

4. SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS AND GUIDANCE

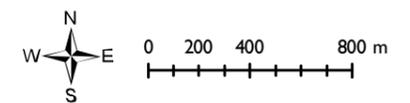
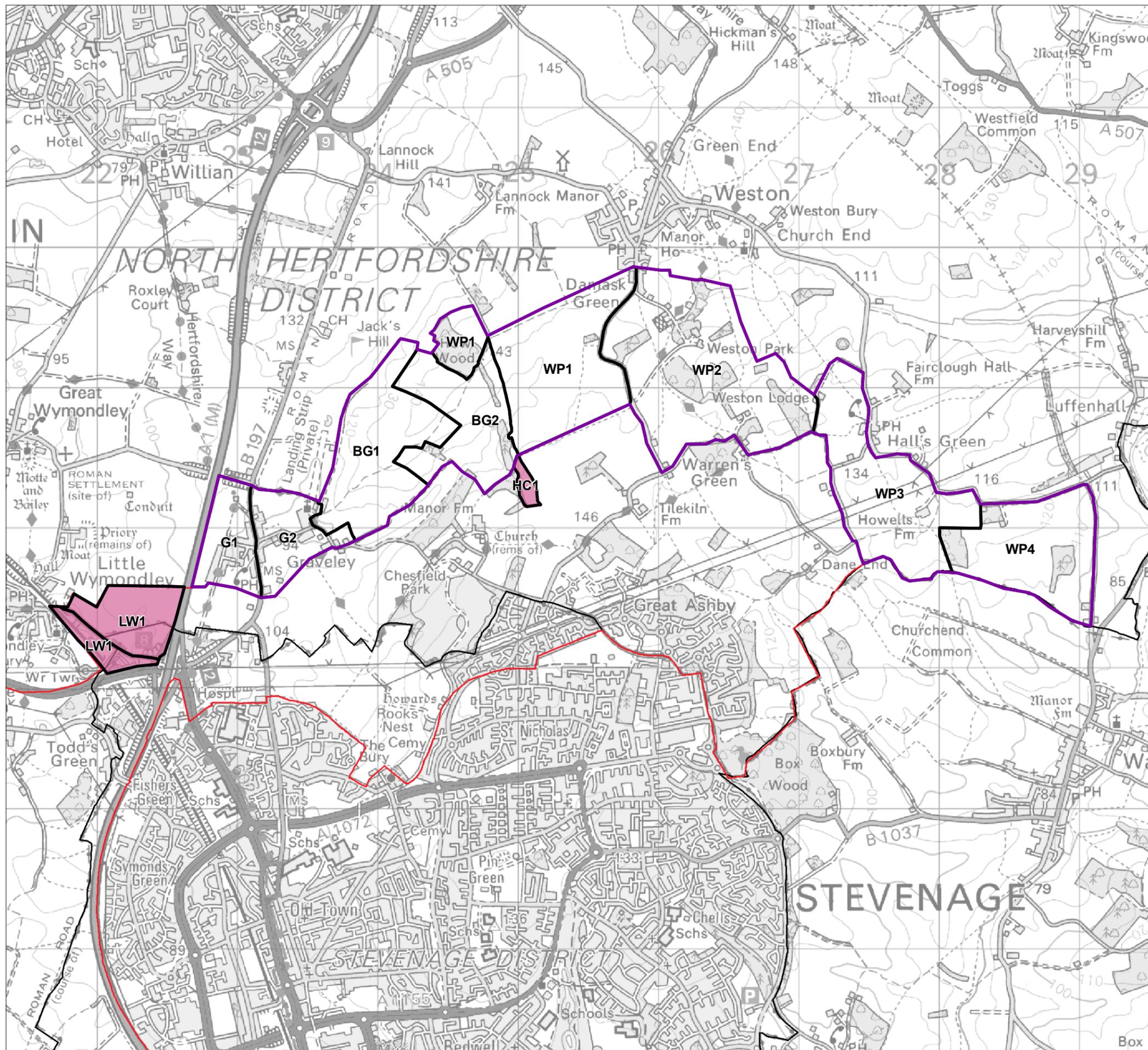
- 4.1. This section sets out the sensitivity analysis by individual landscape unit. The sensitivity analysis has applied the criteria presented at section 2, together with the 5 point sensitivity scale shown in that section. The sensitivity analysis has been undertaken with reference to medium to high density (30-50 dwellings per hectare) large scale residential development. Account has however also been taken of the different development models presented in section 2, particularly with reference to landscape guidance in relation to appropriate forms of development, where relevant.
- 4.2. For the purposes of this study, the district landscape character areas have been sub divided into smaller scale, local landscape units. These are shown on **Figure 4.1** overleaf.
- 4.3. The sensitivity analysis has been undertaken at a scale of 1:10,000 and is appropriate for use at that scale.
- 4.4. The local landscape units are as follows and include two landscape units within the SNAP which were not covered by the earlier sensitivity analysis by NHDC (LWI and HCI):
 - LWI (within the SNAP area)
 - G1
 - G2
 - BG1
 - BG2
 - HCI (within the SNAP area)
 - WPI
 - WP2
 - WP3
 - WP4
- 4.5. The findings are presented in the remainder of this section. Supporting mapping in relation to the sensitivity analysis is shown on **Figure 4.2**, at the end of this section. Conclusions and recommendations as to the appropriateness of the SNAP boundary and additional area of search, as well as landscape frameworks for potential 'developable areas' are presented in section 5.

Stevenage Landscape Sensitivity Study

Figure 4.1: Landscape Units for Analysis

Key

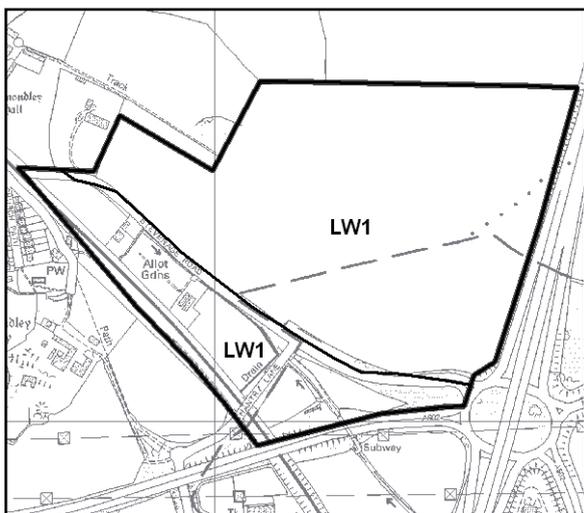
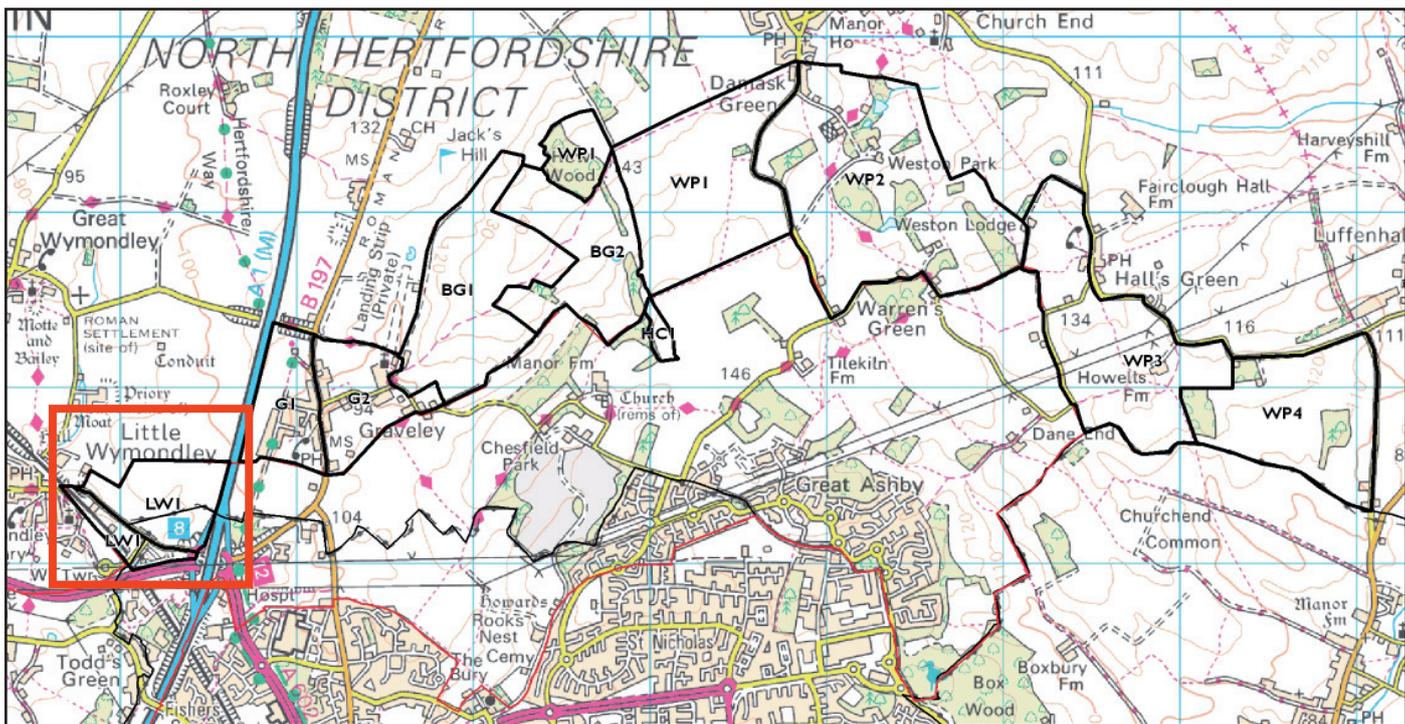
-  Study area
-  Sites within SNAP for Landscape sensitivity study
-  Landscape Units
-  SNAP boundary
-  Local Authority boundaries



Source: Land Use Consultants, North Herts

Date: 02/02/2010
Revision:





1. Context and relationship with adjacent landscape units
2. Landscape Unit
3. Large scale field pattern and remnant woodland
4. Domed chalk landform and views to A1(M)



Land north of Stevenage
Landscape Unit LW1
Site location and characteristics



LANDSCAPE CHARACTER UNIT: LWI

BASELINE

Location

- 4.6. Landscape character unit LWI is located immediately north of the A602 and Todd's Green, to the north west of Stevenage. The unit lies entirely within the SNAP area. The eastern boundary is formed by the A1(M), and the southern boundary by the A602. The village of Little Wymondley lies to the west of the unit, separated by the East Coast Mainline Railway, with Great Wymondley approximately 1km to the north west of the unit. The unit is bisected along its southernmost extent by a minor road linking Little Wymondley and Junction 8 of the A1(M). The greater part of the unit to the north of this road comprises mainly arable farmland with a small area of broadleaf woodland and remnant mixed hedgerows. Land to the south of this road includes allotments and paddocks. For the purposes of assessment the site has been considered as one unit with variations brought out in the analysis below.

LCA Context

National
NCA 87: <i>East Anglian Chalk</i>
Regional: East of England Regional Landscape Framework
Largely within the <i>Lowland Village Farmlands</i> landscape type, with a small part along the southern site boundary classified as urban.
Local: North Hertfordshire and Stevenage LCA
<p>Area 216: <i>Arlesey - Great Wymondley</i>:</p> <p>Relevant characteristics of area 216: <i>Arlesey – Great Wymondley</i> and identified within the LCA include large, expansive arable fields, with relatively flat topography to the north and more rolling landform to the south (in which this unit is located). An open landscape with few trees and limited woodland cover, but with an historic settlement pattern. The LCA notes that the landscape represented by <i>Arlesey – Great Wymondley</i> is not rare within the district, and that it exhibits a number of settlement edge uses and pressures.</p> <p>Area 215: <i>Wymondley and Titmore Green</i> (small area along the southern boundary):</p> <p>This is a rolling chalk landscape, often of intimate scale, with a historic settlement pattern linked by winding lanes, in close proximity to strategic transport corridors such as the A1(M) and A602.</p>

Summary description of the landscape unit

- 4.7. The greater part of the unit comprises a rolling chalk landform overlain by arable cultivation, and fringed by patchy Enclosure hedgerows and a small piece of woodland to the western boundary. The small parcel of land towards Little Wymondley and adjacent to the railway includes allotments and paddocks.

Policy context and designations

- 4.8. There are no landscape or nature conservation designations on the site. Wymondley Priory, approximately 200m to the north of the unit, is a Scheduled (Ancient) Monument on the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). The priory was an Augustinian foundation, and the remains include a moat, ponds, earthworks and a medieval barn.

Landscape functions

- 4.9. The functions of this landscape unit are twofold: productive landscape under arable cultivation, and as a 'gap', maintaining settlement setting and separation between the Wymondleys and Stevenage. Given the relatively sparse landcover and relative lack of variety across this unit, biodiversity functionality is likely to be limited.

SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS

Criteria	Comments and sensitivity judgement – medium density residential development
Landscape	
Landscape scale and enclosure	Land to the north of the minor road to Little Wymondley, and which makes up the greater part of the unit, comprises large scale fields under arable cultivation. The landscape has an open character with limited enclosure, apart from for a small piece of mature mixed and 'pioneer' deciduous woodland on the west facing slope rising from Little Wymondley, and scrubby patchy mixed hedgerow to the road frontage. Sensitivity to residential development would be moderate – low . However the land to the south of this road, between the railway and the A602 is of a more intimate spatial scale, surrounded by scrubby hedgerows and scrub woodland towards the motorway embankment. Sensitivity of this part of LWI to residential development would therefore be moderate - high .
Landform and topography	Land to the north of the minor road which bisects the unit is of a rolling character, reflecting the underlying chalk geology and rising to a 'dome' in excess of 95m AOD in the north eastern part of the unit. This distinctive landform character would have a high

Criteria	Comments and sensitivity judgement – medium density residential development
	sensitivity to residential development. Land to the south of the road is considerably flatter, with some small scale undulation and some artificial banking to the A602, railway and A1 (M). As such sensitivity is moderate-low .
Landscape pattern and complexity	The landscape has a relatively simple pattern, with the exception of the scrubby, outgrown hedgerow network and a small piece of mature oak and deciduous larch woodland, with patches of birch pioneer woodland. The small parcel of land to the south of the road has a slightly more complex character, being enclosed by hedgerows and including allotments as well as paddocks. Overall, in view of the relative absence of landscape complexity, the marked presence of settlement edge influences, and the fact that such landscapes are not considered rare across the district, sensitivity to residential development is judged to be moderate – low .
Cultural pattern and time depth	<p>The Historic Landscape Characterisation identifies the field pattern of the landscape unit to be the result of pre 18th Century Enclosure, although there is otherwise little sense of time depth or cultural pattern in either part of this landscape unit. Approximately two hundred metres to the north of the site boundary lie the remains of Wymondley Priory (Scheduled Monument), including a medieval barn, a moat and a small network of ponds. Wymondley Hall and grounds lie approximately 200m to the north west of the unit.</p> <p>The priory and its setting would have a high sensitivity to residential development, although it is likely that any effects would be indirect due to the distance from the unit. The field boundary pattern of pre 18th Century Enclosure would similarly have a high sensitivity to residential development.</p>
Settlement and human influences	Although the landscape of the unit is not settled, it is fringed by a number of settlement influences. The compact nucleated village of Little Wymondley lies to the west of the unit, beyond the railway line (historic vernacular village core, with much 20 th Century expansion). Great Wymondley, to the north west of the unit, is a compact nucleated village of medieval

Criteria	Comments and sensitivity judgement – medium density residential development
	<p>origin, centred on a Motte and Bailey Castle and adjacent to the site of a Roman settlement. Other human influences near the unit include Wymondley Bury and church and associated wooded grounds, south of the railway line, and the presence of Wymondley Hall and the Priory site. The landscape around the unit therefore has a strongly settled character, with many ‘edge’ influences (paddocks, allotments, transport corridors), although this should be balanced with the function of the unit in providing separation between the settlements of Little Wymondley and Stevenage – moderate sensitivity to residential development (although this judgement would depend on the scale of any future settlement – sensitivity judgement is made in relation to future development of a similar character).</p>
Skyline character	<p>Skylines in the northern part of the unit are open and ‘smooth’ in character, due to the domed chalk landform. Such skylines have a high sensitivity to change of the type proposed to the north of Stevenage, although this is partly eroded by the presence of large scale elements such as the line of pylons which cross the landscape and ‘Forster Country’, to the east. To the southern and western parts of the unit, skylines are of a more settled character and characterised by edge influences such as the allotments and railway line, although sensitivity is elevated here by the wooded grounds of Wymondley Bury and the church steeple, which impart a more historic character – moderate sensitivity to residential development.</p>
Perceptual qualities (colour/texture, light/reflection, movement, tranquillity, remoteness)	<p>This is a landscape with a generally muted, limited colour palette (due to the intensive arable cultivation), although there is more contrast in the smaller land parcel to the south of the minor road to Little Wymondley. A relatively detached and isolated landscape, but with movement (and associated noise) provided by the roads and railway line. Sensitivity to residential development, in perceptual terms, is therefore judged to be moderate.</p>

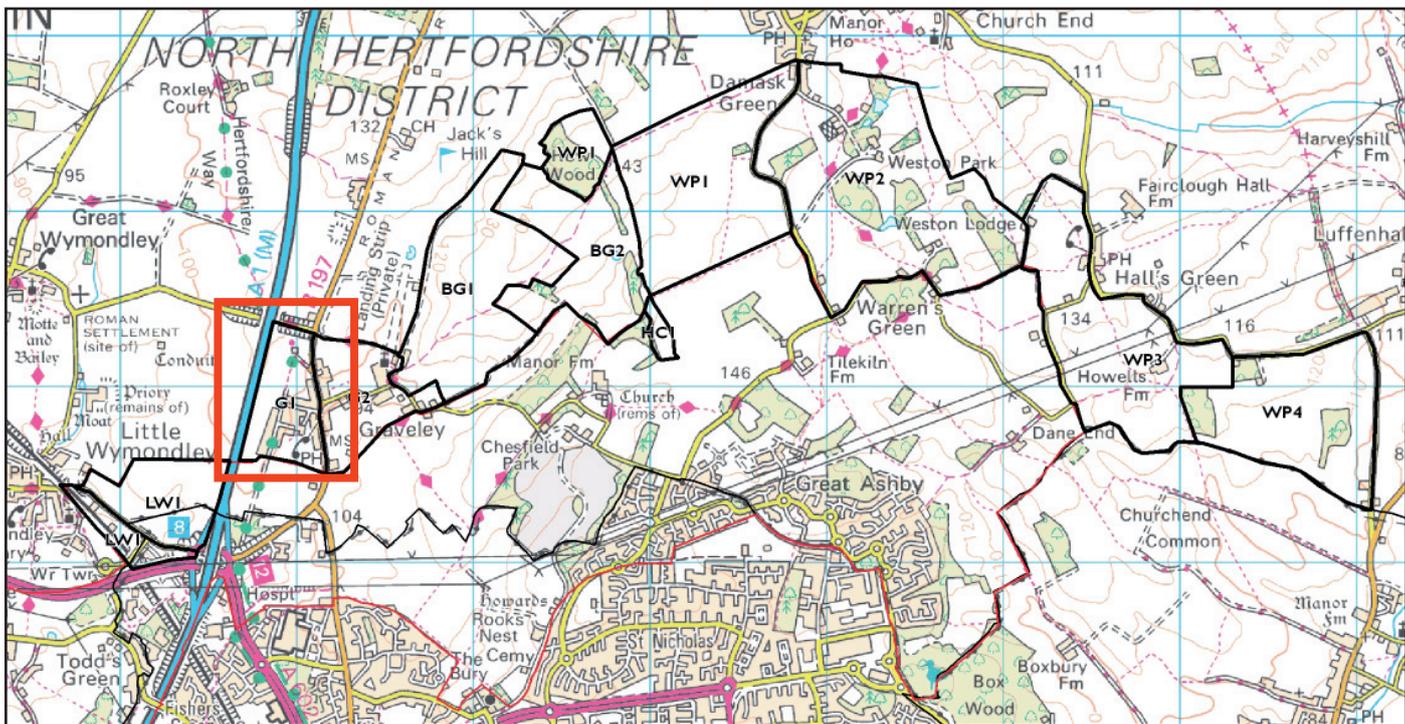
Criteria	Comments and sensitivity judgement – medium density residential development
Visual	
Visual relationships and views	The nature of views varies considerably across the unit, being very contained at the foot of slope and near the settlement edge of Little Wymondley (due to topography). To the north east, there are wide, open views across the rolling chalk landscape – high sensitivity. Views to and from the unit to the south of the minor road to Little Wymondley are framed and filtered by field boundary vegetation – moderate sensitivity to residential development, due to the level of containment.
Level of intervisibility	There is a level of intervisibility with landscape elements in adjacent landscapes, e.g. wooded skylines around Graveley, beyond the A1(M). Although it was not possible to access land within the unit including elevated land at the top of the chalk ‘knoll’ it is likely that this would afford considerable intervisibility with adjacent landscapes – high sensitivity to residential development.
Overall landscape sensitivity	Overall landscape sensitivity to residential development of the large scale arable chalk landscape to the north of the minor Little Wymondley Road is judged to be moderate – high in view of its open character, distinctive skylines, historic character and potential for intervisibility with wider landscapes. The small parcel of land between the road to Little Wymondley and the railway line is judged to have a moderate overall sensitivity in view of its relatively ‘degraded’ condition and level of visual containment.

COMMENTARY ON BOUNDARIES

- 4.10. The SNAP boundary stops approximately 200 metres short of Wymondley Hall and the Priory site, and is defined by field boundaries and remnant patches of farm woodland. It corresponds with the 95m AOD contour to the west, with the unit sloping gently towards the settlements of Little Wymondley and Stevenage. There is therefore the potential to visually contain development in the lower slopes. The boundary is therefore judged to be appropriate at this point. In relation to this unit, no consideration has been made of land further north as part of the area of search for housing sites to meet targets to 2031.

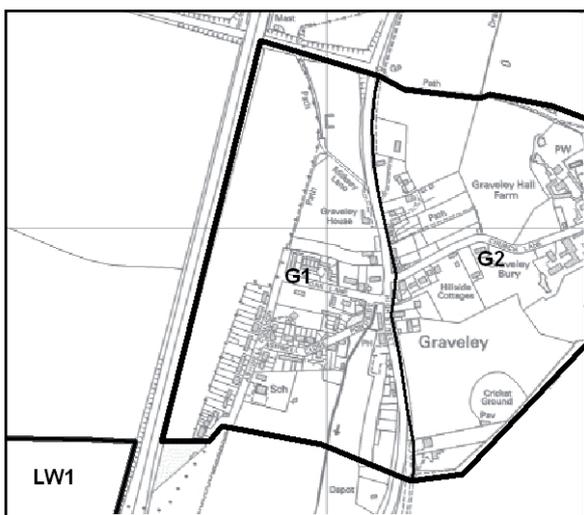
RECOMMENDATIONS AND LANDSCAPE GUIDANCE

- 4.11. If development were to occur in this landscape unit, it would be ideally concentrated on the lower slopes towards the railway and the settlement edge of Little Wymondley – this would enable retention of the distinctive rolling chalk landform and the large scale, open quality of much of this landscape unit. This would also allow land to visually contain the perception of settlement within the SNAP area at this point. Variation in development densities (e.g. use of a lower development density to the settlement edge) could be used to conserve and create views to this wider landscape context, as part of the local green infrastructure network. Concentrating development on the lower slopes and avoiding more elevated ground would also assist in conserving the landscape setting of Wymondley Hall and the Priory, as well as the sense of separation between Stevenage and the village of Great Wymondley, to the north west.
- 4.12. The pre 18th Century Enclosure landscape framework should be conserved, enhanced and reinforced, including a native woodland landscape buffer (Ref. GI Plan). Appropriate species for this landscape foiling include oak, hornbeam, cherry, field maple and deciduous larch, as well as hazel, thorn and dogwood.
- 4.13. The landscape edge of Little Wymondley and the small parcel of land to the north of the railway could accommodate a concentrated area of development with appropriate landscape enhancement, e.g. through reinforcing native hedgerow networks to create a framework for settlement extension, to enhance visual mitigation, and contribute to LCA, biodiversity and green infrastructure objectives. Combined with green space provision and structural landscape planting within development, this could combine to ‘foil’ development and reduce perception of the roofscape.



1

1. Context and relationship with adjacent landscape units
2. Landscape Unit
3. Road leading to the green lane network to the West of Graveley
4. Village pond, with views to Lister Hospital to the south



2



3



4

Land north of Stevenage
 Landscape unit GI:
 Site location and characteristics



LANDSCAPE CHARACTER UNIT: GI

BASELINE

Location

- 4.14. Landscape character unit GI is located to the west of the B197 and encompasses the western side of the village of Graveley, the settlement edge and land extending west as far as the A1(M) corridor. The southern boundary is formed by the SNAP area. The landscape unit includes the village pond at Graveley and the gentle valley (with minor stream) extending south towards the northern edge of Stevenage.

LCA Context

National
NCA 87: <i>East Anglian Chalk</i>
Regional: East of England Regional Landscape Framework
Lies within the <i>Lowland Village Farmlands</i> landscape type
Local: North Hertfordshire and Stevenage LCA
Area 216: <i>Arlesey - Great Wymondley</i> : Relevant characteristics of area 216: <i>Arlesey – Great Wymondley</i> and identified within the LCA include large, expansive arable fields, with relatively flat topography to the north and more rolling landform to the south (in which this unit is located). An open landscape with few trees and limited woodland cover, but with an historic settlement pattern. The LCA notes that the landscape represented by <i>Arlesey – Great Wymondley</i> is not rare within the district, and that the landscape exhibits a number of settlement edge uses and pressures.

Summary description of the landscape unit

- 4.15. The landscape unit comprises the western half of Graveley village including the western and southern settlement fringes. A large arable field extends westwards towards the A1(M) which marks the western boundary of the landscape unit. Much of the settlement edge of the village is modern in character to the west although to the south is a cluster of historic buildings. Rough grazed, woodland fringed fields extend south of the village, within a broad, shallow valley.

Policy context and designations

- 4.16. There are no landscape or nature conservation designations within this landscape unit. The village core of Graveley (to the eastern edge of the unit and including the southern edge of the village) is designated as a Conservation Area.

Landscape functions

- 4.17. The primary landscape function of this unit is in providing a landscape setting to Graveley, and a sense of separation between the village and Stevenage to the south.

SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS

Criteria	Comments and sensitivity judgement – medium density residential development
Landscape	
Landscape scale	To the west of the village is a relatively large scale and open arable landscape extending as far as the A1(M) corridor. To the south is a broad and generally open valley landscape, with settlement edges and fringing woodland and hedgerows providing localised enclosure – moderate sensitivity to residential development.
Landform and topography	Landform is that of a rolling chalk landscape in the valley to the south. To the west of the village, landform variation is less distinct - the east facing slope on which the village is located rises to a relatively low, gently undulating plateau, with landform falling away towards and beyond the A1(M). Sensitivity to residential development is judged to be moderate overall, although this would be locally higher around the valley to the south of the village.
Landscape pattern and complexity	<p>This is varied across the landscape unit. To the south, mature mixed hedgerows and woodland strips (with species including oak, birch, holly and hazel) fringe the pasture chalk valley landscape associated with a minor stream. This stream runs through the village and drains in a south westerly direction. To the west of the village, mature mixed hedgerows and part of a green lane create the framework in which the settlement sits.</p> <p>In areas, aspects of the landscape structure have been eroded by 20th Century agricultural practice and by the A1(M) corridor. In view of this diversity of elements, and the presence of discordant features, sensitivity of landscape pattern to residential development is judged to be moderate overall, although this is again locally higher e.g. around the valley to the south.</p>
Cultural pattern and time depth	Cultural pattern is represented by the historic settlement of Graveley (which has subsequently greatly expanded to the western side of the village) and by

Criteria	Comments and sensitivity judgement – medium density residential development
	Graveley Hall and its minor wooded parkland, to the north of the village, in addition to the village Conservation Area to the eastern edge of the landscape unit, and forming part of the southern village edge. The main road leading out of the village to the north is the old Great North Road (of Roman origin). Sensitivity of cultural pattern to residential development is judged to be moderate-high , in view of the proximity of the Conservation Area to the settlement edge.
Settlement and human influences	A strongly settled landscape with evidence of human influence and considerable time depth – the course of the Roman road, and medieval and later settlement within Graveley. A variety of building styles and periods are displayed within Graveley and particularly in the Conservation Area (which extends to the southern settlement edge), including traditional red brick, colour washed render and a range of 17 th and 18 th Century buildings, including cottages and larger dwellings in a loose ‘Strawberry Hill Gothick’ style. Later and modern infill of a markedly less distinctive character, defines much of the western settlement edge. Sensitivity to residential development is judged to be moderate , although the traditional areas of settlement within the Conservation Area around the pond and to the north of the valley would have a higher (high) sensitivity to residential development, in view of its more intact character, recognised in the Conservation Area designation.
Skyline character	The influence of development is evident on all skylines which form the backdrop to this landscape unit. To the south the large buildings and flue of Lister Hospital dominate the skyline, whilst the northern edge of Stevenage is apparent in more general terms, although this is filtered to a certain extent by woodland fringing the settlement edges. To the west of Graveley, skylines are defined by the A1(M) corridor and associated infrastructure (e.g. lighting). In view of such influences, skyline character is therefore judged to have a moderate sensitivity to residential development.
Perceptual qualities (colour/texture,	To the south of the village, visual interest and variety is created by the broad shallow valley, riparian vegetation

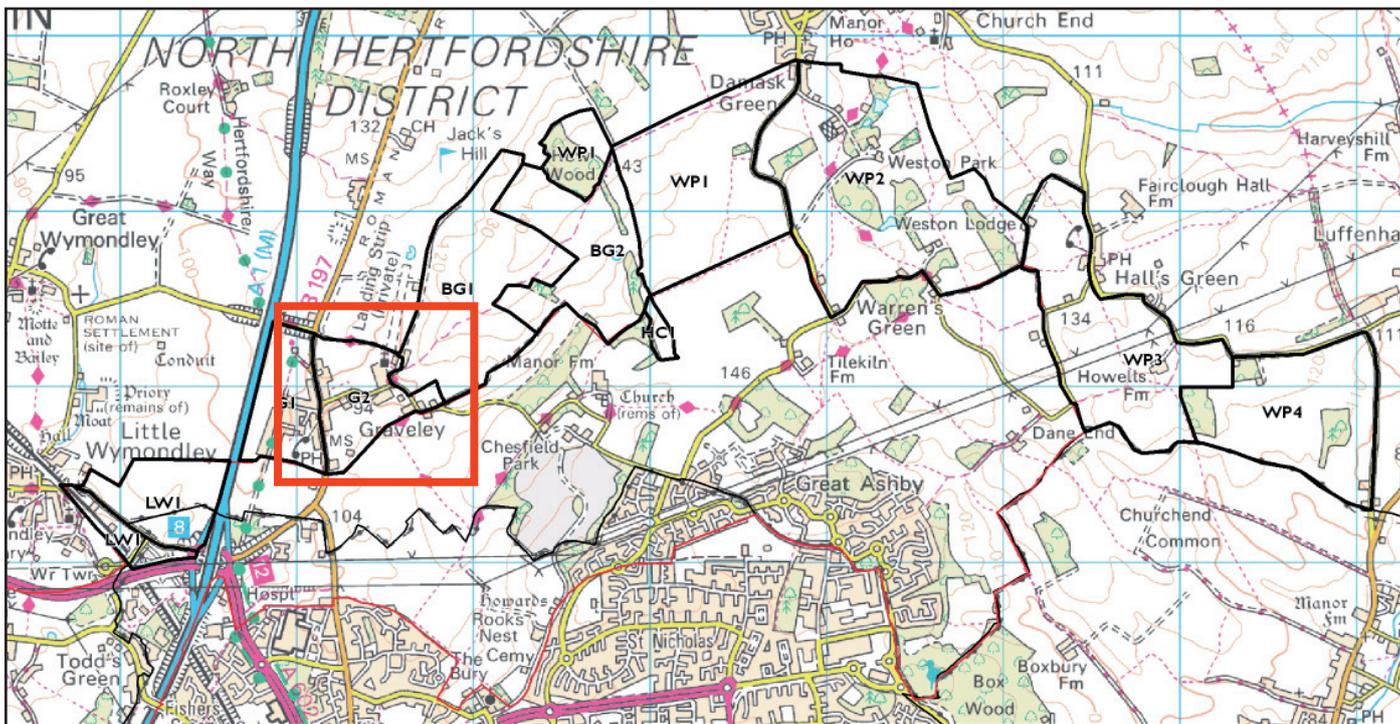
Criteria	Comments and sensitivity judgement – medium density residential development
light/reflection, movement, tranquillity, remoteness)	associated with the stream and by the woodland strips and hedgerows fringing the settlement. Influences such as the Lister Hospital and flue, and the northern edge of Stevenage detract from the sense of tranquillity, as does the A1(M) corridor to the west, which is an aurally dominant and discordant feature. A slightly degraded character is evident in places due to levels of management in the valley floor landscape, the loss of much of the historic landscape character to the west of Graveley and infrastructure associated with the A1(M). As such sensitivity to residential development is judged to be moderate in perceptual terms.
Visual	
Visual relationships and views	Framed views are available along the valley bottom to the south of Graveley Village. Lister Hospital and the associated flue are a prominent background element of such views. To the west of Graveley views are limited by the way landform falls beyond the A1(M). Sensitivity to residential development is therefore judged to be moderate , although this would be locally higher in relation to the open visual character of the valley landscape to the immediate edges of Graveley village.
Level of intervisibility	There is intervisibility with the northernmost parts of the SNAP area and the northern edge of Stevenage including the Lister Hospital. Intervisibility is otherwise limited by topography and distribution of existing built form – moderate-low sensitivity to residential development.
Overall landscape sensitivity	Overall landscape sensitivity to residential development is judged to be moderate . Aspects of historic landscape and settlement character are interspersed and contrasted with ‘edge’ influences, which has eroded sensitivity overall. Sensitivity of the landscape edge of Graveley, south of the village pond and Conservation Area, would have a higher sensitivity to residential development, in light of the more intact historic character at this point.

COMMENTARY ON BOUNDARIES

- 4.18. The village of Graveley and its landscape edge are within the boundary defined as part of the area of search for additional housing outside the SNAP area, to 2031. The landscape to the village fringe is sensitive in spite of edge influences, and only small scale levels of development could be accommodated without fundamentally altering character (either settlement character or wider landscape character, or the sense of separation between the village and Stevenage). In our view the boundary should be redrawn to omit Graveley and its edge from the area of search (retain the SNAP boundary as the extent of development), in the first instance, e.g. that other areas should be considered to meet development requirements earlier.

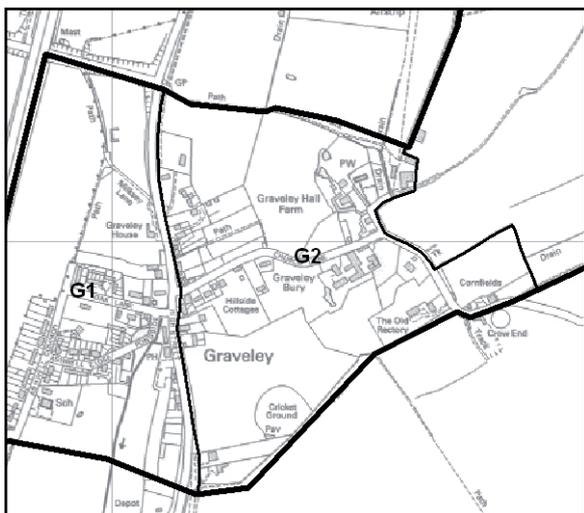
RECOMMENDATIONS AND LANDSCAPE GUIDANCE

- 4.19. The aim should be to conserve the compact, nucleated form of the settlement of Graveley and the function of the landscape as a 'gap'/in maintaining the sense of separation between Graveley and Stevenage. If development is considered to the west of the village, towards the A1(M), opportunities should be sought to enhance and reinforce the landscape edge to improve connectivity, and to provide an enhanced landscape setting to the settlement. Use of a 'foiled' native woodland edge with a mix of management regimes (including canopy with understorey and coppices with standards) would enhance landscape and settlement interface and provide enhanced visual and physical connectivity (movement corridors – the green lane and cycle route to the western edge of the village), linking Graveley with the wider green infrastructure network.
- 4.20. Maintain the green wedge between Graveley and Stevenage. Any development proposals should visually contribute to this objective, through building heights, massing and orientation, use of green roofs and integration with the structural landscape and areas of open space, to reduce the perception of roofscape. Consider also variation in development density, with use of the 'parkland' density model to the settlement/landscape interface, to create a porous settlement edge. The minor valley, stream, associated floodplain and more intimate scale landscape to the south of Graveley village should form a component of the green infrastructure network and should be conserved and managed as such. This would assist in maintaining the sense of separation between Graveley and Stevenage.
- 4.21. If development is planned to the southern settlement edge this should be sympathetic to the scale, massing and materials palette, and the relationship of built form to open space, displayed in the Conservation Area to the north.



1

1. Context and relationship with adjacent landscape units
2. Landscape Unit
3. Showing distinctive vernacular, and cluster of buildings around St Mary's Church
4. View to the eastern settlement edge of Graveley from the wider chalk landscape, within landscape unit BG1



2



3



4

Land north of Stevenage
 Landscape unit G2:
 Site location and characteristics



LANDSCAPE CHARACTER UNIT: G2

BASELINE

Location

- 4.22. Landscape character unit G2 is located to the east of the B197 and incorporates the eastern half of the village of Graveley, and the settlement edge landscape, up to and including the historic church and outlying farms at Graveley Bury. Rising topography to the east limits the extent of this landscape unit. The boundary at this point is the same as that used by the North Hertfordshire and Stevenage LCA, in relation to landscape character area 216: *Arlesey – Great Wymondley*. The Hertfordshire Way crosses part of the landscape unit in a north – south direction.

LCA Context

National
NCA 87: <i>East Anglian Chalk</i> , fringed by NCA 86: <i>South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland</i> , to the east.
Regional: East of England Regional Landscape Framework
Lies within the <i>Lowland Village Farmlands</i> landscape type
Local: North Hertfordshire and Stevenage LCA
Area 216: <i>Arlesey - Great Wymondley</i> : Relevant characteristics of area 216: <i>Arlesey – Great Wymondley</i> and identified within the LCA include large, expansive arable fields, with relatively flat topography to the north and more rolling landform to the south (in which this unit is located). An open landscape with few trees and limited woodland cover, but with an historic settlement pattern. The LCA notes that the landscape represented by <i>Arlesey – Great Wymondley</i> is not rare within the district, and that it exhibits a number of settlement edge uses and pressures.

Summary description of the landscape unit

- 4.23. The landscape unit comprises pasture and paddocks to the foot of the north west facing scarp slope within the adjacent landscape unit. It includes aspects of the historic settlement of Graveley, including St Mary's Church, Graveley Bury and the supporting estate farm and associated barns. A small alder lined stream runs along the southern edge of the landscape unit, towards Graveley's village core.

Policy context and designations

- 4.24. The churchyard of St Mary's is identified as a District Wildlife Site. A number of buildings within the landscape unit are listed, including the parish church. The historic core of the village including the area around the church and the Bury is designated as a Conservation Area.

Landscape functions

- 4.25. The primary landscape function is in forming the setting to the historic settlement of Graveley. The rural landscape around Graveley also plays an important role in relation to maintaining a sense of separation between the village and Stevenage, to the south.

SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS

Criteria	Comments and sensitivity judgement – medium density residential development
Landscape	
Landscape scale	An intimate scale landscape subdivided partly by outgrown mixed native hedgerows (the fragmented legacy of Parliamentary Enclosure) and by paddocks – a relatively small scale rectilinear field pattern. Further containment is created by the interplay of church and historic farm buildings and barns to the eastern edges of the landscape character unit. As such the area has a high sensitivity to residential development in terms of landscape scale.
Landform and topography	Landform is gently rolling, with the landscape unit sitting in the floor of a minor valley with stream, with the village of Graveley tucked within a dip in a considerably more undulating chalk landscape. As such landform is relatively distinctive (and afford potential for more elevated views of church, historic barns and the Bury), and is framed by some considerably more sculpted 'scarp' landforms beyond the landscape unit – sensitivity to residential development is therefore moderate-high .
Landscape pattern and complexity	The landscape to the eastern edge of Graveley village comprises a relatively complex interplay of landscape elements. These include a small scale (hedged) rural lane network and remnants of the Enclosure field pattern. The churchyard is designated as District Wildlife Site. A further dimension is added by the alder lined course of the stream which runs westwards through the landscape unit towards Graveley village. Taken together these form a relatively complex

Criteria	Comments and sensitivity judgement – medium density residential development
	landscape which would have a high sensitivity to residential development, unless very dispersed and small scale development which respected this character.
Cultural pattern and time depth	These include aspects of the historic and dispersed settlement of Graveley (e.g. the stone built medieval church of St Mary, the red brick and tiled Bury and supporting farm, and a series of black weatherboarded barns). Such elements would have a high sensitivity to residential development.
Settlement and human influences	As described above, the landscape unit has a strongly settled character, forming part of the dispersed and relatively low density village of Graveley. Within the village Conservation Area, the influence of church, the manor house (Graveley Bury) and supporting estate farm remain strongly apparent, as does the relatively intact sense of vernacular built character imparted by these elements (traditional red brick and clay tile, colour washed render, dressed stone to the church, black stained weatherboard barns). As such sensitivity to residential development would be high , unless very small scale development which retained this historic settlement pattern.
Skyline character	The skylines are defined by enfolding scarp slope landforms and deciduous hanger woodlands within the adjacent landscape unit, which also play an important role in relation to visual separation from Stevenage, to the south. Skylines are largely undeveloped in character and sensitivity to residential development would therefore be high .
Perceptual qualities (colour/texture, light/reflection, movement, tranquillity, remoteness)	This is an essentially rural ‘mosaic’ landscape, with the interplay of the many landscape elements creating visual interest and variety. There is a variety of built styles and periods, façade treatments, materials and textures, and an interesting grouping and orientation of different building masses and rooflines. Hedgerows, mature trees and the minor watercourse create further colour and texture within the landscape. Character is relatively tranquil, with few more modern settlement ‘edge’ influences (with the exception of pony paddocks), although the aural influence of the AI(M) is present. This reduces the sensitivity to

Criteria	Comments and sensitivity judgement – medium density residential development
	residential development to moderate in perceptual terms.
Visual	
Visual relationships and views	Views are essentially contained by the rolling chalk landform and hanger woodland to the south and east. Views relate mainly to the historic settlement edge of Graveley at this point. Such views would have a high sensitivity to residential development, although the landform and woodland beyond provide a valuable screening function in relation to the northern edge of Stevenage.
Level of intervisibility	There is intervisibility with the scarp slopes, landform and hanger woodland within the adjacent landscape unit to the east. This is important in providing rural context to the edge of Graveley village, and would have a moderate-high sensitivity to residential development.
Overall landscape sensitivity	Overall landscape sensitivity to residential development is judged to be high . This is in view of the intimate spatial character and the presence of historic settlement and landscape elements.

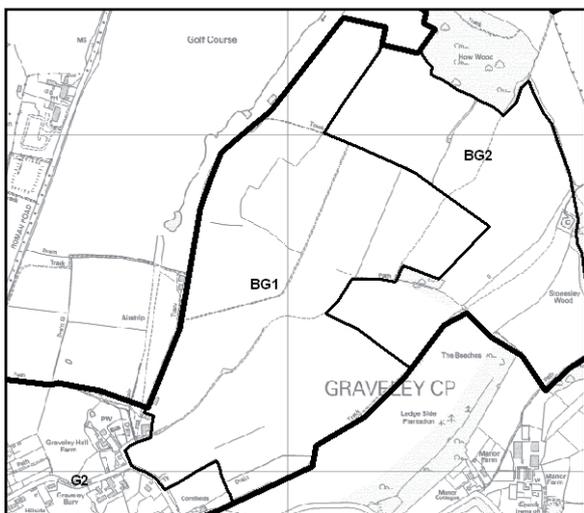
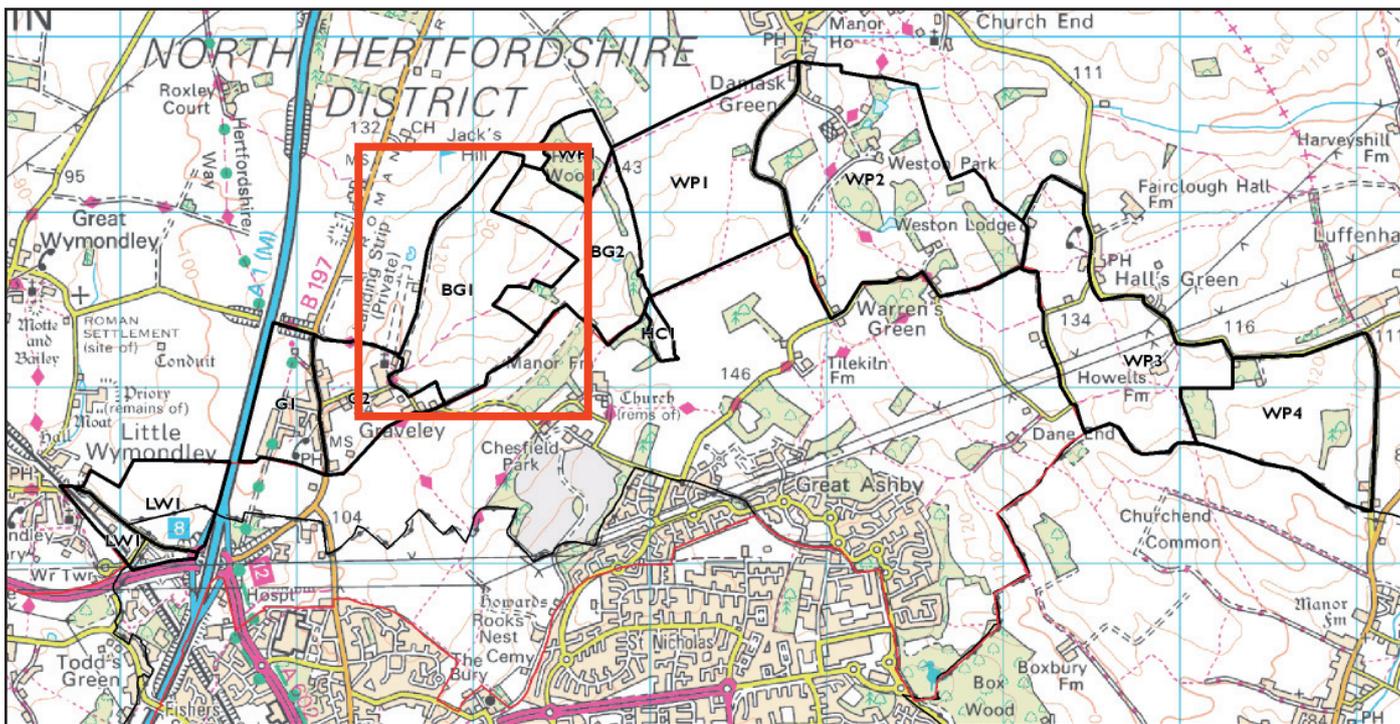
COMMENTARY ON BOUNDARIES

- 4.26. The village of Graveley and its landscape edge are within the boundary defined as part of the area of search for additional housing outside the SNAP area, to 2031. The landscape to the village fringe is sensitive, and only small scale levels of development could be accommodated without fundamentally altering character. The boundary should, in our view be redrawn to omit Graveley east from the area of search, e.g. that other, less sensitive sites should be considered first, and that the SNAP boundary should form the extent of development.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND LANDSCAPE GUIDANCE

- 4.27. Given the sensitivity of the settlement edge around Graveley east and the important role of the countryside in maintaining a sense of settlement setting and separation from Stevenage, it is considered that landscape unit G2 has very limited potential to accommodate development (other than a low density 'parkland type' development model). Over riding considerations should be to maintain the compact, semi nucleated settlement form, and to maintain the dispersed character of the slightly 'detached' settlement around the Church and Bury, within the village Conservation

Area. The importance of the open landscape setting to the Church and Bury should be noted as should visual relationships with the sculpted landforms and hanger woodlands of Forster Country, within the adjacent landscape unit, e.g. that any future development should, through building height, roofline and building orientation, seek not to obstruct such views. As such, regard should be given both to the physical and visual connections with Forster Country and the wider rural landscape in planning future development in this area.



1. Context and relationship with adjacent landscape units
2. Landscape Unit
3. Distinctive ridge and vale landform towards golf course
4. View across the rural landscape towards Forster Country



Land north of Stevenage
Landscape unit BGI:
Site location and characteristics



LANDSCAPE CHARACTER UNIT: BGI

BASELINE

Location

- 4.28. Landscape character unit BGI is located east of the B197 (a Roman Road) north of Stevenage and the small historic settlements of Graveley and Chesfield. The northern and eastern edges of the area are defined by 20th Century Enclosure and a larger scale field boundary pattern. To the east and north within the adjacent landscape unit BG2 lies a smaller scale 18th Century Enclosure pattern interspersed with patches of mixed and hanger woodland. The arable landscape of the unit is crossed by a bridleway which climbs the scarp slope and links the village of Graveley with the south western edge of Weston and Damask Green.

LCA Context

National
NCA 86: <i>South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands</i> NCA 87: <i>East Anglian Chalk</i>
Regional
Largely within the <i>Chalk Slopes and Ridges</i> landscape type, with the north eastern hilltop falling within the <i>Wooded Plateau Farmlands</i> landscape type.
Local (District)
Area 219: <i>Baldock Gap</i> Key characteristics from the Landscape Character Assessment are given below: An undulating scarp with local steep sided valleys largely under arable cultivation. Small occasional plantations and shelter belts add to the wooded character. Small sunken lanes and footpaths that traverse the slopes are a feature.

Summary description of the landscape unit

- 4.29. This is a gently rolling ridge and valley landscape under arable cultivation and defined by a medium to large scale field pattern. A landscape of relatively unsettled character. A strong sense of openness and exposure is enhanced by long distance views to the adjoining chalk landscapes beyond, with glimpses of the built development associated with larger settlements in the middle distance.

Policy context and designations

- 4.30. There are no landscape or nature conservation designations within the unit although directly to the north is How Wood, both an area of ancient woodland and a District Wildlife Site.

Landscape functions

- 4.31. The primary landscape function of this landscape unit is as a productive arable landscape. However the unit also forms part of the rural countryside setting of Stevenage, being part of a large green lung which sweeps into the north of Stevenage, and incorporates the locally significant landscape of Forster Country, within Stevenage Borough to the south.

SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS

Criteria	Comments and sensitivity judgement
Landscape	
Landscape scale	A large scale landscape under arable cultivation. The openness, lack of woodland and loss of field boundary enclosure (the legacy of 20 th Century agriculture) results in an overall lack of enclosing elements within the area. The landscape sensitivity in relation to residential development is therefore high .
Landform and topography	The elevated landform associated with the scarp slope rises from 100m AOD at the settlement edge at Graveley to 140m AOD at the domed hilltop, and constitutes one of the most elevated parts of the study area. The rolling landform which is the outward expression of the underlying chalk geology creates a ridge and valley landscape. The sensitivity of the landform to residential development is high due to the level of undulation and topographic variation.
Landscape pattern and complexity	As a result of arable cultivation the landscape structure has become fragmented due to the loss of field boundaries. The large scale field pattern associated with the arable landscape results in a moderate-low sensitivity to residential development.
Cultural pattern and time depth	The Historic Landscape Characterisation identifies the field pattern of the landscape unit to be the result of 20 th Century agriculture, with much of the historic landscape structure lost. Land directly adjacent to the landscape unit retains a slightly more intricate field boundary network (the legacy of 18 th Century Enclosure). Despite the unit's proximity to Graveley the landscape sensitivity to residential development is

Criteria	Comments and sensitivity judgement
	judged as low in terms of cultural pattern.
Settlement and human influences	There is an absence of settlement within this landscape unit. Visual links with the edge of Graveley to the south form elements of views to the south and the Chesfield Golf Course is clearly visible directly to the north. Due to the absence of existing settlement within the unit, it is judged to have a moderate-high sensitivity to residential development in these terms.
Skyline character	Due to the exposed and elevated character, significant wide panoramic views exist to the north west beyond Letchworth and Hitchin, to the chalk landscape beyond, including scarps within the Chilterns AONB west to south west of Hitchin. Views to the east and south are framed by rolling landform and hanger woodland which clings to the ridge top and creates a wooded skyline. Pylon lines and the church spire within Forster Country at the northern edge of Stevenage to the south form vertical elements within views. Sensitivity of rolling wooded skylines to residential development is judged to be high , although the pylon lines locally reduce this.
Perceptual qualities (colour/texture, light/reflection, movement, tranquillity, remoteness)	A muted colour palette, with smooth arable fields and skylines creating a 'simple' landscape. However the strong aural influence of the A1 (M) has a significant impact on a landscape which otherwise has a surprisingly isolated character (due to lack of settlement within the landscape unit). The sensitivity to residential development is judged to be moderate .
Visual	
Visual relationships and views	Views are largely open and panoramic to the north. Built development within Hitchin and Stevenage form elements within views 3km to the north west, with intervisibility with the rolling chalk hills of the Chilterns AONB in the far distance. Views to the south are framed and more intimate due to the rolling landform and wooded ridgelines although the built edge of Stevenage and prominent pylon lines form elements within views. There is otherwise a comparative absence of built development. Due to views and a sense of isolation, sensitivity to residential development, in visual terms, is judged to be high .

Criteria	Comments and sensitivity judgement
Level of intervisibility	There is a level of intervisibility with adjacent landscapes, notably the wooded ridges to the east and south towards Forster Country, on the edge of Stevenage, but also further in the distance to the north and west beyond Letchworth Garden City and Hitchin. The elevated aspect, far reaching views and level of intervisibility with adjacent landscapes results in a high sensitivity to residential development.
Overall landscape sensitivity	Overall landscape sensitivity to residential development of this large scale, open, elevated and seemingly isolated landscape unit is judged to be high , in view of the strong sense of exposure and isolated, mostly undeveloped character.

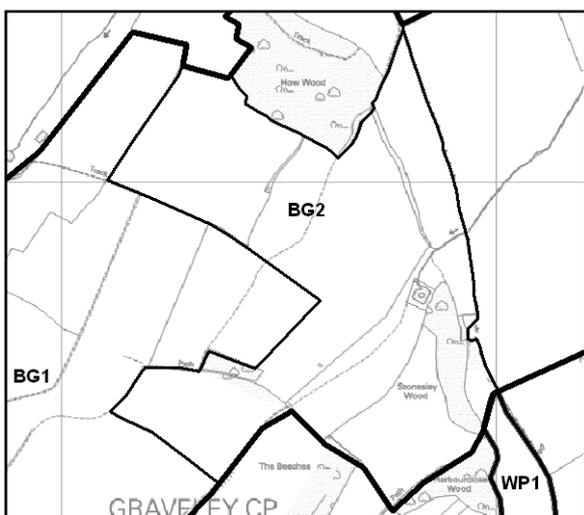
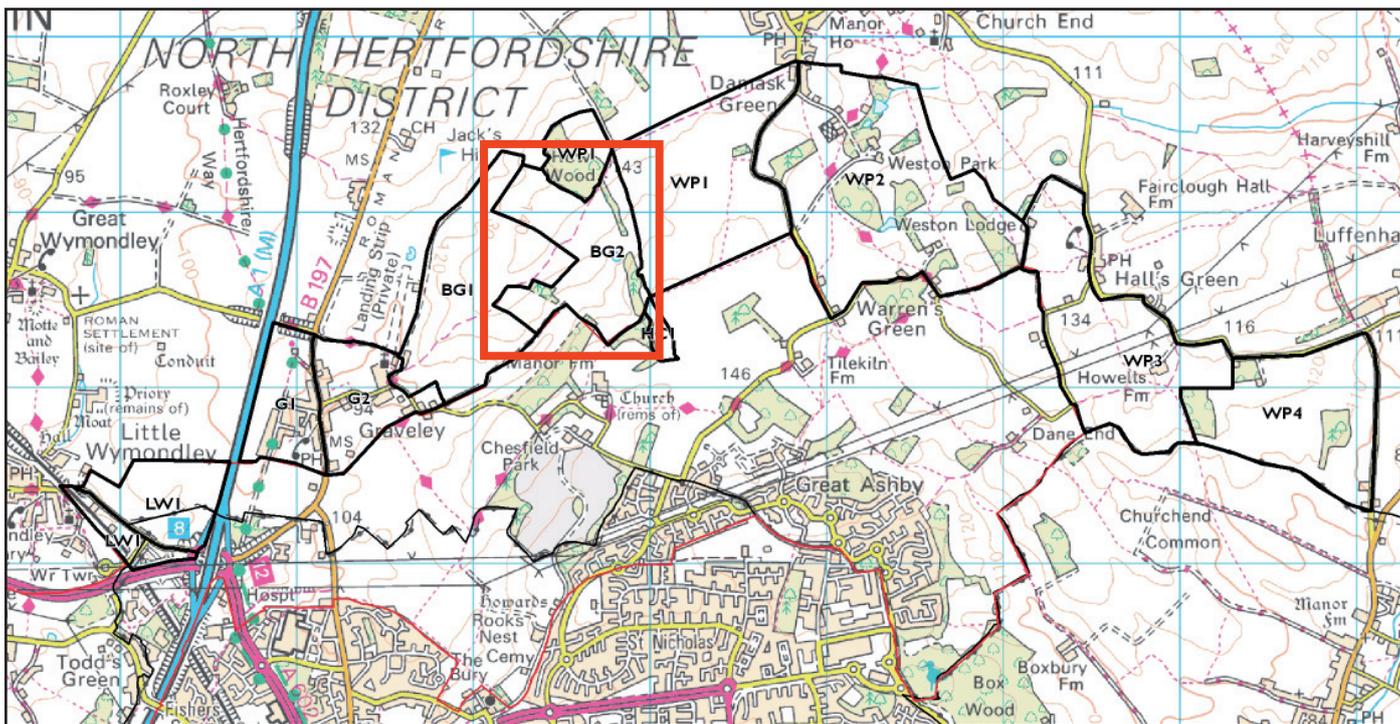
COMMENTARY ON BOUNDARIES

- 4.32. The SNAP boundary follows the south eastern edge of the landscape unit and is defined by the lower contours of the valley topography which cuts the scarp and follows the line of an existing track. In order to respond to the existing landscape structure and topography it is suggested that it would be better drawn to the outer edge of hanger woodland at Ledgeside Plantation (District Wildlife Site), in order to conserve the valley as GI. Ledgeside Plantation would also afford significant visual containment and create a strong landscape edge to future development within the SNAP area at this point.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND LANDSCAPE GUIDANCE

- 4.33. This landscape unit has a limited ability to accommodate development. If development were to occur in this landscape unit it would be most appropriate concentrated along the lower scarp slopes where it could be contained by the existing landscape structure and topography. Development would have to be sensitive to the compact historic settlement of Graveley directly to the south west and not create long ribbons of development along the valley floor i.e. maintain the sense of separation between settlements.
- 4.34. This landscape unit forms part of a valuable green lung which links the edge of Stevenage and Forster Country with the wider rural landscape to the north. Development could potentially be accommodated on the lower slopes but measures should be encouraged to maintain and strengthen the valued connective role this landscape plays between the urban edge of Stevenage and the wider rural landscape e.g. lower development density, maintaining the valley swathe and perception of it. In order to maintain key green swathes which sweep into Forster Country from the north, varied development densities should be considered and developed in parallel with a landscape framework which accommodates and contains/absorbs any future development proposals.

- 4.35. Pylon lines to the south of the landscape unit and north of the Stevenage settlement edge provide the opportunity for reinforcing green infrastructure networks due to the necessary 'easement' which acts as a constraint to built development. This would strengthen the interface between Forster Country and the rural landscape beyond to the north.
- 4.36. A key opportunity is to reinforce and enhance the historic landscape structure through replacement hedgerow planting. Additional woodland planting could act as a landscape buffer to potential small scale development on rolling slopes and reinforce the wooded landscape character. Through use of lower density development edges integrated with existing and additional tree planting, the perception of greenness would be increased, strengthening the unit's role as a green wedge in relation to Forster Country.



1. Context and relationship with adjacent landscape units
2. Landscape Unit
3. Relatively intact Enclosure landscape structure
4. Undulating landform, with scarp slope and hanger woodland



3



4

Land north of Stevenage
 Landscape unit BG2:
 Site location and characteristics



LANDSCAPE CHARACTER UNIT: BG2

BASELINE

Location

- 4.37. Landscape character unit BG2 is located to the east of the B197 (a Roman Road) north of Stevenage. It is encircled to its northern and eastern boundaries by patches of woodland. The historic medieval settlement of Weston (and associated estate landscape) lies to the north east and the hamlet of Chesfield to the south. The western edges are defined by 18th and 19th Century field boundary enclosure and are smaller in scale than those directly adjacent in the BGI unit. Pockets of woodland coupled with an intact field boundary network result in a more wooded landscape.

LCA Context

National
NCA 86: <i>South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands</i> NCA 87: <i>East Anglian Chalk</i>
Regional
Largely within the <i>Chalk Slopes and Ridges</i> landscape type, with the north eastern hilltop falling within the <i>Wooded Plateau Farmlands</i> landscape type.
Local (District)
Area 219: <i>Baldock Gap</i> Key characteristics from the Landscape Character Assessment are given below: An undulating chalk scarp with steep sided valleys. Large arable fields are interspersed with small plantations and shelter belts. Small sunken lanes and footpaths climb the valley sides.

Summary description of the landscape unit

- 4.38. This is a gently rolling ridge and valley arable landscape enclosed by patches of woodland on the northern and eastern edges. A fairly intact field boundary network interspersed with hedgerow trees adds to the wooded character and results in a more enclosed landscape. This is a landscape of relatively unsettled character, although Graveley lies to the west. Due to its elevated aspect this landscape unit evokes a surprising sense of remoteness despite its proximity to Stevenage.

Policy context and designations

- 4.39. There are no landscape or nature conservation designations within the unit although directly to the north in the adjacent landscape unit (WPI) is How Wood, a District Wildlife Site and area of ancient woodland.

Landscape functions

- 4.40. The primary landscape function of this landscape unit is as a productive arable landscape. It also forms a key part of the Baldock Gap, maintaining separation between the settlements of Graveley to the south west and Weston to the north east. The landscape forms part of the visual setting of Stevenage when considered with Forster Country to the south.

SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS

Criteria	Comments and sensitivity judgement
Landscape	
Landscape scale	A large scale landscape under arable cultivation but with a sense of enclosure afforded by surrounding hanger woodland, intact hedgerows and hedgerow trees. The landscape sensitivity in relation to residential development is moderate-high .
Landform and topography	The gently rolling landform associated with the dry valley rises to 140m AOD on the elevated hilltop south of How Wood. This ridge and valley landscape is judged to have a moderate-high sensitivity to residential development.
Landscape pattern and complexity	A network of hedgerows cross the rolling valley landscape and form key habitat connections between patches of woodland. Hanger woodland clings to the ridge tops and adds to the wooded character of the unit. Sensitivity to residential development is judged to be moderate .
Cultural pattern and time depth	The Historic Landscape Characterisation identifies the medium to large scale field pattern of the landscape unit to be the result of late 18 th and 19 th Century Enclosure. The unit retains a largely intact field boundary network often including hedgerow trees which enhance the historic and cultural landscape structure. This contrasts with the BGI unit directly to the west which demonstrates a more open and less treed character. The landscape sensitivity to residential development is therefore judged to be moderate-high .

Criteria	Comments and sensitivity judgement
Settlement and human influences	There is an absence of settlement within this landscape unit. Due to the more enclosed character of the unit visual links to nearby settlements are restricted to along the valley to the south west towards the edge of Graveley, where farm buildings and the medieval church are visible. Due to the absence of existing settlement the sensitivity to residential development is judged to be moderate-high .
Skyline character	Skylines are at points both wooded and open. Due to the rolling ridge and valley landscape and elevated aspect intermittent open views to the west and the rolling chalk landscape of the Chilterns AONB can be experienced. However views are often framed by wooded skylines due to the ribbons of hanger woodland on the ridges to the south and How Wood (ancient woodland) to the north. Pylon lines to the north east and south and the church spire near Forster Country to the south form vertical elements within views. Due to the absence of development, skyline character sensitivity to residential development is judged to be high .
Perceptual qualities (colour/texture, light/reflection, movement, tranquillity, remoteness)	A muted colour palette is created by arable fields. Hedgerows create strong lines within the landscape, crossing valley sides and interspersed with hedgerow trees. This adds texture and sculptural form to the landscape. Despite the unit's close proximity to Stevenage and the strong aural influence of the A1 (M) there is a surprisingly strong sense of remoteness. The sensitivity to residential development is judged to be high in perceptual terms.
Visual	
Visual relationships and views	Views are largely framed by woodland to the north, east and south with occasional glimpses of built development within Stevenage (notably Lister Hospital). To the west views are open and panoramic with the undulating chalk scarps associated with the Chilterns AONB forming distant skylines. To the south west the medieval church of St Mary's on the edge of Stevenage coupled with glimpses of Graveley Bury and farm form components of views. Due to the absence of development in this area but coupled with the enclosing effect of a well treed landscape, sensitivity to residential development is judged to be

Criteria	Comments and sensitivity judgement
	moderate-high.
Level of intervisibility	There is a level of intervisibility with adjacent landscapes notably to the more open arable fields to the west on the edge of Graveley. Wooded skylines to the south east however limit the level of intervisibility. The wooded landscape of Forster Country to the south adds to connection between this landscape unit and the wider rural landscape setting of Stevenage to the south. Due to the sense of enclosure associated with the treed character and undulating landform, sensitivity to residential development is judged to be moderate .
Overall landscape sensitivity	Overall landscape sensitivity to residential development is judged to be moderate - high in view of the sense of enclosure created by the rolling landform and wooded character despite a sense of remoteness and exposure on higher slopes.

COMMENTARY ON BOUNDARIES

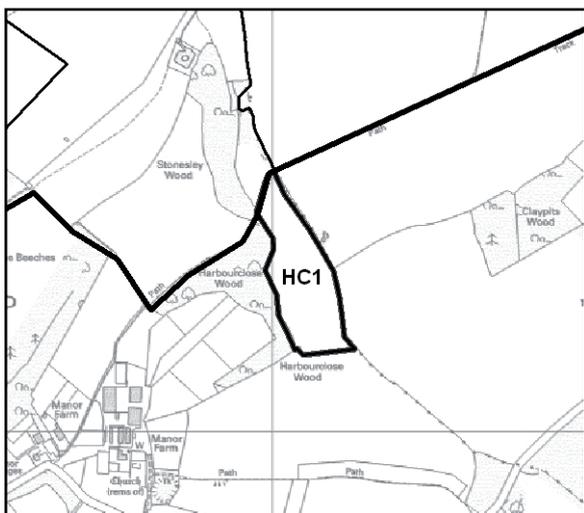
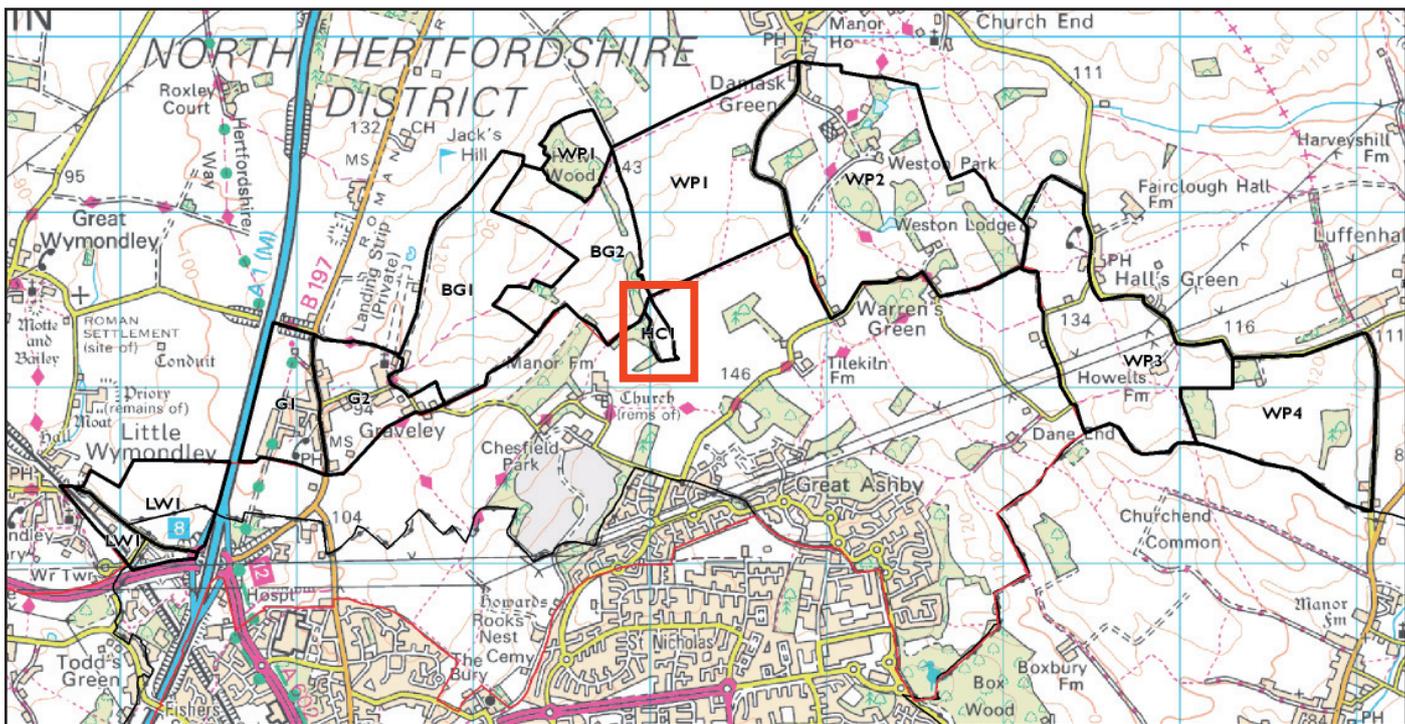
- 4.41. The SNAP boundary follows the southern edge of the landscape unit and is defined by topography and woodland cover which is judged to be appropriate. However it is recommended that the south western edge should be drawn to the outer edge of the hanger woodland at Ledgeside Plantation, in view of the visual containment this would afford in relation to future residential development within the SNAP area.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND LANDSCAPE GUIDANCE

- 4.42. If development were to occur in this landscape unit it would be best accommodated in relation to the existing landscape structure, notably associated with woodland pockets and on lower slopes to conserve wooded skyline.
- 4.43. There could be the potential to accommodate small, well designed pockets of nucleated settlement along valley floors within the wider landscape structure, which links the rural setting to Forster Country to the south. Such development patterns would be in keeping with the historic layout of hamlets and settlements in this area. Such small scale compact development would maintain a sense of openness where green swathes restrict 'creeping urbanisation' and retain strong links with the wider rural landscape. This landscape unit forms a key element of the green lung which sweeps into Stevenage from the north, and coupled with Forster Country is an important green infrastructure resource.
- 4.44. However in relation to proximity to existing settlement and development proposed in the earliest phases of SNAP, the southernmost part of BG2 may be more viable in

development terms. It has the potential to accommodate a small amount of development due to the strong landscape framework and level of containment. In relation to this, whilst a key principle is to conserve the mature woodland structure, it would be important to maintain physical and visual connectivity with any other development to the east of Harbourclose Wood (enhancing and expanding the existing path network for pedestrians and cyclists). This option would also avoid development 'breaking' the slope. By maintaining the bulk of BG2 as a green wedge the distinctive urban form of Stevenage would also be maintained at this point.

- 4.45. In order to strengthen and reinforce the existing landscape structure and cultural heritage, additional hedgerow planting would not only enhance the wooded character but also improve habitat connectivity across the unit, thereby further contributing to green infrastructure objectives.



1. Context and relationship with adjacent landscape units
2. Landscape Unit
3. Filtered views to Great Ashby settlement edge to the south
4. Ancient woodland forming the western boundary



3



4

Land north of Stevenage
 Landscape unit HCI:
 Site location and characteristics



LANDSCAPE CHARACTER UNIT: HCI

BASELINE

Location

- 4.46. Landscape character unit HCI forms a small parcel of enclosed, gently undulating fallow land approximately 200 metres north east of Manor Farm and the ruined medieval church of St Etheldreda at Chesfield Park. The unit lies entirely within the SNAP area.

LCA Context

National
NCA 86: <i>South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland</i> . The landscape unit lies at the transition with NCA 87: <i>East Anglian Chalk</i> , to the west.
Regional: East of England Regional Landscape Framework
The unit lies entirely within the <i>Wooded Plateau Farmlands</i> landscape type
Local: North Hertfordshire and Stevenage LCA
Area 220: <i>Weston Plateau Parklands</i> Relevant characteristics of this area as identified within the LCA include plateau landform and arable land use allied to extensive mature woodland cover. A lightly settled landscape with scattered farmsteads and a winding network of rural lanes, which frequently interlock with curvilinear field boundaries. The parkland of Weston Park is distinctive. The landscape unit is also fringed to the north west by area 219: <i>Baldock Gap</i> , a larger scale undulating chalk landscape.

Summary description of the landscape unit

- 4.47. The landscape unit is formed by a single, relatively narrow, small to medium sized field with curvilinear boundaries. Field boundaries are defined by outgrown mixed hedgerows and mature woodland strips, in addition to ancient broadleaf woodland at Harbourclose Wood. Landuse is predominantly fallow, and there are indications of game keeping (pheasant rearing). Filtered views are available to the edge of Great Ashby, to the south.

Policy context and designations

- 4.48. The unit is not subject to any designations although the ancient woodland (Harbourclose Wood) which abuts and forms the western site boundary is designated as a District Wildlife Site.

Landscape functions

- 4.49. Primary functions of the landscape unit are in relation to arable agriculture landscape and in contributing to the rural setting of Great Ashby.

SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS

Criteria	Comments and sensitivity judgement
Landscape	
Landscape scale	A medium scale landscape with enclosure and containment provided by outgrown mixed hedgerows and woodland (oak-hornbeam and hazel woodland, including ancient woodland). Sensitivity to residential development in terms of landscape scale is therefore judged to be moderate .
Landform and topography	The landscape unit is characterised by a gently rolling landform, part of a larger undulating plateau landform – moderate sensitivity to residential development. Land falls away to a dry valley to the west of the unit.
Landscape pattern and complexity	The unit is part of a relatively varied and complex, intact rural landscape. The unit itself displays mostly intact and ditched field boundaries and is fringed to the west by ancient broadleaf woodland, which is designated as a District Wildlife Site in view of its local biodiversity interest. Subject to further future investigation this may be vulnerable to development (potential for bats etc). Tall ruderal habitat and scrub are a feature of the northern tip of the unit. Sensitivity to residential development in terms of landscape pattern is therefore judged to be moderate-high .
Cultural pattern and time depth	The Historic Landscape Characterisation identifies the unit to be part of a network of pre 18 th Century irregular enclosure fieldscapes, which occupies a relatively small part of the study area as a whole. Ancient woodlands fringing the western site boundary also impart a considerable sense of time depth. Sensitivity to residential development is therefore judged to be moderate-high .
Settlement and human influences	This is an unsettled landscape unit within a wider landscape of only lightly settled character, although the northern edge of Great Ashby and the pylon line are visible to the south. Sensitivity to residential development is therefore judged to be moderate .

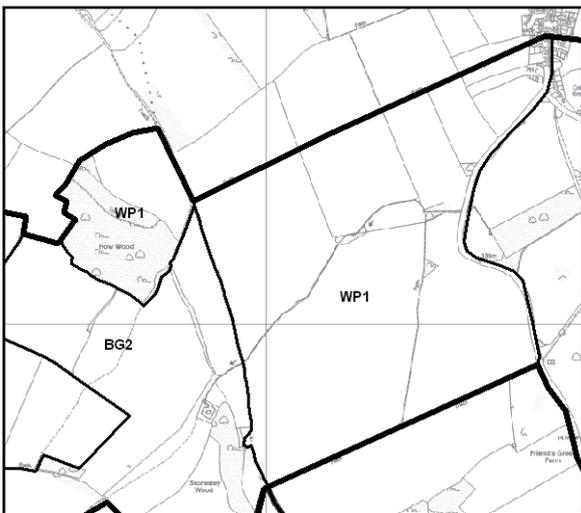
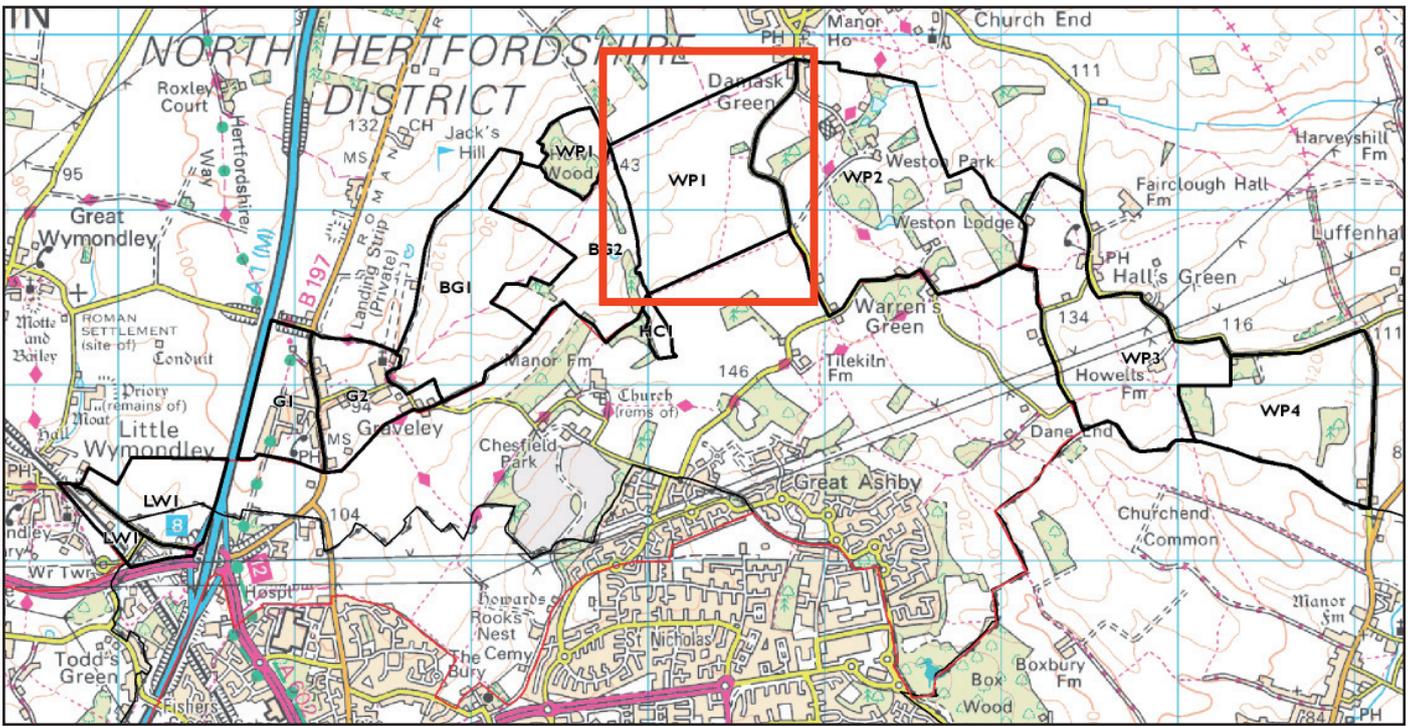
Criteria	Comments and sensitivity judgement
Skyline character	Skylines are wooded throughout, within the landscape unit and the wider landscape, and largely undeveloped. Great Ashby only forms part of the skyline to the south of the landscape unit, albeit filtered and foiled by intervening and field boundary vegetation. Sensitivity of skylines to residential development is therefore judged to be high .
Perceptual qualities (colour/texture, light/reflection, movement, tranquillity, remoteness)	A relatively tranquil rural landscape although the aural presence of the A1(M) is apparent. A landscape of essentially textured quality and with a reasonable diversity of landscape elements. Sensitivity to residential development is therefore judged to be moderate-high in perceptual terms.
Visual	
Visual relationships and views	A well contained landscape with few opportunities for views out due to the density of field boundary vegetation. Filtered winter views are available to the settlement edge of Great Ashby to the south. Sensitivity to residential development is therefore judged to be moderate-low in visual terms.
Level of intervisibility	There is very little intervisibility with other landscapes, due to the level of field boundary vegetation – moderate-low sensitivity to residential development.
Overall landscape sensitivity	Overall landscape sensitivity to residential development is judged to be moderate in view of the level of visual containment, and the fact that the majority of the features of landscape interest fringe, rather than lie within, the unit.

COMMENTARY ON BOUNDARIES

- 4.50. The northern boundary of the SNAP area has been drawn in relation to field boundary vegetation at this point, and is judged to be appropriate, in view of the strong landscape structure which could form a framework for residential development. The landscape to the north and north east of HCI is of a similar character, albeit larger scale, whilst immediately to the north west and west of the landscape unit boundary is a rolling chalk landscape of different character. Refer also to boundary conclusions for landscape unit WPI.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND LANDSCAPE GUIDANCE

- 4.51. This landscape unit has some potential to accommodate residential development in view of its comparatively low level of landform variation, the level of visual containment and proximity to the settlement edge of Great Ashby. The ancient woodland of Harbourclose Wood which forms the western boundary of the unit and to the edge of the adjacent dry valley is, however, sensitive. It is therefore suggested that the woodland and an appropriate swathe of adjacent land are maintained as green infrastructure, and kept at a distance from residential development and lit settlement edges. A sensitive approach to lighting should in any case be used for development in this area, irrespective of the presence of bats (e.g. use of full cut off lighting to reduce sky glow and assist in conserving dark night skies).
- 4.52. Development would ideally be accommodated to the southern part of the unit (in closest proximity to Great Ashby and other development which may be located within the SNAP between the unit and Great Ashby), with a 'porous', variable density development edge to the north. This, and lower storey height to the edges, or use of longer rooflines, would help development 'bleed' more subtly in to the landscape and would reduce the perception of development from the wider landscape, in particular the undulating chalk landscape to the north west and west.



1. Context and relationship with adjacent landscape units
2. Landscape Unit
3. Filtered views to the settlement edge of Weston
4. Relatively intact historic landscape structure

2



3



4

Land north of Stevenage
Landscape unit WPI:
Site location and characteristics



LANDSCAPE CHARACTER UNIT: WPI

BASELINE

Location

- 4.53. Landscape character unit WPI is located within the *Weston Plateau Parklands character area* within the North Hertfordshire and Stevenage LCA, to the west of the parkland estate of Weston Hall. The eastern boundary abuts the village envelope of Weston and Damask Green, whilst the southern boundary abuts the SNAP area (which is of similar character at this point). To the west are the undulating chalk landscapes within the *Baldock Gap* character area.

LCA Context

National
NCA 87: <i>East Anglian Chalk</i>
NCA 86: <i>South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland</i>
Regional – East of England Regional Landscape Framework
The landscape unit lies largely within the <i>Wooded Plateau Farmlands</i> Landscape Type. A small area of undulating land in the western part of the unit (the head of a dry valley) lies within the <i>Chalk Slopes and Ridges</i> Landscape Type.
Local – North Hertfordshire and Stevenage LCA
Area 220: <i>Weston Plateau Parklands</i> . Relevant characteristics include plateau landform, arable landcover interspersed with extensive broadleaf woodland cover, an interlocking pattern of lanes and curvilinear field boundaries, and a small scale, historic settlement pattern. Historic parklands such as Weston Park and associated estate landscape features are a distinctive characteristic.

Summary description of the landscape unit

- 4.54. A simple arable landscape, with a relatively large scale rectilinear field pattern defined by mixed native hedgerows and occasional small patches of deciduous farm woodland, and a number of field boundary ditches. The landscape unit is characterised by a gently undulating plateau landform, with the head of a minor dry valley extending into the landscape unit from the west. The landscape unit is crossed by several paths and rights of way but otherwise has an extremely sparsely settled character, with the influence of Weston village barely apparent within the landscape unit.

Policy context and designations

- 4.55. No designations cover the landscape unit, although it abuts two District Wildlife Sites (broadleaf woodland, including Harbourclose Wood and How Wood- ancient woodland) to the west. The parkland landscape of Weston Park to the east of the landscape unit is un registered.

Landscape functions

- 4.56. Primary functions of this landscape are in relation to arable agriculture and in forming the landscape setting to Weston Park.

SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS

Criteria	Comments and sensitivity judgement – medium density residential development
<i>Landscape</i>	
Landscape scale	A medium to large scale Enclosure landscape/field pattern. Enclosure is provided by mixed, relatively dense hedgerows. Sensitivity to residential development is judged to be moderate .
Landform and topography	There is only subtle landform variation across this gently undulating plateau, with the only distinction created by the head of the dry valley which falls within the western part of the landscape unit – moderate-low sensitivity to residential development.
Landscape pattern and complexity	Whilst not an overly complex or varied landscape mosaic, the landscape unit has a relatively intact landscape pattern. This is imparted by Enclosure field boundary hedgerows and mature hedgerow and field oaks. Sensitivity to residential development is judged to be moderate-high .
Cultural pattern and time depth	A clear sense of time depth is displayed by this landscape. Key aspects of the cultural pattern include the (non registered) parkland of Weston Park, which forms the eastern boundary of the landscape unit, and the relatively intact 18 th -19 th Century Enclosure landscape structure. Sensitivity to residential development is judged to be moderate-high in terms of cultural pattern.
Settlement and human influences	This is a sparsely settled landscape, although fringed by areas of historic settlement such as Weston. However the influence of such elements is not readily perceived within the landscape unit, and sensitivity to residential development is therefore judged to be

Criteria	Comments and sensitivity judgement – medium density residential development
	high.
Skyline character	Skylines are wooded throughout in views from within the landscape unit, due to the extent of mature field boundary and hedgerow vegetation, both within the landscape unit and at Weston Park, to the east. Evidence of settlement fringing the landscape unit cannot therefore be readily perceived (other than through filtered winter views). Sensitivity to residential development is judged to be high in terms of skyline character.
Perceptual qualities (colour/texture, light/reflection, movement, tranquillity, remoteness)	A tranquil, rural landscape, which is also relatively remote in character, or is at least perceived as such. The visual influence of the pylon line to the north of Stevenage, and the aural influence of the A1(M) corridor, is far less readily perceived than in other landscape units with the study area. As such sensitivity to residential development is judged to be high .
Visual	
Visual relationships and views	Due to the relatively elevated aspect there are long but filtered views across the plateau, including towards the 'bowl' in which Stevenage is sited. Sensitivity to residential development is judged to be moderate-high in visual terms.
Level of intervisibility	There is considerable intervisibility with adjacent landscapes (including long views towards the northern edge of Stevenage), albeit filtered by intervening and field boundary vegetation within the landscape unit – moderate-high sensitivity to residential development.
Overall landscape sensitivity	Overall landscape sensitivity to residential development is judged to be moderate-high . Although considerable visual containment is afforded at points, the landscape displays a relatively intact, historic landscape structure which is sensitive.

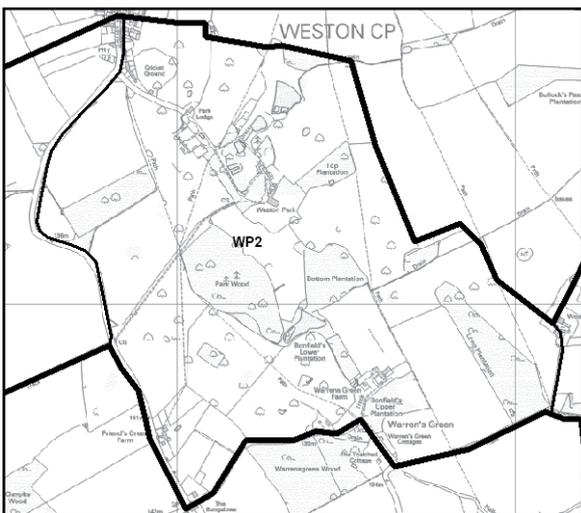
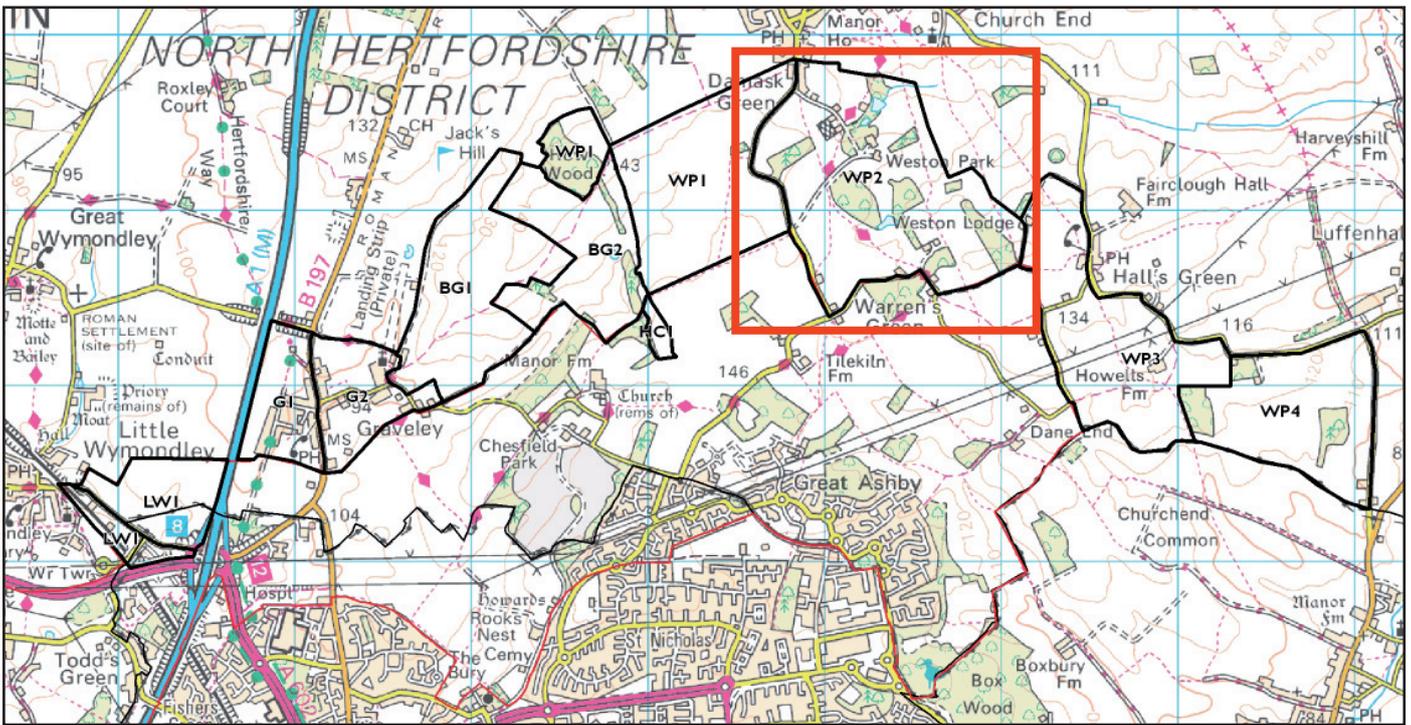
COMMENTARY ON BOUNDARIES

- 4.57. The northern boundary of this part of the 'area of search' is drawn by the field boundary nearest to the 140m AOD contour, whilst the southern boundary is drawn by the existing SNAP area (itself based on the field boundary network). The SNAP boundary appears appropriate and robust, although there is the potential for the

SNAP boundary to be extended northwards from its present location to the next field boundary. This is in view of the fact that landscape and visual character is similar to the north and south of the line as currently drawn, and there would still be potential for visual assimilation of a level of carefully designed development to the north of the existing SNAP boundary (refer to guidance below).

RECOMMENDATIONS AND LANDSCAPE GUIDANCE

- 4.58. The strong landscape structure of hedgerows and hedgerow trees is a fundamental characteristic of this landscape unit, and should be conserved and enhanced, not only as part of the green infrastructure network to ensure connectivity, but also as a framework for any future development. Whilst development could be accommodated in topographic and visual terms, it is likely that this would need to be of a dispersed character (possibly using the 'parkland' housing model to the interface with the wider landscape). This would help maintain the impression of a rural 'estate landscape' of lightly settled character. It would also assist in reducing the perception of the expansion of Stevenage, the settlement edge of which already forms a component of views to the south from within the landscape unit.
- 4.59. Opportunities should be sought to strengthen and reinforce the native landscape structure, to reinstate field boundary patterns for connectivity, to improve the diversity and functionality of the landscape. This should be considered as an integral part of any development which may occur in this landscape unit.



1. Context and relationship with adjacent landscape units
2. Landscape Unit
3. Mature parkland trees within the Weston Park estate - strong sense of time depth



3



LANDSCAPE CHARACTER UNIT: WP2

BASELINE

Location

- 4.60. Landscape Unit WP2 is located between the north east of Stevenage and the historic village of Weston. It is defined by the extents of the planned and designed landscape of Weston Park, a well wooded landscape with parkland trees and exotics encircling small lakes and ponds. The landscape unit's western boundary and the majority of its southern boundaries are defined by narrow winding rural lanes and it is crossed by an extensive path network, including the Hertfordshire Way, which crosses the landscape unit north-south. Several farms and estate buildings are located both within the unit and on boundaries.

LCA Context

National
NCA 86: <i>South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland</i>
Regional
The landscape unit lies within the <i>Wooded Plateau Farmlands</i> landscape type.
Local (District)
Area 220 <i>Weston Plateau Parklands</i> : Relevant characteristics include plateau landform, arable landcover interspersed with extensive broadleaf woodland cover, an interlocking pattern of lanes and curvilinear field boundaries, and a small scale, historic settlement pattern. Historic parklands such as Weston Park and associated estate landscape features are a distinctive characteristic.

Summary description of the landscape unit

- 4.61. This is a gently undulating, well wooded parkland plateau landscape crossed by an extensive path network. The historic village of Weston lies directly to the north, with the southern tip of the village extending into the landscape unit. Strongly wooded skylines are created by mature parkland exotics, woodlands and parkland tree groups, within the landscape unit. This adds to the intricate, 'mosaic' character of the local landscape at this point.

Policy context and designations

- 4.62. The central large woodland block within the landscape unit (Park Wood) is an ancient (replanted) woodland on the Natural England ancient woodland inventory. A

District Wildlife Site (grassland) fringes part of the northern boundary of the landscape unit. Weston Park is unregistered.

Landscape functions

- 4.63. Primary functions of the landscape are as a working landed estate, and in forming the landscape setting to the mansion of Weston Park.

SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS

Criteria	Comments and sensitivity judgement
Landscape	
Landscape scale	A landscape of mostly intimate scale and enclosed character, due to the presence of shelterbelts, parkland tree groups, field trees and strongly wooded skylines. Areas of larger scale, more open parkland (e.g. west of the house at Weston Park) create variety and interest. Sensitivity to residential development is judged to be moderate – high .
Landform and topography	An undulating plateau landscape, incised to the east by several valley fingers (one of which contains a chain of parkland waterbodies/ponds within Weston Park). Sensitivity to residential development is judged to be high in topographic terms.
Landscape pattern and complexity	A complex landscape mosaic is create by the interplay of ancient broadleaf woodland, mature parkland exotics, mature oak field trees, designed landscape (with water bodies) and areas of cattle grazed pasture. Sensitivity to residential development is therefore high .
Cultural pattern and time depth	A largely intact cultural pattern, with the HLC revealing the landscape to be largely early-mid 19 th Century parkland. Ice houses within the estate are Scheduled Monuments. Ancient woodland at Park Wood imparts a sense of time depth, as does the traditional management of the parkland within the estate. Sensitivity to residential development is therefore judged to be high in cultural terms.
Settlement and human influences	The now nucleated (formerly dispersed) medieval village of Weston fringes the landscape unit to the north, and the southern approach to the village lies within the landscape unit. The village is centred on an historic village green, and displays an eclectic range of periods and vernacular building styles (including timber

Criteria	Comments and sensitivity judgement
	framing, colour washed plaster and local brick/tile). Otherwise, settlement within the landscape unit is defined by isolated farmsteads associated with Weston Park and the house at Weston Park itself. Sensitivity to residential development is judged to be high .
Skyline character	With the exception of the village of Weston to the north, skylines are largely undeveloped in character. Woodland vegetation absorbs a large part of settlement edge of Weston. This lightly settled, strongly wooded skyline character has a high sensitivity to residential development.
Perceptual qualities (colour/texture, light/reflection, movement, tranquillity, remoteness)	A richly varied, textured landscape of 'mosaic' character, with a variety of scales and spatial experiences created by different types and ages of structural vegetation. A landscape of strongly rural, essentially tranquil character (the aural influence of the AI(M) is not perceived within the landscape unit). This sense of tranquillity is reinforced by the traditional landscape management regimes employed within the landscape unit e.g. grazing by rare breeds cattle. Sensitivity to residential development, in perceptual terms, is therefore judged to be high .
Visual	
Visual relationships and views	There are, at most, filtered views across the landscape unit, framed by mature woodland vegetation. The density and maturity of the landscape structure within the landscape unit largely denies opportunities for long views, although there are views to the Beane Valley from the eastern most edge of the landscape unit. Sensitivity to residential development is judged to be moderate in visual terms.
Level of intervisibility	With the exception of views to the Beane Valley from the easternmost parts of the landscape unit (as described above), there is only limited intervisibility with other landscapes, such as the adjacent WPI landscape unit to the west. Sensitivity to residential development is therefore judged moderate in these terms.
Overall landscape sensitivity	Overall landscape sensitivity to residential development is judged to be high . This is due to the intricate quality and relatively small scale of the landscape, its sense of time depth and intactness, and

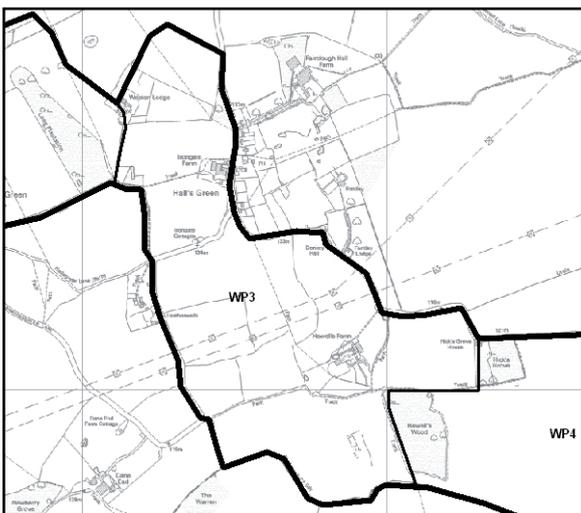
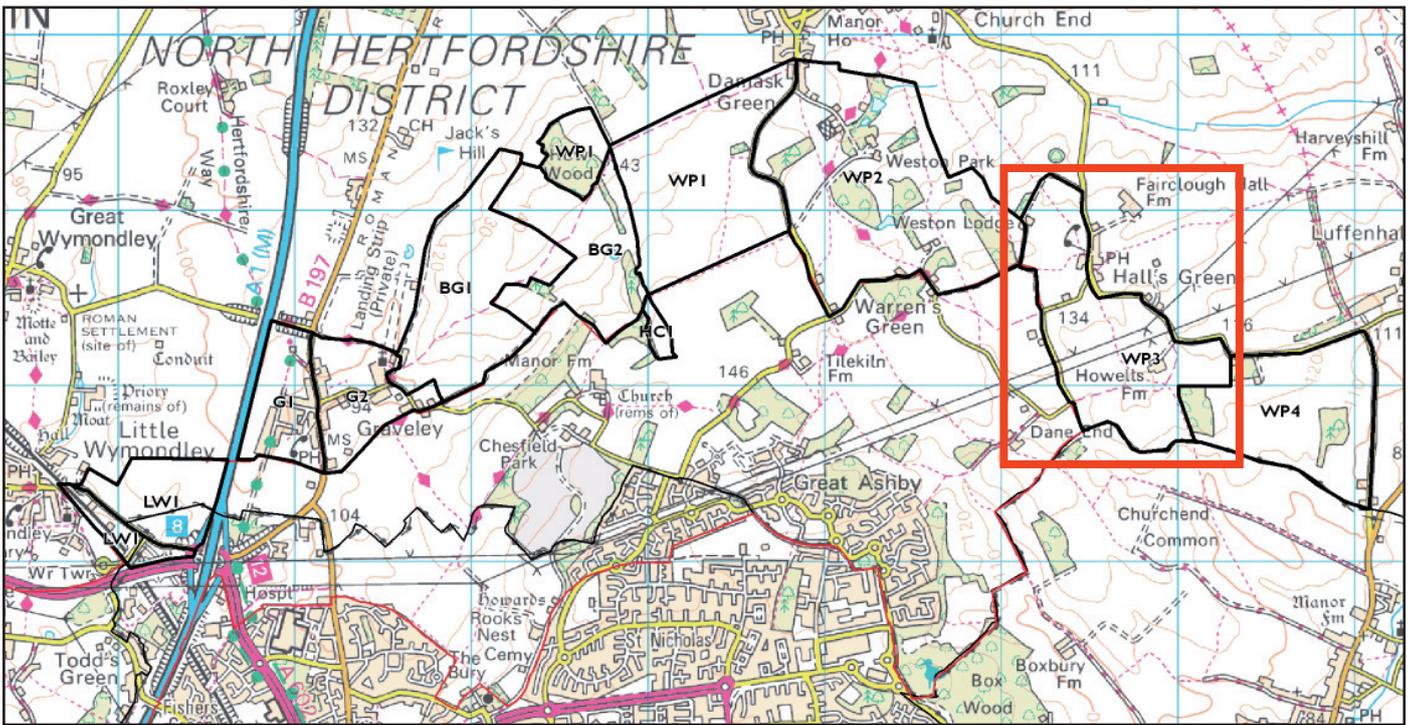
Criteria	Comments and sensitivity judgement
	the lightly settled character.

COMMENTARY ON BOUNDARIES

- 4.64. The SNAP boundary is consistent with the southern edge of the parkland landscape of Weston Park. Provided an appropriate landscape buffer was incorporated to this edge and existing mature woodland (within the SNAP area) to this boundary was retained, to maintain the setting to Weston Park, this boundary is considered appropriate. In view of the sensitivity of the landscape of Weston Park itself, it is suggested that landscape unit WP2 is omitted from the area of search for sites for development after 2026, e.g. that development could not be accommodated in this landscape unit.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND LANDSCAPE GUIDANCE

- 4.65. Guidance in relation to this landscape unit relates to conservation and ongoing management of the parkland landscape to maintain its historic landscape character. Also to conserve Weston Park, associated estate landscape and good levels of footpath access as an integral part of the green infrastructure network. Any landscape structure planting planned outside of the landscape unit as part of mitigation for development elsewhere and adjacent to the boundaries with WP2 should seek to conserve and respect any 'designed views' which form part of the landscape of Weston Park. Such views could include from the long sweeping carriage drive and expanse of less wooded parkland to the west of the house, although it was not possible to check these on site.



1. Context and relationship with adjacent landscape units
2. Landscape Unit
3. Landscape structure creates framed views
4. Part of the distinctive green lane network which crosses the landscape

2



3



4

Land north of Stevenage
Landscape unit WP3:
Site location and characteristics



LANDSCAPE CHARACTER UNIT: WP3

BASELINE

Location

- 4.66. Landscape character unit WP3 is located to the north east of Stevenage, with the hamlet of Halls Green falling on the north eastern boundary. The historic villages of Weston and Luffenhall lie to the north west and north east respectively. The estate parkland associated with Weston Park forms the setting to the landscape unit to the north. The eastern and western boundaries are partly formed by the network of narrow winding lanes and paths. Pylons dissect the unit east west and form prominent features within the landscape. The greater part of the unit comprises mainly arable farmland with surrounding patches of woodland adding to the landscape structure.

LCA Context

National
NCA 86: <i>South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland</i>
Regional
The unit lies largely within the <i>Wooded Plateau Farmlands</i> landscape type with small areas (to the northern, eastern and southern boundaries) within the <i>Wooded Chalk Valleys</i> landscape type (valley heads only).
Local (District)
Area 220: <i>Weston Park</i> Key characteristics from the Landscape Character Assessment are given below: A plateau landform largely under arable cultivation covered by extensive patches of woodland. A network of lanes thread through a historic field boundary pattern and link scattered farmsteads. Area 221: <i>Upper Beane Valley Tributaries</i> (small area in the north) A bowl like landform characterised by underlying chalk geology. Steep sloping chalk valley sides are incised by watercourses. Fields are medium to large scale and of an irregular pattern. The character area is sparsely settled with the area largely under arable cultivation, with scattered hedgerows, waterside trees and small blocks of relict ancient woodland contributing to the landscape structure.

Summary description of the landscape unit

- 4.67. This is a gently rolling medium to large scale arable landscape with an intact landscape structure associated with intact field boundary hedgerows and the historic and cultural influence of the Weston Park Estate to the north west. Views are filtered and enclosed by extensive patches of woodland and the undulating landform. Scattered farms in the local vernacular of red brick and weatherboard are distinctive.

Policy context and designations

- 4.68. There no landscape or nature conservation designations within the unit although directly to the east of the landscape unit are Hick’s Grove and Howell’s Wood, both District Wildlife Sites.

Landscape functions

- 4.69. This is a productive arable landscape which also forms part of the setting to Weston Park.

SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS

Criteria	Comments and sensitivity judgement
Landscape	
Landscape scale	A medium to large scale landscape which is enclosed by a relatively intact field boundary pattern. Due to the sense of enclosure and intricate landscape pattern this is judged to have a moderate-high sensitivity to residential development.
Landform and topography	A gently undulating landscape with little topographic variation, ranging from 120m AOD to 130m AOD. Northern areas around Halls Green are more plateau like but slowly drop away to the dry valley landform in the adjacent area to the south. The sensitivity to residential development is judged to be moderate-low .
Landscape pattern and complexity	Despite extensive arable cultivation the landscape has retained a structured and intact field boundary pattern which is enclosed by adjoining woodland blocks, and crossed by green lanes and an extensive path network. Due to the complex and varied landscape structure the sensitivity to residential development is judged to be moderate-high .
Cultural pattern and time depth	The Historic Landscape Characterisation identifies the medium to large scale field pattern at the core of the landscape unit to be the result of pre 18 th Century Enclosure. Pockets of 20 th Century Enclosure

Criteria	Comments and sensitivity judgement
	<p>characterise areas in the north and south. There is a strong estate influence associated with Weston Park, and one of the estate lodges lies on the north western boundary of the landscape unit. Due to the strong influence of Weston Park and intact boundary structure the sensitivity to residential development is judged to be moderate-high.</p>
Settlement and human influences	<p>Small scale scattered settlement is present throughout the landscape unit. The hamlet of Halls Green lies on the north eastern edge with Howells Farm and Irongate Farm falling within the unit. The farm buildings (of which some are listed) largely retain a traditional vernacular and are well integrated into the wider landscape structure, screened by woodland blocks and glimpsed through the trees. Due to the dispersed small scale settlement the sensitivity to residential development is assessed as high.</p>
Skyline character	<p>Skylines are well wooded and of a parkland character to the north west with parkland exotics and glimpses of The Holy Trinity Church at Weston. The gently rolling landform to the north east encloses views. Other than pylons to the south and occasional glimpses of settlement the skylines are undeveloped in character, which results in a high sensitivity to residential development.</p>
Perceptual qualities (colour/texture, light/reflection, movement, tranquillity, remoteness)	<p>There is a strong sense of remoteness despite relative proximity to Stevenage and surrounding scattered settlements and adjoining roads. This is a textured landscape with a varied landscape mosaic due to tree cover, intact field boundary hedges and historic character, this results in a high sensitivity to residential development.</p>
Visual	
Visual relationships and views	<p>Views to the south west are dominated by wooded skylines and pylons. The settlement edge of Stevenage at Great Ashby to the south of the landscape unit can be glimpsed through the tree cover. To the north, views are characterised by wooded skylines interspersed with glimpses of gabled rooftops associated with scattered farmsteads and Weston Park. The northern areas of the landscape unit are more elevated and there is a visual connection with the steeper rolling chalk slopes to the north east.</p>

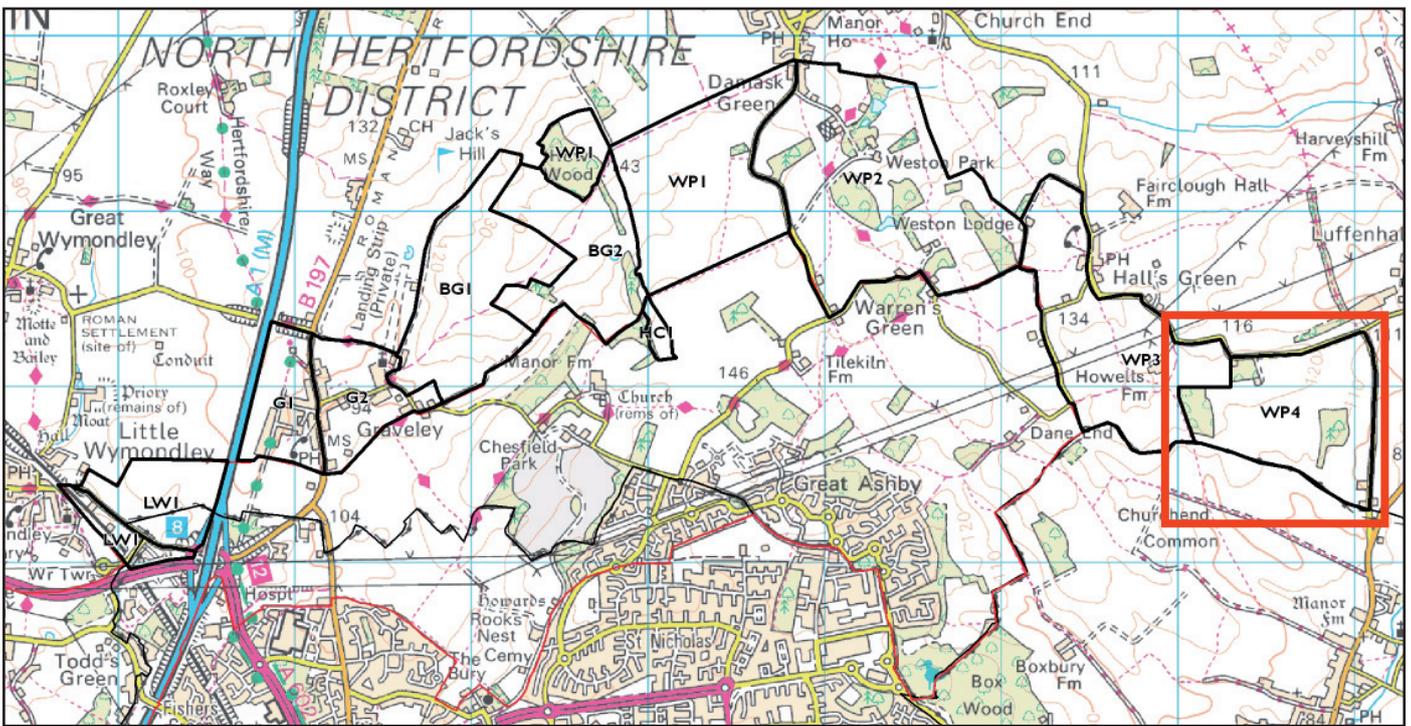
Criteria	Comments and sensitivity judgement
	Within the elevated and more historic northern areas there is judged to be a high sensitivity to residential development, with lower lying and more developed southern areas judged to have a moderate sensitivity to residential development in visual terms.
Level of intervisibility	Despite the well wooded character of the unit there is a level of intervisibility with adjoining areas, notably to the north from the elevated plateau. Due to the elevated aspect within the unit there is judged to be a high sensitivity to residential development in terms of intervisibility.
Overall landscape sensitivity	There is judged to be a moderate-high sensitivity to residential development within this landscape unit in view of the intact and varied landscape structure, elevated position, sparse settlement pattern and the unit's role in forming the wider setting of the Weston Park estate.

COMMENTARY ON BOUNDARIES

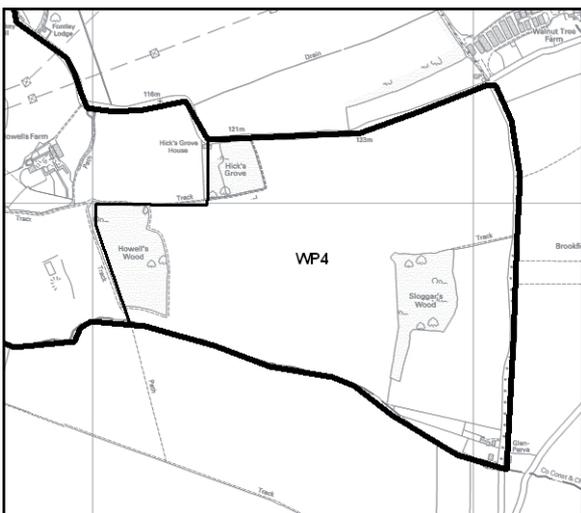
- 4.70. The eastern boundary of the SNAP area defines the western boundary of this landscape unit. Whilst it is judged appropriate, there is the potential for limited expansion to the south eastern part of the landscape unit. This is due to the visual containment and continuity of landscape character at this point. The northern and north eastern parts of the boundary should remain as drawn, to ensure a limit on development and therefore in retaining a strong rural, historic and undeveloped character to the north, maintaining separation with Hall's Green to the east.
- 4.71. It is therefore recommended to omit the northern and eastern parts of this landscape unit from the area of search to 2031, as its elevated position and proximity to Weston Park result in a high sensitivity.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND LANDSCAPE GUIDANCE

- 4.72. Development should largely be avoided within this landscape unit, to maintain separation with Hall's Green. The southern part of the landscape unit (south of the pylon line) may have potential to accommodate a small amount of development within the strong Enclosure landscape structure adjoining the SNAP area at this point. The focus should be on reinforcing and conserving the existing landscape structure as part of the green infrastructure network and as a template to visually assimilate any development in this part of the landscape unit. An appropriate green space buffer should be maintained to Howells Wood to the east, to conserve rural setting and sense of openness at this point.



1



2

1. Context and relationship with adjacent landscape units
2. Landscape Unit
3. Expansive views across the landscape to the north
4. Large scale arable landscape and occasional woodland blocks within the landscape unit



3



4

Land north of Stevenage
 Landscape unit WP4:
 Site location and characteristics



LANDSCAPE CHARACTER UNIT: WP4

BASELINE

Location

- 4.73. Landscape character unit WP4 is located to the northeast of the SNAP area and to the north of the boundary with East Hertfordshire District. The River Beane follows a north-south course, to the east of the landscape unit. The landscape unit forms a large arable field with an elevated, ‘domed’ landform, and fringed by woodland blocks to the south. It abuts the more intact and ‘historic’ landscape of WP3 to the west, and extensive views are available to the rolling landscape to the north and east, from within the landscape unit. The linear village of Walkern lies approximately 500m to the south east of the edge of the landscape unit.

LCA Context

National
NCA 86: <i>South Suffolk and North Essex Clayland</i>
Regional: East of England Regional Landscape Framework
The majority of the landscape unit lies within the <i>Wooded Chalk Valleys</i> landscape type, with the western part within the <i>Wooded Plateau Farmlands</i> landscape type.
Local: North Hertfordshire and Stevenage LCA
<p>Area 220 <i>Weston Plateau Parklands</i>:</p> <p>Relevant characteristics include plateau landform, arable landcover interspersed with extensive broadleaf woodland cover, an interlocking pattern of lanes and curvilinear field boundaries, and a small scale, historic settlement pattern. Historic parklands such as Weston Park and associated estate landscape features are a distinctive characteristic.</p> <p>Area 39 <i>Middle Beane Valley</i> (small area in the south east)</p> <p>Relevant characteristics include undulating topography and a sense of openness, and expansive views from the Beane Valley, with a strong sense of remoteness in spite of the proximity to Stevenage.</p>

Summary description from North Hertfordshire and Stevenage LCA

- 4.74. The landscape unit comprises a single large arable field, including three smaller rectilinear mixed woodland blocks. It displays a rolling landform of elevated aspect, with the highest point (120m AOD) found near the western boundary. The land falls gently eastwards towards the River Beane which flows into the adjacent East

Hertfordshire District. The landscape unit is bounded by the rural road network to two sides and has extensive views over the open, rolling landscape to the north.

Policy context and designations

- 4.75. All of the mature woodlands within the landscape unit are designated as District Wildlife Sites.

Landscape functions

- 4.76. The primary landscape functions are those of productive landscape (arable farmland) and in maintaining a sense of separation between Stevenage and the village of Walkern to the east.

SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS

Criteria	Comments and sensitivity judgement
Landscape	
Landscape scale	A landscape of very large scale, with a relative lack of enclosure, except for the mature woodland blocks in the southern and western parts of the landscape unit. Sensitivity to residential development, in terms of landscape scale, is judged to be high .
Landform and topography	Landform is that of a gently undulating, elevated plateau – moderate-low sensitivity to residential development.
Landscape pattern and complexity)	A simple, largely open landscape. With reference to the HLC, much of the landscape pattern is the legacy of 18 th -19 th Century Enclosure, with some earlier Enclosure patterns evident between Hick's Grove and Howell's Wood, in the western part of the landscape unit. Boundary loss is a characteristic of parts of the unit, particularly in the eastern section (the result of 20 th Century agricultural intensification). Sensitivity to residential development is therefore judged to be moderate-low in terms of scale and complexity.
Cultural pattern and time depth	Other than the enclosure fieldscapes and the woodland blocks, there is little sense of time depth. Sensitivity to residential development is judged to be moderate-low .
Settlement and human influences	A unsettled and relatively remote rural landscape (with the village of Walkern to the south east tucked into the Beane Valley, largely out of sight). As such sensitivity to residential development is judged to be

Criteria	Comments and sensitivity judgement
	high in terms of settlement and human influences.
Skyline character	The skyline is largely open, with the exception of the framing provided by the woodlands in the southern part of the unit. Skylines are ‘undeveloped’ throughout, with the exception of the pylon line visible in the middle distance to the north and north east of the landscape unit. Sensitivity to residential development is therefore judged to be high in terms of skyline character.
Perceptual qualities (colour/texture, light/reflection, movement, tranquillity, remoteness)	A relatively repetitive large scale arable landscape, with little sense of textural variation, other than the mixed woodland blocks within the unit. The landscape of the unit has a strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity, with little evidence of the aural presence of the A1(M). The sense of remoteness and tranquillity elevates the sensitivity of the landscape unit to residential development to moderate-low in terms of perceptual qualities.
Visual	
Visual relationships and views	From within the landscape unit, wide views are available across the dry valley to the north, and to the Beane Valley and the landscapes beyond, within East Hertfordshire District, to the east. Sensitivity to residential development is judged to be high in visual terms.
Level of intervisibility	Within this landscape unit, there is extensive intervisibility with adjacent landscapes, as described above in relation to ‘visual relationships and views’ – high sensitivity to residential development.
Overall landscape sensitivity	Overall landscape sensitivity to residential development is judged to be high , in view of the nature of visual relationships and the scale of the landscape.

COMMENTARY ON BOUNDARIES

- 4.77. Given the importance of this landscape in maintaining rural separation between Stevenage and the village of Walkern, we consider that the boundary should be redrawn to either exclude the landscape unit or otherwise drawn to the eastern most edge of Hick’s Grove woodland, where development could more readily be

contained in visual terms. This would still maintain a sense of separation between the settlements of Stevenage and Walkern.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND LANDSCAPE GUIDANCE

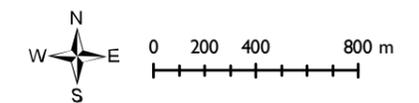
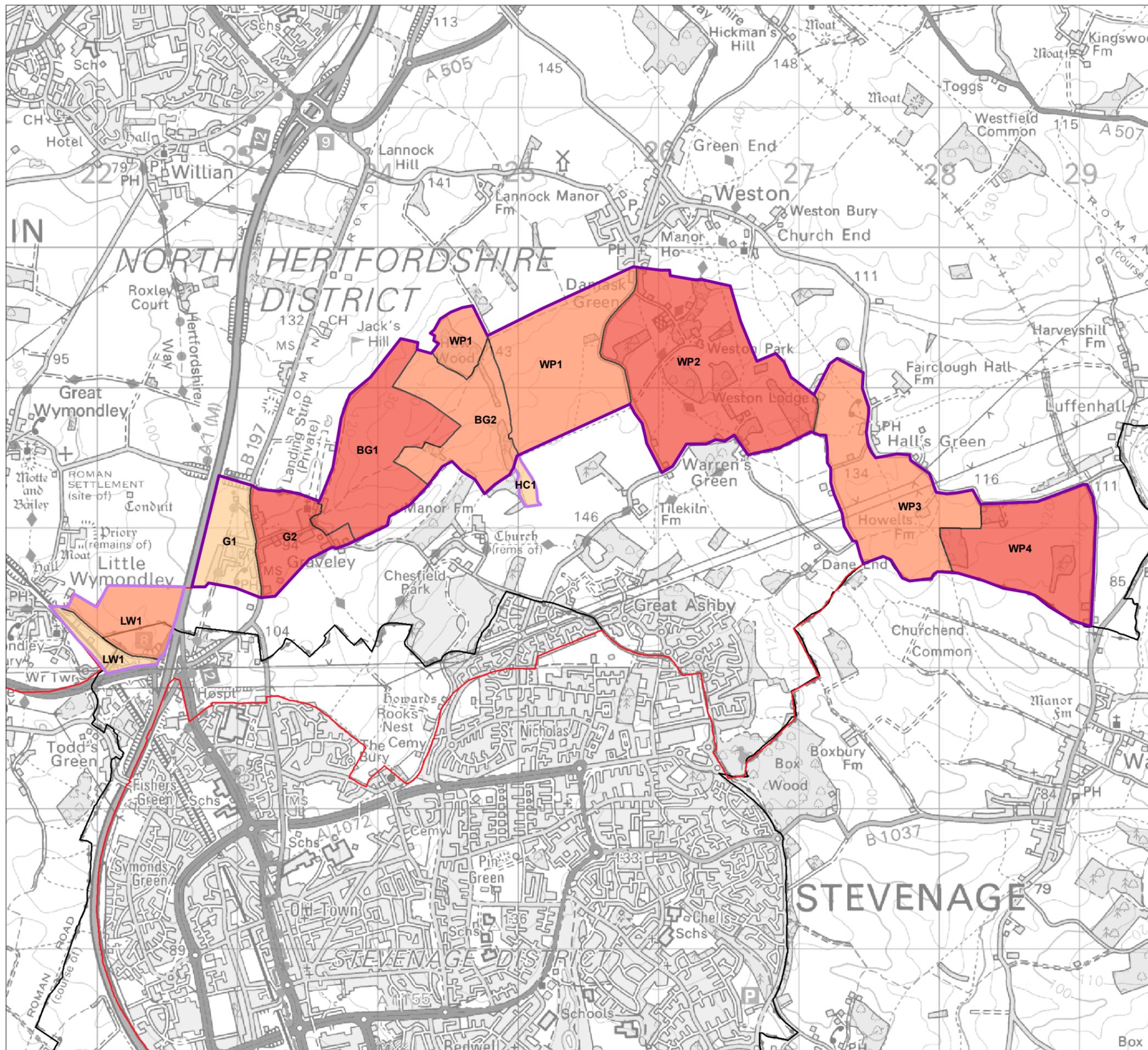
- 4.78. With the exception of the more visually contained western part of the unit (which is framed by woodland and hedgerows), development should not be considered in this predominantly open and elevated location. However the westernmost part of the landscape unit is still significantly detached from the SNAP and Stevenage, and as such development should only be considered after all other locations within the SNAP and wider area of search have been explored and tested through the spatial planning process. Within the western part of the landscape unit, the primary aims should be to contain any future development behind and within the mature woodland blocks on site, to minimise the perception of development from within the wider rural landscape to the north. Such woodland may also have the potential for bat habitat (subject to further investigations). Any development should therefore have appropriate stand off from the woodland edge and avoid lighting to the settlement edge (which would also assist in conserving dark night skies). Provision of new landscape structure to the south of the woodland at Hick's Grove as mitigation for development would also create the potential for enhancement of landscape character (historic fieldscapes), and biodiversity/connectivity, contributing to green infrastructure objectives.

Stevenage Landscape Sensitivity Study

Figure 4.2: Landscape Sensitivity Analysis

Key

-  Study area
 -  Sites within SNAP for Landscape Sensitivity Study
 -  SNAP boundary
 -  Local Authority boundaries
- Landscape Sensitivity
-  High
 -  Moderate - High
 -  Moderate



Source: Land Use Consultants, North Herts

Date: 02/02/2010
Revision:



5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1. This section sets out the conclusions and recommendations in relation to development within land to the north of the SNAP area, in response to the analysis.
- 5.2. The sensitivity analysis presented in the previous section has indicated that a significant part of the study area has a high sensitivity to large scale residential development, in landscape terms. Of a total of ten landscape character units, only three have a moderate sensitivity to development, with four having a moderate-high sensitivity and three having a high sensitivity. Areas which do not have a high sensitivity to residential development would therefore be more appropriate for consideration for development in the first instance. This is subject to the caveat that an appropriate landscape strategy was devised to assimilate development within the landscape and to ensure that it responded to sense of place and respected wider landscape character.
- 5.3. The following areas which have a lower (moderate-high or moderate) sensitivity to residential development have formed the focus for additional study, in terms of an outline landscape masterplanning/‘greenprinting’ exercise (guiding principles for any future development which may occur), which is presented later in this section (**Figures 5.1-5.4**).
- LWI
 - HCI
 - WPI
 - WP3
- 5.4. It should be noted that one landscape unit has been omitted from this exercise. This is GI (due to the desire by NHDC to maintain the rural setting of Graveley Village). A small part of BG2 adjacent to the SNAP area has been considered for the exercise (shown on **Figure 5.2**), in view of the visual containment of this specific location and relationship to future development. However the majority of landscape unit BG2 to the north would otherwise be problematic in relation to locating development (in terms of isolation and lack of relationship to existing development or other development proposed as part of SNAP).

‘GREENPRINTING’ – APPROACH

- 5.5. LUC have defined ‘greenprinting’ as follows:

A landscape and environment led approach to spatial planning, where landscape assets are considered from the first, to guide growth as part of advance mitigation for such change.

- 5.6. This therefore responds not only to the Green Infrastructure Plan but also to the landscape sensitivity analysis and supporting guidance. To give an indication of net developable area and to assist NHDC in determining wider environmental capacity as part of the spatial planning process, a green print diagram has been generated for

each of the areas with more development potential, to show landscape opportunities and constraints and indicative capacity in terms of residual/net residential area. The rationale behind these (assumptions and caveats) is presented below, with the diagrams shown overleaf. Conclusions in relation to the SNAP boundary are presented at the end of this section, together with an annotated plan (**Figure 5.5**) showing suggested alterations to the SNAP boundary (and associated boundary justifications) where additional housing can or cannot be accommodated. These are based on the field survey findings as expressed in the sensitivity analysis at section 4 and work developed for the greenprinting exercise.

Greenprinting – rationale, assumptions and caveats

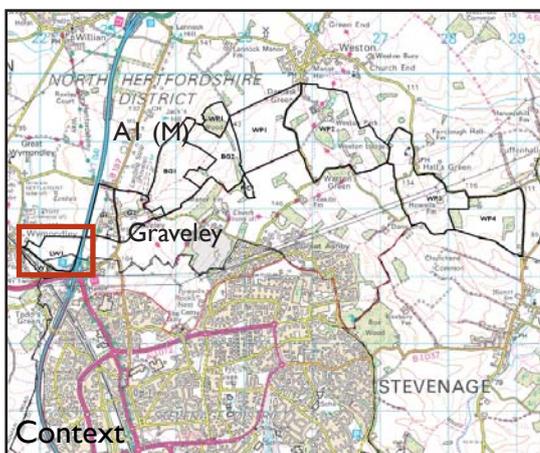
- 5.7. The annotated plans overleaf have been developed in relation to the sensitivity analysis and resulting landscape guidance. High level landscape design principles specific to each relevant landscape unit and which respond to key points in the sensitivity analysis are also shown on the plans. These principles expand on the following ‘generic rules’ which were used in drawing up the plans.
- A landscape corridor of up to 20 metres depth has been allowed to development edges in proximity to mature hedgerow trees, to allow for the root protection area (RPA) of such trees. This would however be subject to tree surveys (to BS 5837:2005) on site, supported by a Tree Constraints Plan, to determine the extent of RPA required, on a site by site basis.
 - A 20 metre depth is also appropriate given the depth of some of the mature tree belts in the landscape to the north of Stevenage. Such a depth would also allow for varied native planting types and management regimes (such as woodland with understorey, coppice and coppice with standards) to respond to subtleties of landscape character and to provide visual mitigation, particularly in relation to winter views. As such 20 metres is judged to be the minimum width in terms of landscape character and visual foiling potential.
 - This width would also allow for the accommodation of GI links/shared use movement corridors, where a minimum 2.4 metre wide surface would be required, plus verge.
 - Net development area takes into account this stand off to development edges and to mature vegetation within the sites themselves, as well as PROWs/movement corridors to retain.
 - The plans shown overleaf are indicative only and have not considered finer grain urban design issues, other than very broad principles. As such they show the landscape framework within which development will fit, rather than any indicative development proposal. No consideration has been given to detailed form or detailed landscape architectural expression of developable areas to deliver the landscape guidance (these are considered in outline in a separate scoping paper).
 - Site constraints such as ancient woodland, floodplain (not applicable in this area) and pylon lines/associated easements have been avoided. In light of health and

safety considerations, land under pylons has either been suggested as part of the green infrastructure network, or otherwise remaining in agricultural use.

- Detailed site investigations will be needed in relation to habitats, to determine appropriate distances from development edges or design guidance to respond to sensitive/protected species such as bats. This may have further implications for ultimate development capacity.

Figure 5.1 LW1: Landscape opportunities

1. Reinforce and extend landscape buffer between Wymondley Hall and existing woodland to the north (enhanced connectivity).
2. Ensure development is concentrated on lower slopes. Development forms an extension of Little Wymondley village.
3. Proposed relocation of allotments to create more sustainable urban form and positive green edge.
4. Protection of existing vegetation and creation of open greenspace and GI linkage.
5. Conserve and reinforce Enclosure landscape structure.



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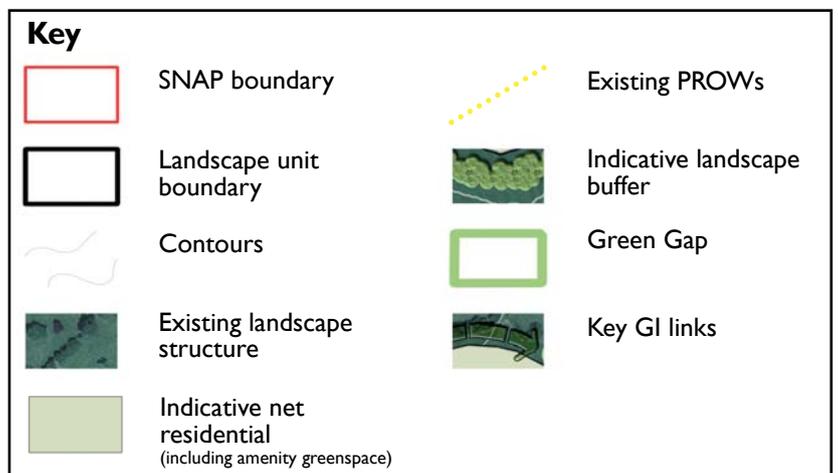
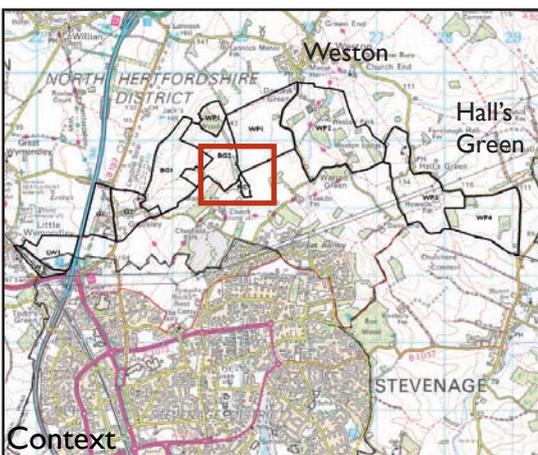
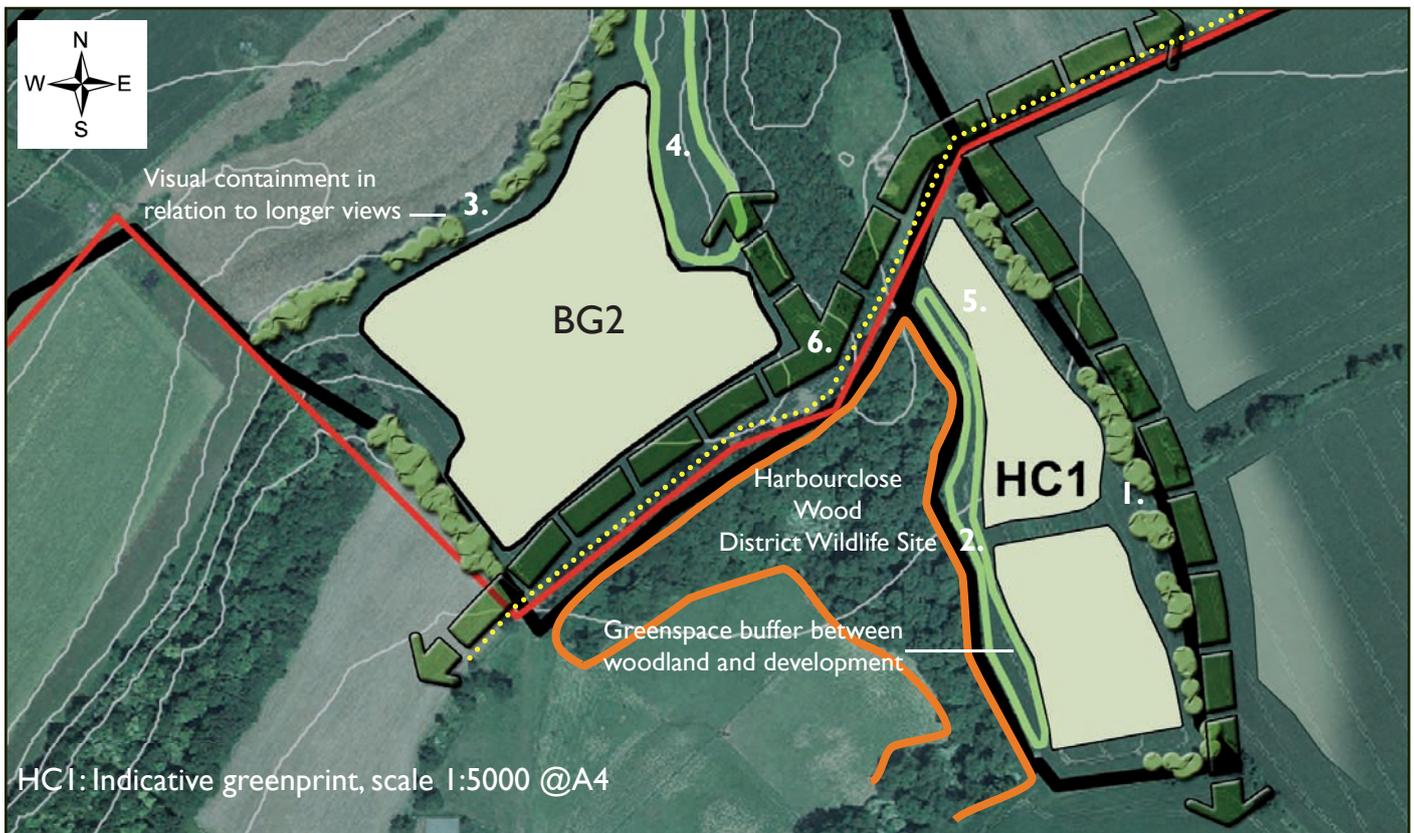


Figure 5.2 HCI/BG2: Landscape opportunities

1. Reinforcement of existing vegetation to provide visual mitigation in relation to Weston Park and creation of key GI link between Great Ashby to the south and existing footpath networks.
2. Minimum 20m standoff between development and Harbourclose Wood (in relation to tree root protection area and buffer for habitat).
3. Reinforced native landscape structure to provide visual mitigation (min 20m) in relation to views to the scarp from within Baldock Gap.
4. Green wedge- views down dry valley.
5. Concentrate development to southern part of site, reducing development density to the northern edge.
6. Maintain connectivity for pedestrians/cyclists between parts of new development.



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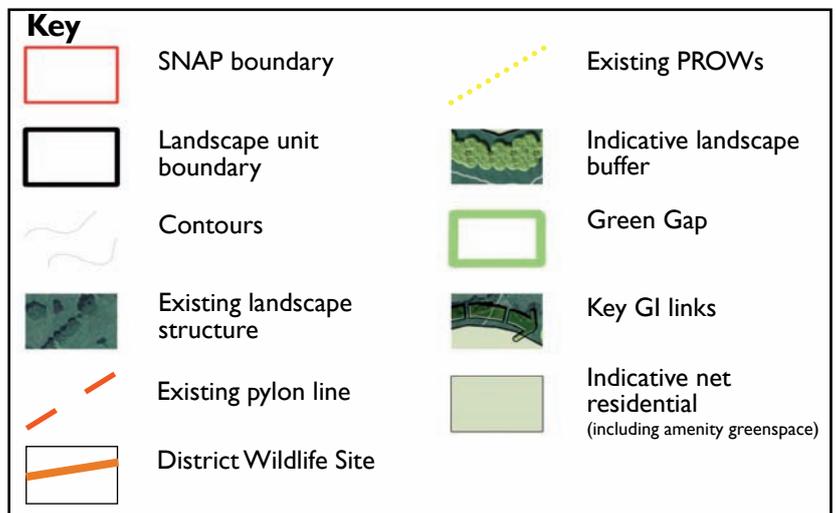
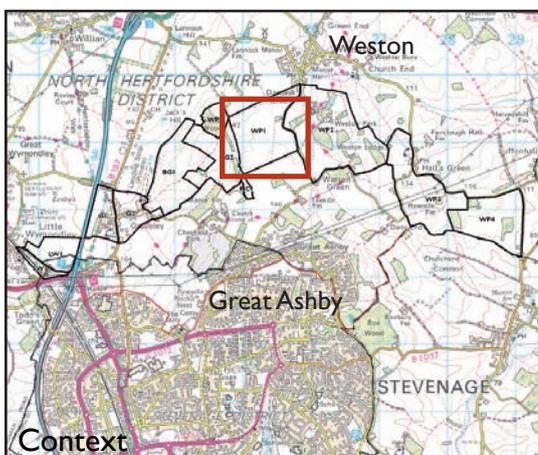
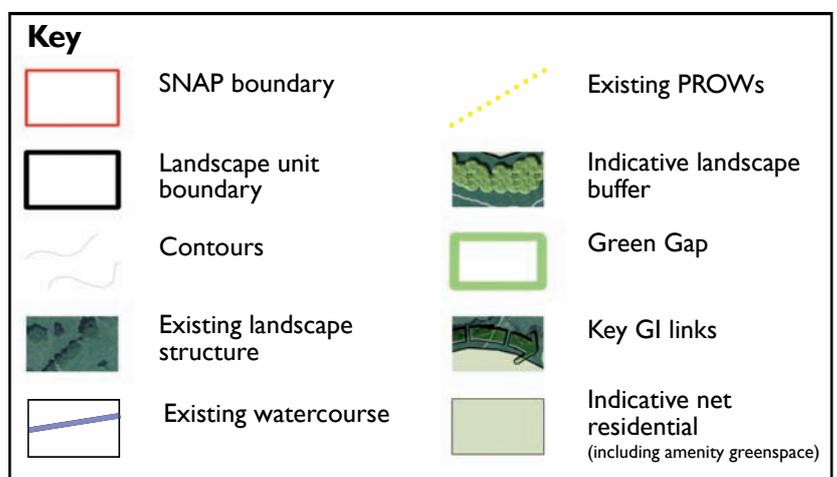


Figure 5.3 WPI: Landscape opportunities

1. Conserve and enhance existing landscape structure of hedgerows and mature hedgerow trees in order to provide a landscape buffer between development and views from Great Ashby to the south.
2. Green swathes add to GI network creating links between existing footpaths, and affording potential for multifunctionality e.g. landscape and visual mitigation and biodiversity enhancement.
3. Development should be dispersed in character, responding to 'parkland' character of wider landscape and reduce perception of expansion of Stevenage e.g. reduced development density to edge.
4. Maintain semi natural greenspace buffer to Weston Park.



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Conclusions in relation to the SNAP boundary

5.8. **Figure 5.5** overleaf sets out suggested alterations to the SNAP boundary. This responds to points made in the sensitivity analysis at chapter 4, to assist NHDC in planning development between 2026 and 2031. The main points in relation to potential boundary alterations are as follows:

- Landscape units BGI and BG2. Use the northern edge of Ledgeside Plantation (hanger woodland) as the SNAP boundary, so that development does not breach topography or mature landscape structure at this point (ref paragraphs 4.32 and 4.41 of the sensitivity analysis). This results in a 12.34 ha contraction of the SNAP area at this point.
- Landscape unit WPI. Extension of the SNAP area boundary northwards to the next field boundary, in light of the level of visual containment and commonality of landscape character in this area (ref paragraph 4.57 of the sensitivity analysis). This results in a 52.40 ha expansion of the SNAP area at this point. This considers gross footprint including landscape structure (existing and proposed) and any amenity green space which may be provided in relation to development. With reference to the conclusions reached in relation to landscape unit WPI in Chapter 4, a reduced housing density (using the 'parkland' or aspirational housing model described at paragraph 4.58) should be used to the edge of future development, to secure landscape assimilation through a permeable landscape edge.
- Landscape unit WP3: Small extension of the SNAP boundary to the south east (based on visual containment and similarity in landscape character terms, but maintaining rural character to the north, and sense of separation with Hall's Green – ref paragraph 4.70 of the sensitivity analysis). This results in a 22.14 ha expansion of the SNAP area at this point.

Stevenage Landscape Sensitivity Study

Figure 5.5: SNAP Boundary - Suggested Modifications

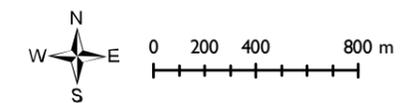
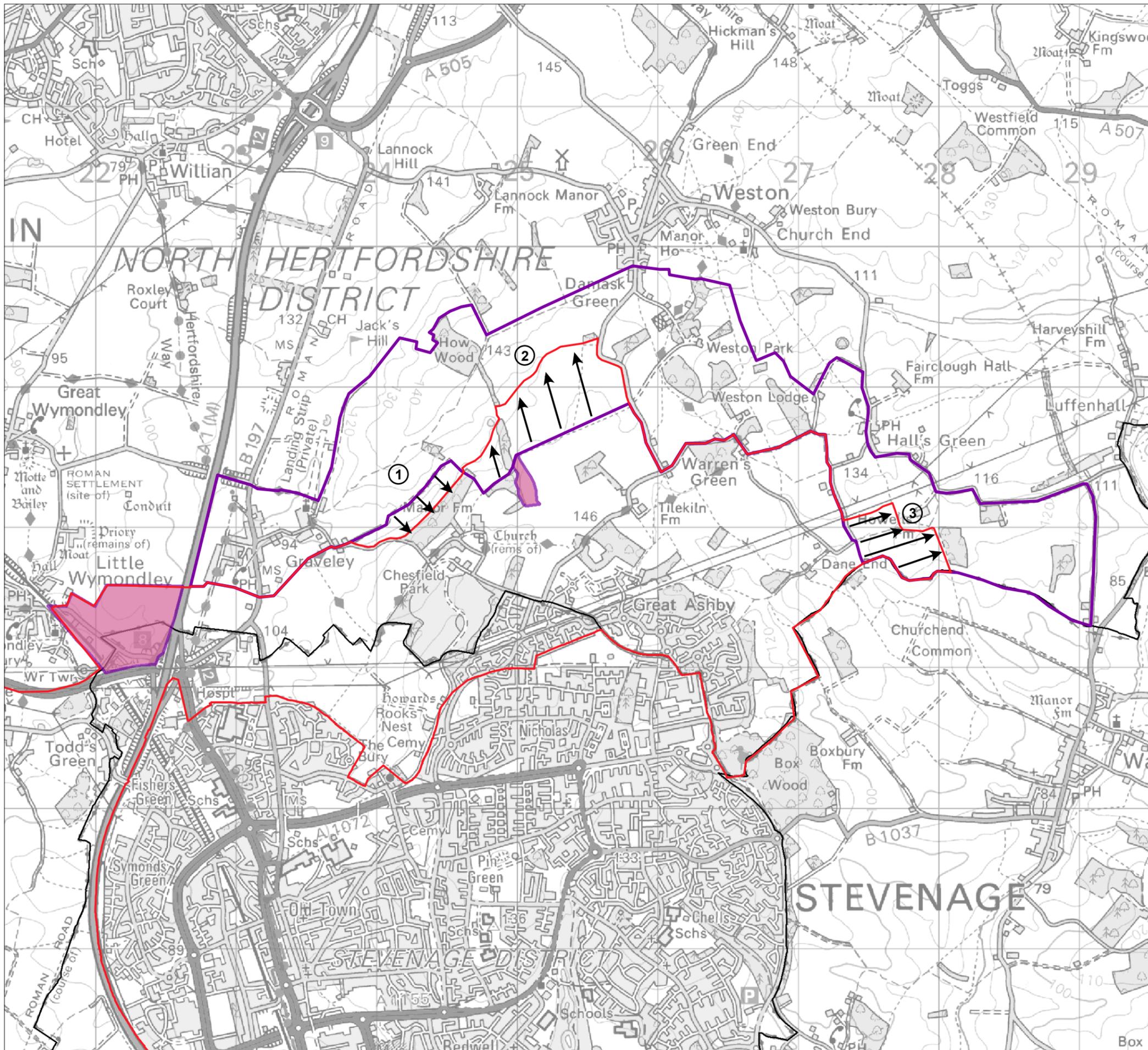
Key

-  Suggested modifications to the SNAP boundary
-  Study area
-  Sites within SNAP for Landscape Sensitivity Study
-  Local Authority boundaries

Suggested modifications to the SNAP boundary
 1) Draw boundary back to edge of Ledge Side Plantation (provides good visual edge / containment to future development in SNAP)

2) Potential to expand SNAP boundary northwards as Enclosure fieldscapes are of similar character / level of visual containment north and south of existing boundary

3) Potential for small eastern expansion to SNAP boundary, due to field patterns and visual containment



Source: Land Use Consultants, North Herts

Date: 02/02/2010
 Revision:



APPENDIX I: Field survey form

4801 LAND NORTH OF STEVENAGE – FIELD SURVEY FORM

Date:	Weather:	Photos:
Time:	Surveyors:	
Landscape unit:		
<u>District LCA context:</u> LCA name and number: Key characteristics: Condition (from LCA matrix): Robustness (from LCA matrix): Evaluation (from LCA description):		
Relevant landscape policies/designations:		
Landscape functions:		

Sensitivity analysis		
<i>Criteria (and supporting survey prompts)</i>	<i>Landscape values, comments and judgements</i>	<i>Landscape guidance and opportunities (if applicable)</i>
<i>LANDSCAPE</i>		
<u>Landscape scale:</u> Presence/absence of human scale features Presence or absence of enclosing elements Field pattern, form and size		
<u>Landform:</u> Scarp slopes Ridge and valley U shaped valley Rolling/undulating/flat Level of landform variation Gradient/slope		

Landscape pattern and complexity:

Cultural/time depth:

Fieldscapes

Field pattern/earthworks

Settlement influences

Manors/parkland/estates/parks and gardens

SAMs

Roman roads

Sunken lanes

Landscape structure:

Enclosure pattern

Vegetation types, age and scale, density

Habitats

Colour/texture

Others:

Evidence of geological exposure

Hydrology:

Chalk rivers/streams

Springs

Seasonal winterbourne

<p><u>Landscape pattern and complexity:</u></p> <p><u>Cultural/time depth:</u></p> <p>Fieldscapes</p> <p>Field pattern/earthworks</p> <p>Settlement influences</p> <p>Manors/parkland/estates/parks and gardens</p> <p>SAMs</p> <p>Roman roads</p> <p>Sunken lanes</p> <p><u>Landscape structure:</u></p> <p>Enclosure pattern</p> <p>Vegetation types, age and scale, density</p> <p>Habitats</p> <p>Colour/texture</p> <p><u>Others:</u></p> <p><u>Evidence of geological exposure</u></p> <p><u>Hydrology:</u></p> <p>Chalk rivers/streams</p> <p>Springs</p> <p>Seasonal winterbourne</p>			
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<u>Settlement and human influences:</u> Age of settlement Form, whether nucleated, linear/dispersed Scale Density and massing Materials palette Character of roads Settlement edge			
<u>Skyline character:</u> Open/framed/screened Settled/developed Landmarks			

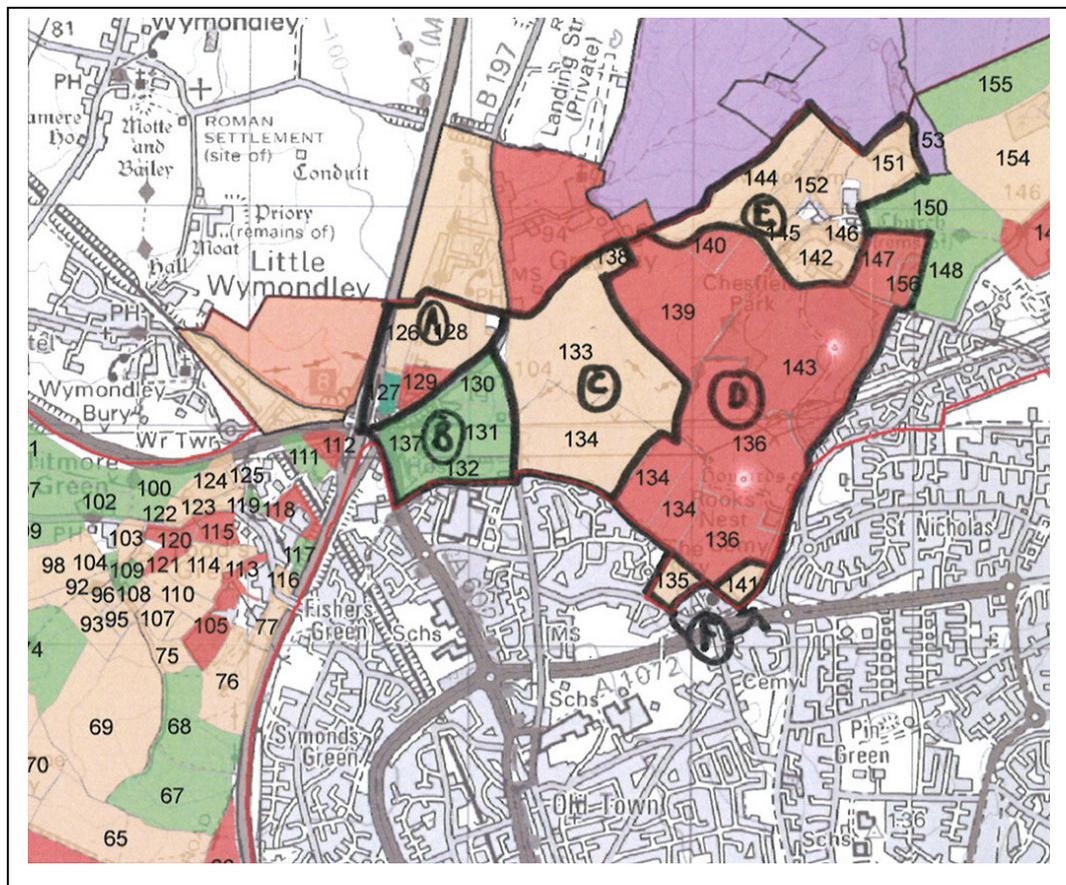
<p><u>Perceptual qualities:</u></p> <p>Colour and texture</p> <p>Light and reflection</p> <p>Movement</p> <p>Tranquillity</p> <p>Remoteness</p> <p>Rarity (from LCA description)</p> <p>Condition/management</p>			
<p><u>Boundaries:</u></p> <p>Appropriateness</p> <p>Relationship to SNAP area/landscape functions</p> <p>Recommendations</p>			

VISUAL			
<p>Visual relationships and views:</p> <p>Nature of views, whether open/expansive, framed, foiled, glimpsed or screened</p> <p>Intervisibility with adjacent landscape units</p>			
<p>Overall sensitivity judgement and comments:</p>			

APPENDIX 2: Findings from the review of earlier NHDC sensitivity analysis

SUMMARY OF REVIEW OF NHDC LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY WORK

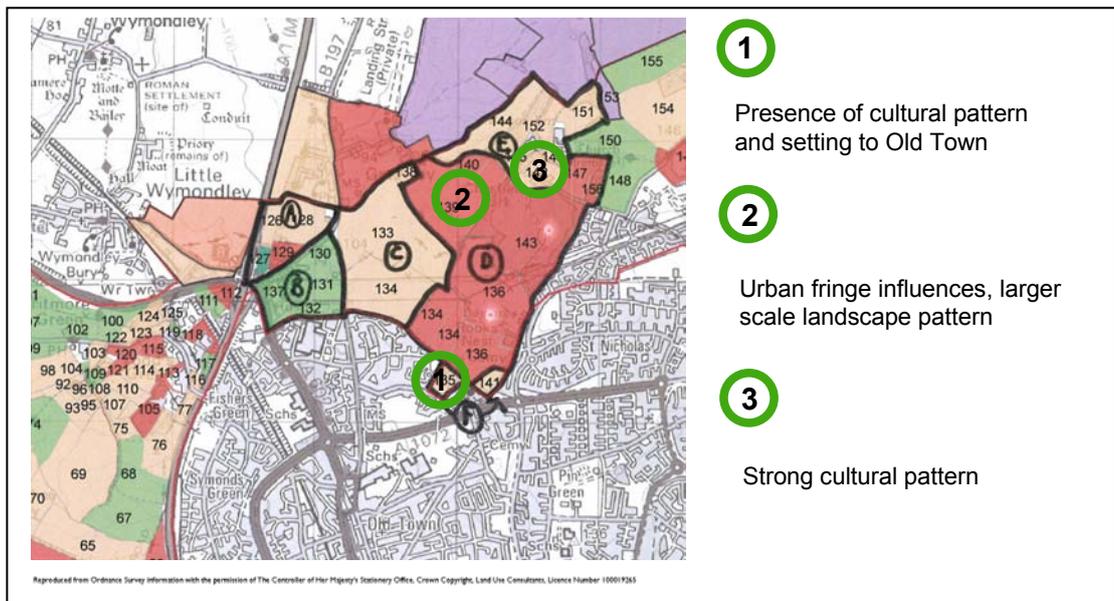
- I. In addition to applying the methodology developed for the Landscape Sensitivity Study for land to the north of Stevenage (January 2010) to two land parcels within the SNAP area (landscape units LWI and HCI), LUC also undertook a review of approximately 15% of sites already surveyed by NHDC, using the new methodology. This review focussed specifically on land parcels within the 'green lung' to the north of Forster Country. Given the difference in scale between the NHDC and LUC studies (the LUC study has used local landscape character units as opposed to individual field parcels), the smaller units of the NHDC study were aggregated into larger parcels of comparable sensitivity, for the purposes of this review. The area of the review and the aggregation of the parcels is shown on the map extract below.



2. The study sites were visited by landscape architects experienced in landscape and visual appraisal, including a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI), on 10th December 2009. The field survey form shown in **Appendix I** was used for assessing the sensitivity of the grouped land parcels.

Key findings

3. Application of LUC's method to the sites within areas A-E shown above demonstrated that the results were largely consistent with the findings reached in the NHDC study.
4. The three key issues where LUC and NHDC judgements were at variance are as follows (described with reference to the map extract below):



- Map point 1 (NHDC land parcel no 135). We consider that landscape sensitivity in this area would be higher than moderate, in view of the relatively intact cultural pattern, the close proximity to Forster Country, and the function of the land parcel in forming part of the visual setting of the medieval Stevenage Old Town.
- Map point 2 (NHDC land parcel no 139). Whilst in close proximity to the intact, small scale and sensitive landscape of Chesfield Park to the east, this land parcels displays a markedly larger landscape scale, due to field boundary loss. A number of edge influences are also present, such as the urban fringe of Stevenage and the aurally discordant A1(M). In our view these reduce the landscape sensitivity of this particular parcel to moderate. However, the high sensitivity of the adjacent land parcels within area D appears correct.
- Map point 3 (NHDC land parcel no 142). We consider that this should have a high rather than moderate sensitivity in view of the intactness of the cultural pattern. This is particularly in relation to the land parcel's function as the setting to Manor Farm and the ruins of St Etheldreda's Church, Chesfield.

