

LAND AT GILSTON PARK

PRELIMINARY LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT AND REVIEW OF EAST HERTS– GREEN BELT STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

1. This paper provides an initial overview and comment related to the assessment of the landscape character and the findings of the Green Belt Review carried out by East Herts Council. It relates to the area north of the Stort Valley around Eastwick and Gilston Park, specifically the adjoining land holdings of City and Provincial and Places for People .
2. The East Herts Green Belt Study undertaken in December 2013 starts from the assumption that pressure for housing cannot be satisfied on non-Green Belt land in a sustainable manner. It assesses the Green Belt across East Herts with a view to determining whether the five purposes of Green Belt identified by the NPPF would be compromised if land is released for development. It also assesses whether in releasing Green Belt land for development would be desirable and realistic to establish compensatory Green Belt. The assessment process moves through three stages:-
 - Analysis of the existing landscape condition and character;
 - assessment of condition and strength across the entire East Herts Green Belt from which a short list of potential sites for release is identified;
 - detailed assessment of Green Belt strength at shortlisted sites.
3. This report will give a high level review of each of these three stages of the process. The Green Belt Review identifies that further finer grained analysis will be necessary at North Harlow once the likely scale and form of development have been determined. It should be said at this stage that the East Herts Review is a robust document, differences of opinion expressed within this document are of a relatively minor nature.

ANALYSIS OF EXISTING LANDSCAPE CHARCATER

4. This is provided by the 2007 East Herts Landscape Character Assessment which identifies the distinct landscapes within East Hertfordshire by describing their key characteristics, natural, historical and cultural features. In addition it provides a structured evaluation of these landscapes, a landscape strategy and guidelines for conserving and enhancing the character of each character area. The document provides a framework for assessing planning applications and other landscape planning, regulation, conservation and management activities. It should be noted that this assessment predates the release of the NPPF by several years so it is likely that its approach to development within the countryside will be slightly at odds with the strategies coming forward now under the NPPF.
5. The two sites owned by City and Provincial and Places for People respectively fall within Character Area 81 Stanstead and Pishiobury Parklands. However, in assessing the effects of any development proposals at North Harlow one also has to be aware of the potential effects on the adjoining Character Area 82 River Stort.

Character Area 81 Stanstead and Pishiobury Parklands

6. Defined as parkland and arable farming on gently undulating south facing slopes interrupted by the valleys of the Stort's tributaries. An area of ancient settlements dominated by many parklands including remnants of former deer parks.
7. Key characteristics are :- parkland , large scale arable farmland with little woodland out of the valleys, views of Harlow across the river valley with taller buildings nestling in the trees, change from floodplain to rounded slopes apparent throughout, constant noise of cars and aircraft, open rounded slopes above the Stort Valley.
8. Distinctive Features are :- country houses southerly aspect, relic cultural pattern reflects topographic change and different land cover, dovecote water tower at Briggens, historic moat at Eastwick, transition to adjoining area with small parklands on boundary.
9. Under Vegetation and Wildlife it is said that the south west part of the character area has little woodland while the north eastern part contains several important, isolated blocks of woodland. Around the parkland there are said to be extensive deciduous plantations, some grasslands and ornamental lakes which are valuable locally for birds.

10. Eastwick has few areas of ecological value except for rough grassland associated with the old moats. Gilston park has some notable veteran trees and a lake. Sayes Park has some important old woodland and individual relic oak standards and ash.
11. There are additional local wildlife sites not noted in the Landscape Character Assessment, that should be recognised for their ecological and social conservation value, north of Eastwick in the form of pasture land, at Gilston Park Lake, and others within the river valley and churchyard and woodland pockets. Areas of Archaeological Significance are non-statutorily defined areas that highlight the key historic settlement areas, scattered around the character area with foci in historic centres and farms such as Eastwick, Hunsdon House area and Gilston Park.
12. The landscape strategy and guidelines for Area 81 shows that it has a moderate condition and moderate strength of character which puts it in the “Improve and Conserve category for future strategies. The strategy and guidelines for managing change are focused toward retention, protection and restoration of the existing rural features rather than the acceptance of new development. Indeed the last policy in the strategy list is to “ensure that proposed development is only permitted where it will enhance local landscape character”. Clearly this will be difficult to achieve if large scale development is allowed.
13. The Landscape Character Assessment identifies distinctiveness in a high number of associated parklands in the area. Moving through the landscape, parts of this character area still read as fragments of the historic parkland setting, particularly from areas where vistas are more extensive. Where large arable field systems dominate the earlier historic assets are less apparent, although Areas of Archaeological Significance are recognised within arable farmland, architectural remnants are typically not visible on the surface.

Character Area 82 River Stort

14. Rural river valley, made up of open farmland with wetlands and open water. A relatively enclosed landscape with visual connections focused on the river. Noise travels into the valley from the railway, roads and planes. Watercourses present are the original River Stort and the channelled Stort Navigation and tributaries which is considered a significant recreational amenity. The A414 is north of the flood plain,

which demarcates a change in land character with arable slopes to the north and wetlands to the south.

15. Key characteristics are :- river valley, rural character, enclosed setting lacking panoramic views, urban impact varied.
16. Distinctive Features are :- narrowboats, relics of water-related industry, tranquil watercourse with locks & willow fringes.
17. The Edwardian historic character of Sawbridgeworth is noted with 19th-century water-related industrial buildings.
18. The Stort Valley is recognised as a High Biodiversity Area and the natural floodplain is considered of major ecological value, with species uncommon elsewhere in Hertfordshire. Rare flora found include shining pondweed, arrowhead, and yellow waterlilies, with fauna such as water voles also present. Hunsdon and Parndon Meads form the most important floodplain grasslands in Hertfordshire. Parts of the canalised river and areas affected by mineral extraction are severely degraded.
19. The landscape strategy and guidelines for Area 82 shows that it has a moderate condition and moderate strength of character which puts it in the “Improve and Conserve category for future strategies. This is perhaps a little surprising as the landscape character would appear to be very strong, it has resisted development pressures and remains fairly true to its historic condition. It could be argued that this area should be in either the “conserve and strengthen” or the “safeguard and manage category.
20. The strategy and guidelines for managing change identifies resisting development or mineral extraction in this area that may result in ecological damage, and encouraging good water and vegetation management to conserve healthy wetland systems.
21. It is important to add, there is significant disconnection of the River Valley to the surrounding landscape, not only due to contours and vegetation limiting view extents but also for access reasons, as paths predominately weave alongside the river. The A414 is clearly the most disruptive element to the river corridor which underlines the disconnect and presents noise and visual interference beyond any other man made intervention.

GREEN BELT REVIEW PART 1

22. The next step in the process is the Sept 2013 East Herts District Wide Green Belt Review Part 1 which provides a high level assessment of the entire Green Belt with a view to assessing which Green Belt land within East could be released.

23. It seeks to address whether the District's development needs can be met within the Green Belt. The assumption is that housing needs will need to be met on the edge of existing settlement as there are insufficient opportunities within settlements to accommodate the required volume of housing. As the four major settlements within East Herts are all within the Green Belt it follows that Green Belt release is a logical consequence of future building.

24. In order to assess the potential for various parts of the Green Belt to facilitate release for development the East Herts Report has used four of the five purposes of Green Belt defined by the NPPF:-

- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

The fifth NPPF purpose, To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land, was not considered locally relevant.

These four criteria are applied to a series of ID plots which relate to the character areas of the 2007 Character Assessment, there being five ID plots spread across the two Character Areas.

Character Assessment Ref	District Wide Ref	Place	Ownership
81	28	Stanstead to Pishiobury Parklands	City and Provincial with Places for People at East End
81-82	29	Stanstead to Pishiobury	

		Parklands , River Stort	
81	30	Stanstead to Pishiobury Parklands	Places for People
82	31	River Stort	Places for People
82 (and 84)	32	High Wych Slopes, River Stort	Places for People

Each ID plot is assessed against the four Green Belt objectives and assigned one of three ratings to indicate its contribution to Green Belt purposes

Red – Significant

Amber – Contribution

Green – Limited

25. City and Provincial have taken the allocations for each plot and have added their own observations. In the main there is no disagreement with the text in these tables at Appendix 1. However, there are some minor issues in terms of consistency, particularly related to checking sprawl and merging across plots 28 and 30.

City and Provincial Observations

26. The Green Belt Review applies only to Green Belt land. However, it is assumed that similar protection measures relate to rural land to the north. It is assumed that major development within these areas would not be sustainable by virtue of its inaccessibility and lack of services/ infrastructure.

27. Green Belt within the East Herts extends in a narrow area across the south end of the District, it is at its narrowest in the area north of Harlow where it is only 1.9 km wide. The Metropolitan Green Belt does extend further south into Essex to the edge of the main London conurbation. However, Green Belt release in ID plots 28–32 would create a fragmented Green Belt and may even push the boundary to the south of Harlow.

28. In terms of checking unrestricted sprawl ID plot 30 is assigned a rating of Limited Contribution while the adjoining plot 28 has the higher Contribution rating. It would have been expected that these would be the same and possibly that ID plot 30 would have the higher value due to the close proximity of High Wych and Sawbridgeworth.

A comparison of The East Herts Green Belt Assessment and City and Provincial findings are set out in the following tables.

District – Wide Assessment ID 28	Landscape Character Assessment ID 81	1 Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas	Prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns
East Herts Assessment	<p>Contribution – The Green Belt in the west of this area around Stanstead Abbots/St Margarets plays a significant role in preventing the unrestricted sprawl of the village, which being otherwise relatively unconstrained would have likely spread further eastwards along local roads.</p>	<p>Limited Contribution – This area contributes to preventing the merging of neighbouring towns only in combination with area 29 to the south which contains the River Stort Valley. The Green Belt in this location does however have a role in preventing the growth of various small settlements in this area.</p>	<p>Contribution – There is a small amount of ribbon development stretching into this area from Stanstead Abbots/St Margarets to the west. There are two relatively large woodlands of Wildlife Site status in this area. Being on predominantly southward-facing slopes, the estate parklands and arable fields are prominent. The Harcamlow Way, a popular Right of Way extends throughout this area although access to the parklands is limited.</p>	<p>Limited Contribution – This area plays a limited role in preserving the setting of historic towns. However, where the area abuts the large village of Stanstead Abbots/St Margarets, it influences the form of the eastern edge of the settlement.</p>	

<p>City and Provincial Assessment</p>	<p>Limited Contribution- The threat of unrestricted sprawl occurring at Stansted Abbots would appear to be no greater than in ID plot 30 at High Wych and Sawbridgethworth.</p>	<p>The green belt at this location does prevent villages merging with other settlements, particularly Hunsdon and Hunsdonbury to the north. However, this purpose is no greater than High Wych in ID plot 30.</p>	<p>Limited contribution. There are sites of nature conservation within and adjacent to this ID plot. However their number is less than ID plot 30 which contains several blocks of Ancient Woodland and which has only a Contribution Value. These blocks of woodland do benefit from Green Belt protection.</p>	<p>Limited Contribution. It could be argued that this should be raised to Contributory as there is a Listed building within the ID plot and it does lie to the south of historic buildings and the former deer park at Hunsdonbury. However, it should have the same rating as Plot 30 which contains Gilston Park and former deer parks at Sayes Park.</p>
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District – Wide Assessment ID 29	Landscape Character Assessment ID 81–82	1 Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas	Prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns
East Herts Assessment	Contribution – The River Stort and its floodplain has formed the strongest barrier to the northern growth of Harlow, which was originally designed to not breach the Stort Valley. This has been strengthened by the construction of the A414.	Significant Contribution – The Green Belt in this location contributes towards the strategic gap between Roydon and Harlow to the south, Stanstead Abbots/St Margarets to the north and Hoddesdon to the west.	Significant Contribution – This area contains a wealth of Wildlife Sites and a Local Nature Reserve/ SSSI, along with Rights of Way and Historic Parklands on the south-facing slopes of the Stort Valley.	Contribution – The original plan for the New Town of Harlow intended the River Stort and its valley to act as the northern limit to the settlement. There are a number of Historic Parkland estates within this area. However, the Stort Valley, A414 and railway line contribute to preventing the northward extent of Roydon and Harlow as much as the Green Belt designation.	
City and Provincial Assessment	Unclear why the assessment for ID plot 29 is greater than the southern tip of 30 which is said to make only Limited contribution. Agreed that it should be less than plot 27 which checks growth from Roydon and plots 31 and 32 which check growth from	Agreed	Agreed	Agreed	

	Harlow.			
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District – Wide Assessment ID 30	Landscape Character Assessment ID 81	1 Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas	Prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns
East Herts Assessment	<p>Limited Contribution – The distance of this area from the nearest towns means this area of Green Belt has limited purpose in terms preventing the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.</p>	<p>Limited Contribution – The large estate of Gilston Park and the village of Eastwick are the only notable settlements that would likely be larger if not for the Green Belt designation.</p>	<p>Contribution – There are several Wildlife Sites and important ancient woodlands in this area that are made more valuable given the large expanse of land managed as estate parklands or small farm holdings. The rising valley slopes make the countryside highly visible.</p>	<p>Contribution – There are several historic estates that have evolved into mansions with modern residential units in the grounds, which along with Eastwick village are the only forms of settlement in the area. However, the southward facing slopes of this area are a part of the Stort Valley which contributes to the setting of the New Town of Harlow.</p>	
City and Provincial Assessment	<p>Agreed but then the same assessment should apply to ID 28.</p>	<p>It would be feasible for Sawbridgeworth and High Wych to expand Southward and westward which would create a coalescence of development around the north east corner of Harlow.</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	<p>Agreed</p>	

District – Wide Assessment ID 31	Landscape Character Assessment ID 82	1 Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas	Prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns
East Herts Assessment	Significant Contribution – The River Stort and its floodplain has formed the strongest barrier to the northern growth of Harlow, which was designed to not breach the Stort Valley. The Green Belt has prevented the northward sprawl of Harlow.	Significant Contribution – Particularly in the eastern part of this area, the Green Belt contributes along with the Stort Valley, to preventing Harlow from expanding northwards towards Sawbridgeworth. Otherwise, there is only the small village of Gilston that might otherwise be encroached upon.	Significant Contribution – The floodplain of the River Stort has formed the strongest barrier to encroachment. There are several stretches of the valley that are protected by Wildlife Site, Nature Reserve and SSSI status.	Contribution– The Stort Valley was designed to be the northern extent of the New Town of Harlow. However, there are physical constraints such as the valley environment that has contributed to this purpose more so than the Green Belt designation.	
City and Provincial Assessment	Agreed	Agreed although could be argued that ID 30 and 32 do more of the safeguarding.	Agreed	There is a concentration of historic features at this point which are protected by the Green Belt status.	

District – Wide Assessment ID 32	Landscape Character Assessment ID 82	1 Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas	Prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns
East Herts Assessment	Significant Contribution – Even despite the Green Belt designation, there is a considerable amount of sprawl leading south from Sawbridgeworth. Built development extends from Harlow right up to the County boundary.	Significant Contribution – There has been considerable built development in this area which has almost closed the gap between Sawbridgeworth and the New Town of Harlow to the south with considerable sprawl along all roads connecting the two towns. The Green Belt Strategic Gap is the only thing preventing the merging of the two settlements.	Significant Contribution – There has been considerable built development in this area which has encroached upon a number of Wildlife Sites and has reduced the open nature of the area by enclosing the few remaining farmland areas with suburban housing estates.	Significant Contribution – There has been considerable built development extending along all roads connecting Sawbridgeworth and Harlow. This has artificially extended the form of Sawbridgeworth to the south reducing the compactness of the small market town and the setting of the historic parkland of Pishiobury Park has been subsumed in the urban features of the A1184.	

City and Provincial Assessment	Agreed	Agreed	Agreed	Agreed
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EAST HERTS GREEN BELT REVIEW PARTS 2–6 DECEMBER 2013

29. This stage of the process provides a more detailed and finer grained analysis. It takes the short list of sites identified by Phase 1 and applies the same four tests in terms of the NPPF Green Belt purposes. Included within this stage of the process is the site at North Harlow, referred to as GBR 16 which is subdivided into three sub plots :-

16A	West end South of Hunsdon	Mainly City and Provincial land but a small part at East end is Places for People
16B	West of Gilston Park	Places for People
16C	East of Gilston Park	Places for People (part)

30. The boundaries of 16A–16C do not correspond with ownership boundaries, so it should be noted some land sits outside of these sub-plots. Some City and Provincial land sits to the West of GBR 16, approximately half of Places for People land sits to the north of 16B & 16C, and a further slither of Places for People land sits to the south in the river corridor.

31. The summary of the findings for these three plots are :-

- The Green Belt serves the purpose of checking unrestricted sprawl from the built-up area of Harlow, as it maintains the openness, particularly given its distance from the town.
- The Green Belt serves the purpose of preventing merging with the neighbouring town of Sawbridgeworth at Sites 16B and 16C, particularly to the eastern part of Site 16C. If land were released to the west of Sawbridgeworth then the Green Belt furthest east would be even more critical in preventing merging given that the strategic gap would be reduced further. East Herts Green Belt Review: Part 2
- The Green Belt serves the purpose of assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment particularly due to the presence of the high nature conservation value, protected ancient woodland and high grade agricultural land.
- The Green Belt containing the southward facing slopes of the Stort Valley does serve a purpose in preserving the setting of Harlow, although it does not serve the purpose of preserving the character of Harlow.

32. Given that the assessment is District Wide and covers 25 detailed areas of search it is inevitable that the process will have its limitations. It was not intended that it should act as a comparison between plots as the circumstances at each plot would be different, more that it assessed the effects on the NPPF Green Belt purposes as a means to informing decisions within the Borough about Green Belt release. When it comes to assessing the merits of adjoining plots a finer grained process of review would be required. For example, under the purpose of “assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment” a plot will attract the highest rating of 3 if it contains only a fragment of a site of nature conservation value, there is no differentiation from plots which contain significant areas of ecological value, ancient woodlands etc. The report does recognise these limitations and one of the recommendations for North Harlow is that a further review is carried out to assess the area in greater detail.

In terms of the NPPF purposes the scorings are as follows :-

NPPF purpose	16A	16B	16C
Checking unrestricted sprawl	6	6	6
Preventing neighbouring towns (and villages) from merging	2	3	6
Assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	12	13	13
Preserve setting and special character of historic towns	4	4	4

33.As the Green Belt Review identifies there is a need for a more detailed assessment as part of any planned development for North Harlow. The following tables provides an initial assessment of the values that might be applied across the three sub areas 16A, B and C through comparison with each other rather than the other areas across the District. Rather than assigning values of 1,2,3 this assessment assigns values of highest, middle and lowest to the various criteria, lowest being the lowest level of impact arising from greenbelt release, if they are equal then the two plots are assigned the same weighting.

Purpose 1 Checking unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas

	16A	16B	16C
Openness	Lowest	Middle	Highest
Impending ribbon development	Lowest	Middle	Highest

34.The close proximity of adjacent settlements at Sawbridgeworth, High Wych, the northern edge of Harlow and now at Terlings Park mean that at 16C pressures on the retained Green Belt would be significant. This is recognised in the notes within the East Herts Review. 16B would be higher than 16A as it already contains development at Gilston Hall and at the village of Eastwick and is closer to Harlow.

Purpose 2 Prevent Neighbouring towns from merging

	16A	16B	16C
Distance to Neighbouring Towns	Lowest	Middle	Highest (Sawbridgeworth)
Distance to neighbouring	Middle Eastwick adjacent &	Highest Eastwick (within	Lowest (High Wych 1.35

villages	Hunstonbury 0.75km	plot)	km)
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35. Due to the East Herts settlement pattern of small villages and towns, maintaining strategic gaps between smaller settlements is equally important, as identified in the Green Belt Review. In terms of proximity to Harlow 16B and C would be closer at less than 1Km while A is around 1.5 Km.

Purpose 3 Assisting in Safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

	16A	16B	16C
Nature Conservation	Lowest	Highest	Middle
Trees Hedgerows	Lowest	Middle	Highest
Landscape Character Assessment	Lowest	Middle	Highest
Agricultural land classification	Highest	Highest	Highest
Accessibility	Lowest	Highest	Middle

36. All three areas lie adjacent to river corridor, which hosts the most vulnerable and important habitats locally. Although the A414 marks a physical separation, the Stort Valley slope visually and hydraulically connects these sites to the river corridor, of which all three sites hold compatible connections.

It seems 16A only contains one local wildlife site; the field west of Eastwick Hall Lane, not two sites as mentioned in the Green Belt Review. Sites within close proximity are Lord's Wood wildlife site and ancient woodland, Eastwick Mead and the SSSI at Hunsdon Mead. 16B has four sites of conservation interest internally; two pasture wildlife sites, part of Home wood/Gibson's Shaw ancient woodland, and Gilston Park Lake wildlife site. The prominent scale of Home wood/Gibson's Shaw ancient woodland in comparison to other ancient woodland pockets locally is notable. Just outside 16B are three further local wildlife sites and pasture within 16A. 16C hosts part of Gilston Park Lake wildlife site and one other local wildlife site, as well as two ancient and replanted woodlands. 16B presents slightly more habitat diversity and a larger proportion of conservation areas in comparison to 16C.

These areas are regarded relatively high grade in the Landscape Character Assessment. Quality differentiation of landscape character between the sub plots is subjective and difficult to justify. There is, however, one factor still to be taken into consideration; the power line that cuts through 16A, and the north west tip of 16B.

This presents a significant local degradation of the rural setting and visual amenity, and results in a degree of physical division. For this reason, the value of 16A and 16B is considered lower than 16C.

The East Herts assessment recognises a mix of agricultural land classifications are present in all sub-plots, with Grade 2 prominent in all three. No further comparison has been drawn between plots.

This part of the Stort Valley presents good access to the countryside. 16B provides a greater network of footpaths although 16C is accessible to a similar extent.

Purpose 4 Preserving setting and special character of historic towns

	16A	16B	16C
Designated Heritage Assets	Middle	Highest	Lowest
Conservation Areas	NA	NA	NA

37. 16A contains Listings at Brickhouse Farm and at its south east corner the Church of St Botolph and Eastwick Manor. 16A hosts five non-statutory Areas of Archaeological Significance, two of these areas continuing outside the boundary such as Eastwick which enters 16B. Nearby is a collection of archaeological and architectural interests at Hunsdonbury including grade I Listed buildings Hunsdon House and the Church of St Dunstan's. To the south west lies the Listed Briggens House and the associated Parkland which is on the English Heritage non statutory Parks & Gardens list. 16B has a higher rating because it contains a concentration of historic features at Gilston Park, and also some at Eastwick, including Areas of Archaeological Significance similar in number and area cover to 16A. A scheduled site containing a moat and deer-pen West of Gilston village are also within 16B. 16C contains a small number of listed buildings, at Channoeks Farm and a further two near Gilston Park house to the West, and is about 1km away from the High Wych Conservation Area. There are four Areas of Archaeological Significance, now seemingly removed from any visible architectural remains with the exception of Channoeks Farm.

38. As identified in the Green Belt Review, the south facing aspect is important in the preservation of the setting of Harlow. Due to the limited range of views in some parts of the Stort Valley and pockets of visual enclosure, some areas within these sub-plots are limited in achieving this objective due to topographical and vegetative screening.

CONCLUSION

39. The site with the greater number of lowest ratings is 16A, and to a significant degree, so in terms of Green Belt release this would seem to be easier to justify within this sub-plot.

COMPENSATORY GREEN BELT

40. The East Herts Review recognises at 10.3 that if the scale of development at North Harlow were to be of the scale being tested then compensatory Green Belt may need to be sought to the north of the development. There are no identifiable continuous strong boundaries to the north although a number of ancient woodlands provide boundaries independently. Links between these blocks would need to be strengthened. Future Green Belt boundaries can both connect these woodland pockets and be built into the form of future developments, which can further promote access and conservation opportunity of these ancient woodlands.

41. The compensatory Green Belt would not provide any direct protection for native hedgerows and unprotected trees which are sited near to future developments. Hedgerows currently protected may fall out of the protection the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 post development due to surrounding land use. Trees and hedgerows would be subject to increased pressure of felling or damage due to proximity of future developments, therefore further protection measures should be considered in this instance.