

LAND EAST OF CAMBRIDGE ROAD, HARDWICK
PRELIMINARY GREEN BELT ASSESSMENT

HILL RESIDENTIAL LTD and
CHIVERS FARMS (HARDINGTON) LLP

MARCH 2019



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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Terence O'Rourke Ltd has been instructed on behalf of Hill Residential Ltd and Chivers Farm (Hardington) LLP to undertake a preliminary assessment of Green Belt issues for land east of Hardwick. This assessment will form supplementary information as part of the representations for the Call for Sites to be submitted to South Cambridgeshire District Council as part of their new joint Greater Cambridge Local Plan.

The site location and context

Location and site boundaries

- 1.2 The site is split into two parcels. Both are located along the eastern boundary of Hardwick, with their western boundaries forming parts of the western edge of the Cambridge Green Belt. The main parcel occupies two fields. One large arable field occupies the majority of this parcel with a second smaller field, kept as rough pasture, in the south western corner, surrounding properties in Kesters Close.
- 1.3 The main parcel is bounded by the tree and hedgerow lined Cambridge Road along the majority of its western boundary with the exception of properties in Kesters Close and the boundary of number 122 Cambridge Road along its north western corner. St Neots Road forms the northern boundary, and Bin Brook along with its associated riparian woodland edge forms the southern boundary. The eastern boundary is split into three. The northern extent is formed by the western edge of an isolated line of properties along St Neots Road, the middle section is formed by a post and wire boundary between two arable fields and the southern extent is marked by a strip of tree and scrub field boundary vegetation.
- 1.4 The second parcel covers a very small area to the east of Main Street in the south of Hardwick between number 87 Main Street and the rear of properties in Manor Crescent. This parcel is bounded by a treed hedgerow along Main Street and occupies a small area of rough grassland. See figure 1.

Topography

- 1.5 Like Hardwick village, the majority of the main parcel is located on the top of a raised plateau sitting roughly at 60m AOD. However, there is some localised variation, with the northern part of the site at approximately 64m AOD and the southern boundary approximately 56m AOD, providing an 8m level change from north to south the smaller second parcel is approximately 65m AOD. See figure 2.

Settlement pattern

- 1.6 The main parcel is located 5 km to the west of Cambridge. The nearest settlements are Coton 2.3km to the south east, Comberton 2km to the south, Highfields Caldecote 2km to the west and Dry Drayton 2.5km to the north.

Designations

- 1.7 Apart from being designated as Green Belt there are no other designations on either parcel. The historic core of Hardwick is on the eastern side of the village where Cambridge Road becomes Main Street. The historic core is designated as

a conservation area and contains a number of listed buildings. Due to the Green Belt, development in Hardwick has been concentrated mainly to the north and west although there has been a small amount of growth south of the village core.

- 1.8 Within a 2.5km radius from the main parcel's boundary there are two registered parks and gardens. Madingley Hall is 880 metres to the north east and the American Military Cemetery is 2.3km to the east. Childerley Hall, a further registered park and garden to the north west is located just beyond the 2.5km radius. See figure 3.

Footpaths

- 1.9 There are no public rights of way through either of the parcels. The main concentration of public rights of way, including some permissive footpaths are located to the south and south west of both parcels and includes a national trail that runs from Coton in the east to Highfield Caldecote in the west. Within the 2.5km radius around the main parcel there are a limited number of public rights of way north of the A428. The closest footpath north of the A428 links Hardwick with Dry Drayton, following Callow Brook between two ridges of high ground.

Visibility

- 1.10 At this preliminary stage, using our professional judgement and experience, it is envisaged that due to topography and intervening vegetation, visibility is likely to be fairly contained to the south east facing slopes of the higher ridges to the north west of Hardwick and the two fingers of higher land to the west of Coton and the north of Comberton.
- 1.11 The impacts on visibility will be assessed in greater detail within a landscape and visual impact assessment which will form part of the studies to be undertaken at a later stage. With regards to possible visual impacts, it is intended that any masterplan would be landscape led and that the landscape of both parcels has the ability to respond positively to landscape considerations.

2.0 Green Belt assessment

National policy

2.1 At a national level government policy is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2019 which under paragraph 134 states the purposes of Green Belt are:

- 1 *“To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
- 2 *to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
- 3 *to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
- 4 *to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
- 5 *to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.”*

Planning policy

2.2 At a local scale, policy relating to development in the Cambridge Green Belt is contained within *The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan, adopted September 2018*. Policy S/4: Cambridge Green Belt states:

“A Green Belt will be maintained around Cambridge that will define the extent of the urban area”...

2.3 In paragraph 2.29 it states the government attaches great importance to Green Belts whose fundamental aim is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. A specific function of some Green Belts, such as that around Cambridge, is to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.

2.4 Under paragraph 2.30 it states how the Cambridge Green Belt is relatively small in extent, extending around 3 to 5 miles from the edge of the city. It goes on to state that the established purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt are to:

- *“Preserve the unique character of Cambridge as a compact, dynamic city with a thriving historic centre;*
- *Maintain and enhance the quality of its setting; and*
- *Prevent communities in the environs of Cambridge from merging into one another and with the city.”*

2.5 Within paragraph 2.31 it states how there are a number of factors that define the special character of Cambridge and its setting, those that are relevant to the sites at Hardwick are:

- *“Key views of Cambridge from the surrounding countryside;*
- *A soft green edge to the city;*
- *The distribution, physical separation, setting, scale and character of the Green Belt villages; and*
- *A landscape that retains a strong rural character”.*

Preliminary Green Belt Assessment

- 2.6 Whilst the NPPF clearly sets out the five purposes the Green Belt is intended to serve, to date there is no agreed methodology for undertaking an assessment of Green Belt and reviewing how land contributes to these purposes.
- 2.7 However, what is common in all assessments of Green Belt is that purpose 5 – assisting regeneration, is almost always discounted on the grounds that the amount of land within an urban area that could be developed will already have been factored in before identifying Green Belt land. Therefore, assessment of Green Belt against purpose 5 will not enable a distinction to be made between land parcels as all Green Belt achieves this purpose to the same extent.
- 2.8 The following section will therefore assess both parcels against NPPF purposes 1 to 4 along with commenting in relation to how they perform against the three Cambridge Green Belt purposes.

Purpose 1 – Sprawl

- 2.9 As provided in most Green Belt assessment methodologies sprawl is defined as the outward spread of a large built up-area at its periphery in a sporadic, dispersed or irregular way. Hardwick is not a large built-up area it is a village. Therefore, against NPPF purpose 1 the sites make very little contribution. Furthermore, development will be well planned and designed using strong boundaries and therefore will not represent sprawl.

Purpose 2 - Merging

- 2.10 Proposed development at both site parcels will not cause coalescence with other settlements. The main parcel is 5km to the west of Cambridge and the nearest villages are Coton, Comberton, Highfields Caldecote and Dry Drayton, all of which are 2 to 2.5km from the boundary of the larger site parcel.
- 2.11 Presently, Hardwick village has grown asymmetrically westwards of the village facilities and further from the historic core, which lies south of the main extent of the village. Development within the main parcel, east of Cambridge Road will re-address this issue. In regards to the smaller parcel south of the historic core along Main Street, this is simply a small length of infill that would close a gap between existing properties.
- 2.12 The sites do not assist in preventing the merging of major built up areas or villages.

Purpose 3 - Encroachment

- 2.13 All new development around cities, towns and villages creates encroachment into the countryside. However, the proposed masterplanning of both parcels will be landscape led and provides an opportunity for mitigation measures that will assist in screening development and the perception of encroachment.
- 2.14 There is ample opportunity to provide a strong woodland belt along the eastern boundary of the main parcel which would create a new strong Green Belt boundary and would assist in screening views from the east. New riparian

woodland can be provided to enhance the already strong southern boundary along the Bin Brook and a woodland belt along the northern boundary, created by St Neots Road, will assist in screening views from the north.

- 2.15 With regards to the smaller parcel, a strong woodland belt along the eastern boundary would form a strong new Green Belt boundary that would align with the rears of the existing properties along Main Street. There would be no perceived encroachment into the countryside with the development of this parcel. A wooded eastern boundary along with the existing woodland belts south of Redbrick Farm and Redbrick Plantation should sufficiently screen all views of development from the east and south. The existing settlement of Hardwick will screen views from the north and west.

Purpose 4 - Historic Setting

- 2.16 This purpose relates to historic towns and cities and therefore does not apply to these sites as development on both parcels will have no effect on the setting or special character of Cambridge.

Assessment against Cambridge Green Belt purposes

- 2.17 Development on both parcels will have no effect on the Cambridge Green Belt purposes. Development will not affect the unique character of Cambridge, it will not affect its setting and it will not cause settlements to merge.
- 2.18 Equally, in relation to the special character of Cambridge, development at either parcel will not affect key views toward Cambridge from the surrounding countryside. Hardwick village is 5km from Cambridge and at this distance it is unlikely that the majority of the city will be discernible.
- 2.19 Development at both parcels will not affect the soft green edge and will not affect the physical separation, setting, scale and character of the Green Belt villages. Finally, removing both parcels from the edge of the Cambridge Green Belt will have no effect on the rural character of Green Belt surrounding Cambridge.

Preliminary Green Belt assessment conclusion

- 2.20 Both parcels provide an opportunity for the creation of strong new woodland boundaries as well as scope to provide much needed new facilities such as doctors surgery, sports fields and a small amount office development.
- 2.21 Development of the main parcel will assist in balancing the village core and has the ability to integrate the isolated line of residential development along St Neots Road into the village. Development of the small parcel is just infill and would simplify the Green Belt boundary to form a sensible alignment. It is evident that this area of rough grass plays no part in upholding the Green Belt purposes.
- 2.22 From this preliminary assessment both parcels would appear to perform poorly to not at all against both the NPPF and Cambridge Green Belt purposes. We suggest that both can provide new strong Green Belt boundaries that would allow them to both be removed from the Green Belt without prejudicing the remaining Cambridge Green Belt.



- Site boundary
- 2.5km study area

**Land east of Cambridge Road,
Hardwick**
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Figure 1: Aerial

Dwg no/239105/01	Revision	
Status	25 March 2019	
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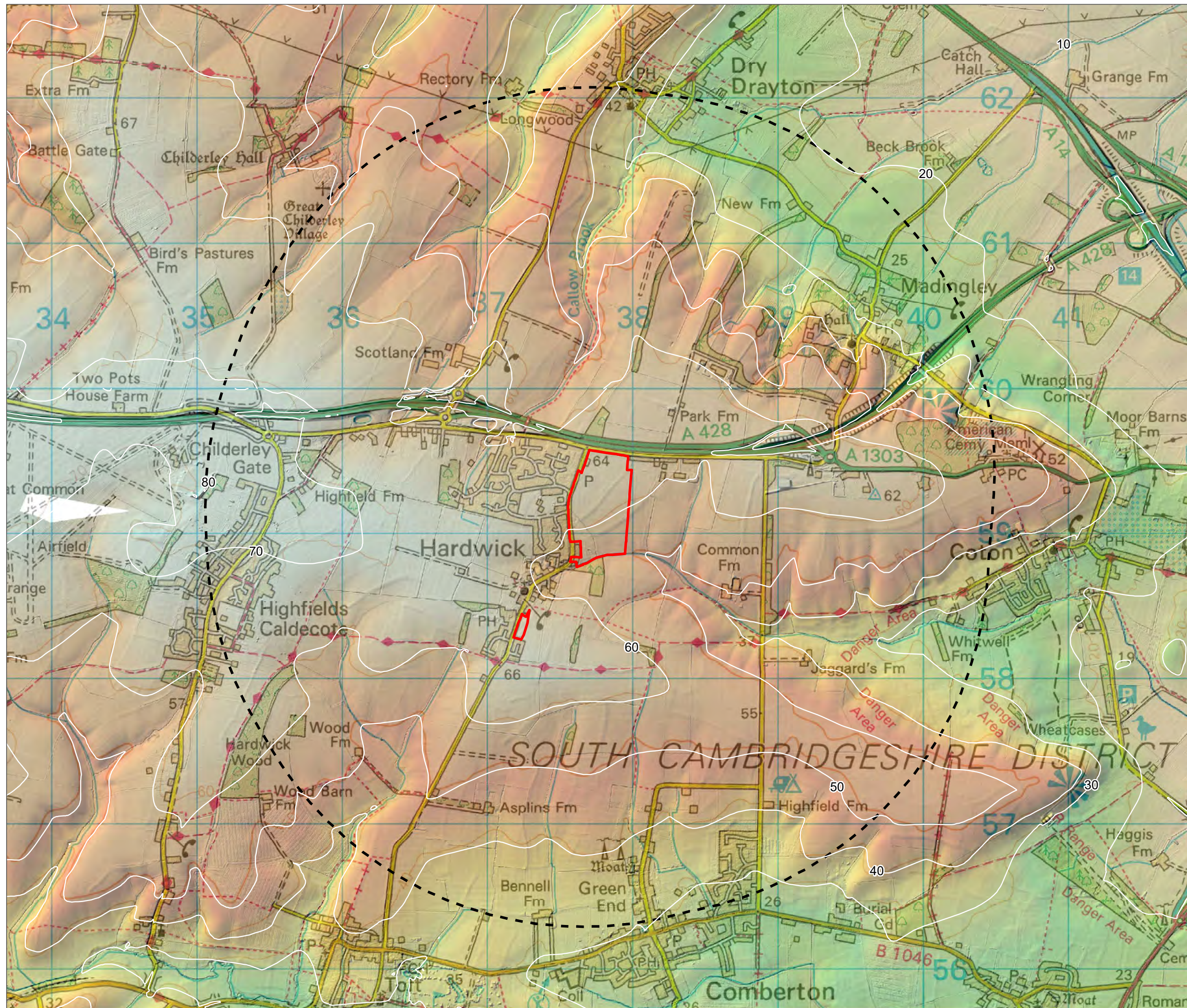
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- Site boundary
- 2.5km study area

Land east of Cambridge Road, Hardwick
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Figure 2: Topography

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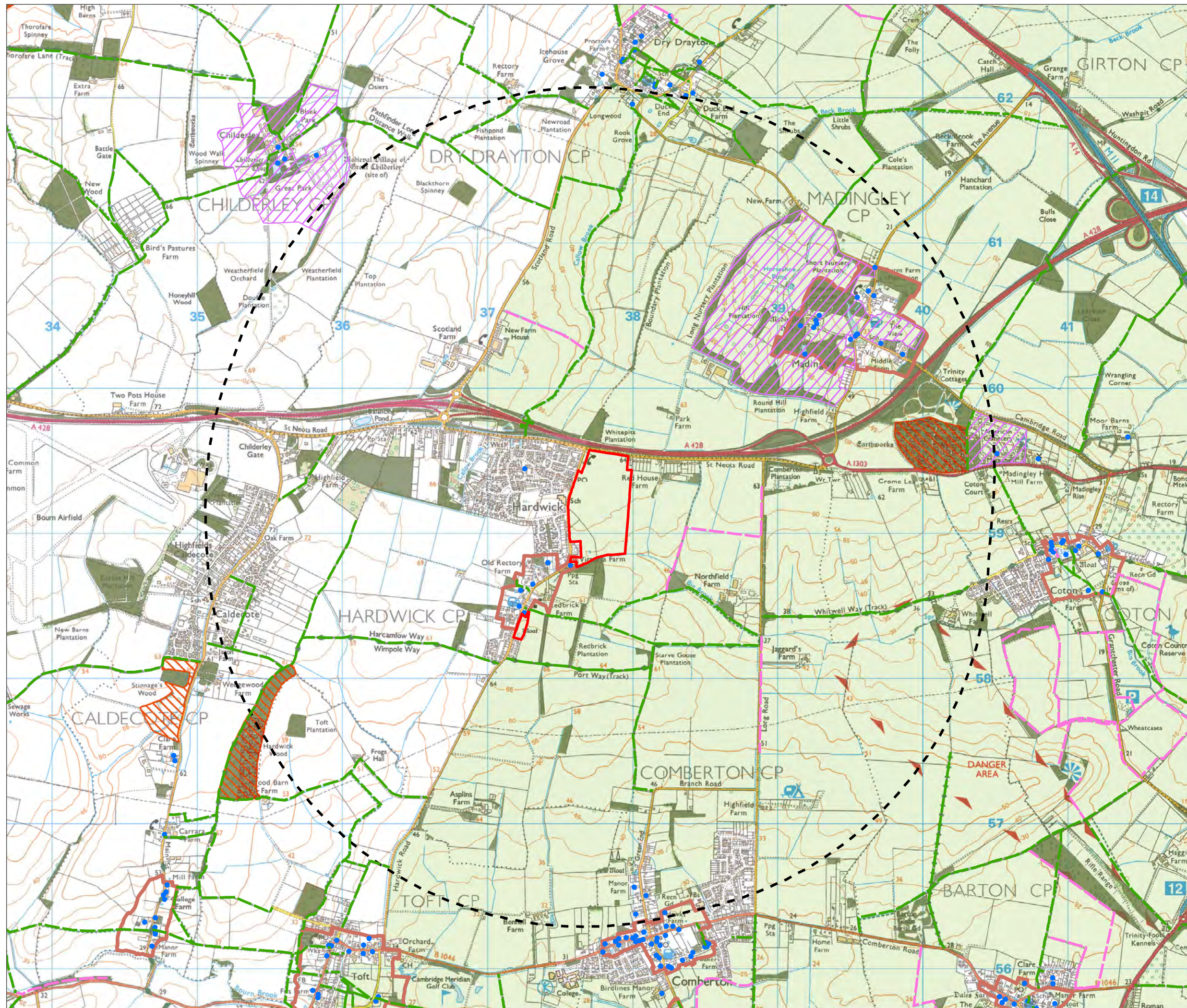
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- Site boundary
- 2.5km study area
- Rights of way
- Permissive footpaths
- Woodland
- Listed buildings
- Registered parks and gardens
- Ancient woodland
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Green belt
- Conservation areas

Land east of Cambridge Road, Hardwick
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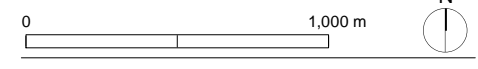


Figure 3: Designations

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