

Uttlesford District Council

Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Phase 1: Towns and key villages

Draft report

Prepared by LUC

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Uttlesford District Council

Landscape Sensitivity Assessment
Phase 1: Towns and key villages

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This chapter gives an overview of the study and presents the policy context

Background and purpose of this study

1.1 Uttlesford District Council (UDC) is in the early stages of preparing a new Local Plan to cover the period 2020 - 2040, which will need to accommodate a significant amount of new housing growth. As part of the evidence base for the Local Plan, the Council needs to consider whether the landscape around towns and villages in the district, as well as sites for new settlements, has the capacity to accommodate new development without causing significant adverse effects on its character.

1.2 UDC commissioned LUC in June 2021 to prepare a landscape sensitivity assessment (hereafter referred to as the study) for the following:

- Phase 1: Towns and key villages
- Phase 2: Potential new settlement locations
- Phase 3: Allocations around other villages

1.3 The purpose of the study is to provide a robust and up-to-date evidence base and assessment to inform the appropriate scale, form and location of future development to minimise harm to landscape and the setting of settlements. By assessing and mapping the relative sensitivity of different landscapes the study will provide a tool for informing landscape change.

1.4 The outputs of the study will be used by UDC to;

- Identify land where development would be most appropriate to minimise impact on landscape i.e. areas of least sensitivity.
- Help in refining broad growth areas and inform the evaluation of potential development locations.
- Help establish individual site options for consideration through the Sustainability Appraisal process and for future consultation.

Policy context

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

1.5 The UK Government published an updated and revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in July 2021, which sets out the environmental, social and economic planning policies for England. Central to NPPF policies is a presumption in favour of sustainable development; that development should be planned for positively and individual proposals should be approved wherever possible.

1.6 One of the overarching objectives that underpins the NPPF is set out in **Paragraph 8**: “an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment.”

1.7 Paragraph 174 states that “planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by **protecting and enhancing valued landscapes**” and “**recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside**”.

1.8 Paragraph 20 states ‘Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development, and make sufficient provision for:

- a) housing (including affordable housing), employment, retail, leisure and other commercial development;
- b) infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, security, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management, and the provision of minerals and energy (including heat);
- c) community facilities (such as health, education and cultural infrastructure); and
- d) conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation’.

1.9 Paragraph 130 states ‘Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials

to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit.

e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and

f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience’.

1.10 Paragraph 175 states ‘Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries’.

1.11 Paragraph 185 contains one reference to sensitivity as follows:

‘Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development...’

National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)

Further guidance is provided in the NPPG. Paragraph: 037 Reference ID: 8-037-20190721 Revision date: 21 07 2019 notes the following under the heading of ‘How can the character of the landscape be assessed?’

1.12 “...*Landscape sensitivity can inform policy development and appropriate locations for development and can also be one of the considerations to be taken into account when making decisions on planning applications.*”

1.13 *To help assess the type and scale of development that might be able to be accommodated without compromising landscape character, a Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Assessment can be completed. To demonstrate the likely effects of a proposed development on the landscape, a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment can be used.*

Local Plan

1.14 The draft Local Plan 2019 was withdrawn in April 2020 following the Inspectors’ Letter of January 2020. Preparation of the new Local Plan 2020-2040 is currently underway, with

the first consultation stage completed in April 2021. The aim is to adopt the new Local Plan in December 2023.

1.15 The 2005 Local Plan is the current adopted plan for Uttlesford. The following policies relate directly to the Local Plan's stance on the protection of landscapes:

- **Policy S8 The Countryside Protection Zone** states that development will not be permitted if it promotes coalescence between Stansted Airport and existing development in the surrounding countryside, or if it would adversely affect the open character of the landscape.
- **Policy GEN2 Design** states that new development should safeguard important environmental features in its setting, retaining them and using them to reduce the visual impact of the new development were possible.
- **Policy GEN5 Light Pollution** states that developments with lighting schemes must use the minimum level of lighting necessary to achieve its purpose, and minimise glare and light spillage.
- **Policy ENV3 Open Spaces and Trees** states that traditional open spaces, visually important spaces, groups of trees and fine individual trees should be maintained, unless the need for development outweighs their amenity value.
- **Policy ENV8 Other Landscape Elements of Importance for Nature Conservation** states that the following landscape features should be retained where possible, and mitigation provided if this is not possible:
 - Hedgerows
 - Linear tree belts
 - Larger semi natural or ancient woodlands
 - Semi-natural grasslands
 - Green lanes and special verges
 - Orchards
 - Plantations
 - Ponds
 - Reservoirs
 - River corridors
 - Linear wetland features
 - Networks or patterns of other locally important habitats.
- **Policy ENV9 Historic Landscapes** states that significant local historic landscapes, historic parks and

gardens and protected lanes should not be harmed by new development.

Neighbourhood Plans

1.16 Three settlements within Uttlesford have adopted Neighbourhood Plans:

- Felsted (adopted February 2020)
- Great Dunmow (adopted December 2016)
- Thaxted (adopted February 2019).

Using this study

Limitation of the landscape sensitivity assessment

1.17 This study provides an assessment of the relative landscape sensitivities of different landscape areas to residential and employment development, without knowing the exact location, layout, design or mitigation proposed.

1.18 It should not be interpreted as a definitive statement on the suitability of certain locations for a particular development. It is not a replacement for detailed studies for specific siting and design and all developments will need to be assessed on their individual merits.

1.19 The study is based on an assessment of landscape character using carefully defined criteria. Landscape sensitivity is the result of a complex interplay of often unequally weighted variables (or 'criteria'). We have sought to address this issue in our summary of overall landscape sensitivity given for each assessment area (or 'parcel') – which considers how the criteria-based assessments combine to give an overall sensitivity result for the different development types under consideration. The assessments are based on professional judgement, taking account of the interplay between criteria, as well as those which might be more important to the landscape character of the parcel.

1.20 It is also worth noting that the assessment considers the following:

- The natural character of the landscape but not specific ecological issues in relation to species or habitats;
- The historic and cultural character of the landscape but not specific cultural heritage/archaeological issues associated with individual designated heritage assets and their settings; and
- The visual character of the landscape but not visual amenity issues associated with specific receptors, such as the overall quality, experience and nature of public views from specific locations such as promoted viewpoints, or of private views and outlook available to occupants of residential properties.

1.21 These are all issues that will need to be taken into account in site selection and impacts will need to be reported at the time when individual proposals are put forward – as such they will be addressed through the Sustainability Appraisal, the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA), planning applications and the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process including more detailed landscape and visual impact assessments and appraisals (LVIA).

1.22 This study concentrates on understanding the sensitivities to development and does not address capacity. Capacity is a further stage of assessment that requires consideration of cumulative development, landscape objectives, and thresholds of acceptable change to identify likely quantum of change that can be accommodated.

1.23 Finally, this remains a strategic study which is based on the assessment of broad settlement edge parcels. There are likely to be spatial variations in character within any one parcel and these are generally described in the text. Individual site level investigations will likely indicate further differences and variations at the site scale. This study was undertaken at 1:25,000 scale, involving desk study and field work from public rights of way and public vantage points.

Structure of the report

1.24 Each phase of the study will be presented in its own report. Each report is structured as follows:

Chapter 1 presents an introduction and policy context (this chapter)

Chapter 2 sets out the methodology for the landscape sensitivity assessment.

Chapter 3 sets out the overall landscape sensitivity results.

Appendix A contains the sources of information used in the assessment.

Appendix B contains a glossary of terms.

Appendix C presents the landscape sensitivity assessment profiles by parcel, ordered alphabetically by settlement.

Chapter 2 Methodology

This chapter sets out the approach to assessing for the landscape sensitivity

2.1 The process for undertaking the landscape sensitivity assessment involved three main stages:

- Phase 1: Towns and villages
- Phase 2: Potential new settlements
- Phase 3: Additional sites around smaller villages

2.2 The methodology for Phase 1: Towns and villages is described below.

Phase 1: Towns and villages LSA

Type and scale of developments considered

2.3 The assessment considers the landscape sensitivity of the landscape around towns and villages within Uttlesford District to specific residential and commercial development types. These development scenarios were agreed with UDC as representative of those that are most likely to be put forward by developers.

2.4 The development scenarios used for the assessment are set out in **Table 2.1**.

Table 2.1: Development types

Development Typology	Description	Example
Residential housing development	Low density two-three storey houses at approx.30-40 dwellings per hectare (dph) with associated access roads, private gardens and garaging.	 <p data-bbox="930 1957 1543 2000">Elms Farm, Stansted Mountfitchet</p>

Development Typology	Description	Example
		(© Design for Homes)
Mixed use development	Low density two-three storey houses at approx.30-40 dwellings per hectare (dph) along with small scale two storey commercial development e.g. employment hubs	 <p>Walpole Meadows, Stansted Mountfitchet (© Watson & Cox Construction)</p>
Sports facilities	One-two storey sports clubs, parking and flood lit sports fields	 <p>Manuden Village Community Centre (© Manuden Village Community Centre)</p>

Spatial framework for the assessment

2.5 The assessment uses the spatial framework of Landscape Character Types (LCTs) and components Landscape Character Areas (LCA) identified by the existing Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment (2006) which identifies 3 LCTs and 20 component LCAs.

2.6 The LCTs and component LCAs which form the spatial framework for this study are shown in **Figure 2.1**.

Study Areas

2.7 The assessment focuses on the settlement fringes of 10 towns and villages across the district which are set out in **Table 2.2** and **Figure 2.2** below.

2.8 Study areas around each of these settlements were defined and agreed with UDC, following a desktop analysis of settlement surrounding and the likely extent of development pressure, including the following:

- Built-up area boundaries as defined in the adopted Uttlesford District Local Plan 2005
- Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)

- Ecological and heritage designations and information from the Uttlesford Historic Environment Project.
- The extent of sites put forward through the call for sites process (July 2021)

2.9 The study areas for each of the towns and villages were based on an outer radius of up to 1km from the settlement edge for the larger towns, and up to 500m from other rural settlements. The extent of these areas was defined by a combination of the size of the settlement; the presence of substantive boundary features such as major roads or rivers; and the character of the surrounding landscape.

2.10 Within the study area, land was scoped out of the assessment if there was no physical connection with the settlement (i.e. if another assessment parcel 'intervened' between the land and the settlement). Land was also scoped out based on defined key constraints, as agreed with UDC. The presence of the following constraints led to some land being automatically scoped out of the assessment:

- Flood Zone 3 (representing the highest level of flood risk);

- Statutory national ecological designations including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI); and National Nature Reserves
- Statutory heritage designations (Scheduled Monuments and Registered Parks and Gardens)

Table 2.2: Phase 1: Towns and villages assessment parcels

Settlements	Assessment Parcels
Phase 1: Towns and villages	
Bishop's Stortford	2
Elsenham	3
Great Chesterford	2
Great Dunmow	2
Hatfield Heath	3
Newport	2
Saffron Walden	3
Stansted Mountfitchet	3
Takeley and Priors Green	2
Thaxted	2
Total	24

2.11 The district-wide key constraints which determined the scoping are shown on **Figure 2.3**. Occasionally it was not feasible to exclude particularly small or narrow areas of land subject to these constraints.

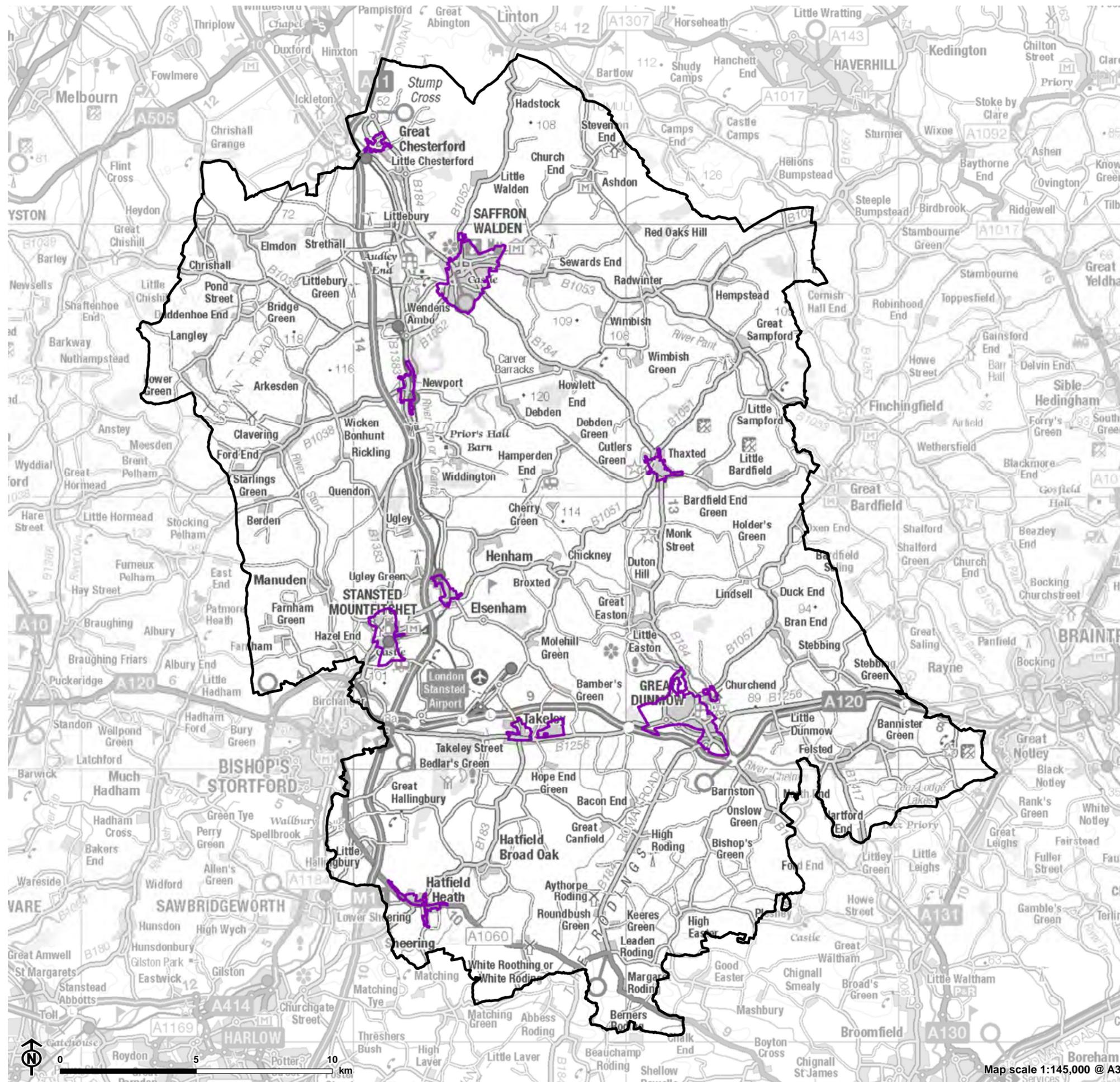
2.12 Each study area was then subdivided into assessment parcels, so that judgements could be made on the relative landscape sensitivity of different parts of each settlement fringe. Assessment parcels were defined so that they contained land of the same or similar land use or character, bounded by recognisable features such as roads, woodlands or field boundaries, as appropriate. The aim was to define areas of approximately even size, although characteristics were more important than size in determining their number and extent.

2.13 This process resulted in a total of 24 geographically distinct assessment parcels being identified. These are outlined within **Table 2.2** above.

2.14 **Figure 2.4** shows an example of the defined assessment parcels around Great Dunmow following this process.



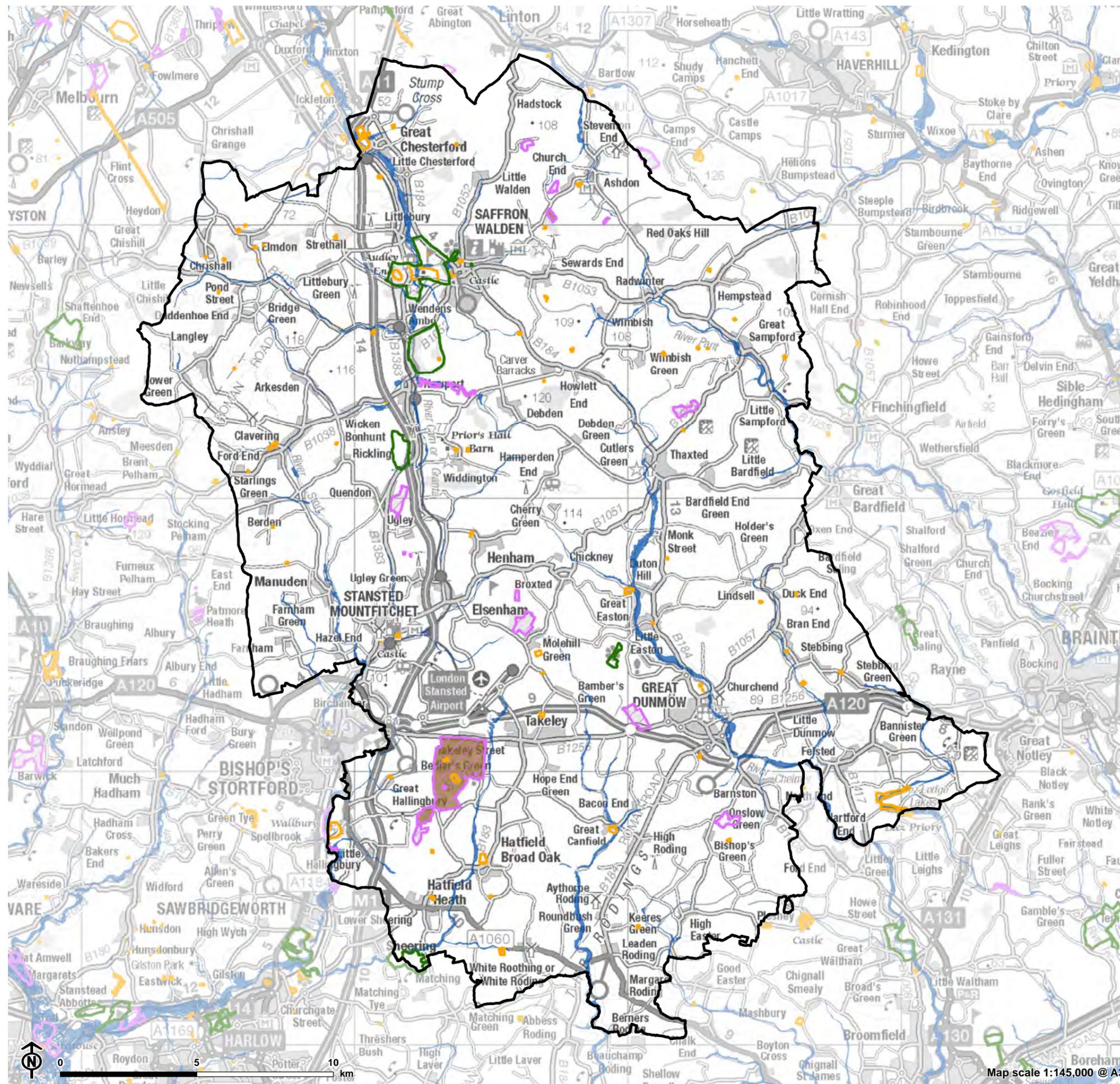
Figure 2.2 Study areas



Uttlesford District boundary
Settlement boundary

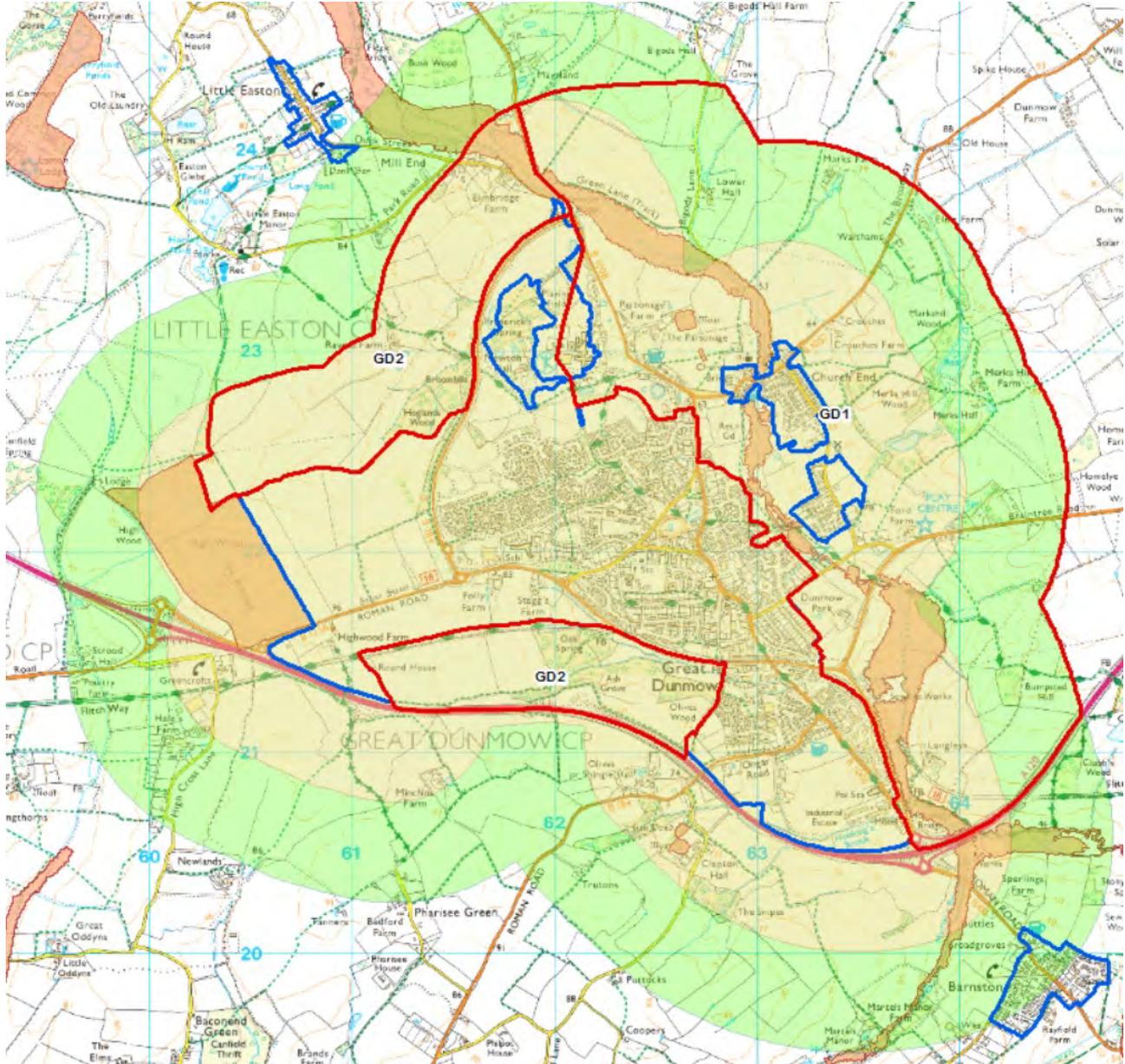


Figure 2.3 District wide key constraints



- Uttlesford District boundary
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- National Nature Reserve
- Registered parks and gardens
- Scheduled monument
- Flood zone 3

Figure 2.4: ArcGIS screenshot of defined parcels around Great Dunmow following the scoping out process. The 500m and 1km buffers are shown. Areas shaded in orange were scoped out due to flood areas and ecological designations.



Evaluating landscape sensitivity

2.15 This assessment draws on advice contained in Natural England's 'Approach to landscape sensitivity assessment' (2019)¹. This describes the term 'landscape sensitivity', within the context of spatial planning and land management, as follows:

"Landscape sensitivity may be regarded as a measure of the resilience, or robustness, of a landscape to withstand specified change arising from development types or land management practices, without undue negative effects on the landscape and visual baseline and their value."

2.16 It is a term applied to landscape character and the associated visual resource, combining judgements of their susceptibility to the specific development type / development scenario or other change being considered together with the value(s) related to that landscape and visual resource.

Assessment criteria

2.17 Landscape sensitivity assessment requires judgements on both landscape susceptibility (how vulnerable the landscape is to change from the type being assessed, in this residential and commercial developments) and landscape value (consensus about importance, which can be recognised through designation as well as through descriptions within the 2014 Landscape Character Assessment).

2.18 The selection of landscape sensitivity indicators ('criteria') for this study is informed by the attributes of landscape that could be affected by residential and commercial development. These consider the 'landscape', 'visual' and 'perceptual' aspects of sensitivity. Their selection is also based on current best practice and experience of LUC in undertaking similar studies elsewhere in the UK.

2.19 The following six criteria headings are used for this study:

- Physical character (landform, scale and field pattern)
- Natural character
- Sense of time depth/ historic landscape character;
- Settlement character;
- Visual character (including skylines); and
- Perceptual and scenic qualities (including recreational value)

2.20 **Table 2.4** at the end of this chapter provides guidance and examples of higher and lower sensitivity

features/attributes for applying the criteria in Uttlesford to residential and commercial development. The assessments present a commentary against each criterion to inform the judgements on levels of sensitivity. It is important to note that the relative importance of each criterion varies between landscapes (due to differences in landscape character). The initial stage of the assessment involved a thorough desk-based study drawing on sources of spatial and descriptive information regarding the landscape. This was supplemented by field survey work undertaken by a team of landscape professionals to verify the findings.

Making overall judgements on landscape sensitivity

2.21 Once the landscape sensitivity criteria were assessed individually, the results were translated into overall scores of landscape sensitivity (see **Table 2.3**) for the different bandings of residential, mixed use and sports facility developments. If any areas within the parcel were judged to be of higher/lower landscape sensitivity (due to local variations), this is set out in the assessment summary.

Table 2.3: The five-point scale landscape sensitivity scale

Sensitivity Level	Definition
High (H)	The key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are highly sensitive to change. It is unlikely to be able to accommodate the proposed change without significant character change/adverse effects.
Moderate - High (M-H)	The key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are sensitive to change. There may be very limited situations/locations where the relevant change can be accommodated.
Moderate (M)	Some of the key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are sensitive to change. It may have some potential to accommodate the relevant change in defined locations.
Low - Moderate (L-M)	Few of the key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are sensitive to change. They are resilient and have some potential to accommodate the change proposed.
Low (L)	The key characteristics and qualities of the landscape are robust and are either unlikely to be subject to change or are not sensitive to the change proposed.

2.22 The five defined levels of landscape sensitivity form stages on a continuum, rather than clearly separated categories. Any given landscape may or may not fit neatly into

¹ Natural England's 2019 approach document is available [here](#)

one category, and an element of professional judgement is required.

2.23 As with all assessments based upon data and information which is to a greater or lesser extent subjective, some caution is required in its interpretation. This is to avoid the suggestion that certain landscape features or qualities can

automatically be associated with certain sensitivities – the reality is that an assessment of a landscape’s sensitivity to development is the result of a complex interplay of often unequally weighted variables or criteria.

Table 2.4: Criteria and guidance for assessing landscape sensitivity to residential and commercial development

Physical character (including landform, scale and field pattern)				
<p>This considers the shape and scale of the landform, landscape pattern and landscape elements in relation to the scale of potential development. Smooth, gently undulating or flat landforms are likely to be less sensitive to development than a landscape with a more dramatic landform, distinct landform features or incised valleys with prominent slopes.</p> <p>This criterion considers how developments fit with the scale of the landform (understanding the scale of the development proposed is important when applying this criterion). Larger scale, simple landforms are likely to be less sensitive to larger scale developments than smaller scale, enclosed landforms (where large-scale developments could appear out of scale with the underlying landform). Conversely, smaller developments may be able to be screened within enclosed landforms, therefore reducing landscape sensitivity. Existing small-scale features in the landscape in the form of existing buildings or trees can also influence the scale of development that can be accommodated in the landscape. This criterion also needs to be considered in relation to visual character.</p>				
Low	Low-Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-High	High
The landscape has smooth, gently undulating or featureless landform with uniform large-scale landscape pattern and low density of overlying landscape features.		The landscape has an undulating landform and some distinct landform features; it is overlain by a mixture of small-scale and larger scale field patterns and a moderate density of small-scale landscape features.		The landscape has a dramatic landform or distinct landform features that contribute positively to landscape character; the area has a high density of small-scale landscape features and is overlain by a small-scale field pattern.
Natural character				
<p>This criterion considers the ‘naturalistic’ qualities of the landscape in terms of coverage of semi-natural habitats and valued natural features (e.g. trees, hedgerows) which could be vulnerable to loss from development.</p> <p>Areas with frequent natural features (including large areas of nationally or internationally designated habitats) result in increased sensitivity to development, while landscapes with limited natural features (including intensively farmed areas or areas with high levels of existing development) will be less sensitive. This criterion also looks at the role of the landscape as part of a wider network of natural features (Nature Recovery Network).</p>				
Low	Low-Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-High	High
Much of the landscape is intensively farmed or developed with little semi-natural habitat coverage and few valued natural features.		There are areas of valued semi-natural habitats and features found in parts of the landscape, whilst other parts are intensively farmed or developed.		Large areas of the landscape are nationally or internationally designated for their nature conservation interest; there is a frequent occurrence of valued natural features across the landscape.
Sense of time depth / historic landscape character				
<p>This considers the extent to which the landscape has ‘time-depth’ (a sense of being an historic landscape, with reference to the Uttlesford District Historic Environment Project (2009) and/or the presence of heritage assets that are important to landscape character (i.e. Conservation Areas, Scheduled Monuments, listed buildings, protected lanes, archaeological features and remains or other features listed in the landscape character assessment).</p> <p>Landscapes with small-scale, more irregular field patterns of historic origin are likely to be more sensitive to the introduction of modern development than landscapes with large, regular scale parliamentary field patterns.</p>				
Low	Low-Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-High	High
A landscape with relatively few historic features important to the character of		A landscape with some visible historic features of		A landscape with a high density of historic features important to the character

the area and little time depth (i.e. large intensively farmed fields).		importance to character, and a variety of time depths.		of the area and great time depth (i.e. piecemeal enclosure with irregular boundaries, ridge and furrow)
Character and setting of settlement				
<p>This considers the overall settlement form and character of existing settlement and considers whether development in the landscape would be in accordance with the general pattern, setting and form of current development and relationship with the existing settlement edge. It includes an understanding of the landscape pattern associated with settlement edges (where relevant), for example if it is well integrated by woodland cover or open and exposed to form a 'hard edge' to the adjoining landscape.</p> <p>This criterion also considers the extent to which the landscape contributes to the identity and distinctiveness of settlements, by way of its character and/or scenic quality, for example by providing a backdrop/ setting, or playing an important part in views from a settlement. This also considers the extent to which the area contributes to a perceived gap between settlements (the loss of which would increase coalescence).</p>				
Low	Low-Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-High	High
The area does not contribute positively to the setting of the settlement or play a separation role. Development in the parcel would have a good relationship with the existing settlement form/ pattern and could provide the opportunity to improve an existing settlement edge.		The area provides some contribution to the setting of the settlement by providing, or plays some part in views from the settlement, or play a role in the perception of a gap between settlements. Development in the parcel may be slightly at odds with the settlement form/ pattern and may adversely affect the existing edge to some extent.		The area provides an attractive backdrop/ setting to the settlement, plays an important part in views from the settlement, or forms an important part in the perception of a gap between settlements. Development in the parcel would have a poor relationship with the existing settlement form/pattern and would adversely affect an existing settlement edge (which may be historic or distinctive).
Visual character				
<p>This considers the visual prominence of the parcel, reflecting the extent of openness or enclosure in the landscape (due to landform or land cover), and the degree of intervisibility with the surrounding landscape (i.e. the extent to which potential development would be visible).</p> <p>Visually prominent landscapes are likely to be more sensitive to development than those which are not so visually prominent. Landscapes which are visually prominent and inter-visible with adjacent landscapes (both urban and rural) are likely to be more sensitive to development than those which are more hidden or less widely visible.</p> <p>It also considers the skyline character of the area including whether it forms a visually distinctive skyline or an important undeveloped skyline. Prominent and distinctive and/or undeveloped skylines, or skylines with important landmark features, are likely to be more sensitive to development because new buildings/structures may detract from these skylines as features in the landscape. Important landmark features on the skyline might include historic features or monuments.</p>				
Low	Low-Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-High	High
The area is enclosed/visually contained and/or has a low degree of visibility from surrounding landscapes and the area does not form a visually distinctive or important undeveloped skyline		The area is semi-enclosed or has some enclosed and some open areas. It is likely to have some inter-visibility with surrounding landscapes and may have some visually distinctive or undeveloped skylines within the area.		The area is open and/or has a high degree of visibility from surrounding landscapes, and/or the area forms a visually distinctive skyline or an important undeveloped skyline.

Perceptual and scenic qualities (including access and recreation)				
<p>This considers qualities such as the rural character of the landscape (traditional land uses with few modern human influences), scenic qualities, sense of remoteness and/or tranquillity, and the extent of public access via Public Rights of Way and/or Open Access Land.</p> <p>Landscapes that are relatively remote or tranquil (due to freedom from human activity and disturbance and having a perceived naturalness or a traditional rural feel with few modern human influences) tend to increase levels of sensitivity to development compared to landscapes that contain signs of modern development. High scenic value and dark night skies also add to sensitivity in relation to this criterion. This is because development will introduce new and uncharacteristic features (including flood lighting) which may detract from a sense of tranquillity, dark skies and or remoteness/naturalness.</p>				
Low	Low-Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-High	High
The area is significantly influenced by development/human activity, where new development would not be out of character. Low or no public access.		A landscape with some sense of rural character, but with some modern elements and human influences. Some Public Rights of Way.		A tranquil or highly rural landscape, lacking strong intrusive elements. A landscape of high scenic value with dark skies and a high perceived degree of rural character and naturalness with few modern human influences. Extensive public access via PRow's / open access land.

Desk Study

2.24 The first task in the assessment process, following the definition of the 24 spatially distinct assessment parcels against the agreed criteria, was to carry out a desk-top analysis of each settlement and its component parcels. This involved the mapping of multiple data sets within ArcGIS (Geographical Information System) to identify the potential sensitivities of each parcel.

Field Verification

2.25 A structured process of field survey verification was undertaken by landscape experts in order to test and refine the outputs from the desk study. Each assessment parcel was visited in turn to record information and take photographs. The field survey was undertaken from roads and public rights of way to gain an understanding of landscape character sensitivity.

2.26 The landscape assessment fieldwork focused in particular on the relationships between the assessment parcels and adjoining settlement edges, landscape settings and wider views. It also noted any important features within each area that would be sensitive to change.

Reporting

2.27 A pilot assessment was produced to agreement with UDC before the full report was prepared.

2.28 Each settlement report produced as part of this study contains the individual landscape sensitivity parcel 'profiles' focussed around the settlement edge. The reports are structured as follows:

- An aerial photograph showing the boundaries of the parcels identified for the settlement;
- An overview of the settlement in terms of its location, form, character and setting;
- A short description of each assessment parcel surrounding the settlement;
- Identification of any areas scoped out of the assessment;
- A detailed map of the settlement and parcels, with relevant designations and constraints;
- Representative photographs of the parcels;
- Landscape sensitivity profiles for each assessment parcel, comprising:
 - Overall description of the landscape character context – i.e. which Landscape Character Area(s) the area falls within.
 - Criteria-based landscape sensitivity assessment, with a description given against each assessment criterion and its sensitivity.
 - Overall assessment of landscape sensitivity to future change from residential, mixed use and sports facility development, using the five-point scale rating and a written summary.

Chapter 3

Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Results

This chapter presents the overall results of the assessment

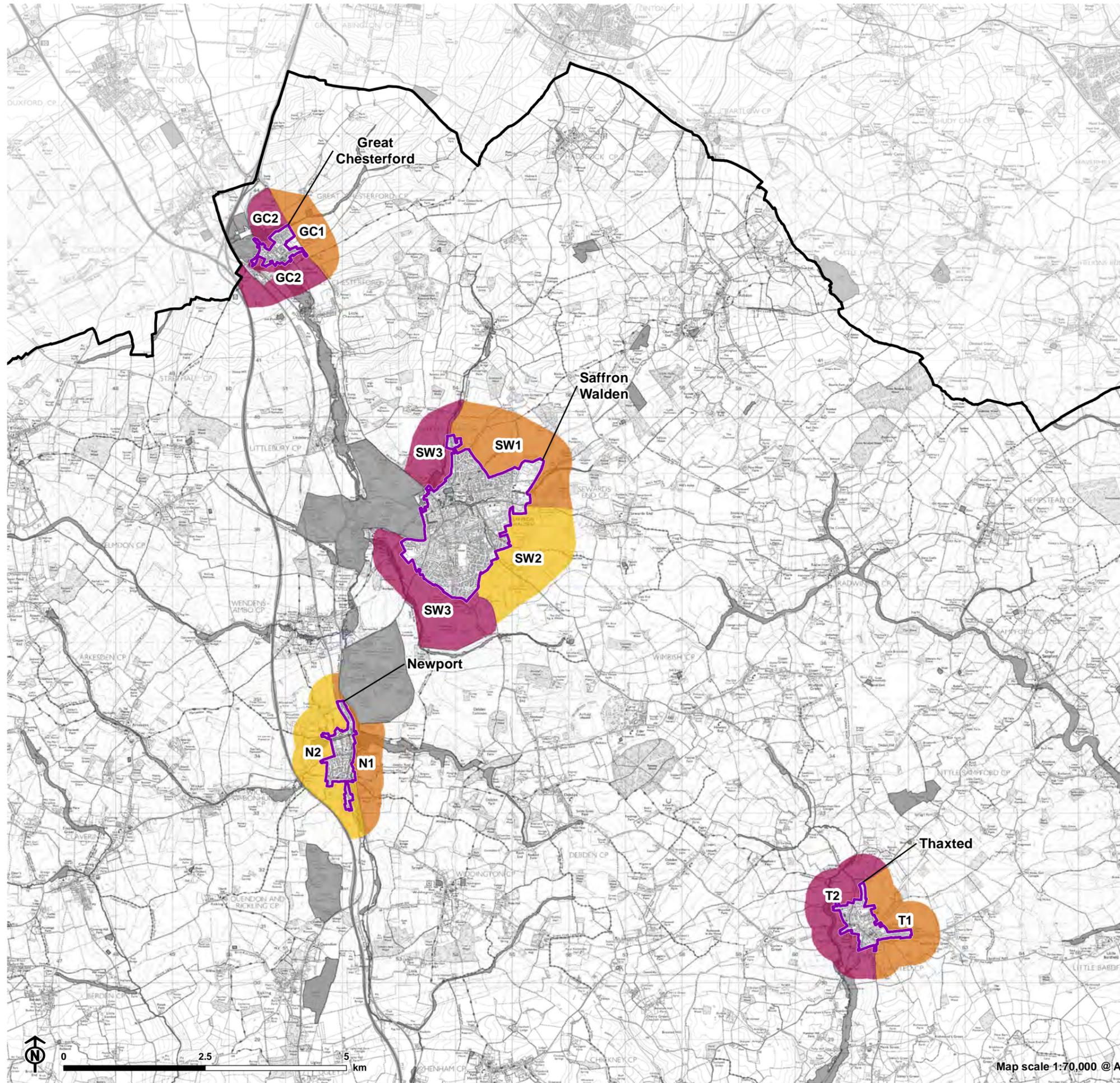
3.1 The overall results of the landscape sensitivity assessment are set out in **Tables 3.1**. These rating are also mapped in **Figures 3.1, 3.3 and 3.3**.

3.2 The overall judgement scores should always be interpreted in conjunction with the information contained in the detailed profiles for the individual settlements. It should not be assumed that all areas with lower sensitivity ratings could be considered suitable for development, as cumulative issues would need to be considered.

Table 3.1: Landscape sensitivity to residential and commercial development

Settlement	Assessment Parcel	Landscape sensitivity to development		
		Residential	Mixed-use	Sports facilities
Bishop's Stortford	BS1	L	L	L
	BS2	L-M	M	L-M
Elsenham	E1	L-M	M	M
	E2	M-H	H	H
	E3	L-M	M	M
Great Chesterford	GC1	M-H	M-H	M-H
	GC2	H	H	M-H
Great Dunmow	GD1	M-H	H	M-H
	GD2	M	M-H	M-H
Hatfield Heath	HH1	M-H	M-H	M-H
	HH2	H	H	M-H
	HH3	M	M	M
Newport	N1	M-H	H	M-H
	N2	M	M-H	M
Saffron Walden	SW1	M-H	M-H	M-H
	SW2	M	M	M
	SW3	H	H	M-H
Stansted Mountfitchet	SM1	M-H	H	M-H
	SM2	M	M	M
	SM3	M-H	M-H	M-H
Takeley and Priors Green	TPG1	M-H	H	M-H
	TPG2	M	M-H	M
Thaxted	T1	M-H	M-H	M-H
	T2	H	H	H

Figure 3.1: Overall landscape sensitivity to residential development (North)



- Uttlesford District boundary
- Settlement boundary
- Absolute constraints
- Sensitivity score**
- High
- Moderate - High
- Moderate
- Low - Moderate
- Low

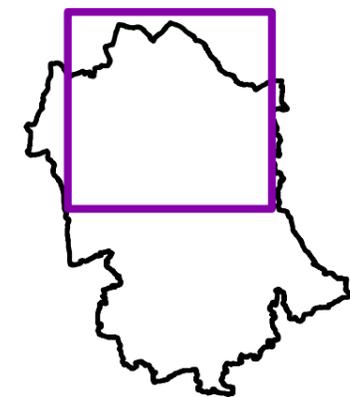
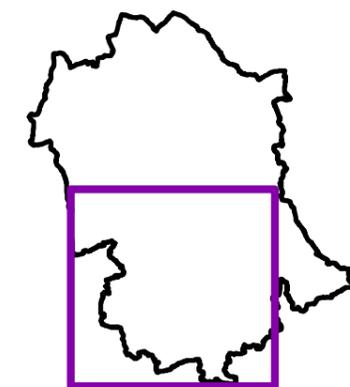
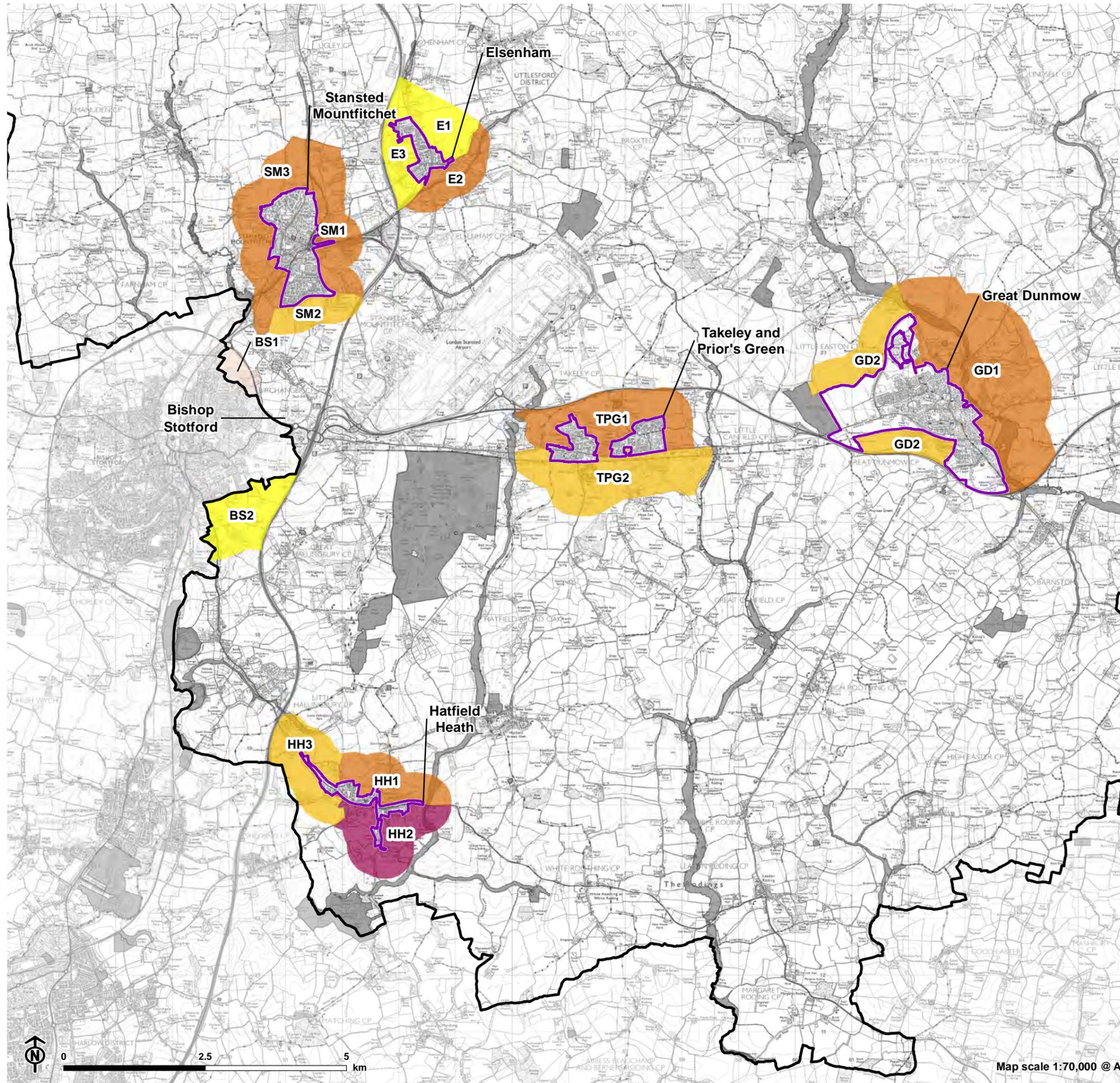
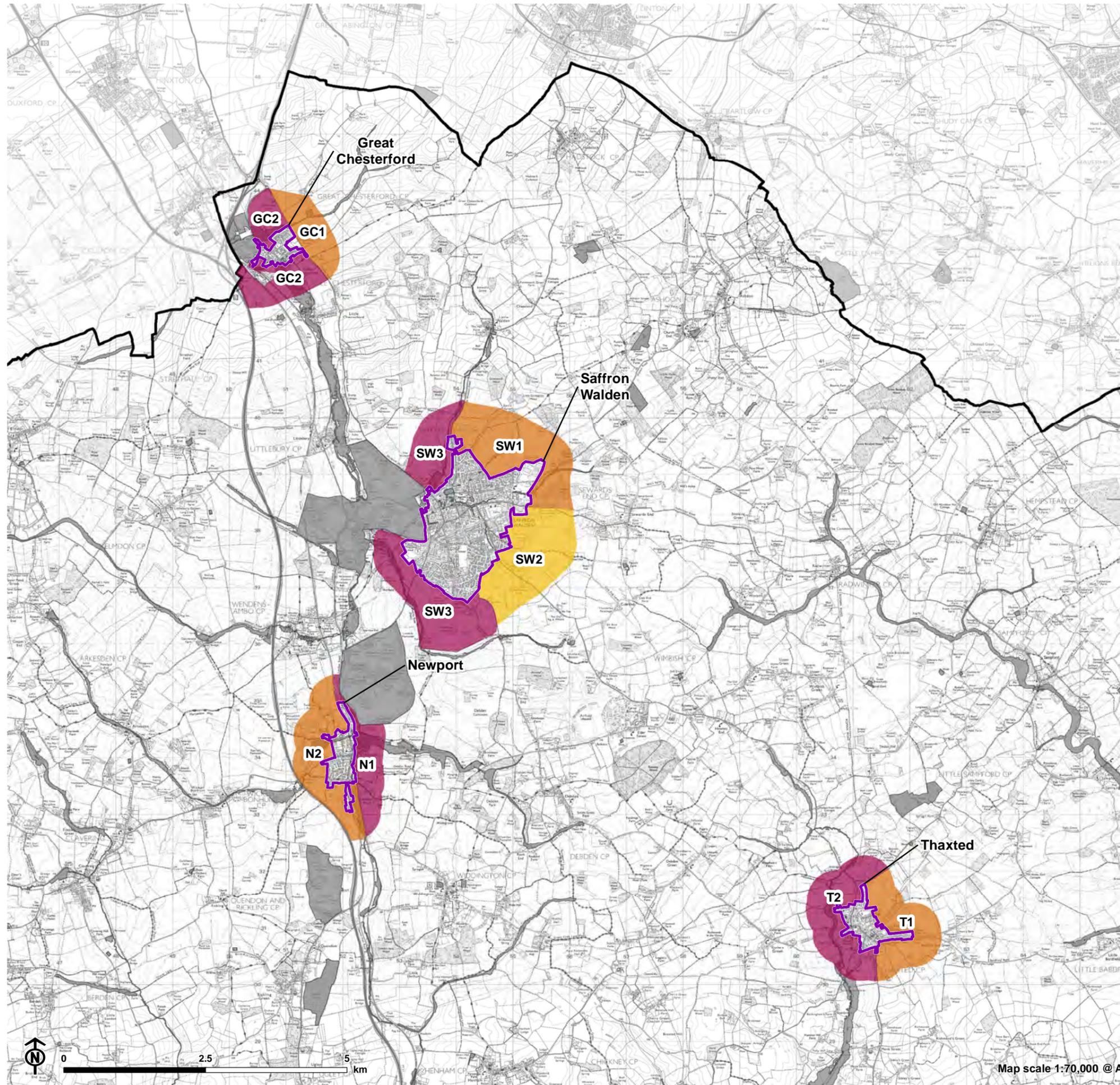


Figure 3.1: Overall landscape sensitivity to residential development (South)



Map scale 1:70,000 @ A3

Figure 3.2: Overall landscape sensitivity to mixed-use development (North)



- Uttlesford District boundary
- Settlement boundary
- Absolute constraints
- Sensitivity score**
- High
- Moderate - High
- Moderate
- Low - Moderate
- Low

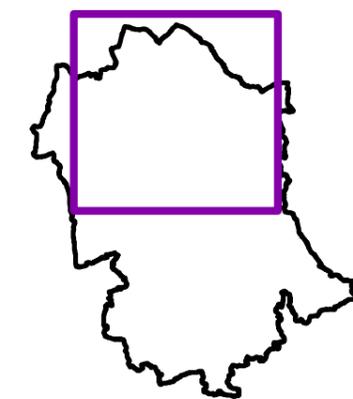
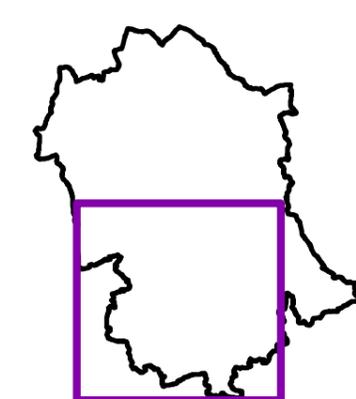
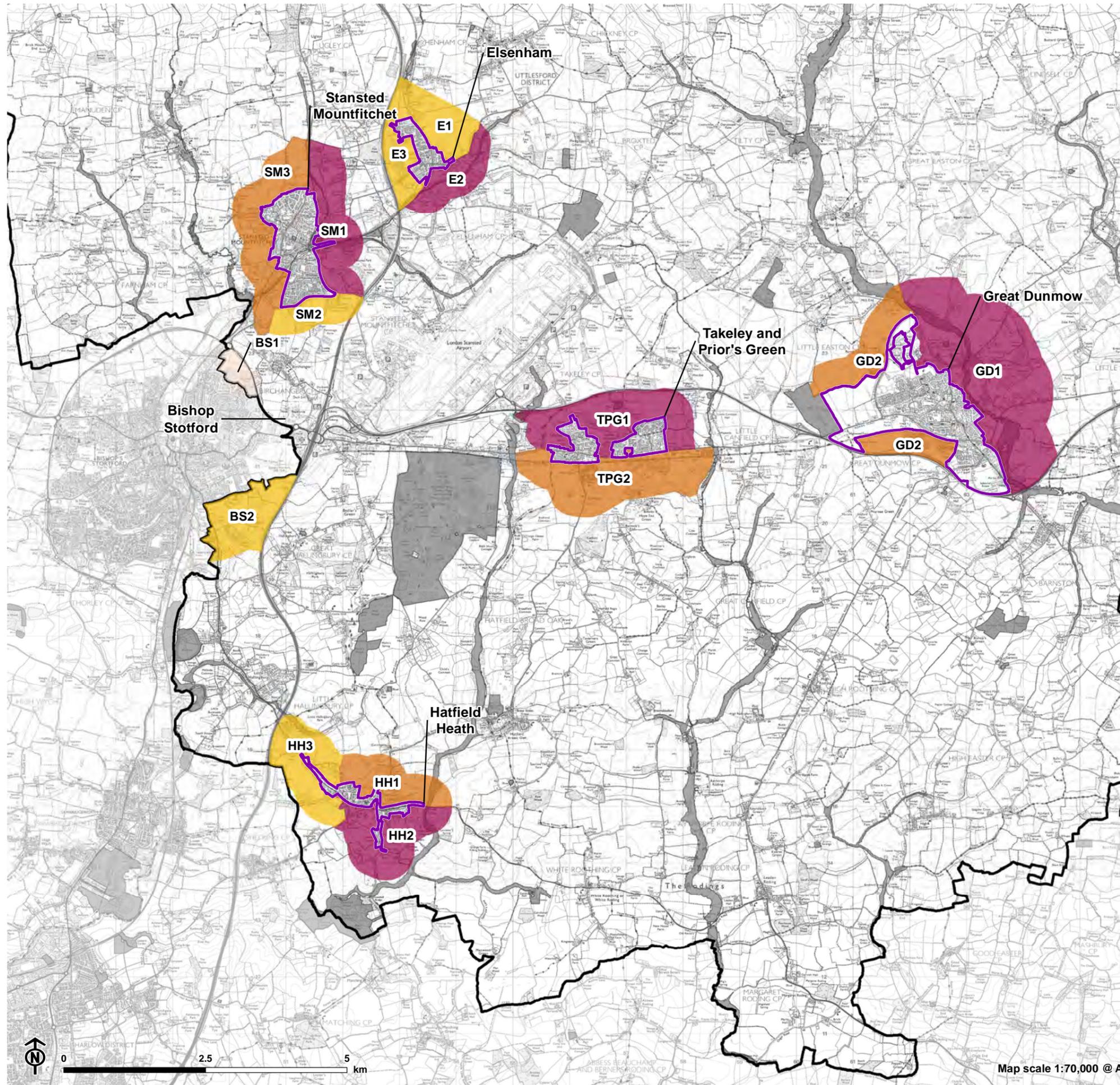
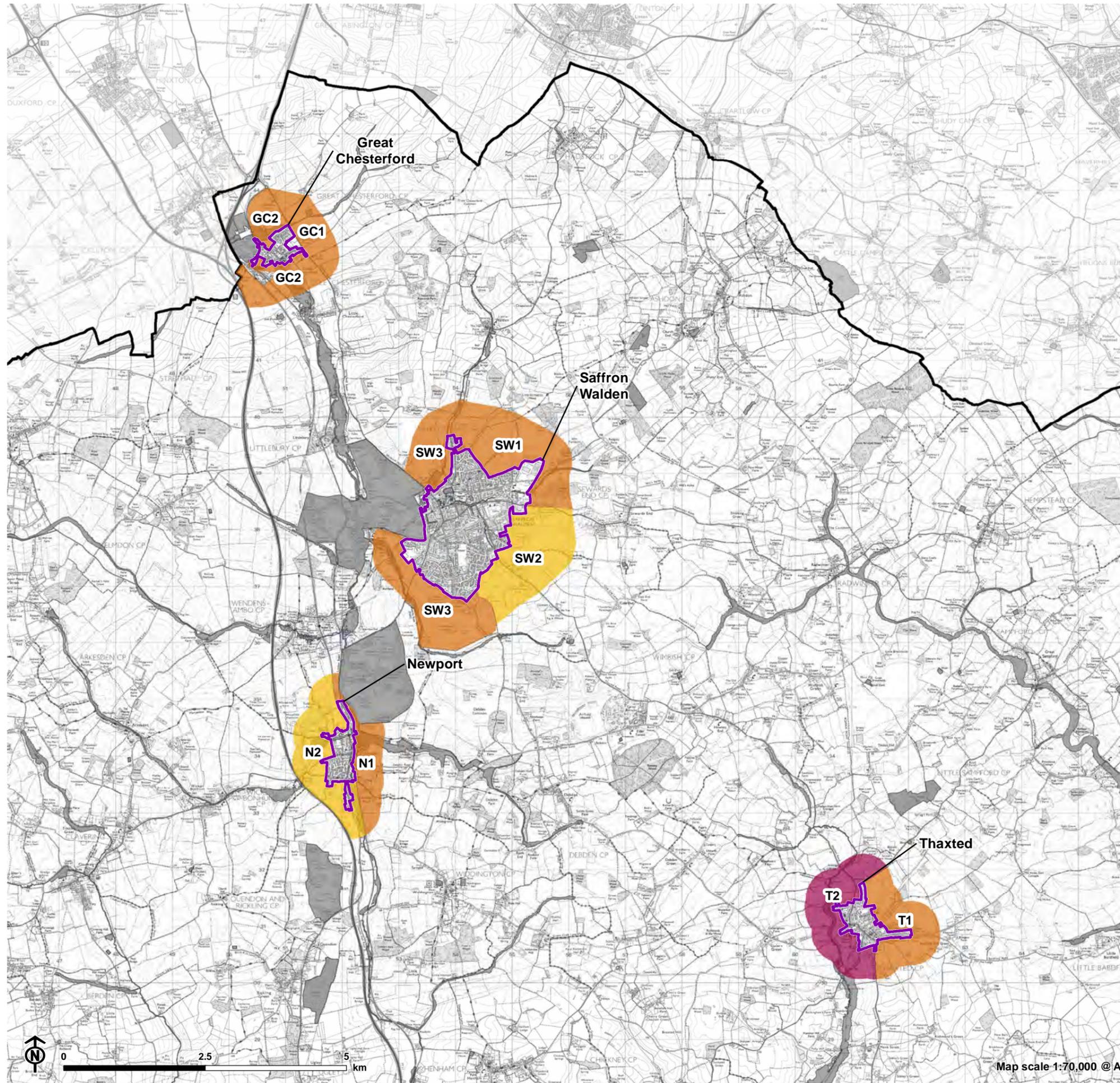


Figure 3.2: Overall landscape sensitivity to mixed-use development (South)

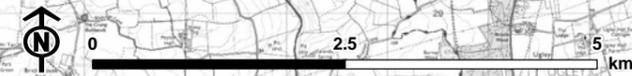
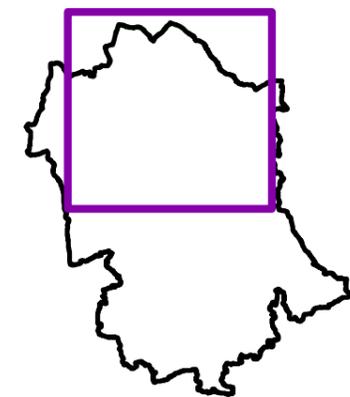


Map scale 1:70,000 @ A3

Figure 3.3: Overall landscape sensitivity to sports facility (North)

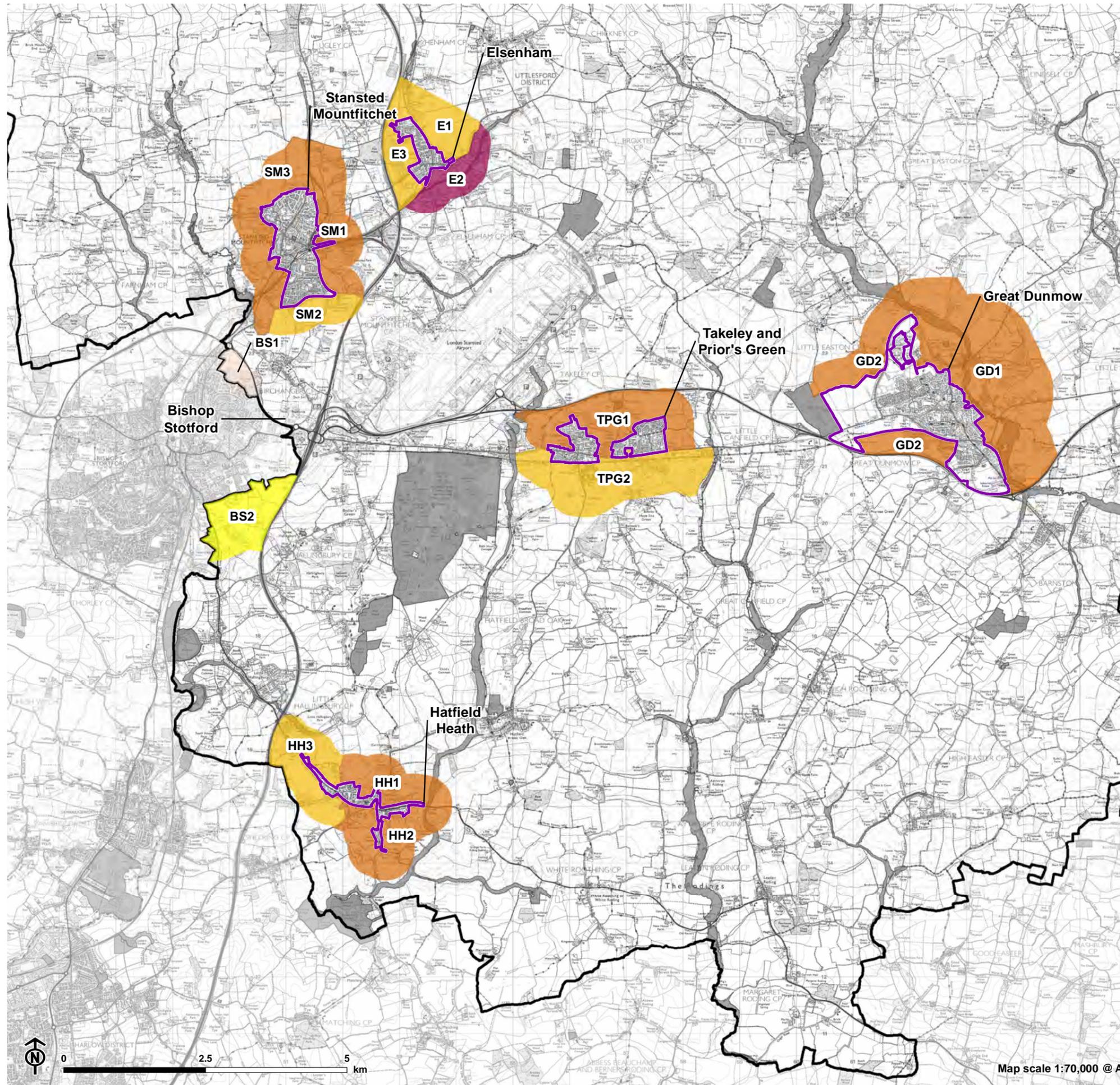


- Uttlesford District boundary
- Settlement boundary
- Absolute constraints
- Sensitivity score**
- High
- Moderate - High
- Moderate
- Low - Moderate
- Low

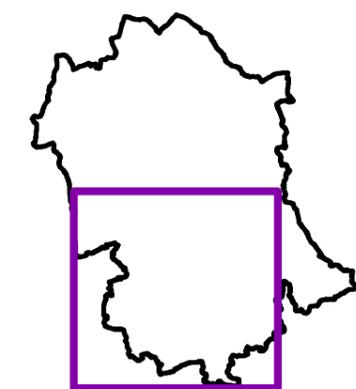


Map scale 1:70,000 @ A3

Figure 3.3: Overall landscape sensitivity to sports facility (South)



- Uttlesford District boundary
- Settlement boundary
- Absolute constraints
- Sensitivity score**
- High
- Moderate - High
- Moderate
- Low - Moderate
- Low



Chapter 4

Landscape Guidance

This section provides generic guidance to help accommodate development within the landscape.

Landscape guidance for accommodating residential and employment development in Uttlesford District

4.1 This guidance should be read in conjunction with the more detailed information provided in the Uttlesford District Council Landscape Character Assessment (2006) and the Essex Design Guide (2018).

4.2 All development should aim to:

- Utilise existing vegetation or plant new vegetation/trees to assimilate development into the landscape. Cues from the local landscape character should be used to design species and planting patterns.
- Avoid visually prominent locations, where development will be incongruous with the wider landscape context.
- Refer to the published landscape guidance in the Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment (2006), Neighbourhood Plans (in place for Great Chesterford and Thaxted) and The Essex Design Guide (2018) for ideas for mitigation and enhancement that will be in character with the landscape.
- Improve access networks and recreational opportunities to enable access to, and enjoyment of, the landscape where possible.
- Ensure the landscape components of the development are in character with the locality, form part of a coherent green infrastructure network and provides ecosystem services including increasing pollinating insects, providing water storage, preventing soil erosion, enhancing water quality and enhancing sense of place.
- Ensure a high quality and responsive design, making reference to the National Design Guide, Building for a Healthy Life and Essex Design Guide, particularly the sections on character and context.

- Be in-keeping with the existing settlement form and vernacular taking into account specific local information including Neighbourhood Plans.
- Where appropriate, use visual representations to understand impact of development proposals – as set out in Landscape Institute's Visual Representation of Development Proposals.
- Take opportunities to mitigate the impact of existing detracting features within the landscape, and where possible enhance landscape character in line with published guidance, including local landscape character assessments.

Cumulative impacts of development

4.3 This assessment has considered sites on an individual basis. For some areas/ villages a large number of potential development sites are proposed around a settlement. Clearly, development of multiple sites would have a greater cumulative landscape impact and consideration would be required of an appropriate limit of change, taking into account factors including:

- Settlement shape and form ensuring the development relates well to existing form rather than for example elongated extensions.
- Maintaining sense of place, distinctiveness and key gateways.
- Relationship to landscape features such as hill crests, valleys, woodland blocks which contain or define the settlement setting.
- Factors such as options for development of one larger site as opposed to multiple smaller sites.
- Opportunities for mitigation and wider landscape enhancement.

Mitigation for sites with high or moderate-high landscape sensitivity

4.4 It is unlikely that mitigation will reduce sensitivity for sites judged as having moderate-high or high landscape sensitivity to the specified change. Higher landscape sensitivity is one factor that will need to be weighed in the planning balance. For higher sensitivity sites the greatest opportunities for landscape improvements and enhancements should be taken in association with development. It is also important to note that landscape mitigation and enhancement is equally important for those sites of moderate or lower sensitivity and will be critical in helping to ensure positive landscape change in association with development. For these sites the generic guidance provided here should be used to develop site specific mitigation proposals.

Appendix A

Data / information sources



Key sources of information used to inform the study

A.1 The following documents were used to inform the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment:

- Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment (Chris Blandford Associates, 2006)
- Conservation Area Appraisals:
 - Great Chesterford (2007)
 - Great Dunmow (2007)
 - Newport (2007)
 - Saffron Walden (2018)
 - Stansted Mountfitchet (2007)
 - Thaxted (2012)

A.2 In addition, the following table lists the main datasets collated and analysed in Geographic Information System (GIS) software as a key part of the evidence base for this study.

Table A.1: GIS considered in the assessment

GIS layer	Source
Base maps	
Local authority boundaries	Ordnance Survey
Ordnance Survey 1: 25K	Uttlesford Council
Ordnance Survey 1: 50K	Uttlesford Council
Ordnance Survey 1:250k	Ordnance Survey
Aerial imagery	ESRI
Landscape	
National Character Areas	Natural England
Agricultural Land Classification	Natural England
Light pollution	CPRE
Tranquillity	CPRE
CORINE Land Cover	EEA
Historic environment	
Conservation areas	Uttlesford Council
Listed buildings	Historic England
Registered Parks and Gardens	Historic England
Scheduled Monuments	Historic England

Appendix A
Data / information sources

Uttlesford LSA: Towns and key villages
September 2021

GIS layer	Source
Registered battlefields	Historic England
Locally listed buildings	Uttlesford Council
Ecological environment	
Local Wildlife Sites (LoWS)	Uttlesford Council
Priority Habitat Inventory (PHI)	Natural England
Local Nature Reserves (LNR)	Natural England
National Nature Reserves (NNR)	Natural England
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Natural England
Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI)	Natural England
Access and recreation	
Country Parks	Natural England
National Trails	Natural England
National and Regional Cycle Routes	Sustrans
Ordnance Survey Open Greenspace	Ordnance Survey
CRoW Act Open Access Land / Open Country	Natural England
National Trust Land – Always Open / Limited Access	National Trust

Appendix B: Glossary



Appendix B

Glossary

Term	Definition
Ancient woodland	An area of woodland which evidence shows has had continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD and has only been cleared for underwood or timber production. It is an extremely valuable ecological resource, with an exceptionally high diversity of flora and fauna.
AOD	Above Ordnance Datum (sea level)
Arable	Land used for growing crops
Biodiversity	The measure of the variety of organisms present in different ecosystems
Built form	The characteristic nature of built development
Feature	A prominent, eye-catching element (e.g. wooded hilltop, church spire)
Floodplain	The area that would naturally be affected by flooding if a river rises above its banks
GIS	Geographic Information System
Grassland	Land used for grazing. Grassland can be improved (by management practices), semi-improved (modified by management practices with a less diverse range of species than unimproved grasslands), or unimproved (not treated with fertiliser, herbicide or intensively grazed, and consequently has a high species diversity)
Habitat	The natural home or environment of an animal, plant, or other organism
Intact	Not changed or diminished
Land cover	Combinations of land use and vegetation that cover the land surface
Landmark	An object or feature of a landscape that is easily seen and recognised from a distance, especially one that enables someone to establish their location
Landscape	The term refers primarily to the visual appearance of the land, including its shape, form and colours. However, the landscape is not a purely visual phenomenon; its character relies on a whole range of other dimensions, including geology, topography, soils, ecology, archaeology, landscape history, land use, architecture and cultural associations.
Landscape Character Areas (LCAs)	A unique geographic area with a consistent character and identity, which forms part of a landscape character type.
Landscape Character Types (LCTs)	Distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogenous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different areas in different parts of the district, but share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation, historic land use and settlement pattern.
Landscape value	The relative value that is attached to different landscapes. In a policy context the usual basis for recognising certain highly valued landscapes is through the application of a local or national landscape designation. Yet a landscape may be valued by different communities of interest for many different reasons without any formal

Appendix B
Glossary

Uttlesford LSA: Towns and key villages
September 2021

Term	Definition
	designation, recognising, for example, perceptual aspects such as scenic beauty, tranquillity or wildness; special cultural associations; the influence and presence of other conservation interests; or the existence of a consensus about importance, either nationally or locally.
Listed building	A building, object or structure that has been judged to be of national importance in terms of architectural or historic interest, designated by Historic England
Local Plan	A development plan prepared by local planning authorities
LSA	Landscape Sensitivity Assessment
LoWS	Local Wildlife Site
Natural character	Character as a result of natural or semi-natural features such as woodland, grassland, hedgerows
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
Nucleated settlement	A settlement that is clustered around a centre, in comparison to a linear or dispersed settlement
OS	Ordnance Survey
Pastoral	Land used for keeping or grazing sheep or cattle
Priority habitat	UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority species and habitats were identified as being the most threatened and requiring conservation action under the UK BAP. The original lists of UK BAP priority habitats were created between 1995 and 1999 and were subsequently updated in 2007. See http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-5155 for further information.
Riparian habitat	Riverbank habitat
Scheduled Monument	Nationally important archaeological sites or historic buildings, given protection against unauthorised change.
Semi-natural vegetation	Any type of natural vegetation which has been influenced by human activities, either directly or indirectly
Sense of place	A person's perception of a location's indigenous characteristics, based on the mix of uses, appearance and context that make a place memorable
Sensitive	The response to change or influence
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
Time depth	The time period expressed in the landscape, or the extent to which the landscape reflects a certain time period (a landscape with greater time depth will comprise older elements than a landscape with lesser time depth).
Topography	Combinations of slope and elevation that produce the shape and form of the land surface
Valued landscape attributes	Positive features and characteristics that are important to landscape character and that, if lost, would result in adverse change to the landscape
Vernacular	Buildings constructed in the local style from local materials. Concerned with ordinary rather than monumental buildings