

Stevenage Borough Council

Review of the Green Belt around Stevenage: Part 1 - Survey against Green Belt Purposes

Final Report



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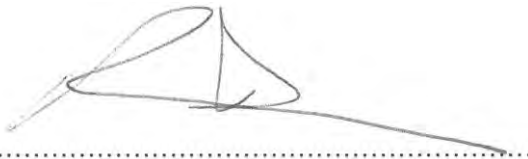
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AMEC Environment & Infrastructure
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Executive Summary

Background and Purpose of the Report

1. This assessment of the Green Belt around Stevenage was commissioned by Stevenage Borough Council. The study forms part of the evidence base associated with the review of the Stevenage Local Plan. The remit of the study is to:
 - Provide an independent assessment of the extent to which the land around the urban edge of Stevenage still fulfils the purposes of Green Belt as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), namely to:
 - check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
 - prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
 - assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
 - preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
 - assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
 - Evaluate the sensitivity of land to development and change.
 - Identify broad areas for potential compensatory Green Belt provision in the event that Green Belt releases are required around Stevenage.
2. In defining the second purpose of 'preventing neighbouring towns from merging into one another', the NPPF is clearly referring to towns and other urban areas, as opposed to settlements generally. Thus villages and hamlets, which are often 'washed over' by Green Belt, **do not** fall within this definition.
3. The study is strategic in nature which is appropriate at this stage of the Local Plan development. It is part of a suite of evidence base studies being assembled as part of the preparation of the Stevenage Local Plan, and has been prepared to be used in that context.

Assessment Methodology

4. The assessment methodology has been developed in light of NPPF guidance on Green Belt issues. A summary of the approach to this study is as follows:
 - A mapping exercise to identify key constraints.
 - Identification of initial Green Belt segments using OS maps, aerial photos and site visits, with strong boundaries being used to define boundaries of the segments.

- Assessment of each segment against each of the five purposes of including land in the Green Belt as set out in the NPPF, and modification of segment boundaries as required.
- Record the results of the assessment using a matrix and a simple colouring system, based on land making a significant contribution, a contribution or a limited contribution to Green Belt purposes. An overall colour was applied to each segment in order to summarise the assessment.
- Summary of the results of the above through segments being grouped and recommendations made for each group of segments. Where recommendations are made that particular segments/groups of segments require further consideration, this does not mean that they should be released from the Green Belt, but that they could be considered further depending on development requirements and the findings of other evidence base studies. Equally, assessment of a segment as making a significant contribution to Green Belt purposes, does not preclude consideration of potential development.
- Consideration was given to possible areas for inclusion in the Green Belt using the same broad assessment criteria that were used for assessing the existing Green Belt.

1.1.1 Study Results

1.1.2 Assessment of the Green Belt around Stevenage

5. **Figure 1** summarises the overall evaluation of fulfilment of Green Belt purposes of land around Stevenage. A significant part of the Green Belt around Stevenage is assessed as making a Significant Contribution to Green Belt purposes overall (notwithstanding varying roles in individual Green Belt purposes), notably land separating Stevenage from Hitchin and Letchworth, and land separating Stevenage from Welwyn Garden City. Segments assessed as making a Contribution to Green Belt purposes overall are largely associated with land to the east and west of Stevenage where their Green Belt function is less clearly defined. Two segments are assessed as making a Limited Contribution to Green Belt purposes.
6. In light of where the assessment has concluded that there are areas of Green Belt which make a ‘contribution’ and ‘limited contribution’ to Green Belt purposes, these could be further evaluated in the context of the findings of other parts of the Local Plan evidence base, in particular those relating to development levels, sustainability and landscape issues. Consideration should also be given to the identification of ‘safeguarded land’ from these segments recommended as holding potential for release in order to prevent the need for further Green Belt review at the end of the Plan period.
7. Equally, the identification of strategic segments as making a significant contribution to Green Belt purposes does not preclude consideration of development at these locations. In all cases, where Green Belt designation exists, then the test of ‘very special circumstances’ applies to development proposals.

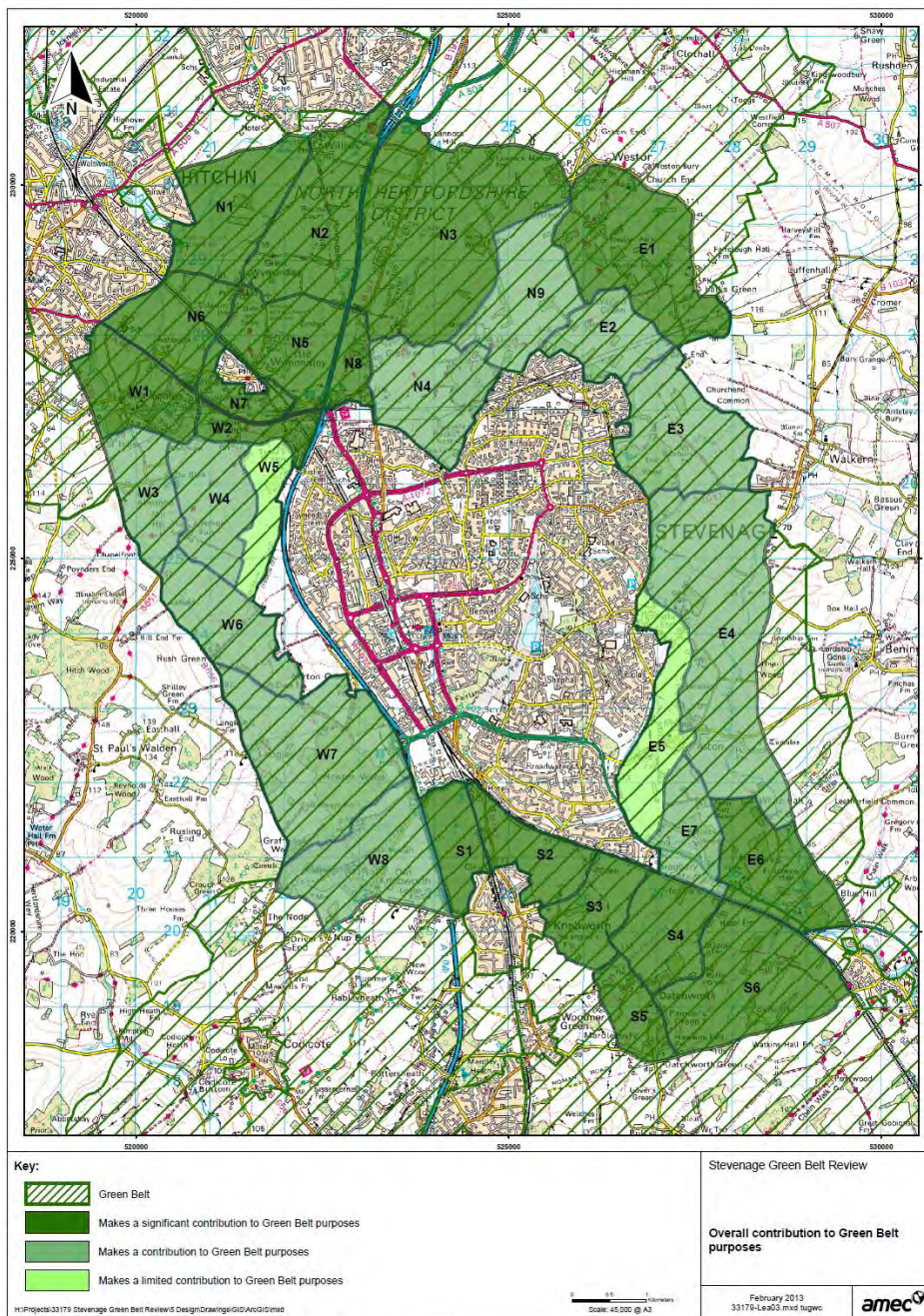
1.1.3 Further Work

8. The study is Part 1 of a two-part study to explore the role and function of the Green Belt around Stevenage. Part 1 is strategic in nature, which is appropriate at this stage of the Local Plan development, and explores the performance of the Green Belt designation against NPPF criteria in isolation from other potential factors to be

considered. Part 2 will consider detailed land parcels and boundaries against a range of other evidence base studies. Therefore, the most appropriate detailed Green Belt boundaries cannot and should not be identified until the level of development, likely densities, sustainable development considerations and land take is known and until other elements of the evidence base have been completed.

- 9. The definition of Green Belt boundaries can be a complex issue, particularly where significant features such as a motorway, major road or railway can be dominant and create the impression of an un-breacheable barrier. However, Green Belt should be considered in a broader context, such as the relationship between particular tracts of land and the wider countryside, in respect of a sense of openness. The strengthening and creation of boundaries can change this visual relationship and help to better define the principle of the permanency of boundaries which informs Green Belt policy.

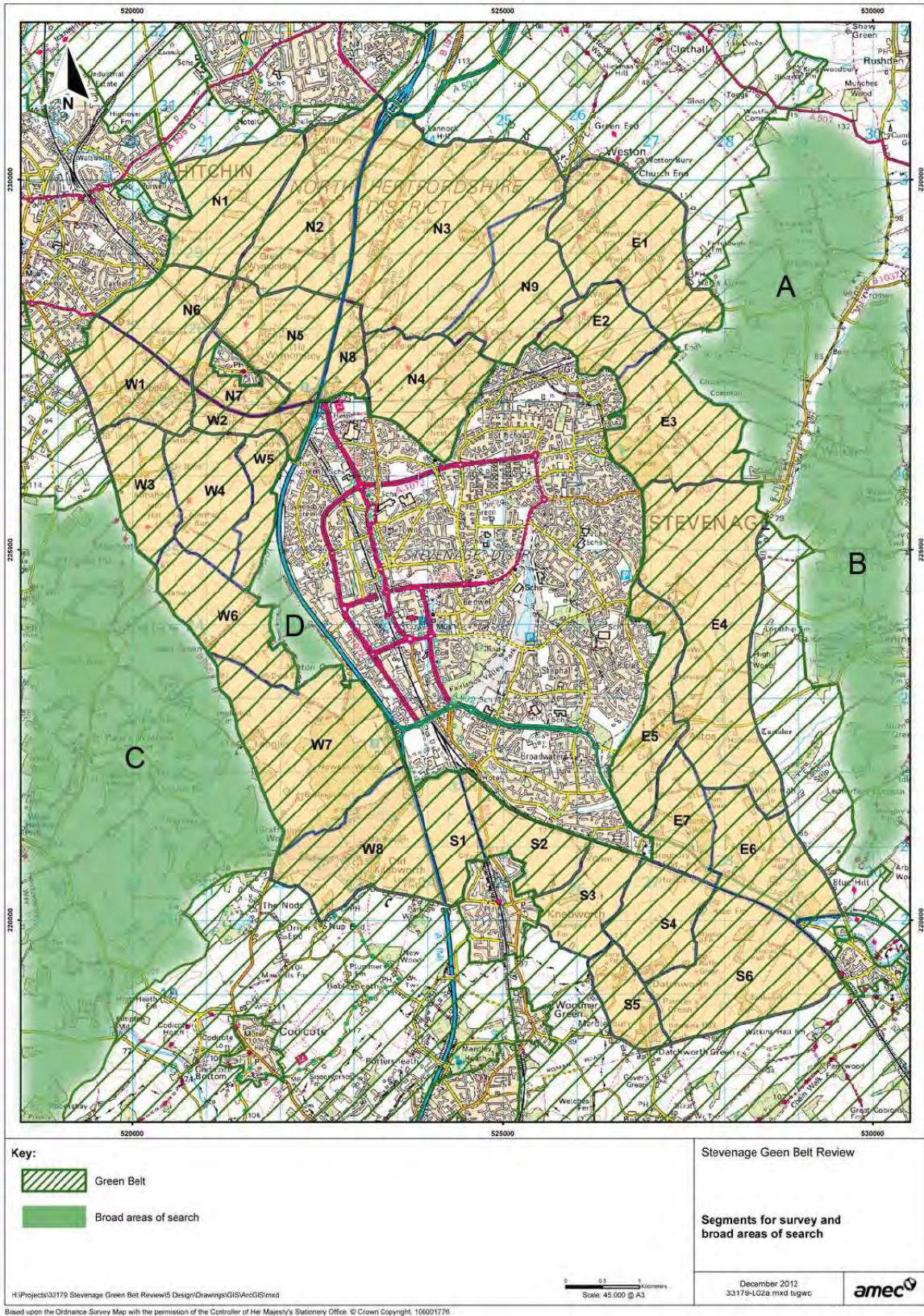
Figure 1 Overall Evaluation of Contribution to Green Belt Purposes



1.1.4 Assessment of Potential Additions to the Green Belt

10. Four areas were considered as holding potential to be added to the Green Belt, either to make the Green Belt more coherent through the use of strong boundaries, or to compensate for potential removal of areas (Figure 2). The case for extension of the Green Belt is strongest in relation to Areas A (between Walkern and Cromer), Area B (around Beningfield and Area C (to the west of the B656). In combination, designation would help to more strongly define the current Green Belt through the use of more logical and stronger boundaries and compensating for any future loss of Green Belt around Stevenage.
11. Area A: the current eastern Green Belt boundary is arguably not particularly clear or strong, and addition of the land bounded by the B1037 through Walkern and Cromer meeting the A507 to the north and joining the existing eastern boundary at Westfield Common would make a more logical and definitive boundary.
12. Area B: the current Green Belt between the urban edge of Stevenage and the east of the Walkern Road, centred on the Beane Valley, provides a distinct, albeit narrow, area containing urban encroachment into this open landscape. Whilst the logic of the current eastern boundary is in places difficult to understand, the overall justification for the extension of the Green Belt eastwards is not strong should segments E3 and E4 not be released, either in whole or part. This conclusion is reinforced by the absence of a clear boundary (for example around Beningfield) that would form a clear new eastern boundary. However, any release of land in segments E3 and E4 would narrow the Green Belt to an unacceptable extent and require exploration of the extension of the Green Belt into Area B in order to maintain its integrity.
13. Area C: should land to the west of the A1(M) be released (Segments W4 and W5), then the Green Belt becomes unreasonably narrow. It would therefore be logical to extend the designation westwards beyond the B656, which would in turn meet with the finger of Green Belt running along the M1 corridor, thus filling in the 'gap'. A separate study defining the northern boundary of this land would be required, but the A505 between Hitchin and Luton provides an obvious starting point. Addition of part of this area, say using the B651 towards Whitwell for example, would create an illogical extension.
14. Area D: this area was removed from the Green Belt and includes the hamlet of Norton Green to the south and a caravan site along Dyes Lane. The boundaries to this area are defined primarily by hedgerows, but also by trackways in places. Whilst there is a degree of connection to the wider countryside to the west, this is variable, with the predominant topographical orientation of the land being toward the east. There is no clear connection with the wider countryside which would be required to justify re-designation of this land.

Figure 2 Green Belt Segments for Survey and Areas of Search for Green Belt Designation



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1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Study Remit

- 1.1.1 Stevenage Borough Council commissioned AMEC to undertake an assessment of the Green Belt surrounding Stevenage. Stevenage is a New Town of 80,000 situated in northern Hertfordshire. In many places the urban area reaches up to the administrative boundary and, to the north-east, already spreads across it into neighbouring North Hertfordshire District. The Green Belt boundary is, with the exception of land to the west of the A1(M) within the Borough boundary, drawn tightly around the edge of the existing urban area which is also, for much of its length, the administrative boundary with neighbouring districts.
- 1.1.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is clear (paragraph 83) that, “*once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of the Local Plan*”. However, the NPPF is equally clear (paragraph 14) that “*Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs...unless specific policies...indicate development should be restricted*”. Small authorities, such as Stevenage, which are tightly contained, in terms of both their administrative areas and Green Belt boundaries, face particular challenges in balancing and/or reconciling these competing and potentially conflicting requirements.
- 1.1.3 Stevenage Borough Council is in the preliminary stages of preparing a new Local Plan which will cover the period to 2031. The remit of the study is to:
- provide an independent assessment of the extent to which the land around the urban edge of Stevenage still fulfils the purposes of Green Belt as defined by the NPPF;
 - evaluate the sensitivity of land to development and change; and
 - identify broad areas for potential compensatory Green Belt provision in the event that Green Belt releases are required around Stevenage.
- 1.1.4 The study is Part 1 of a two-part study to explore the role and function of the Green Belt around Stevenage. Part 1 is strategic in nature, which is appropriate at this stage of the Local Plan development, and explores the performance of the Green Belt designation against NPPF criteria in isolation from other potential factors to be considered. Part 2 will consider detailed land parcels and boundaries against a range of other evidence base studies including the SHMA, SHLAA and ELR. Therefore, the most appropriate detailed Green Belt boundaries cannot and should not be identified until the level of development, likely densities, sustainable development considerations and land-take is known and until other elements of the evidence base have been completed.

1.2 Structure of the Report

- 1.2.1 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

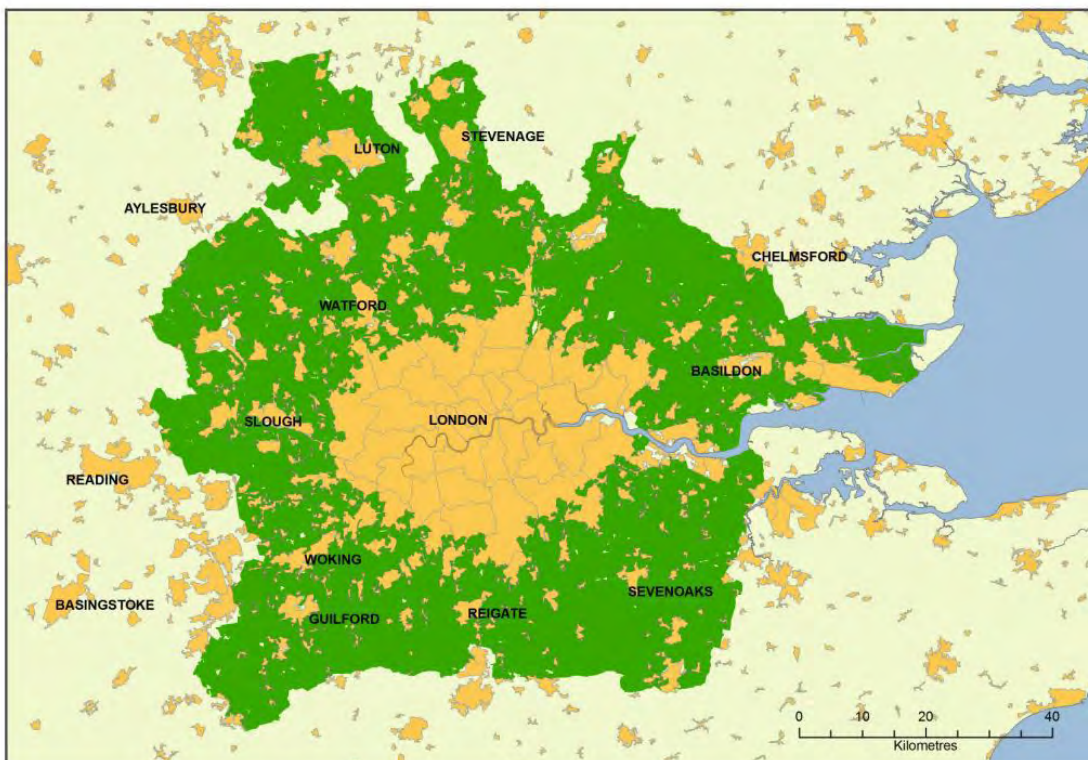
- chapter 2 sets out the policy context including national and local planning policies and the background to the designation of the London Metropolitan Green Belt;
- chapter 3 sets out the assessment methodology;
- chapter 4 sets out the assessment results and recommendations; and
- chapter 5 summarises the Study's findings and recommendations.

2. Context

2.1 The London Metropolitan Green Belt and its Designation

2.1.1 The Green Belt which surrounds Stevenage is part of the London Metropolitan Green Belt which has progressively been extended since a first phase of designation in 1954 (Figure 2.1). Hertfordshire County Council first designated the south of the County as Green Belt as part of the Hertfordshire County Development Plan, published in 1951 and approved in 1958. The First Review of the County Development Plan, published in 1964 and approved in 1971, extended the Green Belt to the north of the County along the A1(M) corridor to include Stevenage. The London Metropolitan Green Belt is the largest of England's 14 Green Belts, covering 30% of the total area of all Green Belt land in England. Some 92% of the London Metropolitan Green Belt is undeveloped land, but only 58% of the land is registered as being in agricultural use (compared with 71% of all land in England). There is a high prevalence of 'semi-urban' uses relying on open land, such as golf courses and pony paddocks. The London Metropolitan Green Belt has a significant proportion (5,380ha) of farmland covered by Higher Level Stewardship schemes, but a low overall proportion (51% of all land in agricultural use) of involvement in Natural England funding supporting environmentally sensitive farming ('agri-environment schemes'; the national proportion is 67%; Green Belt land overall 53%).

Figure 2.1 The Metropolitan Green Belt



source: CPRE (<http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/housing-and-planning/green-belts/item/1957-green-belts-in-england-key-facts>)

2.1.2 The scale and complexity of built form across the area covered by the London Metropolitan Green Belt means that all five purposes are relevant to a greater or lesser degree. However, in the case of the Green Belt around Stevenage, the purposes of checking sprawl, preventing the merger of towns and protection of the countryside from encroachment are likely to be of particular relevance. The Green Belt has contained the growth of the towns which are surrounded by Green Belt, and particularly the linear coalescence of towns lying along transport corridors. Thus along the A1(M) corridor, the towns of Letchworth, Hitchin, Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City retain spatial separation, although the gaps between the settlements are relatively narrow and in places urbanised in character.

2.2 National Policy

2.2.1 Green Belt policy is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which states that:

“79. The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. 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.”

2.2.2 Green Belts serve five purposes:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

2.2.3 In defining the second purpose of ‘preventing neighbouring towns from merging into one another’, the NPPF is clearly referring to towns, as opposed to settlements generally. Thus villages and hamlets, which are often ‘washed over’ by Green Belt, **do not** fall within this definition.

2.2.4 The NPPF makes it clear that Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances and should be characterised by their permanence and endurance beyond a plan period:

“83. Local planning authorities with Green Belts in their area should establish Green Belt boundaries in their Local Plans which set the framework for Green Belt and settlement policy. Once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of the Local Plan. At that time, authorities should consider the Green Belt boundaries having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so that they should be capable of enduring beyond the plan period.”

2.2.5 In defining Green Belt boundaries, the NPPF (paragraph 85) notes that local planning authorities should:

- Ensure consistency with the Local Plan strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development.
- Not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open.
- Where necessary, identify in their plans areas of 'safeguarded land' between the urban area and the Green Belt, in order to meet longer-term development needs stretching well beyond the plan period.
- Make clear that the safeguarded land is not allocated for development at the present time. Planning permission for the permanent development of safeguarded land should only be granted following a Local Plan review which proposes the development.
- Satisfy themselves that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the development plan period.
- Define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.

2.2.6 The definition of Green Belt boundaries can be a complex issue, particularly where significant features such as a motorway, major road or railway can be dominant and create the impression of an unbreachable barrier. However, Green Belt should be considered in a broader context, such as the relationship between particular tracts of land and the wider countryside, in respect of a sense of openness. The strengthening and creation of boundaries can change this visual relationship and help to better define the principle of the permanency of boundaries which informs Green Belt policy.

2.3 Local Policy

2.3.1 The local policy context currently consists of:

- The Stevenage District Plan 2nd Review (adopted 2004) which is being replaced by the Stevenage Local Plan.
- The North Hertfordshire Local Plan (adopted in 1996) which has saved policies including Policy 2 - Green Belt. Consultation on the emerging Local Plan focuses on a housing growth target and possible housing sites (February 2013).
- The East Hertfordshire Local Plan 2007, where Green Belt policies remain in force. Consultation on the emerging Local Plan is delayed until later in 2013.

2.4 Local Studies

2.4.1 There have been minor Green Belt reviews associated with local plan production in East Hertfordshire, but the most significant document is the Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Action Plan (SNAP), a collaborative plan to respond to the demands of the East of England Regional Strategy which allocated significant growth at Stevenage. This work involved an appraisal of land which should be removed from the Green Belt to enable development accommodating around 13,000 dwellings. In contrast to this

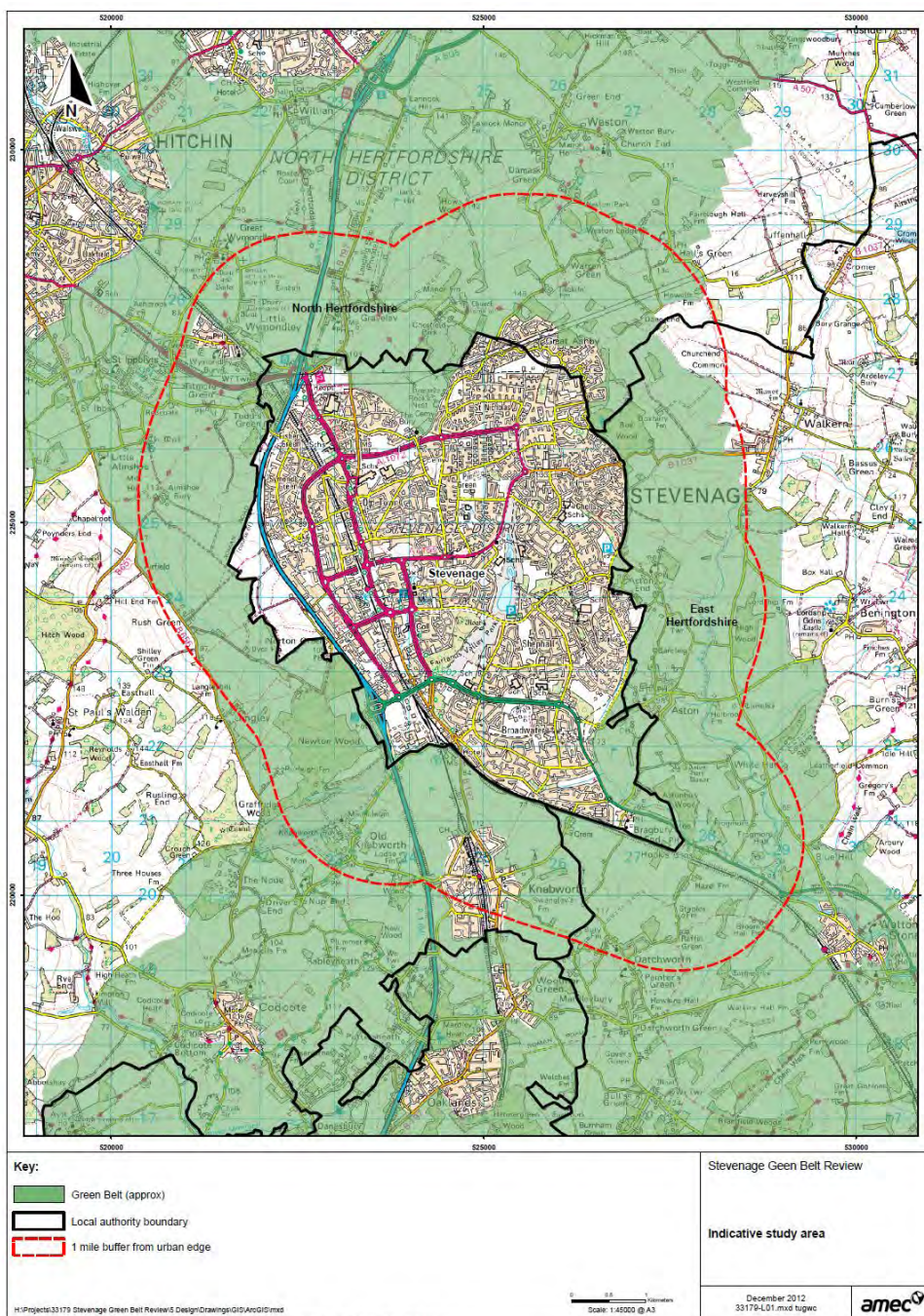
present study, this involved identifying preferred housing sites and subsequently defining boundaries. However, following the Government's announcement on the abolition of Regional Strategies, work on SNAP was suspended following the withdrawal of North Hertfordshire District Council from the study. A final plan was not formally published, although background work and preferred options are in the public domain (<http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/43356/>).

3. Assessment Methodology

3.1 The Study Area

3.1.1 This study covers the Green Belt in the vicinity of Stevenage, including its inner and outer boundaries. The indicative study area provided by Stevenage Borough Council (Figure 3.1) was taken as the starting point, recognising that this would be modified through detailed study.

Figure 3.1 Green Belt Assessment Indicative Study Area



3.2 Assessment Methodology

Summary

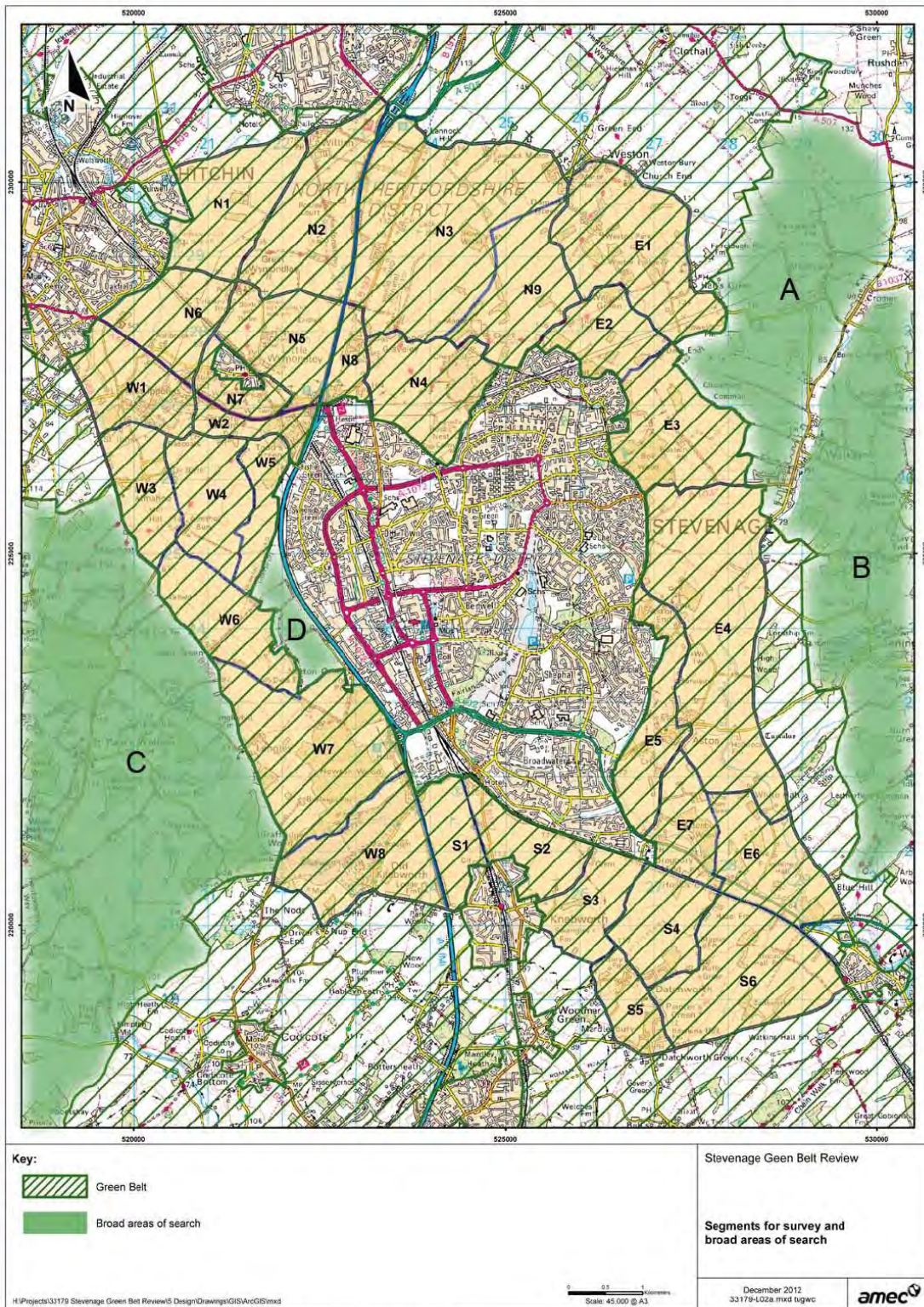
- 3.2.1 The assessment methodology has been developed in light of NPPF guidance on Green Belt issues. A summary of the approach to this study is as follows:
- A mapping exercise to identify key constraints.
 - Identification of initial Green Belt segments using OS maps, aerial photos and site visits, with strong boundaries being used to define boundaries of the segments.
 - Assessment of each segment against each of the five purposes of including land in the Green Belt as set out in the NPPF, and modification of segment boundaries as required.
 - Record the results of the assessment using a matrix and a simple colouring system. An overall colour was applied to each segment.
 - Summary of the results of the above through segments being grouped and recommendations made for each group of segments. Where recommendations are made that particular segments/groups of segments require further consideration, this does not mean that they should be released from the Green Belt, but that they could be considered further depending on development requirements and the findings of other evidence base studies. Equally, segments identified as making a significant contribution to Green Belt purposes could merit more detailed study of their function in the light of other evidence base studies.
 - Consideration was given to possible areas for inclusion in the Green Belt using the same broad assessment criteria that were used for assessing the existing Green Belt.

Identification of Green Belt segments

- 3.2.2 Using OS maps, aerial photos and site visits this task involved the preliminary identification of Green Belt segments for more detailed analysis. Figure 3.2 shows the 30 segments that were tested through fieldwork. Identification of segments used the following features:
- a road, which can be of various scales, from a rough trackway to a motorway;
 - a building line that provides a straight logical line and clearly represents the edge of the urban area;
 - a pathway, stream, ridge, car park, playground or other physical feature;
 - an ownership boundary marked by physical features such as a hedgerow or a fence-line; or
 - in the absence of any physical features to follow on the ground to provide a straight line between two permanent physical features.

3.2.3 These segments could be refined both in terms of the precise alignment of boundaries and their size. Additional areas of search (labelled A-D), currently not designated as Green Belt, are indicated. These were surveyed (although not in detail) for their potential for designation as Green Belt.

Figure 3.2 Green Belt Segments for Survey and Broad Areas of Search



Field Assessment of Segments

3.2.4 The fieldwork assessed each segment in respect of its character along with the robustness of the boundaries which define that segment. The most important attribute of Green Belts - their openness - was a key consideration. The criteria used to evaluate the character of each segment were:

- existing land use;
- proximity and relationship to the built-up area;
- degree of enclosure/openness and containment.
- distance and visual connection to historic urban centres/key urban areas; and
- relationship to the countryside.

3.2.5 The results are recorded in a series of data sheets at Appendix C.

Analysis of Fieldwork

3.2.6 The results of the assessment exercise were recorded in a matrix (Appendix A), which sets out comments on how each segment meets or does not meet each Green Belt purpose. Results against four Green Belt purposes are mapped in Appendix B. Once all desk and field surveys were completed, they were discussed at an internal workshop to sense-check the results of the assessment.

3.2.7 The following criteria (Table 3.1) were used to guide the narrative assessment of the contribution of each segment to Green Belt purposes.

Table 3.1 Criteria Used in the Assessment of Green Belt Purposes

Green Belt Purpose	Criteria used in Assessment
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	What role does the segment play in preventing ribbon development and non-compact development?
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another	What role does the segment play in preventing urban areas or towns (which are clearly so in terms of size and function) from merging and narrowing the gap between them? Would a reduction in the gap between the urban areas or towns compromise the openness of the Green Belt land? What is the width of the gap?
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Are there clear strong and robust boundaries, both internal and external, to contain development and prevent encroachment in the long term? Are there already significant urbanising influences? Has there already been encroachment by built development?
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	Are there views and links to the historic centres and does the land have an impact on the special character of the town?

Green Belt Purpose	Criteria used in Assessment
To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	Is there a clear role for the Green Belt in containing development that might assist regeneration?

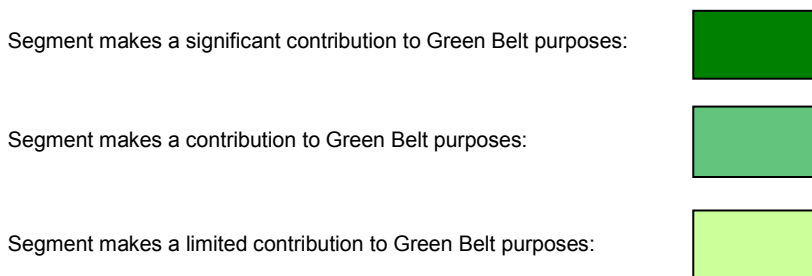
3.2.8 The NPPF does not define what precisely is meant by ‘sprawl’ and ‘encroachment’. To assist the assessment of land against these tests, the following dictionary definitions (OED on-line) are used:

Sprawl: *“the disorganized and unattractive expansion of an urban or industrial area into the adjoining countryside”*

Encroachment: *“to advance gradually beyond usual or acceptable limits”*

3.2.9 Within each segment, following from the matrix, a simple colouring system (see Figure 3.3) is used which sets out the conclusions for each segment.

Figure 3.3 The Colouring Assessment



3.2.10 A dark green colour indicates a significant contribution to Green Belt purposes and a boundary review should probably be avoided, although this would not preclude release either in whole or in part. A mid-green colour indicates that the purposes are partially being fulfilled and that the boundary could be revised if other planning factors so indicate. A light green colour indicates that a relatively limited contribution is made overall to Green Belt purposes and these areas might be more readily considered for Green Belt release, subject to other planning considerations. However, for all colours any proposals for the release of land from the Green Belt, of whatever scale, in accordance with the NPPF would have to be justified through ‘very special circumstances’. This colouring approach is considered to be more accessible than a complex scoring system that gives different weightings to different purposes, for example, and includes a commentary and discussion on each segment. The overall assessment colour for each segment then presents the summary conclusion for each segment of the Green Belt assessment process. Land that could be added to the Green Belt i.e. that might improve the function of the Green Belt or could be part of setting long term boundaries was also be considered as part of the assessment exercise.

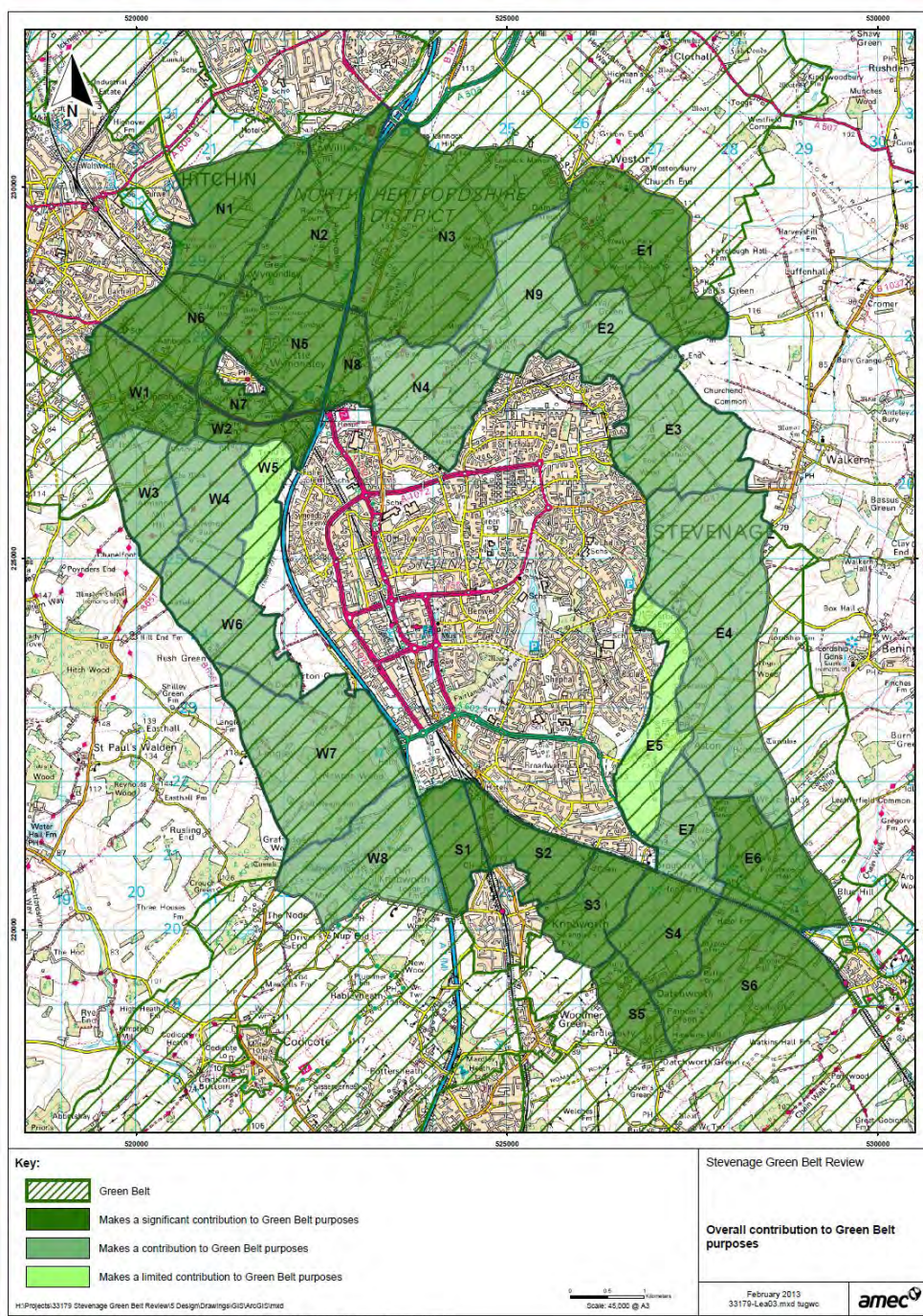
- 3.2.11 The assessment findings are mapped, providing a simple graphical representation of those areas where there is most potential to remove land from the Green Belt and those where land should remain in the Green Belt. The output also includes conclusions regarding whether or not the purposes of designation for each segment are still relevant and whether or not they have changed.

4. Assessment Results

4.1 Overview of Key Results

4.1.1 The overall results of the assessment are mapped in Figure 4.1, with assessments of individual segments set out in Appendix A and mapping against individual Green Belt purposes shown in Appendix B.

Figure 4.1 Overall Assessment of Contribution of Segments to Green Belt Purposes



4.1.2 In order to help organise the analysis of the contribution of the segments, these have been grouped. Table 4.1 sets out the segments and their contribution to Green Belt purposes. Some 17 of the 30 segments identified for assessment are assessed to overall make a significant contribution to Green Belt purposes. These can be grouped into two, reflecting their close association in terms of function and geography. Some 11 of the 30 segments are assessed as making a contribution to Green Belt purposes, and in turn these can be grouped into three reflecting their geography and function. Two segments are judged to make a relatively limited overall contribution to Green Belt purposes.

Table 4.1 Contribution of Segments to Green Belt Purposes

Significant Contribution	Contribution	Limited Contribution
Land to the north of Stevenage, between Stevenage and Letchworth and Stevenage and Hitchin (segments N1, N2, N3, N5, N6, N7, N8, W1, W2, E1)	Land to the north-east of Stevenage towards Weston and centred on the River Beane Valley and Boxbury Farm, and south towards (segments E3, E4, E7)	Land between Stevenage and Aston, bounded by Gresley Way to the west and Aston Lane/Aston End Road/Long Lane to the east (segment E5).
Land to the south of Stevenage between Stevenage and Knebworth and Knebworth and Datchworth, (segments S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, E6)	Land to the west of Stevenage around Knebworth Park, between Knebworth Park and Little Almshoe and between Little Almshoe and Titmore Green (segments W3, W4, W6, W7, W8)	Land to the west of the A1(M) (segment W5)
	Land to the north and north-east of Stevenage bounded by Back Lane/Church Lane and Damask Green Lane (segments N4, N9, E2)	

4.2 Land Making a Significant Contribution to Green Belt Purposes

4.2.1 This land comprises substantial areas of Green Belt to the north and south of Stevenage, the key role of which is preventing the merger of Stevenage with Hitchin and Letchworth to the north and Welwyn Garden City to the south. The majority of the component segments have well-defined boundaries, and despite urban intrusion principally in the Stevenage/Hitchin gap, their Green Belt function is clear. In addition, segments adjacent to Hitchin (N1, N6, and W1) have a function of acting as the setting for the historic market town of Hitchin. Whilst the overall importance of these segments to meeting Green Belt functions is considered to be significant, this does not necessarily preclude release of parcels of land should ‘very special circumstances’ be considered to apply.

4.3 Land Making a Contribution to Green Belt Purposes

4.3.1 This land is located principally to the east and west of Stevenage where the principal Green Belt function is to prevent encroachment into open countryside. Parts of this land are considered to offer the greatest

scope for adjustment of Green Belt boundaries without compromising the function of the Green Belt around Stevenage, particularly land immediately to the north and north-east of Stevenage.

- 4.3.2 Should land be identified for release from the Green Belt, more detailed reviews of appropriate boundaries which could be used in the long term to define the Green Belt will be needed. Masterplanning would need to be needed to help establish clear long-term boundaries, reinforcing the function of the Green Belt for the longer term. Notwithstanding this, the open landscape character of many of the segments which fall into this category means that boundary definition will be challenging.

4.4 **Land Making a Limited Contribution to Green Belt Purposes**

- 4.4.1 There are two segments of land which are considered to make an overall limited contribution to Green Belt purposes: E5 and W5. These segments differ significantly in their character, E5 being in close proximity to the urban edge of Stevenage, which is bounded by Gresley Way. Here, the land is clearly separated from the wider Green Belt to the east which is characterised by a strong sense of openness, in contrast to segment E5 which is largely enclosed with a strong visual relationship to the urban edge of Stevenage.

- 4.4.2 Segment W5, by contrast, is open arable land adjacent to the A1(M), and in combination with other segments in the vicinity principally functions to prevent urban encroachment into open countryside. However, in the case of segment W5, the easterly orientation of the topography and visual connection with the A1(M) and Stevenage, reduces the sense of openness. However, the current western boundary is not a particularly strong one, being a trackway typical of this vicinity.

4.5 **Recommendations**

- 4.5.1 The results of this assessment (summarised above and set out Appendix A) identify areas which merit further investigation for possible boundary review in the short and longer term depending upon the development requirements for Stevenage Borough.
- 4.5.2 Table 4.2 summarises the evaluation for each of the groups of segments, along with a recommendation as to its potential future role. The recommendations need to be considered within the context of the rest of the evidence base and should not be considered in isolation.

Table 4.2 Summary Evaluation of Groups of Green Belt Segments

Segments	Contribution to Green Belt Purposes - Overall Grade	Evaluation and Recommendations
Land to the north of Stevenage, between Stevenage and Letchworth and Stevenage and Hitchin (segments N1, N2, N3, N5, N6, N7, N8, W1, W2, E1)	Significant Contribution	<p>Evaluation Against Purposes</p> <p>Check unrestricted sprawl: these segments play an important role in preventing sprawl along the transport corridors connecting Stevenage and Hitchin, and the A1(M) corridor between Stevenage and Letchworth.</p> <p>Prevent merger: these segments play a significant part in preventing the merger of Stevenage and Hitchin/Letchworth.</p> <p>Safeguard countryside from encroachment: whilst the openness of this group of segments does vary considerably, they nevertheless play a significant part in maintaining openness, particularly in the northern segments N1, N2 and N3.</p> <p>Preserve the setting of towns: to varying degrees, these segments help preserve the setting of both Hitchin and Letchworth.</p> <p>Other Factors</p> <p>Existing land use: comprising predominantly open arable land with large fields and well-maintained hedgerows to the north, a more intimate landscape to the south around Little Wymondley and St Ippolyts. Despite strong (albeit sometimes glimpsed) visual connections to both Hitchin and Stevenage, the land retains sense of open countryside.</p> <p>Proximity and relationship to built-up areas: the relatively narrow gap between Stevenage and Hitchin means that this land is closely related to both urban areas, less so in between Stevenage and Letchworth.</p> <p>Degree of enclosure/openness: generally an open landscape with distant views, particularly in the northern segments. More enclosed to the south.</p> <p>Relationship to the countryside: clearly performs a strong role as a corridor in connecting wider countryside to the east and west.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: these segments make a Significant Contribution to Green Belt purposes through maintaining the distinction between Stevenage and Hitchin and Letchworth. These segments (either in part or whole) do not therefore merit further consideration for release from the Green Belt unless other elements of the evidence base strongly suggest otherwise.</p>
Land to the south of Stevenage between Stevenage and Knebworth and Knebworth and Datchworth, (segments S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, E6)	Significant Contribution	<p>Evaluation Against Purposes</p> <p>Check unrestricted sprawl: these segments play an important role in preventing sprawl along the A1(M) corridor between Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City.</p> <p>Prevent merger: these segment, taken together as an arc to the south of Stevenage, play a significant part in preventing the merger of Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City via Knebworth.</p> <p>Safeguard countryside from encroachment: these segments form a connection to the wider countryside to the south-east and south-west.</p> <p>Preserve the setting of towns: these segments play no direct role in providing a setting for historic towns, although they provide the setting for Knebworth.</p> <p>Other Factors</p> <p>Existing land use: the land is of varying land uses including golf courses and parkland, but agriculture dominates towards the east, both arable and pastoral.</p> <p>Proximity and relationship to the built-up areas: strong glimpses of Stevenage immediately to the north, or these are often filtered views.</p> <p>Degree of enclosure/openness: to the east of Knebworth and the south of railway line to Hertford, the land is generally open in aspect, with a more intimate feel around Datchworth. To the west of the ECML, the golf course and parkland lend a distinctive enclosed character.</p> <p>Relationship to the countryside: forms a strong link to the wider countryside to the west and south.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: these segments make a Significant Contribution to Green Belt</p>

Segments	Contribution to Green Belt Purposes - Overall Grade	Evaluation and Recommendations
		<p><u>purposes through their role in preventing the merger of Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City. These segments (either in part or whole) do not therefore merit further consideration for release from the Green Belt unless other elements of the evidence base strongly suggest otherwise.</u></p>
<p>Land to the east of Stevenage towards Weston and centred on the River Beane Valley and Boxbury Farm, and south towards (segments E3, E4, E7)</p>	<p>Contribution</p>	<p>Evaluation Against Purposes</p> <p>Check unrestricted sprawl: these segments protect against sprawl to some degree but this is not a significant function.</p> <p>Prevent merger: these segments play no real part in preventing merger given their orientation toward open countryside to the east.</p> <p>Safeguard countryside from encroachment: this is their most significant function given the character of the open countryside to the east of Stevenage.</p> <p>Preserve the setting of towns: these segments play no role in this function.</p> <p>Other Factors</p> <p>Existing land use: predominantly composed of large-scale arable fields with varying hedgerow boundaries and isolated woodland block, particularly in the parkland landscape to the north associated with Weston Park.</p> <p>Proximity and relationship to the built-up areas: forms the immediate eastern boundary of east and north-eastern Stevenage with glimpsed views to the urban edge, particularly towards the north.</p> <p>Degree of enclosure/openness: varying in openness, though predominantly a large-scale open character.</p> <p>Relationship to the countryside: forms part of, and a strong connection with, the open countryside to the east.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: these segments make a Contribution to Green Belt purposes through their containment of Stevenage, preventing encroachment into open countryside. However, selected areas could merit release, particularly associated with segment E2 to the north, supported by the development of strong eastern boundaries, and E7 to the south.</p>
<p>Land to the west of Stevenage around Knebworth Park, between Knebworth Park and Little Almshoe and between Little Almshoe and Titmore Green (segments W3, W4, W6, W7, W8)</p>	<p>Contribution</p>	<p>Evaluation Against Purposes</p> <p>Check unrestricted sprawl: has a variable function, but contributes to preventing sprawl from the south of Hitchin along the B656 and along the A1(M) to the south.</p> <p>Prevent merger: contributes to preventing the merger of Stevenage and Hitchin in northern segments.</p> <p>Safeguard countryside from encroachment: overall, makes a significant contribution to this function by helping to contain the western edge of Stevenage.</p> <p>Preserve the setting of towns: has no function in this respect.</p> <p>Other Factors</p> <p>Existing land use: predominantly arable, but significant woodland to the south designated as SSSI.</p> <p>Proximity and relationship to the built-up areas: very limited connection to Stevenage to the east, apart from glimpsed views across the A1(M), from Norton Green, for example.</p> <p>Degree of enclosure/openness: generally an open landscape with large fields and intermittent hedgerows.</p> <p>Relationship to the countryside: these segments are part of the wider countryside to the west of Stevenage, but this is less strong immediately to the west of the A1(M) where the topography limits wider visual connectivity.</p> <p>RECOMMENDATION: these segments make a Contribution to Green Belt purposes through their role in preventing the encroachment of Stevenage into open countryside to the west of the town. The B656 forms a relatively strong western boundary to these segments, and selected release could be considered, particularly segment W4 which would complement recommendations on the release of segment</p>

Segments	Contribution to Green Belt Purposes - Overall Grade	Evaluation and Recommendations
<p>Land to the north and north-east of Stevenage bounded by Back Lane/Church Lane and Damask Green Lane (segments N4, N9, E2)</p>	<p>Contribution</p>	<p><u>E5, and a small part of W7 to the south of Norton Green.</u></p> <p>Evaluation Against Purposes</p> <p>Check unrestricted sprawl: has a limited contribution in this respect.</p> <p>Prevent merger: part of the Green Belt separating Stevenage and Hitchin/Letchworth, therefore making a significant contribution in this respect.</p> <p>Safeguard countryside from encroachment: makes a contribution, although the extent to which this is open countryside could be questioned.</p> <p>Preserve the setting of towns: makes no contribution to this function.</p> <p>Other Factors</p> <p>Existing land use: arable, characterised by large fields with some hedgerows and tree belts (the latter planted to demarcate the edge of Stevenage Borough).</p> <p>Proximity and relationship to the built-up areas: very strong relationship to the built-up area, particularly associated with the Lister Hospital.</p> <p>Degree of enclosure/openness: reasonably strong sense of openness, particularly to the north towards Graveley.</p> <p>Relationship to the countryside: forms part of a transition zone between the urban edge and the wider countryside.</p> <p><u>RECOMMENDATION: these segments make a Contribution to Green Belt purposes through their function in checking the north and north-eastward growth of Stevenage, being part of the broader Green Belt preventing the merger of Stevenage and Hitchin/Letchworth. However, selected areas could merit release, particularly segment N4, but also N9 and E2, supported by the development of strong northern boundaries through masterplanning.</u></p>
<p>Land between Stevenage and Aston, bounded by Gresley Way to the west and Aston Lane/Aston End Road/Long Lane to the east (segment E5).</p>	<p>Limited Contribution</p>	<p>Evaluation Against Purposes</p> <p>Check unrestricted sprawl: has no real function given the presence of a clear containing boundary in the form of Aston Lane/Aston End Road/Long Lane.</p> <p>Prevent merger: has no real function.</p> <p>Safeguard countryside from encroachment: has a limited role, in combination with segments to the east.</p> <p>Preserve the setting of towns: has no real function.</p> <p>Other Factors</p> <p>Existing land use: mixed: pastoral, arable, golf course.</p> <p>Proximity and relationship to the built-up areas: proximate to Stevenage.</p> <p>Degree of enclosure/openness: generally enclosed with glimpsed views to Stevenage and across the Beane Valley to the north of the segment.</p> <p>Relationship to the countryside: forms a transition zone between Stevenage and the wider countryside of the Beane Valley.</p> <p><u>RECOMMENDATION: this segment makes a Limited Contribution to Green Belt purposes owing to its close proximity to Stevenage and strong sense of enclosure. As such the segment could be considered for release should other elements of the evidence base suggest that it may be appropriate.</u></p>
<p>Land to the west of the A1(M) (segment W5)</p>	<p>Limited Contribution</p>	<p>Evaluation Against Purposes</p> <p>Check unrestricted sprawl: helps to prevent sprawl along the A1(M) corridor from Todd's Green to the north.</p> <p>Prevent merger: has no real function.</p> <p>Safeguard countryside from encroachment: makes a contribution, in combination with segments to the west and south-west, bounded by the B656.</p> <p>Preserve the setting of towns: has no real function.</p>

Segments	Contribution to Green Belt Purposes - Overall Grade	Evaluation and Recommendations
		<p>Other Factors</p> <p><i>Existing land use:</i> extensive arable.</p> <p><i>Proximity and relationship to the built-up areas:</i> proximate to Stevenage across the A1(M).</p> <p><i>Degree of enclosure/openness:</i> open, extensive views to Stevenage and to the west.</p> <p><i>Relationship to the countryside:</i> forms a transition zone between the A1(M) zone and wider countryside to the west.</p> <p><u>RECOMMENDATION: this segment overall makes a Limited Contribution to Green Belt purposes given its relative containment within the landscape as a whole (both in boundaries and topography). As such the segment could be considered for release should other elements of the evidence base suggest that it may be appropriate.</u></p>

4.6 Assessment of Potential Additions to the Green Belt

4.6.1 The study brief identified the need for the assessment to include areas that could potentially be added to the Green Belt in order to compensate for the loss of Green Belt and/or make the current extent of the Green belt more coherent. As part of the assessment process, four areas were considered for potential inclusion (see Figure 3.2):

- A. Land to north-west extending from the current outer boundary into open countryside toward Rushden, bounded by the A507 and the Walkern-Cromer road.
- B. Land extending eastwards from the current outer boundary of the Green Belt towards Benington.
- C. Land extending westwards from the current outer boundary along the B 656 between Little Almshoe and to the north and west of Codicote.
- D. Land immediately to the west of the A1(M) northward from Norton Green.

4.6.2 The NPPF does not make specific reference to increasing the Green Belt area solely to compensate for areas that may be removed from the Green Belt. Therefore any areas proposed for inclusion which could help to maintain and increase the integrity of the Green Belt should make a contribution to Green Belt purposes. On this basis, the assessment of the areas is the same as that for the specific segments.

4.6.3 Table 4.3 considers Areas A - D in more detail setting out the evaluation against four Green Belt purposes (that of urban regeneration being excluded as it would apply equally to all areas) and a recommendation as to whether each area could be considered for inclusion. As with recommendations from areas for possible release, these areas should be considered in the context of the evidence base of Stevenage and adjacent authorities.

Table 4.3 Recommendations on Areas to be added to the Green Belt

Area for Consideration and Rationale	Evaluation	Recommendation
<p>AREA A</p> <p>Existing land use: large-scale arable fields with limited hedgerows, and some isolated woodland blocks.</p> <p>Degree of enclosure/openness: extensive views over surrounding countryside.</p> <p>Distance and visual connection to key urban areas: despite relative proximity to Stevenage, maintains a sense of remoteness through no immediate visual connection to the urban area.</p> <p>Relationship to the countryside: part of the wider countryside to the east of Stevenage.</p>	<p>Check unrestricted sprawl: no direct contribution.</p> <p>Prevent merger: no direct contribution.</p> <p>Safeguard countryside from encroachment: contribution through complementing segments adjacent to Stevenage.</p> <p>Preserve the setting of towns: no direct contribution.</p>	<p>Designation of this area would complement adjoining segments E1, E2 and E3 in reinforcing the outer edge of the Green Belt against the more logical, firm boundaries of the A507 and the B1037 through Walkern.</p>
<p>AREA B</p> <p>Existing land use: large-scale arable fields with hedgerows, and significant isolated woodland blocks.</p> <p>Degree of enclosure/openness: variable, according to location and land use, but extensive views over surrounding countryside.</p> <p>Distance and visual connection to key urban areas: despite relative proximity to Stevenage, maintains a sense of remoteness through no immediate visual connection to the urban area.</p> <p>Relationship to the countryside: part of the wider countryside to the east of Stevenage.</p>	<p>Check unrestricted sprawl: no direct contribution.</p> <p>Prevent merger: no direct contribution.</p> <p>Safeguard countryside from encroachment: contribution through complementing segments adjacent to Stevenage.</p> <p>Preserve the setting of towns: no direct contribution.</p>	<p>The case for designation of this area is relatively weak, given the current role of the Green Belt in land centred on the Beane Valley. Finding appropriate eastern boundaries could be difficult with no clear rationale for Green Belt function which could not be fulfilled through restraint policies for areas of open countryside.</p>
<p>AREA C</p> <p>Existing land use: large-scale arable fields with hedgerows, and significant woodland blocks.</p> <p>Degree of enclosure/openness: variable, according to location and land use, but extensive views over surrounding countryside.</p> <p>Distance and visual connection to key urban areas: has a sense of remoteness through no immediate visual connection to the urban area.</p> <p>Relationship to the countryside: forms the wider countryside to the west of Stevenage</p>	<p>Check unrestricted sprawl: no direct contribution.</p> <p>Prevent merger: no direct contribution.</p> <p>Safeguard countryside from encroachment: contribution through complementing segments adjacent to Stevenage.</p> <p>Preserve the setting of towns: no direct contribution.</p>	<p>As with Areas A and B, the argument for designation rests on the reinforcement of the outer boundary of the Green Belt to the west. Whether designation should fill in the whole of the land between Stevenage and Luton up to the A505, or just part of this land, would need to be subject to a separate study to find appropriate boundaries.</p>
<p>AREA D</p> <p>Existing land use: partial arable, set-aside/scrub.</p> <p>Degree of enclosure/openness: variable.</p> <p>Distance and visual connection to key urban areas: variable, glimpsed connections across the A1(M).</p> <p>Relationship to the countryside: variable connections to open countryside to the west.</p>	<p>Check unrestricted sprawl: no direct contribution.</p> <p>Prevent merger: no direct contribution.</p> <p>Safeguard countryside from encroachment: contribution through complementing adjacent segments.</p> <p>Preserve the setting of towns: no direct contribution.</p>	<p>This area was removed from the Green Belt and includes the hamlet of Norton Green to the south and a caravan site along Dyes Lane. The boundaries to this area are defined primarily by hedgerows, but also by trackways in places. Whilst there is a degree of connection to the wider countryside to the west, this is variable, with the predominant topographical orientation of the land being toward the east. There is no clear connection with the wider countryside which would be a required to justify re-designation of this land.</p>

- 4.6.4 Overall, the case for extension of the Green Belt is strongest in relation to Areas A, B and C, helping to more strongly define the current Green Belt through the use of more logical and stronger boundaries and compensating for any future loss of Green Belt around Stevenage.
- 4.6.5 Restraint policies of various kinds other than Green Belt could be used to manage development in areas of development pressure.

4.7 Summary

- 4.7.1 The assessment has identified 17 segments that make a significant contribution to Green Belt purposes. These segments play a key role in separating Stevenage from Hitchin/Letchworth and Stevenage from Welwyn Garden City. Any proposals for release of land in these locations, would need to be considered against very special circumstances and other elements of the evidence base.
- 4.7.2 In all, 11 segments were identified as making a contribution to Green Belt purposes, and two segments (W5 and E5) were identified as making a limited contribution towards Green Belt purposes. The latter could be considered for release should land be required for development and should it be appropriate in light of the Local Plan evidence base generally, although this does not necessarily mean that they should be released, either in whole or in part.
- 4.7.3 Where there are no obvious robust boundaries, or such boundaries are a considerable distance from the urban edge, it may be necessary to define a new robust Green Belt boundary through masterplanning. This may be the case at segments N4, N9, E2 and W4 where development of the whole of the segment is unlikely to be appropriate, but which contain no clear internal boundaries through which ready subdivision could take place.
- 4.7.4 As set out in the NPPF, when defining boundaries as part of a plan review, there is a need to ensure that the boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the plan period, and therefore that longer term requirements are considered and, where necessary, safeguarded land identified.
- 4.7.5 With regard to potential additions to the Green Belt, these have been identified to the east and west of Stevenage. To the east, land to the north-west of the B1037 Walkern-Cromer Road would constitute a clear addition, reinforcing the relatively narrow Green Belt to the east of Stevenage. An area to the east of the current boundary, around Beningfield, does not present a strong case for addition, given the study's conclusions relating to land centred on the Beane Valley (segments E3 and E4). However, should land to the east of Stevenage be identified for release, then further easterly designation of the Green Belt would be needed to maintain its integrity through providing a reasonable width of land. The same conclusion applies to land to the west of Stevenage, where land beyond the B656 constitutes a strong case for potential addition in order to maintain a credible width to the Green Belt. Land to the west of the B656 is part of land between the Green Belt corridors centred on the A1(M) and the M1 up to Luton (see Figure 2.1). Again, whether all of this land or part of it merits designation and the definition of clear boundaries would need further study. Designation would serve to reinforce the narrow Green Belt to the west of Stevenage, particularly if portions were released from the Green Belt to meet development needs.

- 4.7.6 Any extension must be limited to those areas that make a contribution to Green Belt purposes, either singly or in combination. Other planning policies could be used to manage development in those areas where development pressure is perceived to be particularly strong.

5. Summary and Recommendations

5.1 Summary of Assessment Results

5.1.1 There are 17 segments are considered to make a significant contribution to Green Belt purposes. The recommendations in relation to these segments are summarised in Table 5.1. These do not merit further consideration for potential release from the Green Belt unless an overwhelmingly strong case emerges from other evidence base studies.

Table 5.1 Summary Functions of Segments Making a Significant Contribution to Green Belt Purposes

Segments	Summary function
Land to the north of Stevenage, between Stevenage and Letchworth and Stevenage and Hitchin (segments N1, N2, N3, N5, N6, N7, N8, W1, E1, W2)	These segments are critical to separating Stevenage, Hitchin and Letchworth. This is a relatively heavily intruded landscape, particularly between Stevenage and Hitchin (less so be Stevenage and Letchworth), and the sense of openness and separation is particularly sensitive to further urbanisation, notably along the key road corridors of the A602 and A1(M).
Land to the south of Stevenage between Stevenage and Knebworth and Knebworth and Datchworth, (segments S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, E6)	These segments are critical to preventing the merger of Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City via settlements in between (Knebworth, Woolmer Green, Oaklands and Digswell). Despite a strongly varying sense of openness between the segments, urbanisation would quickly damage the sense of separation between current built-up areas.

5.1.2 Overall 11 segments were identified as making a contribution to Green Belt purposes. These are summarised in three groups in Table 5.2. In principle, these segments could be considered for release from the Green Belt, either in whole or in part, subject to more detailed study through landscape and visual evaluation and sustainability appraisal, for example.

Table 5.2 Summary Functions of Segments Making a Contribution to Green Belt Purposes

Segments	Summary function
Land to the north-east of Stevenage towards Weston and centred on the River Beane Valley and Boxbury Farm, and south towards (segments E3, E4, E7)	These segments help to prevent encroachment into open countryside, with the wide expansive views associated with the River Beane Valley and land to the north creating a strong sense of openness which would be easily damaged by significant development. Further south, segment E7 is less sensitive, being relatively, well enclosed, and to the north, parts of segment E3 along the existing urban edge are visually well contained, although firm outer boundaries are not apparent until well into open countryside around Warren Green.
Land to the west of Stevenage around Knebworth Park, between Knebworth Park and Little Almshoe and between Little Almshoe and Titmore Green (segments W3, W4, W6, W7, W8)	This is the most complex group of segments in terms of the absence of strong internal boundaries to the segments, and the landform creating a significant sense of openness of substantial parts of the segments along the ridge towards Almshoe Bury. The outer boundary of the Green Belt defined by the B656, defines a clear boundary into open countryside to west, making the prime function of this land preventing encroachment into open countryside. Segment W7 to the south is more complex, being dominated by Newton Wood and having towards its eastern extent similar functions to Segments W3 and W6, but with a clear parcel of land adjacent to Junction 7 of the A1(M). This has partly been developed for hotel use and has irregular boundaries defined by Newton Wood. The Green Belt functions of some of easterly areas of Segment W7 are not clear.

Segments	Summary function
Land to the north and north-east of Stevenage bounded by Back Lane/Church Lane and Damask Green Lane (segments N4, N9, E2)	Whilst nominally forming part of the land separating Stevenage and Hitchin/Letchworth, segment N4 does not fully contribute to the openness of land to the north of Stevenage. Whilst the landform presents challenges of exposing the urban edge towards Back Lane/Church Lane (rising SW-NE towards Chesfield Park), boundary planting along the current Stevenage Borough boundary could form a new urban edge. Similarly segments N9 and E2, whilst being open countryside, are well contained by substantial woodland blocks and substantial hedgerows.

5.1.3 Two segments were identified as making a limited contribution to Green Belt purposes, summarised in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3 Summary Functions of Segments Making a Limited Contribution to Green Belt Purposes

Segments	Summary function
Land between the urban edge and Aston, defined by the A602 to the south, Gresley Way to the west and Aston Lane and Aston End Road to the east (segment E5)	This segment is characterised by strong boundaries and containment which limits its openness and therefore its contribution to the Green Belt to the east of Stevenage.
Land between the A1(M) and an unnamed bridleway from Lower Titmore Farm (segment W5)	Whilst being part of open land, the wider Green Belt to the west performs the function of limiting encroachment into open countryside. Visually, the orientation of the segment towards the A1(M), and the ridge line to the west means that it is in large measure contained from land to east, although the A1(M) is a key visual receptor.

5.2 Assessment of Potential Additions to the Green Belt

5.2.1 Four areas were considered as holding potential to be added to the Green Belt, either to make the Green Belt more coherent through the use of strong boundaries, or to compensate for potential removal of areas. The case for extension of the Green Belt is strongest in relation to Area A (between Walkern and Cromer), Area B (around Beningfield) and Area C (to the west of the B656). In combination, designation would help to more strongly define the current Green Belt through the use of more logical and stronger boundaries and compensating for the loss of Green Belt around Stevenage.

5.2.2 Area A: the current eastern Green Belt boundary is arguably not particularly clear or strong, and addition of the land bounded by the B1037 through Walkern and Cromer meeting the A507 to the north and joining the existing eastern boundary at Westfield Common would make a more logical and definitive boundary.

5.2.3 Area B: the current Green Belt between the urban edge of Stevenage and the east of the Walkern Road, centred on the Beane Valley, provides a distinct, albeit narrow, area containing urban encroachment into this open landscape. Whilst the logic of the eastern boundary is in places difficult to understand, the overall justification for the extension of the Green Belt eastwards is not strong, particularly should

segments E3 and E4 not be released, either in whole or part. This conclusion is reinforced by the absence of a clear boundary (for example in the vicinity of Beningfield) that would form a clear new eastern boundary. However, any release land in segments E3 and E4 would narrow the Green Belt to an unacceptable extent and require exploration of the extension of the Green Belt into Area B in order to maintain its integrity.

- 5.2.4 Area C: should land to the west of the west of the A1(M) be released (Segments W4 and W5), then the Green Belt becomes unreasonably narrow. It would therefore be logical to extend the designation westwards beyond the B656, which would in turn meet with the finger of Green Belt running along the M1 corridor, thus filling in the gap (see Figure 2.1). A separate study defining the northern boundary of this land would be required, but the A505 between Hitchin and Luton provides an obvious starting point. Addition on part of this area, say using the B651 towards Whitwell for example, would create an illogical extension.
- 5.2.5 Area D: this area was removed from the Green Belt and includes the hamlet of Norton Green to the south and a caravan site along Dyes Lane. The boundaries to this area are defined primarily by hedgerows, but also by trackways in places. Whilst there is a degree of connection to the wider countryside to the west, this is variable, with the predominant topographical orientation of the land being toward the east. There is no clear connection with the wider countryside which would be a required to justify re-designation of this land.

5.3 Overall Conclusions and Recommendations

- 5.3.1 A significant part of the Green Belt surrounding Stevenage is assessed as making a Significant Contribution to Green Belt purposes overall (notwithstanding varying roles in individual Green Belt purposes), notably land separating Stevenage from Hitchin and Letchworth, and land separating Stevenage from Welwyn Garden City. Segments assessed as making a Contribution to Green Belt purposes overall are largely associated with land to the east and west of Stevenage where their Green Belt function is less clearly defined. Two segments, one to the east of Stevenage and one to west, are assessed as making a Limited Contribution to Green Belt purposes overall.
- 5.3.2 In light of where the assessment has concluded that there are areas of Green Belt which make a 'contribution' and 'limited contribution' to Green Belt purposes, these could be further evaluated in the context of the findings of other parts of the Local Plan evidence base, in particular those relating to development levels, sustainability and landscape issues. Consideration should also be given to the identification of 'safeguarded land' from these segments recommended as holding potential for release in order to prevent the need for further Green Belt review at the end of the Plan period.
- 5.3.3 Equally, the identification of strategic segments as making a significant contribution to Green Belt purposes does not necessarily preclude consideration of development at these locations. The Part 2 study will consider the merits of parcels of land where this may be the case. In all cases, where Green Belt designation exists, then the test of 'very special circumstances' applies to proposals for release of the land.

Appendix A

Green Belt Assessment Results by Segment

Segment	Key constraints	1. Checking sprawl (ribbon and non-compact development and absence of a containing boundary)	2. Prevent the merger of adjacent towns	3. Safeguard countryside from encroachment (through urbanisation)	4. Preserve the setting of historic towns	Overall evaluation	Overall contribution to Green Belt purposes
E1: Land to the north-east, bounded by Maiden Street to the north and east, Damask Green Road and Warrensgreen Lane to the south and west	None	Significant Contribution – part of the open countryside to the north and east of Stevenage, and although is not adjacent to the urban edge, in combination with segments N3 and E2, prevents sprawl.	Limited Contribution – forms part of the outer edge of the Green Belt and has no direct role in this function.	Significant Contribution – forms part of the eastern edge of the Green Belt, along with land to the north and east.	Limited Contribution – the segment has no direct relationship with the urban areas of Hitchin and Letchworth to the west.	An outer segment of open land, which functions as a part of the outer extent of the Green Belt, and complements Segments E2, E3 and E4 preventing urban encroachment into open countryside. The land, centred on Weston Park, retains a parkland character and makes a contribution to Green Belt purposes.	Significant Contribution
E2: Land immediately to the north-east of the urban edge, defined by Back Lane to the north-west and Warrensgreen Lane to the north-east	None	Contribution – this segment, along with segments N4 and E3, contains the north-eastern part of Stevenage, preventing sprawl into open countryside.	Limited Contribution – plays no part in preventing the merger of urban areas.	Significant Contribution – with segments N3, E1 and E3, contains the north-eastern part of Stevenage.	Limited Contribution – the segment has no direct relationship with the urban areas of Hitchin and Letchworth to the west.	Land situated immediately to the north-east of the urban edge, generally characterised by large-scale arable fields but with significant woodland blocks closer to the urban edge. Whilst making a significant contribution to containing the current extent of the urban area, this would not preclude its subdivision without being detrimental to the Green Belt to the east of Stevenage as a whole. The absence of clear internal boundaries to this segment makes this problematic, however, and further additions to the Green Belt to the east would be required to form an effective easterly Green Belt.	Contribution
E3: Land immediately to the east of the urban edge centred on Boxbury Farm, bounded by the Stevenage Road to the south and current extent of the Green Belt to the east	Box Wood LNR?	Contribution – this segment, along with segments E2 and E4, contains the eastern part of Stevenage.	Limited Contribution – plays no part in preventing the merger of urban areas.	Significant Contribution – this segment, along with segments E2 and E4, contains the eastern part of Stevenage.	Limited Contribution – the segment has no direct relationship with the urban areas of Hitchin and Letchworth to the west.	Akin to segment E2, this land contains the eastern edge of Stevenage and contains no clear internal boundaries by which the segment could be subdivided. Box Wood LNR is a significant presence to the south of the segment, immediately adjacent to the urban edge, although land immediately to the north could be released, although outer boundary definition is again problematic.	Contribution
E4: Land between the urban edge to the north, Aston End Road and Aston Lane to the west and Walkern Road to the east		Contribution – this segment, along with segments E3 and E5, contains the eastern part of Stevenage.	Limited Contribution – plays no part in preventing the merger of urban areas.	Significant Contribution – this segment, along with segments E2 and E3, contains the eastern part of Stevenage.	Limited Contribution	The combination of topography, large-scale open fields, distant views and no immediate visual connection with the urban edge of Stevenage to the west, give this segment a strongly rural character and openness. As such the segment is an important part of the Green Belt to the east of Stevenage. Roads (albeit of varying size) form strong boundaries to this segment.	Contribution
E5: land between the urban edge and Aston, defined by the A602 to the south, Gresley Way to the west and Aston Lane and Aston End Road to the east		Limited Contribution – this segment plays no role in preventing sprawl.	Limited Contribution – plays no part in preventing the merger of urban areas.	Contribution – the relative self-containment of this segment means that its direct contribution to preventing encroachment is limited to complementing that of outer Segments E4 and E6.	Limited Contribution	The location of this segment, immediately to the east of the urban edge, means that whilst it makes a contribution to limiting the encroachment of the urban area, this is not significant given the clear boundaries which demarcate the segment, notably Gresley way to the east. Openness and visual connections to the open countryside to the east are limited meaning that its overall contribution to the Green Belt is limited.	Limited Contribution
E6: Land centred on Frogmore Hall between the Stevenage – Hertford railway line and Walkern Road		Significant Contribution – this segment, along with segments E4 and E5, contains the south-eastern part of Stevenage, preventing sprawl into open countryside.	Contribution – plays a part in the preventing the merger of the south-east of Stevenage and Watton at Stone.	Significant Contribution – this segment, along with segment E4, helps to contain the eastern/south-eastern part of Stevenage.	Limited Contribution	This segment retains a strong parkland feel with mixed land use and some large woodland blocks which clearly forms part of the open countryside to the east of Stevenage. The land is important in maintaining a sense of separation between Stevenage and Watton at Stone joined by the busy A602 and overall makes a significant contribution to Green Belt purposes. Roads (albeit of varying size) form strong boundaries to this segment.	Significant Contribution
E7: Land centred on Astonbury Wood bounded by Aston Lane to the east and Aston Bury Lane to the north-east		Contribution – this segment, along with segment E6 contains the south-eastern part of Stevenage, preventing sprawl into open	Contribution – plays a part in the preventing the merger of the south-east of Stevenage and Watton at Stone.	Contribution – plays a part in protecting the wider countryside from encroachment	Limited Contribution	Dominated by Astonbury Wood to the south-east of the segment and mixed arable/pastoral land uses to the west and north, this segment helps in the containment of the south-east of Stevenage, particularly in terms of sprawl along the A602 and the maintenance of the gap between Stevenage and Watton at Stone. However, when viewed as part of the overall Green Belt in this area, its strategic function is less clear, particularly in the context of segment E6 performing this role. Roads (albeit of	Contribution

Segment	Key constraints	1. Checking sprawl (ribbon and non-compact development and absence of a containing boundary)	2. Prevent the merger of adjacent towns	3. Safeguard countryside from encroachment (through urbanisation)	4. Preserve the setting of historic towns	Overall evaluation	Overall contribution to Green Belt purposes
		countryside.				varying size) form strong boundaries to this segment.	
S1: Land between the A1(M) to the west and ECML railway to the east		Significant Contribution – forms part of the Green Belt preventing the southward expansion of Stevenage and urbanisation of the A1(M) corridor.	Significant Contribution – forms part of the Green Belt preventing the southward expansion of Stevenage and merger with Knebworth.	Limited Contribution	Limited Contribution	Consisting of a golf course, this land forms the final gap between Stevenage and Knebworth and as such performs a critical separation function, in combination with segment S2. Roads and the ECML form strong boundaries to this segment.	Significant Contribution
S2: Land between the railway lines and Watton Road		Significant Contribution – forms part of the Green Belt preventing the southward expansion of Stevenage and urbanisation of the A1(M) corridor.	Significant Contribution – forms part of the Green Belt preventing the southward expansion of Stevenage and merger with Knebworth.	Contribution – protects open countryside between Knebworth and Stevenage.	Limited Contribution	The general absence of strong field boundaries, the large field patterns and the elevated position which affords long distance views, creates a landscape with a strong sense of openness. The general absence of hedgerow boundaries, significant woodland blocks or built form, means that there is a generally poor level of containment. Comprising two or three large fields this land in combination with segment S1 forms the gap between Stevenage and Knebworth and as such has a critical separation function. The railway line to Hertford forms a strong north eastern boundary, whilst boundaries with Knebworth to the south west are defined by the urban edge only.	Significant Contribution
S3: Land between Watton Road and Swangleys Lane and Bragbury Lane		Contribution – forms part of the Green Belt preventing the southward expansion of Stevenage and urbanisation of the A1(M) corridor.	Contribution – forms part of land separating Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City.	Significant Contribution – forms part of the open countryside towards Datchworth.	Limited Contribution	The general absence of strong field boundaries, the large field patterns and the elevated position which affords long distance views, creates a landscape with a strong sense of openness. In combination with segments S4 and S5, this segment helps to protect openness of the countryside in the vicinity of Knebworth, being part of the strategic gap between Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City.	Significant Contribution
S4: Land between Bragbury Lane, Raffin Green Lane and the railway forming its northern boundary		Contribution – forms part of the Green Belt preventing the southward expansion of Stevenage and urbanisation of the A1(M) corridor.	Contribution – forms part of land separating Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City.	Significant Contribution – forms part of the open countryside around Datchworth.	Limited Contribution	Whilst this area is located in close proximity to Stevenage (at the northern extent the only separation is the elevated railway line), a combination of the rolling landform and woodland blocks means that only very occasional and glimpsed views of the edge of Stevenage are possible from the edges of the area. In combination with segments S3 and S5, this segment helps to protect openness of the countryside in the vicinity of Knebworth, being part of the strategic gap between Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City.	Significant Contribution
S5: Land between Datchworth and Woolmer Green defined by Rectory Lane to the west, Bury Lane/Hawkins Hall Lane to the east and Watton Road to the south		Contribution – forms part of the Green Belt preventing the southward expansion of Stevenage and urbanisation of the A1(M) corridor.	Contribution – forms part of land separating Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City.	Significant Contribution – forms part of the open countryside around Datchworth.	Limited Contribution	The area does have a generally open character as a result of the low population density and extensive areas of arable fields. However, the hedgerow boundaries, woodland blocks and rolling landform does create some enclosure. In combination with segments S3 and S4, this segment helps to protect openness of the countryside in the vicinity of Knebworth, being part of the strategic gap between Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City.	Significant Contribution
S6: Land to the south-east of Datchworth bounded by Watton Road to the south, Raffin Green Lane to the north-west and the railway line to the north-east.		Contribution – forms part of the Green Belt preventing the southward expansion of Stevenage and urbanisation of the A1(M) corridor.	Contribution – forms part of land separating Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City.	Significant Contribution – forms part of the open countryside around Datchworth.	Limited Contribution	A combination of the distance from the urban edge, the rolling landform and woodland blocks means that only very occasional and glimpsed views of the edge of Stevenage are possible from the edges of the area. Whilst being relatively remote from the urban edge, this segment contributes to protecting the openness of the countryside more generally in the gap between Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City.	Significant Contribution
W1: land centred on St Ippolyts, bounded by the A602 to the north-east, B656 to the west and Sperberry Hill to the south		Significant Contribution – prevents southward extension of Hitchin into the narrow gap between Hitchin and Stevenage.	Significant Contribution – forms a critical part of land separating Hitchin and Stevenage.	Significant Contribution – whilst not being open countryside, the land is part of the wider Green Belt surrounding Hitchin and to the west of the A1(M).	Contribution – helps to maintain the setting of Hitchin.	Whilst being relatively urbanised through built form (St Ippolyts) and electricity lines which detract from a sense of openness, the segment is a critical part of the relatively narrow gap between Stevenage and Hitchin. The A602 and B656 form strong north eastern and south western boundaries, whilst that to the north west is defined by the urban edge and to the south east by a minor road.	Significant Contribution
W2: land to the west of the A1(M), bounded by the A602 to the north,		Significant Contribution – prevents southward extension of Hitchin into the	Significant Contribution – forms a critical part of land separating Hitchin and	Significant Contribution – complements the protection of open countryside to the	Limited Contribution	This linear segment is strongly influenced by the A602 which forms its northern boundary, and A1(M) which forms its eastern boundary. The key functions of this segment are the prevention of sprawl along the A602 and contribution to the maintenance of the gap between Stevenage and Hitchin. As such the	Significant Contribution

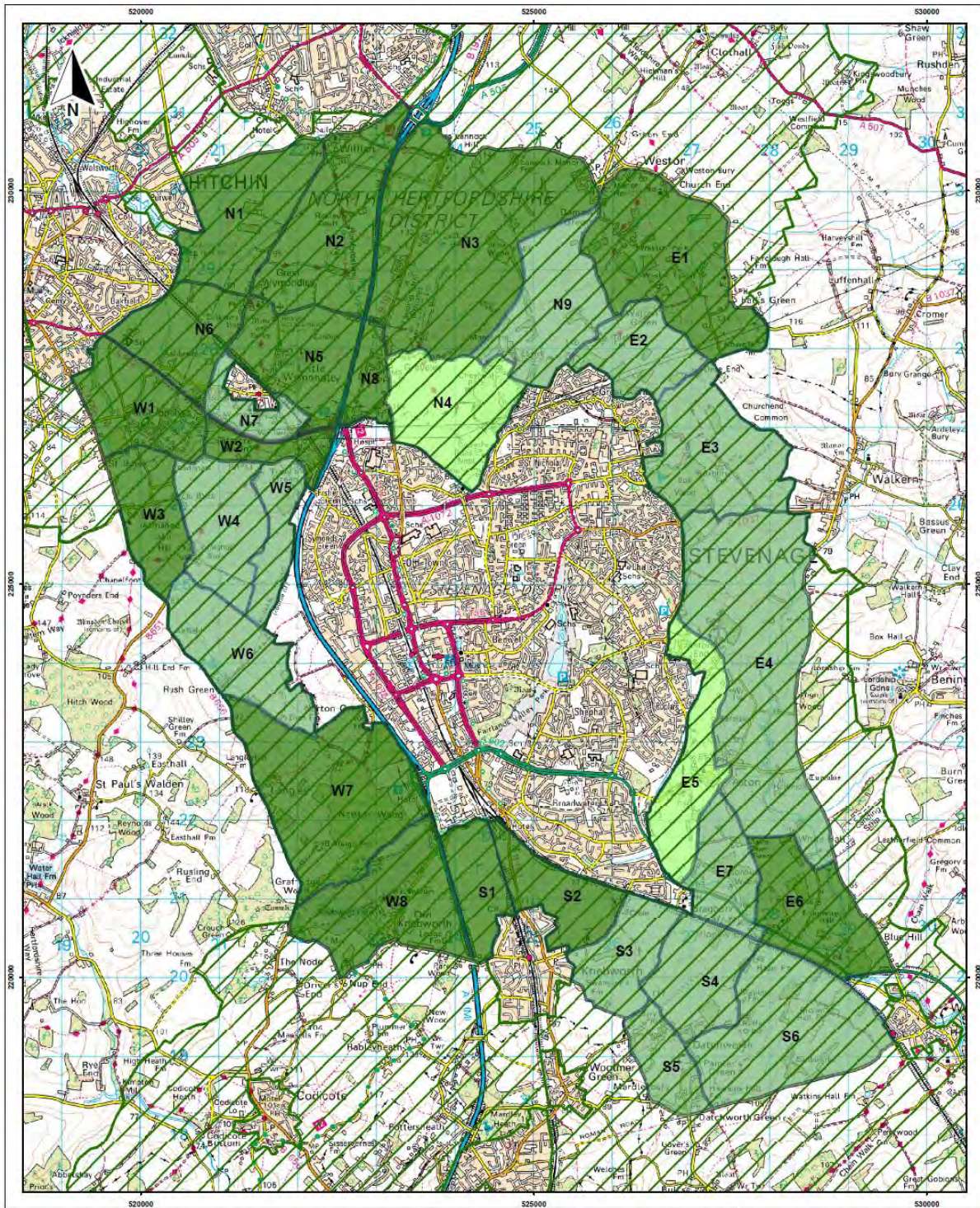
Segment	Key constraints	1. Checking sprawl (ribbon and non-compact development and absence of a containing boundary)	2. Prevent the merger of adjacent towns	3. Safeguard countryside from encroachment (through urbanisation)	4. Preserve the setting of historic towns	Overall evaluation	Overall contribution to Green Belt purposes
Stevenage Road to the south and Blakemore End Road to the west		narrow gap between Hitchin and Stevenage.	Stevenage.	south (segment W4).		segment makes a significant contribution to Green Belt purposes.	
W3: land between Sperberry Hill to the north, the B656 to the west, White Lane to the south and a track leading to Almshoe Bury to the east		Significant Contribution – prevents development along B656 from Hitchin.	Limited Contribution – no direct role in this function.	Significant Contribution – forms part of the open countryside to the west of Stevenage.	Limited Contribution	Forming the eastern flank of the Langley Valley (along with segment W6), this segment contributes to preventing encroachment into open countryside as well as preventing the southward sprawl of Hitchin (in combination with segment W1). The B656 forms a strong western boundary whilst that to the east, is less clear, being a combination of minor road and trackway.	Contribution
W4: land between a track leading to Almshoe Bury to the west and an un-named bridleway from Lower Titmore Farm to Kitching Lane to the east		Contribution – part of land preventing the westward expansion of the compact form of Stevenage currently contained by the A1(M).	Limited Contribution – no direct role in this function.	Significant Contribution – forms part of the open countryside to the west of Stevenage	Limited Contribution	This segment is characterised by undulating land of extensive open fields which assists with preventing encroachment into open countryside in this vicinity. However, the landform is such that development would not undermine the integrity of the Green Belt, particularly if were part of a wider masterplanned development which sought to create stronger boundaries than currently exist. The boundaries of this segment are trackways to the west, east and south, and minor roads to the north.	Contribution
W5: land between the A1(M) and an un-named bridleway from Lower Titmore Farm		Contribution – helps to prevent sprawl along the A1(M) corridor from Todd's Green to the north.	Limited Contribution – no direct role in this function.	Contribution – helps to prevent encroachment into open countryside to the west.	Limited Contribution	Whilst this segment is nominally part of the open countryside to the west of Stevenage, its function as part of the Green Belt is relatively limited. Whilst contributing to checking sprawl and encroachment, this is in combination with other segments to the west, and its overall contribution is considered to be limited, notwithstanding its separation from Stevenage by the A1(M) and western boundary defined by a trackway.	Limited Contribution
W6: land to the west of the A1(M) between Kitching Lane and the B656		Contribution – part of land preventing the westward expansion of the compact form of Stevenage currently contained by the A1(M).	Limited Contribution – no direct role in this function.	Significant Contribution – forms part of the open countryside to the west of Stevenage.	Limited Contribution	The large arable fields combined with a low population density and almost complete absence of woodland creates an open landscape, although the undulating topography provides a level of containment. Forming the eastern flank of the Langley Valley (along with segment W3), this segment contributes to preventing encroachment into open countryside, defined by the B656 to the west and trackways to the north east, east and south west.	Contribution
W7: land to the west of the A1(M) bounded the B656 to the west, Dyes Lane to north-east and the southern boundary of Newton Wood to the south	Knebworth Woods/ Burleigh Grove/ Watery Grove SSSI	Significant Contribution – prevents westward expansion of the compact form of Stevenage currently contained by the A1(M).	Limited Contribution – no direct role in this function.	Significant Contribution – forms the open countryside to the west of the A1(M).	Limited Contribution	Consisting of arable land and significant woodland cover, much of which is designated as SSSI, this segment makes a contribution to preventing the urbanisation of the open countryside to the south-west of Stevenage, complementing segments W6 and W8. This segment also includes land to the west of Junction 7 of the A1(M) which has been developed for hotel uses, and which is part of a larger parcel contained by the A1(M) and the irregular eastern edge of Newton Wood. The hamlet of Norton Green lies immediately adjacent to the segment in land which has been previously removed from the Green Belt.	Contribution
W8: land centred on Knebworth Park, bounded by the A1(M) to the west, the southern boundary of Newton Wood to the north and Park Lane/Hitchin Lane to the south	Knebworth Park registered historic parkland; Knebworth Park site of wildlife significance	Significant Contribution – prevents westward expansion of the compact form of Stevenage currently contained by the A1(M).	Limited Contribution – no direct role in this function	Significant Contribution – forms the open countryside to the west of the A1(M).	Limited Contribution	The parkland character of this segment gives it a distinct identity and its Green Belt function is a strong one, buffering the A1(M) on its eastern boundary from the open countryside to the south-west. As such it contributes to preventing sprawl southwards along the A1(M) and encroachment into the wider countryside of which it is a part. The segment is defined by the A1(M) to the east and minor roads to the south, but is less clearly defined along its northern edge along Newton Wood.	Contribution

Segment	Key constraints	1. Checking sprawl (ribbon and non-compact development and absence of a containing boundary)	2. Prevent the merger of adjacent towns	3. Safeguard countryside from encroachment (through urbanisation)	4. Preserve the setting of historic towns	Overall evaluation	Overall contribution to Green Belt purposes
N1: land to the east of Hitchin, bounded by the Willian Road to the north, Wymondley Road to the east and Hitchin Road to the south		Significant Contribution – prevents southward extension of Hitchin into the narrow gap between Hitchin and Stevenage.	Significant Contribution – forms a critical part of the land separating Hitchin, Letchworth and Stevenage.	Significant Contribution – protects open countryside in the relatively narrow gap between Hitchin and Stevenage.	Contribution – helps to maintain the setting of Hitchin.	The arable fields are typically large and bounded by hedgerows and hedgerow trees. Combined with the two woodland blocks (Upper Plantation and Lower Plantation), a sense of enclosure is created. Visual connections with the edge of Stevenage are weak due to the north westwards sloping landform and the visual containment provided by the hedgerow and woodland blocks. From the western edges of the segment, there is a visual connection with Hitchin. Along with segments N2, N5, N6 and N7, this land forms a critical part of the separation between Stevenage and Hitchin. Roads of varying size form strong boundaries to this segment.	Significant Contribution
N2: land lying between the A1(M) to the east, Wymondley Road to the west, Graveley Lane to the south and Baldock Lane to the north		Significant Contribution – prevents southward extension of Letchworth into the narrow gap between Letchworth and Stevenage.	Significant Contribution – forms a critical part of land separating Hitchin and Stevenage.	Significant Contribution – protects open countryside in the relatively narrow gap between Letchworth and Stevenage.	Limited Contribution	The arable fields are typically large and bound by hedgerows and hedgerow trees. In combination with small woodland blocks within the fields, the hedgerow contributes to a sense of enclosure and containment. Along with segments N1, N5, N6 and N7, this land forms a critical part of the separation between Stevenage and Hitchin. Roads of varying size, including the A1(M), form strong boundaries to this segment.	Significant Contribution
N3: land lying between the A1(M) to the west, Lannock Hill/Hitchin Road to the north, and a woodland edge running from Back Lane to south-west edge of How Wood and across to Damask Green to the east		Significant Contribution – helps to maintain the compact urban form of Stevenage to the south.	Significant Contribution – forms an important part of the land separating Letchworth and Stevenage.	Significant Contribution – protects open countryside between Stevenage and Letchworth.	Limited Contribution	The scale of this segment performs a critical separation function between Stevenage and Letchworth, consisting principally of an open landscape which gives extensive views northwards from Church Lane/Back Lane. Roads of varying size, including the A1(M), form strong boundaries to this segment.	Significant Contribution
N4: land lying to the north of the urban edge of Stevenage, bounded by the B197 to the west, Church Lane/Back Lane to the north and the urban edge (part Weston Road) to the east		Limited Contribution – minor contribution to maintaining the compact urban form of Stevenage to the south.	Significant Contribution – forms a critical part of land separating Hitchin, Letchworth and Stevenage.	Contribution – protects open countryside between Stevenage and Letchworth, in combination with Segment N4.	Limited Contribution	The landscape to the west of the segment is fairly open, but the eastern section which contains a greater amount of tree planting, is more enclosed. This segment, whilst protecting the open countryside from encroachment, overall makes a contribution to Green Belt function by virtue of its visual relationship with the current urban edge and containment by Church Lane/Back Lane. Boundaries to this segment are of varying strength, being the B197 to the west, Church Lane/Back Lane to the north and Weston Lane and the urban edge to the south and west.	Contribution
N5: land lying between the A1(M) to the east, Graveley Lane to the north, Arch Road to the west, and the A602/ Hitchin Road/ECML to the south-west		Significant Contribution – prevents southward extension of Hitchin into the narrow gap between Hitchin and Stevenage.	Significant Contribution – forms a critical part of land separating Hitchin and Stevenage.	Contribution – protects open countryside in the relatively narrow gap between Hitchin and Stevenage.	Limited Contribution	Along with segments N1, N2, N6 and N7, this land forms a critical part of the separation between Stevenage and Hitchin. Roads of varying size, including the A1(M) and A602, form strong boundaries to this segment.	Significant Contribution
N6: land lying between the urban edge of Hitchin to the north-west, the A602 to the south-west, Arch Road to the east and Hitchin Road to the north		Significant Contribution – prevents southward extension of Hitchin into the narrow gap between Hitchin and Stevenage.	Significant Contribution – forms a critical part of land separating Hitchin and Stevenage.	Contribution – protects open countryside in the relatively narrow gap between Hitchin and Stevenage.	Contribution – helps to maintain the setting of Hitchin.	Along with segments N1, N2, N5 and N7, this land forms a critical part of the separation between Stevenage and Hitchin. Roads of varying size, including the A602, form strong boundaries to this segment.	Significant Contribution
N7: land lying between the A602 to the south, Blakemore End Road to the west, and Stevenage Road/ECML to the north		Contribution – helps to prevent the closing the narrow gap between Hitchin and Stevenage, in combination with Segments	Significant Contribution – forms a critical part of land separating Hitchin and Stevenage.	Contribution – protects open countryside in the relatively narrow gap between Hitchin and Stevenage.	Limited Contribution	Forming part of the landscape context for Little Wymondley, this segment is critical to the maintenance of the relatively narrow gap between Stevenage and Hitchin, notwithstanding urbanisation through the influence of the A602 and power transmission lines associated with Wymondley substation in the adjacent segment W1. Along with segments N1, N2, N5 and N6, this land forms a critical part of the separation between Stevenage and Hitchin. Roads of varying size, including the A602, and the ECML	Significant Contribution

Segment	Key constraints	1. Checking sprawl (ribbon and non-compact development and absence of a containing boundary)	2. Prevent the merger of adjacent towns	3. Safeguard countryside from encroachment (through urbanisation)	4. Preserve the setting of historic towns	Overall evaluation	Overall contribution to Green Belt purposes
		N5, N6, W1 and W2.				form strong boundaries to this segment.	
N8: land lying between the B197 to the east and the A1(M) to the west centred on Graveley village		Significant contribution – prevents sprawl along the A1(M) corridor and B197	Significant contribution – forms a critical part of land separating Hitchin and Stevenage.	Contribution – part of countryside in the relatively narrow gap between Hitchin and Stevenage, strongly related to parts of segments N3 and N4.	Limited Contribution	Contained between the A1(M) and B197, this land forms part of the context for Graveley Village, and contains sprawl along the B197. Along with segments N1, N2, N5, N6 and N7, this land forms a critical part of the separation between Stevenage and Hitchin, and containing sprawl northwards along the B197 and A1(M) through Graveley. Roads of varying size, including the A1(M), form strong boundaries to this segment.	Significant Contribution
N9: Land lying between a woodland edge running from Back Lane to south-west edge of How Wood and across to Damask Green to the west and back Lane/Damask Green Road to the west		Contribution – helps to check sprawl to the north of Stevenage.	Contribution – contributes to the general separation of Stevenage and Letchworth.	Contribution – checks urbanisation of open countryside towards Weston.	Limited Contribution	Consisting of a plateau landscape with substantial hedgerows and woodland blocks, this segment in combination with segment E2 prevents the northward encroachment of Stevenage into open countryside. However, extent of its woodland cover and enclosure of views through substantial hedgerows means that, in principle, development could be absorbed without significant compromising of the wider Green Belt to the north-east of Stevenage. Boundaries of this segment are relatively weak, consisting of minor roads to the south, south east and north east, and woodland edge and hedgerows to the west and north.	Contribution

Appendix B

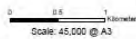
Maps of Segment Contributions against Green Belt Purposes



- Key:**
- Green Belt
 - Makes a significant contribution to Green Belt purposes
 - Makes a contribution to Green Belt purposes
 - Makes a limited contribution to Green Belt purposes

Stevenage Green Belt Review

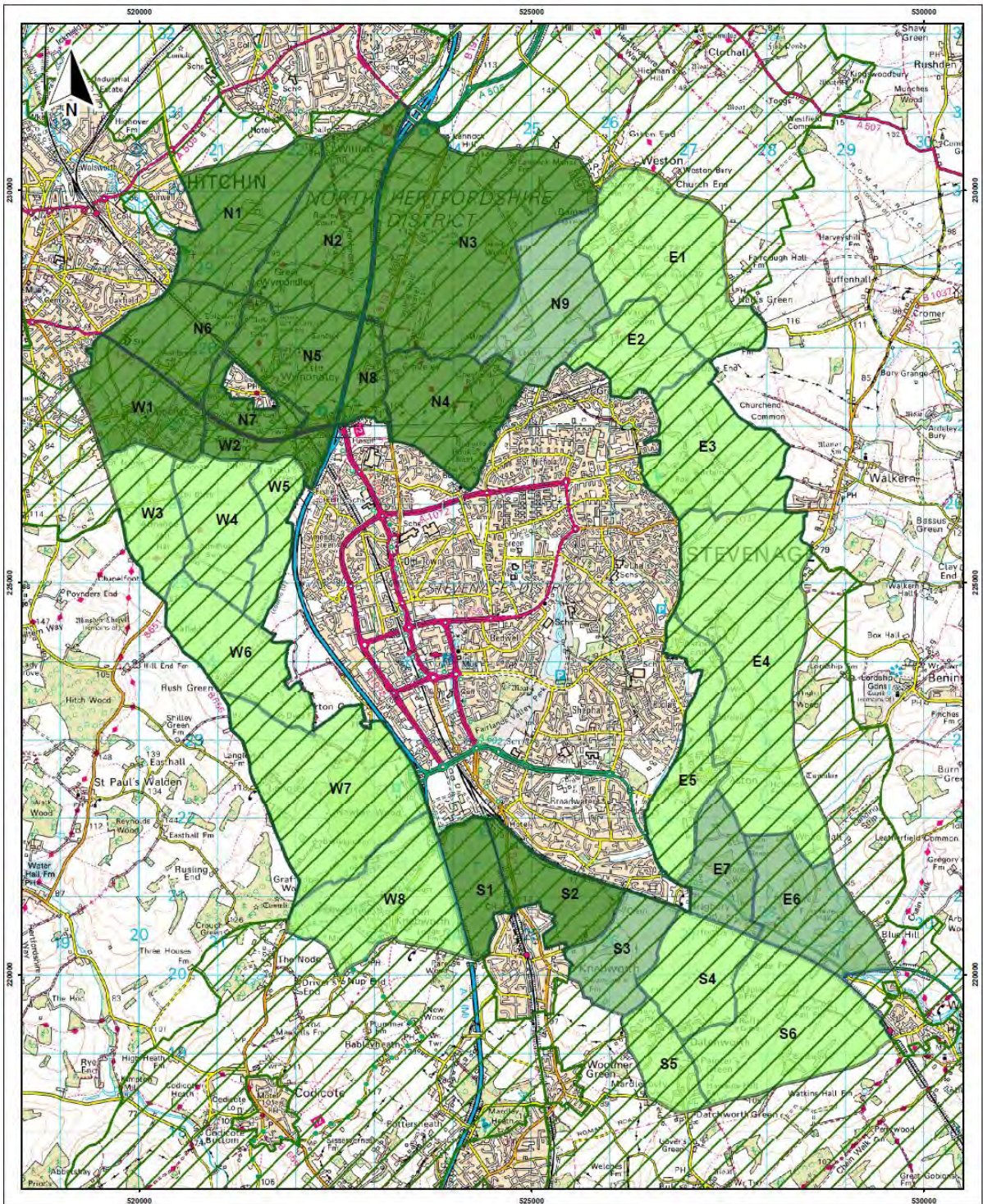
Checking sprawl



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- Key:**
- Green Belt
 - Makes a significant contribution to Green Belt purposes
 - Makes a contribution to Green Belt purposes
 - Makes a limited contribution to Green Belt purposes

Stevenage Green Belt Review

Preventing merger

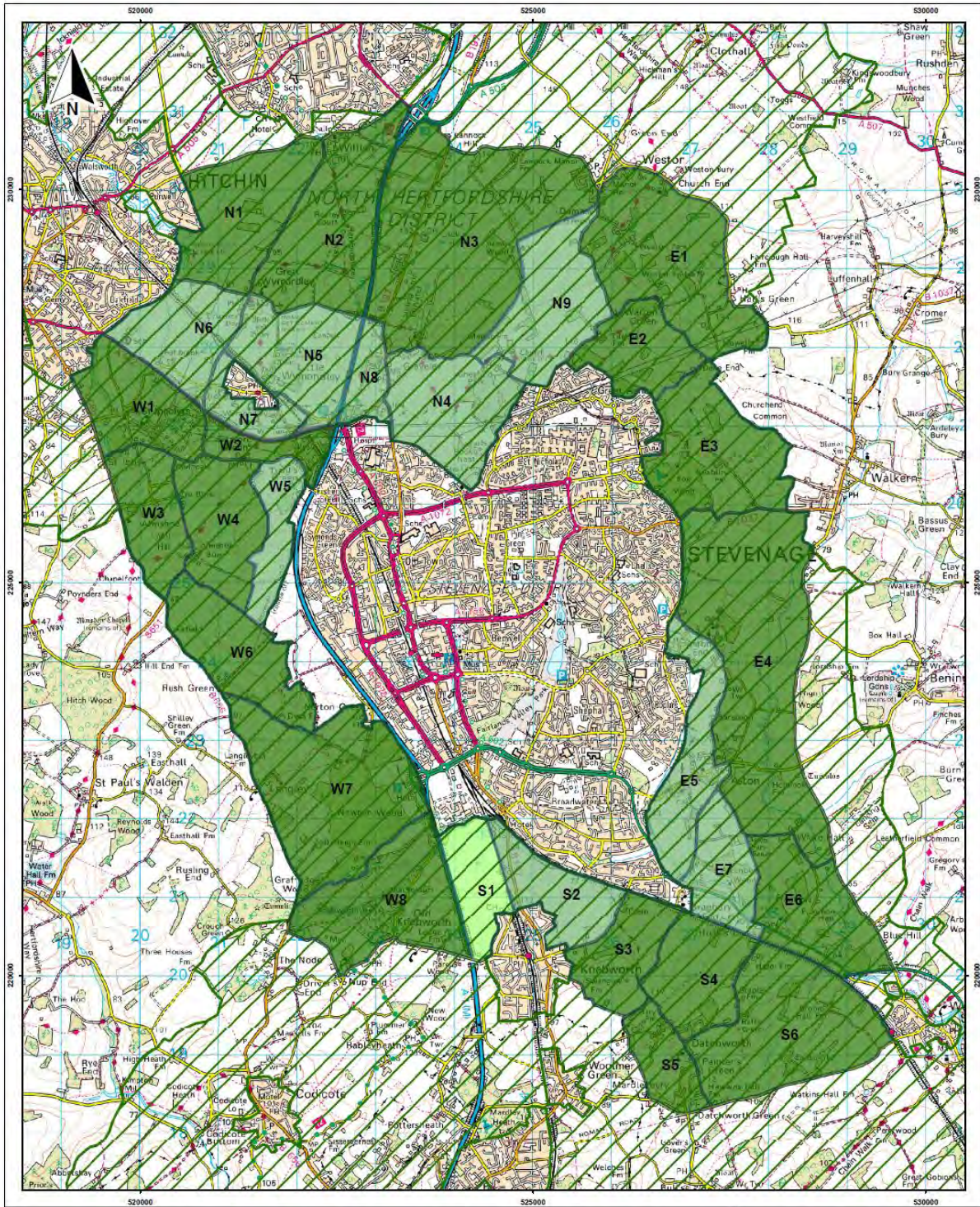
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- Key:**
- Green Belt
 - Makes a significant contribution to Green Belt purposes
 - Makes a contribution to Green Belt purposes
 - Makes a limited contribution to Green Belt purposes

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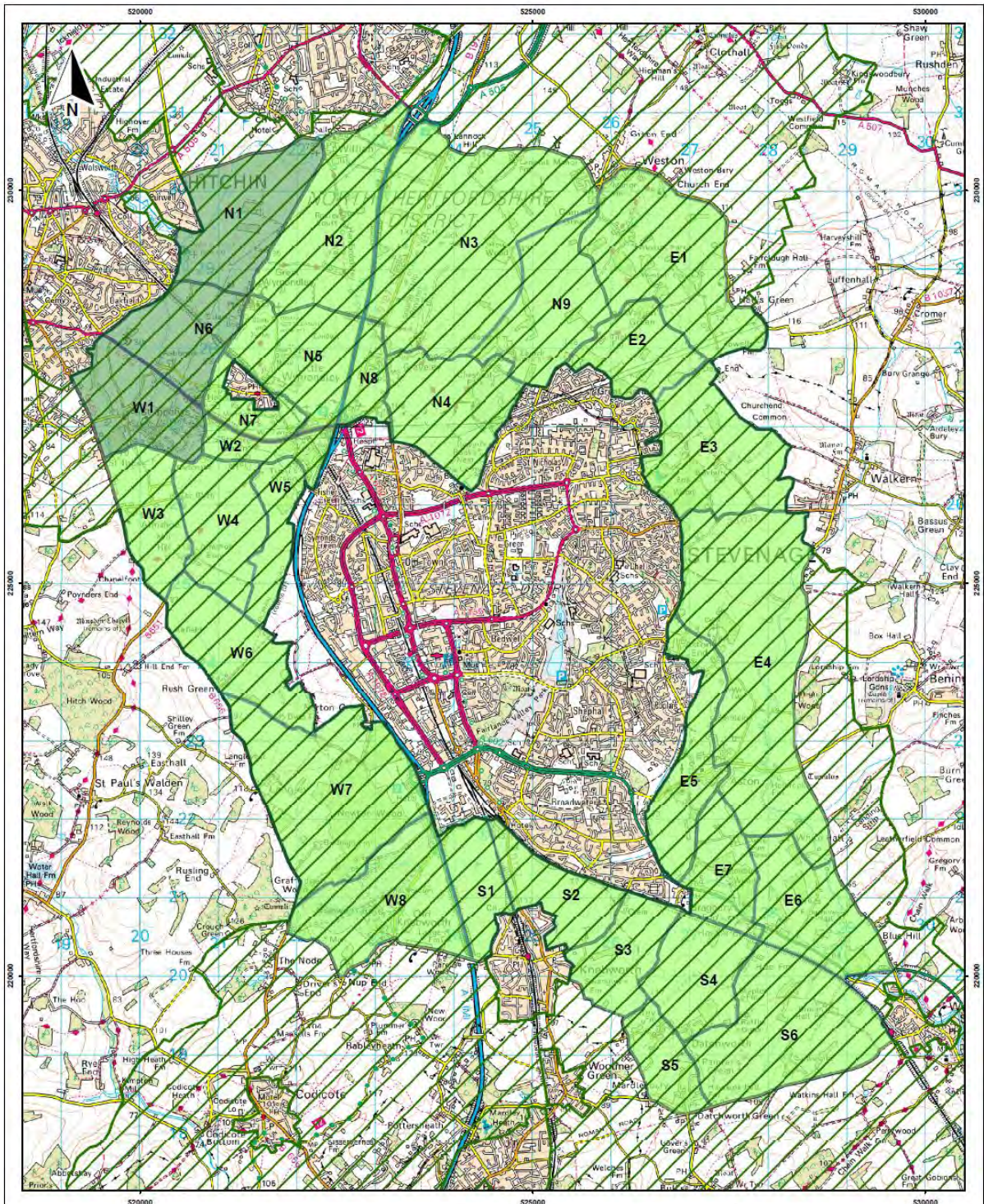
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Stevenage Green Belt Review

Safeguarding countryside from encroachment

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Key:

	Green Belt
	Makes a contribution to Green Belt purposes
	Makes a limited contribution to Green Belt purposes

Stevenage Green Belt Review

Preserve the setting of historic towns

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Appendix C

Segment Profiles



Aerial photograph of area E1 (not to scale)

Segment E1

General Character

- An arable, parkland landscape (Weston Park) to the north east of Stevenage.
- The landscape is gently undulating.
- Small but numerous woodland blocks break up the arable fields.
- The arable fields are bound by hedgerows and woodland blocks.
- The country lanes that form the western and eastern boundaries of the area are also bound by hedgerows.

Openness & Containment

- The woodland planting within the parkland landscape, creates a sense of enclosure.
- The frequent small woodland blocks and hedgerow lined lanes and fields, creates a contained landscape.

Intervisibility

- Although only approximately 1km north of the edge of Stevenage, views back to the settlement are not a common feature and the area has a strongly rural character.

Key Receptors

- The Hertfordshire Trail Long Distance Path crosses north to south through this area.



Aerial photograph of area E2 (not to scale)

Segment E2

General Character

- A gently undulating landscape located immediately north east of Stevenage.
- An arable, landscape interspersed with frequent medium sized woodland blocks e.g. Tilekiln Wood, Longdell Wood and Parson Green Wood.
- A very low population density. With the exception of isolated farmsteads, the hamlet of Warren Green is the only residential development.
- The arable fields are bound by hedgerows and woodland blocks.
- The country lanes that form the north western and north eastern boundaries of the area are also bound by hedgerow.

Openness & Containment

- The woodland planting creates a sense of enclosure, particularly to the south.

Intervisibility

- A combination of the woodland blocks and gently undulating landscape (which does not provide the opportunity for panoramic views), largely contains views towards Stevenage. Views of built form are largely restricted to glimpsed and partial views of the residential development on the north eastern edge of Stevenage.

Key Receptors

- Users of the local network of Public Rights of Way within the area
- Residents of the hamlet of Warren Green.





Aerial photograph of area E3 (not to scale)

Segment E3

General Character

- A gently undulating landscape located immediately north east of Stevenage.
- The landscape is largely arable, with a large woodland block (Box Wood to the far west).
- A very low population density. The only built form is isolated farmsteads.
- The arable fields are characteristically bound by gappy and inconsistent hedgerows.

Openness & Containment

- Within the western section of the area, the woodland creates a strong sense of enclosure. However, in the eastern section of the area, where there is no woodland and the hedgerow boundaries are gappy, the landscape is more open.
- Box Wood contains views westwards towards Stevenage. There is less containment to the east, towards Walkem, although the layering of hedgerow boundaries does create some containment.

Intervisibility

- Box Wood creates a strong edge to the area and blocks views back towards Stevenage.

Key Receptors

- Users of the local network of Public Rights of Way within the area
- Motorists using the B1037.



Aerial photograph of area E4 (not to scale)

Segment E4

General Character

- A narrow tributary valley landscape (River Beane).
- Arable fields are the predominant land use. The size of the arable fields is variable. However, due to the very gappy hedgerows, definition between the fields is poor creating a general sense of continuous arable fields.
- A low population density. The only built form is isolated farmsteads and the settlement of Aston in the south west.

- Land uses such as horiculture and small workshop units on the edge of Aston have a suburbanising influence.

Openness & Containment

- The sloping valley sides creates some enclosure to the west. To the east, the general absence of woodland within the area or hedgerow boundaries, creates a more open landscape.

Intervisibility

- The sloping valley sides to the west restricts views towards Stevenage.

Key Receptors

- Users of the local rural road network within the area.





Aerial photograph of area E5 (not to scale)

Segment E5

General Character

- Gently undulating estate farmland between Stevenage in the west and Aston in the east.
- The arable fields are typically bound by overgrown and un-managed hedgerow.
- Sections of the settlement of Aston, Aston End and Barleigh fall within this area and together create a population density which is higher than other areas on the edge of Stevenage within the Green Belt. However, all of these settlements are located within a mature, well established landscape setting which restricts the visibility of the built form. The built form does however have a suburbanising influence.

The Stevenage Golf Course occupies a large portion of the south of this area and also has a suburbanising influence. Other suburbanising influences include horticulture and areas of scrubby, un-managed arable fields.

Openness & Containment

- The mature landscape planting which surrounding the settlements ensures a level of containment as experienced from within the settlements. Within the surrounding arable fields, the overgrown hedgerow again provides a sense of enclosure, although where there are gaps in the hedgerow, frequent views west to Stevenage are possible.
- The mature landscape planting which surrounds the settlements creates a strong sense of containment. Within the surrounding arable fields, the level of containment is lower.

Intervisibility

- Within the arable landscape surrounding the settlements, the overgrown hedgerows provides a sense of enclosure, although where there are gaps in the hedgerows, frequent views west to Stevenage are possible.

Key Receptors

- Users of the local rural road network within the area.



Aerial photograph of area E6 (not to scale)

Segment E6

General Character

- Gently undulating estate farmland to the south-west of Stevenage (the Frogmore Estate).
- The River Beane flows through the eastern section of the area but in this area is a very narrow channel and does not have a notable influence on the landscape character.
- Landform rises to the west and north west towards Aston.
- There is a low density of development. The only residential buildings are isolated farmsteads.

Openness & Containment

- The occasional woodland blocks, and sloping valley sides to the west, provide enclosure and a level of containment.

Intervisibility

- Astonbury Wood and the ridgeline to the north-west, restrict views of Stevenage. Built form in Aston is visible.

Key Receptors

- Users of the local rural road network within the area.
- Motorists using the A602.





Aerial photograph of area E7 (not to scale)



Segment E7

General Character

- This landscape forms the upper valley sides of the River Beane Valley.
- Land use is a combination of arable fields and parkland pasture interspersed with woodland blocks e.g. Astonbury Wood.
- There is a low density of development. The only residential buildings are isolated farmsteads.

Openness & Containment

- The woodland blocks (including the large woodland block 'Astonbury Wood') detracts from the sense of openness.

Intervisibility

- The woodland within the segment, and the wooded ridgeline of Aston, combine to restrict views of Stevenage.

Key Receptors

- Users of the local rural road network within the area.
- Motorists using the A602.

Segment N1

General Character

- An arable landscape to the immediate south east and east of Hitchin.
- The topography of the segment drops gently away in a north western direction towards Hitchin.
- Willian Road forms the eastern boundary to the segment and separates it from the arable landscape further to the east.
- The area has a very low population density. There are no settlements within the segment.

Openness and Containment

- The arable fields are typically large and bound by hedgerows and hedgerow trees. Combined with the two woodland blocks (Upper Plantation and Lower Plantation), a sense of enclosure is created.

Intervisibility

- Visual connections with the edge of Stevenage are weak due to the north westwards sloping landform and the visual containment provided by the hedgerow and woodland blocks. From the western edges of the segment, there is a visual connection with Hitchin.

Key receptors

- Motorists using Willian Road.



Aerial photograph of area N1 (not to scale)



Aerial photograph of area N2 (not to scale)

Segment N2

General Character

- An arable landscape which forms part of the landscape that separates Letchworth to the north from Stevenage to the south.
- A gently undulating landscape. The fields are typically large and bounded by hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
- The segment has a low population density and Willian is the only settlement. There are no roads that cut across the segment, although the Hertfordshire Way does cross the segment.
- The A1 which connects Letchworth and Stevenage forms the eastern boundary to the segment.

Openness and Containment

- The arable fields are typically large and bounded by hedgerows and hedgerow trees. In combination with small woodland blocks within the fields, the hedgerow contributes to a sense of enclosure and containment.

Intervisibility

- Visual connections with the edge of Stevenage are weak due to the visual containment provided by the hedgerow and woodland blocks.

Key receptors

- Motorists using the A1 (M).
- Residents outside the segment in Great Wymondley.

Segment N3

General Character



Aerial photograph of area N3 (not to scale)

- This segment forms part of the arable landscape between Stevenage and Letchworth. It is located approximately 1.5km north of Stevenage.
- The A1(M) separates the segment from the landscape to the west.
- This is a narrow valley landscape sloping towards a low point in the centre of the segment.
- Land use is typically large arable fields interspersed with small woodland blocks e.g. How Wood and Stonesley Wood.
- The settlement of Graveley is located on the southern boundary of the area. Built form within the segment is otherwise very sparse and is limited to isolated farmsteads.

Openness and Containment

- The large open fields creates an open landscape.

Intervisibility

- A combination of the landform, woodland blocks and the separation distance from Stevenage results in an absence of a visual relationship with Stevenage.

Key receptors

- Residents at Graveley.
- Motorists on the A1(M).



Aerial photograph of area N4 (not to scale)

Segment N4

General Character

- An arable landscape which forms part of the landscape that separates Letchworth to the north from Stevenage to the south.
- The western section of the segment is typically medium sized arable fields. In the east, the landscape is typically pasture surrounding the historic landscape of Chesfield Park and Rook's Nest.
- The settlement of Graveley is located to the north of the segment, but otherwise there is little development.

Openness and Containment

- The landscape to the west of the segment is fairly open, but the eastern section which contains a greater amount of tree planting, is more enclosed.

Intervisibility

- Views southwards towards Stevenage are possible.

Key receptors

- Residents on the northern edge of Stevenage.
- Residents within Graveley.
- Chesfield Park.



Segment N5

General Character

- This segment forms part of the arable landscape between Stevenage and Hitchin.
- The arable landscape of medium sized fields bounded by hedgerows, surrounds the settlement of Little Wymondley (largely outside of the segment). Great Wymondley is located on the north western boundary of the segment.
- The A1(M) separates the segment from the landscape to the east. The East Coast Mainline separates the segment from the landscape to the west.

Openness and Containment

- The low density of population and the medium sized arable fields, together create an open landscape.

Intervisibility

- The A1(M) forms a physical boundary between the segment and Stevenage, and also limits views back to Stevenage. However, glimpsed views are possible.

Key receptors

- Residents of Great Wymonley and Little Wymondley.
- Motorists on the A1(M).



Aerial photograph of area N5 (not to scale)



Aerial photograph of area N6 (not to scale)

Segment N6

General Character

- This segment forms part of the arable landscape between Stevenage and Hitchin. It is located approximately 1.5km north west of Stevenage.
- The arable landscape of medium sized fields bounded by hedgerows, is split in two by the East Coast Mainline between Hitchin and Stevenage.
- The area has a low density of development. Built form is limited to a small cluster of residences at Ashbrook.

Openness and Containment

- The low density of population and the medium sized arable fields, together create an open landscape.

Intervisibility

- The distance from Stevenage and the intervening land uses means that there is no visual relationship with Stevenage. Hitchin is however visible from this segment.

Key receptors

- Residents on the southern edge of Hitchin.
- Residents at Great Wymondley.

Segment N7

General Character

- A linear landscape sandwiched between the A802 in the south and the railwayline between Stevenage and Hitchin in the north.
- This segment forms part of the landscape between Stevenage and Hitchin.
- Although nominally part of the arable landscape typical of the landscape west of Stevenage, views of the built form in Little Wymondley, and land uses such as tennis courts and paddocks which bleed into the arable land use, all have an urbanising influence.

Openness and Containment

- Close range views of built form and the transport infrastructure create an enclosed character.

Intervisibility

- Glimpsed and partial views of Stevenage beyond the A1(M) are possible from this segment.

Key receptors

- Motorists using the A802.
- Residents within Little Wymondley.



Aerial photograph of area N7 (not to scale)



Aerial photograph of area N8 (not to scale)

Segment N8

General Character

- A linear landscape sandwiched between the A1(M) in the west and the B197 in the east.
- This segment forms part of the landscape between Stevenage and Letchworth to the north.
- The western section of the settlement of Graveley is located within this segment.
- Small, hedgerow lined arable fields surround the settlement.

Openness and Containment

- Close range views of built form and the transport infrastructure create an enclosed character.

Intervisibility

- Glimpsed and partial views of Stevenage to the south are possible.

Key receptors

- Motorists using the A1(M)
- Residents within Graveley.



Segment N9

General Character

- This segment is a fairly flat plateau, arable landscape to the north of Stevenage.
- The segment forms part of the landscape between Stevenage and Letchworth. It is located directly adjacent to the northern edge of Stevenage.
- A belt of woodland separates the segment from the landscape to the west.
- Land use is typically large arable fields bounded by hedgerows, interspersed with small woodland blocks.
- The area has a very low population density. There are no settlements within the segment.

Openness and Containment

- The hedgerow field boundaries combined with the woodland blocks creates a fairly enclosed landscape.

Intervisibility

- The hedgerows and woodland blocks largely contain views towards Stevenage.

Key receptors

- Residents on the northern edge of Stevenage.
- Users of the network of Public Rights of Way.



Aerial photograph of area N9 (not to scale)





Aerial photograph of area S1 (not to scale)

Segment S1

General Character

Land use in this area is a combination of arable fields and Knebworth Golf Course.

The area is separated from the surrounding landscape by the A1 (M) to the west, the East Coast Mainline to the east, Old Knebworth Lane to the north and the settlement of Knebworth to the south and south east.

The frequent movement and noise from the large infrastructure routes to the east and west, combined with the activity at Knebworth Golf Course detracts from the tranquility of this area.

Openness & Containment

Tree planting within the golf course and along Old Knebworth Lane creates some enclosure to views. However, partial views through the trees towards Stevenage and the A1(M) are a common feature of views from the area.

Tree planting within the golf course and along Old Knebworth Lane ensures some containment of views.

Intervisibility

Due to the close proximity to Stevenage, partial views of the settlement are experienced. However, a combination of the elevated and embanked railwayline to the east, and tree planting within the golf course and along Old Knebworth Lane to the north, restricts the extent of the views.

Key Receptors

- People using Knebworth Golf Course
- Motorists using the A1(M)



Aerial photograph of area S2 (not to scale)

Segment S2

General Character

An elevated, plateau landscape to the north east of Knebworth.

Very low population density with little built form.

The land use is predominantly large arable fields.

To the north, the area is separated from Stevenage by the elevated and embanked Hertford branch railwayline.

Despite the proximity to Stevenage and Knebworth, there is very little evidence of typical urban edge land uses such as horse paddocks.

The large fields are typically bound by gappy hedgerows.

Openness & Containment

The general absence of strong field boundaries, the large field patterns and the elevated position which affords long distance views, creates a landscape with a strong sense of openness.

The general absence of hedgerow boundaries, significant woodland blocks or built form, means that there is a generally poor level of containment.

Intervisibility

This area is located in very close proximity to Stevenage (at the northern extent the only separation is the elevated railwayline). The close proximity to Stevenage, combined with the elevated plateau nature of the landscape, creates a high level of intervisibility from this landscape to Stevenage. The Glaxo building is a particularly prominent feature of views of Stevenage.

Key Receptors

- Motorists using Watton Road.
- Visitors to Harwood Park Cemetery in the east of the segment.





Aerial photograph of area S3 (not to scale)

Segment S3

General Character

- An elevated, plateau landscape
- The land use is predominantly large arable fields.
- To the north, the area is separated from Stevenage by the elevated and embanked railway line.
- Despite the proximity to Stevenage and Knebworth, there is very little evidence of typical urban edge land uses such as horse paddocks.
- The large fields are typically bound by gappy hedgerows or small woodland blocks.
- A combination of the elevated topography and low vegetation cover, provides the opportunity for elevated and occasionally panoramic views, across the arable fields of the foreground to Stevenage in the background.

Openness & Containment

- The general absence of strong field boundaries, the large field patterns and the elevated position which affords long distance views, creates a landscape with a strong sense of openness.
- The general absence of hedgerow boundaries, significant woodland blocks or built form, means that there is a limited degree of containment.

Intervisibility

- This area is located in very close proximity to Stevenage (at the northern extent the only separation is the elevated railway line). The close proximity to Stevenage, combined with the elevated plateau nature of the landscape, creates a high level of intervisibility from this landscape to Stevenage.

Key Receptors

- Motorists using Swangley's Lane, Bragbury Lane and Baines Lane.
- Isolated properties and small groupings of properties along Swangley's Lane, Bragbury Lane and Baines Lane.



Aerial photograph of area S4 (not to scale)

Segment S4

General Character

- Rolling arable fields on the northern edge of the plateau to the south east of Stevenage.
- Landform generally slopes, fairly steeply in places, towards Stevenage to the north.
- A low population density within the area, but at the boundaries with Datchworth, views of farm buildings and residential properties creates a more domestic character.
- The land use is predominantly large arable fields.
- To the north, the area is separated from Stevenage by the elevated and embanked railway line.
- The large fields are typically bound by gappy hedgerows and occasional woodland blocks e.g. Skegg's Wood.

Openness & Containment

- The general absence of strong field boundaries and the large field patterns creates a sense of openness.
- In comparison to the elevated plateau landscape of S3 and S2, the rolling hills combined with the occasional woodland blocks do provide some containment.

Intervisibility

- This area is located in very close proximity to Stevenage (at the northern extent the only separation is the elevated railway line). However, a combination of the rolling landform and woodland blocks means that only very occasional and glimpsed views of the edge of Stevenage are possible from the edges of the area.

Key Receptors

- Motorists using Raffin Green Lane.
- Residents on the northern edge of Datchworth.





Aerial photograph of area S5 (not to scale)



Segment S5

General Character

Rolling arable fields to the south of Stevenage.

Landform slopes, fairly steeply in places, towards Stevenage to the north.

A low population density within the area generally although the village of Datchworth is partially located in the segment. At the boundaries with Datchworth, views of farm buildings and residential properties creates a more domestic character.

The land use is predominantly medium sized arable fields. Although the hedgerow boundaries are gappy, they are more complete than noted in the surrounding area.

There are a number of small woodlands within the area e.g. Brewers Wood, Chapel Wood and Well Wood.

Openness & Containment

The area does have a generally open character as a result of the extensive areas of undeveloped arable fields. However, the hedgerow boundaries, woodland blocks and rolling landform does create some enclosure.

Intervisibility

This area is located approximately 1.5km south of Stevenage. The distance from Stevenage combined with the rolling landform and woodland blocks means that only very occasional and glimpsed views of the edge of Stevenage are possible from the edges of the area.

Key Receptors

- Motorists using Wotton Road and Raffin Green Lane.
- Residents in Datchworth.



Aerial photograph of area S6 (not to scale)



Segment S6

General Character

Rolling arable fields to the south east of Stevenage.

Landform slopes, fairly steeply in places, towards Stevenage to the north-west.

A low population density within the area, although there are scattered farmsteads throughout e.g. Broom Hall, Hazel Farm and Staples Farm. At the boundaries with Datchworth, views of further farm buildings and residential properties creates a more domestic character.

The land use is predominantly medium sized arable fields. Although the hedgerow boundaries are gappy, they are more complete than noted in the surrounding area.

To the north, the area is separated from Stevenage by the elevated and embanked railway line.

There are a number of small woodlands within the area

Openness & Containment

The area does have a generally open character as a result of the low population density and extensive areas of arable fields. However, the hedgerow boundaries, woodland blocks and rolling landform do create some enclosure.

Intervisibility

This area is located approximately 1.5km south east of Stevenage. A combination of the distance, the rolling landform and woodland blocks means that only very occasional and glimpsed views of the edge of Stevenage are possible from the edges of the area.

Key Receptors

- Users of the public right of way to the north east of Datchworth.
- Residents on the eastern edge of Datchworth.

Segment W1

General Character

- An arable landscape centred on the settlement of St. Ippolyts.
- It forms part of the narrow segment of land between Hitchin to the north west and Stevenage in the south east.
- The arable fields are bound by hedgerows. They are interspersed with small woodland blocks including woodland along the River Purwell south of Hitchin.
- The segment is bound to the north east by the A802, the B858 to the west and Sperberry Hill to the south. The roads, the built form at St. Ippolyts and an electricity pylon route running broadly east to west across the segment have an urbanising influence.

Openness & Containment

- The built form within St. Ippolyts, the roads and the electricity pylon routes all detract from the sense of openness.

Intervisibility

- Due to the proximity of the development to both Stevenage and Hitchin, there is intervisibility between this landscape and both settlements.

Key Receptors

- Residential receptors in St. Ippolyts.
- Residents on the eastern edge of Hitchin. Users of the road network within and adjacent to the segment.



Aerial photograph of area W1 (not to scale)



Aerial photograph of area W2 (not to scale)

Segment W2

General Character

- A linear segment of land to the immediate west of Stevenage. It is separated from Stevenage by the A1(M).
- The area is strongly influenced by the A802 which forms its northern boundary.
- The western section of the site is arable fields, although the A802 and the overhead electricity pylon route has an urbanising influence.
- The eastern section of the segment (between Stevenage Road and Chantry Lane) contains built form including residential properties in the northern section of Todd's Green and a riding stables.

Openness & Containment

- The A802, A1(M) and residential development all detract from the sense of openness.
- The roads and residential development provide a level of containment.

Intervisibility

- Due to the proximity of the development to both Stevenage and Hitchin, there is intervisibility between this landscape and both settlements.

Key Receptors

- Users of the A802 and A1(M).
- Residents of properties along Stevenage Road and Chantry Lane.

Segment W3

General Character



Aerial photograph of area W3 (not to scale)

- An elevated, arable landscape approximately 1.5km west of Stevenage. The segment forms the north eastern extent of the Langley Valley.
- The segment has a low population density. The only built form is isolated residential properties and the small hamlet of Little Almshoe.
- The B858 forms the western edge to the segment. There are a number of rural roads that cross the segment.
- The arable fields are typically large and bounded by low hedgerows.
- The Chiltern Way Long Distance Footpath crosses through the segment from east to west.

Openness & Containment

- The large arable fields bounded by low hedgerow creates an open character. However, the sloping valley sides do contribute to a sense of containment and enclosure.

Intervisibility

- The sloping valley sides to the east restrict views of Stevenage from this segment.

Key Receptors

- Users of the Chiltern Way Long Distance Footpath.
- Users of the B858.
- Residents of Little Almshoe.



Aerial photograph of area W4 (not to scale)

Segment W4

General Character

- An undulating, arable landscape approximately 0.5km west of Stevenage at the closest point.
- The segment forms part of the north western slopes of the plateau to the west of Stevenage.
- The segment has a low population density. The only built form is isolated residential properties to the east of Little Almshoe.
- The arable fields are typically large and bounded by low hedgerows.
- The Chiltern Way Long Distance Footpath crosses through the segment from south west to north east.

Openness & Containment

- The large arable fields bounded by low hedgerow creates an open character.

Intervisibility

- The undulating landscape restricts views eastwards towards Stevenage.

Key Receptors

- Users of the Chiltern Way Long Distance Footpath.
- Residents of isolated properties east of Little Almshoe.



Segment W5

General Character

- A plateau landscape immediately west of Stevenage. The A1 (M) forms the boundary between the segment and the edge of Stevenage.
- Although the southern section of the segment is arable fields and nominally part of the agricultural landscape, the arable fields are interspersed with horse paddocks and there are frequent views of housing within Todd's Green. In conjunction with views of, and noise from the A1(M), this has an urbanising influence.
- There is typically a low population density although the southern section of the hamlet of Todd's Green does extend into the northern part of the segment.
- The land use is predominantly medium sized arable fields. Although the hedgerow boundaries are gappy, they are more complete than noted in the surrounding area.

Openness & Containment

- Tree planting along field boundaries combined with woodland south west of Todd's Green provides some enclosure and containment to the area.

Intervisibility

- From the A1(M) there are views into this segment. However, particularly to the north, woodland and trees along field boundaries provide some containment of views.

Key Receptors

- Motorists on the A1 (M).
- Residents within Todd's Green.



Aerial photograph of area W5 (not to scale)



Aerial photograph of area W6 (not to scale)



Segment W6

General Character

- An undulating arable landscape to the west of Stevenage, between the A1 (M) in the east and B656 in the west.
- The segment forms the eastern flank of the Langley Valley.
- The arable fields are typically large and bounded with gappy hedgerows.
- The segment has a very low population density. No roads cross through the segment. There is one Public Right of Way that crosses south west to north east through the segment.

Openness & Containment

- The large arable fields combined with a low population density and almost complete absence of woodland creates an open landscape.
- The undulating topography provides a level of containment.

Intervisibility

- The undulating topography and sloping valley sides ensures there is no visual relationship with Stevenage.

Key Receptors

- Users of the public right of way which crosses through the segment.

Segment W7

General Character

- A large portion of this segment is covered by ancient woodland e.g. Newton Wood, Burleighcroft Wood and Cannocks Wood.
- A mixture of arable and pastoral fields surround the woodland.
- With the exception of isolated properties, there is no built form within the segment.
- The segment is separated from the western edge of Stevenage by the A1 (M).
- The western boundary to the segment is created by the B656.

Openness and Containment

- The wooded nature of the segment typically creates contained and short range views out.

Intervisibility

- Visual connections with the edge of Stevenage are weak. This is due to the level of visual containment provided by woodland blocks and the visual separation provided by the A1(M) and its adjacent vegetation.

Key receptors

- Users of the network of PRow.
- Users of the B656.



Aerial photograph of area W7 (not to scale)



Aerial photograph of area W8 (not to scale)



Segment W8

General Character

- Historic parkland landscape centred around Knebworth House.
- Much of the segment is heavily wooded with woodland within the grounds of Knebworth House and Knebworth Country Park.
- The settlement of Old Knebworth is located within the centre of the segment.
- The segment is separated from the adjacent golf course and Knebworth by the A1 (M).
- Openness and Containment
- The segment has a low population density.
- The wooded nature of the segment creates contained and short range views out.

Intervisibility

- Visual connections with the edge of Stevenage are weak. This is due to the level of visual containment provided by woodland blocks.

Key receptors

- Residents within Old Knebworth.
- Users of the network of local roads.

