



Stevenage Local Plan



Technical note: Review of the Green Belt around Stevenage – additional parcel assessments

1. Introduction

Stevenage Borough Council is currently producing their new Local Plan which contains proposals for housing and employment development. Part of the evidence base underpinning the emerging Local Plan is a two part Review of the Green Belt around Stevenage which comprises: Part One Strategic Review (February 2013) and Part Two Site Assessment and Capacity Testing (September 2015).

Within the Part Two Report various parcels were assessed in detail for their potential for release from the Green Belt and recommendations made accordingly. This Technical Note, which is an addendum to the Part Two Report, assesses two additional parcels of land to the north of Stevenage: land to the north east of Todd's Green and land to the west of the Graveley Road.

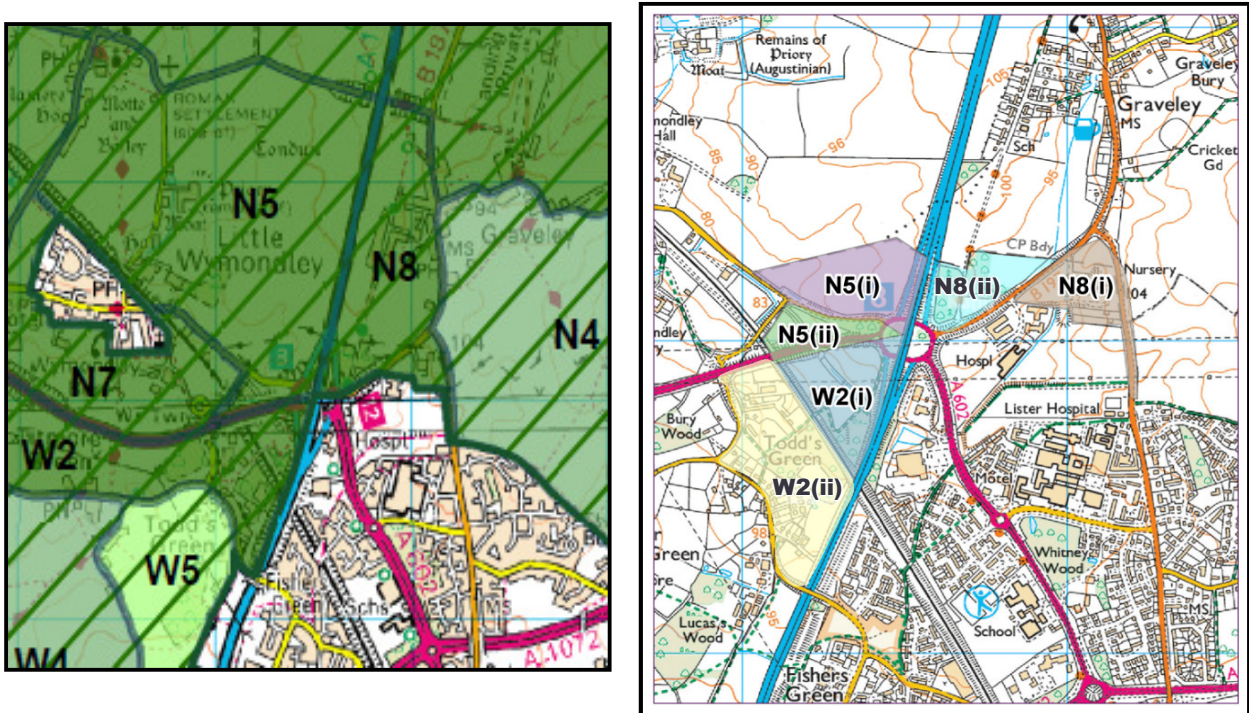
2. Location of the Parcels in relation to the Strategic Green Belt Review and Conclusions Reached in the Part Two Assessment

The Part One Strategic Review identified land to the north of Stevenage (segments W2 and N8) as making a significant contribution to Green Belt purposes, their primary function being that of separation of Stevenage from Hitchin and Letchworth to the north west and north respectively.

The detailed Part Two Assessment concluded that parcels N5(ii), W2(i) and N8(i) could be considered for release, reflecting their high degree of containment (Figure 2.1), whilst release of parcel N5(i) because of an absence of physical and visual containment would represent an unacceptable intrusion into open countryside and a clear narrowing of the countryside gap between Stevenage and Hitchin.

Figure 2.1 includes the additional parcels W2(ii) and N8(ii) assessed within this Technical Note.

Figure 2.1 Overall Contribution to Green Belt Purposes (left) and parcels assessed (right)



Figures 2.2 and 2.3 show the land use character of parcels W2(ii) (Figure 2.2) being a complex assortment of land uses including farm enterprises, rough grazing, woodland, brownfield land and storage, principally bounded by the A1(M), a railway line, Chantry Lane and the built edge of Todd's Green. Parcel N8(ii) (Figure 2.3), by contrast, is a mixture of woodland and scrub which is bounded by the A1(M) to the west, the B197 Graveley Road to the south east and a mature treeline to the north being the Borough boundary.

Figure 2.2 Aerial Photograph of Parcel W2(ii)



Figure 2.3 Aerial Photograph of Parcel N8(ii)



2.1 Assessment of Parcels W2(ii) (land to the north east of Todd's Green) and N8(ii) (land to the west of the B197 Graveley Road)

Table 2.1 Contribution to Green Belt Purposes of Segments W2 and N8 and Parcels W2(ii) and N8(ii)

Segment/ Parcel	Checking sprawl	Merger	Encroach- ment	Setting of Settlements	Overall Contribution	Commentary
W2	Significant Contribution	Significant Contribution	Significant Contribution	Limited Contribution	Significant 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 segment makes a significant contribution to Green Belt purposes.
W2(ii)	Contribution	Significant Contribution	Contribution	Significant Contribution	Contribution	A complex parcel which is heavily intruded visually and functionally by various uses giving an urban fringe character. Whilst development could readily be accommodated at various scales with a high degree of visual containment, the key issue remains the further erosion of the narrow gap between Stevenage and Hitchin strategically and in this locality between the edge of Stevenage and Little Wymondley. In addition, the land forms the easterly setting for Todd's Green.
N8	Significant Contribution	Significant Contribution	Contribution	Limited Contribution	Significant 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.
N8(ii)	Contribution	Contribution	Contribution	Limited Contribution	Contribution	This parcel is visually well contained by a mature tree belt to the north and woodland on the majority of the parcel and at this local scale is distinct in character from the open landscape immediately to the north towards Graveley. Given the extent of containment, in principle, development could take place within the parcel without undue damage to the strategic function of the Green Belt.

Landscape Character

These parcels are covered by the following Local Landscape Areas:

W2(ii): 21. North of Todd's Green - Small enclosed fields surrounded by major roads and railway. Significant visual/noise intrusion. Urban extensions – low sensitivity and high capacity. Employment development – low sensitivity and high capacity.

N8(ii): 17. North Lister - Small valley, visual/noise intrusion from urban development, road and pylons, lack of field boundaries, patches of scrub. Urban extensions – low sensitivity and high capacity. Of low sensitivity and high capacity for employment.

Ecological & Cultural Heritage Designations

There are no ecological or cultural heritage designations in these parcels.

Environmental Constraints

There are no environmental constraints such as flood risk associated with these parcels.

Summary Evaluation and Recommendations

Table 2.2 Evaluation of Parcels W2(ii) and N8(ii)

Criteria	Parcel W2(ii)	Parcel N8(ii)
Principal features	Complex assemblage of agricultural, rough grazing brownfield and storage uses.	Generally densely wooded with areas of scrub in succession to woodland.
Key boundaries defining parcel	A1(M) to the south east, railway line to the north east, Chantry Lane to the north west.	Graveley Road to the south east, the A1(M) to the west and mature tree belt to the north.
Effect of development on openness and purposes of the Green belt.	Further urbanisation of a fragmented landscape which would narrow the gap between Stevenage and Little Wymondley.	Would introduce built form into countryside beyond the current urban boundary.
Effect of development on visual amenity of the countryside/locality	Potentially significant effect on local amenity, particularly in respect of the setting for Todd's Green.	No significant effect given high degree of physical and visual enclosure.
Relationship with existing development pattern	Adjacent to the hamlet of Todd's Green	None
Effect of development on the landscape setting/character of a settlement	Effect on the setting of Todd's Green.	None
Constraints	None	None
Landscape sensitivity and capacity (Halcrow 2006 study)	Low sensitivity and high capacity for employment and urban extensions.	Low sensitivity and high capacity for employment and urban extensions.
Recommendation	Do not release	Potential for release in whole or part

3. Conclusions

Strategically, parcels W2(ii) and N8(ii) are part of the Green Belt which makes a significant contribution to maintain the gaps between Stevenage and Hitchin and Letchworth and as such the principal issue relates to the contribution that development would make to a further narrowing of this gap through built development.



For parcel W2(ii), removal of Green Belt status and subsequent development creates issues associated with the extent of release (all of the parcel or parts thereof), contribution to the erosion of the strategic gap in this location and the impact on the identity of Todd's Green. Taken together, these factors suggest that release is inappropriate.

For parcel N8(ii) the physical and perceptual distinction from the wider segment is much clearer, being generally heavily wooded and well bounded on all sides. Release of this land from the Green Belt, either in whole or part, would therefore be possible without causing undue damage to the strategic role of the Green Belt. However, given the separation of the land from the existing urban area, the range of appropriate uses is likely to be limited, in turn affecting the potential visual impact of development.



Author

Robert Deanwood

Reviewer

Robert Deanwood

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