

**Canterbury City Council**

**Canterbury City AHLV**  
**Review for Local**  
**Landscape Designation**

**Final report**  
Prepared by LUC  
January 2021



# Canterbury City Council

## Canterbury City AHLV Review for Local Landscape Designation

**Project Number**  
10717

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# Chapter 1

## Review and Recommendations

**1.1** Canterbury City Council (CCC) commissioned LUC to undertake a review of local landscape designations across the district to assist the local planning process. This paper presents the results of the work for the Canterbury Area of High Landscape Value (AHLV) which is a more complex designation protecting the rural setting of the city and views. It should be read alongside the Canterbury Local Landscape Designation (LLD) study, LUC 2021.

### Introduction

**1.2** Canterbury is a compact city located within the distinctive Stour Valley setting. The prominence and visual impact of the cathedral and its Bell Harry tower, rising above the roofs of the city in order to create a sense of awe and inspiration, was an essential characteristic of historical views of the city. It still is today. **Figure 1** illustrates the World Heritage Site and its Buffer Zone within its wider valley setting.

**1.3** The Canterbury AHLV covers a large area surrounding the city and extends over some 2774ha and parts of 8 individual character areas covering diverse landscapes of valley slides, valley floor, wooded hills and chalk dip slope. **Figure 2** illustrates the AHLV and the LCA context.

**1.4** The initial desk study evaluation for the Canterbury AHLV indicates that, unlike other AHLVs, it does not as a whole meet the criteria for Local Landscape Designation (see **Appendix 1**).

**1.5** The landscape surrounding Canterbury is important as the landscape setting and context for Canterbury but does not meet the agreed LLD criteria of:

- Local distinctiveness and sense of place;
- Landscape quality;
- Scenic qualities and perceptual aspects;
- Natural and cultural qualities;
- Recreation value;
- Associations.

**1.6** For the Canterbury City LLD a further criterion was included considering 'Spatial Function' – specifically the role that the landscape plays in relation to the setting of the city (including backdrop to and views to the cathedral). This criterion includes the following:

- Role in relation to the city – e.g. role as rural/wooded backdrop, skyline;

- Opportunity for views to the city and Canterbury Cathedral (Bell Harry Tower) and to appreciate the city in its Stour Valley setting;
- Key connections to the city – approaches, historic views etc.

**1.7** This relates to the landscape context of the Canterbury City and visual/physical connections. It does not cover setting of a heritage asset, as defined in the NPPF, which is a complex heritage matter and includes wider historic, social and economic considerations.

**1.8** Much of the existing AHLV around Canterbury City cannot be defined as “special” or out of the ordinary and does not demonstrate consistent physical attributes. It comprises a wide variety of different landscapes. These areas of land adjacent to the settlement edge often provide a sustainable location for development as indicated by the strategic allocations within the AHLV (**Figure 3**).

**1.9** This area merits further review, and a different approach compared to the LLDs covered by the separate LLD document (LUC, 2021). This paper sets out results of a more detailed analysis and presents options and recommendations.

## Background to the Canterbury AHLV

**1.10** The Canterbury AHLV was designated as in the Canterbury District Local Plan (2006) and protected in Policy LB2.

*Canterbury AHLV (the Valley of the River Stour around Canterbury) has been identified to protect the historic and landscape setting of the City and the World Heritage Site. Policy HE3 and associated text also sets out requirements for protecting the setting of the City (Canterbury District Local Plan, 2017).*

**1.11** Canterbury AHLV is a unique designation as it relates to heritage setting and significant views rather than intrinsic landscape quality. Policy HE3 covers Significant Views of the City and the World Heritage Site, although unlike Policy LB2 does not relate to a spatially defined area but sets out a set of criteria against which new development should be assessed.

**1.12** Views into, out of and across the World Heritage Site are identified in the Canterbury Conservation Area Appraisal (Purcell Draft report 2020).

**1.13** The text associated with Policy HE3 references the AHLV as being identified to protect the historic setting of the City and the World Heritage Site.

## Inspectors comments on the Local Plan Inquiry (2005)

**1.14** The Inspector who conducted the Inquiry into the previous adopted Local Plan considered the evidence base for

these designations and their boundaries. His main concern related to the Canterbury AHLV which he supported as a designation that might help prevent visual damage to the setting of the city but considered did not have exceptional landscape quality. Amongst other things, he recommended a review of the boundary to reflect this, setting out some parameters by which this should be done using Visual Envelope Mapping (VEM).

**1.15** A study for the Council was subsequently undertaken by Jacobs Babbie in 2005 which developed the Inspector’s recommendations. The work recommended a contiguous landscape designation rather than a mosaic of visible areas created through visibility modelling, as suggested by the Inspector. The recommendation was to include landscape with strong links to the city through, cultural, ecological and landscape associations, whether or not there are views to and from the city. A revised AHLV was developed to form part of the Local Plan.

## Inspectors comments on 2017 Plan

**1.16** The Inspector made some interesting comments on the 2017 Plan regarding the Canterbury AHLV, noting that:

- A contiguous coherent landscape designation is better than a visibility mosaic of spots of visibility;
- Agreeing that in this case the designation does not relate to landscape quality.



*“I share my predecessor’s view that the reasons for the Canterbury AHLV relate to the setting of the city rather than to significant landscape quality. Representations have been made to exclude some areas from the AHLV because they do not contribute to that setting. The LP does include some allocations within the AHLV that have been established through the plan making process. However, other piecemeal changes to the AHLV in the absence of a further overall review may lead to inconsistencies. Furthermore, this is not necessary for the LP to be sound, provided that the policy recognises that any development proposed on a particular site in this AHLV should be assessed in terms of its impact on the historic setting of the city. This is achieved in MM145. There is no evidence that demonstrates that the other AHLVs have not been appropriately defined.*

*I have considered representations that suggest that the designated Canterbury AHLV includes areas that do not play a role in the protection of the setting of the historic city and that no review of the inner boundary took place. As a result it is contended that the Inspector’s recommendations were not followed in full. However, the Jacobs Babbie conclusions were not before him and are persuasive in supporting a meaningful continuous designation area rather than the ‘mosaic’ the Inspector may have favoured.”*

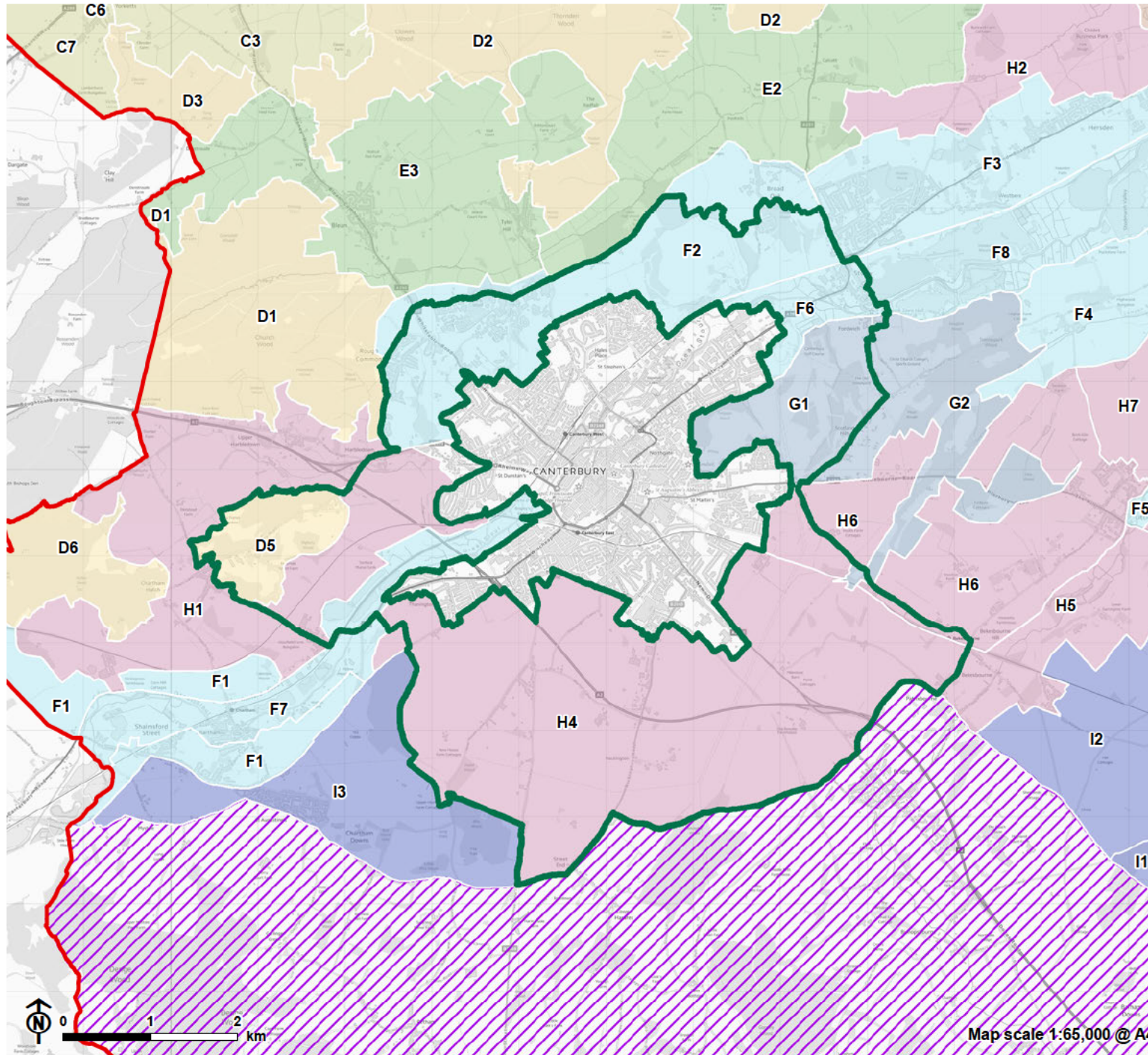
**Figure 1: Canterbury Cathedral, St. Augustine's Abbey and St. Martin's Church World Heritage Site**



**Legend**

-  World Heritage Site
-  World Heritage Site Buffer Zone

**Figure 2: Canterbury Area of High Landscape Value and Landscape Character Areas**



**Legend**


- Canterbury City Council Boundary
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Area of High Landscape Value - Canterbury

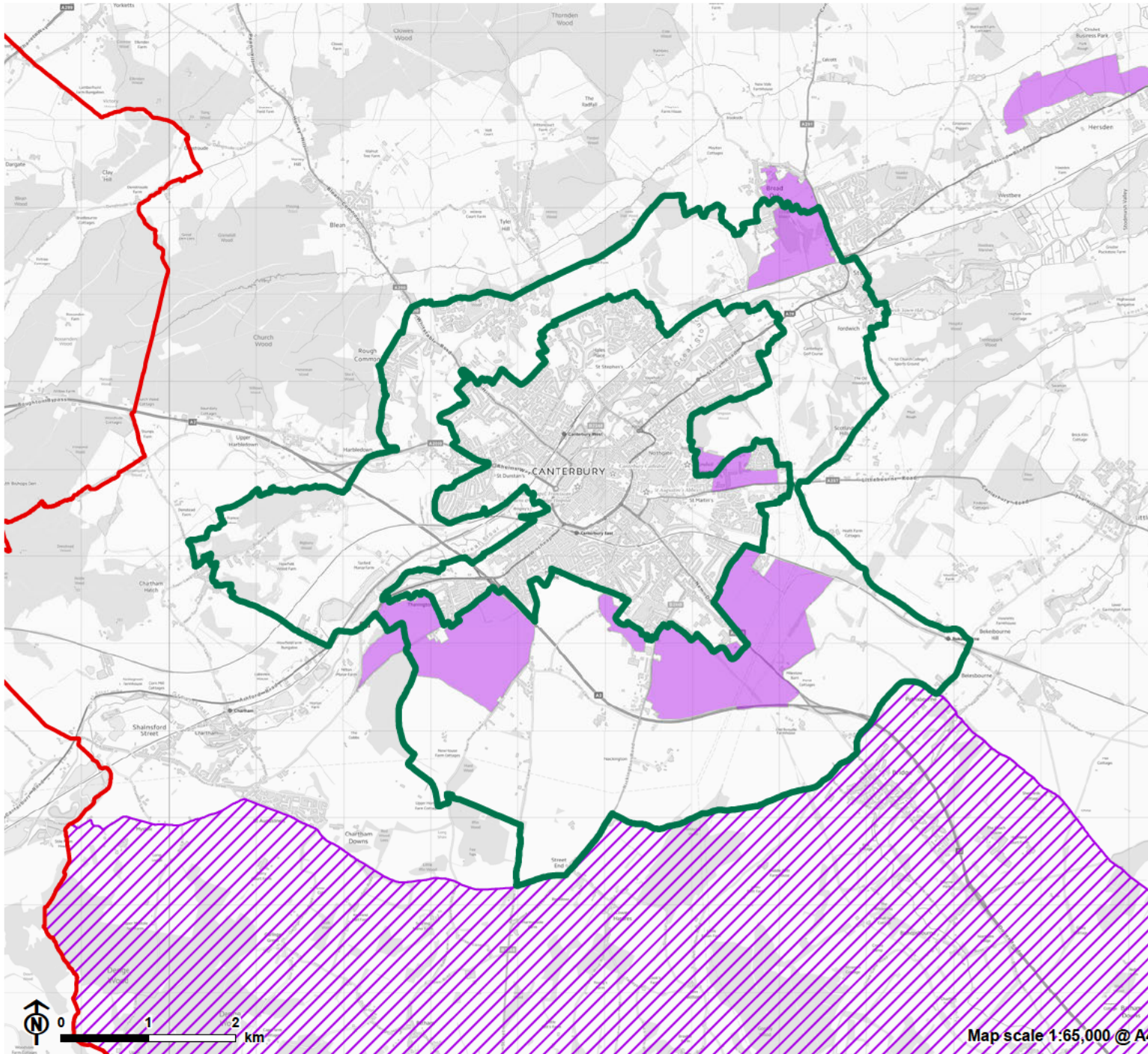
**Landscape Character Areas**

- C3 Court Lees and Millstrood Farmlands
- C6 Wraik Hill
- C7 Yorkletts Farmlands
- D1 Harbledown
- D2 Thornden
- D3 Ellenden and Victory Woods
- D5 Denstead Woods
- D6 Bigbury Hill
- E1 Herne Common
- E2 Sarre Penn Valley
- E3 Amery Court
- F1 Stour Valley Sides
- F2 Stour Valley Slopes
- F3 Hersden Ridge
- F4 Stodmarsh Ridge
- F6 Stour Valley - Sturry and Fordwich
- F7 Stour Valley West
- F8 Westbere and Stodmarsh Valley
- G1 Old Park
- G2 Trenley Park Woodlands
- H1 Harbledown Fruit Belt
- H4 Nackington Farmlands
- H5 Nailbourne Parklands
- H6 Littlebourne Fruit Belt
- H7 Wickhambreaux Horticultural Belt
- I1 Adisham Arable Downland
- I2 Bramling Downland
- I3 Chartham and Shalmsford Downland

**Figure 3: Canterbury Area of High Landscape Value and Strategic Allocations**

**Legend**

-  Canterbury City Council Boundary
-  Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
-  Area of High Landscape Value - Canterbury
-  Strategic Allocations



## 2020 Evaluation

1.17 The key points taken from the above to inform the approach are:

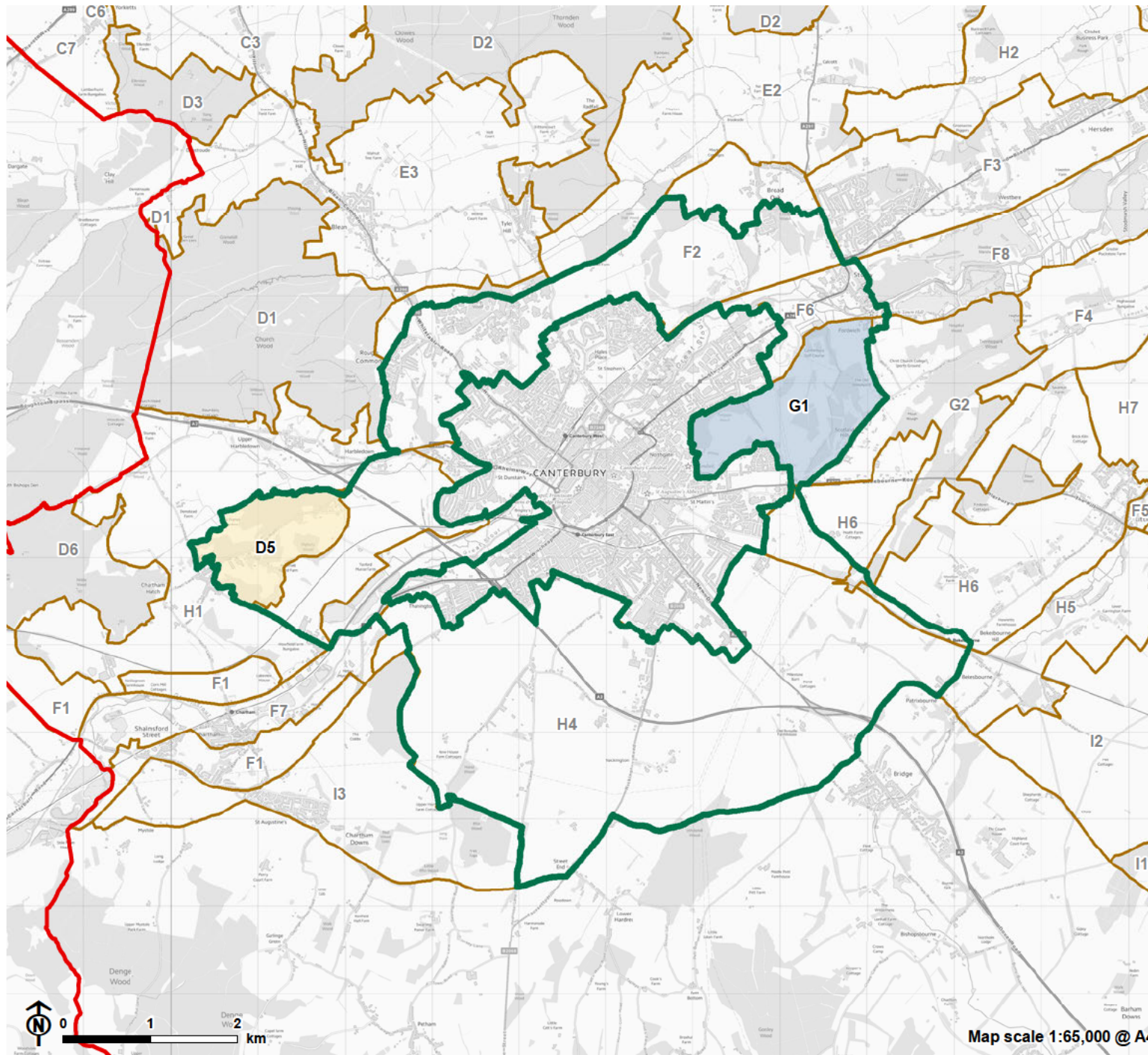
- A contiguous landscape local designation (not visibility models);
- A character-based approach;
- Relating to functional landscape setting/context of the city, rather than landscape quality.

1.18 The evaluation in **Appendix 1** sets out the Local Landscape Designation methodology applied to review of all AHLV in the district. It indicates, in agreement with the Inspector, that the majority of landscape character areas in the Canterbury AHLV do not meet the LLD criteria, i.e. not based on landscape quality, but all areas to some extent meet the functional criteria relating to the role in setting of the city (see **Figure 4**).


1.19 The table below, indicates the results of the LLD evaluation and the role of the LCAs surrounding Canterbury in the landscape setting/context of the city (Additional Criteria).





**Figure 4: Landscape Character Areas within the existing Canterbury AHLV that meet the original 6 LLD Criteria**




**Legend**


 Canterbury City Council Boundary

 Area of High Landscape Value - Canterbury

 Landscape Character Area Boundaries

**LCAs within Canterbury AHLV which fully meet the LLD criteria**

 D5: Denstead Woods

 G1: Old Park

Map scale 1:65,000 @ A4

Table 1.1: LCAs surrounding Canterbury and role in relation to the landscape context of the city

LCA	Name (% AHLV)	Summary evaluation (LLD criteria)	Views/context and relationship to city (Additional Criterion)	Recommendations & boundary
D5	Bigbury Hill (99%)	This distinctive wooded ridge scores well on all landscape criteria and should be retained as part of the Canterbury LLD.	Pilgrim's Way is the route historic pilgrims took travelling from Winchester to Canterbury cathedral.  This area offers fine views over Canterbury and to the Cathedral, visible from parts of Pilgrim's Way  LCA meets additional functional criteria	Whole LCA to be included as Canterbury City LLD – the existing wooded edge defines the boundary to the north.
F2	Stour Valley Slopes (78%)	This area forms a definite ridge containing Canterbury/Stour Valley to the north. It is highly sensitive providing a view to the city and also a partially undeveloped backdrop and skyline in views from the south where these slopes frame views of the cathedral in its Stour valley setting.  The area contains the University of Kent and educational establishments plus areas of extraction and landfill at Shelfords and is a fragmented landscape.  The undeveloped slopes and skyline are important attributes in the setting of the city. It also provides an important transition to the landscape of The Blean to the north.  It does not meet landscape criteria for LLD.	Steep valley provides containment for Canterbury and partially undeveloped backdrop.  University of Kent campus, St Edmund's school and water tower at Neal's Place are elements on the ridgeline in many views from Canterbury and areas to the south.  Panoramic views from the south facing slopes across Stour Valley to Canterbury, with the cathedral as a notable focal point. The slopes create a rural backdrop to views from the south of Canterbury, encompassing the cathedral in its valley setting.  Key area of transition at top of slopes – to The Blean landscape to the north and opening out of views over the City to the south.  Includes key views from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Neal's Place</li> <li>■ St Thomas's Hill</li> <li>■ University Road</li> <li>■ The valley side above Sturry</li> <li>■ Rhiems Way approach</li> </ul> LCA meets additional functional criteria.	Majority of area relevant to Canterbury City LLD – review detailed boundary around Broad Oak and Upper Stour slopes at the University of Kent at transition to Sarre Penn/Blean.  Site survey indicates that the existing boundary is appropriate – although recognizes this is a sensitive transition to The Blean landscape (LCA E3).
F6	Stour Valley – Sturry and Fordwich (100%)	Part of the area retains a strong Stour valley character and meets landscape criteria for LLD.  Towards the city development interrupts and detracting features dominates.	Fordwich is part of the pastoral valley setting to Canterbury.  The earliest port for Canterbury was around Sturry on the north-west of the Stour, and Sturry Road is an important and historic route into the city.  Glimpsed views exist from Fordwich across the floodplain meadows to Canterbury City and the cathedral.  LCA meets additional functional criteria.	The whole LCA should be included within the Canterbury City LLD.
F7	Stour Valley West (36%)	The wider area does not meet LLD criteria. While it retains important elements, it is crossed by transport corridors, with substantial quarry	This area is one of closest places to the city that the natural floodplain landscape can be experienced – with the city seen in its valley setting, with glimpsed views to the cathedral. The distinctive Sidney Cooper view from Hambrook Marshes, plus views from the	The area in proximity to the city to the point where the A28 crosses the valley should be retained within the Canterbury City LLD.

LCA	Name (% AHLV)	Summary evaluation (LLD criteria)	Views/context and relationship to city (Additional Criterion)	Recommendations & boundary
		and restoration, plus large industrial/commercial units.  The small area close to the city is an important part of the floodplain meadow setting of the city.	elevated section of the A2 along the valley to the cathedral.  Open flat river floodplain with meandering Great Stour provides valley setting to Canterbury.  Stour Valley is a historically important link and transport corridor between Canterbury and the countryside and include part of the Stour Valley Walk.  Part of LCA meets additional criteria.	
G1	Old Park (99%)	Distinctive elevated woodland landscape of high recreational and, historic and biodiversity value on the immediate edge of the city.  Meets LLD criteria	Ancient woodland, heathland and associated valley landscape contribute to the role of Old Park as a historic setting and backdrop to Canterbury.  Elevated topography and openness allow good views towards Canterbury and the cathedral.  LCA meets additional functional criteria.	Whole of LCA to be included as part of Canterbury City LLD.
H1	Harbledown Fruit Belt (24%)	Distinct orchard landscape with views to Canterbury cathedral from parts of the area to the east.  Does not meet LLD criteria.	Views towards Canterbury, with the cathedral tower appearing above woodland.  Views from orchards across the Stour Valley towards the city for example near Poldhurst Farm.  Includes part of the North Downs Way link to Canterbury  Part of LCA meets additional functional criteria.	Part of area to the east to be included in Canterbury City LLD using existing boundaries of roads and lanes.  Recommended extension of existing AHLV to include the area to the north of Bigbury Hill which contains long views to Canterbury and the cathedral from the right of way near Poldhurst Farm.
H4	Nackington Farmlands (99%)	An interesting landscape with many points of natural and historic interest. It includes substantial strategic development allocations.  Does not meet LLD criteria	Rural agricultural character extending to the urban edge of Canterbury.  Dramatic and surprising views from more elevated areas and along valleys and the North Downs Way to Canterbury and the cathedral in its Stour valley setting. Key views identified include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Thanington footpath near Cockerling Road on the rising side of the Stour valley with the cathedral as a focal point.</li> <li>■ Distance views from New House and Iffin Lane with the city in its rural setting, and the Stour valley slopes providing the backdrop.</li> <li>■ Crest of New Dover Road – providing part of a sequence of views to the cathedral on the approach to the city, with the Stour Valley slopes as a backdrop, and the cathedral silhouetted.</li> <li>■ Sequence of views from the North Downs Way approach channelling views to the city and cathedral.</li> <li>■ Views from A2 east of Stuppington Lane to cathedral are important for visitors arriving from Dover.</li> <li>■ Rights of way and access links between Canterbury City and the Kent Downs AONB, including route of the North</li> </ul>	Retained as part of Canterbury City LLD with boundary modifications to take account of committed development. The southern boundary should continue to extend as currently to the AONB.  A large part of the existing AHLV is included within strategic allocations. A decision will need to be made how the LLD deals with these – areas within the settlement boundary are unlikely to be relevant as a landscape designation, but these areas still have a role to play in the landscape setting of the city. Size and type of development, relationship to key views to and from the city and opportunities for greenspace will all be important considerations in the detailed design of these areas.  The majority of the area between the A2 and settlement edge, east of Nackington Road, is now allocated. The remaining open area between Nackington Road and Stuppington Lane is an important rural setting to the city in relation to the A2.

LCA	Name (% AHLV)	Summary evaluation (LLD criteria)	Views/context and relationship to city (Additional Criterion)	Recommendations & boundary
			Downs/Pilgrims Way link between Canterbury and Dover. Part of LCA meets additional functional criteria.	
H6	Littlebourne Fruit Belt (11%) and small adjacent area in G2	Distinctive agricultural landscape of orchards, hops and traditional buildings in relatively close proximity to the city.  Does not meet LLD criteria.	Littlebourne Road (A257) was an important Roman Road to the port at Richborough and is almost certainly the route St. Augustine first took to Canterbury. It was also a valued trade link with Sandwich that grew in importance as the Stour silted up and Fordwich declined.  Agricultural landscape including traditional orchards contribute to the rural setting of Canterbury. Area closest to the city includes Little Barton Farm and pylon line as detractors.  Small part of LCA could meet additional functional criteria	The existing small part of the LCA west of Bekesbourne Lane within the AHLV should be retained as part of the Canterbury City LLD. The existing road is a defensible boundary, including the small area of LCA G2 adjacent.

### Conclusion on the current Canterbury AHLV

1.20 Table 1.1 above indicates that the LCAs that make up the current Canterbury AHLV are varied in character and quality and for the most part do not meet the 6 LLD criteria. However, they do meet the additional functional criterion which considers the role of the LCA in relation to the views and context of the city. It is a landscape that is valued for what it provides in relation to something else (i.e. the landscape setting of the historic city/ cathedral). Some of it is not high-quality landscape, often including areas that have been degraded or proposed for development. It is nevertheless a valued landscape in relation to the surroundings of Canterbury, including views to and from the city.

### Options for the Canterbury AHLV

1.21 The following options are proposed for the Canterbury AHLV:

**Option 1:** Retain broadly as it is (excluding recent allocations and with some small boundary extensions) as a new local designation for the landscape context of Canterbury City – Canterbury City LLD – and include policy recognition that this area is valued for the role that the landscape plays in views and the setting of the city and not the quality of the landscape in its own right, and noting that the designation includes areas representing different landscape types (valley, wood hills etc.) which each play different roles as landscape setting.

**Option 2:** Remove the AHLV designation around Canterbury and definition of a spatial area but include a strong criteria-based policy setting out what is important in the surrounding landscape and relating this closely to information in the Landscape Character Appraisal (as indicated in the table above) and refer specifically to relevant character areas and the role that they play and landscape guidance therein.

### Recommendation

1.22 The AHLV is popular and the Inspector on the 2017 Plan supported retention of a meaningful continuous designation rather than a piecemeal discontinuous designation of multiple areas 'in the view'.

1.23 It is recommended **Option 1** is followed, creating a new local designation as **landscape context of the historic city of Canterbury**, which is separate to the LLDs (which were, developed according to the 6 specific landscape value criteria). It includes some areas of lower landscape quality in comparison to the other LLDs in the district.

1.24 It should be noted that this is a not a heritage designation, which would be a more complex study and require separate and different criteria.

1.25 The policy should consider the following:

**Preamble:** Highlight the landscape context of Canterbury in its valley setting and the important contribution and role of the floodplain, valley slopes and areas of woodland around the city, and highlight the relevant character areas and the LCA and associated guidance. Link to key views identified through other studies.

**Suggested Policy:** Development will be permitted that does not adversely affect or makes a positive contribution to the character and landscape context of the historic City of Canterbury.

1.26 Relevant criteria can be drawn out from the character assessment should be included with the policy.

**Boundaries:** It is recommended that the current extent of the existing AHLV is broadly retained – this is based on a

landscape character approach. Minor boundary modifications are proposed as follows, and illustrated on **Figure 5**:

- Potential removal of strategic allocations from the policy area, although noting that changes within these areas may impact on views and setting. The design and form of development within these areas should be cognisant of the landscape setting of Canterbury.
- Recognising the importance of the undeveloped and land and views from the A2 between Nackington Road and Stuppington Lane and including the area to the south which also forms the landscape setting and context for the AONB.
- Minor changes along the boundary in LCA H1 to include areas with view to Canterbury between Denstead Farm and Poldhurst Farm using the right of way as the new boundary.

**1.27** It is also noted that change/development within the settlement boundary of Canterbury City, which are not covered by the LLD can also have an effect on understanding the context and setting of the city.

**1.28** Many types of change within the landscape setting boundary will be acceptable and will not have an adverse impact. Not all areas within the boundary are important as setting but they are included as part of a meaningful continuous spatial designation.




**1.29** It is recommended that any proposal for development within this LLD should be accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) or landscape appraisal to show how the proposed change will conserve and enhance the rural landscape context of the city, including conservation and protection of valued views to and from the city.



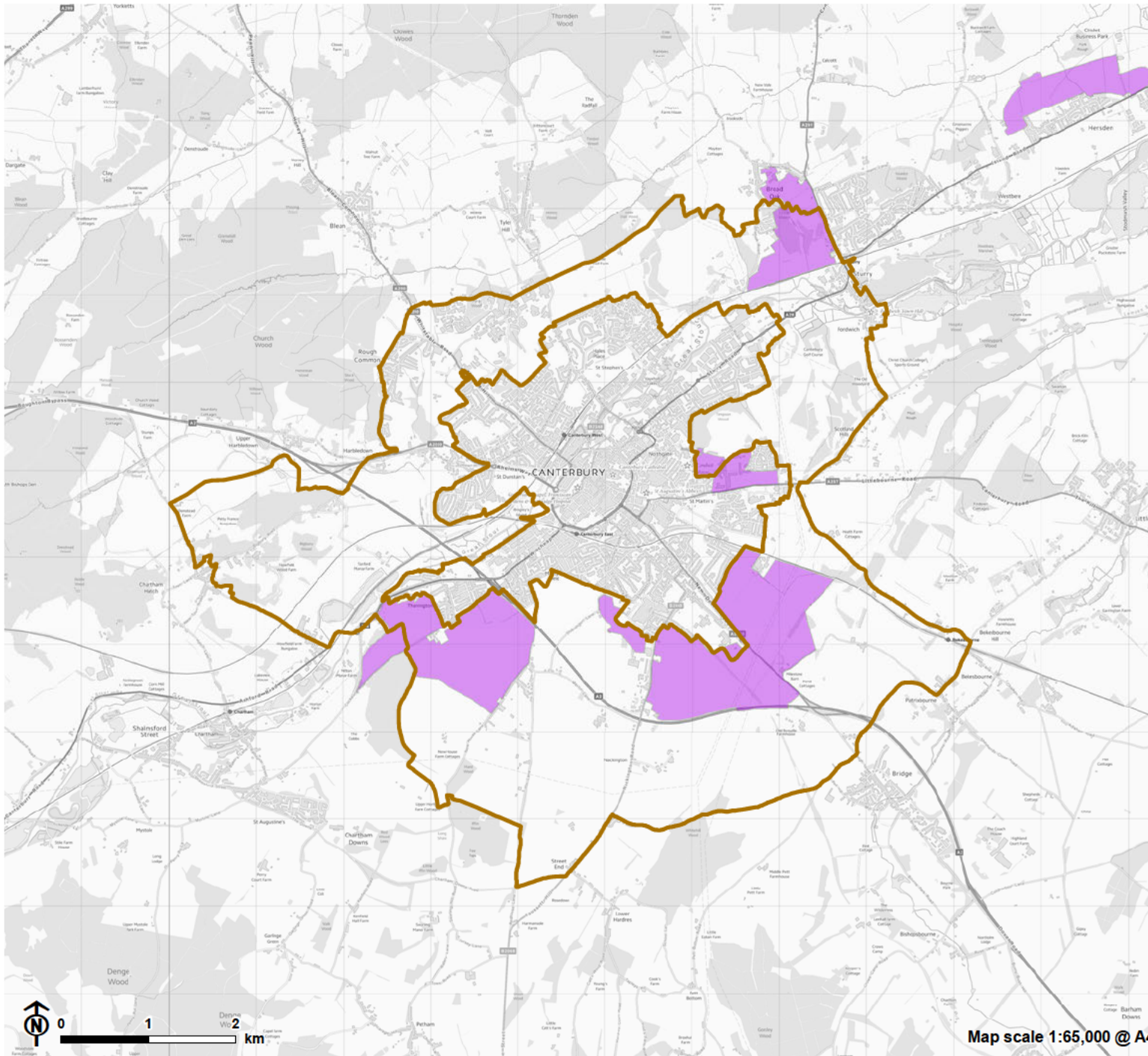
Sidney Cooper view along the Stour Valley meadows to Canterbury Cathedral

**Figure 5: Proposed Canterbury City LLD  
and Strategic Allocations**

**Legend**

-  Canterbury City Council Boundary
-  Proposed Canterbury City LLD
-  Strategic Allocations

(Note: the LLD boundary will need to be revised to take account of allocations)



## Appendix A

### Rapid desk study review to identify Areas of Search for LLDs – Canterbury AHLV extract

LLD Criteria			Local distinctiveness and sense of place	Landscape quality	Scenic quality and perceptual aspects	Natural and cultural qualities	Recreation value	Associations	Spatial function – role as setting to the city	Notes
LCA	Included within AHLV designation?	Area within AHLV (%)								
D5 Bigbury Hill	Yes Canterbury	99%								Important to setting of Canterbury and The Blean
F2 Stour Valley Slopes	Yes Canterbury	78%								Not a valued landscape in own right but important in context of views to and from the city. Review as part of setting to Canterbury.
F6 Stour Valley – Sturry and Fordwich	Yes Canterbury	100%								Partially meets criteria. Consider as part of wider Stour Valley designation or part of Canterbury setting.

Appendix A  
 Rapid desk study review to identify Areas of Search for LLDs – Canterbury AHLV extract  
 Canterbury ALHV Review  
 January 2021

LLD Criteria			Local distinctiveness and sense of place	Landscape quality	Scenic quality and perceptual aspects	Natural and cultural qualities	Recreation value	Associations	Spatial function – role as setting to the city	Notes
LCA	Included within AHLV designation?	Area within AHLV (%)								
F7 Stour Valley West	Yes Canterbury	36%								Partially meets criteria.  Consider eastern part, as part of wider Stour Valley designation or Canterbury context. Important views to cathedral (Sydney Cooper view of cathedral).
G1 Old Park	Yes Canterbury	99%								Meets criteria.  Distinctive wooded landscape in setting of city backdrop and views
H1 Harbledown Fruit Belt	Yes Canterbury	24%								Distinct orchard landscape with views to Canterbury Cathedral. Part of area forms context/setting.
H4 Nackington Farmlands	Yes Canterbury	99%								Distinctive agricultural landscape of orchards, hops and traditional buildings. Substantial allocations/committed development. Review relationship with AONB and setting of Canterbury including views to city/cathedral. Consider whether the designation should cover areas within the settlement boundary.
H6 Littlebourne Fruit Belt	Yes Canterbury	11%								Distinctive agricultural landscape of orchards, hops and traditional buildings. Review relationship with AONB and setting of Canterbury. Small part of area likely to be included as part of new LLD