

Uttlesford Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Addendum

Uttlesford District Council

Final report

Prepared by LUC

June 2024



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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Uttlesford District Council (UDC) commissioned LUC in April 2024 to provide an addendum to the Uttlesford Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Phase 3: Smaller villages (2022, updated 2023). This addendum covers additional sites, which were submitted to UDC following the Regulation 18 consultation on the new Local Plan.

Purpose of this study

1.2 This study forms part of the evidence base for the new Local Plan, which will cover the period 2021-2041. UDC needs to consider whether the landscape within the District has the capacity to accommodate new development without causing significant adverse effects on its character.

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 the landscape and setting of settlements. By assessing and mapping the relative sensitivity of different landscapes the study will provide a tool for informing positive 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.

Assessment scope

1.5 The Uttlesford Landscape Sensitivity Study (Phase 3: Smaller villages), prepared by LUC in 2022 assessed the sensitivity of individual sites adjacent to smaller villages. These sites were identified in the Uttlesford Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) and put forward in preparation for the new Local Plan. The study was updated in 2023 to take account of the new Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment.

1.6 Since the Phase 3 study was prepared an additional five sites have been put forward for consideration for employment development. One of these sites, to the south-east of Saffron Walden, was assessed as part of a wider parcel of land for its sensitivity to mixed use development in the Uttlesford Landscape Sensitivity Study (Phase 1: Towns and key villages) (2021, updated 2023). It would not be proportionate to assess this standalone site solely for employment development, as a small change in land use within a larger mixed use scheme is unlikely to cause a significant difference in the sensitivity identified in the Phase 1 study.

1.7 The assessment of the four remaining sites is provided below and forms an addendum to the 2022 Uttlesford Landscape Sensitivity Study (Phase 3).

Figure 1.1 illustrates the additional sites, grouped by their associated Landscape Character Type and Landscape Character Area.

Policy context and methodology

1.8 Details of the policy context and methodology for this study can be found within the Uttlesford Phase 3 Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (LUC, 2022 updated 2023).

1.9 The 2022 study assessed the sensitivity of the landscape to the principle of residential development and mixed-use development (residential and employment). However, the five sites in this addendum assess the sensitivity of the landscape to the principle of employment development. This type of development consists of 2 to 3 storey commercial / industrial / employment development; with associated access roads, parking and open spaces. Examples include local business parks, light industrial units, office blocks and hotel complexes. An example of this type of development is shown in **Figure 1.2**, in neighbouring South Cambridgeshire.

Figure 1.2: Recent employment development at Bourn Quarter, Cambourne © Savills



Chapter 2

Landscape sensitivity assessment results

2.1 The overall results of the assessment are set out below in **Table 2.1**. These ratings are also mapped in **Figures 2.1a and 2.1b**.

Table 2.1: Landscape sensitivity to residential and commercial development

Settlement / Location	HELAA reference code	Development type	Sensitivity
Takeley Street	Land south of A120 and north of Stortford Road, Great Dunmow	EMP	Moderate
Takeley Street	North Takeley Street	EMP	Moderate
Elsenham	Gaunts End	EMP	Low-moderate
Chesterford Research Park	Chesterford Research Park	EMP	Low-moderate

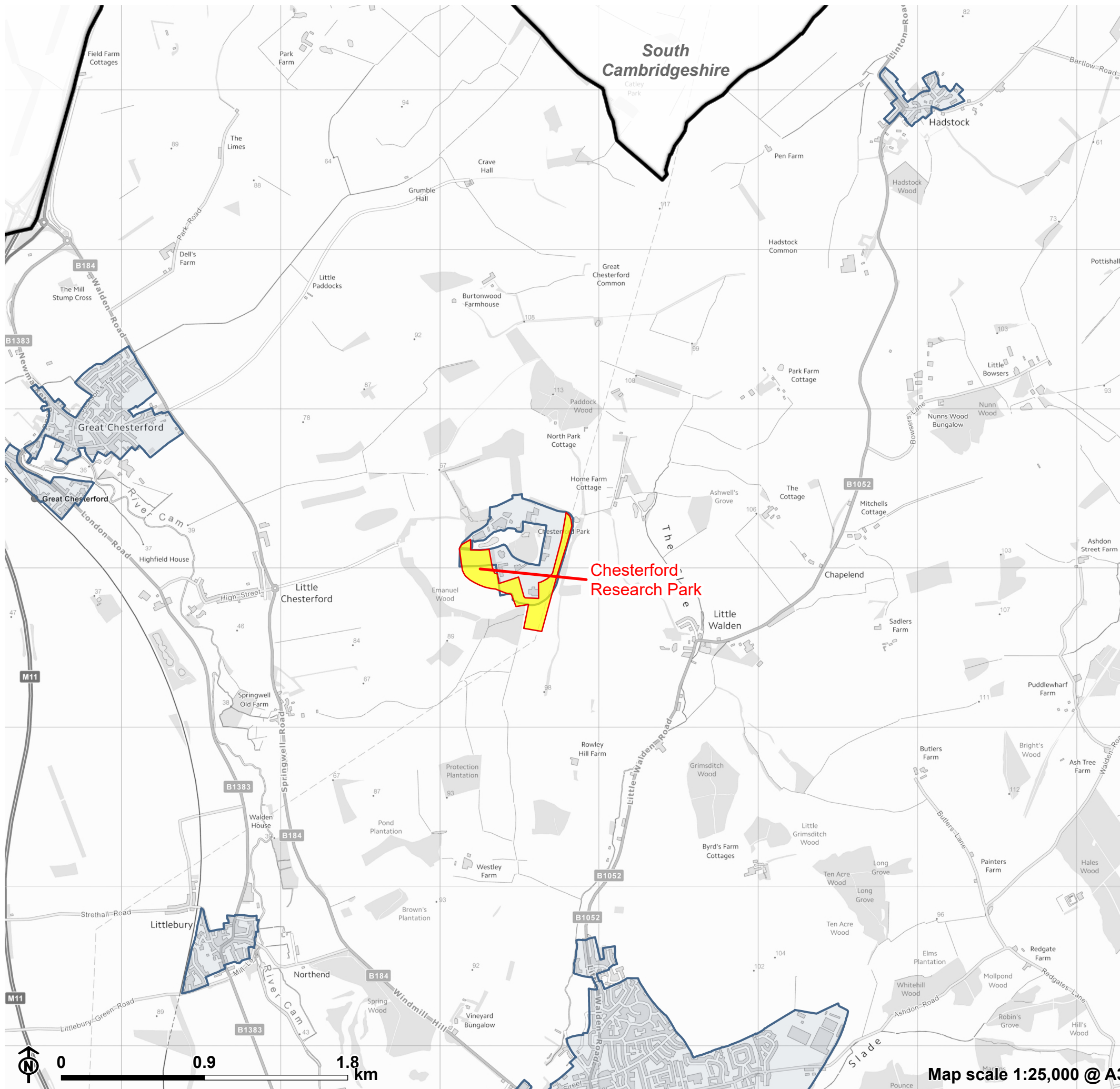
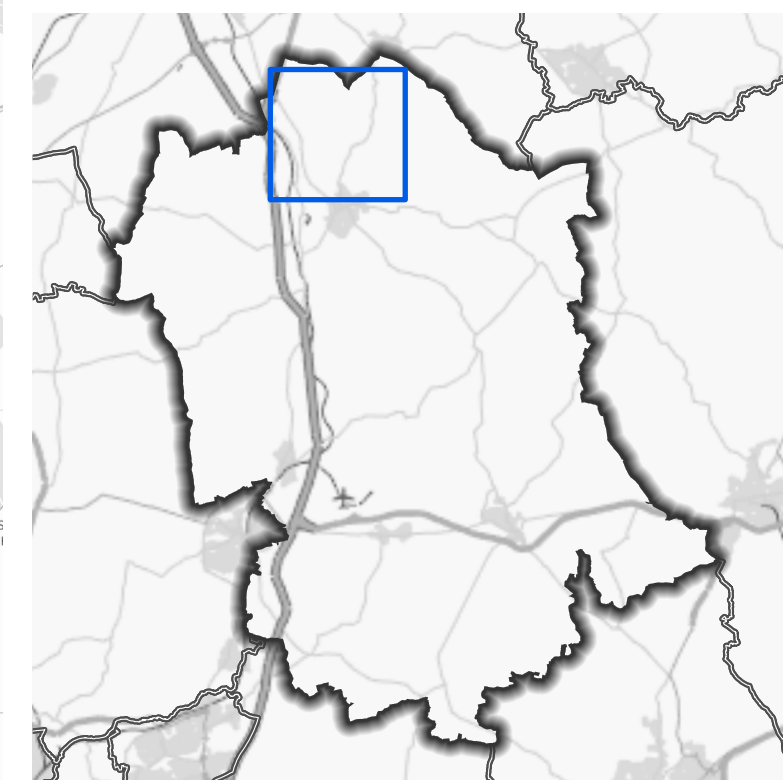


Figure 2.1b: Overall landscape sensitivity to employment development

- Uttlesford district boundary
- Neighbouring local authority
- Settlement
- SHELAA site
- SHELAA site rating**
- High
- Moderate high
- Moderate
- Low moderate
- Low



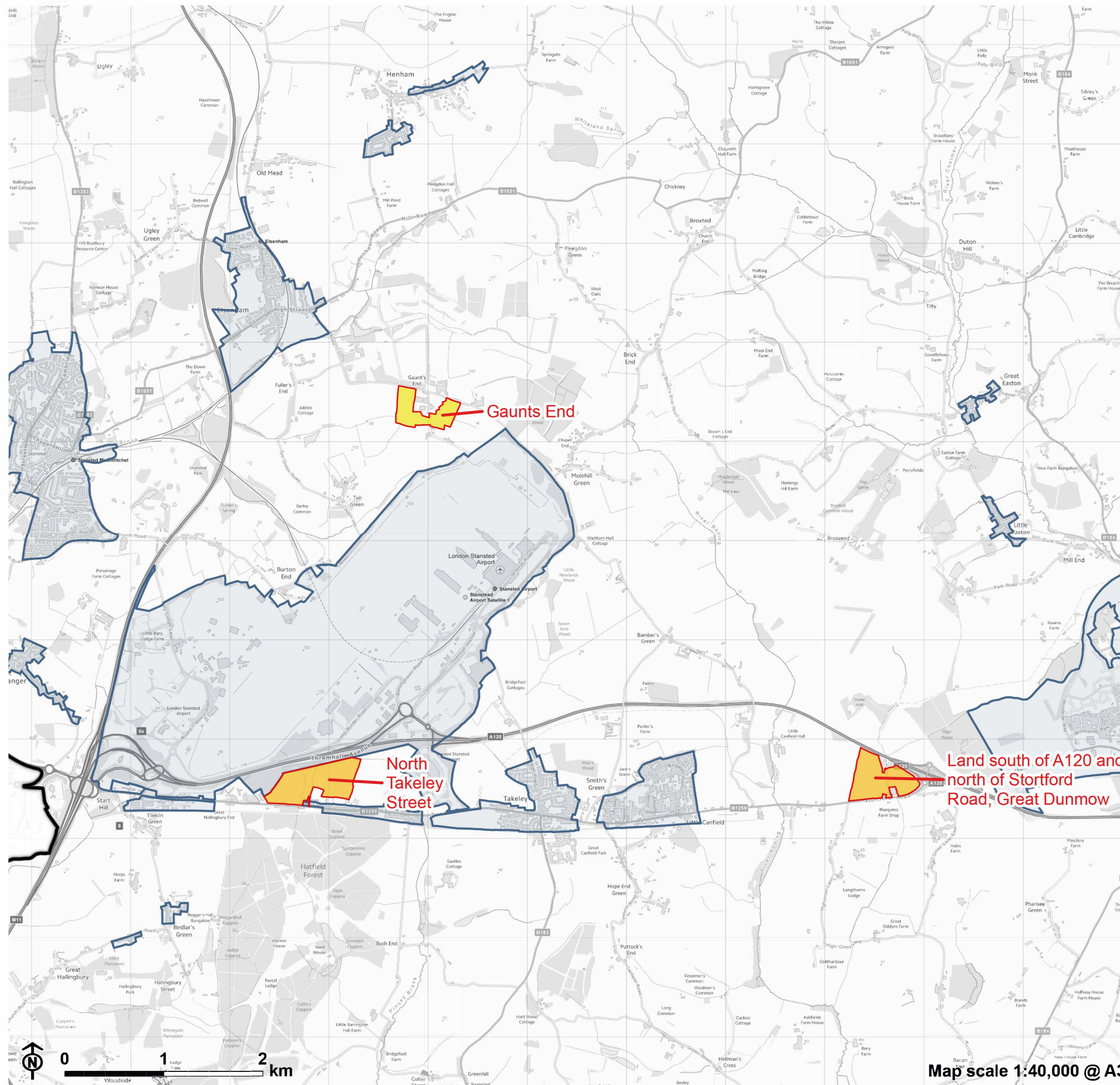
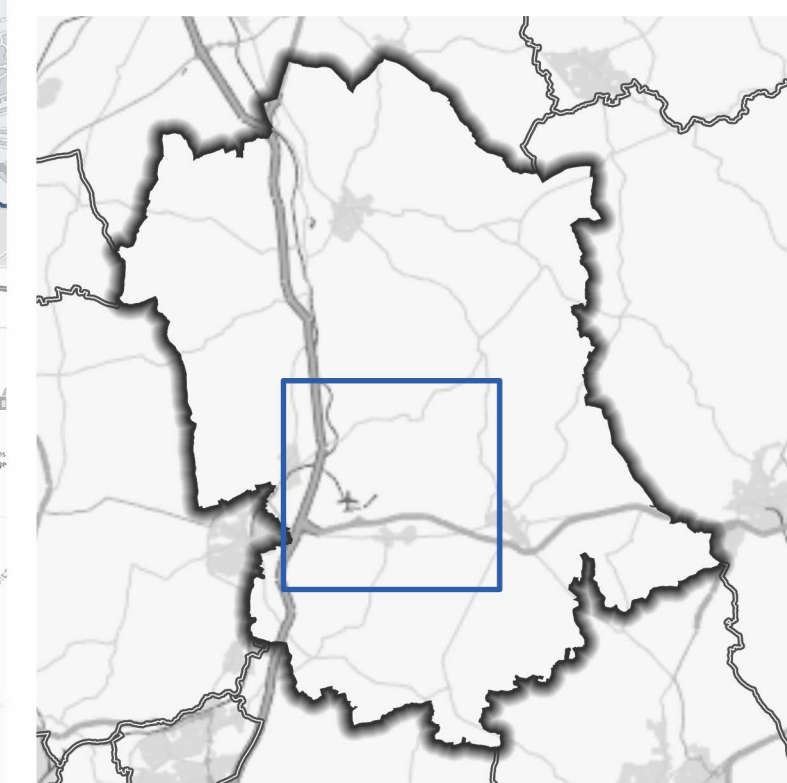


Figure 2.1b: Overall landscape sensitivity to employment development

- Uttlesford district boundary
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- SHELAA site rating**
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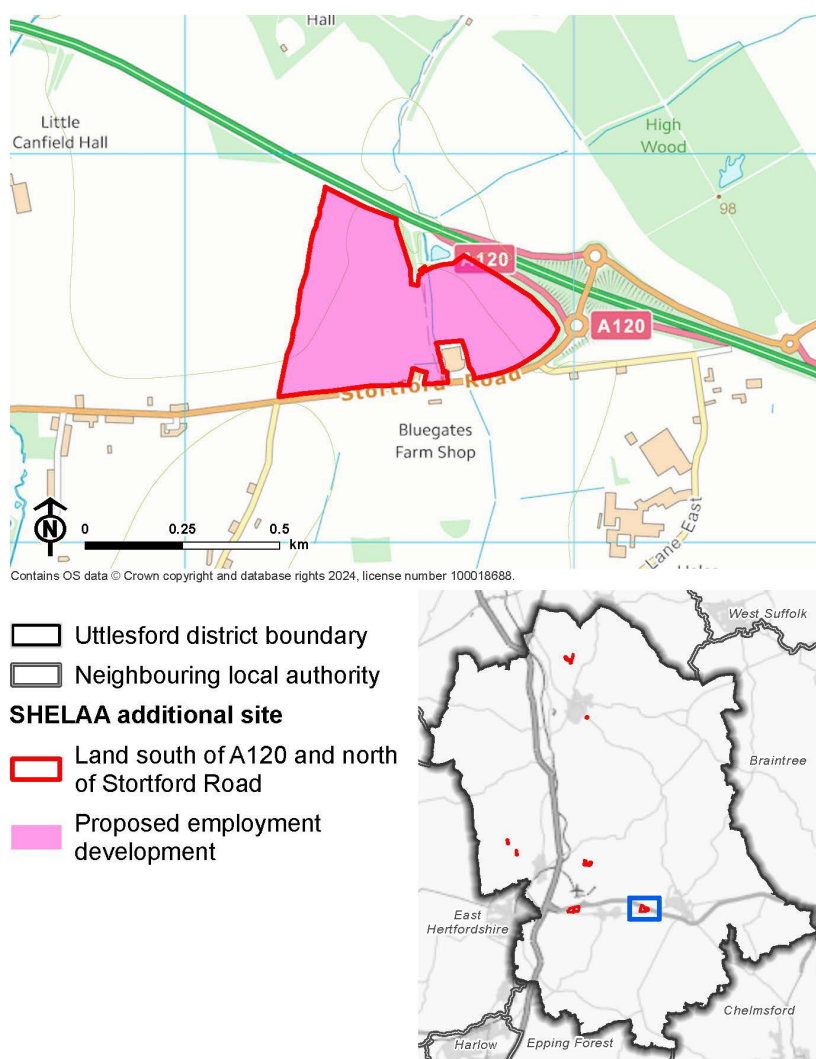
Appendix A

Landscape sensitivity proformas

Land south of A120 and north of Stortford Road, Great Dunmow (EMP)

Landscape Character Area: B5 Broxted Farmland Plateau

Figure A.1: Land south of A120 and north of Stortford Road, Great Dunmow (EMP)



Landscape character analysis

Physical and natural character

A.1 A flat landscape, lying around 90 metres AOD. The site is formed of grass fields, with largely intact hedgerow boundaries, and mature hedgerow trees. The hedgerow is partially lost on the south-east boundary along the B1256 Stortford Road. Mature trees and vegetation bound the A120 to the north and east. No priority habitats are recorded within the site, although a historic orchard is noted at Strood Hall, adjacent to the site.

■ Moderate

Historic landscape character

A.2 The fields are irregular-shaped, however there has been considerable 20th Century boundary reorganisation, partly due to the construction of the A120 to the north and its junction with the B1256 Stortford Road to the east. The site excludes Strood Hall, but provides a rural setting to the Grade II listed building.

■ Low-moderate

Settlement character

A.3 The site is not close to any settlements. The landscape forms part of a generous gap between Takeley and Great Dunmow. As a result of the intervening distance and tree cover, development of the site would not reduce the sense of separation. There is commercial development south of the site, however this is a much smaller scale of development than the site. Development on this site would be seen as encroachment into the countryside, as there is no current large-scale employment development in the vicinity.

■ Moderate

Visual character

A.4 Hedgerows along the B1256 Stortford Road and mature trees and vegetation along the A120 provide some enclosure to the site. However, this is relatively low, and 2-3 storey height development will be visible above existing vegetation. A public right of way runs through the centre of the site, with clear views across the site. It also crosses the A120 on a bridge, affording extensive views across the site. Although the promoted pedestrian and cycle route The Flitch Way lies 150 metres south of the site, there are very limited views as the route is in a former railway cutting.

■ Moderate

Perceptual and scenic qualities

A.5 Despite light pollution and noise from the busy A120 to the north and proximity to Takeley and Great Dunmow, the site retains some sense of a rural character. There are few views of the road network, and no views of modern development.

■ Moderate

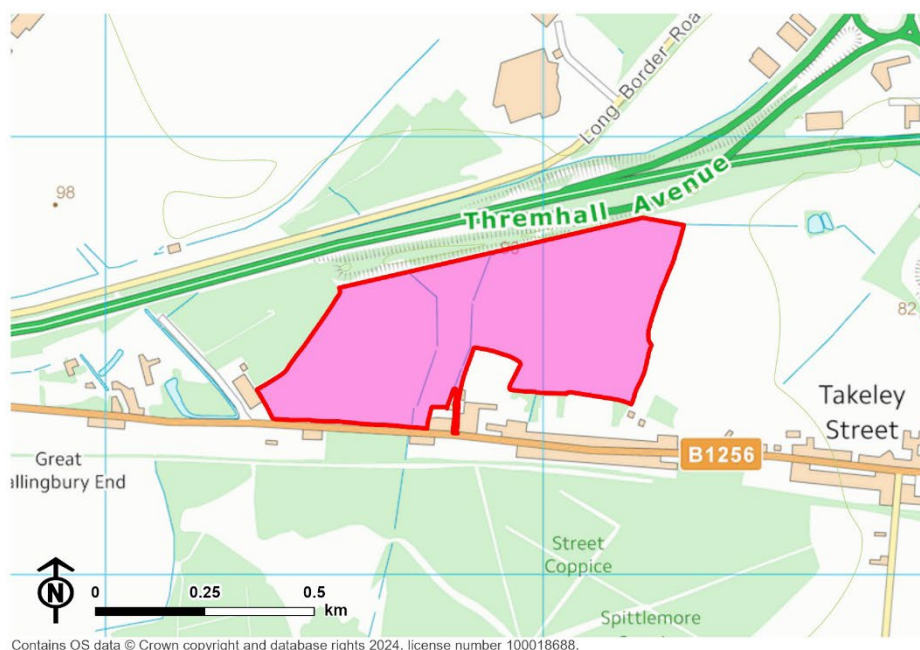
Overall landscape sensitivity to employment development

The site is assessed as having moderate sensitivity to employment development, due to its limited natural and cultural heritage features and proximity to the A120. Sensitive features include its relatively rural character, limited visual screening and views into the site from the surrounding roads and a public right of way.

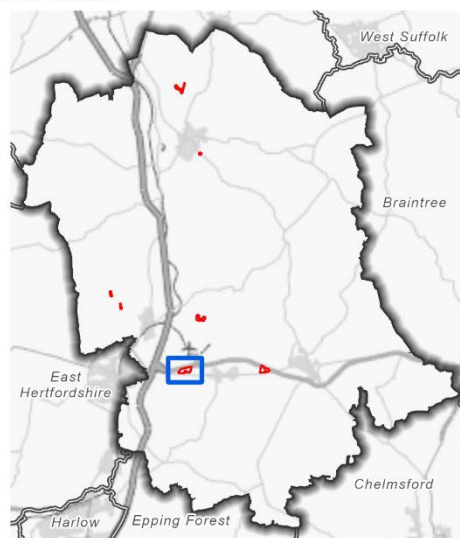
North Takeley Street (EMP)

Landscape Character Area: B7 Hatfield Forest Farmland

Figure A.2: North Takeley Street (EMP)



-  Uttlesford district boundary
-  Neighbouring local authority
- SHELAA additional site**
-  North Takeley Street
-  Proposed employment development



Landscape character analysis

Physical and natural character

A.6 The site is relatively flat, lying around 95 metres AOD. An earth bund runs along the northern boundary, which is an unnatural feature in the landscape. It consists of three fields in arable use. Hedgerow boundaries are largely retained and in good condition, with some gaps. There is significant tree planting along the northern boundary associated with the A120. Priory Wood, adjacent to the western boundary, is an area of ancient woodland, designated locally as an Important Woodland and Local Wildlife Site. Hatfield Forest, a nationally important Ancient Woodland designated as a Site of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI) and National Nature Reserve (NNR), lies 100 metres to the south, however there is no intervisibility due to intervening housing.

■ Moderate

Historic landscape character

A.7 The fields are irregular-shaped; however, their boundaries have been altered by 20th Century farming practices and the construction of the A120 to the north. Four Grade II listed buildings lie to the south of the site, and the site provides a rural backdrop to these. Listed buildings at Thremhall Priory lie to the west but are screened from view by Priory Wood.

■ Low-moderate

Settlement character

A.8 The site lies north and west of Takeley Street, a linear settlement which has developed along The Street. Taylors Farm lies to the east and south of the site and has some large agricultural sheds. Employment development on this site would be out of character with the existing linear residential settlement pattern.

Appendix A Landscape sensitivity proformas

It would also extend development from The Street (B1256) up to the A120 and would reduce the gap between Takeley Street and Stansted Airport.

■ Moderate-high

Visual character

A.9 The site is enclosed to the north by vegetation and embankments along the A120. It is partially enclosed to the south by hedgerows and vegetation along property boundaries and the B1256; however, 2-3 storey development would be seen through and above this vegetation. Hedgerows and vegetation along The Street provide partial enclosure to the west of the site, while existing residential development in Takeley Street provides enclosure to the east of the site. Embankments and vegetation along the A120 also provide enclosure to the site. There are clear views available from public footpaths, including one that crosses the site and runs along the northern boundary, and another along the south-eastern boundary.

■ Moderate

Perceptual and scenic qualities

A.10 Although there are no views to the A120 and Stansted Airport due to woodland and embankments, there is considerable road and aircraft noise, and aeroplanes taking off are frequent features. Traffic noise is also audible from the B1256 to the south. Within the site there is some sense of rural character due to the agricultural nature of the site, good condition of the hedgerows and proximity to Priory Wood and Hatfield Forest.

■ Low-moderate

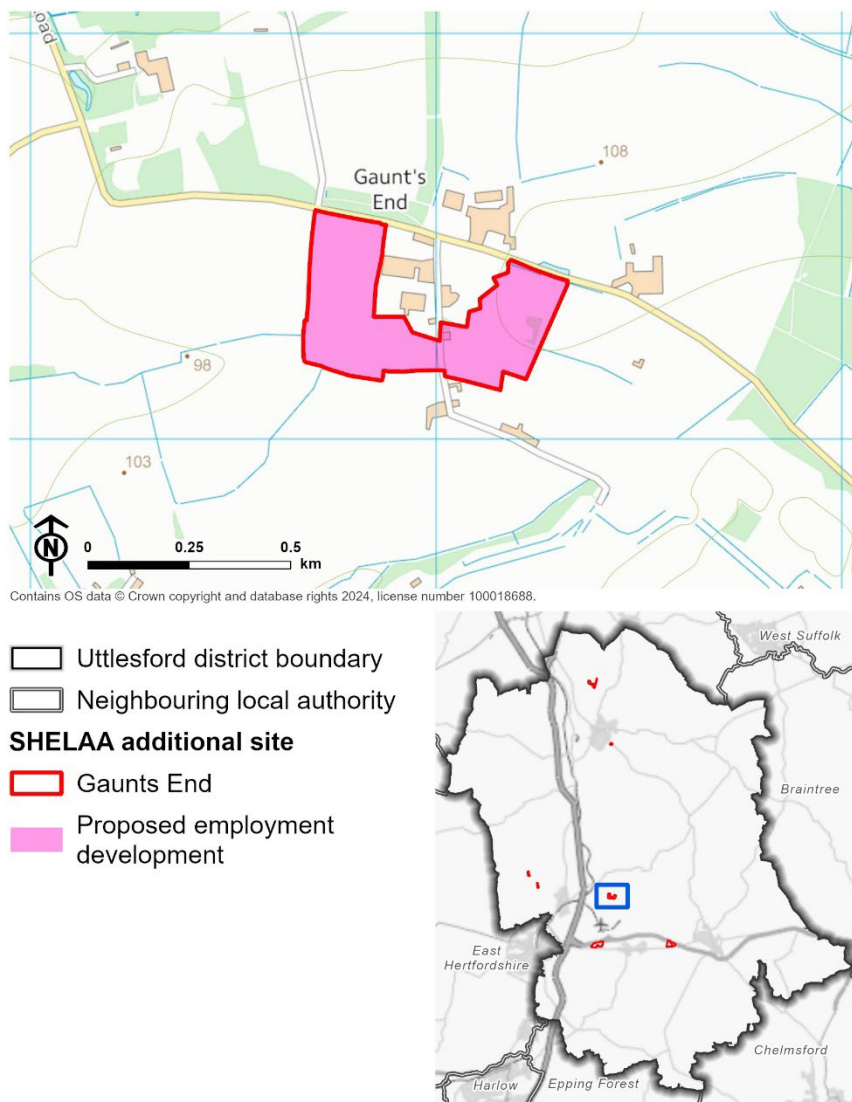
Overall landscape sensitivity to employment development

The site is assessed as having moderate sensitivity to employment development. Sensitive features include the ancient woodland at Priory Wood and Hatfield Forest surrounding the site, views of the site from public rights of way, and its lack of relationship with the linear settlement pattern of Takeley Street.

Gaunts End (EMP)

Landscape Character Area: B5 Broxted
Farmland Plateau

Figure A.3: Gaunts End (EMP)



Landscape character analysis

Physical and natural character

A.11 The site is generally flat, with a very slight incline to the north-east, from 105 metres to 110 metres AOD. Earth embankments to the west and south are unnatural features in the landscape. The site is comprised of open land on the edges of an existing employment development site and is not in agricultural use. Natural heritage features are limited to a hedgerow in good condition on the western boundary and scrubby grassland.

■ Low

Historic landscape character

A.12 The site is formed of irregularly shaped fields; however, the boundaries have been considerably altered by 20th Century farming practices. There are a number of Grade II listed historic buildings close to the site. Most of these have no relationship to the site; however, the site forms part of the remaining undeveloped setting to the isolated Grade II listed cottages Brewer Cottage and Sumach Cottage, which lie south of the existing Gaunt's End business park.

■ Low-moderate

Settlement character

A.13 The site is not close to any settlements. Development of this site would be seen as encroachment into the countryside. However, due to its location to the east, west and south of an existing employment site development of the site would therefore relate well to the existing form and pattern of development. Development on this site would also provide an opportunity to enhance the harsh edge of the development and integrate it into the wider countryside.

■ Low

Visual character

A.14 Development of the site would be visible in the wider landscape, due to the flat and open character. The hedgerow on the western boundary and earthworks provides some screening, although 2-3 storey development would be visible above this. Green Street, a public right of way, runs through the centre of the site, and continues to the south. There would be clear views from Green Street into the site. Vegetation and tree belts along Green Street restrict most views from the public rights of way to the south. Trees lining Hall Lane provide some enclosure for views from the north.

■ Moderate

Perceptual and scenic qualities

A.15 Proximity to Stansted Airport reduces the sense of tranquillity and remoteness. Although the airport is largely hidden from view, views of and noise from aeroplanes taking off has a significant impact. Existing employment development at Gaunt's End and on Hall Lane also reduces the rural character of the site.

■ Low-moderate

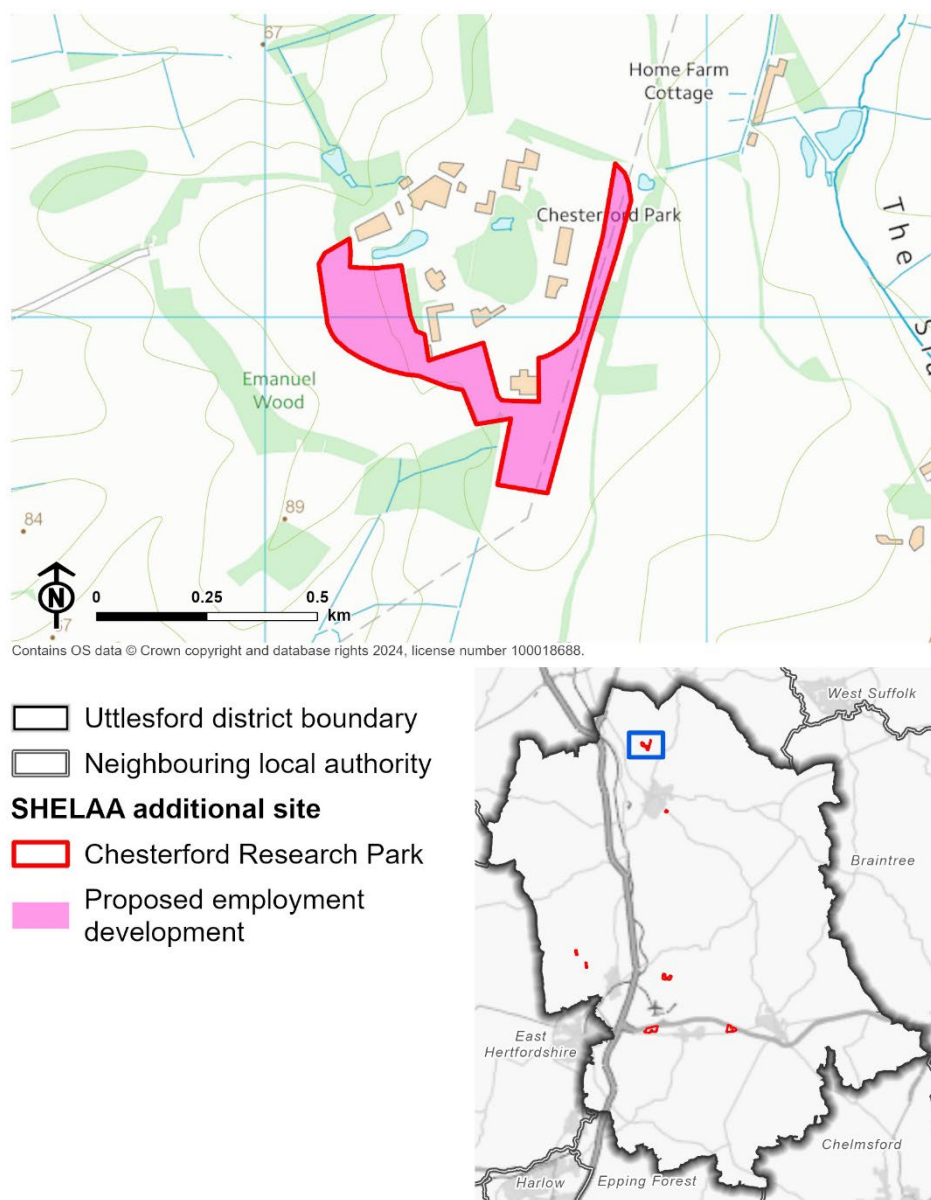
Overall landscape sensitivity to employment development

The site is assessed as having low-moderate sensitivity to employment development. The sensitive features of the site include its visibility within the wider countryside to the south and west.

Chesterford Research Park (EMP)

Landscape Character Area: A1 Cam River Valley

Figure A.4: Chesterford Research Park (EMP)



Landscape character analysis

Physical and natural character

A.16 Sloping landform, rising to the north, from 95 metres AOD to 110 metres AOD. The site consists arable fields, surrounding the existing Chesterford Research Park. No priority habitats are recorded within the site, although there is a row of parkland avenue trees and a small woodland in the north. Emanuel Wood to the south and west is recorded as Ancient Woodland and designated as a Local Wildlife Site. Priority habitat deciduous woodland also lies north of the site.

■ Low-moderate

Historic landscape character

A.17 Chesterford Park was a stately home and parkland. Reduction in the size of woodlands, and development of the business park has reduced the quality of the historic landscape. However, the parkland character of the site, particularly in the north-west is still evident, including an avenue of trees along the entrance road, individual specimen trees and grasslands.

■ Moderate

Settlement character

A.18 The site is not close to any settlements. It is located adjacent to the Chesterford Research Park, and additional employment development would therefore be in keeping with the existing development form and pattern.

■ Low

Visual character

A.19 The site is situated on the rolling valley sides of the River Cam. There are wide cross-valley views from the west of the site; however, many of these views are blocked by woodlands and copses. Views from the east of the site are blocked by vegetation and scrub. Views from Little Chesterford to the west, Springwell Road to the south-west and Little Walden to the east are all restricted by the rolling topography and woodlands.

■ Low-moderate

Perceptual and scenic qualities

A.20 The rurality of the site is impacted by proximity to the Chesterford Research Park and an electricity pylon route which runs through the east of the site. There are views from the east of the site of the continuing pylon route, as well as views from the west of the site to the M11 and electricity pylon routes across the Cam Valley. Despite this, the site retains a relatively rural character, with a good level of tranquillity due to the limited road access.

■ Moderate

Overall landscape sensitivity to employment development

The site is assessed as having low-moderate sensitivity to employment development. The sensitive features are the non-priority habitat woodland and the parkland character, particularly in the north-west of the site.

Report produced by LUC

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