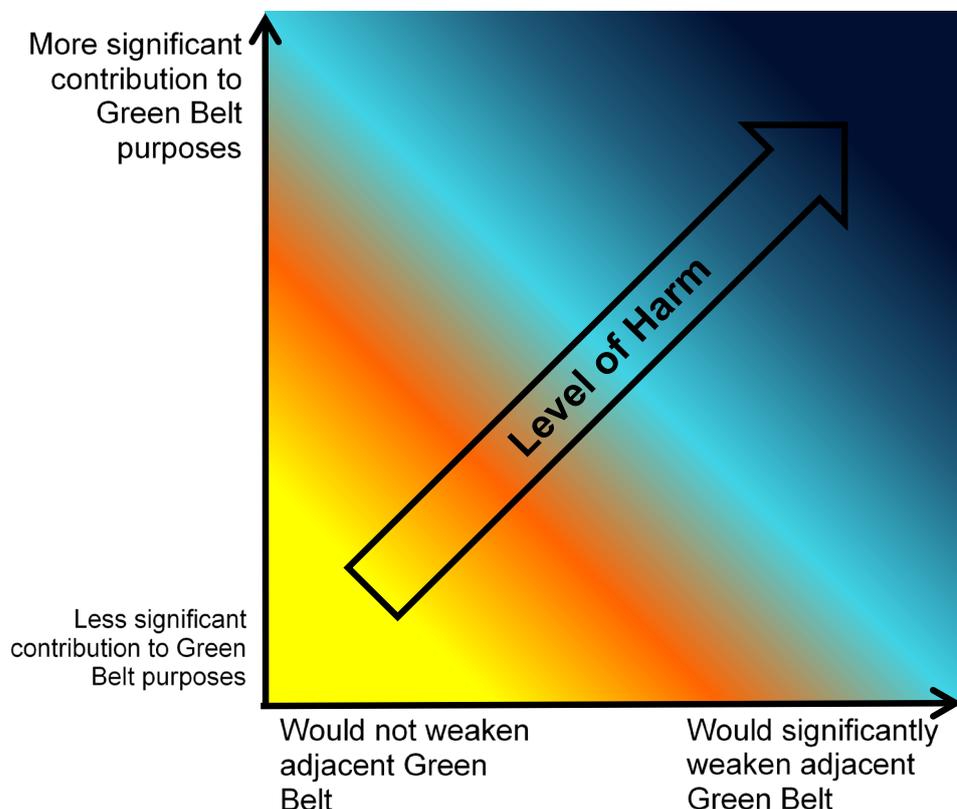


Table 3.6: Benchmark examples used to inform the assessment of overall harm to the Cambridge Green Belt purposes

Very high harm	<p>Release of land results in a loss of land which makes a particularly strong contribution to one of the Green Belt purposes, and would constitute at least a minor impact on adjacent Green Belt land; or</p> <p>Release of land results in a loss of strong contribution to one of the Green Belt purposes, and would constitute a minor-moderate impact on adjacent Green Belt land; or</p> <p>Release of land results in a loss of moderate contribution to one of the Green Belt purposes, and would constitute a moderate-major impact on adjacent Green Belt land.</p>
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<p>High harm</p>	<p>Release of land results in a loss of strong contribution to one of the Green Belt purposes, and would constitute a minor impact on adjacent Green Belt land; or</p> <p>Release of land results in a loss of relatively strong contribution to one of the Green Belt purposes, and would constitute a minor-moderate impact on adjacent Green Belt land.</p>
<p>Moderate-high harm</p>	<p>Release of land results in a loss of strong contribution to one of the Green Belt purposes, but would constitute a negligible impact on adjacent Green Belt land; or</p> <p>Release of land results in a loss of relatively limited contribution to one of the Green Belt purposes, and would constitute a moderate impact on adjacent Green Belt land.</p>
<p>Moderate harm</p>	<p>Release of land results in a loss of moderate contribution to one of the Green Belt purposes, and would constitute a minor impact on adjacent Green Belt land; or</p> <p>Release of land results in a loss of relatively weak contribution to one of the Green Belt purposes, and would constitute a minor-moderate impact on adjacent Green Belt land.</p>
<p>Low harm</p>	<p>Release of land results in a loss of moderate contribution to one of the Green Belt purposes, and would constitute a negligible impact on adjacent Green Belt land; or</p> <p>Release of land results in a loss of relatively weak contribution to one of the Green Belt purposes, and would constitute a minor impact on adjacent Green Belt land.</p>

Parcel rationalisation and assessment of outer areas

3.132 The process of defining parcels and assessing harm progressed outwards from each inset settlement until a zone of parcels was defined which either had strong distinction from the settlement edge, or were assigned a 'very high' harm rating. A process of rationalisation then took place, with adjacent parcels sharing the same contribution and harm ratings being combined into larger parcels where it was felt that this would simplify the assessment outputs without losing granularity in the result.

3.133 The remaining land between settlements was termed the 'outer area'. The 'outer area' was subdivided and assessed in the same way as the parcels around each settlement, considering the relevance of each purpose but applying a very strong distinction rating. Due to the greater distance between land in outer areas and the inset settlements, and the subsequent very strong distinction, outer areas were all given a 'very high' harm rating. The outer area assessments do recognise some variation in contribution rating but in all cases the overall harm is still 'very high' and the areas are, as a result, much larger than the parcels defined around each inset settlement. Any significant areas of diminished openness in outer area parcels were noted, but in the context of an assessment of harm associated with expanding existing inset areas these did not affect the assessment ratings. Outer area subdivisions are coded OA1, OA2 and so forth.

Harm assessment outputs

3.134 The parcel assessments are grouped by settlement and each grouping includes:

- an OS map showing the location of the settlement within the area;
- an OS map showing the assessment area parcels around the settlement and any areas of absolute constraint. Each parcel is coded with reference

to the settlement – for example GR1, GR2 and so on for land around Grantchester; and

- an OS map showing the assessment area parcels around the settlement, colour-shaded to show variations in harm ratings.

3.135 An assessment proforma is provided for all identified parcels. Each proforma includes an aerial view showing the extent of the parcel, in the context of neighbouring parcels, and an OS map indicating the presence of any absolute constraints (as defined in Paragraph 3.22) and any areas that have been assessed as having no openness (as set out in Step 2 of the assessment process). The parcel assessment is then organised under the following headings:

Parcel location and openness

3.136 This gives the parcel size (in hectares) and a brief description of its location, then considers the openness of the land. Openness relates to Step 2 in the assessment process (see Paragraphs 3.36-3.42).

Distinction between parcel and inset area

3.137 This is Step 3 in the assessment process (see Paragraphs 3.43 - 3.60). It examines the relationship between the Green Belt and the inset settlement, in order to determine how strongly the parcel is related to the settlement. This considers four inter-related elements: boundary features; landform and land cover; urbanising visual influence and urbanising containment. Land which has a stronger distinction from an inset settlement will generally make a stronger contribution to Cambridge Green Belt Purposes 1 and 3. Distinction is stated on a 4-point scale (weak, moderate, strong or very strong).

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

3.138 This covers Step 1 (see Paragraphs 3.27 - 3.35) and Step 4 (Paragraphs 3.61 - 3.110) in the assessment process. It considers the extent to which each Cambridge Green Belt Purpose is relevant to a location (Step 1), and combines this with consideration of openness (Step 2) and distinction (Step 3) to determine the parcel's contribution to each of the three purposes (Step 4). The assessment of contribution applies to each parcel as a whole, providing a rating on a 5-point scale (limited/no contribution, relatively limited, moderate, relatively significant or significant) and supporting text for each Cambridge Green Belt Purpose:

- Cambridge Purpose 1 (to preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre) – for land to contribute to this purpose it needs to be located in the immediate vicinity of Cambridge (see Paragraphs 3.28 and 3.67 - 3.73).
- Cambridge Purpose 2 (to maintain and enhance the quality of Cambridge's setting) - a two-element approach was taken considering: 1) the extent to which land constitutes countryside (that is to say has a rural character) based on its usage and distinction from an inset settlement; and 2) the extent to which land forms or contains other features or aspects that contribute to the quality of Cambridge's setting (see Paragraphs 3.29 and 3.74 - 3.102).
- Cambridge Purpose 3 (to prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city) – an analysis was undertaken of the distribution of villages in and around the Green Belt and the physical features that separate and/or connect them from each other or from Cambridge, in order to determine the fragility of each settlement gap (see Paragraphs 3.30-3.35 and 3.103 - 3.110).

Impact on contribution of adjacent Green Belt

3.139 This covers Step 5 in the assessment process (see Paragraphs 3.111-3.124). It considers the potential impact on the adjacent Green Belt of the

release of land as an expansion of the adjacent inset settlement. If release of part of a parcel would result in a lower harm rating than release of the parcel as a whole, a separate analysis is given for each scenario.

Overall harm of Green Belt release

3.140 This covers Step 6 in the assessment process (see Paragraphs 3.125-3.131). It combines consideration of the loss of contribution of land to the Green Belt purposes (Step 4) with any additional harm resulting from the weakening of remaining Green Belt land (Step 5), to determine an overall rating of the harm of releasing land from the Green Belt. Green Belt harm was rated using a 5-point scale (low, moderate, moderate-high, high and very high harm). If release of part of a parcel would result in a lower harm rating than release of the parcel as a whole, a separate rating and conclusion is given for each scenario.

3.141 A worked example of a parcel assessment, explaining the application of the methodology is included in Appendix D.

Chapter 4

Summary of Findings

4.1 The findings of the assessment of contribution to the Green Belt purposes and potential degree of harm to the Green Belt purposes that would result from release of land are summarised by settlement in Table 4.1 below. Parcels on the edge of Cambridge are organised into ten separate areas, named in accordance with the suburbs adjacent to which they are located.

4.2 It should be noted that the 'area (ha)' column in Table 4.1 indicates the size of the area that would be released in the 'release scenario' described. This means that, in those cases where two scenarios are identified within a particular parcel and one of those scenarios is described as being the release of both area 1 and area 2, the 'area (ha)' value is the size of the parcel as a whole. It should also be noted that in cases where a parcel includes some land subject to an absolute development constraint, the 'area (ha)' value includes that constrained land.

4.3 Figures 4.1 - 4.3 map the ratings for contribution to each of the three Cambridge Green Belt purposes, and Figure 4.4 maps the overall ratings for the potential degree of harm to the Cambridge Green Belt purposes that would result from release of land as an expansion of existing inset or Green Belt edge settlements. At this scale parcels individual parcels cannot be labelled, but overview maps subdivided into different sections of the Green Belt in Greater Cambridgeshire (north, east, south, west and Cambridge City) which include parcel numbers can be found in Appendix A (Figures A1.1 – A1.20).

4.4 In each location where alterations to Green Belt boundaries are being considered, a planning judgement is required to establish whether the sustainability benefits of Green Belt release and the associated development outweigh the harm to the Green Belt designation. In light of this, this assessment of harm to the Green Belt purposes does not draw conclusions as

Chapter 4 Summary of Findings

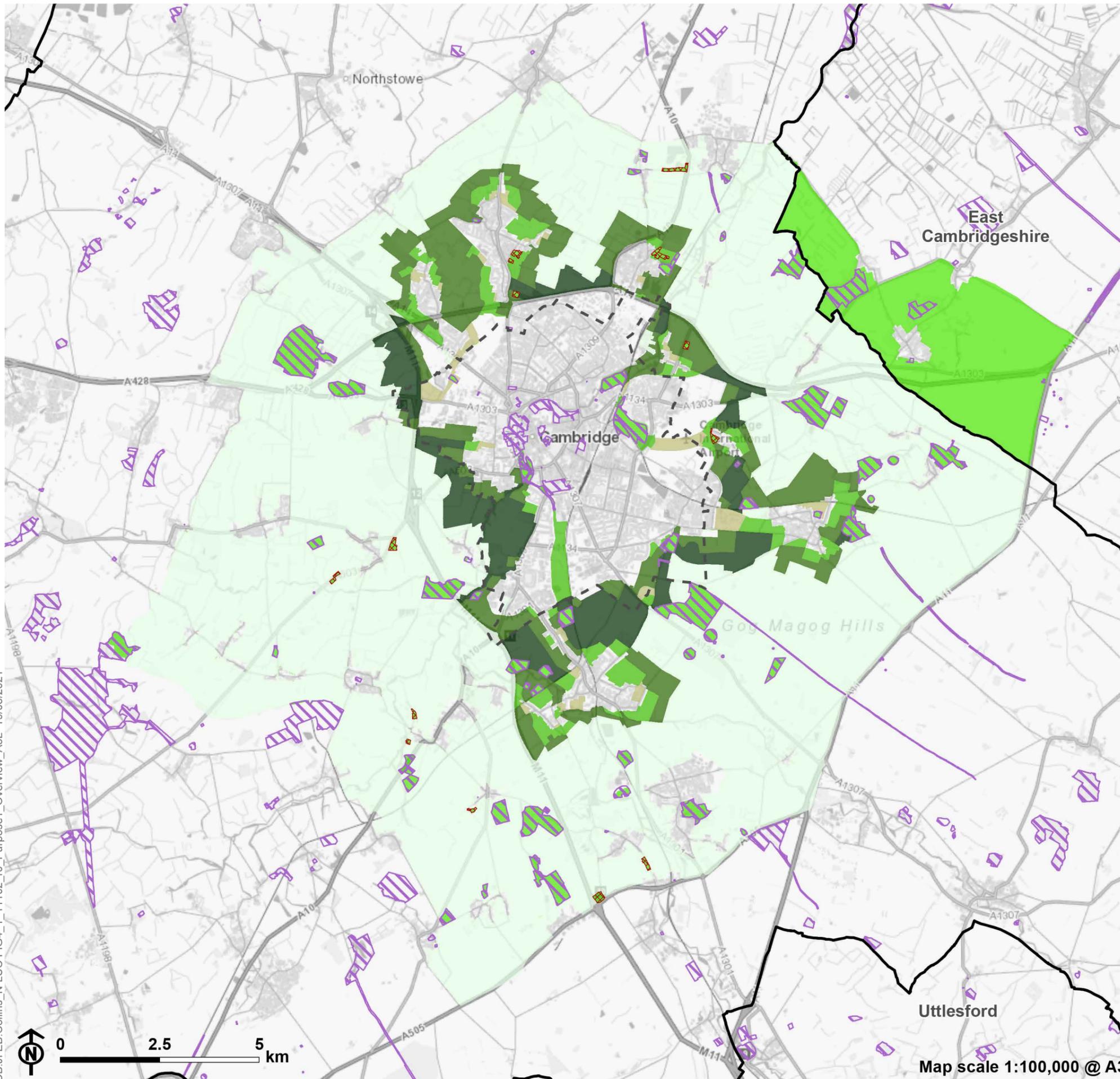
to where land should be released to accommodate development, but identifies relative variations in harm to the designation.

4.5 Detailed findings of the assessment of contribution and harm for the parcelled zones around Cambridge and each inset settlement, and the outer areas beyond the parcelled zones, are included in Appendix B.

Figure 4.1

**Purpose 1 Contribution:
Greater Cambridge**

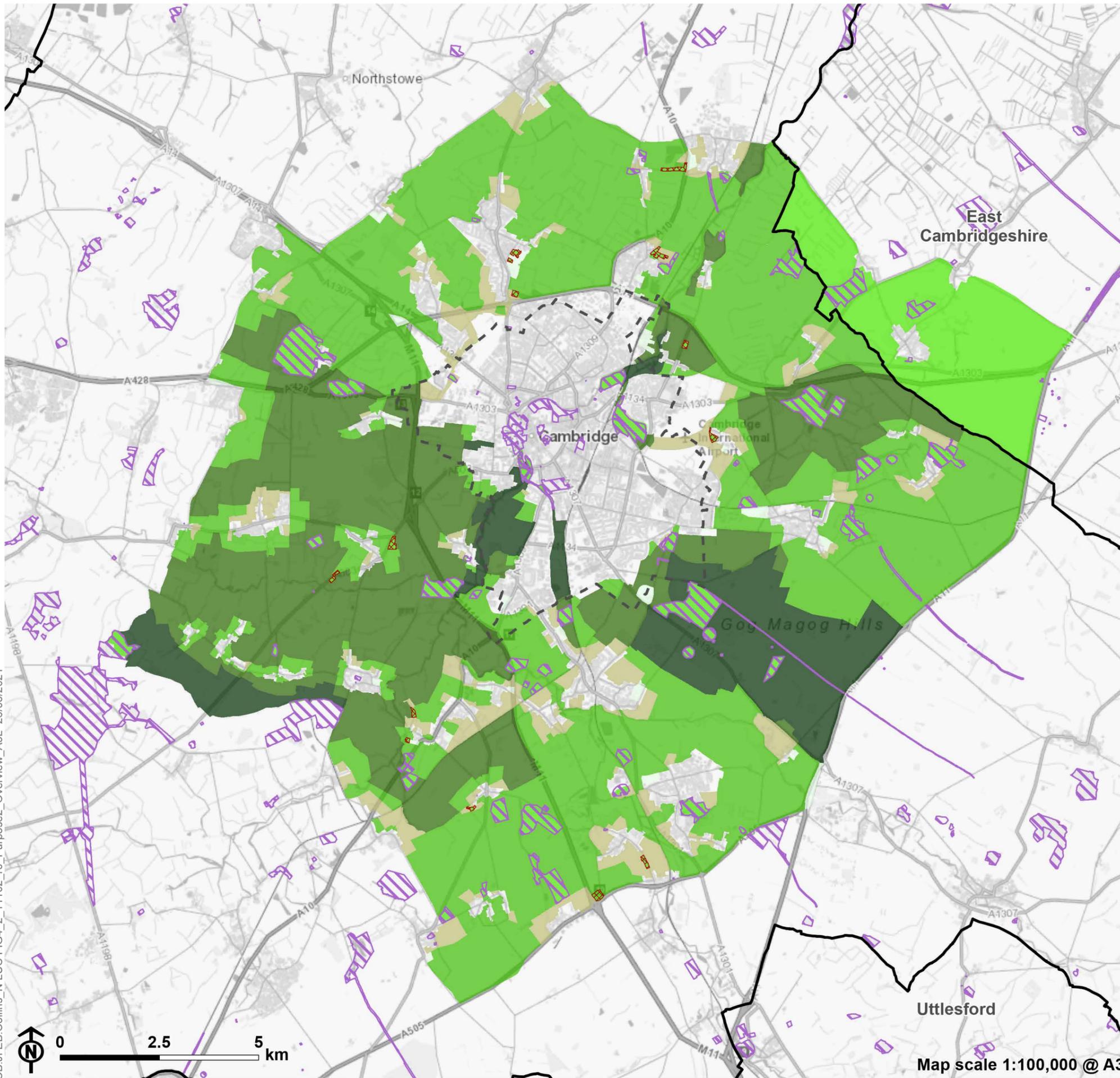
- Greater Cambridge
- Local Authority boundary
- No openness
- Green Belt
- Absolute constraint(s)
- Purpose 1 contribution**
- Significant
- Relatively significant
- Moderate
- Relatively limited
- Limited/No contribution



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Figure 4.2
Purpose 2 Contribution:
Greater Cambridge

- Greater Cambridge
- Local Authority boundary
- No openness
- Green Belt
- Absolute constraint(s)
- Purpose 2 contribution**
- Significant
- Relatively significant
- Moderate
- Relatively limited
- Limited/No contribution

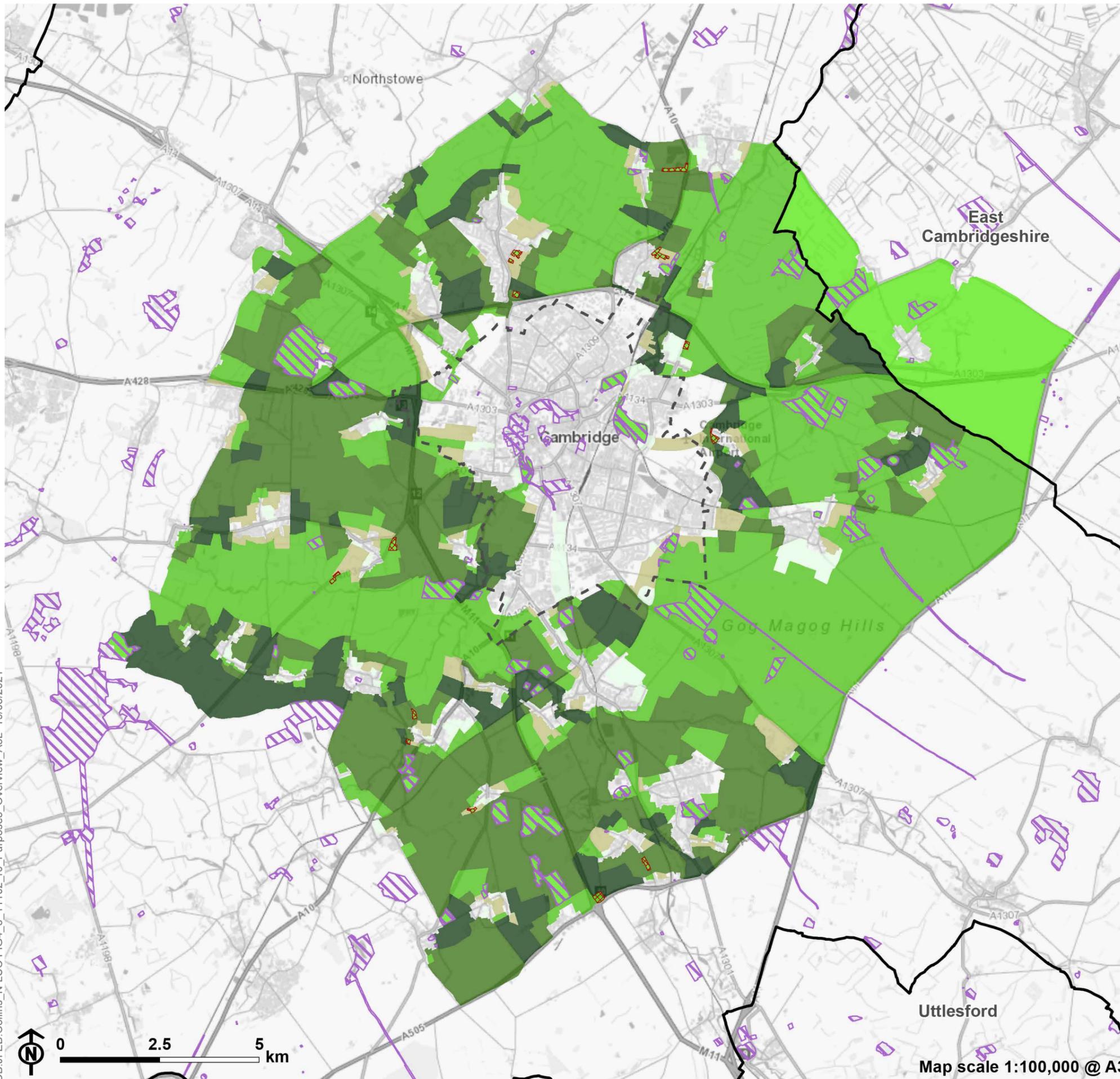


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Figure 4.3

**Purpose 3 Contribution:
Greater Cambridge**

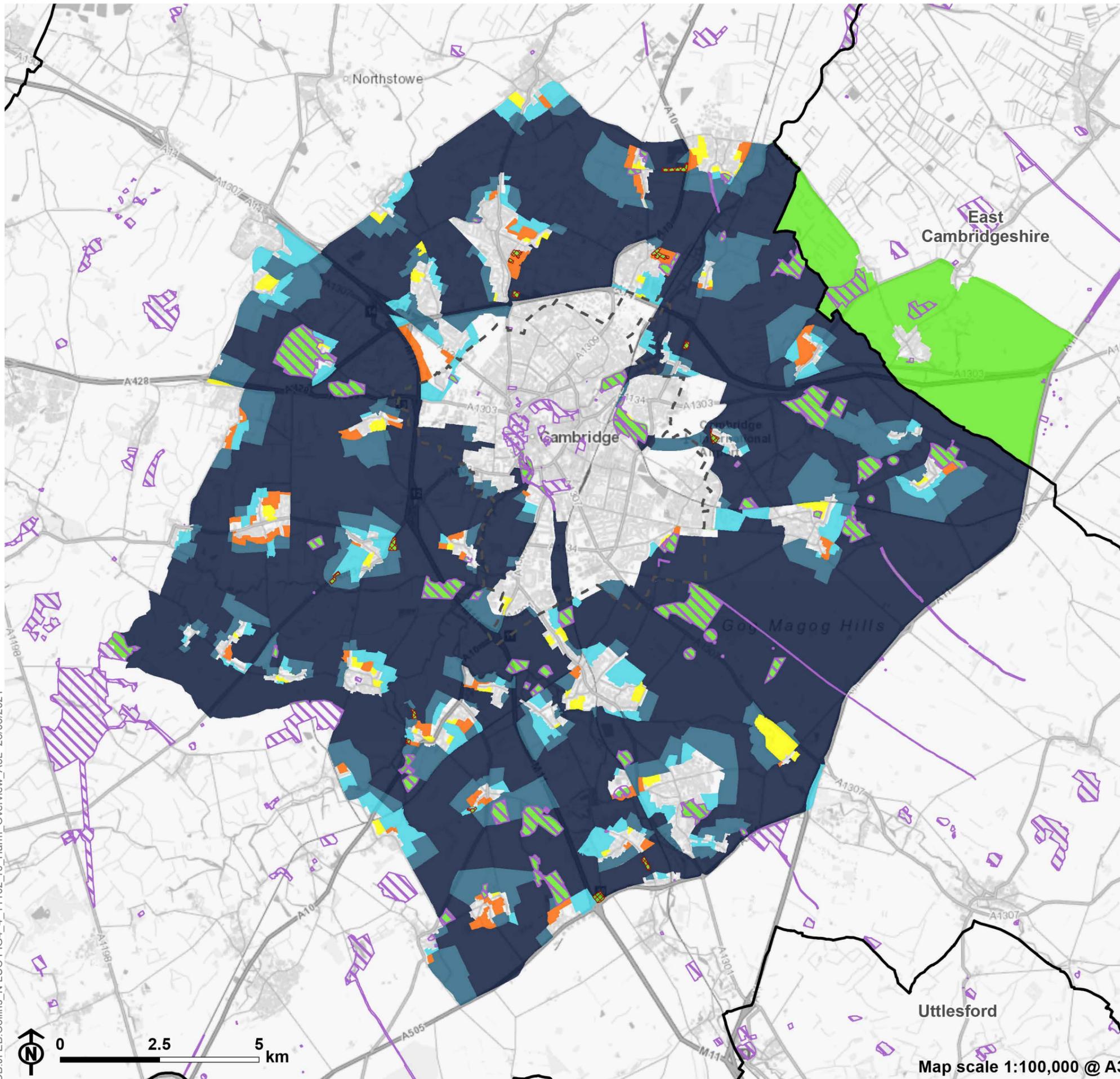
- Greater Cambridge
- Local Authority boundary
- No openness
- Green Belt
- Absolute constraint(s)
- Purpose 3 contribution**
- Significant
- Relatively significant
- Moderate
- Relatively limited
- Limited/No contribution



CB:JIEB:Collins_N LUC FIG4_3_11102_r0_Purpose3_Overview_A3L 19/08/2021

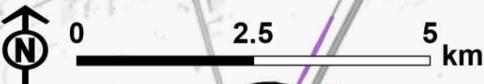
Figure 4.4

Harm Rating: Greater Cambridge



- Greater Cambridge
- Local Authority boundary
- No openness
- Green Belt
- Absolute constraint(s)
- Harm rating**
- Very high
- High
- Moderate high
- Moderate
- Low

CB:JIEB:Collins_N LUC FIG4_4_11102_r0_Harm_Overview_A3L_26/08/2021



Map scale 1:100,000 @ A3

Chapter 5

Making Changes to the Green Belt

5.1 The following chapter sets out the key steps that the Council should consider if there is an identified need to release land from the Green Belt. The chapter also sets out potential generic mitigation measures that could be applied to reduce the potential harm to the Green Belt, if land is released. This is followed by a discussion of the potential opportunities for enhancing the beneficial use of the Green Belt (in line with Paragraph 145 of the NPPF). If the Council decides to release land from the Green Belt, the Local Plan will need to set out opportunities to enhance the remaining Green Belt to compensate for its loss. However, it should be noted that this Chapter does not contain an exhaustive list of enhancement opportunities. Further information on the potential strategic opportunities to enhance the Green Belt are included in the accompanying evidence base – Green infrastructure Opportunity Mapping Final Report (July 2021).

Releasing land from the Green Belt

5.2 The NPPF requires changes to the Green Belt to be made through the Development Plan process. If such changes are made, the process should include demonstration of exceptional circumstances, including consideration of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development, i.e. planning for economic growth, housing need, health and wellbeing, accessibility and biodiversity, cultural heritage and climate change resilience.

5.3 A common interpretation of the policy position is that, where necessitated by development requirements, plans should identify the most sustainable locations for growth. This policy position should be maintained unless outweighed by adverse effects on the overall integrity of the Green Belt according to an assessment of the whole of the Green Belt based around the five purposes. In other words, the relatively poor performance of the land against Green Belt

purposes is not, of itself, an exceptional circumstance that would justify release of the land from the Green Belt. Conversely, higher performing Green Belt may be appropriate for release where exceptional circumstances are demonstrated.

5.4 Before concluding that 'exceptional circumstances' exist to justify changes to the Green Belt, Paragraph 141 of the NPPF states that local authorities should demonstrate that all other 'reasonable options' for meeting its identified need for development have been considered. In particular local authorities need to consider whether their strategy:

- makes effective use of suitable brownfield sites and underutilised land;
- optimises the density of development in town and city centres and other locations well served by public transport; and
- explores whether other authorities can help to meet some of the identified development requirement.

5.5 Should the Council decide to release land from the Green Belt, careful consideration also needs to be given to the form of the amended Green Belt boundaries. As set out in Para 143 of the NPPF:

5.6 "When defining Green Belt boundaries, plans should:

- ensure consistency with the development plan's strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development;
- not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open;
- where necessary, identify areas of safeguarded land between the urban area and the Green Belt, in order to meet longer-term development needs stretching well beyond the plan period;
- make clear that the safeguarded land is not allocated for development at the present time. Planning permission for the permanent development of safeguarded land should only be granted following an update to a plan which proposes the development;
- be able to demonstrate that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the plan period; and

- define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent."

5.7 The judgement in *Calverton Parish Council v Greater Nottingham Councils and others* (2015) provided a useful list of matters to consider when assessing whether the 'exceptional circumstances' for making alterations to Green Belt boundaries are present. This included:

- The acuteness/intensity of the objectively-assessed need;
- The inherent constraints on supply/availability of land;
- The consequent difficulties in achieving sustainable development without impinging on the Green Belt;
- The nature and extent of harm to the Green Belt; and
- The extent to which consequent impact on the Green Belt purposes may be ameliorated or reduced to the lowest reasonably practicable extent.

5.8 Further guidance on establishing the necessary 'exceptional circumstances' for making alterations to Green Belt boundaries is set out in the recent High Court judgement: *Compton Parish Council and others v Guildford Borough Council and others* (2019). This involved an appeal opposed to the principle and extent of land proposed for release from the Green Belt in the Council's submitted Local Plan. The judge concluded:

- "There is no definition of the policy concept of 'exceptional circumstances' for altering Green Belt boundaries. This itself is a deliberate policy decision, demonstrating that there is a planning judgment to be made in all the circumstances of any particular case."
- "The 'exceptional circumstances' can be found in the accumulation or combination of circumstances, of varying natures, which entitle the decision-maker, in the rational exercise of a planning judgment, to say that the circumstances are sufficiently exceptional to warrant altering the Green Belt boundary...there will almost inevitably be an analysis of the nature and degree of the need, allied to consideration of why the need cannot be met in locations which are sequentially preferable for such developments, an analysis of the impact on the functioning of the Green Belt and its

purpose, and what other advantages the proposed locations, released from the Green Belt, might bring, for example, in terms of a sound spatial distribution strategy.”

Mitigation to reduce harm to Green Belt

The concept of mitigation

5.9 One of the factors weighed up in the judgement of harm resulting from the release of a Green Belt area, is the impact that the loss of openness would have on other Green Belt land. This is assessed by considering how neighbouring land would rate in terms of its contribution to Green Belt purposes were the area in question to be urbanised, that is to say would its contribution be weakened? In many cases this is a key factor in the judgement: a site might in itself be small but its development could represent a more significant change than its physical area might suggest if, for example, it resulted in the breaching of a strong boundary feature, or an increase in the built containment of adjacent land.

5.10 There is the potential to reduce harm to the remaining Green Belt by implementing measures which will affect the relationship between the remaining Green Belt land and urban areas. Measures which increase the contribution that land is judged to make to Green Belt purposes, offsetting to some degree the predicted reduction in contribution, could strengthen the case for release of a particular area. However, any release of Green Belt land will still require 'exceptional circumstances' to be demonstrated.

5.11 Mitigation could apply either to land being released or land being retained as Green Belt.

Mitigation themes

5.12 The extent to which harm can be mitigated will vary from site to site, but potential measures can be considered under different themes. The Green Belt purposes are considered to relate to the relationship between the land area in question, developed land, and the countryside. This relationship is influenced by: the location of the area; the extent of openness within it; and the role of landscape/physical elements, including boundary features (in either separating the area from, or connecting it to) built-up areas and the wider countryside.

5.13 The list below outlines some mitigation measures that could be considered as part of the planning and development process. Which mitigation measures are the most appropriate will vary, depending on local circumstances and will need to be defined as part of the master planning process.

Potential measures to mitigate harm to Green Belt

5.14 The following mitigation measures could be used (where appropriate) to mitigate harm to the Green Belt:

- Use landscape to help integrate a new Green Belt boundary with the existing edge, aiming to maximise consistency over a longer distance. This can help to maintain a sense of separation between urban and open land. A boundary that is relatively homogeneous over a relatively long distance, such as a main road, is likely to be stronger than one which has more variation. Landscape works can help to minimise the impact of 'breaches' in such boundaries.
- Strengthen boundary at weak points – for example where 'breached' by roads. This can help reduce opportunities for sprawl. The use of buildings and landscaping can create strong 'gateways' to strengthen settlement-edge function.

- Define Green Belt edge using a strong, natural element which forms a visual barrier – for example a woodland belt. This can help to reduce the perception of urbanisation, and may also screen residents from intrusive landscape elements within the Green Belt (for example major roads). Boundaries that create visual and movement barriers can however potentially have detrimental effects on the character of the enclosed urban areas and the amenity of residents so this need to be careful considered.
- Create a transition from urban to rural, using built density, height, materials and landscape to create a more permeable edge. This can help to reduce the perception of urbanisation. It may however have implications in terms of reducing housing yield.
- Consider ownership and management of landscape elements which contribute to Green Belt purposes. This can help to ensure the permanence of Green Belt. However, trees and hedgerows require management to maintain their value in Green Belt terms, and the visual screening value that can be attributed to them is more limited if they are under private control (for example within back gardens).
- Enhance visual openness within the Green Belt. This can help to increase the perception of countryside. Although openness in a Green Belt sense does not correspond directly to visual openness, a stronger visual relationship between countryside areas, whether directly adjacent or separated by other landscape elements, can increase the extent to which an area is perceived as relating to the wider countryside.
- Improve management practices to enhance countryside character. This can help to increase the strength of countryside character. Landscape character assessment can help to identify valued characteristics that should be retained and where possible strengthened, and intrusive elements that should be diminished and where possible removed.
- Design and locate buildings, landscape and green spaces to minimise intrusion on settlement settings. This can help to maintain perceived settlement separation by minimising the extent to which new development intrudes on the settings of other settlements. The analysis of settlement settings, including consideration of viewpoints and visual receptors, can

identify key locations where maintenance of openness and retention of landscape features would have the most benefit.

- Design road infrastructure to limit the perception of increased urbanisation associated with new development. Increased levels of ‘activity’ can increase the perception of urbanisation.
- Use sustainable drainage features to define/enhance separation between settlement and countryside. This can help to strengthen the separation between urban and open land. It is important however to determine if local topography and ground conditions are suitable.
- Lessen the sense of intrusion on the countryside by designing buildings to incorporate local vernacular, in order to strengthen perception of new development as part of the existing urban settlement. Thorough site and settlement analysis can identify settlement character.

Beneficial use of Green Belt

5.15 The purposes of the Green Belt do not make any reference to the quality or use of land falling within the designation, but Paragraph 145 of the NPPF, states that:

5.16 “Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.”

5.17 Furthermore, Paragraph 142 of the NPPF states that where it has been concluded that it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development, plans should “set out ways in which the impact of removing land from the Green Belt can be offset through compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt land”. This could be achieved through legal agreements in conjunction with the release of land and planning consent

for development, or through strategic enhancement initiatives e.g. creation of community woodland.

5.18 The NPPF suggests different types of beneficial use. They relate principally to the environmental quality of the land, but can also, through strengthening boundary/buffer roles and affecting landscape and visual character, affect the contribution of land to Green Belt purposes.

5.19 The Government's Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), updated in relation to Green Belts in 2019) also endorses the preparation of supporting landscape, biodiversity or recreation evidence to identify appropriate compensatory improvements, including:

- “new or enhanced green infrastructure;
- woodland planting;
- landscape and visual enhancements (beyond those needed to mitigate the immediate impacts of the proposal);
- improvements to biodiversity, habitat connectivity and natural capital;
- new or enhanced walking and cycle routes; and
- improved access to new, enhanced or existing recreational and playing field provision”.

5.20 Some of the mitigation measures listed in the previous section that relate to Green Belt land can also be considered beneficial uses, but there is broader scope for introducing or enhancing uses of Green Belt land that (by adding to its value) will strengthen the case for that land's future protection. Some examples are provided in the list below.

5.21 Beneficial uses could be achieved through planning conditions, section 106 obligations and/or the Community Infrastructure Levy. The PPG stresses the need for early engagement with landowners and other interested parties to obtain the necessary local consents, establishing a detailed scope of works and identifying a means of funding their design, construction and management.

Potential enhancements to the Green Belt

5.22 The following measures could be employed (where appropriate) to enhance the Green Belt:

- Improving access. Enhancing the coverage and condition of the rights of way network and increasing open space provision is a key enhancement opportunity.
- Providing locations for outdoor sport. Some outdoor sports can represent an urbanising influence; an emphasis on activities which do not require formal facilities is less likely to harm Green Belt purposes.
- Landscape and visual enhancement. Using landscape character assessment as guidance, intrusive elements can be reduced and positive characteristics reinforced.
- Increasing biodiversity. Most Green Belt land has potential for increased biodiversity value – e.g. the management of hedgerows and agricultural field margins, and provision of habitat connectivity, planting of woodland. There may also be opportunities to link enhancements with requirements to deliver ‘biodiversity net gain’ associated with development proposals.
- Improving damaged and derelict land. Giving land a functional, economic value is a key aspect in avoiding damage and dereliction through lack of positive management, but this needs to be achieved with minimum harm to characteristics/qualities which help it contribute to Green Belt purposes.

5.23 The accompanying Green infrastructure Opportunity Mapping Final Report (July 2021) prepared by LUC provides helpful information on some of the key opportunities to enhance Green Infrastructure within the area. Further guidance on the opportunities to enhance the landscape are included in the Landscape Character Assessment Report (2021). If the Councils identify that any land needs to be removed from the Green Belt, these reports should be used to help identify key enhancement opportunities to compensate for the loss of any Green Belt.

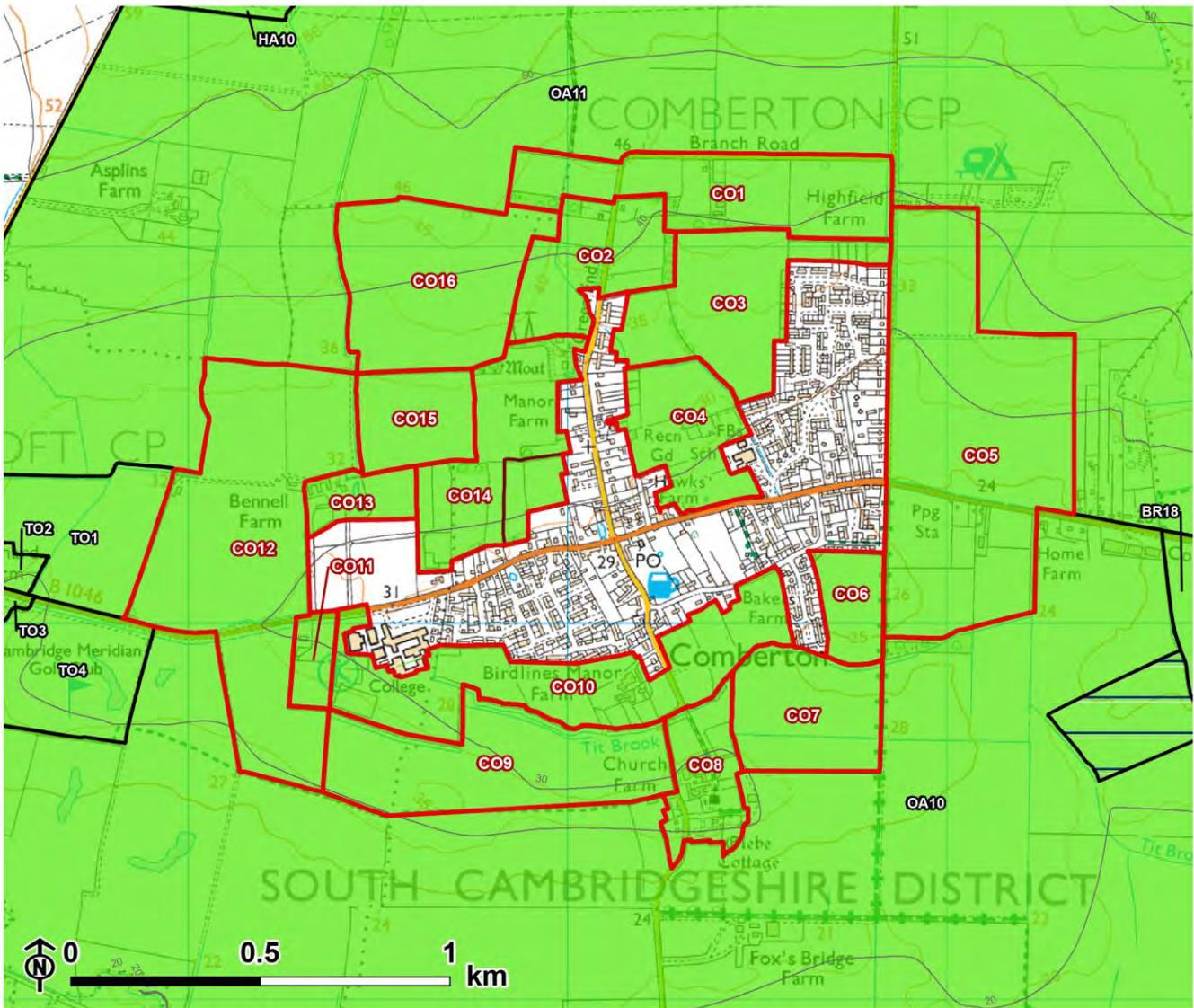
Conclusion

5.24 This study has assessed the extent to which land contributes to the purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt and the potential harm to these purposes of releasing land for development within Greater Cambridge. The findings of this study will form an important piece of evidence for the Councils' emerging Local Plan.

5.25 As outlined above there are other important factors that need to be considered when establishing exceptional circumstances for making alterations to Green Belt boundaries, most notably sustainability, viability and deliverability issues.

5.26 In each location where alterations to Green Belt boundaries are being considered, planning judgement is required to establish whether the sustainability benefits of Green Belt release and the associated development outweigh the harm to the Green Belt designation. In addition, consideration will need to be given to potential measures to mitigate harm to the Green Belt, as well as potential opportunities to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt.

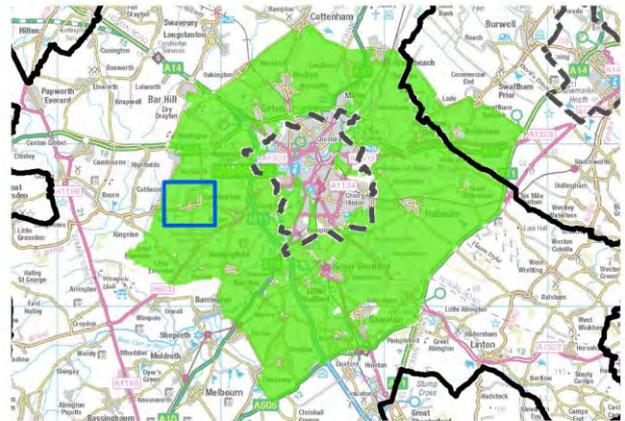
Comberton



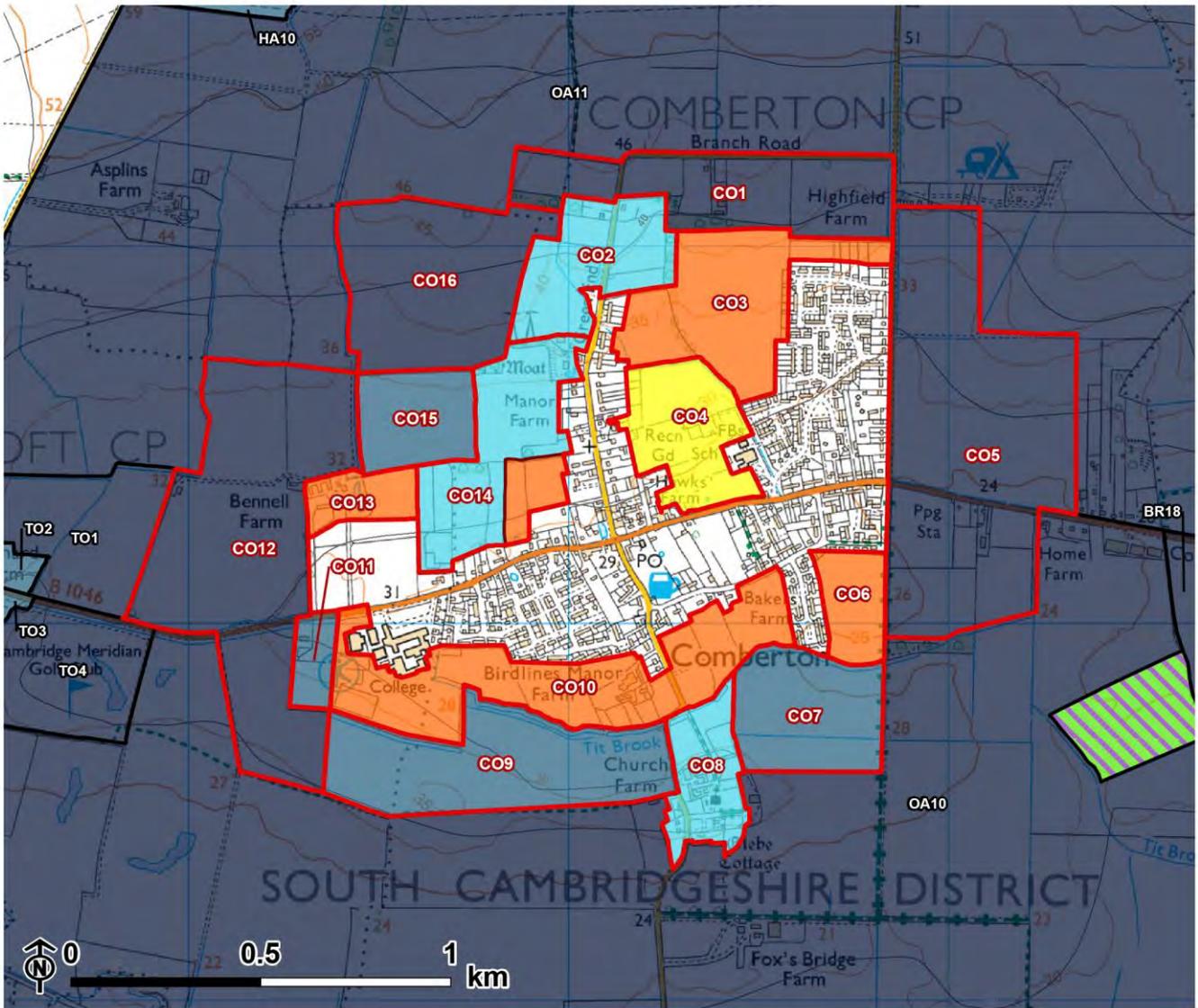
- - - Local Authority
- Comberton parcel
- Division between parcel sub-areas
- Neighbouring parcel
- Green Belt

Absolute constraints

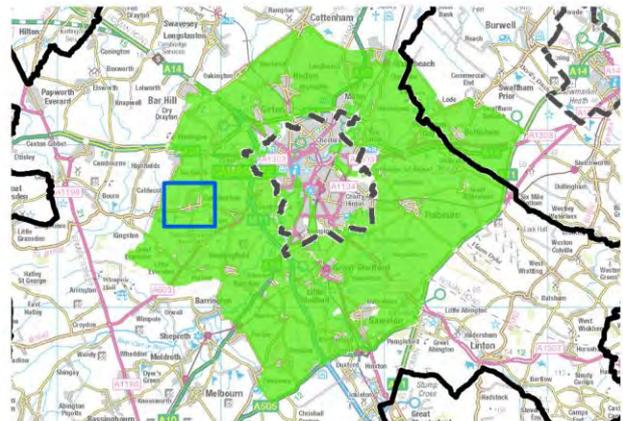
- Scheduled monument



Comberton



- - - Local Authority
 - Comberton parcel
 - Division between parcel sub-areas
 - Neighbouring parcel
 - Green Belt
 - Absolute constraint(s)
- Harm rating**
- Very high
 - High
 - Moderate high
 - Moderate
 - Low



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Notes on harm ratings

All harm ratings are for the release of land as an expansion of an existing inset area. Therefore, where a parcel does not lie immediately adjacent to the settlement edge, it is assumed that some intervening land will also be released, although no assumptions are made regarding what exactly what land that will be. Where a release of land would encompass areas with different harm ratings, the overall harm rating will always equate to the highest component harm rating.

Harm ratings are not given for areas subject to absolute constraints on development, or areas which have been judged to have no openness, in Green Belt terms. These are indicated on the maps for each assessed parcel of land. Absolute constraints include:

- Special Areas of Conservation;
- Special Protection Areas;
- Ramsar sites;
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- Ancient woodland;
- Scheduled Monuments;
- Registered Parks and Gardens;
- Common land; and
- National Nature reserves

Components of harm assessment

The notes below explain the format of the parcel assessments contained in this report, referencing the relevant paragraphs in the Green Belt Assessment Methodology chapter of the main report where a more detailed explanation can be found.

Each parcel has a reference code that reflects the settlement that it lies closest to. This is followed by an aerial view showing extent of the parcel, in the context of neighbouring parcels, and an OS map indicating the presence of any absolute constraints.

Parcels were created to reflect variations in contribution to Green Belt purpose, rather than considering pre-defined parcels. In some cases a parcel may be split into areas labelled 1 and 2, reflecting situations where there are variations in the level of harm that would result from release (see Paragraph 3.128 in the main report).

Each parcel assessment is then organised under the following headings:

Parcel location and openness

This gives the parcel size (in hectares) and a brief description of its location, then considers the openness of the land. Openness relates to Step 2 in the assessment process (see Paragraphs 3.36-3.42 in the main report).

Distinction between parcel and inset area

This is Step 3 in the assessment process (see Paragraphs 3.43 - 3.60 in the main report). It examines the relationship between the Green Belt and the inset settlement, in order to determine how strongly the parcel is related to the settlement. This considers four inter-related elements: boundary features; landform and land cover; urbanising visual influence and urbanising containment. Land which has a stronger distinction from an inset settlement will generally make a stronger contribution to Cambridge Green Belt Purposes 1 and 3. Distinction is stated on a 4-point scale (weak, moderate, strong or very strong).

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

This covers Step 1 (see Paragraphs 3.27 - 3.35 in the main report) and Step 4 (Paragraphs 3.61 - 3.110) in the assessment process. It considers the extent to which each Cambridge Green Belt Purpose is relevant to a location (Step 1), and combines this with consideration of openness (Step 2) and distinction (Step 3) to determine the parcel's contribution to each of the three purposes (Step 4). The assessment of contribution applies to each parcel as a whole, providing a rating on a 5-point scale (limited/no contribution, relatively limited, moderate, relatively significant or significant) and supporting text for each Cambridge Green Belt Purpose:

- Cambridge Purpose 1 (to preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre) – for land to contribute to this purpose it needs to be located in the immediate vicinity of Cambridge (see Paragraphs 3.28 and 3.67 - 3.73 in the main report).
- Cambridge Purpose 2 (to maintain and enhance the quality of Cambridge's setting) - a two-element approach was taken considering: 1) the extent to which land constitutes countryside (that is to say has a rural character) based on its usage and distinction from an inset settlement; and 2) the extent to which land forms or contains other features or aspects that contribute to the quality of Cambridge's setting (see Paragraphs 3.29 and 3.74 - 3.102 in the main report).
- Cambridge Purpose 3 (to prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city) – an analysis was undertaken of the distribution of villages in and around the Green Belt and the physical features that separate and/or connect them from each other or from Cambridge, in order to determine the fragility of each settlement gap (see Paragraphs 3.30-3.35 and 3.103 - 3.110 in the main report).

Impact on contribution of adjacent Green Belt

This covers Step 5 in the assessment process (see Paragraphs 3.111-3.124 in the main report). It considers the potential impact on the adjacent Green Belt of the release of land as an expansion of the adjacent inset settlement. If release of part of a parcel would result in a lower harm rating than release of the parcel as a whole, a separate analysis is given for each scenario.

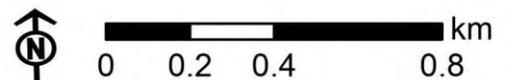
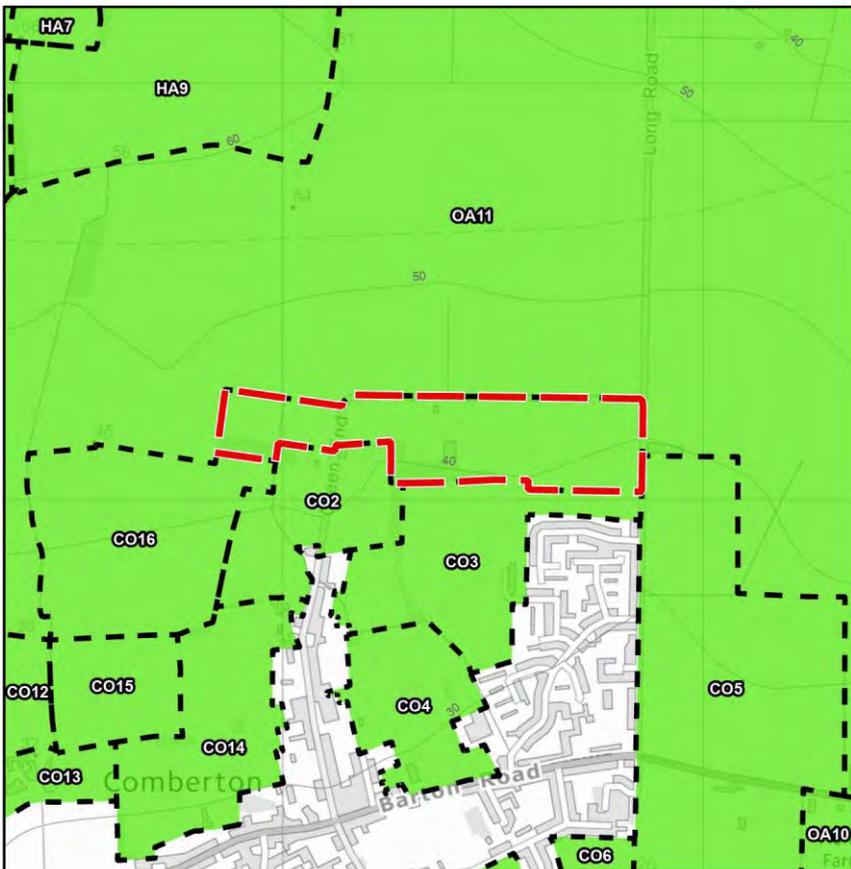
Overall harm of Green Belt release

This covers Step 6 in the assessment process (see Paragraphs 3.125-3.131 in the main report). It combines consideration of the loss of contribution of land to the Green Belt purposes (Step 4) with any additional harm resulting from the weakening of remaining Green Belt land (Step 5), to determine an overall rating of the harm of releasing land from the Green Belt. Green Belt harm was rated using a 5-point scale (low, moderate, moderate-high, high and very high harm). If release of part of a parcel would result in a lower harm rating than release of the parcel as a whole, a separate rating and conclusion is given for each scenario.

CO1



-  CO1
-  Neighbouring parcel
-  Green Belt



CO1

Parcel location and openness

Parcel size: 17.78ha

The parcel is located to the north of Comberton and contains agricultural fields. A dwelling and woodland is located in the centre of the parcel. It is crossed by Green End to the west, which merges with Branch Road to form the northern edge of the parcel.

Land is open. There is no development of a scale, character or form that has an impact on Green Belt openness.

Distinction between parcel and inset area

Land is not contained by inset development and the hedgerows to the south are relatively weak boundary features individually, but in combination they create moderate separation between the parcel and Comberton. AS such, there is no urbanising visual influence. The elevated landform within the parcel provides some additional distinction from Comberton. Overall, there is strong distinction between the parcel and the inset area.

CO1

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

- Cambridge Purpose 1 - to preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre:

Contribution: Limited/No contribution

Land is not close enough to the main urban area of Cambridge to be associated with it; the land is closely associated with the settlement of Comberton. It therefore makes no contribution to Cambridge Purpose 1.

- Cambridge Purpose 2 - to maintain and enhance the quality of Cambridge's setting:

Contribution: Relatively significant

The parcel comprises open farmland and woodland that has a strong distinction from the edge of Comberton. Its rural character therefore contributes to the quality of Cambridge's setting. The parcel also forms part of a gault clay ridge, a key topographical feature that lies to the west of Cambridge. This contrasts with the low 'bowl' within which Cambridge lies and therefore allows an appreciation of the wider topographical framework of the city. The elevated topography also means there is some visual inter-relationship with Cambridge, with land forming part of a rural backdrop in views out of the city to the west and in views across the city from the south-east (including from the Gog Magog Hills). Overall the parcel makes a relatively significant contribution to Cambridge Purpose 2.

- Cambridge Purpose 3 - to prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city:

Contribution: Relatively significant

Land lies in a moderate gap between Comberton and Hardwick, but elevated land is a significant separating feature. There is strong distinction between the parcel and the inset area, which increases the extent to which development would be perceived as narrowing the gap. Overall, the parcel makes a relatively significant contribution to Cambridge Purpose 3.

CO1

Impact on contribution of adjacent Green Belt

- Release of land as an expansion of Comberton:

Rating: Minor-moderate

The release and development of land within this parcel would weaken the strong boundary distinction and of land to the north.

The release would also remove some of the elevated land located between the settlements of Comberton and Hardwick. Therefore, a minor additional impact is expected on the relevance of this land to Green Belt purposes.

The release would not have an impact on the contribution of land to the east to Green Belt purposes, due to separation by Long Road and associated hedgerows.

The adjoining land to the south and southwest does not make a stronger contribution to any of the Green Belt purposes. The impact on this land would not therefore increase overall harm.

Overall harm of Green Belt release

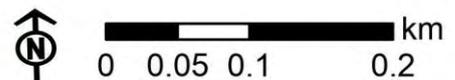
- Parcel CO1 makes a relatively significant contribution to maintaining and enhancing the quality of Cambridge's setting, and a relatively significant contribution to preventing communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging with one another. The additional impact on the adjacent Green Belt of the release of the parcel would be minor-moderate. Therefore, the harm resulting from its release, as an expansion of Comberton, would be Very High.

Very High

CO6



-  CO6
-  Neighbouring parcel
-  Green Belt



CO6

Parcel location and openness

Parcel size: 4.83ha

The parcel is located to the southeast of Comberton and is comprised of an agricultural field.

Land is open. There is no development that has an impact on Green Belt openness.

Distinction between parcel and inset area

The parcel has some degree of containment by inset development and the garden hedgerow boundaries to the north and west create little separation between the parcel and Comberton. As such, there is some urbanising visual influence. The landform and land cover within the parcel do not create any additional distinction from Comberton and, overall, there is moderate distinction between the parcel and the inset area.

CO6

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

- Cambridge Purpose 1 - to preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre:

Contribution: Limited/No contribution

Land is not close enough to the main urban area of Cambridge to be associated with it; the land is closely associated with the settlement of Comberton. It therefore makes no contribution to Cambridge Purpose 1.

- Cambridge Purpose 2 - to maintain and enhance the quality of Cambridge's setting:

Contribution: Relatively limited

Land has a moderate distinction from the edge of Comberton, meaning it has some relationship with the inset area. However, it comprises open farmland and therefore has some rural character. Land does not form or contain any specific features/aspects that contribute to the quality of Cambridge's setting. Overall the parcel makes a relatively limited contribution to Cambridge Purpose 2.

- Cambridge Purpose 3 - to prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city:

Contribution: Relatively limited

Land is peripheral to a moderate gap between Comberton and Barton. The parcel has some relationship with the inset area, but also a degree of distinction from it. Overall, the parcel makes a relatively limited contribution to Cambridge Purpose 3.

CO6

Impact on contribution of adjacent Green Belt

- Release of land as an expansion of Comberton:

Rating: Minor

The release and development of land within this parcel would increase urbanising visual impact on land within the fields to the south. However, the additional impact is limited due to a small frontage.

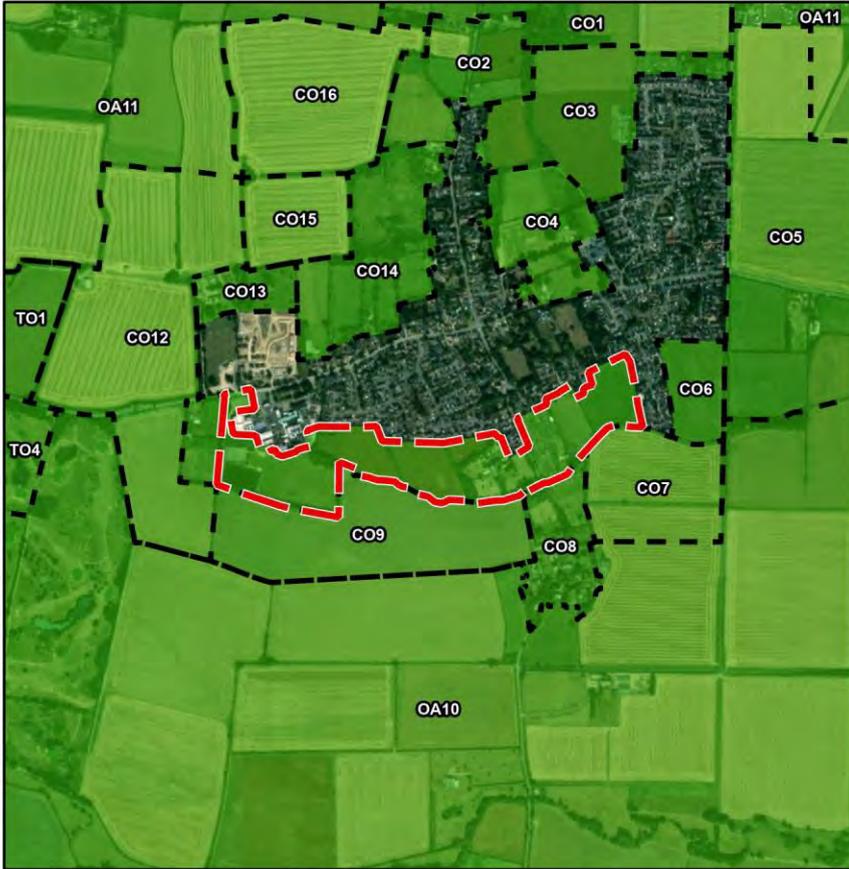
The release would not have an impact on the contribution of land to the east or the southeast to Green Belt purposes.

Overall harm of Green Belt release

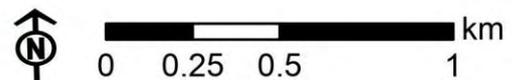
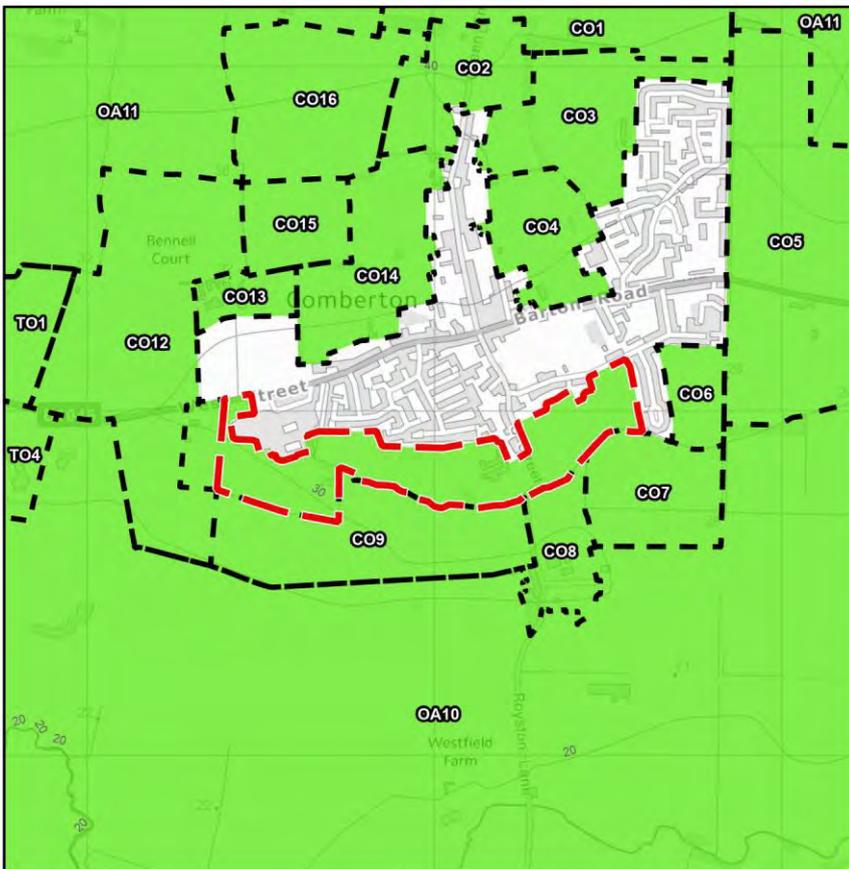
- Parcel CO6 makes a relatively limited contribution to maintaining and enhancing the quality of Cambridge's setting, and a relatively limited contribution to preventing communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging with one another. The additional impact on the adjacent Green Belt of the release of the parcel would be minor. Therefore, the harm resulting from its release, as an expansion of Comberton, would be Moderate.

Moderate

CO10



-  CO10
-  Neighbouring parcel
-  Green Belt



CO10

Parcel location and openness

Parcel size: 22.11ha

The parcel is located to the south of Comberton and is crossed by South Street in the centre. Agricultural buildings are located to the west of South Street while allotments are located to the east. Comberton Village College sports ground are contained within the west of the parcel while agricultural fields are located within the centre and the east of the parcel.

Land is open. There is no development of a scale, character or form that has an impact on Green Belt openness.

Distinction between parcel and inset area

Although the parcel is not contained by inset development, the garden hedgerows to the north create little boundary separation between the parcel and Comberton and so there is some urbanising visual influence. The landform and land cover within the parcel do not create any additional distinction from Comberton. Overall, there is moderate distinction between the parcel and the inset area.

CO10

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

- Cambridge Purpose 1 - to preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre:

Contribution: Limited/No contribution

Land is not close enough to the main urban area of Cambridge to be associated with it; the land is closely associated with the settlement of Comberton. It therefore makes no contribution to Cambridge Purpose 1.

- Cambridge Purpose 2 - to maintain and enhance the quality of Cambridge's setting:

Contribution: Moderate

The parcel predominantly comprises open farmland that has a moderate distinction from the edge of Comberton, meaning it has some rural character. However, to the west it contains some development and has a use (sports pitches) and has a small area of allotments off South Street that associates it with the inset area and weakens its rural character. To the east the parcel fronts onto the historic core of the village on Swaynes Lane and South Street/Royston Lane, marked by Comberton Conservation Area and several listed buildings. As such it allows an appreciation of the rural character and setting of the more intact and historic parts of Comberton, which in turn makes some contribution to the quality of Cambridge's setting. Overall the parcel makes a moderate contribution to Cambridge Purpose 2.

- Cambridge Purpose 3 - to prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city:

Contribution: Relatively limited

Land lies in a wide gap between Little/Great Eversden and Comberton, with some significant separating features including Tit Brook and Bourn Brook, and associated tree lines. The parcel has some relationship with the inset area, but also a degree of distinction from it. Overall, the parcel makes a relatively limited contribution to Cambridge Purpose 3.

CO10

Impact on contribution of adjacent Green Belt

- Release of land as an expansion of Comberton:

Rating: Minor

The release and development of land within this parcel would increase urbanising visual impact on land within the fields to the south.

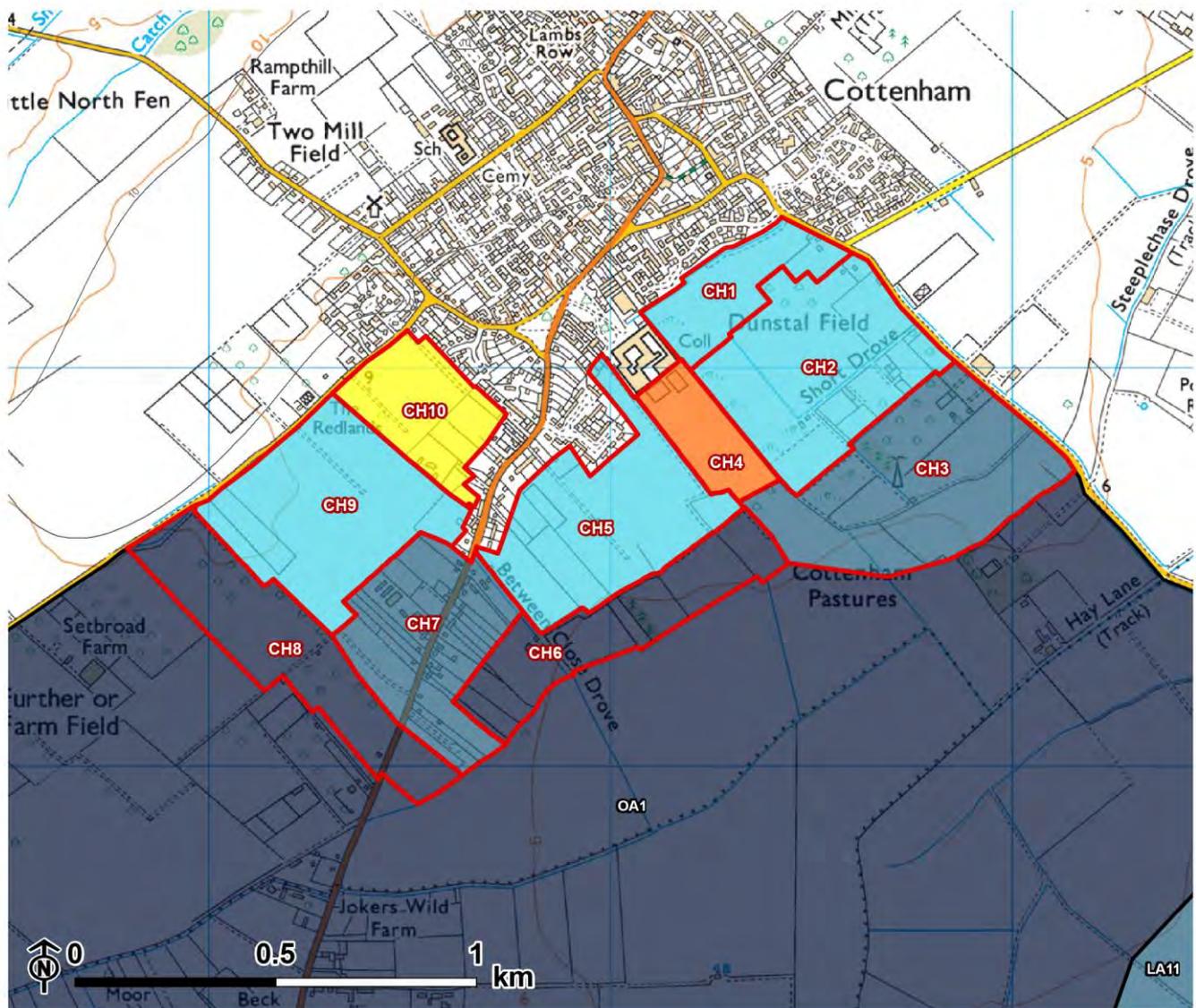
The release would not have an impact on the contribution of land to the southeast or the west to Green Belt purposes.

Overall harm of Green Belt release

- Parcel CO10 makes a moderate contribution to maintaining and enhancing the quality of Cambridge's setting, and a relatively limited contribution to preventing communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging with one another. The additional impact on the adjacent Green Belt of the release of the parcel would be minor. Therefore, the harm resulting from its release, as an expansion of Comberton, would be Moderate.

Moderate

Cottenham



- - - Local Authority boundary

▭ Cottenham parcel

▭ Neighbouring parcel

▭ Green Belt

Harm rating

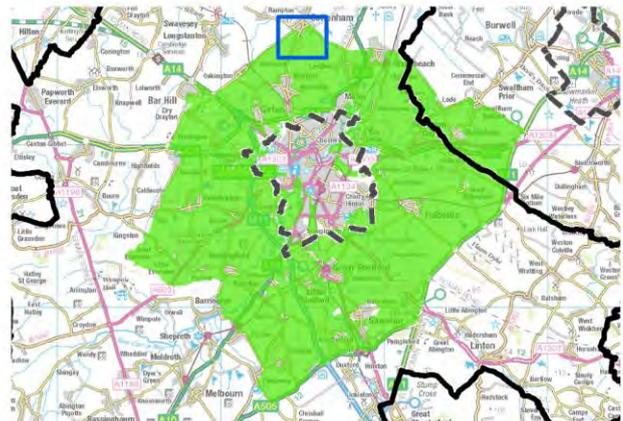
▭ Very high

▭ High

▭ Moderate high

▭ Moderate

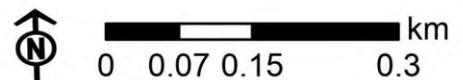
▭ Low



CH10



-  CH10
-  Neighbouring parcel
-  Green Belt



CH10

Parcel location and openness

Parcel size: 9.18ha

The parcel is located to the southwest of Cottenham and contains arable land and residential gardens. Oakington Road forms the north western edge of the parcel.

Land is open. There is no development of a scale, character or form that has impact on Green Belt openness.

Distinction between parcel and inset area

Land is largely contained by development to the northeast and west, but the size of the area limits the urbanising influence. The garden hedgerow boundaries to the north and east create little separation between the parcel and Cottenham and there is urbanising visual influence. The landform and land cover within the parcel do not create any additional distinction from Cottenham. Overall, there is weak distinction between the parcel and the settlement.

CH10

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

- Cambridge Purpose 1 - to preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre:

Contribution: Limited/No contribution

Land is not close enough to the main urban area of Cambridge to be associated with it; the land is closely associated with the settlement of Cottenham. It therefore makes no contribution to Cambridge Purpose 1.

- Cambridge Purpose 2 - to maintain and enhance the quality of Cambridge's setting:

Contribution: Relatively limited

Land has a weak distinction from Cottenham, meaning it has a strong relationship with the inset area. However, land comprises open arable fields meaning it has some rural character. It does not form or contain any features/aspects that contribute to the quality of Cambridge's setting. Overall the parcel makes a relatively limited contribution to Cambridge Purpose 2.

- Cambridge Purpose 3 - to prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city:

Contribution: Limited/No contribution

Land is open and is peripheral to a moderate gap between Cottenham and Histon. There is weak distinction between the parcel and the inset area, which reduces the extent to which development would be perceived as narrowing the gap. Overall, the parcel makes a limited contribution to Cambridge Purpose 3.

CH10

Impact on contribution of adjacent Green Belt

- Release of land as an expansion of Cottenham:

Rating: Minor

The release and development of land within this parcel would increase urbanising visual impact on land to the southwest and would leave this land more closely contained by the inset edge and the field boundary to the south, which separates it from the wider Green Belt.

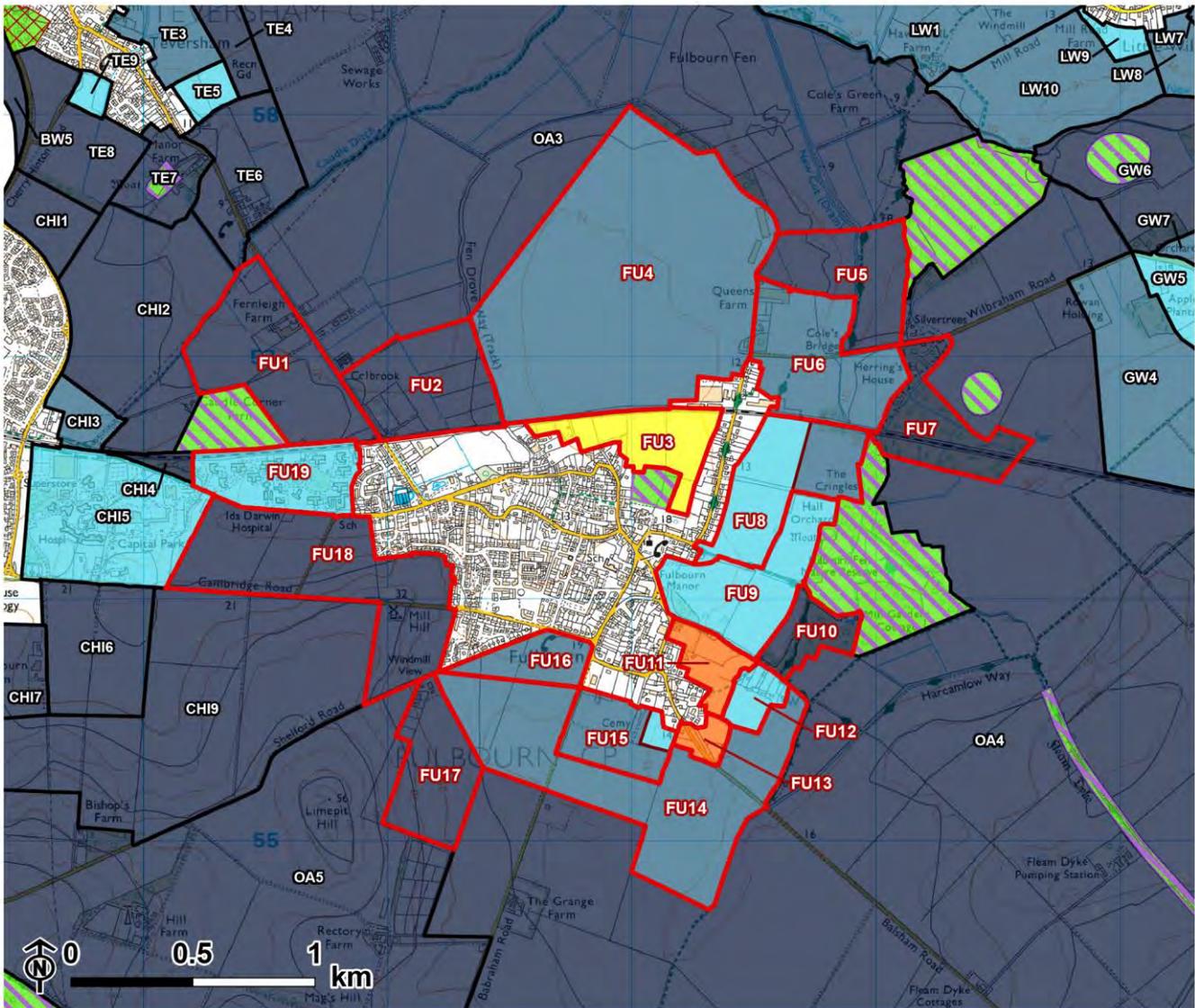
The release and development of land within this parcel would not have an impact on the contribution of land to the southeast to Green Belt purposes.

Overall harm of Green Belt release

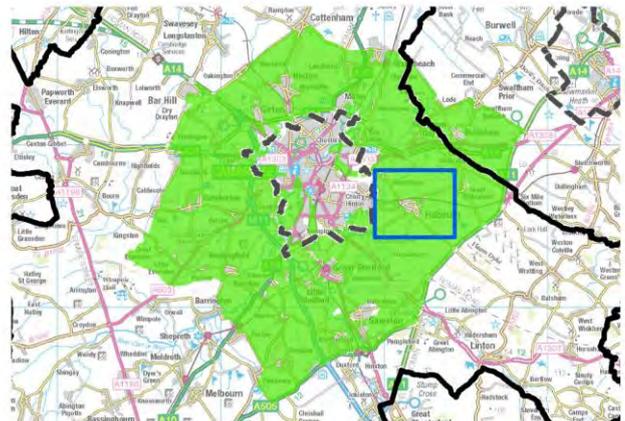
- Parcel CH10 makes a relatively limited contribution to maintaining and enhancing the quality of Cambridge's setting, and a limited contribution to preventing communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging with one another. The additional impact on the adjacent Green Belt of the release of the parcel would be minor. Therefore, the harm resulting from its release, as an expansion of Cottenham, would be low.

Low

Fulbourn



- - - Local Authority
 - Fulbourn parcel
 - Division between parcel sub-areas
 - Neighbouring parcel
 - No openness
 - Green Belt
 - Absolute constraint(s)
- Harm rating**
- Very high
 - High
 - Moderate high
 - Moderate
 - Low



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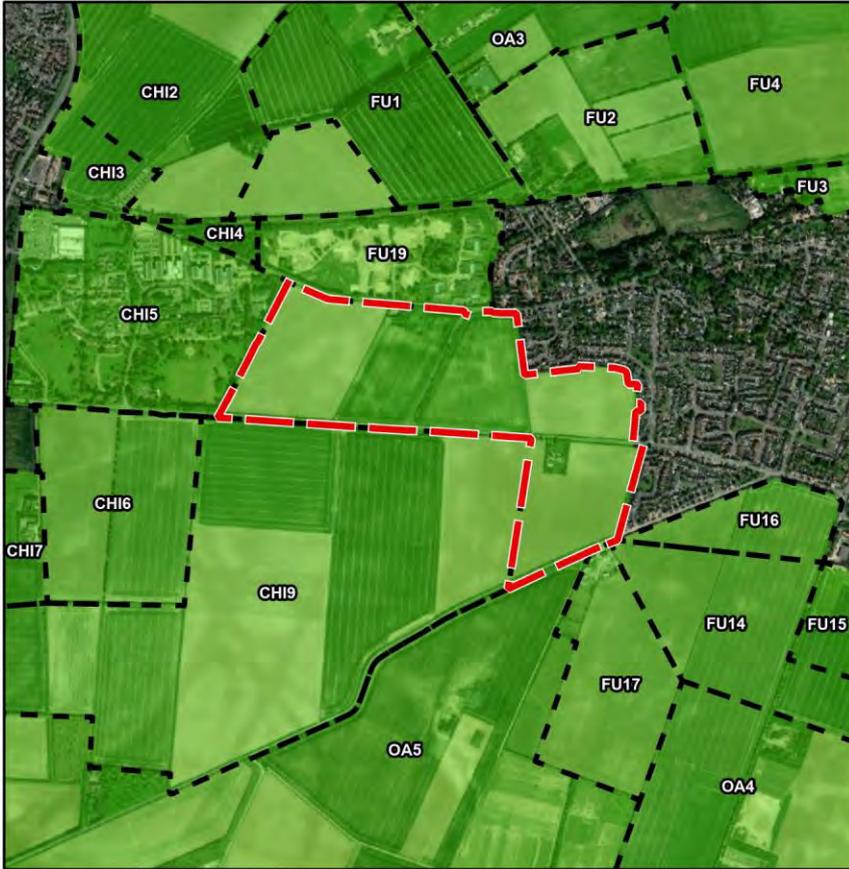
Notes on harm ratings

All harm ratings are for the release of land as an expansion of an existing inset area. Therefore, where a parcel does not lie immediately adjacent to the settlement edge, it is assumed that some intervening land will also be released, although no assumptions are made regarding what exactly what land that will be. Where a release of land would encompass areas with different harm ratings, the overall harm rating will always equate to the highest component harm rating.

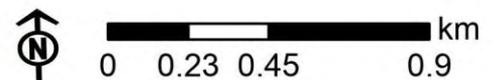
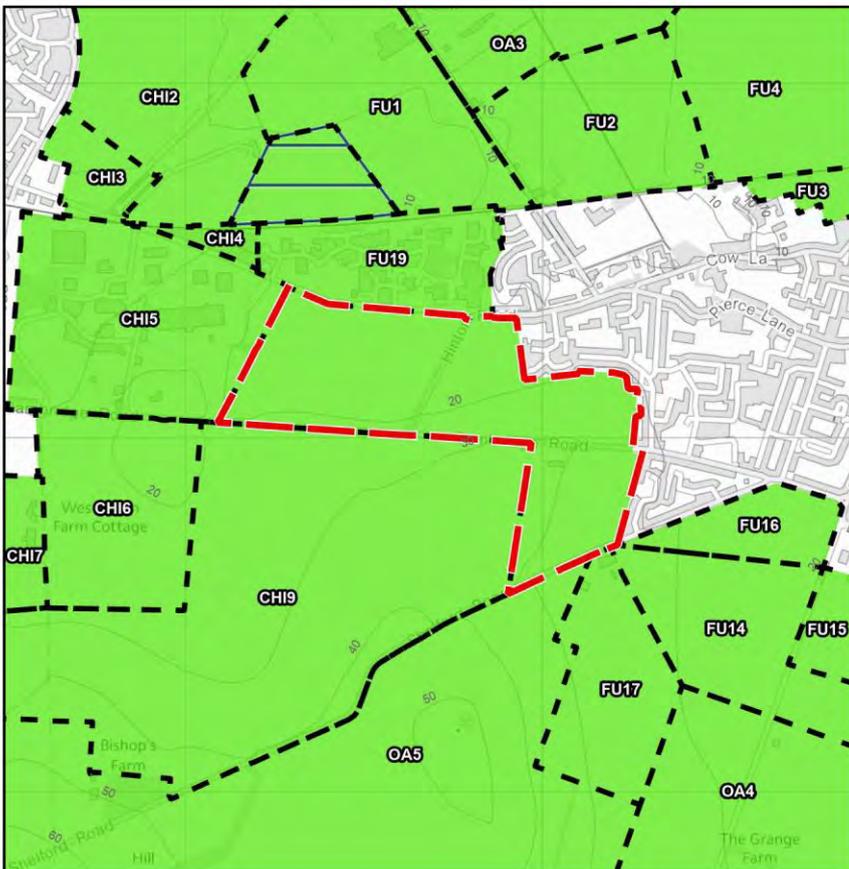
Harm ratings are not given for areas subject to absolute constraints on development, or areas which have been judged to have no openness, in Green Belt terms. These are indicated on the maps for each assessed parcel of land. Absolute constraints include:

- Special Areas of Conservation;
- Special Protection Areas;
- Ramsar sites;
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- Ancient woodland;
- Scheduled Monuments;
- Registered Parks and Gardens;
- Common land; and
- National Nature reserves

FU18



-  FU18
-  Neighbouring parcel
-  Green Belt
-  Scheduled monument



FU18

Parcel location and openness

Parcel size: 43.57ha

The parcel is located to the west of Fulbourn and to the east of Fulbourn Hospital. It is comprised of arable land and contains Mill Hill to the south. The parcel is crossed by Cambridge Road, which forms part of the southern edge with Shelford Road. Fulbourn Old Drift forms the northern edge.

Land is open. There is no development of a scale, character or form that has an impact on Green Belt openness.

Distinction between parcel and inset area

The parcel has some degree of containment by inset development due to areas of lower openness to the north and west and the garden hedgerow boundaries to the east of the parcel create little boundary separation from Fulbourn. Neither the countryside nor the inset settlement dominates views. The sloping landform within the parcel due to Limepit Hill to the south provides some additional distinction from Fulbourn. Overall, there is moderate distinction between the parcel and the inset area.

FU18

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

- Cambridge Purpose 1 - to preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre:

Contribution: Moderate

Land is open and is close to the main urban area of Cambridge. The parcel has some relationship with the urban area but also a degree of distinction from it. Overall, the parcel makes a moderate contribution to Cambridge Purpose 1.

- Cambridge Purpose 2 - to maintain and enhance the quality of Cambridge's setting:

Contribution: Moderate

The parcel occupies an area of undulating land forming the lower slopes of the Gog Magog Hills, which are a key topographical feature in the setting of Cambridge to the south-east. It comprises open farmland that contributes to a characteristic rural setting experienced on approach to the wider city from the east along Cambridge Road and Shelford Road, creating positive perceptions of the city on arrival. It also contains the Grade II listed Windmill, a local landmark that contributes positively to the character of the landscape and the setting of Cambridge and people's experience of it. Overall the parcel makes a moderate contribution to Cambridge Purpose 2.

- Cambridge Purpose 3 - to prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city:

Contribution: Relatively significant

Land lies in a moderate gap between neighbouring settlements, but urbanising development between the two reduces perceived separation and increases the fragility of the gap. The parcel has some relationship with the urban area, but also a degree of distinction from it. Overall, the parcel makes a relatively significant contribution to Cambridge Purpose 3.

FU18

Impact on contribution of adjacent Green Belt

- Release of land as an expansion of Fulbourn:

Rating: Minor-moderate

The release and development of land within this parcel would decrease landform distinction of land to the south of Cambridge Road and would result in the settlement gap between Fulbourn and Cambridge to become narrow. Any partial release and development of land within this parcel would result in at least a minor additional impact due to the reduction in the settlement gap. An expansion of Fulbourn westward of Hinton Road or the release and development of the whole parcel would have a greater additional impact.

The release would not have an impact on the contribution of land to the southeast to Green Belt purposes.

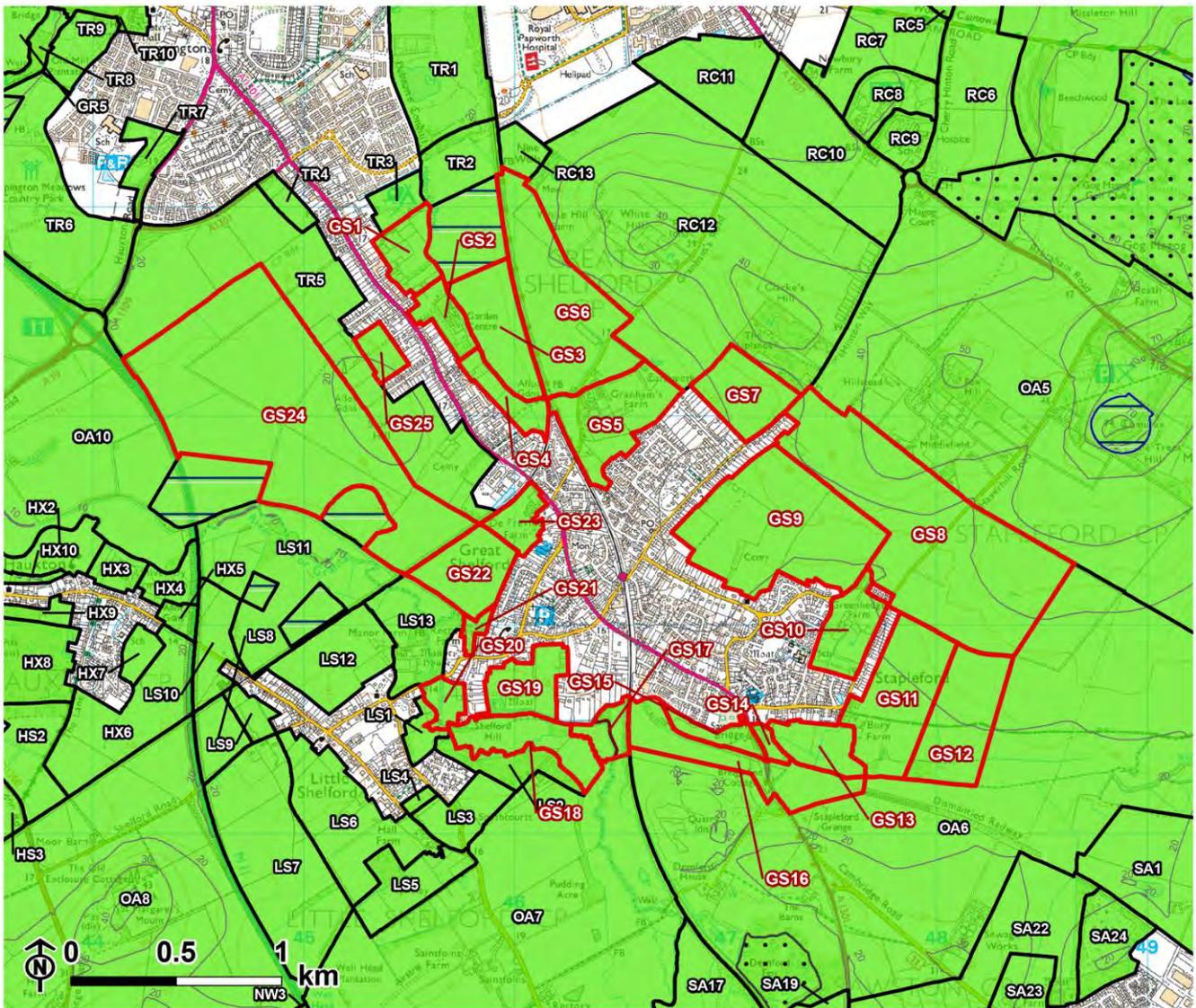
The adjoining land to the north and west does not make a stronger contribution to any of the Green Belt purposes. The impact on this land would not therefore increase overall harm.

Overall harm of Green Belt release

- Parcel FU18 makes a moderate contribution to preserving Cambridge's compact character, a moderate contribution to maintaining and enhancing the quality of Cambridge's setting, and a relatively significant contribution to preventing communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging with one another. The additional impact on the adjacent Green Belt of the release of the parcel would be minor-moderate. Therefore, the harm resulting from its release, as an expansion of Fulbourn, would be very high

Very High

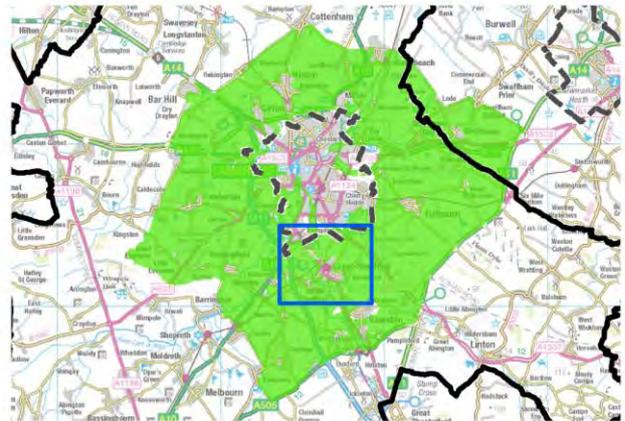
Great Shelford



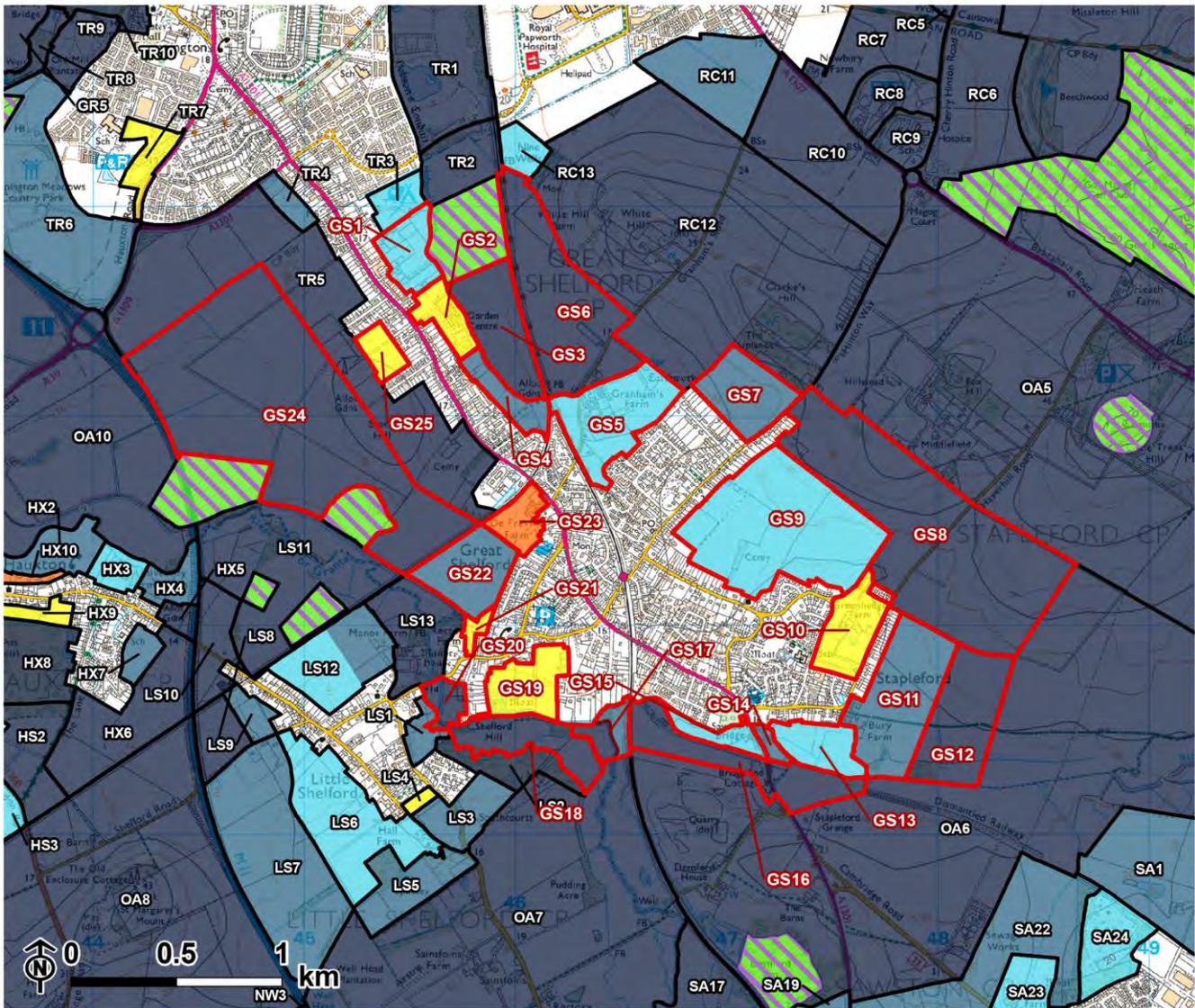
- - - Local Authority boundary
- Great Shelford parcel
- Division between parcel sub-areas
- Neighbouring parcel
- Green Belt

Absolute constraints

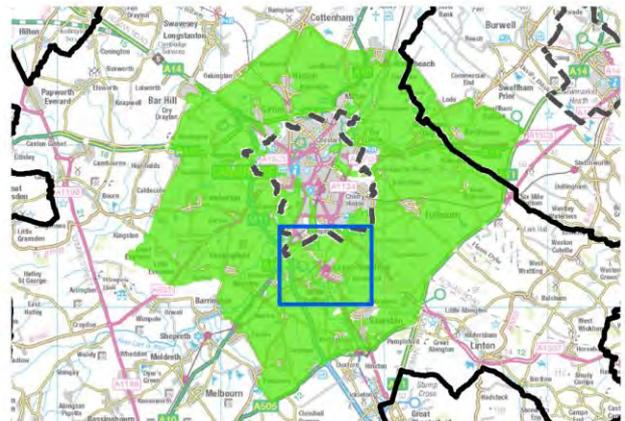
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Scheduled monument



Great Shelford



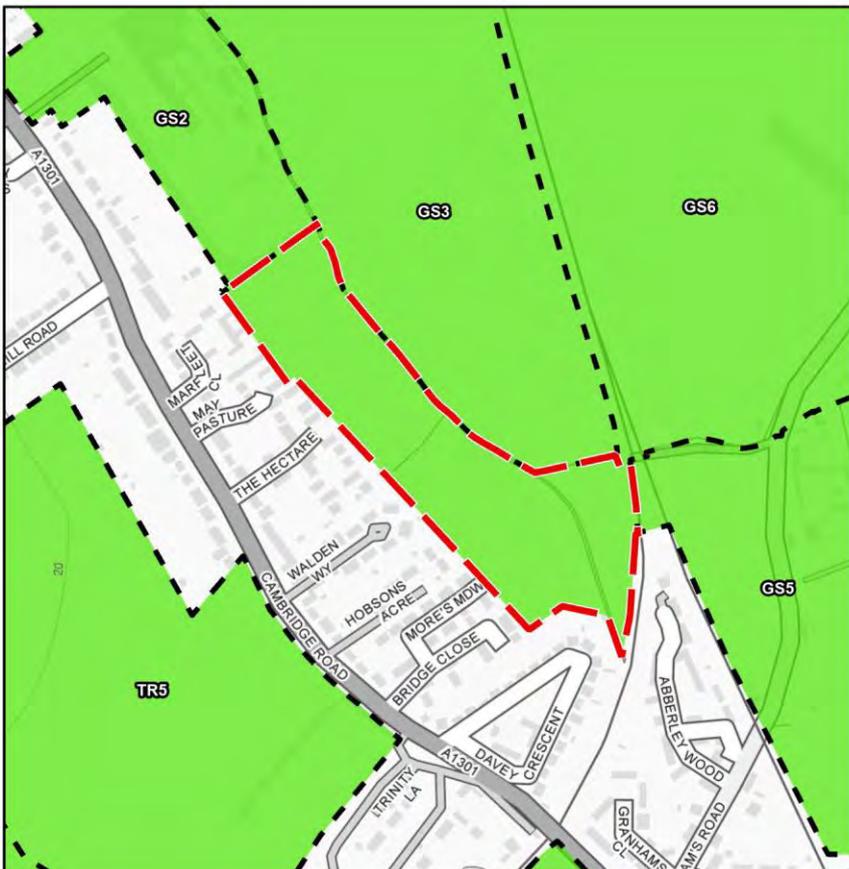
- - - Local Authority
 - Great Shelford parcel
 - Division between parcel sub-areas
 - Neighbouring parcel
 - Green Belt
 - Absolute constraint(s)
- Harm rating**
- Very high
 - High
 - Moderate high
 - Moderate
 - Low



GS4



-  GS4
-  Neighbouring parcel
-  Green Belt



GS4

Parcel location and openness

Parcel size: 5.99ha

The parcel is located to the northwest of Great Shelford, adjacent to an area of ribbon development from the main urban area of Cambridge. Hobson's Brook encloses the parcel to the east and Scotsdales Garden Centre lying in the adjacent parcel to the northwest. The parcel comprises of back gardens and a small paddock in the north, as well as three further paddocks and allotments in the south of the parcel.

Land is open. There is no development within the parcel.

Distinction between parcel and inset area

Scotsdale Garden Centre is located to the northwest of the parcel, but does not create any significant urbanising containment, given its countryside associated uses. Although the parcel lies in close proximity to the inset area, views from the parcel are balanced between open countryside to the north and east and residential development to the west and south. The garden boundaries at the inset edge create little separation from the urban area and the landform and land cover within the parcel do not create any additional distinction from the inset area. Overall, there is moderate distinction between the parcel and the urban area.

GS4

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

- Cambridge Purpose 1 - to preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre:

Contribution: Relatively significant

Land is open and is adjacent to ribbon development from the main urban area of Cambridge. The parcel has some relationship with the urban area but also has a degree of distinction from it. Overall, the parcel makes a relatively significant contribution to Cambridge Purpose 1.

- Cambridge Purpose 2 - to maintain and enhance the quality of Cambridge's setting:

Contribution: Relatively limited

Land has a weak distinction from the edge of Great Shelford/Stapleford, meaning it has a strong relationship with the inset area. However, it is open and largely agricultural meaning it has some rural character. A small area to the south comprises allotment gardens. It does not form or contain any specific features/aspects that contribute to the quality of Cambridge's setting. Overall the parcel makes a relatively limited contribution to Cambridge Purpose 2.

- Cambridge Purpose 3 - to prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city:

Contribution: Moderate

Land is open and lies in a wide gap between Cambridge (Trumpington) and Great Shelford, but urbanising development between the two reduces perceived separation. The parcel has some relationship with the urban area but also has a degree of distinction from it. Overall, the parcel makes a moderate contribution to Cambridge Purpose 3.

GS4

Impact on contribution of adjacent Green Belt

- Release of land as an expansion of Great Shelford:

Rating: Minor-moderate

The release of this land will have some impact on narrowing the gap between Cambridge (Trumpington) and Great Shelford.

The release will result in land to the east forming the Green Belt adjacent to the inset edge and will therefore increase urbanising visual impact on this area.

Land to the northwest does not make a stronger contribution to any of the Green Belt purposes. The impact on this land would not therefore increase overall harm.

Overall harm of Green Belt release

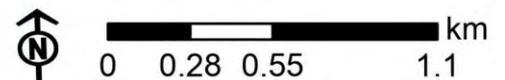
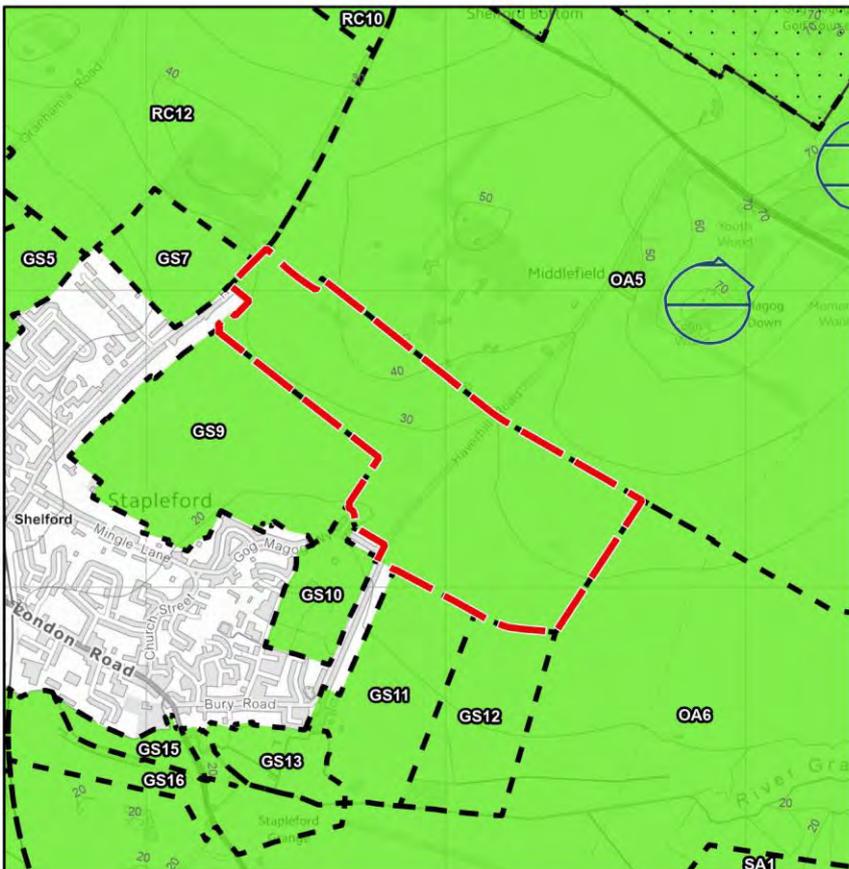
- Parcel GS4 makes a relatively significant contribution to preserving Cambridge's compact character, a moderate contribution to preventing communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging with the city, and a relatively limited contribution to maintaining and enhancing the quality of Cambridge's setting. The additional impact on the adjacent Green Belt of the release of the parcel would be minor-moderate. Therefore, the harm resulting from its release, as an expansion of Great Shelford, would be high.

High

GS8



-  GS8
-  Neighbouring parcel
-  Green Belt
-  Scheduled monument
-  Site of Special Scientific Interest



GS8

Parcel location and openness

Parcel size: 72.42ha

The parcel is located to the northeast of Great Shelford, and comprises of parts of large agricultural fields. Haverhill Road bisects the central region of the parcel.

Land is open. There is no development within the parcel.

Distinction between parcel and inset area

The garden boundaries to the west and southwest of the parcel at the inset edge provide little boundary separation from Great Shelford. However, despite this lack of significant boundaries features, views are balanced with open countryside to the north and east and the sloping landform within the parcel provides additional distinction from the inset area. The parcel is not contained by urban development and extends a significant distance from the urban area. Overall, there is strong distinction between the parcel and the urban area.

GS8

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

- Cambridge Purpose 1 - to preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre:

Contribution: Relatively significant

Land is open and is adjacent to Great Shelford, which is contiguous with Cambridge but which retains a degree of distinction from the main City area. It has strong distinction from the urban area, which increases the extent to which development would be perceived as diminishing Cambridge's compact character. Overall, the parcel makes a relatively significant contribution to Cambridge Purpose 1.

- Cambridge Purpose 2 - to maintain and enhance the quality of Cambridge's setting:

Contribution: Moderate

Land does not form or contain any specific features/aspects that contribute to the quality of Cambridge's setting, but it is open farmland that has a strong distinction from the edge of Great Shelford/Stapleford. Its rural character therefore contributes to the quality of Cambridge's setting. Overall the parcel makes a moderate contribution to Cambridge Purpose 2.

- Cambridge Purpose 3 - to prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city:

Contribution: Moderate

Land is open and lies in a wide gap between Great Shelford and Cambridge (Cherry Hinton), with wooded areas and the Gog Magog Hills acting as significant separating features. Although the settlement gap is robust, there is strong distinction between the parcel and the urban area, which increases the extent to which development would be perceived as narrowing the gap. Overall, the parcel makes a moderate contribution to Cambridge Purpose 3.

GS8

Impact on contribution of adjacent Green Belt

- Release of land as an expansion of Great Shelford:

Rating: Minor-moderate

The release of this land would increase urbanising visual impacts on land to the northeast and east. The release would also decrease the landform distinction (Gog Magog Hills) of these areas from Great Shelford as new development would be occupying the same slope.

Woodland land cover occupying land to the northwest means that the release would not impact that contribution of this area to Green Belt purposes.

Land to the south and west does not make a stronger contribution to any of the Green Belt purposes. The impact on this land would not therefore increase overall harm.

Overall harm of Green Belt release

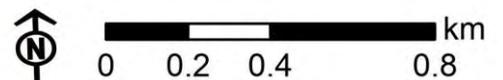
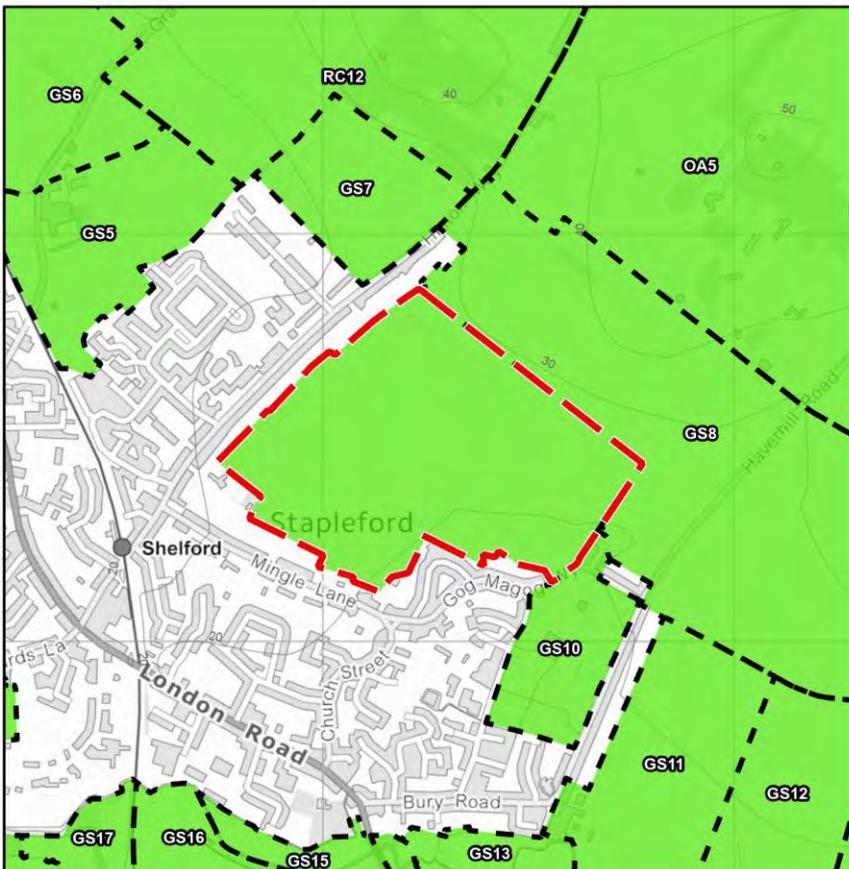
- Parcel GS8 makes a relatively significant contribution to preserving Cambridge's compact character, a moderate contribution to maintaining and enhancing the quality of Cambridge's setting, and a moderate contribution to preventing communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging with the city. The additional impact on the adjacent Green Belt of the release of the parcel would be minor-moderate. Therefore, the harm resulting from its release, as an expansion of Great Shelford, would be very high.

Very High

GS9



-  GS9
-  Neighbouring parcel
-  Green Belt



GS9

Parcel location and openness

Parcel size: 43.91ha

The parcel is located on the northern edge of Great Shelford, with development along Hinton Way enclosing the parcel to the west. Stapleford Cemetery is located in the south of the parcel. The parcel is comprised of part of an agricultural field.

Land is open. There is no development of a scale, character or form that has a significant impact on Green Belt openness.

Distinction between parcel and inset area

The parcel is subject to a degree of urban containment as residential development within Great Shelford lies to the south and west of the parcel, which results in views being balanced between urban development and open countryside. The garden boundaries at the inset edge create little separation from Great Shelford and the landform and land cover within the parcel do not create any additional distinction from the inset area. Overall, there is moderate distinction between the parcel and the urban area .

GS9

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

- Cambridge Purpose 1 - to preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre:

Contribution: Moderate

Land is open and is adjacent to Great Shelford, which is contiguous with Cambridge but which retains some distinction from the main City area.

The parcel has some relationship with the urban area but also has a degree of distinction from it. Overall, the parcel makes a moderate contribution to Cambridge Purpose 1.

- Cambridge Purpose 2 - to maintain and enhance the quality of Cambridge's setting:

Contribution: Relatively limited

Land has a moderate distinction from the edge of Great Shelford/Stapleford, meaning it has some relationship with the inset area.

However, it is also open and land use is not associated with the inset area, meaning it has some rural character. It does not form or contain any specific features/aspects that contribute to the quality of Cambridge's setting. Overall the parcel makes a relatively limited contribution to Cambridge Purpose 2.

- Cambridge Purpose 3 - to prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city:

Contribution: Limited/No contribution

Land is too closely contained by the settlement of Great Shelford to contribute to its separation from any other Cambridge.

GS9

Impact on contribution of adjacent Green Belt

- Release of land an expansion of Great Shelford:

Rating: Minor-moderate

The release of this land would decrease the landform distinction of land to the northeast from Great Shelford, as development would be occupying the start of the same slope. The release would also increase urbanising visual impacts from this agricultural field, given that the slope would focus views towards new development.

Land to the southeast does not make a stronger contribution to any of the Green Belt purposes. The impact on this land would not therefore increase overall harm.

Overall harm of Green Belt release

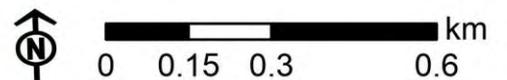
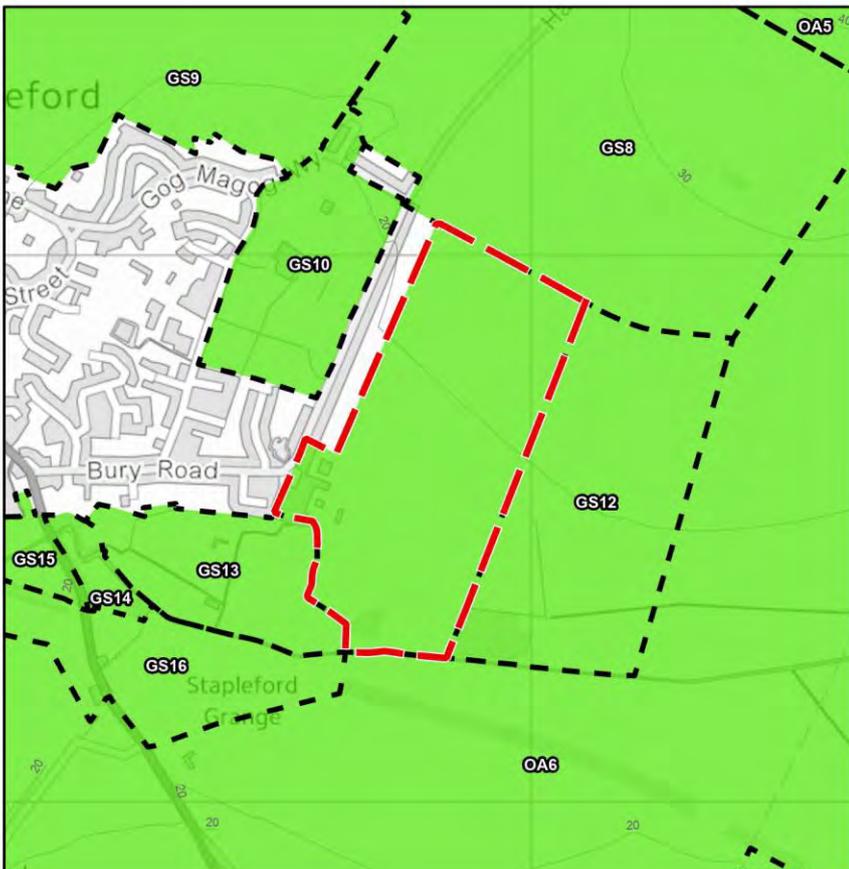
- Parcel GS9 makes a moderate contribution to preserving Cambridge's compact character and a relatively limited contribution to maintaining and enhancing the quality of Cambridge's setting. The additional impact on the adjacent Green Belt of the release of the northern part of the parcel would be minor-moderate. Therefore, the harm resulting from its release, as an expansion of Great Shelford, would be moderate-high.

Moderate High

GS11



-  GS11
-  Neighbouring parcel
-  Green Belt



GS11

Parcel location and openness

Parcel size: 23.63ha

The parcel is located to the east of Great Shelford and comprises of part of a large agricultural field. There are some agricultural and commercial use buildings in the southeast of the parcel.

Land is open. There is no development of a scale, character or form that has a significant impact on Green Belt openness.

Distinction between parcel and inset area

The garden boundaries at the inset edge to the west of the parcel provide little separation from Great Shelford. The parcel is not contained by urban development, but views are balanced between the urban area to the west and open countryside to the east. The landform and land cover within the parcel do not create any additional distinction from Great Shelford. Overall, there is moderate distinction between the parcel and the urban area.

GS11

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

- Cambridge Purpose 1 - to preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre:

Contribution: Moderate

Land is open and is adjacent to Great Shelford, which is contiguous with Cambridge but which retains a degree of distinction from the main City area. The parcel has some relationship with the urban area, but also has a degree of distinction from it. Overall, the parcel makes a moderate contribution to Cambridge Purpose 1.

- Cambridge Purpose 2 - to maintain and enhance the quality of Cambridge's setting:

Contribution: Relatively limited

Land has a moderate distinction from the edge of Great Shelford/Stapleford, meaning it has some relationship with the inset area. However, it is also open and land use is not associated with the inset area, meaning it has some rural character. It does not form or contain any specific features/aspects that contribute to the quality of Cambridge's setting. Overall the parcel makes a relatively limited contribution to Cambridge Purpose 2.

- Cambridge Purpose 3 - to prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city:

Contribution: Moderate

Land is open and lies in a moderate gap between Great Shelford and Sawston, with the River Granta acting as a significant separating feature. The parcel has some relationship with the urban area but also has a degree of distinction from it. Overall, the parcel makes a moderate contribution to Cambridge Purpose 3.

GS11

Impact on contribution of adjacent Green Belt

- Release of land as an expansion of Great Shelford:

Rating: Minor-moderate

The release of this land would increase urbanising visual impacts on land to the east and northeast.

Land to the south does not make a stronger contribution to any of the Green Belt purposes. The impact on this land would not therefore increase overall harm.

Overall harm of Green Belt release

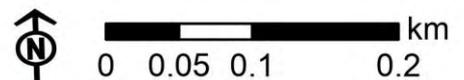
- Parcel GS11 makes a moderate contribution to preserving Cambridge's compact character, a moderate contribution to preventing communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging with each other, and a relatively limited contribution to maintaining and enhancing the quality of Cambridge's setting. The additional impact on the adjacent Green Belt of the release of the parcel would be minor-moderate. Therefore, the harm resulting from its release, as an expansion of Great Shelford, would be high.

High

GS25



-  GS25
-  Neighbouring parcel
-  Green Belt



GS25

Parcel location and openness

Parcel size: 3.78ha

The parcel is located to the northwest of Great Shelford, adjacent to ribbon development from Cambridge along the A1301. The parcel is comprised of agricultural land.

Land is open. There is no development within the parcel.

Distinction between parcel and inset area

The parcel lies in close proximity to the inset area and is largely contained by residential development, which results in views being dominated by the urban area. The garden boundaries at the inset edges of the parcel provide little separation from this area of ribbon development between Great Shelford and Cambridge and the landform and land cover within the parcel do not create any additional distinction from the inset area. Overall, there is weak distinction between the parcel and the urban area.

GS25

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

- Cambridge Purpose 1 - to preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre:

Contribution: Moderate

Land is open and is adjacent to the main urban area of Cambridge. The parcel has weak distinction from the urban area, which reduces the extent to which development would be perceived as diminishing Cambridge's compact character. Overall, the parcel makes a moderate contribution to Cambridge Purpose 1.

- Cambridge Purpose 2 - to maintain and enhance the quality of Cambridge's setting:

Contribution: Relatively limited

Land has a weak distinction from the edge of Great Shelford, meaning it has a strong relationship with the inset area. However, it is open and land use is not associated with the inset area, and therefore has some rural character. Land contains no features/aspects that contribute specifically to the quality of Cambridge's setting. Overall the parcel makes a relatively limited contribution to Cambridge Purpose 2.

- Cambridge Purpose 3 - to prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city:

Contribution: Relatively limited

Land is open and lies in a moderate gap between Great Shelford and Little Shelford, with the River Cam acting as a significant separating feature. The parcel has weak distinction from the urban area, which reduces the extent to which development would be perceived as narrowing the gap. Overall, the parcel makes a relatively limited contribution to Cambridge Purpose 3.

GS25

Impact on contribution of adjacent Green Belt

- Release of land as an expansion of Great Shelford:

Rating: Negligible

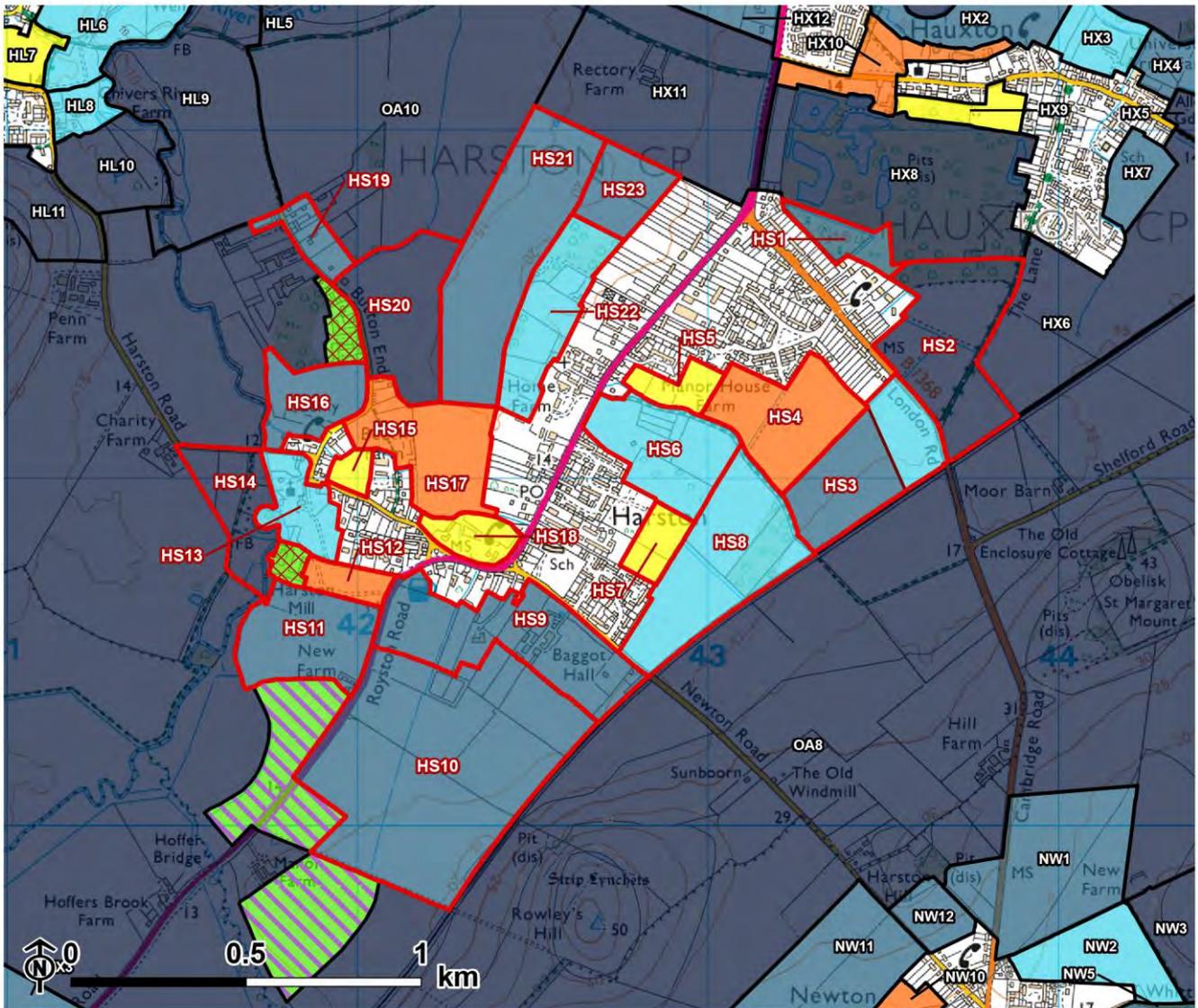
The release of this land would not impact the contribution of land to the southwest, given that it is largely contained and would be infill development.

Overall harm of Green Belt release

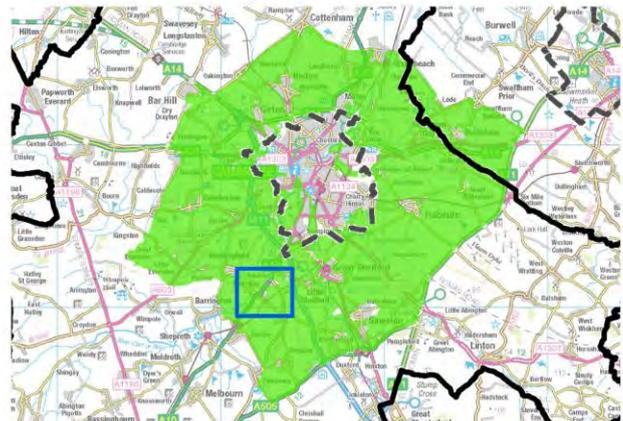
- Parcel GS25 makes a moderate contribution to preserving Cambridge's compact character, a relatively limited contribution to maintaining and enhancing the quality of Cambridge's setting, and a relatively limited contribution to preventing communities in the environment of Cambridge from merging with the city. The additional impact on the adjacent Green Belt of the release of the parcel would be negligible. Therefore, the harm resulting from its release, as an expansion of Great Shelford, would be low

Low

Harston



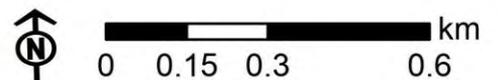
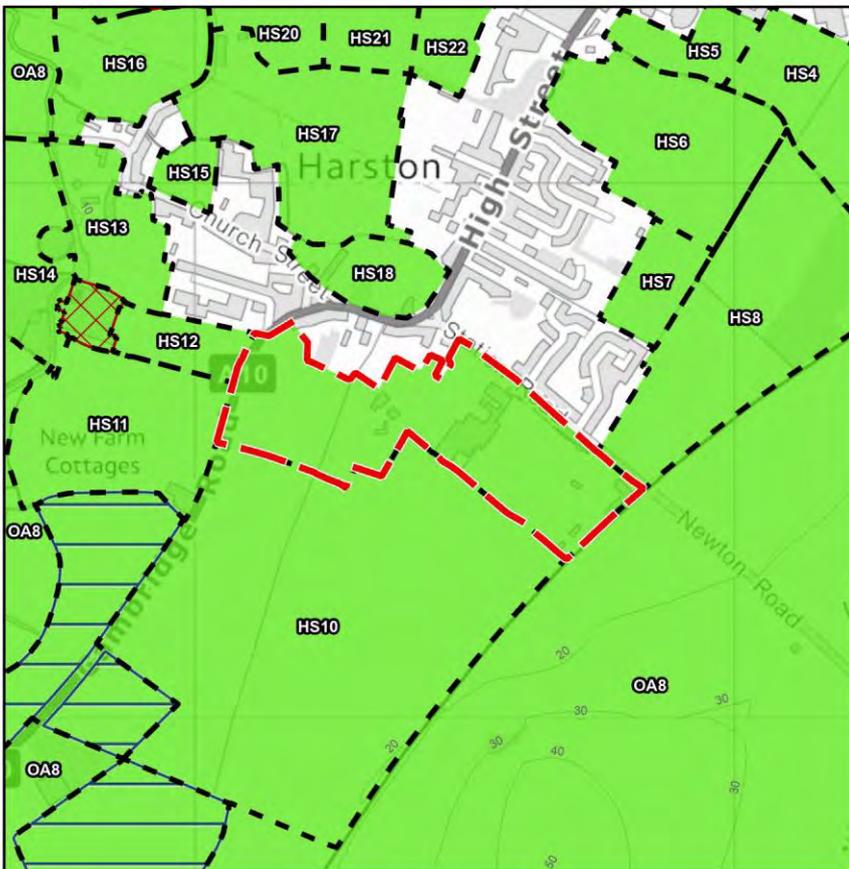
- - - Local Authority
 - Harston parcel
 - Division between parcel sub-areas
 - Neighbouring parcel
 - No openness
 - Green Belt
 - Absolute constraint(s)
- Harm rating**
- Very high
 - High
 - Moderate high
 - Moderate
 - Low



HS9



-  HS9
-  Neighbouring parcel
-  No openness
-  Green Belt
-  Scheduled monument



HS9

Parcel location and openness

Parcel size: 15.09ha

The parcel is located to the south of Harston and is comprised of agricultural land. There is a farmstead in the east of the parcel and a large country house in the central region.

Land is open. There is no development of a scale, character or form that has a significant impact on Green Belt openness.

Distinction between parcel and inset area

Whilst the east of the parcel is separated from Harston by tree cover and station road to the north, in the west of the parcel garden boundaries at the inset edge to the north provide little boundary separation from the settlement. There is some urbanising visual influence from the settlement to the north within the parcel, but this is balanced with open countryside to the south. The parcel is not contained by inset development. The landform and land cover within the parcel do not create any additional distinction from Harston. Overall, there is moderate distinction between the parcel and the inset area.

HS9

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

- Cambridge Purpose 1 - to preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre:

Contribution: Limited/No contribution

Land is not close enough to the main urban area of Cambridge to be associated with it; the land is closely associated with the settlement of Harston. It therefore makes no contribution to Cambridge Purpose 1.

- Cambridge Purpose 2 - to maintain and enhance the quality of Cambridge's setting:

Contribution: Moderate

Land has a moderate distinction from the edge of Harston, meaning it has some relationship with the inset area. However, it comprises open farmland with scattered agricultural buildings meaning it has some rural character. To the southeast land makes some contribution to a rural landscape setting experienced on approach to the wider city from the southwest along the railway line connecting Cambridge with London. Land also fronts onto the historic core of the village along Royston Road and Station Road, which is marked by several listed buildings. As such, it allows some appreciation of the rural character and setting of Harston in proximity to the more intact and historic parts of the village, which in turn makes some contribution to the quality of Cambridge's setting. Overall the parcel makes a moderate contribution to Cambridge Purpose 2.

- Cambridge Purpose 3 - to prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city:

Contribution: Moderate

Land is open and lies in a moderate gap between Harston and Foxton, but wooded areas act as a significant separating feature. The parcel has some relationship with the inset area, but also has a degree of distinction from it. Overall, the parcel makes a moderate contribution to Cambridge Purpose 3.

HS9

Impact on contribution of adjacent Green Belt

- Release of land as an expansion of Harston:

Rating: Minor-moderate

The release and development of this land would have some impact on narrowing the settlement gap between Harston and Foxton.

The release and development of this land would increase urbanising visual influence on land to the south, as well as weakening the boundary separation of this area from the settlement of Harston. The release would also have some urbanising visual impacts on land to the southwest and southeast.

Overall harm of Green Belt release

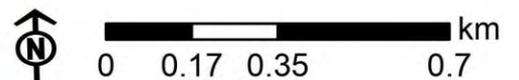
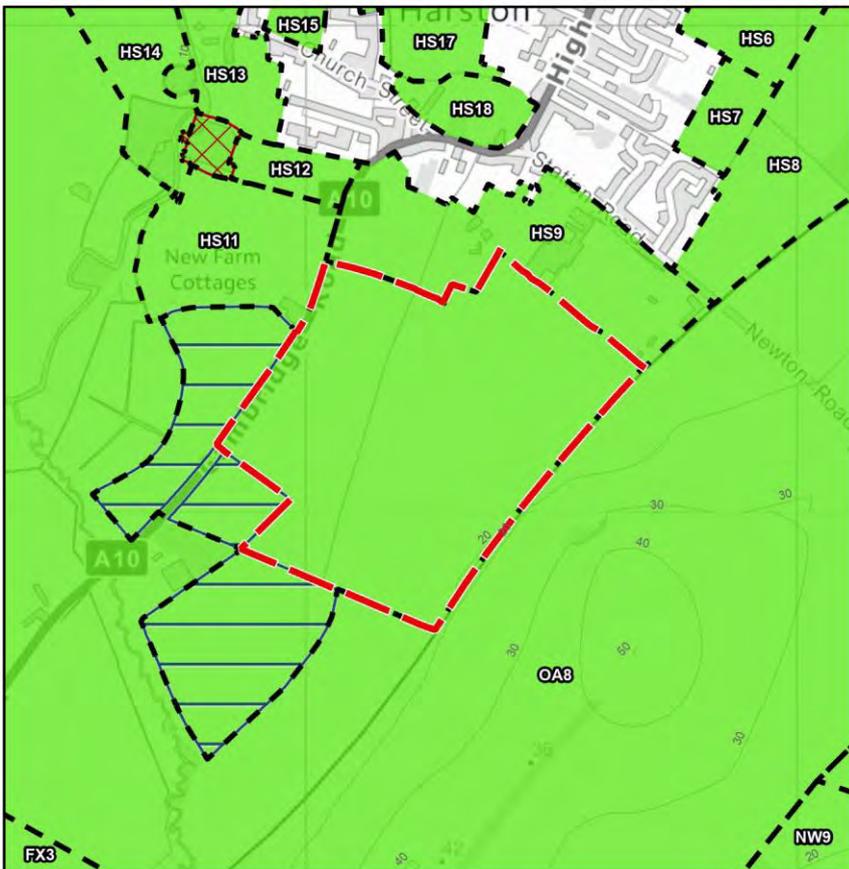
- Parcel HS9 makes a moderate contribution to preventing communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging with each other, and a moderate contribution to maintaining and enhancing the quality of Cambridge's setting. The additional impact on the adjacent Green Belt of the release of the parcel would be minor-moderate. Therefore, the harm resulting from its release, as an expansion of Harston, would be high.

High

HS10



-  HS10
-  Neighbouring parcel
-  No openness
-  Green Belt
-  Scheduled monument



HS10

Parcel location and openness

Parcel size: 38.73ha

The parcel is located to the south of Harston and is comprised of agricultural land. The railway line lies to the east of the parcel and the A10 lies to the west.

Land is open. There is no development within the parcel.

Distinction between parcel and inset area

Filed boundaries and intervening land to the north of the parcel provides a moderate degree of separation from the inset settlement of Harston. The parcel is not contained by inset development and extends a significant distance from the settlement, which means that there is little urbanising visual influence within the parcel. Whilst the landform and land cover within the parcel do not create any additional distinction from Harston, overall there is strong distinction between the parcel and the inset area.

HS10

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

- Cambridge Purpose 1 - to preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre:

Contribution: Limited/No contribution

Land is not close enough to the main urban area of Cambridge to be associated with it; the land is closely associated with the settlement of Harston. It therefore makes no contribution to Cambridge Purpose 1.

- Cambridge Purpose 2 - to maintain and enhance the quality of Cambridge's setting:

Contribution: Moderate

The parcel comprises open farmland that has a strong distinction from the edge of Harston, meaning it has a strong rural character. This contributes to a rural landscape setting experienced on approach to the wider city from the southwest along the railway line connecting Cambridge with London. Overall the parcel makes a moderate contribution to Cambridge Purpose 2.

- Cambridge Purpose 3 - to prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city:

Contribution: Relatively significant

Land is open and lies in a moderate gap between neighbouring Harston and Foxton, but wooded areas act as a significant separating feature. The parcel has strong distinction from the inset area, which increases the extent to which development would be perceived as narrowing the gap. Overall the parcel makes a relatively significant contribution to Cambridge Purpose 3.

HS10

Impact on contribution of adjacent Green Belt

- Release of land as an expansion of Harston:

Rating: Minor-moderate

Whilst the woodland belt to the southwest acts as significant separating feature. The release and development of this land would have some impact on narrowing the settlement gap between Harston and Foxton. The release would increase urbanising visual influence on land to the south and east. The boundary separation from Harston of land to the south would also be weakened.

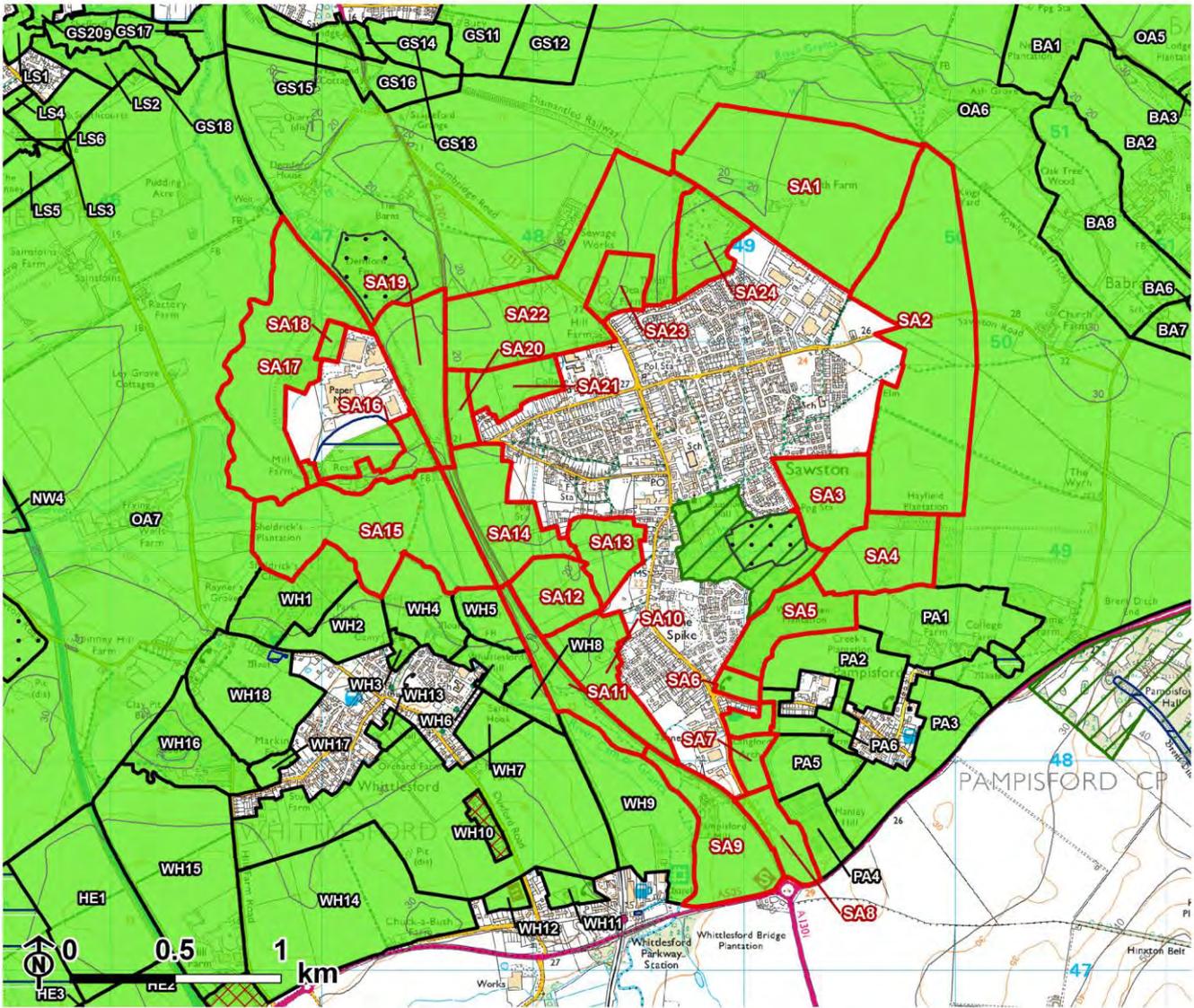
The adjoining land to the northwest does not make a stronger contribution to any of the Green Belt purposes. The impact on this land would not therefore increase overall harm.

Overall harm of Green Belt release

- Parcel HS10 makes a relatively significant contribution to preventing communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging with each other, and a moderate contribution to maintaining and enhancing the quality of Cambridge's setting. The additional impact on the adjacent Green Belt of the release of the parcel would be minor-moderate. Therefore, the harm resulting from its release, as an expansion of Harston, would be high.

High

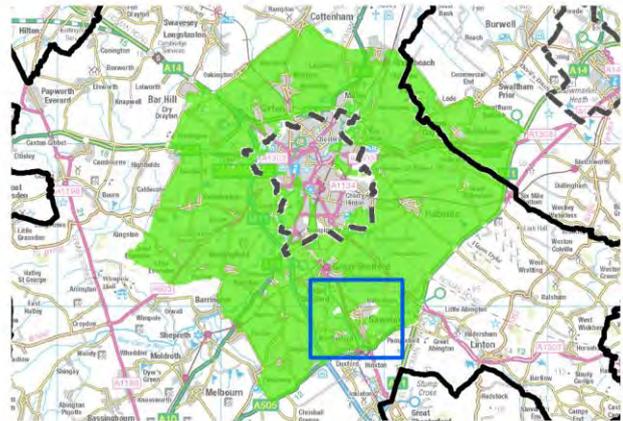
Sawston



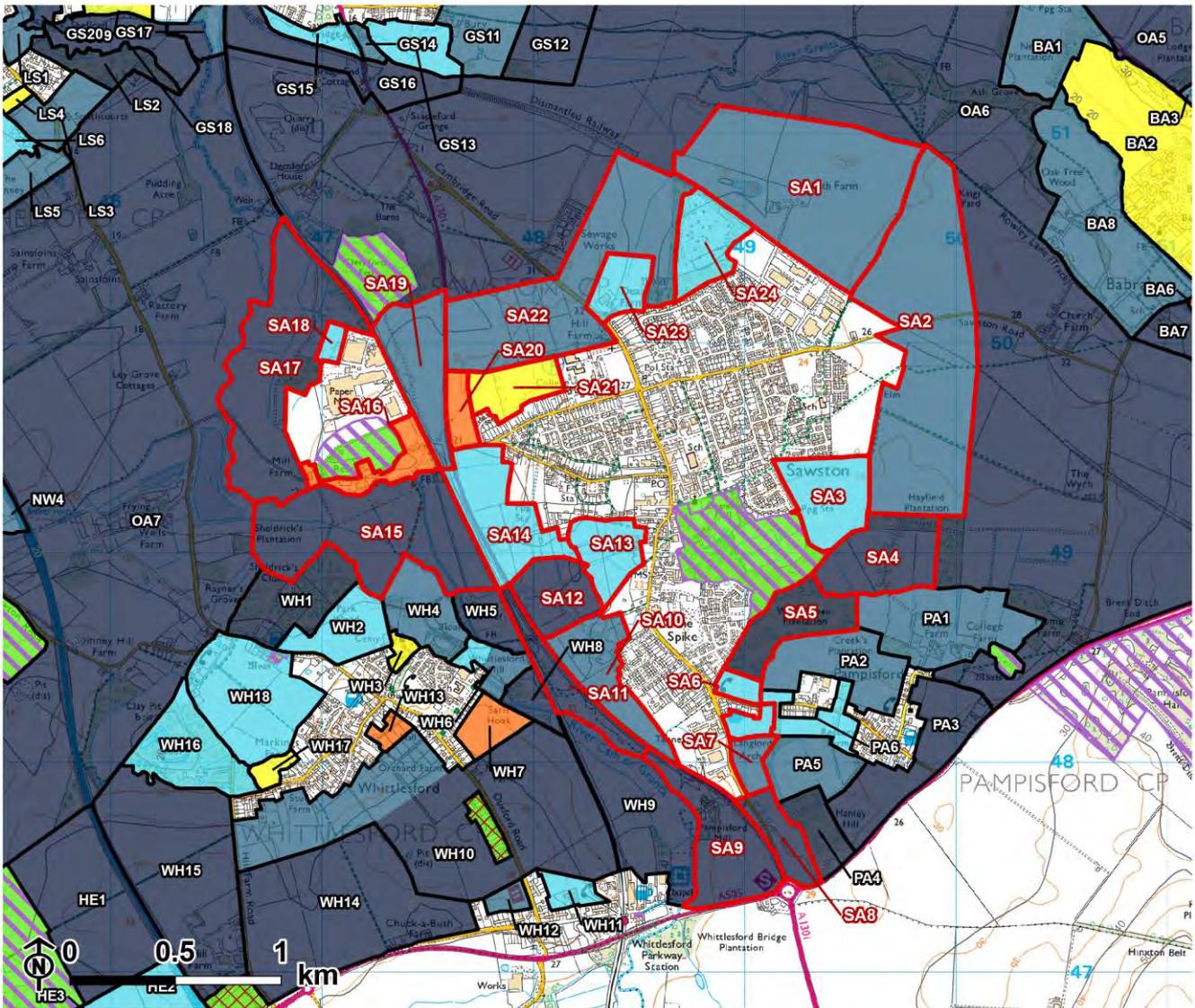
- - - Local Authority
- Sawston parcel
- Neighbouring parcel
- No openness
- Green Belt

Absolute constraints

- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Scheduled monument
- Registered park & garden



Sawston



- - - Local Authority boundary

▭ Sawston parcel

▭ Neighbouring parcel

▨ No openness

▭ Green Belt

▨ Absolute constraint(s)

Harm rating

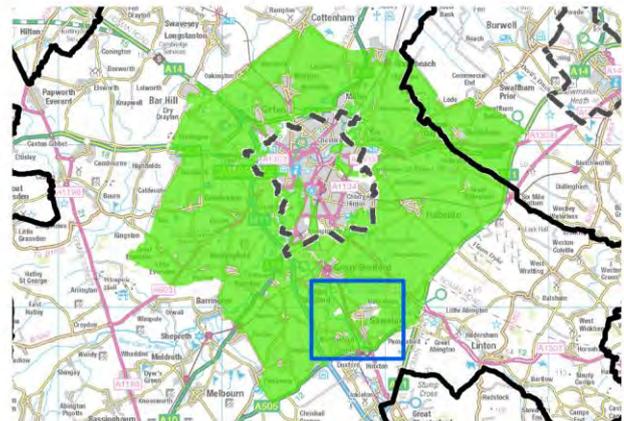
▭ Very high

▭ High

▭ Moderate high

▭ Moderate

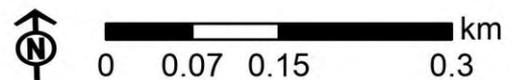
▭ Low



SA20



-  SA20
-  Neighbouring parcel
-  Green Belt
-  Scheduled monument



SA20

Parcel location and openness

Parcel size: 4.45ha

The parcel is located to the east of Sawston and consists of an arable field. It is contained by the A1301 to the west and Mill Lane to the south.

Land is open. There is no development of a scale, character or form that has an impact on Green Belt openness.

Distinction between parcel and inset area

Land is not contained by inset development and the tree line to the southeast is a moderate boundary feature between the parcel and Sawston, with some urbanising visual influence. The landform and land cover within the parcel do not create any additional distinction from Sawston. Overall, there is moderate distinction between the parcel and the inset area.

SA20

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

- Cambridge Purpose 1 - to preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre:

Contribution: Limited/No contribution

Land is not close enough to the main urban area of Cambridge to be associated with it; the land is closely associated with the settlement of Sawston. It therefore makes no contribution to Cambridge Purpose 1.

- Cambridge Purpose 2 - to maintain and enhance the quality of Cambridge's setting:

Contribution: Moderate

Land comprises open farmland that has a strong distinction from the edge of Sawston and therefore has a strong rural character. This contributes to a rural landscape setting experienced on approach to the city from the south along the A1301. Overall the parcel makes a moderate contribution to Cambridge Purpose 2.

- Cambridge Purpose 3 - to prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city:

Contribution: Relatively limited

Land is open and is peripheral to a moderate gap between Sawston and Whittlesford. Although the settlement gap is robust, there is strong distinction between the parcel and the inset area, which increases the extent to which development would be perceived as narrowing the gap. Overall, the parcel makes a relatively limited contribution to Cambridge Purpose 3.

SA20

Impact on contribution of adjacent Green Belt

- Release of land as an expansion of Sawston:

Rating: Minor

The release and development of land within this parcel would weaken the boundary distinction of land to the north. However, the additional impact is limited due to the small frontage.

The release of land within this parcel would also increase urbanising containment of land to the west, however, the extent of existing urbanising development to the southeast and within Sawston Business Park limits the additional impact.

The adjoining land to the south, east and west does not make a stronger contribution to any of the Green Belt purposes. The impact on this land would not therefore increase overall harm.

Overall harm of Green Belt release

- Parcel SA20 makes a moderate contribution to maintaining and enhancing the quality of Cambridge's setting, and a relatively limited contribution to preventing communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging with one another. The additional impact on the adjacent Green Belt of the release of the parcel would be minor. Therefore, the harm resulting from its release, as an expansion of Sawston, would be moderate.

Moderate

SA21



-  SA21
-  Neighbouring parcel
-  Green Belt



SA21

Parcel location and openness

Parcel size: 8.83ha

The parcel is located to the northwest of Sawston and to the west of Sawston Village College. It contains an arable field to the west and an area of Sawston Village College sports grounds to the east.

Land is open. There is no development of a scale, character or form that has an impact on Green Belt openness.

Distinction between parcel and inset area

Land has some degree of containment by inset development and the sparse hedgerow to the east between the parcel and Sawston Village College creates little boundary separation between the parcel and the inset settlement, so there is some urbanising visual influence. The landform and land cover within the parcel do not create any additional distinction from Sawston. Overall, there is moderate distinction between the parcel and the inset area.

SA21

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

- Cambridge Purpose 1 - to preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre:

Contribution: Limited/No contribution

Land is not close enough to the main urban area of Cambridge to be associated with it; the land is closely associated with the settlement of Sawston. It therefore makes no contribution to Cambridge Purpose 1.

- Cambridge Purpose 2 - to maintain and enhance the quality of Cambridge's setting:

Contribution: Limited/No contribution

Land has a moderate distinction from the edge of Sawston, meaning it has some relationship with the inset area. However, it has a use (sports pitches) to the east that associates it with the inset area and weakens its rural character. It does not form or contain any features/aspects that contribute to the quality of Cambridge's setting. Overall the parcel makes a limited contribution to Cambridge Purpose 2.

- Cambridge Purpose 3 - to prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city:

Contribution: Moderate

Land is open and lies in a moderate gap between Sawston and Great Shelford, but there are some significant separating features including woodland belts and the River Granta. The parcel has some relationship with the inset area, but also a degree of distinction from it. Overall, the parcel makes a moderate contribution to Cambridge Purpose 3.

SA21

Impact on contribution of adjacent Green Belt

- Release of land as an expansion of Sawston:

Rating: Negligible

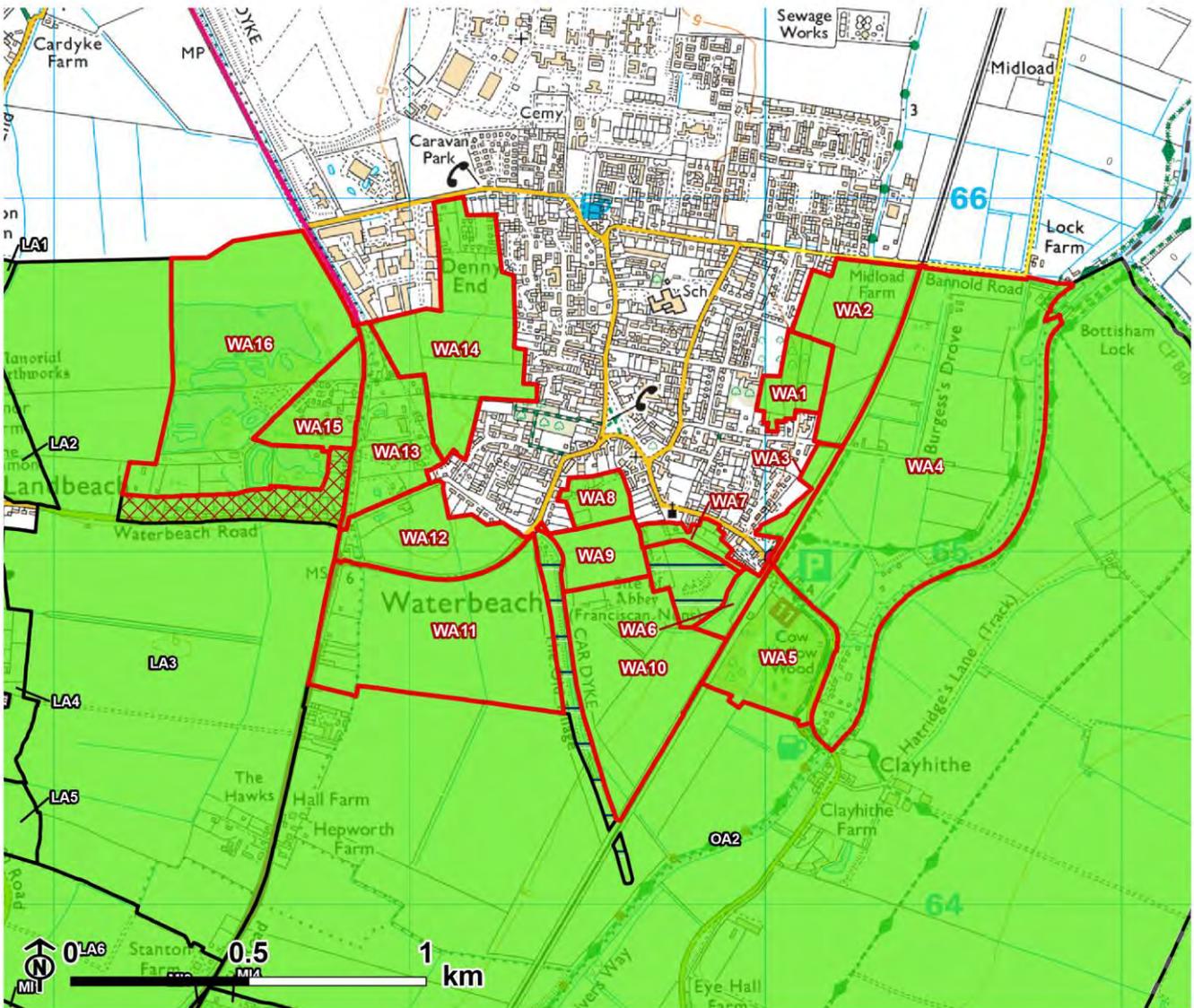
The release and development of land within this parcel would not have an impact on the contribution of land to the north or west to Green Belt purposes due to separation by tree lines.

Overall harm of Green Belt release

- Parcel SA21 makes a moderate contribution to preventing communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging with one another, and a limited contribution to maintaining and enhancing the quality of Cambridge's setting. The additional impact on the adjacent Green Belt of the release of the parcel would be negligible. Therefore, the harm resulting from its release, as an expansion of Sawston, would be low.

Low

Waterbeach



- - - Local Authority boundary

Waterbeach parcel

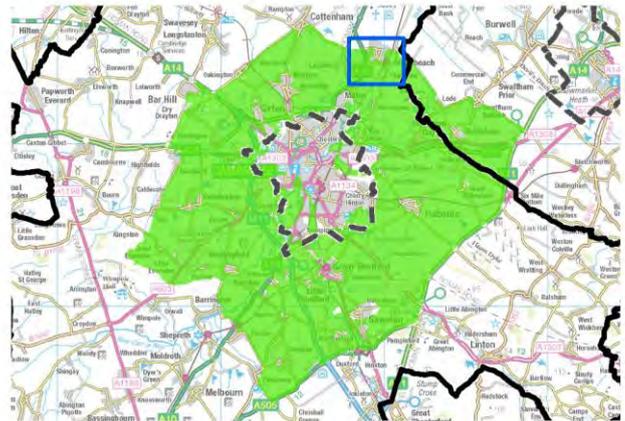
Neighbouring parcel

No openness

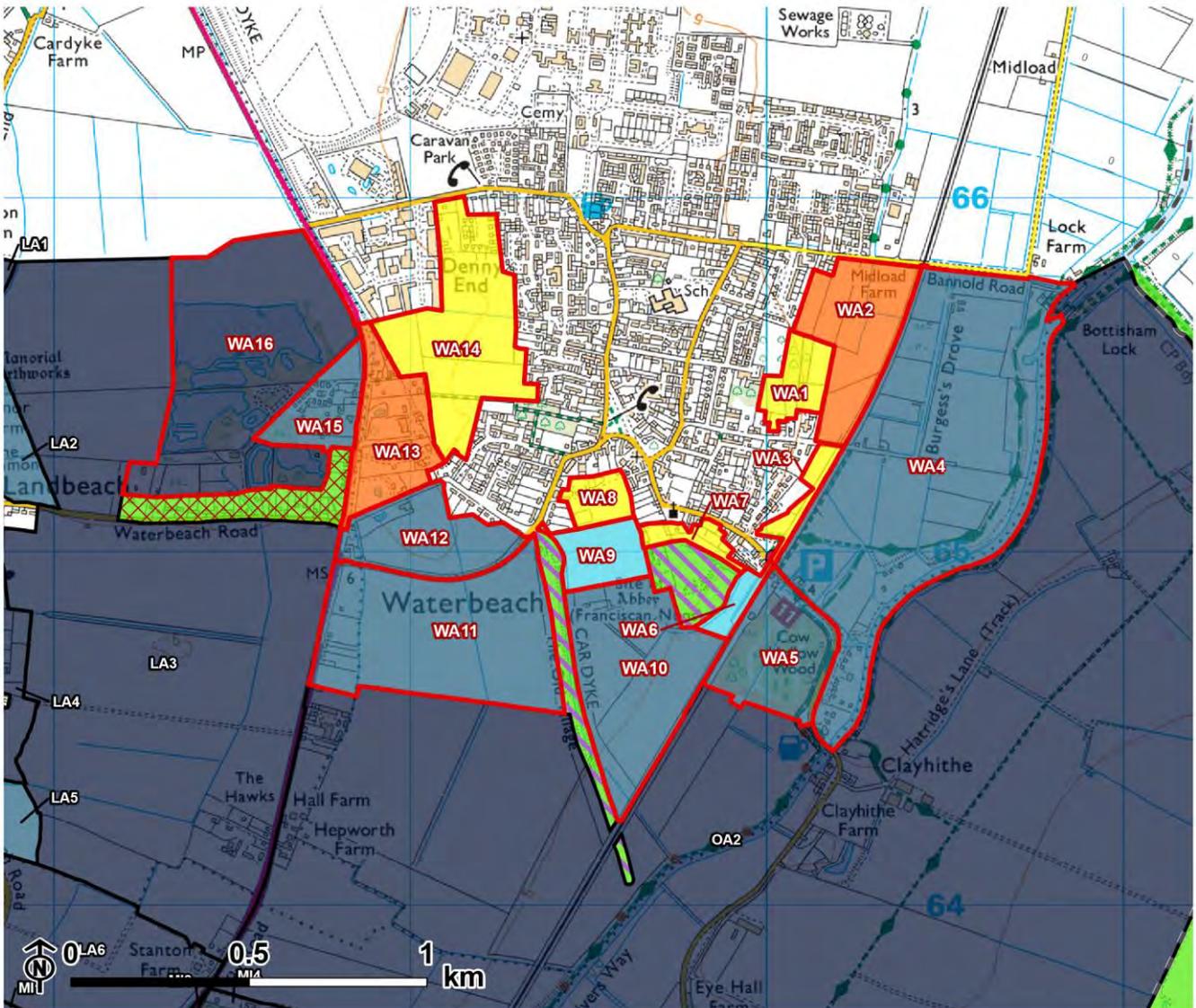
Green Belt

Absolute constraints

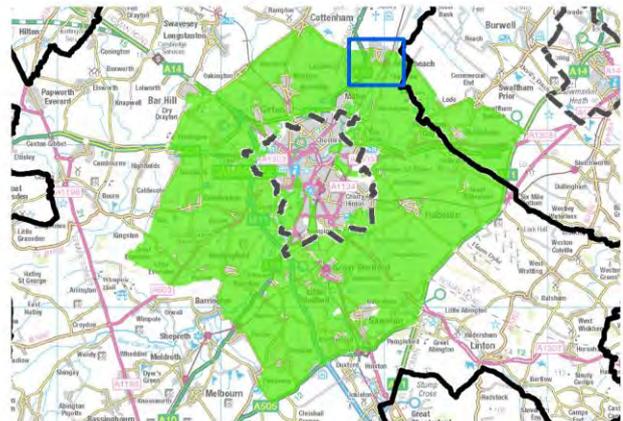
Scheduled monument



Waterbeach



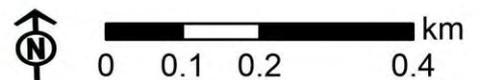
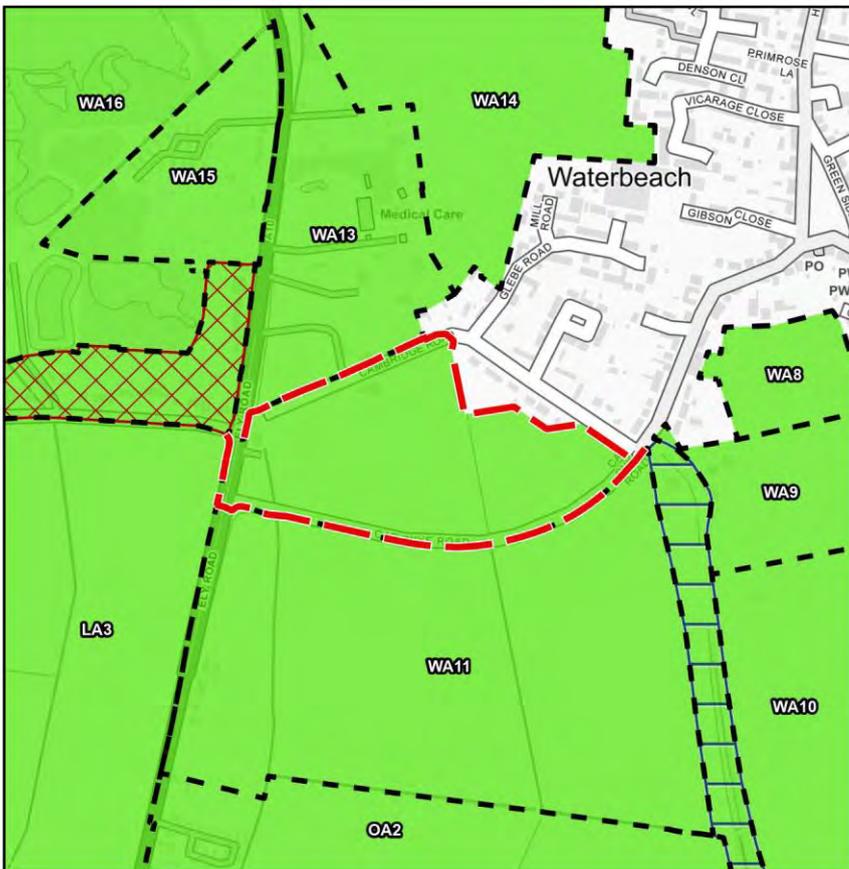
- - - Local Authority
 - Waterbeach parcel
 - Neighbouring parcel
 - No openness
 - Green Belt
 - Absolute constraint(s)
- Harm rating**
- Very high
 - High
 - Moderate high
 - Moderate
 - Low



WA12



-  WA12
-  Neighbouring parcel
-  No openness
-  Green Belt
-  Scheduled monument



WA12

Parcel location and openness

Parcel size: 8.93ha

The parcel is located to the southwest of Waterbeach and to the east of Ely Road. The parcel is comprised of arable land and is contained by Car Dyke Road.

Land is open. There is no development of a scale, character or form that has an impact on Green Belt openness.

Distinction between parcel and inset area

Land is not contained by inset development but the garden hedgerow boundaries to the northeast create little separation from Waterbeach and there is some urbanising visual influence from the inset settlement. The landform and land cover within the parcel do not create any additional distinction from Waterbeach. Overall, there is moderate distinction between the parcel and the inset area.

WA12

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

- Cambridge Purpose 1 - to preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre:

Contribution: Limited/No contribution

Land is open and is not close enough to the main urban area of Cambridge to be associated with it; the land is closely associated with the settlement of Waterbeach. It therefore makes no contribution to Cambridge Purpose 1.

- Cambridge Purpose 2 - to maintain and enhance the quality of Cambridge's setting:

Contribution: Relatively limited

Whilst there is some development to the west on Ely Road, the majority of the parcel comprises open agricultural land that has a moderate distinction from the edge of Waterbeach and therefore has some rural character. Land contains no features/aspects that contribute specifically to the quality of Cambridge's setting. Overall the parcel makes a relatively limited contribution to Cambridge Purpose 2.

- Cambridge Purpose 3 - to prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city:

Contribution: Relatively significant

Land is open and lies in a moderate gap between Waterbeach and Landbeach, but urbanising development on Waterbeach Road reduces perceived separation and increases the fragility of the gap. The parcel has some relationship with the inset area, but also a degree of distinction from it. Overall, the parcel makes a relatively significant contribution to Cambridge Purpose 3.

WA12

Impact on contribution of adjacent Green Belt

- Release of land as an expansion of Waterbeach:

Rating: Minor-moderate

The release and development of land within this parcel would increase urbanising visual impact on land to the south.

The release would also result in a reduction in the moderate settlement gap between Waterbeach and Landbeach, as existing urbanising development on Waterbeach Road diminishes the role of Ely Road as a separating feature and increases the fragility of the gap.

The release and development of land within this parcel would not have an impact on the contribution of land to the west to Green Belt purposes

The adjoining land to the north does not make a stronger contribution to any of the Green Belt purposes. The impact on this land would not therefore increase overall harm.

Overall harm of Green Belt release

- Parcel WA12 makes a relatively significant contribution to preventing communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging with one another, and a relatively limited contribution to maintaining and enhancing the quality of Cambridge's setting. The additional impact on the adjacent Green Belt of the release of the parcel would be minor-moderate. Therefore, the harm resulting from its release, as an expansion of Waterbeach, would be high.

High