

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and Green Belt Assessment

October 2025

**Land at Mill Lane and
London Road, Hitchin**

Prepared by
CSA Environmental

On behalf of:
Martin Grant Homes

Report No: CSA/3922/11

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CSA/3922/11	-	21/07/25	BS	BC	Draft issue
	A	15/09/25	BS	BC	Updated to team comments
	B	02/10/25	TV	BS	Updated Illustrative Landscape Strategy
	C	21/10/25	TV	BS	Updated baseline plans



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 CSA Environmental has been appointed by Martin Grant Homes to undertake a landscape and visual impact assessment of land at Mill Lane and London Road, Hitchin (the 'Site'). The Site lies within the Green Belt and this report also considers the Site's performance in terms of the functions and purposes of the Green Belt. The proposal is for an outline application for up to 41 dwellings, with all matters reserved except for access.
- 1.2 The Site comprises two broadly rectangular shaped fields on the southern edge of Hitchin and lies within the administrative area of North Hertfordshire District Council. The location and extent of the Site is shown on the Location Plan at **Appendix A** and on the Aerial Photograph at **Appendix B**.
- 1.3 This assessment describes the existing landscape character and quality of the Site and the surrounding area. The report then goes on to discuss the suitability of the Site to accommodate the development proposals, and the potential landscape and visual effects on the wider area.

Methodology

- 1.4 This assessment is based on a site visit undertaken by a suitably qualified and experienced Landscape Architect in January 2025. The weather conditions at the time were fine, and visibility was good.
- 1.5 In landscape and visual impact assessments, a distinction is drawn between landscape effects (i.e. effects on the character or quality of the landscape irrespective of whether there are any views of the landscape, or viewers to see them) and visual effects (i.e. effects on people's views of the landscape from public vantage points, including public rights of way and other areas with general public access, as well as effects from any residential properties). This report therefore considers the potential impact of the development on both landscape character and visibility. The methodology that underpins the landscape assessment presented in this report is contained in **Appendix H**.
- 1.6 Photographs contained within this document (**Appendix C**) were taken using a digital camera with a lens focal length approximating to 50mm, to give a similar depth of vision to the human eye. In some instances, images have been combined to create a panorama. The photographs and visualisations within this report have been prepared in general conformance with the Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Note 06/19, as set out in the Methodology in **Appendix H**.

2.0 LANDSCAPE POLICY CONTEXT

National Planning Context

- 2.1 National planning policy is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF'). Section 15 of the NPPF deals with conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Paragraph 187 of the document states that the planning system should contribute to the protection and enhancement of the natural and local environment through, among other things, protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, '*... (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan)*'. The paragraph also outlines that the planning system should recognise the, '*...intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.*'
- 2.2 The Planning Practice Guidance ('PPG') adds further context to the policies contained in the NPPF. The guidance as relevant to this assessment covers landscape and the natural environment, and the design of new developments.
- 2.1 The National Design Guide (2019) has been produced as part of the PPG. It provides guidance to '*... illustrate how well-designed places that are beautiful, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice.*' The National Model Design Code (July 2021) expands upon the ten characteristics of good design providing an overarching framework for design.
- 2.2 Those sections of the NPPF and PPG relevant to this assessment are summarised in **Appendix E**.

Local Policy Context

North Hertfordshire District Council

- 2.3 The Site lies within the administrative area of North Hertfordshire District Council. Adopted policy relating to the District comprises the Local Plan 2011 - 2031.
- 2.4 Policies of relevance to the Site and the landscape include:
- *Policy SP5: Countryside and Green Belt;*
 - *Policy SP9: Design and Sustainability;*
 - *Policy SP12: Green Infrastructure, Landscape and Biodiversity;*
 - *Policy D1: Sustainable Design;*

- *Policy NE1: Strategic Green Infrastructure;*
- *Policy NE2: Landscape; and*
- *Policy NE6: New and Improved Open Space.*

Neighbourhood Plans

- 2.5 The Site lies within the St Ippolyts Neighbourhood Plan Area, although no draft Neighbourhood Plan has currently been published.

3.0 SITE CONTEXT

Site Context

- 3.1 The Site comprises two broadly rectangular shaped fields, which are connected by a narrow strip of land on the southern edge of Hitchin, immediately west of London Road and south of Mill Lane. Sloe Hill Residential Home indents the northern Site boundary, separating the two fields.
- 3.2 The built up area of Hitchin adjoins the Site to the north, including properties on Mill Lane, with residential estate development continuing northward. Land to the immediate north east (on the opposite side of London Road) has consent for 84 new dwellings and is currently under construction, including a new roundabout junction off London Road.
- 3.3 To the east of the southern part of the Site is a small cluster of farmhouses including Pound Farmhouse and its associated outbuildings and grounds. Agricultural fields continue eastwards, bisected by the wooded course of the Ippollitts Brook which flows north to south. The village of Little Wymondley lies just over 1.8km east of the Site, beyond which is the A1 motorway and the large built up area of Stevenage.
- 3.4 South of the Site are several agricultural fields situated between Mill Road and London Road, and include some stables and a manege, adjacent to a small cluster of dwellings at The Eves, a short distance south of the Site. Beyond these field is the built up edge of Gosmore village, including properties on the northern edge of The Crescent. South of the village of Gosmore is predominantly agricultural land, with scattered farms, properties and occasional businesses (including a public house and veterinary surgery).
- 3.5 To the south west of the Site are properties on Mill Road, at the edge of Gosmore, with the village continuing both south east and west. To the north west of the Site is an agricultural field extending up to Hitchin Road, beyond which extensive agricultural land continues westward.

National Landscape Character

- 3.6 Natural England has produced profiles for England's National Character Areas ('NCA'), which divides England into 159 distinct natural areas, defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, cultural and economic activity. The Site lies within the Chilterns Character Area (NCA 110).
- 3.7 The Chilterns NCA is described as a patchwork of mixed farmland (with fields typically bound by hedgerows), woodland, grazed downland and

common land. Outside of the National Landscape (which covers roughly half of the NCA), are major settlements including Luton, Hemel and High Wycombe. The area is described as offering many opportunities to enjoy the outdoors, including rights of way, open access common, woodland and downland.

North Hertfordshire Landscape Study 2011

- 3.8 The study combines the original Landscape Character Assessment carried out by Babbie Group in 2004 and subsequent Sensitivity and Capacity work carried out by The Landscape Partnership carried in 2011, both on behalf of North Hertfordshire District Council (Extracts in **Appendix F**).
- 3.9 The study divides North Hertfordshire District into a series of landscape character areas ('LCAs'). The Site is identified as lying within the Langley Valley LCA 214, key characteristics, relevant to the Site, include:
- *'Rolling chalk landform;*
 - *Dominant large scale arable farming;*
 - *Smaller areas of grazing on steeper chalk slopes to the south of Hitchin; and*
 - *Woodland plantations concentrated in the north on most pronounced chalk landscape. Relatively little woodland cover elsewhere.'*
- 3.10 Distinctive Features of the LCA are stated as being;
- *'Small areas of parkland at Gosmore;*
 - *A505 dual carriageway cuts across the area; and*
 - *Langley Valley airfield and scrapyard.'*
- 3.11 The study assesses the LCA condition is 'poor', and robustness is weak, resulting in an overall strategy to Reconstruct the landscape. It is assessed within the study as being of overall 'moderate' landscape sensitivity and 'moderate low' landscape value. Inherent character sensitivities are stated as including:
- *'Settlement is sparse within Langley Valley, consisting of small nucleated villages with historic cores, estates and scattered farmstead. This would be sensitive to unsympathetic development not in scale with the villages;*
 - *Hedgerows throughout the Character Area are variable. Some*

are tall and well managed, whilst other have been removed. Hedgerows would be sensitive to further removal;

- *The pattern of narrow, winding lanes around Gosmore would be vulnerable to improvements to/upgrading the roads; and*
- *Good public access through rights of way, particularly around Hitchin, including the Chiltern Way and the Hertfordshire Way.'*

3.12 Visual sensitivity is assessed in the study as being 'moderate to high', with expansive views from valley tops stated as being important features. The edge of Hitchin is also described as being visually intrusive in some views.

3.13 The study then evaluates the capacity of the LCA to accommodate various forms of new development. In relation to smaller urban extensions (<5ha), the study states that *'it may be possible to accommodate some small scale expansion of Hitchin within this Character Area, carefully designed and in keeping with the existing character. Mitigation planting and retention of existing woodland would also need to be given careful consideration, to ensure that there is not visual intrusion into the wider Character Area.'* The overall landscape capacity for the LCA to accommodate small urban extensions is stated as being 'medium to low'.

3.14 The study also sets out a series of guidelines for managing change, which in relation to built development include:

- *'Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes and associated hedge banks;*
- *Retain the rural character of Langley Valley, ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to Langley Valley;*
- *Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing small woodland blocks;*
- *Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaves woodland and vegetation to screen new development that could intrude in longer distance views;*
- *Avoid the location of new development on visually exposed ridge areas;*
- *Ensure that lighting necessitated by new development minimises the impact on the Character Area; and*
- *Use the opportunity of any new development to create new*

accessible green infrastructure for local communities.'

- 3.15 Our assessment of the wider LCA within which the Site lies is broadly consistent with the Council's study, with generally sparse settlement away from Hitchin and expansive views in areas of higher ground, along ridges. The Site is however more closely related to the edge of Hitchin, and the settlement of Gosmore, which together with the adjacent London Road, exert more of urban fringe character onto the Site, making it less typical of the wider more rural LCA. This is also noted within the study, which concluded that there is potential for some small scale urban expansion of Hitchin, ensuring a sensitively designed scheme including characteristic mitigation planting.

Statutory and Non-Statutory Designations

- 3.16 The Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside Map ('MAGIC') and the Local Plan Adopted Policies Maps indicate that the Site is not covered by any statutory or non-statutory designations for landscape character or quality (please refer to Designations and Local Policy Plan in **Appendix D**). The Site does lie wholly within the Green Belt, the extents of which are shown on the Designations and Local Policy Plan.
- 3.17 The Chilterns National Landscape lies approximately 2.6km to the west of the Site at its closest point.

Conservation Area and Listed Buildings

- 3.18 There are two Listed buildings within the immediate surroundings of the Site. These comprise the Grade II Listed Pound Farmhouse to the east, and the Grade II Listed Mill Farm to the north.
- 3.19 Gosmore Conservation Area lies approximately 85m to the west of the Site at its closest point. The St Ippolyts Conservation Area lies approximately 400m to the south east of the Site at its closest point.

Public Right of Way

- 3.20 There are no public rights of way crossing the Site or within its immediate surroundings. Other public rights of way within the surrounding area are shown on the base mapping of the Site Location Plan at **Appendix A**.

Tree Preservation Orders

- 3.21 There is a Tree Preservation Order ('TPO') covering a Turkey oak within the northern part of the Site's eastern field (please refer to the Tree Survey Report by Barton Hyett Associates).

4.0 SITE DESCRIPTION AND VISIBILITY

Site Description

- 4.1 The Site comprises two broadly rectangular shaped fields, which are connected by a narrow strip of land. Both fields comprise predominantly areas of unmanaged grassland, with the western field containing numerous trees of varying age and condition scattered throughout the field. The eastern field is more open although its northernmost part is well vegetated with a mixture of mature trees and understorey scrub, developing as an area of regenerating woodland. A single mature lime tree also lies within the centre of the eastern field. The narrow strip of land connecting the two fields is lined on either side with mature trees, predominantly sycamore and oak.
- 4.2 The Site boundaries are generally well vegetated with a mixture of mature trees, hedgerows and scrub vegetation. Several gaps in the boundary vegetation occur in the south eastern part of the Site adjacent to London Road.

Topography

- 4.3 The topography of the Site is relatively flat, lying on a gradual south facing slope, with a high point in the northern part of the Site of approximately 80m AOD (Above Ordnance Datum ('AOD')) and a low point in the south of the Site of approximately 75m AOD.
- 4.4 Within the vicinity of the Site, the landform gradually undulates, with the southern built up area of Hitchin (to the north of the Site) lying at between approximately 70m and 85m AOD. Land to the south and west of the Site and Gosmore continues to rise towards the village of Preston at 145m AOD (approximately 2.5km south of the Site), and towards the village of Great Offley at 155m AOD (approximately 4.5km west of the Site). Land to the east of the Site generally undulates between approximately 70m AOD and 100m AOD up to the A1 motorway.

Visibility

- 4.5 An assessment of the visibility of the Site was undertaken and a series of photographs taken from public vantage points, rights of way and public highways. The viewpoints are illustrated on the Location Plan and Aerial Photograph contained in **Appendices A and B** and on the photographs in **Appendix C**.
- 4.6 From our assessment, it is apparent that the Site is generally well screened from its surroundings by its field boundary vegetation together with surrounding vegetation, which limit opportunities to view the Site.

4.7 The key views of the Site are described in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Visual Baseline		
Visual Receptor	Sensitivity	Description of Views
London Road Photographs 16-21	Medium	The Site is generally well screened in views from London Road on the approach into Hitchin from the south by established vegetation to the roadside and along the western section of the southern Site boundary. Framed views of the Site become available when adjacent to the south eastern corner of the Site, before becoming screened again by the eastern boundary vegetation. In these framed views across the eastern part of the Site, the vegetated northern Site boundary is visible, together with glimpsed views of properties on Mill Lane to the immediate north of the Site including the Sloe Hill Residential Home.
Mill Lane Photographs 12-15	Medium	Views from Mill Lane to the north of the Site are well screened by the established vegetation along the northern Site boundary, which prevents views of the interior of the Site.
Mill Road Photographs 11 & 22	Medium	Views from Mill Road to the south west of the Site (within Gosmore) are generally screened by roadside vegetation and built form. Where views are more open, they look towards the Site's southern boundary which forms a dense screen, preventing views of the interior of the Site and screening built form on the southern edge of Hitchin.
Hitchin Road Photograph 23	Medium	Views are largely screened by housing in both Hitchin and Gosmore, except for the stretch of road between the two settlements, where views look across the intervening field towards the northern boundary of the Site's western field. The remainder of the Site, including the interior / ground plane, is screened from view by dense intervening vegetation.
Folly Lane Photographs 24 & 25	Medium	Views from Folly Lane to the east look westward across the valley, with dense intervening woodland along the Ippollitts Brook screening the Site as well as built form within Gosmore and on the southern edge of Hitchin.
Residential Views		
Properties on Mill Lane	High	Detached properties to the north of the Site's eastern field look towards the dense tree over along both sides of Mill Lane, which screens the Site from view. Partial views looking towards the northern boundary of the Site's western field are possible from a handful of properties on the northern side of the lane, with dense vegetation restricting these views and screening the interior of the Site from view.
Sloe Hill Residential Home Reciprocal view at photograph 4	High	First floor and partial ground floor views from the rear of the residential home look above the boundary hedge, across the western and southern parts of the Site's eastern field. Oblique views towards the western field are also possible, although intervening vegetation screens the ground plane of the Site from view.

Property at Pound Farmhouse, London Road Reciprocal views at photographs 1, 2, 5 & 6	High	There are first floor views from this property looking across the eastern field of the Site, with ground floor views screened by boundary wall/fencing. The Site's western field is screened from view by dense vegetation within the central strip of the Site and to the Site boundaries. Views towards the Site from the other properties adjacent to Pound Farmhouse are well screened by intervening vegetation.
Properties at The Eves Reciprocal view at photograph 2	High	Views from several properties at The Eves to the south of the Site (off London Road) look north across two intervening vegetated field boundaries, towards the Site's eastern field. The Site's western field is screened from view by dense intervening vegetation.
Properties on Mill Road Reciprocal view at photograph 3	Medium	There are partial, first floor views across the intervening field towards the northern part of the Site's eastern field from a number of properties on the southern edge of Mill Road. The remainder of the Site is generally screened by intervening field boundary vegetation.

Landscape Features

- 4.8 The Site's structural landscape features include numerous mature trees and hedgerows to the boundaries of both fields, a group of mature trees within the northern part of the eastern field and trees scattered throughout the western field. A single mature field tree is also located in the centre of the eastern field. These are set out in detail in Table 2 below.

Table 2 – Landscape Features Baseline		
Landscape feature	Sensitivity	Description of Feature
Trees	Medium - high	There is a dense cluster of trees, forming an area of naturally regenerating woodland, within the north of the Site's eastern field, a mature lime tree within the centre of the eastern field and scattered trees throughout the Site's western field and long the Site boundaries. These are varying quality, and include a number of high arboricultural Category A quality trees.
Hedgerows	Medium	A number of mature, predominantly native species, hedgerows are located along the boundaries of the Site. These comprise a variety of hawthorn, blackthorn, beech and holly. These are assessed with the tree survey report as being of largely Category B arboricultural quality.
Grassland fields	Medium	The Site comprises two unmanaged grassland fields.

Landscape Quality, Value and Susceptibility

- 4.9 The Site comprises two unmanaged grassland fields and a narrow strip of connecting land, on the southern edge of Hitchin. Structural vegetation comprises hedgerows and trees to the boundaries of the Site, including some notable trees in the north of the eastern field. There are also numerous field trees within the western field and a notable mature lime tree within the eastern field. Several of these trees are identified within the accompanying tree survey as being of Category A quality and are assessed as being of high landscape quality, with the remaining trees and hedgerows generally being of Category B quality and medium landscape quality.
- 4.10 The Site adjoins residential properties to the north and currently under construction housing to the east of London Road to the north east. Built form within Gosmore also lies to the west of the Site and further to the south. This adjoining development, together with the adjacent London Road, exert an urban fringe character onto the Site, in particular its eastern field. Whilst the Site does exhibit some rural characteristics, including the vegetated boundaries, and mature trees, it is also influenced by the above factors, making it less typical than the wider more rural landscape. Overall, the Site is assessed as being of **medium landscape quality**.
- 4.11 The Site does not carry any statutory or non-statutory designations for landscape character or quality. A TPO covers a single mature tree within the north of the Site's eastern field. There is no public access into the Site although there is evidence of the public utilising the Site's fields for unauthorised informal dog walking. Overall, the Site is assessed as being of **medium landscape value** and is not considered to be a Valued Landscape for the purposes of paragraph 187 of the NPPF.
- 4.12 In terms of landscape susceptibility, this is judged against the type of development proposed, in this case a relatively small scale residential development focused in the eastern parts of the Site with associated open space in the south and in the western field. Development of the Site would be well related to the existing settlement edge of Hitchin including currently under construction housing to the east of London Road. The boundary vegetation and mature field trees are key landscape features that should be retained where possible and incorporated into areas of new open space. The Site's western field is more susceptible to change, given the establishing trees covering this part of the Site, and its role in maintaining separation between Hitchin and Gosmore. Overall, the Site is assessed as being of **medium landscape susceptibility** to the type of residential development proposed.

4.13 Taking into account the landscape value and susceptibility of the Site, it is assessed as being of overall **medium landscape sensitivity**.

4.14 The landscape character of the Site and surrounding landscape / townscape is set out in Table 3 below.

Table 3 – Landscape Character Baseline		
Landscape / townscape character area	Sensitivity	Existing Conditions
The Site and immediate surroundings	Medium	The Site comprises two unmanaged grassland fields on the edge of the built up area of Hitchin, which together with the adjacent London Road, influences the character of the Site, making it less typical of the wider rural landscape. There are established trees to the boundaries of the Site, as well as several field trees particularly in the western field, some of which are of high quality.
Townscape character of immediate surroundings	Medium	The townscape of the adjacent housing on the southern edge of Hitchin comprises large, detached properties along Mill Lane and beyond, typically with large driveways and generous, well vegetated gardens. These are typically of red brick construction with some render. New estate housing is also currently under construction to the immediate north east of the Site.
Wider Landscape Character	Medium	The wider landscape to the south of Hitchin (outside of the Chilterns National Landscape) comprises predominantly rural arable farmland within the Langley valley, with occasional scattered rural villages, isolated areas of parkland and linear belts of woodland along the valley floor.

5.0 GREEN BELT REVIEW

North Hertfordshire Green Belt Review

- 5.1 North Hertfordshire District Council has undertaken a Green Belt Review in order to assess the contribution of Green Belt land within the District to the first four Green Belt purposes as set out in the NPPF. The Green Belt Review was published in July 2016, and updated in 2018 in order to respond to representations submitted during the Local Plan Examination process. These assessments predate the recently published Planning Practice Guidance ('PPG', relevant extracts at **Appendix E**) which sets out a standardised approach to assessing Green Belt purposes a, b and d for the purpose of identifying 'grey belt'.
- 5.2 At a strategic level the Green Belt Review divided the Green Belt within the District into 22 parcels for assessment. These parcels were further subdivided into sub-parcels for more detailed assessment against the Green Belt purposes. Section 5 of the Review contains an analysis of potential development sites within the Green Belt, which were put forward as part of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) process.
- 5.3 The Site is located within the wider strategic Parcel 11: Gosmore, which encompasses a broad tract of land to the south west of Hitchin (see Figure 1 below). The Review concludes that the wider parcel makes a significant contribution to the following purposes:
- *Purpose 1: Preventing sprawl from Hitchin;*
 - *Purpose 3: Encroachment on the setting of Gosmore and Charlton; and*
 - *Purpose 4: Preserving the historic setting of Hitchin owing to the links to The Priory and associated parkland.*

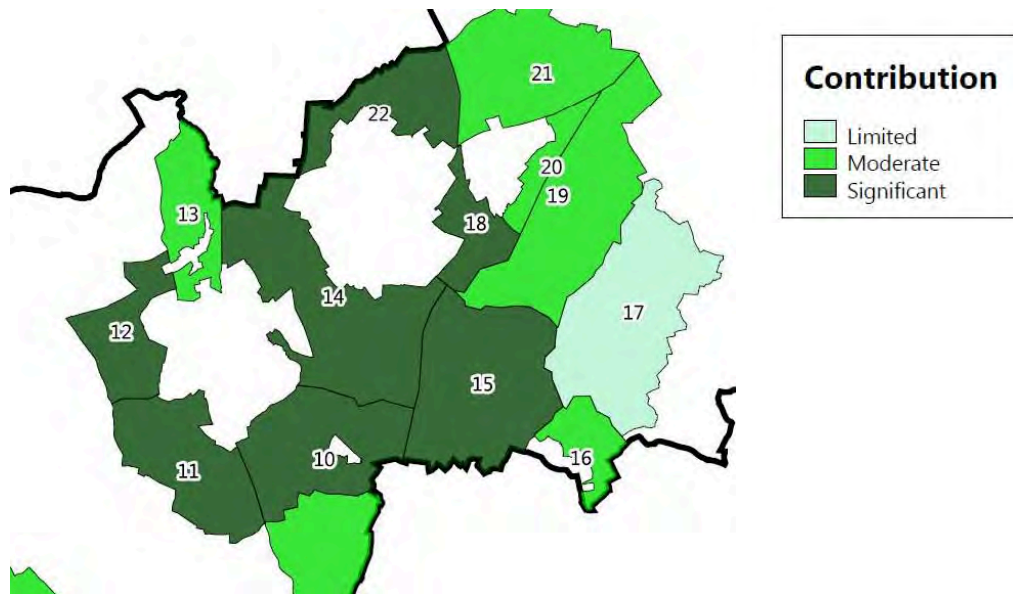


Figure 1: Extract from North Hertfordshire District Green Belt Review: Figure 2.8: Strategic Parcel Assessment – Overall Contribution to Green Belt Purposes

- 5.4 In addition, the Review notes that the parcel makes a limited contribution to preventing merging between Hitchin and the towns of Luton and Stevenage. Overall, it concludes that the parcel makes a significant contribution to the purpose of including land within the Green Belt due to its role in preventing further expansion to the south west into open countryside, and providing a setting for Hitchin. The Review comes to a similar conclusion in respect of the wider strategic parcels at the periphery of Hitchin. As shown on Figure 1 above, the majority of these are assessed as contributing significantly to meeting the purposes of including land within the Green Belt. The exception is parcel 13, a small parcel to the north of the town, which contributes moderately.
- 5.5 The Site is located within sub-parcel 11d (extract at Figure 2 below), which extends to the south west of Hitchin between Preston Road and London Road, to the west and east respectively. The sub-parcel occupies an extensive area of land, which includes the neighbouring small settlements of Gosmore and St. Ippolyts and continues southward to Little Amshoe Road. The Site occupies the northmost part of this sub-parcel.

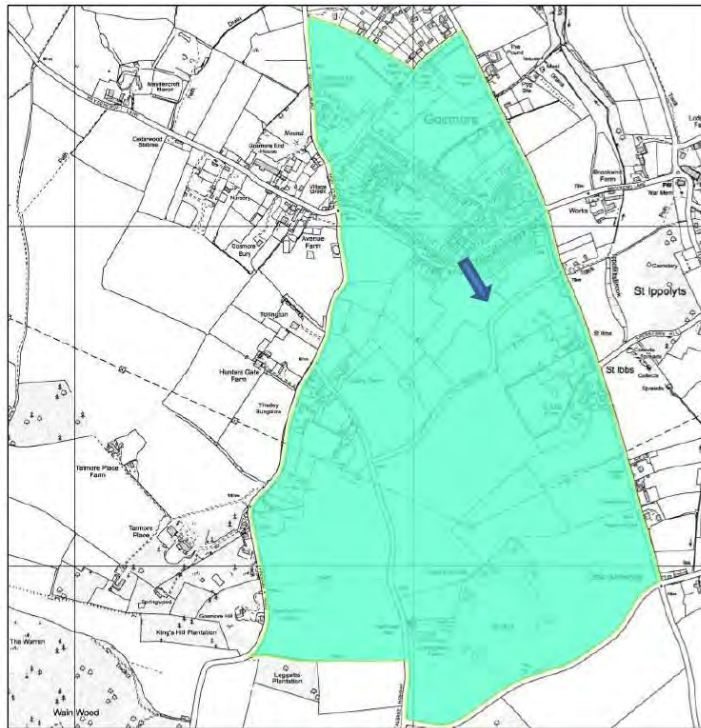


Figure 2: Extract from North Hertfordshire District Green Belt Review – parcel 11d, Gosmore

- 5.6 The Review contains a high level assessment of the sub-parcel's performance against the Green Belt purposes. It concludes that sub-parcel 11d makes a significant contribution to purpose 1, preventing the sprawl of Hitchin southwards; and a moderate contribution to purpose 3 as it prevents encroachment on the setting of Gosmore. The Review concludes that this parcel makes limited / no contribution to purposes 2 and 4. Notwithstanding this, it finds that the sub-parcel, makes a significant contribution overall, as it helps prevent the expansion of Hitchin south westwards into open countryside and provides a setting for the town. In terms of the wider sub-parcels at the periphery of Hitchin, the Review concludes that these all make a significant contribution to Green Belt purposes overall.
- 5.7 Section 5 of the 2016 Review includes a marginally more detailed assessment of Green Belt sites which have been promoted through the SHLAA. The Site is identified within a larger land parcel (SHLAA Ref: 219 as indicated at Figure 3 below). This parcel includes land to the east and west of London Road, extending south to the edge of Gosmore / St. Ippolyts. The assessment notes that the parcel is outside the existing settlement boundary, adjoined by development on one side, and within 2km of St. Ippolyts. On this basis it is assessed as contributing 'significantly' to purposes 1 and 3; and 'moderately' against purpose 2, providing separation between Hitchin and St. Ippolyts. The Review states that the parcel is not adjacent to a conservation area of an historic town and

therefore makes no contribution to purpose 4. The Review concludes that this parcel makes an overall 'moderate' contribution to the Green Belt. It should be noted that the assessment identifies that all the parcels assessed on the periphery of Hitchin make either a moderate or significant contribution to the purpose of including land within the Green Belt.

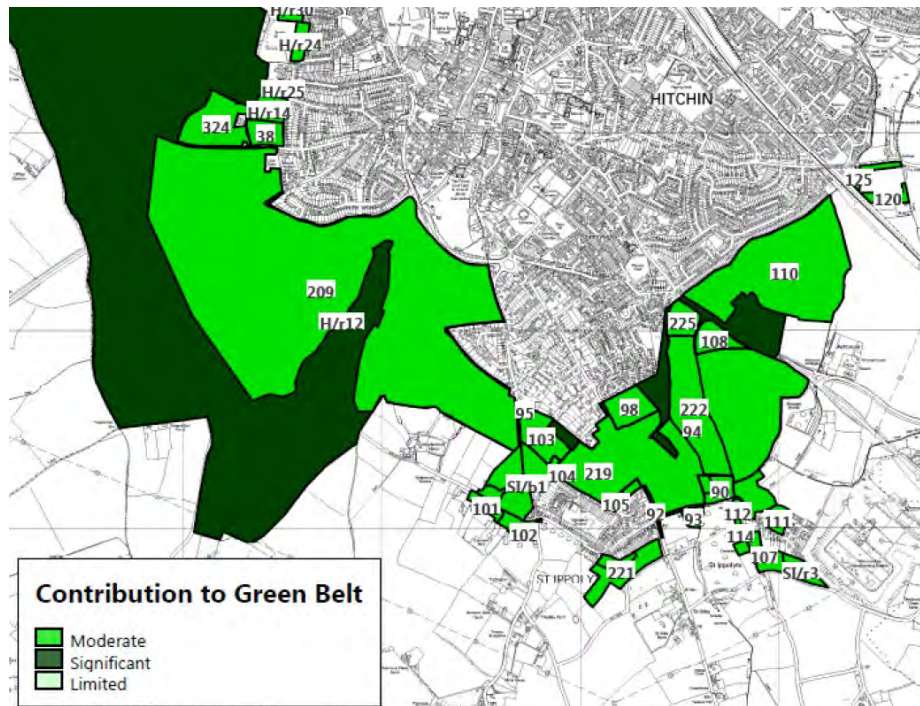


Figure 3: Extract from North Hertfordshire District Green Belt Review – Assessment of potential development sites South West Hitchin, St Ippolyts and Little Wymondley

- 5.8 An update to the Green Belt Review was prepared in 2018, to include an assessment of the visual and physical openness of Green Belt parcels. This analysis was applied to the third Green Belt purpose only, namely 'safeguarding the countryside from encroachment'. In respect of sub-parcel 11d, the update notes that views within the sub-parcel are generally contained by rolling landform. The northern part of the area contains Gosmore village with the remainder of the sub-parcel more open to the south. Overall, it states that the sub-parcel has 'mixed' visual and physical openness. It concludes that this area continues to make a 'moderate' contribution to this purpose, and in line with the earlier assessment, a significant contribution overall to the Green Belt purposes. It should be noted that only three parcels, 11c, 11d and 13c, at the periphery of Hitchin perform moderately in respect of purpose 3, with the remaining 11 parcels all assessed as contributing significantly to this purpose.

CSA assessment of the Site performance against the Green Belt purposes

- 5.9 The following section sets out our own assessment of the performance of the proposed areas of development within the Site against purposes a, b, and d of the Green Belt, against the guidance set out within the PPG guidance published in February 2025 (see **Appendix E**). It also includes a commentary on whether the Site is considered to be Grey Belt. It should be noted that Footnote 7 considerations and Golden Rules are considered within the accompanying Planning Statement.

a) To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

- 5.10 Hitchin is a large built up area and the Site lies adjacent to this. The Site's eastern field adjoins existing development to the north and in part to the east (at the currently under construction residential development east of London Road), whilst the north eastern part of the western field (proposed for development) adjoins existing built form to the north along Mill Lane and to the east at the Sloe Hill Residential Home. The eastern field is also bounded by established field boundary vegetation which would physically contain any new development whilst new structural planting is proposed to the boundary of the proposed development in the western field. Development of these parts of the Site would not be incongruous with the existing settlement pattern of Hitchin, continuing the pattern of growth either side of London Road and would be well related to the currently under construction development to the north east, as well as existing built form along Mill Lane to the north (extending no further west than existing properties on the northern side of Mill Lane).

- 5.11 Overall we would assess the parts of the Site proposed for development as making a **moderate contribution** to this Green Belt purpose.

b) To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

- 5.12 The PPG makes it clear that this purpose relates to the merging of towns, not villages. The nearest towns to the south of Hitchin are Stevenage (just over 3km to the south east) and Luton (approximately 8km to the south west). Both Gosmore and St Ippolyts are classified as villages.

- 5.13 Given the intervening distance between Hitchin and the nearest towns to the south and the contained nature of the Site, it is assessed as making a **weak or no contribution** to this Green Belt purpose.

d) Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

- 5.14 The Council's Green Belt Review identifies Hitchin as an historic town, however it concludes that the wider parcel 11d (within which the Site

lies) does not lie adjacent to Hitchin's conservation area and therefore is assessed as making no contribution to this purpose.

- 5.15 Our own assessment of the Site would concur that the Site does not form part of the historic setting of Hitchin, nor does it have a connection to the historic aspects of the town or its conservation area. We would therefore assess the Site as making a **weak or no contribution** to this Green Belt purpose.
- 5.16 Overall, the Site is not considered to perform strongly against any of purposes a, b or d as defined by the NPPF. On this basis the Site therefore **meets the criteria required for Grey Belt**, subject to meeting NPPF footnote 7 requirements. The case for appropriate development within Grey Belt is set out within the Planning Statement.

Effects on Green Belt Openness

- 5.17 The following section considers the degree to which the proposed development would impact on the openness of the Green Belt. Openness has both a spatial and visual dimension, and as assessment of the impact on both is set out below.
- 5.18 The Site comprises open farmland and does not currently contain any built form. Its relationship to neighbouring development to the north and east provides physical containment to the Site, which would be further reinforced with proposed structural landscaping. The proposed development would result in a substantial reduction on the physical openness of the Site, however this would be the case with any development on a green field site in the Green Belt.
- 5.19 The visual assessment identified that there is limited intervisibility between the Site and the wider Green Belt. Public views are largely limited to the immediate surroundings, with only occasional, partial middle-distance views possible from the west. As a result, the impact on the visual openness of the Site would be limited and would decline further as new structural landscaping to the Site boundaries establishes.

Harm to the Strategic Integrity of the Green Belt

- 5.20 The proposed development will be well related to the existing settlement of Hitchin and will form an extension to it. The Site is contained from the wider Green Belt by established, vegetated boundaries and adjacent built form and will become further contained as the currently under construction housing to the north east is built out, and new landscaping within the Site matures. The Site makes little contribution to the strategic function of the wider Green Belt. Whilst there will be a reduction in the openness of the Green Belt at the Site, the sense of openness will remain

across the wider Green Belt to the south of Hitchin. Accordingly, with the proposed development at the Site in place, the wider strategic Green Belt would continue to meet the objectives of Green Belt policy.

6.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

6.1 The proposals comprise an outline application, with all matters reserved except for access, for a residential development of up to 41 dwellings, associated open space and landscaping.

6.2 A Development Framework Plan and Illustrative Landscape Strategy Plan (**Appendix G**) have been prepared, based on the various site opportunities and constraints. The key layout and design principles that have informed the layout of the proposals include:

- The Site's western field will be primarily new semi-natural open space, retaining the existing established trees, and enhancing the area with additional meadow grassland for the benefit of biodiversity. A small parcel of development will be focused in the north eastern corner of this field, adjacent to existing properties along Mill Lane and the Sloe Hill Care Home.
- Provision of semi natural open space in the southern part of the Site's eastern field, respecting views looking west from the Grade II Listed Pound Farm. This space will include new native tree planting, grassland meadows and informal play provision;
- Retention of the vast majority of existing boundary vegetation across the Site (except where losses are required around the Site access), and strengthening this with additional native tree and thicket planting. This will provide a robust landscape framework within which the new houses will sit; and
- Retention of the higher quality mature trees in the east of the Site within new incidental greenspaces within the developable area, ensuring the safeguarding of these high quality landscape features.

6.3 The key landscape and visual effects are described in the tables below.

Relationship to Settlement

6.4 Proposed development at the Site would be well related to the existing built up edge of Hitchin to the north and the currently under construction housing to the north east, off London Road. It would result in a small extension to the settlement southwards, continuing the direction of growth along London Road.

6.5 The retention and enhancement of existing field boundaries vegetation, would ensure the new housing is well-contained from its surroundings,

minimising the effects on the surrounding countryside and aiding assimilation of new built form into the existing landscape context.

- 6.6 Overall, it is considered that development at the Site would provide a well contained and discrete extension to the southern edge of Hitchin, delivering new housing to help meet the District's need.

Impact on Landscape Features

- 6.7 The proposals have been designed to retain the majority of the Site's existing trees, in particular the high quality Category A trees which will all be retained and protected as part of the proposals. The proposed access and parcel of development in the north east of the Site will however require an area of medium quality (Category B) trees to be removed, although those in the north west of the eastern field will be retained. A small number of trees within in the western field will also require removal to facilitate the small parcel of development here. These losses will be compensated for with new native tree and hedgerow planting, to reinforce field boundaries and enhance open space areas.
- 6.8 The effects on individual landscape features are set out in detailed within Table 4 below.

Table 4 – Effects on Landscape Features				
Landscape features and Sensitivity	Nature of Effect and Mitigation	Magnitude of Change	Year 1 Effect	Year 15 Effect
Trees Medium – high sensitivity	The proposals have been designed to retain the highest quality trees on site, including all of those of Category A quality. An area of predominantly medium quality Category B trees in the north east corner of the Site will require removal to facilitate the proposed development. Several medium quality trees are also proposed for removal in the western field in order to accommodate the small parcel of proposed development here. New tree planting is proposed to reinforce the Site boundaries, as well as within the new areas of semi natural open space, which will help to mitigate for these losses.	Moderate – substantial	Moderate – substantial adverse	Moderate adverse
Hedgerows Medium sensitivity	The vast majority of existing boundary hedgerows will be retained with development set back behind these landscape features. A	Slight	Slight adverse	Slight beneficial

	section of medium quality Category B hedgerow in the north east of the Site will however require removal in order to enable the proposed access road (and associated visibility) into the Site. New hedgerow planting is proposed at the Site frontage to mitigate this loss, as well as along the boundaries between the new housing and proposed areas of open space, resulting in an overall net increase in hedgerows across the Site.			
Grassland fields Medium sensitivity	The Site's eastern field will be replaced with new housing and associated semi-natural open space. The majority of the Site's western field will be retained and enhanced with new native planting, with a small parcel of development proposed in the north easter corner of the field.	Substantial	Moderate adverse	Moderate adverse

Effects on Landscape Character

- 6.9 The character of the Site will change from that of grassland fields to a new housing development with associated open space, although this is an inevitable consequence when considering any housing development on the settlement edge. The new housing would not be out of character in this location, being well related to built form to the north and currently under construction housing to the north east, on the opposite side of London Road. The majority of the Site's existing boundary vegetation will be retained and new structural planting will bolster this and assist in containing the new built form. Effects will therefore be largely limited to the Site and immediate surroundings, with effects on the wider landscape being limited.
- 6.10 The effects on the landscape character of the Site and the wider surrounding landscape are set out in Table 5 below.

Table 5 – Effects on Landscape Character

Landscape character area and Sensitivity	Nature of Effect and Mitigation	Magnitude of Change	Year 1 Effect	Year 15 Effect
The Site and immediate surroundings Medium sensitivity	The character of the Site will clearly change from that of grassland fields to a new housing scheme with associated open space, although the new housing will not be out of character in this location. The majority of the Site's structural landscaping will be retained and new landscaping is proposed in the form of native tree and thicket planting, together with areas of new meadow grassland. This structural landscaping will contain the proposals and assist in assimilating the new housing into the surrounding landscape framework. Effects on the immediately surrounding landscape will be minimised through the above measures, although the proposals will still be visible from neighbouring areas, reducing as mitigation planting matures.	<u>Site:</u> Substantial	<u>Site:</u> Moderate - Substantial adverse	<u>Site:</u> Moderate adverse (as new planting matures)
		<u>Immediate surroundings:</u> Moderate	<u>Immediate surroundings:</u> Moderate adverse	<u>Immediate surroundings:</u> Moderate - Slight adverse (as new planting matures)
Townscape character of immediate surroundings Medium sensitivity	The proposed housing would adjoin existing built form to the north and north east and would be of a similar scale, mass and character. The townscape character of the built-up edge of Hitchin would not be markedly affected by the proposals.	Slight	Slight adverse	Slight adverse
Wider Landscape Character Medium sensitivity	The proposed residential built form would be well related to the existing southern edge of Hitchin, including currently under construction housing on London Road to the north east. Retained boundary vegetation, together with new structural planting, will contain the new housing and ensure the effects on the wider landscape are minimised.	Negligible	Negligible adverse	Negligible adverse

Visual Effects

- 6.11 As set out in Section 4, views of the Site are generally limited to the near vicinity, with established field boundary vegetation and surrounding built form containing the Site and restricting views from the wider

surroundings. Views of the new housing will be similarly limited to the near surroundings, including London Road, Mill Lane and Mill Road as well as a number of residential properties along these roads.

6.12 The key visual effects of development at the Site are set out in Table 6 below.

Table 6 - Visual Effects				
Visual Receptor and Sensitivity	Nature of Effect and Mitigation	Magnitude of Change	Visual Effect Year 1	Visual Effect Year 15
London Road Medium sensitivity	The new houses in the east of the Site will be visible at the new access junction into the Site, where existing boundary hedgerow will require removal. Views on the approach from the south will be partially screened by retained roadside vegetation, with views limited to the upper storeys and roofs of new houses. These views will become increasingly filtered as new structural planting to the Site boundaries and within the areas of open space matures. Views on the approach from the north will be screened by intervening built form and vegetation, with the new housing only becoming visible when adjacent to the Site boundary.	Moderate (section of immediately adjacent road) Negligible (elsewhere)	Moderate adverse (section of immediately adjacent road) Negligible adverse (elsewhere)	Moderate – slight adverse (section of immediately adjacent road) Negligible adverse (elsewhere)
Mill Lane Medium sensitivity	Views will look towards the new residential development in the north of both the eastern and western fields of the Site, with retained boundary vegetation providing some partial filtering of views, becoming increasingly filtered as new planting matures. Framed views of the new houses will also be possible at the point which Mill Lane is proposed to be redirected into the Site. Elsewhere, retained boundary trees and hedgerows will largely screen views into the Site.	Moderate	Moderate adverse	Moderate – slight adverse
Mill Road Medium sensitivity	Views from Mill Road will be largely screened by intervening housing and vegetation along the road, except in the vicinity of Orchard Close where existing views towards the Site are possible. From here, views will look	Slight	Slight adverse	Slight – negligible adverse

	across the intervening field towards the new housing in the south of the Site's eastern field, which will be partially visible above the intervening boundary vegetation. The houses in the western field will be well screened by intervening vegetation.			
Hitchin Road Medium sensitivity	Open views towards the Site from Hitchin Road are limited to a single point where roadside vegetation breaks to provide field access. The new houses in the eastern field will be fully screened by intervening vegetation, with the vast majority of the housing in the western field also screened. Occasional glimpsed views of the roofs of these properties may be possible during winter months, above the intervening vegetation and properties on the northern side of Mill Lane.	Negligible	Negligible adverse	Negligible adverse
Folly Lane Medium sensitivity	Views of the new houses at the Site will not be possible from this lane, with dense tree cover within the intervening valley, screening views.	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
Residential Receptors				
Properties on Mill Lane High sensitivity	Partial views towards the new housing in the north of the Site will be possible from several properties along the northern side of Mill Lane, although these properties are typically set back behind vegetated front gardens / driveways, which partially restricts views toward the Site. Retained and enhanced vegetation along the northern Site boundary will provide increased screening as it matures.	Moderate - slight	Moderate - slight adverse	Slight adverse
Sloe Hill Residential Home High sensitivity	Views towards the new housing in both the western and eastern field will be possible from ground floor and first floor windows of the residential home. Retained boundary vegetation and additional tree planting will provide some softening of views as it matures.	Substantial	Substantial adverse	Moderate adverse
Property at Pound Farmhouse, London Road	Views from first floor windows of this property will look across the open space in the south of the Site and towards the new housing in the central part of the eastern field.	Moderate	Moderate adverse	Slight adverse

High sensitivity	Retained and enhanced vegetation along the eastern Site boundary will provide increased screening as it matures. Views from ground floor windows will be largely screened by intervening fencing and vegetation.			
Properties at The Eves, London Road High sensitivity	Views from several properties here will look across the intervening field towards the new open and housing in the Site's eastern field. These views will become increasingly filtered as new planting establishes.	Moderate – slight	Moderate – slight adverse	Slight adverse
Properties on Mill Road Medium sensitivity	Views from a number of properties on Mill Road will look across the intervening fields towards the Site, with the new houses in the eastern field partially visible above intervening vegetation. These views will be limited to first floor windows, with ground floor views screened.	Slight	Slight adverse	Slight – negligible adverse
Seasonal Variation				
The above assessment is based upon an appraisal of winter views when vegetation was out of leaf and the Site was at its most visible. During summer months views will be increasingly screened where intervening vegetation filters views.				

Cumulative Effects

- 6.13 Land to the north east of the Site, east of London Road, has planning consent for 84 dwellings (application ref: 21/00434/HYA) including a new roundabout junction off London Road. The scheme is at the early stages of construction, but once built out will extend the built edge of Hitchin southwards, to roughly align with the midpoint of the Site. The proposals look to retain the vast majority of boundary vegetation and extensive new planting is proposed, which together with surrounding woodland, will ensure the housing is contained in views from the wider landscape.
- 6.14 There will a localised cumulative effect on the local landscape resulting from both schemes, although this will be localised on account of the well contained nature of both sites, with limited impact on the wider landscape. Cumulative visual effects will be limited to users of London Road and Mill Lane and a small number of neighbouring residential properties, where both development sites would be visible. These cumulative effects will all reduce over time as new planting to both sites matures.

Lighting

- 6.15 The Site is currently in agricultural use and is unlit. There is street lighting along London Road to the immediate east as well as on Mill Road to the west of the Site. There is also background lighting to properties to the north, east and west of the Site and future lighting to the residential area currently under construction to the north east of the Site.
- 6.16 The proposal is for a medium density residential development with associated lighting. The development is not anticipated to give rise to any abnormal night time effects and will result in a small increase in background lighting levels which will be seen in the context of existing lighting within the neighbouring residential area and along London Road to the east.

Construction Phase

- 6.17 There will be temporary landscape and visual effects arising from the construction phase of the scheme. These will include, amongst other things, stock piling of materials, and vehicle and plant movements, both on Site and on the surrounding road network. It is not anticipated that the scheme will give rise to any abnormal landscape or visual effects above those that would be expected from a development of this nature. It is anticipated that the extent and timing of these effects will be controlled through a Construction Management Plan.

7.0 CONCLUSION

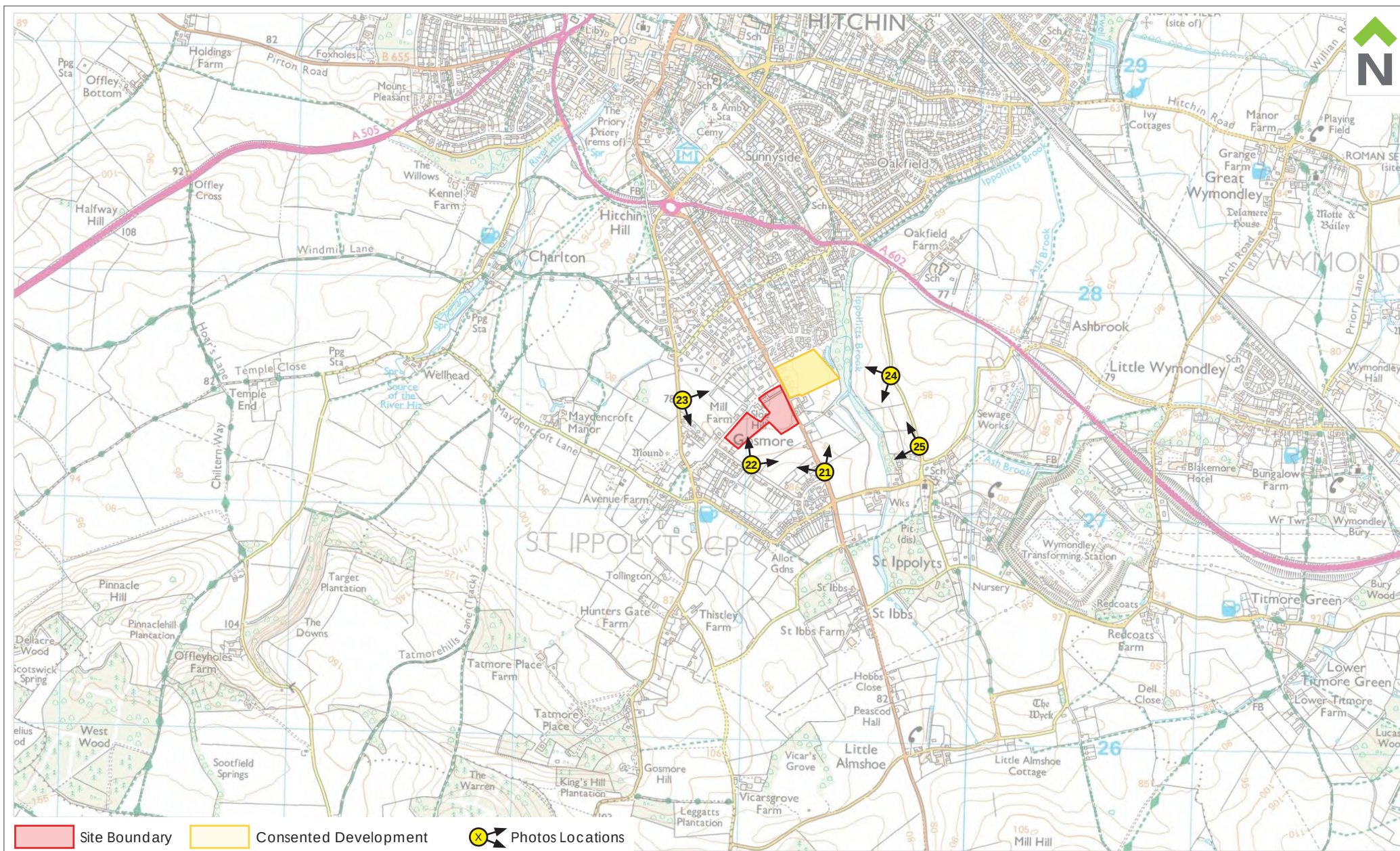
- 7.1 The Site is located on the southern edge of Hitchin and comprises two unmanaged grassland fields and a connecting strip of land. It is bound by London Road to the east, with currently under construction housing lying to the north east, and by existing residential properties and a residential care home along Mill Lane to the north, and properties along Mill Road to the west.
- 7.2 The Site is not covered by any statutory or non-statutory designations for landscape character or quality. A single tree within the north of the Site's eastern field is covered by a TPO. Within the wider surroundings, there are several Listed Buildings, including Pound Farmhouse to the immediate east of London Road and the Site, and Mill Farm to the immediate north of the Site. The Site, along with the majority of countryside outside of the built-up settlement area of Hitchin, is designated as Green Belt.
- 7.3 There are established trees to the boundaries of the Site, as well as several field trees particularly in the western field, some of which are of high quality. The Site comprises two unmanaged grassland fields on the edge of the built up area of Hitchin, which together with the adjacent London Road, influences the character of the Site, making it less typical of the wider rural landscape. There is no public access into the Site. The Site is assessed as being of overall medium landscape quality, value, and susceptibility and of overall medium sensitivity to sensitively designed residential development.
- 7.4 Views of the Site are generally confined to the near distance, and include users of London Road, Mill Road and Mill Lane. Views across the Site are also possible from several adjoining properties, including Pound Farmhouse to the east, Sloe Hill Residential Home to the north. Partial views of the Site are also possible from properties at The Eves to the south, and properties on Mill Road to the south west. The Site's established vegetated boundaries generally provides a good level of screening of the interior of the Site in these views.
- 7.5 The proposed development comprises an outline application, with all matters reserved except for access, for a residential development of up to 41 dwellings, associated open space and landscape planting. The open space areas will include recreational routes through the Site, with doorstep natural play facilities for local residents and extensive new tree, thicket, and meadow grassland planting.
- 7.6 The majority of the Site's existing trees, including all those of highest quality, will be retained as part of the proposals. Several medium quality

trees in the north east of the Site's eastern field and along the northern edge of the western field, will require removal to facilitate the proposed housing and associated access. These losses will be compensated for with new tree planting to reinforce the Site boundaries, and to enhance the areas of new public open space. Whilst it is acknowledged that the character of the Site will undergo clear change as a result of the proposals, the contained nature of the Site together with the landscape enhancement measures, will ensure effects on the wider landscape character are minimised.

- 7.7 Views of the new housing will be largely confined to the near surroundings, including users of London Road, Mill Lane and Mill Road, with the housing also being visible from neighbouring residential properties on these roads. These views will become further filtered, as new planting proposed to reinforce Site boundaries and within the areas of new open space, matures. Views from the wider area will be largely screened by intervening established vegetation and surrounding built form.
- 7.8 In relation to Green Belt, the parts of the Site being proposed for development are assessed as not performing strongly against any of purposes a, b, or d. On this basis the Site is considered to be Grey Belt, subject to meeting footnote 7 requirements, as defined in the NPPF 2024 and subsequent PPG 2025.
- 7.9 In summary the proposed development would be well related to the existing built-up edge of Hitchin and would form a discrete and logical extension to the settlement. The contained nature of the Site, together with new structural landscaping, will all assist in containing the new built form and help to assimilate it into the surrounding landscape framework. Effects on landscape character and visual amenity will be largely limited to the Site and immediate surroundings, with effects on the wider landscape being limited.

Appendix A

Site Location Plan



Dixies Barns, High Street,
Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT

t 01462 743647
e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk
w csaenvironmental.co.uk

Project Land at Mill Lane and London Road, Hitchin

Drawing Title Site Location Plan

Client Martin Grant Homes

Date August 2025

Drawing No. CSA/3922/100

Scale @ A4 NTS

Rev B

Drawn TV

Checked BS

Appendix B

Aerial Photograph



 Site Boundary  Photos Locations  Contextual Photos



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Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT

t 01462 743647
e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk
w csaenvironmental.co.uk

Project Land at Mill Lane and London Road, Hitchin

Drawing Title Aerial Photograph

Client Martin Grant Homes

Date August 2025

Scale @ A4 NTS

Drawn TV

Drawing No. CSA/3922/101

Rev C

Checked BS

Appendix C

Photosheets



Photograph 1 View from within the northern part of the Site's eastern field looking east



Photograph 2 View from within the northern part of the Site's eastern field looking south

Pound Farmhouse

Pound Farmhouse

Residential property 'The Eves'

Properties on Mill Road

CSA environmental		Dixies Barns, High Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT t 01462 743647 e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk w csaenvironmental.co.uk		
Project	Land at Mill Lane and London Road, Hitchin	Drawing No. CSA/3922/101		
Drawing Title	Photosheets	Date June 2025		
Client	Martin Grant Homes	Drawn ZO	Checked BS	Rev -

Properties on Mill Road

Sloe Hill Residential Home



Photograph 3 View from within the eastern part of the Site looking southwest

Sloe Hill Residential Home

Properties on Mill Lane



Photograph 4 View from within the south eastern part of the Site looking northwest

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Sloe Hill Residential Home



Pound Farmhouse

Photograph 5 View from within the southern part of the Site's eastern field looking north

Pound Farmhouse



Photograph 6 View from the western edge of the Site's eastern field looking northeast towards London Road (B656)

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Properties on Mill Road



Photograph 7 View from within the central part of the Site looking southwest

Property on Mill Lane



Photograph 8 View from within the southern part of the Site's western field looking northwest towards Mill Lane

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Project	Land at Mill Lane and London Road, Hitchin	Drawing No. CSA/3922/101		
Drawing Title	Photosheets	Date June 2025		
Client	Martin Grant Homes	Drawn ZO	Checked BS	Rev .

Sloe Hill Residential Care Home



Photograph 9 View from within the Site's western field looking northeast

Properties on Mill Lane



Photograph 10 View from southern part of the Site's western field looking northwest towards Mill Lane

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Properties at the junction of Mill Road and Mill Lane



Photograph 11 View from Mill Road looking northeast towards the Site's western field

Visualisation Type 1
Cylindrical projection
48% @ A3, 96% @ A1
07.01.2025, 10:39
Canon 2000D 1.6x, Canon EF-S 30mm
HfoV 90°
Looking direction: North east

CSA environmental		Dixies Barns, High Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT t 01462 743647 e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk w csaenvironmental.co.uk
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Photograph 12 View from Mill Lane looking north east towards the Site's western field

Visualisation Type 1
Cylindrical projection
48% @ A3, 96% @ A1
07.01.2025, 10:35
Canon 2000D 1.6x, Canon EF-S 30mm
HfoV 90°
Looking direction: North east

CSA environmental		Dixies Barns, High Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT t 01462 743647 e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk w csaenvironmental.co.uk		
Project	Land at Mill Lane and London Road, Hitchin	Drawing No. CSA/3922/101		
Drawing Title	Photosheets	Date June 2025		
Client	Martin Grant Homes	Drawn ZO	Checked BS	Rev .



Photograph 13 View from Mill Lane looking south west towards the Site's western field

Visualisation Type 1
Cylindrical projection
48% @ A3, 96% @ A1
07.01.2025, 11:25
Canon 2000D 1.6x, Canon EF-S 30mm
HfoV 90°
Looking direction: South west

CSA environmental		Dixies Barns, High Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT t 01462 743647 e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk w csaenvironmental.co.uk		
Project	Land at Mill Lane and London Road, Hitchin	Drawing No. CSA/3922/101		
Drawing Title	Photosheets	Date June 2025		
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Property on Mill Lane



Photograph 14 View from Mill Lane looking north east towards the Site's eastern field

Visualisation Type 1
Cylindrical projection
48% @ A3, 96% @ A1
07.01.2025, 11:29
Canon 2000D 1.6x, Canon EF-S 30mm
HfoV 90°
Looking direction: North east

CSA environmental		Dixies Barns, High Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT t 01462 743647 e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk w csaenvironmental.co.uk
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Photograph 15 View from Mill Lane looking south west towards the Site's eastern field

Visualisation Type 1
Cylindrical projection
48% @ A3, 96% @ A1
07.01.2025, 10:29
Canon 2000D 1.6x, Canon EF-S 30mm
HfoV 90°
Looking direction: South west

CSA environmental		Dixies Barns, High Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT t 01462 743647 e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk w csaenvironmental.co.uk
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Photograph 16 View from London Road (B656) looking south towards the Site

Visualisation Type 1
Cylindrical projection
48% @ A3, 96% @ A1
07.01.2025, 11:32
Canon 2000D 1.6x, Canon EF-S 30mm
HfoV 90°
Looking direction: South

CSA environmental		Dixies Barns, High Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT t 01462 743647 e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk w csaenvironmental.co.uk		
Project	Land at Mill Lane and London Road, Hitchin	Drawing No. CSA/3922/101		
Drawing Title	Photosheets	Date June 2025		
Client	Martin Grant Homes	Drawn ZO	Checked BS	Rev .



Photograph 17 View from London Road (B656) looking south west towards the Site's eastern field

Visualisation Type 1
Cylindrical projection
48% @ A3, 96% @ A1
07.01.2025, 10:24
Canon 2000D 1.6x, Canon EF-S 30mm
HfoV 90°
Looking direction: South west

CSA environmental		Dixies Barns, High Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT t 01462 743647 e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk w csaenvironmental.co.uk
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Photograph 18 View from London Road (B656) looking north west towards the Site's eastern field

Visualisation Type 1
Cylindrical projection
48% @ A3, 96% @ A1
07.01.2025, 10:20
Canon 2000D 1.6x, Canon EF-S 30mm
HfoV 90°
Looking direction: North west

CSA environmental		Dixies Barns, High Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT t 01462 743647 e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk w csaenvironmental.co.uk		
Project	Land at Mill Lane and London Road, Hitchin	Drawing No. CSA/3922/101		
Drawing Title	Photosheets	Date June 2025		
Client	Martin Grant Homes	Drawn ZO	Checked BS	Rev .



Photograph 19 View from London Road (B656) looking north west towards the Site's eastern field

Visualisation Type 1
Cylindrical projection
48% @ A3, 96% @ A1
07.01.2025, 10:17
Canon 2000D 1.6x, Canon EF-S 30mm
HfoV 90°
Looking direction: North west

CSA environmental		Dixies Barns, High Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT t 01462 743647 e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk w csaenvironmental.co.uk
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Photograph 20 View from London Road (B656) looking north west towards the Site

Visualisation Type 1
Cylindrical projection
48% @ A3, 96% @ A1
07.01.2025, 10:15
Canon 2000D 1.6x, Canon EF-S 30mm
HfoV 90°
Looking direction: North west

CSA environmental		Dixies Barns, High Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT t 01462 743647 e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk w csaenvironmental.co.uk
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Property on London Road (B656)



Photograph 21 View from London Road (B656) looking north west towards the Site

Visualisation Type 1
Cylindrical projection
48% @ A3, 96% @ A1
07.01.2025, 11:42
Canon 2000D 1.6x, Canon EF-S 30mm
HfoV 90°
Looking direction: North west

CSA environmental		Dixies Barns, High Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT t 01462 743647 e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk w csaenvironmental.co.uk
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Approximate extent of Site

Pound Farmhouse



Photograph 22 View from Mill Road looking north east towards the Site

Visualisation Type 1
Cylindrical projection
48% @ A3, 96% @ A1
07.01.2025, 10:42
Canon 2000D 1.6x, Canon EF-S 30mm
HfoV 90°
Looking direction: North east

CSA environmental		Dixies Barns, High Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT t 01462 743647 e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk w csaenvironmental.co.uk
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Property on Millfield Lane

Properties on Mill Lane



Photograph 23 View from Hitchin Road looking south east

Visualisation Type 1
Cylindrical projection
48% @ A3, 96% @ A1
07.01.2025, 12:36
Canon 2000D 1.6x, Canon EF-S 30mm
HfoV 90°
Looking direction: South east

CSA

environmental

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Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT
t 01462 743647
e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk
w csaenvironmental.co.uk

Project	Land at Mill Lane and London Road, Hitchin	Drawing No. CSA/3922/101		
Drawing Title	Photosheets	Date June 2025		
Client	Martin Grant Homes	Drawn ZO	Checked BS	Rev .



Photograph 24 View from Folly Lane looking west

Visualisation Type 1
Cylindrical projection
48% @ A3, 96% @ A1
07.01.2025, 12:17
Canon 2000D 1.6x, Canon EF-S 30mm
HfoV 90°
Looking direction: West

CSA environmental		Dixies Barns, High Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT t 01462 743647 e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk w csaenvironmental.co.uk
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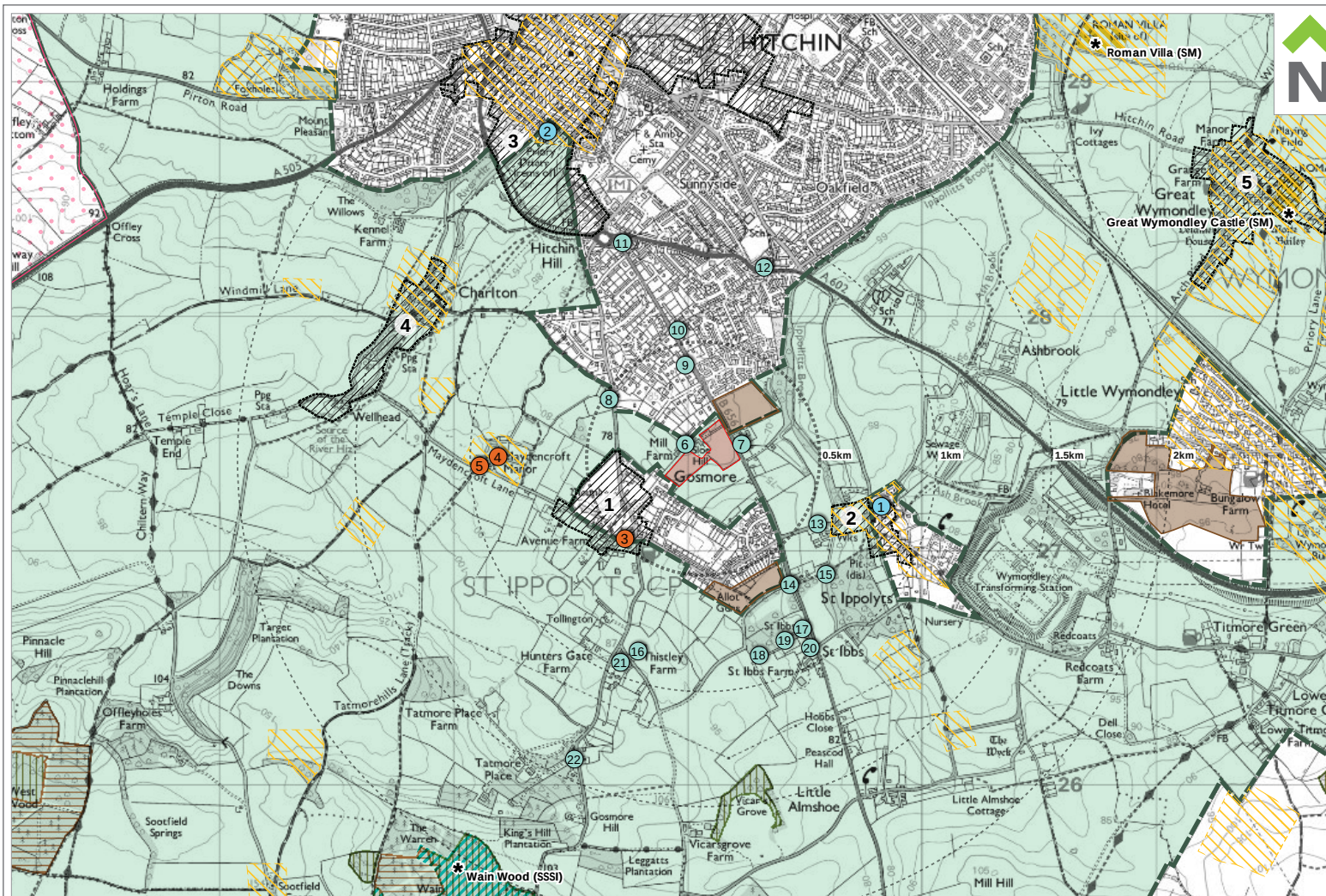
Photograph 25 View from Folly Lane looking north west

Visualisation Type 1
Cylindrical projection
48% @ A3, 96% @ A1
07.01.2025, 12:26
Canon 2000D 1.6x, Canon EF-S 30mm
HfoV 90°
Looking direction: North west

CSA environmental		Dixies Barns, High Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT t 01462 743647 e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk w csaenvironmental.co.uk
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Appendix D

Designations and Local Policy Plan



- Site Boundary
- Green Belt
- Chilterns National Landscape (formerly AONBs)
- Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Ancient Woodland
- Ancient Replanted Woodland
- Scheduled Monuments (SM)
- Areas of Archaeological Interest
- Housing Allocations
- Conservation Areas
 1. Gosmore
 2. St Ippolyts Village
 3. Hitchin (sub-divided)
 4. Charlton
 5. Great Wymondley
- X Grade I Listed Buildings & Structures within 1.5km
 1. Church of St Ippolyts
 2. The Priory
- X Grade II* Listed Buildings & Structures within 1.5km
 3. Avenue Farm House
 4. Maydencroft Manor
 5. Barn at Maydencroft Manor

X Grade II Listed Buildings & Structures within 1.5km
(Outside Conservation Areas)

6. The Mill Farm
7. Pound Farmhouse
8. Rose View opp. Newlands Lane
9. New England House & Cottage
10. Group of 2: Grange House & Barn

11. Group of 5: 5 & 6 (adjoined), 7, & 8 Hitchin Hill Path, Montserrat & Saint Elmo
12. The New Found Out Public House
13. Group of 2: The Foundry House & Foundry Cottage
14. Group of 2: St Ibbs Lodge & Ice House

15. Bridge over Ippollitts Brook
16. Group of 2: Thistley Farmhouse & Byre
17. 1 & 2 North Wing, South Wing & West Wing, at St Ibbs
18. Group of 2: Observatory & Observation Stone
19. Coach House and attached Walled Garden

20. St Ibbs Bush
21. Thistley Cottage
22. The Clock House



Dixies Barns, High Street,
Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT
t 01462 743647
e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk
w csaenvironmental.co.uk

Project	Land at Mill Lane and London Road, Hitchin
Drawing Title	Designations and Local Policy Plan
Client	Martin Grant Homes

Date	Sept 2025	Drawing No.	CSA/3922/103
Scale @ A4	NTS	Rev	C
Drawn	TV	Checked	BS

Appendix E

National Landscape Policy Context

1.0 APPENDIX E – NATIONAL LANDSCAPE POLICY CONTEXT

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)

- 1.1 National policy is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') and those parts relevant to this assessment are summarised below.
- 1.2 Paragraphs 10 and 11 of the NPPF state that at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be applied in relation to both plan-making and decision-taking.
- 1.3 Paragraph 20 of the NPPF states that strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places and make sufficient provision for, among other elements, the *'(d) 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.'*
- 1.4 Section 12 of the NPPF sets out that planning policies and decisions should support the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places. Paragraph 132 states that *'... design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area's defining characteristics.'* Paragraph 133 requires local authorities to prepare design guides and codes which act as a framework to reflect local character and design preferences to create high quality designed places which are beautiful and distinctive.
- 1.5 Paragraph 135 states that planning policies and decisions, should ensure that developments, amongst others:
 - *'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;*
 - *are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
 - *are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change...'*
- 1.6 Paragraph 136 highlights the importance of new and retained trees to the character and quality of urban environments, with appropriate species choice for the location and the needs of all users.
- 1.7 Paragraph 137 states that the design quality should be integral to the evolution and assessment of proposals, and paragraph 139 goes on to state that poorly

designed development should be refused, particularly where it does not follow local or government design guidance.

- 1.8 Section 15 of the NPPF deals with conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Paragraph 187 of the document states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment through, among other things, protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, '*... (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan)*'. The paragraph also outlines that the planning system should recognise the, '*... intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.*'

- 1.9 Paragraph 188 highlights that 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.'

- 1.10 Paragraph 193 notes that in the process of determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply several principles. Among these, the paragraph notes that, '*(c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists*'.

- 1.11 In Section 13 'Protecting Green Belt Land' paragraph 142 of the NPPF states that the essential character of Green Belts is their openness and their permanence, with the fundamental aim of preventing urban sprawl. Paragraph 143 sets out the five purposes which Green Belt should serve:

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

- 1.12 Paragraphs 145 to 147 outline the national planning policy relating to the definition of Green Belt boundaries. Paragraph 145 states that, *'Once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified through the preparation or updating of plans.'* Paragraph 148 states that where it is necessary for Green Belt land to be released for development, previously developed land should be prioritised, then Grey Belt which is not previously developed, then other Green Belt land.
- 1.13 'Grey Belt' is defined in the Glossary as *'land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143.'* It goes on to say that Grey Belt *'excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development'*. Footnote 7 includes habitats sites, land designated as SSSI, Local Green Space, National Landscapes, National Parks, Heritage Coast, irreplaceable habitats, designated heritage assets, and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.
- 1.14 Paragraph 149 (f) states that plans should, *'define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.'*
- 1.15 Paragraph 153 and 154 deal with inappropriate development, which is by definition deemed to be harmful in the Green Belt. These paragraphs state that only in very special circumstances should inappropriate development be approved, and these circumstances will not be considered to exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt and any other harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
- 1.16 Paragraph 154 states that development is considered inappropriate development in the Green Belt, but goes on to list some exceptions. These include among others, *'(g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land (including a material change of use to residential or mixed use including residential), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.'*
- 1.17 Paragraph 155 goes on to say that development (including residential, commercial and other) within the Green Belt should not be regarded as inappropriate where:
- a) *'The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;*
 - b) *There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed;*

- c) The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework; and*
- d) Where applicable the development proposed meets the 'Golden Rules' requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 below.'*

1.18 The Golden Rules (as set out in paragraph 156) applicable to major development for the provision of housing, are as follows:

- a) 'affordable housing which reflects either: (i) development plan policies produced in accordance with paragraphs 67-68 of this Framework; or (ii) until such policies are in place, the policy set out in paragraph 157 below;*
- b) necessary improvements to local or national infrastructure; and*
- c) the provision of new, or improvements to existing, green spaces that are accessible to the public. New residents should be able to access good quality green spaces within a short walk of their home, whether through onsite provision or through access to offsite spaces.'*

1.19 Paragraph 158 goes on to say that development which meets the Golden Rules should be given significant weight in favour of granting permission.

Planning Practice Guidance

1.20 The Planning Practice Guidance ('PPG') as relevant to this assessment covers landscape and the natural environment, the design of new developments, and Green Belt. The PPG may be out of date in its reference to NPPF paragraph numbers, and where this is the case, the latest paragraph number has been included in the text in square brackets.

1.21 Paragraph 001 (ID 26-001-20191001) of the Design: process and tools section sets out the purpose of the guidance, which aims to explain the process and tools that can be employed to achieve well-designed places. The guidance refers to paragraph 134 [139] of the NPPF which relates to ensuring good design, and states that the section should be read in conjunction with the National Design Guide (published Oct, 2019), which it notes should be used in both plan-making and decision making. Ten good design characteristics are identified in the National Design Guide, and these are set out as follows in the PPG:

- Context
- Identity
- Built form
- Movement
- Nature
- Public places
- Uses

- Homes and buildings
- Resources
- Lifespan.

- 1.22 Paragraphs 006 and 007 deal with masterplans, stating that they should be site specific and should '*... set the vision and implementation strategy for a development...* '. Paragraph 006 notes that they may need to be accompanied by other technical reports including landscape assessment and proposals for securing biodiversity net gain.
- 1.23 The Natural environment section of the guidance aims to explain the key issues to consider in relation to the implementation of policies to protect and enhance the natural environment, including local requirements.
- 1.24 Paragraph 004 defines Green Infrastructure, while in paragraph 005 it explains its importance as a natural capital asset that provides multiple benefits, including enhanced biodiversity, landscapes and urban cooling. In paragraph 006 the guidance sets out the planning goals green infrastructure can assist in achieving, and these are:
- *Building a strong, competitive economy;*
 - *Achieving well-designed places;*
 - *Promoting healthy and safe communities;*
 - *Mitigating climate change, flooding and coastal change;*
 - *Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.*
- 1.25 The final paragraph (008) in the green infrastructure sub-section notes that:
- 'Green infrastructure opportunities and requirements need to be considered at the earliest stages of development proposals, as an integral part of development and infrastructure provision, and taking into account existing natural assets and the most suitable locations and types of new provision.'*
- 1.26 Within the Biodiversity, geodiversity and ecosystems section, the topic of net gain has been included. Paragraph 020 describes net gain as '*... an approach to development that leaves the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand. Net gain is an umbrella term for both biodiversity net gain and wider environmental net gain.*'
- 1.27 In the Landscape section of the guidance, paragraph 036 refers to that part of paragraph 180 of the NPPF which deals with the recognition of the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside in local plans, and the need for strategic policies to '*... provide for the conservation and enhancement of*

landscapes. This can include nationally and locally-designated landscapes but also the wider countryside.' Paragraph 036 goes on to note that:

'Where landscapes have a particular local value, it is important for policies to identify their special characteristics and be supported by proportionate evidence. Policies may set out criteria against which proposals for development affecting these areas will be assessed. Plans can also include policies to avoid adverse impacts on landscapes and to set out necessary mitigation measures, such as appropriate design principles and visual screening, where necessary. The cumulative impacts of development on the landscape need to be considered carefully.'

- 1.28 The Green Belt section of the guidance provides further clarity on assessing Green Belt to identify grey belt land. Paragraph 001 (Reference ID:64-001-20250225) states that:

'National policy also requires authorities to identify, where necessary, whether land is grey belt for the purpose of considering applications on Green Belt land. Where land is identified as grey belt land, any proposed development of that land should be considered against paragraph 155 of the NPPF, which sets out the conditions in which development would not be inappropriate on grey belt land.'

- 1.29 Paragraph 002 states that authorities should produce a Green Belt assessment to identify grey belt land, either as part of the review of Green Belt boundaries during the preparation or updating of a Local Plan, or at another relevant point. Paragraph 003 identifies the key steps to preparing a Green Belt assessment that authorities will need to consider.

- 1.30 Paragraph 004 relates to identifying appropriate assessment areas when assessing Green Belt. It notes that assessment areas should be sufficiently granular to enable the assessment of their variable contribution to Green Belt purposes, and authorities should consider opportunities to better identify areas of grey belt by subdividing areas into smaller assessment areas where necessary.

- 1.31 Paragraph 005 states that when making judgments on whether land is grey belt, authorities should consider the contribution an assessment area makes to Green Belt purposes a, b, and d. It sets out what considerations should inform these judgements.

Purpose A – to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas This purpose relates to the sprawl of large built up areas. Villages should not be considered large built up areas.	
Contribution	Illustrative Features
Strong	Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely to be free of existing development, and lack physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development. They are also likely to include all of the following features: - be adjacent or near to a large built up area - if developed, result in an incongruous pattern of development (such as an extended “finger” of development into the Green Belt)
Moderate	Assessment areas that contribute moderately are likely to be adjacent or near to a large built up area, but include one or more features that weaken the land’s contribution to this purpose a, such as (but not limited to): - having physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development - be partially enclosed by existing development, such that new development would not result in an incongruous pattern of development - contain existing development - being subject to other urbanising influences
Weak or None	Assessment areas that make only a weak or no contribution are likely to include those that: - are not adjacent to or near to a large built up area - are adjacent to or near to a large built up area, but containing or being largely enclosed by significant existing development
Purpose B – to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another This purpose relates to the merging of towns, not villages.	

Contribution	Illustrative Features
Strong	Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely to be free of existing development and include all of the following features: - forming a substantial part of a gap between towns - the development of which would be likely to result in the loss of visual separation of towns
Moderate	Assessment areas that contribute moderately are likely to be located in a gap between towns, but include one or more features that weaken their contribution to this purpose, such as (but not limited to): - forming a small part of the gap between towns - being able to be developed without the loss of visual separation between towns. This could be (but is not limited to) due to the presence or the close proximity of structures, natural landscape elements or topography that preserve visual separation
Weak or None	Assessment areas that contribute weakly are likely to include those that: - do not form part of a gap between towns, or - form part of a gap between towns, but only a very small part of this gap, without making a contribution to visual separation
Purpose D – to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns This purpose relates to historic towns, not villages. Where there are no historic towns in the plan area, it may not be necessary to provide detailed assessments against this purpose.	
Contribution	Illustrative Features
Strong	Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely be free of existing development and to include all of the following features: - form part of the setting of the historic town - make a considerable contribution to the special character of a historic town. This could be (but is not

	limited to) as a result of being within, adjacent to, or of significant visual importance to the historic aspects of the town
Moderate	Assessment areas that perform moderately are likely to form part of the setting and/or contribute to the special character of a historic town but include one or more features that weaken their contribution to this purpose, such as (but not limited to): - being separated to some extent from historic aspects of the town by existing development or topography - containing existing development - not having an important visual, physical, or experiential relationship to historic aspects of the town
Weak or None	Assessment areas that make no or only a weak contribution are likely to include those that: - do not form part of the setting of a historic town - have no visual, physical, or experiential connection to the historic aspects of the town

- 1.32 Paragraph 006 states that grey belt excludes land where the application of policies relating to areas or assets in footnote 7 of the NPPF (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development. Where this is the case, it may only be possible to provisionally identify land as grey belt in advance of more detailed specific proposals.
- 1.33 Paragraph 007 confirms that assessment areas which do not strongly contribute to any one of purposes a, b, or d can be identified as grey belt, subject to the exclusion of land where the application of policies relating to footnote 7 would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.
- 1.34 Paragraph 008 states that in reaching judgements on the extent to which release of Green Belt land would fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of remaining Green Belt across the plan area, authorities should consider whether, or the extent to which, the release or development of Green Belt Land would affect the ability of all the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan from serving all five of the Green Belt purposes in a meaningful way.
- 1.35 Paragraph 009 states that Green Belt assessment will inform the determination of applications which involve judgments on whether proposals utilise grey belt

land, or whether development would fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt. Where grey belt sites are not identified in existing plans or Green Belt assessments, authorities should consider evidence in light of the PPG guidance.

- 1.36 Paragraph 010 sets out the circumstances where proposals on grey belt should be approved. It notes that where a site is judged grey belt and release would not fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt, then it will be necessary to determine whether development would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt as set out in paragraph 155 of the NPPF. This includes consideration of whether a development is sustainably located, whether it would meet the 'Golden Rules' contributions (where applicable), and whether there is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed. It also states that where development is not inappropriate in the Green Belt, wider policies and considerations will apply including those in the area's adopted Plan, and in the NPPF read as a whole.
- 1.37 Paragraph 011 relates to identifying sustainable locations for development and reiterates that where grey belt land is not sustainably located development it is inappropriate. Decisions on whether locations are sustainable should be determined in light of local circumstances and site or development specific considerations. Authorities should look to maximise sustainable transport solutions as set out in paragraphs 110 and 115 of the NPPF.
- 1.38 Paragraph 012 sets out how major housing development on land released from the Green Belt can contribute to accessible green space. It sets out the following contributions which should be considered:
- *'New residents and the wider public should be able to access good quality green spaces which are safe; visually stimulating and attractive; well-designed; sustainably managed and maintained; and seek to meet the needs of the communities which they serve.'*
 - *Accessible green spaces are areas of vegetation set within a landscape or townscape, often including blue space, which are available for public use free of charge and with limited time restrictions.*
 - *Where possible access to green spaces should include safe active travel routes and should be served by public transport, which also means providing the necessary infrastructure (such as footpaths and bridleways).*
 - *Proposals should consider how the creation or enhancement of existing green spaces can contribute to the priorities for nature recovery set out within the relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategies, providing greater benefit to nature and contributing to the delivery of wider environmental outcomes.*
 - *Where appropriate, authorities should consider the use of conditions or planning obligations. The Community Infrastructure Levy can also be used to fund improvements to existing greenspaces or the provision of new*

ones. Local authorities should consider arrangements for the long-term maintenance of green spaces.'

1.39 Paragraph 013 states that judging the openness of Green Belt land depends upon the circumstances of the case. The guidance notes that there are a number of factors to consider, and sets out three examples which include, but are not limited to:

- *'openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects – in other words, the visual impact of the proposal may be relevant, as could its volume;*
- *the duration of the development, and its remediability – taking into account any provisions to return land to its original state or to an equivalent (or improved) state of openness; and*
- *the degree of activity likely to be generated, such as traffic generation.'*

1.40 Paragraph 014 sets out how harm to the Green Belt including its openness should be considered if a development is not inappropriate development. As set out in Footnote 55 to the NPPF if development is not inappropriate development on previously developed land or grey belt, then it is not a policy requirement to give substantial weight to any harm to the Green Belt, including its openness. It states:

'This is consistent with rulings from the courts on these matters that, where development (of any kind, now including development on grey belt or previously developed land) is not considered to be inappropriate in the Green Belt, it follows that the test of impacts to openness or to Green Belt purposes are addressed and that therefore a proposal does not have to be justified by "very special circumstances".'

National Design Guide

1.41 The National Design Guide (2019) provides guidance to illustrate *'... how well-designed places that are beautiful, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice.'*

1.42 The guidance identifies ten good design characteristics and the following are of most relevance to landscape and visual assessment (our emphasis):

- Context is described as *'... the location of the development and the attributes of its immediate, local and regional surroundings.'* The Guide goes on to state that,

'An understanding of the context, history and cultural characteristics of a site, neighbourhood and region influences the location, siting and design of new developments. It means they are well grounded in their

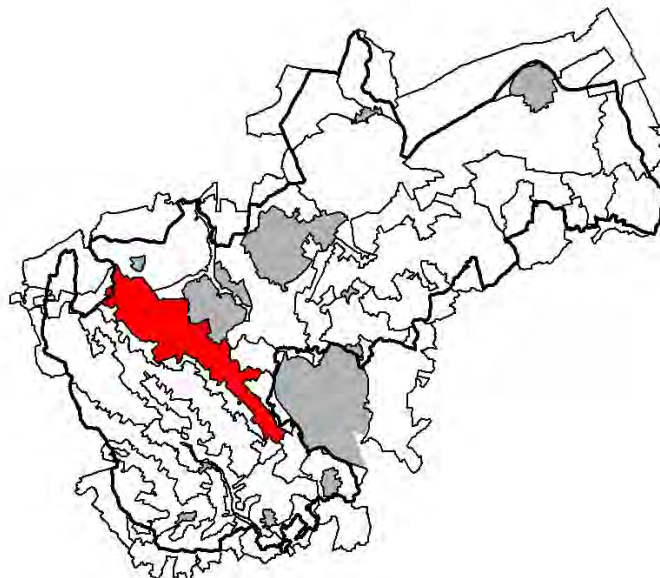
locality and more likely to be acceptable to existing communities. Creating a positive sense of place helps to foster a sense of belonging and contributes to well-being, inclusion and community cohesion.

- *The identity or character of a place comes from the way that buildings, streets and spaces, landscape and infrastructure combine together and how people experience them. It is not just about the buildings and how a place looks, but how it engages with all of the senses. Local character makes places distinctive. Well-designed, sustainable places with a strong identity give their users, occupiers and owners a sense of pride, helping to create and sustain communities and neighbourhoods.*
- *Nature contributes to the quality of a place, and to people's quality of life, and it is a critical component of well-designed places. Natural features are integrated into well-designed development. They include natural and designed landscapes, high quality public open spaces, street trees, and other trees, grass, planting and water.'*

1.43 The National Model Design Code (July, 2021) expands upon the ten characteristics of good design providing an overarching framework for design. The document provides detailed guidance on the production of design codes, guides and policies to promote successful design. It is split into two parts; Part 1 focusing on the coding process, and Part 2 comprising guidance notes.

Appendix F

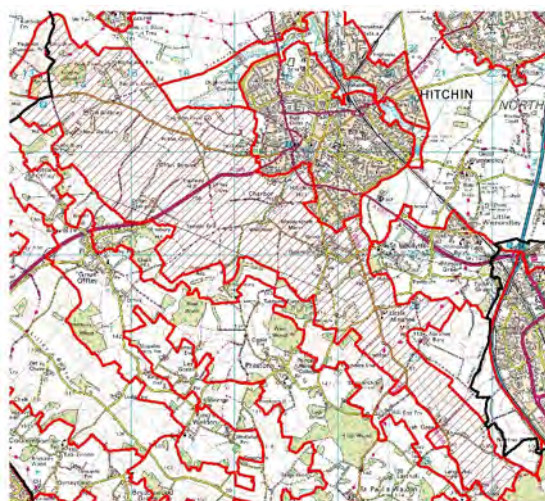
Extract from North Hertfordshire Landscape Study

EVALUATION

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LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

The Character Area runs in a broad band from Wellbury in the north to Langley Bottom where it stops at the boundary to Knebworth woods/parkland.



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LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Large scale rolling landform. Predominantly in arable land use but with pockets of grazing on the

steeper slopes in the north and adjacent to settlements at St Ippolyts and Langley. Field sizes vary with extensive arable land to the southwest of Hitchin and smaller fields associated with grazing land. Hedges generally well trimmed with remnant mature trees. High proportion of stag-headed trees to the north. Scattered settlements and farmsteads. Parkland as a notable feature widely spread over the Character Area. Discrete areas of commercial land-use (Isaacs Foundry, Royal Oak, Airfield, Rush Green recycling, pigeonswick sawmill)

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Rolling chalk landform
- Dominant large scale arable farming
- Smaller areas of grazing on steeper chalk slopes to the south of Hitchin
- Woodland plantations concentrated in the north on most pronounced chalk landscape. Relatively little woodland cover elsewhere.

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

- Small areas of parkland at Gosmore
- A505 dual carriageway cuts across the area
- Langley Valley airfield and scrapyard

ASSESSMENT

PHYSICAL INFLUENCES

Geology & soils

In the north there are thin rendzina soils over Chalk which merge into brown soils over Chalk. South of Hitchin there is a transition to sandy brown soils over glacial till which continue down the Langley valley. Tingley Down is a Chalk outlier capped with gravel and Clay-with-Flints giving locally acidic soils at Tingley Wood.

Topography

An undulating landform in the north gradually gives way to the valley landscape at Langley.

Degree of slope

Varies, 1:20 in steeper areas, 1:250 in the Langley valley.

Altitude range

95m (Langley) to 140m (Wellbury).

Hydrology

The Langley valley runs north west to the Hiz and Oughton which in turn run northwards to the catchment of the river Ouse. A stream from the south disappears at Almshoe Bury swallowhole to re-appear further north on a tributary to the River Purwell. At times of high groundwater levels a lake may form at the swallowhole.

Land cover and land use

Dominant arable land use with grazing on steeper chalk slopes and around Gosmore. High proportion of woodland cover north of Wellbury on the steeper chalk slopes.

Vegetation and wildlife

Mixed deciduous/conifer plantations in the north. Small pockets of woodland adjacent to Gosmore. Belts of willow following the watercourse in Langley valley. Hedge species include oak, ash, hawthorn and sycamore with beech and hornbeam in Langley valley.

Green lanes like Wood Lane with its chalk grassland and scrub habitats are ecologically valuable strips within this Character Area. Some arable field margins support rare 'arable weeds'.

Unimproved chalk grassland and traditionally managed neutral and acid grassland are present within this Character Area and are typically species-rich. Some of these unimproved grasslands have been designated as SSSIs, such as Burleigh Meadow and Langley Meadow. Tingley Down falls

within core chalk grassland described as an area of high biodiversity within the Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).

Tingley Wood is an ancient semi-natural woodland, partly acidic oak woodland partly calcareous ash/beech with hybrid elm and associated maple and hazel coppicing. Ancient woodlands comprised primarily of hornbeam coppice also occur infrequently within the Character Area, and have an assortment of associated ancient woodland indicator species.

Areas of ecologically interesting marshy grassland, wet willow and alder woodland are associated with the River Hiz, for example 'The Willows'. Folly Alder Swamp is located in the area of St Ippollits Common, and is of interest for its ancient alder woodland. The Hertfordshire BAP describes this alder/tussock sedge carr as one of the richest and most valuable examples in the county. Woodlands adjacent to the river may completely flood at certain times of year. Almshoebury Swallowhole is a unique example in north Hertfordshire of a specialised hydrological feature with associated unimproved grassland and wet woodland habitats.

Priory Park in Hitchin is important for bats and existing grazing land holds breeding barn owls.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES

South of Pirton lie two areas of prehistoric ring ditches and a Scheduled bowl barrow at Knocking Knoll. On the margins of Hitchin Romano-British burials are documented to the west and a ring ditch, medieval moated site and deserted medieval village Gosmore to the southwest. Another ring ditch is located to the east of Preston.

Field pattern

The historic agricultural landscape generally comprises a mixture of prairie fields with post-1950s boundary loss and 18th century and later enclosure to the northwest. An area of ancient woodland occupies an area southwest of Pirton. There are small areas of pre-18th century enclosure and informal medieval parkland on the southwest perimeter of Hitchin. The southeast section of the Character Area comprises of a mixture of prairie fields with post-1950s boundary loss, prairie fields with relict elements within, 18th century and later enclosure, pre-18th century irregular enclosure

ASSESSMENT

and pre-18th century unenclosed common arable. A small area of ancient woodland remains on the northern edge of a mineral extraction pit south of Gosmore. Today there are varied irregular sizes with many removed hedges where in arable production. Smaller field parcels where land in grazing use.

Transport pattern

The A505 dual carriageway connecting Hitchin to Luton cuts across the Character Area. The B656 follows the Langley Valley south. Minor network of local lanes at Gosmore.

Settlements and built form

The historic settlement pattern is of a sparse nature characterised by farms and estates. There are mainly farmsteads in the north and south. Sub-urban fringe at Hitchin and Gosmore. Older settlement at Gosmore dating from 1283.

Dwellings in the hamlet of St Ibbs, date from 18th century St Ibbs and St Ibbs Bush and 19th century St Ibbs Lodge. Traditional buildings include The Wyck, a timber framed structure near Little Almshoe.

EVALUATION

VISUAL AND SENSORY PERCEPTION

The valley is a combination of mature, well wooded valley sides in the upper reaches with a wider shallow sided valley washing up against a sub-urban fringe in the northeast. The valley is well defined along its boundary with the Langley scarp to the west.

Rarity & distinctiveness

This landscape is relatively common to this locality. The rolling chalk landscape to the north is the most distinctive feature of the Character Area

VISUAL IMPACT

The scrapyard at the Langley Valley has a negative impact. The urban edge of Hitchin is a prominent feature to the west. The A505 dual carriageway cuts across the landscape and is visible from the surrounding landscape.

ACCESSIBILITY

The area is well covered by a network of public rights of way.

COMMUNITY VIEWS

Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) have undertaken Tier B (Community of Place) consultations. Views of the local community have been sought and contributor's responses to each of the Character Areas will be analysed and a summary of the responses provided by HCC.

LANDSCAPE RELATED DESIGNATIONS

AONB	The Chilterns
LC1	Landscape Conservation Area
SSSI	Knebworth

EVALUATION

CONDITION

Land cover change:	Widespread
Age structure of tree cover:	Mixed
Extent of semi-natural habitat survival:	Relic
Management of semi-natural habitat:	Not obvious
Survival of cultural pattern:	Declining/Relic
Impact of built development:	Low
Impact of land-use change:	High

Matrix Score: **Poor**

ROBUSTNESS

Impact of landform:	Apparent
Impact of land cover:	Prominent
Impact of historic pattern:	Insignificant
Visibility from outside:	Locally visible
Sense of enclosure:	Open
Visual unity:	Coherent
Distinctiveness/rarity:	Frequent

Matrix Score: **Weak**

CONDITION	GOOD	Strengthen and reinforce	Conserve and strengthen	Safeguard and manage
	MODERATE	Improve and reinforce	Improve and conserve	Conserve and restore
	POOR	Reconstruct	Improve and restore	Restore condition to maintain character
		WEAK	MODERATE	STRONG
		ROBUSTNESS		

EVALUATION

INHERENT LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

Landscape Character Sensitivities

- The landform plays a significant role in the character of Langley Valley, consisting of a network of ridges and wet or dry valleys
- Vegetation is present within valley bottoms and along streams where they are present. This would be vulnerable to removal
- Areas of marshy grassland, wet willow and alder woodland associated with the River Hiz, are vulnerable to further loss
- Settlement is sparse within Langley Valley, consisting of small nucleated villages with historic cores, estates and scattered farmsteads. This would be sensitive to unsympathetic development not in scale with the villages
- Areas of parkland landscape around Gosmore and west of St Ippolytts would be sensitive to inappropriate management or conversion to arable farmland
- Hedgerows throughout the Character Area are variable. Some are tall and well managed, whilst others have been removed. Hedgerows would be sensitive to further removal
- Woodland is sparse within the Character Area and small copses, particularly on higher ground within the AONB, would be vulnerable to removal
- The pattern of narrow, winding lanes around Gosmore would be vulnerable to improvements to/ upgrading of the roads
- Areas of grazing on steeper slopes and adjacent to watercourses add variety to the landscape and are of a smaller scale than larger arable fields. These would be vulnerable to inconsistent management or conversion to arable farmland
- The A505 crosses the character area and is a detractor to the natural character of Langley Valley
- Good public access through rights of way, particularly around Hitchin, including the Chiltern Way and the Hertfordshire Way
- Part of the Character Area falls within the Chilterns AONB

Overall Langley Valley is considered to be of **moderate sensitivity**. The gently undulating network of ridges and valleys creates an enclosed landscape but with some urban influence.

Visual Sensitivities

- Expansive open views are possible from the tops of the valleys, often through gaps in vegetation
- Views within the valleys are generally more contained by landform
- Electricity pylons currently intrude on views within the centre of the Character Area
- The edge of Hitchin to the north east of the character area is visually intrusive some views
- Langley Valley has a strong visual relationship with the adjacent Langley Scarp

In visual terms, Langley Valley is considered to be of **moderate to high sensitivity**. Panoramic views from vantage points and views along the valleys are important features within the character area. These would be sensitive to the introduction of built features.

LANDSCAPE VALUE

Overall Langley Valley is considered to be of **moderate low landscape value**. Aspects of particular value within Langley Valley are the sense of openness, but there is also a less memorable landform, lack of remoteness and general human influence on the landscape that detracts from it.

EVALUATION

CAPACITY TO ACCOMMODATE DEVELOPMENT

Large urban extensions and new settlements (>5ha)

This type of development would not be appropriate within Langley Valley, due to its rural and undeveloped nature. It would introduce a scale of development that would be out of keeping with the Character Area. Large scale development could not be accommodated within Langley Valley without a significant visual impact on the landscape. The undulating landform would also make major development very difficult to accommodate.

The landscape capacity for large urban extensions or new settlements is considered to be low.

Smaller urban extensions (<5ha)

It may be possible to accommodate some small scale expansion of Hitchin within this Character Area, carefully designed and in keeping with the existing character. Mitigation planting and retention of existing woodland would also need to be given careful consideration, to ensure that there is not visual intrusion into the wider Character Area.

The landscape capacity for small urban extensions is considered to be moderate to low.

Major transport developments/improvements

This type of development would only be appropriate with improvements to the A505 within this Character Area. The majority of routes are rural in character. Upgrading of existing narrow, twisting lanes could erode the character of the landscape. Additional traffic would also affect the peace and tranquillity of the Character Area.

The landscape capacity for major transport developments/improvements is considered to be low.

Commercial/warehouse estates

This type of large scale development would not generally be appropriate in this character area, as there are not currently any large scale developments of this type within the area other than in the vicinity of Hitchin. Extensive development would also disrupt expansive views.

The landscape capacity for commercial/warehouse estates is considered to be low.

Individual large/bulky buildings

There may be some limited capacity for sympathetically located and designed individual large buildings, particularly if they were of an agricultural nature or vernacular in form and style and in keeping with the rural character. Large buildings, if not carefully located, could erode the rural and undeveloped character of Langley Valley particularly within the AONB.

The landscape capacity for individual large/bulky buildings is considered to be low to moderate.

Large scale open storage

The undulating landform within Langley Valley would make it difficult to accommodate large scale 'open' uses without ground modelling. This would not be in keeping with the rural character of the area and likely to be very open to view and introduce new elements that would conflict with the existing characteristics.

The landscape capacity for large scale 'open' uses is considered to be low.

location	assessment	evaluation	guidelines	LANGLEY VALLEY	Area 214
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EVALUATION

Mineral extraction/waste disposal

This Character Area is currently relatively undisturbed and rural in appearance. Whilst some small scale mineral extraction could be accommodated with careful design and mitigation measures, larger scale extraction or waste disposal would not be in keeping. Restoration proposals for any consented schemes should be mainly at grade and include for additional planting in character with existing patterns.

The landscape capacity for mineral extraction is considered to be low. Waste disposal would be a problem in all character areas due to the presence of aquifers.

Incremental small scale development

There may be some capacity for carefully located and designed small scale developments within the Character Area, particularly if they were of an agricultural nature or vernacular in form and style and in keeping with the rural character. However, due to the existing open and undeveloped character any proposals would need clear justification to avoid the erosion of the rural character and avoid impacts on the AONB.

The landscape capacity for incremental small scale developments is considered to be low to moderate.

Utilities developments e.g. masts, pylons, wind turbines

There are existing detractors within this Character Area at present, including electricity pylons. New utilities developments would have a significant impact on the rural character and extensive views experienced in Langley Valley. Any proposals would need clear justification to avoid impacts on the AONB. Large scale developments and tall elements would be highly visible within the Character Area.

The landscape capacity for utilities developments is considered to be low to moderate.

GUIDELINES

Nb. These guidelines apply only to land within North Hertfordshire

STRATEGY AND GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CHANGE

Strategy: Reconstruct

Landscape management guidelines

- Promote planting of new woodland to encourage a diverse woodland flora especially in relation to sub-urban fringe areas
- For existing woodlands, encourage diverse woodland management practice and replanting of conifer plantations with new deciduous woodlands
- Promote the creation of buffer-zones between intensive arable production and areas of semi-natural habitat and the creation of links between habitat areas
- Promote hedgerow restoration along the lines of historic field boundaries and for the creation of visual links between existing woodland areas
- Promote the use of traditional field hedges in place of post and wire enclosures to new grazing areas
- Promote the diversity of hedgerow species and the planting of standard hedgerow trees
- Maintain and extend the rights of way network
- Encourage the planting of trees and appropriate species along water course
- Encourage the management of arable weed field margins
- Promote and develop the chalk grassland and scrub habitats along Wood Lane
- Encourage management of hazel and hornbeam coppice woodlands

Built development guidelines

- Protect and preserve the pattern of narrow winding lanes and associated hedge banks, sunken lanes, verges and hedges
- Retain the rural character of Langley Valley, ensuring that any new development is appropriately sited and of a scale, form and style appropriate to Langley Valley
- Ensure that new development does not necessitate the removal of existing small woodland blocks
- Encourage the planting of appropriate broadleaved woodland and vegetation to screen new development that could intrude in long distance views
- Avoid the location of new development on visually exposed ridge areas
- Ensure that lighting necessitated by new development minimises the impact on the Character Area
- Use the opportunity of any new developments to create new accessible green infrastructure for local communities
- Ensure redundant agriculture buildings subject to applications for change of use are monitored to ensure that they reflect the local building style

Appendix G

Illustrative Landscape Strategy

1. Landscape Framework

The Site comprises two broadly rectangular shaped fields, which are connected by a narrow strip of land. The western field contains numerous trees of varying age and condition scattered throughout the field. The north-most part of the eastern field has a mixture of mature trees and understorey scrub. The Site boundaries are generally well vegetated with a mixture of mature trees, hedgerows and scrub vegetation. There are several gaps in the boundary vegetation in the south eastern part of the Site adjacent to London Road. Existing boundary vegetation will be retained where possible, although a number of trees in the north of the Site will require removal. Any loss to the existing vegetation will be compensated with new native tree, hedge and thicket planting to reinforce the Site boundaries, and to enhance the areas of new public open space. The contained nature of the Site and the new landscape enhancement measures would minimize the effect on the wider landscape character.

- Native Thicket**

 - Ilex aquifolium*
 - Crataegus monogyna*
 - Cornus sanguinea*
 - Rosa canina*
 - Sambucus nigra*
 - Cytisus scoparius*
 - Corylus avellana*
- Common Holly
 - Common Hawthorn
 - Common Dogwood
 - Dog rose
 - Common Elder
 - Common Broom
 - Common Hazel

- Native Trees :**

 - Quercus Robur*
 - Aesculus Hippcastanum*
 - Acer campestre*
 - Tilia cordata*
- English Oak
 - Horse Chestnut
 - Field Maple
 - Small-leaved Lime

2. Recreational Route

A recreational mown path would be created around the Site to make the proposed development more accessible and to provide residents with an informal dog walking route. The path will meander around the existing vegetation, through proposed meadows creating an interesting walking route. Naturalistic trim-tail equipment will be placed along the walking route to create a play-along-the-way experience.



3. Western Open Space

The western field of the Site would be largely left undeveloped and will be used for ecological enhancement while allowing informal public access including mown paths through the area and timber trim trail elements to provide interest / informal play. Dense new thicket and tree planting is proposed to wrap around the new housing here, providing containment and screening of views from the south.



4. South Eastern Open Space

The south eastern part of the Site will be kept free from development and proposed as open space, to respect the setting of Pound Farm. Hedgerow planting will be proposed along the southern edge of the housing and thicket planting along the southern boundary of Site. This open space will be largely sown as meadow grassland, with mown path walking routes, occasional timber trim trail play and an attenuation drainage basin.



5. Indicative Residential Planting Palette

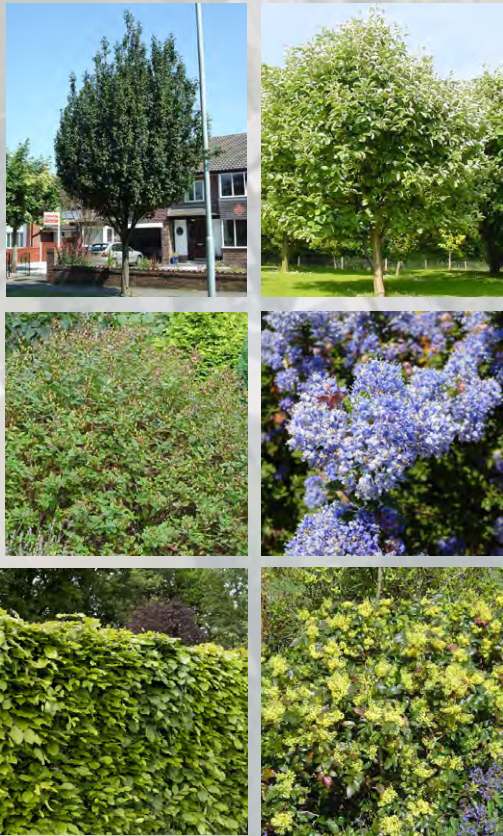
A variety of planting across the new residential area will achieve a high-quality landscape design and help to integrate the new development into the existing landscape framework. The proposed planting will reflect the character of the area and provide an attractive place to live while softening the built form throughout the development and its surroundings. Within the development area, a more ornamental palette of trees and shrubs will be used to provide seasonal interest and colour. A typical species list is set out below:

- Ornamental Trees**

 - Prunus avium 'Albertii'
 - Sorbus thibetica 'John Mitchell'
- Bird Cherry 'Albertii'
 - Whitebeam 'John Mitchell'
- Ornamental Shrubs**

 - Santolina rosmarinifolia* 'Lemon Fizz'
 - Lonicera nitida* 'Lemon Beauty'
 - Ceanothus* 'Blue Mound'
 - Hypericum* 'Hidcote'
 - Skimmia confusa* 'Kew Green'
 - Mahonia aquifolium* 'Apollo'
 - Lavandula* 'Munstead'
- Cotton lavender 'Lemon Fizz'
 - Honeysuckle 'Lemon Beauty'
 - Californian lilac 'Blue Mound'
 - St John's wort 'Hodcote'
 - Skimmia 'Kew Green'
 - Oregon grape 'Apollo'
 - English lavender 'Munstead'
- Native Hedgerow**

 - Carpinus betulus*
 - Fagus sylvatica*
- Common Hornbeam
 - Common Beech



- Site Boundary
- Existing Vegetation
- Removed Vegetation
- Meadow Planting
- Amenity Grass
- Ornamental planting to Plot Frontages
- Native Thicket Planting
- Tree Planting
- Native Hedgerow
- SuDS Basin
- Mown Pathway
- Trim Trial Station
- Retained View From Pound Farm

A	30.09.25	TV	Updated to reflect new SuDS Basin
Rev	Date	By	Description
Drawing Status			
FOR PLANNING			
CSA environmental			
Dixies Barns, High Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5NT			
t 01462 743647 e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk w csaenvironmental.co.uk			
Project	Land at Mill Lane and London Road, Hitchin		
Title	Illustrative Landscape Strategy		
Client	Martin Grant Homes Limited		
Scale 1:1000 @ A2	Drawn	TV	
Date August 2025	Checked	BS	
Drawing No. CSA/3922/125	Rev	A	

Appendix H

Methodology for Landscape and Visual Assessment

METHODOLOGY FOR LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

- M1 In landscape and visual impact assessment, a distinction is normally drawn between **landscape/townscape effects** (i.e. effects on the character or quality of the landscape (or townscape), irrespective of whether there are any views of the landscape, or viewers to see them) and **visual effects** (i.e. effects on people's views of the landscape, principally from public rights of way and areas with public access, but also private views from residential properties). Thus, a development may have extensive landscape effects but few visual effects if, for example, there are no properties or public viewpoints nearby. Or alternatively, few landscape effects but substantial visual effects if, for example, the landscape is already degraded or the development is not out of character with it, but can clearly be seen from many residential properties and/or public areas.
- M2 The assessment of landscape & visual effects is less amenable to scientific or statistical analysis than some environmental topics and inherently contains an element of subjectivity. However, the assessment should still be undertaken in a logical, consistent and rigorous manner, based on experience and judgement, and any conclusions should be able to demonstrate a clear rationale. To this end, various guidelines have been published, the most relevant of which, for assessments of the effects of a development, rather than of the character or quality of the landscape itself, form the basis of the assessment and are as follows:
- 'Guidelines for Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment', produced jointly by the Institute of Environmental Assessment and the Landscape Institute (GLVIA 3rd edition 2013); and
 - 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment', October 2014 (Christine Tudor, Natural England) to which reference is also made. This stresses the need for a holistic assessment of landscape character, including physical, biological and social factors.
 - 'Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designations', Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Note 02/21
 - 'Notes and Clarifications on Aspects of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third edition (GLVIA3)', Landscape Institutes Technical Guidance Note LITGN-2024-01 (August 2024)

LANDSCAPE/TOWNSCAPE EFFECTS

- M3 Landscape/townscape quality is a subjective judgement based on the condition and characteristics of a landscape/townscape. It will often be informed by national, regional or local designations made upon it in respect of its quality e.g. National Landscapes (formerly AONBs). Sensitivity relates to the inherent value placed on a landscape / townscape and the ability of that landscape/townscape to accommodate change (i.e. landscape susceptibility).
- M4 GLVIA defines susceptibility to change as *'the ability of the landscape receptor (whether the overall character or quality / condition of a particular landscape type or area, or an individual element and / or feature, or a particular aesthetic and perceptual aspect) to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and / or the achievement of planning policies and strategies.'*

Landscape susceptibility can vary with:

- (i) *existing land uses;*
- (ii) *the pattern and scale of the landscape;*
- (iii) *visual enclosure/openness of views, and distribution of visual receptors;*
- (iv) *relationship to neighbouring settlement;*
- (v) *the scope for mitigation, which would be in character with the existing landscape; and*
- (vi) *the condition and value placed on the landscape.*

- M5 The concept of landscape/townscape value is considered in order to avoid consideration only of how scenically attractive an area may be, and thus to avoid undervaluing areas of strong character but little scenic beauty. In the process of making this assessment, the following factors, among others, are considered with relevance to the site in question: landscape quality (condition), scenic quality, rarity, representativeness, conservation interest, recreation value, perceptual aspects and associations.
- M6 Nationally valued landscapes are recognised by designation, such as National Parks and National Landscapes (formerly AONBs) which have particular planning policies applied to them. Nationally valued townscapes include areas identified as World Heritage Sites. Paragraph 187 of the current NPPF outlines that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes ‘...in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan’.
- M7 For the purpose of our assessment, landscape/townscape quality, value and susceptibility are assessed using the criteria in Tables LE1 and LE2. Assessing landscape sensitivity to a particular type of development is made by combining judgements on landscape value and susceptibility to the type of development proposed. The different levels of landscape sensitivity are defined in Table LS1 below.

Table LS1: Landscape / Townscape Sensitivity	
Very High	A landscape/townscape with a very low ability to accommodate change such as a nationally designated landscape or World Heritage Site.
High	A landscape/townscape with limited ability to accommodate change because such change may lead to some loss of valuable features or elements. Development of the type proposed could potentially be discordant with the character of the landscape/townscape.
Medium	A landscape/townscape with reasonable ability to accommodate change. Change may lead to a limited loss of some features or characteristics. Development of the type proposed would not be discordant with the character of the landscape/ townscape.
Low	A landscape/townscape with good ability to accommodate change. Change would not lead to a significant loss of features or characteristics and there would be no significant loss of character or quality. Development of the type proposed would not be discordant with the landscape/ townscape in which it is set and may result in a beneficial change.

- M8 There is a strong inter-relationship between landscape/townscape quality, value and susceptibility as high quality/value landscapes/townscapes usually have a low ability to accommodate change. Typically, landscapes/townscapes which carry a quality designation, and which are otherwise attractive or unspoilt will in general be more sensitive, while those which are less attractive or already affected by significant visual detractors and disturbance will be generally less sensitive. However, to avoid making this process overly formulaic, the assessment of landscape / townscape sensitivity includes a degree of professional judgement and where necessary this is explained in the narrative text within the report.
- M9 The magnitude of change is the size / scale, extent and duration of change to a landscape arising from the proposed development and was assessed using the criteria in Table LE3.
- M10 The size / scale of change relates to the loss or introduction of landscape elements resulting from the proposed change. This is particularly relevant where proposals will impact on key landscape components which contribute to local landscape character. The geographic extent is the overall area in which the landscape effects will be felt and will vary depending on the nature of the proposals. For instance, effects could be experienced at the site level, its immediate setting, at a character area level, or could impact on several landscape character areas. Duration is the expected time frame during which effects will be experienced. In some instances, such as wind / solar farms which have a limited life span, effects may be reversible as once the development is decommissioned the land can be restored.
- M11 Landscape/townscape effects are assessed in terms of the interaction between the magnitude of the change brought about by the development and the quality, value & susceptibility of the landscape resource affected (using the criteria set out in Table LE4). The landscape/townscape effects can be either beneficial, adverse or neutral. Landscape effects can be direct (i.e. impact on physical features, e.g. landform, vegetation, watercourses etc.), or indirect (i.e. impact on landscape character as a result of the introduction of new elements within the landscape or a significant increase in site traffic movement). Direct visual effects result from changes to existing views.
- M12 In this way, landscapes/townscapes of the highest sensitivity, when subjected to a high magnitude of change from the proposed development, are likely to give rise to 'substantial' landscape/townscape effects which can be either adverse or beneficial. Conversely, landscapes of low sensitivity, when subjected to a low magnitude of change from the proposed development, are likely to give rise to only 'slight' or neutral landscape effects. Beneficial landscape effects may arise from such things as the creation of new landscape features, changes to management practices and improved public access. For the purpose of this assessment the landscape/townscape effects have been judged at completion of the development and in year 15. This approach acknowledges that landscape/townscape effects can reduce as new planting/mitigation measures become established and achieve their intended objectives.

VISUAL EFFECTS

- M13 Visual effects are concerned with people's views of the landscape/townscape and the change that will occur. Like landscape effects, viewers or receptors are categorised by their sensitivity. For example, views from private dwellings are generally of a higher sensitivity than those from places of work.
- M14 In describing the content of a view the following terms are used:
- No view - no views of the development;

- Glimpse - a fleeting or distant view of the development, often in the context of wider views of the landscape;
- Partial - a clear view of part of the development only;
- Filtered - views to the development which are partially screened, usually by intervening vegetation - the degree of filtering may change with the seasons;
- Open - a clear view to the development.

M15 The sensitivity of the receptor varies according to its susceptibility to a particular type of change, and the value placed on it (e.g. greater value will be attached to a view from a recognised beauty spot, or views towards a designated heritage asset). As set out in GLVIA, paragraph 6.32, the susceptibility of visual receptors to changes in views / visual amenity is mainly a function of:

- *'The occupation or activity of people experiencing the view at particular locations; and*
- *The extent to which their attention or interest is focused on the views and the visual amenity they experience at particular locations.'*

M16 Visual sensitivity was assessed using the criteria in Table VE1 by combining judgements on the value of the views and their susceptibility to change.

M17 The magnitude of change is the degree in which the view(s) may be altered as a result of the proposed development and will generally decrease with distance from its source, until a point is reached where there is no discernible change. It takes into account the scale and extent of change in the view and the contrast between the existing landscape / townscape and the proposed development. The magnitude of change in regard to the views was assessed using the criteria in Table VE2.

M18 Visual effects were then assessed in terms of the interaction between the magnitude of the change brought about by the development and also the sensitivity of the visual receptor affected.

M19 As with landscape effects, a high sensitivity receptor, when subjected to a high magnitude of change from the proposed development, is likely to experience 'substantial' visual effects which can be either adverse or beneficial. Conversely, receptors of low sensitivity, when subjected to a slight magnitude of change from the proposed development, are likely to experience only 'slight' or neutral visual effects, which can be either beneficial or adverse.

M20 Unless specific slab levels of buildings have been specified, the assessment has assumed that slab levels will be within 750mm of existing ground level.

MITIGATION AND RESIDUAL EFFECTS

M21 Mitigation measures are described as those measures, including any process or activity, designed to avoid, reduce and compensate for adverse landscape and/or visual effects resulting from the proposed development.

M22 In situations where proposed mitigation measures are likely to change over time, as with planting to screen a development, it is important to make a distinction between any likely effects that will arise in the short-term and those that will occur in the long-term or 'residual effects' once mitigation measures have established. In this assessment, the visual effects of the development have been considered at completion of the entire project and at 15 years thereafter.

M23 Mitigation measures can have a residual, positive impact on the effects arising from a development, whereas the short-term impact may be adverse.

ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS

- M24 The assessment concisely considers and describes the main landscape/townscape and visual effects resulting from the proposed development. The narrative text demonstrates the reasoning behind judgements concerning the landscape and visual effects of the proposals. Where appropriate, the text is supported by tables which summarise the sensitivity of the views/landscape/townscape, the magnitude of change and describe any resulting effects.

CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

- M25 Cumulative effects are *'the additional changes caused by a proposed development in conjunction with other similar developments or as the combined effect of a set of developments, taken together.'*
- M26 In carrying out landscape assessment it is for the author to form a judgement on whether or not it is necessary to consider any planned developments and to form a judgement on how these could potentially affect a project.

ZONE OF THEORETICAL VISIBILITY (ZTV)

- M27 A ZTV map can help to determine the potential visibility of the site and identify those locations where development at the site is likely to be most visible from the surrounding area. Where a ZTV is considered appropriate for a proposed development the following methodology is used.
- M28 The process is in two stages, and for each, a digital terrain model ('DTM') using Key TERRA-FIRMA computer software is produced and mapped onto an OS map. The DTM is based on Ordnance Survey Landform Profile tiles, providing a digital record of existing landform across the UK, based on a 10 metre grid. There is the potential for minor discrepancies between the DTM and the actual landform where there are topographic features that are too small to be picked up by the 10 metre grid. A judgement will be made to determine the extent of the study area based on the specific site and the nature of the proposed change, and the reasons for the choice will be set out in the report. The study area will be determined by local topography but is typically set at 7.5km.
- M29 Different heights are then assigned to significant features, primarily buildings and woodland, thus producing the first stage of an 'existing' ZTV illustrating the current situation of the site and surrounding area. This data is derived from OS Open Map Data, and verified during the fieldwork, with any significant discrepancies in the data being noted and the map adjusted accordingly. Fieldwork is confined to accessible parts of the site, public rights of way, the highway network and other publicly accessible areas.
- M30 The second stage is to produce a 'proposed' ZTV with the same base as the 'existing' ZTV. The proposed development is introduced into the model as either a representative spot height, or a series of heights, and a viewer height of 1.7m is used. Illustrating the visual envelope of the proposed development within the specific site.
- M31 The model is based on available data and fieldwork and therefore may not take into account all development or woodland throughout the study area, nor the effect of smaller scale planting or hedgerows. It also does not take into account areas of recent or continuous topographic change from, for instance, mining operations.

VISUALISATION TYPE METHODOLOGY

- M32 The photographs and visualisations within this report have been prepared in general conformance with the Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Note 06/19. The 'types', as set out within the Guidance, comprise the following:
- Type 1 - annotated viewpoint photographs;
 - Type 2 - 3D wireline / model;
 - Type 3 - photomontage / photowire;
 - Type 4 - photomontage / photowire (survey / scale verifiable).
- M33 Photographs were taken with a digital camera with a lens that approximates to 50mm, to give a similar depth of view to the human eye. In some cases images have been joined together to form a panorama. The prevailing weather and atmospheric conditions, and any effects on visibility are noted. Images are displayed at the most appropriate size, taking into account the published guidance, legibility at A3 paper size, and context (which is often shown for illustrative purposes only), and allows for enlarged scale printing if required.
- M34 The Guidance Note advocates a proportionate and reasonable approach, which includes professional judgement, in order to aid informed decision making.
- M35 The determination of the suitable Visualisation Type to aid in illustrating the effects of the scheme, has been determined by a range of factors as set out below, including the timing of the project, the technical expertise, and costs involved.
- M36 Where it is deemed suitable or necessary to utilise the Visualisation Types set out within the Guidance Note, the table below has been used to determine which Visualisation Type is most appropriate to the project, unless otherwise specified within the report.
- M37 The table below (based on Table 1 within the Guidance Note) sets out the intended purpose and user of the report, and the Likely Level of Effect. The Likely Level of Effect is based on Tables LE4 and VE3 in this methodology, and takes into consideration the type and nature of the proposed development, as well as the sensitivity of the host environment and key visual receptors. The Likely Level of Effect is based on an initial consideration of the landscape and visual effects of the project as a whole, and the subsequent assessment may conclude a lesser or higher level of overall effect, once completed. Table VMT also provides an indication as to the appropriate Visualisation Type, noting that it is not a fixed interpretation, and that professional judgement should always be applied. In certain instances, where there is neighbouring development which is of a similar scale to that of the proposed development, which provides a point of reference, it is not always considered necessary to produce photowire or photomontage visualisations.
- M38 Additional photographs (which do not conform to any Type) may be included to illustrate the character of the landscape/townscape, or to illustrate relevant characteristics, for example the degree and nature of intervening vegetation, or reciprocal views from residential properties.

Table VTM		VISUALISATION TYPE METHODOLOGY			
User, Purpose, and Likely Level of Effect		Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4
	A	Evidence submitted to most planning applications for EIA development accompanied by Landscape and Visual ES Chapters.			
		Neutral	Negligible	Slight	Moderate
					Substantial
	B	Planning applications for most non-EIA development accompanied by LVIA/LVA, where there are potential concerns about landscape and visual effects and effective mitigation may be required. Some Landscape and Visual ES Chapters.			
		Neutral	Negligible	Slight	Moderate
					Substantial
	C	Planning applications where the character and appearance of the development is a material consideration, but where a LVIA/LVA may not be required.			
		Neutral/Negligible/Slight		Moderate	Substantial
	D	To inform the iterative process of assessment and design with client, and/or pre-application consultations with the competent authority.			
		Neutral/Negligible/Slight/Moderate		Substantial	

Table LE 1

LANDSCAPE / TOWNSCAPE QUALITY AND VALUE

	Very High	High	Medium	Low
Description of Landscape/Townscape Quality and Value	Landscape Quality: Intact and very attractive landscape which may be nationally recognised/designated for its scenic beauty. e.g. National Park, National Landscapes or World Heritage Site. Townscape Quality: A townscape of very high quality which is unique in its character, and recognised nationally/internationally, e.g. World Heritage Site Value: Very high quality landscape or townscape with Statutory Designation for landscape/townscape quality/ value, e.g. National Park, World Heritage Site, Registered Park or Garden. Contains rare elements or significant cultural/historical associations.	Landscape Quality: A landscape, usually combining varied topography, historic features and few visual detractors. A landscape known and cherished by many people from across the region. e.g. County Landscape Site such as a Special Landscape Area. Townscape Quality: A well designed townscape of high quality with a locally recognised and distinctive character e.g. Conservation Area Value: High quality landscape/townscape or lower quality landscape with un-fettered public access, (e.g. commons, public park) or with strong cultural associations. May have important views out to landmarks/designated landscapes and few detracting features. May possess perceptual qualities of tranquility or wildness.	Landscape Quality: Typically non-designated landscape area, generally pleasant but with no distinctive features, often displaying relatively ordinary characteristics. May have detracting features. Townscape Quality: A typical, pleasant townscape with a coherent urban form but with no distinguishing features or designation for quality. Value: An ordinary landscape/townscape of local value which may have some detracting features. Typically no statutory designations for landscape/townscape quality. A landscape which may have limited public access and/ or have pleasant views out, or be visible in public views.	Landscape / Townscape Quality: Unattractive or degraded landscape/townscape, affected by numerous detracting elements e.g. industrial areas, infrastructure routes and un-restored mineral extractions. Value: Landscape/townscape generally of lower quality. A landscape with limited public access, typically no designations or recognised cultural significance. Limited public views.

Table LE 2

LANDSCAPE / TOWNSCAPE SUSCEPTIBILITY

	Very High	High	Medium	Low
Description of Susceptibility	Highly distinctive landscape, / townscape with strong character generally in excellent condition, exhibiting a number of positive attributes and no or few detracting elements. Development would be entirely at odds with the scale, pattern and character of the landscape / townscape. A landscape with little ability to accommodate change of the type proposed without significant impacts on landscape / townscape character and on key characteristics and / or aesthetic or perceptual aspects of the character area. Little or no scope for mitigation.	Distinctive landscape / townscape with few detracting features. Landscape elements in good condition and make a positive contribution to local character. Landscape with low potential to accommodate change of the type proposed without loss or alteration of key landscape / townscape elements or adverse change to landscape / townscape character. Limited scope for mitigation.	Relatively commonplace landscape / townscape typically in moderate condition. Proposals would be largely compatible with the scale, pattern and character of the landscape / townscape. Proposals could be absorbed with limited impact on key landscape features, and perceptual and aesthetic qualities. Scope to provide landscape mitigation / enhancements.	Landscape / townscape of mixed character and / or with some detracting and intrusive elements. Landscape features pose little constraint and / or are capable of replacement. Proposals would be well related to the scale, pattern and character of the local landscape / townscape. Good potential for landscape mitigation and enhancements which would contribute to landscape / townscape character.

Table LE 3 LANDSCAPE / TOWNSCAPE MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE

	Substantial	Moderate	Slight	Negligible	Neutral
Description of the Change predicted	Total loss of or significant impact on key characteristics, features or elements				
		Partial loss of or impact on key characteristics, features or elements			
			Minor loss of or alteration to one or more key landscape/ townscape characteristics, features or elements		
				Very minor loss or alteration to one or more key landscape/ townscape characteristics, features or elements	
					No loss or alteration of key landscape/ townscape characteristics, features or elements

Table LE 4 LANDSCAPE / TOWNSCAPE EFFECTS

	Substantial	Moderate	Slight	Negligible	Neutral
Description of the Effect	The proposals will alter the landscape/ townscape in that they: • will result in substantial change in the character, landform, scale and pattern of the landscape/townscape; • are visually intrusive and would disrupt important views; • are likely to impact on the integrity of a range of characteristic features and elements and their setting; • will impact a high quality or highly vulnerable landscape; • cannot be adequately mitigated.				
		The proposals: • noticeably change the character, scale and pattern of the landscape/ townscape; • may have some impacts on a landscape/ townscape of recognised quality or on vulnerable and important characteristic features or elements. • are a noticeable element in key views; • not possible to fully mitigate.			
			The proposals: • do not quite fit the landform and scale of the landscape/townscape and will result in relatively minor changes to existing landscape character; • will impact on certain views into and across the area; • mitigation will reduce the impact of the proposals but some minor residual effects will remain.		
				The proposals: • complement the scale, landform and pattern of the landscape/townscape; • development may occupy only a relatively small part of the Site; • maintain the majority of landscape features; • incorporates measures for mitigation to ensure the scheme will blend in well with the landscape/townscape and mitigates any loss of vegetation.	
					The proposals: • change is neither better nor worse; • maintain existing landscape/ townscape character; • maintain the majority of landscape features; • incorporates measures for mitigation to ensure the scheme will blend in well with the landscape/townscape and mitigates any loss of vegetation.

Footnote:

1. Each level (other than neutral) of change identified can be either regarded as 'beneficial' or 'adverse'. The above table relates to adverse landscape effects, however where proposals complement or enhance landscape character, these will have a comparable range of beneficial landscape effects.

Table VE 1

VISUAL SENSITIVITY

		High	Medium	Low
Description of the Receptor		Residential properties with predominantly open views from windows, garden or curtilage. Views will normally be from ground and first floors and from two or more windows of rooms mainly in use during the day. Users of Public Rights of Way in sensitive or generally unspoilt areas. Predominantly non-motorised users of minor or unclassified roads in the countryside. Views from within an National Landscape, National Park, World Heritage Site or Conservation Area and views for visitors to recognised viewpoints or beauty spots. Users of outdoor recreational facilities with predominantly open views where the purpose of that recreation is enjoyment of the countryside - e.g. Country Parks, National Trust or other access land etc.		
			Residential properties with partial views from windows, garden or curtilage. Views will normally be from first floor windows only, or an oblique view from one ground floor window, or may be partially obscured by garden or other intervening vegetation. Users of Public Rights of Way in less sensitive areas or where there are significant existing intrusive features. Users of outdoor recreational facilities with restricted views or where the purpose of that recreation is incidental to the view e.g. sports fields. Schools and other institutional buildings, and their outdoor areas. Users of minor or unclassified roads in the countryside, whether motorised or not.	
				People in their place of work. Users of main roads or passengers in public transport on main routes. Users of outdoor recreational facilities with restricted views and where the purpose of that recreation is unrelated to the view e.g. go-karting track.

Table VE 2 **VISUAL MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE**

	Substantial	Moderate	Slight	Negligible	Neutral
Description of the Change predicted	Large and dominating changes which affect a substantial part of the view.				
		Clearly perceptible and noticable changes within a significant proportion of the view.			
			Small changes to existing views, either as a minor component of a wider view, or smaller changes over a larger proportion of the view(s).		
				Very minor changes over a small proportion of the view(s).	
					No discernible change to the view(s).

Table VE 3 VISUAL EFFECTS

	Substantial	Moderate	Slight	Negligible	Neutral
Description of the Effects	The proposals would have a significant impact on a view from a receptor of medium sensitivity, or less damage (or improvement) to a view from a highly sensitive receptor, and would be an obvious or dominant element in the view.				
	The proposals would impact on a view from a medium sensitive receptor, or less harm (or improvement) to a view from a more sensitive receptor, and would be a readily discernible element in the view.				
	The proposals would have a limited effect on a view from a medium sensitive receptor, but would still be a visible element within the view, or a greater effect on a view from a receptor of lower sensitivity.				
	The proposals would result in a negligible change to the view but would still be discernible.				
	No change in the view.				

Footnote:

1. Each level (other than neutral) of change identified can be either regarded as 'beneficial' or 'adverse'.



Dixies Barns, High Street,
Ashwell, Hertfordshire
SG7 5NT

t 01462 743647
e ashwell@csaenvironmental.co.uk
w csaenvironmental.co.uk

Office 20, Citibase,
95 Ditchling Road,
Brighton BN1 4ST

t 01273 573871
e brighton@csaenvironmental.co.uk
w csaenvironmental.co.uk

3 Ripple Court,
Brockridge Park, Twynning,
Tewkesbury GL20 6FG

t 01386 751100
e tewkesbury@csaenvironmental.co.uk
w csaenvironmental.co.uk

Wizu Workspace, 32 Eyre
St, Sheffield City Centre,
Sheffield S1 4QZ

t 07838 290741
e sheffield@csaenvironmental.co.uk
w csaenvironmental.co.uk

Worting House,
Church Lane, Basingstoke,
RG23 8PY

t 01256 632340
e basingstoke@csaenvironmental.co.uk
w csaenvironmental.co.uk