

LANDS IMPROVEMENT HOLDINGS LIMITED / PIGEON LAND LTD

CAMBRIDGE SOUTH

GREEN BELT APPRAISAL

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CLIENT Lands Improvement Holdings Limited / Pigeon Land Ltd

PROJECT Cambridge South

REPORT TITLE Green Belt Appraisal

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REPORT REVISIONS

Revision	Date	Description	Prepared	Approved
P1	07/10/2025	Draft	PG	PG
P2	06/11/2025	Draft	PG	PG
P3	18/11/2025	Updates to Sections 2 and 3	PG	PG
P4	16/01/2026	Heritage updates	PG	PG

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 David Jarvis Associates Limited (DJA) is instructed by Lands Improvement Holdings Limited / Pigeon Land Ltd (LIHPLL) to provide a Green Belt Appraisal relating to land at Cambridge South (the Site).
- 1.2 DJA is a firm of Chartered Landscape Architects and Town Planning consultants established in 1982 and has extensive experience in planning, assessment, design and implementation of development proposals.
- 1.3 The firm is a Registered Practice of the Landscape Institute.
- 1.4 The Site lies on the south edge of Cambridge, within the Cambridge City Council (CCC) and South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) administrative areas. The Site comprises a series of fields in agricultural use, Great Shelford Cemetery and Shelford Rugby Club. The Site covers an area of approximately 167ha. It is bounded to the north by Addenbrookes Road, the M11 to the west, the River Cam to the south and residential development along Shelford Road to the east. The landscape is gently sloping and fairly open with external and internal boundaries to the Site loosely defined by hedgelines with occasional trees.
- 1.5 The location of the Site is shown in **Figure 1** below.

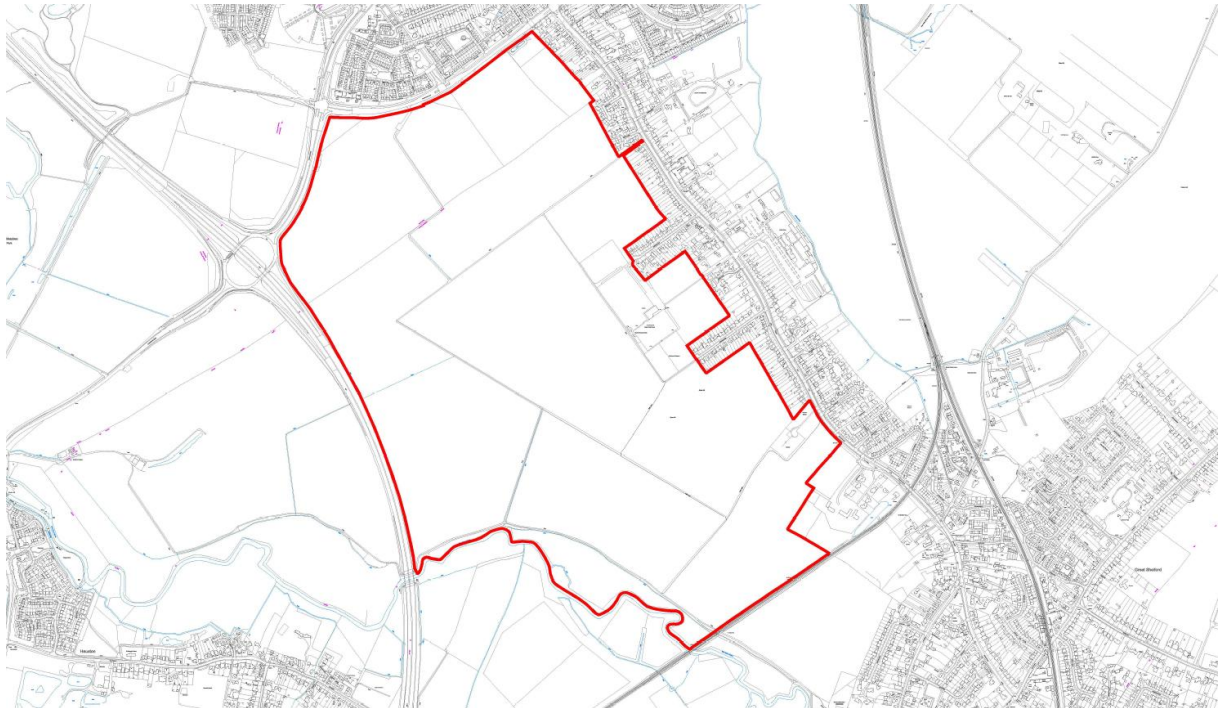


Figure 1. Site Location

- 1.6 This appraisal considers whether this Green Belt site is Grey Belt land, following the guidance set out in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). As part of this assessment the Greater Cambridge Green Belt Assessment¹ (GCGBA) is considered; this contains no reference to grey belt, given it was prepared prior to the publication of the December 2024 NPPF. However, it forms a useful reference for consideration.

¹ "Greater Cambridge Green Belt Assessment - Final Report" (August 2021) South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council prepared by consultants LUC.

2. PUBLISHED GREEN BELT REVIEW

- 2.1 This GBA takes full account of the findings and methodology of the Greater Cambridge Green Belt Assessment, which forms part of the evidence base for the Greater Cambridge Authority (GCA) emerging Local Plan.
- 2.2 The 2021 GCGBA comprises a single document. It includes a methodology, subdivides the Green Belt around Cambridge into Parcels and provides a summary of the findings.
- 2.3 The methodology used is bespoke to Cambridge and works on the basis that there are three Cambridge Green Belt Purposes (rather than the normal five).² Table 3.1 of GCGBA explains:

Cambridge Purpose	NPPF Purpose
1. Preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre.	(a) To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.
2. Maintain and enhance the quality of its setting.	(c) To assist in the safeguarding of the countryside from encroachment. (d) To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.
3. Prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city.	(b) To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.

- 2.4 Under Cambridge Purpose 2, Purposes c) and d) as set out in the NPPF are combined; despite those purposes not addressing the same issue.

Purpose (a)

- 2.5 With regard to Cambridge Purpose 1 / NPPF (a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas, Cambridge is defined at 3.20 of GCGBA as the sole large built-up area.
- 2.6 GCGBA notes at 3.28 that *“For Cambridge Purpose 1 (Preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre) the purpose is relevant only to land around the City, and the extent to which land contributes to this purpose is dependent on the variations in openness and in the degree of distinction from the edge of Cambridge that are applied in Steps 2 and 3.”*

Purpose (b)

- 2.7 With regard to (b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another, Cambridge is considered to be the only town, see 3.20 of GCGBA.

Purposes (c) and (d)

- 2.8 With regard to Purpose (c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, GCGBA combines Purpose (c) with Purpose (d) under Cambridge Purpose 2.

² The NPPF Green Belt purposes are:

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

Purpose (e)

- 2.9 Purpose (e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land, is discounted from consideration, see GCGBA Appendix C in response to a query raised by Historic England.
- 2.10 *“Whilst we agree that National Purpose 5 does serve as a tool in encouraging urban regeneration, we also note that this purpose is equally applicable to all Green Belt land (i.e. the entire Green Belt helps to meet this purpose). Therefore, we do not consider that it would be meaningful to assess individual Green Belt land parcels against Purpose 5. Most Green Belt studies either do not rate parcels against National Purpose 5 or rate them all equally, on the grounds that it is difficult to support arguments that the release one parcel of Green Belt land has a greater impact on encouraging re-use of urban land than another”.*
- 2.11 Appendix A of the GCGBA sets out the Parcels assessed, with a detailed review of each Parcel at Appendix B. The Parcels vary in size and shape.
- 2.12 Grey belt was not a consideration at the time the GCGBA was written.

The Site

- 2.13 The Site contains Parcels GS24, GS25, TR4 and TR5, and a small part of Parcel LS11. An extract of the plan found at GS-P1 of the GCGBA can be found below with the Site boundary added in yellow.

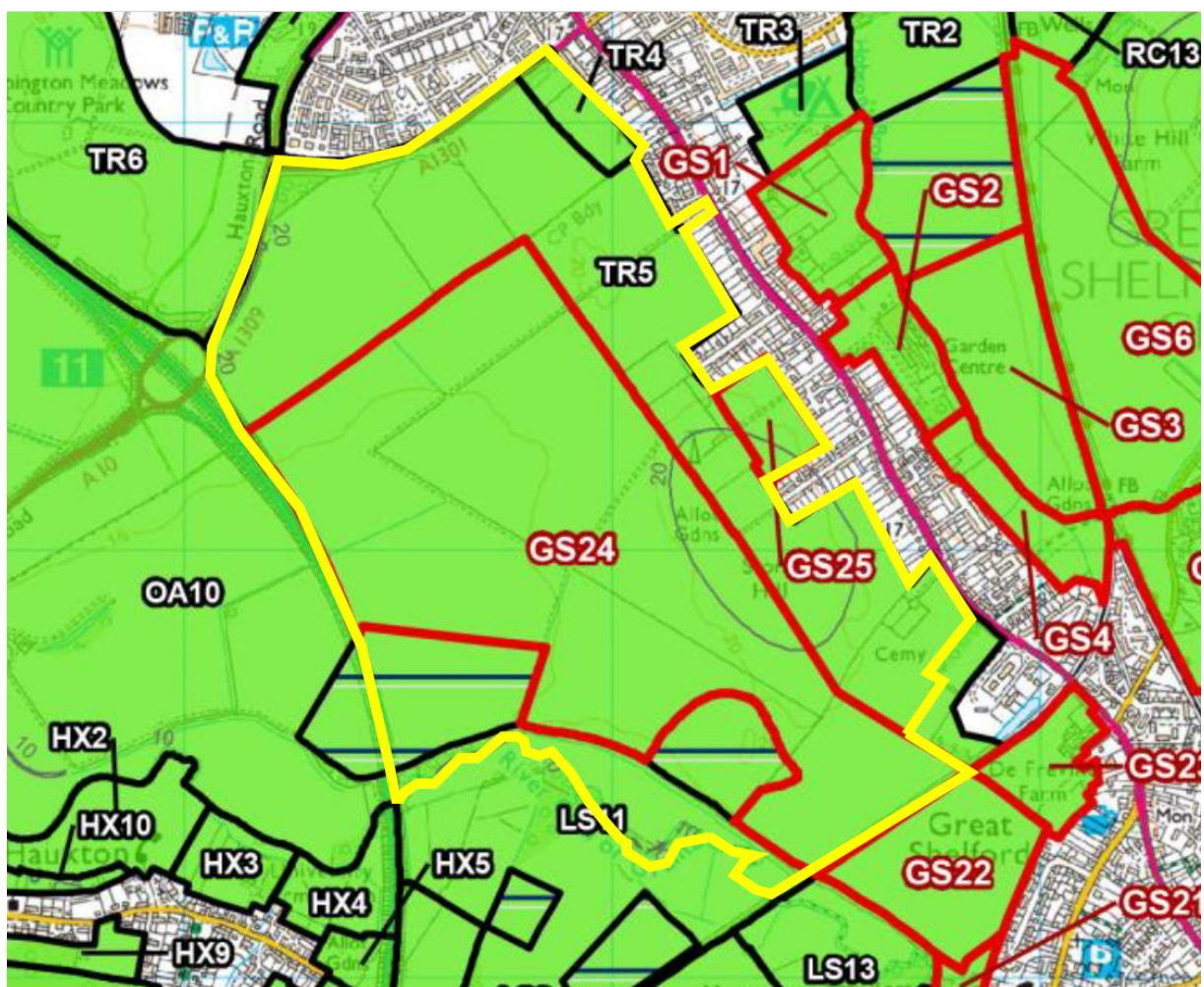


Figure 2. Green Belt Parcels (GCGBA)

2.14 The findings of the GCGBA with respect to the relevant Parcels are summarised below:

Table 2.1 – GCGBA results

Parcel	Cambridge Purpose 1	Cambridge Purpose 2	Cambridge Purpose 3	Overall harm of Green Belt Release
GS24	Significant	Moderate	Relatively significant	Very High
GS25	Moderate	Relatively limited	Relatively limited	Low
LS11 (partial)	Relatively significant	Moderate	Significant	Very High
TR4	Moderate	Relatively limited	Relatively limited	High
TR5	Relatively significant	Moderate	Moderate	Very High

3. GREY BELT

3.1 Grey belt is defined in Annex 2: Glossary of the Framework (December 2024) 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. ‘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.”

3.2 In the consideration of grey belt, the contribution that the Site makes to Purposes (a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas, (b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another and (d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns should be considered and, in accordance with the NPPF definition, the question asked whether the Site contributes **strongly**. The PPG in paragraph 005 (Reference ID: 64-005-20250225³) provides guidance on those features of a Site which are considered to make a strong, moderate or weak contribution to each purpose..

3.3 Purposes (c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment and (e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land are not relevant to the definition of the grey belt.

3.4 For a grey belt assessment the land in question needs to be considered as a whole, rather than as the sum of parcels that may have been assessed as part of a previous green belt assessment.

Purpose (a)

3.5 With regard to Purpose (a) (to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas GCGBA considers Cambridge to be the sole large built-up area.

3.6 The recent update to the Planning Practice Guidance⁴ (Paragraph: 005 Reference ID: 64-005-20250225) makes it clear that Purpose (a) *“relates to the sprawl of large built up areas. Villages should not be considered large built up areas.”*

3.7 All other settlements referred to in the GCGBA are classed as villages.

3.8 Urban sprawl is typically considered in many Green Belt reviews to be development that is unplanned.

3.9 For example, in the Buckinghamshire Green Belt Review 2016 sprawl is considered to be: *“the outward spread of a large built-up area at its periphery in an untidy or irregular way”.*

3.10 Similarly, sprawl is defined at 3.19 of the Tandridge District Council Green Belt Assessment (December 2015), see Appendix 2, as: *“the advancement of ad hoc, sporadic and unplanned development beyond the clear physical boundary of a developed settlement. If there is a clearly defined physical boundary line between the built form of the urban area and the countryside then this would suggest that any development has more than likely been planned and that the Green Belt has been effective in guiding and restricting it. If that line has been blurred by ad hoc infilling or patchy development and a clear boundary no longer exists that parcel may be less effective at restricting urban sprawl.”*

3.11 This is consistent with the PPG itself, which defines features of a site which makes a strong contribution as follows:

“Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely to be free of existing development, and lack physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development. They are also likely to include all of the following features:

³ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/green-belt>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/green-belt#assessing-green-belt-to-identify-grey-belt-land>

- *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).”*

3.12 This is plainly not the case with the Site which is very clearly defined by strong, permanent physical features in reasonable proximity that that could restrict and contain development in the form of the M11 to the west, River Cam to the south and the urban form of Great Shelford to the north and east. The consequence is that development of the Site could reasonably be regarded as planned within clear boundaries, rather than sprawl.

3.13 The development of the Site would not result in an “*incongruous finger of development*” as a continuous ribbon of development already exists, linking Trumpington and Great Shelford along both sides of Shelford Road.

3.14 The Site’s features are more aligned with the PPG’s definition of a site which contributes moderately, which is defined in the PPG as follows:

“Assessment areas that contribute moderately are likely to be adjacent or near to a large built up area, but include one or more features that weaken the land’s contribution to this purpose a, such as (but not limited to):

- *having physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development*
- *be partially enclosed by existing development, such that new development would not result in an incongruous pattern of development*
- *contain existing development*
- *being subject to other urbanising influences.”*

3.15 It is clear that the Site does not perform strongly against this Green Belt purpose.

Purpose (b)

3.16 With regard to Purpose (b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another, the PPG (Paragraph: 005 Reference ID: 64-005-20250225) makes it clear that “*This purpose relates to the merging of towns, not villages.*” There is only one town identified in the GCGBA, all other settlements are classified as villages. There are therefore no neighbouring towns with which development of the Site would cause Cambridge to merge.

3.17 On that basis the Site makes a **no contribution** to Purpose (b).

Purpose (d)

3.18 With regard to Purpose (d) to preserve the special character of historic towns, the recent update to the PPG⁵ (Paragraph: 005 Reference ID: 64-005-20250225) makes it clear that Purpose (d) “*relates to historic towns, not villages.*”

3.19 The Heritage Note on Green Belt dated January 2026 produced by Pegasus Group concludes at 5.1 that:

*“With regards to Purpose D, considering the government guidance, the site is considered to make at most a **moderate contribution** to this purpose of the Green Belt. It is not considered to make a strong contribution.”*

⁵ *ibid*

- 3.20 It can therefore be concluded that the Site makes at most a **moderate contribution** to Purposes (a) and (d) and **no contribution** to Purpose (b).

Footnote 7

- 3.21 The Site contains two scheduled monuments; the indicative development proposed means those will not be disturbed and therefore there is no suggestion that the heritage assets represent a strong reason to refuse or restrict the proposed development.
- 3.22 Other than Green Belt and designated heritage assets, the Site is not subject to any other footnote 7 designations.
- 3.23 On this basis the Site is considered to be grey belt.

Remaining Green Belt area

- 3.24 The PPG states then when considering whether a proposal would undermine the purposes taken together of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan that authorities should consider whether, or the extent to which, the release or development of Green Belt Land would affect the ability of all the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan from serving all five of the Green Belt purposes in a meaningful way. This does not require there to be no harm to the remaining Green Belt, but that the Green Belt can continue to serve its purpose.
- 3.25 The impact on Purposes (a), (b) and (d) has been considered above, concluding the Site makes a **moderate** contribution to Purposes (a) (d) and **no contribution** to Purpose (b).
- 3.26 Purpose (e) which is to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land is not particularly relevant here given that the application site is predominantly rural. There is not sufficient derelict or urban land to meet the Councils' needs, and therefore developing this site would not undermine this purpose of the Green Belt, as the purpose has essentially already been served and it is now only serving to result in development being allocated beyond the green belt, further from jobs and amenities.
- 3.27 Purpose (c) is to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The Site is very clearly defined by strong, permanent physical features in the form of the M11 to the west, River Cam to the south and the urban form of Great Shelford to the north and east. The consequence is that development of the Site could reasonably be regarded as planned within clear boundaries, rather than sprawl.
- 3.28 The development of the site would lead to Cambridge / Great Shelford being closer to Hauxton to the south west, but the M11, River Cam and landscape structure provides natural boundaries which would contain the site. While therefore the site encroaches into the countryside, should the site be developed then the remaining Green Belt would still adequately serve its five purposes in a meaningful way.
- 3.29 The Green Belt around Cambridge is expansive and the remaining width of the Green Belt to the west and south west of the Site would still perform its function. With respect to paragraph 155a of the Framework, given the reasonably compact nature of the Site, that it forms a logical extension to Cambridge within clear physical boundaries and its relatively limited functional and visual connectivity with the wider landscape, the delivery of the Site would have no effect on the wider Green Belt locally. It would not *"fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan"*, namely the CCC/SCDC administrative area. The development of this land would not *"affect the ability of all the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan from serving all five of the Green Belt purposes in a meaningful way"*.

4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

- 4.1 David Jarvis Associates Limited (DJA) is instructed by Lands Improvement Holdings Limited / Pigeon Land Ltd (LIHPLL) to provide a Green Belt Appraisal relating to land at Cambridge South (the Site).
- 4.2 This GBA is references the findings and methodology of the Greater Cambridge Authority Green Belt Assessment (GCGBA), that forms part of the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan, however it pre-dates the introduction of the concept of grey belt.
- 4.3 The Site is adjacent to a large built up area, and includes features that weaken the land's contribution to Purpose (a) by having physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity, such as the M11, River Cam and Addenbrookes and Shelford Roads that would restrict and contain development.
- 4.4 On this basis it can be concluded that the Site makes a **moderate contribution** to Purpose (a).
- 4.5 There are therefore no neighbouring towns to merge with. On that basis the Site makes a **no contribution** to Purpose (b).
- 4.6 The Site makes at most a **moderate contribution** to Purpose (d).
- 4.7 It can therefore be concluded that the Site makes at most a **moderate** contribution to Purposes (a) and (d) and **no contribution** to Purpose (b).
- 4.8 On this basis the Site is considered to be grey belt as defined by the Framework and the PPG.
- 4.9 The delivery of the Site would have no effect on the wider Green Belt locally. It would not *"fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan"*, namely the CCC/SCDC administrative area.