South West Cambridge –

Land north of Barton Road

Landscape and Visual Appraisal and Green Belt Review

for

North Barton Road Landowners Group

Planning | B19079 R03 V00 | 28th January 2026

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the project

1.1.1 In 2019, The Landscape Partnership (TLP) was commissioned by North of Barton Landowners Group (a consortium of the University of Cambridge and four Cambridge Colleges; Corpus Christi, St John's, Jesus and Downing) to prepare a Landscape and Visual Appraisal and Green Belt Review for a parcel of land to the north of Barton Road, Cambridge. The land is referred to as South West Cambridge. This work supported representations to the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan, which is still progressing.

1.1.2 The representations included *A vision for South West Cambridge*, prepared by David Lock Associates, that set out a vision for an exemplar, landscape-led, and highly sustainable new neighbourhood at South West Cambridge. It is referred to here as the Vision Document.

1.1.3 Prior to this commission – between 2012 and 2017 – The Landscape Partnership was appointed by St John's College to undertake landscape and visual appraisals relating to the northern portion of the parcel of land north of Barton Road. These studies formed part of the representations made by Savills on behalf of St John's College regarding the emerging Local Plans that were later adopted in 2018. St John's College is now part of the North Barton Road Landowners Group.

1.1.4 In 2025 and following two meetings; one held with the Cambridge Growth Company and another held with Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Services, the North Barton Road Landowners Group instructed an update of the 2019 study to inform future discussions with the consultants appointed by the Cambridge Growth Company, to inform further consultation on the emerging Greater Cambridge Local Plan, and to inform an updated Vision Document.

1.1.5 The study considers:

a. the landscape character of the Site and its wider context to the site (Section 2)

b. the visual character of the site and its setting, with a focus on publicly accessible views (Section 3)

c. the role of the Site within the Green Belt (Section 4)

d. opportunities and constraints for the Site in relation to potential development (Section 5)

1.1.6 This document does not provide a detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, as there are at this stage no final proposals to assess, rather it considers the in-principle suitability of the land for development, based on factors such as landscape character and visibility, and the contribution the Site makes to the setting of the city and the purposes of including land within the Green Belt.

1.1.7 South West Cambridge – the 'Site' – is 149.4ha in size and, broadly, is bound by Barton Road to the south, the M11 (and a section of its slip road) to the west, West Cambridge campus to the north, University Sports Ground to the north-east, and the edge of Cambridge City to the east (see Figure 01 and Plate 01). A fuller site description of the Site is provided at Section 2.

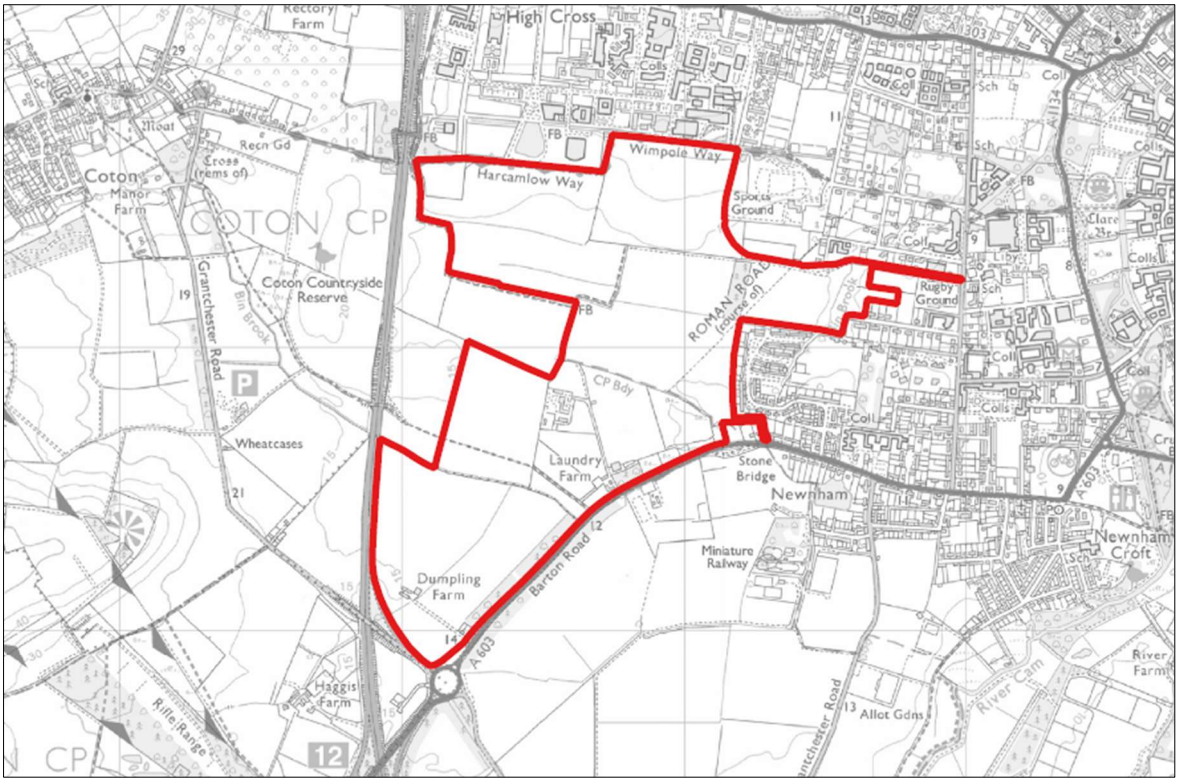


Plate 01: The Site

1.1.8 The administrative boundary between Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council follows a line broadly diagonally across the Site from the north-west corner to the south-east corner. The current position of the City and District Council is that the whole Site is defined as Green Belt within the adopted Local Plans with no planned development.

1.1.9 This report should be read alongside a number of related reports for other environmental topics including:

- The updated Vision Document. Refer to Plate 02 for the proposed Master Plan.
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, 2020, The Landscape Partnership
- The Western Fields of Cambridge, Land North of Barton Road – Initial Appraisal of Significance October 2019 (Andrew Josephs Associates)

1.1.10 For ease of reference and for the purpose of this report, the Site has been divided into a *sectors* and f*ield units* as illustrated on Figure 04. This arrangement mirrors the sectors and field units utilised in the Cambridge Inner Green Belt Study (2015), which is described in more detail in Section 6: Cambridge Green Belt.

1.2 A vision for South West Cambridge

1.2.1 The vision for South West Cambridge is for a new neighbourhood that:

- *Provides between 2,500 and 2,800 high quality new homes with a range of housing types, densities and tenures including market, affordable housing, build to rent, housing for*

University and/or College staff, housing for the elderly (including care provision) and potentially student accommodation. It will have a real sense of identity, with distinctive neighbourhoods arranged around significant areas of open space. It will also be viable and deliverable in the immediate term.

- *Is in a highly sustainable location, which is readily accessible by walking, cycling and public transport, including existing bus and cycle routes, the proposed Cambourne to Cambridge Busway, and the Comberton and Barton Greenways. It is accessible to the wide range of services and facilities available in the City Centre. It is well-related to the current and future employment opportunities at Cambridge West and North West Cambridge, and to other employment opportunities available in the City. It can make a critical contribution to the delivery of a new public transport link connecting Cambridge West with the Cambridge Biomedical Campus. The needs of pedestrians and cyclists would be prioritised over car users.*
- *More than 55% of the site would be greenspace, and it is anticipated that a large proportion of this would be retained as Green Belt This would include a significant amount of accessible green infrastructure including open spaces and parks, sports pitches, green corridors, meadows, wetland habitat and the rewilding of Bin Brook.*
- *The green infrastructure within the development connects Cambridge with the countryside and Coton Countryside Reserve, and provides improved access to the site and opportunities for recreation and leisure for residents and neighbouring areas.*
- *Maintains the landscape setting of Cambridge and the character of the area, taking account of historic assets and views. A comprehensive landscape scheme would integrate the development, mitigate some of the more detracting elements currently present, and reinforce the character of the receiving landscape.*
- *Will provide important community facilities including a primary school, community centre, health centre, public square, and a local centre with a food store and other shops to meet the needs of the new community, and to serve other nearby residents. In addition, these facilities will be accessible for the Cambridge West campus and beyond serving the wider growth corridor, including research facilities and associated employment area*
- *Will focus on a high-quality built environment, with ambitious design standards for public realm and buildings, including high levels of energy performance that follow best practice in energy and carbon reduction.*
- *Will achieve net biodiversity gains, with the creation of a variety of habitat types, and a substantial focus on natural capital underpinning the entire development. Sustainability measures will be extensive and will embrace high standards for carbon neutrality, drainage and biodiversity and adopt low carbon construction techniques.*



Plate 02: Master Plan

1.3 Appendices

1.3.1 The study is illustrated by a number of supporting figures and photo sheets that are included at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 respectively.

2 Landscape Character

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 The importance of understanding the character of all landscapes in England is recognised in the current National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), February 2025, §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.

2.1.2 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. 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.

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.

2.2 National Character Area profiles

2.2.1 In the mid-1990s, English Nature and the Countryside Commission created The Character Map of England[1], 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.

2.2.2 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.

2.2.3 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

2.2.4 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.*

2.3 Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment

2.3.1 The *Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment*[2] (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.

2.3.2 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 aims to 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.

2.3.3 The GCLCA divides the study area into nine generic landscape character types (LCTs). These are further sub-divided into a total of 34 geographically discrete landscape character areas (LCAs).

2.3.4 The Site falls within *LCT3: Lowland Farmlands*, and within *LCA 3B: Bourn Tributaries Lowland Farmlands.*

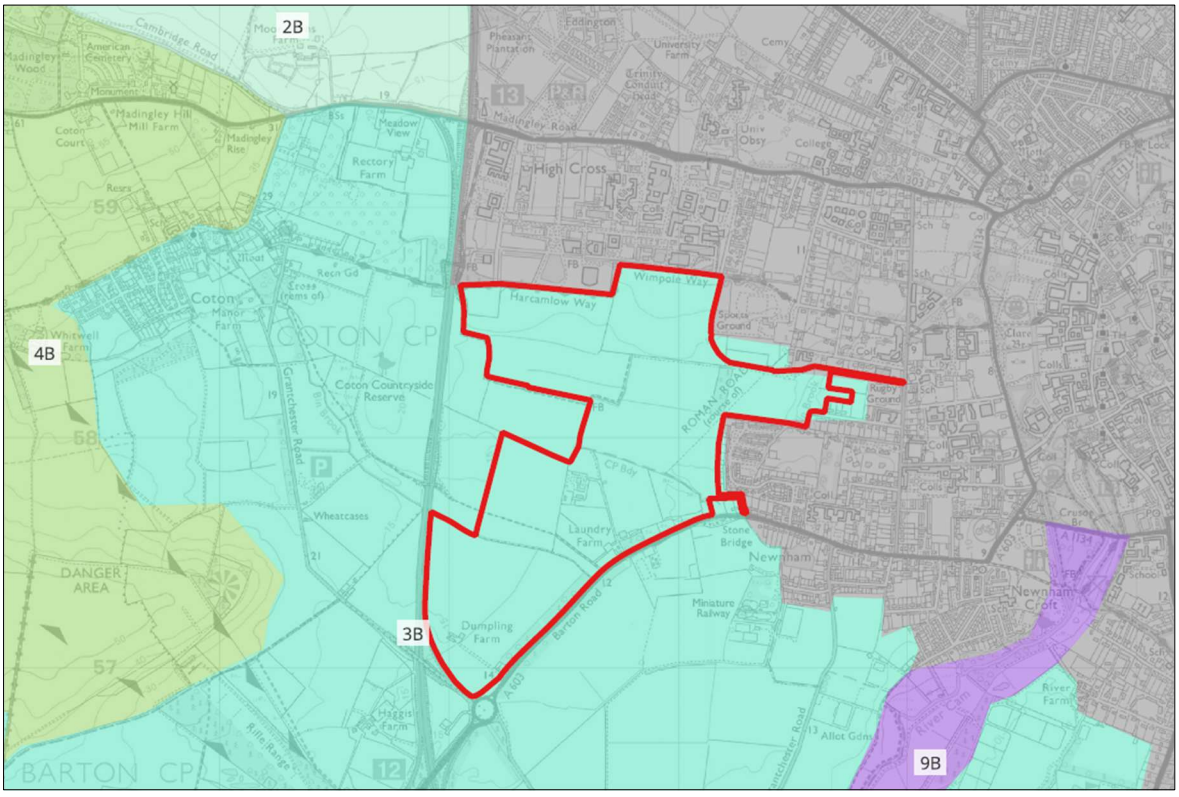


Plate 03: Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment - Landscape Character Areas

[2] Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment, 2021

LCT3: Lowland Farmlands

2.3.5 Lowland Farmlands is defined by a gently undulating, intensively farmed arable landscape encompassing densely settled, broad, flat river valleys and their tributaries.

2.3.6 The overall management objective for the Lowland Farmlands LCT is *"to conserve the tranquil, rural landscape with its network of scattered small woodlands, surviving moated sites and dispersed pattern of rural villages and to strengthen its character through measures to minimise the urbanising influence of large villages, new settlement and transport routes. Enhancements to woodland and linking vegetation features should also be encouraged to retain or enhance biodiversity and visual character*".

2.3.7 Guidance for landscape management within LCT3 includes:

- *Manage the agricultural landscape and soils both for production and opportunities to improve biodiversity*
- *Conserve and enhance existing watercourses to enhance the ecological value of the farmed landscape*
- *Conserve areas of grazing marsh, and scattered deciduous woodland and orchards of high ecological value*
- *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 and managing key views across the rural landscape*

2.3.8 Guidance for integrating development into the landscape includes:

- *Conserve the historic villages through avoidance of ribbon development and coalescence with nearby settlement*
- *Manage the scale, siting and design of settlement expansion to avoid incongruous development in the rural landscape*
- *Maintain the distinctive settlement pattern of the area and its local context*
- *Ensure density and pattern of new developments reflect that of existing villages and hamlets*
- *Avoid backland and cul-de-sac developments where possible*
- *Ensure buildings are arranged in continuous frontages within village cores and are arranged in loose knit patterns facing the street on more peripheral sites*
- *Ensure new developments are integrated with sufficient space for garden and street tree planting where applicable*

- *Enhance village gateways and, where appropriate, consider provision of appropriate planting on village approaches*
- *Take opportunities to create new village greens and/or wildlife areas within new developments.*
- *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 traditional local building styles, height, materials, colours and textures*
- *Retain hedges along roads*
- *Enclose boundaries facing the street on village peripheries with hedge and tree planting*
- *Avoid the use of standardised and intrusive urban materials, street furniture, lighting and signage as part of traffic calming measures wherever appropriate*
- *Ensure new agricultural buildings, such as large storage sheds, are sited and designed to reduce their apparent mass, minimising their impact on the wider landscape by the appropriate use of texture, colour and planting*

LCA 3B: Bourn Tributaries Lowland Farmlands.

2.3.9 LCA 3B: Bourn Tributaries Lowland Farmland is a well-settled rural landscape, strongly influenced by the wide, shallow valley of the Bourn Brook, with distinctive radio telescopes visible on the skyline.

2.3.10 The key characteristics of Bourn Tributaries Lowland Farmland are:

- *Wide valley of the River Bourn and its tributaries as it nears its confluence with the River Cam*
- *Generally strong, regular rectilinear field pattern with smaller scale pastoral fields near villages*
- *Ecological richness associated with the river including lowland meadows, good quality semi-improved grassland and floodplain grazing marsh*
- *Radio telescopes are a unique and distinctive feature on the skyline*
- *Well defined settlement edges defined by mature trees, copses and thick hedgerows enclosing small scale fields and paddocks*
- *Network of major roads locally detracts from the otherwise tranquil, rural character*
- *Recreational land use includes golf clubs, University sports fields and a polo club*
- *Coton Countryside Reserve is linked to the historic core of Cambridge by views towards the city's historic core and a green corridor which contributes to the setting of the city*

2.3.11 Cited landscape sensitivities for LCA 3B include:

- *Green corridor linking Coton Countryside Reserve and the historic core of Cambridge which contributes towards the setting of the city*
- *Distinctive radio telescopes form a prominent landmark on the skyline*
- *Well defined settlement edges defined by mature trees, copses and thick hedgerows enclosing small scale fields and paddocks*
- *Pressure for recreational land use*

2.3.12 Landscape guidelines include:

- *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*
- *Conserve and enhance the regular small-scale pastoral fields, shelter belts and hedgerows at village edges*

2.4 Cambridge Inner Green Belt Boundary Study

2.4.1 Further useful information regarding the landscape west of Cambridge, and in particular its relationship with the city, is contained within the *Cambridge Inner Green Belt Boundary Study*[3] (CIGBBS). Published in 2015, it predates the Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment but the findings remain relevant.

2.4.2 The CIGBBS identifies the Site as lying within and to the north-east of LCT4: River Valleys and within the LCA 4C: Rhee and Bourn Valleys (refer to CIGBBS, Figure 8[4]).

2.4.3 The Study notes [§4.8.12]:

> *Cambridge is surrounded by river valley landscapes on its south west and southern edges. These valleys have been formed by rivers eroding the chalk or clay bedrock to create broad valleys, with a very gently undulating landform. There are numerous streams and tributaries. The alluvial sediment makes the land relatively fertile, allowing arable agriculture in higher areas, and pasture/ meadows in flood plains closer to watercourses.*

2.4.4 The Bin Brook is the watercourse passing through the Site which proceeds to flow into the River Cam to the east.

2.4.5 LCA 4C: Rhee and Bourn Valleys is further defined from §4.8.41. Relevant extracts include "These valleys form the landscape to the south west of Cambridge. The landscape is comprised of a repeating pattern of subtle ridges and dips which reflect the drainage pattern. However, their overall appearance is relatively flat. ….The majority of land is in arable production, although pastures are common alongside streams".

[3] Cambridge Inner Green Belt Boundary Study
[4] https://www.scambs.gov.uk/media/6596/a-cambridge-inner-green-belt-boundary-study_-mainreport.pdf

2.4.6 The CIGBBS continues at §4.8.43 noting, *"The key views to Cambridge within this character area are seen from the M11. The landmarks of the historic core are clearly visible and form skyline elements. Low lying countryside forms the foreground to these views, and the high quality green edge of the city means that the city appears to merge gradually with the countryside"*. This description of views references those across the Site from the section of the M11 closest to it. However, in The Landscape Partnership's opinion the sections of the M11 with available views to the city are limited in extent and where present the landmark buildings in the historic core are only partly visible and constitute relatively minor features. A fuller discussion of these views is provided in Section 3 below.

2.4.7 The land further to the west of the Site and to the west of the M11 rises up to LCT 5 and LCA 5A: Western Claylands. The text at §4.8.5 states:

> *The overall impression is of a mature, peaceful rural landscape which enhances the topography of east-west ridges. There are some distant views of Cambridge from high points, including at Red Meadow Hill in Coton Countryside Reserve, but the majority of these views are screened by vegetation in the summer months. An important approach into Cambridge from Bedford passes through the Western Claylands. Adjacent to the road is the American Cemetery, a memorable feature within the setting of the city. Just beyond the American Cemetery is a key elevated view of Cambridge.*

2.4.8 Coton is the closest village to the Site and within c.500m from the West Cambridge University campus, which lies to east of the M11. Despite the relative proximity, there is negligible intervisibility between the Site and Cotton village due to the presence of intervening hedges.

Supporting character

2.4.9 The CIGBBS also assesses the role of the different areas of townscape/landscape within the district in supporting the historic core and distinctive areas of the city. This includes the contribution which the surrounding landscape makes to the city's visibility or where it forms part of the foreground of views of the city from more distant viewpoints. The CIGBBS assessment also considers the contribution each character area makes to the *essence* of Cambridge. Consideration was given to connective areas which may include significant landscape and/or townscape features.

2.4.10 The CIGBBS judges that the Site falls within a *Supportive* landscape area adjacent to a *Distinctive* townscape area to the west of Cambridge. See Plate 04.

2.4.11 The '*Supportive* townscape/landscape areas are seen to support the character of the historic core and *Distinctive* areas of the city and provide a *"backdrop and ambience, and bolster the sense of place of the city and its approaches"*. The CIGBBS identifies that these areas are not unique but are locally distinctive.

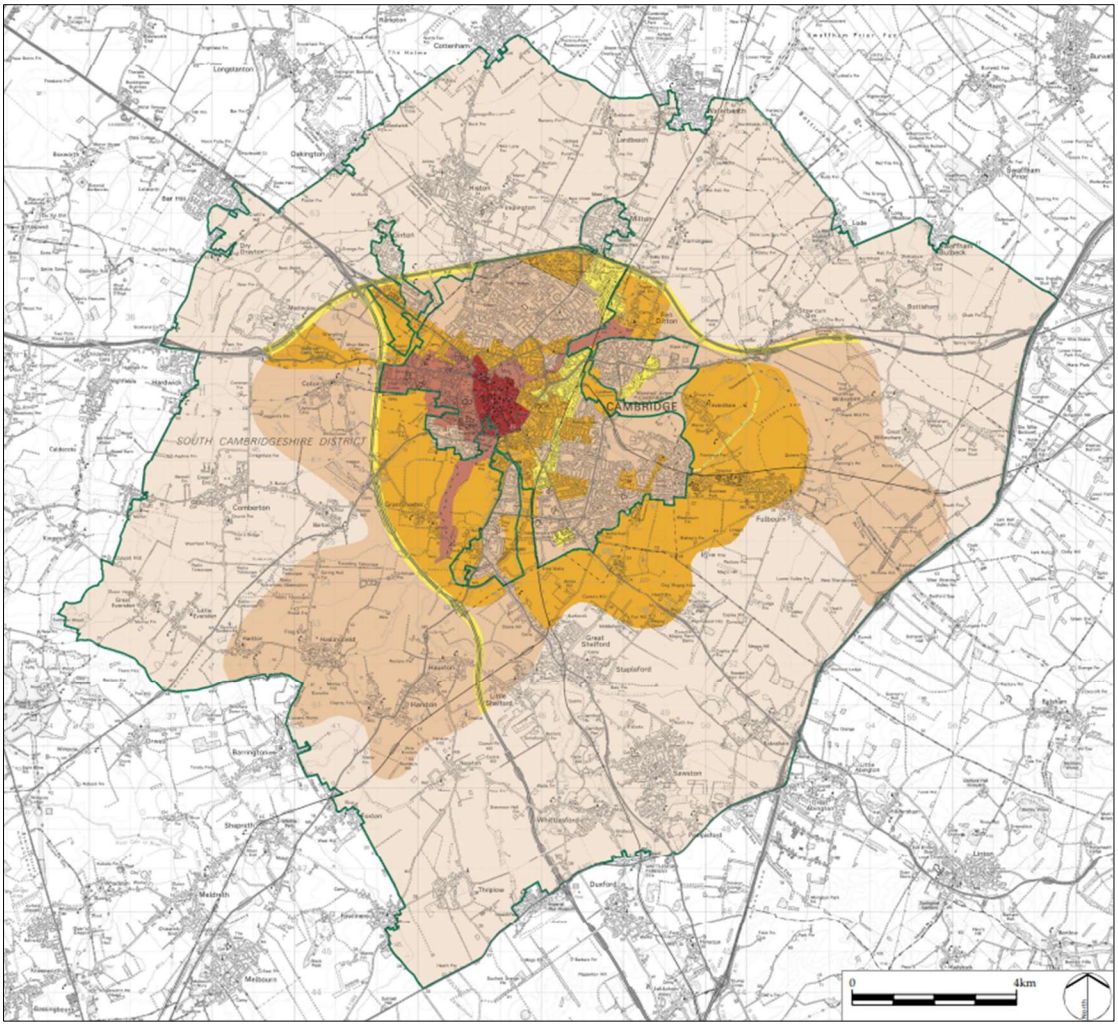


Plate 04: Landscape and Townscape Areas (Figure 11 in *CIGBBS*, 2015[5])

2.4.12 The study also notes the large area of landscape to the west of the city extending up to the M11 in which the Site is located – referred to as Sector 3 (see Section 4) – *"provides an important foreground in views of the city, including the clearest views of the colleges and the historic core from the landscape anywhere around Cambridge"*. The CIGBBS goes on to state that these supportive landscape areas are, *"key elements of the distinctiveness of Cambridge and its setting, and a fundamental quality of the setting and special character of the historic city"*.

The Landscape Partnership acknowledges that this area of land to the west provides one of the few locations with views towards the historic core. However, The Landscape Partnership considers that the extent to which the colleges and historic core of the city can be seen from these locations is relatively limited. The main landmark building visible is the University Library tower. Only parts of two colleges can be readily identified, namely the tower of St John's College Chapel and the very upper section of King's College Chapel. In The Landscape Partnership's opinion, the relative distinctiveness of these views and the weight to be afforded to them should not be overstated. The findings of the CIGBBS in relation to the Green Belt designation itself are considered at Section 4.

[5] Cambridge Inner Green Belt Boundary Study, Figures

2.5 Local Character and site features

Topography

2.5.1 The Site is located between c.19m AOD at the north-western corner to c.11m AOD along Barton Road at the south-eastern boundary. To the east the land falls below the 10m contour along the alignment of Bin Brook. The water course flows eastwards in a concrete channel adjacent to Barton Road, before passing through Gough Way and around the eastern edge of the Site, then onwards to meet the River Cam.

2.5.2 Most of the land between the M11 and the built edge of the city is at c.10-20m AOD and comprises the gentle undulating lower slopes of the claylands as they descend to Cambridge. A finger of slightly higher ground follows a line through the northern section of the Site from the west in an eastwards direction as noted by the presence of the 15m contour (see Plate 05). A further area of locally higher ground above 15m is located mid-way on the western boundary extending eastwards.

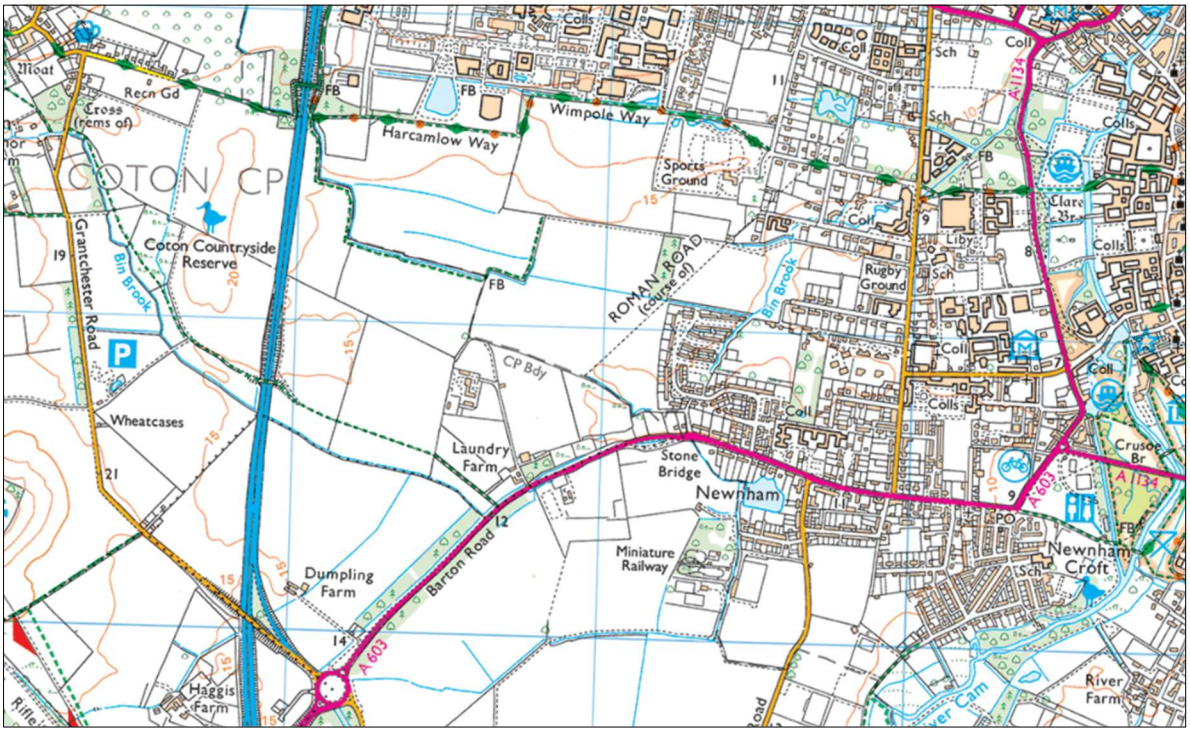


Plate 05; Topography of the Site

2.5.3 To the west, beyond the M11 corridor and north of Barton, the topography rises up to elevations at and above 50m AOD. These low clay hills effectively mark the western edge of the wider setting of Cambridge. There are two ridges that extend east west within this higher ground. To the north a ridge follows the A1303 Madingley Road at Madingley Hill. This higher ground is also reasonably well wooded. The second ridge lies to the south, north of Barton and is more open in character and extends towards the Open Access Land at Red Meadow Hill. The wider topographical features can be seen on Figure 01.

Existing vegetation and land use

2.5.4 The claylands outside the urban area of the city are predominantly used for a range of arable cropping. The fields on the Site are mainly enclosed by hedges of varying height. Most of the hedges are relatively tall (c.3m to 4 m). Between the M11 and Cambridge there are a number of hedges that visually combine to filter views from the west into and across the Site. There are also smaller areas of meadow and grassland. These mainly follow the course of Bin Brook and are also associated with riparian vegetation and small tree groups. Some of the stronger vegetative boundaries across the Site include those along the parish and district administrative boundary that takes a course diagonally across the Site.

2.5.5 A historical assessment of the fields within the Site is provided with The Western Fields of Cambridge, Land North of Barton Road – Initial Appraisal of Significance October 2019 (Andrew Josephs Associates (AJA)). This report concludes that the modern fieldscape is mainly of 1805 origin resulting from the early 19th century enclosures. This process incorporated some earlier boundaries e.g. along parish boundaries and watercourses. The most significant boundary features are noted in the AJA report as being those along the aforementioned parish and district boundary, around two adjacent fields and along the Bin Brook. Figures 06 to 08 in this report show the pattern of fields based on OS maps from 1888 and 1960. Hedges/boundaries lost or added since the date of each OS map in comparison to the present day are annotated. These plans illustrate that the broad pattern of field units present in 1880 largely remain intact today.

2.5.6 Woodland within the Site is limited in extent to the substantial linear mixed plantation adjacent to Barton Road (c 1990s origin) and a plantation (also late 1990s origin) located to the north-west of Gough Way that now physically and visually contains the land to the east of the Site (Field Unit H on Figure 04) from the wider landscape.

2.5.7 Individual mature trees on the Site are restricted to a few in the established hedgerows and watercourses and a number associated with the smaller scale paddocks/pasture along Barton Road in the vicinity of Laundry Farm House.

2.5.8 In the wider area, with the exception of Madingley Wood on the higher ground to the west, there are few large woods in the area. However, there are a number of shelter belts and copses. Many of these follow main routes into Cambridge – including on both sides of Barton Road and along Madingley Road – which visually contain the approaches into Cambridge from the wider arable landscape beyond. There are also substantive linear plantations enclosing the Rifle Range to the south-west of the M11. In addition, the local villages of Coton, Barton and Grantchester are generally relatively enclosed by perimeter vegetation including copses, hedges and a number of mature gardens.

2.5.9 The western edge of Cambridge City extending between the Backs and River Cam to the western built edge of the City also contains a notable amount of mature vegetation. This is a function of the relatively low-density character of the residential areas, university college facilities and associated playing fields etc. There are many mature trees and areas of semi natural vegetation and large gardens in this part of the city that combine to help to create a soft green edge to the west of the city, despite it being urban in character. This density of planting also provides a considerable

measure of screening to the majority of the buildings in the historic core as seen from the west including from across the Site.

Settlement pattern

2.5.10 The character of the settlement varies in the locality. To the east of the Site, the western extent of Cambridge comprises individual houses and buildings that are located in a mature well vegetated setting. These include a number of architectural styles from the late 19th century onwards. Buildings include substantial detached houses set in large gardens and a number of university accommodation blocks dating from the 20th to early 21st century. Most of the buildings are architect designed and exhibit a bespoke and high standard of design. There are a number of other individual buildings including sports pavilions.

2.5.11 The progression of built development to the west of the historic core is illustrated by the historic OS maps in Figures 06-08. These show how at 1888-91 (Figure 06) the core cluster of Cambridge Colleges leading to the Backs on the River Cam effectively marked the edge of the city, with only scattered development and college playing fields to the west. By 1960 (Figure 08) built development had extended up to Wilberforce Road with low density of residential development and further development along the Madingley Road and Barton Road routes. In the latter half of the 20th century, infill west of Cambridge has occurred including some traditional residential development and some more bespoke college development.

2.5.12 Figure 01 shows the current extent of development and the considerable scale of the more recent West Cambridge campus development located beyond the northern boundary of the Site. This is in marked contrast to other development that has taken place west of Cambridge, having a campus style including a number of large faculty buildings set within a formal landscaped masterplan layout. A number of these buildings are 4 to 5 storeys in height and employ a range of contemporary designs and materials. These are in the main of good design quality of their type, particularly when seen at closer quarters. However, from a greater distance the overriding impression is of several large buildings unrelated to the historic core.

2.5.13 Section 4.14 of the Cambridge Inner Green Belt Study (2015) sets out how various broad townscape and landscape areas have been assessed regarding their *function* to the distinctiveness and sense of place of Cambridge. The roles of these areas vary around the city. The CIGBBS notes that the importance of the areas can also vary *within* as well as between character areas. In terms of townscape, the CIGBBS considers that all the land area adjoining the Site to both the north and east is *Distinctive*, i.e. it is specifically recognisable and distinctive to the city with distinctive buildings and quintessential views. At §4.14.12, the CIGBBS notes that this area, "*includes the ongoing University development at West Cambridge, which include buildings of distinctive, high quality architecture and other buildings of significant historical and cultural importance, such as the Cavendish laboratory*." However, The Landscape Partnership considers that the West Cambridge development is in marked contrast to the rest of west Cambridge and not specifically in a recognisable *Cambridge* style. With the possible exception of the Schlumberger Building, the area is not dissimilar to many University campuses in the UK. While being implemented to a high architectural quality it is not unique. This is also the case for the Wilberforce Road University Sports facilities. It is not considered that West Cambridge campus is *"a fundamental quality of the setting*

and special character of historic city" as set out in §4.14.13 of the CIGBBS. The Landscape Partnership considers this is an incorrect judgement for this part of Cambridge.

2.5.14 The closest villages are Coton and Barton and lie to the west. Both contain a mix of traditional vernacular dwellings in the village centre and some small scape 20th century estate developments. The church at Coton is relatively modest in scale and cannot be seen from the site, although the spire is visible from other points in the wider landscape.

2.5.15 Within the Site itself there are some individual clusters of buildings. These include Dumpling Farm to the south-west towards Barton Road and Laundry Farm to the south. Laundry Farm includes a larger complex of University buildings (see Unit P on Figure 4) which date from the second half of the 20th century and are accessed off Barton Road. These are utilitarian in appearance and include galvanised palisade boundary fencing and lighting within the yard areas, which gives a localised discordant, urban fringe appearance.

Access

2.5.16 Public access to the landscape in the vicinity of the Site is generally good, with an established network of public footpaths, bridleways and promoted recreational routes extending between Madingley Road and Barton Road and continuing westwards beyond the M11. Crossing points over and under the M11 allow movement between the inner edge of Cambridge and the wider countryside, maintaining continuity of access despite the presence of major infrastructure.

2.5.17 Several long-distance routes pass through this landscape and provide well-connected recreational opportunities. The Harcamlow Way, a regional circular trail linking Harlow and Cambridge, follows a line immediately to the north of the Site via public footpaths before continuing over the M11 toward Coton and the countryside beyond. The Wimpole Way, which forms part of the wider Fen Rivers Way network, provides a popular linear route between Cambridge and Wimpole Estate, threading through the farmland west of the M11 follows a similar route in the vicinity of the Site.

2.5.18 Coton Countryside Reserve is located to the west of the M11, to the south of the village of Coton, and on either side of Grantchester Road. Originally farmland acquired by Cambridge Past, Present & Future in the 1930s to prevent urban sprawl, it was developed into a public reserve from the early 2000s, with new paths, meadows, hedgerows, woodland and orchards established alongside retained working farmland. Covering roughly 300 acres, the Reserve now comprises a mosaic of arable land, grazing pasture, semi-natural habitats and publicly accessible green space.

2.5.19 The landscape of the Reserve is gently undulating, comprising open fields, hedgerows and restored habitats that afford a rural character. Its accessible paths enable public enjoyment of the countryside, with Red Meadow Hill offering notable panoramic views over Cambridge and the surrounding countryside.

2.6 Landscape-related designations

2.6.1 The majority of the countryside beyond the city limits is designated as Green Belt (see Figure 02). A description of the merits of the site in Green Belt terms is provided in Section 4.

2.6.2 To the east of the Site and beyond Wilberforce Road is the West Cambridge Conservation Area (NB not to be confused with the West Cambridge University site which covers a different area). This is

one of 11 Conservation Areas in Cambridge (see Figure 02). Most of the Conservation Areas in Cambridge are contiguous with each other. The Conservation Area abuts the Site in two locations to the east in the vicinity of the Bin Brook. The Conservation Area Appraisal[6] identifies [at pdf page 62] *Important Positive views*. Three arrowed locations are indicated along the track extending west from Grange Road towards the Site. However, it should be noted that these are private views as this is not a public footpath.

2.6.3 There are two County Wildlife Sites (CWS) close to or on the site. These both comprise sections of hedgerow and verge. CWS C5.6 includes the hedgerow to the north of the footpath and cycleway that follows the Harcamlow Way. CWS C5.3 includes a section of the hedgerow and verge network to the adjacent to fields units B, D and G. Further discussion on these features is provided in the Preliminary Ecology Appraisal.

2.7 Landscape sensitivity

2.7.1 The sensitivity of a particular landscape is derived by combining its value with its susceptibility to change from development of the type proposed.

2.8 Landscape value

2.8.1 In terms of landscape value, no part of the site is designated at the national or local scale. In the absence of any designations a consideration of local value can be aided by reference to the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02/21, which sets out a range of factors that can be considered when assessing landscape value. The different aspects of value are natural heritage, cultural heritage, landscape condition, associations, distinctiveness, recreational, perceptual, and functional. The presentation of information about landscape value should be proportionate to the task at hand.

2.8.2 The guidance states that "*Value is best appreciated at the scale at which a landscape is perceived – rarely is this on a field-by-field basis*." The evaluation of landscape value therefore relates to the Site and its surrounding context.

The following section includes notes as to how the Site and its environs (See figure 04) accord with relevant factors identified in Guidance Note 02/21 that can potentially contribute to landscape value.

Natural Heritage

2.8.3 This factor is defined as '*Landscape with clear evidence of ecological, geological, geomorphological or physiographic interest which contribute positively to the landscape'*.

2.8.4 Conservation interest is considered to be localised. There are County Wildlife Sites associated with a number of the hedges to the west and City wildlife Sites along sections of the Bin Brook.

[6] https://www.cambridge.gov.uk/media/2855/west-cambridge-caa.pdf

Cultural Heritage

2.8.5 This factor is defined as '*Landscape with clear evidence of archaeological, historical or cultural interest which contribute positively to the landscape'*.

2.8.6 The Cambridge West Conservation Area is located to the east, but beyond the Site boundary.

Landscape condition

2.8.7 This factor is defined as '*Landscape which is in a good physical state both with regard to individual elements and overall landscape structure'*.

2.8.8 It relates to the physical state of the landscape and the intactness and condition of the individual features. The retained hedges and hedgerow trees are generally in a moderate to good condition. There are sections of hedges that have and still suffer from Dutch Elm Disease. The arable fields are mainly in regular cultivation and pastoral fields, largely used for grazing. However, a number of the smaller and peripheral Field Units including, I and T are in a poor/declining condition.

Associations

2.8.9 This factor is defined as '*Landscape which is connected with notable people, events and the arts.*'

2.8.10 There are no known specific associations with writers in relation to the Site. In relation to artists the Cambridge Inner Green Belt Study (2015)[7] at Figure 20 includes a line drawing from 1688 entitled, *Prospect of Cambridge from the West (Cambridgeshire, Cambridge City Library).* It is unclear exactly where this is taken from and the character of the intervening land has since changed due to enclosure of the open fields and introduction of the M11. In the drawing a number of the historic buildings within the city are clearly seen, including King's College Chapel. However, the current views available from similar viewpoints are less distinctive and much more masked by intervening vegetation and a well treed edge to the city.

Recreational

2.8.11 This factor is defined as '*Landscape offering recreational opportunities where experience of landscape is important'.*

2.8.12 Footpath Coton 006 (Figure 03), which connects between Barton Road and the Coton Reserve to the west of the M11 passes across the site.

2.8.13 Footpath Coton 009 and Footpath Cambridge 114 follows the western Site boundary (and the boundaries of Field Units A, B, D, G and F) but then terminates (at the boundary of the former University Rifle Range) with no public access across the remainder of the site.

2.8.14 The Harcamlow Way – Footpath Cambridge 031 follows the northern boundary but is located outside the Site.

2.8.15 Recreational value is also provided currently by the playing fields within Field E.

2.8.16 There is informal but unauthorised usage of part of the site using a track that runs from Grange Road westwards across the site towards Footpath Coton 009.

[7] Cambridge Inner Green Belt Study, Figures

Perceptual (scenic)

2.8.17 This factor is defined as '*Landscape that appeals to the senses, primarily the visual sense'.*

2.8.18 Sector 3.1 which includes the majority the Site comprises a typical lowland arable landscape. There is nothing particularly distinctive within the Site itself.

2.8.19 The scenic quality of Sector 3.2 is a more enclosed and small-scale pastoral landscape. This is partially offset by the presence of the Laundry Farm development which is a notable influence to the north. There is some scenic quality in the strip in the fields (forming unit T) adjacent to Barton Road subject to improvement in condition.

2.8.20 The scenic quality of the Sector 3.3 comprises a mix of land uses to the edge of Cambridge. The main positive features include established tree belts to the perimeter and edge of Cambridge and the more intimate character along Bin Brook.

Perceptual (wildness and tranquillity)

2.8.21 This factor is defined as *'Landscape with a strong perceptual value notably wildness, tranquillity and/or dark skies'.*

2.8.22 The Site is not wild and its tranquillity is affected by the M11 and Barton Road to the west and south-west. However, areas to the centre of the site and western edge of Cambridge are relatively quieter, albeit being adjacent to an urban area. The other perceptual aspect relevant to the site is the awareness of the presence of Cambridge, to the north and west. The overriding impression to the east is of a soft green edge to the city.

2.8.23 There are some intermittent and limited views to individual landmark buildings within the historic core of the city. However, in most of the available viewpoints the landmarks (with the exception of the University Library tower) form relatively small features. Awareness of the West Cambridge Campus development to the north the site presents a more modern commercial/educational built edge to the Site, but this is not considered to be representative of an historic city.

Rarity and representativeness

The Site is considered to be representative of the landscape around the western edge of Cambridge.

Landscape value - summary

Based on the above assessment it is considered that the Site has overall a Moderate landscape value. The value of the Site is no more than an ordinary lowland agricultural landscape with a few features of local interest. The interface with the M11 and West Cambridge to the north reduces the value while the relationship between the Site and the edge of the historic city of Cambridge that would increase its landscape value.

2.9 Landscape susceptibility to change

2.9.1 As part of this Landscape and Visual Appraisal and Green Belt Review, individual land/field units have been identified within the Site and described in terms of their character. A broad indication is provided of the relative susceptibility of each individual land/field unit to change of from the type of development proposed at South West Cambridge. The type of change assessed is 2 to 3 storey

residential development with associated open space and infrastructure. This susceptibility is assessed on a three-point scale of Low, Medium and High, where Low would be the most suitable to develop and High the least suitable. However, it should be noted that it is likely that an individual land/field unit may be of higher susceptibility to change when considered in combination with adjacent areas of higher sensitivity. The land/field units are identified as A to T, and are described below in Table 1 and illustrated on Figure 04.

Table 1: Description of land/field units

Unit	Description	Susceptibility
A	Small broadly square arable field to the north-west of the Site enclosed and bounded by mature hedges and copses. The Harcamlow Way/Wimpole Way cycleway (Footpath Cambridge 31) follows the northern boundary although located just outside the Site itself.	**Low** The land unit is located to the west of the Site almost adjacent to the M11. Enclosing hedgerows contain the character, but development would be relatively isolated and affect the sense of separation from Coton.
B	Large rectilinear arable field to the north-west of the Site. Mature hedges to southern boundary (County Wildlife Site) and more intermittent hedging to east (part County Wildlife Site). The northern boundary is bounded by a post and rail fence and the Harcamlow Way/Wimpole Way cycleway follows a course parallel to the north. West Cambridge campus to north.	**Medium** The land unit has a relatively close relationship with West Cambridge campus that will become increasingly noticeable with further planned development. However, the unit also extends towards the M11 and in this location it would become relatively more detached moving west.
C	Large rectilinear arable field to north-east of Site. Northern strip of Field C uncultivated. Established hedges to the majority of the boundary to the west, south and east (part County Wildlife Site). The northern boundary is bounded by a post and rail fence and the Harcamlow Way/Wimpole Way cycleway follows a line parallel outside the site. West Cambridge campus prominent to north.	**Low** A large open field closely related to West Cambridge. The presence of the existing development to the north and east indicates the site has a relatively good suitability for built development. This could be further visually contained by the addition of planting to the west and southern boundaries. Views towards landmark buildings in Cambridge could be accommodated within the form of development.
D	Medium rectilinear arable field to west of Site. Established hedgerows to all boundaries (most designated as County Wildlife Site) apart from open boundary to Field G.	**High** The unit is located to the west of the site and relatively close to the M11 and rural edge. The field contains established hedgerows which are protected by a County Wildlife Site designation and would require suitable offset that could restrict development. The proximity to the west of the site and the designation notably limits the scope for development.
E	Sports fields to the centre and south of Site, currently set out for junior rugby (for Kings College School). Strip of grassland to the	**Low**

Unit	Description	Susceptibility
	north and east extending into copse to south-eastern corner. Established hedgerows containing majority of Field Unit. The presence of University Sports Ground evident to the north through structures and floodlighting columns.	The land unit is largely contained by vegetation and adjacent development and could accommodate new development without substantial effects on the wider area subject to suitable mitigation and design.
F	Medium rectilinear arable field to centre of Site. Established hedgerows to north, west and south boundaries. Established broadleaved plantation (c 200m x 60m) to east boundary providing separation from Field H to the east. Northern strip was part of former University Rifle Range.	**Medium** The unit is relatively contained by hedgerows and woodland to all boundaries, and in isolation some limited development would have a relatively limited influence. However, the potential for creating connectivity through a green finger linking units H and D/G would be restricted if the unit was developed. For this reason, development is less suited.
G	Narrow arable field bounded by established hedgerows with a number of trees within southern boundary which follows the parish/district boundary. Section of footpath Coton 9 passes through south-east corner.	**High** The unit is located to the edge of the site and influenced by the presence of established hedgerows protected by a County Wildlife Site designation, which would require suitable offsets to restrict development.
H	Medium rectilinear arable field to east of Site. Established hedgerows to north and established broadleaved plantation within Field F to west. Mature planting to southern boundary in strip which follows the flood relief channel and rear gardens of Gough Way and Dane Drive. Eastern boundary formed by Bin Brook which is also marked by riparian vegetation. Northern strip was part of former University Rifle Range.	**Medium** The field unit is physically and visually well contained to the perimeter and for this reason would be suitable to accommodate built development. However, the proximity to the West Cambridge Conservation Area raises its sensitivity. The unit also provides the potential to accommodate part of a green finger extending from Cambridge through Unit I and F to the west. This would restrict its potential for development.
I	Small area of rough grassland and scrub between the Bin Brook and the edge of Cambridge and West Cambridge Conservation Area. Intermittent, mature vegetation follows the west boundary along the Bin Brook. Beyond eastern boundary a number of mature trees located within gardens associated with residential properties along Cranmer Road. Northern strip was part of former University Rifle Range.	**High** A relatively sensitive area of land adjacent to the West Cambridge Conservation Area and Bin Brook. Development opportunities are limited due to the flooding risk and would need to be small-scale to reflect the adjacent development on the edge of Cambridge. The unit would be better suited to form a buffer of open space with benefits for biodiversity and public access.
J	Large irregular shaped arable field. Boundary to the south following parish/district boundary with tall established hedgerow and intermittent hedgerow. The western and northern boundary contained by mature hedgerows. Eastern boundary formed by	**Low** The site adjoins existing residential development at Gough Way to the west. It is contained to all of its boundaries and there are limited connections to the wider rural landscape towards the M11. However,

Unit	Description	Susceptibility
	flood relief channel and rear boundary gardens of properties on Gough Way.	development on the site would be visible from Red Meadow Hill. The creation of strong tree planting to the western boundary could effectively contain the influence of built development viewed from the west.
K	Small triangular field of grassland pasture enclosed by established hedgerows, with a number of hedgerow trees to all boundaries. Parish/district boundary with intermittent trees then hedgerow to the north.	**Low** The field unit is relatively well enclosed by vegetation to all sides. Development would have a limited effect on the openness of the surrounding landscape but would need to respect the flooding risk of Bin Brook.
L	Medium scale rectilinear field of grassland pasture enclosed by established hedgerows to all boundaries. Parish/district boundary with intermittent trees then hedgerow to the north.	**Low** The fields unit is relatively well enclosed by vegetation to all sides. Development would have a limited effect on the openness of the surrounding landscape but would need to respect the flooding risk of Bin Brook.
M	Medium scale rectilinear field of grassland pasture enclosed by established hedgerows to the south, and west. Smaller clipped hedges to north and east.	**Low** A modest area of pasture that could be partly developed alongside adjacent units L and K. However, the area closest to Barton Road including the mature trees and hedgerows should be retained as part of an open space corridor along the Bin Brook.
N	Small rectilinear field of grassland pasture enclosed by clipped hedges to the south and east and University of Cambridge Laundry Farm to west.	**Low** A small area of pasture that could be developed alongside adjacent field units.
O	Small rectilinear field of grassland pasture enclosed by established hedges to north, east and west and University of Cambridge Laundry Farm to south.	**Low** A small area of pasture that could be developed alongside adjacent field units.
P	Established buildings and hard surfacing and lighting associated with University of Cambridge Laundry Farm.	**Low** The existing University buildings are relatively unsightly and there would be a local benefit by removing the buildings and yard. New development should be relatively low level. The land unit is also visible from the elevated Red Meadow Hill where it sits within a view cone to the historic core of the city.
Q	Large rectangular field bounded by clipped hedgerows or sides. Footpath Coton 6 passes through the field.	**High** Development within this field unit would extend development towards the M11 and be visible from the motorway and Grantchester Road. Development should be relatively low level and located to the centre and east of the unit. Substantive mitigation would be

Unit	Description	Susceptibility
		required to the perimeters of the area, particularly to the south and west. The field unit is visible from the elevated Red Meadow Hill where it sits within a view cone to the historic core of the city.
R	Small rectilinear grassland pasture bounded by mature hedgerow. Mature trees to the north-east boundary following the line of footpath Coton 6 which follows the course of the green lane and to the south-west boundary along the alignment of the Bin Brook.	**High** This is a small-scale linear field with strong enclosure but would be sensitive to development. The unit should ideally be retained as part of a semi-natural open space along the Bin Brook corridor.
S	Two large arable field units subdivided by an open ditch. Dumpling Farm located to the west within the unit. Large linear mixed plantation (circa 35 m x 530 m) to south-east boundary adjacent to Barton Road provides strong containment from road. Southern and western boundaries are open and adjoin Barton Road, Grantchester Road and the M11. Motorway traffic clearly evident to the west. Northern boundary formed by Bin Brook with variable hedgerows (taller to the east and the west and clipped to the centre).	**High** Development within this field unit would extend development into the rural area towards the M11 and be visible from the motorway and Grantchester Road. Substantive mitigation combining earthworks and planting would be required to the perimeters of the area, particularly to the west. The field unit is visible from the elevated Red Meadow Hill.
T	Group of small-scale rectilinear grassland fields, forming a linear strip adjacent to Barton Road. Bin Brook flows adjacent to Barton Road in concrete channel. Fields contain a number of mature trees to the boundaries and some stands of mature trees within them.	**High** The small-scale vegetated corridor following the Bin Brook would be sensitive to development and adversely affect the existing green corridor approach into Cambridge. There is scope to enhance this unit for green infrastructure

3 Views

3.1.1 The focus of the visual assessment in this study is of views from publicly accessible locations. A number of representative viewpoints has been selected to describe Site's visual context. They are considered to represent the range of visual receptors (people) likely to experience change were development to take place at the Site.

3.1.2 Photo sheets to illustrate the composition of the view from each of these points are reproduced at Appendix 1, with the locations of the viewpoint illustrated on Figure 03. These viewpoints [referenced 1 to 20] are all at public locations, with the exception of Viewpoint 6, which is considered a private view.

3.1.3 The Cambridge Local Plan 2018[8] includes at Appendix F: *Tall Buildings and the Skyline, Figure F.3: Topography and Strategic Viewpoints*, which illustrates a number of viewpoints (See Plate 06). A number of these are relevant to the Site (viewpoints 3, 4, 14 and 15) as discussed within the appropriate receptor group below.

3.1.4 The descriptions of the views are to be read in conjunction with Figure 03.

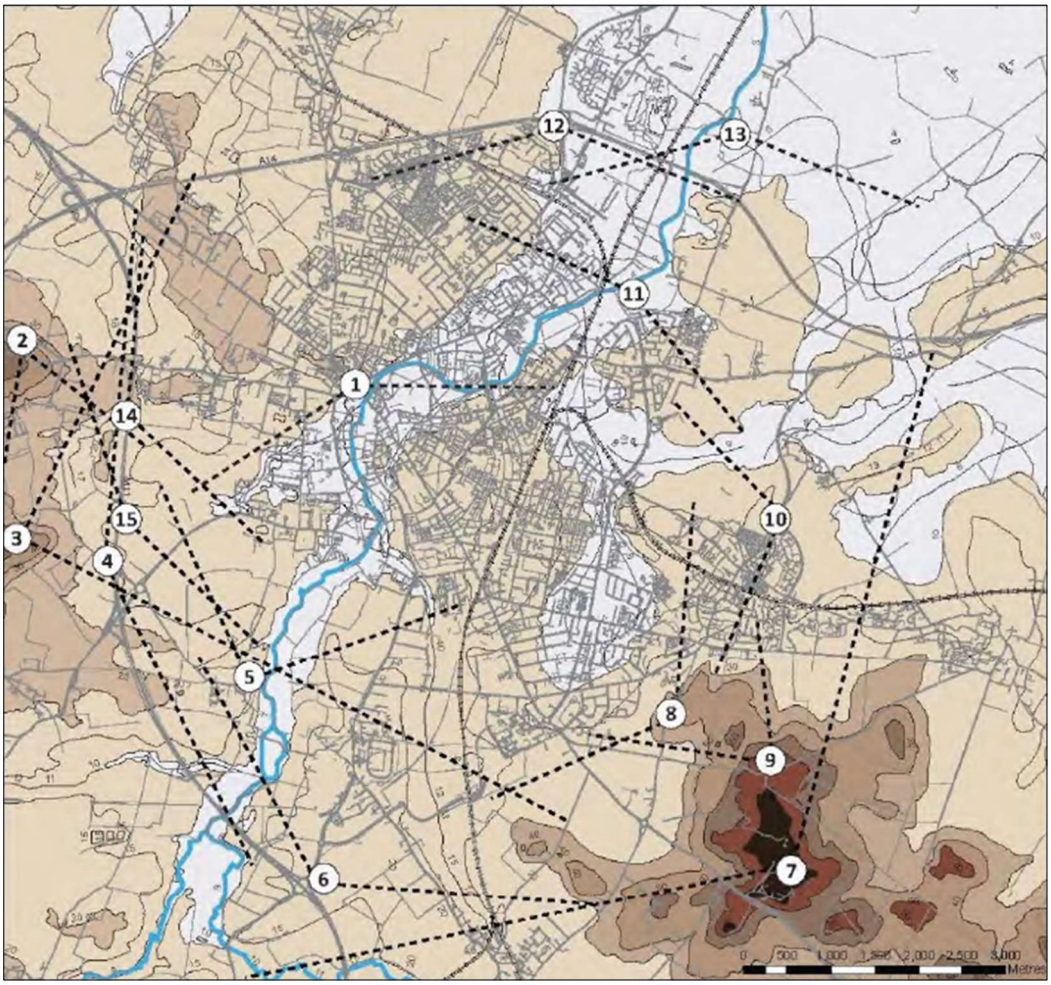


Plate 06: Topography and Strategic Viewpoints (extract from Cambridge Local Plan 2018)

[8] Cambridge Local Plan, 2018

3.2 Views from roads

3.2.1 Public views from roads represent locations with the greatest potential for people to see the Site. Visual receptors using roads are generally considered to have a Sensitivity, but this may increase to Medium for important scenic routes.

Barton Road

3.2.2 Views from Barton Road are illustrated by Views 8 and 7. **Viewpoint 8** illustrates the relatively more open views at the south-western corner of the Site where a cycleway crosses Grantchester Road/Barton Road. There are open views across the Site with Field S, associated with Dumpling Farm, most visible. The upper parts of the West Cambridge Site (University of Cambridge) are visible on the horizon set beyond established vegetation. There are no views to any landmark buildings within the historic core from this location.

3.2.3 The majority of the views along Barton Road are typified by **Viewpoint 7** where established tree belts and mature trees contain views along the road corridor into the Site. The visual character changes closer to entering Cambridge, where the smaller scale pasture fields within Unit T can be appreciated next to the road corridor. However, views into the remainder of the Site, beyond are restricted by intervening hedges.

M11 corridor

3.2.4 There are views from the M11 corridor towards the Site and Cambridge beyond. The location is included as **Strategic Viewpoint 15** in the Cambridge Local Plan. No photographs are included from this corridor for safety reasons. The sections of the motorway where there is some visibility across the Site are marked on Figure 03 which illustrates that there are two sections with views.

3.2.5 Views travelling north are slightly more available than for those travelling south due to the angle of view for the motorist and passenger. Other parts of the motorway corridor are contained by highway vegetation.

3.2.6 Views from the southern section of the M11 are primarily over Field Units Q and S. Views beyond these fields are similar in character to those illustrated by **Viewpoint 8**, with more distant layering of hedgerows across the Site and denser vegetation both towards and within the edge of Cambridge. The buildings at the edge of the West Cambridge Site are clearly identifiable.

3.2.7 A few landmark buildings within the historic core can just be identified. However, with the exception of the University Library Tower, only the small upper sections of the university buildings can be appreciated.

3.2.8 Views from the northern section of the M11 are more contained by established hedgerows around the boundaries of Field units D, G and J (**Viewpoint 1**). However, the development within the West Cambridge Site, also forms the more prominent built development visible from the motorway.

3.2.9 The appreciation of the historic core from this route is similar to that described above. TLP consider the views to the historic core to be fleeting and peripheral to the experience of the low sensitivity receptor.

Grantchester Road (west of M11)

3.2.10 Another location where there is a view from a public road is from Grantchester Road as illustrated by **Viewpoint 14**. This viewpoint is also included as **Strategic Viewpoint 4** within the Cambridge Local Plan (Plate 06). The character of this view is very similar to that from the M11. The view is taken from a minor road linking Coton and Grantchester.

3.2.11 Most of the route is contained by roadside hedgerows apart from a short section (c 80 m) where View 14 has been taken from. Receptors on this route would almost exclusively be motorists whose focus would be travelling along Grantchester Road rather than across the Site and towards Cambridge.

3.2.12 Along this short break in the hedgerows the character of the view to the east is initially over open arable fields and then to the M11 corridor where the moving traffic is the primary feature with the West Cambridge Site beyond to the middle of the view.

3.2.13 Views beyond the M11 to the right of the view are of a well treed horizon extending across the Site and to the edge of Cambridge. An awareness of the historic core of Cambridge is limited to the same buildings as described above from the M11.

3.2.14 TLP again consider this to be a fleeting and secondary peripheral view towards Cambridge for most receptors and question the validity for its inclusion as a Strategic Viewpoint within the Local Plan.

Grantchester Road (east of M11)

3.2.15 **Viewpoint 13** is located at Grantchester Road east of the M11 and from here the Site is screened by intervening vegetation, through which the West Cambridge Site can be discerned to the right of the view.

Madingley Road

3.2.16 **Viewpoint 18** is located on Madingley Road. From here Cambridge Biomedical Campus can be seen in the long distance, but the Site is screened by intervening topography and vegetation.

Wort's Causeway

3.2.17 **Viewpoint 20** is located on Wort's Causeway at the north-western corner of Cog Magog Golf Club. Cambridge including the historic core, Cambridge Biomedical Campus and the West Cambridge Site can be seen with Madingley Hill and Red Meadow Hill in the background. The Site is screened by intervening topography, built form and vegetation.

3.3 Views from public rights of ways, permissive routes and access land

3.3.1 Visual receptors using public rights away within the countryside are typically assessed as being of High sensitivity unless there are factors that would reduce this locally such as evidence of low usage or major distracting features.

3.3.2 There are a number of existing public rights of way, adjacent to or within the Site.

Footpath Cambridge 031

3.3.3 To the north of the Site is footpath Cambridge 31, which connects Coton and Cambridge. It is a surfaced route, and provides a key cycle route between Cambridge and the West Cambridge Site. The route also forms part of the Harcamlow Way /Wimpole Way (**viewpoints 2, 3 and 4).**

Footpath Cambridge 31 - travelling west

3.3.4 **Viewpoint 4** illustrates the views along the surfaced segregated cycleway/footpath Cambridge 31 travelling west and leaving Cambridge.

3.3.5 Along this section there is a tall hedgerow to the north of the cycleway which contains views at close quarters to the West Cambridge Site. From this viewpoint there are open views over the open character of Field Unit C and then to boundary hedgerows around this unit. Red Meadow Hill can be seen in the distance.

3.3.6 Traveling further west views to the established University buildings in West Cambridge Site are much more prominent and a feature of the route.

Footpath Cambridge 31 - travelling east

3.3.7 Views travelling eastward along footpath Cambridge 31 closer to the M11 is illustrated by **Viewpoint 3**, which comprises a typical view over Field Unit B for receptors on the right of way. The foreground and middle distance are formed by the arable character of the landscape with the established mature hedgerows, albeit gappy in places beyond. The distant horizon is formed by the soft green edge of Cambridge which includes some hedgerows and woodland blocks within the Site. The established housing at Gough Way is also just visible above set within the mature tree groups and hedges, beyond which the chimneys of MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology can be seen.

3.3.8 Views of key landmarks within historic Cambridge are available as with other views from the west from roads. The most notable building is the University Library tower, which is a function of its relative much greater height, closer proximity and 'skyscraper' character.

3.3.9 The other historic landmark buildings that are locally intermittently identifiable include: the spire of Our Lady of the Assumption and English Martyrs (hereafter referred to and Roman Catholic Church), Tower of John's College Chapel and King's College Chapel. However, for each of these other landmarks, the visibility of the feature is of a small feature set within a largely green vegetated horizon. While these landmarks may be 'identifiable' in places they are of minimal importance within the view.

Footpath Coton 6

3.3.10 Another east-west route follows footpath Coton 6 which runs from Barton Road over the M11 to the Coton Countryside Reserve (**viewpoints 9, 10 and 11**).

Footpath Coton 6 – travelling east

3.3.11 Viewpoint 9 and 10 illustrate the visual character travelling east towards Barton Road. Views towards the Site at **Viewpoint 9** (outside the Site) are largely contained by the established hedgerows around the boundary. The most notable built features are within the West Cambridge

Site seen to the north-west, a number of which break the skyline. The very top of the University Library tower is just identifiable above the hedgerow, but is of incidental importance.

3.3.12 **Viewpoint 10** illustrates an open view from Footpath Coton 6 looking east towards Cambridge. The immediate foreground is of the open arable field within Field Unit Q with boundary hedgerows round the perimeter. Again, the development at the West Cambridge Site comprises the most noticeable elements of built form to the north-west of the view. The presence of the established Laundry Farm buildings and associated lighting infrastructure are also identifiable above the boundary hedgerows within Field Unit P. Available views to landmark buildings within the historic core of Cambridge is as stated before largely limited to a view of the University Library tower , together with small-scale views of the top of St John's College and upper section of King's College.

3.3.13 Views from this footpath are not included within the list of *Strategic* viewpoints on Figure F.3 in the Cambridge Local Plan. However, a view from a similar location to Viewpoint 11 is included within the CIGBBS (Figure 9[9] as a Key Low level view - P2 and in Figure 15 Photograph 2). The text on the photograph states, "*This viewpoint gives low level views of several key landmarks within the historic core, as well as views of the newer West Cambridge site. It demonstrates the soft green edge of Cambridge as seen from the western side of the city and highlights the proximity of the historic core to surrounding countryside. The view is across the rural foreground to the city, with Distinctive Cambridge, formed by Fellows' houses, Colleges and University buildings west of the historic core, immediately beyond*."

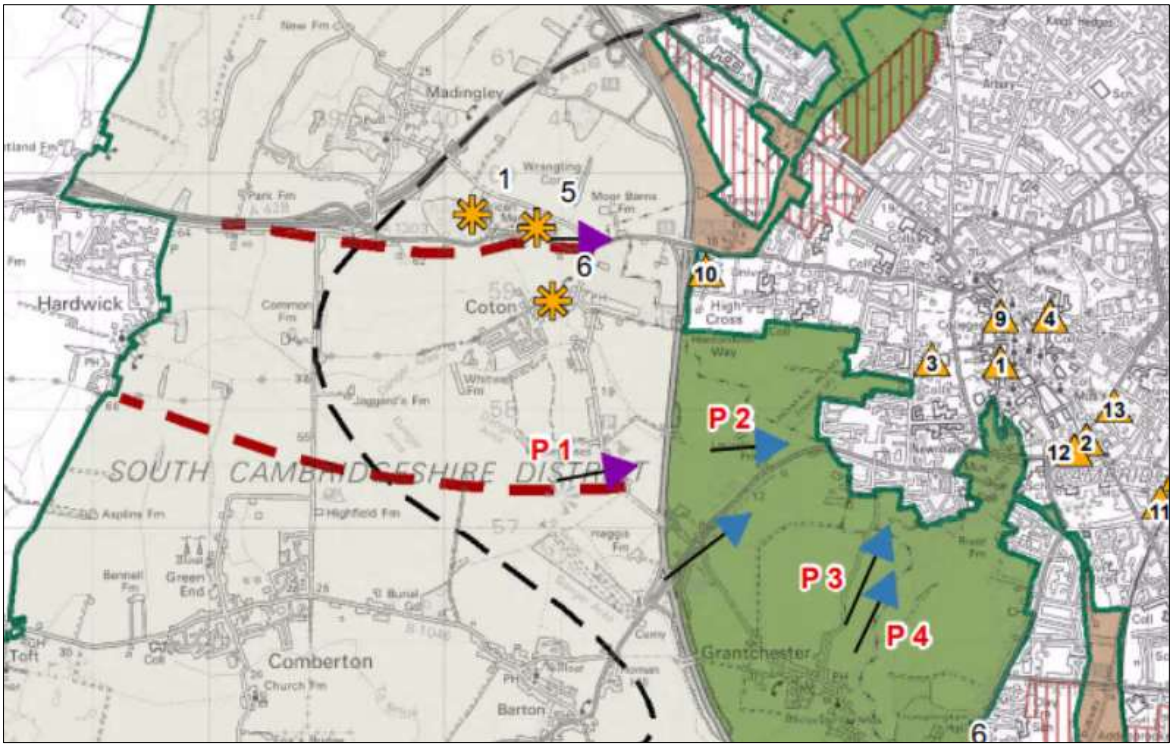


Plate 07: Figure 9, CIGBBS

[9] Cambridge Inner Green Belt Boundary Study, Figures, 2015

3.3.14 The Landscape Partnership concurs that the location does provide an opportunity for views towards the edge of Cambridge. However, many of the features such as fellows' houses and colleges are not visible since they are subsumed within the green vegetated edge of the city. The Landscape Partnership would challenge the importance of this viewpoint as a location to identify key landmarks since the scale of the landmarks are small features within the view (with the possible exception of the University Library tower). In addition, there is a limited ability to appreciate the true character of these buildings and they are seen in the context of Laundry Farm, which introduces an adverse element of built character. Furthermore, it is The Landscape Partnership's opinion that if this viewpoint is considered in the CIGBBS to comprise a *"Key Low level view"* then the importance of any other views across the Site towards Cambridge to appreciate the character of historic Cambridge would be even more inconsequential.

Footpath Coton 006 – travelling east

3.3.15 Views travelling west along footpath Coton 6 are illustrated by **Viewpoint 11**. From this viewpoint views over Field Unit Q and the traffic on the M11 are readily afforded with Red Meadow Hill also visible on the horizon beyond. From this location the modern development at the West Cambridge Site is also clearly visible to the north.

Footpath Coton 9 and Footpath Cambridge 114

3.3.16 footpath Coton 9 (**Viewpoint 1)** runs along a section of the western Site boundary. Footpath Cambridge 114 runs from Coton 9 eastwards and then terminates in the centre of the Site (**Viewpoint 12**). Viewpoint 12 represents the view towards the residential properties at Gough Way and the narrow plantation nearby.

Permissive route through Coton Countryside Reserve

3.3.17 There are a number of footpaths and permissive routes west of the M11 associated with the Coton Countryside Reserve that facilitate access to areas of countryside including Red Meadow Hill. The closest permissive route through Coton Reserve follows a surfaced track located c.350m west of the M11 running south of Coton 5. Views towards the Site from this route (represented by **Viewpoint 16**) are screened by intervening planting along the M11 corridor and a minor ridge of higher ground in the adjacent arable field. However, there are views of upper parts of landmark buildings in the historic core. The upper sections of Papworth Hospital can be seen in the distance.

Footpath Cambridge 112

3.3.18 The Cambridge Local Plan includes a Strategic Viewpoint 14 with views from the *"Coton Footpath over the M11"* (footpath Cambridge 112). At the point where the footpath crosses the M11 there is dense vegetation associated with the motorway and embankments of the footpath. This prevents any views towards the city and could clearly not be described as a Strategic View. The Landscape Partnership would challenge the inclusion of this viewpoint within the Local Plan. The closest point available on the right of way with a relatively more open views is found at **Viewpoint 2** which is taken across Field Unit A to the north-west of the Site. However, in this view the established hedgerows around the field contain most of the outward views over the remainder of the Site. Subject to the maintenance height of the vegetation at this point, there may be a glimpse of the

tower at the University Library, but this is considered to be of secondary importance to the view overall and could not be described to be of *Strategic* importance.

Footpath Coton 9

3.3.19 Footpath Coton 9 follows a line to the west of the Site boundary close to the M11, which is a dominant and very noisy feature at this distance. The boundary hedges screen most views to the east as illustrated by **Viewpoint 1**. There are a few framed views in gaps in the hedging into Field Unit D from the public footpath.

Whitwell Way/Footpath Comberton 3/Harcamlow Way

3.3.20 Views from this route are represented by **Viewpoint 19**. The Site is not visible from this location due to intervening vegetation and built form.

Red Meadow Hill

3.3.21 **Viewpoint 15** at Red Meadow Hill represents the most notable elevated location in the study area with a view over the Site towards the edge of Cambridge. This viewpoint was included within the Cambridge Local Plan as Strategic Viewpoint 3 and also identified within the GIGBBS at P1 (Figure 9) and illustrated by the corresponding Photograph 1. The viewpoint is noted in the CIGBBS as a *Key* elevated view. The view is from an area within Coton Countryside Reserve managed by Cambridge Past, Present & Future. The availability of views in the Reserve is largely restricted to the top of Red Meadow Hill since the access track leading up to the hill is bounded by hedgerows.

3.3.22 The text within the CIGBBS at Figure 15 states: *"This viewpoint allows elevated views across much of Cambridge, from higher ground on the edge of the Western Claylands. It demonstrates the compactness of the historic core of the city, with landmarks such as King's College and the University Library breaking the vegetated skyline and identifying the city centre. The green edge to the city is also clearly visible, with little of the built form of Cambridge seen through the vegetation and the rural foreground to the city (principally Sectors 3 and 4) seen in front of the vegetation. Higher ground to the south east and south of the city can also be seen in the distance, including the Gog Magog Hills"'*

3.3.23 The Landscape Partnership concur with the above description of the view from Red Meadow Hill. The location provides panoramic views of Cambridge city as a whole, including the historic core cluster and more recent developments along with the higher ground of the chalklands to the east as backdrop. The cone of view for Strategic Viewpoint 03 is sub divided into two sections by a young copse depending on where the viewer is standing. The historic core and cluster of landmark buildings is visible at c.4km distance, including the University Library tower, King's College Chapel, St John's Chapel tower and the Romain Catholic Church spire. All of these buildings are set within and beyond a soft green edge.

3.3.24 The most visible prominent Field Unit from Red Meadow Hill within the Site is Field Q which visually aligns below the main historic core. However, Laundry Farm is also visible within the same view corridor. The Landscape Partnership would add to the description in the CIGBBS that the M11 corridor and associated traffic also form notable features within the middle-distance detracting from the character and setting of Cambridge. Further to the north-west, from the same viewpoint, the West Cambridge campus at c.2km represents the largest and most prominent buildings within

the panoramic view (several being 4 to 5 storeys high). Further to the south-east, the buildings at the Cambridge Biomedical Campus form notable clusters.

Madingley Hill

3.3.25 A further viewpoint is included within the Cambridge Local Plan as **Strategic Viewpoint 2**, Madingley Rise, Madingley Road and also in CIGBBS as a *Key Elevated View*. Views from, the elevated Madingley Hill are orientated east. There are no clear views towards the Site from this location due to the enclosing mature tree cover either side of the road. The Landscape Partnership also considers that there are limited views of the historic core of Cambridge from this location.

3.3.26 **Viewpoint 17** included within this study illustrates elevated views over a c.100 m section of footpath Coton 2 that follows a course south of Madingley Hill, back to the village of Coton. From this point, an elevated framed view is available over much of Cambridge and the distant higher lands to the east of the city. It includes Cambridge Biomedical Campus, Wadlow wind turbines on the chalklands, and historic city centre landmarks. However, most of Site is not visible as it is screened by intervening trees. The main development in the middle distance in front of historic Cambridge is the modern West Cambridge campus.

Ca*stle Hill Mound / Ca*mbridge City

3.3.27 Within the Cambridge Local Plan, a view from within Cambridge City at Castle Hill Mound (Strategic View 1) is identified. Such a view includes landmarks in the city core at relatively close range (within 500 to 1,000m). There are also views west of Cambridge towards the Site but to the periphery of the identified cone of view for Strategic View 1. However, the mature tree cover between the Backs and the site screens any views to the Site itself. The elevated western claylands beyond the M11 mark the distant horizon at c.4km. It is not anticipated that there would be any notable impact on this Strategic View from the introduction of residential development on the Site.

Grantchester Meadows

3.3.28 From Grantchester Meadows (Strategic Viewpoint 5) to the north of Grantchester village the extent of intervening vegetation (including that along Barton Road) would screen all potential views to the Site. The views to the buildings in the historic core would be unaffected and would be experience to the east of the Site.

Views from Residential locations

3.3.29 Views from private houses are not a planning matter unless there is an unacceptable effect on the residential amenity. However, there are some views across the Site from some residential properties that would be affected to a degree and the locations involved are noted below.

- The main area of residential development affected is Gough Way **(Viewpoint 6)** and Dane Drive to the south-east. A number of these houses have some open views over the Site including to the west over Field Unit J and over Field Unit H to the north.
- Properties at Cranmer Road have views to the west over Field Unit I and H.
- There would be views from Dumpling Farm and the two cottages at the access track leading to the farm on Barton Road.

- It is not anticipated there are any views from Coton onto the Site due to intervening vegetation.
- There are two wayside properties on Grantchester Road, near Viewpoint Q but these have dense vegetation to the rear gardens in the direction of the Site.

4 Cambridge Green Belt

4.1 The Green Belt at Cambridge

4.1.1 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.

4.1.2 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.

4.1.3 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.*

4.1.4 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 undergone increasing scrutiny.

4.1.5 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 provision of landscape buffers and green infrastructure could be achieved.

4.1.6 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.

4.1.7 The Cambridge 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.

4.1.8 The Cambridge Green Belt encircles the city of Cambridge and extends into the surrounding countryside. Covering c.26,340ha, it forms a broad arc around the urban area, stretching from Girton 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 its outer boundary lies several kilometres beyond the city, encompassing a diverse rural landscape of arable fields, woodlands, villages, and river corridors. See Plate 08: *The Cambridge Green Belt*.

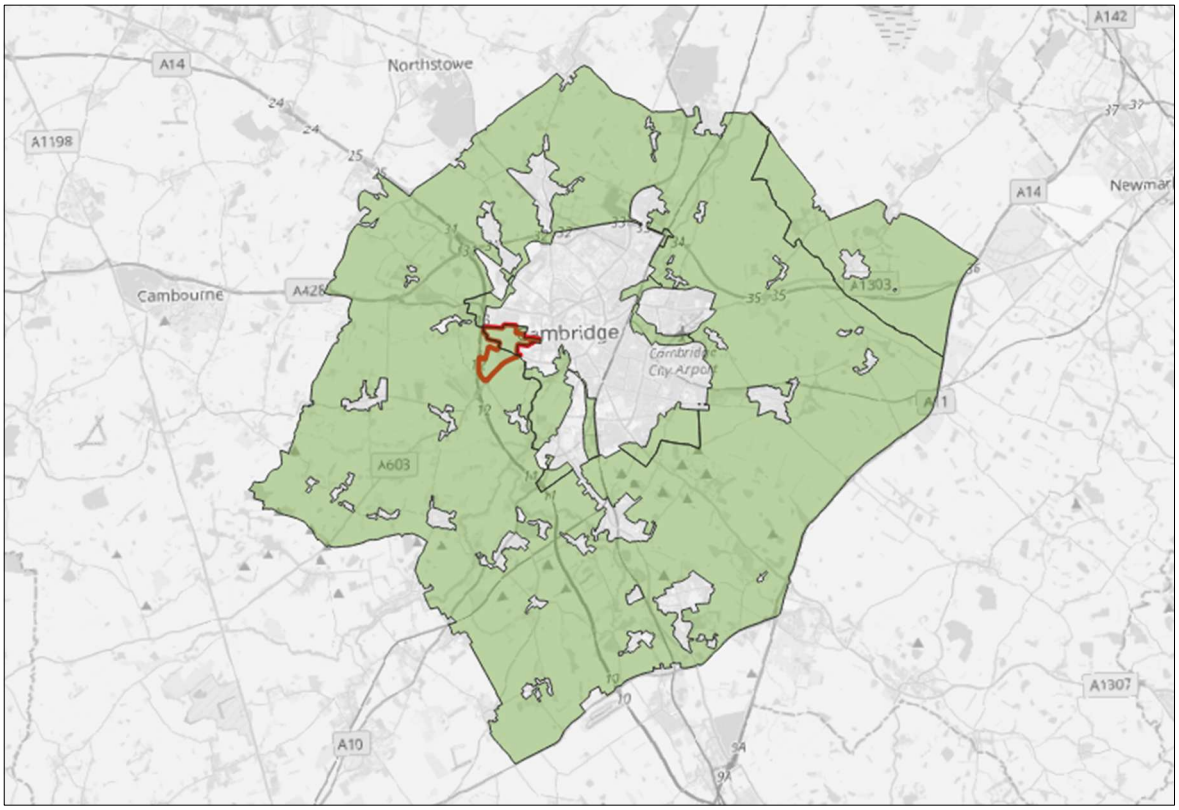


Plate 08: The Cambridge Green Belt

4.1.9 In the vicinity of the Site, the inner boundary of the Green Belt is defined by the western and then southern boundary of Cambridge West Innovation District and thus follows much of the northern edge of the Site. It continues eastward to encompass the sports grounds of Cambridge University. The eastern extent is convoluted and is defined by development within Clare College and properties fronting Herschel Road, Grange Road, Cranmer Road, Dane Drive, and Gough Way. Further south, it washes across Barton Road to encompass the King's College and Selwyn College Sports Ground

4.1.10 This section of the Green Belt extends westwards to the edges of Hardwick and Toft. The villages of Coton, Madingley, Comberton, Barton and Grantchester are excluded from the Green Belt.

4.2 Policy context

National Planning Policy Framework

4.2.1 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]*

4.2.2 Green Belts can serve five purposes [§143], although not all purposes necessarily apply to all Green Belts. The five national 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

4.2.3 §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"*.

4.2.4 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."*

4.2.5 §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.

4.2.6 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...*

4.2.7 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"*.

4.2.8 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.

4.2.9 §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".*

4.2.10 §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*".

> §156 is concerned with major development involving the provision of housing and sets out the contributions or *Golden Rules*. These relate to affordable housing, necessary improvements to local or national infrastructure and "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."

4.2.11 The improvements to green spaces 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]

4.2.12 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"*.

4.2.13 §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"*.

4.2.14 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.

4.2.15 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.

4.2.16 §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 under-mine 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.

Cambridge City Local Plan 2018

4.2.17 The Cambridge Local Plan (CLP) 2018 is the current adopted development plan and reflects the needs and strategic direction of Cambridge City Council at the time of its preparation. Relevant policies from the adopted plan are summarised below. However, this Landscape and Visual Appraisal 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.

4.2.18 The CLP states at §2.3: *"The vision for Cambridge is of a compact, dynamic city, located within the high quality landscape setting of the Cambridge Green Belt."* Strategic Objective 6 seeks to: *"protect and enhance the landscape setting of the city, which comprises the Cambridge Green Belt, the green corridors penetrating the urban area, the established network of multi-functional green spaces, and tree canopy cover in the city."*

4.2.19 §2.4 continues: *"This section on the spatial strategy for Cambridge sets out the city's approach to planning for the compact city through focusing new development in accessible locations, reusing previously developed land and completing the delivery of planned new urban neighbourhoods, and small Green Belt releases where exceptional circumstances can be argued. Sufficient land for housing, jobs and education/research, and supporting land uses to meet objectively assessed needs, is allocated at locations and in amounts compatible with this compact city strategy. … Continued protection is given to the Cambridge Green Belt, the River Cam corridor and the setting of the historic city."*

4.2.20 The CLP proposed six small-scale Green Belt sites for release.

4.2.21 The extent of the Green Belt with Cambridge City's administrative area is defined at Policy 4. Supporting §2.51 states: *"The Green Belt preserves the unique setting and special character of the city and includes green corridors that penetrate deep into the urban and historic heart of Cambridge. It is a key component in providing for active and passive sport and recreation, for amenity and biodiversity. A significant proportion of the Cambridge Green Belt within the city's boundaries is in agricultural use. The Green Belt is one of the key elements that contribute to the symbiotic relationship between high quality of life, place and economic success of Cambridge."*

4.2.22 Policy 4 sets out three specific purposes for the Cambridge Green Belt:

- to preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre;
- to maintain and enhance the quality of its setting; and
- to prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city.

4.2.23 The first two of these purposes correspond with NPPF Purpose d): *"to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns."*

4.2.24 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.

4.2.25 §2.54–2.55 of the CLP state that: *"The remaining areas of Green Belt have increased in value as they are now closer to the city's edge and less Green Belt land remains to perform the unique roles played by the Cambridge Green Belt. The Green Belt is a critical environmental asset for Cambridge in forming the important setting for a compact, historic city and contributing to the high quality of life and place enjoyed here."*

4.2.26 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.

4.2.27 This above illustrates how, in locations such as Trumpington, carefully planned development has been combined with enhanced recreational access to deliver benefits to the wider population and create a well-designed urban edge. This principle could be sensitively applied in other locations, including at the Site.

South Cambridgeshire Adopted Local Plan

4.2.28 In common with the CLP, and until the GCLP is adopted, the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan (SCLP) 2018 remains the current adopted development plan for the district and reflects the needs and spatial strategy identified at the time of its preparation. Relevant policies from the SCLP are summarised below.

4.2.29 Policy S/4 confirms that the Cambridge Green Belt will be protected in accordance with the approach set out in the NPPF. The supporting text identifies the same purposes for the Green Belt

as those set out in Policy 4 of the CLP. It also references the joint CIGBBS, which forms part of the shared evidence base for both authorities.

4.2.30 Policy NH/8 relates to mitigating the impact of development within and adjoining the Green Belt. It requires that any development proposals in the Green Belt are located and designed so that they do not adversely affect its rural character or openness. Where development is permitted, the policy requires landscape measures and long-term maintenance to ensure that impacts on the Green Belt are appropriately mitigated. This policy remains consistent with the NPPF's principles of preserving openness and safeguarding the character of the Green Belt.

4.2.31 Policy NH/9 allows for limited forms of redevelopment within the Green Belt, subject to criteria including that replacement buildings are not materially larger than those they replace and that any infilling does not result in a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

4.2.32 Policy NH/10 relates to new buildings for outdoor sport and recreation within the Green Belt. Such proposals are supported provided that they preserve the openness and purposes of the Green Belt and avoid harm to its rural character.

4.3 Planning Advisory Service guidance

4.3.1 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.

4.3.2 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.

4.4 Planning Policy Guidance: Green Belt

4.4.1 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.

4.4.2 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

4.4.3 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

4.4.4 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

4.4.5 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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Contribution	Illustrative features
Strong	Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely be free of existing development and to include all of the following features: • *form part of the setting of the historic town* • *make a considerable contribution to the special character of a historic town. This could be (but is not limited to) as a result of being within, adjacent to, or of significant visual importance to the historic aspects of the town*
Moderate	Assessment areas that perform moderately are likely to form part of the setting and/or contribute to the special character of a historic town but include one or more features that weaken their contribution to this purpose, such as (but not limited to): • *being separated to some extent from historic aspects of the town by existing development or topography* • *containing existing development* • *not having an important visual, physical, or experiential relationship to historic aspects of the town*

Weak or None	Assessment areas that make no or only a weak contribution are likely to include those that: • *do not form part of the setting of a historic town* • *have no visual, physical, or experiential connection to the historic aspects of the town*

Application of Footnote 7 when identifying land as Grey Belt

4.4.9 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

4.4.10 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

4.4.11 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.

4.4.12 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

4.4.13 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

4.4.14 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.

4.4.15 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

4.4.16 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

4.4.17 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.

4.4.18 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""*.

4.5 Case law precedent

4.5.1 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.

4.5.2 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*

4.5.3 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.

4.5.4 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"*.

4.5.5 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.

4.5.6 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).

4.5.7 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.

4.6 Previous Green Belt studies

4.6.1 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.

4.6.2 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.

4.6.3 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 to that 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.

4.7 Cambridge Inner Green Belt Boundary Study

Background

4.7.1 The CIGBBS[10], 2015, was based on the specific purposes defined for the Cambridge Green Belt as well as the Green Belt purposes set out in the NPPF, and focused on assessment of the land closest to Cambridge. It identified 19 sectors of the Inner Green Belt, which were assessed to understand their importance to the performance of the Green Belt purposes. Where there were differences within a sector, sub-areas were created.

[10] Cambridge Inner Green Belt Boundary Study, 2015

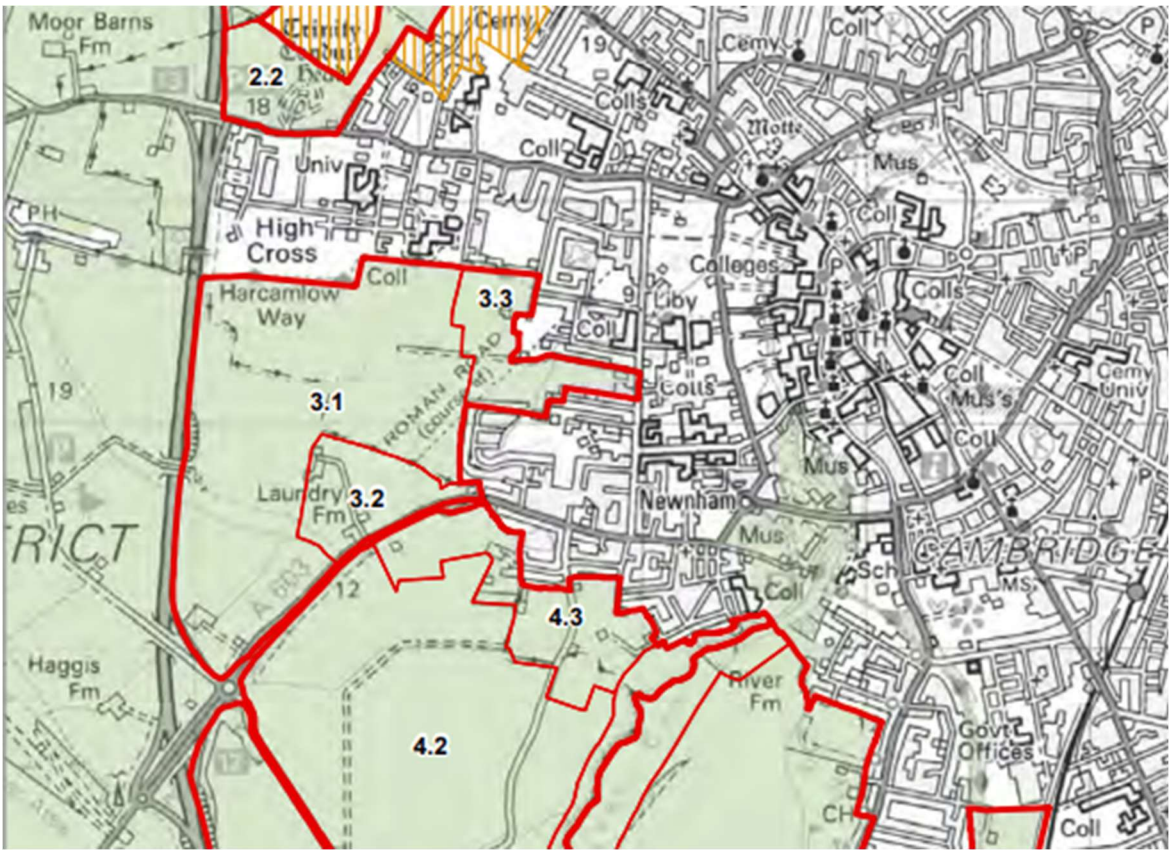


Plate 09: Assessment Sectors and Sub Areas (Extract from CIGBBS)

4.7.2 The study further defines and described **16 qualities of Cambridge and its surrounding landscape** that were considered to directly contribute to the performance of Green Belt purposes. These 16 qualities were then used as the criteria for assessing the individual sectors of the Inner Green Belt. The CIGBBS noted that qualities are "*all equally important and each contributes to the performance of Green Belt purposes"* and that there was no use of numerical scoring as this this would inevitably lead to a focus on lower scoring areas. It is noteworthy that there was a heavy focus on qualities/criteria that related to the historic character and setting of Cambridge.

4.7.3 The Greater Cambridge Green Belt Assessment, 2021, notes that "*The 2015 study* [CIGBBS] *was found to be robust within the Inspectors' Local Plan Examination report … in 2018 and remains a valid evidence base document. It is considered to be an appropriate evidence base document, in particular the 16 qualities of the Cambridge Green Belt are identified which can be used as the basis for subsequent Green Belt assessments such as this* [e.g. the GCGBA]" .

Identified sectors relevant to the Site

4.7.4 The Site forms the majority of Sector 3: North of Barton Road, Sector 3 was sub-divided into three sub areas :

- 3.1 – Larger Arable Fields.
- 3.2 - Smaller parcels of pastoral land along southern boundary
- 3.3 - Mixed small parcels of land in east of sector

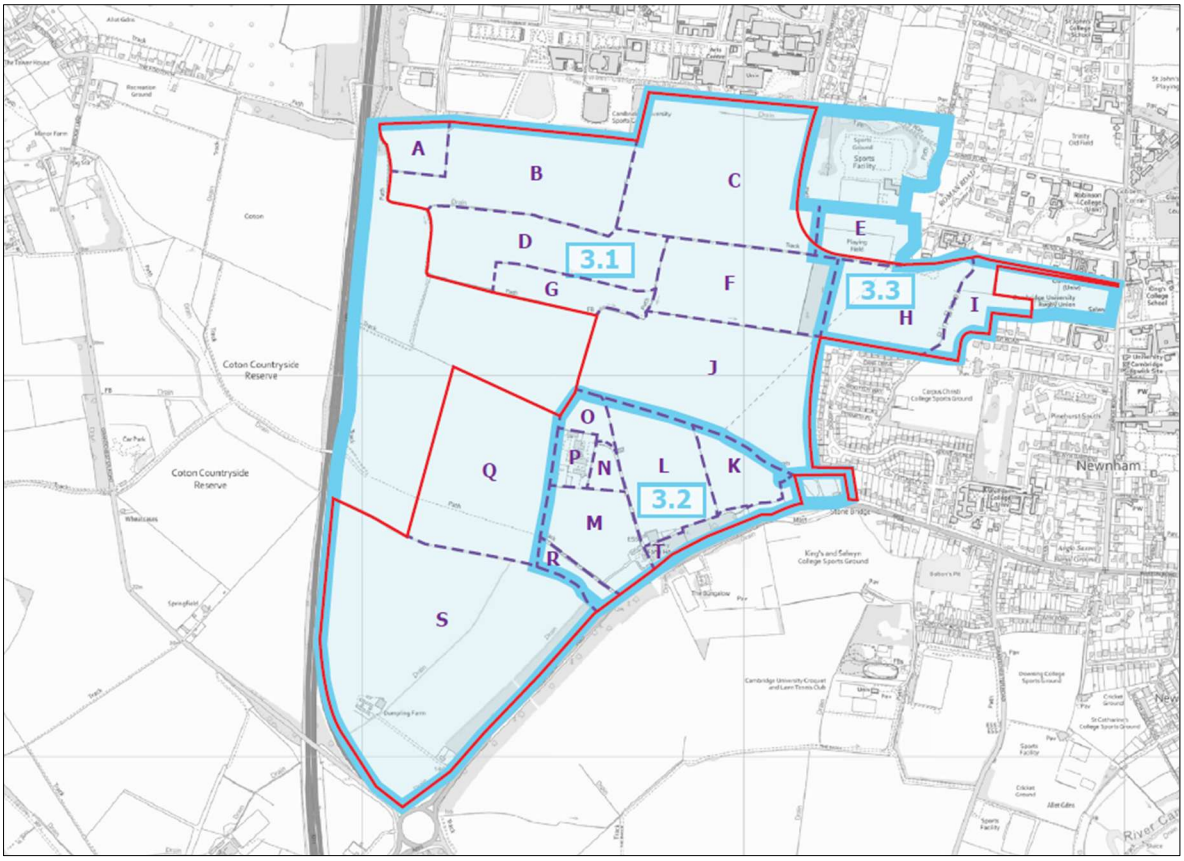


Plate 10; Assessment Sectors and Sub Areas (Extract from CIGBBS)

4.7.5 Sector 3 is described in the CIGBBS as: *"Land use in most of the sector is large scale arable farm-land. However, there are some smaller scale areas, including sports fields and rough grassland to the east and pastoral fields in the south along Barton Road. Several of the field boundary hedgerows are designated as County Wildlife Sites. The sector also includes Bin Brook, which is designated as a City Wildlife Site. A number of public footpaths cross the sector and the Harcamlow Way/Wimpole Way, which is also a well-used cycleway, is located along the northern boundary."*

4.7.6 The boundaries of Sector 3 are shown on Figure 04. The Landscape Partnership has reviewed the sub areas in terms of character and find them to be broadly appropriate at the scale of landscape assessed and consistent in terms of scale and sub-division with other sectors around Cambridge. There have been no substantive changes within Sector 3 since the CIGBBS was undertaken in 2015 beyond some works at the Cambridge University Sports Ground.

4.7.7 The 16 qualities/criteria identified are drawn from a number of previous studies and set out as follows:

1. A large historic core relative to the size of the city as a whole
2. A city focussed on the historic core
3. Short and/or characteristic approaches to the historic core from the edge of the city
4. A city of human scale easily crossed by foot and by bicycle
5. Topography providing a framework to Cambridge

6. Long distance footpaths and bridleways providing access to the countryside
7. Key views of Cambridge from the surrounding landscape
8. Significant areas of Distinctive and Supportive townscape and landscape
9. A soft green edge to the city
10. Good urban structure with well-designed edges to the city
11. Green corridors into the city
12. The distribution, physical and visual separation of the necklace villages
13. The scale, character, identity and rural setting of the necklace villages
14. Designated sites and areas enriching the setting of Cambridge
15. Elements and features contributing to the character and structure of the landscape
16. A city set in a landscape which retains a strongly rural character

4.7.8 Between 2012 and 2017, The Landscape Partnership prepared evidence to support a series of representations made on behalf of St John's College to the emerging Local Plans (subsequently adopted), including a critique of the methodology used in the CIGBBS. The Landscape Partnership's comments included questioning the complexity of using 16 criteria (several of which overlapped) and noting that some criteria were of peripheral importance to Green Belt purposes and should not be afforded equal weight e.g. *Quality 6* relating to long-distance footpaths and bridleways. While differences remain between The Landscape Partnership's views and the approach taken in the CIGBBS it is noted and accepted that the CIGBBS forms part of the Council's ' evidence base supporting the adopted Local Plan.

4.7.9 The CIGBBS concluded that, "*all areas of land within the study area (with the exception of one small area, sub area 8.2) are important to Green Belt purposes but the reasons differ from one area to another. For example: West of the city, the Inner Green Belt plays a critical role in maintaining the impression of a compact city, with countryside close to the historic core. The rural character of the land emphasises this and is seen as the foreground in views from approaches to the city, the M11 and the countryside west of the M11.*"

4.7.10 Other sectors around Cambridge were seen as being important for other varying reasons. The conclusion in the CIGBBS Executive summary states, "*Whilst virtually all areas of land within the study area have been assessed as being of importance to Green Belt purposes, consideration has been given as to whether it may nevertheless be possible for certain areas of land to be released from the Green Belt for development without significant harm to Green Belt purposes*." The findings of the CIGBBS was that this only applied to a few small sites to the south and south-east of the city.

4.7.11 However, despite the findings of the CIGBBS, it is noteworthy that significant Green Belt releases have been allowed in recent years e.g. the allocation of North-West Cambridge as part of the joint Area Action Plan in 2009.

4.7.12 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 can only be occur through one or a

combination of the following: i) redevelopment of existing developed areas in Cambridge, ii) development beyond the Green Belt, or iii) release of the Green Belt. Over recent years this has been – and remains – a key decision for the authorities as they plan to meet housing and other needs in the most sustainable way.

Assessment of Green Belt Sector 3

4.7.13 Section 6 of the CIGBBS provides a detailed application of the 16 qualities against each of the Sectors. The following text provides a review of the description and analysis of Sector 3: North of Barton Road, in relation to the Site. By use of Figure 04, reference is also made to the smaller scale individual Field Units (A to T) that The Landscape Partnership have identified for this study. See also descriptions at CIGBBS Section 6.6 [o(pages 86 to 92].

4.7.14 It is noted that Sector 3 is the closest area of Green Belt to the historic core. The Landscape Partnership concurs with descriptions set out at §§6.6.1 and 6.6.2.

4.7.15 §6.6.3 states that Sector 3 contains a key view of several of the City's distinctive landmarks from the public footpath Coton 006 that passes through the south of the sector to a footbridge over the M11. It also notes there are similar views from the western end of the Harcamlow Way in the sector. TLP would challenge the judgement that the view illustrated by "*Photograph 2: arable land of Sector 3 west of the historic core"* shown on CIGBBS Figure 15 is a *Key View*. While the view includes four landmark buildings within the historic core of the city, it is only the University Library tower that makes a notable contribution to the skyline. Despite the architectural importance and quality of other structures, including St John's College Chapel and King's College Chapel, these are distant views to the upper (and non-publicly accessible) sections of the buildings. Furthermore, the cluster of utilitarian buildings within Laundry Farm form the more immediate and middle-distance context above which the tops of the buildings in the historic core are seen. The Landscape Partnership therefore dispute that this is a key view of importance.

4.7.16 In relation to the other views from the western section of the Harcamlow Way towards the M11, these are illustrated by The Landscape Partnership's Viewpoint 3. In this view the key feature is the University Library tower with the Roman Catholic Church spire also visible. The Landscape Partnership considers that while there are some views to a small number of landmarks within Cambridge, they do not indicate the presence of the wealth of historic buildings within the city centre. The University Library tower is a substantial high-rise building, visible on the skyline from a number of sections of the Harcamlow Way . However, it would still be possible to retain views to this landmark building through an appropriate design layout at the Site. The character of the library tower is that of a 20th century interwar skyscraper and one more characteristic indication of a feature being appreciated in an urban/university campus environment. There are small windows in the section of the tower that is visible from the Site but these windows are from storage areas and not used by the public.

4.7.17 The CIGBBS then continues to assess each of the qualities in tabular form at pages 86-92- providing a distinction between Sub-Areas 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 where appropriate. The Landscape Partnership's commentary on this assessment is presented in a tabular form in the following table.

Table 2: Commentary on CIGBBS assessment of Sector 3

Cambridge Green Belt Quality from CIGBBS	The Landscape Partnership's comment on text within CIGBBS (Section 6.6) in relation to the proposed South West Cambridge development
1. A large historic core relative to the size of the city as a whole	The GIGBBS notes that with the *exception* of West Cambridge campus affecting Sector 3, there has been more limited development to the west of Cambridge. However, the CIGBBS does not comment on the style or scale of the new structures at West Cambridge and their visual influence upon the Green Belt. Rather the study remains neutral on the substantial additions at West Cambridge that are in The Landscape Partnership's opinion in marked contrast to the more historic development further to the east towards Grange Road and along the Backs. The Landscape Partnership considers that the West Cambridge campus extending west to the M11 already exerts a locally prominent influence on the neighbouring Sector 3.1 of the Green Belt. An area of new high-quality architecture on the Site could form a sympathetic western extension to Cambridge that would integrate with the aggregation of larger education and research buildings within the West Cambridge campus. Cambridge has progressively expanded to the west since the 1880s (see Figures 6 to 8, Appendix 1). What was formerly a close relationship between the historic core of the colleges and the Backs with the rural countryside and beyond has progressively become more detached over the last 150 years by incremental development to the west of the Backs. The Landscape Partnership does not consider that it is necessarily inappropriate for further development to occur in this direction subject to a suitable masterplan and strategy to protect character and setting of the city. **There would be some conflict with this quality.**
2 A city focused on the historic core	The description within the CIGBBS is that historic Cambridge remains a clear focus of this part of the City. The Landscape Partnership agrees that there is a focus towards the city, but Sector 3 is not in the City and there are few locations where this historic link is readily appreciated. The link is as much perceptual as visual. The only public views of any note within the Site are from footpath Coton 6 and along the Harcamlow Way, and in these views it is the University Library tower that is the primary focus. Views to this landmark building could be retained in a suitable development layout. In contrast, other landmarks in the city are seen intermittently and are minor features in the available views. The CIGBBS study states that the retention of Green Belt has prevented large urban extensions to the west of the city that would compete with the historic core. However, West Cambridge presents a new and large-scale education and research facility separated from the original historic core. West Cambridge is the most visible and prominent area of development adjacent to Sector 3.1. The Landscape Partnership considers that a well-considered residential scheme

Cambridge Green Belt Quality from CIGBBS	The Landscape Partnership's comment on text within CIGBBS (Section 6.6) in relation to the proposed South West Cambridge development
	would present minimal competition with the historic core. In addition, the presence of the M11 is already a prominent and distracting feature to the west of the Site, and this influence could be mitigated by strategic landscape on the Site. **There would be limited conflict with this quality.**
3 Short and/or characteristic approaches to the historic core from the edge of the city	There is limited visibility of the Site from the main vehicular approaches to the historical core of the city. While there are glimpsed views from the south-west along Barton Road, the majority of the road corridor is well enclosed and screened from Barton Road by plantations, mature trees and hedgerows. The character of this approach could be protected and enhanced by the retention of tree belts and improvements to the Bin Brook corridor. The Harcamlow Way (and Wimpole Way, Cambridge 31) is noted as a local approach for pedestrians and cyclists. This route is already well used as a link between West Cambridge campus and the historic core and would not be physically affected by development on the Site. There are open views across the adjacent arable fields (Field Units A, B and C) and there would be opportunities to retain vistas to the historic core. The CIGBBS text for Sub-Area 3.3 describes (permissive) footpath links within this sub area (from Gough Way to Cranmer Road). These routes could be retained unaffected. However, there are currently no public or permissive footpaths through the northern section of Sector 3.3. A suitable masterplan could deliver new and enhanced approaches to the historic core with corridors of green space and retained Green Belt in accordance with NPPF §§156 and 159. **There would be limited conflict with this quality.**
4 A city of human scale easily crossed by foot and by bicycle	It is agreed that Sector 3 is the closest to the historical core. Therefore, any development of the Site would mean that access to the city centre would primarily be by foot and bicycle, and would not conflict with this quality. This opinion is supported by the current volume of pedestrian and cycle movement on the Harcamlow Way between Cambridge, Coton and West Cambridge, as well as along the Barton Road cycleway to the south of the Site. **There should be no conflict with this quality.**
5 Topography providing a framework to Cambridge	The Landscape Partnership agrees with the description within the CIGBBS that the topography is flat with landform only rising up beyond the M11. As such, it makes no contribution to the framing of the City. **There should be no conflict with this quality.**
6 Long distance footpaths and bridleways providing	There are three public footpaths or bridleways that cross Sector 3. Cambridge 31 (Harcamlow Way) and Coton 9 to the north, and Coton 6 to the south. Development on the Site would reduce the proportion of Coton 6, Coton 9 and Cambridge 31 in the countryside, but such

Cambridge Green Belt Quality from CIGBBS	The Landscape Partnership's comment on text within CIGBBS (Section 6.6) in relation to the proposed South West Cambridge development
access to the countryside.	development would provide opportunities for greater access to countryside, including that within the Site, on other land east of the M11, and to the west of the M11 (including to Coton Reserve). It is possible that enhanced footpath connections to the east of the M11 between the existing rights of way could provide circular routes connecting with existing footpaths Cambridge 31, Coton 9 and the site. This would benefit the use of the retained Green Belt for recreation in accordance with NPPF §§156 and 159. **There would be limited conflict with this quality.**
7 Key views of Cambridge from the surrounding landscape	The Landscape Partnership agrees that the panoramic viewpoint from Red Meadow Hill (Viewpoint 15) is important. The view panorama encompasses the historic core to the east, along with other larger scale modern development at West Cambridge and Addenbrookes. The Field Units most visible in the context of the historic core, as seen from Red Meadow Hill are Units Q and S (see Figure 04). A suitable strategy is required to minimise any adverse effects. Development should be kept relatively low in Units Q and S; it would then be well below the skyline. Planting mitigation and/or subtle earthworks at key locations across the Site including within Units Q and S, east of the M11, could help to contain the visible presence of new built form. The Landscape Partnership considers that the lower-level views, including those from Grantchester Road (Viewpoint 14) and those to the east of the M11 (including Viewpoint 9) are less distinctive in that the landmark buildings in the historic core of note are limited to the University Library tower with others being relatively less identifiable or small in scale. It is The Landscape Partnership's opinion that while these lower level views provide opportunities to see some landmark buildings from the Green Belt, they are of relatively limited importance and do not comprise *strategic views*. The lower level views are also in marked contrast to the very clear high-quality environment and views available within the historic core of the City and most notably along the Backs. **There would be some conflict with this quality.**
8 Significant areas of Distinctive and Supportive Townscape and Landscape	There would be a loss of supportive open countryside. However, since the M11 is considered to be a visually detracting influence on Sector 3.1 and the visibility of the historic landmark buildings is relatively limited from this location, The Landscape Partnership consider that an alternative approach would be to visually contain the motorway and its traffic to the eastern boundary. While the CIGBBS considers that Sector 3 constitutes a supportive landscape through its provision of a rural setting to Cambridge, this does not mean that the whole of the Site needs to be retained in its existing character to fulfil this function. Areas to the west of the Site and within the adjacent landownerships could still be retained as open to support this quality. The West Cambridge University development to the north is also considered in the CIGBBS to be a *Distinctive Townscape* (and in the

Cambridge Green Belt Quality from CIGBBS	The Landscape Partnership's comment on text within CIGBBS (Section 6.6) in relation to the proposed South West Cambridge development
	same category, the West Cambridge Conservation Area). However, The Landscape Partnership considers that the character of West Cambridge campus does not rely on its relationship with the Green Belt. **There would be some conflict with this quality.**
9 A soft green edge to the city	The presence of vegetation within Sector 3 and also within the western edges of Cambridge to the east all contain (visually screen) existing built forms within the fringes of the City and in its historic core. Landmark buildings are only occasionally visible. The CIGBBS notes West Cambridge as an exception. However, the study does not provide any descriptive material against this quality regarding the effect of West Cambridge, despite the considerable mass and height of a number of the buildings. It would be readily feasible to introduce new and repositioned soft edges to development on the Site in the form of tree cover and still retain some new publicly accessible views across retained open land towards the city along green corridors. This approach would support NPPF §§156 and 159 by delivering enhanced visual amenity. **There would be limited short term conflict with this quality**.
10 Good urban structure with well-designed edges to the city	The CIGBBS states that the urban edge to the Sector has a Distinctive townscape, *"including the new development at West Cambridge"*. It is not disputed that West Cambridge is distinctive. However, it is of a very different character to that of the area to the east of Wilberforce Road. If the CIGBBS is of the opinion that the West Cambridge southern boundary presents a well-designed edge to the city along its full-length despite it being *"much less vegetated"* then it should be equally feasible to create a well-designed edge to the city in Sector 3 by a combination of landscape and good quality architecture. **There should be no conflict with this quality.**
11 Green corridors into the city	The CIGBBS clearly states that the majority of Sector 3 does not contribute to any of the green corridors from the countryside into the heart of Cambridge. The exception is sub-area 3.3, which provides a *"partial green corridor into the city"*. This would indicate majority of the Grange Farm site and Sub-area 3.1 does not currently form a notable green corridor into Cambridge. However, in contrast and in conflict §5.2.45 of the CIGBBS states that the green corridor in West Cambridge, is of great importance to preserve. It would be feasible to retain and create new and improved green corridors across the Site on land retained in Green Belt leading into Cambridge from the west. These could follow Bin Brook and Barton Road to the south and to the centre by linking the fields associated with the County Wildlife Sites to the west and leading east into Cambridge at Grange Road near the University Rugby Union Ground and at Cranmer Road. These new and enhanced routes would support NPPF §156 and 159. **There should be no conflict with this quality.**

Cambridge Green Belt Quality from CIGBBS	The Landscape Partnership's comment on text within CIGBBS (Section 6.6) in relation to the proposed South West Cambridge development
12 The distribution, physical and visual separation of the necklace villages	The CIGBBS states that Sub-Area 3.1 plays a key role in separating Cambridge from Coton. However, The Landscape Partnership considers that while Aub-Area 3.1 provides part of the physical separation there is minimal visual interconnectivity between the Site and Coton. This separation is aided by the M11 and associated vegetation in the intervening land. Furthermore, the West Cambridge development already extends Cambridge towards Coton. **There would be limited conflict with this quality.**
13 The scale, character, identity and rural setting of the necklace villages	The CIGBBS states that Sector 3 does not form part of the setting of any of the necklace villages. The Landscape Partnership concurs but it is perhaps surprising as under quality 12 above it indicates Sector 3 plays a *"key role"* in the separation of Cambridge and Coton. **There should be no conflict with this quality.**
14 Designated sites and areas in reaching the setting of Cambridge	The CIGBBS notes the presence of: County Wildlife Sites associated with some of the hedge corridors, City Wildlife Sites along the Bin Brook, and the West Cambridge Conservation Area. However, it would be feasible to retain and integrate all these features into a sensitive development of the Site. This could include retaining land to the west of the Conservation Area as open land as part of a retained Green Belt corridor and providing scope to enhance the biodiversity value of the designated wildlife sites. **There should be no conflict with this quality.**
15 Elements and features contributing to the character and structure of the landscape	The Landscape Partnership agrees with the analysis within the CIGBBS for this quality. The majority of the listed features could be retained within a sensitive development on the site. The only potential conflict is in respect of the views to landmark buildings. The Landscape Partnership's opinion is that the views of landmark buildings, although a positive feature, should not be overstated in number, extent or scale. Furthermore, it would be possible to retain a number of the views within a well-designed layout. **There would be limited conflict with this quality.**
16 A city set in a landscape that retains a strong rural character	The description in the CIGBBS is that Sector 3 retains a *"strongly rural character"* and is *"the closest area of 'rural feeing' Green Belt land to the historic core of Cambridge character one of the rural feeling close to the historic core"*. However, in The Landscape Partnership's opinion, this view should be offset against the influence of the M11, the new Cambridge University development to the north at West Cambridge, and the presence of existing and adjacent sports uses. These factors do not form part of a *"strongly rural character"* which in TLPs opinion has been overstated. The CIGBBS also states that the extent of tree coverage inside the city helps to reduce visibility of the presence of the urban area while retaining a strong visual connection to a number of landmark features in the historic core. This is an apparent contradiction.

Cambridge Green Belt Quality from CIGBBS	The Landscape Partnership's comment on text within CIGBBS (Section 6.6) in relation to the proposed South West Cambridge development
	TLP consider that while development on the Site would inevitably physically reduce the Green Belt that by following a pattern that combines: retained open land and green fingers, a strong green edge and suitably scaled architecture in the Cambridge style, that new development could effectively combine high-quality residential development with substantive areas of accessible green infrastructure, much of this being retained as accessible Green Belt. A rural character could be retained to the west of the development and lead into green fingers into the City in a pattern characteristic of the best of Cambridge e.g. along the River Cam and Hobsons Brook. This approach would support NPPF paragraphs 138 and 141. **There would be some conflict with this quality.**

Summary of findings within Sector 3

4.7.18 CIGBBS §6.6.4 provides a summary of the importance of the sector to the Green Belt Purposes. The key qualities listed in the CIGBBS that would be affected by development in Sector 3 are Quality 1 (A large historical core relative to the size of the city as a whole), Quality 7 (Key views of Cambridge from the surrounding landscape) and Quality 16 (a city set in the landscape which retains a strongly rural character). Therefore, of the 16 criteria evaluated in the CIGBBS, three were found to be notable in regard to Sector 3 and development at the Site. The CIGBBS clarifies that no individual criteria were considered more or less important than others; rather, all were regarded as equally important. This approach is considered unhelpful in that it would appear that even if two or three criteria were seen as being harmed then there would be a case for arguing no Green Belt release in that Sector. This could be construed to be unnecessarily restrictive and not helpful for the identification of sites on a relative basis.

4.7.19 In relation to criteria listed in the CIGBBS summary for Sector 3 and development on the Site, it is accepted that there would be some conflict with Quality 1 (A large historical core relative to the size of the city as a whole). However, from Sector 3 the relative size of the historic core compared with the size of the City as whole cannot be readily appreciated. The scale of the City and historic core are not visible from the Sector. It is only with a wider knowledge of the structure of the City and based on use of mapping that its relative scale can be readily understood. In any event, the historic core of the City is located east of Queens Road and already contained beyond the intervening late 19th century and largely 20th century development west of The Backs. Therefore, the appreciation of the character and qualities of the true historic core is rooted far more in the experience of being within the area itself rather than from locations or vantage points on the western edge of the City, such as within Sector 3. This position is supported by the limited outward public viewpoints available from the western edge of the Conservation Area.

4.7.20 In relation to the views across Sector 3, it is agreed that for Quality 7 (Key views of Cambridge from the sur-rounding landscape) there are some existing views to a few of the landmark buildings identified in the CIGBBS (i.e. buildings 1, 2 ,3 and 4 listed and shown on Figure 01). However, apart

from the University Library tower, the degree of visibility of landmarks in these views is, in The Landscape Partnership's opinion, relatively restricted. None of the available views are considered by The Landscape Partnership to be specifically designed views but are more a consequence of height of the buildings and relative proximity. The most notable view is from the elevated Red Meadow Hill (Viewpoint 15 and CIGBBS Photograph 2). From this location there is a wide panorama stretching several miles over Cambridge and its wider setting. The City is largely set within trees with only the taller structures visible. The most prominent and closest structures are those at the West Cambridge campus. The likely visibility of any new development on the Site within this panorama would depend on its location, height, scale, design, materials and intervening mitigation. It is considered feasible to introduce sensitive development on the Site while still being able to appreciate views to the historic core and the landmark buildings from Red Meadow Hill. The Landscape Partnership consider that the viewpoints identified in the CIGBBS from the lower lying ground towards the historic core are of reduced and limited importance since the identifiable landmark buildings are typically seen in conjunction with other built forms such as Laundry Farm and the M11 corridor and associated traffic or are largely obscured by intervening vegetation on the Site or within the edge of Cambridge. The lower-level views are not considered to be views of Strategic Importance.

4.7.21 In relation to the Quality 16, it is accepted that that the open countryside provides part of the context and setting to Cambridge from the west. However, if open areas of land were retained as a foreground to the west in combination with areas of structural landscape both within and on the edge of the development, then it is quite probable that the character of a rural foreground could be retained with development located beyond a new soft green edge.

4.7.22 The CIGBBS concludes at §6.6.5 in relation to the implications of Green Belt release for development that, "*it is unlikely that any development within sector could be accommodated without substantial harm to Green Belt purposes"*. In The Landscape Partnership opinion this is too broad and restrictive an approach. It does not consider or analyse potentially different scales of development within Sector 3 that could still preserve the important qualities of the Sector. The CIGBBS continues "*Development within sub areas 3.1 or 3.2 would remove the characteristic setting to the city, diminish (both in reality and in perception) the presence of the countryside close to the distinctive core of Cambridge and obstruct key views"*. The Landscape Partnership also considers these conclusions are too crude and severe. The Landscape Partnership considers that sensitive development on the Site could partly retain the setting of the city and its rural foreground. The Landscape Partnership also considers that within Sub-Area 3.3 it would be feasible to introduce development and also retain the distinctive townscape character of the West Cambridge Conservation Area. which is by its very nature already largely inward looking.

4.7.23 The conclusion of the CIGBBS s that "*no Green Belt release should be contemplated in this sector"*. A very similar conclusion is drawn for the majority of the Sectors around Cambridge (with the exception of Sector 8.2 and small parts of Sectors 10.1, 10.2, 11.1, 11.2 and 13.1). Previous conclusions on the suitability of development in the Green Belt, including Sector 3, and consequential Green Belt boundary changes should be examined again as part of the emerging Local Plans.

4.8 Greater Cambridge Green Belt Assessment

Methodology and Scope

4.8.1 The Greater Cambridge Green Belt Assessment (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 GCGBS 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

4.8.2 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.

4.8.3 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*".

4.8.4 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.

4.8.5 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].

4.8.6 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 GCGBS assessment needs to be interpreted to relate to specific potential development sites, with

individuals parcels not necessarily 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 GCGBS is potentially or likely to be different to that of releasing of land associated with a proposed development.

4.8.7 The Landscape Partnership makes the following comments regarding the methodology applied within the GCGBA:

- 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 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. 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. 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.

4.8.8 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.

4.8.9 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.

Identification and assessment of parcels

4.8.10 The Site encompasses eight parcels, as set out in the table below. Those parcels where development would occur as part of the South West Cambridge development are highlighted for further review.

Table 3: Site parcels

Parcel No.	Existing baseline conditions	South West Cambridge proposal	Consider in review?
HC8	Arable fields	Largely developed, with some green infrastructure	Yes
HC9	Grassed area/sports field	Green infrastructure	No
HC10	Arable fields	Green infrastructure	No
NH10	Grassed areas/ Laundry Farm – University of Cambridge and paddocks/pasture	Part developed/part green infrastructure	Yes
NH12	Arable field	Largely developed	Yes
NH13	Arable field	Green infrastructure	No
NH14	Grassed area along Bin Brook	Green infrastructure	No
OA11	Arable fields and Dumpling Farm	Part developed/part green infrastructure	Yes

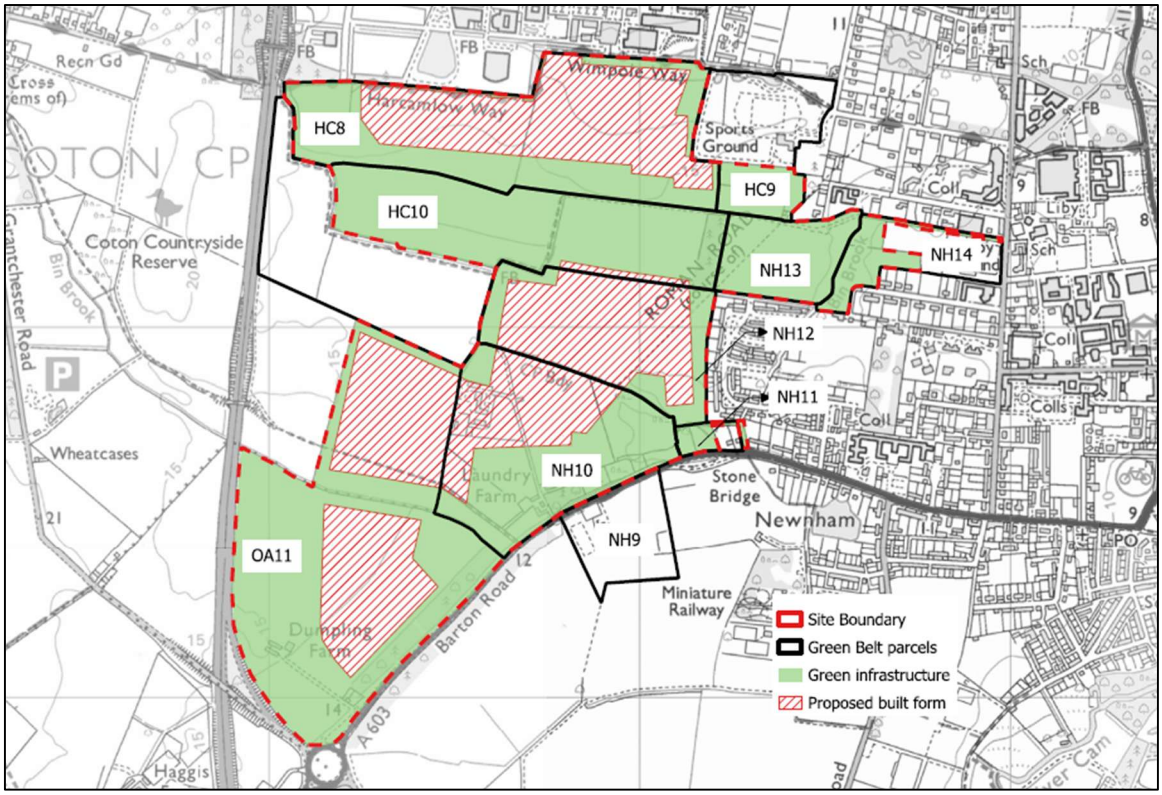


Plate 11: Green Belt parcels, Green Infrastructure and Proposed built form

4.8.11 Parcels HC8, NH10, NH12 and NH13 fall entirely within the Site area, whereas parcels HC9, HC10, NH14 and OA11 are only partially included within the Site area.

4.8.12 Parcels HC8, NH10, NH12 and OA11 all include areas where development occur as part of the South West Cambridge proposals.

4.8.13 Parcels HC9, HC10, NH13 and NH14 are all proposed for green infrastructure. Consequently, the focus of this part of the report is on Parcels HC8, NH10, NH12 and OA11 in relation to their assessed contribution to the Cambridge Green Belt and the assessed harm from releasing the land.

4.8.14 The following paragraphs provide commentary on the judgements made within the GCGBA regarding each of the relevant parcels' contribution to the Cambridge Green Belt Purposes. It includes reference to the more detailed analysis and findings contained in GCGBA Appendix B.

Parcel HC8 – Cambridge High Cross and Eddington

4.8.15 Parcel HC8 (32.76ha) is located within the northern part of the Site and comprises four arable fields enclosed and bounded by mature hedges and copses. The Harcamlow Way/Wimpole Way cycleway (footpath Cambridge 31) follows the northern boundary, although it is located just outside the Site itself. Hedgerows following the western sections of the southern and northern boundaries are designated County Wildlife Sites. The West Cambridge campus is prominent to north. The M11 corridor abuts the north-western boundary of the Parcel.

4.8.16 Land is open. There is no development of a scale, character or form that has a significant impact on Green Belt openness.

Table 4:

GCGBA Appendix B findings	The Landscape Partnership commentary
Distinction between parcel and inset area Land is not contained by urban development and the tree line to the north is a moderate boundary feature between the parcel and Cambridge, but development to the north along Charles Babbage Road is large in scale. As such, neither the countryside nor the urban area dominates views. The landform and land cover within the parcel do not create any additional distinction from Cambridge. Overall, there is moderate distinction between the parcel and the urban area.	Generally concur, although consider the balance of influence is weighted towards the urban edge (West Cambridge) than the countryside.
Cambridge Purpose 1 - to preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre: Contribution: Relatively significant Land is open and adjacent to the main urban area of Cambridge. The parcel has some relationship with the urban area but also a degree of distinction from it. Overall, the parcel makes a relatively significant contribution to Cambridge Purpose 1.	It is noted that the criteria are not particularly fine-grained and rather heavily weighted in favour of higher contribution, i.e. a parcel that is open but generally equally balanced between having a relationship with the urban area and a distinction from it, is afforded a higher than middle judgment.
Cambridge Purpose 2 - to maintain and enhance the quality of Cambridge's setting: Contribution: Relatively significant	As noted above, views from the M11 are limited and so perhaps over-stated in the analysis.

GCGBA Appendix B findings	The Landscape Partnership commentary
Land is partially visible in the middle ground of a key views towards the historic core of the city from elevated claylands to the west (including from Red Meadow Hill and Madingley Hill) and forms the open foreground of low-level views from the M11 and Grantchester Road. Within these views several notable landmarks within the historic core (including King's College Chapel, St John's Chapel, the University Library, Holy Trinity Church and the Roman Catholic Church spire of The Church of Our Lady and the English Martyrs) are visible on the skyline in the distance. This is seen beyond this open agricultural land which allows the rural landscape setting in proximity to the historic core to be clearly appreciated. Low-level views are also available towards these landmarks from certain areas within the parcel, albeit with intervening vegetation at proximity on the edge of the city filtering views. In addition, land contributes to the rural landscape setting experienced in proximity to the city edge when approaching the historic core along several PRoW from the west (including the Harcamlow Way and the Wimpole Way), although its character is influenced by the adjacent large-scale development to the north. Overall the parcel makes a relatively significant contribution to Cambridge Purpose 2.	Similarly, the degree to which the landmarks in the historic core are visible is over-stated. The criteria noted in GCGBA Table 3.3 do not directly correlate with the conditions at Parcel HC8, i.e. the land is open, but has only a moderate distinction, a moderate rural character and contains some features that contribute to the quality of Cambridge's setting. On balance, a judgement of Moderate contribution would be more appropriate.
Cambridge Purpose 3 - to prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city: Contribution: Relatively limited Land is peripheral to the narrow gap between Cambridge and Coton, but the M11 motorway is a significant separating feature. The parcel has some relationship with the urban area, but also a degree of distinction from it. Overall, the parcel makes a relatively limited contribution to Cambridge Purpose 3.	Concur that the land is only peripheral to the gap between Cambridge and Coton, although it might best be described as more than *narrow.* The parcel extends no further towards Coton than does West Cambridge. Concur that the M11 is a strong separating feature.
Impact on contribution of adjacent Green Belt Release of the parcel as an expansion of Cambridge (High Cross and Eddington):	No comment

GCGBA Appendix B findings	The Landscape Partnership commentary
Rating: Minor-moderate Release of the parcel would partially restrict low-level views towards the historic core from the M11 and Grantchester Road, which would slightly diminish the role of adjacent land to the west in respect to Cambridge Purpose 2. The release would also weaken the boundary separation of land to the south and west. The adjoining land to the east does not make a stronger contribution to any of the Green Belt purposes. The impact on this land would not therefore increase overall harm.	
Overall harm of Green Belt release Parcel HC8 makes a relatively significant contribution to preserving Cambridge's compact character, a relatively significant contribution to maintaining and enhancing the quality of Cambridge's setting, and a relatively limited contribution to preventing communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging with the city. The additional impact on the adjacent Green Belt of the release of the parcel would be minor-moderate. Therefore, the harm resulting from its release, as an expansion of Cambridge, would be very high.	Distinction: Moderate Purpose 1: Relatively Significant Purpose 2: Moderate Purpose 3: Relatively Limited Impact on adj. Green Belt: Minor-Moderate Applying the guidance at GCGBA Figure 3.10 and benchmark examples in Table 3.6, along with professional judgement as advocated at §3.131, an overall harm judgement of between High harm and Moderate-High harm would be appropriate.

Parcel NH10

4.8.17 Parcel NH10 is located north-west of Barton Road and wholly with the Site, and includes University of Cambridge Laundry Farm to the west and Laundry Farm House and an Electrical Sub-station to the south-east. The remainder of the parcel comprises pasture fields enclosed by hedgerows or clipped hedges, together with a strip of grassland with mature trees along Barton Road. Bin Brook flows adjacent to Barton Road in a concrete channel.

Table 5

GCGBA Appendix B findings	The Landscape Partnership commentary
Distinction between parcel and inset area Land is not contained by urban development and extends a significant distance from the inset area. The tree lines to the east of the parcel are a moderate boundary feature between the parcel and Cambridge. As such, views are dominated by open countryside. The landform and land cover within the parcel do not create any additional distinction from	The presence of Laundry Farm, with its non-agricultural uses, weakens the sense of distinction between urban influence and countryside. A judgement of Reasonably Strong distinction is considered appropriate.

GCGBA Appendix B findings	The Landscape Partnership commentary
Cambridge. Overall, there is strong distinction between the parcel and the urban area.	
Cambridge Purpose 1 - to preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre Contribution: Significant Land is open and is close to the main urban area of Cambridge. It has strong distinction from the urban area, which increases the extent to which development would be perceived as diminishing Cambridge's compact character. Overall the parcel makes a significant contribution to Cambridge Purpose 1.	Whilst the land is generally open, it does contain the detracting Laundry Farm complex, which is no longer in agricultural use. A judgement of Relatively Significant contribution is considered more appropriate.
Cambridge Purpose 2 - to maintain and enhance the quality of Cambridge's setting Contribution: Relatively significant The land lies in the middle ground of a key views towards the historic core of the city from elevated claylands to the west (including Red Meadow Hill within Coton Country Reserve). Within these views several notable landmarks within the historic core (including King's College Chapel, St John's Chapel, the University Library, Holy Trinity Church and the Roman Catholic Church spire of The Church of Our Lady and the English Martyrs) are visible on the skyline beyond this open agricultural land. This allows the rural landscape setting in proximity to the historic core to be clearly appreciated. Land also contributes to the rural landscape setting experienced in proximity to the city edge when approaching the historic core along the A603 (Barton Road) from the south-west, with some glimpsed views available across the land. This creates positive perceptions of the city on arrival. Overall, the parcel makes a relatively significant contribution to Cambridge Purpose 2.	The land does feature in views from Red Meadow Hill, although not as agricultural land – the footprint of the parcel is rather lost in the general vegetation cover. The M11 and Laundry Farm remain as detracting elements in the view. The build up of vegetation in field boundaries means that the influence of the parcel on views from such as the Harcamlow Way is limited. The criteria noted in GCGBA Table 3.3 do not directly correlate with the conditions at Parcel NH10, i.e. the land is relatively open, has only a strong distinction, a moderate rural character and contains some features that contribute to the quality of Cambridge's setting. On balance, a judgement of Moderate contribution would be more appropriate.
Cambridge Purpose 3 - to prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city: Contribution: Moderate	The narrowness of the gap between Coton and Cambridge is overstated. Given the distance, and the presence of the M11 and intervening woodland, it is unlikely that any development at the parcel wound weaken the

GCGBA Appendix B findings	The Landscape Partnership commentary
Land is peripheral to the narrow gap between Cambridge and Coton, but the M11 motorway is a significant separating feature. There is strong distinction between the parcel and the inset area, which increases the extent to which development would be perceived as narrowing the gap. Overall, the parcel makes a moderate contribution to Cambridge Purpose 3.	perception of the gap between the two settlements. A judgement of Relatively Limited is considered more appropriate.
Impact on contribution of adjacent Green Belt Release of the parcel as an expansion of Cambridge (Newnham) Rating: Minor-moderate The release and development of land within this parcel would increase urbanising visual impact and significantly weaken the strong boundary distinction of land to the west from the settlement. The adjoining land to the north, south, and east, does not make a stronger contribution to any of the Green Belt purposes. The impact on this land would not therefore increase overall harm.	Given the vegetation framework present and the detractions afforded by Laundry Farm, it is considered the urbanising effect of any development here on the wider Green Belt would be limited.
Overall harm of Green Belt release Parcel NH10 makes a significant contribution to preserving Cambridge's compact character, a relatively significant contribution to maintaining and enhance the quality of Cambridge's setting, and a moderate contribution to prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city. The additional impact on the adjacent Green Bel of the release of the parcel would be minor-moderate. Therefore, the harm resulting from its release, as an expansion of Cambridge, would be very high.	Distinction: Reasonably Strong Purpose 1: Relatively Significant Purpose 2: Moderate Purpose 3: Relatively Limited Impact on adj. Green Belt: Minor-Moderate Applying the guidance at GCGBA Figure 3.10 and benchmark examples in Table 3.6, along with professional judgement as advocated at §3.131, an overall harm judgement of between High harm and Moderate-High harm would be appropriate.

Parcel NH12

4.8.18 Parcel NH12 is situated centrally within the Site, west of the rear gardens of properties on Gough Way. It is laid out as arable land, enclosed by hedgerows along the northern, southern and western boundaries. A flood relief channel follows the eastern boundary.

Table 6

GCGBA Appendix B findings	The Landscape Partnership commentary
Distinction between parcel and inset area The garden hedgerow boundary to the east creates little separation between the parcel and Cambridge. However, land is not contained by urban development and extends a significant distance from the inset area. As such, neither the countryside nor the urban area dominates views. The landform and land cover within the parcel do not create any additional distinction from Cambridge. Overall, there is moderate distinction between the parcel and the urban area.	Concur
Cambridge Purpose 1 - to preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre: Contribution: Relatively significant Land is open and is adjacent to the main urban area of Cambridge. The parcel has some relationship with the urban area but also a degree of distinction from it. Overall the parcel makes a relatively significant contribution to Cambridge Purpose 1.	Concur
Cambridge Purpose 2 - to maintain and enhance the quality of Cambridge's setting: Contribution: Relatively significant The land lies in the middle ground of a key views towards the historic core of the city from elevated claylands to the west (including from Red Meadow Hill within Coton Country Reserve), and in low-level views from the M11 and Grantchester Road. Within these views several notable landmarks within the historic core (including King's College Chapel, St John's Chapel, the University Library, Holy Trinity Church and the Roman Catholic Church spire of The Church of Our Lady and the English Martyrs) are visible on the skyline beyond this open agricultural land. This allows the rural landscape setting in proximity to the historic core to be clearly appreciated. In addition, land contributes to the rural landscape setting experienced in proximity to the city edge when approaching the historic core along short and/or characteristic approaches,	The land does feature in views from Red Meadow Hill, although not as agricultural land – the footprint of the parcel is rather lost in the general vegetation cover. The M11 and Laundry Farm remain as detracting elements in the view. The vegetation in field boundaries means that the influence of the parcel on views from such as the Harcamlow Way is limited. The criteria noted in GCGBA Table 3.3 do not directly correlate with the conditions at Parcel NH10, i.e. the land is relatively open, has only a strong distinction, a moderate rural character and contains some features that contribute to the quality of Cambridge's setting. On balance, a judgement of Moderate contribution would be more appropriate.

GCGBA Appendix B findings	The Landscape Partnership commentary
including several PRoW from the west (the Harcamlow Way, the Wimpole Way and the footpath following the parcel's north western boundary). Overall the parcel makes a relatively significant contribution to Cambridge Purpose 2.	
Cambridge Purpose 3 - to prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city: Contribution: Relatively limited Land is peripheral to the narrow gap between Cambridge and Coton, but the M11 motorway is a significant separating feature. The parcel has some relationship with the inset settlement, but also a degree of distinction from it. Overall, the parcel makes a relatively limited contribution to Cambridge Purpose 3.	Concur
Impact on contribution of adjacent Green Belt Release of the parcel as an expansion of Cambridge (High Cross and Eddington): Rating: Minor-moderate The release and development of land within this parcel would increase urbanising visual impact on land to the southwest, and would weaken the boundary distinction of land to the north from the settlement. It would not significantly affect the contribution of land to the west of the parcel, which already has some long distance urbanising visual influence from the large scale development to the north at the West Cambridge Site, University of Cambridge. The adjoining land to the south east does not make a stronger contribution to any of the Green Belt purposes. The impact on this land would not therefore increase overall harm.	Given the vegetation framework present, it is considered the urbanising effect of any development here on the wider Green Belt would be limited.
Overall harm of Green Belt release Parcel NH12 makes a relatively significant contribution to preserving Cambridge's compact character, a relatively significant contribution to maintaining and enhance the quality of Cambridge's setting, and a relatively limited contribution to preventing communities in the environs of Cambridge	Distinction: Moderate Purpose 1: Relatively Significant Purpose 2: Moderate Purpose 3: Relatively Limited Impact on adj. Green Belt: Minor-Moderate Applying the guidance at GCGBA Figure 3.10 and benchmark examples in Table 3.6, along

GCGBA Appendix B findings	The Landscape Partnership commentary
from merging with the city. The additional impact on the adjacent Green Belt of the release of the parcel would be minor-moderate. Therefore, the harm resulting from its release, as an expansion of Cambridge, would be very high.	with professional judgement as advocated at §3.131, an overall harm judgement of Moderate to Moderate-High harm would be appropriate.

Parcel OA11

4.8.19 Parcel OA11 encompasses the two fields in the south-western part of the Site that are currently in arable use, together with the Laundry Farm complex. It is crossed by footpath Cambridge 6. The wider Parcel is split by the M11 that provides a strong physical boundary to the portion of the Parcel within the site. Largely arable farmland continues beyond the motorway.

Table 7

GCGBA Appendix B findings	The Landscape Partnership commentary
Distinction between parcel and inset area 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.	In the vicinity of the Site, the land within OA11 can be considered to have more urbanising visual influences than the parcel as a whole, e.g. the M11 and the nearby Laundry Farm.
Cambridge Purpose 1 - to preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre Contribution: Limited/No contribution	Concur
Cambridge Purpose 2 - to maintain and enhance the quality of Cambridge's setting Contribution: Relatively significant The outer area predominantly comprises open farmland and woodland that is characteristic of the wooded clayland landscapes situated to the west of Cambridge. It has a very strong distinction from the edge of the urban area or any inset settlement, meaning it has a strong rural character. Land to the west and northwest forms part of a gault clay ridge, which is a key topographical feature lying to the west of Cambridge. This contrasts with the low 'bowl' within which Cambridge lies and therefore allows an appreciation of the wider topographical framework of the city. The elevated topography also affords some key views available towards Cambridge	Given the presence of detracting features in close proximity such as the M11 and the non-agricultural Laundry Farm, the distinction and the rural qualities of the portion of Parcel OA11 close to the Site are diminished. The land within the Site is visible in views from Red Meadow Hill, where it would be seen in conjunction with the upper portions of some of the landmark buildings in the historic core.

GCGBA Appendix B findings	The Landscape Partnership commentary
(including from Red Meadow Hill) across an intervening largely rural landscape, which allows an appreciation of the city's wider rural setting. Land also forms part of a rural backdrop in views out of the city to the west and in views across the city from the south-east (including from the Gog Magog Hills). Whilst the more elevated areas of the outer area to the west and northwest make a strong contribution, the Outer Area as a whole makes a relatively strong contribution to Cambridge Purpose 2.	
Cambridge Purpose 3 - to prevent communities in the environs of **Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city** Contribution: Relatively significant Land in this area makes at least a relatively significant contribution to maintaining the separation between Toft, Comberton, Barton, Grantchester, Hardwick, Dry Drayton, Madingley, Coton and Newnham (Cambridge).	Parcel OA11 encompasses a large area. The portion of the parcel within the Site is relatively open and forms part of a robust gap between Cambridge and Coton and the other settlements noted in the response. The M11 provides a strong delineating feature. It is considered that this part of the parcel makes a Relatively Limited contribution to the purpose.
Impact on contribution of adjacent Green Belt Release of the parcel as an expansion of Cambridge (High Cross and Eddington): Rating: Minor-moderate The additional impact of any release on the strength of adjacent Green Belt land and on the Green Belt's function in maintaining separation between settlements would be at least minor-moderate.	No comment.
Overall harm of Green Belt release Parcel OA11 makes at least a relatively significant contribution to maintaining and enhancing the quality of Cambridge's setting, and at least a relatively significant contribution to preventing communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging with each other. Any expansion of Cambridge into this area would have a significant impact on preserving the city's compact character. The additional impact on the adjacent Green Belt of the release of the parcel would be at least minor-moderate. Therefore, the harm resulting from its release, as an expansion of	Distinction: Reasonably Strong Purpose 1: Limited/No contribution Purpose 2: Relatively Significant Purpose 3: Relatively Limited Impact on adj. Green Belt: Minor-Moderate Applying the guidance at GCGBA Figure 3.10 and benchmark examples in Table 3.6, along with professional judgement as advocated at §3.131, an overall harm judgement of Moderate to Moderate-High harm would be appropriate.

GCGBA Appendix B findings	The Landscape Partnership commentary
any inset settlement or settlement beyond the Green Belt's outer edge, would be very high.	

4.9 Initial Green Belt Assessment

4.9.1 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.

4.9.2 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

4.9.3 For the purposes of this high-level appraisal, the Assessment Area comprises the land within the Site, as described at earlier sections of this report.

4.9.4 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

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

4.10.1 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

4.10.2 The PPG confirms that this purpose relates to the sprawl of large built up areas and that villages should not be considered to be large built-up areas.

- Reference to the criteria within the PPG suggests the Assessment Area makes a Moderate contribution to sprawl, since it is adjacent to a large built up area (Cambridge) and includes one or more of the following features that weaken the land’s contribution to Purpose a:
- It is partially enclosed by existing development to the north and east (with the M11 in close proximity to the west), such that any new development would not result in an incongruous pattern of development, but rather as the next stage of the western extension of Cambridge.
- It is subject to other urbanising influences such as the presence of the West Cambridge campus to the north and the M11 and associated traffic to the west.

4.10.3 In addition:

- The M11 could be considered to be located a reasonable distance to the west, and could be considered to be a physical feature that could restrict and contain future development.
- The Assessment Area contains some existing development, e.g. Laundry Farm and Dumplings Farm, albeit that the predominant existing character is of open agricultural land.

4.10.4 To have been considered to make a *Strong* contribution, to Purpose a), any future development within the Assessment Area, in addition to being adjacent to a large built up area, would need to be judged as resulting "in an incongruous pattern of development (such as an extended "finger" of development into the Green Belt)". As has been demonstrated in previous sections of this report, the Site could be developed in a manner that respects the surrounding existing development pattern and which read as a natural western extension to the city, springing from the adjacent settlement edge on two sides. Accordingly, development of the type proposed could not reasonably be described as incongruous or as forming an extended *"finger"* of development into the Green Belt.

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

4.10.5 The supporting text notes that this purpose *"relates to the merging of towns, not villages"*, i.e. not the villages of Coton, Barton or Grantchester.

4.10.6 With the exception of Cambridge itself, there are no towns in the immediate vicinity. The closest would be Cambourne c.9km to the west. The next nearest towns are Ely to the north, Newmarket to the east and Royston the south-west.

4.10.7 The landscape between the Assessment Area and these towns contains several villages, as well as Cambridge itself, but is otherwise rural in character.

4.10.8 Reference to the PPG criteria suggests that the Assessment Area makes No contribution to Purpose b), since it does not form part of the gap between towns.

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

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

4.10.10 As noted above in relation to the findings of the GCGBA, it is acknowledged that parcels of the Green Belt within the Site do make a 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).

4.10.11 These contributions range from Limited/No contribution to Relatively Significant contribution for Purpose 1, and Moderate to Relatively Significant contribution for Purpose 2.

4.10.12 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:

- Physical separation from the historic core of the City by existing development. What was formerly a close relationship between the historic core of the colleges and the Backs with

the rural countryside to the west has progressively become more detached over the last 150 years by incremental development to the west of the Backs.

- Limited connections with the historic core. The presence of vegetation within the Assessment Area and also within the western edge of Cambridge all contain or visually screen existing built forms in the historic core. Landmark buildings are only occasionally visible.
- Any remaining links are as much perceptual or experiential as visual. The only public views of any note within the Assessment Area are from footpath Coton 6 and along the Harcamlow Way and in these views it is the University Library tower that is the primary focus. Views to this landmark building could be retained in a suitable development layout. In contrast other landmarks in the city are seen intermittently and are minor features in the available views.

4.10.13 Limited visual connections with the West Cambridge Conservation Area which, by its very nature, is inward looking. 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

4.10.14 The Assessment Area is (largely) free of development and can be considered to form part of the setting of Cambridge. Whilst it does make some contribution to the special character of the city, for the reasons set out above, such contribution could not reasonably be described as *considerable*, e.g. it is neither within, adjacent to or of significant visual importance to the historic aspects of Cambridge.

4.11 Consideration of Footnote 7

4.11.1 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."*

4.11.2 None of the areas or assets listed in Footnote 7 (bar Green Belt itself) are present within the Assessment Area, such that they could be considered to provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development there.

4.12 Assessment of whether the Assessment Site is Grey Belt

4.12.1 The Assessment Area does not contribute strongly to any of 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.

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

4.13 Impact of development on the remaining Green Belt

4.13.1 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

4.13.2 The M11 provides a strong, robust and permanent restriction to any further western extension of Cambridge. In addition, the proposed development would be accompanied by an extensive green infrastructure strategy that would include the creation of a robust landscape buffer around the western and southern edges of the development. Taken together, these features would form a robust and defensible barrier that would restrict the unrestricted sprawl of Cambridge.

4.13.3 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

4.13.4 The Assessment Area makes no material contribution to maintaining the gap between Cambridge and nearby towns. In addition, there is visual separation between the towns and no intervisibility.

4.13.5 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

4.13.6 The Assessment Area is located on the edge of the Green Belt, with the land to the north (West Cambridge campus) and the east (the existing settlement edge of Cambridge) falling outside of the Green Belt. The proposed development would have no physical effect on the remaining Green Belt, i.e. the land to the west beyond the M11, nor to the south beyond Barton Road.

4.13.7 The initial LVIA studies have found that the Assessment Area 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. Where views would exist, e.g. from the elevated points in the vicinity of Red Hill Meadow, the proposed development would be experienced within the context of the existing urban edge and extensive areas of planting and other green infrastructure measures would help mitigate visual effects.

4.13.8 The presence of vegetation within Sector 3 and also within the edge of Cambridge to the east all contain (visually screen) existing built forms towards the edge of Cambridge and in the historic core. Landmark buildings are only occasionally visible.

4.13.9 It is readily feasible to introduce new and repositioned soft edges to development on the Site in the form of tree cover and still retain some new publicly accessible views across retained open land towards the city along green corridors.

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

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

4.13.11 The remaining Green Belt would be separated from Cambridge's historic core by the Assessment Area and intervening built form. As such, any effects on the setting and special character of the historic town would be no greater than assessed for the Assessment Area along.

4.13.12 The introduction of extensive areas of green infrastructure in association with any future development, particularly on its western and southern parts, would help create an appropriate transition between the city and the countryside .

4.13.13 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

4.13.14 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

4.13.15 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.

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

4.14.1 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.

4.14.2 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.

4.14.3 While development of the scale proposed would likely have a substantial impact on the spatial openness of specific parts 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, including retaining broad fingers and corridors of existing Green Belt through the development, 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

4.14.4 The Site comprises farmland currently in agricultural use. It contains a very limited number of built forms in the form of farmsteads, e.g. Dumpling Farm and Laundry Farm.

4.14.5 Although not physically extending into the site bounds, the character of the Site is influenced by the proximity of the M11 corridor and associated traffic to the west and by the proximity of the West Cambridge campus to the north, and, to a lesser extent by other development on the western edge of Cambridge, e.g. at Gough Way.

4.14.6 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 new homes 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.

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

- Retaining as much existing trees, woodland/shelter belt 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, particularly to the west and south.
- Retention of broad corridors of open space through the development.
- Use of internal planting to help break up the massing of the proposed development.
- 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

4.14.8 No physical works are proposed beyond the Site's western and southern boundaries, and so there would be no change to the spatial openness of the remaining Green Belt.

4.14.9 Access to the Site would be taken from Barton Road on the Site's southern boundary. As such, there would be some upgrades to and increases in traffic on the section of Barton Road that passes through the Green Belt.

4.14.10 Aside from Barton Road, the nature of traffic flows and the limited number 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

4.14.11 The initial visual studies, summarised in earlier sections of this report, concluded that the site is relatively well contained in visual terms, particularly from the north and east.

4.14.12 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.

4.14.13 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 western and southern edges. Such actions would help safeguard the character of the approaches into the city, e.g. along Barton Road. In addition, broad corridors of open land should be retained through any future development to facilitate views to the upper portions of the landmark buildings within the city's historic core.

4.14.14 The Site benefits from being relatively low-lying and having a strong existing green infrastructure framework, including mature tree belts and woodland. There is potential to reinforce these conditions with additional planting. These attributes would assist in visually containing development, reduce the extent of perceived change in the wider rural setting, and help preserve a sense of openness.

4.14.15 It is likely that the LVIA will conclude that once the new planting has established, the landscape to the west of the M11 and to the south of Barton Road, e.g. the remaining Green Belt, would experience a limited visual change when compared with the existing situation, save from localised elevated viewpoints such as Red Meadow Hill. Consequently, the impact on the sense of visual openness would also be limited.

Summary of effects on spatial and visual openness

4.14.16 The proposed development would, inevitably, result in harm to spatial openness within the site area but very 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.

5 Opportunities and constraints

5.1 Overview

5.1.1 Following the assessment of the Site and its landscape and visual context in Sections 2 and 3 above, and the consideration in Section 4 of the 16 qualities identified in the CIGBBS that contribute to the Green Belt at Sector 3 – including the Site – a set of opportunities and constraints has been identified for the Site relating to landscape and visual matters. An overview Landscape Strategy plan (Figure 05) has also been produced to illustrate a number of the points described below.

5.2 Opportunities

a. The Site provides the opportunity to create a comprehensive and sensitive well-planned development in a sector of land to the west of the city with excellent sustainable access links into and out of the city and university.

b. The scheme could combine high quality architecture with a network of distinctive open spaces. Proposals should reflect and build on the traditions of Cambridge as a centre of excellence.

c. The Site is not designated at a national or local level for its landscape quality or value.

d. The Site is broadly level or at most gently undulating. Topography does not represent a constraint and efficient use of the site for development is achievable.

e. A scheme could be developed to retain and enhance the watercourses through the Site benefiting local character and biodiversity. This could involve rewilding the canalised sections of the Bin Brook to form a semi-natural character within small-scale fields along the Barton Road approach to Cambridge.

f. Land use on the Site is predominantly agricultural and arable with some localised areas of pasture around Laundry Farm. The structure of the historic field pattern and hedged enclosures, including those designated as County Wildlife Sites and City Wildlife Sites could be retained and integrated with suitable offsets within a creative masterplan.

g. Existing woodland is limited to semi-mature plantations along Barton Road and to the east (of Field F) in the centre of the Site. These features could be retained to provide continued physical and visual enclosure.

h. The functional and utilitarian Laundry Farm development (forming land Unit P) could be removed and replaced with high quality residential development.

i. A comprehensive development could enable the creation of a strong network of green infrastructure across the site with strategic areas of open space forming green fingers of retained Green Belt into Cambridge. These could focus on:

   - a major east-west corridor leading between Grange Road in the east and towards Coton in the west
   - a corridor to the south along Barton Road utilising existing woodland, and

- an enhanced corridor combining Bin Brook and footpath Coton 6 leading to the Coton Reserve.

The existing hedgerows and areas of adjacent semi natural vegetation and water courses/ditches could form the basis of semi-natural green corridors. These could be widened within the Site to enhance opportunities for wildlife and include multi-functional SuDS features. The green infrastructure network could include a transition in character from rural in the west to more formal areas closer to Cambridge and associated with residential development. This could reflect other examples in the city along the Cam and Hobson's Brook. The approach of retained accessible land in Green Belt would support NPPF §§156 and 159

j. The M11 and associated traffic is a visual and audible intrusion on the western section of the Site. There is scope to provide a softening and screening of the interface between the Site and the M11 by earthworks and planting. In addition, remaining land located outside the Site but east of the M11 could by agreement with the landowners be incorporated into the green fingers and rural edge of the development. This land is under the ownership of Cambridge Past Present and Future who already manage the Coton Countryside Reserve to the west of the M11. Inclusion of this land is not a requirement of the success of development at the Site but provides scope for further enhancement.

k. A wider network of public rights of way could be provided across the Site. Coton 6 is the only route that passes through the Site. Other existing rights of way on the Site form cul-de-sacs. There is scope to provide new north-south connections to the west of the Site and routes that lead centrally through green corridors to Grange Road, Barton Road and Wilberforce Road and then into Cambridge. The approach of retained accessible land in Green Belt would support NPPF §§156 and 159. Cambridge 31 (Harcamlow Way/Wimpole Way) is located just outside the Site to the north and already provides good pedestrian and cycle links to the historic core. This route would not be physically affected by development but there is scope to provide additional connections from the site and into the West Cambridge campus.

l. Vehicular access can be achieved directly from Barton Road in the south and from Clerk Maxwell Road and Charles Babbage Road to the north. Routes into and through the site could be designed to cause minimal loss of hedgerow and vegetation and integration with adjacent land uses.

m. A suitable interface with the existing and expanding West Cambridge campus can be provided. The introduction of residential development stepping up from low to medium heights towards the northern section of the Site boundary would help to visually reduce the existing massing and scale of the existing five storey development at the southern edge of the West Cambridge development, which includes some prominent built forms.

n. Strategic native tree planting adjacent to the perimeters of the residential development areas could provide the potential for creating a new soft edge and visual enclosure of development as seen from the west.

o. Views to the landmark buildings in the city and most notably the University Library tower can be retained and framed within a development layout. The main vistas should be orientated west to east following the Harcamlow Way and though the development.

5.3 Constraints

a. The Site is fully located within the Cambridge Green Belt. Sector 3 of the Cambridge Green Belt as identified in the CIGBBS (between Cambridge, Barton Road, West Cambridge campus and the M11) is considered to play a role in the characteristic setting of the city and in providing countryside close to the distinctive core of Cambridge. There would be some conflict with NPPF Green Belt purposes 1, 3 and 4 (see Section 4 above) and Cambridge City Council/South Cambridgeshire District Council Green Belt purposes 1 and 2 (see Section 4 above). As a result, the development of the Site would need to justify exceptional circumstances to enable Green Belt release from those parts of the Site that would be developed. Design proposals could help reduce adverse effects on the retained Green Belt. This could include the provision of green corridors leading into Cambridge retained as Green Belt, as elsewhere in the city. Furthermore, the retained Green Belt has the potential for enhancement for access, recreation and biodiversity in support of §§156 and 159 of the NPPF.

b. The location of the Site in its proximity to Cambridge and its historic core

c. Strategic Views into Cambridge (as considered in Section 3 above) should be evaluated for their importance and the effect of development on the Site. Views from within the Site and along the adjacent Harcamlow Way cycleway towards landmark buildings in Cambridge should be identified and where possible built into the proposed masterplan. Views beyond the Site to the west including from the M11 and Grantchester Road should be considered. The most notable viewpoint is from Red Meadow Hill. The height and massing of development and strategic planting within the view cone over which the historic core is visible should be given careful consideration to retain views to the historic core of city.

d. Locations designated as County Wildlife Sites and City Wildlife Sites should be retained and enhanced. These include mature hedges and supporting habitats along watercourses and boundary ditches.

e. The interface with the West Cambridge Conservation Area should be given careful consideration. Most of the interface is inward looking and already softened by intervening development and mature tree planting. However, there is a central section near Bin Brook where there are likely to be some views out of the Conservation Area albeit these are currently largely from private locations. Views looking towards the Conservation Area from the Site should also be carefully considered.

f. The flood risk of the Bin Brook, which crosses the Site provides a localised constraint to where development is feasible. The flood risk areas should be suitably designed to bring landscape and biodiversity enhancements alongside flood attenuation and SuDS features.