

# Welwyn Hatfield Green Belt Review

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Stage 2 (Sites); Method Statement

Final Report

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## Welwyn Hatfield Green Belt Review

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### Document history and status

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## Appendix A. Glossary of Terms

## Important note about your report

The sole purpose of this report and the associated services performed by Jacobs is to support Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council in the analysis of sites that form part of the Welwyn Hatfield Green Belt Review, Stage 2 (sites) in accordance with the scope of services set out in the contract between Jacobs and the Client. That scope of services, as described in this report, was developed with the Client.

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1.1 This document provides a detailed methodology for the Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council (WHBC) Green Belt Review: Stage 2 - Sites. This work follows on from the *Green Belt Review: Purposes Assessment for Dacorum, St Albans and Welwyn Hatfield* (November 2013). Hereafter this previous strategic study is referred to as the 'Part 1 study', and this Green Belt site assessment as the 'Part 2 study'. This Part 2 study assesses a range of Green Belt sites identified in the WHBC Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), the Gypsy and Traveller Land Availability Assessment (GTLAA) call for sites, and a site promoted to be removed from the Green Belt.
- 1.1.2 This Part 2 study overlaps areas of the Green Belt recommended for further assessment in the Part 1 study, including strategic sub-areas and small scale sub-areas. This land was identified in the Part 1 study as Green Belt land which contributes least towards the five purposes assessed. Sites which lie outside those areas recommended for further assessment are also assessed. The Part 1 study acknowledged that because the review was carried out at a strategic level it was possible that further small scale boundary changes that would not compromise the overall function of the Green Belt might be identified through a more detailed survey.

## 1.2 Summary of Approach

- 1.2.1 The methodology for the WHBC Green Belt Purposes Assessment is devised in accordance with the approach adopted to undertake the Part 1 study.
- 1.2.2 The Part 2 study undertakes a purposes assessment to identify the extent to which each site contributes to each of the five Green Belt purposes<sup>1</sup> below:
- NPPF Purpose 1: To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
  - NPPF Purpose 2: To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;
  - NPPF Purpose 3: To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
  - NPPF Purpose 4: To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and,
  - Local Purpose: To maintain the existing settlement pattern.
- 1.2.3 The fifth NPPF purpose to assist in regeneration has been discounted from the Purposes Assessment. It was not considered in the Part 1 study.
- 1.2.4 The study assesses three separate categories of land as follows:
- 'Strategic sub-areas' (as identified in the Part 1 study);
  - 'Small scale sub-areas' and areas for 'Boundary adjustment' recommended for further assessment in the Part 1 study;
  - WHBC SHLAA, GTLAA and additional sites (AS).
- 1.2.5 The assessment criteria for the Part 2 study are generally consistent with the Part 1 study. It also utilises the same assessment terminology to classify the extent to which each site contributes towards each Green Belt purpose. This approach ensures consistent analysis and reporting which is important given the large number of sites.
- 1.2.6 The Assessment of each site is recorded on a standard Site Proforma. This is completed both during the desk-based assessment and on-site assessment. It allows for the following information to be recorded:
- Site Context – including document review of key findings from Part 1 study, relevant designations and landscape features;
  - Site and Landscape Appraisal – including document review of WHBC Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study and on-site appraisal to validate key findings in relation to land use, topography, land cover, boundary review, levels of enclosure and levels of openness;

<sup>1</sup> The same five Green Belt purposes were assessed in the Part 1 study.

- Green Belt Purposes Assessment – to consider the contribution each site makes towards each of the five Green Belt purposes; and,
- Recommendations – to consider any cumulative impacts (as a result of site grouping), potential for sub-division, and summary and next steps.

1.2.7 The classification of the contribution of each site generally follows the approach adopted in the Part 1 study. Levels of contribution are classified as either 'significant', 'partial' or 'limited or no'.

1.2.8 The detailed step-by-step methodology is set out in Chapter 2.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Sites for Assessment

- 2.1.1 The first task is to determine the origin of the sites to be assessed. Green Belt land considered to contribute least towards the five purposes assessed in the Part 1 study are considered as well as sites identified set out in the WHBC SHLAA and GTLAA.
- 2.1.2 The Purposes Assessment therefore categorises assessment sites as follows:
1. Strategic sub-areas in the Part 1 study (SHLAA HAT1 and WGC5<sup>2</sup>);
  2. Small scale sub-areas in the Part 1 study (SHLAA sites HAT4 and WGC1); and
  3. Remaining SHLAA, and GTLAA sites.
- 2.1.3 All sites are subject to the same assessment however this site categorisation is important to ensure there is a distinction between those sites which were recommended for further assessment in the Part 1 study and those sites which are being assessed solely by virtue of their inclusion in the SHLAA or GTLAA.
- 2.1.4 Although the SHLAA and GTLAA sites were not recommended for further investigation in the Part 1 study, they are being assessed in Part 2 to ensure that all Green Belt sites which may be put forward as potentially suitable for release in the emerging Local Plan have been subjected to the same level of assessment. As the Part 1 study was strategic in nature, it was not appropriate to apply a detailed assessment of individual parcels of land which are of the scale typically included in this assessment.
- 2.1.5 The recommendations in the Site Proforma allow for discussion of potential cumulative considerations as a result of clustering or grouping e.g. potential merging with existing settlements and site boundaries.
- 2.1.6 The purposes assessment only takes account of the sites, not land beyond the sites. This is particularly relevant to the assessment of clusters or groups and when existing site boundaries are considered to be weak and / or non-permanent. However, where it is obvious that a stronger potential boundary exists in the vicinity of the site this can be identified in the section that identifies the potential for site boundary adjustment.

### 2.2 Task 1: Desk-based Assessment

- 2.2.1 Task 1 comprises a desk-based exercise involving a baseline and document review and some initial purposes assessment tasks.

#### Baseline Review

- 2.2.2 The baseline review considers mapping to show environmental and historic features across the study area. Any designations, as well as agricultural land grade and flood zones, are recorded if located within or adjacent to any assessment sites.

#### Document Review

- 2.2.3 The key findings set out in the Part 1 study are reviewed. The site assessment for the strategic parcel which contains the site is considered. This provides useful context prior to the on-site assessment. The contribution to each of the five purposes is summarised in one line.
- 2.2.4 This write-up should be clear, concise and factual. Specific designations are named and their geographical relationship to the site stated.

<sup>2</sup> HAT1 is north of Hatfield and WGC5 is Southeast of Welwyn Garden City. Note that WGC5 overlaps with a strategic sub-area but is not identical in extent.

### *Landscape Considerations*

- 2.2.5 The Purposes Assessment also takes account of issues which relate to key landscape features including topography, land use, hedgerows, tree cover, site boundary characteristics including strength and permanence, and physical and visual attributes of edges as well as levels of landscape enclosure and levels of visual openness.
- 2.2.6 The landscape elements of the site analysis uses the Landscape of Hertfordshire - Landscape Character Assessment<sup>[1]</sup> and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's, Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study (October 2012, and recent update).
- 2.2.7 The Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study provides a detailed landscape appraisal of the specific sites for assessment and informs this analysis and the content of the completed Site Proformas. The overall judgements that relate to both landscape sensitivity and capacity, together with the judgement that follows the landscape capacity matrix, are entered into the Site Proforma.
- 2.2.8 In accordance with the Part 1 study, and as set out in the glossary, openness is an 'absence of built development or other urbanising elements (not openness in a landscape character sense - topography and woodland / hedgerow cover)'. It is important to acknowledge that levels of openness impact upon all of the Green Belt purposes. For example, openness is a key characteristic of the countryside and it helps maintain gaps between settlements as well as helping to provide setting to historic places. More information of the assessment of the level of openness is set out in NPPF Purposes 3 (section 2.6).
- 2.2.9 Key findings from the document review are set out in the Site Proforma, to help inform the on-site assessment.

### *Desk-based Purposes Assessment*

- 2.2.10 Some components of the Purposes Assessment are undertaken as desk-based tasks prior to site visits. These tasks are explained in more detail in Task 2 and are summarised as follows:
- Review of Part 1 key findings;
  - Identification of sites within parcels which contributed towards restricting sprawl (as identified in Part 1 Study);
  - Analysis of strategic gaps, primary local gaps and secondary local gaps; and,
  - Identification of historic places.

## **2.3 Task 3: On-site Assessment**

- 2.3.1 The on-site Purposes Assessment evaluates the contribution a site makes towards each of the five Green Belt purposes. Two people should visit each site to ensure a consistent and robust assessment.
- 2.3.2 This section explains the approach undertaken to assess each of the five purposes and to set out one of three classifications for each site to reflect a: 1) significant, 2) partial, or 3) limited or no level of contribution towards each purpose. For each site, each classification is typically justified briefly i.e. in no more than two or three sentences, and with reference to site specific characteristics, features or designations.
- 2.3.3 A Glossary of assessment terms is provided in Appendix A.

### *Boundary Review*

- 2.3.4 A boundary review is undertaken on-site as part of the landscape appraisal of each site. All assessments of boundary strength are from the perspective of the site looking outwards i.e. the strength of the existing Green Belt boundary is not a consideration for this exercise. For the purposes of the on-site assessment the boundary review first considers the existing site boundaries. Each boundary – north, south, east and west – should be summarised with its strength evaluated in brackets.

<sup>[1]</sup> <http://www.hertsdirect.org/services/leisureculture/heritage1/landscape/hlca/>

- 2.3.5 In respect of boundary review, the NPPF explains that boundaries should be clear and use physical features that are likely to be permanent. Therefore the assessment should evaluate the existing boundaries of each site, and potentially any sub-divisions, e.g. internal hedgerows, where relevant. Where access limitations impede the ability to evaluate the boundaries fully this is also recorded on the Site Proforma. As part of the desk-based review, it may be appropriate to supplement the on-site boundary evaluation with a review of aerial photography and Ordnance Survey mapping.
- 2.3.6 Boundaries may vary around the edge of the site and the analysis should reflect this. The description should reflect the location of the boundary relative to the overall site area e.g. northern edge, north-eastern edge etc. The strength of each boundary should be reflected based on the following table. Note that the categories stated are not definitive and a brief description may be appropriate to justify the evaluation.

Strong	Moderate	Weak
<b>Prominent physical features</b> Roads Railways Buildings/urban edge	<b>Less physical features</b> Paths/tracks Watercourses Woodlands Hedgerows	<b>No definable boundary on the ground</b> Environmental designation Overhead power lines

- 2.3.7 Where boundaries are considered to be weak, and non-permanent, the assessment considers land beyond existing boundaries to potentially identify stronger boundaries in close proximity to the sites. Any such boundaries are noted on the Site Proforma. The relationship of the site with the existing Green Belt boundary is recorded (e.g. along which edge of the site). If the site is separated from the Green Belt Boundary, this is also recorded.
- 2.3.8 Given that the main objective of the study is to undertake a Green Belt purposes assessment it is therefore acknowledged that potentially an additional and more detailed boundary assessment will need to be undertaken on sites which are considered to contribute least towards the five Green Belt purposes assessed.

## 2.4 Assessment of Openness

- 2.4.1 Openness is evaluated in two key ways to reflect:
- Visual openness (relating to nature of views obtained from the site); and,
  - Physical openness (an absence of development).
- 2.4.2 Openness is not defined in the NPPF, but the consideration of these two factors allows an evaluation of each site to indicate how open it is. The evaluation is based on judgement and different factors could influence the conclusions reached.
- 2.4.3 Visual openness is based on how visible the site is and the nature of the views that can be obtained to and from it. Potential views could be long, medium and short distance and will be impacted upon by scale of the site, landform and type and strength of site boundaries which all contribute to potential visibility and openness. A short factual description covering views and site characteristics is included in the proformas. Consistent terminology is applied where possible. The overall judgement should describe the site as having high, mixed or low levels of openness as defined below:

High	Mixed	Low
Elevated, ridge top site with clear long distance views over the surrounding landscape.	A site that is partially enclosed (e.g. by landform, vegetation or built form) but there are some views to/from it.	Flat site and context with the site surrounded on all sides by tall trees/vegetation.

- 2.4.4 Physical openness, in terms of freedom from development, is evaluated in terms of development and built features that exist within the site. Factors that influence this evaluation are built form and other features that have an urbanising influence on the site, e.g. permanent buildings, hardstanding, roads,

industrial fencing. Development does not include evidence of ‘walking on the site’ (i.e. existing PRoW or permissive footpaths). Key challenges with this evaluation relate to the proportion of land that such urbanising factors occupy e.g. a small site with small structures on it could appear less open than a large site with large structures. A short factual description covering development or absence of development is set out in each proforma. Consistent terminology (as set out in the proforma template) is applied where possible. An overall judgement is made and this is graded high, mixed or low, as defined below:

High	Mixed	Low
No built form or urbanising influences on the site, or where they are present they only cover a small proportion of total site area.	There is some built form, but it is not a defining feature and the majority of the site is undeveloped.	Existing development and urban influences already occupy a considerable part of the site and are a defining element.

## 2.5 NPPF Purpose 1: To Check the Restricted Sprawl of Large Built-up Areas

- 2.5.1 The first national purpose performs a barrier role. In accordance with the Part 1 study 'sprawl' is defined as the 'spread out over a large area in an untidy or irregular way' and is considered in respect of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage only, which were defined as 'large built-up areas'.
- 2.5.2 This interpretation of the NPPF purpose should remain; however, given the scale, nature and location of the assessment sites, it is unlikely that individually they will make a significant contribution towards this purpose (due to distances to large built-up areas). Hence, only a partial, limited or no level of contribution is considered possible.
- 2.5.3 The classification terminology for each level of contribution, and assessment criteria, to check sprawl is set out below.

Contribution	Classification Terminology
<i>Significant</i>	<p><b>This score is not applicable to this study given the small scale nature of most sites to be assessed and the fact that no sites adjoin large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage.</b></p> <p><i>Assessment Criteria:</i> Not applicable given the small scale nature of sites assessed.</p>
<i>Partial</i>	<p><b>The site is located within a parcel which makes a 'significant' contribution towards checking unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage.</b></p> <p><i>Assessment Criteria:</i> Strategic parcel makes a 'significant' contribution towards NPPF Purpose 1 as identified in the Part 1 study (Figure 7.1).</p>
<i>Limited or No</i>	<p><b>The site is located within a parcel which makes a 'partial' or 'limited or no' contribution towards checking unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas of London, Luton and Dunstable and Stevenage.</b></p> <p><i>Assessment Criteria:</i> Strategic parcel makes a 'partial' or 'limited or no' contribution towards NPPF Purpose 1 as identified in the Part 1 study (Figure 7.1).</p>

- 2.5.4 The site specific text refers to the large built up area from which the strategic parcel contributes towards checking sprawl from, where appropriate.

## 2.6 NPPF Purpose 2: To Prevent Neighbouring Towns from Merging

- 2.6.1 The second national purpose performs an interstitial role, whereby gaps or spaces between settlements exist and have a clear role in preventing coalescence. In accordance with the Part 1 study, preventing merging of large towns relates to 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements only. Therefore the assessment of this purpose is only relevant to those sites located within strategic gaps between the settlements of Welwyn Garden City, Hatfield, St Albans, Hertford, Stevenage, Potters Bar and Cheshunt (i.e. gaps between 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements).
- 2.6.2 Due to the small scale and location of the sites, very few of the sites would lead to physical merging of neighbouring towns / 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements. Therefore the assessment is based upon the reduction in the distance of the gap between settlements and the visual perception of the gap. Consideration has been given to precise measurement of gaps. However, in practice such an approach is challenging, particularly in relation to which gap is measured and how a given site relates to the gap. Therefore, the evaluation of the gap focusses on professional judgements around the fragility of the existing gaps and how the sites would relate to the spatial arrangement of settlements e.g. whether a gap is already compromised by encroachment and/or whether a site lies within the shortest gap.
- 2.6.3 The size of a site is a key consideration e.g. a small site may have less influence on this purpose than a large site. However consideration of the size of a site may also be relative to the scale of the gap e.g. a small site within a small gap may make a greater contribution to this purpose than a large site within a large gap.
- 2.6.4 The presence of built development including ribbon development / encroachment, and other settlements (especially due to the large-scale of strategic gaps) could have an influence on the contribution the site makes towards maintaining the gap and should be recorded. Such existing development may be separate to the defined settlements, but occupy part (in some cases a large proportion) of the gap. The presence of ribbon development or encroachment may also influence the fragility of a gap. Conversely, if a gap is free from development this is also relevant.
- 2.6.5 On-site judgement of visual perception of the strategic gap is a further consideration. Where possible and appropriate the gap should be viewed from both edges of the relevant 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements, the edge of the site and a central point within the strategic gap. Key routes within the gap are considered, and ideally travelled along, to assess visual perception. Comments on how the site contributes (or does not contribute) to visual perception are recorded e.g. 'the site is open, free from development therefore contributes to the gap, compared with a more built-up site'. The visual perception of the gap relates to the presence of countryside characteristics, an absence of built development and levels of openness.
- 2.6.6 The classification terminology for each level of contribution, and assessment criteria, to prevent merging is set out below.

Contribution	Classification Terminology
<i>Significant</i>	<p><b>The site is located within a strategic gap between 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements. The site makes a significant contribution towards the visual perception of the separation of settlements.</b></p> <p><i>Assessment Criteria:</i></p> <p>The site is located within a strategic gap between 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements.</p> <p>The site would considerably shorten narrower gaps between 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements, with key considerations as follows (note that not all need apply to a single site):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There would be an appreciable reduction in the separation of settlements, to the extent that that there would be an adverse effect on settlement pattern (contribution to coalescence);</li> </ul>

Contribution	Classification Terminology
<i>Significant (continued)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The site lies within the shortest or shorter gaps between 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements;</li> <li>• A strategic gap is already compromised by existing developments (e.g. smaller settlements and ribbon development), and therefore may be vulnerable to further change (recognising the fragility of some gaps).</li> <li>• The scale of a site relative to the gap means development is likely to result in a markedly reduced physical separation or visual perception of the gap.</li> </ul>
<i>Partial</i>	<p><b>The site is located within a strategic gap between 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements. The site makes a partial or limited contribution towards the visual perception of the separation of settlements.</b></p> <p><i>Assessment Criteria:</i></p> <p>The site is located within a strategic gap between 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements.</p> <p>The site would narrow a gap between 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements, however factors mitigate the potential effects on the separation of settlements, with key considerations as follows (note that not all need apply to a single site):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While a site lies within the gap between 1st tier settlements, it would not reduce the gap or shorter gaps between settlements i.e. the site is more integral to the existing settlement pattern;</li> <li>• The impact of any encroachment or ribbon development is limited as development does not impact upon visual perception or separation of settlements and development within the gap is consistent with countryside uses/patterns (the existing gap is less fragile);</li> <li>• The scale of a site relative to the gap means development is less likely to result in a marked reduction in physical separation or visual perception of the gap;</li> <li>• On-site contribution to visual perception is not significant e.g. the site already contains development, therefore the potential change associated with new development would be reduced.</li> </ul>
<i>Limited or No</i>	<p><b>The site is not located within a strategic gap between 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements.</b></p> <p><b>OR</b></p> <p><b>The small scale size of the site (e.g. an existing residential property, single small field, small car park etc.) and its characteristics mean that it makes a limited contribution to the gap.</b></p>

2.6.7 The site specific text refers to the settlements in relation to the strategic gap in which the site is located. The analysis of the visual perception of the gap also summarises any features (e.g. ribbon development etc.) which impact upon the character and openness of the Green Belt.

## 2.7 NPPF Purpose 3: To Assist in Safeguarding the Countryside from Encroachment

- 2.7.1 The third purpose performs a protective role, to safeguard the countryside. In accordance with the Part 1 study the assessment evaluates the countryside and rural characteristics as well as urban influences on the site to determine contribution towards safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The rural and urban features are considered in the first instance to understand whether the site has a countryside, urban fringe, or urban character. The definitions applied in the Part 1 study are utilised.
- 2.7.2 The countryside comprises the land and characteristics associated with a rural area. Therefore, such areas generally exhibit absence of built development and urbanising influences, and are characterised by rural open land uses including agriculture and woodland. It is closely connected to physical openness (freedom from development) which is similarly a reflection of the absence of built development and urbanising influences. Landscape characteristics also influence the perception of character and quality of the countryside. The assessment therefore includes examination of topography, woodland and tree cover and presence of hedgerows / boundary planting which can help define views and perceptions of openness in the landscape. This perception of openness is in turn influential in the way a Green Belt area performs against the purposes. Landscape features can conceal urban features and built development in close proximity and restrict/interrupt views of settlements and urbanised features. It is also important to note that these areas can comprise high quality or valued landscapes, including those in good condition and/or included in designations.
- 2.7.3 The classification terminology for each level of contribution, and assessment criteria, to safeguard the countryside, is set out below.

Contribution	Classification Terminology
<i>Significant</i>	<p><b>The site exhibits strong countryside characteristics, high levels of visual openness and is free from encroachment / development.</b></p> <p><i>Assessment Criteria:</i></p> <p>The land comprises open countryside and there are few detracting elements.</p>
<i>Partial</i>	<p><b>The site exhibits countryside characteristics, but there are elements that undermine these to some extent.</b></p> <p><i>Assessment Criteria:</i></p> <p>The land comprises uses that are consistent with countryside, but there are detracting elements e.g. the land-use is not consistent with countryside e.g. sports pitches. Built development already occupies part of the land.</p>
<i>Limited or No</i>	<p><b>The site exhibits strong urban fringe characteristics including built form.</b></p> <p><i>Assessment Criteria:</i></p> <p>Urban fringe elements dominate, e.g. the site is surrounded or part surrounded by urban form. Built development already occupies a large proportion of the site.</p>

- 2.7.4 The site specific text refers to specific features within or adjoining the site that impact upon its countryside or urban fringe character. These could include presence of agricultural land, recreational land uses, prominent urban edges, ribbon development etc. These features and their relationship to land character are discussed below.
- 2.7.5 Open land uses of a countryside character are considered to include agriculture, woodland, and areas of natural/semi-natural habitats. Agriculture includes fields used for arable crops and pasture. Woodlands include plantation, semi-natural and natural woodland (including ancient woodland). Natural and semi-natural habitats could overlap with woodland, but could also include other habitats, features and elements e.g. commons, heathland, rivers and ponds.

- 2.7.6 Some features/types of development may be appropriate within the Green Belt (as set out in the NPPF) e.g. buildings for agriculture and forestry, facilities for outdoor sport and recreation, cemeteries, mineral extraction, engineering operations etc. These are typical of the urban-rural fringe. A site based judgement is necessary to identify if any features or elements within or near a site undermine its countryside characteristics. Other urban fringe characteristics will be evident as a result of development in the Green Belt, including encroachment. These features could also represent urbanising influences on the Green Belt in addition to prominent settlement edges and prominent (visually or audibly) major corridors including motorways and railways lines.
- 2.7.7 Environmental or landscape quality designations may also support strong countryside character. However, absence of such designations does not mean that land does not comprise countryside.

## 2.8 NPPF Purpose 4: To Preserve the Setting and Special Character of Historic Towns

- 2.8.1 The fourth purpose performs a girdle role, as a green ring around historic settlements or to provide the landscape context to historic features that preserves setting by keeping land open. The heritage assets considered in this analysis include Conservation Areas, Historic Parks and Gardens and Scheduled Ancient Monuments. For the purposes of the assessment Listed Buildings and Areas of Archaeological Significance are not considered. Relevant historic features on-site are recorded within the designations section of the Site Proforma.
- 2.8.2 Listed Buildings and Areas of Archaeological Significance should not be the focus of the purposes assessment, but should still be identified in the designation section to record context (they do not need to be repeated in the Purposes Assessment). A single Listed Building may not present an issue (as the focus of the Green Belt Purpose is historic towns), but a group of several Listed Buildings may raise the potential sensitivity to level that warrants identification and further analysis (at a later stage).
- 2.8.3 The classification terminology for each level of contribution, and assessment criteria, to preserve historic setting is set out below.

Contribution	Classification Terminology
<i>Significant</i>	<p><b>The site makes a significant contribution towards preserving the setting of historic features.</b></p> <p><i>Assessment Criteria:</i></p> <p>The site contains or is directly adjacent to a Conservation Area or Historic Park and Garden, or contains a Scheduled Ancient Monuments.</p> <p>The whole of the site preserves the historic setting to the historic feature.</p> <p>Historic setting is determined through desk-based and on-site tasks. Then on-site the relationship between the site and historic feature(s) should be assessed by considering any direct views between the site and historic feature(s). This is to be undertaken by visiting both the site and the edge of the historic feature and considering the visual connection between both.</p>
<i>Partial</i>	<p><b>The site makes a partial contribution towards preserving the setting of historic features.</b></p> <p><i>Assessment Criteria:</i></p> <p>The site is indirectly adjacent to a Conservation Area or Historic Park and Garden, or contains a Scheduled Ancient Monuments.</p> <p>Only part of the site preserves the historic setting.</p> <p>See above for description of desk-based and on-site tasks.</p>
<i>Limited or No</i>	<p><b>The site does not preserve setting of any historic features. It has no relationship to historic features. There are no historic features located within or adjacent to the site.</b></p> <p><i>Assessment Criteria:</i></p> <p>The site has no relationship with Conservation Areas, Historic Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Ancient Monuments.</p>

- 2.8.4 The site specific text refers to the description and location of specific historic features which are relevant to the site. The section of the site which contributes towards preserving historic setting is noted in the proformas where appropriate.

## 2.9 Local Purpose: To Maintain the Existing Settlement Pattern

- 2.9.1 In accordance with the Part 1 study the local purpose is also assessed. This purpose was a planning objective in the 1998 Hertfordshire Structure Plan and continues to be articulated within local policy. The Green Belt maintains the existing settlement pattern by providing a range of spaces and gaps between all settlements. Therefore the assessment criteria have followed those questions applied to the second purpose, but focus on land between non-1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements. Though not specifically defined as such in local policy, these spaces have been considered to represent 'primary' or 'secondary' local gaps.
- 2.9.2 A primary local gap provides the space between 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements to 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> tier settlements only where as a secondary local gap provides the space between 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> tier settlements to 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> tier settlements only. None of the sites evaluated in this study would lead to physical merging of settlements in isolation. However physical merging might take place in some cases, should groups of sites be released from the Green Belt.
- 2.9.3 The appraisal of this purpose is very similar to the consideration of national purpose 2 (to prevent neighbouring towns from merging), with the approach being the same, but applied to the gaps between smaller settlements (or 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements to smaller settlements). Therefore, to avoid duplication the method set out in relation to national purpose 2 should be referred to. Key elements of this comprise:
- Consideration of the fragility of gaps;
  - The size of a site relative to a gap;
  - The presence of existing ribbon development and encroachment; and
  - Visual perception of the gap.
- 2.9.4 The classification terminology for each level of contribution, and assessment criteria, to maintain the existing settlement pattern is set out below.

Contribution	Classification Terminology
<i>Significant</i>	<p><b>The site is located within a primary local gap or secondary local gap. The site makes a significant contribution towards the visual perception of the separation of settlements.</b></p> <p><i>Assessment Criteria:</i></p> <p>The site is located within a primary local gap or secondary local gap.</p> <p>The site would considerably narrow shorter gaps between 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements, with key considerations as follows (note that not all need apply to a single site):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There would be an appreciable reduction in the primary or secondary gap, to the extent that that there would be an adverse effect on settlement pattern (contribution to coalescence);</li> <li>• The site lies within the shortest or shorter gaps between relevant settlements;</li> <li>• A primary or secondary gap is already compromised by existing developments (e.g. ribbon development and encroachment), and therefore may be vulnerable to further change (fragility of gaps).</li> <li>• The scale of a site relative to the gap means development is likely to result in a marked reduced physical separation or visual perception of the gap.</li> </ul>

Contribution	Classification Terminology
<i>Partial</i>	<p><b>The site is located within a primary local gap or secondary local gap. The site makes a partial or limited contribution towards the visual perception of the separation of settlements.</b></p> <p><i>Assessment Criteria:</i></p> <p>The site is located within a primary local gap or secondary local gap.</p> <p>The site would narrow a primary or secondary local gap, however factors mitigate the potential effects on the separation of settlements, with key considerations as follows (note that not all need apply to a single site):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While a site lies within the primary or secondary gap, it would not reduce the gap or shorter gaps between settlements and the site is more integral to the existing settlement pattern;</li> <li>• The impact of any encroachment or ribbon development is limited as development does not impact upon visual perception or separation of settlements and development within the gap is consistent with countryside uses/patterns (the existing gap is less fragile);</li> <li>• The scale of a site relative to the gap means development is less likely to result in a marked reduction in physical separation or visual perception of the gap;</li> <li>• On-site contribution to visual perception is not significant e.g. the site already contains development, therefore the potential change associated with new development would be reduced.</li> </ul>
<i>Limited or No</i>	<p><b>The site is not located within a primary local gap or secondary local gap.</b></p> <p><b>OR</b></p> <p><b>The small scale size of the site (e.g. an existing residential property, single small field, small car park etc.) and its characteristics mean that it makes a limited contribution to the primary or secondary local gap.</b></p>

2.9.5 The site specific text refers to the settlements in relation to the primary local gap or secondary local gap in which the site is located. The analysis of the visual perception of the gap summarises any feature or features (e.g. ribbon development etc.) which impact upon the character and openness of the Green Belt, where appropriate.

## 2.10 Task 5: Evaluation of Purposes Assessment

2.10.1 Each site is assessed against each of the four national Green Belt purposes and local Hertfordshire purpose. A colour coding classification system is used to summarise the assessment of each site against each purpose. The classification denotes the outcome of the assessment of the contribution that a site makes towards each of the Green Belt purposes.

<b>Dark green</b>	Significant contribution to Green Belt purposes
<b>Mid green</b>	Partial contribution to Green Belt purposes
<b>Light green</b>	Limited or no contribution to Green Belt purposes

2.10.2 With regard to next steps and further assessment, the Council will review all levels of contribution from each site and determine which sites require further investigation.

### Other Considerations

2.10.3 The Site Proforma allows for other considerations to help the Council consider the need for potential further assessment of sites. Other considerations relate to potential cumulative impacts of groups of sites, potential for sub-division or boundary review, and potential cross-boundary issues with adjoining local authorities.

2.10.4 The potential for cumulative impacts associated with sites is identified. If a site forms part of a group or collection of sites the Site Proforma states that this might have a greater combined impact on the Green Belt. For example, a site in isolation might not lead to physical coalescence of settlements but a larger group of sites might. For the purpose of this analysis only the potential for cumulative impacts should be identified, with the focus on sites which are grouped. Simple identification of the potential for cumulative effects has been undertaken at this stage as it is not known which or how many sites will be taken forward. Once there is clearer understanding of which sites may be being proposed for potential release from Green Belt, it may be appropriate to revisit the potential for cumulative effects.

2.10.5 The opportunity for potential sub-division of a site or potential expansion of a site is considered. Either consideration is only possible if stronger and more permanent boundaries exist which might maintain the integrity of the Green Belt.

2.10.6 Potential cross-boundary issues with adjoining local planning authorities are identified. This is only relevant if a site directly adjoins or is close to the boundary of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.

### Summary

2.10.7 The Site Proformas summarise how many national purposes the site makes a significant or partial contribution towards, and whether there is a significant contribution to the local purpose. The potential for a cumulative impact is also highlighted. This summary also comments upon the openness of the site and whether there is any potential to adjust the boundaries in a way that may alter potential impacts on the Green Belt.

## Appendix A. Glossary of Terms

<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Definition of Terms to be applied in Assessment</b>
<i>To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas</i>	<p><b>Sprawl</b> – ‘spread out over a large area in an untidy or irregular way’ (Oxford Dictionary online).</p> <p><b>Large built-up areas</b> – in the context of this study are London, Luton &amp; Dunstable and Stevenage, where outward expansion (particularly to the south) was controlled as an original purpose of the Green Belt.</p>
<i>To prevent neighbouring towns from merging</i>	<p><b>Neighbouring towns</b> – 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements (see Table 3.2 Settlement Hierarchy)</p> <p><b>Merging</b> – this can be by way of general sprawl (above) or;</p> <p><b>Ribbon development</b> – ‘the building of houses along a main road, especially one leading out of a town or village’ (Oxford Dictionary Online). This includes historical patterns of, or current pressures for, the spread of all forms of development along movement corridors, particularly major roads.</p> <p><b>Strategic gap</b> – provides the space between 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements to 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements only.</p>
<i>To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment</i>	<p><b>Encroachment</b>– ‘a gradual advance beyond usual or acceptable limits’ (Oxford Dictionary online).</p> <p><b>The countryside</b> – open land with an absence of built development and urbanising influences, and characterised by rural land uses including agriculture and forestry. Relevant landscape character or quality designations will be taken into account in assessing the role of the Green Belt in safeguarding countryside.</p> <p><b>Openness</b> – there are two types of openness employed in the assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual openness (relating to nature of views obtained from the site); and,</li> <li>• Physical openness (an absence of development).</li> </ul>
<i>To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns</i>	<p><b>Historic town</b> – settlement or place with historic features identified in local policy or through conservation area or other historic designation(s). Historic features to include Conservation Areas, Historic Parks and Gardens and Scheduled Monuments.</p>
<i>To broadly maintain the existing settlement pattern</i>	<p><b>Settlement pattern</b> – this pattern is created as a result of the location and separation of all settlements including main towns, market towns, large villages, small villages and other villages and hamlets within the Study area. A particular characteristic of the area is the physical and visual separation of many smaller settlements by gaps that vary in width.</p> <p><b>Primary local gap</b> – provides the space between 1<sup>st</sup> tier settlements to 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> tiers settlements only.</p> <p><b>Secondary local gap</b> – provides the space between 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> tier settlements to 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> tier settlements only.</p>

**Part 1 study** – Green Belt Review: Purposes Assessment for Dacorum, St Albans and Welwyn Hatfield (November 2013).

**Part 2 study** – Welwyn Hatfield Green Belt Review – Purposes Assessment

**Strategic Parcel** – assessment area for Part 1 Study. The study was sub-divided into 66 strategic parcels across the three local authorities.

**Strategic sub-area** – large area of Green Belt land which contributes least to the five Green Belt purposes assessed in the Part 1 Study.

**Small scale sub-area** – small area of Green Belt land which contributes least to the five Green Belt purposes assessed in the Part 1 Study.

**Boundary Adjustment** – area of Green Belt land which contributes least to the five Green Belt purposes assessed in the Part 1 Study. It has been built upon and does not exhibit Green Belt characteristics.

**Major transport corridors** – M25, M1, A1(M) and railway lines.

**Urban Fringe / Peri-urban environment** – land or '[...]' that zone of transition which begins with the edge of the fully built up urban area and becomes progressively more rural whilst still remaining a clear mix of urban and rural land uses and influences before giving way to the wider countryside' (Countryside Agency, 2002: no page number<sup>3</sup>)

**Green wedge** – open land which runs into urban area, rather than around urban area.

**Well-maintained gap** – absence of built development from the spaces between settlements.

**Concealed** – landscape features such as planting / hedgerows / trees which hide physical features including settlements and roads, railway lines.

**Landscape sensitivity** – a reflection of the susceptibility to change and value of a given landscape.

**Shelterbelts** – a linear area of woodland, often planted to provide shelter or visual enclosure.

**Susceptibility to change** – the ability of a landscape receptor to accommodate change without undue consequences.

**Landscape value** – typically reflected in designations or policies that seek to protect landscape character or elements.

**Visual receptor** – a person likely to see a particular view.

**Visual sensitivity** – a reflection of the potential susceptibility of a person or group of people to a change in a view, it is influenced by the activity of a person (or group of people) and the extent to which their attention may be focussed on the view.

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<sup>3</sup>Countryside Agency (2002) The state and potential of agriculture in the urban fringe, unpublished project brief, Cheltenham, CA