

93 Impington Lane, Impington,
Cambridgeshire

Green Belt Appraisal

Greater Cambridgeshire Local Plan: Call
for Sites

JD Developments

Final

March 2025

tor
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| Issue / revision Final | Prepared by Richard Burton |
| Reference 293901/RB | Signature |
| This document is issued for <input type="checkbox"/> Information <input type="checkbox"/> Approval <input type="checkbox"/> Comment <input type="checkbox"/> Submission | Date 03.02.25 |
| | Checked by Richard Burton |
| Comments | Signature |
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Appendix A: Extract of LUC Assessment Parcel H18, Impington

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 tor&co has been commissioned by JD Development to prepare a Green Belt Appraisal for Land at 93 Impington Lane, Impington, Cambridgeshire. The purpose of the appraisal is to support the Call for Sites submission as part of Greater Cambridgeshire Local Plan Review. It is intended to assist the two councils to plan positively and meet the housing need in the districts as required by national policy, specifically the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 1.2 The site area is shown on figure 1.
- 1.3 The appraisal provides an overview of site and its context, before reviewing the most recent Green Belt Assessment undertaken by the councils for this part of Impington; namely, LUC's Greater Green Belt Assessment, August 2021. A brief overview of the assessment methodology for Green Belts is provided in light of the updated national guidance contained within the December 2024 NPPF and the recently published Green Belt PPG. The report concludes with a site-specific appraisal of how the site contributes to Green Belt purposes, and its Grey Belt status.
- 1.4 As part of previous local plan representations on the Cambridgeshire Green Belt, tor&co has already undertaken a site visit and reviewed the Green Belt parcels in the locality of the site.
- 1.5 The methodology adopted by LUC in their 2021 assessment has not been reappraised here; instead the focus of this study is to undertake:
- a review of the finding in the 2021 LUC assessment for Parcel HI8
 - a finer grain analysis for the site, taking account of the changes to national guidance on Green Belt
- 1.6 JD Developments is promoting the land for residential development. An initial review of site capacity has established that the site is capable of delivering circa 26 two storey residential dwellings, served off Impington Lane. Development proposals would be representative of the local settlement pattern and built form.
- 1.7 Taking account of the new guidance within the NPPF and the recently published PPG on Green Belt, the appraisal concludes that Land at 93 Impington Lane does not strongly contribute to green belt purposes (a),(b) or (d) and that development of the site would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan (para. 155 a) of NPPF). As such, the appraisal concludes that the site area should be designated as Grey Belt.

2.0 Site description and context

The site

- 2.1 The site area is 2.7 acres, and it is located on the east edge of Impington, north of Impington Village College. It is bound by Impington Lane on its southern edge, by residential development to the east and west and by countryside to the north. The southern portion of the site is previously developed land, comprising

a large L-shaped plot with a single storey bungalow centrally located. The remaining land to the is open garden with a small area currently used as a vegetable patch. A number of mature trees line the inner field boundary, while the outer field is delineated by a post and wire fence.

- 2.2 While the bungalow and its garden lie outside the Green Belt designation, the remaining land within the red line is designated as Green Belt (except for a very small parcel of land along the western boundary). Other than the Green Belt designation, the land is free of landscape and environmental constraints - refer to figure 2. The eastern boundary of the site borders St Andrew's conservation area. Residential properties along Clay Close Lane, which back onto the site, fall within the conservation area boundary.

Context

- 2.3 The villages of Impington and Histon have, over the years, coalesced to form one conurbation although each retains its own identity. The main historic core of Histon, which is now designated as a conservation area, lies to the west of the Impington site and contains a large number of listed buildings, mainly concentrated around The Green, Histon Manor and around the Station Road / Water Lane junction. Impington's historic core, also designated as a conservation area, has only one listed building which is St Andrew's Church. While there are isolated older buildings around Clay Close Lane and Burgoyne's Road they are not listed and sit amongst largely modern residential development. See figure 2, Landscape designations.
- 2.4 The topography of the landscape surrounding Impington and Histon is relatively flat at approximately 10m AOD. The land drops to around 5m AOD 2km to the north west and rises to around 20m AOD at the village of Girton, approximately 2.2km to the south east of the Impington site.
- 2.5 While there are plenty of public rights of way, (PROW), within Histon and Impington itself, there is limited public access to the landscape north of Impington. The nearest PROW is the Mere Way that follows the line of a Roman road, located approximately 1.5km to the east. A permissive footpath is located approximately 1.75km to the north.
- 2.6 The landscape to the north is well treed providing a reasonable level of visual enclosure. A combination of woodland tree belts and scrub to the rear of the site mean opportunities for obtaining views of the landscape to the north are limited. Localised views are available of the northernmost edge of the site from Clay Close Lane; otherwise views towards the site from publicly accessible areas are very limited.
- 2.7 The site is very closely associated with the existing settlement edge and being contained on three sides by residential development is perceived as being separated both physically and visually from the wider open landscape.
- 2.8 Effects of development of comparable in height with the existing settlement edge will carry very limited visual effects, experienced by visual receptors which are adjacent to the site only. No medium to long distance visual effects are anticipated.
- 2.9 The site sits within a landscape character area referred to as the "*Cottenham Fen Edge Claylands*" (Greater Cambridge Landscape Character Assessment,

February 2021). This area is characterised by a gently undulating and well settled rural landscape comprising a number of large villages with historic linear cores located on elevated '*islands*'. Urban influences associated with the urban edge of Cambridge and the major road network in the south are discordant with the otherwise rural character.

- 2.10 The site is not representative of the wider character area due to its highly enclosed nature and its close association with the settlement edge of Impington.
- 2.11 This part of the village settlement edge has changed significantly in recent years, as illustrated by figure 4. In 1999, dwellings along the northern edge of Impington backed onto the countryside edge, aside from a former industrial estate and a limited number of small-scale courtyard development that extended further north into the countryside. Since then, however, the settlement edge has significantly expanded, with two moderate sized residential developments built out to the west of the site. The first in 2012 redeveloped the industrial estate and open land immediately to its west (edged yellow), followed by a second residential development in 2022 (edge blue) – refer to figure 4.
- 2.12 Reference to the last diagram on figure 4 (proposed 2025), clearly illustrates that the land within the red line area has effectively become an infill site, surrounded on three sides by residential neighbourhoods. Development at this location would regularise the settlement edge between Glebe Way and Clay Close Lane, establishing a more coherent and consistent settlement boundary. This is highly relevant when considering how the site contributes to Green Belt purposes and the ability to establish a robust and defensible boundary.

3.0 The councils' Green Belt Assessment

- 3.1 As set out within the August 2021 Green Belt assessment by LUC, the assessment methodology for the study was based on the three Cambridge Green Belt purposes, namely:
 1. Preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre.
 2. Maintain and enhance the quality of its setting.
 3. Prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city.
- 3.2 The assessment also considered distinctiveness and openness, and provided an assessment of the level of impact on adjacent Green Belt. It concluded with an assessment of the overall harm resulting from Green Belt release.
- 3.3 Figure 3 shows the site boundary overlayed on the LUC parcels for this area of Impington. The LUC assessments for the parcels relating to the Impington site are included in appendix A.
- 3.4 The site is located within Parcel HI8 (except for the bungalow plot), but this parcel covers a much larger area of land totalling 39.93 ha. It is referenced as including fields, paddocks, scrub, wooded copse and gardens located to the east of Impington. The land is described as open, although as noted earlier in section 2, woodland and scrub visually contained the site.

- 3.5 The assessment for Parcels HI7 and HI9 have been included for information as they are located adjacent to parcel HI8.
- 3.6 Table 1 below indicates the LUC assessment for parcels HI7, HI8 and HI9.

| Green Belt purposes | Parcel HI7 | Parcel HI8 | Parcel HI9 |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| Openness | Mostly open | Open | Open |
| Distinction | Strong distinction | Moderate distinction | Weak distinction |
| Cambridge Purpose 1 | Relatively significant contribution | Moderate contribution | Relatively limited contribution |
| Cambridge Purpose 2 | Moderate contribution | Moderate contribution | Moderate contribution |
| Cambridge Purpose 3 | Moderate contribution | Relatively limited contribution | Limited/No contribution |
| Impact on adjacent Green Belt Land | Minor-Moderate | Minor – Area 1 Negligible – Area 2 | Negligible |
| Overall harm of Green Belt release | Very High | Moderate High – Area 1 Moderate – Area 2 | Low |

Table 1: LUC Green Belt assessment of the Impington site parcels

- 3.7 As can be seen on figure 3, the section of the site that is located within Green Belt accounts for a very small section of parcel HI8. Unlike most of the parcel, it is contiguous with the settlement edge and contained by development on three sides. HI8 as a whole is assessed as having a moderate distinction from Impington and providing a moderate contribution for purposes 1 and 2 and a relatively limited contribution for purpose 3.
- 3.8 The LUC assessment recognised that parcel HI8 has two distinct areas and therefore the assessment on harm to adjacent Green Belt land has been split between areas 1 and 2 - See appendix A. Area 1, to the north consists of the more open fields beyond the smaller paddocks edging Histon and Impington, and was assessed as causing minor harm on adjacent Green Belt land and an overall harm if released from Green Belt of moderate high. The land making up area 2 (within which the site is located) were assessed as creating a negligible impact on adjacent Green Belt land and an overall moderate harm if released.
- 3.9 Based on the assessment undertaken by LUC, Parcel HI8 was not considered further for Green Belt release, with the councils discounting the site for the following reason:
- “.....Whilst relatively contained and adjoining existing and planned development, it would require releasing Green Belt land to enable further intensification of development to the rear of Impington Lane.... The Cambridge Green Belt Study (2021) identifies that release of land in this area would result in a **moderate high level** of harm to the Green Belt.”*
- 3.10 It is important to note that the reference above does not acknowledge that the Green Belt land with area 2, as assessed by LUC, would have resulting in a lesser level of overall harm (moderate).
- 3.11 Further, as set out within the next section, the release of the site in isolation is considered to only result in a **low level of overall harm**, based on the Cambridge Green Belt criteria assessed by LUC.

- 3.12 As noted earlier, since the LUC assessment was produced new national guidance on Green Belts has been set out within the NPPF and Green Belt PPG.
- 3.13 The Green Belt paragraphs within the NPPF have changed significantly and the NPPF has now introduced the concept of Grey Belt. Grey Belt has been defined 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.”*
- 3.14 The part of the site that lies within the Green Belt does not meet the previously developed land test, but this appraisal has concluded the land covered by Green Belt does not strongly contribute to purposes a), b) or d). Further, it has established that development of the site would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan (para. 155 of the NPPF).
- 3.15 The Green Belt PPG published in February 2025 provides additional guidance on how contribution to Green Belt purposes should be assessed. This has been adopted in the appraisal, as outlined below.
- 3.16 Lastly, since the LUC assessment was completed, the new residential housing area to the west of the site (approved planning application S/1486/18/FL) has been built out in full, changing the configuration of the settlement edge and how the site functions in terms of Green Belt.

4.0 Site appraisal and conclusion

Cambridge Green Belt

- 4.1 It has been established that area 2 (within which the site is located) was assessed by LUC as having an overall moderate harm – not a moderate-high level.
- 4.2 The site is a small area of a much wider parcel, parcel HI8 (refer to Appendix A). This is particularly relevant as those areas that are more distinct and distant from the settlement edge will make a very different contribution to Green Belt purposes than those which lie immediately adjacent. The assessment of HI8 and indeed area 2 is therefore broad and averages the parcel's categorisation. An assessment of the site in isolation, which has very different characteristics, results in a different conclusion.

Openness

- 4.3 LUC considered only the spatial (physical) dimension of openness and not the visual aspect. Instead, the visual aspect is used in the assessment of distinctiveness. As noted earlier, the site is contained by the existing development edge and is more associated with the residential edge of Impington than with the countryside beyond. Indeed, it is perceived as being located within the settlement boundary.

Distinction

- 4.4 Area 2 and the site is largely visually contained, with the site influenced by surrounding residential development. Views of residential properties to the

south, east and west create urbanising visual influences. The southern part of the site is previously developed comprising an existing bungalow accessed off Impington Lane. The small fields do not create additional distinction from the village. For this reason, area 2 and the site has a weak distinction from Impington.

Purpose 1 – preserving the unique character of Cambridge as a compact city

- 4.5 We consider that even where “necklace” villages are within relatively close proximity to Cambridge or are tentatively ‘linked’ to Cambridge via a single line of linear development, parcels located on the far side of these settlements should not have been included in the assessment of this purpose, as we do not feel they are so visually or physically associated with Cambridge to have any bearing on preserving its character.
- 4.6 The site is not ‘*nearly contiguous with Cambridge*’. It has no relationship with the edge of Cambridge city, instead the land is more closely associated with the settlements of Histon and Impington.
- 4.7 The site, at best, makes a limited contribution to this purpose.

Purpose 2 – to maintain and enhance the quality of Cambridge’s setting

- 4.8 LUC considered that the closeness of the Histon and Impington conservation areas to parcel HI8 creates a relationship with features / designations that contribute positively to the character and setting of the city. They state that the two conservation areas:

“[allow] for some appreciation of the rural character and setting of the more intact and historic parts of Impington (Including Burgoynes Road), which in turn contribute to the wider rural setting of Cambridge...”

- 4.9 It is considered that the somewhat tenuous reference to the rural setting of Cambridge is simply not relevant in the context of this site which only has a direct relationship with Impington. While Impington St Andrew’s conservation area is adjacent to the east boundary of the site, this is not considered to be relevant when considering its contribution to this purpose. The site is assessed as making a limited contribution.

Purpose 3 – to prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city

- 4.10 Parcel HI8 is assessed as being in a wide gap between Impington and Landbeach. As LUC assess the full parcel as having a moderate distinction from Impington, it is therefore assessed as making a relatively limited contribution to purpose 3. The gap between the two settlements of Impington and Landbeach is approximately 2.5km wide. Developing within the small site that is effectively an infill site would have a negligible impact on this purpose.

Impact on contribution of adjacent Green Belt

- 4.11 This is the only section within the assessment of parcel HI8 where LUC assess areas 1 and 2 separately. The assessment of harm to adjacent Green Belt land

for the release of area 2 is negligible. This appraisal concurs with this level of contribution and the same level would apply to the site.

Overall harm of Green Belt release

- 4.12 Based on the above site-specific assessment, it is concluded that the site's removal from the Green Belt would result in **low overall harm**.

Grey Belt assessment

- 4.13 The latest guidance on assessing Green Belt was published on 27 February 2025 within the Green Belt PPG. It is relevant to note that the guidance states that *"authorities should consider where it may be appropriate to vary the size of assessment areas based on local circumstances. For example, the assessment of smaller areas may be appropriate in certain places, such as around existing settlements or public transport hubs or corridors."* The site and area 2, which are located within the larger parcel of H18, would fall within this criterion.
- 4.14 When making judgements as to whether land is Grey Belt, the contribution that assessment areas make to Green Belt purposes a, b, and d is the relevant test. Considerations for informing these judgements are set out in the guidance, with specific criteria provided to determine whether an area's contribution is strong, moderate or weak /none. Importantly, the guidance makes it clear that purposes a, b and d relate to historic towns, and not villages. Based on this new guidance the site has been re-appraised.

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

- 4.15 The area is not adjacent to a large built up area, being on the edge of the village of Impington, some 3 miles from Cambridge. The site is contained by existing development on three sides. It is assessed as making a weak contribution to this purpose.

Purpose b – to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

- 4.16 As noted earlier, the site forms only a very small part of a gap between villages (and not towns), and makes no contribution to visual separation. As such, it is considered to make a weak contribution to this purpose.

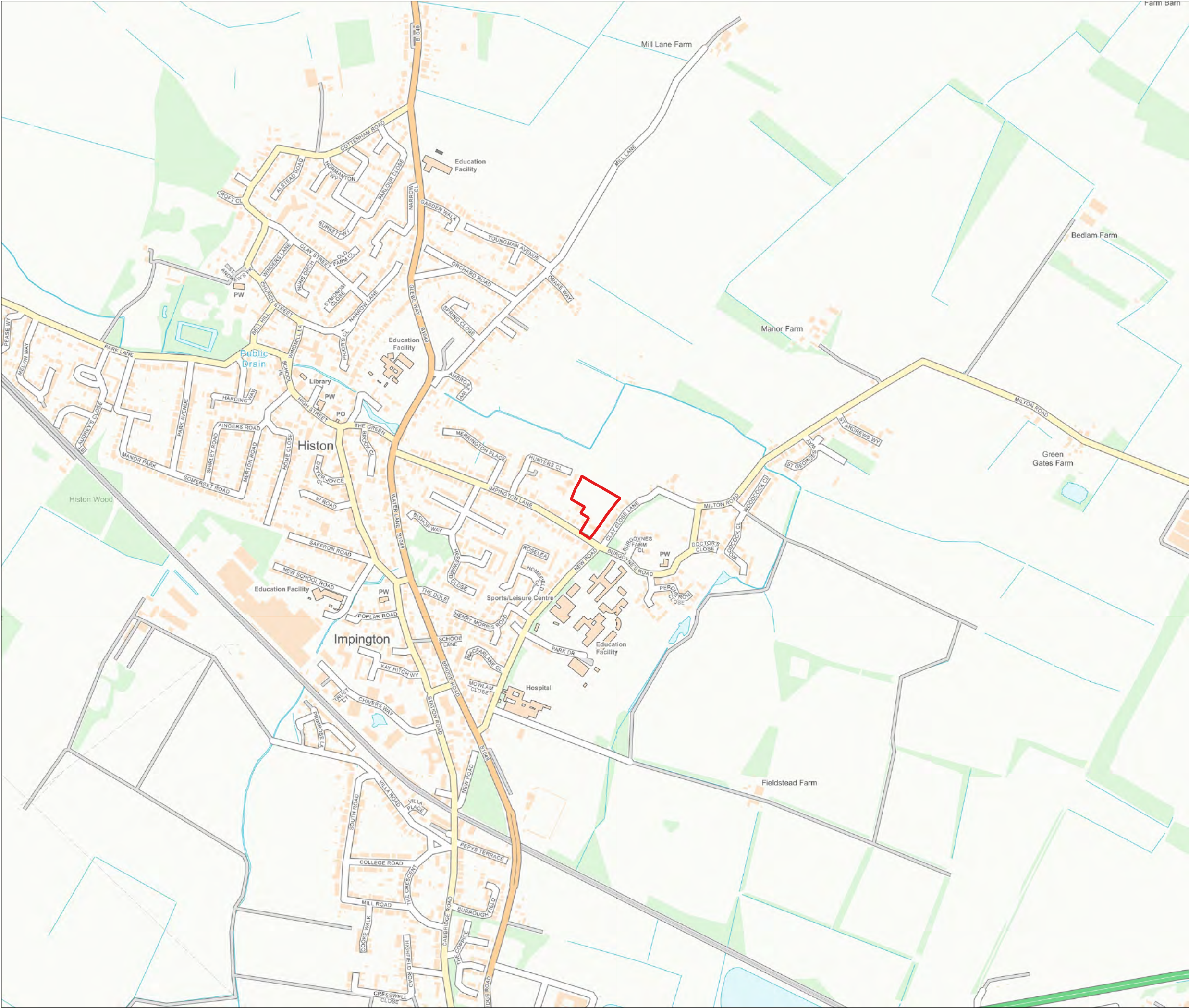
Purpose d – to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

- 4.17 This purpose is relevant to the Cambridge Green Belt. The site, however, has been shown not to form part of the setting of the historic town of Cambridge, with limited visual, physical and experiential connection to the historic aspects of the town. As such it is assessed a making a weak contribution to this purpose.

Conclusion

- 4.18 Based on the above, the site **does not strongly** contribution to purposes a, b or d. Further, the assessment of the Cambridge Green Belt has established that its release would result in an overall **low** level of harm to the remaining Green Belt.

- 4.19 The site is strongly related to the existing settlement and only weakly to the wider open countryside. It has considerable capacity for built development that is well integrated with the existing settlement and can be contained by a sufficiently robust defensible boundary through structure planting along the northern edge. Development in this infill site would regularise the settlement edge between Glebe Way and Clay Close Lane, establishing a more coherent and consistent settlement boundary. A strong and robust new Green Belt edge would result.
- 4.20 Based on Cambridge Green Belt purposes the site's removal from the Green Belt would result in **low overall harm**.
- 4.21 Taking account of the new guidance with the NPPF and the recently published PPG on Green Belt, the appraisal concludes that Land at 93 Impington Lane does not strongly contribute to Green Belt purposes (a),(b) or (d) and it has been shown that development of the site would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan.
- 4.22 As such, this appraisal concludes that land at 93 Impington Lane should be designated as Grey Belt. This is subject to satisfying the separate requirement relating to the exclusion of land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 to the NPPF (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development (which is not covered by the scope of this appraisal).



 Site Extent

Notes/Revision

93 Impington Lane
JD Developments



Figure 1: Site location plan

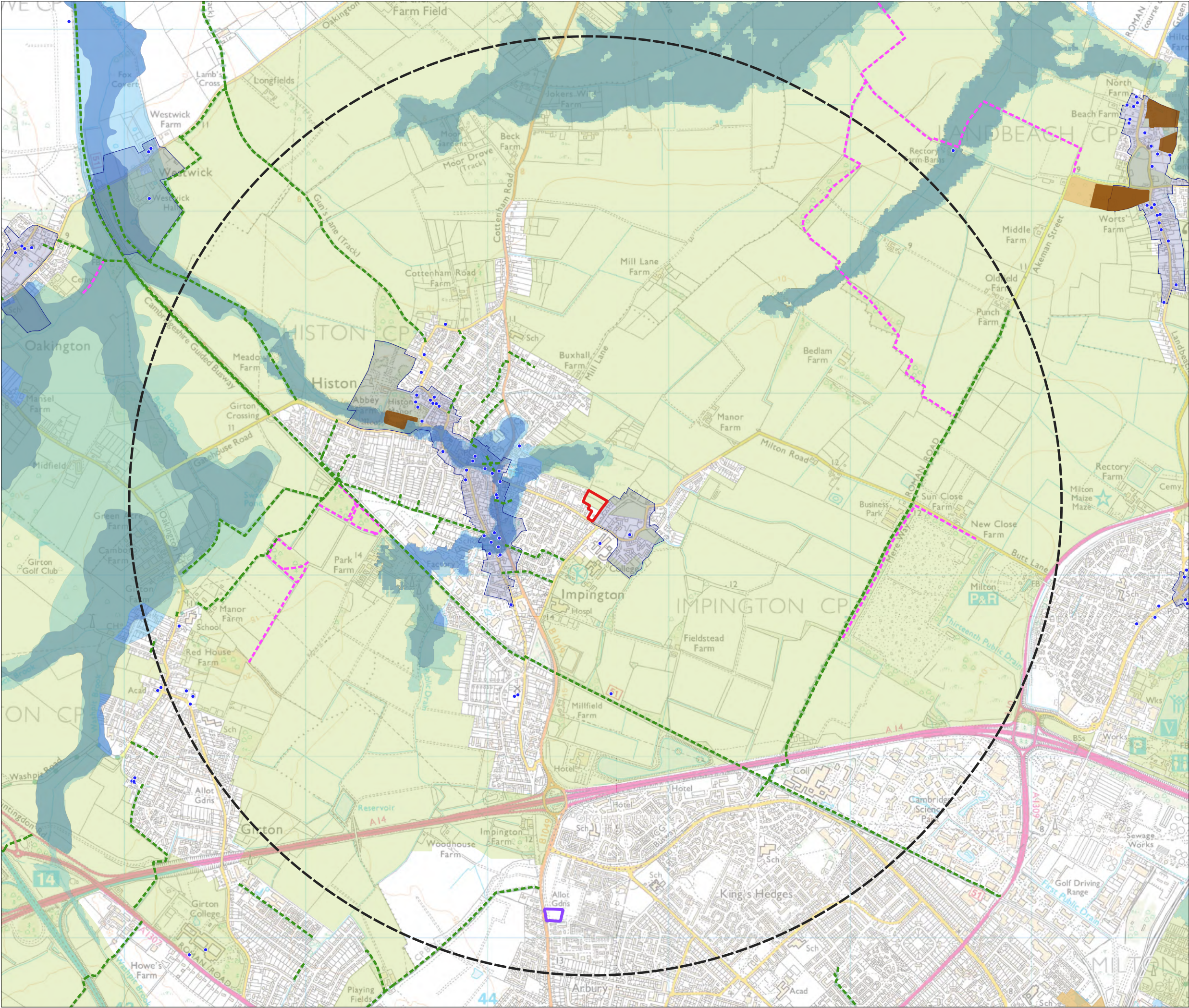
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Site Extent

2.5km study area

Public rights of way

Permissive footpath

Designations

Listed buildings

Scheduled monuments

Conservation areas

Local Nature Reserves

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Green belt

Flood Zone 2

Flood Zone 3

Notes/Revision

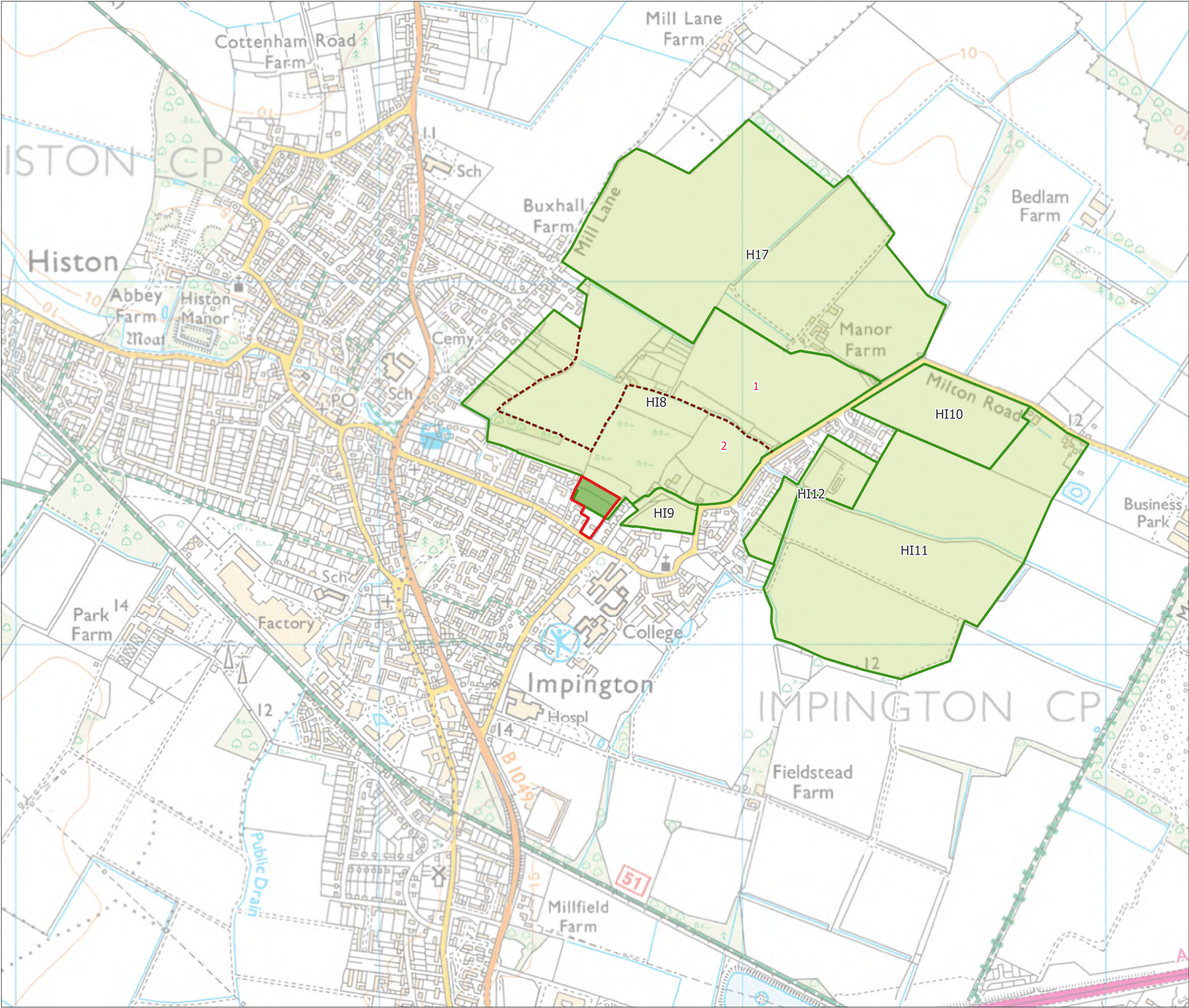
93 Impington Lane
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Figure 2: Environmental designation plan

| | | |
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- Site Extent
- Harm scenario
- LUC Green Belt parcels covering part/all of the site
- LUC Green Belt parcels around the site

Notes/Revision

93 Impington Lane
JD Developments



Figure 3: Green Belt Parcel Plan

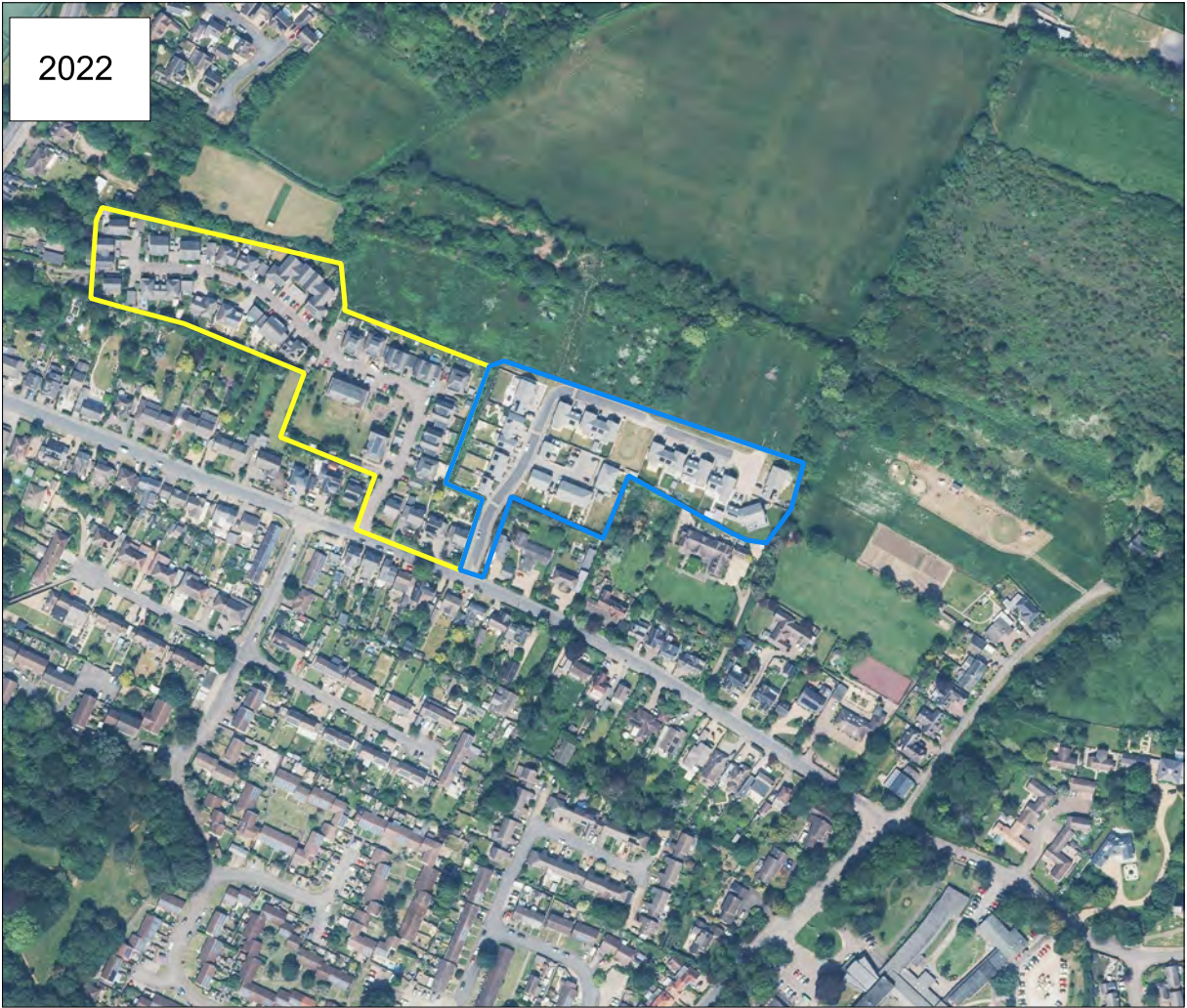
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Notes/Revision

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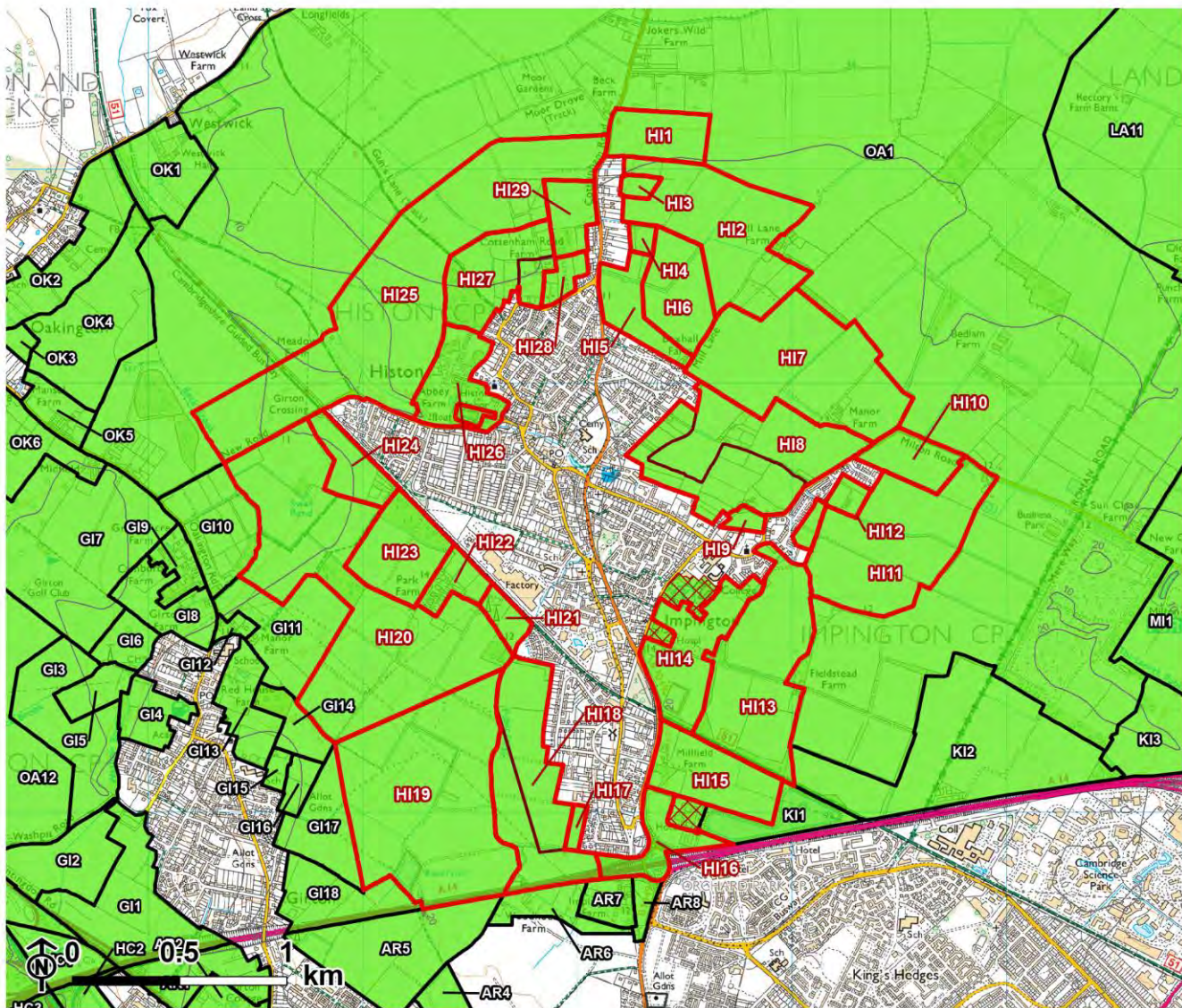




Figure 4: Development History Plan

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| Project number: 293901 | Scale @A3: | Date created: 2025/3/7 |
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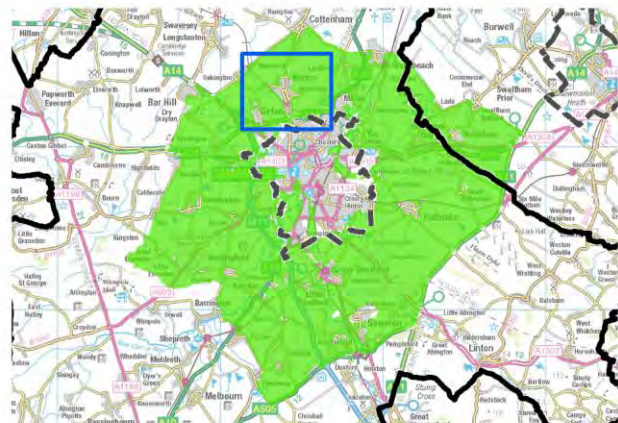
Histon and Impington



- - - Local Authority boundary
-  Histon and Impington parcel
-  Division between parcel sub-areas
-  Neighbouring parcel
-  No openness
-  Green Belt

Absolute constraints

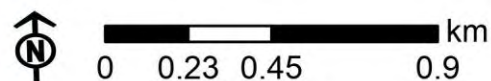
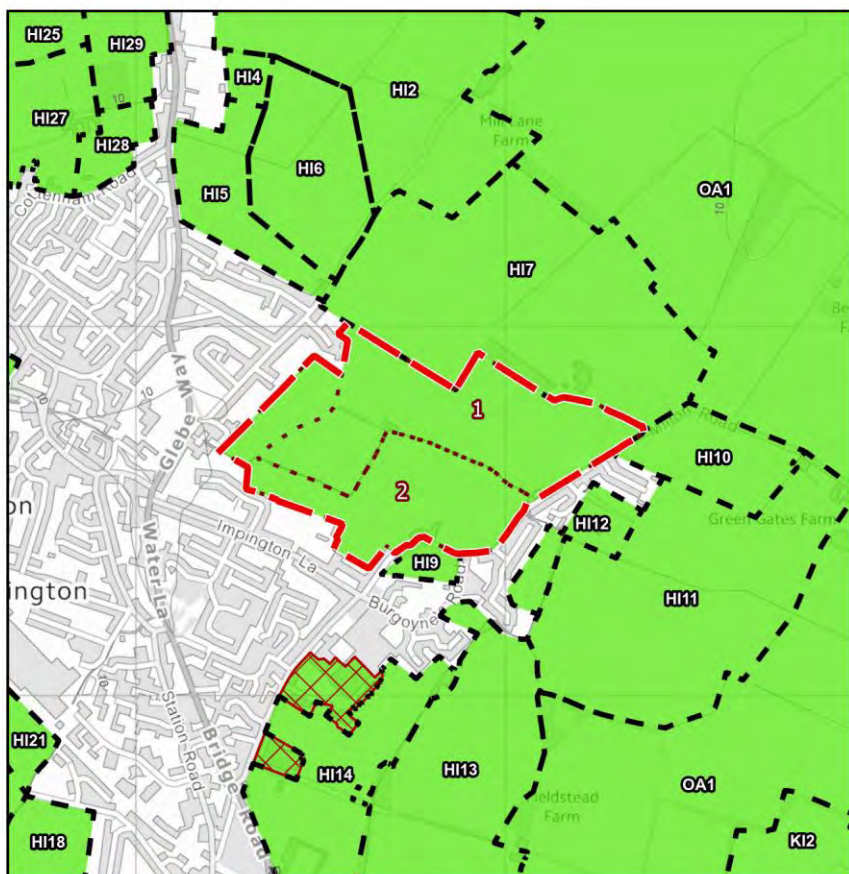
-  Site of Special Scientific Interest
-  Scheduled monument



HI8



- HI8
- Harm scenario
- Neighbouring parcel
- No openness
- Green Belt



HI8

Parcel location and openness

Parcel size: 39.93ha

Fields, paddocks, scrub, wooded copses and gardens located to the east of Impington.

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

Distinction between parcel and inset area

Milton Road is a moderate boundary feature between land in the east of the parcel and the inset village of Impington. However, the back gardens of houses to the south and west of the parcel create little boundary separation between the parcel and Impington. The parcel is largely contained by inset development, but the size of the area limits the urbanising influence, but there is some urbanising visual influence from the inset settlements to the south, east and west. The fields and paddocks that occupy the majority of the parcel do not create any additional distinction from Impington. Overall there is moderate distinction between the parcel and the urban area.

Contribution to the Green Belt purposes

- Cambridge Purpose 1 - to preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre:

Contribution: Moderate

Land is open and is adjacent to Impington, which is nearly contiguous with Cambridge but which retains some distinction from the main City area. The parcel has some relationship with the urban area but also a degree of distinction from it. Overall the parcel makes a moderate contribution to Cambridge Purpose 1.

- Cambridge Purpose 2 - to maintain and enhance the quality of Cambridge's setting:

Contribution: Moderate

The parcel comprises open farmland and woodland that has a moderate distinction from the edge of Impington, meaning it has some rural character. Land lies partly within and fronts directly onto Histon and Impington Conservation Area to the south and as such allows some appreciation of the rural character and setting of the more intact and historic parts of Impington (including Burgoyne's Road), which in turn contributes to the wider rural setting of Cambridge. Overall the parcel makes a moderate 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 open and lies in a wide gap between Impington and Landbeach. 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.

HI8

Impact on contribution of adjacent Green Belt

- Release of land beyond the smaller hedged fields on the inset settlement edge (map areas 1 and 2), as an expansion of Impington:

Rating: Minor

Release of land within the parcel would increase the urbanising visual impact on land to the north.

Land to the south of the parcel does not make a stronger contribution to any of the Green Belt purposes. Any impact on this land would not therefore increase overall harm.

- Release of land within the smaller hedged fields on the inset settlement edge (map area 2) as an expansion of Impington:

Rating: Negligible

Release of only the smaller hedged fields on the inset settlement edge would not increase the urbanising visual impact on land to the north of the parcel.

Land within the north of the parcel itself and to the south of the parcel does not make a stronger contribution to any of the Green Belt purposes.

Any impact on this land would not therefore increase overall harm.

Overall harm of Green Belt release

- Parcel HI8 makes a moderate contribution to preserving Cambridge's compact character and 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 one another. The additional impact on the adjacent Green Belt of the release of the land within the parcel extending beyond the smaller hedged fields on the inset settlement edge (map areas 1 and 2) would be minor. Therefore, the harm resulting from its release, as an expansion of Impington, would be moderate-high.

Moderate High

HI8

- The additional impact on the adjacent Green Belt of the release of only land within the smaller hedged fields on the inset settlement edge (map area 2) would be negligible. Therefore, the harm resulting from its release, as an expansion of Impington, would be moderate.

Moderate

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