

Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study

Halcrow Group Ltd, January 2006



LDF Evidential Studies

[Web link](#)

Aim: To undertake landscape sensitivity and capacity assessment to help inform decisions about the future extent and directions of residential and employment growth around Stevenage. To propose a robust framework for landscape mitigation measures.

Methodology: The area around Stevenage was categorised into 35 units. Landscape capacity was defined as high, medium or low based on visual and sensitivity assessment of condition, natural, cultural and aesthetic factors, visibility and mitigation potential.

Findings: There is potential for urban extensions without unacceptable adverse impact on the landscape for 8,100 dwellings at 30 dph, 10,800 dwellings at 40 dph and 13,500 dwellings at 50 dph, together with 28 ha of employment land. Potential residential development areas are:

	Hectares	30 dph	40 dph	50 dph
West Stevenage	152	2,625	3,500	4,375
Little Wymondley & Todds Green	57	1,080	1,440	1,800
North Stevenage	65	1,155	1,540	1,925
North East Stevenage	20	360	480	600
East Stevenage (North)	38	696	926	1,160
East Stevenage (South & Central)	51	938	1,250	1,562
South East Stevenage	18	330	440	550
South Stevenage	55	915	1,220	1,525

Achievement of 50 dph need not mean very visually conspicuous high-rise development or compromise on ensuring a high standard of urban and landscape design. All assumptions assume landscape mitigation and enhancement measures, i.e. greenspace framework and structural planting.

There are extensive areas around Stevenage with high sensitivity and low landscape capacity for urban extensions and employment growth. Development could fundamentally alter their unspoilt rural character, their views and their tranquillity.

Conclusions: "It has been possible, particularly around the immediate urban fringe to identify a number of potential development areas where, assuming the essential mitigation measures are implemented effectively, it should be possible to accommodate both urban extensions and employment growth of the scale envisaged in the regional plan without unacceptable adverse landscape impacts."

Recommendations: Relevant policies should incorporate essential mitigation measures if potential development areas are to be taken forward as allocations in LDFs. A comprehensive greenspace framework strategy should be prepared containing detailed guidance on design, engendering public involvement and funding mechanisms. A landscape led approach should be adopted in future masterplans.