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Strategic Gap Assessment, Hartlepool

Hartlepool Borough Council

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01 INTRODUCTION



01 Introduction

Background

- 1.1 re-form Landscape Architecture Ltd. was commissioned by Hartlepool Borough Council in June 2017 to carry out a Strategic Gap Assessment to support the proposed Strategic Gap allocation within the emerging Hartlepool Local Plan.
- 1.2 The Borough Council believes that the western expansion of Hartlepool, through housing development beyond the existing urban fence, can be achieved sustainably. However it is considered imperative that a Strategic Gap is maintained between the main urban area of the town and surrounding villages, as built development within the gap could over time, lead to villages joining with the urban area and losing their distinct identities.
- 1.3 Details of the Strategic Gap allocation are included within the spatial policy of LS1: Locational Strategy. The following description of the Strategic Gap is extracted from emerging Policy LS1: Locational Strategy:
- To maintain the separate identity and amenity of settlements and to prevent the urban area coalescing with the villages, the spread of the urban area and the villages outside of the limits to development, as defined on the proposals map, into the Strategic Gap will be strictly controlled. Development within Strategic Gaps will be strictly controlled and limited to development associated with farming and rural businesses.*
- 1.4 For the purpose of this project, the following abridged core purposes of the Strategic Gap have been identified and agreed:
1. To limit the spread of urban areas and villages outside of the limits to development;
 2. To prevent the urban area of Hartlepool coalescing with villages;
 3. To protect the character of the countryside and rural areas; and
 4. To maintain the separate identity and amenity of settlements.
- 1.5 At the time of producing the assessment, the Local Plan was in its Examination stage and had been submitted to the Secretary of State for examination. The Borough Council identified within the submitted Regulation 22 Consultation Statement a need to produce further information to support the soundness of the Strategic Gap prior to the commencement of the hearing sessions of the Examination In Public (EiP) in September 2017.

Scope

- 1.6 This project aims to provide a comprehensive assessment of how the Strategic Gap allocation performs against its core purposes as defined above. The report comprises the following sections:

Base Line

- 1.7 **Desk Study:** Prior to conducting the assessment stage of the project, information was collated and analysed to establish an understanding of the landscape in which the Strategic Gap is located in terms of planning policy, landscape character and physical characteristics. This included a review of current landscape based planning policies established by Hartlepool Borough Council, and a evaluation of existing Landscape Character Assessments relating to the Hartlepool Borough.
- 1.8 **Field Survey:** Using the desk study as supporting information, the second stage of the base line involved an on site survey of the Hartlepool Borough area, focusing on land within the extents of, and around the existing Strategic Gap boundary. The survey aimed to review the classifications made within existing character assessments and make any necessary refinements to ensure an accurate classification of the local landscape as it is today in relation to the Strategic Gap.

Landscape Assessment

- 1.9 This element of the assessment considers the landscape and visual character of the landscape context in which the Strategic Gap is currently located. The purpose is to identify various sensitivities of the landscape within and around the Strategic Gap, and provide an indication of the levels of capacity that the landscape has to accommodate change.

Spatial Planning Assessment

- 1.10 The second element of assessment reviews the Strategic Gap allocation against the four core purposes, as identified above, to determine how successfully the allocation currently performs.

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Evaluation

- 1.11 The findings of the above two assessment elements are to be summarised to provide a clear indication of the soundness of the current Strategic Gap allocation. Any necessary recommendations are to be made as to how the extents of the Strategic Gap may be adjusted to ensure that the allocation effectively serves its function.

Study Area

- 1.12 The study area defines the geographical extent of assessment, and is split into two zones which include a 'primary zone' of study and a 'secondary zone' of study. (Refer to Figure 1)
- 1.13 The primary zone focuses on the landscape to west of Hartlepool in which the Strategic Gap is located and includes the western settlement extent of Hartlepool, local villages and the northern edge of Billingham. The focus of the zone is landscape and settlement areas that potentially bare significance to the purposes of the Strategic Gap, including the western edge of Hartlepool and landscape between settlements. The western extent of the zone is bound by the A19 road corridor. Westwards of this corridor is considered to not be significant for the purpose of this project, as it is not located between the Hartlepool Settlement and nearby villages within the Borough.

Within this zone, the landscape character, capacity and core purposes of the Strategic Gap will be assessed in detail.

- 1.14 The secondary zone encompasses a broad extent of the Hartlepool settlement. The content of this zone lies within the core interior and far eastern coastal extent of the Hartlepool settlement, and as such is difficult to distinguish how the Strategic Gap delivers its purpose against the content of the zone. The purpose of this zone is to allow consideration of the remainder of the settlement and to check whether key assets within Hartlepool, including Conservation Areas and features of historic significance such as Listed Buildings, have any visual relationship with the Strategic Gap.

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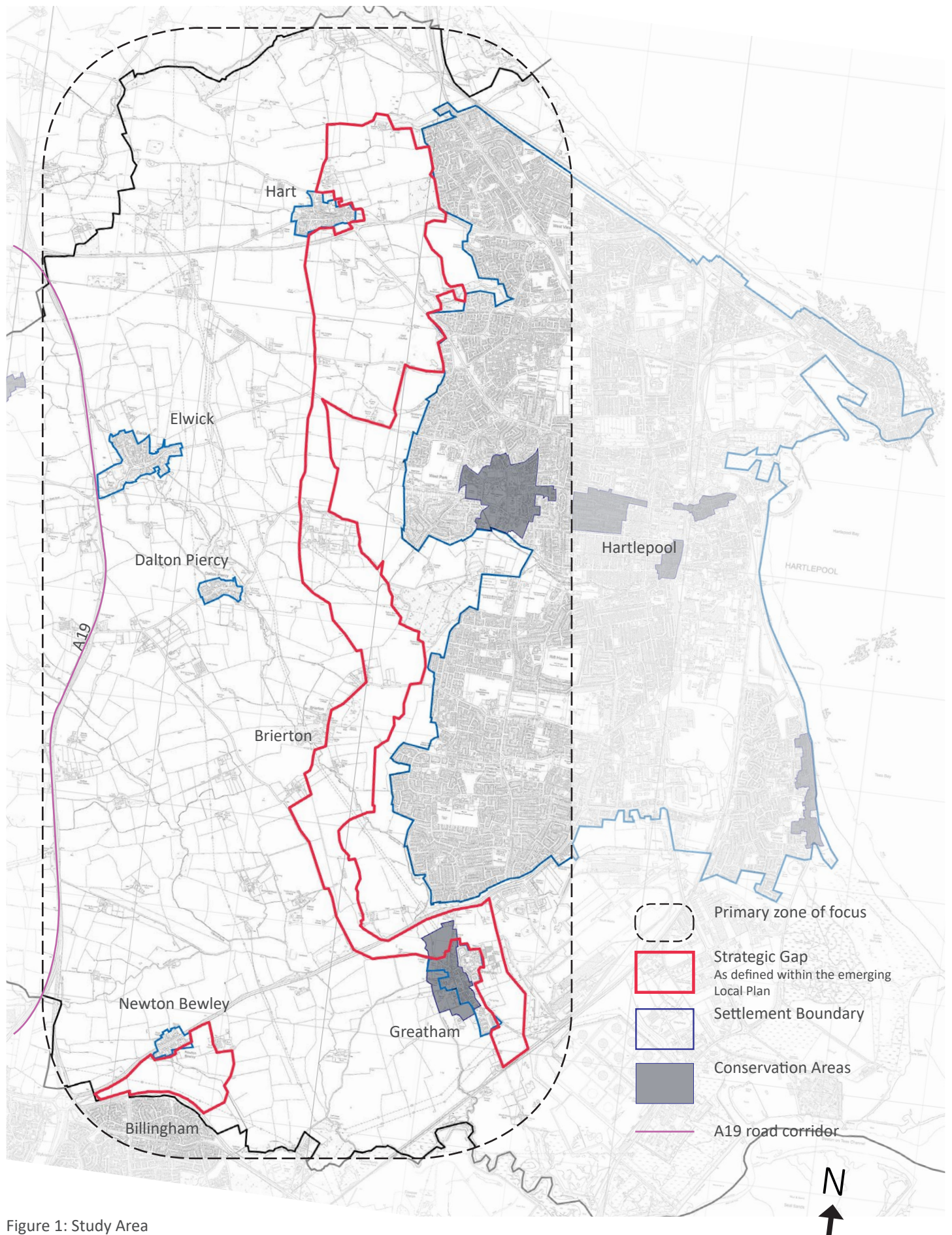


Figure 1: Study Area

02 BASE LINE



02 Base Line

Planning Context

- 2.1 The relevant planning policies relating to landscape and visual issues are set out in this section and include the following;
- National Planning Policy Framework (2012)
 - Emerging Hartlepool Local Plan Publication Stage Consultation Document (2016)
 - Hartlepool Rural Neighbourhood Plan Publication Draft (2016)

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

- 2.2 Relevant Sections within the National Planning Policy Framework, relating to landscape and visual issues are as follows:
- Section 7: Requiring good design
 - Section 11: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
 - Section 12: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment
- 2.3 In Section 7 of the NPPF 'Requiring good design', the government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is seen as a key aspect of sustainable development. The section states at paragraph 58 '*Planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that development:*'
- *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;*
 - *establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit;*
 - *optimise the potential of the Site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses (including incorporation of green and other public space as part of developments) and support local facilities and transport networks;*
 - *respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation;*
 - *create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion; and*
 - *are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.*
- 2.4 Section 11 (paragraph 109) of the NPPF seeks to ensure that the planning system contributes to and enhances the natural and local environment by
- *protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils;*
 - *recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services; minimising effects on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures*
 - *preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability; and*
 - *remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.*

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- 2.5 Paragraph 12 of the NPPF refers to the need to minimise noise and health implications of a new development.
- *recognise that development will often create some noise and existing businesses wanting to develop in continuance of their business should not have unreasonable restrictions put on them because of changes in nearby land uses since they were established; and*
 - *identify and protect areas of tranquillity which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason.*

Local Planning Policy

Hartlepool Local Plan

- 2.6 For the purpose of this project, relevant policies within the emerging Local Plan will be reviewed, as the Strategic Gap is proposed only within the emerging Local Plan. The Strategic Gap does not exist within the Hartlepool Local Plan 2006, therefore saved 2006 policies will not be included as part of this assessment.
- 2.7 The emerging Hartlepool Local Plan will be the key Development Plan Document setting out the spatial vision, strategic objectives and core policies for the Borough for the next 15 years. The document and a supporting Proposals Map are currently in their 'Publication' stage and have been submitted to the Secretary of State for examination. The new Local Plan is due for adoption in February 2018.
- 2.8 The Strategic Gap allocation does not currently exist as stand alone policy, however descriptions relating to the purpose of the Strategic Gap are primarily included within policy **LS1: Locational Strategy**. Policy LS1 states the purpose of the strategic gap as follows:
- To maintain the separate identity and amenity of settlements and to prevent the urban area coalescing with the villages, the spread of the urban area and the villages outside of the limits to development, as defined on the proposals map, into the Strategic Gap will be strictly controlled. Development within Strategic Gaps (as shown on the proposals map) will be strictly controlled and limited to development associated with farming and rural businesses.*
- 2.9 The Strategic Gap is also included within the preamble to policies **RUR1: Development in the Rural Area** and **RUR2: New Dwellings Outside of Development Limits**, however it is not included as part of the policy itself.

Hartlepool Rural Neighbourhood Plan

- 2.10 The Publication Draft Hartlepool Rural Neighbourhood Plan 2016-2031 was submitted to the Hartlepool Borough Council in August 2016 and has recently completed the final stage of publication prior to examination of the plan. The Rural Neighbourhood Plan is to be a Development Plan Document along side the emerging Hartlepool Local Plan.
- 2.11 The document includes policy relating to 'Green Gaps', which serve a similar purpose to that of the Strategic Gap. Descriptions relating to 'Green Gaps' are located within policy **GEN1 - Village Envelopes**. The following policy text is extracted from GEN1 - Village Envelopes:
- Development within the Green Gaps shown on the Proposals Map will be permitted only in exceptional circumstances where it does not compromise the openness of the countryside between the villages, Hartlepool and Billingham.*
- In the countryside outside the Village Envelopes and outside the Green Gaps, development will be supported where it is essential for the purposes of agriculture, forestry, public infrastructure or to meet the housing and social needs of the local rural community.*
- 2.12 The Council has sought to align the emerging Hartlepool Local Plan with emerging Rural Neighbourhood Plan with respect to the Strategic Gap allocation and 'Green Gaps', albeit there are a number of additional 'Green Gap' areas identified in the Rural Neighbourhood Plan Proposals Map.

02 Base Line

Landscape Character

- 2.13 A desk study of existing landscape character assessments was carried out to develop an understanding of the landscape character of the Hartlepool at both a national and local level. The desk study provided a basis from which the field survey was conducted and informed the local landscape assessment carried out as part of this project.

National Landscape Character

- 2.14 Natural England's National Character Area (NCA) Profiles divide England into 159 distinct natural areas. Each is defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity and cultural and economic activity. The Strategic Gap spans two National Character Areas which include:
- NCA 15 Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau
 - NCA 23 Tees Lowland
- 2.15 Approximately one third of the Strategic Gap is located within NCA 15 Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau (to the north) and approximately two thirds of its extent within NCA 23 Tees Lowland (to the south).
- 2.16 The field survey identified that only a limited number of key landscape characteristics of NCA 15 Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau and NCA 23 Tees Lowland were present within the study area. It was noted that key characteristics of NCA 15 are more widespread within the study area. These are listed below.

NCA 15 Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau:

- *A productive farmed landscape with a high proportion of large arable fields and some pasture for sheep and cattle grazing;*
- *Historic villages subject to 20th-century expansion;*
- *Transport corridors throughout; and*
- *Widespread urban development.*

NCA 23 Tees Lowland:

- *Predominantly arable agricultural land, with low woodland cover and large fields; and*
- *Principal transport corridors, power lines and energy infrastructure are conspicuous elements in the landscape.*

- 2.17 The majority of above characteristics are considered to be more general semi-rural and rural attributes that are associated with many farmland landscape types across England. A number of unique and defining landscape characteristics that are more specific to each NCA were not present within the study area. These include limestone escarpments, dramatic coastline with exposed cliffs, steep-sided wooded coastal dunes and sand dunes and beaches (from NCA 15), and a low-lying and open plain, major industrial installations, slow-moving rivers and Brownfield sites (from NCA 23).
- 2.18 The field survey identified that the transition of landscape character between National Character Areas NCA 15 and NCA 23 is gradual and not strongly defined and as illustrated within The NCA profile, the transition between NCA 15 and NCA 23 occurs approximately at the longitude of Elwick.

Local Landscape Character

- 2.19 The Hartlepool Landscape Assessment 2000 (by The Landmark Partnership on behalf of Hartlepool Borough Council) is the only published document which categorises the landscape character around Hartlepool at a borough level. The assessment categorises the landscape of the Hartlepool Borough into seven landscape types. The Strategic Gap is located within, or adjacent to the following landscape types:
- Undulating Farmland
 - Woodland
 - Rural Fringe

02 Base Line

2.20 It is identified that the character assessments made within the Hartlepool Landscape Assessment 2000, remain largely representative of the local landscape character around Hartlepool in 2017. However, the field survey picked up on a number of variations against the Hartlepool Landscape Assessment 2000. These are considered to be as a result of new building development, which alter settlement boundaries and the establishment and management of field boundaries and woodland over time.

2.21 The majority of the Strategic Gap is located within, or adjacent to the Undulating Farmland Landscape Type, which covers a large extent of the western half of the Borough. The undulating farmland classification comprises the following characteristics which are represented within the study area:

Predominately arable farmland, areas of pasture, minor beck valleys, rounded hillocks and sparsely wooded areas. Scattered farmsteads and other small-scale rural developments are also found within this character area.

2.22 The field survey identified that the Undulating Farmland Landscape Type largely remains as the same extent illustrated within the Hartlepool Landscape Assessment 2000. There are a number of instances where the extent is considered to have changed, particularly within closer proximity to the edge of settlement, where recent residential development has occurred. The field survey also determined that the undulating topography transitions to flatter to the south of Hartlepool.

2.23 The Rural Fringe Landscape Type is defined as extending along the settlement edges of Hartlepool and peripheries of rural villages, including Elwick, Dalton Piercy, Newton Bewley and Greatham. The Landscape Type is described as:

Areas adjacent or in close proximity to the urban environment, which typically have either lost or had the rural character influenced by adjacent urban development.

2.24 This characterisation remains largely representative of the existing landscape around the peripheries of settlement, however as with the Undulating Farmland Landscape Type, the field survey revealed a number of variations to its extent, which are likely to be a result of the establishment of field boundaries or new development.

2.25 The Woodland Type is intermittent and not as widespread as the Undulating Farmland and Rural Fringe Landscape Types and is described as follows:

The woodland landscape is defined by areas of predominate tree cover. This landscape type includes mature and semi natural woodland, woodland plantations, and immature/emerging woodland.

2.26 It was noted as part of the field survey that in some situations, woodland areas are assimilated within the character of the Undulating Farmland type, forming a visibly natural part of field boundaries and overall tree cover. This was particularly the case where the woodland was mature and semi-natural. Plantations and immature woodland areas, which are typically in closer proximity to the settlement edge of Hartlepool, are distinctly different in character and currently do not integrate into the surrounding farmland landscape as strongly.

Topography (Refer to Appendix 01)

2.27 The topography to the west of the Hartlepool settlement is gently undulating north of Dalton Piercy, gradually becoming flatter south of Dalton Piercy and towards Billingham. The Strategic Gap spans between both areas of land form.

2.28 The overall change in level is from approximately 5m AOD to the south near the village of Greatham up to approximately 140m AOD in the north near to the village of Hart. There are no distinctive ridge lines within the study area as the undulating topography and hedgerow vegetation generally conceals the overall change in level. There are also locally recognised viewing points within the landscape that attract visitors.

2.29 From higher ground around the villages of Elwick and Hart, occasional longer distance elevated views south-eastwards of the coastline are available from Public Rights of Way or country lanes where breaks in hedgerow vegetation occur. Notable longer distance views are available from along Elwick Road and the unnamed country lane between Elwick Road and Dalton Piercy. Some glimpsed views of the wider countryside to the north of Hartlepool are also available between gaps in hedgerow along the A179.

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Vegetation (Refer to Appendix 02)

- 2.30 The farmland landscape to the west of Hartlepool predominantly consists of mature native hedgerow vegetation and deciduous broad leaf trees that delineate field boundaries and the edges country lanes. Some small mature woodlands are occasional throughout the landscape. In close proximity to the edge of Hartlepool there are also a number of mixed deciduous plantations in a relatively early stage of establishment.
- 2.31 The farmed landscape comprises a large proportion of arable fields with some pasture for sheep and cattle grazing.

Settlement (Refer to Appendix 03)

- 2.32 The town of Hartlepool is the largest urban settlement within the study area and is situated on the North Sea coast, 12km north of Middlesbrough. The majority of the town consists of low density residential development located west of the A689 / A179 (as the roads pass through the town). Early 20th Century housing stock is typically terraced housing situated to the back of footpath and arranged in formal street patterns. Post war and modern housing development, which makes up the majority of the western extent of the settlement, includes a combination of semi-detached, detached and bungalow properties situated in larger private gardens and arranged in informal street patterns. Buildings within the Grange Conservation Area and Park Conservation area are larger in scale and include large villas and hotel buildings.
- 2.33 The coastal edge of the settlement to the east of the A689 / A179 includes more widespread commercial and industrial development situated around the Victoria Harbour, Hartlepool Marina and the Park View Industrial Estate and Tees Bay Business Park.
- 2.34 A number of villages form small satellites of settlement amongst the farmland landscape west of Hartlepool and include Hart, Elwick, Dalton Piercy and Greatham. The villages comprise a mixture of cottages, terraced and semi-detached houses and some larger villas. A rural - countryside vernacular is generally prevalent within the villages, with a large number of rendered or natural stone buildings and village greens providing open space. The villages of Elwick and Greatham include Conservation Areas.
- 2.35 The northern extent of the town of Billingham and the village of Newton Bewley are situated to the south of the study area.

Heritage and Culture (Refer to Appendix 03)

- 2.36 The study area includes a number of Conservation Areas located within the Hartlepool Settlement, and within the Villages of Elwick and Greatham. All of the Conservation Areas were visited as part of the field survey to determine whether they have any visual relationship with the Strategic Gap and whether the Strategic Gap contributes to their setting.
- 2.37 It was identified that there are no Conservation Areas within the Hartlepool Settlement that have a clear visual relationship with land located within the Strategic Gap and as such, their setting is not affected. This is as a result of the visual barriers including buildings, vegetation and topography. Similarly, the Conservation Area within the village of Elwick also does not have a clear visual relationship with Strategic Gap.
- 2.38 The Greatham Conservation Area extends into a number of local fields to the north and west of the village settlement. The northern extent of the Conservation Area is located within the Strategic Gap and it is therefore considered the the Strategic Gap allocation contributes to the setting of the Greatham Conservation Area.
- 2.39 Listed buildings are common throughout the extent of the Study Area. For the purpose of this project, only Listed Buildings that are located directly adjacent to, or within the extents of the Strategic Gap have been considered. The setting of the following Listed Buildings is identified to be influenced by the Strategic Gap allocation, due to their proximity and visibility of land within the Strategic Gap:
- Grade I Listed St Mary Magdalene's Church, Hart. (Located directly adjacent to land within the Strategic Gap).
 - Grade II Listed Hart Windmill. (Located within the Strategic Gap).
 - Grade II Listed Briarmead, Greatham. (Located within the Strategic Gap).
 - All other Grade II Listed Buildings within the Greatham Conservation Area.

02 Base Line

- 2.40 There are number of Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the Study Area. The setting of the following Scheduled Ancient Moments is considered to be influenced by the Strategic Gap allocation, due to their proximity and visibility of land within the Strategic Gap:
- Fishponds, north of Hart. (Located within the Strategic Gap).
 - Great House, Hart. (Located in close proximity to the Strategic Gap).
 - Claxton Medieval Moated Site, north of A689. (Located within the Strategic Gap).
- 2.41 There are no known significant cultural references relating to the rural landscape at the west of Hartlepool which are of notable relivance to the purpose of this assessment.

02 Base Line

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03 LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT



03 Landscape Assessment

- 3.1 Using information compiled from the desk study and the field survey, the following distinctive Landscape Character Areas and Settlement Character areas are identified within the study area. (Refer to Figure 2).

Primary Landscape Character Areas

- 3.2 Primary Landscape Character Areas will form the primary basis of assessment and comprise significant extents of land and exhibit distinctive and wide-spread common characteristics.

Undulating Semi-Rural Farmland

- 3.3 This Landscape Character Area is the most common and widespread within the vicinity of the Strategic Gap, covering a large area of gently rolling land to the west of the Hartlepool settlement. The Landscape Character Area comprises extensively managed arable farmland and grazing pastures bound by mature hedgerow boundaries, post and wire fences and farm tracks.
- 3.4 Built form is limited to isolated farm buildings, timber utility poles and occasional wind turbines. Transport infrastructure is limited to a small number of service roads, including the A19, A179 and country lanes.
- 3.5 The landscape character area gradually transitions from gently undulating to flatter, becoming the Low Lying Semi-Rural Farmland Character Area to the south of Hartlepool.

Low Lying Farmland

- 3.6 The Low Lying Farmland Landscape Character Area has a number of similar characteristics to that of the Undulating Semi-Rural Farmland Landscape Character Area and is broadly characterised by managed farmland fields, bound by hedgerows, trees and farm tracks. However, it includes a larger proportion of arable fields and is notably flatter in comparison to the adjacent undulating farmland. It also includes a greater amount of metal pylons and overhead cables. The Landscape Character Area is intersected by the A698, with the A19 to the west.

Urban Fringe Farmland

- 3.7 Urban Fringe Farmland also comprises some similar characteristics to Semi-Rural Farmland and Low-Lying Semi-Rural Farmland, including arable fields and grazing pastures bound by some hedgerows, fencing and farm tracks. There is an overall reduced rural character due to the near proximity, or direct adjacency of large urbanised areas, which visibly impose upon the landscape, including the edge of the Hartlepool settlement. In some instances, productive farmland is replaced by equestrian land, scrubby grassland, stables and vehicle access.
- 3.8 The character area is also subject to some degradation, most notably in locations adjacent to the Hartlepool settlement boundary where litter, damage or poor maintenance is occasionally evident.

Village Fringe Farmland

- 3.9 Village Fringe Farmland consists of arable fields and grazing pastures bound by hedgerows, trees and post and wire fences and exhibit a number of similar characteristics to Undulating Semi-Rural Farmland. Fields within the Landscape Character Area are located adjacent to, or with notable visibility of village settlement edges such as Hart, Elwick, Dalton Piercy Greatham.
- 3.10 The level of urban influence is less significant than that of Urban Fringe Farmland, as the village settlement edges are often fragmented and interspersed by mature tree cover, and built form is of a countryside vernacular.

High Throston Golf Course

- 3.11 The golf course is a highly manicured and managed landscape, specifically created to accommodate the requirements of golf. The character area includes large expanses of lawn, scattered and grouped trees and infrastructure, such as access tracks and a car park for the club house. Coniferous shelter belts are also present around the peripheries of the course, which are incongruous to the surrounding farmland landscape and hedgerow structure.
- 3.12 The character area is largely influenced by the close proximity of the Hartlepool settlement, however there is a small variation in the degree of urbanisation depending on distance from settlement.

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Woodland Plantation

- 3.13 Woodland Plantations are areas of relatively immature and emerging woodland with the purpose of providing public amenity and nature conservation. They include a combination of accessible pathways and trodden routes, with some signage and wayfinding. They are located adjacent to, or in close proximity to settlement, however the level of perceivable urbanising influence is limited.

Secondary Landscape Character Areas

- 3.14 The following Secondary Landscape Character Areas are identified as small scale and site specific areas of individual character that differ from that of the wider surrounding landscape. They are considered as 'secondary' as they do not impose significant influence upon the character of the surrounding Primary Landscape Character Areas. They are generally considered to integrate into their surroundings, although they exhibit unique characteristics in their own right.
- 3.15 Secondary Landscape Character Areas will not be assessed individually in detail, although they will form part of the assessment of the Primary Landscape Character Areas.

Hart Quarry

- 3.16 This is a localised area of working quarry, comprising a deep excavation and exposed rock faces. The quarry includes an area of car parking and is predominantly enclosed within earth embankments of self set trees and scrub and grassland. The quarry is largely integrated into the surrounding Undulating Semi-Rural Farmland Landscape Character Area and is not clearly visible from publicly accessible parts of the surrounding landscape.

Hart Reservoirs

- 3.17 This Secondary Landscape Character Area sits amongst Urban Fringe Farmland at the edge of the Hartlepool Settlement and consists of two adjacent reservoirs surrounded by a combination of farmland fields, hedgerows, individual trees and scrubby grassland. Soft embankments and some retaining walls edge the water bodies.

Brierton Fishing Ponds and Quad Track

- 3.18 This is a small area of amenity landscape comprising man-made ponds, worn dirt tracks, new trees and self set vegetation. The undulating topography and vegetation largely integrates the site into the surrounding farmland landscape.

Settlement Character Areas

- 3.19 There are a number of settlements within the extent of the study area, ranging in scale and character. For the purpose of this project, Settlement Character Areas are not assessed in detail, although they have been categorised to help inform the assessment of the Primary Landscape Character Areas.

Urban Settlement

- 3.20 This includes both the Hartlepool and Billingham settlements, which are considered to exhibit predominantly 'urban' characteristics, including widespread mixed development and a significant road infrastructure. The character, use and form of buildings varies throughout each settlement and is not considered to be of a rural vernacular.

Semi-Urban Villages

- 3.21 Newton Bewley is defined as its own Townscape Character Area, as it exhibits more urbanising characteristics than the Semi-Rural Villages. The village is arranged in a linear form fronting onto a short section of the A689 dual carriageway, which frequently has high levels of traffic. Buildings vary in vernacular from traditional cottages and agricultural buildings to modern houses.

Semi-Rural Villages

- 3.22 The villages of Hart, Elwick, Dalton Piercy and Greatham are defined as semi-rural in character, although in some instances the physical distance from urban settlement is relatively short. The villages comprise a large proportion of rural vernacular buildings, smaller scale road infrastructure and sylvan qualities arranged in an informal pattern of built form. The villages of Elwick and Greatham include Conservation Areas.

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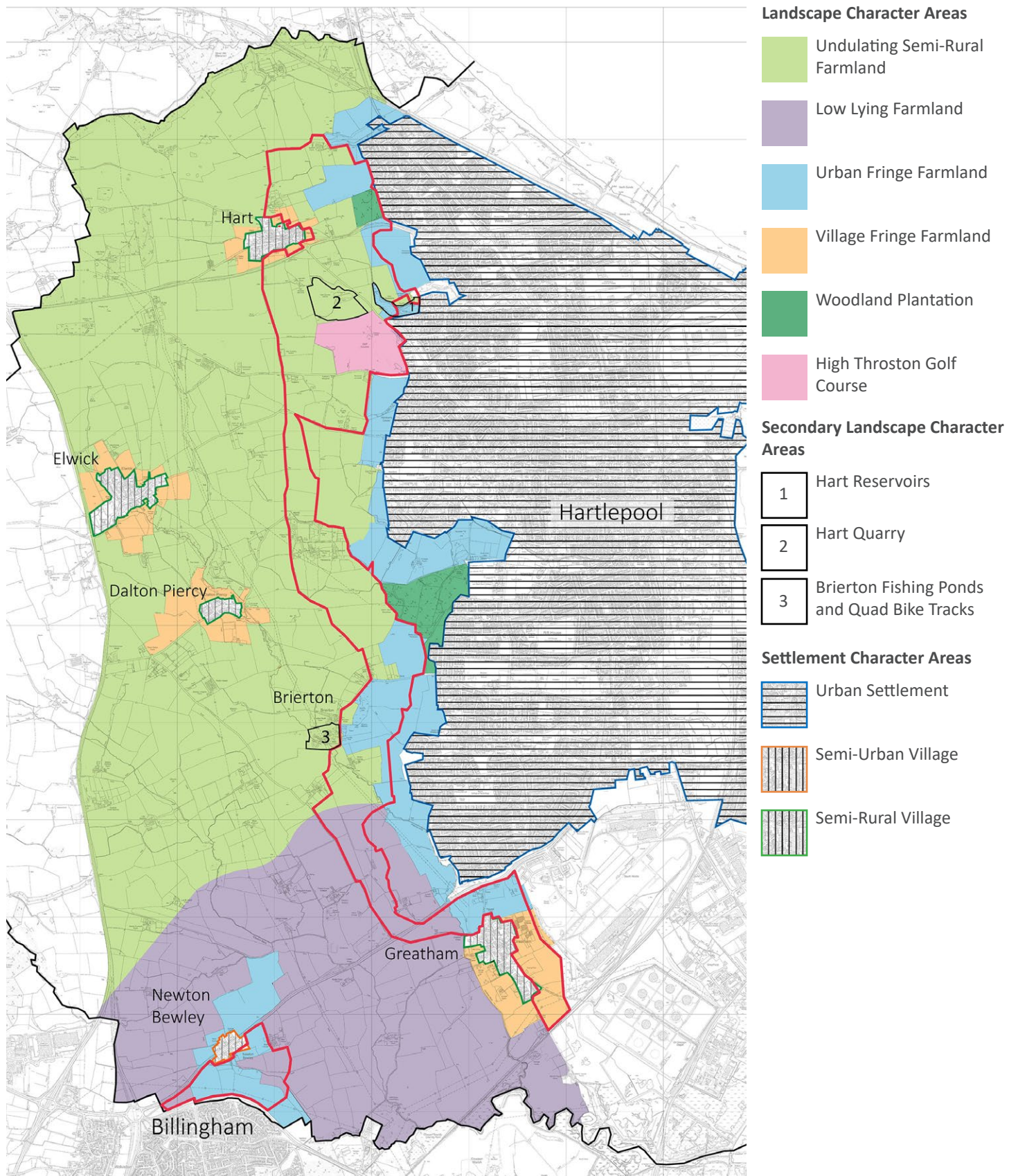


Figure 2: Landscape and Settlement Character Areas

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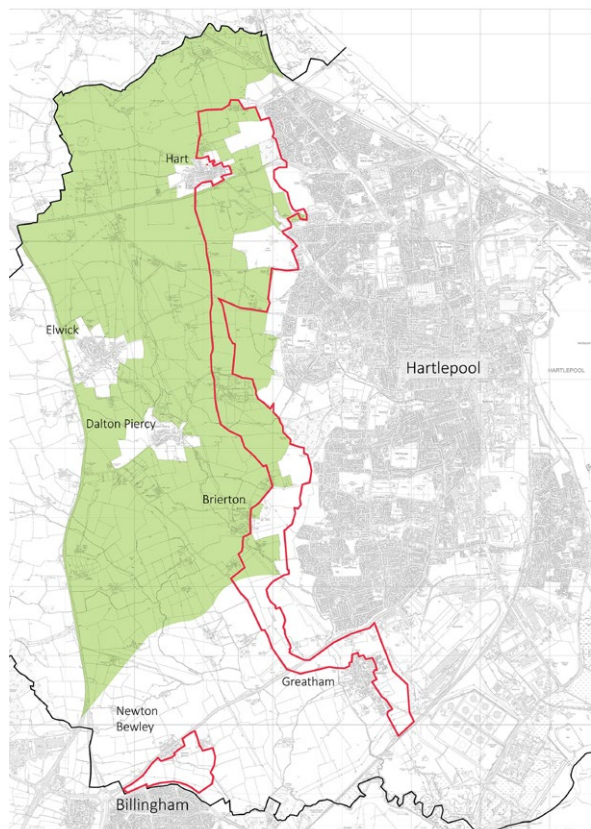


Figure 3: Undulating Semi-Rural Farmland



3.23 Undulating Semi-Rural Farmland

Land use

- Managed agricultural landscape, including arable farmland and grazing pasture.

Layout and scale

- Widespread managed farmland fields bound by hedgerows or post and wire fences. Fields vary in size.
- Trees are found amongst hedgerows, or as part of small woodlands.
- Occasional becks and streams pass along field boundaries and amongst small woodland and hedgerows.
- Service roads, including the A19 and the A179 and number of rural roads pass through the character area and fragment the landscape to a degree, although their presence is only notable at short distance and they are generally concealed by hedgerow boundaries and trees.
- Overall scale is generally moderate, particularly where rolling topography and field boundaries limit the extent of views to mid-distance. Occasional long distance views are permitted towards the coastline and Hartlepool settlement on higher ground which create an increased sense of scale.

Land form

- Gently undulating and sloping.

Built form

- Scattered farmsteads and buildings relating to agriculture are located throughout the character area.
- Predominantly lower voltage overhead cables and timber utility poles, with some occasional high voltage metal pylons and wind turbines.

Landscape Designations

- Emerging Local Plan Policy Designation NE1 - Local Wildlife Sites
- Emerging Local Plan Policy Designation NE2e - Local Green Corridors

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- Emerging Local Plan Policy Designation NE2j - Natural and Semi-Natural Green Space
- Emerging Local Plan Policy Designation HE1 - Scheduled Monument Sites

Public Access

- A network of Public Rights of Way including farm tracks, routes across fields, along field boundaries and through woodland areas.

Remoteness and tranquillity

- Predominantly a tranquil and calm landscape away from service roads, with an overall sense of semi-remoteness. In closer proximity to roads, vehicle noise becomes apparent, however undulating topography and boundary vegetation create inconsistency in the perceivable sound level.
- Limited built form and urbanisation. Semi-Rural villages are well integrated into the surrounding landscape context.

Visual qualities

- Views are sometimes a combination of short and mid distance, with occasional long distance views eastwards across Hartlepool and towards the coast from elevated ground.
- Views are often panoramic with some limitation created by hedgerow vegetation and undulating topography.

Relationship with other Landscape Character Areas

- Fields and vegetation within the Low Lying Farmland, Urban Fringe Farmland and Village Fringe Farmland Landscape Character Area are sometimes available. Often views are confined within the character area at lower ground or where hedgerow vegetation limits the extent of views.
- The character area gradually transitions into Low Lying Farmland as the topography levels out towards the south of Hartlepool.

Landscape Condition

- **Good:** A recognisable farmland landscape structure with landscape components and field patterns that are worthy of conservation. Some detracting features including pylons, utility poles and overhead lines. Overall there is very little degradation to the landscape.

Landscape Value

- **High:** The landscape comprises defined semi-rural attributes that positively contribute to the setting of nearby settlement areas. The character area also includes a number of local landscape designations and is widely accessible via a network of Public Rights of Way, providing opportunities for appreciation of the wider countryside landscape.

Landscape Character Sensitivity

- **Medium-High:** The landscape has well defined and widespread semi-rural farmland characteristics and is generally in a good condition, but includes some detracting elements, including overhead cables, timber utility poles, pylons and roads. The character area is not defined by any national designations, including AONBs, National Parks or SSSI's, which would infer a higher degree of landscape sensitivity.

Landscape Visual Sensitivity

- **Medium-High:** Views across the landscape are available from Public Rights of Way and are widely of farmland, trees and hedgerows. The footpaths are not considered to attract high visitor numbers and are not set amongst a landscape of national significance or particular rarity. Some views are longer distance, but occasionally comprise visibility of the Hartlepool settlement and industrialised areas beyond. The character area also has some intervisibility between adjacent character areas.

Overall Landscape Sensitivity	Landscape Capacity
MEDIUM - HIGH	VERY LOW / LOW

03 Landscape Assessment

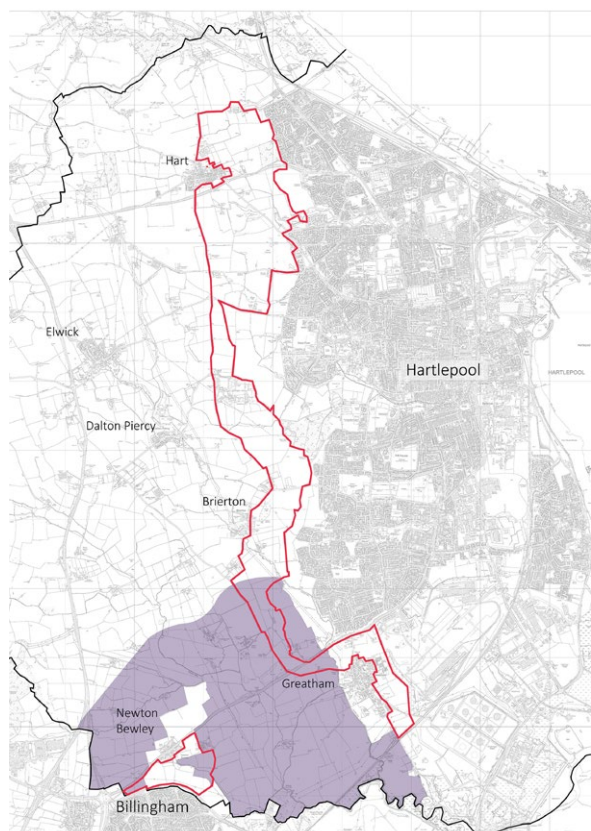


Figure 4: Low Lying Farmland



3.24 Low Lying Farmland

Land use

- Managed agricultural landscape, including widespread arable farmland and some grazing pasture.

Layout and scale

- Widespread farmland fields bound by hedgerows or post and wire fences, with scattered trees and tree groups, including small woodland belts. Fields vary in size but are generally larger than in other character areas.
- Occasional becks and streams pass along field boundaries and amongst small woodland and hedgerows.
- Service roads, including the A19 and the A689, and number of rural roads pass through the character area and fragment the landscape to a degree, however their presence is only notable at short distance and they are generally concealed by hedgerow boundaries and trees.
- Overall scale is generally large, due to the extent of views permitted by the flat to gently sloping topography. Some limitation to the extent of views if is created by field boundaries and trees.

Land form

- Flat to gently sloping.

Built form

- Scattered farmsteads and buildings relating to agriculture are located throughout the character area.
- High voltage power cables and metal pylons are common within the character area

Landscape Designations

- Emerging Local Plan Policy Designation HE1 - Scheduled Ancient Monument
- Emerging Local Plan Policy Designation NE1 - Local Wildlife Sites
- Emerging Local Plan Policy Designation NE2e - Local Green Corridors
- Emerging Local Plan Policy Designation NE2j - Natural and Semi-Natural Green Space

03 Landscape Assessment

Public Access

- A network of Public Rights of Way including farm tracks, routes across fields and along field boundaries.

Remoteness and tranquillity

- Occasionally a tranquil and calm landscape away from service roads. In closer proximity to roads, vehicle noise becomes apparent.
- Energy infrastructure and longer distance views of industrial areas to the south reduce the sense of remoteness

Visual qualities

- Views vary between mid and long distance depending on the proximity of hedgerow vegetation and trees.
- Views are often panoramic but are curtailed by proximity of boundary hedgerows and trees.

Relationship with other Landscape Character Areas

- Fields and vegetation within the Undulating Semi Rural Farmland and Urban Fringe Farmland landscape character are often available between gaps in vegetation or where views from sloping topography permits.
- The character area gradually transitions into Undulating Semi Rural Farmland as topography becomes more undulating.

Landscape Condition

- **Moderate:** A recognisable farmland landscape structure with landscape components and field patterns that are worthy of conservation. A number of widespread detracting features such as high voltage overhead cables and metal pylons conflict with the farmland character. Overall there is little degradation to the landscape.

Landscape Value

- **High:** The landscape comprises a number of attributes that positively contribute to the setting of nearby settlement areas. The character area also includes a number of local landscape designations and is widely accessible via a network of Public Rights of Way.

Landscape Character Sensitivity

- **Medium:** The landscape comprises some semi-rural characteristics and a generally moderate condition. It includes notable detracting elements, such as extensive energy infrastructure and service roads and is not defined by any national designations, including AONBs, National Park status, or SSSI's, which would infer a higher degree of landscape sensitivity.

Landscape Visual Sensitivity

- **Medium:** Views across the landscape area available from Public Rights of Way, however they are not considered to attract high visitor numbers and are not set amongst a landscape of national significance or particular rarity. Views are often longer distance and comprise visibility of adjacent farmland character areas, the Hartlepool settlement and industrialised areas to the south.

Overall Landscape Sensitivity	Landscape Capacity
MEDIUM	LOW

03 Landscape Assessment

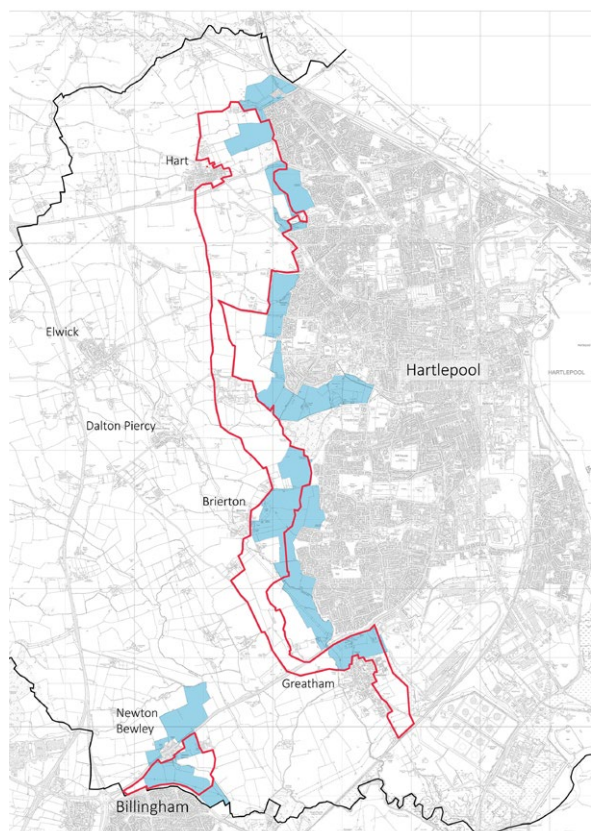


Figure 5: Urban Fringe Farmland



3.25 Urban Fringe Farmland

Land use

- Managed agricultural landscape, including arable farmland and grazing pasture.
- Some equestrian paddocks.

Layout and scale

- Farmland fields bound by hedgerows and post and wire fences, with scattered trees and tree groups. Fields are typically small to medium size and generally more regular in shape.
- Some becks and streams pass along field boundaries and amongst small woodland belts, sometimes becoming culverted at settlement edges.
- Two service roads, including the A179 and A689 pass through parts of the character area, fragmenting the landscape particularly as they pass into settlement boundaries where street lighting, signage and roundabouts increase.
- Overall scale is generally moderate, but decreases where edge of settlement creates a strong physical barrier to views and openness.

Land form

- Gently undulating with some areas of flatter topography to settlement peripheries

Built form

- Residential development adjacent to the character area
- Some light industry and commercial development adjacent to the character area
- Stables and small buildings associated with equestrian paddocks
- Limited individual buildings relating to farming

Landscape Designations

- Emerging Local Plan Policy Designation NE2e - Local Green Corridors

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- Emerging Local Plan Policy Designation NE3 - Green Wedges
- Emerging Local Plan Policy Designation HE3 - Conservation Area Greatham village

Public Access

- Network of Public Rights of Way including farm tracks, routes across fields and along field boundaries.

Remoteness and tranquillity

- Limited remoteness and tranquillity due to urbanising influence and proximity to settlement.

Visual qualities

- Views are a combination of short to mid distance
- Westwards views are sometimes panoramic across the farmland landscape.
- Some limitation of views created by hedgerow vegetation, undulating topography and edge of settlement.

Relationship with other Landscape Character Areas

- Fields and vegetation within the Undulating Semi Rural Farmland and Low Lying Farmland landscape character are sometimes available between gaps in vegetation.

Landscape Condition

- **Poor - Moderate:** A recognisable farmland landscape structure with some landscape components and field patterns that are worthy of conservation. Detracting features and evidence of degradation are apparent, including poorly maintained field boundaries, littering and areas of scrub vegetation.

Landscape Value

- **Moderate:** The landscape includes a number of Public Rights of Way that provide access into the farmland landscape and wider countryside beyond. It also comprises a number of local designations, including Green Wedges which contributes to the setting of Hartlepool and offer local amenity value.

Landscape Character Sensitivity

- **Low - Medium:** The landscape has notable farmland characteristics which are considered to positively contribute to the setting of the Hartlepool settlement, the northern edge of Billingham and the village of Greatham. However the landscape is compromised and fragmented by urbanising influence and is degraded in places.

Landscape Visual Sensitivity

- **Low - Medium:** Views are typically from local Public Rights of Way and are limited by edge of settlement development. Views of the Undulating Semi-Rural Farmland and Low Lying Farmland character areas are available between hedgerow vegetation.

Overall Landscape Sensitivity	Landscape Capacity
LOW - MEDIUM	MEDIUM / HIGH

03 Landscape Assessment

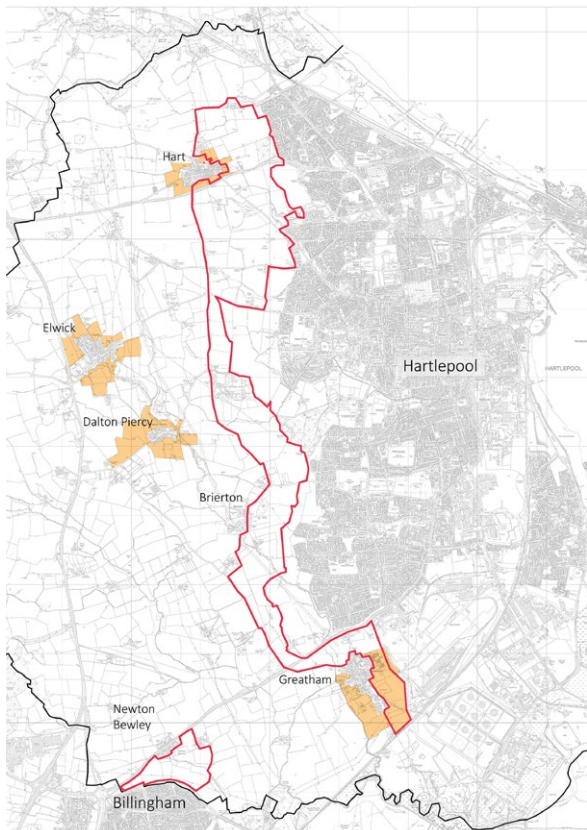


Figure 6: Village Fringe Farmland



3.26 Village Fringe Farmland

Land use

- Managed agricultural landscape, including arable farmland and grazing pasture.
- Some localised uses including allotments, cemeteries and sport fields

Layout and scale

- Farmland fields bound by hedgerows or post and wire fences, with scattered trees and small woodland around villages. Fields are irregular in shape and typically smaller than fields within the Undulating Semi-Rural Farmland and Low Lying Farmland character areas.
- Occasional becks and streams pass along field boundaries and amongst small woodland and hedgerows.
- Service roads, including the A19, A179 and A689 as well as a number of rural roads pass by the character area.
- Overall sense of scale ranges from small to moderate, particularly where village settlement, rolling topography and field boundaries limit the extent of views. Occasional long distance views are permitted towards the coastline and Hartlepool settlement on higher ground which create an increased sense of scale.

Land form

- Gently undulating and sloping.

Built form

- Predominantly lower voltage overhead cables and timber utility poles pass through the landscape, with some occasional metal pylons.
- The Semi-Rural villages of Hart, Elwick, Dalton Piercy and Greatham comprise the main built form, however their visibility is sometimes fragmented by mature tree cover that borders village settlements. Buildings are often of a countryside vernacular, comprising cottages and farm buildings.

03 Landscape Assessment

Landscape Designations

- Emerging Local Plan Policy Designation HE1 - Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- Emerging Local Plan Policy Designation HE3 - Conservation Area (Greatham and Elwick villages)
- Emerging Local Plan Policy Designation HE2d- Outdoor Sports
- Emerging Local Plan Policy Designation HE2h- Allotments and Community Gardens
- Emerging Local Plan Policy Designation HE2g- Church Yards and Commentaries

Public Access

- Public Rights of Way including farm tracks, routes across fields and along field boundaries.

Remoteness and tranquillity

- Some limited sense of remoteness created by prevalent farmland characteristics and countryside vernacular buildings located within adjacent villages. The level of tranquillity is compromised in places by nearby service roads, including the A19, A179 and A689.
- Urbanising influences are notably less that within the Urban Fringe Farmland character area, as built form is less imposing and of a rural character.

Visual qualities

- Views are a combination of short to mid distance, with some longer views of the wider farmland landscape and adjacent character areas
- Some limitation created by hedgerow vegetation, undulating topography and edge of village settlement.

Relationship with other Landscape Character Areas

- Fields and vegetation within the Undulating Semi Rural Farmland and Low Lying Farmland landscape character are sometimes available between gaps in vegetation.

Landscape Condition

- **Moderate:** A recognisable farmland landscape structure with landscape components and field patterns that are worthy of conservation. A number of detracting features such as overhead cables, timber utility poles and metal pylons conflict with the farmland character, however overall there is little degradation to the landscape.

Landscape Value

- **Moderate:** The landscape includes a number of Public Rights of Way that provide access into the farmland landscape and wider countryside beyond. It also comprises a number of local designations and contributes to the semi-rural characteristics of the villages. Some variety in land use, including allotments and sports fields provide facilities and outdoor amenity space for the local community.

Landscape Character Sensitivity

- **Medium:** The landscape has notable farmland characteristics which are considered to positively contribute to the setting of the semi-rural villages. The Conservation Areas of Elwick and Greatham extend into the adjacent farmland area which infers a high sensitivity. Nearby service roads in some locations have a detrimental impact.

Landscape Visual Sensitivity

- **Medium:** Views are typically from local Public Rights of Way and are limited by village settlement in some directions. Longer distance views of the Undulating Semi-Rural Farmland and Low Lying Farmland character areas are available between hedgerow vegetation.

Overall Landscape Sensitivity	Landscape Capacity
MEDIUM	MEDIUM

03 Landscape Assessment

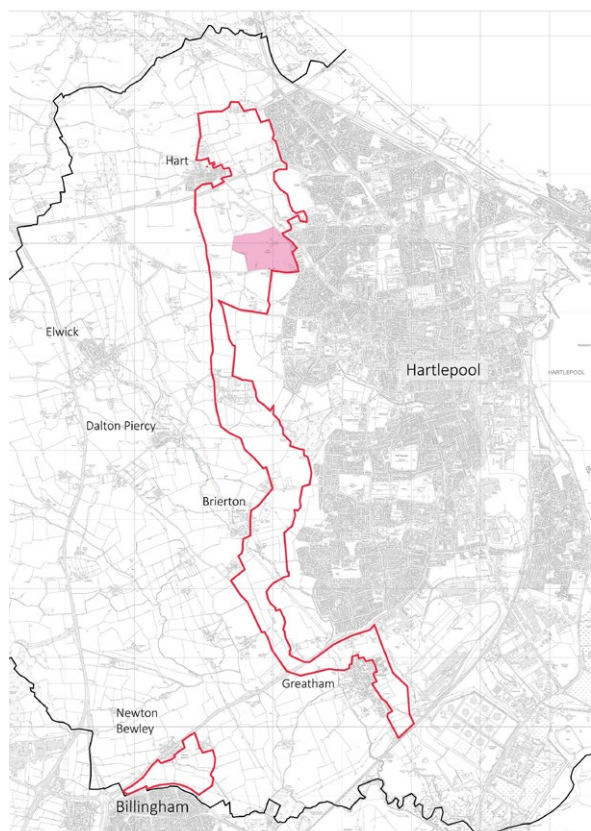


Figure 7: High Throston Golf Course



3.27 High Throston Golf Course

Land use

- Golf course, club house and car park

Layout and scale

- Area of managed lawns interspersed with woodland plantations and individual trees.
- Some vehicle tracks to allow access for maintenance and a large car park for visitors.
- Open and exposed with limited enclosure creating a medium-large scale landscape.

Land form

- Gently undulating and sloping with some level terracing.

Built form

- Hartlepool urban settlement adjacent to the character area
- Club house and car park
- Stone retaining walls to car park

Landscape Designations

- None

Public Access

- Limited to golf course users only

Remoteness and tranquillity

- Urbanised in close proximity to the edge of settlement and club house, becoming semi-remote and more tranquil in closer proximity to the Semi-Rural Farmland landscape character area.

03 Landscape Assessment

- Views of the wider Semi-Rural Farmland and Urban Fringe character areas are available

Relationship with other Landscape Character Areas

- Views of the adjacent Undulating Semi-Rural Farmland and Urban Fringe Farmland are widely available

Landscape Condition

- **Moderate:** An extensively managed and manicured landscape that is maintained to a good quality for the purpose of outdoor recreation. The landscape comprises some common characteristics of the wider landscape, however it is evidently 'artificial' in its aesthetic and structure. External lighting columns associated with the car park and entrance area are detracting and urbanising elements which reduce overall landscape quality.

Landscape Value

- **Poor-Moderate:** A widely monotonous landscape of relative immaturity. Accessibility is limited to golf course users and the landscape does not define the character of settlement to the same extent of the more widespread farmland landscape. The a landscape offers a degree of tranquillity to the settlement edge and a gentle transition to the wider countryside character.

Landscape Character Sensitivity

- **Medium:** The golf course is a manicured and intensively managed landscape that is not widely representative of the wider farmland landscape, and is compromised to a degree by proximity to urbanising influence. It is however a landscape which in itself is largely free from built form and has limited detracting features or degradation.

Landscape Visual Sensitivity

- **Medium:** Views across the golf course are open and comprise trees and undulating terrain, with some views of the wider Semi-Rural Farmland and Urban Fringe Farmland landscape character areas. The character area also comprises extensive views of the Hartlepool settlement, which include detracting elements that reduce overall visual quality

Overall Landscape Sensitivity	Landscape Capacity
MEDIUM	MEDIUM / HIGH

03 Landscape Assessment

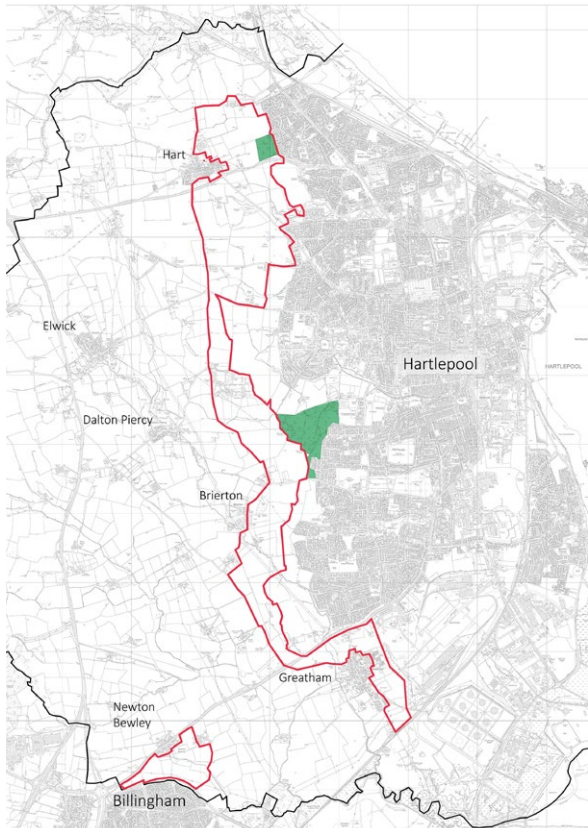


Figure 8: Woodland Plantation



3.28 Woodland Plantation

Land use

- Immature woodland areas in relatively early stages of establishment, created for the purpose of nature conservation and public amenity.

Layout and scale

- Areas of densely planted deciduous woodland with occasional clearings comprising self set vegetation
- A network of built pathways and some trodden routes
- Small scale landscape created by enclosure and restricted views

Land form

- Predominantly flat with some gently sloping topography.

Built form

- Summerhill Country Park includes a visitor centre and car park.

Landscape Designations

- Emerging Local Plan Policy Designation NE1 - Local Wildlife Sites
- Emerging Local Plan Policy Designation NE2b - Parks and Gardens
- Emerging Local Plan Policy Designation NE2c - Childrens Play Spaces / Areas
- Emerging Local Plan Policy Designation NE2j - Natural and Semi-Natural Green Space

Public Access

- A network of built footpaths and trodden routes

03 Landscape Assessment

Remoteness and tranquillity

- Some degree of remoteness and tranquillity created by the heavily wooded setting and lack of visible built form.

Visual qualities

- Views are limited to short distance by tree cover
- Some areas of woodland are overgrown or lack maturity which detracts from the quality of views.

Relationship with other Landscape Character Areas

- Limited visual connectivity with other character areas due to extensive tree cover and vegetation

Landscape Condition

- **Moderate:** The extensively wooded nature of the character area creates a distinguishable landscape structure. There is scope to improve the management of vegetation which appears overgrown and dense in some instances. A number of footpaths are surfaced and likely to be managed whilst others comprise rough, trodden routes of a poorer quality.

Landscape Value

- **High:** The character area offers extensive public access in the form of footpaths and provides a wooded environment close to urban settlement. A visitor centre, car park and way finding strategy at Summerhill Country Park encourage public use and interpretation. The sites are designated for wildlife and nature conservation which infers a higher landscape value.

Landscape Character Sensitivity

- **Medium:** The character area comprises well defined woodland characteristics and are locally designated sites for nature conservation. The woodlands are not nationally designated and are compromised to an extent by immaturity and evidence of limited management in places.

Landscape Visual Sensitivity

- **Medium:** Views are of a wooded environment which is less common amongst the wider farmland landscape context. The extent of views is often limited to short distance and do not comprise vistas of notable value.

Overall Landscape Sensitivity	Landscape Capacity
MEDIUM	LOW

03 Landscape Assessment

Landscape Capacity Summary

3.29 Landscape Capacity refers to the degree to which a particular Landscape Character Area is able to accommodate change without significant effects on its character, or overall change of landscape character

3.30 The Landscape Character Classification has identified a varying level of landscape capacity within the study area ranging from **Very Low / Low** to **Medium / High** (refer to Figure 9). The Landscape Capacity values assessed for each Landscape Character Area are listed below in ascending order. The approximate coverage of each level of Landscape Capacity within the Strategic Gap is represented as a percentage value.

Landscape Capacity	% of Strategic Gap	Landscape Character Area Represented
Very Low / Low	53 %	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undulating Semi-Rural Farmland
Low	11 %	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low Lying Farmland Woodland Plantation
Medium	6 %	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Village Fringe Farmland
Medium / High	30 %	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban Fringe Farmland High Throston Golf Course

3.31 It is identified that the Strategic Gap predominantly encompasses landscape with a lower capacity to accommodate change, with over half the allocation area having a Very Low / Low Capacity or Low Capacity.

3.32 The Undulating Semi-Rural Farmland Landscape Character Area has a Very Low / Low capacity to accommodate change. This is because the landscape exhibits a limited amount of detracting urbanising influences, which would otherwise impact upon the overall integrity of the landscape character. The addition of any large development, or non-agricultural built form would likely appear incongruous and would detract from the semi-rural character of the landscape.

3.33 The Woodland Plantation Landscape Character Area has a Low Capacity to accommodate change in the form of large built development. The character area has well defined woodland characteristics which relative to the wider study area, are notably rare. The character area also provides public amenity value and wildlife conservation.

3.34 The Low Lying Farmland Landscape Character Area also has a Low Capacity, due to its widespread farmland characteristics which provide a positive contribution to the setting of nearby villages and town settlements. The character area also comprises a number of local landscape designations.

3.35 The Village Fringe Farmland Landscape Character Areas has Medium Capacity. This character area is compromised to a limited degree by settlement influences and detracting elements which reduce the overall sense of remoteness. They are however, of a notable semi-rural character and the introduction of new built form could potentially degrade their character.

3.36 Although Urban Fringe Farmland exhibits a number of similar characteristics to Low Lying Farmland and Village Fringe Farmland, it is more notably influenced by extensive edge of settlement development and signs of degradation, which ultimately conflict with the farmland characteristics of the landscape and reduce the overall sense of place. As a result, the capacity of the landscape is Medium / High. It is noted that the landscape of this character area does positively contribute to the setting of the Hartlepool Settlement edge and provides a transition from settlement to the wider semi-rural farmland. The introduction of significant built form within this character area would potentially impact upon the character of the adjacent Undulating Semi-Rural Farmland and Low Lying Farmland Landscape Character Areas.

3.37 The High Throston Golf Course Landscape Character Area also has a Medium / High Capacity to accommodate change in the form of built development. The landscape within the character area generally provides a gentle transition to the wider farmland landscape and has very limited detracting features or degradation. It also offers opportunities for out door recreation. The landscape is however, compromised by urbanising influence and comprises a number elements that are not characteristic of the wider landscape setting, including coniferous shelter belts, lighting and a car park.

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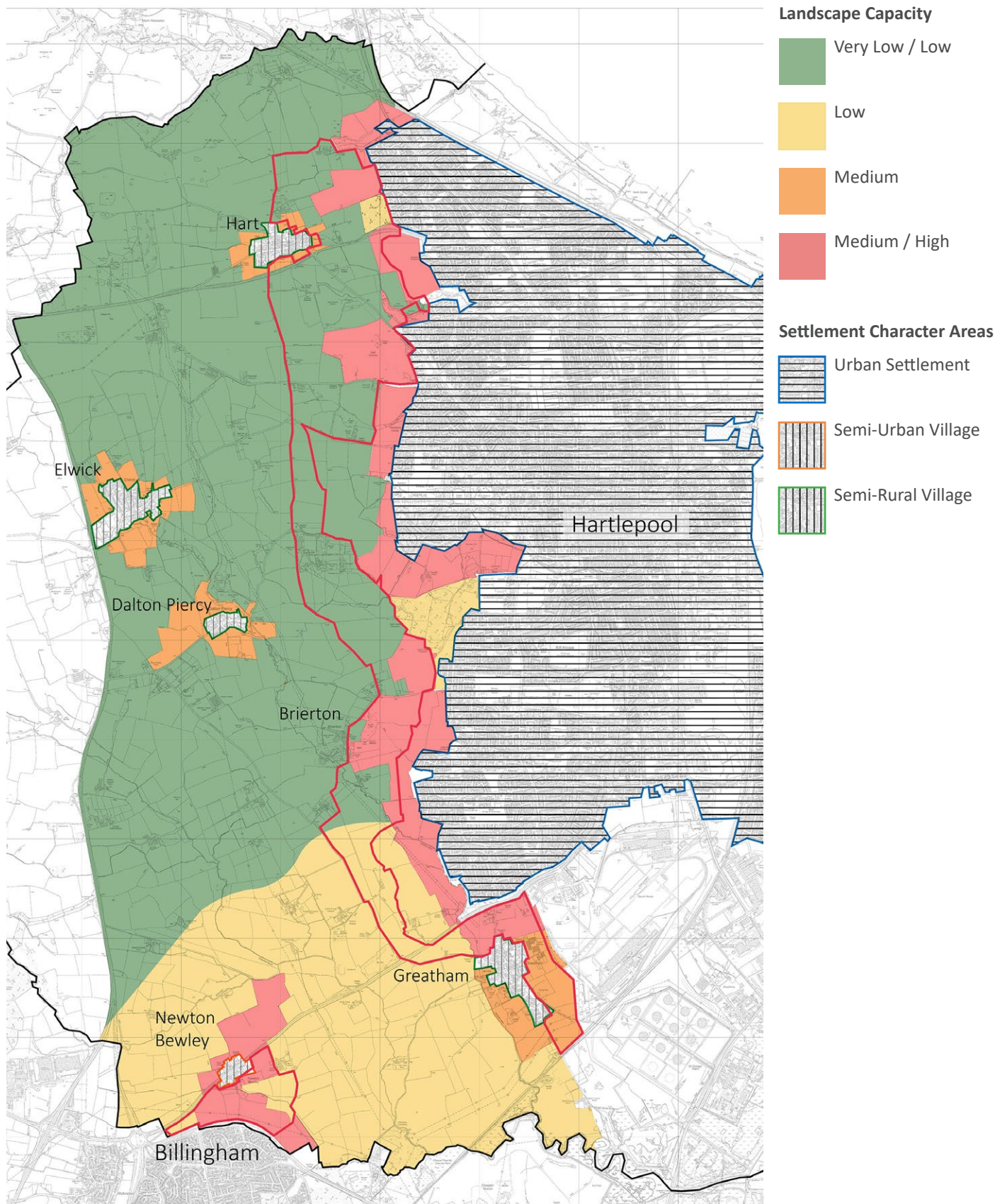


Figure 9: Landscape Capacity

04 SPATIAL PLANNING ASSESSMENT



04 Spatial Planning Assessment

Purpose of the Strategic Gap

- 4.1 The Strategic Gap allocation serves the following four core purposes:
1. To limit the spread of urban areas and villages outside of the limits to development;
 2. To prevent the urban area of Hartlepool coalescing with villages;
 3. To protect the character of the countryside and rural areas; and
 4. To maintain the separate identity and amenity of settlements.
- 4.2 **Limiting the spread of urban areas and villages outside of the limits to development:** In order to limit development outside of existing settlement, it is important to consider the current level of openness (absence of built form) of the landscape. Land currently free from development provides a more defined differentiation between settlement and open countryside and can play a stronger roll in limiting the spread of urban areas.
- 4.3 **Preventing the urban area of Hartlepool coalescing with villages:** Undeveloped land provides a clear physical separation of individual settlements. Coalescence of settlement would result in the loss or fragmentation of the open countryside and a reduced definition between larger towns and small villages.
- 4.4 **Protecting the character of the countryside and rural areas:** Large areas of land around the Hartlepool settlement and nearby villages is identified as farmland fields with semi-rural characteristics and a low capacity to accommodate change (refer to Section 03). Land currently free of built development or urbanising influence plays an important roll in maintaining the intrinsic characteristics of the local countryside landscape. The introduction of new development could potentially conflict with the landscape character and subsequently reduce its integrity.
- 4.5 **Maintaining the separate identity and amenity of settlements:** The townscape characteristics of the Hartlepool settlement are distinctly different from those of smaller villages near to the town. The landscape between these areas of settlement currently provides both visual and physical separation, and helps to contribute to the setting of each individual settlement. Loss of open land between the settlement through built development would potentially lead to the erosion of defined individual settlement characteristics.

Assessment of the Strategic Gap

- 4.6 This section of the assessment process reviews the existing Strategic Gap allocation against the above four core purposes. It is intended to determine the extent to which the Strategic Gap delivers the purposes, and whether any further adjustment may be require to its physical extents to more effectively deliver its function.
- 4.7 The assessment divides the Strategic Gap into manageable sub-area, which will each be assessed against the four core purposes. The Sub-Areas are defined by existing physical features within the landscape, including roads and settlement, so that any potential future adjustments to its extent can be clearly defined and contained. Details of the assessment criteria are found within the Methodology located within the Appendices.
- 4.8 The assessment also recognises landscape characteristics and landscape capacity (as identified within Section 03) in order to inform conclusions made.
- 4.9 The sub-areas are defined as follows:
- 01: **North of the A179**
 - 02: **Between the A179 and Elwick Road**
 - 03: **Between Elwick Road and Brierton Lane**
 - 04: **Between Brierton Lane and the A689**
 - 05: **South of the A689 at Greatham**
 - 06: **South of the A689 at Newton Bewley**

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4.10 Sub-Area 01: North of the A179

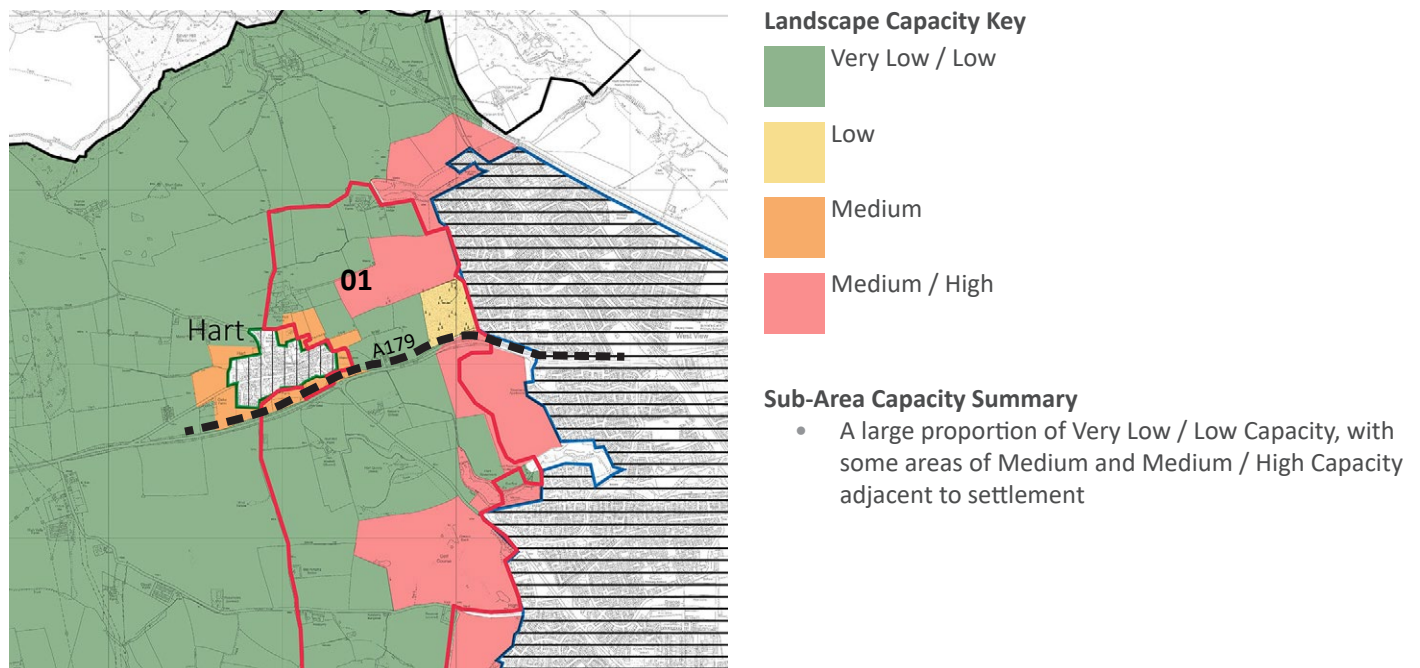


Figure 10: Sub-Area 01

Purpose	Question	Rating	Score
01	To limit the spread of urban areas and villages outside of the limits to development	STRONG	3
02	To prevent the urban area of Hartlepool coalescing with villages	STRONG	3
03	To protect the character of the countryside and rural areas	MODERATE	2
04	To maintain the separate identity and amenity of settlements.	STRONG	3
OVERALL:		STRONG	11

Sub-area 01 performs strongly overall against the purposes of the Strategic Gap for the following reasons:

- Purpose 01:** The sub-area is currently free from built development and as such has a strong sense of openness. The sub-area is therefore important in maintaining openness and limiting spread of urban areas outside of existing development boundaries.
- Purpose 02:** The sub-area extend across the majority of land between the Hartlepool settlement and the village of Hart, creating a well defined area of development limitation that can prevents coalescence.
- Purpose 03:** The land between Hartlepool and Hart comprises farmland with a very Low / Low Capacity with some areas of a Medium / High Capacity with. This infers that overall the Sub-Area has defined countryside characteristics with limited detracting or urbanising elements.
- Purpose 04:** The relatively short distance between Hartlepool and Hart means that the landscape has a very important roll in maintaining the separate identity of each settlement. Any development that encroaches into the sub-area may significantly compromise the separate identities.

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4.11 Sub-Area 02: Between the A179 and Elwick Road

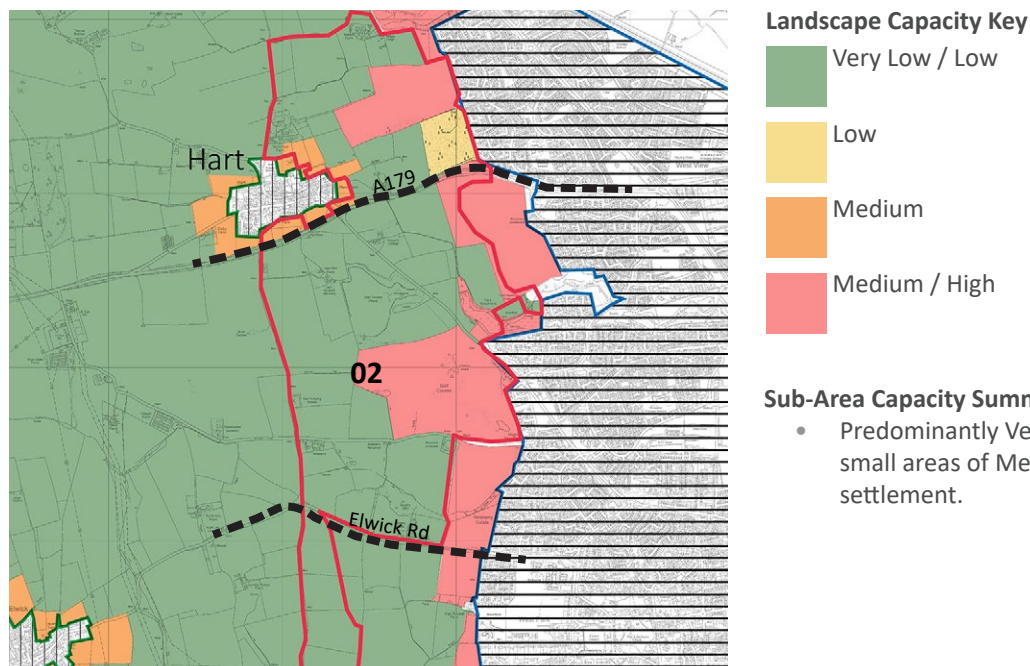


Figure 11: Sub-Area 02

Purpose	Question	Rating	Score
01 To limit the spread of urban areas and villages outside of the limits to development	To what extent does the sub-area protect land from urban development and a loss of openness?	MODERATE	2
02 To prevent the urban area of Hartlepool coalescing with villages	To what extent does the sub-area prevent the merging or erosion of the visual or physical gap between Hartlepool and neighbouring villages and towns?	MODERATE	2
03 To protect the character of the countryside and rural areas	To what extent does the sub-area have the characteristics of countryside or been affected by urbanising influence?	MODERATE	2
04 To maintain the separate identity and amenity of settlements.	To what extent does the sub-area contribute to the setting and character of Hartlepool and neighbouring villages	MODERATE	2
OVERALL:		MODERATE	8

Sub-area 02 performs moderately well overall against the purposes of the Strategic Gap for the following reasons:

- Purpose 01: The sub-area is currently free from built development and as such has a strong sense of openness. Some parts of the sub-area are detached from the Hartlepool settlement edge and therefore play a limited roll in maintaining openness and limiting spread of urban areas outside of existing development boundaries.
- Purpose 02: The sub-area does not extend across all land between the Hartlepool settlement and the village of Hart and some erosion of the gap has potential to occur. On balance, the overall extents of the sub-area prevent coalescence between Hartlepool and villages.
- Purpose 03: A large extent of landscape within the sub-area is identified as farm land with a Very Low/ Low Capacity and countryside characteristics, however it is also fragmented by the High Throston Golf Course and Urban Fringe Farmland which have a Medium / High Capacity.
- Purpose 04: The northern part the sub-area has an important roll in maintaining separation and individual identity between Hartlepool and Hart. However a large extent of the sub-area does not provide direct separation between Hartlepool and an other nearby villages.

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4.12 Sub-Area 03: Between Elwick Road and Brierton Lane

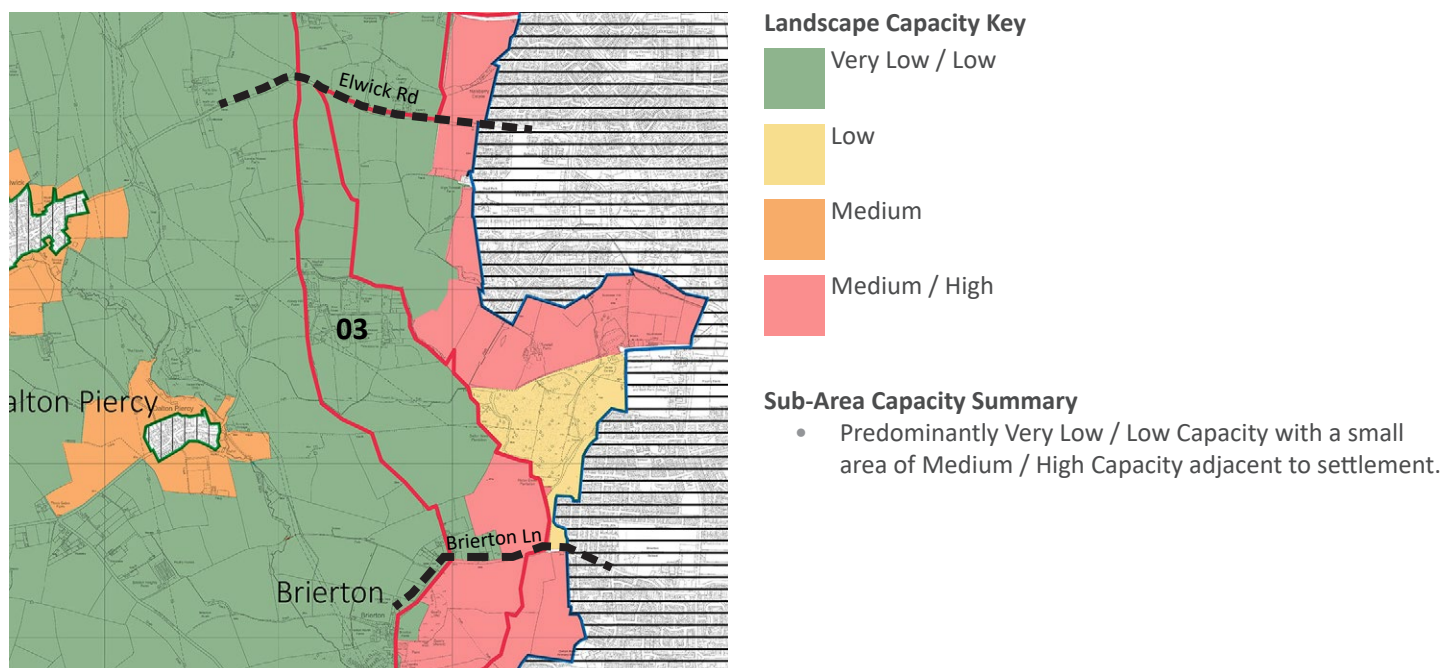


Figure 12: Sub-Area 03

Purpose	Question	Rating	Score
01	To limit the spread of urban areas and villages outside of the limits to development	MODERATE	2
02	To prevent the urban area of Hartlepool coalescing with villages	MODERATE	2
03	To protect the character of the countryside and rural areas	MODERATE	2
04	To maintain the separate identity and amenity of settlements.	MODERATE	2
OVERALL:		MODERATE	8

Sub-area 03 performs moderately well overall against the purposes of the Strategic Gap for the following reasons:

- Purpose 01:** The sub-area is currently free from built development and as such has a strong sense of openness. However, The Sub-Area is detached from the Hartlepool settlement edge and therefore has limited potential to maintain openness outside of existing development boundaries.
- Purpose 02:** There are parts of the Sub-Area that do not extend across all land between the Hartlepool settlement and the nearby village of Elwick and Dalton Piercy and there is potential for substantial erosion of the gap to occur. Although the overall extents of the sub-area prevent the opportunity for total coalescence between Hartlepool and the villages.
- Purpose 03:** All of the Sub-Area comprises farm land with a Very Low/ Low Capacity for change and as such has a distinct countryside landscape character that is largely free from urbanising influence. However the detachment of the sub-area from the settlement leaves areas Very Low / Low Capacity outside of the allocation area.
- Purpose 04:** The Sub-Area plays a limited roll in maintaining separation and individual identity between Hartlepool and the villages of Elwick and Dalton Piercy due to its relatively narrow extent and detachment from settlement boundaries.

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4.13 Sub-Area 04: Between Brierton Lane and the A689

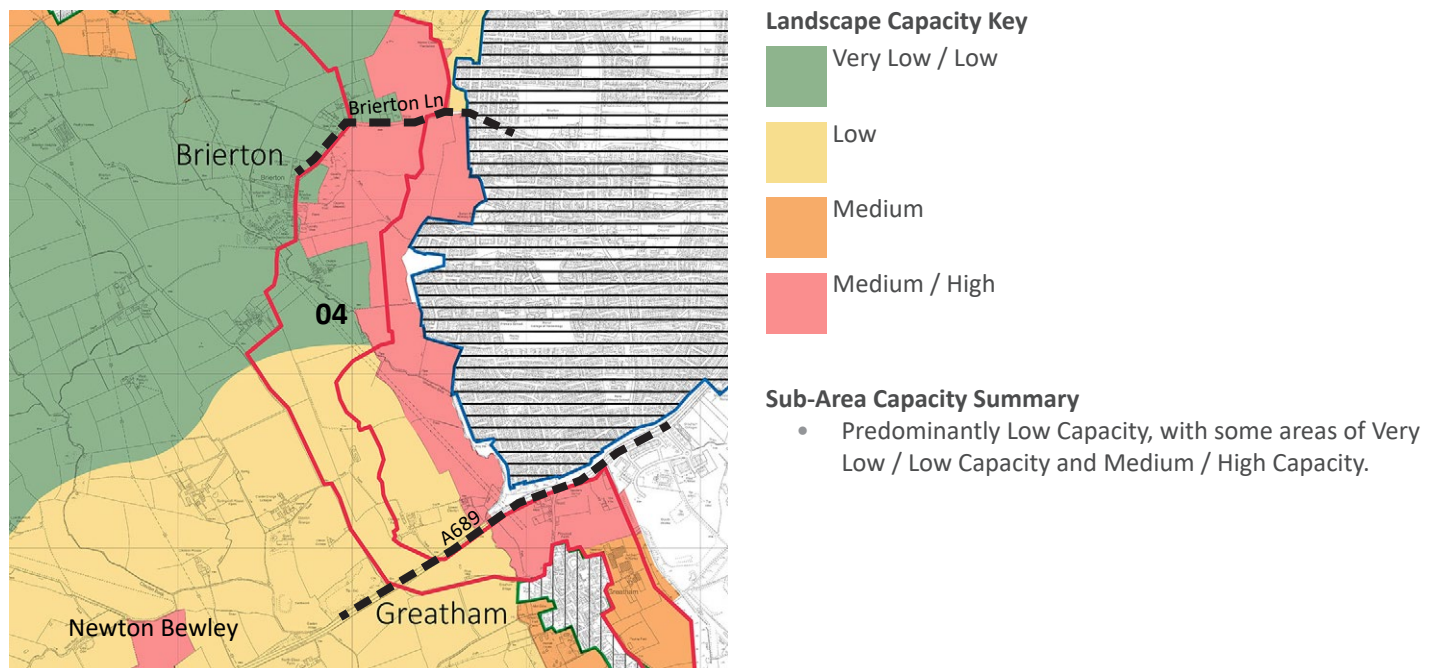


Figure 13 Sub-Area 04

Purpose	Question	Rating	Score
01 To limit the spread of urban areas and villages outside of the limits to development	To what extent does the sub-area protect land from urban development and a loss of openness?	MODERATE	2
02 To prevent the urban area of Hartlepool coalescing with villages	To what extent does the sub-area prevent the merging or erosion of the visual or physical gap between Hartlepool and neighbouring villages and towns?	MODERATE	2
03 To protect the character of the countryside and rural areas	To what extent does the sub-area have the characteristics of countryside or been affected by urbanising influence?	MODERATE	2
04 To maintain the separate identity and amenity of settlements.	To what extent does the sub-area contribute to the setting and character of Hartlepool and neighbouring villages	MODERATE	2
OVERALL:		MODERATE	8

Sub-area 04 performs moderately well against the majority of purposes of the Strategic Gap for the following reasons:

- Purpose 01: The Sub-Area is currently free from built development and as such has a strong sense of openness, however the sub-area does not extend all the way to the Hartlepool settlement edge and therefore has a limited potential to maintain openness and limit the spread of urban areas outside of existing development boundaries.
- Purpose 02: The Sub-Area is detached from the Hartlepool settlement edge and some erosion of the gap between the settlement and the village of Brierton has potential to occur. The overall extents of the sub-area prevents total coalescence between Hartlepool and Brierton.
- Purpose 03: The Sub-Area predominantly comprises farm land with a Low and Very Low/ Low Capacity notable countryside characteristics, but also has some areas which are compromised by urbanising influence and have a Medium / High Capacity for change.
- Purpose 04: The Sub-Area plays a very limited roll in maintaining separation and individual identity between Hartlepool and the villages of Newton Bewley due to its relatively narrow extent and detachment from settlement boundaries.

04 Spatial Planning Assessment

4.14 Sub-Area 05: South of the A689 at Greatham

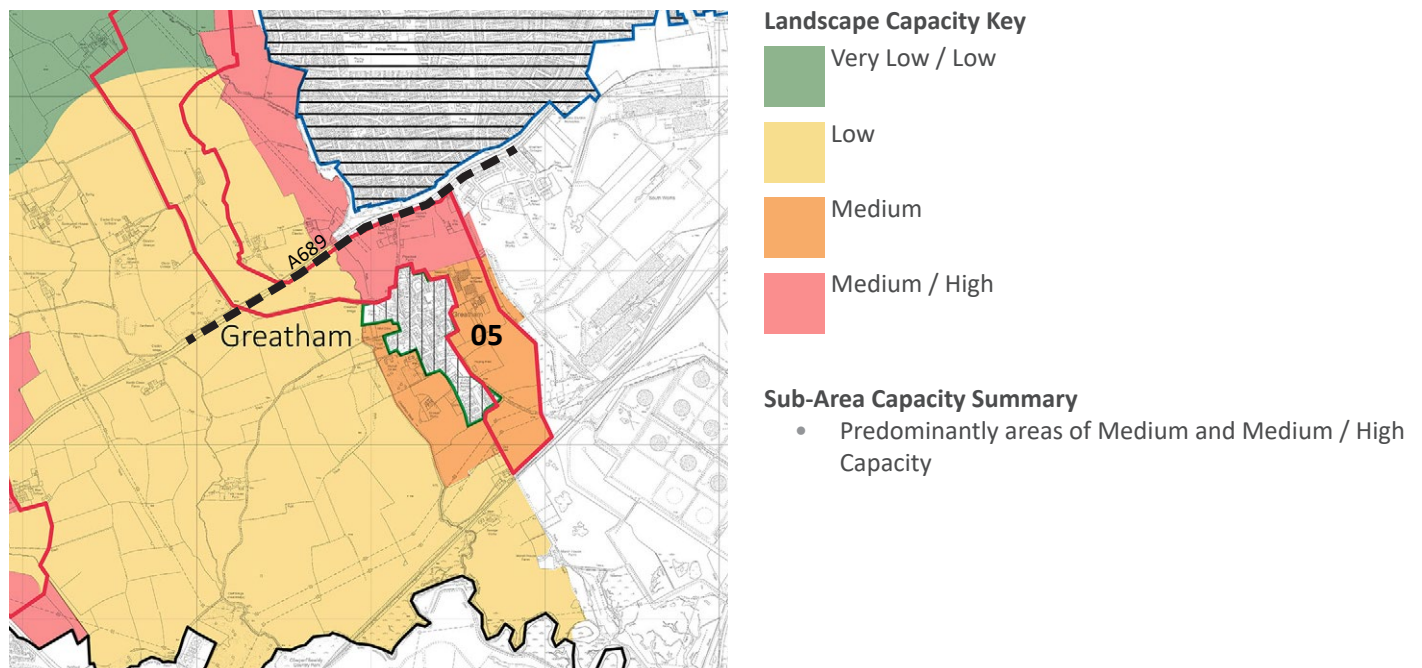


Figure 14: Sub-Area 05

Purpose	Question	Rating	Score
01 To limit the spread of urban areas and villages outside of the limits to development	To what extent does the sub-area protect land from urban development and a loss of openness?	STRONG	3
02 To prevent the urban area of Hartlepool coalescing with villages	To what extent does the sub-area prevent the merging or erosion of the visual or physical gap between Hartlepool and neighbouring villages and towns?	STRONG	3
03 To protect the character of the countryside and rural areas	To what extent does the sub-area have the characteristics of countryside or been affected by urbanising influence?	WEAK	1
04 To maintain the separate identity and amenity of settlements.	To what extent does the sub-area contribute to the setting and character of Hartlepool and neighbouring villages	STRONG	3
OVERALL:		STRONG	10

Sub-area 05 performs strongly overall against the purposes of the Strategic Gap for the following reasons:

- Purpose 01: The Sub-Area is currently free from built development and as such has a strong sense of openness. The sub-area is important in maintaining openness and limiting spread of urban areas outside of existing development boundaries.
- Purpose 02: The Sub-Area extends across all land between the Hartlepool settlement and the village of Greatham, creating a well defined area of development limitation that could prevents further encroachment and subsequent coalescence.
- Purpose 04: The relatively short distance between Hartlepool and Greatham means that the landscape plays a very important roll in maintaining the separate identity of each settlement. As such any development that encroaches into the Strategic Gap may compromise the separate identities.

Sub-Area 05 performs poorly against the below purpose of the Strategic Gap for the following reason:

- Purpose 03: The land between Hartlepool and Greatham comprises farm land which is compromised by urbanising influence and detracting elements, resulting in a Medium and Medium / High Capacity. The landscape within the sub-area therefore does not widely contain rural, countryside characteristics that are being protected by the allocation.

04 Spatial Planning Assessment

4.15 Sub-Area 06: South of the A689 at Newton Bewley

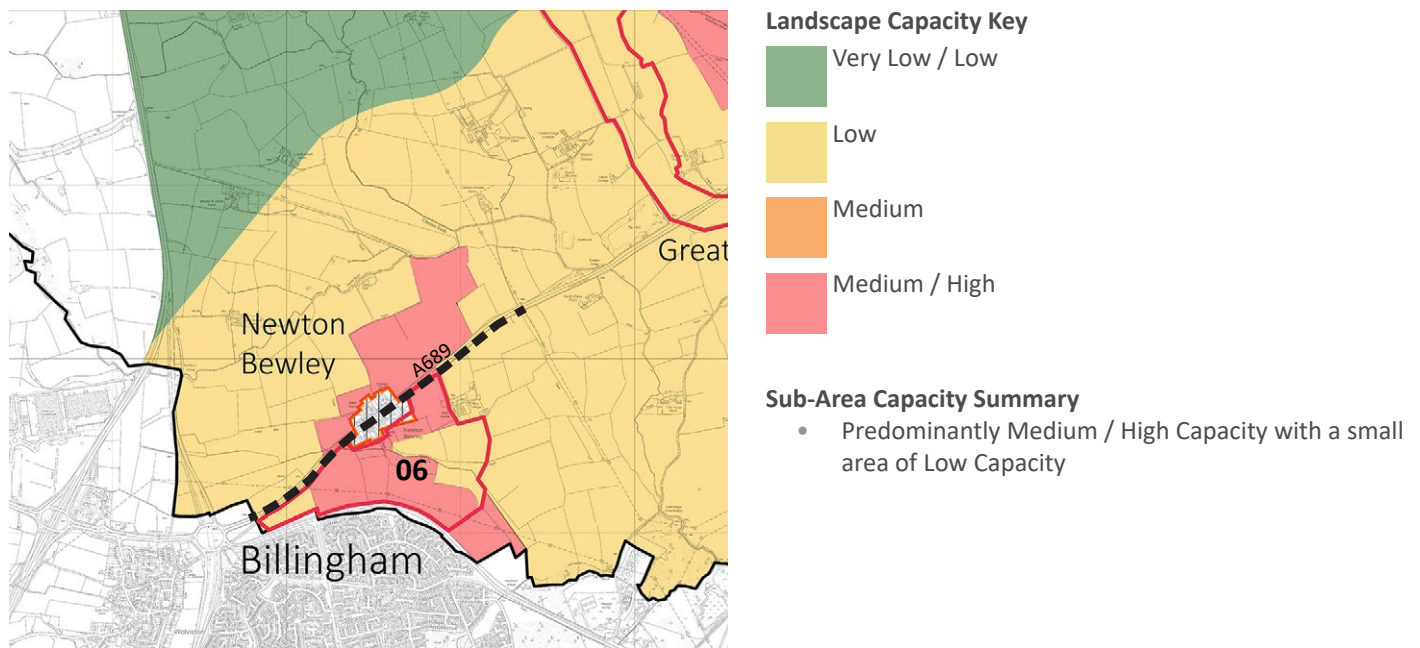


Figure 15: Sub-Area 05

Purpose	Question	Rating	Score
01 To limit the spread of urban areas and villages outside of the limits to development	To what extent does the sub-area protect land from urban development and a loss of openness?	STRONG	3
02 To prevent the urban area of Hartlepool coalescing with villages	To what extent does the sub-area prevent the merging or erosion of the visual or physical gap between Hartlepool and neighbouring villages and towns?	STRONG	3
03 To protect the character of the countryside and rural areas	To what extent does the sub-area have the characteristics of countryside or been affected by urbanising influence?	MODERATE	2
04 To maintain the separate identity and amenity of settlements.	To what extent does the sub-area contribute to the setting and character of Hartlepool and neighbouring villages	STRONG	3
OVERALL:		STRONG	11

Sub-area 06 performs Strongly overall against the purposes of the Strategic Gap for the following reasons:

- Purpose 01: The Sub-Area is currently free from built development and as such has a strong sense of openness. The Sub-Area is important in maintaining openness and limiting spread of urban areas outside of existing development boundaries of Newton Bewley and Billingham.
- Purpose 02: The extents of the Sub-Area extend across all land between the Billingham settlement and the village of Newton Bewley, creating well defined area of development limitation that could prevents coalescence.
- Purpose 04: The relatively short distance between Billingham and Newton Bewley means that the landscape plays a very important roll in maintaining the separate identity of each settlement. As such any development that encroaches into the Strategic Gap may compromise the separate identities
- Purpose 03: The Sub-Area comprises some farm land with Low Capacity for change. Some land has a Medium / High Capacity due to urbanising influence and detracting features.

04 Spatial Planning Assessment

Spatial Planning Assessment Summary

4.16 The assessment has identified the purposes of the Strategic Gap are met in most cases. A summary of the results are below and illustrated in Figure 16. To aid cross reference, the four core purposes are included below:

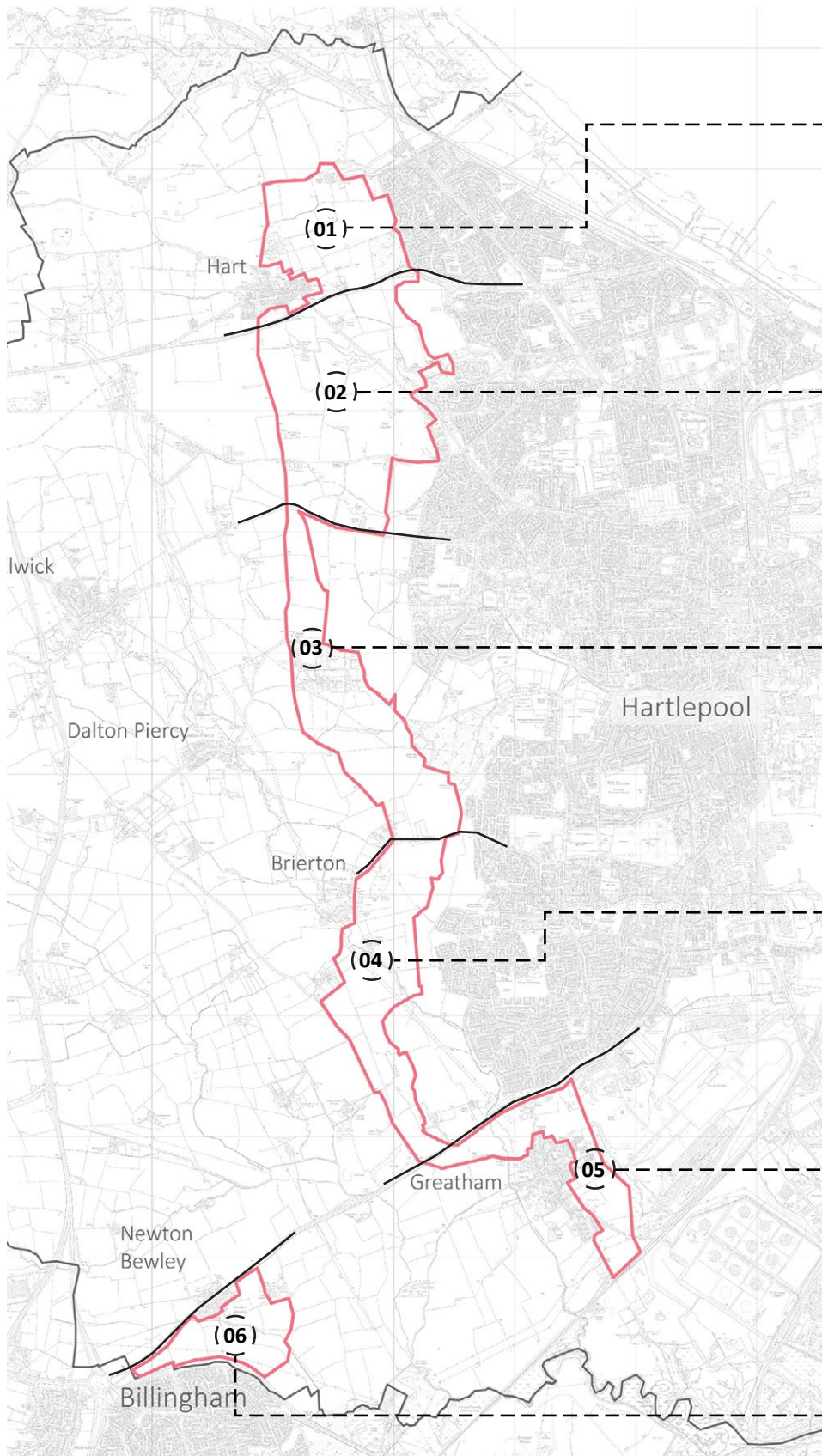
1. To limit the spread of urban areas and villages outside of the limits to development;
2. To prevent the urban area of Hartlepool coalescing with villages;
3. To protect the character of the countryside and rural areas; and
4. To maintain the separate identity and amenity of settlements.

		SUB-AREA 01	SUB-AREA 02	SUB-AREA 03	SUB-AREA 04	SUB-AREA 05	SUB-AREA 06
STRATEGIC GAP PURPOSE	1	Strong (3)	Moderate (2)	Moderate (2)	Moderate (2)	Strong (3)	Strong (3)
	2	Strong (3)	Moderate (2)	Moderate (2)	Moderate (2)	Strong (3)	Strong (3)
	3	Moderate (2)	Moderate (2)	Moderate (2)	Moderate (2)	Weak (1)	Moderate (2)
	4	Strong (3)	Moderate (2)	Moderate (2)	Moderate (2)	Strong (3)	Strong (3)
Overall		Strong (11)	Moderate (8)	Moderate (8)	Moderate (8)	Strong (10)	Strong (11)

Sub - Area results summary

- 4.17 Sub-Areas 01, 05 and 06 perform the strongest overall against the four core purposes. Although Sub-Area 05 provides a Weak contribution towards core purpose 3 'To protect the character of the countryside and rural areas'. This is because the Landscape within this sub-area is widely compromised by urbanising and detracting elements which result in a landscape with a higher capacity for change.
- 4.18 Sub-Areas 02, 03 and 04 perform moderately overall against the four core purposes of the Strategic Gap.

04 Spatial Planning Assessment



Contribution towards Strategic Gap

Purpose	Rating	Score
1	STRONG	3
2	STRONG	3
3	MODERATE	2
4	STRONG	3
OVERALL	STRONG	11

Purpose	Rating	Score
1	MODERATE	2
2	MODERATE	2
4	MODERATE	2
4	MODERATE	2
OVERALL	MODERATE	8

Purpose	Rating	Score
1	MODERATE	2
2	MODERATE	2
3	MODERATE	2
4	MODERATE	2
OVERALL	MODERATE	8

Purpose	Rating	Score
1	MODERATE	2
2	MODERATE	2
3	MODERATE	2
4	MODERATE	2
OVERALL	MODERATE	8

Purpose	Rating	Score
1	STRONG	3
2	STRONG	3
3	WEAK	1
4	STRONG	3
OVERALL	STRONG	10

Purpose	Rating	Score
1	STRONG	3
2	STRONG	3
3	MODERATE	2
4	STRONG	3
OVERALL	STRONG	11

Figure 16: Strategic Gap Contribution

05 EVALUATION



05 Evaluation

- 5.1 This section brings together the outcomes of the Landscape Assessment and Spatial Planning Assessment to provide a conclusion towards the soundness of the existing Strategic Gap Allocation. Figure 17 provides an overlay of Landscape Capacity and Strategic Gap Contribution and illustrates the relationship between the two areas of assessment.
- 5.2 The four core purposes of the Strategic Gap are:
1. To limit the spread of urban areas and villages outside of the limits to development;
 2. To prevent the urban area of Hartlepool coalescing with villages;
 3. To protect the character of the countryside and rural areas; and
 4. To maintain the separate identity and amenity of settlements.
- 5.3 It is concluded that the purposes of the Strategic Gap are met in most cases. However, there are some areas of the Strategic Gap which have weaknesses and as such require adjustment to further fulfil its purposes.
- 5.4 In order for the Strategic Gap to function as planned, the following factors must be fulfilled:
- **It must span between settlements where possible, or be sufficiently wide to provide an effective buffer between settlements:** The Spatial Planning Assessment within Section 04 of this report identifies that Sub-Areas of the Strategic Gap which have a wide extent, or span all the way between settlement score Strong overall. This is because the Sub-Areas limit opportunities for development to spread outside of existing urban boundaries (core purpose 1), prevent coalescence (core purpose 2) and help maintain the identity of individual settlements (core purpose 4) more effectively than areas of the Strategic Gap that are disconnected from the edges of settlement and are particularly narrow.
 - **It must safeguard areas of landscape with a low landscape capacity:** The Landscape Character Assessment within Section 03 of this report identifies that landscape with a low capacity typically exhibits defined and widely intact characteristics associated within the countryside. Landscape Character Areas with a Low Capacity include Undulating Semi-Rural Farmland (Very Low / Low Capacity), Low Lying Farmland (Low Capacity) and Woodland Plantation (Low Capacity). Sub-Areas of the Strategic Gap which include significant amounts of land with a Low Capacity are considered to safeguard the character of the countryside and semi-rural villages (core purpose 3) more effectively than Sub-Areas of which are narrow, or include large amounts of landscape with a higher capacity.

Sub-Areas of the Strategic Gap with an overall Strong contribution

- 5.5 Sub-Areas 01, 05 and 06 perform the most successfully overall against the four core purposes of the Strategic Gap for the following reasons:
- **The extent of the Strategic Gap boundary spans between settlement edges:** Sub-Areas 01, 05 and 06 include villages in close proximity to large towns. The villages of Hart and Greatham are near to Hartlepool, and Newton Bewley is near to Billingham. Within these Sub-Areas, the Strategic Gap boundary spans up to village and town edges. This is particularly important in these situations, as any development would result in the spread of built form into the already limited open landscape between the settlements (conflicting with core purpose 1), contribute towards coalescence over time (conflicting with core purpose 2) and erode at the separate identities of individual settlements (conflicting with core purpose 4).
- 5.6 However, Sub-Areas 01, 05 and 06 perform less strongly in protecting the character of the countryside (core purpose 3). This is for the following reason:
- **The Strategic Gap within these Sub-Areas does not include landscape which is considered to exhibit defined countryside characteristics:** With the exception to some limited areas of landscape within Sub-Area 01, (which has a Low / Very Low Capacity), the Landscape within Sub-Areas 01, 05 and 06 predominantly has a Medium or Medium / High capacity to accommodate change in the form of built development. This is because the landscape character is notably compromised by urbanising influence or detracting elements that degrade the overall sense of place and intrinsic qualities of the farmland landscape (refer to Section 03). Therefore the Sub-Areas, do not protect the character of the countryside as effectively.
- 5.7 There is some scope to improve the contribution of Sub-Areas 01, 05 and 06 towards core purpose 3 'To protect the character of the countryside and rural areas'. These are individually illustrated and detailed in figures 18-23. A combined set of proposed adjustments can be found within Figure 24..

05 Evaluation

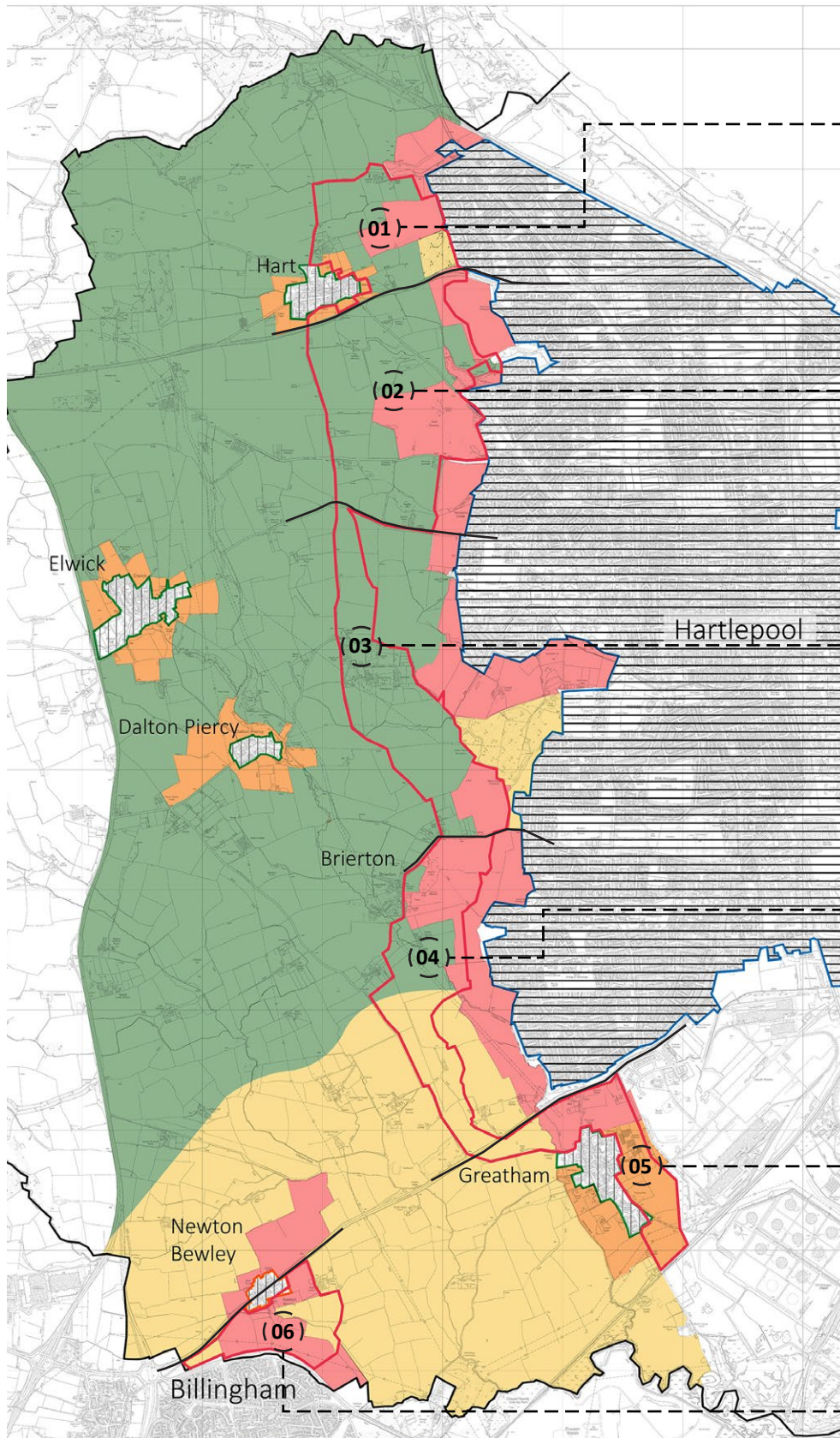
Sub-Areas of the Strategic Gap with an overall Moderate contribution

- 5.8 Sub-Areas 02, 03 and 04 perform less successfully than Sub-Areas 01, 04 and 05 overall against the four core purposes of the Strategic Gap for the following reasons:
- **Some or all parts of the Strategic Gap extents within the Sub-Area are narrow or disconnected from settlement boundaries:** Sub-Areas 02, 03 and 04 currently do not provide a complete defensible edge around Hartlepool as they are disconnected from the settlement in a number of places. This may result in development spreading outside of existing settlement boundaries (conflicting with core purpose 1), which will in turn contribute towards potential coalescence with nearby villages (conflicting with core purpose 2) and erode at the separate identities of individual settlement (conflicting with core purpose 4).
 - **The Sub-Areas do not significantly safeguard adjacent areas of Landscape with a Low Capacity:** Although Sub-Areas 02, 03 and 04 protect some areas of open land with a Low Landscape Capacity, their narrow extent in some instances does not provide sufficient safeguarding of land outside of the allocation (with a Low Capacity) to the potential impacts of development to the east of the Strategic Gap. If land adjacent to Hartlepool is developed, the introduction of built form would likely impact upon the character of Low-Capacity landscape within the Strategic Gap or landscape to the west of its boundary (conflicting with Core purpose 3).
- 5.9 There is some scope to improve the contribution of Sub-Areas 02, 03 and 04 towards the four core purposes. These are individually illustrated and detailed in figures 18-23. A combined set of proposed adjustments can be found within Figure 24.

Recommended Adjustments

- 5.10 The following section describes a number of proposed adjustments to the Strategic Gap. The adjustments aim to address weaknesses within each Sub-Area through changes to the allocation boundary alignment.
- 5.11 The recommended adjustments to the Strategic Gap are made with recognition towards emerging Local Plan Policy LS1 Locational Strategy, which explains that *'development within Strategic Gaps will be strictly controlled and limited to development associated with farming and rural businesses'*. It is therefore considered that the proposed adjustments to the Strategic Gap, which increase it's area, will subsequently result in an increased zone where only buildings relating to farming or rural businesses may be permitted. It is also expected that any development outside of the Strategic Gap and outside of the limits of existing development, will be in accordance with Emerging Local Plan Policies RUR1: Development in the Rural Areas and RUR2: New Dwellings Outside of Development Limits.

05 Evaluation



Landscape Capacity Key:
 Very Low / Low
 Low
 Medium
 Medium / High

Contribution towards Strategic Gap

Purpose	Rating	Score
1	STRONG	3
2	STRONG	3
3	MODERATE	2
4	STRONG	3
OVERALL	STRONG	11

Purpose	Rating	Score
1	MODERATE	2
2	MODERATE	2
4	MODERATE	2
4	MODERATE	2
OVERALL	MODERATE	8

Purpose	Rating	Score
1	MODERATE	2
2	MODERATE	2
3	MODERATE	2
4	MODERATE	2
OVERALL	MODERATE	8

Purpose	Rating	Score
1	MODERATE	2
2	MODERATE	2
3	MODERATE	2
4	MODERATE	2
OVERALL	MODERATE	8

Purpose	Rating	Score
1	STRONG	3
2	STRONG	3
3	WEAK	1
4	STRONG	3
OVERALL	STRONG	10

Purpose	Rating	Score
1	STRONG	3
2	STRONG	3
3	MODERATE	2
4	STRONG	3
OVERALL	STRONG	11

Figure 17: Landscape Capacity and Strategic Gap Contribution

05 Evaluation

5.12 Sub-Area 01: North of the A179 - Recommended adjustments

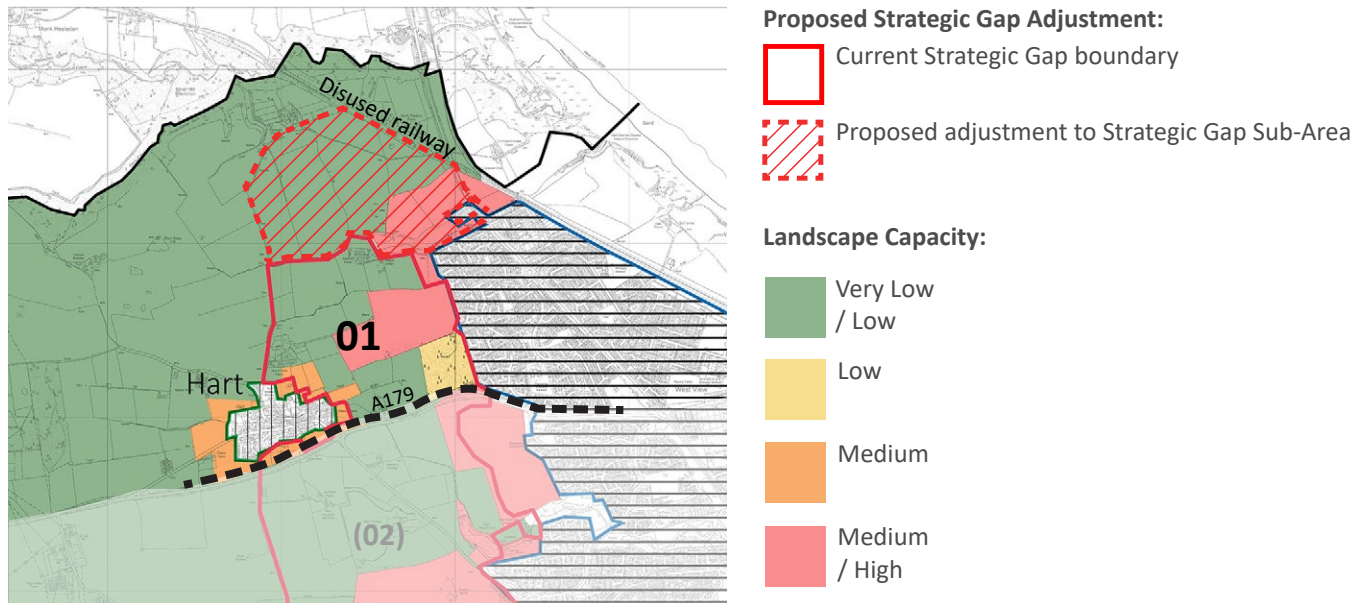


Figure 18: Sub-Area 01 - Proposed adjustments

Strategic Gap adjustment commentary:

- The proposed new alignment follows an existing farm track to the west and north, before running along the alignment of a disused railway cutting to the east.
- The focus of the proposed adjustment to Sub-Area 01 is to improve the Sub-Area's contribution towards Core Purpose 3 'To protect the character of the countryside and rural areas'. The proposed increase to the extent of the Strategic Gap encompasses additional land with a Low Capacity, which will further safeguard the countryside from built development to the North of Hartlepool and Hart.
- The Sub-Area already performs strongly against the following core purposes of the Strategic Gap:
 1. To limit the spread of urban areas and villages outside of the limits to development;
 2. To prevent the urban area of Hartlepool coalescing with villages; and
 4. To maintain the separate identity and amenity of settlements.

05 Evaluation

5.13 Sub-Area 02: Between the A179 and Elwick Road - Recommended adjustments

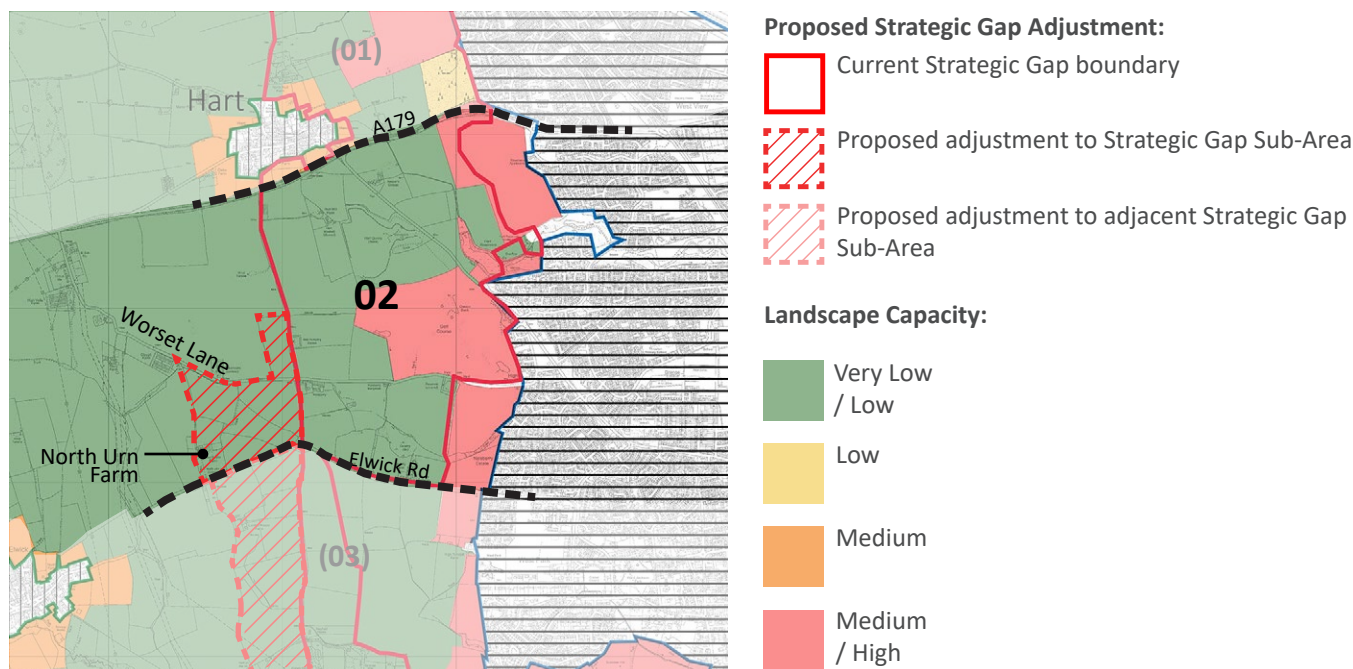


Figure 19: Sub-Area 02 - Proposed adjustments

Strategic Gap adjustment commentary:

- The proposed new alignment to Sub-Area 02 follows existing field boundaries adjacent to North Urn Farm and Worset Lane. The proposed alignment continues into Sub-Area 03.
- The proposed extension to the western edge of the Sub-Area works in conjunction with a proposed extension to Sub-Area 03 and focuses on widening the currently narrow area in close proximity to Elwick Road. The adjustments extends the Strategic Gap westwards to further safeguard the wider countryside and areas of Very Low / Low Landscape Capacity.
- The proposed adjustments aims to reinforce all four of the Strategic Gap core purposes::
 1. To limit the spread of urban areas and villages outside of the limits to development
 2. To prevent the urban area of Hartlepool coalescing with villages;
 3. To protect the character of the countryside and rural areas; and
 4. To maintain the separate identity and amenity of settlements.

05 Evaluation

5.14 Sub-Area 03: Between Elwick Road and Brierton Lane - Recommended adjustments

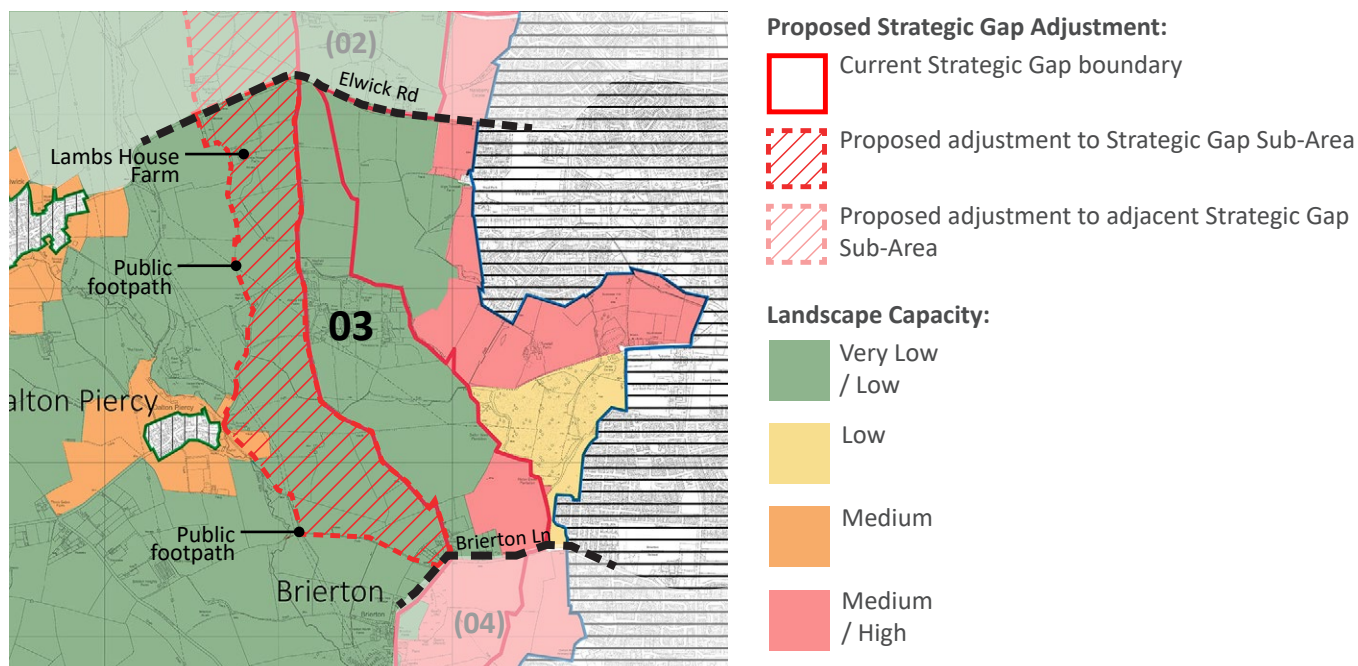


Figure 20: Sub-Area 03 - Proposed adjustments

Strategic Gap adjustment commentary:

- The proposed new alignment to Sub-Area 03 follows the edge of Lambs House Farm and a footpath leading to Dalton Piercy and footpath between Dalton Piercy and Brierton. The proposed alignment is a continuation from Sub-Area 02.
- The proposed extension to the western edge of the Sub-Area works in conjunction with a proposed extension to Sub-Area 02 and focuses on widening the currently narrow area in close proximity to Elwick Road. The adjustments extends the Strategic Gap westwards to further safeguard the wider countryside and areas of Very Low / Low Landscape Capacity.
- The proposed adjustments aims to reinforce all four of the Strategic Gap core purposes:
 - To limit the spread of urban areas and villages outside of the limits to development
 - To prevent the urban area of Hartlepool coalescing with villages;
 - To protect the character of the countryside and rural areas; and
 - To maintain the separate identity and amenity of settlements.

05 Evaluation

5.15 Sub-Area 04: Between Brierton Lane and the A689 - Recommended adjustments

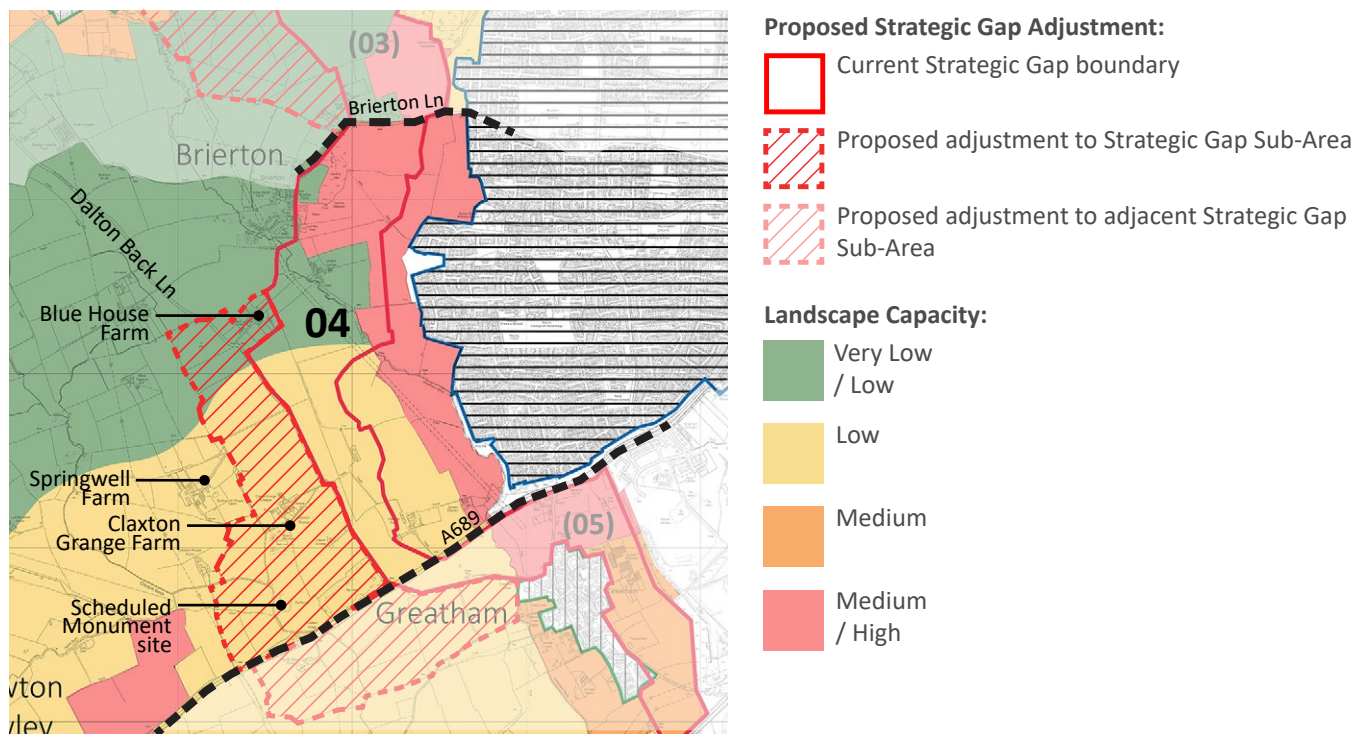


Figure 21: Sub-Area 04 - Proposed adjustments

Strategic Gap adjustment commentary:

- The proposed new alignment to Sub-Area 04 runs along field boundaries to the north of Blue House Farm before following field boundaries to the west of Dalton Back Lane, past Springwell Farm and Claxton Grange Farm. The boundary also provides an increased offset from the Scheduled Monument Site (Claxton Moated Site). The alignment continues into Sub-Area 05.
- The proposed extension to the western edge of the Sub-Area works in conjunction with an extension to the Sub-Area 05. It aims to provide a significant widening to the currently narrow section of the Strategic Gap. This will provide an increased buffer zone between the Hartlepool settlement and Newton Bewley and Greatham, whilst also including a greater amount of Low Capacity Landscape and a Scheduled Monument site.
- The proposed adjustments aims to reinforce all four of the Strategic Gap core purposes:
 - To limit the spread of urban areas and villages outside of the limits to development
 - To prevent the urban area of Hartlepool coalescing with villages;
 - To protect the character of the countryside and rural areas; and
 - To maintain the separate identity and amenity of settlements.

05 Evaluation

5.16 Sub-Area 05: South of the A689 at Greatham - Recommended adjustments

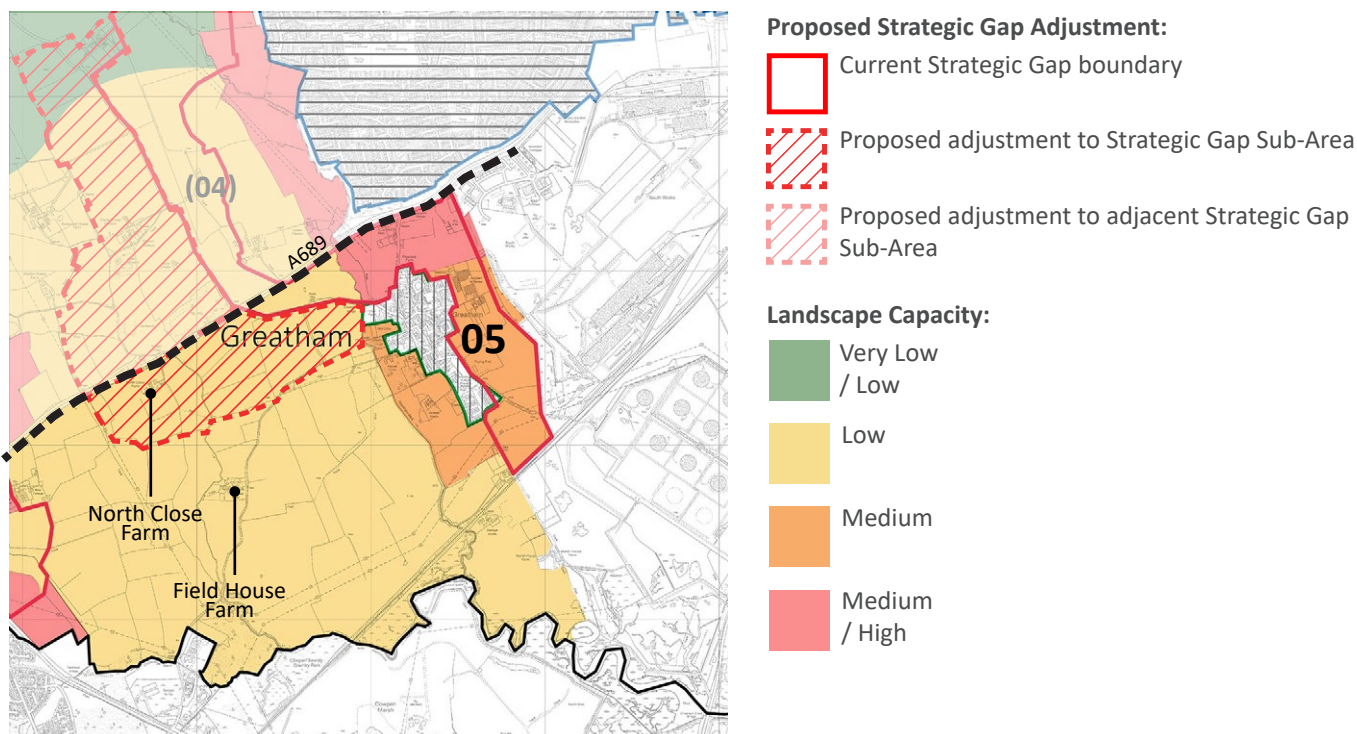


Figure 22 Sub-Area 05 - Proposed adjustments

Strategic Gap adjustment commentary:

- The proposed new alignment to Sub-Area 05 follows existing field boundaries to the west of North Close Farm before running along the edge of a farm track between Field House Farm and Greatham. The alignment continues from Sub-Area 04.
- The focus of the proposed adjustment to Sub-Area 05 is to improve the Sub-Area's contribution towards Core Purpose 3 'To protect the character of the countryside and rural areas'. The increase to the extent of the Strategic Gap encompasses additional land with a Low Capacity, which will further safeguard the countryside from built development to the south west of Hartlepool and in the vicinity of Greatham.
- The Sub-Area already performs strongly against the following core purposes of the Strategic Gap:
 1. To limit the spread of urban areas and villages outside of the limits to development;
 2. To prevent the urban area of Hartlepool coalescing with villages; and
 4. To maintain the separate identity and amenity of settlements.

05 Evaluation

5.17 Sub-Area 06: South of the A689 at Newton Bewley - Recommended adjustments

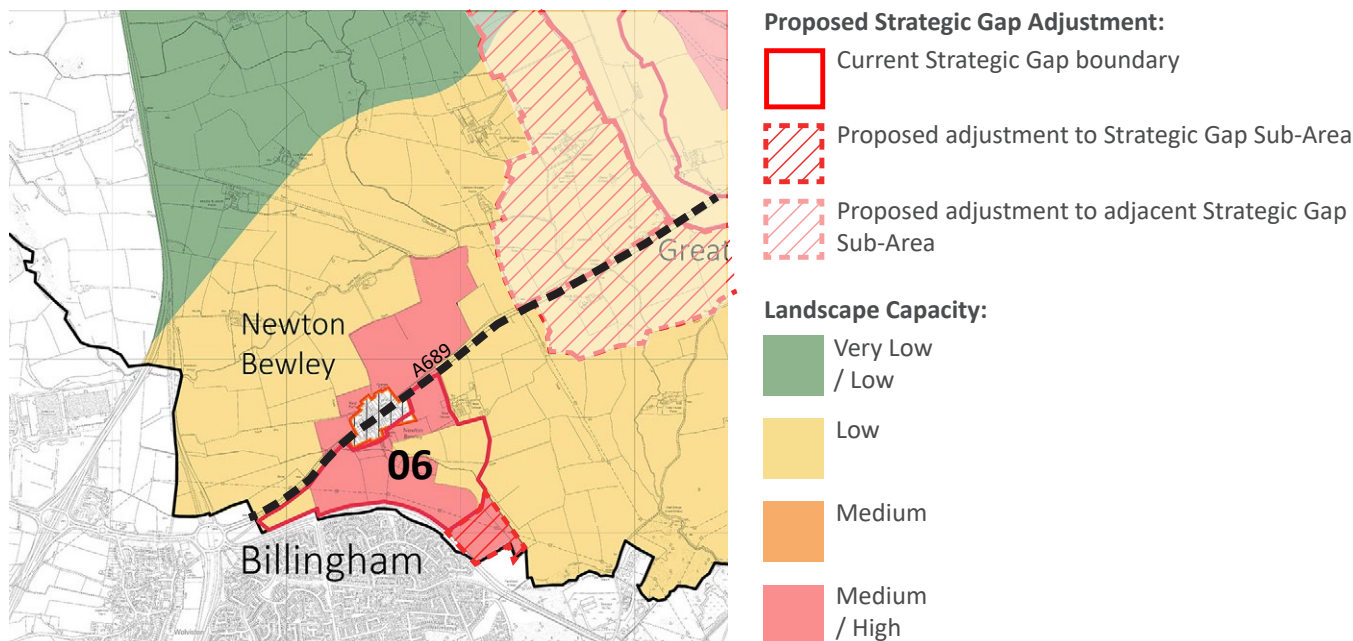


Figure 23: Sub-Area 06 - Proposed adjustments

Strategic Gap adjustment commentary:

- The proposed new alignment to Sub-Area 06 follows existing field boundaries to the north of Billingham, extending the Strategic Gap by an additional field.
- The focus of the proposed adjustment to Sub-Area 06 is to improve the Sub-Area's contribution towards Core Purpose 3 'To protect the character of the countryside and rural areas'. The increase to the extent of the Strategic Gap encompasses additional land with a Medium / High Capacity, in order to further safeguard adjacent land with a Low Capacity. This will provide additional protection to the countryside from built development adjacent to Billingham. .
- The Sub-Area already performs strongly against the following core purposes of the Strategic Gap:
 1. To limit the spread of urban areas and villages outside of the limits to development;
 2. To prevent the urban area of Hartlepool coalescing with villages; and
 4. To maintain the separate identity and amenity of settlements.

05 Evaluation

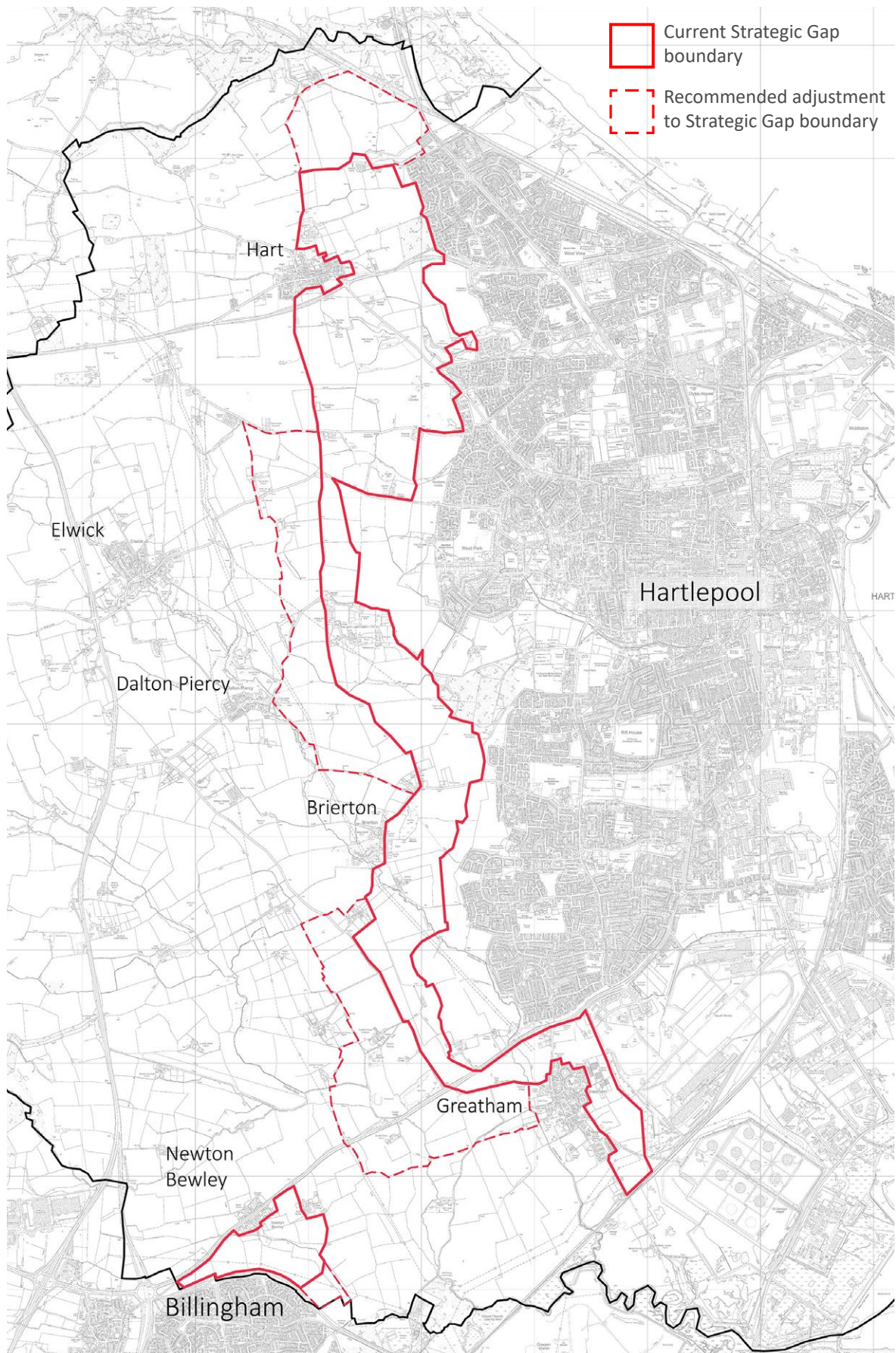


Figure 24: Recommended Adjustments to the Strategic Gap - Full Allocation Area

06 Conclusion

- 6.1 This Strategic Gap Assessment provides a review of how the Strategic Gap allocation performs against its core purposes. The four core purposes of the Strategic Gap are;
1. To limit the spread of urban areas and villages outside of the limits to development;
 2. To prevent the urban area of Hartlepool coalescing with villages;
 3. To protect the character of the countryside and rural areas; and
 4. To maintain the separate identity and amenity of settlements.
- 6.2 The report includes two elements of assessment; a Landscape Character Assessment and a Spatial Planning Assessment. The Landscape Character Assessment considers the landscape and visual characteristics of the context in which the Strategic Gap is currently located in order to identify various levels of capacity that the landscape has to accommodate change. The Spatial Planning Assessment reviews the Strategic Gap allocation against its four core purposes, to determine how successfully the allocation currently performs. The result of the two assessments are brought together to provide an understanding of the current soundness of the Strategic Gap and whether any adjustments are necessary.
- 6.3 The assessment identifies that the purposes of the Strategic Gap are currently achieved to a large extent. The existing allocation widely safeguards the countryside and rural villages from the potential impacts of new development at the edge of Hartlepool. However, there are some areas of the current Strategic Gap allocation which have weaknesses, and as such require adjustment to fulfil the allocation purpose more comprehensively. The Evaluation section of this project identifies opportunities to optimise the Strategic Gap, which include adjustment to the alignment of allocation boundary in some places.
- 6.4 The proposed adjustments increase the extent of the Strategic Gap overall and include additional areas of lower capacity landscape to further protect sensitive characteristics of the countryside outside Hartlepool, which are identified within Section 03 of this assessment. The increased extents also provide a larger zone of development limitation between the main settlements and nearby villages, in order to more substantially safeguard the individual character of village settlements from development encroachment and potential coalescence.
- 6.5 All adjustments to the extent of the Strategic Gap are considered to be modest, appropriate and proportionate in respect of fulfilling the purposes of the Strategic Gap.
- 6.6 The alignment of the proposed adjustments aims to follow clearly identifiable edges, such as field boundaries, water courses, roads and country lanes.
- 6.7 Emerging Local Plan Policy LS1 Locational Strategy explains that *'development within Strategic Gaps will be strictly controlled and limited to development associated with farming and rural businesses'*. It is therefore considered that the proposed adjustments to the Strategic Gap, which increase its area, will subsequently result in an increased zone where only buildings relating to farming or rural businesses may be permitted. It is also considered that any development outside of the Strategic Gap and outside of the limits of existing development, will be in accordance with Emerging Local Plan Policies RUR1: Development in the Rural Areas and RUR2: New Dwellings Outside of Development Limits.

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