



Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Phase 1: Towns and key villages

Uttlesford District Council

Final accessible report (updated)
Prepared by LUC
October 2023

Version	Status	Prepared	Checked	Approved	Date
1	Final accessible report	N Gul J Musial	A Knight P Smith	K Davies	19.10.2023



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Registered in England. Registered number 2549296. Registered office: 250 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8RD. Printed on 100% recycled paper

Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

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Chapter 1

Introduction

2023 update

1.1 In 2023 LUC was commissioned to update the Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment (2023). The second part of the commission was to sense check the 2021-22 Landscape Sensitivity Assessments in light of the update. This included:

- Update the naming and numbering of Landscape Character Areas, to fit with the 2023 Landscape Character Assessment, for both maps and text.
- Sense check of the landscape sensitivity ratings based on the updated Landscape Character Assessment, and any development that has taken place since the original report.
- Update the report to meet the requirements of the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No.2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

1.2 The sense check has not resulted in any changes to the overall sensitivity ratings for any of the assessment parcels. Since the original assessment, additional development has been built, and sites have received planning permission. The Uttlesford Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA), dated October 2023, provides the most up-to-date status of all sites within the district. In the main text, we have reflected the change from Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) to Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA). However, the maps in this version still retain the previous SLAA term.

1.3 This chapter gives an overview of the study and presents the policy context.

Background and purpose of this study

1.4 Uttlesford District Council (UDC) is in the early stages of preparing a new Local Plan to cover the period 2021 - 2041, which will need to accommodate strategic development at sustainable locations. As part of the evidence base for the Local Plan, the Council needs to consider whether the landscape around towns and villages in the district, as well as sites for new settlements, has the capacity to accommodate new development without causing significant adverse effects on its character.

1.5 UDC commissioned LUC in June 2021 to prepare a landscape sensitivity assessment (hereafter referred to as the study) for the following:

- Phase 1: Towns and key villages
- Phase 2: Potential new settlement locations
- Phase 3: Allocations around other villages

1.6 The purpose of the study is to provide a robust and up-to-date evidence base and assessment to inform the appropriate scale, form and location of future development to minimise harm to landscape and the setting of settlements. By assessing and mapping the relative sensitivity of different landscapes the study will provide a tool for informing landscape change.

1.7 The outputs of the study will be used by UDC to;

- Identify land where development would be most appropriate to minimise impact on landscape, that is, areas of least sensitivity.
- Help in refining broad growth areas and inform the evaluation of potential development locations.
- Help establish individual site options for consideration through the Sustainability Appraisal process and for future consultation.

Policy context

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

1.8 The UK Government published an updated and revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in July 2021, which sets out the environmental, social and economic planning policies for England. Central to NPPF policies is a presumption in favour of sustainable development; that development should be planned for positively and individual proposals should be approved wherever possible.

1.9 One of the overarching objectives that underpins the NPPF is set out in Paragraph 8: “an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment.”

1.10 Paragraph 174 states that “planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes” and “recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside”.

1.11 Paragraph 20 states ‘Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and make sufficient provision for:

Chapter 1 Introduction

1. Housing (including affordable housing), employment, retail, leisure and other commercial development;
2. Infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, security, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management, and the provision of minerals and energy (including heat);
3. Community facilities (such as health, education and cultural infrastructure); and
4. Conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation’.

1.12 Paragraph 130 states ‘Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

1. will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
2. are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
3. are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
4. establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit.
5. optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
6. create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience’.

1.13 Paragraph 175 states ‘Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries’.

1.14 Paragraph 185 contains one reference to sensitivity as follows:

'Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development...'

National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)

1.15 Further guidance is provided in the NPPG. Paragraph: 037 Reference ID: 8-037-20190721 Revision date: 21 07 2019 notes the following under the heading of 'How can the character of the landscape be assessed?'

1.16 "...Landscape sensitivity can inform policy development and appropriate locations for development and can also be one of the considerations to be taken into account when making decisions on planning applications.

1.17 To help assess the type and scale of development that might be able to be accommodated without compromising landscape character, a Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment can be completed. To demonstrate the likely effects of a proposed development on the landscape, a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment can be used.

Local Plan

1.18 The draft Local Plan 2019 was withdrawn in April 2020 following the Inspectors' Letter of January 2020. Preparation of the new Local Plan 2021-2041 is currently underway, with the first consultation stage completed in April 2021. The aim is to submit the new Local Plan to the secretary of state in winter 2024 with adoption in early 2026.

1.19 The 2005 Local Plan is the current adopted plan for Uttlesford. The following policies relate directly to the Local Plan's stance on the protection of landscapes:

- Policy S8 The Countryside Protection Zone states that development will not be permitted if it promotes coalescence between Stansted Airport and existing development in the surrounding countryside, or if it would adversely affect the open character of the landscape.
- Policy GEN2 Design states that new development should safeguard important environmental features in its setting, retaining them and using them to reduce the visual impact of the new development where possible.
- Policy GEN5 Light Pollution states that developments with lighting schemes must use the minimum level of lighting necessary to achieve its purpose, and minimise glare and light spillage.

- Policy ENV3 Open Spaces and Trees states that traditional open spaces, visually important spaces, groups of trees and fine individual trees should be maintained, unless the need for development outweighs their amenity value.
- Policy ENV8 Other Landscape Elements of Importance for Nature Conservation states that the following landscape features should be retained where possible, and mitigation provided if this is not possible:
 - Hedgerows
 - Linear tree belts
 - Larger semi natural or ancient woodlands
 - Semi-natural grasslands
 - Green lanes and special verges
 - Orchards
 - Plantations
 - Ponds
 - Reservoirs
 - River corridors
 - Linear wetland features
 - Networks or patterns of other locally important habitats.
- Policy ENV9 Historic Landscapes states that significant local historic landscapes, historic parks and gardens and protected lanes should not be harmed by new development.

Neighbourhood Plans

1.20 Eight settlements within Uttlesford have adopted Neighbourhood Plans:

- Ashdon (adopted December 2022)
- Felsted (adopted February 2020)
- Great and Little Chesterford (adopted February 2023)
- Great Dunmow (adopted December 2016)
- Newport, Quendon and Rickling (adopted June 2021)
- Stebbing (adopted July 2022)

- Thaxted (adopted February 2019)
- Saffron Walden (adopted October 2022)

Landscape character context

1.21 Uttlesford is a large rural district. As set out in the updated Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment (2023) [See reference 1], the landscape is one of gently rolling plateaux, generally under arable cultivation. The landscape is incised by river valleys, including the main rivers Cam, Stort, Pant and Upper Chelmer. The west of the district is underlain by chalk and has a more strongly rolling landform of round backed ridges.

1.22 The distinct rural character of the District with its attractive and historic market towns and villages is widely recognised. The settlement pattern is sparse, with small historic villages strung along winding rural lanes. There has been expansion of the main towns of Saffron Walden, Stansted Mountfitchet and Great Dunmow. The M11 and A120 cut through the district. London Stansted Airport is located in the south-west of the district. Although noise from overhead flight paths reduces tranquillity, the airport is well-integrated in the landscape and screened from view.

1.23 In order to help develop its policies and allocations for new housing and employment growth around towns and villages across the District, the Council needs to consider the sensitivity of the local landscape to new development and its capacity to accommodate development without causing significant adverse effects on its character.

Using this study

Limitation of the landscape sensitivity assessment

1.24 This study provides an assessment of the relative landscape sensitivities of different landscape areas to residential and employment development, without knowing the exact location, layout, design or mitigation proposed.

1.25 It should not be interpreted as a definitive statement on the suitability of certain locations for a particular development. It is not a replacement for detailed studies for specific siting and design and all developments will need to be assessed on their individual merits.

1.26 The study is based on an assessment of landscape character using carefully defined criteria. Landscape sensitivity is the result of a complex interplay of often unequally weighted variables (or 'criteria'). We have sought to address this issue in our summary of overall landscape sensitivity given for each assessment area (or 'parcel') – which considers how the criteria-based assessments combine to give an overall sensitivity result for the different development types under consideration. The assessments are based on professional judgement, taking account of the interplay between criteria, as well as those which might be more important to the landscape character of the parcel.

1.27 It is also worth noting that the assessment considers the following:

- The natural character of the landscape but not specific ecological issues in relation to species or habitats;
- The historic and cultural character of the landscape but not specific cultural heritage/archaeological issues associated with individual designated heritage assets and their settings; and
- The visual character of the landscape but not visual amenity issues associated with specific receptors - such as public views from specific locations (for example promoted viewpoints), or private views and outlooks available to occupants of residential properties.

1.28 These are all issues that will need to be taken into account in site selection and impacts will need to be reported at the time when individual proposals are put forward – as such they will be addressed through the Sustainability Appraisal, the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA), planning applications and the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process including more detailed landscape and visual impact assessments and appraisals (LVIA).

1.29 This study concentrates on understanding the sensitivities to development and does not address capacity. Capacity is a further stage of assessment that requires consideration of cumulative development, landscape objectives, and thresholds of acceptable change to identify likely quantum of change that can be accommodated.

1.30 Finally, this remains a strategic study which is based on the assessment of broad settlement edge parcels. There are likely to be spatial variations in character within any one parcel and these are generally described in the text. Individual site level investigations will likely indicate further differences and variations at the site scale. This study was undertaken at 1:25,000 scale, involving desk study and field work from public rights of way and public vantage points.

Structure of the report

1.31 Each phase of the study will be presented in its own report. Each report is structured as follows:

Chapter 1 presents an introduction and policy context (this chapter)

Chapter 2 sets out the methodology for the landscape sensitivity assessment.

Chapter 3 sets out the overall landscape sensitivity results.

Appendix A contains the sources of information used in the assessment.

Appendix B contains a glossary of terms.

Appendix C presents the landscape sensitivity assessment profiles by parcel, ordered alphabetically by settlement.

Chapter 2

Methodology

2.1 This chapter sets out the approach to assessing for the landscape sensitivity.

2.2 The process for undertaking the landscape sensitivity assessment involved three main stages:

- Phase 1: Towns and villages
- Phase 2: Potential new settlements
- Phase 3: Additional sites around smaller villages

2.3 The methodology for Phase 1: Towns and villages is described below.

Phase 1: Towns and villages LSA

Type and scale of developments considered

2.4 The assessment considers the landscape sensitivity of the landscape around towns and villages within Uttlesford District to specific residential and commercial development types. These development scenarios were agreed with UDC as representative of those that are most likely to be put forward by developers.

2.5 The development scenarios used for the assessment are set out in the following section.

Development typology 1: Residential housing development

Description

2.6 Low density two-three storey houses at approximately .30-40 dwellings per hectare (dph) with associated access roads, private gardens and garaging.

Example

Elms Farm, Stansted Mountfitchet



Development typology 2: Mixed use development

Description

Low density two-three storey houses at approximately .30-40 dwellings per hectare (dph) along with small scale two storey commercial development, for example, employment hubs.

Example

Walpole Meadows, Stansted Mountfitchet



Development typology 3: Sports facilities

Description

One-two storey sports clubs, parking and flood lit sports fields

Example

Manuden Village Community Centre



Spatial framework for the assessment

2.7 The assessment uses the spatial framework of Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and components Landscape Character Areas (LCA) identified by the existing updated Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment (2023) which identifies 3 LCTs and 19 component LCAs.

2.8 The LCTs and component LCAs which form the spatial framework for this study are shown in Figure 2.1

Study Areas

2.9 The assessment focuses on the settlement fringes of 10 towns and villages across the district which are set out in Table 2.1: Phase 1 Towns and villages assessment parcels and Figure 2.2.

2.10 Study areas around each of these settlements were defined and agreed with UDC, following a desktop analysis of settlement surrounding and the likely extent of development pressure, including the following:

- Built-up area boundaries as defined in the adopted Uttlesford District Local Plan 2005
- Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)
- Ecological and heritage designations and information from the Uttlesford Historic Environment Project.
- The extent of sites put forward through the call for sites process (July 2021)

2.11 The study areas for each of the towns and villages were based on an outer radius of up to 1 kilometre from the settlement edge for the larger towns, and up to 500 metres from other rural settlements. The extent of these areas was defined by a combination of the size of the settlement; the presence of substantive boundary features such as major roads or rivers; and the character of the surrounding landscape.

2.12 Within the study area, land was scoped out of the assessment if there was no physical connection with the settlement (that is if another assessment parcel 'intervened' between the land and the settlement). Land was also scoped out based on defined key constraints, as agreed with UDC. The presence of the following constraints led to some land being automatically scoped out of the assessment:

- Flood Zone 3 (representing the highest level of flood risk);

- Statutory national ecological designations including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI); and National Nature Reserves
- Statutory heritage designations (Scheduled Monuments and Registered Parks and Gardens)

Phase 1: Towns and villages

Table 2.1: Phase 1 Towns and villages assessment parcels

Settlements	Assessment Parcels
Bishop’s Stortford	2
Elsenham	3
Great Chesterford	2
Great Dunmow	2
Hatfield Heath	3
Newport	2
Saffron Walden	3
Stansted Mountfitchet	3
Takeley and Priors Green	2
Thaxted	2
Total	24

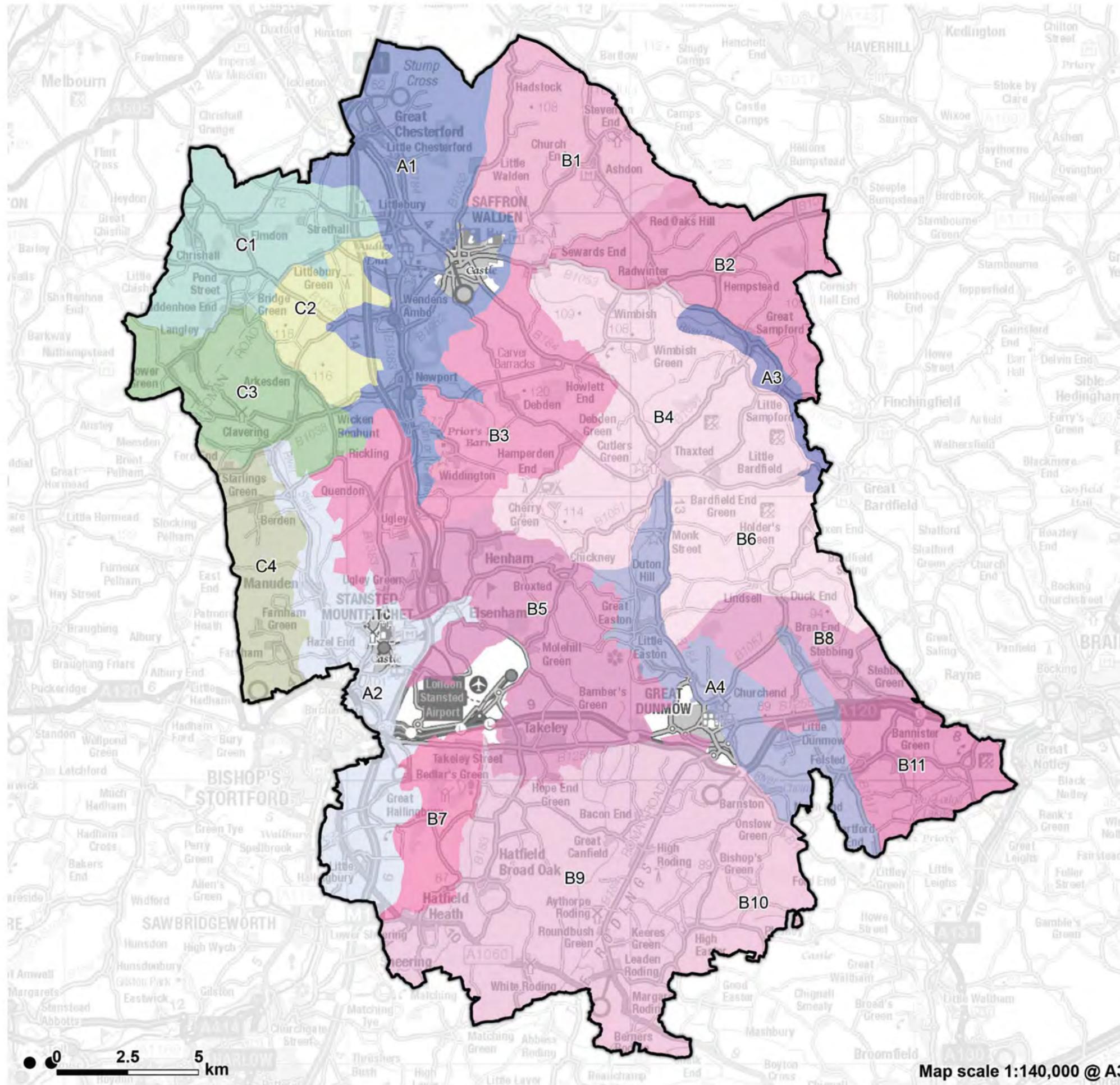
2.13 The district-wide key constraints which determined the scoping are shown on Figure 2.3. Occasionally it was not feasible to exclude particularly small or narrow areas of land subject to these constraints.

2.14 Each study area was then subdivided into assessment parcels, so that judgements could be made on the relative landscape sensitivity of different parts of each settlement fringe. Assessment parcels were defined so that they contained land of the same or similar land use or character, bounded by recognisable features such as roads, woodlands or field boundaries, as appropriate. The aim was to define areas of approximately even size, although characteristics were more important than size in determining their number and extent.

2.15 This process resulted in a total of 24 geographically distinct assessment parcels being identified. These are outlined within Table 2.1: Phase 1 Towns and villages assessment parcels above.

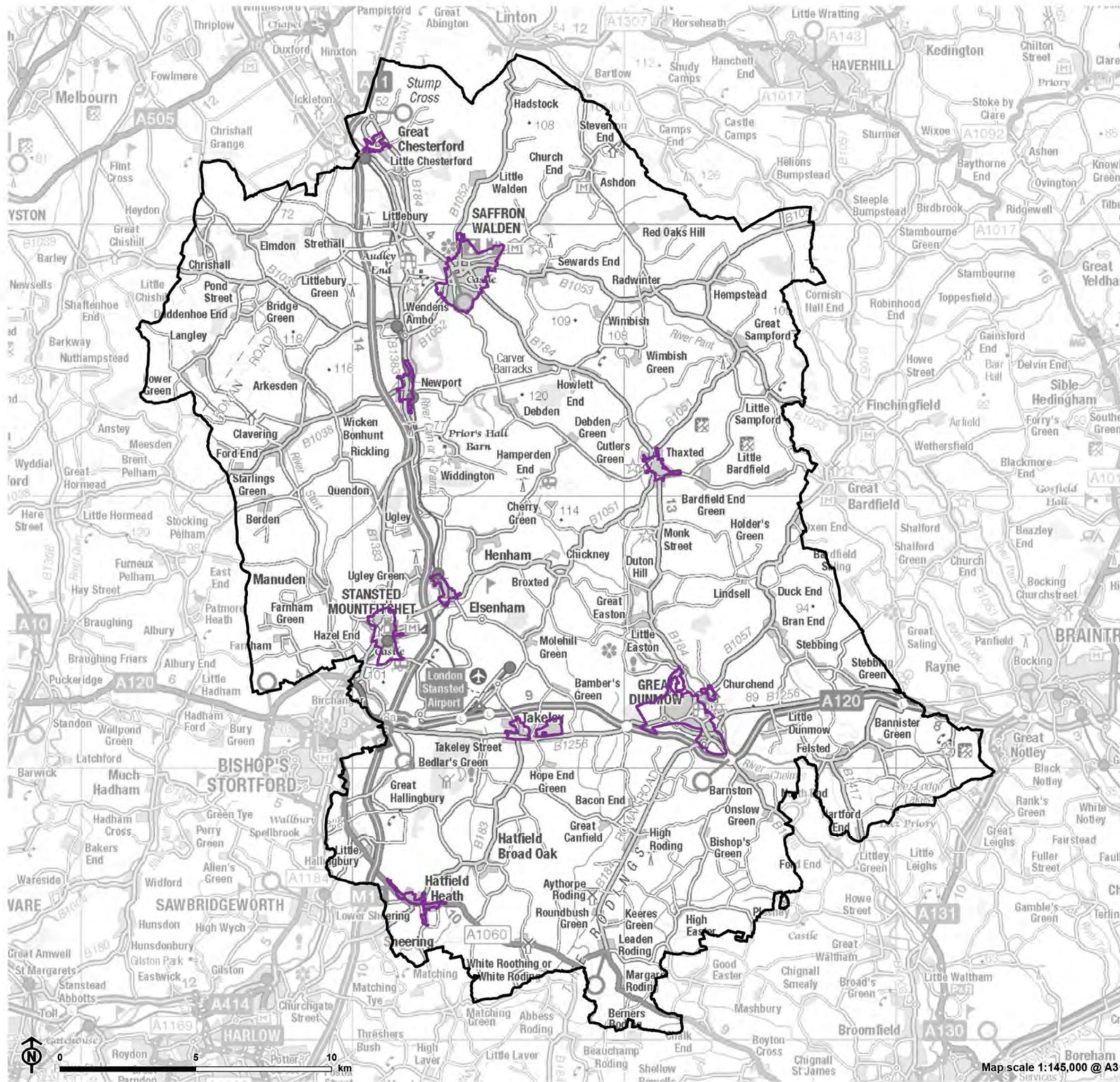
2.16 Figure 2.4 shows an example of the defined assessment parcels around Great Dunmow following this process.

Figure 2.1: Landscape Character Context



- Uttlesford district boundary
- Landscape Character Area**
- A - River Valley**
 - A1: Cam River Valley
 - A2: Stort River Valley
 - A3: Pant River Valley
 - A4: Upper Chelmer River Valley
- B - Farmland Plateau**
 - B1: Ashdon Farmland Plateau
 - B10: Barnston Farmland Plateau
 - B11: Felsted Farmland Plateau
 - B2: Hempstead Farmland Plateau
 - B3: Debden Farmland Plateau
 - B4: Thaxted Farmland Plateau
 - B5: Broxted Farmland Plateau
 - B6: Lindsell Farmland Plateau
 - B7: Hatfield Forest Farmland Plateau
 - B8: Stebbing Green Farmland Plateau
 - B9: Roding Farmland Plateau
- C - Chalk Valley**
 - C1: Elmdon Chalk Upland
 - C2: Arkesden Chalk Upland
 - C3: Langley Chalk Upland
 - C4: Berden Chalk upland

Figure 2.2 Study areas

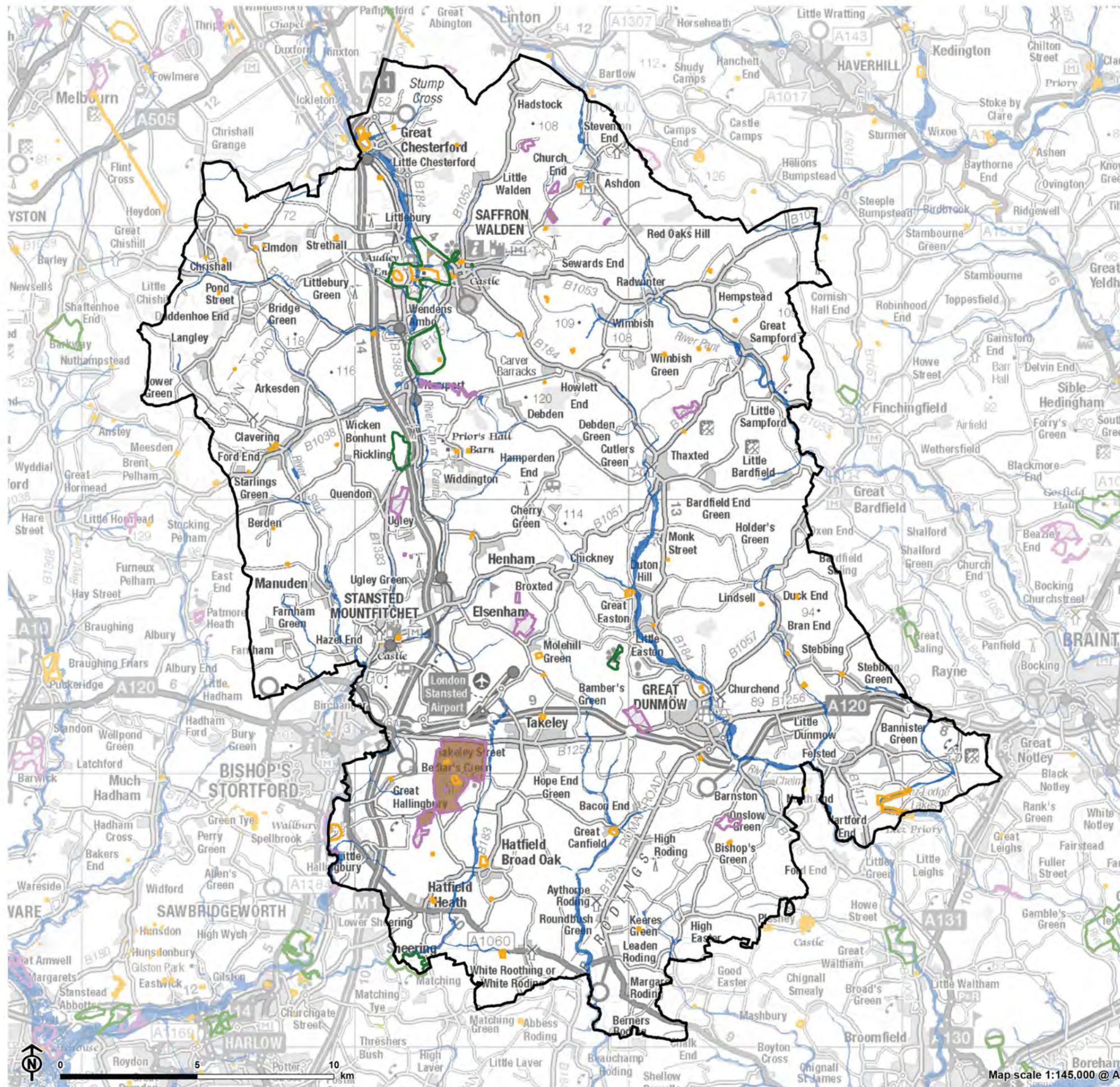


Uttlesford District boundary
Settlement boundary





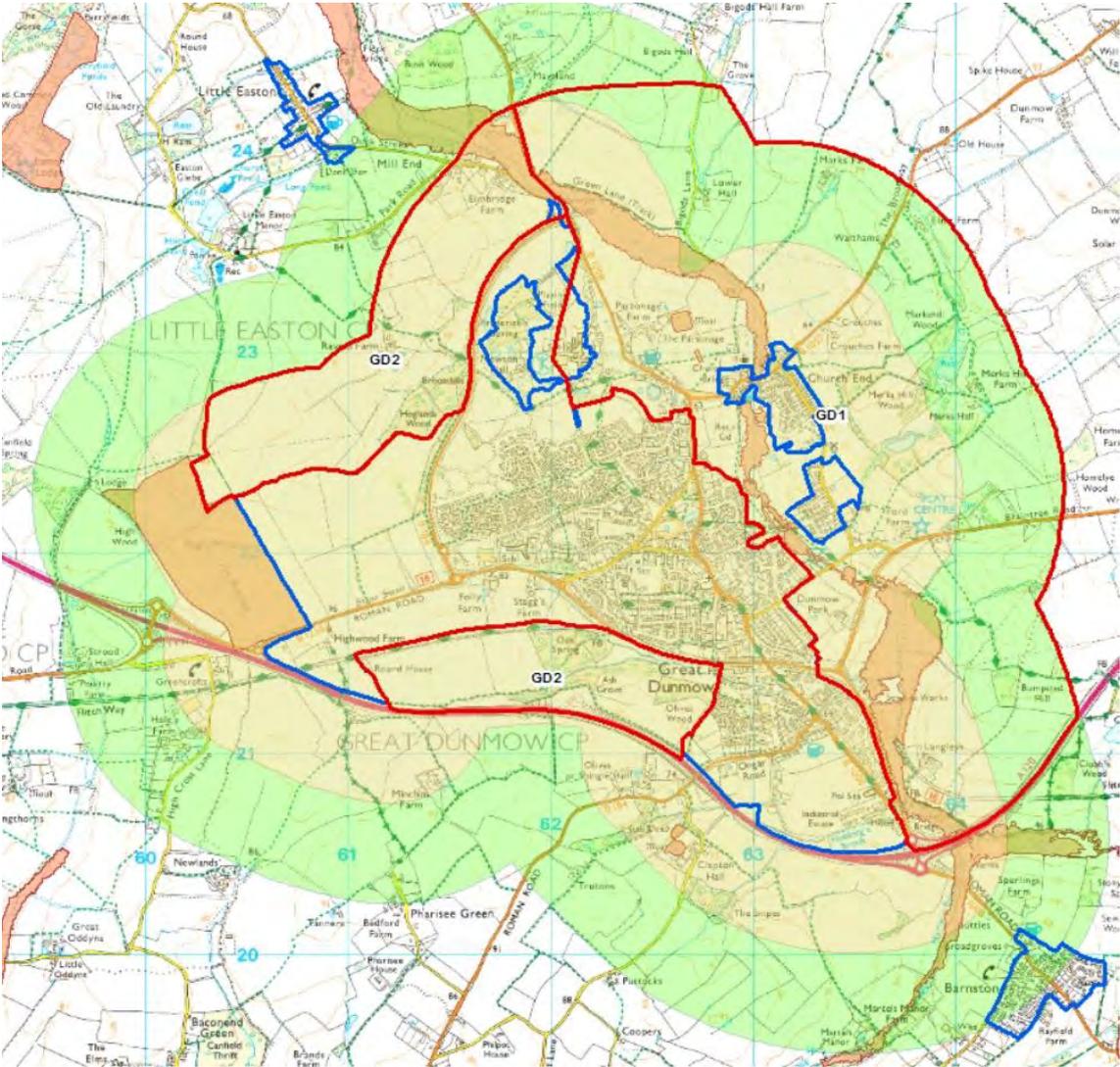
Figure 2.3 District wide key constraints



- Uttlesford District boundary
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- National Nature Reserve
- Registered parks and gardens
- Scheduled monument
- Flood zone 3



Figure 2.4: ArcGIS screenshot of defined parcels around Great Dunmow following the scoping out process. The 500 metres and 1 kilometres buffers are shown. Areas shaded in orange were scoped out due to flood areas and ecological designations.



Evaluating landscape sensitivity

2.17 This assessment draws on advice contained in Natural England's 'Approach to landscape sensitivity assessment' (2019). This describes the term 'landscape sensitivity', within the context of spatial planning and land management, as follows:

"Landscape sensitivity may be regarded as a measure of the resilience, or robustness, of a landscape to withstand specified change arising from development types or land management practices, without undue negative effects on the landscape and visual baseline and their value."

2.18 It is a term applied to landscape character and the associated visual resource, combining judgements of their susceptibility to the specific development type / development scenario or other change being considered together with the value(s) related to that landscape and visual resource.

Assessment criteria

2.19 Landscape sensitivity assessment requires judgements on both landscape susceptibility (how vulnerable the landscape is to change from the type being assessed, in this residential and commercial developments) and landscape value (consensus about importance, which can be recognised through designation as well as through descriptions within the 2014 Landscape Character Assessment).

2.20 The selection of landscape sensitivity indicators ('criteria') for this study is informed by the attributes of landscape that could be affected by residential and commercial development. These consider the 'landscape', 'visual' and 'perceptual' aspects of sensitivity. Their selection is also based on current best practice and experience of LUC in undertaking similar studies elsewhere in the UK.

2.21 The following six criteria headings are used for this study:

- Physical character (landform, scale and field pattern)
- Natural character
- Sense of time depth/ historic landscape character;
- Settlement character;

- Visual character (including skylines); and
- Perceptual and scenic qualities (including recreational value)

2.22 Criteria and guidance assessment section at the end of this chapter provides guidance and examples of higher and lower sensitivity features/attributes for applying the criteria in Uttlesford to residential and commercial development. The assessments present a commentary against each criterion to inform the judgements on levels of sensitivity. It is important to note that the relative importance of each criterion varies between landscapes (due to differences in landscape character). The initial stage of the assessment involved a thorough desk-based study drawing on sources of spatial and descriptive information regarding the landscape. This was supplemented by field survey work undertaken by a team of landscape professionals to verify the findings.

Making overall judgements on landscape sensitivity

2.23 Once the landscape sensitivity criteria were assessed individually, the results were translated into overall scores of landscape sensitivity (see Table 2.2: The five point scale landscape sensitivity scale) for the different bandings of residential, mixed use and sports facility developments. If any areas within the parcel were judged to be of higher/lower landscape sensitivity (due to local variations), this is set out in the assessment summary.

Table 2.2: The five point scale landscape sensitivity scale

Sensitivity Level	Definition
High	The key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are highly sensitive to change. It is unlikely to be able to accommodate the proposed change without significant character change/adverse effects.
Moderate-High	The key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are sensitive to change. There may be very limited situations/locations

Sensitivity Level	Definition
	where the relevant change can be accommodated.
Moderate	Some of the key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are sensitive to change. It may have some potential to accommodate the relevant change in defined locations.
Low-Moderate	Few of the key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are sensitive to change. They are resilient and have some potential to accommodate the change proposed.
Low	The key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are robust and are either unlikely to be subject to change or are not sensitive to the change proposed.

2.24 The five defined levels of landscape sensitivity form stages on a continuum, rather than clearly separated categories. Any given landscape may or may not fit neatly into one category, and an element of professional judgement is required.

2.25 As with all assessments based upon data and information which is to a greater or lesser extent subjective, some caution is required in its interpretation. This is to avoid the suggestion that certain landscape features or qualities can automatically be associated with certain sensitivities – the reality is that an assessment of a landscape’s sensitivity to development is the result of a complex interplay of often unequally weighted variables or criteria.

Criteria and guidance for assessing landscape sensitivity to residential and commercial development

Physical character (including landform, scale and field pattern)

2.26 This considers the shape and scale of the landform, landscape pattern and landscape elements in relation to the scale of potential development. Smooth, gently undulating or flat landforms are likely to be less sensitive to development than a landscape with a more dramatic landform, distinct landform features or incised valleys with prominent slopes.

2.27 This criterion considers how developments fit with the scale of the landform (understanding the scale of the development proposed is important when applying this criterion). Larger scale, simple landforms are likely to be less sensitive to larger scale developments than smaller scale, enclosed landforms (where large-scale developments could appear out of scale with the underlying landform). Conversely, smaller developments may be able to be screened within enclosed landforms, therefore reducing landscape sensitivity. Existing small-scale features in the landscape in the form of existing buildings or trees can also influence the scale of development that can be accommodated in the landscape. This criterion also needs to be considered in relation to visual character.

Low Sensitivity

2.28 The landscape has smooth, gently undulating or featureless landform with uniform large-scale landscape pattern and low density of overlying landscape features.

Moderate Sensitivity

2.29 The landscape has an undulating landform and some distinct landform features; it is overlain by a mixture of small-scale and larger scale field patterns and a moderate density of small-scale landscape features.

High Sensitivity

2.30 The landscape has a dramatic landform or distinct landform features that contribute positively to landscape character; the area has a high density of small-scale landscape features and is overlain by a small-scale field pattern.

Natural character

2.31 This criterion considers the 'naturalistic' qualities of the landscape in terms of coverage of semi-natural habitats and valued natural features (for example trees, hedgerows) which could be vulnerable to loss from development.

2.32 Areas with frequent natural features (including large areas of nationally or internationally designated habitats) result in increased sensitivity to development, while landscapes with limited natural features (including intensively farmed areas or areas with high levels of existing development) will be less sensitive. This criterion also looks at the role of the landscape as part of a wider network of natural features (Nature Recovery Network).

Low sensitivity

2.33 Much of the landscape is intensively farmed or developed with little semi-natural habitat coverage and few valued natural features.

Moderate sensitivity

2.34 There are areas of valued semi-natural habitats and features found in parts of the landscape, whilst other parts are intensively farmed or developed.

High sensitivity

2.35 Large areas of the landscape are nationally or internationally designated for their nature conservation interest; there is a frequent occurrence of valued natural features across the landscape.

Sense of time depth / historic landscape character

2.36 This considers the extent to which the landscape has ‘time-depth’ (a sense of being an historic landscape, with reference to the Uttlesford District Historic Environment Project (2009) and/or the presence of heritage assets that are important to landscape character (that is, Conservation Areas, Scheduled Monuments, listed buildings, protected lanes, archaeological features and remains or other features listed in the landscape character assessment).

2.37 Landscapes with small-scale, more irregular field patterns of historic origin are likely to be more sensitive to the introduction of modern development than landscapes with large, regular scale parliamentary field patterns.

Low sensitivity

2.38 A landscape with relatively few historic features important to the character of the area and little time depth (that is, large intensively farmed fields).

Moderate sensitivity

2.39 A landscape with some visible historic features of importance to character, and a variety of time depths.

High sensitivity

2.40 A landscape with a high density of historic features important to the character of the area and great time depth (that is, piecemeal enclosure with irregular boundaries, ridge and furrow)

Character and setting of settlement

2.41 This considers the overall settlement form and character of existing settlement and considers whether development in the landscape would be in accordance with the general pattern, setting and form of current development and relationship with the existing settlement edge. It includes an understanding of the landscape pattern associated with settlement edges (where relevant), for example, if it is well integrated by woodland cover or open and exposed to form a ‘hard edge’ to the adjoining landscape.

2.42 This criterion also considers the extent to which the landscape contributes to the identity and distinctiveness of settlements, by way of its character and/or scenic quality, for example by providing a backdrop/ setting, or playing an important part in views from a settlement. This also considers the extent to which the area contributes to a perceived gap between settlements (the loss of which would increase coalescence).

Low sensitivity

2.43 The area does not contribute positively to the setting of the settlement or play a separation role. Development in the parcel would have a good relationship with the existing settlement form/ pattern and could provide the opportunity to improve an existing settlement edge.

Moderate sensitivity

2.44 The area provides some contribution to the setting of the settlement by providing, or plays some part in views from the settlement, or play a role in the perception of a gap between settlements. Development in the parcel may be slightly at odds with the settlement form/ pattern and may adversely affect the existing edge to some extent.

High sensitivity

2.45 The area provides an attractive backdrop/ setting to the settlement, plays an important part in views from the settlement, or forms an important part in the perception of a gap between settlements. Development in the parcel would have a poor relationship with the existing settlement form/pattern and would adversely affect an existing settlement edge (which may be historic or distinctive)

Visual character

2.46 This considers the visual prominence of the parcel, reflecting the extent of openness or enclosure in the landscape (due to landform or land cover), and the degree of intervisibility with the surrounding landscape (that is, the extent to which potential development would be visible).

2.47 Visually prominent landscapes are likely to be more sensitive to development than those which are not so visually prominent. Landscapes which are visually prominent and inter-visible with adjacent landscapes (both urban

and rural) are likely to be more sensitive to development than those which are more hidden or less widely visible.

2.48 It also considers the skyline character of the area including whether it forms a visually distinctive skyline or an important undeveloped skyline. Prominent and distinctive and/or undeveloped skylines, or skylines with important landmark features, are likely to be more sensitive to development because new buildings/structures may detract from these skylines as features in the landscape. Important landmark features on the skyline might include historic features or monuments.

Low sensitivity

2.49 The area is enclosed/visually contained and/or has a low degree of visibility from surrounding landscapes and the area does not form a visually distinctive or important undeveloped skyline.

Moderate sensitivity

2.50 The area is semi-enclosed or has some enclosed and some open areas. It is likely to have some inter-visibility with surrounding landscapes and may have some visually distinctive or undeveloped skylines within the area.

High sensitivity

2.51 The area is open and/or has a high degree of visibility from surrounding landscapes, and/or the area forms a visually distinctive skyline or an important undeveloped skyline.

Perceptual and scenic qualities (including access and recreation)

2.52 This considers qualities such as the rural character of the landscape (traditional land uses with few modern human influences), scenic qualities, sense of remoteness and/or tranquillity, and the extent of public access via Public Rights of Way and/or Open Access Land.

2.53 Landscapes that are relatively remote or tranquil (due to freedom from human activity and disturbance and having a perceived naturalness or a traditional rural feel with few modern human influences) tend to increase levels

of sensitivity to development compared to landscapes that contain signs of modern development. High scenic value and dark night skies also add to sensitivity in relation to this criterion. This is because development will introduce new and uncharacteristic features (including flood lighting) which may detract from a sense of tranquillity, dark skies and or remoteness/naturalness.

Low sensitivity

2.54 The area is significantly influenced by development/ human activity, where new development would not be out of character. Low or no public access.

Moderate sensitivity

2.55 A landscape with some sense of rural character, but with some modern elements and human influences. Some Public Rights of Way.

High sensitivity

2.56 A tranquil or highly rural landscape, lacking strong intrusive elements. A landscape of high scenic value with dark skies and a high perceived degree of rural character and naturalness with few modern human influences. Extensive public access via PRoWs/open access land.

Desk Study

2.57 The first task in the assessment process, following the definition of the 24 spatially distinct assessment parcels against the agreed criteria, was to carry out a desk-top analysis of each settlement and its component parcels. This involved the mapping of multiple data sets within ArcGIS (Geographical Information System) to identify the potential sensitivities of each parcel.

Field Verification

2.58 A structured process of field survey verification was undertaken by landscape experts in order to test and refine the outputs from the desk study. Each assessment parcel was visited in turn to record information and take photographs. The field survey was undertaken from roads and public rights of way to gain an understanding of landscape character sensitivity.

2.59 The landscape assessment fieldwork focused in particular on the relationships between the assessment parcels and adjoining settlement edges, landscape settings and wider views. It also noted any important features within each area that would be sensitive to change.

Reporting

2.60 A pilot assessment was produced to agreement with UDC before the full report was prepared.

2.61 Each settlement report produced as part of this study contains the individual landscape sensitivity parcel ‘profiles’ focussed around the settlement edge. The reports are structured as follows:

- An aerial photograph showing the boundaries of the parcels identified for the settlement;
- An overview of the settlement in terms of its location, form, character and setting;
- A short description of each assessment parcel surrounding the settlement;
- Identification of any areas scoped out of the assessment;
- A detailed map of the settlement and parcels, with relevant designations and constraints;
- Representative photographs of the parcels;
- Landscape sensitivity profiles for each assessment parcel, comprising:
 - Overall description of the landscape character context – i.e., which Landscape Character Area(s) the area falls within.
 - Criteria-based landscape sensitivity assessment, with a description given against each assessment criterion and its sensitivity.
 - Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential, mixed use and sports facility development, using the five-point scale rating and a written summary.

Chapter 3

Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Results

3.1 This chapter presents the overall results of the assessment.

3.2 The overall results of the landscape sensitivity assessment are set out in **Table 3.1**. These ratings are also mapped in the figures included in this chapter.

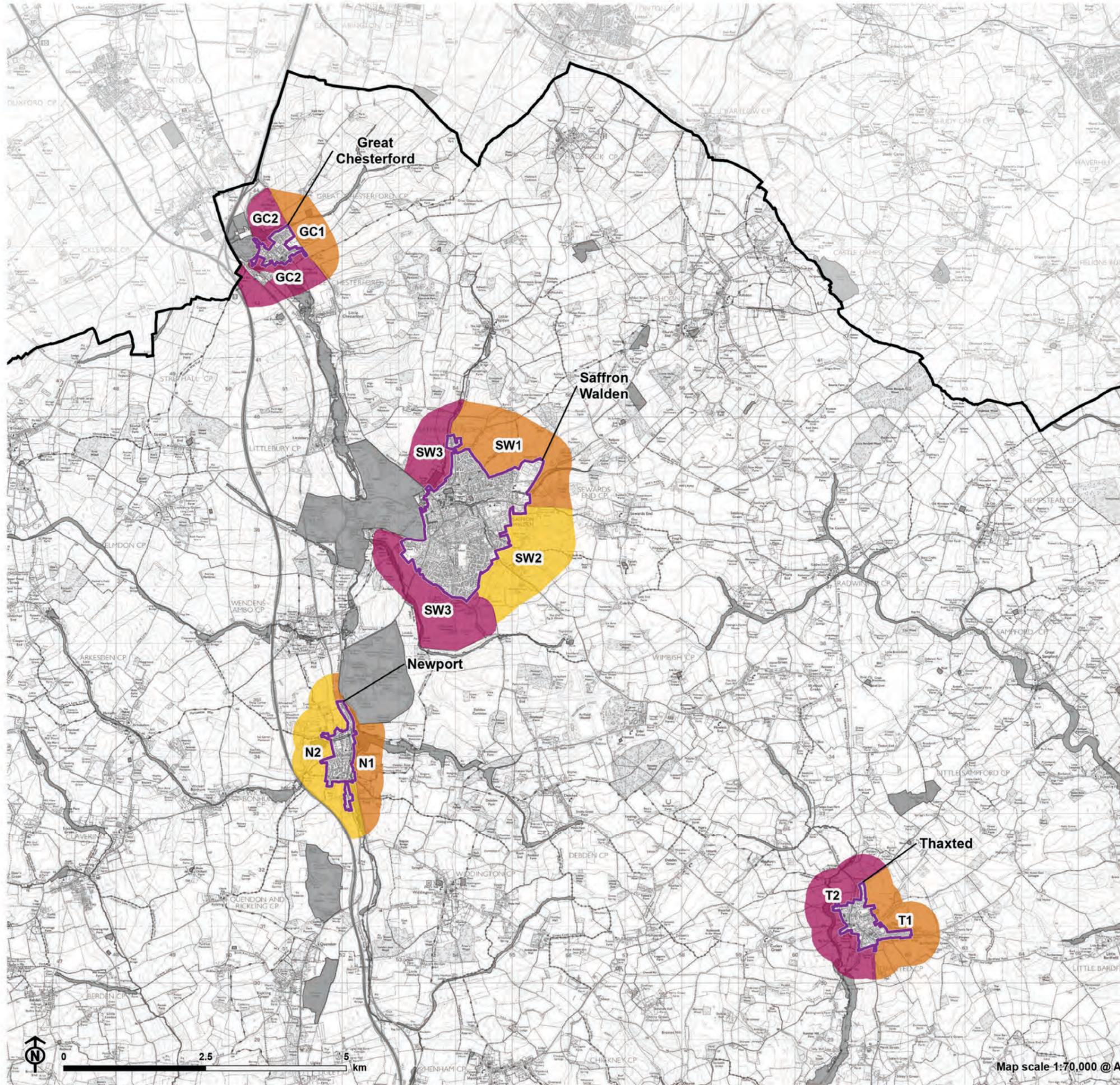
3.3 The overall judgement scores should always be interpreted in conjunction with the information contained in the detailed profiles for the individual settlements. It should not be assumed that all areas with lower sensitivity ratings could be considered suitable for development, as cumulative issues would need to be considered.

Table 3.1: Landscape sensitivity to residential and commercial development

Settlement	Assessment Parcel	Landscape sensitivity to: Residential development	Landscape sensitivity to: Mixed-use development	Landscape sensitivity to: Sports facilities
Bishop's Strotford	BS1	Low	Low	Low
Bishop's Strotford	BS2	Low-Moderate	Moderate	Low-Moderate
Elsenham	E1	Low-Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Elsenham	E2	Moderate-High	High	High
Elsenham	E3	Low-Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Great Chesterford	GC1	Moderate-High	Moderate-High	Moderate-High
Great Chesterford	GC2	High	High	Moderate-High
Great Dunmow	GD1	Moderate-High	High	Moderate-High
Great Dunmow	GD2	Moderate	Moderate-High	Moderate-High
Hatfield Heath	HH1	Moderate-High	Moderate-High	Moderate-High
Hatfield Heath	HH2	High	High	Moderate-High

Settlement	Assessment Parcel	Landscape sensitivity to: Residential development	Landscape sensitivity to: Mixed-use development	Landscape sensitivity to: Sports facilities
Hatfield Heath	HH3	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Newport	N1	Moderate-High	High	Moderate-High
Newport	N2	Moderate	Moderate-High	Moderate
Saffron Walden	SW1	Moderate-High	Moderate-High	Moderate-High
Saffron Walden	SW2	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Saffron Walden	SW3	High	High	Moderate-High
Stansted Mountfitchet	SM1	Moderate-High	Moderate-High	Moderate-High
Stansted Mountfitchet	SM2	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Stansted Mountfitchet	SM3	Moderate-High	Moderate-High	Moderate-High
Takeley and Priors Green	TPG1	Moderate-High	High	Moderate-High
Takeley and Priors Green	TPG2	Moderate	Moderate-High	Moderate
Thaxted	T1	Moderate-High	Moderate-High	Moderate-High
Thaxted	T2	High	High	High

Figure 3.1: Overall landscape sensitivity to residential development (North)



- Uttlesford District boundary
- Settlement boundary
- Absolute constraints
- Sensitivity score**
- High
- Moderate - High
- Moderate
- Low - Moderate
- Low

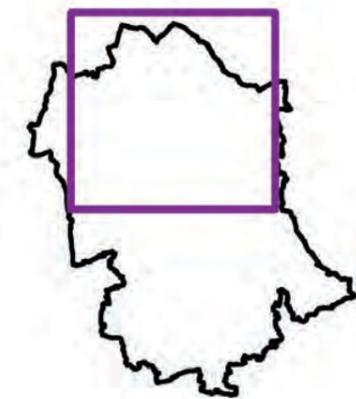


Figure 3.1: Overall landscape sensitivity to residential development (South)

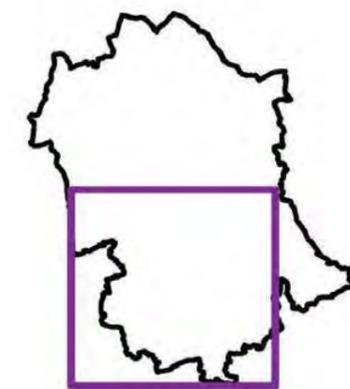
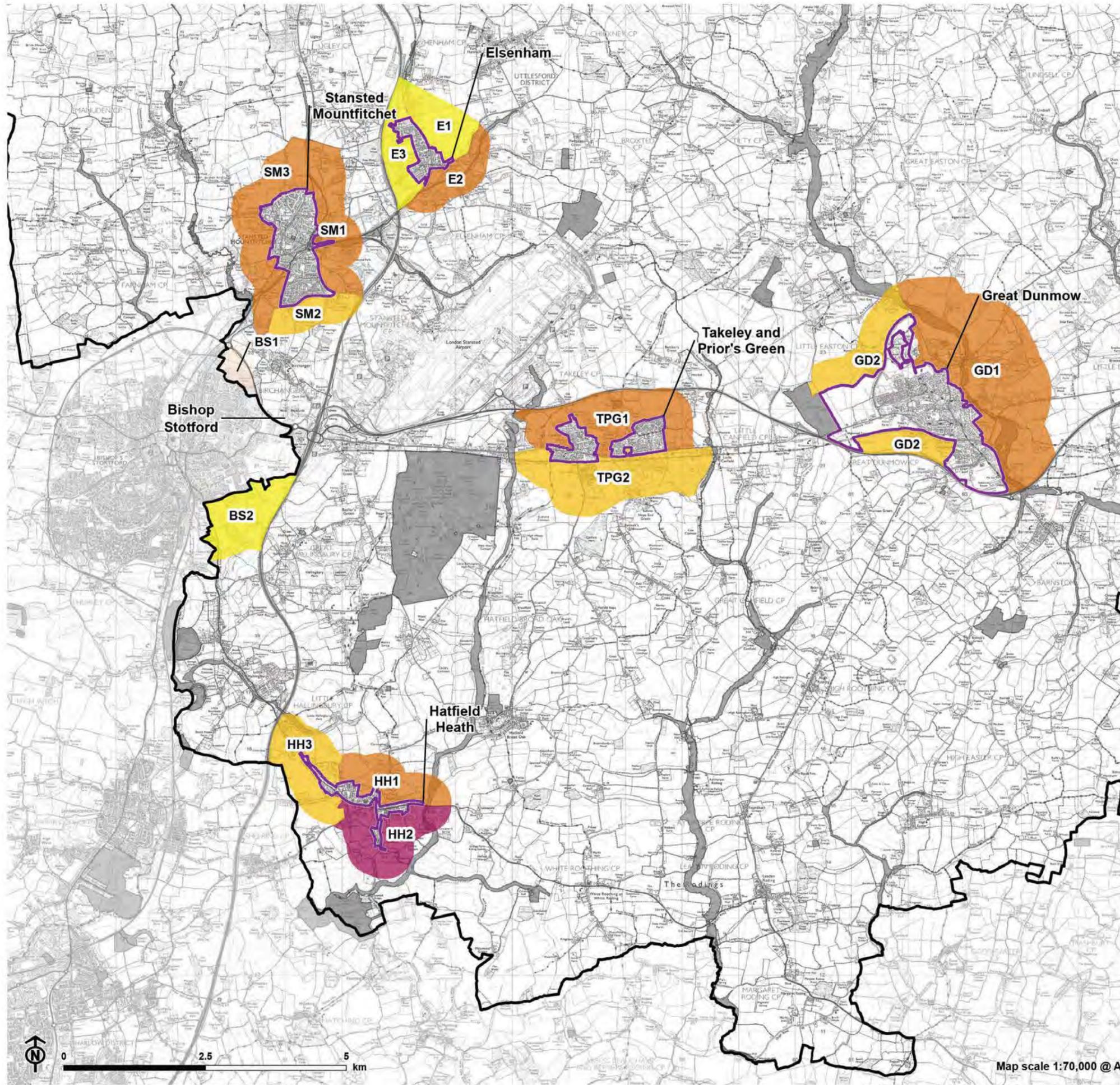
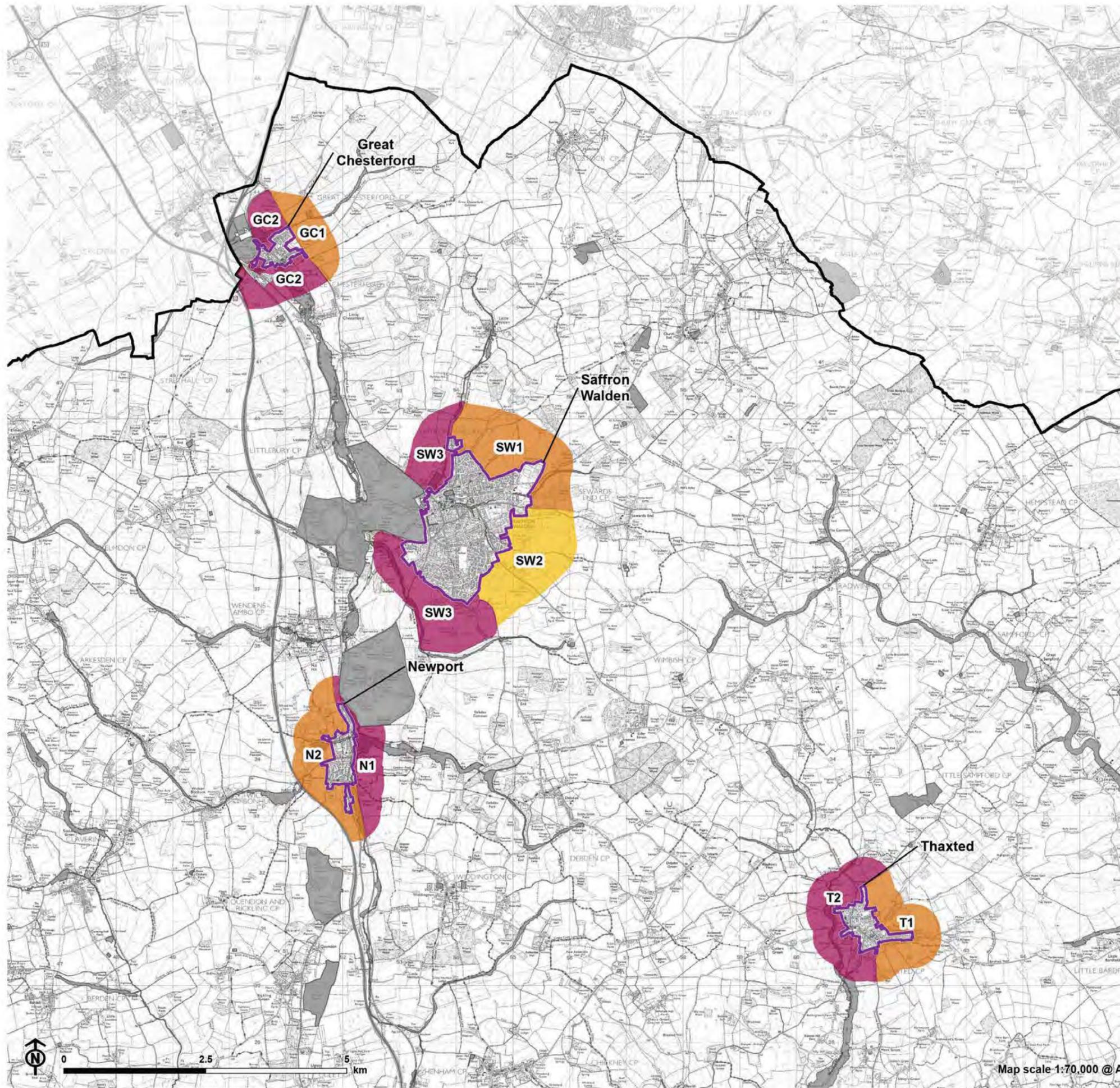


Figure 3.2: Overall landscape sensitivity to mixed-use development (North)



- Uttlesford District boundary
- Settlement boundary
- Absolute constraints
- Sensitivity score**
- High
- Moderate - High
- Moderate
- Low - Moderate
- Low

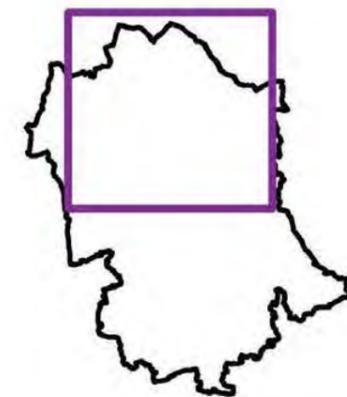
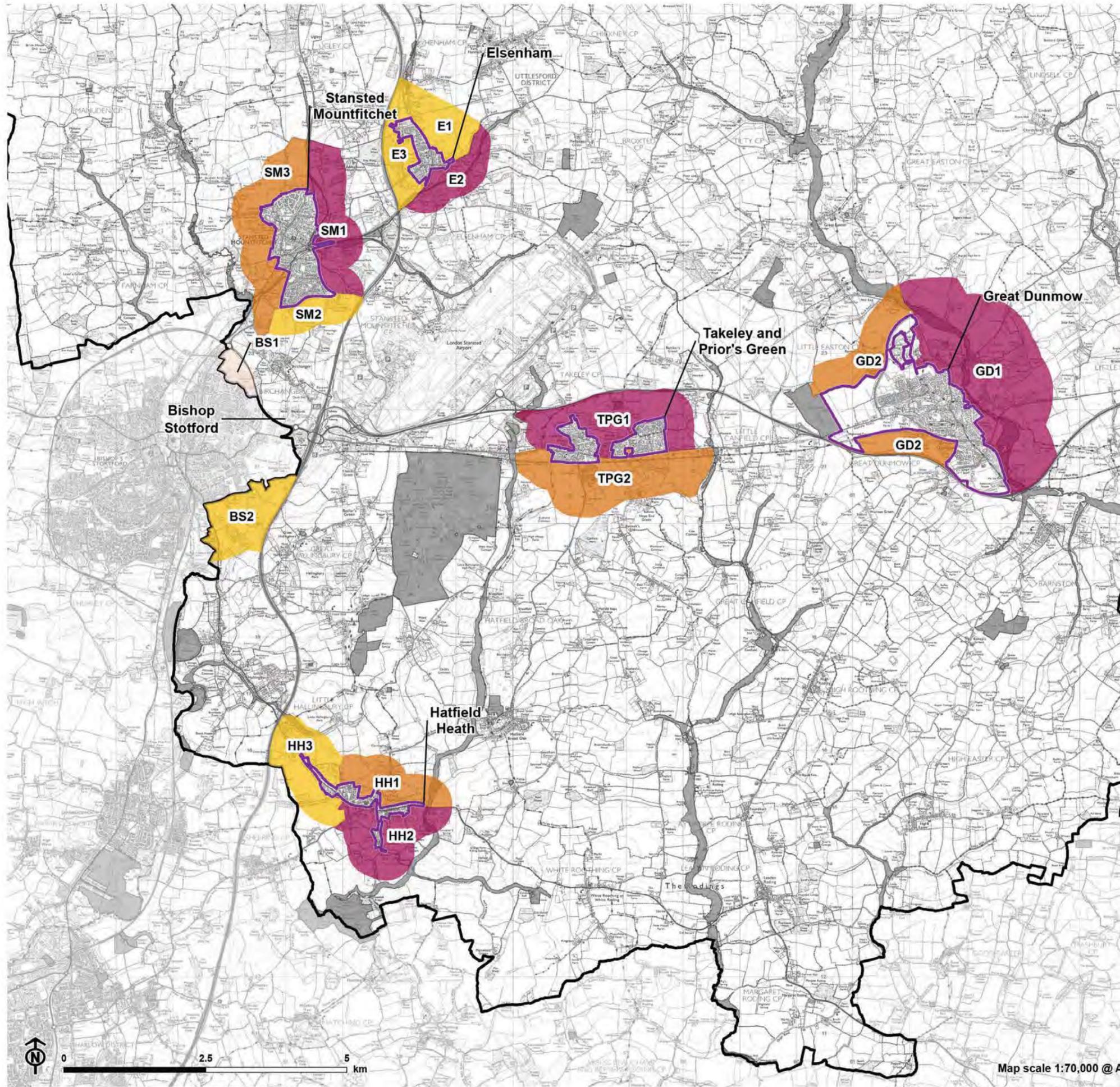


Figure 3.2: Overall landscape sensitivity to mixed-use development (South)



- Uttlesford District boundary
- Settlement boundary
- Absolute constraints
- Sensitivity score**
- High
- Moderate - High
- Moderate
- Low - Moderate
- Low

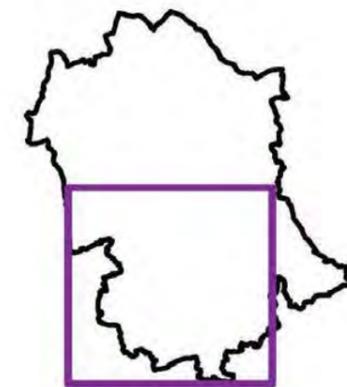
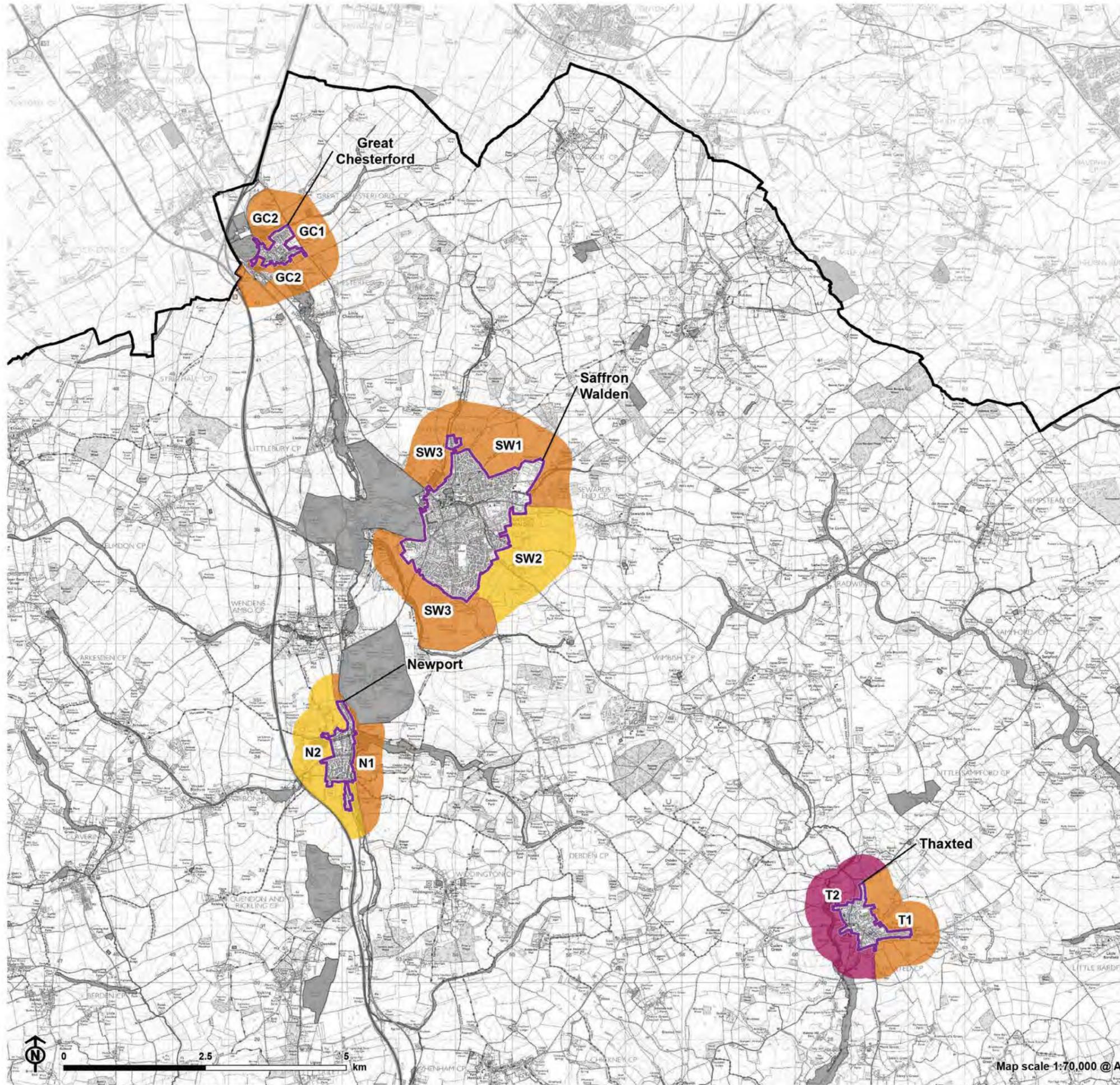


Figure 3.3: Overall landscape sensitivity to sports facility (North)



- Uttlesford District boundary
- Settlement boundary
- Absolute constraints
- Sensitivity score**
- High
- Moderate - High
- Moderate
- Low - Moderate
- Low

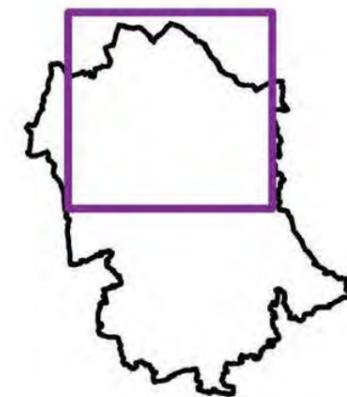
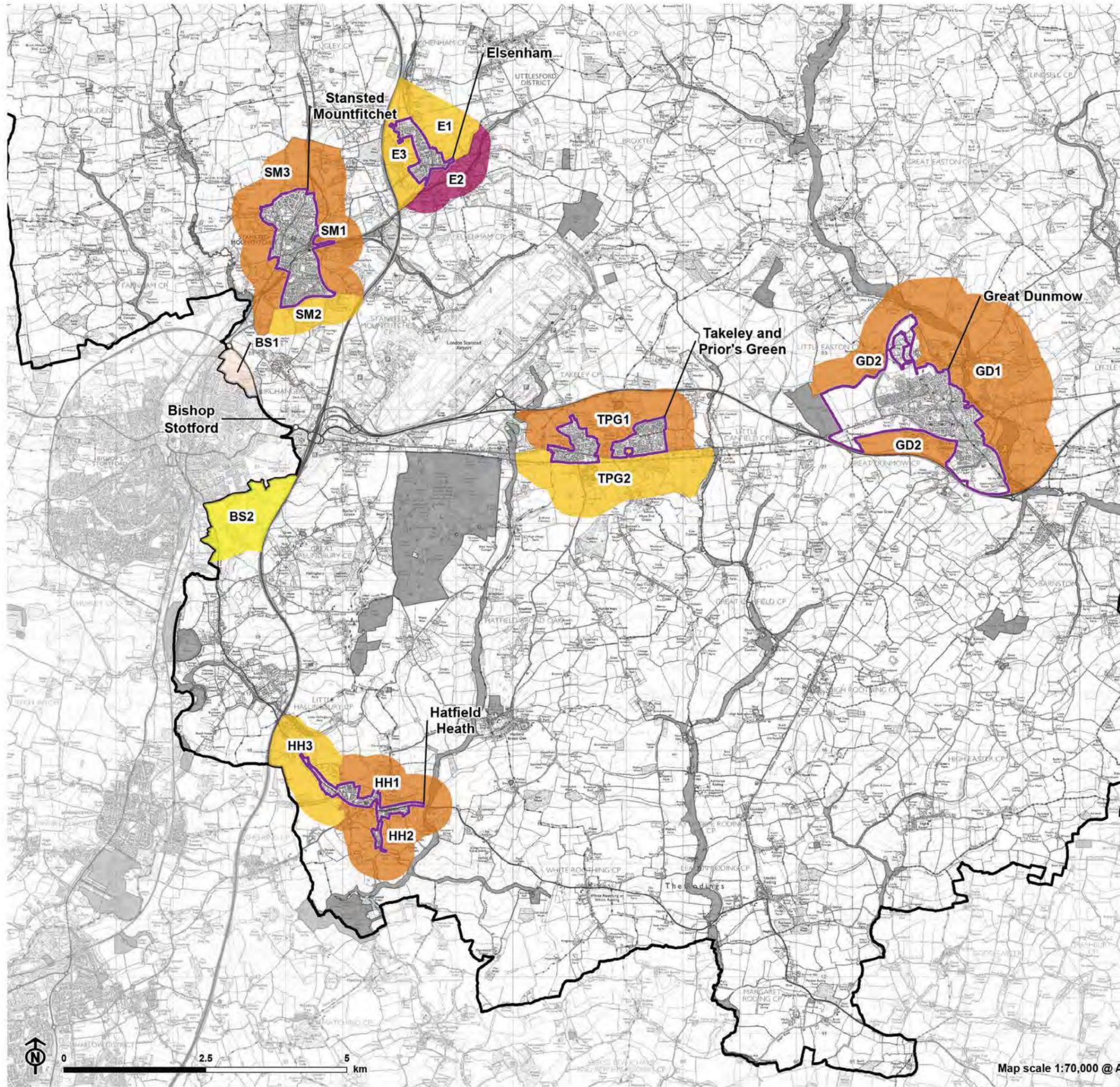
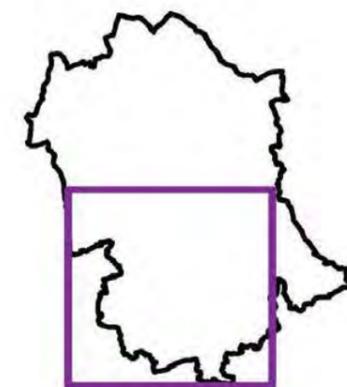


Figure 3.3: Overall landscape sensitivity to sports facility (South)



- Uttlesford District boundary
- Settlement boundary
- Absolute constraints
- Sensitivity score**
- High
- Moderate - High
- Moderate
- Low - Moderate
- Low



Chapter 4

Landscape Guidance

4.1 This section provides generic guidance to help accommodate development within the landscape.

Landscape guidance for accommodating residential and employment development in Uttlesford District

4.2 This guidance should be read in conjunction with the more detailed information provided in the updated Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment (2023) and the Essex Design Guide (2018).

4.3 All development should aim to:

- Utilise existing vegetation or plant new vegetation/trees to assimilate development into the landscape. Cues from the local landscape character should be used to design species and planting patterns.
- Avoid visually prominent locations, where development will be incongruous with the wider landscape context.
- Refer to the published landscape guidance in the updated Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment (2023), Neighbourhood Plans (in place for Ashdon, Felsted, Great and Little Chesterford, Great Dunmow, Newport, Quendon and Rickling, Stebbing and Thaxted).
- and The Essex Design Guide (2018) for ideas for mitigation and enhancement that will be in character with the landscape.
- Improve access networks and recreational opportunities to enable access to, and enjoyment of, the landscape where possible.
- Ensure the landscape components of the development are in character with the locality, form part of a coherent green infrastructure network and provides ecosystem services including increasing pollinating insects, providing water storage, preventing soil erosion, enhancing water quality and enhancing sense of place.

- Ensure a high quality and responsive design, making reference to the National Design Guide, Building for a Healthy Life and Essex Design Guide, particularly the sections on character and context.
- Be in-keeping with the existing settlement form and vernacular taking into account specific local information including Neighbourhood Plans.
- Where appropriate, use visual representations to understand impact of development proposals – as set out in Landscape Institute's Visual Representation of Development Proposals.
- Take opportunities to mitigate the impact of existing detracting features within the landscape, and where possible enhance landscape character in line with published guidance, including local landscape character assessments.

Cumulative impacts of development

4.4 This assessment has considered sites on an individual basis. For some areas/ villages a large number of potential development sites are proposed around a settlement. Clearly, development of multiple sites would have a greater cumulative landscape impact and consideration would be required of an appropriate limit of change, taking into account factors including:

- Settlement shape and form ensuring the development relates well to existing form rather than for example elongated extensions.
- Maintaining sense of place, distinctiveness and key gateways.
- Relationship to landscape features such as hill crests, valleys, woodland blocks which contain or define the settlement setting.
- Factors such as options for development of one larger site as opposed to multiple smaller sites.
- Opportunities for mitigation and wider landscape enhancement.

Mitigation for sites with high or moderate-high landscape sensitivity

4.5 It is unlikely that mitigation will reduce sensitivity for sites judged as having moderate-high or high landscape sensitivity to the specified change. Higher landscape sensitivity is one factor that will need to be weighed in the planning balance. For higher sensitivity sites the greatest opportunities for landscape improvements and enhancements should be taken in association with

development. It is also important to note that landscape mitigation and enhancement is equally important for those sites of moderate or lower sensitivity and will be critical in helping to ensure positive landscape change in association with development. For these sites the generic guidance provided here should be used to develop site specific mitigation proposals.

Appendix A

Data/information sources

Key sources of information used to inform the study

A.1 The following documents were used to inform the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment:

- Updated Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment (LUC, 2023)
- Conservation Area Appraisals:
 - Great Chesterford (2007)
 - Great Dunmow (2007)
 - Newport (2007)
 - Saffron Walden (2018)
 - Stansted Mountfitchet (2007)
 - Thaxted (2012)

A.2 In addition, the following table lists the main datasets collated and analysed in Geographic Information System (GIS) software as a key part of the evidence base for this study.

GIS considered in the assessment

Table A.1: GIS considered in the assessment

Assessment type	GIS layer	Source
Base maps	Local authority boundaries	Ordnance Survey

Appendix A Data/information sources

Assessment type	GIS layer	Source
Base maps	Ordnance Survey 1: 25K	Uttlesford Council
Base maps	Ordnance Survey 1: 50K	Uttlesford Council
Base maps	Ordnance Survey 1:250k	Ordnance Survey
Base maps	Aerial imagery	ESRI
Landscape	National Character Areas	Natural England
Landscape	Agricultural Land Classification	Natural England
Landscape	Light pollution	CPRE
Landscape	Tranquillity	CPRE
Landscape	CORINE Land Cover	EEA
Historic environment	Conservation areas	Uttlesford Council
Historic environment	Listed buildings	Historic England
Historic environment	Registered Parks and Gardens	Historic England
Historic environment	Scheduled Monuments	Historic England
Historic environment	Registered battlefields	Historic England
Historic environment	Locally listed buildings	Uttlesford Council
Ecological environment	Local Wildlife Sites (LoWS)	Uttlesford Council

Appendix A Data/information sources

Assessment type	GIS layer	Source
Ecological environment	Priority Habitat Inventory (PHI)	Natural England
Ecological environment	Local Nature Reserves (LNR)	Natural England
Ecological environment	National Nature Reserves (NNR)	Natural England
Ecological environment	Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Natural England
Ecological environment	Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI)	Natural England
Access and recreation	Country Parks	Natural England
Access and recreation	National Trails	Natural England
Access and recreation	National and Regional Cycle Routes	Sustrans
Access and recreation	Ordnance Survey Open Greenspace	Ordnance Survey
Access and recreation	CRoW Act Open Access Land / Open Country	Natural England
Access and recreation	National Trust Land – Always Open / Limited Access	National Trust

Appendix B

Glossary

Table B.1: Glossary of terms

Term	Definition
Ancient woodland	An area of woodland which evidence shows has had continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD and has only been cleared for underwood or timber production. It is an extremely valuable ecological resource, with an exceptionally high diversity of flora and fauna.
AOD	Above Ordnance Datum (sea level)
Arable	Land used for growing crops
Biodiversity	The measure of the variety of organisms present in different ecosystems
Built form	The characteristic nature of built development
Feature	A prominent, eye-catching element (for example, wooded hilltop, church spire)
Floodplain	The area that would naturally be affected by flooding if a river rises above its banks
GIS	Geographic Information System
Grassland	Land used for grazing. Grassland can be improved (by management practices), semi-improved (modified by management practices with a less diverse range of species than unimproved grasslands), or unimproved (not treated with fertiliser, herbicide or intensively grazed, and consequently has a high species diversity)

Appendix B Glossary

Term	Definition
Habitat	The natural home or environment of an animal, plant, or other organism
Intact	Not changed or diminished
Land cover	Combinations of land use and vegetation that cover the land surface
Landmark	An object or feature of a landscape that is easily seen and recognised from a distance, especially one that enables someone to establish their location
Landscape	The term refers primarily to the visual appearance of the land, including its shape, form and colours. However, the landscape is not a purely visual phenomenon; its character relies on a whole range of other dimensions, including geology, topography, soils, ecology, archaeology, landscape history, land use, architecture and cultural associations.
Landscape Character Areas (LCAs)	A unique geographic area with a consistent character and identity, which forms part of a landscape character type.
Landscape Character Types (LCTs)	Distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogenous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different areas in different parts of the district, but share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation, historic land use and settlement pattern.
Landscape value	The relative value that is attached to different landscapes. In a policy context the usual basis for recognising certain highly valued landscapes is through the application of a local or national landscape designation. Yet a landscape may be valued by different communities of interest for many different reasons without any formal designation, recognising, for example, perceptual aspects such as scenic beauty, tranquillity or wildness; special cultural associations; the influence and presence of other conservation interests;

Appendix B Glossary

Term	Definition
	or the existence of a consensus about importance, either nationally or locally.
Listed building	A building, object or structure that has been judged to be of national importance in terms of architectural or historic interest, designated by Historic England
Local Plan	A development plan prepared by local planning authorities
LSA	Landscape Sensitivity Assessment
LoWS	Local Wildlife Site
Natural character	Character as a result of natural or semi-natural features such as woodland, grassland, hedgerows
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
Nucleated settlement	A settlement that is clustered around a centre, in comparison to a linear or dispersed settlement
OS	Ordnance Survey
Pastoral	Land used for keeping or grazing sheep or cattle
Priority habitat	UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority species and habitats were identified as being the most threatened and requiring conservation action under the UK BAP. The original lists of UK BAP priority habitats were created between 1995 and 1999 and were subsequently updated in 2007. See http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-5155 for further information.
Riparian habitat	Riverbank habitat
Scheduled Monument	Nationally important archaeological sites or historic buildings, given protection against unauthorised change.

Appendix B Glossary

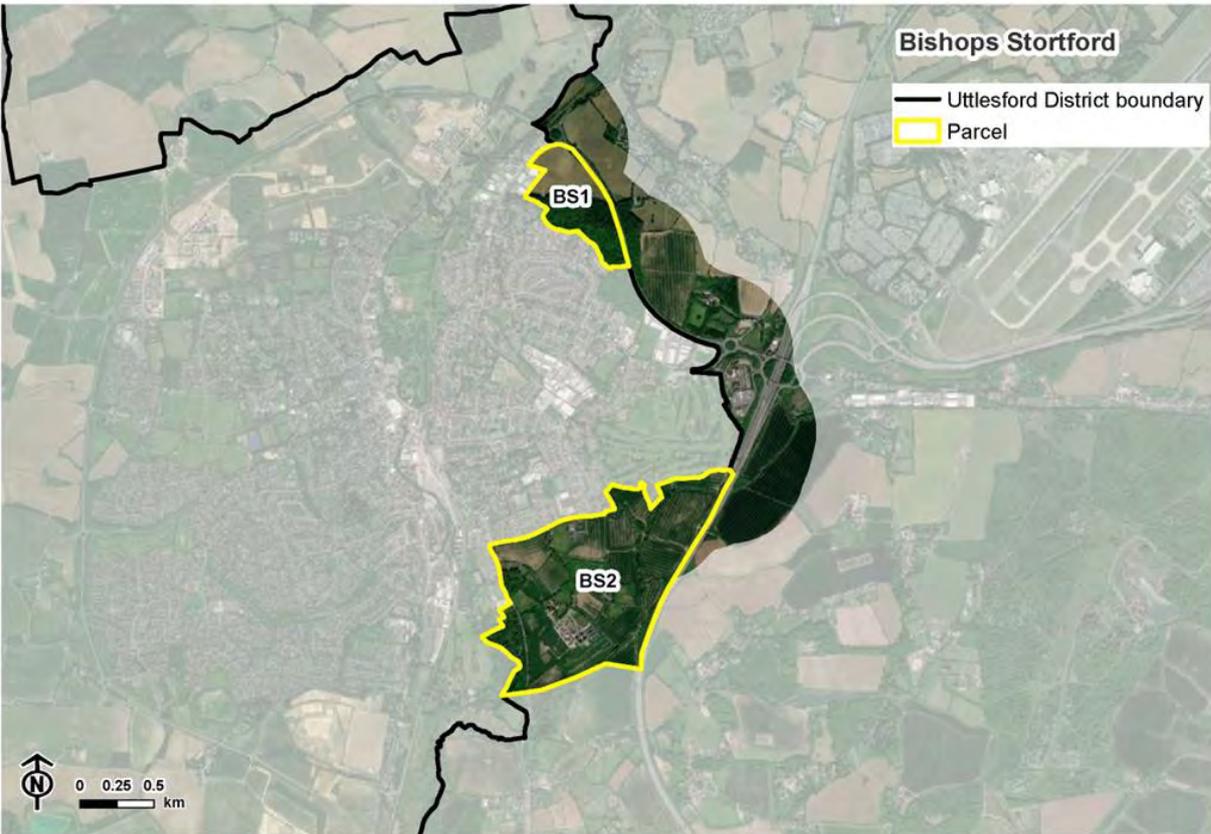
Term	Definition
Semi-natural vegetation	Any type of natural vegetation which has been influenced by human activities, either directly or indirectly
Sense of place	A person's perception of a location's indigenous characteristics, based on the mix of uses, appearance and context that make a place memorable
Sensitive	The response to change or influence
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
Time depth	The time period expressed in the landscape, or the extent to which the landscape reflects a certain time period (a landscape with greater time depth will comprise older elements than a landscape with lesser time depth).
Topography	Combinations of slope and elevation that produce the shape and form of the land surface
Valued landscape attributes	Positive features and characteristics that are important to landscape character and that, if lost, would result in adverse change to the landscape
Vernacular	Buildings constructed in the local style from local materials. Concerned with ordinary rather than monumental buildings

Appendix C

Landscape sensitivity proformas

Settlement Area: Bishop's Stortford

Figure C.1: Location of landscape sensitivity parcels for Bishop's Stortford



Source: Esri, Maxar, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

Source: UDC

Location and description

Bishop's Stortford is a historic market town in East Hertfordshire. The town has expanded during the 20th century to the district boundary with Uttlesford. This assessment considers the sensitivity of land within Uttlesford District only.

Appendix C Landscape sensitivity proformas

The settlement edge is divided into two parcels:

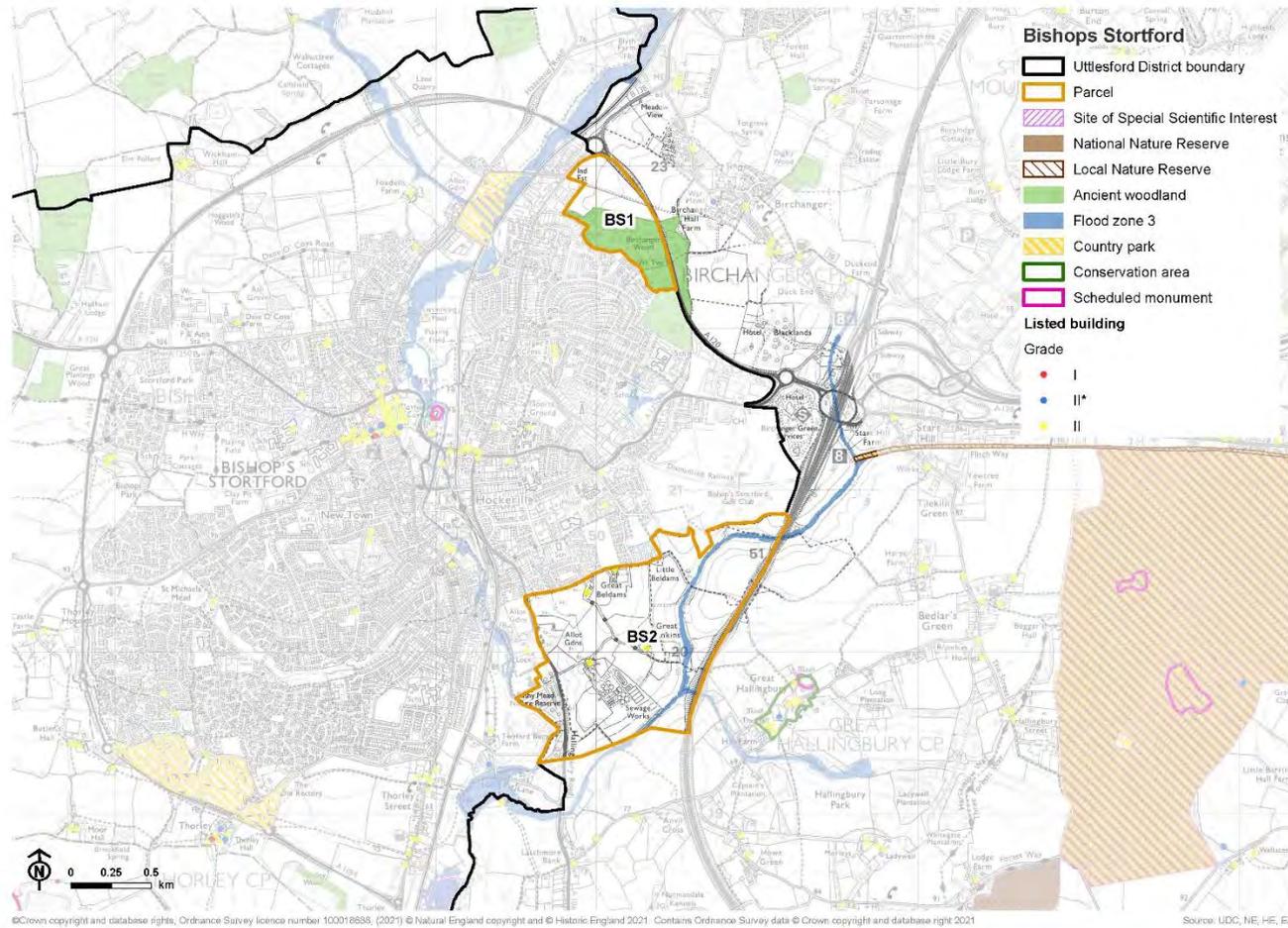
BS1 – gently undulating landscape east of Hanger Lea.

BS2 – undulating valley sides of the River Stort, south of Hockerill

Land east of the A120 and east of the M11 has been scoped out as these major road networks provide a strong boundary feature and development to the east of them, would have no relationship with Bishop's Stortford.

Development east of the A120 would also cause coalescence with Birchanger. The land which contains Birchanger Services between the A120 and the M11 has been excluded from this assessment as it is already developed and therefore would have no landscape sensitivities.

Figure C.2: Natural and cultural heritage designations within Bishop's Stortford



Bishop's Stortford representative photos

Figure C.3: BS1 looking north to Stansted Road



Figure C.4: BS1 looking east to Birchanger Wood



Figure C.5: BS2 looking north from Jenkins Lane to the settlement edge



Figure C.6: BS2 looking north from Jenkins Lane to the settlement edge



Landscape Sensitivity Assessment: Bishop's Stortford BS1

Landscape Character Area: A2 Stort River Valley

Criterion 1: Physical character

- Gently rising topography, rising between 70 metres to 90 metres AOD from the River Stort to the north-west
 - Moderate sensitivity
- Large open arable fields
 - Lower sensitivity

Criterion 2: Natural character

- Birchanger Wood is designated as a LoWS and as Important Woodland due to its priority habitat deciduous woodland which is ancient in origin.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Limited natural character except for boundary hedgerows, hedgerow trees and roadside vegetation.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 3: Sense of time depth

- There are no recorded heritage assets in the parcel, or evidence of older field patterns.
 - Lower sensitivity

Criterion 4: Character and setting of settlement

- Birchanger Wood provides a strong wooded boundary to the residential edge of Bishop's Stortford. The parcel also provides separation between Bishop's Stortford and the A120.

Appendix C Landscape sensitivity proformas

- Higher sensitivity
- Development on the arable fields to the north of the parcel would have a good relationship with the industrial estate on Stansted Way.
- Lower sensitivity

Criterion 5: Visual Character

- Birchanger Wood provides enclosure to the south within the parcel, and there is some enclosure from vegetation along the A120.
- Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 6: Perceptual and scenic qualities

- Light pollution is noticeable from the industrial estate and the surrounding major road network.
 - Lower sensitivity
- A public right of way links the edge of the Bishop's Stortford through Birchanger Wood to Birchanger under the A120. There is no other public access to the parcel.
 - Lower sensitivity
- The A120 and the industrial estate are noticeable human influences on the parcel. The M11 and Stansted Airport to the east are also intrusive influences.
 - Lower sensitivity

Landscape sensitivity assessment: Bishop's Stortford BS2

Landscape Character Area A2 Stort River Valley

Criterion 1: Physical character

- Undulating landform, rising from a tributary of the Stort from 65 metres to 85 metres AOD.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- Large arable fields with some horse grazing around Great Jenkins.
 - Lower sensitivity
- Hedgerows, hedgerow trees and vegetation provide some small-scale landscape features in the landscape.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 2: Natural character

- Pockets of priority habitat good quality semi-improved grassland is recorded in the north-east of the parcel (to the south of the former Bishop's Stortford golf course). Rushy Mead contains priority habitat deciduous woodland and is designated as a LoWS and nature reserve.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Medium to large scale arable fields, with smaller-scale pasture fields at Great Jenkins. Roadside trees and vegetation, hedgerows and hedgerow trees provide semi-natural habitats.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 3: Sense of time depth

- Farmsteads at Great Beldams and Great Jenkins contain Grade II listed buildings and are recorded as archaeological sites.
 - Higher sensitivity

Appendix C Landscape sensitivity proformas

- Although modern agriculture has altered some field boundaries, historic enclosed field patterns remain east of Hallingbury Road and around Little Beldams.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 4: Character and setting of settlement

- The parcel provides a rural setting to the south of Bishop's Stortford, particularly in views from Beldams Lane.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- The parcel provides separation between Bishop's Stortford and the M11 to the east. However, the settlement edge along Jenkins Lane on the south of Bishop's Stortford is open and forms a harsh edge, so development could provide an opportunity to improve the existing settlement edge.
 - Lower sensitivity

Criterion 5: Visual Character

- Roadside vegetation, trees and woodland within the parcel provide a semi-enclosed character. From Beldams Lane there are some views south-east to the Church of St Giles, Great Hallingbury.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 6: Perceptual and scenic qualities

- Proximity to Bishop's Stortford and the M11 contribute to light pollution in the parcel.
 - Lower sensitivity
- The parcel has an urban edge characteristic, with horse tape and paraphernalia at Great Jenkins, a sewage works, and poor-quality hedgerows, some replaced by post and wire fencing.
 - Lower sensitivity
- Some public rights of way connect the edge of Bishop's Stortford to the wider countryside, across the M11.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity: Bishop’s Stortford

Table C.1: Landscape sensitivity scores for Bishop’s Stortford

Development type	BS1	BS2
Residential development	Low	Low-Moderate
Mixed use development	Low	Moderate
Sports facilities and flood lighting	Low	Low-Moderate

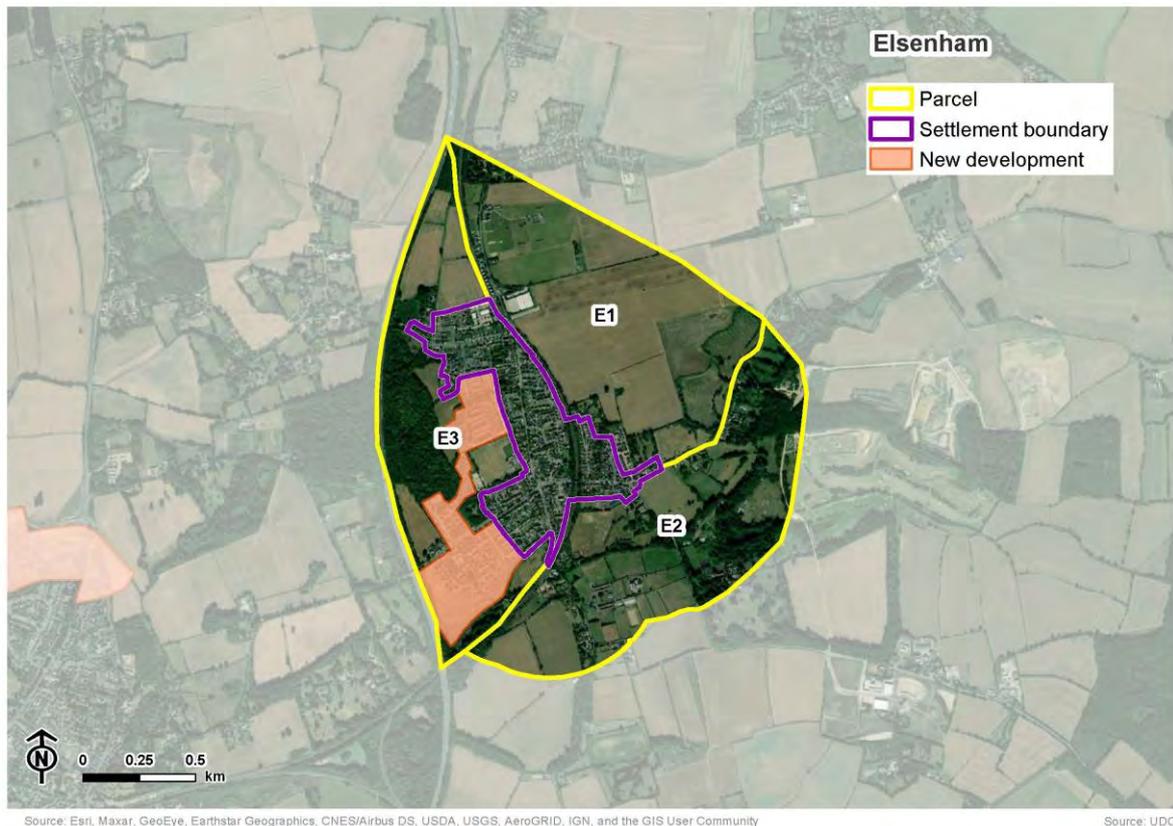
Summary

C.1 Parcel **BS1** has limited sensitivities due to its large-scale landscape pattern and limited landscape features, lack of time-depth, open settlement edge and strong human influences. It is assessed as having **low** sensitivity to residential and mixed-use development, which would provide an opportunity to improve the existing settlement edge along the north-east of Bishop’s Stortford. The parcel would also have **low** sensitivity to sports facility development due to its proximity to the A120 and the M11. However, Birchanger Wood in the south of the parcel has a **high** sensitivity to all development types due to value as a semi-natural habitat and boundary feature along the residential edge of Bishop’s Stortford.

C.2 Parcel **BS2** provides a semi-rural setting to the south of Bishop’s Stortford, with views across the parcel to the church spire at Great Hallingbury. However, it has a semi-enclosed visual character, much of the settlement edge is open and forms a harsh edge and the parcel has lower perceptual qualities due to existing development within the parcel. The parcel is considered to have a **low-moderate** sensitivity to residential development, and a **moderate** sensitivity to mixed-use development due to the existing scale and pattern of the current built form. Rushy Mead to the west of the A1060 Hallingbury Road has a higher sensitivity due to its important semi-natural habitats. The parcel is assessed as having **low-moderate** sensitivity to sports facility development as the M11 and proximity to Bishop’s Stortford have reduced the dark skies.

Settlement Area: Elsenham

Figure C.7: Location of landscape sensitivity parcels for Elsenham



Location and description

The village of Elsenham is located in the centre of the district, 2 kilometres north of Stansted Airport. It has a linear settlement pattern and extends along the railway line. Historic buildings are concentrated in the south-east along Henham Road, but the village expanded rapidly in the 20th century, with more recent expansion to the west and east in the 21st century.

The settlement edge is divided into three parcels:

E1 – open farmland plateau to the east of Elsenham.

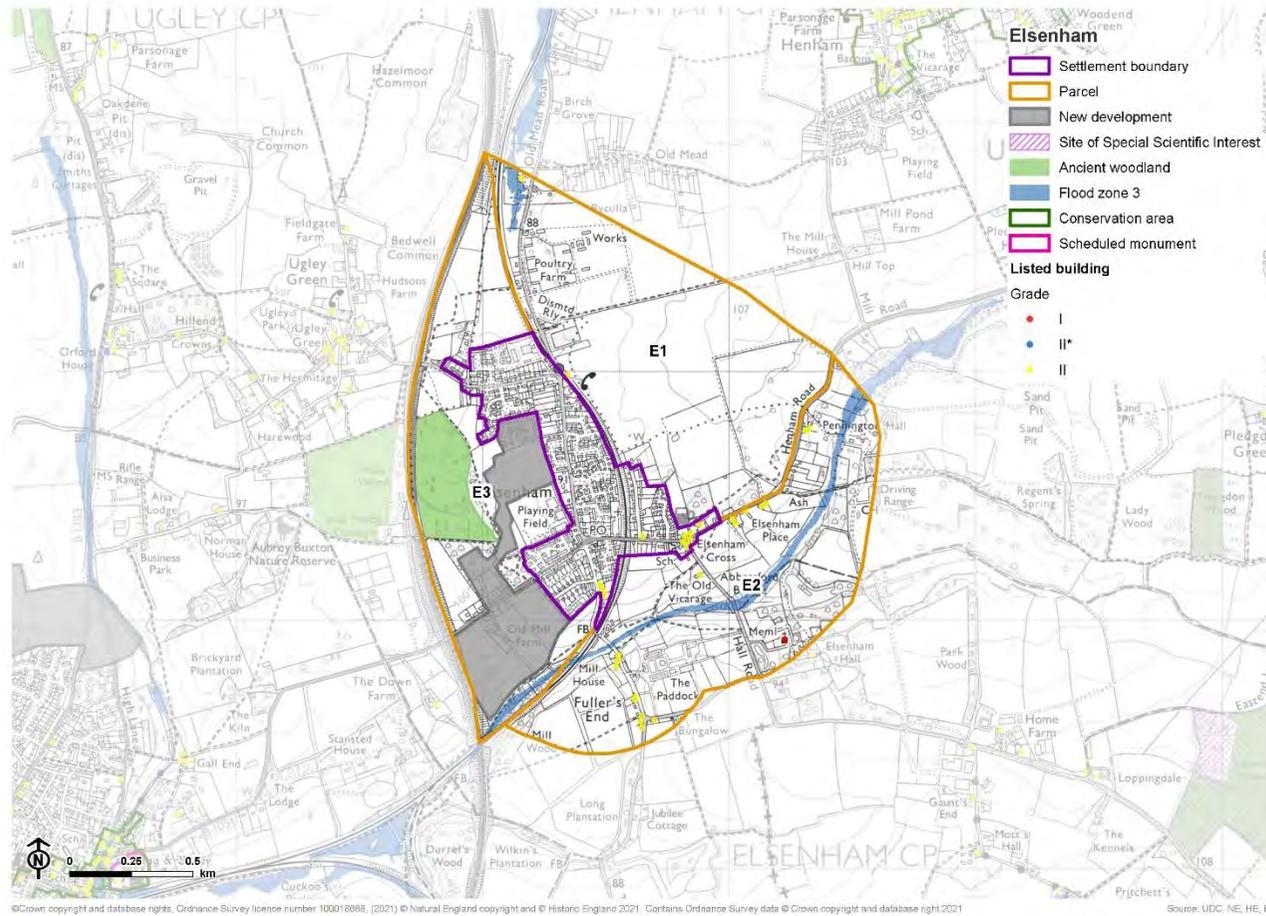
Appendix C Landscape sensitivity proformas

E2 – sloping valley sides of the Stansted Brook to the south of Elsenham.

E3 – wooded farmland plateau to the west of Elsenham (a large area to the south is under development).

Land to the west of the M11 has been scoped out as development here would have no relationship with Elsenham.

Figure C.8: Natural and cultural heritage designations within Elsenham



Elsenham representative photos

Figure C.9: E1 looking north to Poultry Farm



Figure C.10: E1 looking east from Poultry Farm



Figure C.11: E2 looking north to Elsenham Place from Hall Road



Figure C.12: E2 Church of St Mary the Virgin



Figure C.13: E3 looking west from the settlement edge on Bedwell Road



Figure C.14: E3 looking north from Bedwell Road



Elsenham E1

Physical character

- Flat to gently undulating topography, rising from 90 metres to 105 metres AOD in the east.
 - Lower sensitivity
- Arable fields are large scale, regular in size with few smaller-scale features. Fields have been converted for horse grazing at Poultry Farm.
 - Lower sensitivity

Natural character

- Intensively farmed landscape with no recorded priority habitats. Hedgerows, hedgerow trees and roadside vegetation provide some semi-natural habitats.
 - Lower sensitivity

Sense of time depth

- Limited time-depth with the Grade II listed waiting room at the railway station the only listed building in the parcel. There is an archaeological site recorded adjacent to Pennington Hall.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- Modern agricultural practices have removed most historic field patterns, although is a small area of historic field patterns along the B1051 Henham Road adjacent to Pennington Hall.
 - Lower sensitivity

Character and setting of settlement

- The parcel provides some contribution as a rural setting to Elsenham to the north and east. The parcel provides a sense of separation between Elsenham and the linear settlement of Old Mead to the north.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Appendix C Landscape sensitivity proformas

- Recent development at Elsenham Park has extended the settlement edge further east of the railway line and further east along Henham Road. Development east of the railway line would be in keeping with the existing settlement pattern, which has extended beyond the railway line, north-west of Henham Road.
 - Lower sensitivity

Visual character

- Despite the open character of the arable landscape, roadside and rail-side vegetation and hedgerows provide a semi-enclosed character, with few views from the surrounding roads and public rights of way. The skyline is largely undeveloped.

Perceptual and scenic qualities

- Some light pollution is noticeable at Elsenham, but there are darker skies further east and north-east.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- There are limited public rights of way through the parcel. A playing field north of Henham Road provides recreational opportunities.
 - Lower sensitivity
- A moderately rural landscape. Human influences within the parcel include the railway line, modern development at Poultry Farm, Old Mead Road, along Henham Road and north-west of Henham Road. The M11 is an intrusive influence to the west, and Stansted Airport to the south.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Landscape sensitivity assessment: Elsenham E2

Landscape Character Area A2 Stort River Valley (and B5 Broxsted Farmland Plateau in the east)

Criterion 1: Physical character

- Sloping valley sides of the Stansted Brook, rising from 75m to 95m AOD.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- Small to medium scale arable fields, with grazing east of Hall Road and along the course of the Stansted Brook and an orchard west of Hall Road. Hedgerows, existing buildings and paddocks are smaller-scale landscape features.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 2: Natural character

- Priority habitat deciduous woodland around Elsenham Hall, along the course of the Stansted Brook and at Mill Wood which is recorded as a locally Important Woodland. Priority habitat good quality semi-improved grassland is recorded at Mill House.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Hedgerows, mature hedgerow trees and roadside trees create a wooded character.
 - Higher sensitivity

Criterion 3: Sense of time depth

- The Church of St Mary the Virgin is Grade I listed and contains an archaeological site. Fuller's End contains a number of Grade II listed cottages, and there is a cluster of Grade II listed buildings around Elsenham Place. An archaeological site extends into the parcel from Elsenham Hall.

Appendix C Landscape sensitivity proformas

- Higher sensitivity
- Modern agricultural practices have removed most historic field patterns, except for older enclosure fields along the Stansted Brook and around Mill Wood.
- Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 4: Character and setting of settlement

- The parcel provides a rural setting and approach to Elsenham, particularly from the south on Hall Road as it approaches the listed buildings at Elsenham Cross.
 - Higher sensitivity
- The parcel provides separation between Elsenham and Stansted Airport.
 - Higher sensitivity
- The railway line provides a strong boundary to the south-west settlement edge of Elsenham. There is limited development south of High Street and Henham Road, and new development to the south of these roads would not fit with the existing settlement pattern.
 - Higher sensitivity

Criterion 5: Visual character

- Hedgerows and roadside trees create a semi-enclosed character, except for open views south of Henham Road. The skyline is generally treed, and there are no structures visible above the treeline.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 6: Perceptual and scenic qualities

- A landscape with largely dark skies except for some light pollution from Elsenham to the north and Stansted Airport to the south.
 - Higher sensitivity
- A network of public rights of way crosses the parcel.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Appendix C Landscape sensitivity proformas

- A rural landscape with human influences within the parcel limited to the railway line and the M11. Stansted Airport to the south is also an intrusive modern influence.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Landscape sensitivity assessment: Elsenham E3

Landscape Character Area B5 Broxted Farmland Plateau (and A2 Stort River Valley in the south)

Criterion 1: Physical character

- Flat to gently undulating topography in the north and west, from 90 metres to 100 metres AOD, more steeply sloping in the south near Stansted Brook.
 - Lower sensitivity
- Arable fields are medium scale with some intact hedgerows and hedgerow trees which provide smaller-scale features. A small area of horse pasture between Rush Lane and the railway line.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 2: Natural character

- The extensive woodland at Alsa Wood is designated as a LoWS for its priority habitat deciduous woodland, much of which is ancient. Priority habitat deciduous woodland also lines the Stansted Brook and the M11.
 - Higher sensitivity
- North of Bedwell Road fields are bound by hedgerows with some hedgerow trees. Mature vegetation encloses the modern settlement edge of Elsenham.
 - Lower sensitivity

Criterion 3: Sense of time depth

- There are no recorded heritage assets in the parcel. Four archaeological sites run along the M11.
 - Lower sensitivity
- Modern agricultural practices and 20th century development have removed most historic field patterns, although there is some evidence of older enclosed fields patterns south of Bedwell Road.
 - Lower sensitivity

Criterion 4: Character and setting of settlement

- The landscape north of Bedwell Road provides some contribution as a rural setting to Elsenham. The M11 and Alsa Wood to the west and railway line to the north-east and south are strong boundary features. Development beyond these would not have a relationship with Elsenham.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Development north and south of Bedwell Road would fit with the new settlement pattern. The industrial area on Jenkins Drive forms a hard edge to the adjoining landscape, and development to the north of the parcel could soften this.
 - Lower sensitivity

Criterion 5: Visual character

- The parcel is visually enclosed from the surrounding landscapes due to vegetation along the M11, Alsa Wood and roadside and rail-side vegetation. The skyline is largely undeveloped.
 - Lower sensitivity

Criterion 6: Perceptual and scenic qualities

- Some light pollution is noticeable at Elsenham, but there are darker skies further north.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- There are public rights of way through the parcel, connecting the different areas of the village and extending across the M11.

Appendix C Landscape sensitivity proformas

- Moderate sensitivity
- Fields north and south of Bedwell Road are largely unmanaged, detracting from the scenic qualities of the landscape.
- Lower sensitivity
- Limited rural character. Human influences within the parcel include the M11 to the west, railway line to the south and north-east, commercial development at Jenkins Drive and the new developments off Isabel Drive.
- Moderate sensitivity

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity:
Elsenham

Table C.2: Landscape sensitivity scores for Elsenham sites

Development type	E1	E2	E3
Residential development	Low-Moderate	Moderate-High	Low-Moderate
Mixed use development	Moderate	High	Moderate
Sports facilities and flood lighting	Moderate	High	Moderate

Summary

C.3 Parcels E1 and the remaining undeveloped farmland within E3 are assessed as having low-moderate sensitivity to residential development due to the flat to gently undulating topography, medium to large scale arable fields, limited semi-natural habitats, largely enclosed character, and the human influence of modern development within the parcels. The extensive deciduous woodland in E3 would be highly sensitive to change, due to value as a semi-natural habitat and the contribution it makes to the rural setting of Elsenham.

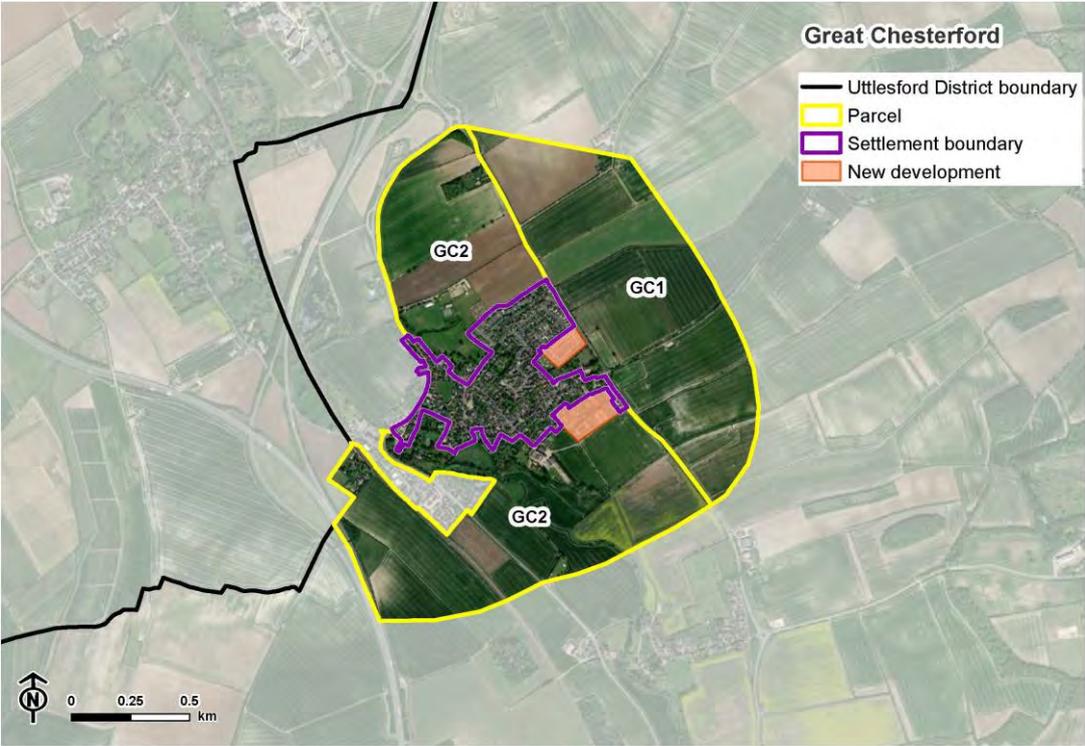
Appendix C Landscape sensitivity proformas

Parcel E1 also provides a rural setting to Elsenham and provides separation between Elsenham and Old Mead in the north. Parcel E1 is assessed as having moderate sensitivity to mixed use development due to the existing scale and pattern of the current built form. E3 has a moderate sensitivity to mixed-use development but this may be lower in the north, where it would relate to the existing industrial development on Jenkins Drive. Both parcels are assessed as having moderate sensitivity to sports facility development due to the moderately dark skies.

C.4 E2 is assessed as having a moderate-high sensitivity to future change from residential development due to the rural setting it provides to Elsenham, steeper topography particularly from Hall Road, small to medium scale field pattern, and greater time-depth. Sensitivity to mixed use development is assessed as high, due to the small scale of the landscape and existing scale and general pattern of the current built form. The parcel is also considered to have high sensitivity to sports facility development due to the levels of dark night skies.

Settlement Area: Great Chesterford

Figure C.15: Location of landscape sensitivity parcels for Great Chesterford



Location and description

The village of Great Chesterford is located in the valley of the River Cam, in the north-west of the district, on the border with South Cambridgeshire. It is characterised by a historic settlement core which lies immediately east of the river, centred on School Street, Carmel Street and High Street, with many timber-framed and plastered buildings from the 17th and 18th centuries. The village expanded in the 20th century around the railway station in the south-west with a mix of housing and large-scale commercial development, and to the north-west with a large area of housing. A further extension in the south-west along the railway line is now under construction.

Appendix C Landscape sensitivity proformas

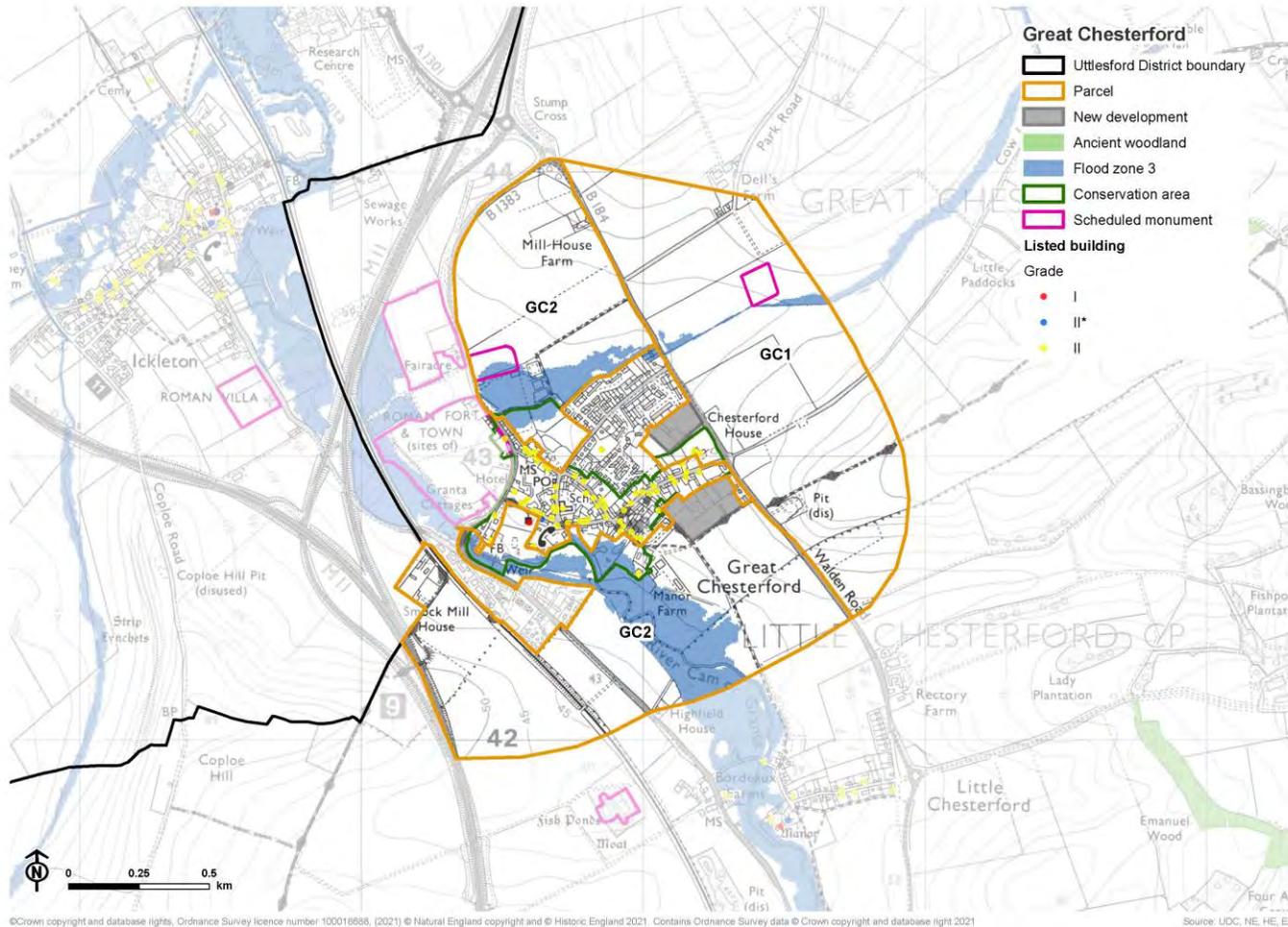
The settlement edge is divided into two parcels:

GC1 – rolling large arable fields to the east of Great Chesterford.

GC2 – valley of the River Cam and surrounding arable fields to the north, south and west of Great Chesterford.

Land to the north-west of Great Chesterford has been scoped out of the assessment due to its designation as a Scheduled Monument. Land outside the district boundary to the west has also been scoped out of the assessment.

Figure C.16: Natural and cultural heritage designations within Great Chesterford



Great Chesterford representative photos

Figure C.17: GC1 looking south on Walden Road



Figure C.18: GC1 looking east on Park Road



Figure C.19: GC2 looking south to settlement edge



Figure C.20: GC2 looking east along the southern settlement edge



Landscape sensitivity assessment: Great Chesterford GC1

Landscape Character Area A1 Cam River Valley

Criterion 1: Physical character

- Rolling landform ranging from 45m to 75m AOD.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Fields are large scale, regular in size and mainly arable, with an open character.
 - Lower sensitivity

Criterion 2: Natural character

- The B184 Walden Road is designated as a LoWS and a Special Verge.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- Fragmented hedgerows border the arable fields, with some remnant hedgerow trees. There are no registered priority habitats within the parcel.
 - Lower sensitivity

Criterion 3: Sense of time depth

- A Romano-Celtic temple south of Park Road is designated as a Scheduled Monument.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Modern agricultural practices have removed most historic fields in the area but some pre-modern enclosure field patterns remain.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 4: Character and setting of settlement

- The parcel provides a rural setting and approach along Cow Lane to the historic settlement edge at High Street.
 - Higher sensitivity
- The B184 Walden Road provides a strong edge to the village and contains the eastern extent of the village. Development east of Walden Road would not be in keeping with the existing settlement pattern.
 - Higher sensitivity

Criterion 5: Visual character

- The parcel has an open character, with long views to and from Great Chesterford across the rolling countryside.
 - Higher sensitivity
- The skyline is largely undeveloped.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 6: Perceptual and scenic qualities

- Light pollution is noticeable at Great Chesterford but there are darker skies to the east.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- The Icknield Way Trail promoted route runs through the south-east of the parcel and provides links from Great Chesterford to the wider countryside.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- A rural landscape with limited human influences within the parcel, although the M11 and A11 are audibly intrusive.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Landscape sensitivity assessment: Great Chesterford GC2

Landscape Character Area A1 Cam River Valley

Criterion1: Physical character

- Gently undulating farmland, from 40 metres to 50 metres AOD, dissected by the River Cam.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- Small meadows and pasture fields line the narrow River Cam, and are found north of Jackson's Lane.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Away from the Cam, fields are large scale and mainly arable, with an open character.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 2: Natural character

- Mature trees and deciduous woodland line the Cam, with some recorded as priority habitat south of Manor Lane.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Mature trees along the settlement edge, intermittent hedgerows and hedgerow trees provide valued semi-natural habitats.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 3: Sense of time depth

- Open green space is important to the historic character of the village, including riverside areas along the Cam and pasture at Jacksons Lane, reflected in their inclusion in the Conservation Area.
 - Higher sensitivity

Appendix C Landscape sensitivity proformas

- Grade I listed Church of All Saints and Grade II* listed Chesterford House are located on the edge of the village, and a Scheduled Monument lies east of the B1383. There are a number of recorded archaeological sites.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Modern agricultural practices have removed most historic field patterns, although older enclosures remain along the River Cam.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 4: Character and setting of settlement

- The parcel provides a rural setting and approach to Great Chesterford, and the scenic quality of green space along the historic settlement edge has a high sensitivity to change.
 - Higher sensitivity
- The modern settlement edge to the north-east (Hyll Close), south-east (Thorpe Lea Close) and recent development in the south-west (Chesterford Meadows) forms a hard and visible edge to the adjoining landscape. Development could provide the opportunity to improve the existing settlement edge.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- Recent development at Chesterford Meadows has narrowed the gap between Great Chesterford and Little Chesterford. The open land in the south-west therefore plays a role in the perception of a gap between the settlements.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 5: Visual character

- The parcel has an open character, with long views to and from Great Chesterford across the rolling countryside.
 - Higher sensitivity
- The importance of views from the historic settlement edge into open countryside across pasture fields to the north and south are noted in the Conservation Area Appraisal.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Areas along the River Cam are more enclosed. The skyline is largely undeveloped.

- Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 6: Perceptual and scenic qualities

- Light pollution is noticeable at Great Chesterford and increases towards the M11. There are darker skies to the south-east.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- The Icknield Way Trail promoted route and other public rights of way cross the parcel and allow access into the wider countryside.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- Limited areas of rurality - human influences within the parcel include the railway line and development associated with it, and M11 as well as infill development at Thorpe Lea Close.
 - Lower sensitivity

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity: Great Chesterford

Table C.3: Landscape sensitivity scores for Great Chesterford sites

Development type	GC1	GC2
Residential development	Moderate-High	High
Mixed use development	Moderate-High	High
Sports facilities and flood lighting	Moderate-High	Moderate-High

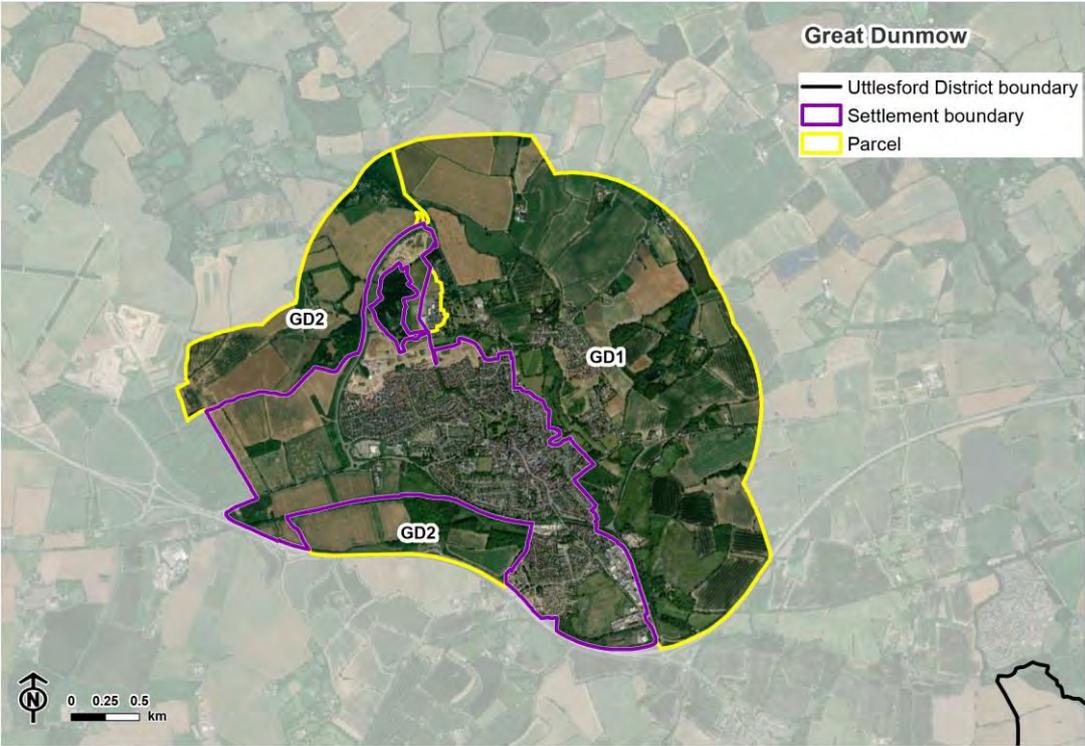
Summary

C.5 The characteristics of the landscape in parcel **GC1**, including its rolling landform, open and rural character, the setting it provides to the settlement edge of Great Chesterford (including part of the historic settlement edge), and the strong boundary feature of the B184 Walden Road are sensitive to change as a result of the introduction of residential development. Although the parcel has limited semi-natural habitats and some human influences from the A11/ M11 there is a lack of existing development. The parcel is assessed as having a **moderate-high** sensitivity to both residential and mixed-use development. The parcel will also have **moderate-high** sensitivity to sports facility development due to the rural character and levels of dark night skies.

C.6 GC2 is assessed as having a **high** overall sensitivity to future change from residential development due to its smaller scale (particularly along the Cam), strong natural character, time-depth, open character and rural setting it provides to the village, particularly its importance to the historic character of the village (including the pasture fields north of Jackson's Lane and the well-vegetated river bank and meadows along the Cam). However, the modern settlement edge to the south-east and south-west, and the land adjacent to the railway line have a **moderate** sensitivity to residential development due to their more developed nature and harsh settlement edges. Sensitivity to mixed use development was assessed as **high**, due to the small scale and open character of the landscape and general pattern of the current built form. Areas adjacent to commercial development at the railway station would have a lower sensitivity. The parcel has **moderate-high** sensitivity to sports facility development due to levels of dark night skies which are impacted by the proximity of the M11.

Settlement Area: Great Dunmow

Figure C.21: Location of landscape sensitivity parcels for Great Dunmow



Location and description

The town of Great Dunmow is located in the south-east of the district and is the second largest settlement in Uttlesford. It is characterised by a historic settlement core centred on Parsonage Downs and the High Street. The town contains a variety of building styles and periods including 16th and 17th century housing, a former Guild Hall and numerous 19th century houses. A significant 21st century settlement extension lies to the west of the historic core, to the north of the B1256.

The settlement edge is divided into two parcels. These largely relate to landscape character areas and comprise:

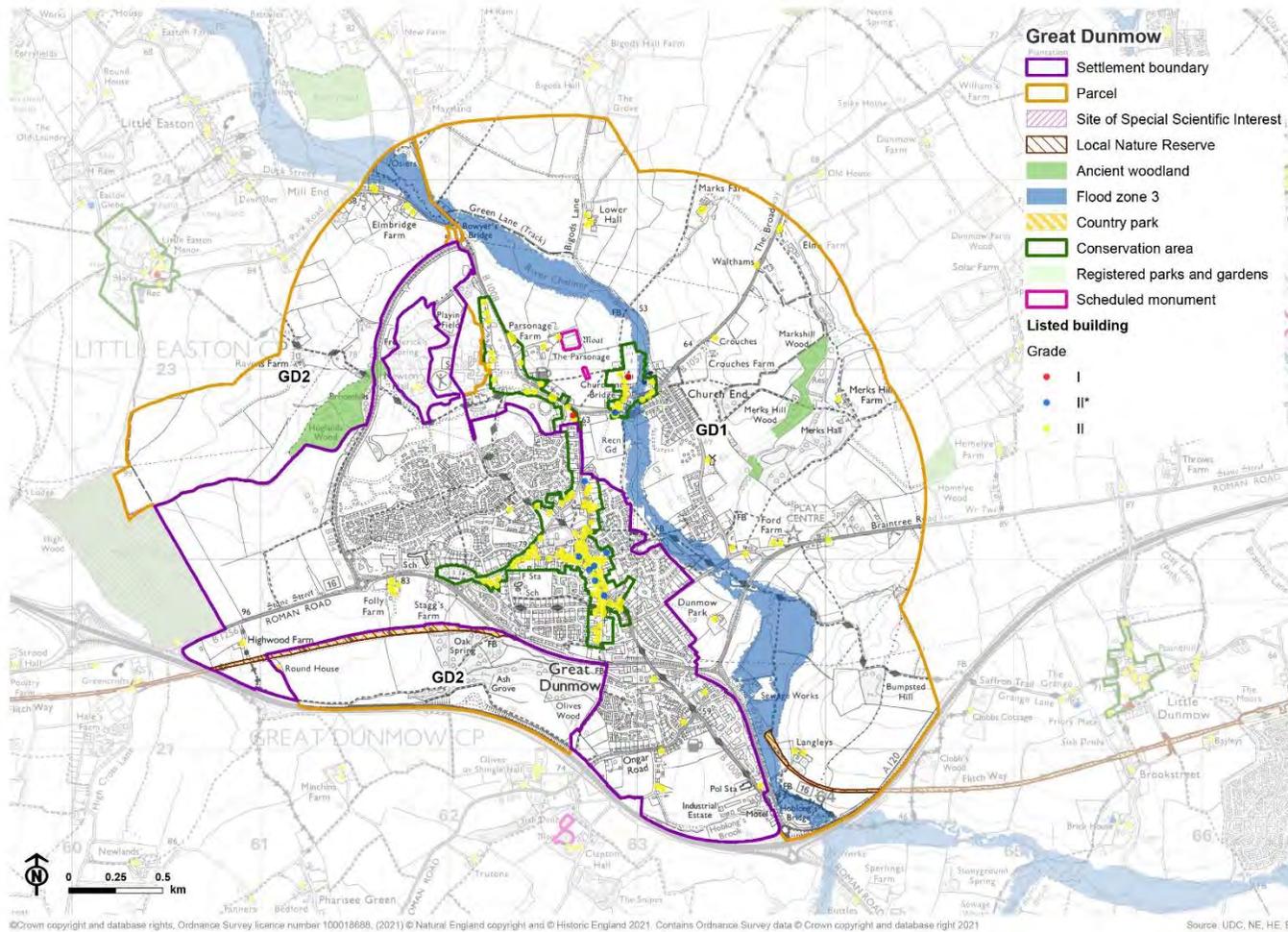
Appendix C Landscape sensitivity proformas

GD1 – the low-lying, gently undulating pastoral fields of the Upper Chelmer River Valley to the north of Great Dunmow.

GD2 – the undulating mixed agricultural farmland to the west and south of Great Dunmow.

High Wood to the west of Great Dunmow has been scoped out of the assessment due to its designation as a SSSI. The area to the south of the A120 has been scoped out of the assessment as the trunk road provides a strong boundary feature to the south of the town and development in this area will not relate well to the existing settlement.

Figure C.22: Natural and cultural heritage designations within Great Dunmow



Great Dunmow representative photos

Figure C.23: GD1 historic Church End



Figure C.24: GD1 looking north-east across the Chelmer Valley



Figure C.25: GD2 view north-west from settlement edge off Ongar Road



Figure C.26: GD2 looking east from Park Road



Landscape sensitivity assessment: Great Dunmow GD1

Landscape Character Area A4 Upper Chelmer River Valley

Criterion 1: Physical character

- Undulating valley sides, rising from 55m to 85m AOD from the River Chelmer.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Fields are medium scale, regular in size and mainly arable, with an open character. There is some pasture adjacent to the river.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 2: Natural character

- Scattered priority habitat deciduous woodland, some recorded as Ancient Woodland. Hoglands Wood, Frederick's Spring and Merks Hill identified as LoWS. Fritch Way is designated as a LNR for its unimproved grassland, scrub and wetland habitat.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Linear riparian trees, especially in the south-east, and hedgerows around arable fields contribute to the vegetated character of the landscape.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 3: Sense of time depth

- The conservation areas at Great Dunmow (which extends into the parcel) and Church End have a concentration of listed buildings including two Grade I listed buildings – The Clock House and St Mary's Church. There are also scattered listed farmsteads. Two Scheduled Monuments are recorded around Parsonage Farm and there are a number of recorded archaeological sites.

Appendix C Landscape sensitivity proformas

- Higher sensitivity
- Modern agricultural practices have removed most historic field patterns except for older enclosure fields at Lower Hall and Church End.
- Lower sensitivity

Criterion 4: Character and setting of settlement

- The parcel contributes to the separation between Great Dunmow, Church End and Riverside and this is noted in the Great Dunmow Conservation Area Appraisal. The parcel also provides a gap between Great Dunmow and Little Easton to the north.
 - Higher sensitivity
- The open character of Parsonage Downs provides a rural setting to the historic settlement edge of Great Dunmow. Development extending from Great Dunmow east across the River Chelmer would not fit with the current settlement form.
 - Higher sensitivity
- The B184 to the north and Chelmsford Road/ A120 to the south provide a strong edge to Great Dunmow, with areas beyond this having no relationship with the town.
 - Higher sensitivity
- 20th century development on the eastern edge of Great Dunmow has extended into the river floodplain, and there may be opportunities to soften the settlement edge.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 5: Visual character

- The importance of the view east from Beaumont Hill across the river valley to Church End is noted in the Conservation Area Appraisal.
 - Higher sensitivity
- The river corridor of the Chelmer has a more enclosed character.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 6: Perceptual and scenic qualities

- A network of public rights of way crosses the area, including the Saffron Trail promoted route. Public access is provided at Flitch Way Country Park and there are a number of recreational green spaces including Parsonage Downs, Helena Romanes School and Church End.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Light pollution is noticeable at Great Dunmow and along the road network. Elsewhere, skies are darker, especially to the north-east.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- A rural landscape with human influences limited to modern development extending from the settlement edge of Great Dunmow.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Landscape sensitivity assessment: Great Dunmow GD2

Landscape Character Area B5 Broxted Farmland Plateau

Criterion 1: Physical character

- Gently undulating farmland, between 70 and 100 metres AOD.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- Large-scale arable fields, with intermittent hedgerow boundaries creating a low-density of overlying landscape features.
 - Lower sensitivity

Criterion 2: Natural character

- Blocks of priority habitat deciduous woodland, some recorded as Ancient Woodland, and most designated as LoWS for their woodland. Flitch Way

Appendix C Landscape sensitivity proformas

is designated as LoWS and an LNR for its unimproved grassland, scrub and wetland habitat.

- Higher sensitivity
- Large arable fields with intermittent hedgerows have limited semi-natural habitat coverage.
- Lower sensitivity

Criterion 3: Sense of time depth

- Time depth is limited with few historic features important to the character of the area, except for the grade I listed Round House and an archaeological site at Oak Spring
- Lower sensitivity

Criterion 4: Character and setting of settlement

- The parcel contributes to the rural setting of Great Dunmow, particularly in the south where it provides separation between the town and the A120.
- Moderate sensitivity
- The north of the parcel provides separation between Great Dunmow and Mill End, Little Easton and Elmbridge
- Higher sensitivity

Criterion 5: Visual character

- The landscape has an open character, with views towards Great Dunmow.
- Higher sensitivity
- A generally undeveloped skyline, although electricity pylons cross the northern part of the parcel
- Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 6: Perceptual and scenic qualities

- The south of the parcel is well-connected by public rights of way, and public access is provided at Flich Way Country Park.

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- Higher sensitivity
- There are fewer public rights of way in the north of the parcel.
- Moderate sensitivity
- Light pollution is noticeable at Great Dunmow and along the road network. Elsewhere, skies are darker, especially to the north-west.
- Moderate sensitivity
- Human influences are limited to electricity pylons in the north of the parcel, the A120 in the south and modern development extending from the edge of Great Dunmow.
- Moderate sensitivity

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity:
Great Dunmow

Table C.4: Landscape sensitivity scores for Great Dunmow sites

	GD1	GD2
Residential development	Moderate-High	Moderate
Mixed use development	High	Moderate-High
Sports facilities and flood lighting	Moderate-High	Moderate-High

Summary

C.7 GD1 is assessed as having a moderate-high overall sensitivity to future change from residential development due to the important role the parcel plays in providing separation between Great Dunmow and Church End as well as the smaller scale of the landscape, extensive scattered semi-natural habitats,

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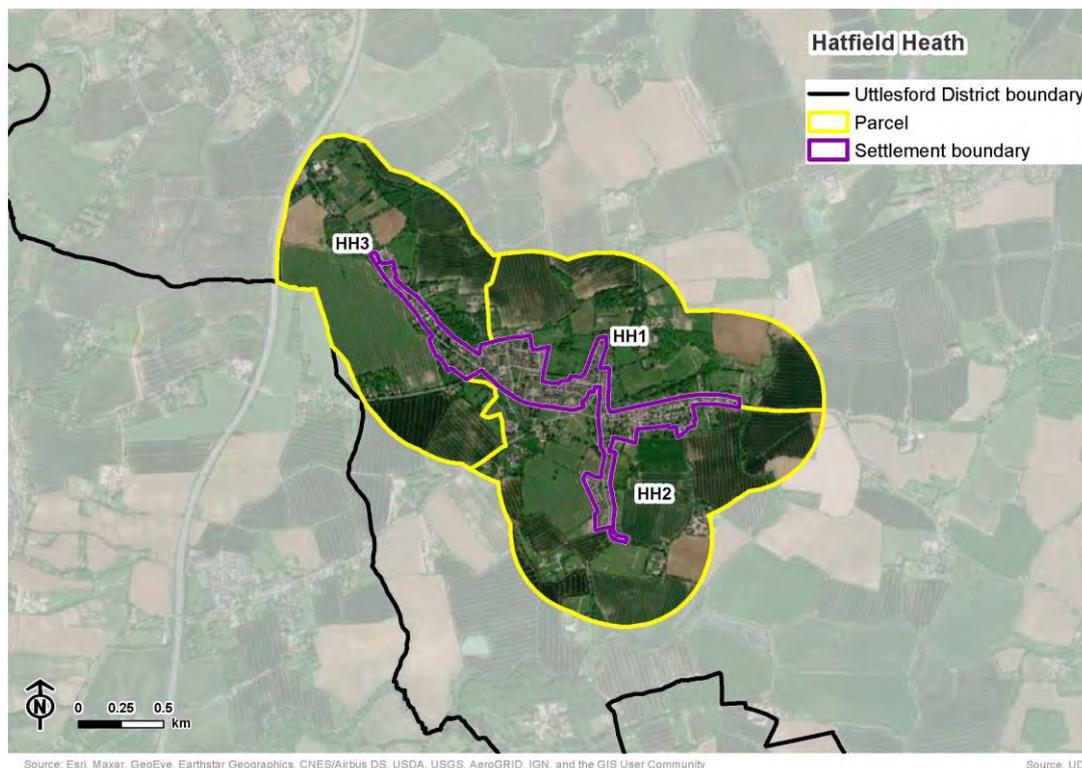
significant heritage assets and public access. Sensitivity to mixed use development was assessed as high, due to the small scale of the landscape and existing scale and general pattern of the current built form.

C.8 The characteristics of the landscape in parcel GD2, including its visual prominence, rural character and scattered semi-natural habitats are sensitive to change as a result of the introduction of residential development, although this is reduced locally by the presence of transport links and the influence of modern development on the settlement edge. The parcel is assessed as having an overall moderate sensitivity. Sensitivity to mixed use development was assessed as moderate-high, due to the existing scale and general pattern of the current built form. Sensitivity to both development types increases in the south, between the settlement edge and the A120, due to the valued semi-natural habitats and separation the area provides between the A120 and Great Dunmow.

C.9 Both parcels would have a moderate-high sensitivity to sports facility development due to their rural character and levels of dark night skies within the parcels.

Settlement Area: Hatfield Heath

Figure C.27: Location of landscape sensitivity parcels for Hatfield Heath



Location and description

The rural village of Hatfield Heath is located in the south-west of the district, 500 metres from the district boundary with Epping Forest. The linear form of the historic village along the edge of the heath is still visible and includes a number of Grade II listed houses. It expanded to the north in the 20th century and as ribbon development along the Stortford Road.

The settlement edge is divided into three parcels:

HH1 – wooded undulating arable fields to the north of Hatfield Heath.

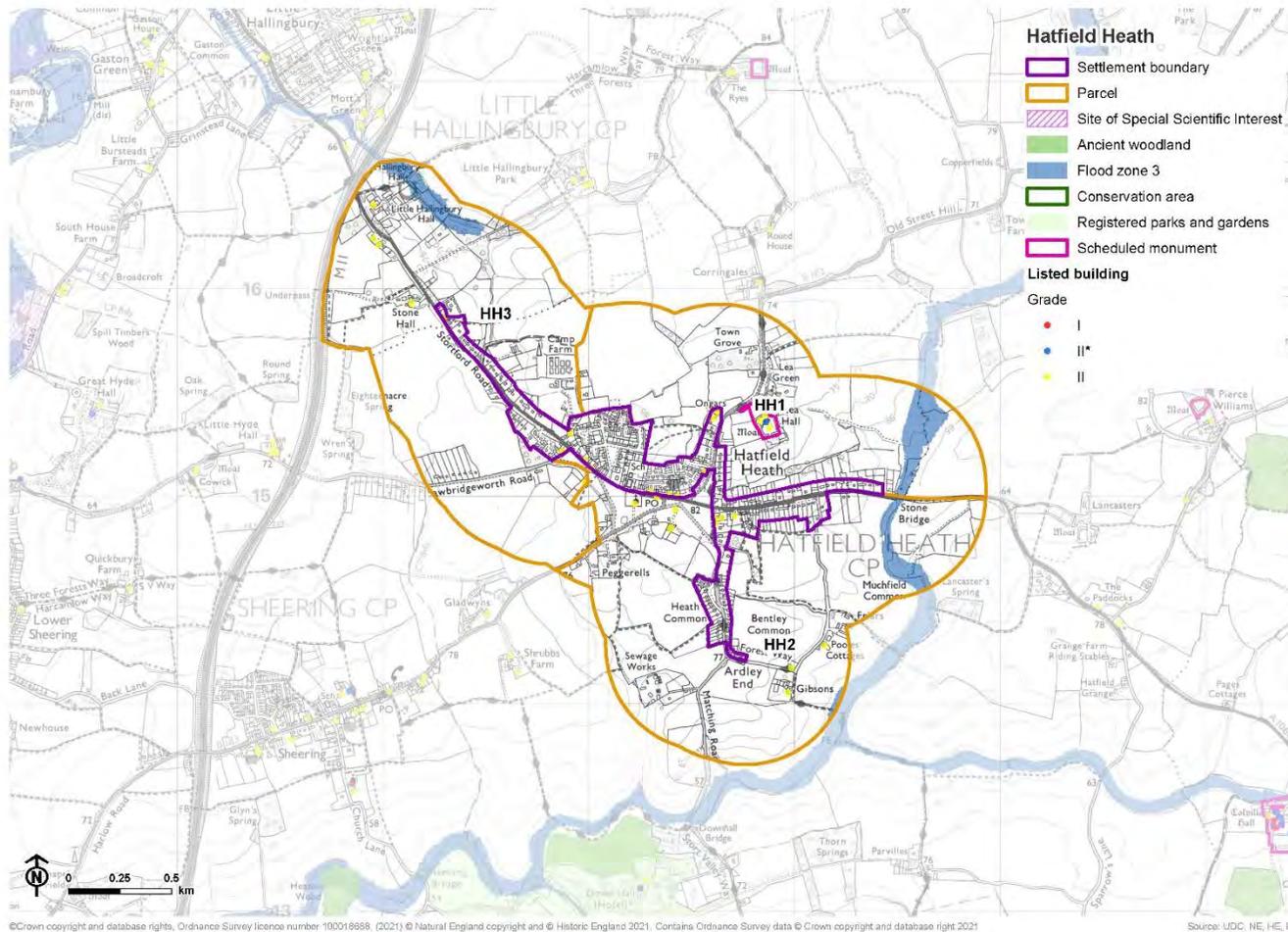
HH2 – gently undulating arable fields to the east and south of Hatfield Heath rising from the Pincey Brook.

Appendix C Landscape sensitivity proformas

HH3 – flatter arable fields to the north west of Hatfield Heath

All of the land within the 500 metres buffer has been assessed.

Figure C.28: Natural and cultural heritage designations within Hatfield Heath



Hatfield Heath representative photos

Figure C.29: HH1 looking north from The Shaw into heathland



Figure C.30: HH1 looking north from Chelmsford Road



Figure C.31: HH2 looking east from Friars Lane



Figure C.32: HH2 looking north-east from Ardley End



Figure C.33: HH3 looking south-east from Sawbridgeworth Road towards Sheering



Figure C.34: HH3 looking north to parkland at Little Hallingbury



Landscape sensitivity assessment: Hatfield Heath HH1

Landscape Character Areas A2 Stort River Valley, B7 Hatfield Forest Farmland Plateau, B9 Roding Farmland Plateau

Criterion 1: Physical character

- Arable farmland falling from 80 metres to 65 metres to the Pincey Brook in the east.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Flat landscape west of Dunmow Road.
 - Lower sensitivity
- Large-scale arable fields, with some smaller pasture fields, some in use as horse grazing, at Little Hallingbury Hall.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 2: Natural character

- Deciduous woodland blocks are scattered throughout the parcel, including Town Grove (identified as Important Woodland) and several blocks identified as priority habitat. Priority habitat lowland heath lies between Dunmow Road and Cox Ley.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Hedgerows and hedgerow trees line the road and border the arable fields.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 3: Sense of time depth

- The moated site at Lea Hall is a Scheduled Monument and includes a number of listed buildings including the Grade II* Lea Hall and an archaeological site. There is another archaeological site north of Cox Ley.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- Modern agricultural practices and an increase in settlement size have removed most historic field patterns, although some remain around the heathland in the centre of the village and adjacent to Dunmow Road.
 - Lower sensitivity

Criterion 4: Character and setting of settlement

- The parcel provides a rural setting to Hatfield Heath, particularly on the approach on Dunmow Road. The parcel plays a role in the separation of Hatfield Heath from Little Hallingbury.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Hatfield Heath has largely retained its historic linear settlement pattern along the north side of the heath with houses generally set back from the roads, creating a distinctive open character to the village.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Modern residential development at Broomfields is more nucleated. Heathland and woodland enclose the settlement edge and would be sensitive to change
 - Higher sensitivity

Criterion 5: Visual character

- Roadside vegetation and woodland blocks provide a sense of enclosure, and there are few views to Hatfield Heath, although there are scenic views from the B183 Dunmow Road
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 6: Perceptual and scenic qualities

- There is some light pollution from Hatfield Heath, but darker skies away from the settlement edge.

Appendix C Landscape sensitivity proformas

- Higher sensitivity
- Forest Way promoted route follows Dunmow Road and provides access to the wider countryside. There are limited other public rights of way.
- Moderate sensitivity
- A rural landscape, with limited human influences
- Higher sensitivity

Landscape sensitivity assessment: Hatfield Heath HH2

Landscape Character Area B9 Roding Farmland Plateau

Criterion1: Physical character

- Gently undulating landscape, with valley sides sloping towards the Pincey Brook in the east and south, ranging from 60 metres to 75 metres AOD.
- Moderate sensitivity
- Fields are medium to large scale with an open character. There is some pasture east of Matching Road and at Ardley End, which are smaller-scale landscape features.
- Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 2: Natural character

- There is a priority habitat traditional orchard at Peggerells, and Hatfield Heath LoWS is located on the green by Holy Trinity Church.
- Higher sensitivity
- Hedgerows border the arable fields and roadsides, with some remnant hedgerow trees, providing semi-natural habitats.
- Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 3: Sense of time depth

- There are scattered Grade II listed buildings in the parcel clustered around Holy Trinity Church and the Mill House, and farmsteads at Ardley End.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Modern agricultural practices have removed most historic field patterns.
 - Lower sensitivity

Criterion 4: Character and setting of settlement

- The parcel provides a rural setting to Hatfield Heath, and the village green and open space around Holy Trinity Church make an important contribution to the historic character of the village.
 - Higher sensitivity
- The historic linear form of Hatfield Heath lining the village green is still apparent, and development here would have a poor relationship with the existing settlement pattern.
 - Higher sensitivity

Criterion 5: Visual character

- The parcel has a largely open character, with woodland and trees providing a wooded backdrop to views. The skyline is undeveloped.
 - Higher sensitivity
- The Holy Trinity Church spire is prominent in views from the south. There are long views from Friars Lane across the rolling Pincey Brook river valley.
 - Higher sensitivity

Criterion 6: Perceptual and scenic qualities

- There is some light pollution from Hatfield Heath, but darker skies away from the settlement edge.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- Forest Way promoted route crosses the parcel and with other public rights of way provides access to the wider countryside.

Appendix C Landscape sensitivity proformas

- Higher sensitivity
- A rural landscape with human influences within the parcel limited to the works off Matching Road.
- Higher sensitivity

Landscape sensitivity assessment: Heatfield Heath HH3

Landscape Character Area A2 Stort River Valley, B7 Hatfield Forest Farmland Plateau, B9 Roding Farmland Plateau

Criterion1: Physical character

- Flat to very gently undulating landscape, around 80 metres AOD, falling towards a tributary of the River Stort in the north, from 80 metres to 65 metres AOD.
 - Lower sensitivity
- Fields are medium to large scale with an open character.
 - Lower sensitivity

Criterion 2: Natural character

- Priority habitat deciduous woodland blocks at Camp Farm and Little Hallingbury Hall, and traditional orchard at Sawbridgeworth Road.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- Hedgerows border the arable fields and roadsides, with some remnant hedgerow trees.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 3: Sense of time depth

- Grade II listed buildings line Stortford Road, including at Stone Hall. There is an archaeological site south of Sawbridgeworth Road. The barn north-east of Little Hallingbury Hall is Grade II listed, and there are archaeological sites at Little Hallingbury Hall.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- Modern agricultural practices have removed most historic field patterns.
 - Lower sensitivity

Criterion 4: Character and setting of settlement

- The open arable fields of the parcel provide a rural setting to Hatfield Heath, particularly between Sawbridgeworth Road and the B183 Sheering Road. The parcel also provides some separation between Hatfield Heath and Sheering to the south-west.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- 20th century ribbon development along Sawbridgeworth Road and Stortford Road are not well integrated with the surrounding landscape.
 - Lower sensitivity

Criterion 5: Visual character

- The parcel has a largely open character, with woodland and trees providing a wooded backdrop to views. The skyline is undeveloped. The church spire at Hatfield Heath is prominent in views from the south and there are views from Sawbridgeworth Road south-west to Sheering.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Roadside vegetation on the eastern edge of Sawbridgeworth Road and on Stortford Road creates some enclosure and prevents views of the settlement edge.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 6: Perceptual and scenic qualities

- There is some light pollution from Hatfield Heath, but darker skies away from the settlement edge.

- Moderate sensitivity
- Limited public rights of way cross the parcel, providing access to the wider countryside.
- Moderate sensitivity
- A moderately rural landscape, with human influences within the parcel limited to the road network and the M11 to the north-west.
- Moderate sensitivity

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity: Hatfield Heath

Table C.5: Landscape sensitivity scores for Hatfield Heath sites

Development type	HH1	HH2	HH3
Residential development	Moderate-High	High	Moderate
Mixed use development	Moderate-High	High	Moderate
Sports facilities and flood lighting	Moderate-High	Moderate-High	Moderate

Summary

C.10 The characteristics of the landscape in parcel HH2, including its rural character and setting provided to Hatfield Heath, especially its contribution to the historic character of the village around the village green and Holy Trinity Church, its semi-natural habitats including heathland, and open character are all sensitive to change as a result of the introduction of residential development. Hatfield Heath retains its historic linear form, and development here would not fit with the existing settlement form. The parcel is assessed as having an overall high sensitivity. Sensitivity to mixed use development was also assessed at

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high, due to the existing scale and general pattern of the current built form and the open character of the landscape.

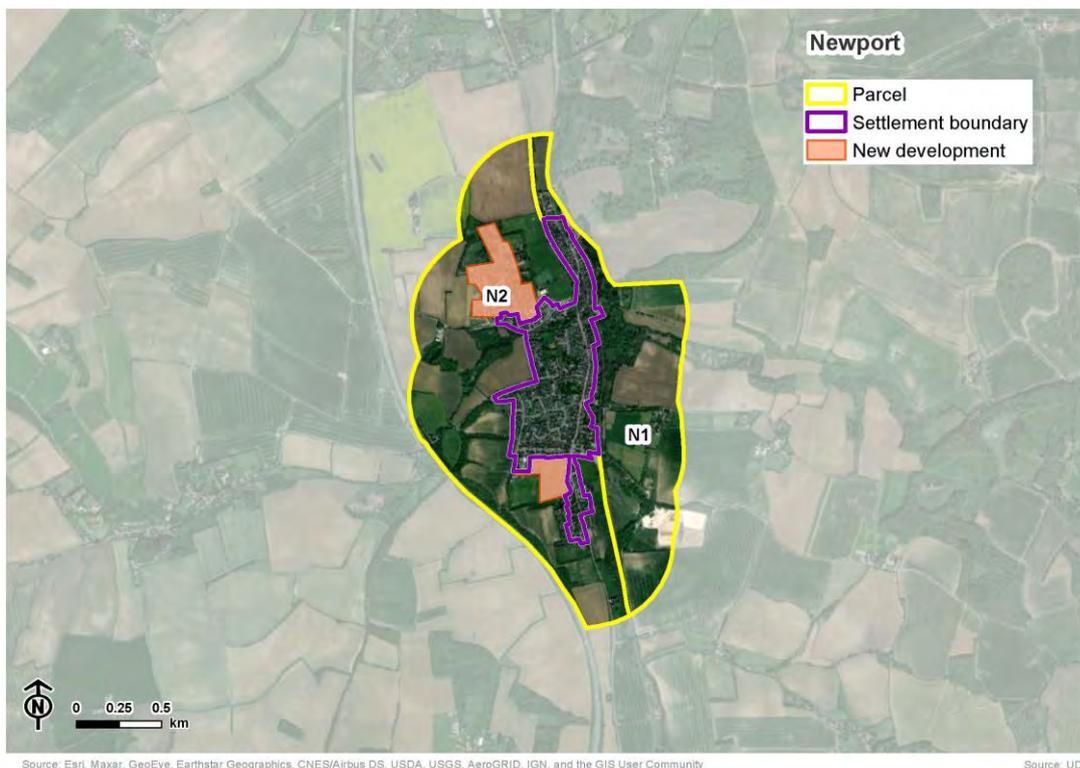
C.11 HH1 is assessed as having a moderate-high overall sensitivity to future change from residential and commercial development due to the rural characteristics and setting provided to the village, including the open character of the heath, semi-natural habitats, valued heritage assets and undulating topography.

C.12 HH3 has a flatter topography, few semi-natural habitats or heritage assets and north of Sawbridgeworth Road plays less of a role in the rural setting to Hatfield Heath. However, there is limited development in the parcel, which has a small-scale landscape and open character. The parcel is assessed as having an overall moderate sensitivity to residential and mixed-use development.

C.13 HH1 and HH2 are assessed as having a moderate-high sensitivity to sports facility development due to their rural character and levels of dark night skies within the parcels. HH3 is more influenced by light pollution from Hatfield Heath and therefore is assessed as having a moderate sensitivity to sports facility development.

Settlement Area: Newport

Figure C.35: Location of landscape sensitivity parcels for Newport



Location and description

The rural village of Newport is located in the centre of the district, 5 kilometres south-west of Saffron Walden. It is a historic linear settlement, following the north-south line of the long main street, with many medieval timber-framed and plastered buildings including the 13th century church and 15th century Wealden House. Growth to the east was restricted by the River Cam, and later by the railway line. 19th century development in response to the arrival of the railway extended the village to the west and continued in the 20th century with development to the west and south.

The settlement edge is divided into two parcels:

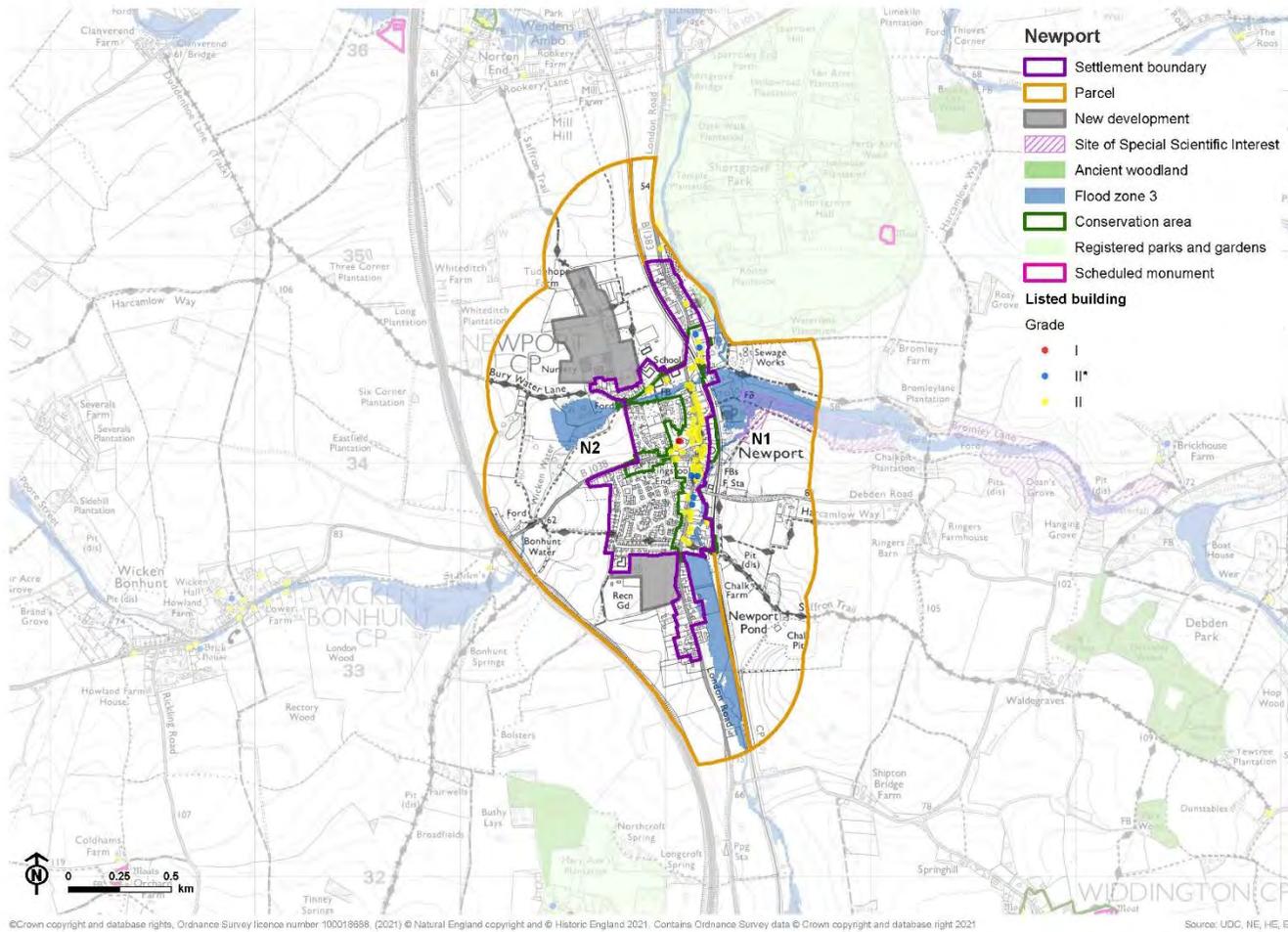
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N1 – rolling large arable fields to the east of Newport beyond the mainline railway line.

N2 – more gently sloping arable fields to the west of Newport extending to the M11.

Land to the north-east of Newport has been scoped out of the assessment due to its designation as a Registered Park and Garden at Shortgrove Hall. Land west of the M11 has also been scoped out as the motorway forms a strong barrier to development.

Figure C.36: Natural and cultural heritage designations within Newport



Newport representative photos

Figure C.37: N1 rising arable fields east of the railway station



Figure C.38: N1 looking west to the settlement edge on Water Lane



Figure C.39: N2 looking north to the new settlement edge from Bury Water Lane



Figure C.40: N2 looking south from the recreation ground



Landscape sensitivity assessment: Newport N1

Landscape Character Area A1 Cam River Valley

Criterion1: Physical character

- Rolling valley sides, ranging from 55m to 85m AOD. These rise from the flatter valley floors along the course of the River Cam and its tributary Debden Water, to the farmland plateau to the east.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Newport Limeworks and Debden Road Chalk Pit are local geological sites.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Fields are large scale, regular in size with an open character.
 - Lower sensitivity

Criterion 2: Natural character

- Debden Water is designated as a SSSI due to its fen and grassland habitats. Debden Road is a LoWS and a Special Verge.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Scattered priority habitat deciduous woodland line the watercourses and have vegetated former chalk pits.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- Gappy hedgerows border the arable fields, with some hedgerow trees. Hedgerows have been removed or replaced by post and rail fencing in many areas.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 3: Sense of time depth

- The Newport Conservation Area extends along Bridge End into the parcel and includes a high density of historic buildings. Archaeological sites are recorded at Newport Pond.

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- Higher sensitivity
- Modern agricultural practices have removed most historic field patterns.
- Lower sensitivity

Criterion 4: Character and setting of settlement

- The parcel provides an attractive rural setting to Newport. Glimpsed views to the east between the historic buildings along High Street to the countryside beyond are important to the character of the village.
 - Higher sensitivity
- The railway line and the Cam to the north provide a strong settlement edge to Newport and woodland provides further enclosure. Development would have a poor relationship with the existing settlement form.
 - Higher sensitivity

Criterion 5: Visual character

- A semi-open character, with views to Newport from the surrounding roads and public rights of way, and across the valley to the west.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- Considerable vegetation and scrub provide areas of enclosure on the settlement edge. The skyline is largely undeveloped.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 6: Perceptual and scenic qualities

- Light pollution is noticeable at Newport, but there are darker skies further east.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- Harcamlow Way and the Saffron Trail promoted routes cross the parcel and provide access to the wider countryside.
 - Higher sensitivity
- A moderately rural landscape, with human influences within the parcel limited to the railway line, sewage works in the north and working chalk pit at Newport Pond.

- Moderate sensitivity

Landscape sensitivity assessment: Newport N2

Landscape Character Area A1 Cam River Valley

Criterion 1: Physical character

- Gently undulating valley sides, rising from Wicken Water, from 55m to 85m AOD.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- Fields are medium to large scale with an open character.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 2: Natural character

- Priority habitat deciduous woodland characterise some field boundaries and Wicken Water and extends to Bury Water Lane as part of the Wicken Water Marsh LoWS. Grasslands line the Cam at Kiora Pasture LoWS between London Road and the railway line in the south.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- Hedgerows border the arable fields, with some remnant hedgerow trees and roadside vegetation.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 3: Sense of time depth

- The parcel contains no recorded heritage assets.
 - Lower sensitivity
- Modern agricultural practices have removed most historic field patterns, except for older enclosures around Bonhunt Water.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 4: Character and setting of settlement

- The parcel provides a rural setting to Newport, with the wooded valley along Wicken Water providing separation between development along Wicken Road and Bury Water Lane. The importance of the views northwards over open countryside from Wicken Road are noted in the Conservation Area Appraisal.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- The parcel contributes to the separation of Newport and Wendens Ambo to the north and provides a buffer between Newport and the M11 to the west.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- New development on the north-west settlement edge forms a hard edge with the adjoining landscape to the west. Ribbon development extends north and south on London Road but is more enclosed by vegetation.
 - Lower sensitivity

Criterion 5: Visual character

- The landscape has a semi-open character, with some enclosure from roadside hedgerows and trees but some open views from the settlement edge, including to Wendens Ambo to the north. The skyline is largely undeveloped.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 6: Perceptual and scenic qualities

- Light pollution is noticeable at Newport, and from the M11.
 - Lower sensitivity
- Harcamlow Way and the Saffron Trail promoted routes cross the parcel and with other public rights of way provide access to the wider countryside, and provide links to Wendens Ambo to the north and Wicken Bonhunt to the west.
 - Higher sensitivity
- A moderately rural landscape with human influences within the parcel limited to the M11 and railway line.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity: Newport

Table C.6: Landscape sensitivity scores for Newport sites

Development type	N1	N2
Residential development	Moderate-High	Moderate
Mixed use development	High	Moderate-High
Sports facilities and flood lighting	Moderate-High	Moderate

Summary

C.14 The characteristics of the landscape in parcel N1, including its rural character, steeply sloping topography, visual prominence, important semi-natural habitats, the setting it provides to the settlement, particularly the Conservation Area, are sensitive to change as a result of the introduction of residential development. The parcel is assessed as having an overall moderate-high sensitivity. Sensitivity is lower around Newport Pond south-east of the railway station due to the flatter topography and enclosure by scrub. Sensitivity to mixed use development is assessed at high, due to the existing scale and general pattern of the current built form and the open character of the landscape. The parcel is assessed as having moderate-high sensitivity to sports facility development due to the rural character and levels of dark night skies.

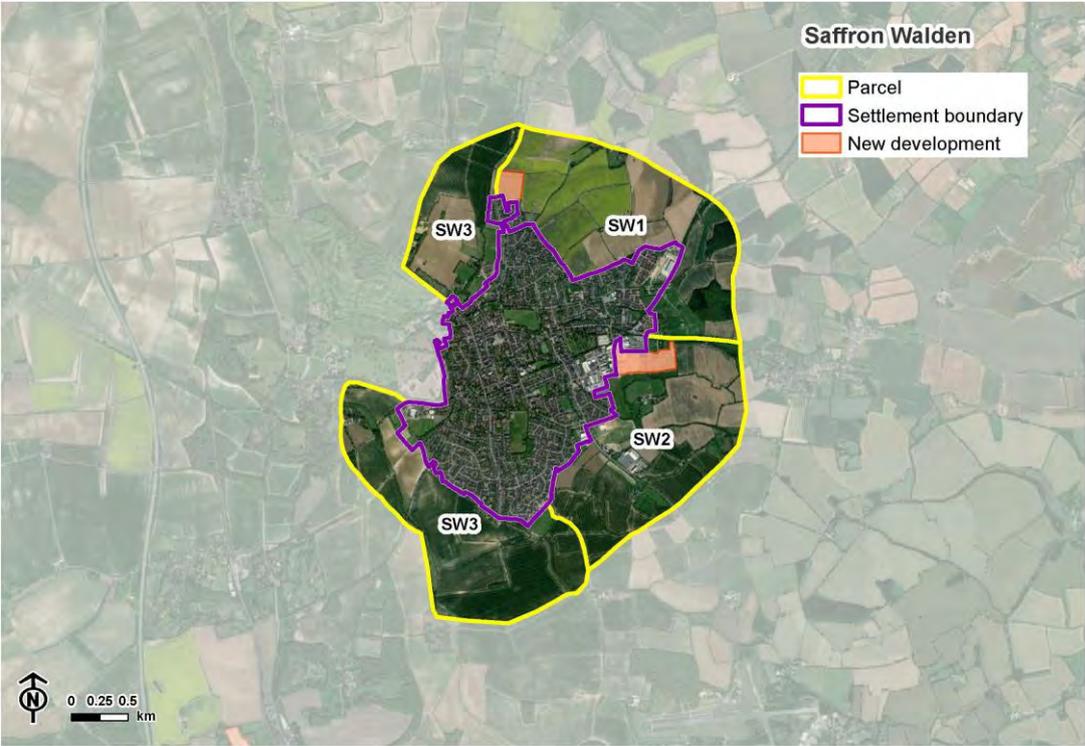
C.15 N2 is assessed as having a moderate overall sensitivity to future change from residential development. Although sensitivity is increased due to semi-natural habitats and its role in providing separation between Newport and Wendens Ambo to the north, sensitivity is reduced by the largely modern settlement edge, limited time-depth and human influence of the M11 and railway line. Sensitivity to mixed use development was assessed as moderate-high, due to the small scale of the landscape and existing scale and general pattern of the current built form and the open character of the landscape. There

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is greater light pollution in N2 due to the existing settlement edge and the M11, and the parcel has a moderate sensitivity to sports facility development.

Settlement Area: Saffron Walden

Figure C.41: Location of landscape sensitivity parcels for Saffron Walden



Location and description

Saffron Walden is a historic market town, which developed as the centre for the English saffron crocus trade in the late medieval period. Located in the north of Uttlesford, Saffron Walden is located on a prominent hilltop, and the spire of St Mary’s Church is visible across the surrounding countryside. Saffron Walden has a high occurrence of listed buildings, centred around the Grade I listed church and Walden Castle. There has been considerable expansion in the 20th and 21st centuries, predominantly to the east and south-east.

The settlement edge is divided into three parcels:

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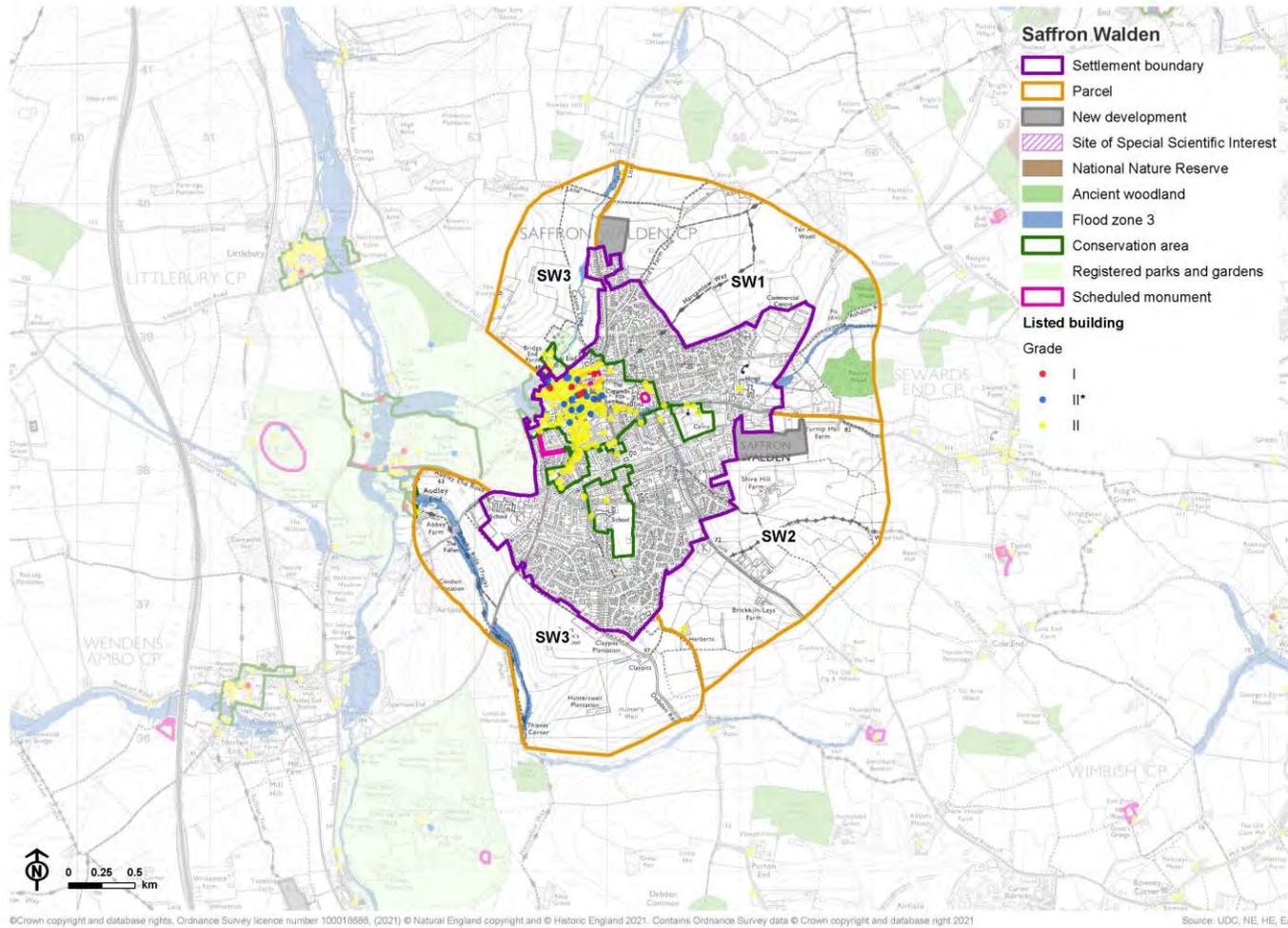
SW1 – rolling arable fields with prominent woodland blocks to the north-east and east of Saffron Walden.

SW2 – sloping farmland which rises to the farmed plateau to the south-east of Saffron Walden.

SW3 – steep valley sides of the River Cam and tributaries to the south-west and north-west of Saffron Walden.

The land to the west of Saffron Walden has been excluded from the assessment due to its designation as part of the Audley End Registered Park and Garden.

Figure C.42: Natural and cultural heritage designations within Saffron Walden



Saffron Walden representative photos

Figure C.43: SW1 looking south from Little Walden Road



Figure C.44: SW1 looking south-east to modern settlement edge



Figure C.45: SW2 looking west from new settlement edge



Figure C.46: SW2 looking north from commercial edge



Figure C.47: SW3 looking north-west from Debden Road



Figure C.48: SW3 looking south from Westley Lane



Landscape sensitivity assessment: Saffron Walden SW1

Landscape Character Area A1 Cam River Valley and B1 Ashdon Farmland Plateau

Criterion 1: Physical character

- Rolling landform between 50 metres to 100 metres AOD, rising from The Slade.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Three geological sites are in the parcel – Limefields Pit, Whitehill Wood Chalk Pits and Radwinter Road Chalk Quarry.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Medium to large scale arable fields, with intermittent hedgerows and woodland providing smaller-scale features
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 2: Natural character

- Priority habitat deciduous woodland at Whitehill Wood and Pounce Wood, both recorded as ancient woodland, and designated as Important Woodland and LoWS. Ashdon Road and Byrds Farm Lane are designated as special verges, and the former is a LoWS.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Boundary hedgerows, hedgerow trees, riverside vegetation and roadside vegetation all provide semi-natural habitats.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 3: Sense of time depth

- There are no recorded heritage assets within the parcel. A former railway line runs along the settlement boundary to the north of Ashdon Road.

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- Lower sensitivity
- Modern agricultural practices have removed most historic field patterns.
- Lower sensitivity

Criterion 4: Character and setting of settlement

- A ring of woodland blocks and open farmland provide a scenic rural setting to the town, with views across fields from the settlement edges. The parcel provides separation between Saffron Walden and Swards End.
 - Higher sensitivity
- The 20th century settlement edge is not well integrated with the adjoining landscape and is visible from the Harcamlow Way. A commercial centre north of Ashdon Road and sewage works to the south characterise the settlement edge to the south of the parcel.
 - Lower sensitivity

Criterion 5: Visual character

- The parcel has an open character, with views across the rolling countryside and potential development on the higher valley slopes would be visible from the surrounding countryside, increasing sensitivity.
 - Higher sensitivity
- St Mary's church spire is an important landmark feature and visible in views from the north and north east, including Little Walden Road. The skyline is largely undeveloped except in views north-west to the Chesterford Research Centre and pylons to the north.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- Woodland blocks, roadside vegetation and settlement edge vegetation provides some enclosure.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 6: Perceptual and scenic qualities

- Saffron Walden emits light pollution, however there are dark skies to the north and north-east away from the settlement edge.
 - Higher sensitivity

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- Harcamlow Way promoted route and other public rights of way allow access from the settlement edges into the wider countryside.
 - Higher sensitivity
- A strongly rural landscape with some human influences including new development along the B1052 Little Walden Road.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Landscape sensitivity assessment Saffron Walden SW2

Landscape Character Area A1 Cam River Valley and B3 Debden Farmland Plateau

Criterion1: Physical character

- Rolling farmland from 80 metres to 100 metres AOD.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- Mixed arable field sizes, with smaller fields close to the settlement edge.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- Hedgerows, hedgerow trees and woodland blocks provide smaller-scale landscape features.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 2: Natural character

- There are no recorded priority habitats within the parcel. The hedgerows, hedgerow trees and small blocks of woodland and shrub provide semi-natural habitats.
 - Lower sensitivity

Criterion 3: Sense of time depth

- The Grade II listed barn at Herberts Farm is the only listed building within the parcel. There is an archaeological site at Wheel Hall.
 - Lower sensitivity
- Modern agricultural practices and settlement expansion have removed most historic field patterns, although some evidence of earlier enclosure patterns remain south of the B184 Thaxted Road.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 4: Character and setting of settlement

- The parcel contributes to a rural setting to Saffron Walden and to the separation between Saffron Walden and Swards End to the east.
 - Higher sensitivity
- The settlement edge of Saffron Walden has recently expanded in this parcel, however retained hedgerows, roadside vegetation and woodland help to integrate it with the adjacent landscape.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 5: Visual character

- Thaxted Road and Radwinter Road are both tree-lined, creating a semi-enclosed character. Where there are gaps in hedgerows there are views across the parcel towards Saffron Walden, which is visible on the ridge.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- The skyline is largely undeveloped, although lighting columns along the M11 are visible.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 6: Perceptual and scenic qualities

- Light pollution is noticeable from Saffron Walden, although there are darker skies to the south-east away from the settlement edge.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- There are limited public rights of way crossing the parcel.

- Lower sensitivity
- The perceptual qualities of the parcel are influenced by large scale commercial development along the Thaxted Road and the busy road network.
- Moderate sensitivity

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity: Saffron Walden SW3

Landscape Character Area A1 Cam River Valley and B3 Debden Farmland Plateau

Criterion1: Physical character

- Rolling valley sides of the River Cam and its tributaries, with landform rising steeply from the Slade in the north and Fulfen Slade in the south and west, between 50 metres and 100 metres AOD.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Westley Lane Chalk Pit is a Local Geological Site.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Medium to large scale arable fields, with woodland blocks and roadside vegetation providing smaller scale landscape features.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 2: Natural character

- Priority habitat deciduous woodland blocks are found in the south of the parcel, and along the Fulfen Slade at Audley End. Claypits Plantation, Conduit Plantation and woodland at Audley End are designated as important woodland. Debden Road and Audley End Park Wall on Audley End Road are designated as LoWS, and Debden Road is as an area of special verges.
 - Higher sensitivity

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- Intermittent hedgerows, hedgerow trees and roadside vegetation provide semi-natural habitats.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 3: Sense of time depth

- The Saffron Walden Conservation Area extends into the parcel in the north west, and contains Bridge End Gardens, a Grade II* Registered Park and Garden, and a number of Grade II listed structures and archaeological sites. Cinder Hall in the north is Grade II listed. A disused railway through the west of the parcel and an area west of Debden Road are designated as archaeological sites. The landscape also provides a setting to the Registered Park and Garden at Audley End.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Modern agriculture has altered the field pattern, although evidence of earlier enclosure patterns remains east of Catons Lane.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 4: Character and setting of settlement

- The parcel provides a rural setting and approach to Saffron Walden from the north, south and west. The parcel contributes to the separation of Saffron Walden and Audley End, and Saffron Walden and Wendens Ambo.
 - Higher sensitivity
- The settlement edge is well-enclosed by trees and vegetation, and the boundary reinforced by a public footpath, and the majority (between Debden Road and Newport Road) is not visible from the surrounding roads.
 - Higher sensitivity

Criterion 5: Visual character

- Views from Bridge End Gardens to the historic settlement edge are noted as important in the Conservation Area Appraisal.
 - Higher sensitivity

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- Roadside vegetation and the rolling topography provide enclosure and limit views. Where hedgerows are missing there are long views west across the Cam valley, and from Audley End Road into Audley End Park.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 6: Perceptual and scenic qualities

- Light pollution is noticeable from Saffron Walden, however there are darker skies away from the settlement edge.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- The Saffron Trail promoted route and other public rights of way provide access from the edge of Saffron Walden to the wider countryside, and allow views from the countryside back to Saffron Walden.
 - Higher sensitivity
- A rural landscape with very limited human influences within the parcel.
 - Higher sensitivity

**Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity:
Saffron Walden**

Table C.7: Landscape sensitivity scores for Saffron Walden sites

	SW1	SW2	SW3
Residential development	Moderate-High	Moderate	Hight
Mixed use development	Moderate-High	Moderate	High
Sports facilities and flood lighting	Moderate-High	Moderate	Moderate-High

Summary

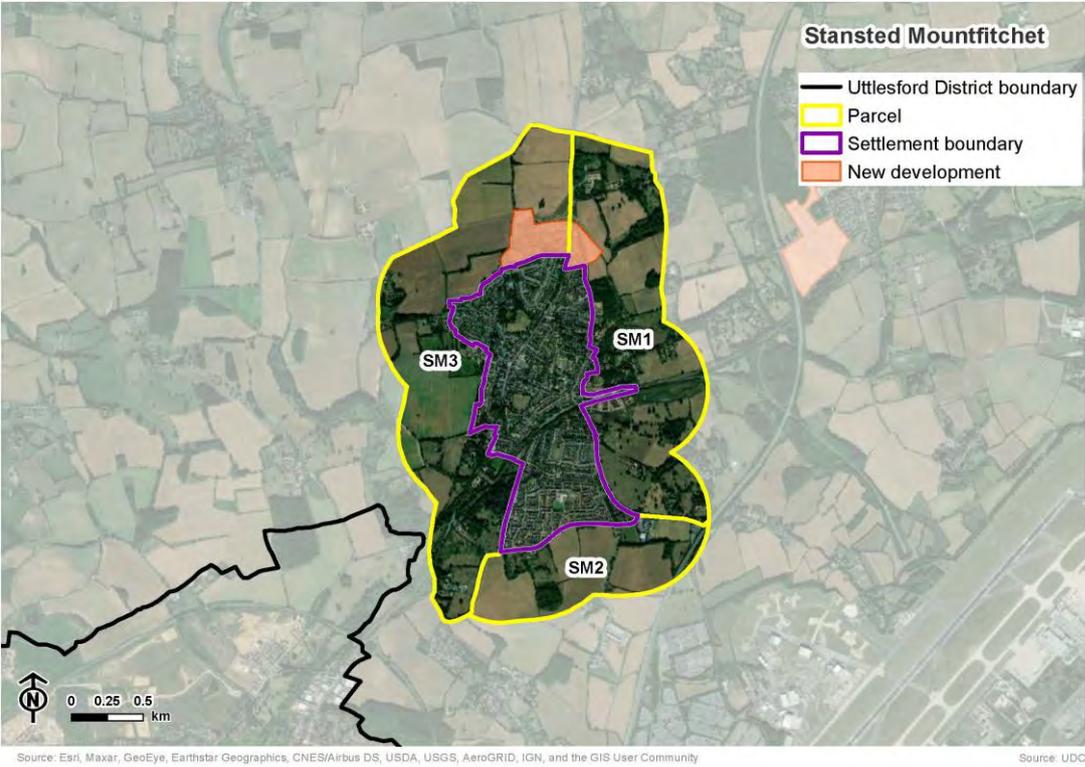
C.16 The characteristics of the landscape in Parcel SW1 include the rural setting it provides to Saffron Walden, its rolling topography and valued semi-natural habitats, which increase sensitivity and the parcel is considered to have an overall moderate-high sensitivity to residential and commercial development. The modern settlement edge along Ashdon Road has a lower sensitivity, due to the existing scale and pattern of the current built form. The parcel is considered to have moderate-high sensitivity to sports facility development due to the rural character of the landscape and dark skies.

C.17 Parcel SW2 is considered to have moderate sensitivity to residential and mixed-use development as although it has a rolling topography, semi-open character and provides a rural setting to Saffron Walden sensitivity is reduced by the limited semi-natural habitats and heritage assets recorded in the landscape, more limited public access and the influence of large-scale modern development on the perceptual qualities of the landscape. SW2 is considered to have moderate sensitivity to sport facility development due to the existing human influences on the parcel.

C.18 Parcel SW3 is considered to have high sensitivity to residential development due to the important rural setting it provides to Saffron Walden (particularly along to the historic settlement edge), steeply rolling landform, valued semi-natural habitats and strong sense of time depth, with a concentration of heritage assets and rural character, which increase sensitivity. The parcel is considered to have a high sensitivity to mixed use development due to the existing scale and pattern of the current built form. The parcel has moderate-high sensitivity to sports facility development due to the rural character of the landscape and dark skies.

Settlement Area: Stansted Mountfitchet

Figure C.49: Location of landscape sensitivity parcels for Stansted Mountfitchet



Location and description

The village of Stansted Mountfitchet is located in the west of the district, 1.2 kilometres north-east of Bishop’s Stortford. The historic core of the village is dominated by the motte and bailey castle, with an additional historic area at Bentfield Green to the north-west. With the construction of the railway the village increased in size. The 20th and 21st centuries have seen considerable development south of the railway line, especially with the redeveloped Rochford nurseries.

The settlement edge is divided into three parcels:

SM1 – steeper wooded farmland rising from the Stansted Brook, with a strong parkland character to the east of Stansted Mountfitchet.

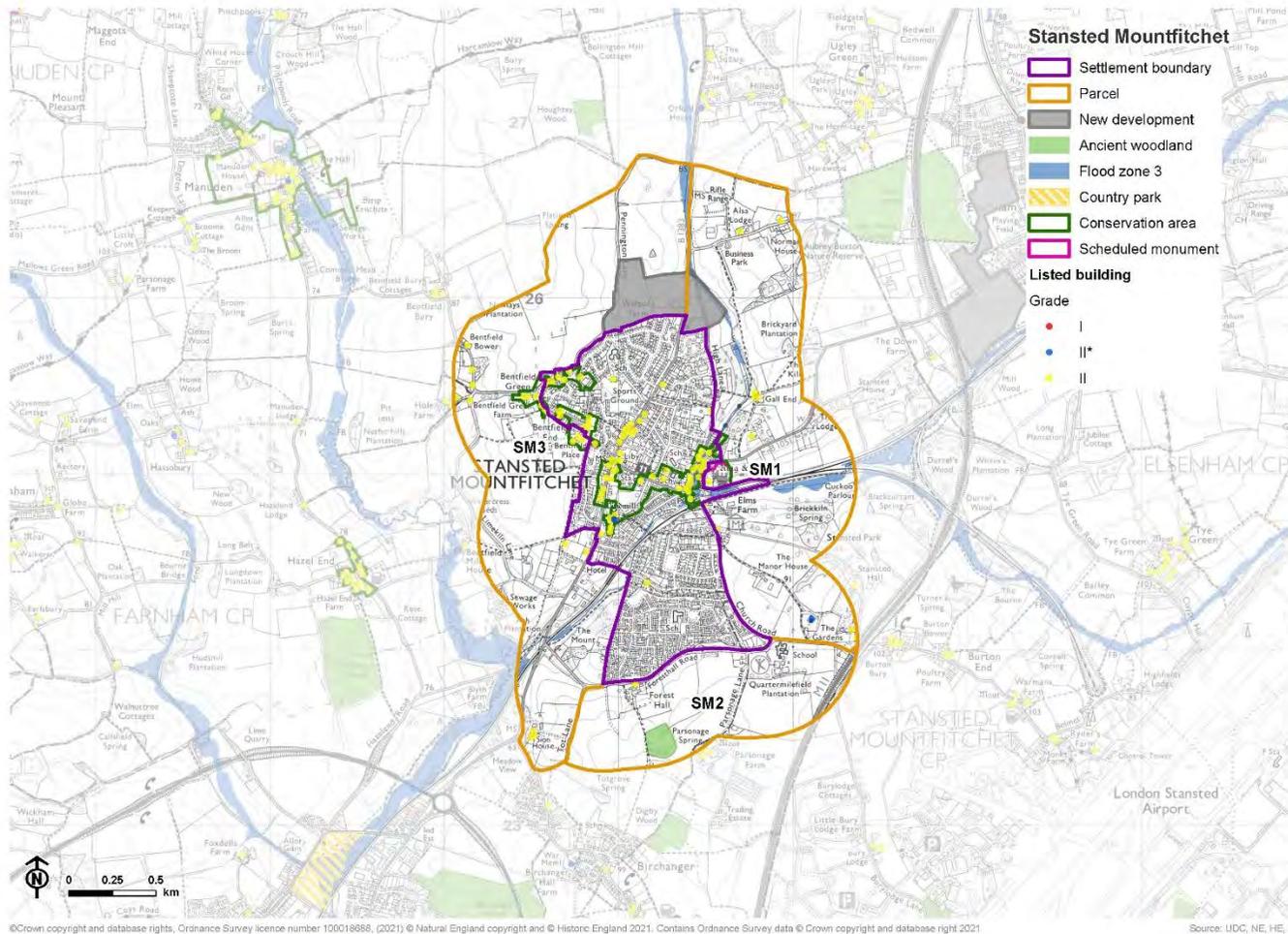
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SM2 – undulating farmland to the south of Stansted Mountfitchet.

SM3 – undulating valley sides of the River Stort to the west of Stansted Mountfitchet

All land within the 500 metres buffer has been assessed.

Figure C.50: Natural and cultural heritage designations within Stansted Mountfitchet



Stansted Mountfitchet representative photos

Figure C.51: SM1 looking west over Stansted Park to leisure centre



Figure C.52: SM1 looking west towards High Lane



Figure C.53: SM2 looking north from Parsonage Lane to new settlement edge



Figure C.54: SM2 looking east from Tot Lane



Figure C.55: SM3 historic settlement edge at Bentfield Green



Figure C.56: SM3 looking south-west towards Bishop's Stortford



Landscape sensitivity assessment: Stansted Mountfitchet SM1

Landscape Character Area A2 Stort River Valley and B5 Broxted Farmland Plateau

Criterion 1: Physical character

- Rolling fields rising from the settlement edge and Stansted Brook from 75 metres to 90 metres AOD.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- Arable fields are medium scale and regular in size, with strong hedgerow and hedgerow tree boundaries. Pasture field in the south of the parcel are smaller scale.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 2: Natural character

- Scattered woodland blocks throughout the parcel, much recorded as priority habitat deciduous woodland, including at Aubrey Buxton Reserve LoWS. Woodland east of High Lane is designated as Important Woodland.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Boundary hedgerows, hedgerow trees, roadside vegetation and parkland with mature specimen trees at Stansted Park provide semi-natural habitats and create a wooded character.
 - Higher sensitivity

Criterion 3: Sense of time depth

- Stansted Mountfitchet Conservation Area extends into the parcel to include the motte and bailey castle which is a Scheduled Monument. Gall End and Stansted Hall contain clusters of Grade II listed buildings. An archaeological site covers the landscape around the Grade II* listed Church of St Mary the Virgin.

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- Higher sensitivity
- The mature trees and remnant parkland at Stansted Park extends from Church Road to the M11 and the railway.
- Higher sensitivity
- Modern agricultural practices have removed most historic field patterns, although there are some older field patterns between the B1051 Grove Hill and the railway line.
- Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 4: Character and setting of settlement

- The parcel provides a rural wooded setting to Stansted Mountfitchet to the north and east. The woodland east of High Lane provides a strong settlement boundary, and development east of the road would not fit the existing settlement pattern. Stansted Mountfitchet has expanded northwards; however the B1351 High Lane remains a strong boundary edge to the east.
- Higher sensitivity
- The modern edge of Stansted Mountfitchet is partially visible from the parkland around Stansted Hall; however Church Road provides a strong settlement boundary to the south-east.
- Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 5: Visual character

- The woodland within the parcel contributes to a semi-enclosed character, and there are only limited views of the roofline of Stansted Mountfitchet across the woodland east of High Lane. There are intermittent views from Stansted Park to the modern settlement edge west of Church Road, but these are screened by parkland trees.
- Lower sensitivity

Criterion 6: Perceptual and scenic qualities

- Light pollution is noticeable at Stansted Mountfitchet, but there are darker skies further east.
- Moderate sensitivity

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- Public rights of way link the edge of the village to the wider countryside.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- Some areas are in poor condition, with post and wire fencing replacing hedgerows, areas of scrub, overgrown hedgerow trees, particularly north of Gall End.
 - Lower sensitivity
- A rural landscape with the railway line the only human influence within the parcel. The M11 is an intrusive influence to the east, and Stansted Airport to the south.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Landscape sensitivity assessment: Stansted Mountfitchet SM2

Landscape Character Area A2 Stort River Valley

Criterion1: Physical character

- Gently rising slopes from 75 metres to 100 metres AOD.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- Medium-scale arable fields, with some hedgerow trees which provide smaller-scale features.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 2: Natural character

- Priority habitat deciduous woodland, recorded as ancient woodland, at Parsonage Spring LoWS.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Hedgerows, hedgerow trees and roadside trees create a wooded character and provide semi-natural habitats.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 3: Sense of time depth

- Parsonage Farm contains a cluster of Grade II listed buildings and is an archaeological site. Forest Hall is also a Grade II listed building.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Modern agricultural practices have removed most historic field patterns.
 - Lower sensitivity

Criterion 4: Character and setting of settlement

- The parcel provides a rural setting and approach to Stansted Mountfitchet and provides separation between Stansted Mountfitchet and Birchanger to the south.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Stansted Mountfitchet has been considerably extended to the south., The new residential development of Forest Hall Park is visible from the south and forms a hard edge to the adjoining landscape.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- Development along the M11 at Old Burylodge Lane and M11 Business Link does not relate well to the settlement edge.
 - Lower sensitivity

Criterion 5: Visual character

- Hedgerows, trees and woodland blocks create a semi-enclosed character to this parcel. The skyline is generally treed, and there are no structures visible above the treeline.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 6: Perceptual and scenic qualities

- Light pollution from Stansted Mountfitchet and Stansted Airport to the south limit the dark skies.
 - Lower sensitivity
- The public right of way network through the parcel provides access to the countryside and from Stansted Mountfitchet to Birchanger to the south.

- Moderate sensitivity
- Areas of rural character, although commercial development along the M11 is a human influence. The M11 is also an intrusive modern influence.
- Moderate sensitivity

Landscape sensitivity assessment: Stansted Mountfitchet SM3

Landscape Character Area A2 Stort River Valley and B5 Broxted Farmland Plateau

Criterion1: Physical character

- Gently undulating topography, ranging from 80 metres to 100 metres AOD.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- Steeper topography around The Mount, rising from the Stansted Brook.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Arable fields are large-scale with some intact hedgerows and hedgerow trees which provide smaller-scale features, with small-scale grazing fields on Limekiln Lane and at Bentfield Green.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 2: Natural character

- Priority habitat deciduous woodland is recorded at Bentfield Green and in the south of the parcel. The Mount is designated as a LoWS for its priority habitat good quality semi-improved grassland.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Hedgerows, substantial mature hedgerow trees and roadside vegetation provide semi-natural habitats.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 3: Sense of time depth

- Bentfield Green Conservation Area extends into the parcel, and a number of Grade II listed buildings are located along the settlement edge. There is an archaeological site off Limekiln Lane and a cluster of Grade II listed buildings at Sion House.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Bentfield Mill Road, Limekiln Lane and Pennington Lane are all designated as Protected Lanes.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Modern agricultural practices and 20th century development have removed most historic field patterns, although there is some evidence of older enclosed fields patterns along Limekiln Lane, along the River Stort around Stansted Brook.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 4: Character and setting of settlement

- The parcel provides a rural setting and approach to Stansted Mountfitchet. and plays an important part in views from the settlement, with long views across the rolling river valley of the River Stort, particularly from the settlement edge at Bentfield Green, where development would adversely affect the historic settlement edge.
 - Higher sensitivity
- The modern settlement edge at Walpole Farm is relatively well integrated into the landscape. Fields east of Pennington Lane and west of the B1383 are generally well contained.
 - Lower sensitivity
- The western settlement edge at Blythwood Gardens is contained by mature vegetation and sloping topography. There is little relationship between the settlement edge and the arable fields to the west. The parcel also provides separation between Stansted Mountfitchet and Birchanger to the south-west.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 5: Visual character

- Hedgerows, trees and woodland blocks create a semi-enclosed character to this parcel, with the exception of longer distance views from Limekiln Lane across the Stort valley. The skyline is generally treed, and there are no structures visible above the treeline.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 6: Perceptual and scenic qualities

- Light pollution from Stansted Mountfitchet is noticeable, although there are darker skies to the north-west.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- Some public rights of way connect the settlement edge to the wider countryside to the west.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- A largely rural landscape, with the railway line as a human influences within the parcel. Stansted Airport is an intrusive influence to the south.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity: Stansted Mountfitchet

Table C.8: Landscape sensitivity scores for Stansted Mountfitchet sites

Development type	SM1	SM2	SM3
Residential development	Moderate-High	Moderate	Moderate-High
Mixed use development	High	Moderate	Moderate-High

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Development type	SM1	SM2	SM3
Sports facilities and flood lighting	Moderate-High	Moderate	Moderate-High

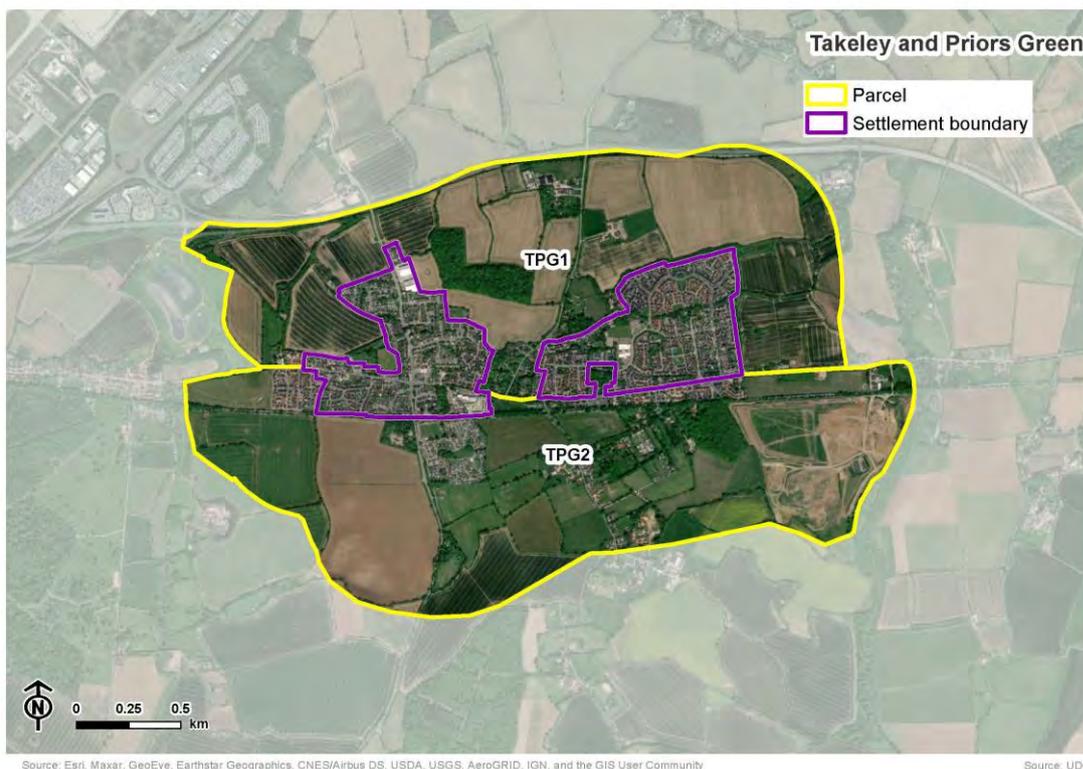
Summary

C.19 Parcels SM1 and SM3 are assessed as having moderate-high sensitivity to residential development due to their rural character, undulating topography, valued-semi-natural habitats, time-depth and the wooded rural setting they provide to Stansted Mountfitchet. Sensitivity to residential development is lower in SM3 north of Walpole Farm, where the fields east of Pennington Lane are well-contained by vegetation and the new settlement edge is visible. The existing scale and pattern of the current built form, and the heritage assets in the parcel result in SM1 having a high sensitivity to mixed-use development. SM3 is assessed as having a moderate-high sensitivity to mixed use development. Both parcels are assessed as having moderate-high sensitivity to sports facility development due to the dark skies and rural characteristics.

C.20 SM2 is assessed as having a moderate overall sensitivity to future change from residential and mixed-use development and sports facilities, development due to the flatter topography, limited semi-natural habitats and heritage assets, more enclosed character and the influence of existing development and the M11 on the perceptual qualities of the landscape.

Settlement Area: Takeley and Priors Green

Figure C.57: Location of landscape sensitivity parcels for Takeley and Priors Green



Location and description

Takeley is a rural village which lies along Dunmow Road (the old Roman road of Stane Street), between Great Dunmow and Bishop's Stortford. Stansted Airport lies to the north-west. The historic linear settlement has a number of listed buildings, including the Grade I listed Church of the Holy Trinity which lies beyond the village to the north-west. The village expanded in the 20th and 21st centuries extending east to Smith's Green and then Priors Green, which was built in the 21st century. A settlement extension is under construction north of Takeley, along Parsonage Road.

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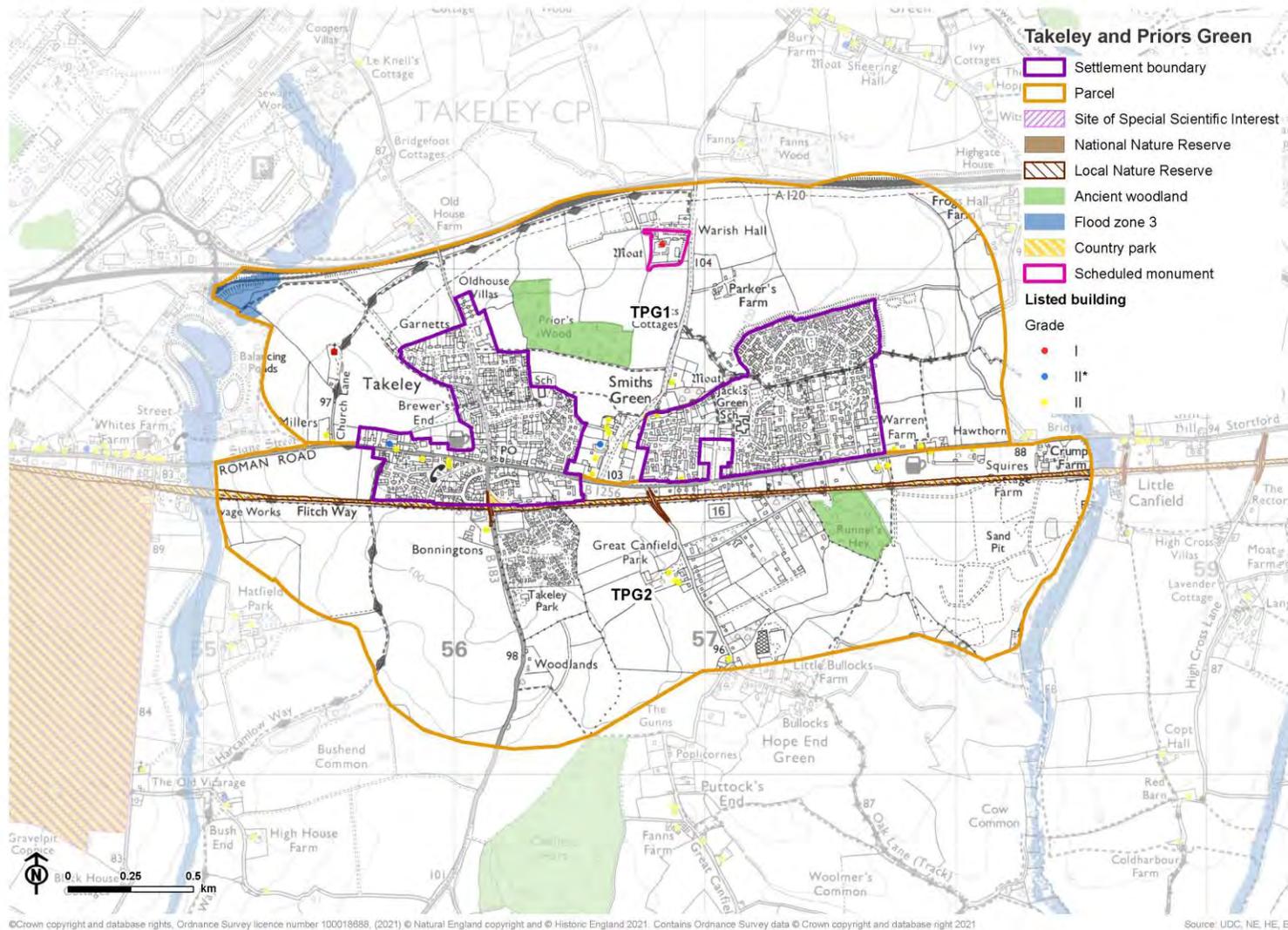
The settlement edge is divided into two parcels:

TPG1 – gently undulating arable fields to the north of Takeley and Priors Green.

TPG2 – gently undulating arable fields to the south of Takeley and Priors Green.

Land north of the A120 has not been assessed, as development here would not relate well to Takeley or Priors Green. Land within the settlement boundary of Stansted Airport to the west of Takeley has not been assessed.

Figure C.58: Natural and cultural heritage designations within Takeley and Priors Green



Takeley and Priors Green representative photos

Figure C.59: TPG1 looking west to settlement edge of Priors Green



Figure C.60: TPG1 looking south to the northern settlement edge of Takeley



Figure C.61: TPG2 looking west from Station Road



Figure C.62: TPG2 looking east from edge of Takeley Park



Landscape sensitivity assessment: Takeley and Priors Green TPG1

Landscape Character Areas B5 Broxted Farmland Plateau

Criterion 1: Physical character

- Flat to very gently undulating farmland, between 95 metres and 100 metres AOD.
 - Lower sensitivity
- Large-scale arable fields, with some fragmented hedgerows and woodland blocks which provide smaller-scale landscape features.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 2: Natural character

- Priority habitat deciduous woodland at Priors Green, most of which is ancient in origin, is locally designated as a LoWS and Important Woodland. There are small priority habitat deciduous blocks on the settlement edge of Priors Green. The small watercourses within the parcel are also priority habitats.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Intermittent hedgerows and hedgerow trees line the roads and border the arable fields, and provide semi-natural habitats.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 3: Sense of time depth

- The moated site at Warish Hall is a Scheduled Monument and Grade I listed. The Church of Holy Trinity is also listed as Grade I.
 - Higher sensitivity

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- There is a cluster of listed buildings at Smiths Green between the two settlements. Smiths Green Lane is a Protected Lane, and there are archaeological sites around the church at Warish Hall, and at Warren Farm.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Modern agricultural practices and an increase in settlement size have removed most historic field patterns, although some remain around the church.
 - Lower sensitivity

Criterion 4: Character and setting of settlement

- The parcel provides a rural and wooded setting to the north of Priors Green. The parcel provides separation between the settlement and Stansted Airport to the north-west. It also provides an important gap between Takeley and Takeley Street to the west and development would cause the coalescence of these settlements.
 - Higher sensitivity
- The open character of Smiths Green provides separation between the two settlements, and the rural approach along Smiths Green is sensitive to change.
 - Higher sensitivity
- The modern settlement edge to the east of Priors Green, is open with views over the flat arable fields to the east terminating in woodland along the River Roding, reducing sensitivity.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 5: Visual character

- A largely open character, with views across the parcel to the north, and east ending in woodland blocks. The skyline is largely undeveloped, with views to the church spire in its wooded setting, and also to the communications tower at Fanns, north of the A120.
 - Higher sensitivity

Criterion 6: Perceptual and scenic qualities

- There is light pollution from Takeley and Priors Green and from Stansted Airport to the north-west.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- Harcamlow Way and other public rights of way provide connections between Takeley and Priors Green, and access to the wider countryside.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Areas of rurality are influenced by the busy A120 trunk road. Stansted Airport is an intrusive modern influence.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Landscape sensitivity assessment: Takeley and Priors Green TPG2

Landscape Character Area B5 Broxted Farmland Plateau

Criterion 1: Physical character

- Gently undulating landform, rising from the Pincey Brook in the west from 80 metres to 100 metres AOD.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- Fields are medium to large scale with an open character. There is some pasture between the Flitch Way and the B1256 Dunmow Road.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 2: Natural character

- Runnels Hay is designated as a LoWS for its priority habitat deciduous woodland which is recorded as ancient. Flitch Way is a LoWS and LNR. There are also small areas of priority habitat deciduous woodland south of the B1256 Dunmow Road.

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- Higher sensitivity
- Hedgerows and hedgerow trees border the arable fields and roadsides and provide semi-natural habitats.
- Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 3: Sense of time depth

- Grade II listed buildings line the B1256 Dunmow Road, and are found at Great Canfield Park and Bonningtons Farmhouse. Flich Way is the route of the former Bishop's Stortford to Dunmow railway line.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- Modern agricultural practices have removed most historic field patterns.
 - Lower sensitivity

Criterion 4: Character and setting of settlement

- The parcel provides separation between Takeley and Takeley Street.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Flich Way provides a boundary feature to the south of Takeley and Priors Green, however, development to the south at Takeley Park and Great Canfield Park has introduced a more suburban character to the landscape with lighting and road signage, reducing sensitivity.
 - Lower sensitivity

Criterion 5: Visual character

- The parcel has a largely open character, with woodland and trees providing a wooded backdrop to views. Roadside vegetation provides some enclosure. The skyline is undeveloped.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 6: Perceptual and scenic qualities

- There is light pollution from Takeley and Priors Green and from Stansted Airport to the north-west.

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- Lower sensitivity
- Flich Way promoted trail and Country Park runs across the parcel. Harcamlow Way provides access from Takeley to the wider countryside.
- Higher sensitivity
- Human influences within the parcel include the mobile home site at Takeley Park and suburban development at Great Canfield Park, and the working sand pit to the south east. Stansted Airport to the north is an intrusive modern influence.
- Lower sensitivity

Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity: Takeley and Priors Green

Table C.9: Landscape sensitivity scores for Takeley and Priors Green sites

Development type	TPG1	TPG2
Residential development	Moderate-High	Moderate
Mixed use development	High	Moderate-High
Sports facilities and flood lighting	Moderate-High	Moderate

Summary

C.21 The characteristics and values of the landscape in parcel TPG1 including the strong rural character, the rural setting it provides to Takeley and Priors Green, the separation it provides between the settlement and Stanstead Airport to the north west and Takeley Street to the west, historic assets and semi-natural habitats, are all sensitive to change as a result of the introduction of residential development. The parcel is assessed as having an overall moderate-high sensitivity. The historic character of Smiths Green, which provides

separation between Takeley and Priors Green, and the landscape which provides a rural setting to the church at Warish Hall have a high sensitivity. There is lower sensitivity to the east of Priors Green, where the harsh modern settlement edge is not well integrated with the adjoining arable fields and development would fit with the existing settlement pattern. Sensitivity to mixed use development was assessed at high, due to the existing scale and general pattern of the current built form and the open character of the landscape. TGP1 is assessed as having moderate-high sensitivity to sports facility development due to its rural character, the rural setting it provides to Takeley and Priors Green, historic assets and semi-natural habitats.

C.22 TGP2 is assessed as having a moderate overall sensitivity to future change from residential development. The rural characteristics, semi-natural habitats, and sense of separation between Takeley and Takeley Street to the west indicate a higher sensitivity. However, the presence of existing development, which has breached the boundary feature of the Flitch Way, limited time-depth and human influences would indicate lower sensitivity. Sensitivity to mixed use development was assessed as moderate-high, due to the small scale of the landscape and existing scale and general pattern of the current built form and the open character of the landscape. The parcel would have a moderate sensitivity to sports facility development due to prevalent light pollution from Takeley and Priors Green and Stanstead.

Settlement Area: Thaxted

Figure C.63: Location of landscape sensitivity parcels for Thaxted



Location and description

Thaxted is a small rural town with medieval origins, located on rising ground in the centre of the district. The village has a historic core with a high occurrence of listed buildings, centred around the Grade I listed Church of St John the Baptist, Guildhall and Clarence House. The Grade II* listed Thaxted Windmill is an important landmark. 20th and 21st century developments have increased the size of Thaxted to the east.

The settlement edge is divided into two parcels:

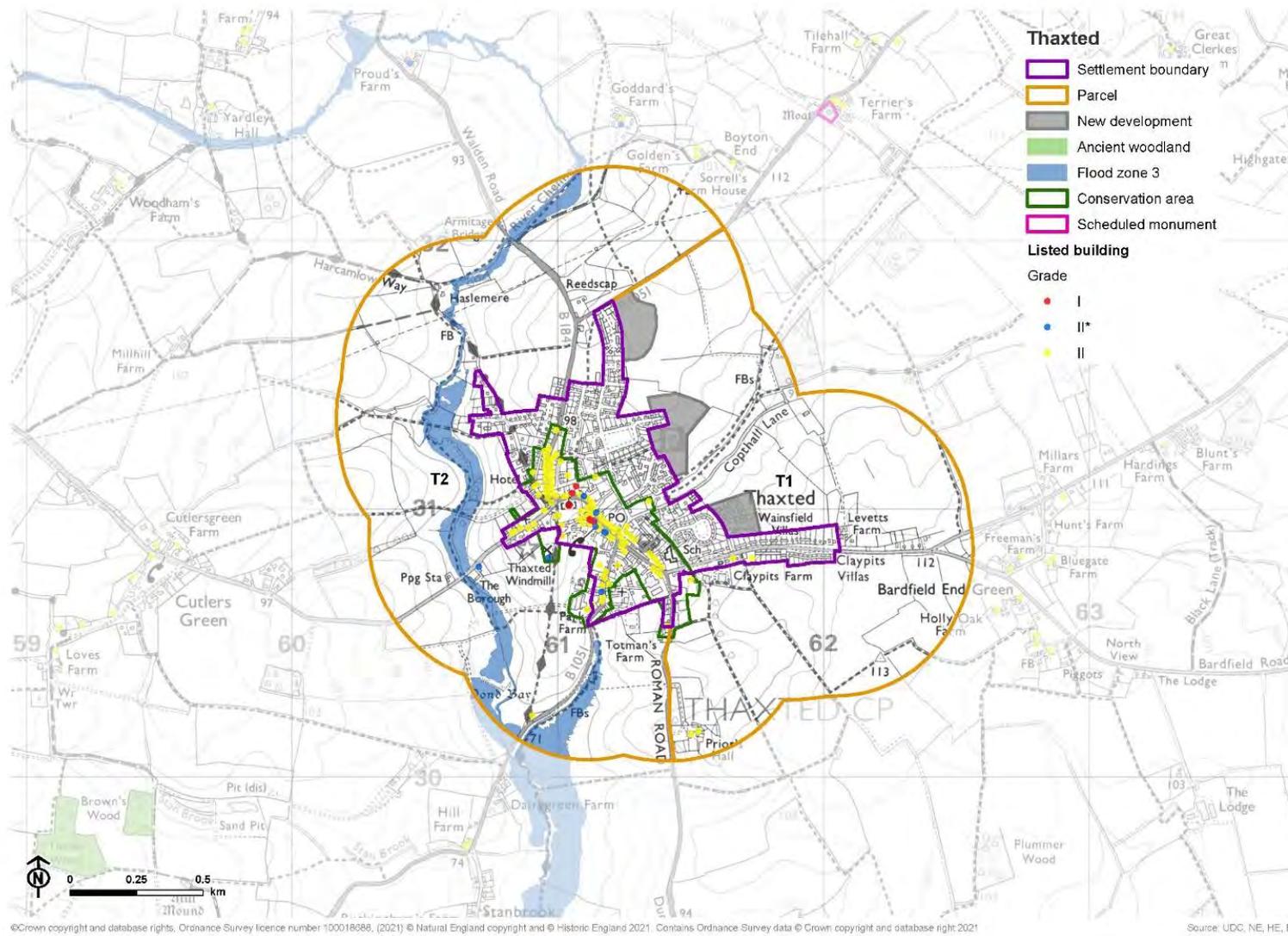
T1 – gently undulating arable fields to the east of Thaxted.

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T2 – steeper valley sides of the River Chelmer to the north and west of Thaxted.

All the landscape within the 500 metres buffer has been assessed.

Figure C.64: Natural and cultural heritage designations within Thaxted



Thaxted representative photos

Figure C.65: T1 looking south-east from Copthall Lane



Figure C.66: T1 looking east along settlement edge off Bardfield Road



Figure C.67: T2 looking south on Walden Road towards the settlement edge



Figure C.68: T2 looking north-east from Bolford Street



Landscape sensitivity assessment: Thaxted T1

Landscape Character Areas B4 Thaxted Farmland Plateau and B6 Lindsell Farmland Plateau

Criterion 1: Physical character

- Flat plateau around 100-110 metres AOD.
 - Lower sensitivity
- Medium to large-scale arable fields, with some fragmented hedgerows and hedgerow trees which provide smaller-scale landscape features.
 - Lower sensitivity

Criterion 2: Natural character

- Priority habitat deciduous woodland north of Copthall Lane is recorded as Important Woodland. A small traditional orchard (priority habitat) is located at Prior's Hall.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Intermittent hedgerows and hedgerow trees line the roads and border the arable fields, providing semi-natural habitats.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 3: Sense of time depth

- The Thaxted Conservation Area extends into the south of the parcel, and covers a Grade II listed farmhouse. There is a cluster of Grade II listed buildings at Prior's Hall. Archaeological sites are recorded south of Claypits Farm.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- There are no recorded heritage assets in the north and east of the parcel.
 - Lower sensitivity

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- Modern agricultural practices and an increase in settlement size have removed most historic field patterns, although some remain east of The Mead.
 - Lower sensitivity

Criterion 4: Character and setting of settlement

- The parcel provides a rural setting to Thaxted. The importance of the open recreational space at the junction of Dunmow Road and Bardfield Road is noted in the Conservation Area Appraisal. Woodland along the watercourse to the north of Copthall Lane provides a strong boundary feature.
 - Higher sensitivity
- 20th century and more recent expansion of Thaxted to the east, has resulted in an open settlement edge which is visible from Copthall Lane, Bardfield Road and the B1051 Pightle, which reduces sensitivity. Development would provide opportunities to soften this settlement edge.
 - Lower sensitivity

Criterion 5: Visual character

- A largely open character, some areas of enclosure along the rural lanes. Views to the church spire are possible from many of the footpaths to the east and south. There are long-distance views from the north of the parcel across the Chelmer valley towards Thaxted.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 6: Perceptual and scenic qualities

- Thaxted emits some light pollution, however there are dark skies away from the settlement edge.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Public rights of way cross the parcel, linking Thaxted with the wider countryside.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- A rural landscape influenced within the parcel by electricity pylons to the north of Thaxted, modern development on the eastern settlement edges

and ribbon development along Bardfield Road. Flights in and out of Stansted Airport are intrusive modern influences.

- Moderate sensitivity

Landscape sensitivity assessment: Thaxted T2

Landscape Character Area B4 Thaxted Farmland Plateau and A4 Upper Chelmer River Valley

Criterion1: Physical character

- Steeply sloping valley sides, rising from the River Chelmer, from 75 metres to 100 metres AOD.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Fields are medium to large scale with a semi-open character, with hedgerows providing enclosure. There are some smaller-scale pasture fields at the settlement edge.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 2: Natural character

- Priority habitat deciduous woodlands line the course of the River Chelmer, with some priority habitat traditional orchards west of the river.
 - Moderate sensitivity
- Trees, roadside vegetation, hedgerows and hedgerow trees border the arable fields and roadsides, and provide semi-natural habitats.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 3: Sense of time depth

- Thaxted Conservation Area extends into the west and south of the parcel, and includes the Grade II* listed Thaxted Windmill, for which the parcel

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provides a rural context. Two farmhouses are listed buildings, and there is an archaeological site north of the B1051.

- Higher sensitivity
- Modern agricultural practices have removed most historic field patterns, although some evidence of earlier enclosure patterns in the west towards Cutlers Green.
- Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 4: Character and setting of settlement

- The parcel provides a scenic setting to Thaxted, including much of the historic settlement edge which increases sensitivity. It also contributes to the separation of Thaxted and Cutlers Green.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Modern development on the northern edge of Thaxted along Walden Road and Watling Lane is well integrated with the rural landscape, and largely screened by roadside or riverside vegetation.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 5: Visual character

- The parcel has a largely open character, with woodland and trees providing a wooded backdrop to views. There are long views across the Chelmer valley from the B184 Walden Road.
 - Higher sensitivity
- The Church of St John the Baptist and the Thaxted Windmill are landmark features in views across the parcel, rising above the undeveloped surrounding countryside.
 - Higher sensitivity
- Some enclosure is provided by roadside vegetation and hedgerows.
 - Moderate sensitivity

Criterion 6: Perceptual and scenic qualities

- Thaxted emits some light pollution, however there are dark skies away from the settlement edge, particularly to the south and west.

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- Higher sensitivity
- Harcamlow Way promoted route and a number of public rights of way provide access from Thaxted to the wider countryside, and good access into the parcel. The recreation ground east of Walden Road is a valued recreational area.
- Higher sensitivity
- A rural landscape - human influences within the parcel are limited to electricity pylons in the north. Flights in and out of Stansted Airport are intrusive modern influences.
- Moderate sensitivity

**Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity:
Thaxted**

Table C.10: Landscape sensitivity scores for Thaxted sites

Development type	T1	T2
Residential development	Moderate-High	High
Mixed use development	Moderate-High	High
Sports facilities and flood lighting	Moderate-High	High

Summary

C.23 The characteristics and values of the landscape in parcel T1 including the rural character, and rural setting to Thaxted, dark skies, semi-natural habitats and extension of the Conservation Area into the parcel are all sensitive to change as a result of the introduction of residential development, and the parcel is assessed as having an overall moderate-high sensitivity. There are areas of lower sensitivity around the harsh modern settlement edges in the north-east. Sensitivity to mixed use development was assessed at moderate-high, due to

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the existing scale and general pattern of the current built form and the open character of the landscape. The parcel is considered to have moderate-high sensitivity to sports facility development to the rural character and dark skies.

C.24 T2 is assessed as having a high overall sensitivity to future change from residential development due to the steeper topography, strong rural and perceptual characteristics, setting to the historic edge of Thaxted and open views to the windmill and church. Areas to the north of the settlement boundary, west of the B184 Walden Road may have lower sensitivity as there are fewer semi-natural habitats and a more modern settlement edge. Sensitivity to mixed use development was assessed as high, due to the small scale of the landscape and existing scale and general pattern of the current built form and the open character of the landscape. The parcel has high sensitivity to sports facility development due to the sloping topography, rural character and dark skies.

References

- 1 Updated Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment (LUC, 2023)

Report produced by LUC

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