

Cambridge Science Park North

Landscape and Green Belt baseline review

for

Trinity College (CSP) Ltd

Contact:

Simon Neesam
Director

The Landscape Partnership

The Granary
Sun Wharf
Deben Road
Woodbridge
Suffolk, IP12 1AZ

t: 01394 380 509

w: thelandscapepartnership.com

The Landscape Partnership Ltd is a practice of Chartered Landscape Architects, Chartered Ecologists and Chartered Environmentalists, registered with the Landscape Institute and a member of the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment and the Arboricultural Association.

Registered office:

The Landscape Partnership
Greenwood House
15a St Cuthberts Street
Bedford
MK40 3JG

Registered in England No. 2709001

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Executive Summary

Introduction and Purpose of the Study

This Landscape and Green Belt Baseline Review has been prepared by The Landscape Partnership on behalf of Trinity College (CSP) Ltd to inform consideration of a proposed extension to Cambridge Science Park (CSP), referred to as Cambridge Science Park North (CSPN). The Study focuses on land to the north of the A14 and west of Mere Way, between the settlements of Histon and Impington to the west and Milton to the east. Its primary purpose is to establish a robust baseline understanding of landscape character, visual context and Green Belt function, and to provide a high-level appraisal of the potential implications of future development from a landscape and Green Belt perspective.

The Study does not seek to justify the release of Green Belt land in isolation, nor does it replace the need for a detailed Green Belt Assessment or Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) to accompany any future planning application. Instead, it provides evidence-led commentary on how the Site performs against relevant Green Belt purposes, how it relates to the landscape setting of Cambridge and surrounding villages, and how development could be accommodated in a manner that minimises harm while delivering landscape, environmental and recreational benefits.

Site Context and Landscape Baseline

The Site lies within a low-lying fen edge landscape characterised by arable farmland, strong rectilinear field patterns, and a network of mature tree belts, shelterbelts and hedgerows. These landscape features create a relatively contained visual environment, particularly in comparison with more open fen edge landscapes elsewhere to the north and east of Cambridge. The A14 forms a dominant southern boundary, acting as both a physical and perceptual barrier between the Site and the urban edge of Cambridge.

Historically, the landscape has been shaped by a combination of agricultural use, former parkland associated with Impington Hall, 20th-century infrastructure development, and more recent urban fringe uses including the CSP, Milton Park & Ride, landfill and recycling facilities, and market gardening. As a result, the character of the area is influenced by a mix of rural and urban-edge elements, with the A14 in particular introducing noise, movement and visual intrusion into the surrounding countryside.

At the national scale, the Site lies within National Character Area 88: *Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands*, a broadly settled, gently undulating arable landscape. At the district scale, it falls within *Landscape Character Type 2: Fen Edge Chalklands*, and more specifically *Landscape Character Area 2B: Cottenham Fen Edge Claylands*. These assessments identify a landscape that is generally of medium to low sensitivity to development, particularly where strong landscape frameworks exist and where development can be integrated through careful siting, structure planting and the retention of key features.

Landscape Character, Designations and Views

The Study confirms that the Site is not subject to any statutory landscape designations. While it lies adjacent to the Impington St Andrew's Conservation Area, the nearest parts of that designation have already been significantly altered by 20th-century residential development, and the historic core of the Conservation Area is visually and physically separated from the Site by distance and intervening land uses.

In visual terms, the Site is well contained by existing vegetation and landform. There are no key views of Cambridge's historic core, skyline or landmark buildings from

within the Site, nor does the Site form part of any identified key views towards the city. Views into the Site are generally localised and filtered, experienced primarily from the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway, Mere Way public byway, limited sections of Milton Road, and a small number of properties on the edges of Histon and Impington. Longer-distance views are constrained by woodland belts, polytunnels and restored landfill land to the east and north-east.

This visual containment is a defining characteristic of the Site and is a critical factor in understanding its relationship with the wider Green Belt and its capacity to accommodate change without giving rise to widespread or significant visual effects.

The Cambridge Green Belt: Strategic Context

The Cambridge Green Belt was established to maintain the city's compact form, safeguard its historic setting, prevent the coalescence of surrounding settlements, and protect the surrounding countryside from encroachment. National planning policy emphasises the permanence of Green Belt boundaries, while recognising that, in exceptional circumstances, boundaries may be reviewed through plan-making to meet identified development needs.

The Site lies within the Cambridge Green Belt, immediately beyond the A14, which defines the current northern edge of the city. Importantly, the A14 is recognised in multiple evidence base documents as a strong but artificial boundary: while it is effective in containing development, it also creates a harsh and abrupt transition between the urban area and the fen edge landscape to the north. This characteristic is central to analysing the Site's role in Green Belt terms.

The Study draws extensively on national policy, Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), relevant case law, the Cambridge Inner Green Belt Boundary Study (CIGBBS), and the Greater Cambridge Green Belt Assessment (GCGBA). It recognises that there is no single prescribed methodology for Green Belt appraisal, and that professional judgement is required, particularly where large parcels or broad-brush assessments may mask important local variations.

Contribution to Green Belt Purposes and Identification of Grey Belt

A key focus of the Study is the assessment of how the Site contributes to the Green Belt purposes most relevant in the Cambridge context, namely: checking the unrestricted sprawl of the city, preventing the merging of settlements, and preserving the setting and special character of the historic city.

The Study concludes that, while the Site does make a contribution to these purposes, it does not do so strongly when compared with other areas of the Cambridge Green Belt. The containment function of the Green Belt in this location is already largely fulfilled by the A14 corridor. Development beyond this boundary would represent a conscious and planned extension, rather than incremental or uncontrolled sprawl.

In relation to settlement separation, the Site does not form part of a gap between towns, and development would not lead to the merging of Cambridge with other towns. While the Site contributes to the rural setting of Histon, Impington and Milton, the substantial distance between these settlements, combined with existing woodland belts and the proposed retention of extensive green infrastructure, would ensure that their individual identities are preserved.

With regard to the historic setting of Cambridge, the Site has limited visual, physical or experiential connection with the historic core. The Study recognises that development could affect perceptions of the city's overall scale; however, it also

identifies a clear opportunity for development to deliver a more sympathetic and legible transition between the urban edge and the countryside than currently exists.

Applying PPG criteria, the Study concludes that the Site does not strongly contribute to Green Belt purposes a), b) or d), and therefore could be considered to meet the definition of Grey Belt. This does not imply that development should automatically be approved, but it is a material consideration in plan-making and decision-taking.

Assessment of Harm and Effects on the Remaining Green Belt

The Study provides detailed commentary on the assessment of harm associated with releasing parts of the Site from the Green Belt, including critical review of the GCGBA parcel based approach. It identifies limitations in the way harm is categorised in the large outer-area parcels, noting that such assessments can overstate harm by failing to reflect localised urbanising influences, existing containment, and opportunities for mitigation.

When assessed at a site-specific scale, and taking account of the proposed development concept—where built development is largely confined to Parcel 1 and extensive green infrastructure is delivered within Parcel 2—the Study concludes that the overall level of harm associated with releasing land would fall within a Moderate–High category. Importantly, it finds that development of the Site would not fundamentally undermine the ability of the remaining Green Belt to perform its five purposes when considered across the wider plan area.

Openness: Spatial and Visual Considerations

The Study recognises that development would inevitably result in a permanent reduction in spatial openness within the Site itself. However, openness is now widely understood to include both spatial and perceptual dimensions. In this regard, the strong existing landscape framework, combined with careful site planning and substantial new planting and green infrastructure, would significantly reduce the perceived impact of development on visual openness within the wider Green Belt.

Initial appraisal indicates that, once mitigation planting has established, changes to visual openness experienced from publicly accessible locations and neighbouring settlements would be limited. The Study identifies clear design principles to minimise harm, including focusing development in the more enclosed southern parts of the Site, reinforcing existing tree belts, strengthening green corridors such as Mere Way, and creating a country park and buffer between the development and nearby villages.

Conclusions and Strategic Implications

Overall, the Study concludes that the Site occupies a relatively less sensitive part of the Cambridge Green Belt, with characteristics that distinguish it from areas that make a more essential contribution to Green Belt purposes. While acknowledging that development would result in harm, it finds that such harm could be limited, mitigated and balanced by landscape, recreational and environmental enhancements, and by the opportunity to redefine the northern edge of Cambridge in a more positive and coherent manner. The findings demonstrate that, subject to detailed design and further assessment, the Site has the potential to accommodate development without fundamentally undermining the purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt. The Study therefore provides a robust landscape and Green Belt baseline to inform future stages of plan-making, site allocation, and development design, and to support a balanced consideration of exceptional circumstances should these be tested through the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan.

1 Introduction

1.1 The Landscape Partnership has been commissioned by Trinity College (CSP) Ltd to undertake a Landscape and Green Belt Baseline Review [the *Study*] to assess the suitability of extending the existing Cambridge Science Park (CSP) to land to the north of the A14 and west of Mere Way [referred to here as the *Site*].

1.2 The Study sets out the existing baseline conditions; identifies relevant content from supporting evidence base documents, providing commentary as to how it applies to the Site; assesses, at a high level, potential effects of future development; and provides guidance and recommendations regarding suitability, development options to minimise harm, and opportunities to provide mitigation and enhancements, all from a landscape and visual perspective.

1.3 The Study draws upon other reports that set out the need for a mid-tech facility within Cambridge and the concept for its delivery as part of an extension to the CSP. It also takes account of the current vision for the extension, as set out on the website www.cambridgescienceparknorth.co.uk (refer to Plate 1 and 2).

1.4 The proposed site for the extension of CSP – Cambridge Science Park North (CSPN) – is well-connected, being located to the north of the A14 and between the villages of Impington and Milton. The locally approved route for the Waterbeach to Cambridge busway takes a course through the Site, and CSPN may contribute to its delivery, with the potential for a proposed guided busway stop on the site.

1.5 The Bidwells report identifies an area of land to be promoted as CSPN.

1.6 The vision for CSPN is to create a facility surrounded by green space and parkland, that would maintain a permanent green buffer of around 80ha between the new science park and the nearby villages. This green space would be designed to support biodiversity, outdoor learning, and recreation. It could provide new opportunities for walking, relaxing, and enjoying sports and play, connecting seamlessly with existing recreation grounds.

1.7 For the purposes of this review:

- The built element of the proposed CSP expansion is referred to as Parcel 1.
- The green infrastructure with public access to support the CSP expansion is referred to as Parcel 2. This land would provide the associated landscape mitigation and enhancements to support the delivery of the future mid-tech development.

1.8 The extent of Parcels is illustrated on Plate 03.



Plate 01: Extract from www.cambridgescienceparknorth.co.uk (NB: view from west)



Plate 02: Extract from www.cambridgescienceparknorth.co.uk

1.9 In particular, the Study:

- Describes the settlement pattern and character of northern Cambridge and its adjoining settlements, and their relationship with the surrounding landscape
- Identifies relevant planning designations (particularly the Cambridge Green Belt) outlining their connection to the Site's context, the key elements they are intended to safeguard, and how they might be influenced by the anticipated development
- Defines the key landscape features and characteristics of the Site and local landscape, considers how this may change, and provides guidance for retaining key features and characteristics
- Identifies key views, describes the visual influence of the Site and potential future development, and considers how these influences could affect the perceived physical and visual openness of this part of the Green Belt.
- Provides recommendations and guidance on development layout and treatment.

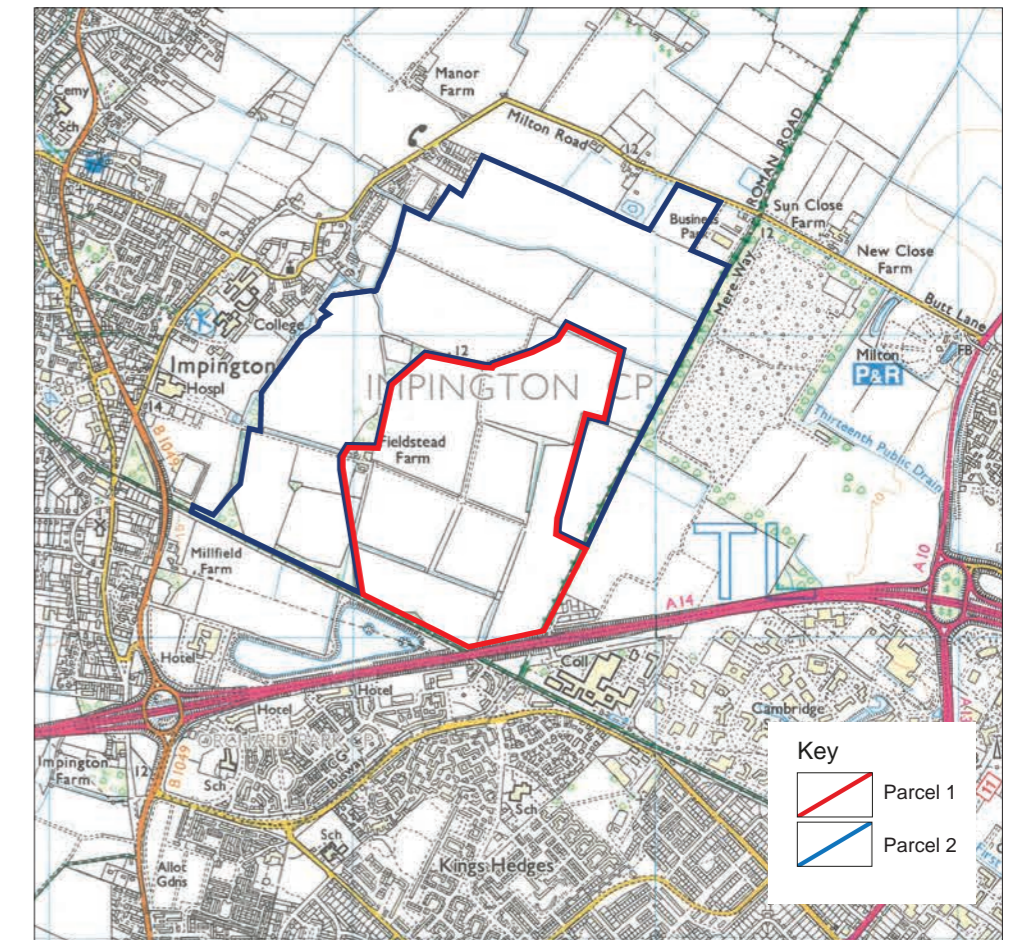


Plate 03: Parcel 1 and Parcel 2

2 Site and local setting

- 2.1 The Site is located to the north of Cambridge and the east of the village of Impington, and approximately 1km west of the village of Milton. It is situated within with the civil parish of Histon and Impington. The Site encompasses an area of arable farmland, with the farm buildings of Farmstead Farm located within the centre of the southern part of the Site.
- 2.2 To the south, a short section of the Site boundary adjoins the A14 corridor, where the road is elevated on an embankment approximately 8m high to accommodate two underpasses. The eastern underpass provides access from the road network around Cambridge Regional College to a travellers site located immediately north of the A14 and directly adjacent to the Site's eastern boundary. It also connects to a public byway [Cambridge 135/1], that follows Mere Way along the eastern edge of the Site.
- 2.3 The A14 underwent widening works and this resulted in the removal of vegetation on the embankment and the formation of a new embankment. The replacement planting scheme is still young and so currently affords no screening properties.
- 2.4 The western underpass accommodates the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway, which links Cambridge to Huntingdon. The busway forms the remainder of the Site's south-western boundary, along which lie three areas of woodland, interspersed with three open sections. Between the busway and the A14 are Cawcutts Lake (a former gravel pit now used as a carp fishing lake by Embryo Angling), the Holiday Inn, and grass fields near Millfield Farm.
- 2.5 South of the A14, between junctions 32 and 33, lie Orchard Park (a high-density residential area), Cambridge Regional College, and the existing Cambridge Science Park. Together, these areas form the northern fringe of Cambridge.
- 2.6 The Site's north-western boundary is shared with the edges of the Histon & Impington Recreation Ground; Spire Cambridge Lea Hospital; grounds of Impington Village College; residential properties along Percheron Close, Woodcock Close, and St Andrew's Way; grounds for informal recreation and camping; and Medivet Impington.
- 2.7 The north-eastern Site boundary is formed by Evolution Business Park and adjoining grass field, and a further a further field of grassland and a small arable field. These lie adjacent to Milton Road, along which are the individual neighbouring residential properties of Green Gates Farm and North View. The large soft fruit growing facilities of Sunclose Farm, with extensive areas of polytunnels, lies to the north of Milton Road.
- 2.8 Along the south-eastern Site boundary is the aforementioned public byway that follows Mere Way, the route of a former Roman road. This is a wide route contained by hedgerows, scrub and woodland. East of Mere Way lies the Blackwell Traveller Site, managed by Cambridgeshire County Council. Adjacent to this are grass fields used for horse grazing by the traveller community. Further north-east is Milton Landfill Site, now largely completed and restored, and the associated Milton Household Recycling Centre accessed off Butt Lane.

- 2.9 The Milton Park & Ride facility is situated to the north-east of the landfill site, adjacent to Butt Lane and the A10, which forms the western boundary of Milton.

Settlement pattern

- 2.10 At the turn of the 19th century, the northern edge of Cambridge was approximately 2.3kms to the south of its current location. The northern edge of the city beyond the collegiate historic core of Cambridge was then defined by dispersed groups of terraced properties, with small holdings extending northwards. The main route leading into Cambridge from the north was Histon Road. This connected Cambridge with the settlements of Histon and Impington to the north. At the end of the 19th century, these were hamlets that were well separated and with their own identity and character. Histon was a nucleated settlement located further to the north-west and set around The Green, whilst Impington was a small collection of scattered well dispersed buildings. These included several key buildings, namely Manor Farm, St Andrew's Church and Impington Hall. The Hall was a country house built by John Pepys in 1579, and lay on the northern edge of Impington Park, which extended to cover land to the south and east. The eastern part of the parkland lay within the western part of Site Parcel 2 with the remainder in what is now the grounds of Impington Village College and Cambridge Lea Hospital.

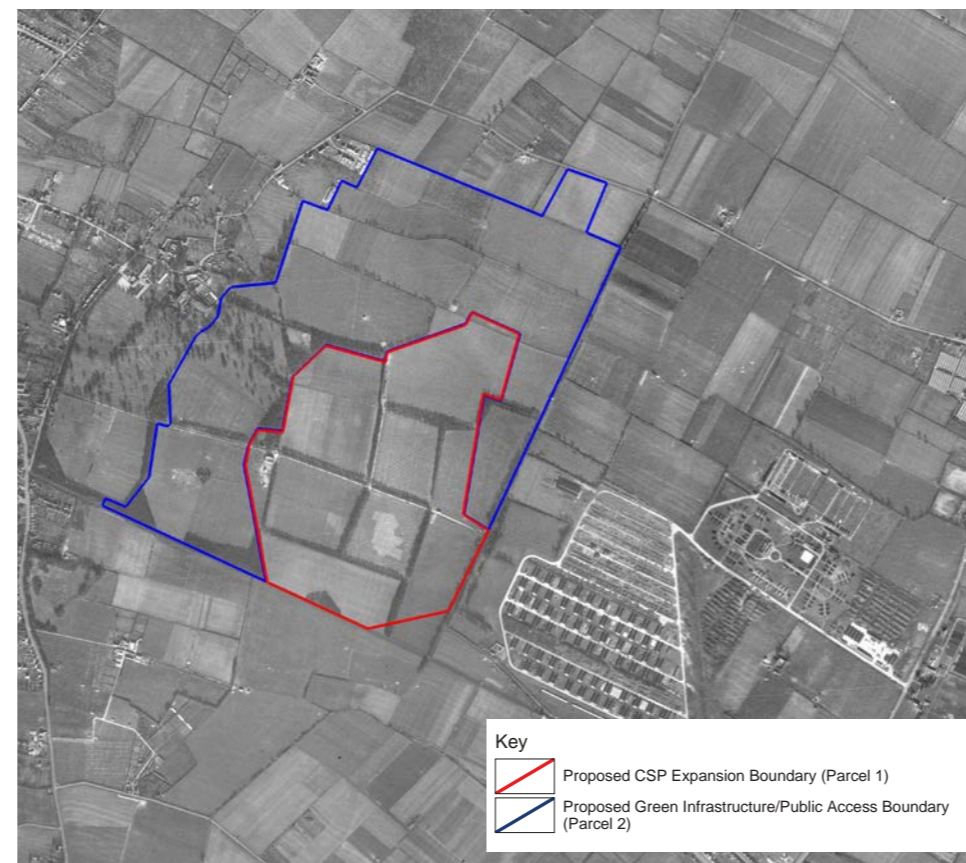


Plate 04: 1945 aerial image

- 2.11 In the first part of the 20th century, 1927 OS map [refer to Figure 1 in Appendix 1] appear to indicate that Impington Park was extended further to the south and east to cover much of the Parcel 2 land and what is now Histon Stadium and adjoining recreation ground. Although not clear from the OS maps, it is considered likely that the Park also extended further east to cover the southern part of Parcel 1. Tree belts were established along the boundaries of the fields that were accommodated into the Park, which are still present within the Site.
- 2.12 The OS maps indicate that the fields were planted with an informal arrangement of parkland trees. However, if they were, none remain today. The main gardens were located around the Hall incorporating a small ornamental lake to the front of the house and a canal to the south of the Hall with lake and fish ponds, with a double tree avenue extending the axis of the canal into the Park. To the north-east of the Hall was a walled kitchen garden with a glasshouse and rustic summer houses.
- 2.13 Further to the east lay the small nucleated village of Milton. Between Impington and Histon lay extensive farmland, with several notable historical features. Among them is the Roman road Akeman Street, now known as Mere Way. Another key feature is King Hedges Road, which historically connected to King's Hedges, formerly called Albrach (a settlement dating back to at least the 13th century). This area is believed to have been the site of the ancient King's Warren, a royal game reserve. Additionally, the former Cambridge and St Ives Branch Line, a railway that once connected Cambridge to St Ives and which has now been re-purposed as Cambridgeshire Guided Busway.
- 2.14 In the first half of the 20th century, Cambridge began expanding, primarily to the north-east. Histon also saw notable growth, particularly towards the south-east, where it connected with the railway line. The junction of Histon Road and the railway became the site of Orchard Factory, a large industrial complex. In contrast, Milton and Impington remained largely unchanged, with the exception that part of Impington Park was sold in 1930 to enable for the construction of Impington Village College. The Hall itself survived until the mid-20th century, when it was demolished and replaced by Impington Hall Farm, which was later redeveloped for housing along Percheron Close toward the end of the century. The remaining parkland was reverted to farmland.
- 2.15 During the 1940s and 1950s, a large area of land to the east of the Site was requisitioned by the US Army for the preparation of vehicles and tanks in advance of D-Day. This area included barracks (refer to Figure 2: OS 1959 Map in Appendix 1, and Plate 04) and was later used as a Prisoner of War camp. A further adjacent area was used as a railway depot; land now occupied by the Cambridge Science Park, the A14, and extending towards the landfill site. This activity removed a substantial area of farmland. Although the buildings were eventually cleared, the layout of the camp and depot remained visible until the 1970s.

- 2.16 Throughout this period, Cambridge also expanded northward with new residential developments. Histon also grew steadily, and by the 1960s and 1970s, it had largely merged with Impington. In comparison, Milton experienced only modest growth, maintaining its compact, nucleated form, although the extensive Cambridge sewage works was constructed to its south during this time.
- 2.17 Significant residential expansion continued to the north of Cambridge in the latter half of the 20th century. The A14 Cambridge Northern Bypass was constructed in 1976–77, and the Cambridge Science Park, established in 1970, supported 25 companies by 1979.
- 2.18 During the 1970s, the land to the north of the former US Army camp (east of the northern part of Parcel 1) and extending south-east up to Junction 33 of the A14 was worked for clay. At the onset of the extraction works, a broad tree belt was planted around the site; this has since matured into a substantial woodland buffer. Later in the century and into the early 21st century, the former clay pit became a landfill for household, commercial, and industrial waste, as well as for material from a waste transfer station.
- 2.19 In 2007, the Milton Park & Ride facility was constructed to the east of the former extraction site. Around the start of the 21st century, large areas of polytunnels began to be used for market gardening both within the Site (particularly around Fieldstead Farm) and as part of Sunclose Farm to the north.

3 Landscape character

- 3.1 The importance of understanding the character of all landscapes in England is recognised in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF §187), which states that planning policies and decisions should contribute and enhance the natural environment by: *“recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland”*. Landscape character assessment is the process which can identify these intrinsic values and unique characteristics of the diverse landscapes in the UK.
- 3.2 Landscape character assessments enable landscapes to be described and understood by mapping natural, physical and cultural features in order to define different landscapes and demonstrate what makes them special. Landscape character types share similar characteristics, such as underlying geology, soil type, topography and landform, the pattern and type of land/field enclosure, historic land use, the pattern of settlements and types of building that these comprise, tree and woodland cover and the general visual experience of the area.
- 3.3 Landscape character areas are specific geographic areas that exhibit a particular landscape character type. Landscape character assessments can be undertaken at a range of scales.
- 3.4 There are two published landscape character assessments that are considered in this study. These are the National Character Area profiles and the district level Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment.

National level - National Character Areas

- 3.5 In the mid-1990s, English Nature and the Countryside Commission created The Character Map of England¹, identifying 159 Joint Character Areas (JCAs) across the country, based on landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, and cultural factors. Boundaries followed natural features, not administrative lines. Volumes were published from 1998 to 2000.
- 3.6 Natural England later reviewed the JCAs to meet aims in the Natural Environment White Paper 2011, Biodiversity 2020, and the 2007 European Landscape Convention, producing updated National Character Area (NCA) profiles.
- 3.7 The Site lies on the eastern edge of NCA 88: Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands, which spans a broad landscape extending from Buckingham in the south-west to Peterborough in the north and Cambridge in the east. This is a gently undulating lowland plateau, divided by shallow river valleys and dominated by open arable farmland with regular field patterns, bounded by open ditches, trimmed hedgerows, and scattered woodland.

1 Natural England – National Character Area Profiles

- 3.8 The Statement of Environmental Opportunity 3 for this NCA advises:
Plan and create high-quality green infrastructure to help accommodate growth and expansion, linking and enhancing existing semi-natural habitats.

Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment

- 3.9 The Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment² (GCLCA) (2021) was commissioned to provide an up-to-date, consistent understanding of the area’s diverse and distinctive landscapes. Spanning both the historic urban core of Cambridge and the surrounding rural areas of South Cambridgeshire, the study identifies the elements and forces that shape local landscape character and distinctiveness.
- 3.10 Its primary objective is to support informed and sustainable decision-making across spatial planning, design, and land management. By offering a clear framework and baseline evidence, the assessment can guide the development of planning policies, helps manage landscape change positively, and support broader initiatives such as green infrastructure, biodiversity strategies, and climate resilience through thoughtful land use and design.
- 3.11 The GCLCA divides the study area into nine generic landscape character types (LTs). These are further sub-divided into a total of 34 geographically discrete landscape character areas (LCAs).
- 3.12 The area between Histon and Milton, in which the Site is located, falls within LT2: Fen Edge Chalklands, a transitional landscape typified by gently undulating large scale arable fields, sparse woodland, and a network of hedgerows and ditches, and more specifically, LCA2B: Cottenham Fen Edge Claylands.
- 3.13 The Cottenham Fen Edge Claylands is a gently undulating, settled rural landscape where several villages, including Cottenham, Waterbeach, Histon, Milton, and Girton, are located on low ‘islands’ rising above the Fens. These settlements often have historic linear cores and have expanded with suburban development influenced by proximity to Cambridge.
- 3.14 Key features include medium-sized arable fields divided by historic ditches and droveways, with more enclosed pastoral fields and orchards near villages. Vegetation is generally sparse, but shelterbelts, hedgerows, and pockets of woodland near settlements and waterbodies create localised enclosure. Remnants of historic parkland and rows of poplars also contribute to the landscape structure.
- 3.15 The area is marked by a mix of rural and urban influences. While the villages are largely screened by vegetation, the proximity to Cambridge means there are glimpses of built form, major roads, industrial sites, and recreational areas like golf courses and former mineral sites, as well as the Cambridge Science Park, contribute to a more developed character,

2 Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment, 2021

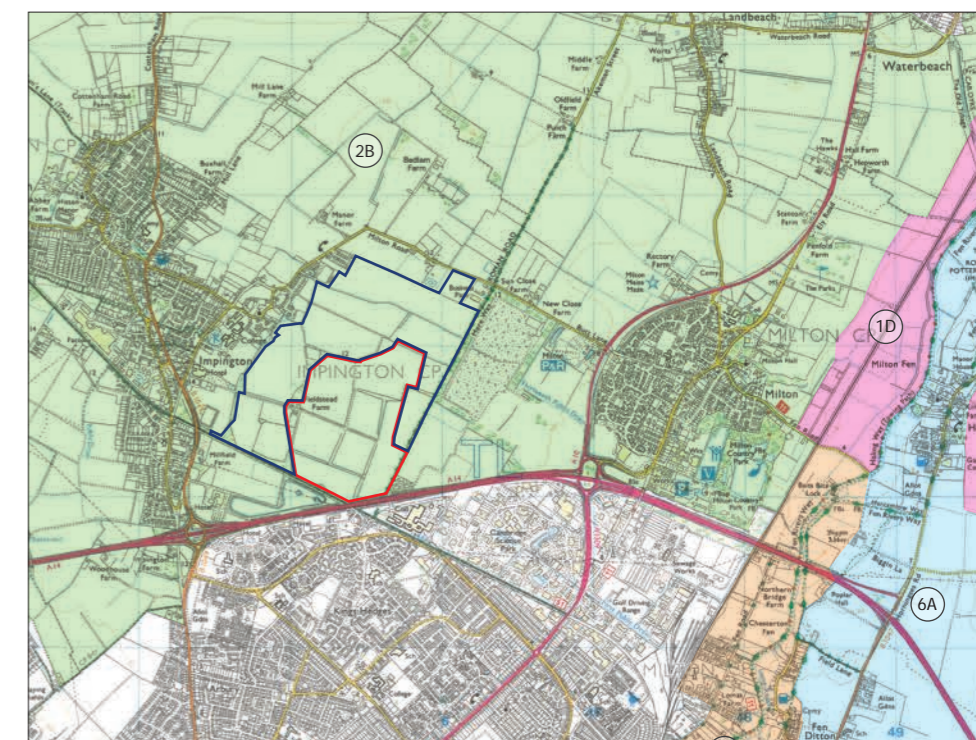


Plate 05: Landscape character areas

- 3.16 Cited landscape sensitivities for LT 2 and LCA 2B include:
 - *Network of historic ditches and droveways that contribute to the area’s sense of place*
 - *Peaceful, rural open character of the landscape*
 - *Hedgerows, shelterbelts and small clumps of trees forming a distinctive, localised vegetation pattern in proximity to villages*
 - *Surviving traditional orchards*
 - *Remaining pockets of high ecological value landscape features such as grazing marsh alongside watercourses and scattered deciduous woodland*
 - *Historic, linear village cores*
 - *Framed, long views between vegetation from villages across open, arable fields*
 - *Remnant parkland west of Histon*
 - *Pressure for recreation*
- 3.17 The overall management objective for the Fen Edge Claylands LCT is to conserve the rural character and the important surviving landscape features (e.g. orchards, droves, drains and linear village cores) and enhance those features that are declining or are incongruous in the landscape such as traditional orchards and modern village edges.

3.18 Guidelines for integrating new development into the LT 2 landscape, as relevant to development of the type proposed include:

- *Conserve the overall rural character, with dispersed Fen Edge villages, farms and cottages linked by rural roads and historic droves and tracks*
- *Ensure any village extensions are located on the high ground of the Fen Islands, avoiding incremental development on the flat, low-lying fen*
- *Ensure new developments on the edges of villages are integrated by wide hedgerows, copses and shelterbelt planting reflecting the local mixes*
- *Ensure a transition between Fen and Fen Island by retention and creation of small hedgerowed paddocks*
- *Conserve and enhance existing orchard and hedgerowed paddocks*
- *Ensure new developments integrate/connect with existing Public Rights of Way (PROW) within development layout*
- *Ensure new developments reflect the form, scale and proportions of the existing vernacular buildings of the area and pick up on the traditional building styles, height, materials, colours and textures of the locality*
- *Retain hedges and introduce them as boundaries alongside roads outside village cores*
- *Integrate water features, such as ditches dykes and ponds, into new developments as part of open spaces*
- *Avoid the use of standardised and intrusive urban materials, street furniture, lighting and signage as part of traffic calming measures wherever appropriate*

3.19 The following guidelines are specific to LCA 2B:

- *Ensure new development is integrated into the landscape sympathetically, is in keeping with the open, rural character, and does not affect long, framed views*
- *Conserve parkland and enhance the specific features that give character and its context within the wider landscape in areas where it has been fragmented*
- *Ensure land developed for recreation enhances existing landscape features, creates links between villages and recreational assets and is in keeping with the open, rural character*

3.20 Relevant land management guidelines include:

- *Conserve and enhance existing watercourses, drains and ditches to maintain historic features and enhance ecological value of the farmed landscape*
- *Conserve and enhance the regular small-scale pastoral fields, shelter belts and hedges at village edges*

- *Manage the agricultural landscape and soils both for production and opportunities to improve biodiversity*
- *Conserve and enhance existing hedgerows and consider opportunities for replanting hedgerows where these have been lost/become fragmented*
- *Protect the sites and features of archaeological and historic interest*
- *Encourage opportunities to expand and link woodland, hedgerows and other seminatural habitats to benefit biodiversity whilst managing the open character of the landscape.*

Greater Cambridge Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

3.21 In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance, the Greater Cambridge Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (GCLSA) (2021) forms part of the evidence base for the Greater Cambridge Local Plan and Sustainability Appraisal. Alongside the Greater GCLCA, it provides a comprehensive understanding of landscape character, qualities and sensitivity to future development and land-use change.

3.22 The assessment will support the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service (GCSP) by informing spatial strategy, site allocations, infrastructure locations, and the development of Local Plan policies relating to landscape protection, enhancement, design, placemaking, sustainability and climate change. It will also inform development management decisions, identify opportunities for landscape restoration and enhancement, provide a baseline for monitoring landscape change, and support other evidence-base studies, including the Green Belt Assessment and Green Infrastructure Opportunity Mapping.

3.23 The GCLSA considers a development scenario of between 2 and 5 storey residential development and between 2 and 4 storey commercial development. Where appropriate, opportunities for increased height/scale are also considered.

3.24 The landscape around Cambridge was divided into a series of assessment units. The Site falls within assessment unit CNF07, which encompasses the land to the north of the A14 between the settlement edges of Impington and Milton, and extending north to Milton Road and Butt Lane.

3.25 Having considered a variety of factors, the assessment found that, overall, unit CNF07 is a fairly typical low lying, flat arable landscape within Greater Cambridge, or simple medium to large scale. The Mere Way Green Corridor provides an important structural element, with natural, recreational and historic value. A clear sense of separation is maintained between Histon and Impington and Milton, while linear woodland and tree belts help define the open landscape. These features are more sensitive to the proposed development scenarios. It was noted that the A14 “provides a harsh and abrupt northern edge to Cambridge”.

Other elements that are less sensitive include the highway network, limited countryside access, “Strong urban influences from the proximity of Cambridge” and the “scattered urban fringe development which erodes the rural character”.

3.26 It was considered that the potential impacts arising from the type and scale of development in Assessment Unit CNF07 could be mitigated through adherence to the relevant landscape guidelines set out in the GCLCA, where applicable, and the Histon and Impington Village Design Guide SPD (2020).

3.27 It was noted that there may be opportunities for strategic landscape mitigation to assist in integrating development into the surrounding landscape, such as the use of structural planting or buffers, or by locating development within existing shelterbelts to the south-east of Impington or west of Milton, provided these measures are carefully designed to reflect the character of the wider landscape.

3.28 The ongoing management and enhancement of existing hedgerows, replanting where hedgerows have been lost or become fragmented, and the exploration of opportunities to extend and connect woodland, hedgerows and other semi-natural habitats would help strengthen biodiversity and manage key rural views, contributing to a well-integrated settlement edge.

3.29 Taken together, the landscape was assessed as having Medium to Low sensitivity to the development scenario. Such a judgment equates to “Typically, a landscape containing relatively unimportant components and/or has few distinctive characteristics and/or is an area in low to moderate condition. Key characteristics and valued attributes have limited susceptibility to the particular type and scale of change being assessed. Although change can potentially be accommodated, care would still be needed in locating and designing such change within the landscape.”

3.30 The assessment concluded that “In this context, there may be opportunities for residential, commercial and mixed-use development with increased height/scale throughout this Assessment Unit.”

South Cambridgeshire District Design Guide

3.31 Prior to the publication of the GCLCA, the South Cambridgeshire District Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (March 2010), provided a broad overview of landscape character and settlement character across the District.

3.32 This guidance identified that the northern part of South Cambridgeshire, to the north of Cambridge, lies within Landscape Character Area (LCA) E: Fens Edge. Key characteristics of this area include:

A mostly flat, low-lying landscape with open views. However, scatterings of clumps of trees, poplar shelterbelts and occasional hedgerows sometimes merge together to give the sense of a more densely treed horizon.

3.33 The settlement character is described as comprising villages on low fen islands, typically defined by a long linear form. Some settlements, such as Cottenham, have a well-wooded character, with hedgerows and mature trees concealing buildings, while others remain more open and exposed.

3.34 Relevant design principles include the following guideline:

Ensure new developments on the edges of villages are integrated by thick hedgerows, copses and shelterbelt planting reflecting the local mixes. Ensure a transition between Fen and Fen Island by retention and creation of small hedgerowed paddocks.

Cambridge Inner Green Belt Boundary Study

3.35 Further useful information regarding the landscape of the Site and in particular its relationship with the city, is contained within the Cambridge Inner Green Belt Boundary Study (CIGBBS). Published in 2015, it pre-dates the GCLCA.

Landscape character

3.36 The Site is identified as lying within the Landscape Character Type (LCT) 2: Fen Edge and within the LCA 2A: Western Fen Edge (refer to Figure 4 in Appendix 1). The Study describes the LCT as being "a transitional landscape type, situated between the Fens and the higher land beyond. It is relatively low lying, but not as low as the Fens. It still appears generally flat, and contains a variety of land uses, including arable and pastoral agriculture, roads and settlements". It also notes that "the building of the A14 has severed the link between the city and the Fen Edge landscape to the north". This is an important point in understanding the relationship and role of the landscape to the north of Cambridge and the setting of the city, in particular the historic parts of Cambridge and the consideration of Cambridge as a whole being an historic city.

3.37 LCA 2A is further defined as being a relatively low-lying landscape and gently undulating between 5 and 20m above sea level and primarily characterised by arable farmland divided into medium-sized regular fields. It notes that "hedges and shelterbelts between fields, plus several orchards, add a distinctive pattern of vegetation into the landscape. Views to Cambridge are restricted by the low-lying topography and the A14. Therefore, the only key views to Cambridge from the western fen edge are from the A14 itself. The A14 also acts as an artificial edge to the city, and undermines the gentle transition between the city and the fen edge". Again, this reinforces the intrusive effect of the A14, and its artificial definition of the northern edge of Cambridge. The development of the Site provides the opportunity to redefine the northern edge of Cambridge through the creation of a more sympathetic transition from the wider countryside.

Supporting character

3.38 The CIGBBS also assesses the role of the different areas of townscape/landscape in supporting the historic core and distinctive areas of the city. This includes the contribution which the surrounding landscape makes where the city is visible or where it forms part of the foreground of views from more distant viewpoints. The CIGBBS assessment also considered the contribution a particular character area makes to the essence of Cambridge, providing a unique sense of place, both within the city and its rural setting. Consideration was given to connective areas, which may include significant landscape and townscape features. However, the Site is not located in any of the key landscape or townscape areas that are highlighted as contributing to the distinctiveness of Cambridge, but rather lies within the remainder of the Green Belt, defined as "outer rural areas of the Green Belt" (refer to Figure 3 in Appendix 1).

3.39 Therefore, the Site falls within part of the broader rural context and not within the *Connective, Supportive and Distinctive* areas of townscape or landscape. The Site does not relate to any of the key functions and points described in the CIGBBS, i.e. it does not form a backdrop in views of the city, nor provide a setting for the approaches to the *Connective, Supportive and Distinctive* areas. The Site, therefore, does not contribute to the "supportive landscape around most of the west, south and east edges of the city, where the relationship of the city to the adjacent rural landscape is an important aspect of the setting".

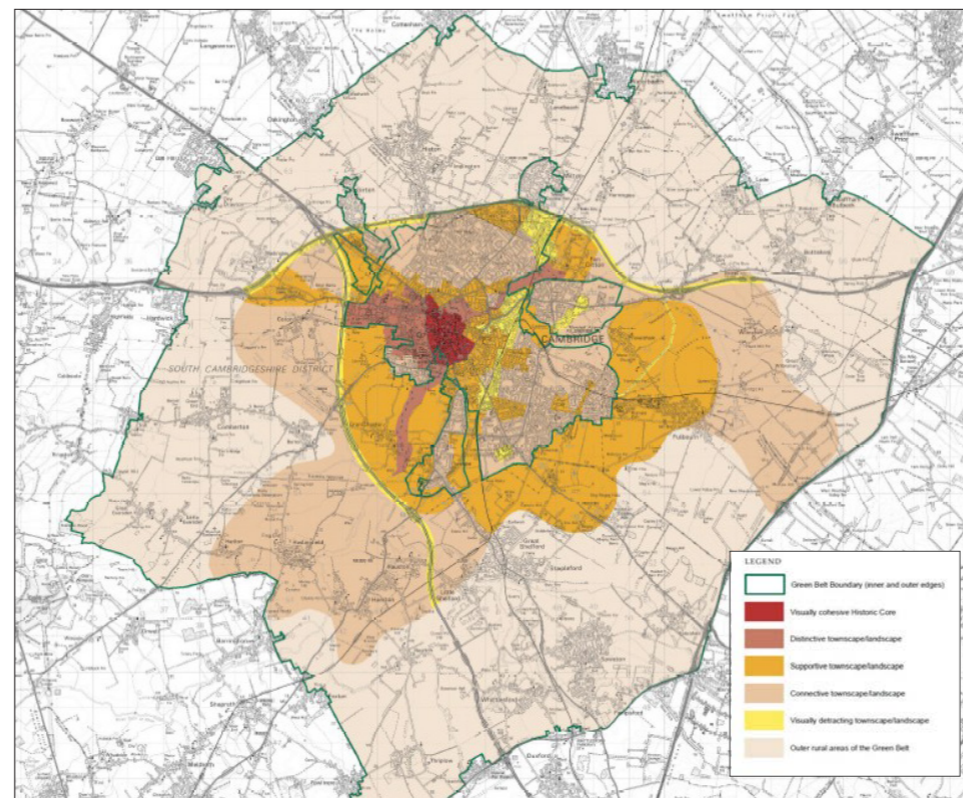


Plate 06: CIGBBS Figure 11 - Townscape and Landscape Role and Function

3.40 Reference is also made to the villages such as Histon and Milton having expanded considerably during the 20th century, and that they are now perilously close to being linked to Cambridge by suburban routes. Nevertheless, the villages have retained their individual village character, although the CIGBBS notes that the scale and form of the villages has radically changed, altering the character and identity of the villages, making much less distinctive. Future development within the Site, reinforced by the expansive buffers of green infrastructure, should limit any further merger with Cambridge and retain the individual character of Histon, Impington and Milton.

3.41 Policy NH/2 of the adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 states that development will only be permitted where it respects and retains or enhances the local character and distinctiveness of the local landscape and the individual NCA in which it is located.

Local Landscape character

3.42 Landscape character can be further defined at a localised scale. This Study considers that the landscape between the A14 to the south, Histon and Impington to the west, Milton Road to the north, and the A10 and Milton to the east (hereafter referred to as the Impington Fen Edge) has a different character than the remainder of the Fen Edge Chalklands and Western Fen Edge landscape identified in the GCLCA and CIGBBS respectively.

3.43 In contrast to much of the Fen Edge Chalklands/Western Fen Edge (which have a more open and expansive arable character, where the sky and horizon form dominant features) the Impington Fen Edge is noticeably more contained, due to the influence of woodland and shelterbelts that form strong landscape features. This reinforces the regular recti-linear landscape pattern and limits views to a localised context.

3.44 In terms of land use there is a more diverse pattern within Impington Fen Edge, which comprises a mix of arable farmland, market gardening, landfill, horse grazing, and urban edge type development. The latter includes the Evolution Business Park, Milton Recycling Centre, and Milton Road Park and Ride. This creates a more urban fringe character to the landscape.

3.45 The effect of 20th century land uses has had particular influence on the eastern part of the landscape, with the removal of much of the original field pattern and hedgerows, and the formation of a new structure of woodland belts.

3.46 The western part of the landscape has been mainly influenced by the former Impington Park, although there is little remaining evidence of this use. The exception is the pattern of the strong linear shelterbelts that contain many of the fields.

- 3.47 The A14 and A10 create dominant road corridors beyond the southern and eastern edges, with significant amounts of traffic movement and presence of noise affecting the local tranquillity. These create intrusive features within the landscape forming hard edges.
- 3.48 The transition with the built up areas of Histon and Impington is more gradual, with the large grounds of Impington Village College, Histon & Impington Recreation Ground, and Cambridge Lea Hospital, with their wooded edges creating a soft and sympathetic transition.
- 3.49 The north-western part of Impington Fen Edge is more open, with field boundaries being contained by mature and continuous hedgerows.
- 3.50 The CIGBBS identifies the main gateways and approaches into Cambridge, as well as a number of important green corridors. The Site would not be located on any of these corridors and would not be close enough for any future development to affect or influence them.

Site features

- 3.51 The Site comprises arable fields, woodland, tree belts, hedgerows and farm buildings and structures. To the north, the arable fields are enclosed by largely continuous and dense hedgerows, with only occasional gaps to allow for farm tracks and connections between the fields. These hedgerows are in an average to good condition and typically 3m in height, and mainly composed of hawthorn and blackthorn, with some elm and dog rose. Scattered hedgerow trees are present, mainly within the more central part of the Site.
- 3.52 The short boundary with Milton Road is predominantly open, marked only by bramble growth. Blocks of woodland are located in the central and southern peripheral parts of the Site, and connect to a wider network of tree belts. These belts vary in width from c.15m to c.25m and average around 15m in height, reaching up to 18m to 20m in some areas. The trees are generally in good form and condition. Species composition varies across the Site, but typically includes sycamore, ash, oak, lime, horse chestnut, pine, elm, and field maple.
- 3.53 Along the south-western boundary with Mere Way, a hedgerow is present. In the northern section, it is in good condition, forming a continuous line around 3m to 4 metres tall, incorporating several trees and enclosing the adjacent public byway. Further south, the hedgerow becomes more variable, with occasional gaps and a scrubby character. Heights here range from 3m up to 8m in the more scrubby sections.

Guidelines and considerations for development: Landscape Character

- 3.54 The design of future development at the Site should be guided by the following key factors regarding landscape character:
 - The landscape is largely flat and well-enclosed by woodland and shelterbelts, helping to contain development and ease its integration into the wider setting.
 - Woodland and shelterbelts are key landscape features and should be retained wherever possible. Their retention would ensure new development can be assimilated into an established and attractive landscape framework, while also strengthening green infrastructure by linking habitats and supporting wildlife corridors.
 - The A14 creates a visually intrusive and artificial northern edge to Cambridge. Future proposals for the Site could deliver a more sympathetic transition between the city and the Fen Edge, in a similar manner to the transition presented by Histon and Impington's settlement to rural edge.
 - The modified nature of Impington Fen Edge, makes this local landscape less sensitive to change from future development, provided the strong existing framework of woodland and shelterbelts is largely preserved and where necessary reinforced.
 - The northern portion of the Site is more sensitive to change than the southern, partly due its greater distance from the existing urban edge of Cambridge and the visual and audible effects of the A14, but it is also less well contained by vegetation.
 - Development should therefore focus on the more southerly areas. If extended northward it should be accompanied by the planting of new shelterbelts or woodland. Planting in advance of the development would help create a more established northern edge in to which new built forms could be integrated. The current proposals allocate the northern-most parts of the it as green infrastructure, which would include planting.
 - Opportunities to reinforce and recreate some of the historic parkland influences for the landscape to the east of Impington.

4 Landscape-related designations

- 4.1 The Site is not located within or in proximity to any statutory or local landscape designations. However, the Site is fully located within the Green Belt that extends around Cambridge. There are also a number of ecological and heritage designations covering parts of Cambridge and the settlements and land to the north of the city. Milton Country Park is located to the south-eastern edge of Milton. These designations are illustrated at Figure 3 in Appendix 1.
- 4.2 Cambridge is an historically significant university city, with its core defined by the extensive Conservation Area that encompasses the city centre and extends north-east along the River Cam. Between this historic core and the Site lies a substantial area of 20th century residential development, including the suburbs of Chesterton and King’s Hedges, in addition to of modern educational and commercial development.
- 4.3 These suburban areas are identified in the Cambridge Inner Green Belt Boundary Study (CIGBBS), published in November 2015, under various Townscape Character Types, including: 1900–1945 Suburban Housing, Post-war Suburban Housing, 21st-century Mixed-use Development, and Large-scale Commercial, Industrial and Service Development. Consequently, the landscape to the north of Cambridge, between Histon/Impington, Milton, and the central city, has long since lost any direct association with the historic core of Cambridge.
- 4.4 The northern settlements of Milton, Landbeach, Histon, and Impington each include designated Conservation Areas. Owing to the intervening distance and the presence of more recent development, these Conservation Areas generally have no physical or visual association with the Site, with the exception of Impington St Andrew’s Conservation Area, which lies immediately to the west and therefore has a physical and visual connection with the Site. This Conservation Area encompasses the historic core of the village, including Manor Farm, St Andrew’s Church, and the former Impington Hall. The part of the Conservation Area nearest to the Site corresponds to the location of the former Impington Hall, which was demolished in the mid-20th century. It has since been replaced by 20th-century residential development along Percheron Close, significantly altering the area’s built character and diminishing its historic associations.
- 4.5 As no Conservation Area Appraisals have been published for the Impington Conservation Areas, the rationale for including this modern residential development within the Conservation Area remains unclear.

Guidelines and considerations for future development: Designations

- 4.6 The design of future development at the Site should be guided by the following key factors regarding landscape-related designations:
- The primary effect on designations would relate to the Green Belt, which is addressed at Section 6.
 - There could be a potential effect on the Impington St. Andrews Conservation Area; however, the inclusion of green infrastructure with public access within Parcel 2 should help avoid any harm to the historic core area around St Andrew’s Church.
 - The creation of a parkland character within Parcel 2 would help re-establish the setting of the former Impington Park. This area could be developed as a country park.
 - The parkland character established in Parcel 2 should be extended into the proposed mid-tech development within Parcel 1.

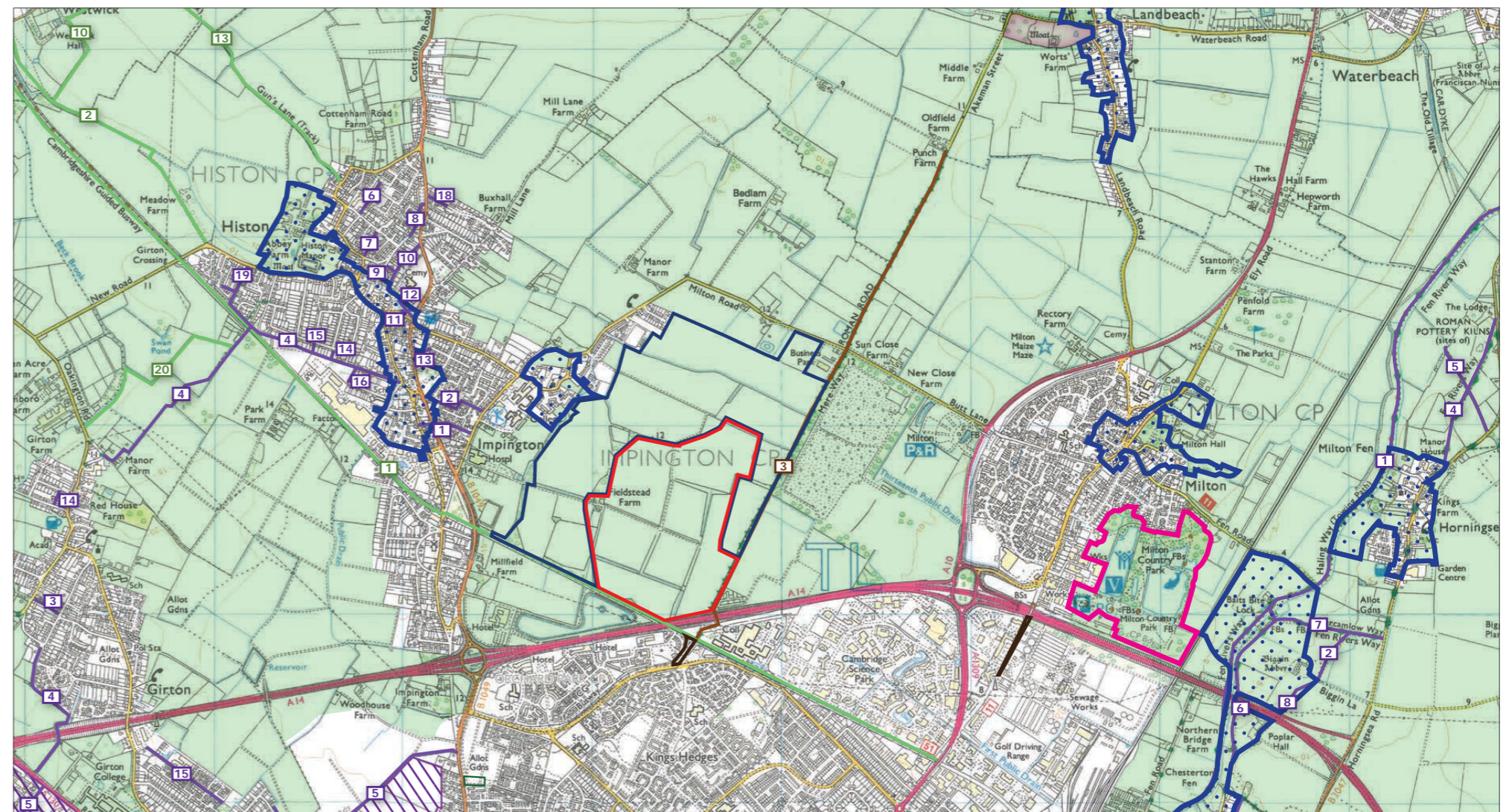


Plate 07: Landscape-related designations

5 Views

- 5.1 Due to the extensive framework of tree belts and woodland within and neighbouring the Site, combined with the flat, low-lying nature of the topography, the Site is visually well contained. The elevated A14 prevents views from the site into Cambridge.
- 5.2 The tree belts, woodland and tall hedgerows along the fringes of Histon and Impington contain most potential views into the Site. There are some localised, lower sections within this part of the vegetation framework, allowing views into the Site from the grounds of Impington Village College (refer to View 2), and from the rear of some of the residential properties in Percheron Close and Woodcock Close. However, these views do not generally extend as far as Parcel 1, being mainly restricted by intervening vegetation. Views from the rear of most of the properties along the eastern edge of Woodcock Close are restricted by the c.10m high tree belt along the Site's western boundary. The properties at the eastern end of St Andrews Way are bungalows, where views are contained to the east by tall hedge along the north-western boundary of the Site. Most of Histon and Impington has no views of the Site, due to the presence of intervening buildings and mature vegetation. This includes from points close to St Andrews Church and churchyard in Impington.
- 5.3 The wide woodland belts around Milton Landfill contain much of the views from the west, preventing views from Milton Park and Ride, the A10 and the village of Milton. The Site is more open to the north-east. However, the only publicly accessible locations to the north are Milton Road and the continuation of the public byway along Mere Way, beyond Milton Road. The latter is contained by tall mature hedgerows and trees, with adjoining fields containing polytunnels, and Evolution Business Park, preventing views of the Site.
- 5.4 Views into the Site would be available from the residential property North View, which fronts the southern side of Milton Road to the north of the Site. Further along Milton Road to the south-east, Green Gates Farm is contained by tall leylandii hedges preventing views in the direction of the Site. However, the remainder of Milton Road, immediately to the north-east of the Site, has open views over the adjoining fields to the northern fringes of the Site (refer to View 3). From these locations, future development (mainly Parcel 2) could be expected to be visible. There are a number of scattered farm buildings to the north, some of which contain farmhouses whose views of the Site appear to be prevented by the adjoining barns and mature vegetation.
- 5.5 Much longer distance views are possible from the edges of village Landbeach village and from open sections of Landbeach Road to the south (refer to View 4). However, views are contained in the mid-distance by the mature hedgerows and trees around Sunclose Farm and along Mere Way, and the woodland belts around Milton Landfill. It is expected that views from this location would not be affected by any future development or would only result in a small or negligible effect.

- 5.6 From Mere Way, the main views would be experienced as filtered glimpses through the adjoining hedgerow and scrub, and through gaps in the vegetation. The maturity of the existing vegetation would limit the effect on users of the public byway (refer to View 4), but there would be an evident awareness of the introduction of new built form into the countryside. This could be addressed by providing a buffer along this edge of the Site and strengthening the existing vegetation with new native planting.
- 5.7 The other notable views into the Site from publicly accessible locations would be from the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway, where gaps in the woodland along the south-western Site boundary allow views into the Site (refer to View 5), and from specific points on the A14. Views from the section of the A14 neighbouring the Site are largely contained by vegetation along the road and around Cawcutts Lake, and by woodland along the south-western boundary of the Site. The exception is where the A14 abuts the Site, and where recent A14 highway widening works

have resulted in the removal of the vegetation along the embankment. Replacement trees and shrubs have been planted but they have yet to deliver any screening properties. From these locations there are currently open views into the Site, and therefore likely views of any future development; at least until the highway planting is established. The future design layout would need to take account of these views, allowing for positive engagement and framed views into the Site from the south. This approach could provide a softer transition from the existing northern edge of Cambridge and remainder of the fen edge landscape.

- 5.8 The CIGBBS identifies a number of Key Elevated Views and Key Low Level Views, none of which are from the north of Cambridge or would incorporate views of or across the Site. There are no views of the historic Cambridge skyline or of any key Cambridge landmarks or distinctive / memorable features from within the Site or which encompass views of the Site.

Guidelines and considerations for future development: Views

- 5.9 The design of future development at the Site should be guided by the following key factors regarding views:
- Retention of woodland and tree belts, wherever possible, to retain the visual character of the Site and help visually integrate any future development
 - Limiting built development to the more enclosed central and southern parts of the Site.
 - If development extends to the north, provide additional tree belt and woodland planting to extend the landscape framework that contains areas of built development.
 - Retain framed views into the Site from the guided busway and the A14, providing a positive engagement and demonstrate a transitional edge from urban to rural.

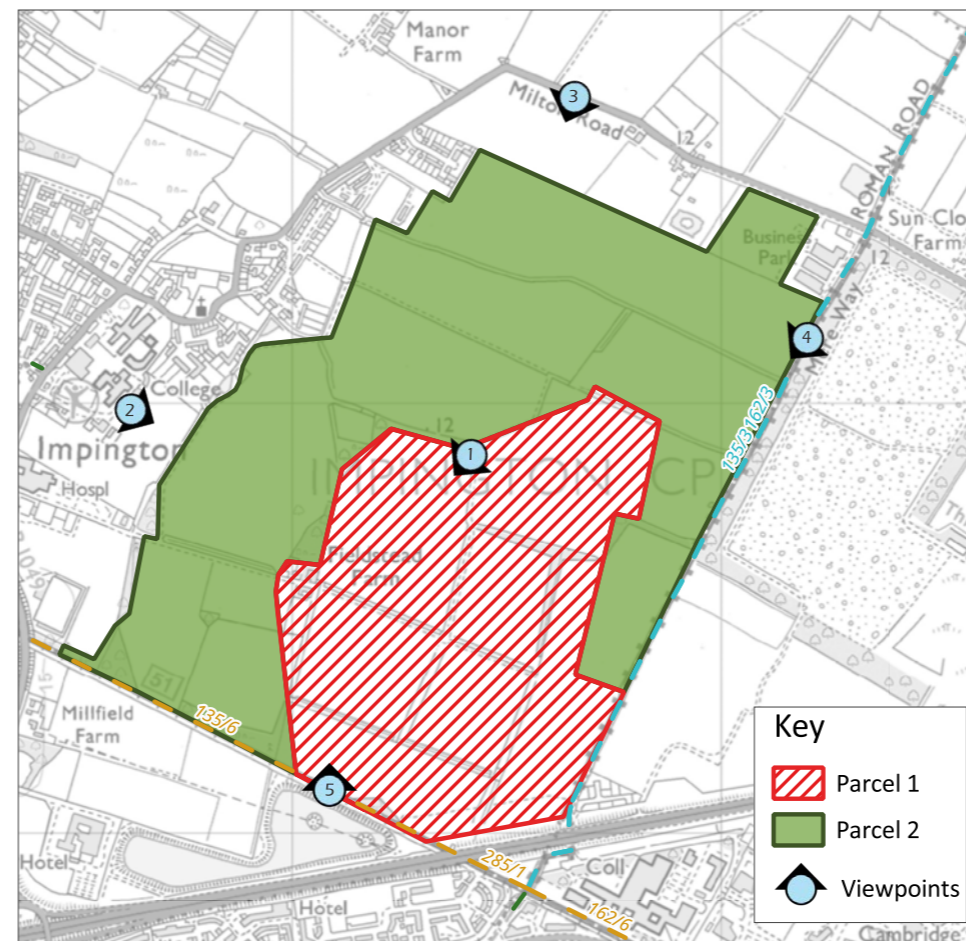


Plate 08: Viewpoint locations (Pages 10 and 11)



View 1: Internal view of Site



View 2: View from Impington Village College looking towards the Site



View 3: View towards the Site from Milton Road



View 4: View from Mere Way public byway



View 5: View from Cambridgeshire Guided Busway, looking into the site

6 Cambridge Green Belt

The Green Belt at Cambridge

- 6.1 The Cambridge Green Belt has played a central role in shaping the growth and development of the city and its surrounding area. Its origins can be traced back to national planning policy introduced in 1955, which encouraged local authorities to designate Green Belts to prevent urban sprawl and protect the countryside.
- 6.2 In 1965, the Ministry of Housing and Local Government identified Cambridge as a location where a Green Belt would be appropriate. The intention was to maintain the city's compact form, prevent the coalescence of Cambridge with surrounding villages, and preserve the setting and character of the historic city and its landscape.
- 6.3 The Green Belt was formally defined in planning policy through the 1992 Cambridgeshire Structure Plan, which established clear boundaries and set out its key purposes. These included:
- Preventing the unrestricted expansion of Cambridge;
 - Avoiding the merging of nearby settlements;
 - Safeguarding the surrounding countryside from encroachment;
 - Preserving the setting and special character of Cambridge; and
 - Supporting urban regeneration.
- 6.4 Over the following decades, the Green Belt has helped maintain the physical and visual separation between Cambridge and surrounding villages, while also protecting important views, landscape features, and the setting of the city. However, with growing pressure for housing and employment development in the Greater Cambridge area, particularly since the early 2000s, the Green Belt has come under increasing scrutiny.
- 6.5 Through successive Local Plans, including the Cambridge Local Plan 2018 and the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018, limited and targeted releases of Green Belt land have been considered to accommodate strategic growth. These include developments on the urban edge such as Trumpington Meadows where impacts on Green Belt purposes were assessed to be acceptable, and where mitigation through landscape buffers and green infrastructure could be achieved.
- 6.6 As part of the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan, the Green Belt is being reviewed to consider how future growth can be delivered sustainably, without compromising the distinctive identity of Cambridge and its surrounding villages.
- 6.7 The Green Belt does not respect administrative boundaries. Whilst the greater portion falls within South Cambridgeshire, some inner parts extend into Cambridge City and the north-eastern portion encompasses a small part of East Cambridgeshire.
- 6.8 The Cambridge Green Belt encircles the city of Cambridge and extends into the surrounding countryside within South Cambridgeshire district. Covering c.26,340ha, it forms a broad arc around the urban area, stretching from Milton and Impington in the north, through Grantchester

and Barton to the west, and down to Shelford, Fulbourn and Teversham in the south and east. Its inner boundary is tightly drawn around the built-up edge of Cambridge, while the outer boundary lies several kilometres beyond the city, incorporating a diverse rural landscape of arable fields, woodlands, villages, and river corridors. See Plate 09.

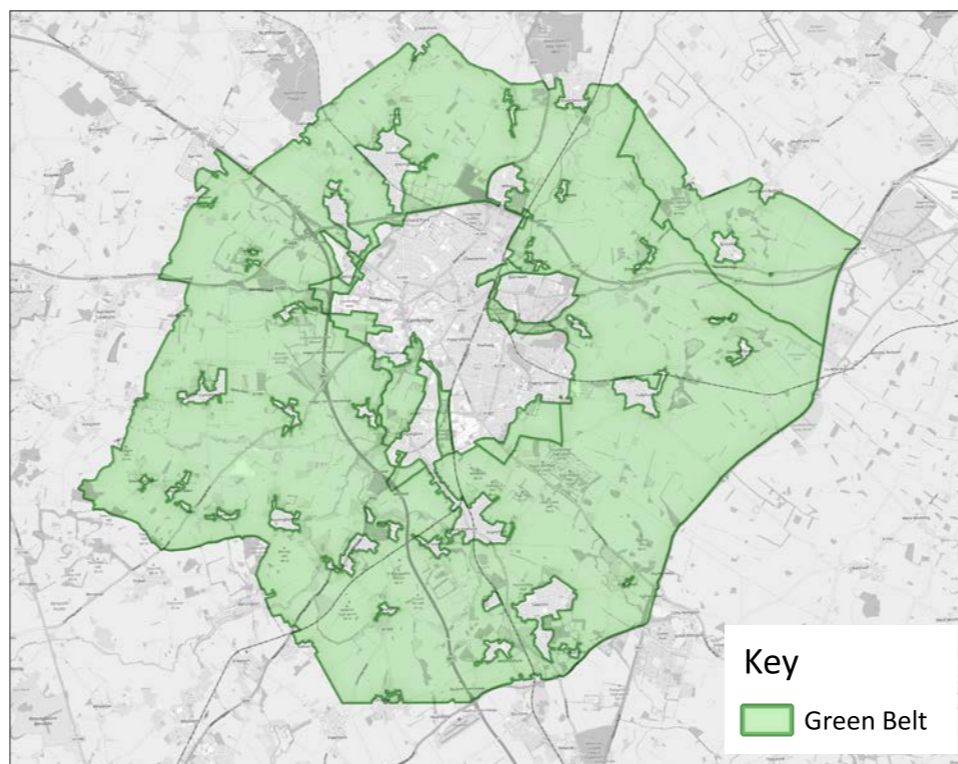


Plate 09: Cambridge Greenbelt

- 6.9 In the vicinity of the Site, the inner boundary of the Green Belt is defined by the A14. To the north, it extends out as far as the southern edge of Cottenham and Waterbeach, part of this boundary following Beach Road and Cottenham Road. This portion of the Green Belt excludes the villages of Histon, Impington, Landbeach and Milton.
- 6.10 The section of Green Belt to the west extends out to the edge of Bar Hill and Oakington, and excludes Girton village. The section to the east extends to the edges of Lode and Swaffham Bulbeck, and excludes Horningsea, Stow cum Quay and Bottisham.

Policy context

National Planning Policy Framework

- 6.11 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), dated 12th December 2025 (amended 7th February 2025) provides the basis by which local planning authorities should address the Green Belt when preparing their local plans or determining applications within its bounds. It states:

The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. [§142]

- 6.12 Green Belt can serve five purposes [§143], although not all purposes necessarily apply to all Green Belts. The five national purposes are:
- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
 - to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
 - to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
 - to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
 - to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.*
- 6.13 §145 notes that "Once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified through the preparation or updating of plans" and that "Strategic policies should establish the need for any changes to Green Belt boundaries, having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so they can endure beyond the plan period."
- 6.14 In this context, "Exceptional circumstances include, but are not limited to, instances where an authority cannot meet its identified need for homes, commercial or other development through other means..." [§146]. Where this is the case, "authorities should review Green Belt boundaries in accordance with the policies in this Framework and propose alterations to meet these needs in full, unless the review provides clear evidence that doing so would fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the area of the plan."
- 6.15 §148 requires that where land is released from the Green Belt for development, priority should first be given to previously developed land, then Grey Belt which is not previously developed, and then other Green Belt land.
- 6.16 Grey Belt is defined at NPPF Annex 2 as:
- ... land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143...*
- 6.17 Grey Belt excludes "land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development".
- 6.18 Areas or assets in Footnote 7 include SSSIs, Local Green Spaces, National Landscapes, National Parks, Heritage Coasts, irreplaceable habitats, designated heritage assets and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.

- 6.19 §149 sets out criteria for defining Green Belt boundaries. Amongst other things, plans should "not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open" and "define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent".
- 6.20 §51 notes that "Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance their beneficial use, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land." and that "Where Green Belt land is released for development through plan preparation or review, the 'Golden Rules' in paragraph 156 below should apply."
- 6.21 §156 is concerned with major development involving the provision of housing and sets out the contributions or Golden Rules that should be made. As such, they do not address Science Parks. Nonetheless, contributions b and c of the Golden Rules could be considered applicable to the type of development proposed at the site:
- b. necessary improvements to local or national infrastructure; and
 - c. the provision of new, or improvements to existing, green spaces that are accessible to the public. New residents should be able to access good quality green spaces within a short walk of their home, whether through onsite provision or through access to offsite spaces.
- 6.22 The improvements to green spaces that are required as part of the Golden Rules should "contribute positively to the landscape setting of the development, support nature recovery and meet local standards for green space provision where these exist in the development plan. Where no locally specific standards exist, development proposals should meet national standards relevant to the development (these include Natural England standards on accessible green space and urban greening factor and Green Flag criteria). Where land has been identified as having particular potential for habitat creation or nature recovery within Local Nature Recovery Strategies, proposals should contribute towards these outcomes." [§159]
- 6.23 The NPPF requires [§153] that local planning authorities should, when determining any application within the Green Belt, "ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness". A footnote to this clause clarifies that this is "other than in the case of development on previously developed land or grey belt land, where development is not inappropriate".
- 6.24 §153 continues, noting that "Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations."
- 6.25 Development in the Green Belt is considered to be inappropriate unless one of the following exceptions applies [§154]:
- a. buildings for agriculture and forestry
 - b. the provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments
 - c. the extension or alteration of a building as prescribed
 - d. the replacement of a building, within prescribed parameters
 - e. limited infilling in villages
 - f. limited affordable housing for local community needs
 - g. limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, as prescribed, that would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.
- 6.26 Other forms of development that may not be considered inappropriate, provided they preserve the Green Belt's openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it, include mineral extraction, engineering operations, local transport infrastructure, the re-use of building, material changes in the use of land and development brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order, all provided they meet the cited conditions.
- 6.27 §155 notes that development in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where all the following apply:
- a. The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (when taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;
 - b. There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed, in line with the accompanying footnote;
 - c. The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to §§110 and 115 and footnote; and
 - d. Where applicable the development proposed meets the 'Golden Rules' requirements set out in §§156 and 157.
- South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018**
- 6.28 The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (SCLP) 2018 is the current adopted development plan and reflects the needs and strategic direction of South Cambridgeshire Council at the time of its preparation. Relevant policies from the adopted plan are summarised below. However, this Landscape and Green Belt Baseline Review has been prepared in the context of the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan (GCLP), now under preparation. The GCLP will consider whether exceptional circumstances exist to justify releasing land from the current Green Belt to meet identified development needs.
- 6.29 1.1.2 Policy S/4: Cambridge Green Belt states:
- A Green Belt will be maintained around Cambridge that will define the extent of the urban area. The detailed boundaries of the Green Belt in South Cambridgeshire are defined on the Policies Map, which includes some minor revisions to the inner boundary of the Green Belt around Cambridge and to the boundaries around some inset villages. New development in the Green Belt will only be approved in accordance with Green Belt policy in the National Planning Policy Framework.*
- 6.30 §2.30 notes that the established purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt are:
- Preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre;
 - Maintain and enhance the quality of its setting; and
 - Prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city.
- 6.31 The first two of these purposes correspond with NPPF Purpose d): "to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns."
- 6.32 The third local purpose reflects NPPF Purpose b): "to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another," but expands this to include smaller settlements, recognising that the Local Plan regards the separation of villages and neighbourhoods not contiguous with the city as equally important.
- 6.33 §2.31 lists a number of factors that are considered to define the character of the city and its setting:
- Key views of Cambridge from the surrounding countryside;
 - A soft green edge to the city;
 - A distinctive urban edge;
 - Green corridors penetrating into the city;
 - Designated sites and other features contributing positively to the character of the landscape setting;
 - The distribution, physical separation, setting, scale and character of Green Belt villages; and
 - A landscape that retains a strong rural character.
- 6.34 Policy NH/8 addresses the mitigation of the potential impact of development in and adjoining the Green Belt:
1. Any development proposals within the Green Belt must be located and designed so that they do not have an adverse effect on the rural character and openness of the Green Belt.

2. *Where development is permitted, landscaping conditions, together with a requirement that any planting is adequately maintained, will be attached to any planning permission in order to ensure that the impact on the Green Belt is mitigated.*
3. *Development on the edges of settlements which are surrounded by the Green Belt must include careful landscaping and design measures of a high quality.*

6.35 Both Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District are committed to viewing the Green Belt as a positive planning tool rather than a solely restrictive one. Opportunities have been taken at Trumpington to shape a new Green Belt edge that enhances the landscape setting of the city while also improving opportunities for recreational access. The strategy seeks to focus growth in sustainable and less landscape-sensitive locations across both authorities.

Planning Advisory Service guidance

6.36 The Planning Advisory Service (PAS) guidance emphasises the importance of making informed and balanced judgements on planning issues. It recognises the important role Green Belts have played in preventing ribbon or strip development, maintaining distinct and separate settlements, and supporting outdoor recreation on the urban fringe, as well as for food and energy production.

6.37 The guidance underscores the need for an initial assessment against the five purposes of the Green Belt. It acknowledges that while factors such as landscape quality cannot justify Green Belt designation, they may still be relevant when evaluating suitable locations for development. The PAS guidance sets out key considerations related to the five purposes of the Green Belt, summarised below.

- **Purpose a): to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas.** The guidance considers the definition of *sprawl* and how its interpretation may have evolved since the 1930s. It also examines whether a development, if positively planned through a local plan or designed with strong master planning principles, should still be classified as sprawl.
- **Purpose b): to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another.** The identity of a settlement is not solely defined by the physical distance to another town but is also influenced by the character of the places and the land between them. In this context, the perception of separation is important. Landscape character assessments can serve as a useful evaluation tool in this respect.
- **Purpose c): to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.** This purpose is assumed to apply across all areas of the Green Belt. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a method for evaluating the relative contribution of different areas to this goal, recognizing that not all parts of the Green Belt have the same level of importance in protecting the countryside from urban encroachment.

- **Purpose d): to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.** This purpose typically applies to a limited number of settlements. In many towns, recent development has encroached upon the historic core, separating it from the Green Belt and diminishing its visual connection to the surrounding countryside;
- **Purpose e): to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.** It is generally considered that the potential for development on urban land has already been accounted for prior to the identification of potential Green Belt land. As a result, all Green Belt land contributes equally to this purpose, making it difficult to distinguish significant differences in the level of contribution across different parts of the Green Belt.

Planning Policy Guidance: Green Belt

6.38 Planning Policy Guidance [PPG]: Green Belt – advice on the role of Green Belt in the planning system, published by Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and dated 27th February 2025, provides useful direction when assessing the likely effects of proposed development on the Green Belt.

6.39 The PPG is relevant to authorities responsible for determining whether land qualifies as Grey Belt during decision making. It notes: *“Where grey belt is identified, it does not automatically follow that it should be allocated for development, released from the Green Belt or for development proposals to be approved in all circumstances”*. Rather, the contribution a portion of Green Belt land makes to Green Belt purposes is one of the considerations when making decisions affecting Green Belt land.

Green Belt Assessment: key steps

- 6.40 The following key steps should be undertaken when carrying out a Green Belt assessment.
1. Identify the location and appropriate scale of the area to be assessed (referred to here as the Assessment Area).
 2. Evaluate the contribution the Assessment Area makes to Green Belt Purposes a), b) and d), using the prescribed criteria.
 3. Consider whether the policies relating to the areas or assets cited in NPPF Footnote 7 (other than Green Belt itself) apply, so potentially providing a strong reason for refusing or restricting development of the Assessment Area
 4. Identify Grey Belt land.
 5. Identify whether the development of the Assessment Area would fundamentally undermine the five Green Belt purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt, when considered across the plan area.

Defining Assessment Areas

- 6.41 Guidance is provided to help define appropriate Assessment Areas:
- To ensure the assessment of how land performs against the Green Belt purposes is robust, Assessment Areas should be sufficiently granular to enable the assessment of their variable contribution to Green Belt purposes.
 - Consideration should be given to subdividing Assessment Areas into smaller areas to better identify areas of Grey Belt
 - The size of Assessment Areas should reflect local circumstances; for example, smaller areas may be appropriate in certain places, such as around existing settlements or public transport hubs or corridors
- 6.42 When making judgements as to whether land is Grey Belt, judgement should be given to the contribution that the Assessment Area makes to Green Belt Purposes a), b), and d), based on the criteria set out below.

Purpose a) – to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas

6.43 This purpose relates to the sprawl of large built up areas. Villages should not be considered large built up areas.

Contribution	Illustrative features
Strong	<p>Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely to be free of existing development, and lack physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development.</p> <p>They are also likely to include all of the following features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be adjacent or near to a large built up area • if developed, result in an incongruous pattern of development (such as an extended “finger” of development into the Green Belt)
Moderate	<p>Assessment areas that contribute moderately are likely to be adjacent or near to a large built up area, but include one or more features that weaken the land’s contribution to this purpose a, such as (but not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • having physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development • be partially enclosed by existing development, such that new development would not result in an incongruous pattern of development • contain existing development • being subject to other urbanising influences
Weak or None	<p>Assessment areas that make only a weak or no contribution are likely to include those that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are not adjacent to or near to a large built up area • are adjacent to or near to a large built up area, but containing or being largely enclosed by significant existing development

Purpose b) – to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

6.44 This purpose relates to the merging of towns, not villages.

Contribution	Illustrative features
Strong	<p>Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely to be free of existing development and include all of the following features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • forming a substantial part of a gap between towns • the development of which would be likely to result in the loss of visual separation of towns
Moderate	<p>Assessment areas that contribute moderately are likely to be located in a gap between towns, but include one or more features that weaken their contribution to this purpose, such as (but not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • forming a small part of the gap between towns • being able to be developed without the loss of visual separation between towns. This could be (but is not limited to) due to the presence or the close proximity of structures, natural landscape elements or topography that preserve visual separation
Weak or None	<p>Assessment areas that contribute weakly are likely to include those that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • do not form part of a gap between towns, or • form part of a gap between towns, but only a very small part of this gap, without making a contribution to visual separation

Purpose d) – to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

6.45 This purpose relates to historic towns, not villages. Where there are no historic towns in the plan area, it may not be necessary to provide detailed assessments against this purpose.

Contribution	Illustrative features
Strong	<p>Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely be free of existing development and to include all of the following features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • form part of the setting of the historic town • make a considerable contribution to the special character of a historic town. This could be (but is not limited to) as a result of being within, adjacent to, or of significant visual importance to the historic aspects of the town
Moderate	<p>Assessment areas that perform moderately are likely to form part of the setting and/or contribute to the special character of a historic town but include one or more features that weaken their contribution to this purpose, such as (but not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being separated to some extent from historic aspects of the town by existing development or topography • containing existing development • not having an important visual, physical, or experiential relationship to historic aspects of the town
Weak or None	<p>Assessment areas that make no or only a weak contribution are likely to include those that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • do not form part of the setting of a historic town • have no visual, physical, or experiential connection to the historic aspects of the town

Application of Footnote 7 when identifying land as Grey Belt

6.46 Grey Belt excludes land where the application of policies relating to the areas or assets in NPPF Footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.

Assessing whether land is Grey Belt

6.47 Having considered the above criteria, and subject to the application of any exclusions arising from Footnote 7, an Assessment Area that is not judged to strongly contribute to any one of Purposes a), b), or d) can be identified as Grey Belt land.

Considering impact on the remaining Green Belt

6.48 A Green Belt assessment should also consider the extent to which development of Green Belt land (including but not limited to Grey Belt land) would fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the plan area as whole.

6.49 In reaching this judgement, consider should be given as to whether (or the extent to which) the release or development of Green Belt Land would affect the ability of all the remaining Green Belt across the plan area from serving all five of the Green Belt purposes in a meaningful way.

Proposals on Grey Belt land

6.50 A Green Belt Assessment will (alongside other considerations) inform the determination of applications that utilise Grey Belt land. In light of this guidance, it is expected that authorities should consider evidence on:

- whether the site strongly contributes to the Green Belt purposes a), b) or d); and
- whether the application of policies to areas and assets of particular importance identified in Footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) provide a strong reason to restrict development; and
- whether development of the site would fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt across the plan area, as set out in national policy and this guidance.

Circumstances proposals on Grey Belt land should be approved

6.51 Where a site is judged to be Grey Belt, and to not fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt across the plan area if developed further consideration will include determining whether the development would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, as set out in NPPF §155. This would include consideration of whether a development is sustainably located, whether it would meet the ‘Golden Rules’ contributions (where applicable), and whether there is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed.

6.52 Where a development is not inappropriate in the Green Belt, this does not itself remove the land from the Green Belt nor require development proposals to be approved. In accordance with section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, wider policies and considerations apply, including those in the area’s adopted plan, and in the NPPF read as a whole.

Considering the potential impact of development on the openness of the Green Belt

6.53 Green Belt Assessments should also consider the impact of a proposal on the openness of the Green Belt. This requires a judgement based on the circumstances of the case. The courts have identified a number of matters that may need to be taken into account in making this assessment. These include, but are not limited to:

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

Consideration of harm to openness if development is not inappropriate

6.54 NPPF Footnote 55 sets out that if development is considered to be not inappropriate development on previously developed land or Grey Belt, then this is excluded from the policy requirement to give substantial weight to any harm to the Green Belt, including to its openness.

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

Case law precedent

6.56 Several appeal decisions have provided further interpretation of Green Belt openness and its potential harm in relation to Green Belt purposes. One key case is the High Court challenge by Samuel Smith Old Brewery (Tadcaster) and Oxton Farm against North Yorkshire County Council and Darrington Quarries Ltd. This case considered the visual dimension of openness, and found that decision-makers should assess how a development’s visual impact affects Green Belt openness and whether those effects are harmful or benign.

6.57 Since openness is not explicitly defined in the NPPF, various factors can be considered relevant to its assessment. The concept now includes both visual and spatial aspects, as recognised in the National Planning Practice Guidance, which advises that the courts have identified several matters that need to be considered when assessing effects on openness. These include, but are not limited to [NPPG 64-013-20250225]:

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

6.58 This principle was established in Turner v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and Another [2016] EWCA Civ 466, concerning land at Barrack Road, West Parley, Dorset. In this case, the judge upheld the Planning Inspector’s approach of comparing the openness impact of a proposed dwelling against an existing mobile home and storage yard. The judge emphasized that openness is not confined to a volumetric assessment but is a broad concept where multiple factors may be relevant.

6.59 The ruling further stated: *"The question of visual impact is implicitly part of the concept of ‘openness of the Green Belt’... There is an important visual dimension to checking ‘the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas’ and the merging of neighbouring towns, as indeed the term ‘Green Belt’ itself implies. Greenness is a visual quality: part of the idea of the Green Belt is that the eye and the spirit should be relieved from the prospect of unrelenting urban sprawl. Openness of aspect is a characteristic quality of the countryside, and ‘safeguarding the countryside from encroachment’ includes preservation of that quality of openness. The preservation of ‘the setting ... of historic towns’ obviously refers in a material way to their visual setting, for instance when seen from a distance across open fields."*

6.60 Further clarification came from the Supreme Court in February 2020, in relation to the Samuel Smith case. The judgment advised that *"as PPG2 made clear, it is not necessarily a statement about the visual qualities of the land, though in some cases this may be an aspect of the planning judgement involved in applying this broad policy concept. Nor does it imply freedom from any form of development"* (§22). The judgement went on to advise *‘that is a matter not of legal principle, but of planning judgement for the planning authority or the inspector’* (§25). Consequently, the judgement of the relevance of visual impact on the Green Belt is a planning judgement, and not a legal one, and can be relevant.

- 6.61 This was expanded on in a later Court of Appeal judgment in *Hook v Secretary for Housing, Communities and Local Government* [2020] EWCA Civ 486, in which Lindblom LJ reinforced the judgement that visual effects can be relevant to the question of openness as a matter of planning judgement stating ‘*there was no indication in ... the NPPF that the aim of preserving the openness of the Green Belt excludes consideration of visual as well as physical or spatial impact*’ (§22).
- 6.62 Recent case law has indicated the importance of visual considerations when assessing effect of development on Green Belt openness as part of the planning judgement process. Accordingly, both spatial and perceptual considerations are important when evaluating how development affects Green Belt purposes.

Previous Green Belt studies

- 6.63 The **Cambridge Sub-Region Study** 2001 included a review of the Green Belt for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan. The **Cambridge Inner Green Belt Study** 2002 was prepared as in-house working document by Cambridge City Council and formed an evidence base document for the 2006 Cambridge Local Plan.
- 6.64 The **Cambridge Green Belt Study: A Vision for the Future of Cambridge and its Green Belt Setting** was prepared for South Cambridgeshire District Council in 2002 by LDA and provided a more strategic assessment covering the broader Green Belt around Cambridge to that of the later 2015 Cambridge Inner Green Belt Boundary Study. This identified a number of qualities that were considered to contribute positively to the setting and special character of Cambridge and were considered essential to the purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt. These were taken forward and used in the later Green Belt assessments.
- 6.65 The **Inner Green Belt Study** 2012 was undertaken by CCC and SCDC provided an evidence base for the emerging Local Plans at that time for each authority. The Study followed a similar methodology used for the Cambridge Inner Green Belt Study 2002. This methodology was brought into question by the inspectors examining the emerging Local Plans as they considered it difficult, in some cases, to understand how the importance to the Green Belt had been derived. In response the 2015 CIGBBS was prepared by LDA.

Cambridge Inner Green Belt Boundary Study

- 6.66 The Study was based on the purposes as defined for the Cambridge Green Belt as well as the Green Belt purposes set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The Study took a different approach to the previous studies and those typically applied in relation to other local planning authority Green Belt assessments by not using a ranking system but rather defining the 16 qualities of the Green Belt that contributed to the purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt. The 16 qualities incorporated

the previous 14 qualities identified in the 2002 Green Belt Study prepared by LDA and added two further qualities.

- 6.67 The CIGBBS focused on the assessment of the land closest to Cambridge (although included a number of figures covering the whole of the Cambridge Green Belt) and identified 19 sectors of the Inner Green Belt, which were assessed to understand their importance to the performance of the Green Belt purposes. Most of the sectors were also divided into sub-areas, where there were differences within the sector.
- 6.68 The Site lies beyond the CIGBBS Study Area and so was not included in any of the assessed sectors. Neither does it lie adjacent to any of assessed sectors.
- 6.69 The Study Area covered nearly the entirety of the Green Belt surrounding Cambridge, with the exception of the Green Belt between Histon/ Impington and Milton. Consequently, the assessed sectors bear no relationship with the Site.
- 6.70 The CIGBBS was found to be robust by the Inspectors examining the Local Plans and has continued to provide an important evidence base document for the adopted 2018 Local Plans for Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council.
- 6.71 The CIGBBS concluded that virtually all areas of land within the study area were assessed as being of importance to Green Belt purposes, although it identified that it may be possible for certain areas of land be released from the Green Belt for development without significant harm to Green Belt purposes.
- 6.72 Given the presence of Green Belt around Cambridge, accommodating future development needs of the city will be challenging. If growth is to be achieved this will need to be by i) redevelopment of existing developed areas in Cambridge, ii) development beyond the Green Belt, or iii) release of the Green Belt. This will be a key decision for Cambridge in the future.
- 6.73 If Cambridge is to accommodate developments, such as a mid-tech development in its best location to maximise the benefits of being near to Cambridge University and benefit from its international reputation for research and design, it will be very likely that further land will need to be released from Green Belt. Consequently, it will be necessary to find parts of the Cambridge Green Belt, where there is less of a contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt in comparison to other parts around Cambridge. The CIGBBS also indicates that it is possible to find parts of the Green Belt where development could take place without significantly harming the purposes of the Green Belt, if designed appropriately and working within specific parameters. Therefore, this may also apply in parts of the Green Belt that have not been assessed.
- 6.74 The CIGBBS Study Area was broadly based on the 2012 Inner Green Belt Boundary Study, but extended to include additional areas to “ensure comprehensive coverage of all undeveloped Green Belt land around the

edges of the city”. It is not stated why the part of the Green Belt north of the A14, which the Site falls within, was not included within the Study Area.

- 6.75 Within the 2012 Study, the Green Belt beyond the A14 was excluded from being assessed, since it was considered the road provided a major physical barrier that confined the edge of Cambridge. However, as the CIGBBS notes elsewhere, the A14 is an artificial boundary that prevents a more sympathetic transition from city to fen edge, and there is seemingly the potential for sympathetic development that extends beyond this artificial boundary to provide a better transition. A similar judgement is made in the later GCLSA.
- 6.76 In 2019, and in the absence of a contemporary assessment of the Green Belt that included the Site area, The Landscape Partnership was commissioned to prepare an assessment of the Site and the potential effects of future development within the Site, based on the 16 Green Belt qualities used within the CIGBBS. It was noted that these qualities provided a greater level of understanding of the Green Belt as it relates to Cambridge, with each quality relating to one of the NPPF’s five purposes. Each of the qualities is considered equally important to the Green Belt, so no weighting is applied.

	Assessment Criteria	Description
1.	A large historic core relative to the size of the city as a whole	<p>The A14 has acted as a barrier to the growth of Cambridge, defining the current northern extent of the city. The Green Belt to the north has little or no association with the historic core, with the intervening modern development having removed this association. There is little sense in which it is connected to the historic character of Cambridge. The northern part of Cambridge is one of the parts of the city which has experienced greater expansion beyond the historic core.</p> <p>Expansion beyond the A14 might be considered to extend the scale of Cambridge so that the balance between the historic core and the city as a whole is harmed. This would probably be more a perceptual and subjective judgment due to the perceived influence of the A14 containing the edge of the city. If the whole of the Site was to be released from the Green Belt, this potentially could reach a tipping point in terms of the scale of the city in comparison to the historic core.</p> <p>There is also the potential that development within the Site could cause urban sprawl. It is consequently, important that any future development within the Site is carefully considered and designed, so that it does not result in perceived urban sprawl or undue expansion to the north.</p>

	Assessment Criteria	Description
2	A city focused on the historic core	<p>There is a connection between this part of the Green Belt and Histon and Impington, but these have their own community cores, and would not be affected by any future mid-tech development within the Site. The proposals would connect with the existing Cambridge Science Park and accordingly would form part of a commercial area of Cambridge, but not compete with the city's historic core.</p>
3	Short and/or characteristic approaches to the historic core from the edge of the city	<p>The Site does not form part of or lie adjacent to any short and/or characteristic approaches between the open countryside and the Distinctive Cambridge. Consequently, the Site provides a very limited role in relation to Criteria 3.</p> <p>Visitors approaching Cambridge from the north through Histon along the B1049 experience a largely suburban approach that is not distinctive. On this route, there is some very limited awareness of the open countryside within the Site when traveling along Bridge Road and crossing the bridge of the guided busway.</p> <p>So long as the south-western part of Parcel 2 retains its current character, any future development within the Site would not affect the perception of entering an historic city nor effect the perceived scale of the city. The Green Belt would maintain the sense that the historic city is dominated by its historic core.</p>

	Assessment Criteria	Description
4	A city of human scale easily crossed by foot and by bicycle	<p>The CIGBBS found that Histon Road is 3.5kms from the city centre, which Bridge Road connects to. The Cambridgeshire Guided Busway also provides a cycleway forming part of Sustrans Route 51, which would connect the Site to Bridge Road, via Cambridge Road, a distance of 4.5km.</p> <p>Route 51 also provides a designated route into the city centre, following a longer route that passes through Chesterton, a distance of approximately 5.5km (close to the national average cycle journey identified by the National Travel Survey 2014, as stated in the CIGBBS). This would still enable Cambridge to be perceived as having a human scale that could be easily crossed by bicycle.</p> <p>In any case, it is likely that most cycle journeys would occur between residential areas and any future mid-tech development and Cambridge Science Park.</p>
5.	Topography providing a framework to Cambridge	<p>The landform is typical of the low lying landscape beyond the floodplain of the River Cam where development has historically occurred to form Cambridge. Consequently, development within the Site would retain Cambridge's relationship between built development and the landform.</p>

	Assessment Criteria	Description
6.	Long distance footpaths and highways providing access to the countryside	<p>There are no public rights of way within the Site. The only route within the vicinity of the Site, is the public byway that follows Mere Way. As this is the only public right of way that provides access to this part of the countryside to the north of Cambridge, it provides an important route and link between the city and countryside and Waterbeach. This would be retained were the Site developed, but also provides the opportunity for any future development proposals to link with it and enhance connectivity.</p> <p>The lack of public access within this part of the Green Belt also provides an opportunity to improve accessibility, and meet the objectives of the NPPF.</p> <p>The public byway is also the only way to appreciate this part of this countryside and its relationship with Cambridge. Future development within the Site should seek to retain a strong green corridor along the public byway and the sense that any adjoining development has a parkland character providing a transitional character between the evidently urban character to the south of the A14 and the stronger rural character further to the north.</p>
7.	Key views of Cambridge from the surrounding landscape	<p>As set out above, the Site does not contribute to any key views. The historic core and Cambridge landmarks are not visible from within the Site or from locations beyond the Site, where the Site contributes to the visual setting of the historic core and landmarks. Views from the A14 are generally of modern development, with no awareness of the historic core or views of an historic skyline and landmark features.</p>

	Assessment Criteria	Description
8.	Significant areas of <i>Distinctive and Supportive</i> townscape and landscape	<p>The Site does not form part of the identified <i>Distinctive and Supportive</i> townscapes and landscapes, which have been defined as being the most important areas to be safeguarded from the adverse effects of development. However, the CIGBBS considers all areas of the Green Belt (with the exception of <i>Visually Detracting Townscape/Landscape</i>) to be provide a crucial role in the setting and perception of the city. Nevertheless, the <i>Distinctive and Supportive</i> townscapes and landscapes provide an important distinction in determining which parts of the Green Belt play a greater role and contribution to the distinctiveness of Cambridge and its setting.</p> <p>Furthermore, the Site is located within the <i>Outer Rural Areas</i> of the Green Belt, where the primary function is described as "<i>providing a backdrop to views of the city and in providing a setting for approaches to Connective, Supportive and Distinctive areas of townscape and landscape</i>". However, the Site provides little contribution in this function.</p>

	Assessment Criteria	Description
9.	A soft green edge to the city	<p>The Site does form part of the countryside surrounding Cambridge and consequently does contribute to providing a soft green edge to the city. Development of part of the Site would affect its contribution to the soft green edge. However, there are several factors which differentiate it from other parts of the Green Belt or which would limit effects / provide an opportunity. For example, the CIGBBS identifies that it is the Green Belt to the west of Cambridge that provides the greatest contribution; Cambridge itself has a densely treed character, which is reflected in the Site's mature tree belts and woodland; the A14 creates an abrupt and hard edge that does not contribute to the setting and special character of Cambridge, thereby enabling the opportunity for future development to provide a more appropriate transition; and the role of planting in forming future city edges. The retention of the existing tree belts and woodlands would form an important part of any future development proposals, as they already provide a strong landscape framework that forms a defining feature within this part of the Green Belt. Thereby, they would continue to provide a soft green edge to the city. If development extended beyond the existing tree belts, there is the potential for further tree belts to be created.</p>

	Assessment Criteria	Description
10.	Good urban structure with well-designed edges to the city	The A14 has contained the growth of Cambridge and defined its northern edge. However, it has also created a linear and harsh edge to the city, particularly as a result of the elevated nature of the road, increasing its prominence on the edge of Cambridge and in the landscape to the north. As described elsewhere within the CIGBBS, this has resulted an artificial, abrupt and hard edge that does not provide a sympathetic and well designed edge to the city. Any future development within the Site would need to be designed to ensure that it provides a good urban structure and well designed edge.
11.	Green corridors into the city	There are no 'Green Corridors' within the vicinity of the Site.

	Assessment Criteria	Description
12.	The distribution, physical and visual separation of the necklace villages	<p>Development during the 20th century has already led to the coalescence of Histon and Impington, and has brought them close to merging with Cambridge. Milton, meanwhile, has already coalesced with Cambridge.</p> <p>Whilst some degree of individual identity has been retained within these villages, this has been significantly compromised. Development at the Site would not further accentuate the existing coalescence between Histon and Impington, nor between Milton and Cambridge. The Site does, however, make an important contribution to limiting their further coalescence with Cambridge.</p> <p>The Site also provides a contribution to the separation of Histon/Impington and Milton. At their closest points, the gap between Impington and Milton is 2km and there is no intervisibility between the settlements. The intervening landscape between the settlements and Cambridge is heavily influenced by the presence of woodland and tree belts, further accentuating the sense of separation between the settlements. Parcel 1 is sufficiently distant from Histon/Impington and Milton such that, if developed, there would be no sense that one settlement was expanding toward the other. Each would still retain its own distinct identity.</p> <p>There could, however, be a perception that Cambridge was expanding. It would therefore be important that most of Parcel 2 remains undeveloped to retain a sense of identity and separation with Cambridge, and prevent further coalescence.</p> <p>The existing tree belts and woodland within the Site provide an important role in this regard by assisting in physically and visually containing any future development. If development is limited to the eastern part of the site, the perceived sense of separation from Cambridge would be maintained at a level no worse than the current situation, as experienced along Bridge Road.</p>

	Assessment Criteria	Description
13.	The scale, character, identity, rural setting of the necklace villages	<p>Histon and Impington have already coalesced, having experienced significant growth during the 20th century, and are therefore less distinctive than villages that have seen little change. Consequently, the Green Belt around these settlements might be considered to play a lesser role in safeguarding character and identity in comparison to other parts of the Green Belt where villages have experienced limited change. Nevertheless, the Site does contribute to the rural setting to the east of Histon and Impington. It is therefore important that Parcel 2 is left largely undeveloped to maintain this setting.</p> <p>Development within the areas of Parcel 1 that contain a network of tree belts and woodland would have minimal visual impact on the wider rural setting of the two villages. Consequently, the Green Belt would continue to conserve this setting.</p>
14.	Designated sites and areas enriching the setting of Cambridge	The Site does not incorporate any environmental, cultural or access-related designations. It does lie adjacent to the Impington St Andrews Conservation Area, but the closest part of the Conservation Area has already been significantly changed through the presence of residential development. Exclusion of development within the adjoining part of Parcel 2 would retain the setting of the Conservation Area.
15.	Elements and features contributing positively to the character and structure of the landscape	The tree belts and woodland provide an important contribution to the character and structure of the landscape, and should be retained as part of any future development wherever possible. Development within this part of the Green Belt would have limited effect on this criteria if these features are retained.

	Assessment Criteria	Description
16.	A city set in a landscape which retains a strongly rural character	<p>The Site does provide an important contribution to the rural character surrounding the city. Whilst the adjoining area of landscape has been notably influenced by a number of land uses, creating a more disturbed landscape, the landscape of the Site retains an evident arable character with a strong landscape framework of tree belts, woodland and hedgerows.</p> <p>Built development, by its very nature, would result in encroachment into the countryside and would therefore cause some harm to this criterion. However, while the physical introduction of built form into the rural context of the site would be evident, its perceptual impact could be significantly reduced—particularly if it is not visible from publicly accessible locations or nearby settlements.</p> <p>By limiting Parcel 1 to the central and southern parts of the Site, a combination of physical separation and the visual containment offered by existing tree belts and woodland would largely prevent a perceptual awareness of countryside encroachment from Histon/Impington and Milton Road. This would also apply to those approaching the city along key transport routes.</p> <p>The exception would be users of the public byway along Mere Way, where the encroachment would be more apparent. However, this impact can be mitigated by strengthening the existing boundaries along Mere Way to create a strong green corridor. The countryside here is not publicly accessible and the creation of an 80ha country park would facilitate public access whilst reinforcing the rural character.</p>

Conclusions regarding the Site's contribution to the Green Belt

6.77 The Site makes an important contribution to the NPPF purposes of the Green Belt. The CIGBBS considers that almost all parts of the Green

Belt around Cambridge provide a *crucial* role, but that there are large portions of the Green Belt around the edges of Cambridge that provide a more *essential* role. The Site does not form part of these more essential parts of the Green Belt.

Greater Cambridge Green Belt Assessment

Methodology and Scope

6.78 The Greater Cambridge Green Belt Study (GCGBA) was authored by LUC and published in August 2021 as part of the evidence base for the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan. It expands upon the CIGBBS to cover the entire Greater Cambridge area. Unlike the CIGBBS, the GCGBA adopts a parcel-based ranking approach, focusing on a parcel of land's contribution to locally defined Green Belt purposes. These three Cambridge-specific purposes are:

1. Preserving Cambridge's unique character as a compact, historic city
2. Maintaining and enhancing the quality of its setting
3. Preventing the merging of surrounding communities with Cambridge

6.79 This reflects the previously identified factors and purposes that were considered to be important at the 2003 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 Examination in Public, which advised that it was necessary to interpret national policy at the local level, indicating that all five purposes of the Green Belt would not necessarily be relevant to the Cambridge Green Belt. The Panel Report identified two purposes that were critical to the Cambridge Green Belt: to preserve the special character of Cambridge and to maintain the quality of its setting; and the secondary purpose: to prevent further coalescence of settlements.

6.80 It noted that the special character of Cambridge was "*compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre*" and that "*apart from its unique historic character, of particular importance to the quality of the city are the green spaces within it, the green corridors which run from open countryside into the urban area, and the green separation which exists to protect the integrity of the necklace of villages. All of these features, together with views of the historic core, are key qualities which are important to be safeguarded in any review of Green Belt boundaries*".

6.81 These characteristics have been referred in the CIGBBS and the GCGBA. The primary difference is that CIGBBS applied a more qualitative approach, whereas the GCGBA incorporated the qualities into a more analytical and quantitative approach. As there is no agreed standard or approach to the preparing of Green Belt assessments, both are considered valid approaches.

6.82 The purpose of the GCGBA was "*not to identify land that is suitable for development, or to set out the exceptional circumstances for releasing land from the Green Belt, and the assessment does not consider any specific potential development sites identified through Calls for Sites*

or other processes. However, by identifying variations in Green Belt harm at a suitably granular level, the study provides outputs that will, alongside wider evidence relating to other environmental/ sustainability considerations, inform decisions regarding the relative merits of meeting the Councils' development needs in different locations" [§1.7].

6.83 The Study goes on to advise "*assessment does not draw conclusions about what land should be released for development as that will require an analysis of wider sustainability factors which the Councils will take into account in reaching a conclusion as to whether there are exceptional circumstances to justify the release of Green Belt land*" [page 43]. Consequently, the GCGBA needs to be interpreted to relate to specific potential development sites, with individuals parcels not necessary correlating with identified sites. As it does not identify potential land that could be released from the Green Belt for development or the potential impact of developing sites on the Green Belt, it differs from previous studies. It is therefore important to note that the assessed harm of releasing land from the Green Belt in the GCGBA is potentially or likely to be different to the proposed releasing of land associated with proposed development.

6.84 In 2021, The Landscape Partnership undertook a review of the methodology applied within the GCGBA; pertinent comments are reproduced below:

- There is a fair amount of overlap of contributory factors and qualities that can be applied to determining a parcel's contribution to the purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt, although this partly reflects the nature of assessing Green Belt purposes. The extent of overlap is particularly present in relation to Cambridge Purpose 1 and 2;
- It is noted that the highest contribution to a specific Green Belt purpose will be taken as the overall contribution for a specific Parcel, regardless as to how the Parcel contributes to the other Green Belt purposes. As the GCGBA states "*the contribution ratings for each purpose were not added up to give a cumulative overall contribution rating, as a significant contribution to one rating may in itself indicate that the land is making a significant contribution to function of the Green Belt*" [§3.64]. This a commonly applied approach, as a Parcel only needs to contribute strongly to one purpose and not contribute to the others to be functioning effectively as Green Belt. Conversely, it is less helpful in comparing land with a view to making decisions regarding exceptional circumstances for the release of Green Belt to meet the future development needs of Greater Cambridge.
- No definition is made of what is regarded as a 'wide gap', 'moderate gap', or 'narrow gap' in relation to Cambridge Purpose 3, which is left to the assessor to determine.

- The methodology refers to distinction being influenced by the cumulative impact of multiple boundary features and distance, The Landscape Partnership concurs with this approach but does not agree that "if boundary features are close together their combined impact can be diminished by lack of distance to separate them" [§3.51].
- While the methodology and criteria used in the assessment are generally appropriate, The Landscape Partnership identifies a key flaw in how variations in Green Belt harm are defined. GCGBA Figure 3.10 outlines a logical approach, showing that 'Very High Harm' should apply where a parcel both contributes significantly to Green Belt purposes and would have a major impact on adjacent land if released. However, this approach is not followed in Table 3.6, where 'Very High Harm' is applied even in less severe scenarios. This inconsistency inflates harm ratings and places more land in higher harm categories than justified. For example, a rating of 'Moderate-High Harm' can be given even where the release would have only a negligible impact on adjacent land. Despite the methodical assessment of parcel contribution and adjacent land impact, this mismatch undermines the reliability of the outcomes. Additionally, the harm categories are weighted towards the higher end, creating a skewed and unbalanced picture.

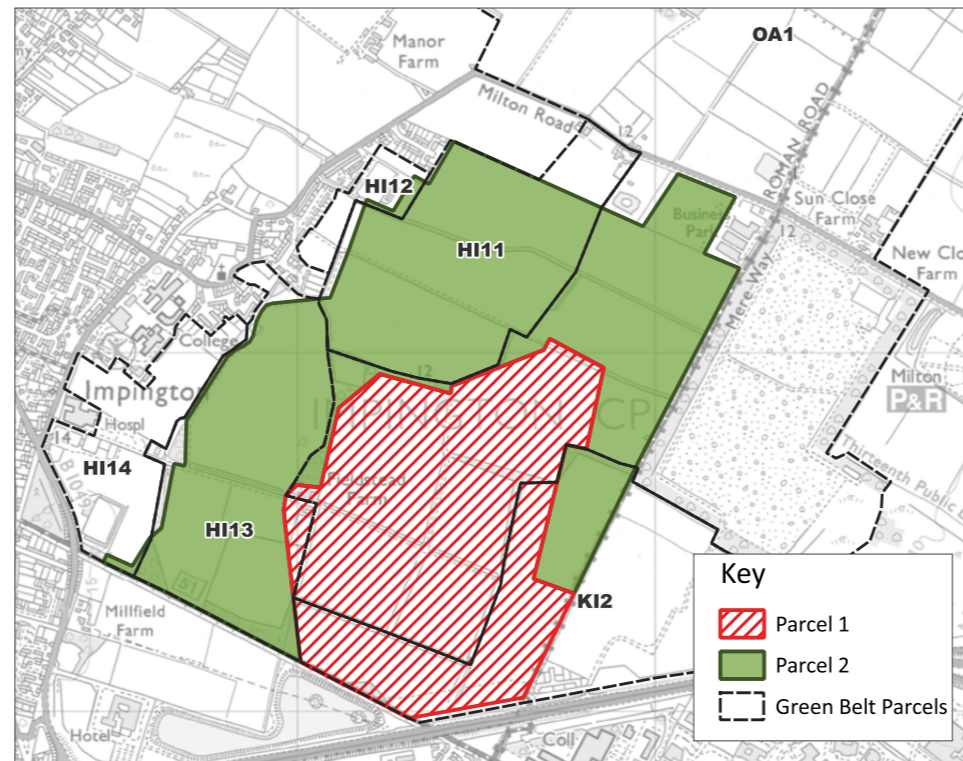


Plate 10: Green Belt parcels

6.85 It is important to note regarding the assessment of impact on the release of adjacent Green Belt land, that the methodology advises "it is necessary to assume that the land will be developed in order to reflect potential adverse impact, but it is recognised that there is potential for mitigation measures such as boundary strengthening and density of development within an inset area to influence this. Although the nature of development on released land could have some bearing on the strength of adjacent retained Green Belt land, it is unlikely to radically

alter assessment outcomes" [§3.113]. As it is not realistic to account for a variety of scenarios, the Green Belt study relies on applying this general principle. Whilst it may not necessarily be "radically" different, the nature of development, its design and the amount and type of mitigation could still have a notable difference. This is why the importance of mitigation and the different approaches to reducing harm is referred to in Chapter 5 of the GCGBA. Consequently, it is important not just to take the outcomes of the GCGBA on face value when considering exceptional circumstances, but to consider each situation on a case by case approach, considering how the proposed development may be able to reduce the GCGBA assessed impact on the release of adjacent Green Belt land, as is the case for the Site.

6.86 GCGBA also notes "due to the greater distance between land in outer areas and the inset settlements, and the subsequent very strong distinction, outer areas were all given a 'very high' harm rating. The outer area assessments do recognise some variation in contribution rating but in all cases the overall harm is still 'very high' and the areas are, as a result, much larger than the parcels defined around each inset settlement. Any significant areas of diminished openness in outer area parcels were noted, but in the context of an assessment of harm associated with expanding existing inset areas these did not affect the assessment ratings" [§3.133]. This is a generic approach that relies on certain assumed aspects of the Green Belt, which will not always be the case. There is recognition of some variation in contribution ratings, but this is not identified in terms of location. The 'very high' harm outcomes are also a reflection of the flaw in the assessment process highlighted

above. The main consideration is that the Outer Area Parcels are very large, and the level of written analysis is limited, so it is not possible to identify any variations or parts of the Parcel that contribute more weakly or where its release would have less of an impact on adjoining Green Belt land. Consequently, this needs to be interpreted where exceptional circumstances are considered to be applicable.

Assessment of Parcels

- 6.87 The Site encompasses parts of six Parcels including HI11; HI13; very small portions of HI12 and HI14; the western portion of KI2; and the south-eastern portion of OA1 (refer to Plate 10).
- 6.88 HI11 and HI13 (and the relevant parts of HI12 and HI14) are proposed for green infrastructure, with the exception of a very small part of HI13, which is proposed for built development. This portion of HI13 equates to the existing Fieldstead Farm complex and would be expected to remain within the Green Belt.
- 6.89 The south-eastern-most portion of OA1 together with the western-most portion of KI2 within the Site area is proposed for release from the Green Belt to enable the development of the built elements of CSPN.
- 6.90 The remaining parts of OA1 within the Site area would form part of the green infrastructure. A part of KI2 along Mere Way would also be retained within the Green Belt as an extension of the green infrastructure, to provide a green wedge between the built elements and Mere Way.
- 6.91 Consequently, the focus of this report is on Parcels KI12 and OA1 in relation to their assessed contribution to the Cambridge Green Belt and the assessed harm from releasing the land.

Parcel KI12

6.92 KI12 is noted as being dominated by arable land with a small developed area on Mere Way. The A14 corridor creates a strong boundary feature separating the Parcel from Cambridge, with the landform and land cover not creating any additional distinction from Cambridge. The Parcel is assessed as follows:

- Cambridge Purpose 1: Significant
- Cambridge Purpose 2: Moderate
- Cambridge Purpose 3: Moderate
- Release of Land: Minor-Moderate
- Overall Harm: Very High

6.93 The Landscape Partnership agrees with the assessed effects, based on the GCGBA methodology, except for the judgement of Very High overall harm. Based on GCGBA Figure 3.10, it is considered that harm would fall between Moderate-High Harm and High. This provides a more appropriate and balanced assessment of harm, than that in Table 3.6, which is too heavily weighted towards identifying a higher level of harm.

Parcel No.	Existing baseline conditions of relevant part of the parcel	Cambridge Science Park proposal	Consider in review?
HI11	Arable fields	Green infrastructure	No
HI12	Small paddock	Green infrastructure	No
HI13	Arable fields	Mostly green infrastructure with only minor part developed in relation to Fieldstead Farm	No
HI14	Vegetation/tree belt	Green infrastructure	No
KI12	Arable fields	Part developed/part green infrastructure	Yes
OA1	Arable fields	Part developed/part green infrastructure	Yes

6.94 The Landscape Partnership also notes that whilst the A14 does provide a strong boundary feature defining the edge of Cambridge, the CIGBBS also notes that it is a strong urbanising feature creating a harsh edge to Cambridge that has severed the link between Cambridge and the adjoining landscape. The CIGBBS notes that the A14 acts as an artificial edge to the city and undermines the gentle transition between the city and the fen edge. This is also highlighted in the description of one of the three key characteristics of Landscape Character Area 2B, set out in the GCLCA (in which southern part of the Site falls), which is described as *"urban influences associated with the urban edge of Cambridge and major road network in the south which are discordant with the otherwise rural character"* [page 66]. The influence of the A14 as a boundary to Cambridge does result in a significant contribution to Purpose 1. However, it is also important to take account of other considerations in relation to its influence on other qualities of the Green Belt, landscape character, views and tranquillity. The Landscape Partnership considers the Site's position adjacent to the A14 would make it an appropriate location based on other considerations and would help reduce the harsh intrusive effects of the A14.

Parcel OA1

6.95 OA1 covers a very large area forming the core Green Belt separation between Milton, Waterbeach, Horningsea, Fen Ditton, Stow cum Quy and Lode. The GCGBA notes that the Parcel mainly comprises open farmland with no significant urbanising development. The following summary statement is provided *"all land in this area is considered to have strong, or very strong, distinction from any inset or Green Belt edge settlement. This may be as a result of the presence of strong boundary features, distance from any inset settlement, lack of urbanising visual influences or a combination of these elements"*. The Parcel is assessed as follows:

- Cambridge Purpose 1: Limited/No Contribution
- Cambridge Purpose 2: Moderate
- Cambridge Purpose 3: Moderate
- Release of Land: Moderate
- Overall Harm: Very High

6.96 It should be noted that OA1 does incorporate *"urbanising visual influences"* within the vicinity of the Site. This includes: Evolution Business Park immediately to the north of the Site; Sun Close Farm buildings and mobile homes; and Milton Recycling Centre and associated former landfill site. Whilst some of the features contained within these areas of land may not be regarded as affecting the openness of the Green Belt, they do affect the rural character and setting to Cambridge, introducing urbanising features and an urban fringe character.

6.97 As the Parcel covers a large area, its assessment primarily reflects the general principles set out in the methodology, mainly based on distance from Cambridge and the necklace villages, without capturing variations

at the more localised scale of the Site. While this broad-brush approach is understandable given the scope of the study, it is important to note that the assessment of OA1 lacks detailed analysis that might identify sub-areas contributing more or less strongly to the Cambridge Purposes. Nonetheless, The Landscape Partnership agrees with the findings of the GCGBA methodology as they relate to the part of the Parcel within the Site—except for the level of assessed harm.

6.98 As set out above, when harm is assessed using the approach illustrated in GCGBA Figure 3.10, a rating of Moderate-High Harm is identified. This is considered a more appropriate and balanced outcome, reflecting both the contribution to the three Cambridge Purposes and the impact of releasing the land from the Green Belt.

6.99 In practice, this level of harm is expected to align with that identified for the part of the Site falling within Parcel K12. Therefore, when these areas are considered together, the overall assessed harm resulting from releasing the part of the Site proposed for built development from the Green Belt would be categorised as Moderate-High Harm.

Initial Green Belt Assessment

6.100 The following paragraphs present an initial, high-level response to the key steps for a Green Belt Assessment, as defined in the PPG: Green Belt.

6.101 Given that the proposed development is at a relatively early stage of design, the assessment is necessarily high-level and will be extended and refined as the design evolves. A full Green Belt Assessment will be prepared to accompany future planning applications.

Identification of Assessment Area

6.102 For the purposes of this high-level appraisal, the Assessment Area comprises the land within the Site, i.e. Parcels 1 and 2, and as described at earlier sections of this report.

6.103 As such, it meets the requirements of the PPG, in that it:

- is sufficiently granular to enable a robust assessment of the sub-parcel's contribution to the Green Belt purposes
- responds to the local circumstances of its context and is defined by clear and defensible boundaries

Contribution of Assessment Area to delivering Purposes a), b) and d)

6.104 The following text provides initial commentary regarding the contribution that the Assessment Area makes to delivering Green Belt Purposes a), b) and d). Judgements are made by applying the criteria set out in the PPG for each purpose.

Purpose a): to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas

6.105 The PPG confirms that this purpose relates specifically to the prevention

of the sprawl of *large built-up areas*. It further clarifies that villages are not to be regarded as large built-up areas for the purposes of Green Belt assessment. In this context, Cambridge represents the relevant large built-up area.

6.106 The Assessment Area lies to the north of Cambridge and beyond the A14 corridor. The A14 forms a clear, strong, and permanent physical boundary between the built-up area of the city and the countryside beyond. As a major dual carriageway with associated infrastructure, it represents a defensible edge to the urban area and is effective in checking the outward spread of the city in this direction.

6.107 Although the Assessment Area is located outside the A14, its role in preventing the unrestricted sprawl of Cambridge is limited by the presence of this established boundary. The sprawl of the city is already checked at the A14, and land beyond it does not perform a primary containment function. Development north of the A14 would not represent incremental or uncontrolled outward sprawl of the urban area, but rather a conscious planning decision to extend development beyond a clearly defined and robust boundary.

6.108 The character of the transition across the A14 is abrupt, with a marked change from urban development to open countryside. The road itself introduces urbanising influences into the landscape through traffic movement, noise, lighting, and engineered infrastructure. These factors reduce the extent to which the Assessment Area can be said to function as a strong buffer against sprawl, as the containment role is already substantially fulfilled by the A14 corridor.

6.109 Taking these factors together, the Assessment Area is considered to make a Moderate contribution to Green Belt Purpose a). While it lies in proximity to a large built-up area, and therefore retains some role in limiting further outward expansion, the Assessment Area includes features that weaken the land's contribution to Purpose a). Its role is moderated by:

- the presence of the A14 as a strong, durable, and defensible boundary to the city,
- the fact that the Assessment Area lies beyond this boundary rather than forming the immediate urban edge, and
- the influence of existing urbanising features associated with the A14 corridor.

Purpose b): to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

6.110 The supporting text notes that this purpose *"relates to the merging of towns, not villages"*, i.e. not the villages of Histon and Impington or Milton.

6.111 With the exception of Cambridge, to the immediate south of the Assessment Area, there are no towns in the immediate vicinity. The closest are St Ives c.16 km to the north-west, Newmarket c.17km to the east, and Ely c.18km to the north.

6.112 The landscape between the Assessment Area and these towns contains a scattering of villages, including Histon and Impington, Milton, Cottenham, Oakington, Longstanton, Willingham and Waterbeach but is otherwise rural in character.

6.113 Reference to the PPG criteria suggests that the Assessment Area makes a Weak contribution to Purpose b), since it does not form part of the gap between towns in a manner that would make a contribution to their visual separation.

Purpose d): to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

6.114 Cambridge can be considered an historic town for the purposes of a Green Belt Assessment.

6.115 As noted above in relation to the findings of the GCGBA, the southern part of the Assessment Area is considered to make a Significant contribution to Cambridge Purpose 1 (to preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre) and a Moderate contribution to Cambridge Purpose 2 (Maintain and enhance the quality of its setting). Notwithstanding this, The Landscape Partnership's observed that the A14, whilst providing a strong physical barrier, forms a harsh boundary between the city and the countryside beyond, and so a less successful transition between urban and rural landscapes.

6.116 Reference to the PPG criteria suggests that the Assessment Area makes a Moderate contribution to Purpose d), since it forms part of the setting and/or contribute to the special character of a historic town, but its contribution is weakened by:

- being separated to some extent from historic aspects of the town by existing development
- not having an important visual, physical, or experiential relationship to historic aspects of the town.

6.117 To be considered to make a Strong contribution, the Assessment Area would be likely free of existing development and both:

- form part of the setting of the historic town, and
- make a considerable contribution to the special character of a historic town. This could be (but is not limited to) as a result of being within, adjacent to, or of significant visual importance to the historic aspects of the town

6.118 The Assessment Area is free of development and can be considered to form part of the setting of Cambridge. It does make some contribution to the special character of the city but such contribution could not be described as considerable, e.g. it has limited visual connections to the historic aspects of the town.

Consideration of Footnote 7

6.119 NPPF Annex 2 defines the term Grey Belt, and notes that "Grey belt' excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development."

6.120 None of the areas or assets listed in Footnote 7 (bar Green Belt itself) are present within the Assessment Area nor in its vicinity, such that they could be considered to provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development there.

Assessment of whether the Assessment Site is Grey Belt

6.121 The Assessment Area does not contribute strongly to Purposes a), b) or d). Nor is it subject to the exclusion of land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in Footnote 7 (other than Green Belt itself) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.

6.122 As such, and having applied the guidance within the PPG, it is considered that the Assessment Area constitutes Grey Belt land.

Impact of development on the remaining Green Belt

6.123 A Green Belt Assessment should consider whether development of the site would fundamentally undermine all five purposes of the remaining Green Belt (taken together) across the plan area.

Purpose a): to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas

6.124 The proposed development would need to be accompanied by an extensive green infrastructure strategy, including the creation of a robust landscape buffer around the western (e.g. the country park), northern and eastern edges of the development. In time, when this has established, it could be considered to deliver a robust and defensible barrier that would restrict the unrestricted sprawl of Cambridge.

6.125 It is therefore considered that development of the Assessment Area would have no meaningful adverse effect on the function of the remaining Green Belt in relation to Purpose a).

Purpose b): to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

6.126 The Assessment Area makes no material contribution to maintaining the gap between Cambridge and nearby towns. Were it developed in the manner proposed, it would result in a negligible reduction in the depth of the gap between the towns. In addition, there is visual separation between the towns and no intervisibility.

6.127 It is judged that the development of the Assessment Area would not have an effect on the function of the remaining Green Belt in relation to Purpose b).

Purpose c): to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

6.128 The proposed development would have no physical effect on the land to the north, i.e. the remaining Green Belt.

6.129 The initial LVIA studies have demonstrated that the Assessment Area (the Site) is relatively well contained and that development of the type proposed would have limited effect on the perceived character of or views from the wider landscape.

6.130 The A14 currently provides a harsh and abrupt transition between the urban area and the countryside beyond, such that the city and the road corridor exert urbanising influences on the landscape to the north. The inclusion of extensive areas of green infrastructure around the development would enable the creation of a more successful edge to the city than currently exists. Such treatment would also limit the influence of the proposed development on the character of the wider landscape.

6.131 It is concluded that the proposed development would have no meaningful effect on the remaining Green Belt in relation to Purpose c).

Purpose d): to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

6.132 Any adverse effect on the setting and special character of Cambridge arising from the proposed development would be at least balanced by the opportunities to create a better transition between city and countryside than currently exists.

6.133 As such, it is considered that the site could be developed in the manner proposed without compromising the function of the remaining Green Belt in relation to Purpose d).

Purpose e): to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

6.134 Purpose e) relates to the promotion of urban regeneration and is not relevant to the site nor the landscape of the wider Green Belt. As such, the development of the site would have no effect on the function of the remaining Green Belt in relation to Purpose e).

Summary of effects on remaining Green Belt

6.135 It can be concluded that the development of the Assessment Area, in the manner proposed, would not fundamentally undermine the ability of the remaining Green Belt across the plan area from serving all five of the Green Belt purposes in a meaningful way.

The effects of the development on the openness of the Green Belt

6.136 As noted above, planning guidance and case law has emphasised the importance of considering both the visual and perceived impacts of development on Green Belt openness, not just its physical footprint. Accordingly, perceptual considerations are now a recognised component in assessing the degree to which development could compromise

the fundamental aims of the Green Belt. This approach is reflected in the Cambridge Inner Green Belt Boundary Study (CIGBBS), which incorporates perceptual aspects into several of its 16 assessment criteria, demonstrating their relevance in gauging the impact on Green Belt qualities.

6.137 Assessing the effects of a proposed development on the openness of the Green Belt requires judgements to be made regarding the physical changes in terms of spatial volume that would arise from the development, as well as the perceived visual changes. Consideration must also be given to the permanence of the development and its remediability, whether any loss of openness could be reinstated, and the degree of activity that is likely to arise, e.g. from traffic generation.

6.138 While development of the scale proposed would likely have a substantial impact on the *spatial openness* of the Green Belt (by introducing built form where currently there is none) its perceptual effect on *visual openness* could be much reduced through careful site planning and sensitive design. By strategically locating and shaping future development within the Site, it should be possible to limit the perceived erosion of Green Belt purposes and maintain a sense of visual openness within the wider landscape.

Effects on spatial openness at the site

6.139 The Site comprises farmland currently in agricultural use. It does not contain any built forms.

6.140 Although not physically extending into the site bounds, the character of the Site is influenced by the proximity of the A14 corridor and associated traffic and, to a lesser extent, by the proximity of commercial development on the edge of Cambridge and residential development on the edges of Histon, Impington and Milton. .

6.141 As is inevitable with development of the type proposed, there would be a reduction in openness at the site as a result of the construction of the mid-tech facility and associated infrastructure in what are currently agricultural fields. Such effects would be permanent and there would be very limited opportunity to remediate the site and return it to its current state of spatial openness.

6.142 Notwithstanding this, the reduction in spatial openness could in part be mitigated by the creation of a extensive areas of green infrastructure and open space in conjunction with the proposed development. This could include:

- Retaining as much existing trees, scrub and hedge as possible, and supplementing this with new structure planting to create linkages with the wider vegetation framework.
- Establishing a green buffer around the edges of the proposed development
- Creating a country park between the Site and Histon and Impington

- Use of internal planting to help break up the massing of the proposed development.
- Retaining as much existing trees, scrub and hedge as possible, and supplementing this with new structure planting to create linkages with the wider vegetation framework.
- Implementation of a management and maintenance plan to safeguard the longevity of existing and proposed planting and to ensure it continued to make a contribution to the landscape and to breaking up massing.

Effects on spatial openness within the remaining Green Belt

6.143 No physical works are proposed beyond the Site's northern boundary, and so there would be no change to the spatial openness of the remaining Green Belt.

6.144 Access to the Site would likely be taken from Butt Road/Milton Road on the Site's northern boundary and back to the A10 close to its junction with the A14. As such, there would be some upgrades to and increases in traffic on a short section of Butt Road within the Green Belt.

6.145 Aside from Butt Road, the nature of traffic flows and the lack of transport routes within the remaining Green Belt is such that no material changes in traffic flows would be experienced within the remaining Green Belt.

Effects on visual openness

6.146 The initial visual studies, summarised in earlier sections of this report, concluded that the site is relatively well contained in visual terms.

6.147 During the design development, the likely visibility of the emerging proposals would be tested using a series of Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) models to ensure that visual influence on the wider landscape was minimised. The visual effects will be assessed using established Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment techniques, with mitigation measures designed as necessary.

6.148 To minimise the perceived loss of visual openness at the site and from points in the surrounding Green Belt, development should be located away from the more exposed northern edges near Histon and Impington.

6.149 The current concept of limiting development to Parcel 1 supports this. This approach would avoid the most visually and spatially sensitive edges.

6.150 The Site benefits from being relatively low-lying and from a strong existing green infrastructure framework, including mature tree belts and woodland. These features would assist in visually containing development, reduce the extent of perceived change in the rural setting, and help preserve a sense of openness.

6.151 It is likely that the LVIA will conclude that once the new planting within the green infrastructure corridors has established, the landscape to the north of the Site, e.g. the remaining Green Belt, would experience a limited visual change when compared with the existing situation.

Consequently, the impact on the sense of visual openness would also be limited.

Summary of effects on spatial and visual openness

6.152 The proposed development would, inevitably, result in harm to spatial openness within the site area but limited harm to that of the wider Green Belt, and limited harm to the remaining Green Belt's visual openness. In summary, there would be limited harm to openness overall.

Greater Cambridge Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation

6.153 Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council are working together to create the first joint Local Plan for Greater Cambridge. A draft of the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan has now been published for Regulation 18 consultation.

6.154 While the strategy concentrates on the period to 2045, it also sets out a longer-term vision to maintain an ongoing supply of land for homes and jobs beyond this period, without relying on further Green Belt release [page 16].

6.155 Policy S/DS: Development Strategy notes, that the need for jobs and homes will be met as far as possible in the following order of preference, having regard to the purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt:

- a. Within the Cambridge urban area;
- b. On the edge of Cambridge;
- c. At an expanded Cambourne;
- d. At other new settlements; and
- e. In the rural southern cluster and wider rural area at Rural Centres and Minor Rural Centres.

6.156 No amendments to the Green Belt are proposed in the immediate vicinity of the Site.

6.157 §§2.62 to 2.66 consider development on the edge of Cambridge. Drawing on its evidence base, Greater Cambridge considered that its development needs alone do not "provide the 'exceptional circumstances' required in national policy to justify removing land from the Green Belt in this Local Plan, having regard to the identification of other sources of land supply that can meet needs sustainably without the need for Green Belt release." Reference is made to grey belt, noting that where it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development, plans should give priority to previously developed land, then consider other grey belt land, before considering other Green Belt sites. Greater Cambridge concluded "As we do not consider it is necessary to release Green Belt to meet the general development needs identified in this plan, it is not necessary for us to identify grey belt land."

6.158 In relation to Green Belt matters, the draft Greater Cambridge Local

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Plan Development Strategy takes forward similar themes to the adopted Local Plan 2018.

6.159 Policy S/GB: The Cambridge Green Belt reflects policy wording from earlier local plans:

1. A Green Belt will be maintained around Cambridge with the specific purposes to:
 - a. *preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre.*
 - b. *maintain and enhance the quality of its setting; and*
 - c. *prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city*
2. The detailed boundaries of the Green Belt in Cambridge are defined on the Policies Map. New development in the Green Belt will only be approved in accordance with policy in the National Planning Policy Framework, and having regard to the Cambridge purposes set out above.

6.160 The supporting text repeats the factors considered to define the special character of Cambridge and its setting, that are set out at §2.31 of the Local Plan 2018, save for the omission of the words Green Belt from “*The distribution, physical separation, setting, scale and character of Green Belt villages*”.

6.161 The supporting text [§2.143] lists the various documents that “*continue to provide appropriate recognition of the particular role and function of the Cambridge Green Belt*”, and notes that “*The Cambridge Green Belt Assessment (2021) assesses the contribution of different parcels of land to these purposes and to identify grey belt land to inform plan making in line with the NPPF and national guidance*”. However, review of the GCGBA reveals that the term Grey Belt is not specially referenced in the document. This is as to be expected as the term first appear in the 2024 NPPF and so postdates the GCGBA.

7.1 Between November 2021 and December 2021, Greater Cambridge carried out a public consultation on their preferred options for the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan. The preferred options, published as the Greater Cambridge Local Plan First Proposals, included policies relating to the Cambridge Green Belt with some proposed releases of Green Belt land for development. These decisions were informed by a number of studies, including the GCGBA. This study provided an assessment of variations in harm to the Cambridge Green Belt Purposes that would result from the release and development of identified parcels of Green Belt land.

7.2 The responses to this Regulation 18 First Proposals consultation included a number of submissions on behalf of promoters of sites putting land forward for development.

7.3 Given the time between the First Proposals Consultation 2021 and the draft plan consultation in late 2025, Greater Cambridge held a Site Submissions Update 2025 consultation between February and March 2025. This provided a focused opportunity for promoters to submit new information on previously submitted sites or new sites.

7.4 Greater Cambridge has reviewed all the submissions and identified a number that raised issues relating to the methodology and findings of the GCGBA. The councils’ responses to the key issues raised within the submissions are set out in the document *Response to Comments from First Proposals Consultation 2021 and Site Submissions Update 2025* [CFPCSS].

7.5 Importantly, CFPCSS §1.7 notes that the consultation response does not provide revised assessments to take account of any changes to national planning policy changes since the GCGBA was prepared in 2021 [i.e. the concept of Grey Belt], it is also noted that: “*The Councils have commissioned an update to the GCGBA to respond to changes in national planning policy, particularly in response to new policy regarding grey belt.*” As of January 2026, no such update is available.

7.6 The following section provides a reasoned rebuttal of comments made in response to representations regarding the Site, which were afforded the Site reference 40096: Land north of A14 and south of Milton Road, Impington.

1. Complexity and Granularity of the GCGBA

Representation

7.7 The methodology is comprehensive, detailed and evidence-based, providing a robust assessment. However, it is overly lengthy and complex, with an extensive level of detail used to justify and explain the approach.

GC Response

7.8 Greater Cambridge states that the GCGBA’s detailed and granular approach is necessary to withstand scrutiny and avoid challenge.

TLP Rebuttal

7.9 While the need for sufficient granularity to withstand scrutiny is acknowledged, complexity does not necessarily equate to robustness. The methodology’s level of detail makes it difficult to use, insufficiently accessible, and unlikely to be read or fully understood by most readers. In The Landscape Partnership’s experience, the methodology is unnecessarily detailed and complicated when compared with other robust Green Belt assessments prepared for other LPAs, including the previous CIGBBS.

2. Relationship with the Cambridge Inner Green Belt Boundary Study (2015)

Representation

7.10 The authors of the GCGBA do not advise why they chose to depart from the established approach used in the CIGBBS, which had been recognised by previous Local Plan Inspectors as robust and had formed an established framework for to assessing the Cambridge Green Belt. Whilst both the GCGBS and CIGBBS apply similar principles, they take a very different approaches to assessing the Green Belt and utilise different parcel sizes, making it difficult to compare or correlate. It is not really possible to compare outcomes, other than perceived differences. The methodological differences between the more quantitative GCGBA and the qualitative CIGBBS make cross-comparison of findings difficult.

GC Response

7.11 The GCGBA is a comprehensive study assessing all of the Cambridge Green Belt. It replaces the 2015 CIGBBS study, so it is not intended that a comparison is made between the two.

TLP Rebuttal

7.12 This position is noted. However, notwithstanding that the study area for the 2015 CIGBBS did not encompass the site area (land beyond the A14 was excluded on the basis that the road was considered a major physical barrier defining the extent of the city), the methodology/findings of the 2015 study remain appropriate/factually correct, relevant, and useful in understanding the role that different parts of the Green Belt play in delivering the qualities and functions of the Green Belt that inform the Cambridge-specific purposes.

7.13 Furthermore, as these Cambridge-specific Green Belt purposes are carried forward into the draft Local Plan, the findings of the CIGBBS continue to form part of the current evidence base. On this basis, the study has not been superseded in its entirety, and its conclusions remain relevant to the interpretation and application of Green Belt policy.

3. Overlap Between Green Belt Purposes

Representation

7.14 There is overlap between the factors that combine to determine contribution ratings, in particular between Purpose 1 and Purpose 2.

GC Response

7.15 This overlap reflects the nature of the Green Belt purposes and factors that are relevant to their assessment. Openness is a fundamental quality of Green Belt land, such that development affecting openness have a bearing on contribution to all the purposes. Similarly, the relationship between urban and open land (which is termed ‘distinction’ in our assessments) is relevant across all purposes.

TLP Rebuttal

7.16 It is accepted that some degree of overlap is inevitable. However, this overlap has the potential to inflate contribution ratings, particularly where concepts such as openness and distinction are effectively applied across two or more purposes without sufficient differentiation. This risk should be acknowledged and taken into account when forming overall judgements that combine the contributions of different purposes.

4. Approach to Overall Harm

Representation

7.17 It is noted that the highest contribution to a specific Green Belt purpose will be taken as the overall contribution for a specific Parcel, regardless as to how the Parcel contributes to the other Green Belt purposes. As the GCGBS states “the contribution ratings for each purpose were not added up to give a cumulative overall contribution rating, as a significant contribution to one rating may in itself indicate that the land is making a significant contribution to function of the Green Belt” [§3.64]. This a commonly applied approach, as a Parcel only needs to contribute strongly to one purpose and not contribute to the others to be functioning effectively as Green Belt. When comparing land where there is a need to make decisions regarding exceptional circumstances for the release of Green Belt to meet the future development needs of Greater Cambridge, it would be more helpful to consider contribution more broadly.

GC Response

7.18 The representation quotes GCGBA §3.63. This statement was intended to indicate that straightforward cumulative scoring approach was not used, but it is not the case that the analysis based its parcel harm rating only on the highest rating given to any of the purposes.

7.19 Whilst a significant contribution to a single purpose can be enough to result in a high level of harm it is also the case that contribution to more than one purpose can result in higher harm than contribution to a single purpose. This is indicated in §3.131, which states that “A stronger contribution to multiple purposes... will typically increase harm...”.

TLP Rebuttal

7.20 The Council’s response is noted. However, The Landscape Partnership remains of the view that CGBBA Table 3.6 is weighted too heavily, identifying a higher level of harm, and that such judgement is not consistent with outcomes based on CGBBA Figure 3.10. This has implications for judgements on the overall harm identified for Site 40096.

5. Lack of Defined Thresholds for Purpose 3

Representation

7.21 The absence of defined parameters for what constitutes a “wide”, “moderate”, or “narrow” gap introduces a high degree of subjectivity by the assessor.

GC Response

7.22 As the assessment of relevance to Purpose 3 is not based solely on distance it was felt that strict definitions for distances would be unhelpful. This does not, however, mean that individual assessors used these descriptive terms without internal guidance. Cross-checking was used to ensure a consistent approach.

TLP Rebuttal

7.23 While the Councils indicate that internal guidance was used, and judgements were not made solely on the basis of distance, this is not transparent. For Site 40096, the gap between Cambridge and surrounding villages is reinforced by woodland, infrastructure and lack of intervisibility. This supports a moderate or weak contribution, rather than one that justifies very high harm.

6. Treatment of Small-Scale Development as ‘Open’

Representation

7.24 The GCGBA is wrong to say that “low density or small-scale rural settlement” [§3.41] should be considered to lack urbanising influences.

GC Response

7.25 It is accepted that any inappropriate development, however small, is having some impact on Green Belt openness. The intention in §3.41 was to indicate that in the context of an assessment parcel, such development would not be considered to diminish the openness of the undeveloped parts of the parcel.

TLP Rebuttal

7.26 The Councils’ clarification that §3.41 of the GCGBA was not intended to suggest that built development is open land, but that it does not diminish openness elsewhere within a parcel, is noted. The Landscape Partnership consider this distinction reinforces the importance of considering the spatial distribution of development, and supports the

case that development focused in contained parts of Site 40096 would not fundamentally undermine openness across the wider parcel.

7. Combining Contribution and Impact on Adjacent Green Belt

Representation

7.27 While the methodology and criteria used in the assessment are generally appropriate, The Landscape Partnership identifies a key flaw in how variations in Green Belt harm are defined. Figure 3.10 outlines a logical approach, showing that ‘Very High Harm’ should apply where a parcel both contributes significantly to Green Belt purposes and would have a major impact on adjacent land if released. However, this approach is not followed in Table 3.6, where ‘Very High Harm’ is applied even in less severe scenarios. This inconsistency inflates harm ratings and places more land in higher harm categories than justified. For example, a rating of ‘Moderate-High Harm’ can be given even where the release would have only a negligible impact on adjacent land. Despite the methodical assessment of parcel contribution and adjacent land impact, this mismatch undermines the reliability of the outcomes. It is therefore recommended that Table 3.6 is reconsidered to accurately reflect Figure 3.10 and apply a more balanced approach to harm categorisation.

GC Response

7.28 Figure 3.10 was intended only to indicate the concept of “level of contribution to Green Belt purposes + level of impact on adjacent Green Belt = overall level of harm”; not to suggest a direct linear relationship between the two. Reference should be made to Table 3.6 for more precise examples, although the table only includes examples and is not intended to be a comprehensive list of every possible combination of factors.

TLP Rebuttal

7.29 The matrices within GCGBA Table 3.6 should be reviewed to provide a more balanced approach to harm categorisation. It is noted that Table 3.6 “...only includes examples and is not intended to be a comprehensive list of every possible combination of factors”. However, if applied directly, Table 3.6 results in an assessment framework that overstates harm for sites where effects on adjacent Green Belt land are limited. This is the case for Site 40096, due to the presence of the A14, existing woodland belts, and the proposed green infrastructure.

8. Terminology of Harm Levels

Representation

7.30 The terminology for different harm levels (‘Very High Harm’, ‘High Harm’, ‘Moderate-High Harm’, ‘Moderate Harm’, and ‘Low Harm’) are weighted to the high end, thereby creating a skewed and unbalanced effect.

GC Response

7.31 In the absence of any official guidance, the terminology for levels of harm should just be considered in a relative manner. Given the need for ‘exceptional’ or ‘very special’ circumstances to justify its release, it was felt that using the term ‘Low’ in more than one rating level name would not reflect the importance afforded to the Green Belt in national planning policy.

TLP Rebuttal

7.32 While the Councils justify the use of multiple ‘High’ categories to reflect Green Belt policy importance, this compresses distinctions between materially different outcomes, reducing the usefulness of the assessment when considering exceptional circumstances and comparative site performance.

9. Level of Justification for Parcel Assessments

Representation

7.33 The level of detail provided for each assessment parcel is very limited and is not comparable to the extensive level of detail provided within the methodology. This appears to be disproportionate, and it would have been preferable if this was more balanced, with more detail and justification being included with the assessment of each assessment parcel, given the importance of the decision making process.

GC Response

7.34 The supporting analysis is considered to be sufficient to justify the ratings given. The study generated a very large number of assessment parcels (in excess of 600) to reflect identified variations in harm, so more detailed analysis would have been disproportionate.

TLP Rebuttal

7.35 The Councils argue that more detailed justification would be disproportionate. However, for large outer parcels such as OA1, this lack of detail results in site-specific characteristics being overlooked, including urbanising influences, infrastructure severance, and landscape containment that materially affect the Site’s Green Belt role.

10. Treatment of Outer Area Parcels

Representation

7.36 The GCGBA notes [§3.133] that, due to the greater distance between outer areas and inset settlements and the resulting strong distinction, all outer areas were assigned a ‘Very High’ harm rating. While some variation in contribution is acknowledged, this does not affect the overall harm rating, which remains ‘Very High’ in all cases. Any areas of

diminished openness within outer parcels are noted but are stated not to influence the harm assessment.

7.37 This represents a generic, assumption-led approach that treats outer Green Belt areas as uniformly sensitive, which will not always reflect site-specific circumstances. Although variation in contribution is acknowledged, it is not spatially defined, and the large size of outer area parcels combined with limited written analysis prevents identification of areas where contribution may be weaker or where release would have a lesser impact on adjoining Green Belt land.

7.38 Given this, the ‘Very High’ harm ratings for the outer areas, and the findings should be interpreted with caution where exceptional circumstances are being considered.

GC Response

7.39 The Councils noted that the study assessed harm of development as an expansion of existing inset areas (noted at §3.9 of the GCGBA), not creation of new ones, it is reasonable to say that expansion of any settlement as far as an outer area would result in ‘Very High’ harm.

TLP Rebuttal

7.40 The blanket application of ‘very high’ harm to outer areas is acknowledged by the Councils as a methodological assumption. This rebuttal strongly disagrees with this approach where, as here, the Site would not comprise an extension to an existing settlement and occupies a small, contained part of a very large parcel, and where the assessment explicitly recognises variation in contribution but fails to spatially articulate it.

11. Role of the A14

Representation

7.41 Whilst the A14 provides a strong boundary defining the edge of Cambridge, the CIGBBS also identifies it as a strong urbanising feature that creates a harsh edge and severs the relationship between the city and the adjoining landscape. It is described as an artificial boundary that undermines the gentle transition between Cambridge and the fen edge. This is echoed in the GCLCA, which notes within Landscape Character Area 2B [page 66], where the Site lies within the southern part, the presence of “urban influences associated with the urban edge of Cambridge and major road network in the south which are discordant with the otherwise rural character”.

7.42 While the A14’s role as a strong boundary results in a significant contribution to Green Belt Purpose 1, it is also necessary to consider its wider influence on other Green Belt qualities, including landscape character, views, and tranquillity. In this context, The Landscape Partnership considers that the Site’s location adjacent to the A14 represents an appropriate location for development, which could help to reduce the harsh and intrusive effects of the road.

GC Response

7.43 The Councils’ view is that rural character is part of the Purpose 2 consideration, but do not believe there to be sufficient adverse impact from the main road to reduce the contribution for this purpose below the ‘Moderate’ rating given. The sensitivity of the landscape and views in this area to development is also a separate consideration to Green Belt harm, which the Councils have taken into consideration when determining the options for development presented in the ‘First Proposals’ consultation.

TLP Rebuttal

7.44 The Councils accept that the A14 forms a strong boundary but consider its landscape and tranquillity impacts insufficient to reduce Green Belt contribution. The Landscape Partnership remains of the view that the A14 is widely recognised as a major urbanising influence, severing landscape continuity and diminishing rural character.

12. Appropriate Harm Rating for Site 40096

Representation

7.45 The representation agrees with the assessed contribution ratings but considers that the overall harm ratings should more accurately reflect Figure 3.10. It suggests that a rating of Moderate-High harm would be a more “appropriate and balanced assessment” for the majority of the site (within parcels OA1 and KI2) rather than the Very High harm ratings applied in the GCGBA.

GC Response

7.46 The Councils note that Figure 3.10 was intended only to indicate the concept that “level of contribution to Green Belt purposes + level of impact on adjacent Green Belt = overall level of harm”; not to suggest a direct linear relationship between the two.

7.47 The Councils further note that the Site is presented as a new inset development in the Green Belt, whereas the GCGBA assessed the harm associated with expansion of existing settlements into the parcels in question. A site-specific assessment has not been carried out, but the location of proposed built development within the site in relation to other settlements, and to the A14, would suggest that significant Green Belt harm would still result.

TLP Rebuttal

7.48 It is noted the Councils consider the findings of the GCGBA not to be directly applicable to the proposed development scenario at the Site, on the basis that it represents a standalone development within the Green Belt rather than an extension of an existing settlement into the Green Belt parcels, as assessed by the GCGBA.

7.49 In the absence of such an assessment, it is unclear on what basis the

8 Green Belt related design considerations

Councils reach the conclusion that “the location of proposed built development within the site in relation to other settlements, and to the A14, would suggest that significant Green Belt harm would still result.”

Overall Conclusion

7.50 In summary, while the GCGBA provides a consistent strategic framework, its application to Site 40096 overstates Green Belt harm due to methodological assumptions, lack of parcel-level nuance, and failure to account for the Site’s specific landscape and infrastructural context. In the absence of an updated GCGBA reflecting current national policy, including Grey Belt, together with an inset site-specific assessment, evidence demonstrates that the Site performs a weaker Green Belt function than has been assessed in published studies.

Spatial and visual openness

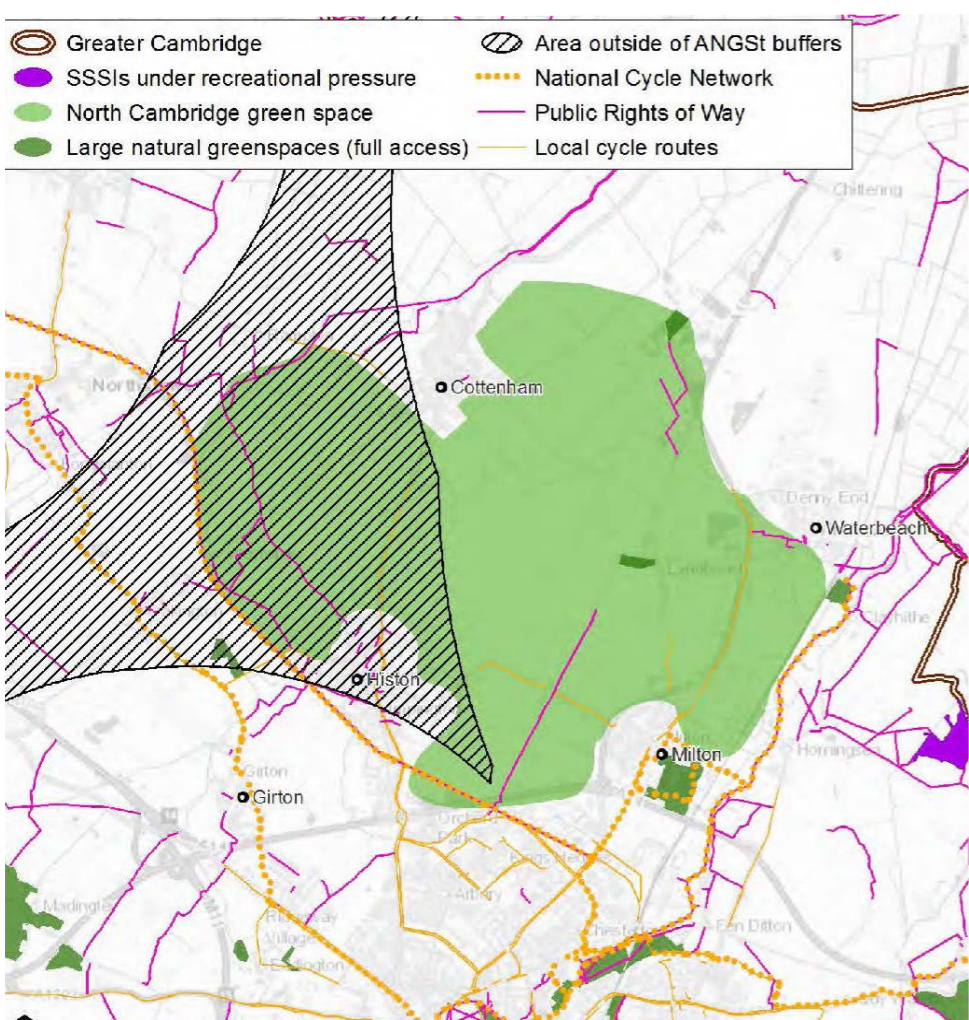
- 8.1 As noted above, planning guidance and case law has emphasised the importance of considering both the visual and perceived impacts of development on Green Belt openness, not just its physical footprint. Accordingly, perceptual considerations are now a recognised component in assessing the degree to which development could compromise the fundamental aims of the Green Belt. This approach is reflected in the Cambridge Inner Green Belt Boundary Study (CIGBBS), which incorporates perceptual aspects into several of its 16 assessment criteria, demonstrating their relevance in gauging the impact on Green Belt qualities.
- 8.2 While development of the scale proposed would have a significant impact on the *spatial openness* of the Green Belt (by introducing built form where currently there is none) its perceptual effect on *visual openness* could be much reduced through careful site planning and sensitive design. By strategically locating and shaping future development within the Site, it should be possible to By strategically locating and shaping future development within the Site, the resulting form and layout can help limit the perceived erosion of Green Belt purposes and maintain a sense of visual openness within the wider landscape.
- 8.3 To minimise the perceived loss of openness and avoid undermining the purposes of the Green Belt, development should be located away from the more exposed northern edges near Histon and Impington. The current concept of limiting development to Parcel 1 supports this. However, extending development across the full extent of Parcel 1 up to Milton Road risks forming a continuous linear development that extends too far north, and which could be perceived as urban sprawl, resulting in a noticeable encroachment into open countryside. It is therefore recommended that development is contained within the central and southern areas of the Site i.e. Parcel 1, with limited, extension into the western edge of Parcel 2 (see Figure 3 in appendix 3). This approach would avoid the most visually and spatially sensitive edges.
- 8.4 The Site benefits from being relatively low-lying and from a strong existing green infrastructure framework, including mature tree belts and woodland. These features would assist in visually containing development, reduce the extent of perceived change in the rural setting, and help preserve a sense of openness.
- 8.5 Should exceptional circumstances be demonstrated to justify removing part of the Site from the Green Belt, future development could also contribute positively to the wider Green Belt setting. In accordance with §145 of the NPPF, development should seek to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, for example by improving landscape quality, biodiversity, or public access. In this case, the southern and central part of Parcel 1 and the eastern edge of Parcel 2 could be developed alongside enhancements to Parcel 2, such as new public access routes, ecological restoration, or strategic planting. These enhancements would help mitigate the effects of development and support the purposes of

the Green Belt as outlined in NPPF §140, which encourages proposals that retain or enhance the Green Belt’s openness and function.

Mitigation, beneficial use and enhancements

- 8.6 The GCGBA notes that where changes to the Green Belt are needed through the Development Plan process, such changes should include “*demonstration of exceptional circumstances, including consideration of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development, i.e. planning for economic growth, housing need, health and wellbeing, accessibility and biodiversity, cultural heritage and climate change resilience*” [§5.2].
- 8.7 This is commonly interpreted to mean that development should be directed to the most sustainable locations for growth. The Site represents such a location and offers key strategic advantages in meeting the specific requirements of the proposed mid-tech development. There is a strong economic rationale that delivers benefits for Cambridge, supporting the case for exceptional circumstances to justify Green Belt release at this location. These are set out in detail in other supporting documents. While this report does not seek to duplicate that analysis, it should be noted that Trinity College considers that exceptional circumstances exist and should be fully assessed as part of the Local Plan review.
- 8.8 Where exceptional circumstances are proven and release of land from Green Belt is determined to be necessary, the GCGBA notes that mitigation measures can be applied to mitigate the harm to the Green Belt. Those that would be applicable to the Site and proposed development (or which could be included as the design of the development progresses) include [§5.14]:
 - *use landscape to help integrate a new Green Belt boundary with the existing edge, aiming to maximise consistency over a longer distance ...;*
 - *define Green Belt edge using a strong, natural element which forms a visual barrier – for example a woodland belt. This can help to reduce the perception of urbanisation, and may also screen residents from intrusive landscape elements within the Green Belt (for example major roads) ...;*
 - *create a transition from urban to rural, using built density, height, materials and landscape to create a more permeable edge ...;*
 - *consider ownership and management of landscape elements which contribute to Green Belt purposes. This can help to ensure the permanence of Green Belt ...;*
 - *enhance visual openness within the Green Belt ...;*
 - *improve management practices to enhance countryside character. This can help to increase the strength of countryside character...;*
 - *design and locate buildings, landscape and green spaces to minimise intrusion on settlement settings. This can help to maintain perceived settlement separation by minimising the extent to which*

<p><i>new development intrudes on the settings of other settlements ...;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>design road infrastructure to limit the perception of increased urbanisation associated with new development. Increased levels of 'activity' can increase the perception of urbanisation ...;</i> <i>use sustainable drainage features to define/enhance separation between settlement and countryside. This can help to strengthen the separation between urban and open land.</i> 	<p>8.14 The current revision of the PPG [§64-012-20250225] reflects the Golden Rules referenced in the December 2024 NPPF §156. Again, these relate to housing but can be considered as good practice on how "[major housing] ... development on land which is released from the Green Belt through plan making, or on sites in the Green Belt, [can] contribute to accessible green space" and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>New residents and the wider public should be able to access good quality green spaces which are safe; visually stimulating and attractive; well-designed; sustainably managed and maintained; and seek to meet the needs of the communities which they serve.</i> Accessible green spaces are areas of vegetation set within a landscape or townscape, often including blue space, which are available for public use free of charge and with limited time restrictions. Where possible access to green spaces should include safe active travel routes and should be served by public transport, which also means providing the necessary infrastructure (such as footpaths and bridleways). Proposals should consider how the creation or enhancement of existing green spaces can contribute to the priorities for nature recovery set out within the relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategies, providing greater benefit to nature and contributing to the delivery of wider environmental outcomes. 	<p>Infrastructure (GI) of Cambridge as identified in the Greater Cambridge Green Infrastructure Opportunity Mapping, September 2021. This defines the intention of creating a North Cambridge Green Space, noting that there is a deficit in accessible green infrastructure (refer to Plate 11).</p>
<p>8.9 The GCGBA also highlights §145 of the then current NPPF (July 2021 revision) [equivalent to §151 of the December 2024 revision], requiring local planning authorities to positively enhance the Green Belt once it has been defined, such as <i>"looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land"</i> (GCGBA §5.16).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>New residents and the wider public should be able to access good quality green spaces which are safe; visually stimulating and attractive; well-designed; sustainably managed and maintained; and seek to meet the needs of the communities which they serve.</i> Accessible green spaces are areas of vegetation set within a landscape or townscape, often including blue space, which are available for public use free of charge and with limited time restrictions. Where possible access to green spaces should include safe active travel routes and should be served by public transport, which also means providing the necessary infrastructure (such as footpaths and bridleways). Proposals should consider how the creation or enhancement of existing green spaces can contribute to the priorities for nature recovery set out within the relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategies, providing greater benefit to nature and contributing to the delivery of wider environmental outcomes. 	<p>8.17 There is an identified need for a strategic natural greenspace (c. 100ha) and Natural England has suggested the need for a large (c. 500ha) National Nature Reserve or similar in the area. The vision for the North Cambridge Green Space is [page 93]:</p> <p><i>Green spaces deliver multifunctional benefits for people, nature and the climate. New strategic green space(s) to the north of Cambridge will address the deficit in accessible GI in this area, reduce recreational pressure on existing ecological sites, provide an important asset to meet growing demand from proposed development and link with other existing GI / nature recovery projects in the area. The Initiative should deliver GI which captures the local landscape character of fen-edge orchards and droves, and creates a cohesive GI network across the north of Greater Cambridge by connecting Cambridge City to the Ouse Valley.</i></p>
<p>8.10 In particular, it notes §142 of the 2021 NPPF, which stated that where it is necessary to release Green Belt for development, plans should <i>"set out ways in which the impact of removing land from the Green Belt can be offset through compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt land"</i>.</p>	<p>8.15 Other potential enhancements applicable to the Site and/or proposed development are identified in the GCGBA at §5.22 and include:</p>	<p>8.18 The Landscape Partnership considers that the county park would make an important contribution that will offset the harm of releasing part of the Site to enable the development of the mid-tech development facility.</p>
<p>8.11 The December 2024 NPPF contains similar sentiments, albeit in relation to housing, at §156: <i>"Where major development involving the provision of housing is proposed on land released from the Green Belt through plan preparation or review, or on sites in the Green Belt subject to a planning application, the following contributions ('Golden Rules') should be made: ... c. the provision of new, or improvements to existing, green spaces that are accessible to the public. New residents should be able to access good quality green spaces within a short walk of their home, whether through onsite provision or through access to offsite spaces."</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Improving access. Enhancing the coverage and condition of the rights of way network and increasing open space provision is a key enhancement opportunity.</i> <i>Providing locations for outdoor sport. Some outdoor sports can represent an urbanising influence; an emphasis on activities which do not require formal facilities is less likely to harm Green Belt purposes.</i> <i>Landscape and visual enhancement. Using landscape character assessment as guidance, intrusive elements can be reduced and positive characteristics reinforced.</i> <i>Increasing biodiversity. Most Green Belt land has potential for increased biodiversity value – e.g. the management of hedgerows and agricultural field margins, and provision of habitat connectivity, planting of woodland. There may also be opportunities to link enhancements with requirements to deliver 'biodiversity net gain' associated with development proposals.</i> 	<p>8.19 The proposed development would build upon the reputation and excellence established by the original Cambridge Science Park, which set the standard for integrating businesses within a parkland setting. This pioneering concept inspired the creation of other high-quality business parks where landscaped environments became a defining feature of employment areas.</p>
<p>8.12 At §5.19, the GCGBA references the recommendations for appropriate compensatory improvements included in the then current Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) for Green Belt, which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> new or enhanced green infrastructure woodland planting improvements to biodiversity, habitat connectivity and natural capital landscape and visual enhancements (beyond those needed to mitigate the immediate impacts of the proposal) new or enhanced walking and cycle routes improved access to new, enhanced or existing recreational and playing field provision 	<p>8.16 The proposed country park would incorporate all the above elements, providing a significant contribution to positively enhancing the retained part of the Green Belt within the Site and appropriate compensatory improvements and enhancements, covering approximately half of the Site. This would make a very important contribution to the Green</p>	<p>8.20 The contribution and role of Cambridge Science Park is recognised in the townscape character assessment undertaken as part of the CIGBBS, in which Townscape Character Area 5A states <i>"Cambridge Science Park, St John's Innovation Par and Cambridge Regional College are located on the northern edge of the city off Milton Road adjacent to the A14. Cambridge Science Park, in particular, is a high quality business park with large-scale high quality commercial buildings in innovative styles housing mainly high technology companies. The buildings and car parks are partly screened by earth mounding and planting, giving it a very green and suburban character"</i> [§4.7.36].</p>
<p>8.13 Whilst the PPG has subsequently been revised and the wording updated in line with the latest NPPF, the above measures can be considered good practice to enhance the remaining Green Belt.</p>		<p>8.21 Trinity College is committed to maintaining this reputation in providing a high quality extension to Cambridge Science Park through built quality, parkland, landscape and biodiversity, continuing to provide a <i>"very green"</i> character, and a development that is sustainable and net positive.</p>
		<p>8.22 If the case for exceptional circumstances enables the Site to be released from the Green Belt, Cambridge Science Park North would provide an asset to Cambridge, creating a high quality development, with a green character, which combined with the proposed country park, would create a sympathetic development on the edge of Cambridge.</p>
		<p>8.23 The country park would create a significant buffer to the remainder of the</p>



Green Belt and neighbouring villages, creating a more appropriate and sympathetic northern edge to Cambridge. Plate 11 Greater Cambridge Green Infrastructure Opportunity Mapping (Fig 3.20)

sympathetic northern edge to Cambridge. The existing woodland and woodland belts, combined with the new woodland belts could provide an appropriate, strong and sympathetic new Green Belt boundary.

Green Infrastructure

8.24 The **Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy**, published in June 2011, provides a strategic framework to promote, coordinate, and support the delivery of green infrastructure across the county. Its primary objectives are to reverse the decline in biodiversity; mitigate and adapt to climate change; promote sustainable growth and economic development; and support healthy living and well-being. The Strategy defines a Strategic Network of green infrastructure, structured around various themes and spatial factors.

8.25 Cambridge and a wide area of its surrounding landscape fall within one of the Strategy’s Strategic Green Infrastructure Areas, referred to as *Cambridge and Surrounding Areas*. Within this Strategic Area, the Strategy identifies five Strategic Area Projects and six Target Areas intended to guide investment and action. The Site lies within one of these broad Target Areas associated with Cambridge; however, none of

the Strategic Area Projects specifically relate to the location of the Site. For the *Cambridge Target Area* in which the Site is located, the Strategy identifies the following green infrastructure opportunities:

- Biodiversity: enhanced management and links with existing green corridors in the wider countryside, and opportunities to address the deficit of parkland habitat in the north of Cambridge
- Climate Change: remediation of the urban heat effect and flood alleviation, in particular addressing surface water drainage needs and planting regimes in open space
- Green Infrastructure Gateways: enhanced links between the city and the surrounding countryside
- Heritage: protection and enhancement of the historic built and natural environment
- Landscape: ensuring that the growth of Cambridge enhances the setting and character of the historic city, through maintaining and contributing to green corridors linking the wider countryside with the heart of Cambridge
- Publicly Accessible Open Space: there is a deficiency for 2ha+ and 20ha+ areas of public open space to the north of Cambridge and the majority of Cambridge has a deficit of 500ha+
- Rights of Way: ensuring that communities have access to sustainable modes of movement and enhanced links to the wider countryside. It is noted that there is a limited Rights of Way network to the north of the city, and identifies that there are opportunities to provide linkages between growth areas, the city, river, nearby villages and the surrounding countryside.

8.26 Future development within the Site could help deliver all of these opportunities providing an important contribution to the Cambridge Target Area.

8.27 Policy NH/4 of the adopted South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018 requires that conservation and enhancement of biodiversity should be a primary objective of any development proposal, providing a positive gain through the form and design of the development. Priority for habitat creation should be given to the achieving targets within the Biodiversity Action Plans and Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy. Policy NH/6 sets out the proposals should not cause loss or harm to the green infrastructure network and should contribute to its enhancement. The Council will support proposals that deliver the priorities of the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy and local green infrastructure.

8.28 Subsequent studies and planning frameworks in Greater Cambridge have continued to develop the core spatial principles and strategic ambitions first outlined in the 2011 Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy

(CGIS). While the 2011 Strategy remains foundational—particularly in its identification of Strategic Green Infrastructure Corridors and its emphasis on landscape-scale connectivity—later documents have built on this baseline to provide more spatially refined, locally responsive, and implementation-focused guidance.

8.29 In particular, the **Greater Cambridge Green Infrastructure Opportunity Mapping Study** (2020) expands the scope of the 2011 Strategy by updating evidence with more granular spatial data and introducing a prioritisation framework for green infrastructure interventions. It reaffirms the multifunctional value of the Green Belt as a setting for biodiversity, climate resilience, and access to nature—while also mapping the constraints and opportunities posed by existing land uses. This study allows for a more targeted analysis of development impacts within Green Belt areas, identifying both mitigation and enhancement options. In the context of new development proposals, this mapping supports the integration of green infrastructure as a proactive design element, not simply a compensatory measure.

8.30 Furthermore, the **Greater Cambridge Local Plan: First Proposals** (2021) and supporting Topic Papers (particularly those related to green infrastructure and climate change) demonstrate a policy shift toward net environmental gain and landscape-scale restoration, goals that are compatible with, and evolve from, the 2011 Strategy’s ambitions. These later documents also place stronger emphasis on nature recovery, referencing national goals (e.g. the Environment Act 2021) and the Doubling Nature initiative, both of which call for development that actively enhances ecological value, even within constrained contexts like the Green Belt.

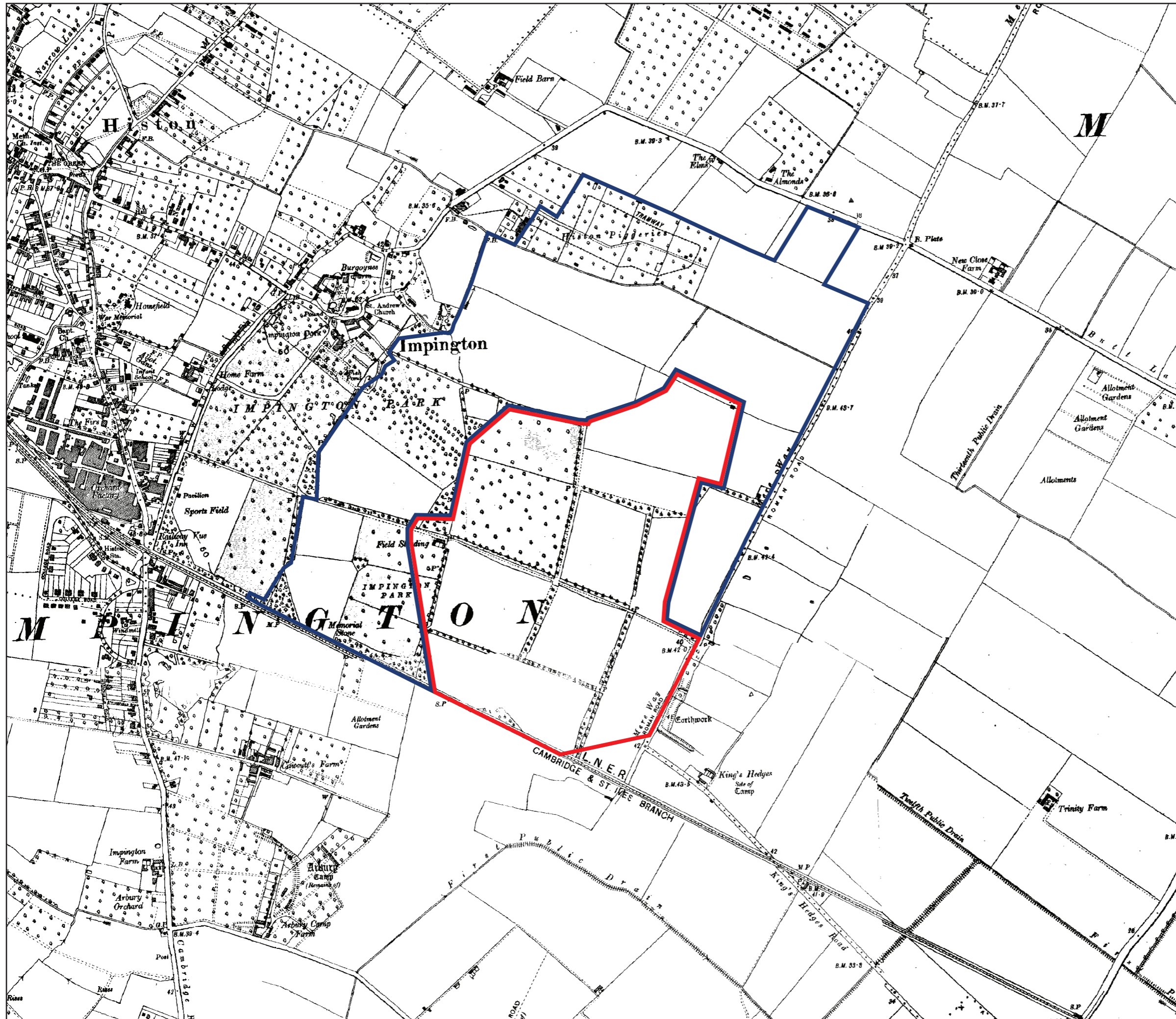
8.31 This layered policy context suggests that the Green Belt should not be considered as a static constraint, but rather as a dynamic landscape with strategic functions that can be enhanced through thoughtful development. The later documents support an approach where proposals can contribute positively to green infrastructure networks by strengthening ecological corridors, improving access to open space, supporting chalk stream restoration, or contributing to urban cooling and flood resilience. These opportunities must be identified early and integrated meaningfully to align with current policy expectations and evolving landscape strategies.

Guidelines and considerations for future development: Green Belt

8.32 The design of future development at the Site should be guided by the following key factors relating to the Green Belt:

- Retention of the existing tree belts and woodland. Some internal loss may be necessary to achieve the best layout to meet other objectives, but should be minimised wherever possible.
- Siting of built development within the central and southern part of the Site and extending partially into the eastern edge of Parcel 2.
- A more nucleated form of development would also provide a more focused development, creating a cohesive layout that encourages the creation of a community and collaborative working. This may help overcome the sense of being isolated at the peripheries that might arise from a more elongated development. A central focal area for meeting and gathering, with café and restaurant facilities and open space would further assist in bringing people together and engendering a sense of belonging. This would also help meet the objectives of CIGBBS Criteria 10.
- Setting the development within a parkland setting with a strong treed character.
- Strengthening the boundaries along Mere Way with additional planting and buffers to provide a green corridor adjacent to the public byway, and/or locating open space adjacent to Mere Way that positively engages with the byway by connecting physically and visually.
- Provision of a country park within the western part of Parcel 2 (refer to Figure 8). It is not considered necessary to extend further north (although that could be achieved if a more extensive commitment was considered necessary). The remainder of the land to the north could be retained as farmland with some habitat and ecological enhancements undertaken.
- The country park could incorporate sporting and recreational facilities that benefit both the mid-tech park and the local community, where this is not currently provided or cannot be shared with Histon & Impington Recreation Ground. The substantial increase in the extent of accessible land would allow other public benefits including opportunities to improve health and well being, informal recreation, creation of parkland, wetland and meadow grassland habitats, parkland tree planting, and heritage interpretation of Impington (in particular the link and the association of the Site with Impington Hall and Park). Public footpath and cycleway access should be provided to connect with and pass through the country park. Key connections should include: Histon and Impington, ideally via the existing vehicular access to the farm, though other access points may also be possible, including via the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway; Mere Way public byway (potentially routed through the mid-tech park); and the wider countryside beyond the site.

Appendix 1: Figures



Key

-  Proposed CSP Expansion Boundary (Parcel 1)
-  Proposed Green Infrastructure/Public Access Boundary (Parcel 2)

B19074 - Cambridge Science Park Extension

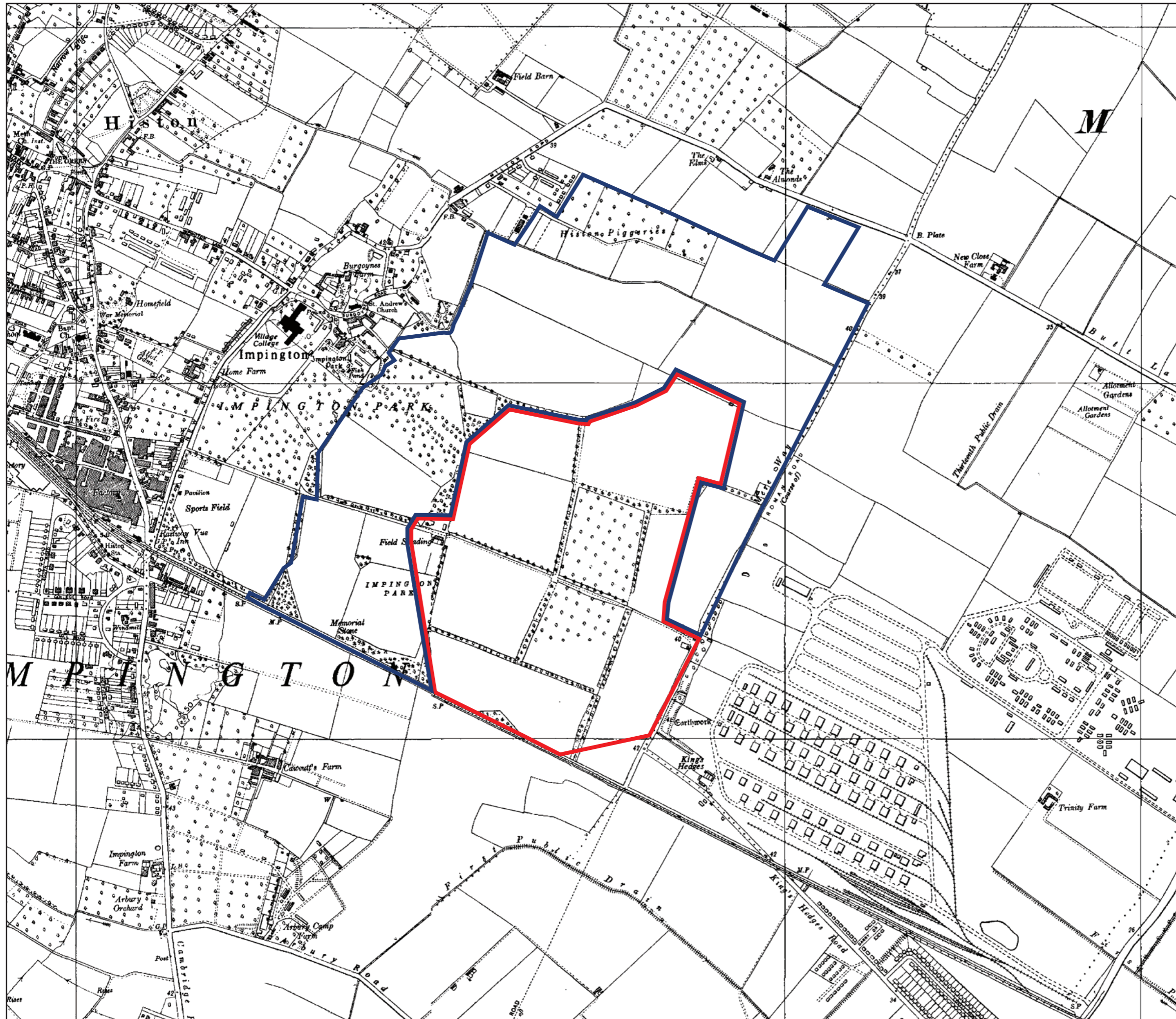
1927 OS Map

Figure 1

Scale: 1:10,500 @ A3

January 2026





Key

-  Proposed CSP Expansion Boundary (Parcel 1)
-  Proposed Green Infrastructure/Public Access Boundary (Parcel 2)

B19074 - Cambridge Science Park Extension

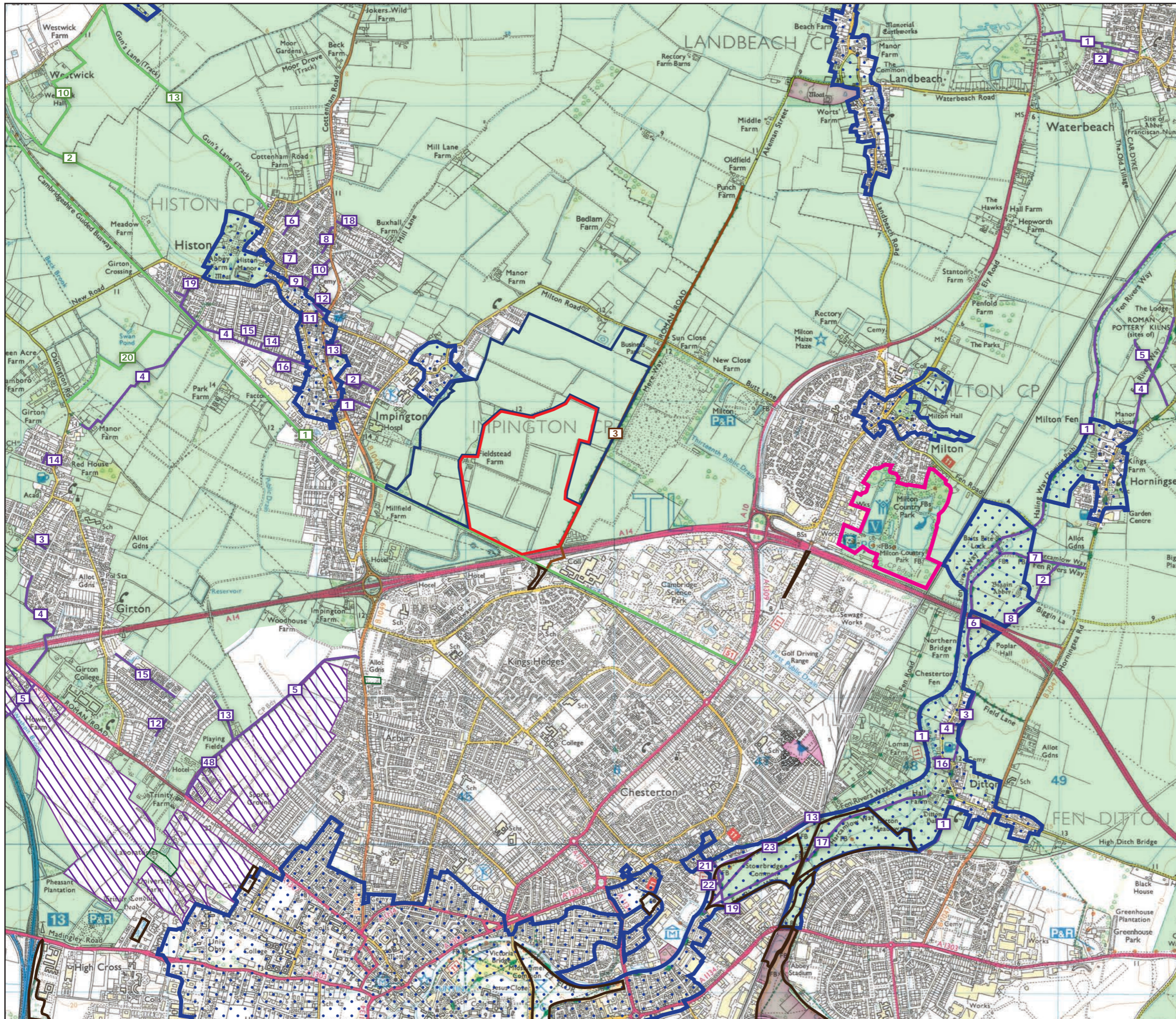
1959 OS Map

Figure 2

Scale: 1:10,500 @ A3

January 2026





B19074 - Cambridge Science Park Extension

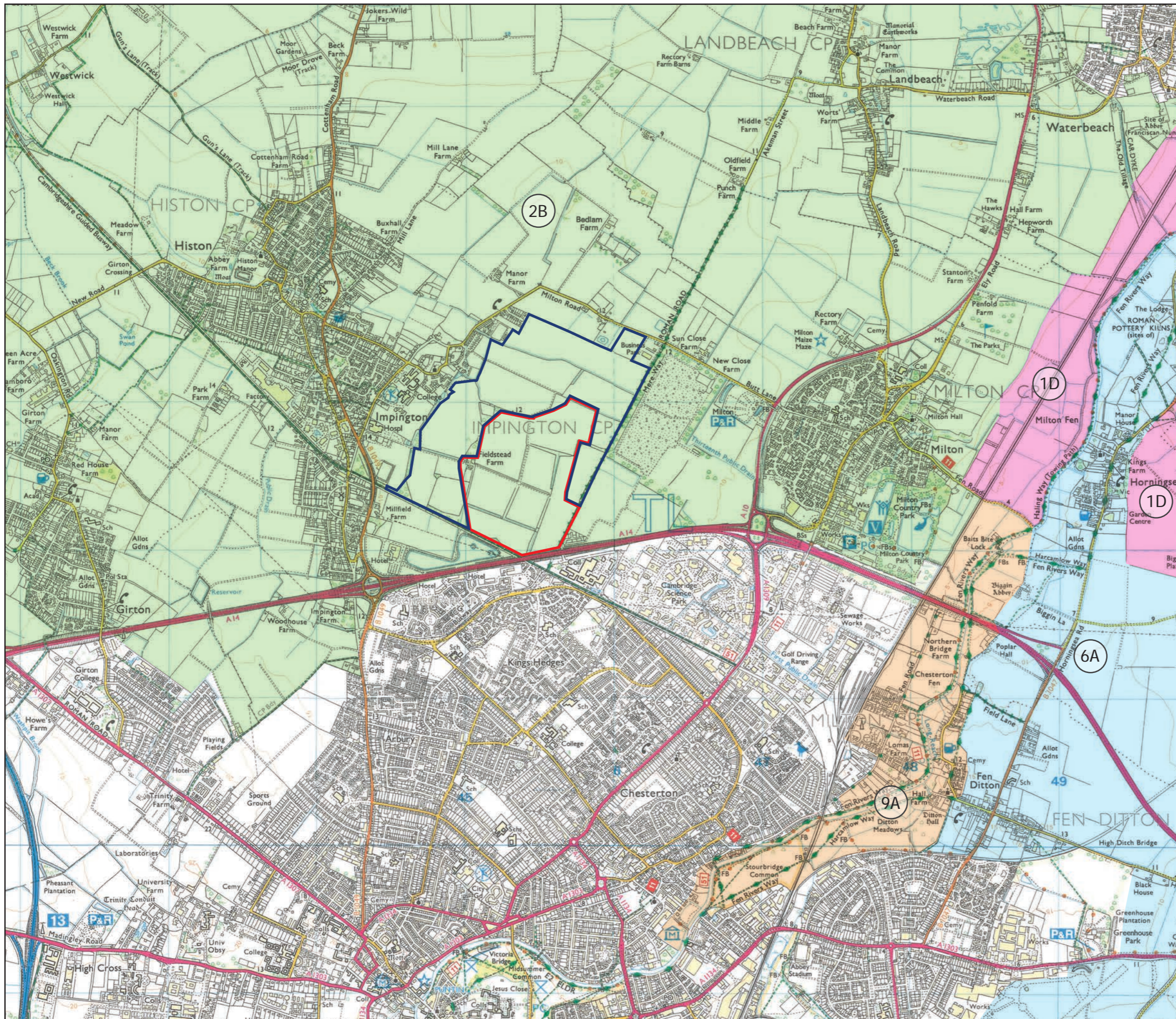
Designations & Public Rights of Way

Figure 3



Scale: 1:25,000 @ A3

January 2026









Key

-  Proposed CSP Expansion Boundary (Parcel 1)
-  Proposed Green Infrastructure/Public Access Boundary (Parcel 2)

Landscape Character Types

-  Fen
-  Fen Edge Claylands
-  Edge Chalklands
-  River Valleys

Landscape Character Areas

- 1D - North Fen to Milton Fen
- 2B - Cottenham Fen Edge Claylands
- 6A - Fen Ditton Fen Edge Chalklands
- 9A - Cam River Valley - Cambridge

B19074 - Cambridge Science Park Extension

Landscape Character

Figure 4

Scale: 1:25,000 @ A3

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