



**Land off Hob  
Lane and  
Pheasant Oak  
Farm, Balsall  
Common**

**Landscape and  
Visual Appraisal**

Prepared by:  
**The Environmental  
Dimension  
Partnership Ltd**

On behalf of:  
**Barwood  
Development  
Securities Ltd**

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## Executive Summary

- S1 Land off Hob Lane and Pheasant Oak Farm, Balsall Common is a highly suitable site for residential development that is both achievable and deliverable.
- S2 In landscape terms, the site has no elevated landscape value, nor does the site feature any landscape designations at a national or local level. Whilst the site does feature elements consistent with the local landscape character, development can still take place without having a significant impact.
- S3 Through the retention of key landscape features such as boundary hedgerows and mature hedgerow trees and the integration of Green Infrastructure, particularly along the eastern boundary, the site can make a positive contribution to the eastern edge of Balsall Common. An appropriately designed development, incorporating suitable mitigation and enhancement measures, can provide an opportunity to increase the value of retained habitats, and create new ones. There is no principle reason why the site should not come forward for residential development in relation to landscape character.
- S4 Views of the development site within the local context are short reaching and geographically limited to c.1km. Views from local public rights of way (PRoW), most notably the on-site Millennium Way promoted route, are considered to be the most sensitive. These views, however, are largely glimpsed through intervening internal and boundary vegetation with internal PRoW, which are already imposed upon by on-site commercial operations. The existing built form and commercial activities do not present an attractive environment for users of Millennium Way. The redevelopment of the site creates opportunity to enhance the on-site route and its setting within the local context. Whilst development cannot be hidden from within the identified local visual envelope, any views of higher sensitivity can be mitigated through careful masterplanning. Visually, development at Land off Hob Lane and Pheasant Oak Farm, Balsall Common would form a logical extension to Balsall Common and a new development on this site would not be perceived as inappropriate.
- S5 The site is not subject to any form of landscape designation at either the national or local level. Parts of the site are subject to landscape policy prescriptions under emerging policy BC4. Through the use of sensitive design of the masterplan and adherence to planning policies, there is no reason as to why the conservation and enhancement of the local character cannot be maintained.
- S6 The site is located within the Green Belt. However, when assessed in landscape and visual terms, rather than being a high functioning part of the Green Belt which contributes highly towards the main function of keeping land 'permanently open', overall, it is an enclosed site, characterised by existing built form and urbanising elements, which is seen by relatively few receptors near it. The site does not play a fundamental role in relation to the wider Green Belt, and if developed, would not harm the performance of the wider strategic Green Belt.

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## **Section 1**

### **Introduction and Purpose**

#### **Introduction**

- 1.1 The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP) has been commissioned by Barwood Development Securities Ltd to undertake a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) of c.12 hectares (ha) of Land off Hob Lane and Pheasant Oak Farm, Balsall Common (hereafter referred to as 'the site').
- 1.2 This document has been produced to support planning proposals for the demolition of the current built form of the site and its change of use to residential development. The site has the benefit of a draft housing allocation under Policy BC4 of the emerging Solihull Local Plan, which is in the closing stages of its Examination.
- 1.3 The site is located within the Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) Local Planning Authority (LPA) area to the east of Balsall Common. The boundaries of the site are illustrated on **Plan EDP 1**.
- 1.4 In this context, detailed consideration is being given to the constraints and opportunities of the area around Balsall Common – including landscape and visual matters – such that the most appropriate form and quantum of development might be delivered in accordance with the aspirations of the SMBC Local Plan.
- 1.5 This LVA sets out the findings of the assessment of the landscape and visual characteristics of the site
- 1.6 In compiling the assessment, EDP has undertaken the following key tasks:
  - A review of the planning policy context for the site;
  - A desktop study and web search of relevant background documents and maps. EDP's study included reviews of aerial photographs, web searches, LPA publications including readily available Landscape Character Assessments. EDP has also reviewed other relevant designations including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), conservation areas and any listings on English Heritage's *Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England*;
  - A field assessment of local site circumstances, including a photographic survey of the character and fabric of the site and its surroundings, using photography from a number of representative viewpoints. The field assessment was undertaken by an appropriately qualified landscape architect; and

- An appraisal of the potential landscape and visual effects of residential development at the site, subject to consideration of the sensitivity of the receiving environment, the predicted change arising from traditional scale residential development and any associated Green and Grey Infrastructure.

### **Study Areas**

- 1.7 In order to establish the baseline and potential limit of significant effects, it has been necessary to view the study area at two geographical scales.
- 1.8 A broad study area of up to 3km from the site has been adopted as the initial search area, as shown on **Plan EDP 1**. This enables the geographical scope of the assessment to be defined and provides wider geographical context of the study. Within this area, the search has focused on identifying the local planning policy context; identifying local and national landscape designations and other relevant designations; and providing a general geographical understanding of the site and its broader context in relation to landform, transport routes and the distribution and nature of settlement and other land uses.
- 1.9 Following this initial analysis and subsequent field work, and having an appreciation of the development proposed, a refinement of the study area has been developed, which focuses on those areas and features that are likely to be directly affected by the proposals. The extent of this detailed study area is 2km from the site boundary, although occasional reference may be made to features beyond this area where appropriate. This detailed study area is also illustrated on **Plans EDP 1** and **2**. This approach is in accordance with the *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Third Edition*<sup>1</sup> (LI/IEMA, 2013) (GLVIA3), which seeks a proportional approach to the assessment (see paragraphs 5.2 and 6.2).

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<sup>1</sup> *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Third Edition*, Landscape Institute and IEMA, 2013



## Section 2 Assessment Methodology

### Introduction

- 2.1 EDP's methodology for the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for the planning application for development at the site is provided within this section. With regard to this baseline assessment, the key matters of value, susceptibility to change and sensitivity are set out for subsequent reference.
- 2.2 A full methodology can be found at **Appendix EDP 2**.

### Methodology

- 2.3 The assessment methodology for assessing landscape and visual effects prepared by EDP is principally based on the following best practice guidance:
- *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Third Edition* (LI/IEMA, 2013); and
  - *Landscape Character Assessment – Guidance for England and Scotland* (Swanick and LUC, 2002), produced on behalf of the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage.
- 2.4 Other reference documents used to understand the baseline position in landscape terms include:
- SMBC – Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment (December 2016);
  - SMBC – Solihull Borough Local Character Guide (November 2016); and
  - Various planning policy guidance documents and emerging evidence bases, considered in **Section 5**.
- 2.5 The nature of a landscape and visual assessment requires both objective analysis and subjective professional judgement. Accordingly, the following assessment is based on the best practice guidance listed above, information gathering and field studies. It uses quantifiable factors wherever possible, along with subjective professional judgement, and is based on clearly defined terms.
- 2.6 Essentially, the assessment identifies, describes and evaluates the effects of landscape and visual receptors likely to be subject to an effect of change, based upon the proposals being considered and the context of the landscape and visual resource surrounding the site. This assessment provides the description of those receptors identified following a desktop appraisal and site visits.

2.7 The subsequent assessment of effects (to be completed once proposals have been developed for the site) is made by identifying the sensitivity of the determined receptors to the proposed development, and then through the identification of the magnitude of change likely to occur in a landscape and visual sense; it then combines the sensitivity and magnitude to derive the level of effect, if any. Provided below are the criteria used to define the identification of 'sensitivity' and 'magnitude of change'.

**Sensitivity**

2.8 **Table EDP 2.1** provides an indication of the criteria by which the overall sensitivity of a landscape receptor is judged within this assessment and considers both value and susceptibility independently.

**Table EDP 2.1:** Landscape Sensitivity Criteria

Category	Landscape Receptor Value Criteria	Landscape Susceptibility to Change Criteria
<b>Very High</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nationally/internationally designated/valued countryside and landscape features;</li> <li>• Strong/distinctive landscape characteristics; and</li> <li>• Absence of landscape detractors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong/distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects;</li> <li>• Absence of landscape detractors; landscape receptors in excellent condition;</li> <li>• Landscapes with clear and widely recognised cultural value; and</li> <li>• Landscapes with a high level of tranquillity.</li> </ul>
<b>High</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Locally designated/valued countryside (e.g. Areas of High Landscape Value, Regional Scenic Areas) and landscape features;</li> <li>• Many distinctive landscape characteristics; and</li> <li>• Very few landscape detractors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; very few landscape detractors;</li> <li>• Landscape receptors in good condition; and</li> <li>• The landscape has a low capacity for change as a result of potential changes to defining character.</li> </ul>
<b>Medium</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undesignated countryside and landscape features;</li> <li>• Some distinctive landscape characteristics; and</li> <li>• Few landscape detractors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects;</li> <li>• Few landscape detractors;</li> <li>• Landscape receptors in fair condition; and</li> <li>• Landscape is able to accommodate some change as a result.</li> </ul>
<b>Low</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undesignated countryside and landscape features;</li> <li>• Few distinctive landscape characteristics; and</li> <li>• Presence of landscape detractors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Few distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects;</li> <li>• Presence of landscape detractors;</li> <li>• Landscape receptors in poor condition; and</li> <li>• Landscape is able to accommodate large amounts of change without changing these characteristics fundamentally.</li> </ul>

Category	Landscape Receptor Value Criteria	Landscape Susceptibility to Change Criteria
<b>Very Low</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undesignated countryside and landscape features;</li> <li>• Absence of distinctive landscape characteristics; and</li> <li>• Despoiled/degraded by the presence of many landscape detractors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence of distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects;</li> <li>• Presence of many landscape detractors;</li> <li>• Landscape receptors in very poor condition; and</li> <li>• As such, landscape is able to accommodate considerable change.</li> </ul>

2.9 For visual receptors, judgements of susceptibility and value are closely interlinked considerations. For example, the most valued views are those that people go and visit because of the available view – and it is at those viewpoints that their expectations will be highest and thus most susceptible to change.

2.10 For this reason, the sensitivity of visual receptors is rated in a single step process that combines both susceptibility and value, as shown by the criteria in **Table EDP 2.2**.

**Table EDP 2.2:** Visual Receptor Sensitivity

Category	Visual Receptor Criteria
<b>Very High</b>	<p>Designed view (which may be to or from a recognised heritage asset or other important viewpoint), or where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to the experience. Key promoted viewpoint e.g. interpretative signs. References in literature and art and/or guidebooks and tourist maps. Protected view recognised in planning policy designation.</p> <p>Examples may include views from residential properties, especially from rooms normally occupied in waking or daylight hours; national PRoW, e.g. National Trails and nationally designated countryside/landscape features with public access, which people might visit purely to experience the view; and visitors to heritage assets of national importance.</p>
<b>High</b>	<p>View of clear value but may not be formally recognised, e.g. framed view of high scenic value, or destination hill summits. It may also be inferred that the view is likely to have value, e.g. to local residents.</p> <p>Examples may include views of recreational receptors where there is some appreciation of the landscape e.g. golf and fishing; local PRoW, access land and National Trust land as well as panoramic viewpoints marked on maps; road routes promoted in tourist guides for their scenic value and main roads within nationally important landscapes (e.g. AONBs or National Parks).</p>
<b>Medium</b>	<p>View is not promoted or recorded in any published sources and may be typical of the views experienced from a given receptor.</p> <p>Examples may include people engaged in outdoor sport other than appreciation of the landscape, e.g. football and rugby or road users on minor routes passing through rural or scenic areas.</p>

Category	Visual Receptor Criteria
<b>Low</b>	<p>View of clearly lesser value than similar views experienced from nearby visual receptors that may be more accessible.</p> <p>Examples may include road users on main road routes (motorways/A roads) and users of rail routes, or people at their place of work (where the place of work may be in a sensitive location). Also views from commercial buildings, where views of the surrounding landscape may have some limited importance.</p>
<b>Very Low</b>	<p>View affected by many landscape detractors and unlikely to be valued.</p> <p>Examples may include people at their place of work, indoor recreational or leisure facilities or other locations where views of the wider landscape have little or no importance.</p>

2.11 **Tables EDP 2.1 and 2.2** offer a template for assessing overall sensitivity of any landscape or visual receptor as determined by combining judgements of their susceptibility to the type of change or development proposed and the value attached to the landscape as set out at paragraph 5.38 of the GLVIA3 (2013). However, due to individual circumstances, the assessment of overall sensitivity can change on a case-by-case basis.

2.12 For example, a high susceptibility to change and a low value may result in a medium overall sensitivity, unless it can be demonstrated that the receptor is unusually susceptible or is in some particular way more valuable. A degree of professional judgement therefore applies in arriving at the overall sensitivity for both landscape and visual receptors.

***Magnitude of Change***

2.13 The magnitude of any landscape or visual change is determined through a range of considerations particular to each receptor. The three attributes considered in defining the magnitude are the 'scale of change', the 'geographical extent', and the 'duration and reversibility/proportion'.

2.14 **Table EDP 2.3** provides the criteria by which the magnitude of change at a landscape or visual receptor is judged within this assessment.

**Table EDP 2.3:** Scale of Change Criteria

Category	Landscape Receptor Criteria	Visual Receptor Criteria
<b>Very High</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total loss of or major alteration to key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline condition; and</li> <li>Addition of elements which strongly conflict with the key characteristics of the existing landscape.</li> </ul>	There would be a substantial change to the baseline, with the proposed development creating a new focus and having a defining influence on the view.
<b>High</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Notable loss or alteration to one or more key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline condition; and</li> <li>Addition of elements that are prominent and may conflict with the key characteristics of the existing landscape.</li> </ul>	The proposed development will be clearly noticeable, and the view would be fundamentally altered by its presence.
<b>Medium</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partial loss or alteration to one or more key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline condition; and</li> <li>Addition of elements that may be evident but do not necessarily conflict with the key characteristics of the existing landscape.</li> </ul>	The proposed development will form a new and recognisable element within the view which is likely to be recognised by the receptor.
<b>Low</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minor loss or alteration to one or more key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline landscape; and</li> <li>Addition of elements that may not be uncharacteristic within the existing landscape.</li> </ul>	The proposed development will form a minor constituent of the view being partially visible or at sufficient distance to be a small component.
<b>Very Low</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Barely discernible loss or alteration to key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline landscape; and</li> <li>Addition of elements not uncharacteristic within the existing landscape.</li> </ul>	The proposed development will form a barely noticeable component of the view, and the view whilst slightly altered would be similar to the baseline situation.

**Effects**

**Table EDP 2.4:** Level of Effects Matrix

Overall Sensitivity	Overall Magnitude of Change				
	Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
<b>Very High</b>	Substantial	Major	Major/- Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/- Minor
<b>High</b>	Major	Major/- Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/- Minor	Minor
<b>Medium</b>	Major/- Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/- Minor	Minor	Minor/- Negligible
<b>Low</b>	Moderate	Moderate/- Minor	Minor	Minor/- Negligible	Negligible
<b>Very Low</b>	Moderate/-	Minor	Minor/-	Negligible	Negligible/-

	Minor		Negligible		None
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2.16 Each effect is described and evaluated individually through the integration of all of the relevant factors.

**Definition of Effects**

2.17 Taking into account the levels of effect described above, and with regard to effects being either adverse or beneficial, **Table EDP 2.5** represents a description of the range of effects likely at any one receptor.

**Table EDP 2.5:** Definition of Effect

Effect	Definition
<b>Substantial</b>	Changes resulting in a complete variance with the landscape resource or visual amenity.
<b>Major</b>	Changes resulting in a fundamental change to the landscape resource or visual amenity.
<b>Moderate</b>	A material but non-fundamental change to the landscape resource or visual amenity.
<b>Minor</b>	A slight but non-material change to the landscape resource or visual amenity.
<b>Negligible</b>	A detectable but non-material change to the landscape resource of visual amenity.
<b>None</b>	No detectable change to the landscape resource or visual amenity.

**Nature of Effect**

2.18 Effects can be adverse (negative), beneficial (positive) or neutral. The landscape effects will be considered against the landscape baseline, which includes published landscape strategies or policies, if they exist. Changes involving the addition of man-made structures are typically considered to be adverse as they are not usually actively promoted as part of published landscape strategies. Accordingly, in the assessment, landscape effects as a result of these aspects of the proposed development will be assumed to be adverse, unless otherwise stated.

2.19 Visual effects are more subjective, as people’s perception of development varies through the spectrum of negative, neutral and positive attitudes. In the assessment of visual effects, the assessor will exercise objective professional judgement in assessing the level of effects and, unless otherwise stated, will assume that all effects are adverse, thus representing the worst-case scenario.

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## Section 3 Baseline Landscape Resource

### Foreword

- 3.1 This baseline section has informed an understanding of the site, surrounding context and its capacity for appropriate development in both scale and character. This assessment has been undertaken alongside the masterplanning process to assist the design evolution of a residential masterplan by identifying any mitigation requirements.

### Introduction

- 3.2 An LVA comprises a study of two separate but inter-linked issues:
- Landscape character is the physical make up and condition of the landscape itself, and arises from a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of physical and social elements, aesthetic factors and perceptual aspects; and
  - Visual amenity is the way in which the site is seen; views to and from the site, their direction, character and sensitivity to change.
- 3.3 This section considers baseline landscape character matters and identifies other landscape resource receptors that are relevant to the assessment. Visual amenity is considered in **Section 4**.
- 3.4 Baseline conditions in respect of the published landscape character assessments are summarised below, followed by a summary of EDP's own assessment of the character of the site and local context.

### Review of Published Landscape Character Assessments

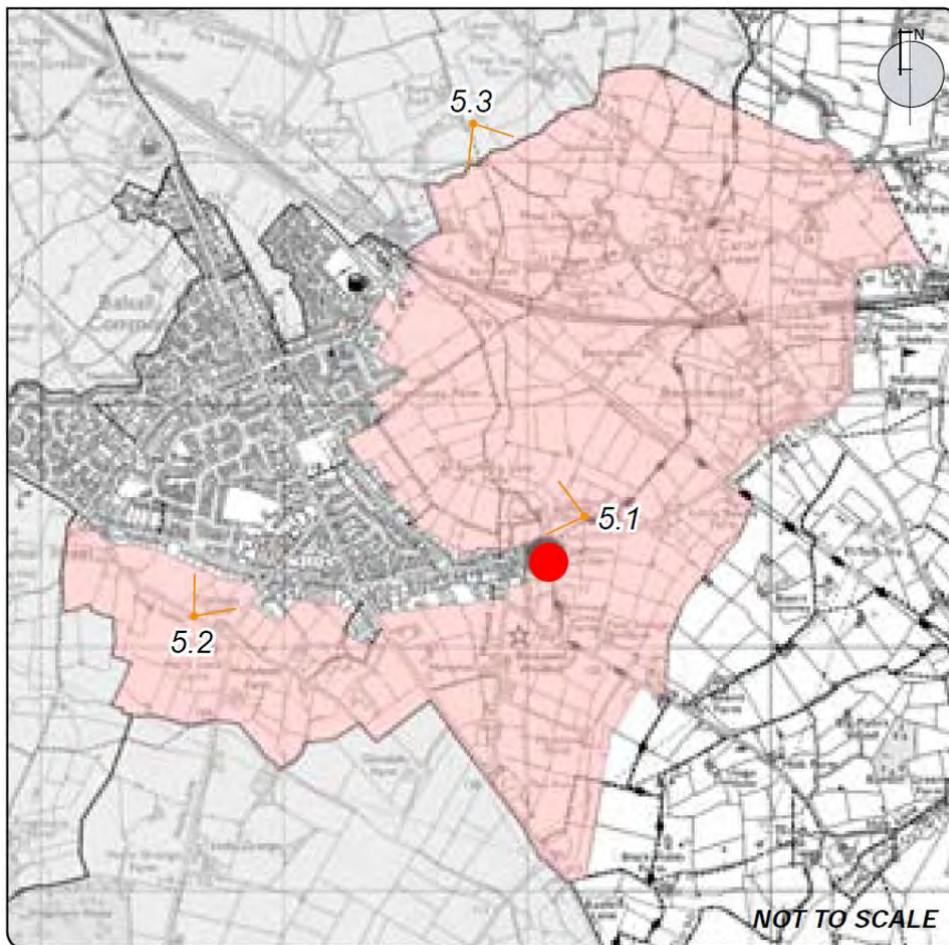
- 3.5 The landscape of England has been subject to a nationwide Landscape Character Assessment. According to *The Character of England: Landscape, Wildlife and Natural Features* (Natural England), the site falls within the National Character Area (NCA) 97, 'Arden'.
- 3.6 While the accompanying descriptions are broadly representative of the wider landscape, they are too generic to provide specific characterisation of the site. This is unsurprising, as the national characterisation provides a broad framework for more detailed Landscape Character Assessments. For the scale of the development proposed, it is considered that the description of landscape character undertaken at the sub-regional level is more relevant in establishing the landscape resource baseline.



**Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment (December 2016)**

3.7 A review of the Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment finds that the site is located within the Landscape Character Area (LCA) 'Balsall Common Eastern Fringe', the location of which is illustrated on **Figure EDP 3.1**. The LCA has been read and analysed in conjunction with SMBC's *Solihull Borough Local Character Guide* (November 2016). The relevant key characteristics of this LCA to the site and its nearby context include:

- Heavy influence from the adjacent Balsall Common settlement;
- Isolated trees within hedgerows lining field boundaries;
- Gently undulating visually, containing landform reinforced by a strong hedgerow network;
- Small fields bound by strong hedgerows structure and some ditches; and
- Absent woodland cover.



**Figure EDP 3.1:** Landscape Character Area Balsall Common Eastern Fringe

### **Character of the Site and Local Context**

- 3.8 While the above-published assessments provide a helpful contextual appreciation of the wider landscape, none provide a sufficiently site-specific assessment to allow a reliable assessment to be made of the effects of the proposed development on the landscape. In particular, published assessments tend to miss more localised influences on the landscape, such as the effect of traffic or existing development on tranquillity and visual character, especially in close proximity to settlements. This requires an appropriately detailed assessment of the site itself and its immediate surroundings, which EDP has undertaken and is described below.
- 3.9 Site visits have taken place throughout 2019, 2022 and 2023, and were conducted in dry weather conditions. The visits were complemented by a review of aerial photography, mapping and field assessments from publicly accessible locations (e.g. from local roads and PRow).
- 3.10 The highest point within the site boundary is c.75m above Ordnance Datum (aOD) at the caravan storage site at the centre of the site. Landform undulates gently across the site, with the lowest point reaching 122.5m aOD in the far south-east corner. Hydrological features include five ponds within the north and south-west of the site and just beyond the southern boundary. Several wet ditches and a field drain line a number of field boundaries.
- 3.11 The underlying character of the Balsall Common Eastern Fringe forms an expansive, generally flat to gently undulating landscape. Combined with characteristic structural boundary hedgerows, mature hedgerow trees and adjacent built development, distant visibility is limited to within c.1km (see **Image EDP 3.1**). The site is representative of a number of the features characterised with the host LCA.



**Image EDP 3.1:** View from approximate centre of site looking east

- 3.12 The main body of fields comprise pastureland. Field parcels to the north and east are largely bound by hedgerows (varying in quality). In contrast, field parcels to the west of the development have predominantly been fenced for livestock purposes. Hedgerows to the north and east of the site feature isolated mature trees and contribute further to the structure of the landscape fabric. Farm buildings, associated hardstanding and areas of bare ground dominate the centre of the site, with adjoining infill spaces left unmanaged to develop areas of scrub, ruderal vegetation and scattered trees. The quality of the built form on site is generally dilapidated, and the on-site buildings can be seen in context with the surrounding developments to the north, south and west.

### **Susceptibility of the Landscape**

- 3.13 The susceptibility of the landscape resource is defined as the ability of the receptor (whether the overall character, individual fabric elements or perceptual aspects) to accommodate the proposed development (in this instance residential development) without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation.
- 3.14 The site contains no notable landscape features beyond hedgerows and trees that form internal divisions. These landscape features are characterising of the local landscape and warrant retention within a development layout, subject to alignment with green corridors and appropriate offsets.
- 3.15 The key sensitivity relates to the open field network, and the manner in which this is perceived from public locations within the site and its immediate context, including views from the on-site Millennium Way Promoted Route and in views from locations such as

PRoW c.300m east of the site. Through the assessment of existing views (as set out in the **Section 4**), it has been identified that views into the site are limited and of close proximity.

- 3.16 In this context, the site is considered to have a **medium** susceptibility to change in the form of residential development.

### **Value of the Landscape Receptors**

- 3.17 The following paragraphs describe the value of the landscape receptors, as assessed by EDP. Value and susceptibility are considered independently in the assessment of overall 'sensitivity' of landscape receptors.

- 3.18 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) advises that development should be directed, wherever possible, to land of the least environmental value (paragraph 17). As such, the intrinsic value of the site is central to its appropriateness for development.

- 3.19 EDP has undertaken a review of the site's intrinsic value using a well-established/accepted approach based on the national guidance for the assessment of landscape impacts (GLVIA3). This guidance assists greatly in delivering a framework for an objective landscape assessment of value. Box 5.1 on page 84 of the GLVIA identifies eight criteria relevant to judgements about landscape value. These criteria are reproduced below with EDP's observations alongside, based on the published landscape character assessments and from EDP's field assessment. The site is judged in terms of its performance against each of the eight criteria:

- **Landscape quality:** The landscape quality of the site is variable and increases from the south-west towards the north-east. Green Infrastructure assets are predominantly confined to the boundaries, comprising some good quality hedgerows and trees. These features are in a poor to moderate condition, with a degree of degradation arising from an absence of management;
- **Scenic quality:** The visual character of the site is also variable and generally unexceptional from public vantage points;
- **Rarity:** The site does not fall within or contain a rare landscape type and contains no landscape features or elements of especial rarity, nor of acknowledged value;
- **Representativeness:** The site contains a number of features/elements of the host LCAs that are considered to be especially representative, including boundary hedgerows with isolated mature trees, historic field patterns and filed drains;
- **Conservation interests:** The majority of the site comprises of habitats (see ecology appraisal edp5006\_r012) of predominantly low (negligible) intrinsic ecological value, including hardstanding, bare ground and buildings, species-poor grassland, wet, shaded ditches, and species-poor defunct hedgerows. Habitats of greater (local)

value include five ponds (plus a boggy area and marshy grassland area), occasional mature scattered trees and species-rich hedgerows; there is no reason to believe that any protected species are likely to be unacceptably impacted by the proposals. Furthermore, development of the site would not necessarily affect the historic value or setting of any heritage asset;

- **Recreation value:** The recreational value is derived from the single PRoW (Millennium Way Promoted Route), which crosses the site from north to south. Considering the size of the site, and in the absence of other forms of open or permissive access, this represents relatively low permeability;
- **Perceptual aspects:** Whilst part of the site is undeveloped agricultural land; public access is limited to the enclosed linear PRoW (Millennium Way Promoted Route). The route is imposed upon by commercial site uses and does not present a welcoming or attractive route. Furthermore, tranquillity is limited within the wider site due to the adjacent urban fringe land uses and busy transport network; and
- **Associations:** There are no known cultural associations or historic land use across the site.

3.20 Having assessed the site in accordance with GLVIA3 Box 5.1, there is no reason to conclude that the site has any elevated landscape value or importance above the rest of the host landscape type. Overall, the site is considered to be of no more than **medium** value.

3.21 Considering this alongside the medium susceptibility to change, the landscape character of the site is considered to be of **medium** sensitivity where landscape character effects are most likely.

3.22 The site has been reviewed for conformity against the LCA key characteristics and in the context of the physical features it contains. This review shows that those key landscape features with the potential to be impacted by the proposals are restricted to the trees, hedgerows and historic field patterns.

3.23 These landscape elements have been shown to be characteristic and present within the site or local context, and have a medium sensitivity based upon their quality, condition and contribution to the wider value of the site as defined within the discussion above.

### **Summary of Landscape Character Matters**

3.24 The site does not lie within any nationally or locally designated landscapes.

3.25 In neither a topographic nor a spatial sense does the development capacity of the site appear to conflict with established patterns of development, nor does it threaten the identity of neighbouring settlements.

- 3.26 Whilst the agricultural landscape of the site and its constituent landscape elements are key characteristics of the identified local landscapes described above, the character of the site is strongly influenced by its location bounding the eastern urban edge of Balsall Common (see **Section 5**) and the land use on the remaining half of the site. Where farm buildings, associated hardstanding and areas of bare ground dominate, with adjoining infill spaces left unmanaged to develop areas of scrub, ruderal vegetation and scattered trees. The quality of the built form on site is generally dilapidated, and the on-site buildings can be seen in context with the surrounding developments to the north, south and west.
- 3.27 It is recommended that the existing tree and hedgerow network are retained where appropriate and, where possible, enhanced by new replacement and gap planting and integrated into a strong landscape structure within the masterplan.
- 3.28 A landscape/Green Infrastructure strategy is required in response to the site's specific landscape sensitivities by both building and reinforcing the onsite fabric. In addition, the following opportunities should be considered in any development of this site:
- A Green Infrastructure framework (including areas of public open space) to integrate with the landscape and provide visual amenity with biodiversity enhancement, whilst ensuring greater opportunities for open air recreation within the setting of Balsall Common Eastern Fringe; and
  - A positive contribution to the urban and rural context at the eastern edge of Balsall Common by enhancing the site's eastern boundary by planting up this boundary to the site, creating an enhanced settlement edge.
- 3.29 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal finds that there are no in principle reasons why the site would be deemed inappropriate for residential development in relation to landscape character matters, providing that the key landscape characteristics of the local landscape are respected and retained where possible.

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## Section 4 Baseline Visual Resources

### Introduction

- 4.1 This section identifies those visual receptors that may have views to and from the site, and their distribution, character, value and sensitivity to change. It also considers, in broad terms, the potential effects of development on that resource.
- 4.2 EDP has conducted an assessment of the views available to and from the site by walking and driving (as appropriate) local roads and rights of way. Before doing so, a broad area of search was defined using a GIS-based computer programme that predicts the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) based upon Ordnance Survey topographical levels. Following site visits, the ZTV was refined to a Zone of Primary Visibility (see **Plan EDP 4**), which identifies the actual visual envelope of attainable viewpoints surrounding the site.
- 4.3 The following paragraphs include an identification of the sensitivity of the visual receptors, where value and susceptibility are considered together in the assessment of overall 'sensitivity' of visual receptors.

### Representative Viewpoint Selection

- 4.4 Based on fieldwork observations and the findings of the data trawl, paired with the result of LPA consultation (Landscape Officer comments) a number of photoviewpoints have been selected to represent the range of visual receptors, the locations of which are shown on **Plan EDP 4**, while the views themselves are shown in **Photoviewpoints EDP 1** to **EDP 14**. Whilst a range of locations have been considered, these photoviewpoints have been selected to best represent the variety of views available from public vantage points towards the site. In addition to these viewpoints, the Conservation Officer requested the inclusion of six locations, these are presented on **Plan EDP 4** and at **Photoviewpoints H1** to **H6** (included at **Appendix EDP 5**).
- 4.5 The actual visibility of a site is normally greater in winter (when trees and hedgerows have no leaves). On this basis, GLVIA3 states a preference that the "worst case" scenario is used for visual assessment. The latest photographic surveys for this assessment were carried out in February 2019, and March 2023 when trees and hedgerows were not in leaf. In accordance with best practice guidance, the visual assessment accompanying the full LVIA will predict likely visibility from viewpoints in winter months to assess effects of the proposed development on visual receptors.
- 4.6 Details of each view, and the reason for its selection as a 'representative viewpoint', are provided in the **Table EDP 4.1**.



**Table EDP 4.1:** Summary of Representative Photoviewpoints

<b>PVP No.</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Grid Reference</b>	<b>Distance and Direction of View</b>	<b>Reason(s) for Selection and Sensitivity of Receptor</b>
1	Millennium Way Promoted Route/Old Waste Lane	425235, 276531	75m; north	Pedestrians, cyclists, Vehicular
2	Waste Lane	425493, 276504	120m; north-east	Vehicular, Cyclist
3	Public Right of Way (PRoW M184/1)	425608, 276096	300m; east	Pedestrian
4	Millennium Way, Hob Lane	425572, 275793	350m; north-west	Pedestrians, cyclists, Vehicular
5	Windmill Lane next to Berkswell Windmill	424884, 275945	250m; north	Pedestrians, cyclists, Vehicular
6	Windmill Lane (opposite to House No.5)	424923, 276291	77m; east	Vehicular, Residential
7	Convergence of Waste Lane, Kelsey Lane and Windmill Lane	424930, 276362	80m; south-east	Vehicular, Residential
8	Junction of Old Waste Lane and Waste Lane (B4101)	425079, 276435	25m; south-west	Vehicular, cyclists
9a	Internal view towards northern boundary along Millennium Way PRoW M190	425100, 276313	0m; north	Pedestrians, Landscape Officer request

<b>PVP No.</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Grid Reference</b>	<b>Distance and Direction of View</b>	<b>Reason(s) for Selection and Sensitivity of Receptor</b>
9b	Internal view of active farm buildings and caravan store along Millenium Way PRow M190	425100, 276313	0m; south	Pedestrians, Landscape Officer request
10	Public Right of Way (PRow M193)	425074, 276439	200m; south-east	Pedestrians, Landscape Officer request
11	Public Right of Way (PRow M184)	425744, 276322	375m; south-west	Pedestrians, Landscape Officer request
12	Public Right of Way (PRow M186)	424990, 276512	765m; west	Pedestrians, Landscape Officer request
13	Public Right of Way (PRow 184)	425518, 275671	390m; north-west	Pedestrians, Landscape Officer request
14	Millenium Way, Hob Lane	426079, 276026	20m; north	Pedestrians, vehicular, Landscape Officer request

***Rights of Way Users***

- 4.7 **Image EDP 4.1** is taken from Millennium Way within the site looking south towards the farmsteads. The route crosses through the site between farm buildings and the caravan store. The perception of the site from the route is that of operational farm businesses and commercial enterprises. The appreciation of the wider site field parcels only becomes available towards Waste Lane, towards the north of the site.



**Image EDP 4.1:** View from Millennium Way Promoted Route (on site)

- 4.8 Views from PRoW are limited to the route within the site (see **Photoviewpoints EDP 9a** and **9b**), and those in close proximity to the site.
- 4.9 Where views from close proximity are possible due to breaks in the established field boundary vegetation, they are only glimpsed, as shown in **Photoviewpoints EDP 1** and **10**. Existing residential and agricultural built context, in close proximity to the site, is featured in the photoviewpoints.
- 4.10 In views from the landscape to the east and south-east, owing to local topography – being largely flat, views of the site are possible. However, such views are only glimpsed due to the presence of multiple established vegetated boundaries between the site and the receptor coupled with mature landscape features along the site’s eastern and southern boundaries. As illustrated in **Photoviewpoints EDP 3, 11, 12** and **13**, views of the site and any development within it, are likely to be glimpsed, filtered views within a context of existing detracting features.
- 4.11 It is considered that due to the focus on the surrounding landscape and interest in the local area, users of local PRoW throughout the study area, although with some desensitisation where views are possible of existing built form and man-made features, are high sensitivity receptors.

#### **Road Users**

- 4.12 There are no main roads within the study area that afford views towards the site. Waste Lane (B4101), which aligns the site’s northern boundary has the most road users due to having direct access into Balsall Common. Owing to mature landscape features at the site

boundary, as illustrated in **Photoviewpoint EDP 2**, views are predominantly screened, being seen by receptors travelling at slow speeds on the approach to Balsall Common. However, where breaks do occur in boundary vegetation, the site's topography allows short-distant views into the immediate field parcels beyond the northern boundary.

- 4.13 Further west along Waste Lane Road, boundary vegetation becomes more fragmented and the inclusion of fencing and a field gate allows for close proximity views into the site, as illustrated in **Photoviewpoint EDP 8**.
- 4.14 Hob Lane, which aligns to the southern boundary of the site, features a similar hedgerow screen aligning the majority of the boundary. The hedgerow is intact along its entirety, only breaking for access points to farm buildings. As such, short-distant views can be gained into the site from these access points (**Photoviewpoint EDP 4**). On journeying west along Hob Lane, towards Windmill Lane, glimpsed, close range views of the site are afforded where breaks in boundary vegetation allows. Such views are illustrated by **Photoviewpoint EDP 14**.
- 4.15 Windmill Lane, which approaches the site from the south and aligns along the western boundary is bound by mature hedgerows. These hedgerows include several mature trees that aid in screening. However, despite the presence of these features, open views are afforded along the approach to the site. Built form and landscape detractors are already present within the views along the approach, illustrated in **Photoviewpoint EDP 5**.
- 4.16 Further north along Windmill Lane, house numbers 1–5 back onto and restrict visibility into the site. Where views are afforded, they are glimpsed due to the breaks in vegetation and the leggy and unmanaged nature of boundary vegetation adjacent to the properties, as shown in **Photoviewpoint EDP 6**.
- 4.17 At the meeting point of Windmill Lane, Kelsey Lane and Waste Lane, views are intercepted by built form and existing vegetation, such views are illustrated by **Photoviewpoint EDP 7**.

#### ***Residential Dwellings/Groups***

- 4.18 Views from private residential properties, although likely to be of high to very high sensitivity to change, are not protected by national planning guidance or local planning policy. Accordingly, changes to the character, 'quality' and nature of private views are not a material planning consideration in the determination of a planning application. However, they remain relevant to this review of the predicted extent and nature of visual change, so are reviewed briefly below:
- Group A – 23 residential properties along Old Waste Lane reside c.60–100m north of the site. Properties align Old Waste Lane in a linear fashion. The separation of the dwellings by intervening vegetation lining amenity field parcels almost entirely limits any possible perceived change;

- Group B – four residential properties along Windmill Lane border the site’s western boundary. A perceived change from first floor rear windows looking out over the site will occur; and
- Group C – four residential properties sit along the opposite side of Hob Lane adjacent to the southern boundary on the site. These large dwellings align the road in a linear fashion, fronting on to the site. A perceived change of the adjacent site is likely to be viewed from second floor windows.

4.19 Following LPA consultation, the Conservation Officer requested a number of photoviewpoints. The locations of which are shown on **Plan EDP 4** while the views themselves are shown in **Photoviewpoints EDP H1–H6** (see **Appendix EDP 5**). Details of each view, and the reason for its selection as a ‘representative viewpoint’, are provided in **Table EDP 4.2**:

**Table EDP 4.2:** Summary of Requested Representative Photoviewpoints

<b>PVP No.</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Grid Reference</b>	<b>Distance and Direction of View</b>	<b>Reason(s) for Selection and Sensitivity of Receptor</b>
H1	View south along Windmill Lane	424905, 276148	40m; south	Conservation Officer request, vehicular
H2	Hob Lane junction with Windmill Lane	424913, 276216	0m; south	Conservation Officer request, vehicular
H3	View north along Hob Lane	425322, 275936	120m; north-west	Conservation Officer request, vehicular
H4	Site seen from Waste Lane	425306, 276464	0m; south-west	Pedestrians, cyclists, Vehicular
H5	Site from Waste Lane looking south towards the windmill	425025, 276407	75m; south-west	Conservation Officer request, vehicular
H6	Berkswell Windmill seen from Hob Lane	425008, 276119	0m; south-west	Conservation Officer request, vehicular

4.20 **Photoviewpoints EDP H1 and H6** have not been assessed due to the site being out of the requested frame, and therefore no change is predicted. However, as mentioned above, the approach from the south along Windmill Lane has been assessed within **Photoviewpoint EDP 5** and the view looking north towards the site from Hob Lane has been assessed in **Photoviewpoint EDP 14**.

- 4.21 As shown in **Photoviewpoint EDP H2**, despite the close proximity to the site, views are only glimpsed, if at all, due to the presence of established road boundary vegetation. This is also the case for **Photoviewpoint EDP H3**.
- 4.22 Along the approach to Balsall Common from the east along Waste Lane, the site is visible due to large breaks in the road boundary vegetation, as a result of field gates and fencing. Several mature trees are present, which aid in breaking up the view as well as existing built form being visible within the view as shown in **Photoviewpoint EDP H4**.
- 4.23 Further along Waste Lane, looking towards the backs of properties along Windmill Lane, the closest parcel of the site is clearly visible due to the lack of boundary vegetation and the presence of an open timber fencing. Beyond the closest parcel, the site is only glimpsed due to field boundary vegetation. Landscape detractors feature heavily in this view, with the presence of built form, pylons and road infrastructure as illustrated in **Photoviewpoint EDP H5**.

#### **Summary of Visual Amenity Matters**

- 4.24 The visual appraisal undertaken thus far identifies that:
- There is no potential for (distant) views into the site from the wider surrounding areas beyond c.1km;
  - From areas outside of the immediate site context, there is very limited intervisibility between the site and the Balsall Common Eastern Fringe LCA due to the strongly vegetated site boundaries featured within the historic field pattern of the site and adjacent agricultural land, combined with the flat to gently undulating topography of the local context;
  - Other views from the north and east are entirely limited to just beyond the site boundaries due to intervening vegetation and residential buildings along Old Waste Lane and the settlement edge of Balsall Common; and
  - Southern views are restricted to a very limited number of Hob Lane Road users and glimpsed views on the approach from Windmill Lane due to the vegetated borders of both roads.
- 4.25 It must be accepted that any form of major development at Land off Hob Lane and Pheasant Oak Farm, Balsall Common as an extension to Balsall Common, cannot be 'hidden' from view. The challenge and opportunity is to bring forward a landscape framework that offers significant Green Infrastructure benefits, 'contains' development as a compact and logical extension to Balsall Common and retains the settlement characters of the Balsall Common Eastern Fringe.
- 4.26 Built development (including extensive areas of housing) is an established and frequent component of the visual character of the area. In this context, new development is

unlikely to be perceived as inappropriate, unexpected or discordant in views, providing that the principles identified previously in this report are observed.

## **Section 5**

### **Review of Relevant Planning Policy and Designations**

#### **Introduction**

- 5.1 An appreciation of the 'weight' to be attributed to any landscape or visual effects arising from development includes an understanding of the landscape designations and planning context within which any such development is to be tested for its acceptability. The statutory development plan relevant to the site is the Solihull Local Plan, adopted by SMBC in December 2013.
- 5.2 Other planning policies and evidence of relevance as material planning considerations include:
- The *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) 2021;
  - Draft Local Plan (November 2016) – SMBC;
  - Draft Local Plan Supplementary Consultation (January 2019) – SMBC;
  - Solihull Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment 2016 (November 2016);
  - Solihull Strategic Green Belt Assessment (July 2016); and
  - Berkswell Neighbourhood Development Plan (September 2019).

#### **National Planning Policy**

- 5.3 The *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF), updated in July 2021, includes planning policies and guidance requiring developers to respond to the natural environment and landscape character, integrating the development into its local surroundings. Under paragraph 174 it requires development to recognise the intrinsic character of the landscape.

#### **Local Policy**

- 5.4 In order to properly assess the effects of the proposal in landscape terms, EDP has conducted a review of relevant planning policy and landscape designations to identify what 'value' the local authority places on the landscape. This review focuses on local plan policy, since such policy is: (a) more specific to the site; and (b) reflects the regional and national advice regarding landscape issues.



**Solihull Local Plan (December 2013 – Adopted)**

- 5.5 This is the statutory development plan that applies to the site, adopted in 2013.
- 5.6 The site and its environs are not subject to any policies that dictate local designations pertaining to the quality of local landscapes or views.
- 5.7 The following general policies are considered relevant in terms of landscape character and visual amenity:
- P10 – Natural Environment: relates to the importance of a healthy natural environment, with the Council seeking to protect, enhance and restore the diverse landscape features of the borough and promote local distinctiveness;
  - P14 – Amenity: relates to the protection and enhancement of amenity to local people including their visual amenity;
  - P15 – Securing Design Quality: relates to securing good quality design that conserves and enhances local character and distinctiveness; creates opportunities for Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS); conserves and enhances biodiversity and landscape quality, including the consideration of impact; and provides opportunity for Green Infrastructure;
  - P17 – Countryside and Green Belt: relates to inappropriate development within greenbelt land;
  - P18 – Health and Well Being: relates to the development of high-quality walking and cycling networks and improving the quality of Green Infrastructure networks; and
  - P20 – Provision for Open Space, Children’s Play, Sport, Recreation and Leisure: relates to local community recreation, visual amenity and quality of the local environment and Green Infrastructure network.
- 5.8 Aside from the issue of the Green Belt policy, there are no policies within the SMBC Local Plan that would preclude development of the site.

**Solihull Draft Local Plan**

- 5.9 General policy P10 – Natural Environment – is considered relevant in terms of landscape character and visual amenity as it relates to the importance of a healthy natural environment, with the Council seeking to protect, enhance and restore the diverse landscape features of the borough and promote local distinctiveness.
- 5.10 The site has been allocated in the Draft Local Plan under Policy BC4, currently with an indicative capacity of 200 dwellings.
- 5.11 BC4 2ii requires that the site:

- Safeguards the rural character of Hob Lane, Waste Lane and Windmill Lane.

5.12 Under BC4 2iv:

- Provision of a significant area of public open space forming a buffer to Waste Lane.

5.13 As part of the consultation, SMBC has published a site assessment document that details assessments of sites put forward for development through the Local Plan Review. The site has been identified to be included in the plan as a draft allocation.

**Solihull Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment 2016 (November 2016)**

5.14 As part of the review of the Local Plan, the Council is updating its evidence base. The Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) forms a key part of the evidence base to inform the reviewed development plan.

5.15 The site is listed within the SHELAA and an extract has been provided at **Appendix EDP 3**.

5.16 The site has been classed as a Category 1 – Deliverable Site, as defined below:

*“For a site to be placed within Category 1 – which, in turn, theoretically means that it could commence within the five-year period – it must be ‘deliverable’; that is, the site should be ‘available now, offer a suitable location for housing now and there is a reasonable prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years from the date of adoption of the plan.”*

**Solihull Strategic Green Belt Assessment (July 2016)**

5.17 The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. Green Belt is a planning designation rather than a landscape designation based on landscape character or value. As such, this baseline assessment has considered the findings of the published Green Belt studies to the extent that these are relied upon in landscape related planning policy and conclusions regarding landscape harm with regard to differing development scenarios.

5.18 The site sits within Broad Area BA04 of the Green Belt assessment. BA04 has been awarded a score of 3 indicating that the *“Broad Area boundary is clearly identifiable/durable and there is no development present.”* However, the non-agricultural uses of the site (caravan storage) are included in the Council’s Brownfield Land Register. The identifiable qualities of Green Belt are limited to the eastern field parcels of the site and the implementation of landscaping and planting along the site’s eastern boundary will provide a new, long-term defensible Green Belt boundary. Due to this, this baseline will not assess the site’s contribution to the Solihull Metropolitan District Green Belt any further.

### ***Berkswell Neighbourhood Development Plan (September 2019).***

5.19 The following general policies are considered relevant in terms of landscape character and visual amenity:

- Policy B1 – New Housing: General Principles – relates to retaining and protecting mature trees and hedgerows that contribute to local landscape character; and
- Policy B3 – Protecting Local Landscape and Built Character – references to the Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment are made in terms of ensuring new housing respect local character.

### **Landscape-related Designations and Other Considerations**

5.20 Landscape-related designations and policy considerations within 2km of the study area are shown on **Plan EDP 2**. In summary:

- The site does not lie within a locally designated landscape; and
- The site does not lie within a nationally designated landscape.

### ***Heritage Matters***

5.21 Heritage assets can influence the visual character of the landscape and enrich its historic value. This baseline assessment addresses heritage assets only insofar as they are components of the wider contemporary landscape – not in terms of their significance and value as heritage assets, which is a matter addressed by the separate Heritage Assessment prepared by EDP (report ref.: edp5006\_r004).

### ***Ecology Matters***

5.22 The site is not covered by, nor in close proximity to, any internally important statutory designations. Within the wider landscape, there is a single international site within 20km (Ensor's Pool Special Area of Conservation (SAC), c.16.6km north-east – white-clawed crayfish); however, due to its distance from the site and the reason for its designation, it is considered that the SAC is not at significant risk of indirect impacts arising as a result of any proposed residential development. There are 14 nationally designated sites (4 Sites of Specific Scientific Interest and 10 Local Nature Reserves) within 5km of the site, which, due to reasons for their designation and distance from the site, are not predicted to be impacted by the proposed development.

5.23 Of non-statutorily-designated sites, there are five Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), four Potential LWS and three 'ungraded' sites within 1km of the site. Of these, Little Beanit Farm Meadow LWS is located close to the site at 160m east. Due to its proximity to the site, it is considered that there is low potential for construction impacts on the LWS, such as via dust deposition. However, with appropriate protective measures during construction,

impacts can be avoided. Other LWS in the vicinity are not predicted to be affected by the development, due to the reasons for their designation, their location and the nature of the proposals.

- 5.24 The majority of the site comprises habitats (see **Appendix EDP 1**) of predominantly low (negligible) intrinsic ecological value, including hardstanding, bare ground and buildings, species-poor grassland, wet, shaded ditches, and species-poor defunct hedgerows. Habitats of greater (local) value include five ponds (plus a boggy area and marshy grassland area), occasional mature scattered trees and species-rich hedgerows. These habitats will be retained, protected and buffered (wherever possible) from the development proposals, where possible. The site is of a sufficient size that any losses can be readily compensated through retained habitat enhancement and new habitat creation.
- 5.25 Protected species interests associated with the site that are likely to require further investigation, subject to the nature of development impacts and consultation, include great crested newt, foraging/commuting and roosting bats, common reptiles, badger, dormouse and nesting and breeding birds. However, it is considered that impacts on these habitats and species, if proven to be present, could be readily avoided, mitigated or compensated for, given the site's size and limited habitat suitability.
- 5.26 An appropriately designed development incorporating suitable mitigation and enhancement measures provides an opportunity to increase the value of retained habitats (such as the grassland, ditches and hedgerows) and create new habitats (such as new wildflower grassland, woody planting, hedgerows and ponds), with associated increased opportunities for protected/notable species, thus delivering a net gain in biodiversity in accordance with planning policy.

#### ***Arboricultural Matters***

- 5.27 There are no woodland features within or adjacent to the site boundary. Furthermore, no ancient woodland is located within or adjacent to the site boundary. There are four areas of ancient woodland within the 2km study area with the closest c.1.2km away. It has not been deemed that there will be any effects upon ancient woodland within the study area.
- 5.28 SMBC has confirmed that there are no Tree Preservation Orders on the site. A single onsite tree has been identified as a veteran tree, this should be retained and protected. This matter is discussed in more detail with a separate Arboricultural Impact Assessment prepared by EDP (report ref: edp5006\_r013).

#### ***Public Access and Rights of Way***

- 5.29 A review of available data provided by SMBC reveals a moderate network of PRoW within the study area. The PRoW network provides good connectivity between settlements within the study area (see **Plan EDP 2**). Most notably, The Millennium Way Promoted Route runs through the site from north to south.

#### ***Green Belt Review***

- 5.30 It has been established by case law (Appeal Ref APP/P2935/A/14/3000634) that openness is defined by “an absence of buildings or other forms of development.” However, the case of Turner<sup>3</sup> is important as it makes clear that a visual dimension should be included within any Green Belt Assessment.
- 5.31 As set out within the case of Turner “there are a range of spatial factors, of which volumetric matters may be a material concern, but they are by no means the only one” (paragraph 14). In addition, the Turner case confirms that “openness can have a visual dimension”, although “an absence of visual intrusion does not in itself mean that there is no impact on the openness of the Green Belt” (paragraph 25).
- 5.32 With reference to “how built up the Green Belt is now and how built up it would be if redevelopment occurs” (paragraph 14) and the visual dimension of openness, **Table EDP 5.1** below presents the results of the consideration of the site against the main purposes of Green Belt in landscape and visual terms, applying criteria based on the detailed site-specific study.

**Table EDP 5.1 Green Belt Review of the Site and Its Context**

Green Belt Criteria	Application of Criteria to Site
<b>Purpose 1: To Check the Unrestricted Sprawl of Large Built-up Areas</b>	
Located at the edge of a large built-up area (as defined by the LPA).	The site is located adjacent to the large built-up area of Balsall Common. However, whilst some of the site constitutes agriculture land and there has a degree of openness, being located immediately adjacent to the settlement edge and containing c.50% developed land as indicated on the Council’s Brownfield Land Register, the site provides limited contribution to the separation between any neighbouring built up areas.
Creates a clear, recognisable distinction between urban fringe and open countryside.	The site’s location and current land use results in it providing a limited contribution, in landscape and visual terms, to the clear distinction between the urban fringe and the wider open countryside (that being further to the east of the site). There are extensive areas of development within the site. The site is contained by a road network and a vegetated eastern boundary.

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<sup>3</sup> John Turner v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and East Dorset District Council [2016] EWCA Civ 466

Green Belt Criteria	Application of Criteria to Site
<p>Defensible boundaries have a role in limiting unrestricted sprawl as they create the boundaries to Green Belt parcels. These may be within the site or form part of its boundary. Such boundaries can be permanent, such as roads, steep topography, woodland or require additional reinforcement such as hedgerows, tree belts and streams. Fences do not form defensible boundaries.</p>	<p>Mature boundary features, aligning the site's eastern boundary, afford a sense of visual enclosure, as does the road network to the north and south. The site has a defensible boundary, which can be subject to additional reinforcement.</p>
<p><b>Purpose 2: To Prevent Neighbouring Towns Merging Into One Another</b></p>	
<p>Settlements maintain a sinuous edge.</p>	<p>The site abuts the settlement boundary and is otherwise enclosed by a combination of built form and mature landscape features.</p>
<p>Prevent loss or noticeable reduction in perceived distance between towns/settlement edges; this may also be affected by agricultural land use or topography: a larger distance or more prominent topographical change would be better capable of accommodating change than a narrow gap.</p>	<p>In landscape and visual terms, the site does not form part of a perceived gap between settlement areas.</p>
<p>The gaps may contain different elements, be it natural (e.g. topography, woodland, agricultural land or large open spaces) or man-made features, which prevent perceived merging.</p>	<p>Development within the site would not result in any visual association with any other settlement.</p>
<p><b>Purpose 3: To Assist in Safeguarding the Countryside from Encroachment</b></p>	
<p>The countryside comprises 'key characteristics' which define the landscape and the way it is perceived, both visually and physically.</p>	<p>The site comprises some limited representative key characteristics, not all of them contributing positively to the local context, furthermore, c.50% is developed and in a poor condition.</p>
<p>Encroachment: features such as speed signage and street lighting affect the extent to which the countryside changes from rural to urban.</p>	<p>There are many detractors and urbanising features affecting the site, including the influence of existing built form and the road network.</p>
<p><b>Purpose 4: To Preserve the Setting and Special Character of Historic Towns</b></p>	

Green Belt Criteria	Application of Criteria to Site
In the absence of professional judgement on setting and special character on a site-by-site basis by heritage consultants, the criteria considers the proximity of the site to a Conservation Area which relates to the historic character of a town.	The site does not share a boundary with a Conservation Area and/or there is no intervisibility with the historic core of the nearest settlement.
<b>Purpose 5: To Assist in Urban Regeneration, by Encouraging the Recycling of Derelict and Other Urban Land</b>	
Purpose 5 considers whether or not sites can be 'recycled' or redeveloped, such as brownfield land within the Green Belt.	The site contains land which can be found on the Council's Brownfield Land Register.

- 5.33 It is clear that the site makes a very limited contribution to the Green Belt overall.
- 5.34 What this review of the site in terms of the main purposes of Green Belt shows is that, rather than being a high functioning part of the Green Belt which contributes highly towards the main function of keeping land 'permanently open', overall, it is an enclosed site, characterised by existing built form and urbanising elements, which is seen by relatively few receptors in relatively close proximity to it. The site does not play a fundamental role in relation to the wider Green Belt Parcel, and if developed would not harm the performance of the wider strategic Green Belt.
- 5.35 EDP's findings suggest that by virtue of the site's visual and physical association with existing built form surrounding the site, its development would not give rise to significant harm to the purposes of the Green Belt in landscape and visual terms.

#### **Summary of Key Issues Arising from Policy and Designations Review**

- 5.36 The site is not subject to any form of designation of landscape value at either the national or local level.
- 5.37 However, parts of the site have been identified as subject to the prescriptions of policies P10 – Natural Environment and P15 – Securing Design Quality, under the current policy framework (SMBC Local Plan, 2013). These policies do not prohibit development but do require that development proposals “*enhance and restore landscape features and local distinctiveness*” and “*conserve and enhance local character and distinctiveness.*”
- 5.38 Policy P10 – Natural Environment has also been identified within the emerging local plan. Again, this policy does not prohibit development, but requires that development proposals “*enhance and restore landscape features and local distinctiveness.*”
- 5.39 The site is allocated for residential development under Policy BC4 of the emerging plan.

- 5.40 This review of planning policy and designations finds that the site is only constrained by local Green Belt planning policy. However, when assessed in landscape and visual terms, rather than being a high functioning part of the Green Belt which contributes highly towards the main function of keeping land 'permanently open', overall, it is an enclosed site, characterised by existing built form and urbanising elements, which is seen by relatively few receptors near it. The site does not play a fundamental role in relation to the wider Green Belt, and if developed, would not harm the performance of the wider strategic Green Belt.



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## Section 6 The Proposed Development and Mitigation

### Introduction

- 6.1 Having defined the baseline conditions in the **Sections 1–5**, this report now reviews the proposed development and (in **Section 7**) undertakes an assessment of likely effects in landscape terms.

### The Proposed Development

- 6.2 The proposed development is illustrated in **Appendix EDP 6**. The Landscape Strategy and Design and Access Statement supporting this application provides full details of the development proposals. In summary, the proposals include the following elements:

- Up to 250 units with parts of the site consisting of dwellings up to 2.5 storeys;
- Street trees within development parcels to create an attractive street scene and provide Green Infrastructure links;
- Public open space located throughout the site, which includes;
  - The retention and enhancement of existing internal and boundary vegetation as important Green Infrastructure corridors, providing structure to the development;
  - Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) integrated into the landscape proposals to provide both amenity and ecological value;
  - Children’s play provision off the Millennium Way providing exciting and challenging opportunities for residents of the new development and existing village;
  - Community orchard provision and growing areas as part of provision for residents and biodiversity improvements; and
  - The existing PRow route which crosses the site is being retained and integrated into the scheme with additional footpaths provided to include circular routes which enhances connectivity throughout the site and encourages local residents to access the outdoors.
- Development is setback from Waste Lane, with development being contained behind existing hedgerow allowing provision of a large area of public open space;

- Buffer planting to site boundary provides a Green Infrastructure link around the development and further filters views of the proposed development and assimilates it into the wider landscape setting; and
- Primary access would be located along Waste Lane, which requires the partial removal of category B hedgerow.

6.3 The site is heavily influenced by the eastern edge of Balsall Common, and the current land use. To ensure the success of the new neighbourhood, several key objectives have fed into the masterplan process, the development of which is outlined below in relation to the key themes of **Ecology, Movement** and **Destinations**:

- The design responds to the host Landscape Character Area (LCA) 'Balsall Common Eastern Fringe', by limiting tree planting within open spaces, to reflect the character of similar local spaces with isolated trees and hedgerows lining development parcels, which offers a positive frontage to the settlement edge and reinforces the strength of the onsite hedgerow network;
- The north-east and south-east corners are recognised to be more visually sensitive due to the potential for views and disruption to character on the settlement approach; areas of Public Open Space (POS) are proposed here including additional planting and strengthening along the boundaries;
- A generous green spine of POS is included along the route of the Millennium Way within the development, providing a significant enhancement to the route, this will retain the current alignment of the PRow and feature scattered tree planting, formal and informal open space and act as an anchor to other designations and informal routes within the development; and
- Boundary vegetation is to be retained, protected and buffered with additional tree planting and grassland wildflower to encourage species diversity.

### **Landscape Masterplan**

6.4 EDP have provided landscape and visual guidance to the design process from an early stage in the project to enable a sensitive and responsive design to materialise in the emerging proposals. This design story is presented at **Appendix EDP 6**, a summary is provided here. The key principles are to retain the existing characteristic features where possible and provide a level of mitigation to the existing adjacent development and surrounding landscape context to avoid or reduce potential landscape and visual effects. Mitigation measures which have been included within the Site Layout (see **Appendix EDP 5**) are summarised below:

- Enhances and softens the currently 'raw' landscape and visual context across much of the site;
- Retains and celebrates the landscape fabric of greatest value and intactness to achieve a development with an attractive semi-rural character;
- Provides a generous and significant quantum and quality of open space on-site for recreational use, providing attractive connections to those further afield, for the both the existing and new community;
- In line with the emerging Policy objectives of BC4 and BC4 2ii (Emerging Solihull Local Plan), the development safeguards the character of the settlement approaches and existing amenity of residents (Hob Lane, Windmill Lane and Waste Lane) with considered treatment at the development parcel edges and surrounding POS; and
- Provides a strong, but accessible landscape buffer along the eastern site boundary.

6.5 In response to the published Landscape Character Assessment for the host area the field pattern, boundary hedgerows and isolated mature trees are to be retained and enhanced where possible and appropriate.

6.6 Overall, the proposed scheme has been sensitively designed to respond to the site's opportunities and constraints through the retention of key landscape fabric elements and the enhancements of ecological and amenity value provide within the site. It is worth noting, that during pre-application feedback, Solihull's landscape officer noted that it was refreshing to see a genuinely landscape-led scheme.

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## Section 7 Assessment of Effects

### Introduction

- 7.1 In this section, the predicted effects on landscape character and visual amenity are assessed. The assessment uses the thresholds for magnitude, sensitivity and significance defined at **Appendix EDP 2** as a guide, but moderated where appropriate with professional judgement. Professional judgement is an important part of the assessment process; it is neither 'pro' nor 'anti' development but acknowledges that development may result in beneficial change as well as landscape harm. The assessment also takes account of the likely effectiveness of any proposed mitigation.

### Construction Effects

- 7.2 Construction activities, movement of site traffic, lighting, noise and sounds will be ever-present during the construction process. This is not unusual and will be carefully controlled by a conditioned construction method statement. Recommendations for protection of retained trees and hedgerows, in accordance with relevant British Standards such as BS 5837, will ensure that the rooting areas of trees and hedgerows are not adversely affected by the construction process. The magnitude of change will, however, be **very high** (on both the site itself and immediate context) and when combined with the **medium** sensitivity of the site, will result in a **major/moderate** adverse level of effect. The effect will, however, be temporary and extend only for the duration of the construction process.
- 7.3 Beyond the site and its immediate context, there may be effects on landscape character during the construction phase due to a heightened level of traffic moving to and from the site, the operation of machinery and associated noise. While this would be noticeable it would be localised and would result in a medium magnitude of change on the identified character area. Combined with a **medium** sensitivity, this would constitute an overall temporary '**Moderate/Minor**' adverse effect on the wider context.

### Predicted Effects on the Character of the Site and Immediate Surrounds (Year 1 and Operation)

- 7.4 Following construction/establishment of the landscape strategy (whichever is sooner), the predicted effects take into account suitable and appropriate management of existing and proposed landscape features, undertaken in accordance with a landscape management plan or similar.
- 7.5 It is a consequence of the nature of the development proposed that visual and sensory character of the site would change substantially as a result of implementation. The

magnitude of change is not an indication of bad design but is to be expected as the result of the change of use to residential development.

7.6 The changes predicted to occur on the dimensions that contribute to the character of the site are described below and evaluated overall, these are structured using the same format used to describe the site in **Section 3**:

- **Landscape quality:** Green Infrastructure elements of good quality have been retained and integrated into the site design where possible. Boundaries of poorer quality have been enhanced through Green Infrastructure provision on-site and a maintenance plan will be produced to ensure degradation will not occur;
- **Scenic quality:** The vegetation along site boundaries would be retained to maintain the same level of screening as mentioned in the baseline. This would be improved upon to reduce views where possible;
- **Rarity:** Due to the site not falling within or containing any rare landscape, no change will occur;
- **Representativeness:** The site layout has been designed to retained representative features. Boundary hedgerows, mature trees and historic field patterns have been preserved where possible;
- **Conservation interest:** Proposed landscape mitigation within the scheme aims to retain and improve existing habitats of greater local value and provide new areas of public open space, habitats and Green Infrastructure connections. The introduction of further tree, hedgerow, planting and seeding aims to provide improved diversity of habitats in comparison to that available at present. Over time (by Year 15), the establishment of the proposed planting will result in enhanced landscape fabric and habitat provision on site;
- **Recreation value:** The development would result in the enhancement of the existing PRoW, which currently transverses the site. This paired with a new network of footpaths for recreational use will increase the permeability of the site. Provision of public open space and green corridors across the site could benefit the wider community as well as future residents;
- **Perceptual aspects:** The perceptual aspects of the site are influenced by its urban context, both visually and audibly from the telecommunications mast, the roads and built form in proximity to the site, as well as on-site. Development of the site would remove areas of pastoral and agricultural land and instead bring it into the settlement edge extents. While being a wholesale change, these changes would not appear out of context as the immediate setting of the site comprised of residential development to the west and north-west, with properties also located to the south and agricultural and commercial built form already present within the site boundary. The Green Infrastructure proposed throughout the site aims to soften the transition

between the proposal and wider landscape context more so than is experienced at present; and

- **Associations:** Due to no known cultural associations, no cultural change will occur.

7.7 In summary, a change to landscape character of the site is inevitable following a change of land use from pasture, agricultural and built form to residential properties and public open space, but it should not be seen as a detriment to the enjoyment and appreciation of the wider landscape.

7.8 The sensitivity of the site is considered to be **medium**. Considering the above, the magnitude of change as a result of the proposals at Year 1 is considered to be high, resulting in a moderate level of effect on the site itself at Year 1. The magnitude of change as a result of the proposals at Year 15 decreases and therefore is considered medium, resulting in a moderate/minor level of effect on the site itself at Year 15. Generally, the change of a partial green field site, such as this, to residential development is perceived to be an adverse change, however, proposals put forward in this instance would have beneficial effects on the landscape habitats, sensory aspect and accessibility of the site. This will be achieved through the retention and reinforcement of existing vegetation and addition of trees, hedgerows, planting and seeding across the site. There is currently only one PRoW through the site which does not present a welcoming or attractive route, this will be improved, and further routes added through the proposal to increase permeability.

#### **Predicted Effects on the Published Character Area (Year 1 and Operation)**

7.9 The effects on the character of the 'Balsall Common Eastern Fringe' LCA would be localised due to the small geographical area of the site. The proposed development aims to retain and enhance existing field boundary vegetation to enforce the "*strong hedgerow structures*" as highlighted in the Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment.

7.10 The overall sensitivity of the LCA examined in the baseline was judged to be **medium** and the magnitude of change considered to be **medium**, as a result the overall effect is considered to be **moderate/minor** at Year 1. Following the implementation of the maintenance program to manage existing vegetation and the establishment of proposed planting, the overall effect as a result of the development will diminish resulting in a lower magnitude of change and therefore a **minor** overall effect.

#### **Predicted Effects on Visual Amenity**

7.11 As part of the baseline of the site, 20 photoviewpoints were identified to represent the receptors that could potentially be affected. Generally, the site benefits from a tight visual envelope due to local topography and existing vegetation. Therefore, visibility is limited to close and mid-range views.



- 7.12 The proposal appears to be consistent with the local context of built form, in that they predominantly consist of a mix of 2-storey and up to 2.5 storey residential dwellings. While the change of parts of the site from greenfield to residential development would be visually noticeable, this change would be in accordance with the local context due to built form already being present within part of the site and the adjacent settlement.
- 7.13 Visual receptor groups identified that may experience a change to their visual amenity as a result of the scheme include the following:
- Users of PRoW;
  - Road users; and
  - Residential dwellings;

**Public Rights of Way Users**

- 7.14 As identified in the baseline of this report, PRoW are generally considered to have 'high' sensitivity. The following visual effects are anticipated:
- As illustrated within **Plan EDP 2** (see also **Photoviewpoints EDP 9a** and **9b**), Millenium Way Promoted Route (PRoW M190) cuts internally across the site. The proposed development would introduce built form into a currently open field in the view looking north. However, looking south the view is dominated by caravan storage and commercial/agricultural buildings. At Year 1, the magnitude of change would be high, resulting in an overall moderate effect. The landscape enhancements, as part of the proposal, would soften the overall effects of the proposed development over time (Year 15), however, for those using the internal PRoW the effect would remain the same. Therefore, the changes experienced by these receptors would remain as moderate effect due to the high magnitude of change;
  - Receptors using PRoW 193 and Millenium Way Promoted Route to the north of the site are represented in **Photoviewpoints EDP 1** and **10**. As illustrated in these photoviewpoints, visual effects experienced by receptors using the PRoW as a result of the proposed development would be limited due to intervening field boundary vegetation and localised topography; At Year 1, the magnitude of change is considered to be low resulting in a moderate/minor level of effect at worst, on PRoW to the north of the site; and
  - Views from PRoW 184 and 186 to the east and south-east are limited due to intervening built form, local topography and existing boundary vegetation as shown in **Photoviewpoints EDP 3, 11, 12** and **13**. Visual detractors such as pylons and overhead cables are present within views. At Year 1, the magnitude of change is considered to be low resulting in a moderate/minor level of effect at worst, on PRoW to the east and south-east of the site.

- 7.15 Overall visual effects on the surrounding PRoW (as listed above) would be limited. Should any views of the proposed development be available, these would be filtered by intervening vegetation and would be characterised by existing built form in and around Balsall Common. As a result at Year 15, the overall magnitude of change would be low and therefore a moderate/minor level of effect.

### **Road Users**

- 7.16 Road users are typically afforded a low sensitivity as receptors are likely to be using the roads for commuting and the not for an appreciation of the landscape.
- Waste Lane: Much of the length of Waste Lane on the approach to Balsall Common benefits from established vegetation aligning the road (as shown in **Photoviewpoint EDP 2**). This limits the opportunity of views to glimpsed where there are breaks within the vegetation. As the receptor travels further west along Waste Lane, boundary vegetation becomes more fragmented and the inclusion of fencing and a field gate allows for close proximity views into the site, as illustrated in **Photoviewpoints EDP 8** and **H4**. Views along this route remain semi-rural until closer to the site where more urban features begin to influence the views in the form of residential properties, overhead cables and pylons (as shown in **Photoviewpoint EDP H5**). As such, the magnitude of change for these receptors as a result of proposals, is considered to be **medium** (forming a recognisable element within the overall view and likely to be recognised by the receptor) and therefore the overall effect would be **minor** at worst at Year 1. By Year 15, the magnitude of change will reduce to low, resulting in a minor/negligible level of effect due to the proposed development forming a minor constitute of the view, being only partially visible as a result of development being set back and landscape mitigation maturing;
  - Hob Lane: As shown in **Photoviewpoints EDP 4** and **H3**, along the boundary of Hob Lane there is established vegetation at a height that limits views of the site. As the receptor travels towards Windmill Lane, vegetation becomes less dense allowing for glimpsed views into the site, however, built form associated with South View farm is present (**Photoviewpoint EDP 14**). The magnitude of change is considered to be **low**, resulting in no more than a **minor** level of effect Year 1. By Year 15 the level of effect will reduce to minor/negligible due to the proposed development forming a minor constitute of the view, being only partially visible as landscape mitigation matures; and
  - Windmill Lane: Towards the northern end of Windmill Lane views are limited due to existing residential dwellings, and where views are afforded, they are only glimpsed due to leggy field boundaries (as shown in **Photoviewpoints EDP 6, EDP 7** and **H2**). Towards the south of Windmill Lane (adjacent to Berkswell Windmill), views of the site are afforded, with limited vegetation obscuring views. However, within the view, and the site itself, there is existing built form associated with South View farm and Pheasant Oak farm. Therefore the magnitude of change is considered to be low, resulting in no more than a minor level of effect at Year 1. By Year 15 the level of effect will reduce to minor/negligible due to the proposed development forming a

minor constitute of the view, being only partially visible as landscape mitigation matures, with the elements that are visible not being too dissimilar from what was present within the view previously.

### **Residential Dwellings**

7.17 Views from private residential properties, although likely to be of **high** to **very high** sensitivity to change, are not protected by national planning guidance or local planning policy.

- Group A – 23 residential properties along Old Waste Lane lie north of the site. However, views of the proposed development would not be discernible due to intervening vegetation lining field boundaries. As such, residential receptors along Old Waste Lane are not expected to experience any change as a result of the proposed development;
- Group B – Four residential properties along Windmill Lane border the site's western boundary. Residential receptors will experience a perceived change from first floor rear windows looking out over the site will occur. Therefore a high magnitude of change results in a **major/moderate** level of effect; and
- Group C – Four residential properties sit along the opposite side of Hob Lane, adjacent to the southern boundary of the site. Residential receptors will experience a perceived change from second floor windows looking across to the adjacent site, however, there is intervening vegetation present. Therefore the **medium** magnitude of change results in a **moderate** level of effect;

7.18 Despite the level of effect predicted, when considering impacts on neighbouring dwellings it is the elements of residential amenity (privacy, noise, access to light) which are protected in policy not the right to the existing view. In this context, effects as a result of the proposed development would be local in nature, with mitigation measures in place to protect their amenity such as proposed vegetation to break up and soften visibility of new built form for these receptors.

## Section 8 Conclusions

- 8.1 EDP is an independent environmental consultancy and Registered Practice of the Landscape Institute specialising in the assessments of developments at all scales across the UK.
- 8.2 This report has summarised the findings of a comprehensive landscape data trawl and field appraisal undertaken by EDP's landscape team (**Sections 2, 3, 4 and 5**). In **Section 6**, the proposed development is described with any proposed mitigation. **Section 7** undertakes an assessment of likely landscape and visual effects having regard to the above and based on a combination of the thresholds set out in **Appendix EDP 2** coupled with professional judgement.
- 8.3 The following effects are likely:
- It is anticipated that any landscape and visual effects resulting from the addition of the proposed scheme would be within the immediate proximity of the site and largely contained by Waste Lane to the north, existing established field boundaries 250m to the east, Hob Lane to the south, with slight extension out to Berkswell Windmill and Windmill Lane to the west (see the ZPV illustrated on **Plan EDP 4**);
  - As a result of the proposal, there would be an inevitable change to land use, from areas of open fields and commercial/agricultural buildings to residential development. However, the proposed development would not be inconsistent with the existing local character due to the surrounding context of residential development predominantly along the western boundary, with minimal along the southern and northern boundaries. The proposed development would result in a **moderate/minor** effect on the character of the site at Year 15;
  - Whilst the character of the site would be subject to change from pasture, agricultural and built from to residential, the proposals have sought to retain and enhance the existing landscape fabric of the site wherever practical and responding to the site's urban context to the west;
  - Features identified as key characteristics of the 'Balsall Common Eastern Fringe' LCA, such as isolated trees within hedgerows lining strong hedgerow structures along field boundaries, would incur limited change due to the scale of the proposed development;
  - Changes to the visual amenity as a result of the proposed development would be experienced by the following receptors:
    - I. PRow users travelling through and within close proximity of the site;

- II. Receptors travelling along parts of Waste Lane, Windmill Lane and Hob Lane; and
- III. Residential receptors along Windmill Lane and to a lesser extent those along Hob Lane.

- Beyond the ZPV (illustrated within **Plan EDP 4**), changes to the visual amenity of receptors as a result of proposed development will be limited. This is largely due to establish intervening field boundary vegetation, local topography and existing built form;
- Overall it is considered that the landscape strategy (**Appendix EDP 6**) for the site has been sensitively designed through a landscape-led approach. On-site opportunities and constraints, as well as matters relating to landscape character and visual amenity have been considered to ensure that the scale, form and appearance of the development proposal is in keeping with the local context. Furthermore, the key characteristics of the site would be enhanced by the proposals, and this would in turn benefit the local Green Infrastructure network; and
- With regards to planning policy, the site accords with the landscape relevant requirements of the emerging Policy BC4.

8.4 A review of planning policy and designations finds that the site is only constrained by local Green Belt planning policy. However, when assessed in landscape and visual terms (within **Section 5**), rather than being a high functioning part of the Green Belt which contributes highly towards the main function of keeping land 'permanently open', overall, it is an enclosed site, characterised by existing built form and urbanising elements, which is seen by relatively few receptors near it. The site does not play a fundamental role in relation to the wider Green Belt, and if developed, would not harm the performance of the wider strategic Green Belt.

8.5 The proposed development would change the land use of the site; however, it would not be in discordance with the local context and local patterns of development. The location of the built form, aligned with the adjacent residential development allows for existing boundary vegetation and PRoW to be retained and enhanced, as well as the creation of new landscaping along boundaries and internally. The proposed development would not be inconsistent with the local landscape character. While it would be prominent from a limited number of close-range viewpoint locations, it is generally considered to be visually contained, having limited effect on the surrounding context.

**Appendix EDP 1**  
**Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey**  
**(edp5006\_d020a 24 July 2022 GYo/OKe)**

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- Site Boundary
- Dense Continuous Scrub
- Tall Ruderal
- A Amenity Grassland
- I Improved Grassland
- SI Poor Semi-improved Grassland
- Standing Water (Pond)
- Building
- Hardstanding
- Bare Ground
- Mammal Path
- Intact Species-poor Hedgerow and Trees
- Intact Species-poor Hedgerow
- Defunct Species-rich Hedgerow and Trees
- Defunct Species-rich Hedgerow
- Defunct Species-poor Hedgerow and Trees
- Defunct Species-poor Hedgerow
- Coniferous Hedgerow
- Line of Trees
- Wet Ditch
- Dry Ditch
- Earth Bank
- Fence
- Wall
- Scattered Trees (Broadleaved)
- Scattered Trees (Coniferous)
- Scattered Scrub
- Target Note
- Potential Hibernacula

client  
**Barwood Development Securities Ltd.**

project title  
**Land off Hob Lane and Pheasant Oak Farm, Balsall Common**

drawing title  
**Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey Update 2022**

date	<b>21 JULY 2023</b>	drawn by	<b>GYo</b>
drawing number	<b>edp5006_d020a</b>	checked	<b>OKe</b>
scale	<b>1:2,000 @ A3</b>	QA	<b>RBa</b>



Registered office: 01285 740427 - www.edp-uk.co.uk - info@edp-uk.co.uk





## Appendix EDP 2

### Methodology: Tables Defining the Thresholds and Definitions of Terminology used in this Appraisal

**Table EDP A2.1:** Defining the Sensitivity of the Landscape Baseline

EDP Assessment Terminology and Definitions	
Landscape Baseline - Overall Sensitivity	
<b>Very High</b>	<p><b>Value:</b> Nationally/internationally designated/valued countryside and landscape features; strong/distinctive landscape characteristics; absence of landscape detractors.</p> <p><b>Susceptibility:</b> Strong/distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; absence of landscape detractors; landscape receptors in excellent condition. Landscapes with clear and widely recognised cultural value. Landscapes with a high level of tranquillity.</p>
<b>High</b>	<p><b>Value:</b> Locally designated/valued countryside (e.g. Areas of High Landscape Value, Regional Scenic Areas) and landscape features; many distinctive landscape characteristics; very few landscape detractors.</p> <p><b>Susceptibility:</b> Many distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; very few landscape detractors; landscape receptors in good condition. The landscape has a low capacity for change as a result of potential changes to defining character.</p>
<b>Medium</b>	<p><b>Value:</b> Undesignated countryside and landscape features; some distinctive landscape characteristics; few landscape detractors.</p> <p><b>Susceptibility:</b> Some distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; few landscape detractors; landscape receptors in fair condition. Landscape is able to accommodate some change as a result.</p>
<b>Low</b>	<p><b>Value:</b> Undesignated countryside and landscape features; few distinctive landscape characteristics; presence of landscape detractors.</p> <p><b>Susceptibility:</b> Few distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; presence of landscape detractors; landscape receptors in poor condition. Landscape is able to accommodate large amounts of change without changing these characteristics fundamentally.</p>
<b>Very Low</b>	<p><b>Value:</b> Undesignated countryside and landscape features; absence of distinctive landscape characteristics; despoiled/degraded by the presence of many landscape detractors.</p> <p><b>Susceptibility:</b> Absence of distinctive landscape elements/aesthetic/perceptual aspects; presence of many landscape detractors; landscape receptors in very poor condition. As such landscape is able to accommodate considerable change.</p>

**Table EDP A2.2:** Defining the Sensitivity of the Visual Baseline

Visual Baseline - Overall Sensitivity	
<b>Very High</b>	<p><b>Value/Susceptibility:</b> View is: designed/has intentional association with surroundings; recorded in published material; from a publicly accessible heritage asset/designated/promoted viewpoint; nationally/internationally designated right of way; protected/recognised in planning policy designation.</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> May include views from residential properties; National Trails; promoted holiday road routes; designated countryside/landscape features with public access; visitors to heritage assets of national importance; Open Access Land.</p>

Visual Baseline - Overall Sensitivity	
<b>High</b>	<p><b>Value/Susceptibility:</b> View of clear value but may not be formally recognised e.g. framed view of scenic value or destination/summit views; inferred that it may have value for local residents; locally promoted route or PRow.</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> May include from recreational locations where there is some appreciation of the visual context/landscape e.g. golf, fishing; themed rights of way with a local association; National Trust land; panoramic viewpoints marked on OS maps; road routes promoted in tourist guides and/or for their scenic value.</p>
<b>Medium</b>	<p><b>Value/Susceptibility:</b> View is not widely promoted or recorded in published sources; may be typical of those experienced by an identified receptor; minor road routes through rural/scenic areas.</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> May include people engaged in outdoor sport not especially influenced by an appreciation of the wider landscape e.g. pitch sports; views from minor road routes passing through rural or scenic areas.</p>
<b>Low</b>	<p><b>Value/Susceptibility:</b> View of clearly lesser value than similar views from nearby visual receptors that may be more accessible.</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> May include major road routes; rail routes; receptor is at a place of work but visual surroundings have limited relevance.</p>
<b>Very Low</b>	<p><b>Value/Susceptibility:</b> View may be affected by many landscape detractors and unlikely to be valued.</p> <p><b>Examples:</b> May include people at their place of work, indoor recreational or leisure facilities or other locations where views of the wider landscape have little of no importance.</p>

**Table EDP A2.3:** Defining the Magnitude of Change to The Landscape and Visual Baseline

Magnitude of Change	
(Considers Scale of Proposal/Geographical Extent/Duration and Reversibility/Proportion)	
<b>Very High</b>	<p><b>Landscape:</b> Total loss/major alteration to key receptors/characteristics of the baseline; addition of elements that strongly conflict or integrate with the baseline.</p> <p><b>Visual:</b> Substantial change to the baseline, forming a new, defining focus and having a defining influence on the view.</p>
<b>High</b>	<p><b>Landscape:</b> Notable loss/alteration/addition to one or more key receptors/- characteristics of the baseline; or addition of prominent conflicting elements.</p> <p><b>Visual:</b> Additions are clearly noticeable and part of the view would be fundamentally altered.</p>
<b>Medium</b>	<p><b>Landscape:</b> Partial loss/alteration to one or more key receptors/characteristics; addition of elements that are evident but do not necessarily conflict with the key characteristics of the existing landscape.</p> <p><b>Visual:</b> The proposed development will form a new and recognisable element within the view which is likely to be recognised by the receptor.</p>
<b>Low</b>	<p><b>Landscape:</b> Minor loss or alteration to one or more key landscape receptors/- characteristics; additional elements may not be uncharacteristic within existing landscape.</p> <p><b>Visual:</b> Proposed development will form a minor constituent of the view being partially visible or at sufficient distance to be a small component.</p>
<b>Very Low</b>	<p><b>Landscape:</b> Barely discernible loss or alteration to key components; addition of elements not uncharacteristic within the existing landscape.</p> <p><b>Visual:</b> Proposed development will form a barely noticeable component of the view, and the view whilst slightly altered would be similar to the baseline.</p>

Magnitude of Change	
<b>Imperceptible</b>	<i>In some circumstances, changes at representative viewpoints or receptors will be lower than 'Very Low' and changes will be described as 'Imperceptible'. This will lead to negligible effects.</i>

**Table EDP A2.4:** Determining the Predicted Levels of Effects to The Landscape and Visual Baseline

Overall Sensitivity	Overall Magnitude of Change				
	Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Very High	Substantial	Major	Major/- Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/- Minor
High	Major	Major/- Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/- Minor	Minor
Medium	Major/- Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/- Minor	Minor	Minor/- Negligible
Low	Moderate	Moderate/- Minor	Minor	Minor/- Negligible	Negligible
Very Low	Moderate/- Minor	Minor	Minor/- Negligible	Negligible	Negligible/- None

**Table EDP A2.5:** Definition of Effects

Definition of Effects	
<b>Substantial</b>	Effects that are in complete variance to the baseline landscape resource or visual amenity.
<b>Major</b>	Effects that result in noticeable and fundamental alterations to the landscape resource or visual amenity.
<b>Moderate</b>	Effects that result in noticeable but non-fundamental alterations to the baseline landscape resource or visual amenity.
<b>Minor</b>	Effects that result in slight alterations to the landscape resource or visual amenity.
<b>Negligible</b>	Effects that result in barely perceptible alterations to the landscape resource or visual amenity.
<b>None</b>	No detectable alteration to the landscape resource or visual amenity.
<b>Consequence</b>	Effects can be positive, adverse or neutral i.e. if no change arises
<b>Duration</b>	Long term (20+ years); Medium-long term (10–20 years); Medium term (5–10 years); Short term (1–5 years); Temporary (<12 months); Construction.

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## **Appendix EDP 3**

### **Findings of EDP Data Trawl**

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energy generation. Developers will be expected to make provision for the monitoring of energy use and emissions in a way that can be linked into Borough-wide monitoring. All applications shall be supported by an energy or sustainability statement and/or relevant information within an appropriate tool such as the West Midlands Sustainability Checklist, unless it is demonstrated that the proposed development will have no impact on energy use or greenhouse gas emissions.

### **10.3 Challenges and Objectives Addressed by the Policy**

Challenge A - Reducing inequalities in the Borough

Challenge B - Addressing Affordable Housing Needs across the Borough

Challenge C - Sustaining the Attractiveness of the Borough for People who Live, Work and Invest in Solihull

Challenge D - Securing Sustainable Economic Growth

Challenge F - Climate Change

Challenge H - Increasing Accessibility and Encouraging Sustainable Transport

Challenge I - Providing sufficient waste Management Facilities and Providing for Sand and Gravel Aggregates

Challenge J - Improving health and Well-Being

Challenge K - Protecting and Enhancing our Natural Assets

#### **POLICY P10 Natural Environment**

The Council recognises the importance of a healthy natural environment in its own right, and for the economic and social benefits it provides to the Borough. The full value and benefits of the natural environment will be taken into account in considering all development proposals, including the contribution to the green economy and the health of residents, and the potential for reducing the impacts of climate change. Joint working with neighbouring authorities will be supported, recognising the need for a landscape scale approach to the natural environment and conservation of biodiversity.

The Council will seek to protect, enhance and restore the diverse landscape features of the Borough and to create new woodlands and other characteristic habitats, so as to halt and where possible reverse the degrading of the Arden landscape and promote local distinctiveness. Development should take full account of national and local guidance on protecting and restoring the landscape and the areas in need of enhancement, including guidance relating to the countryside. Developers will be expected to incorporate measures to protect, enhance and restore the landscape, unless it is demonstrated that it is not feasible, disproportionate or unnecessary.

The Council will seek to conserve, enhance and restore biodiversity and geodiversity, to create new native woodlands and other habitats and to protect, restore and enhance ancient woodland and green infrastructure assets across the Borough. Protection of ancient woodland, designated sites and priority habitats shall include the establishment of buffers to any new development. Development should be informed by the latest information on habitats and species, and take full account of national and local guidance on conserving biodiversity, opportunities for biodiversity enhancement and for improving and restoring the Borough's green infrastructure. When appropriate, development should seek to enhance accessibility to the natural environment, especially for disabled people.

The Council will protect areas of national and local importance for biodiversity and geodiversity, where it is reasonable, proportionate and feasible to do so. Development likely to have an

adverse affect on a Site of Special Scientific Interest, whether directly or indirectly, will be subject to special scrutiny and will be permitted only if the reasons for the development clearly outweigh the nature conservation value of the site and the national policy to safeguard such sites. Where development may have an adverse affect on a Site of Special Scientific Interest, developers will be expected to incorporate measures to enhance the condition of the site, unless it is demonstrated that it is not feasible.

Development likely to have an adverse affect on a Local Nature Reserve or a Local Wildlife or Geological Site will be permitted only if the reasons for the development clearly outweigh the nature conservation or geological value of the site and its contribution to wider biodiversity objectives. Where development would have an adverse affect on a site of local value, developers will be expected to incorporate measures to enhance the site or to restore the links between sites in accordance with the Green Infrastructure study, unless it is demonstrated that it is not feasible.

Outside designated sites, developers will be expected to take full account of the nature conservation or geological value, and the existence of any habitats or species included in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, or sites in the Local Geological Action Plan. Developers will be required to undertake a full ecological survey and to deliver a net gain or enhancement to biodiversity, unless it is demonstrated that it is not appropriate or feasible. In considering the need for green space improvements associated with new development, developers should have regard for the standards and priorities in the Green Spaces Strategy in relation to accessible natural green space.

Where development is likely to have significant harmful effects on the natural environment, as a result of the development itself, or the cumulative impact of developments, developers must demonstrate that all possible alternatives that would result in less harm have been considered. Where development is permitted, appropriate mitigation of the impacts and compensation where relevant will be required to deliver a net gain in biodiversity, habitat creation, landscape character and local distinctiveness. Enhancements should be undertaken either on the site, or in its vicinity, but where it is demonstrated that this is not possible, offsetting in alternative strategic locations within the biodiversity or green infrastructure network, to deliver biodiversity or other objectives may be considered. Where appropriate, developers should demonstrate compliance with this policy through an ecological statement or by relevant information in the West Midlands Sustainability Checklist.

## **10.4 Justification**

- 10.4.1 The Natural Environment White Paper seeks to address concerns about the decline and fragmentation of the natural environment, highlighted in the Lawton Report, through the provision of more, better, bigger and joined spaces for nature. It sets out a national target to halt biodiversity loss by 2020. The Government recognises the economic benefits that are obtained from natural environment resources, or natural capital and makes clear that biodiversity loss has important adverse economic and social consequences, as well as environmental ones. The policy addresses the themes in the White Paper by confirming that the full value of the natural environment will be taken into account in considering development proposals. This should include the potential for the natural environment to improve health, contribute to the multi functional benefits of green infrastructure, and reduce the impacts of climate change, through urban cooling and the management of surface water flows.
- 10.4.2 The Borough lies within Arden landscape character area, for which guidance is provided in Natural England's National Character Area study and the Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines for Arden. These identify the landscape types that are characteristic to the area and the need for enhancement or restoration in much of the Borough. 'Solihull's



versatile agricultural land, the natural and historic environment, and water resources and quality will need to be protected, with appropriate mitigation and compensation where necessary, in accordance with the environmental policies in this plan. The impact on aerodrome safeguarding shall include the need to minimise bird strike hazard. Any proposal adjacent to the River Blythe Site of Special Scientific Interest will be expected to maintain a minimum 30 metre buffer to the Site of Special Scientific Interest. The Council will require that investigations are undertaken to demonstrate that there will be no adverse impact on a Site of Special Scientific Interest before planning permission is granted.

- 10.10.7 Guidance is provided on the restoration and aftercare of mineral sites once extraction has ceased and on the after use to which the land should be put, in accordance with national guidance. The restoration of any site that has a biodiversity designation, or equivalent biodiversity value, shall prioritise the contribution to biodiversity objectives. Reclamation schemes will be expected to prioritise the potential for contributing to green infrastructure, biodiversity objectives, including national and local biodiversity action plan targets, to policies seeking to enhance and restore the Arden landscape, and to flood risk management. Where appropriate, after uses may include agriculture and recreation uses providing these are in accordance with other national and local planning policies. The availability of materials to restore mineral sites will need to be a consideration to avoid unreasonably lengthy restoration.

### **10.11 Challenges and Objectives Addressed by the Policy**

Challenge D - Securing Sustainable Economic Growth

Challenge E - Protecting Key Gaps Between Urban Areas and Settlements

Challenge F - Climate Change

Challenge H - Increasing Accessibility and Encouraging Sustainable Transport

Challenge I - Providing Sufficient Waste Management Facilities and Providing for Sand and Gravel Aggregates

Challenge K - Protecting and Enhancing our Natural Assets

### **POLICY P14 Amenity**

The Council will seek to protect and enhance the amenity of existing and potential occupiers of houses, businesses and other uses in considering proposals for new development, and will:

- i.** Permit development only if it respects the amenity of existing and proposed occupiers and would be a good neighbour;
- ii.** Consider the visual and other amenities of potential occupiers and users of new developments close to overhead power lines and substations. Developers will be expected to locate and design new developments so as to minimise the visual and other amenity impacts;
- iii.** Support the development of electronic communications networks including telecommunications and high speed broadband. The Council will have regard to the needs of telecommunications operators, any technical constraints on location of telecommunications apparatus, the potential for sharing sites, the impact of development on its surroundings, the sensitivity of the environment and the design and external appearance of telecommunications apparatus. Development in or adjacent to sensitive locations will be permitted only if there is no other technically suitable location that both meets operational requirements and causes less environmental harm and any mast is at a distance of at least twice its height from the nearest residential properties;

- iv. Safeguard important trees, hedgerows and woodlands, encourage new and replacement tree and hedgerow planting and identify areas that may be suitable for the creation of new woodlands. Priority will be given to locations that enhance or restore the green infrastructure network and to the planting of species characteristic of the Arden Warwickshire landscape;
- v. Encourage better air quality in and around the Borough through the adoption of low emission zone initiatives such as those involving the use of electric vehicles for freight and public transport. Development that would contribute to air pollution, either directly or indirectly will be permitted only if it would not hinder or significantly harm the achievement of air quality objectives or any relevant Air Quality Management Plan, and it incorporates appropriate attenuation, mitigation or compensatory measures;
- vi. Require proposals for development on land known or suspected to be contaminated to include appropriate information to enable the potential implications to be assessed and to incorporate any necessary remediation;
- vii. Seek to minimise the adverse impact of noise. Development likely to create significant noise will be permitted only if it is located away from noise sensitive uses or it incorporates measures to ensure adequate protection against noise. Noise sensitive development will be permitted only if it is located away from existing sources of significant noise, or if no suitable alternatives exist, the development incorporates measures to reduce noise intrusion to an acceptable level;
- viii. Protect the amenity of residential and shopping areas, community facilities and open space from bad neighbour uses. Development that would be significantly harmful because of smell, noise or atmospheric pollution will not be permitted, whilst development that would be potentially harmful to such areas will be expected to incorporate appropriate attenuation, mitigation or compensatory measures. In locations close to existing bad neighbour uses, the Council will not permit new residential or other sensitive development, unless the effects can be satisfactorily mitigated as part of the development;
- ix. Protect those parts of the countryside in the Borough that retain a dark sky from the impacts of light pollution. Development involving external lighting outside established settlements will be permitted only where significant lighting already exists, or the benefits of the development clearly outweigh the impact of the lighting on the countryside. Any lighting scheme should be the minimum required for the purposes of the development and should avoid light spillage and harmful effects on biodiversity; and
- x. Protect the tranquil and locally distinctive areas in the Borough by guiding new development, particularly those that will create significant noise, either directly or through associated transport, to locations that will avoid or minimise adverse impacts.

## 10.12 Justification

- 10.12.1 The NPPF indicates that planning policies should seek to secure a good standard of amenity for existing and future occupiers of land and buildings. Developments that affect people's visual and other amenities, such as those that create noise, smell or air pollution require careful siting to minimise impacts and appropriate measures to minimise or mitigate any impacts that location does not resolve. Equally, the siting and design of sensitive uses, such as residential development needs careful consideration to ensure that problems are not created. Significant new growth in the Borough is being promoted through this plan to meet needs for new employment, housing, retail, leisure and community facilities. The Council will seek to protect people's amenities whilst ensuring provision for essential development.

Belt to meet housing and other needs. Developments of national and regional significance have also been allowed, justified by very special circumstances. This plan recognises that adjustments to the Green Belt are required in the North Solihull Regeneration Area to deliver regeneration benefits, and elsewhere to meet local housing need.

### **POLICY P15 Securing Design Quality**

All development proposals will be expected to achieve good quality, inclusive and sustainable design, which meets the following key principles:

- i. Conserves and enhances local character, distinctiveness and streetscape quality and ensures that the scale, massing, density, layout, materials and landscape of the development respect the surrounding natural, built and historic environment;
- ii. Ensures that new development achieves the highest possible standard of environmental performance through sustainable design and construction and the location and layout of the development in accordance with the guidance provided in Policy P9 Climate Change;
- iii. Secures the sustainable long-term use of new development through flexible, robust and future-proofed design e.g. high-speed digital connectivity;
- iv. Makes appropriate space for water within the development, using sustainable drainage (SuDS) principles, to minimise and adapt to the risk of flooding. Further guidance is provided in Policy P11 Water Management;
- v. Conserves and enhances biodiversity, landscape quality and considers the impact on and opportunities for green infrastructure at the earliest opportunity in the design process. Further guidance is provided in Policy P10 Natural Environment;
- vi. Integrates the natural environment within the development through the provision of gardens, quality open space and/or improved access to, enhancement or extension of the green infrastructure network. Further guidance is provided in Policy P20 Provision for Open Space, Children's Play, Sport, Recreation and Leisure;
- vii. Creates attractive, safe, active, legible and uncluttered streets and public spaces which are accessible, easily maintained and encourage walking and cycling and reduce crime and the fear of crime.

Development proposals will also be expected to contribute to or create a sense of place. Such measures may include; reflecting heritage assets and their setting in the design process, integrating landscape into the development, promoting diversity through a mix of uses within the site, or the incorporation of public art.

All residential development proposals should be built to the Lifetime Homes standard and demonstrate how they meet Building for Life 12, or its equivalent. However, the Council will take into account the economics of provision, including particular costs that may threaten the viability of the site. All residential development will be expected to adhere to the guidance set out in the New Housing in Context Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) until this has been updated and the Council will prepare Supplementary Planning Documents to provide necessary additional guidance.

Applicants should adhere to the urban design principles set out in established current design guidance, including at present; Urban Design Compendium 1 and 2 (2007), By Design (2000 and 2001), Manual for Streets 1 (2007) and 2 (2010), Car Parking: What Works Where (2006), Building for Life and Secured by Design principles, or their equivalents.

Development at key economic assets within the M42 Economic Gateway; the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham Airport, Birmingham Business Park and Blythe Valley Park, will be expected to be of the highest quality to reflect their strategic importance.

Applicants are encouraged to engage with Officers early in the design process through pre-application discussions and will be required to demonstrate that they have followed the robust Assessment-Involvement-Evaluation-Design process outlined in the national guidance on Design and Access Statements. Major development proposals are required to demonstrate how the local community has been consulted and engaged in the design process. Significant development proposals will also be encouraged to engage with the national and regional Design Review process.

## **11.2 Justification**

- 11.2.1 The Government's policy on design is clear in the NPPF; 'The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning and should contribute positively to making places better for people'. The NPPF also highlights the importance of high quality design in planning and creating places and demonstrates that good design is concerned with more than just the aesthetics of a building, it is integral to the success of buildings and places, how they function and how people connect with the surrounding built, natural and historic environment. As such, Policy P15 provides a set of design principles for applicants to adhere to, concerning the scale and visual appearance of the building as well its environmental performance, impact on flood risk and the natural environment, its integration with its surroundings and neighbouring public spaces. The policy recognises that high quality sustainable materials and construction standards are also important to ensure the durability and longevity of new development.
- 11.2.2 Policy P15 also requires development proposals to create safe and attractive streets and public spaces, which reduce crime and the fear of crime. As well as considering the impact of development proposals on public safety and the incidences of anti-social behaviour, the reference to crime in the Policy also relates to creating safer buildings and places that are better protected from terrorist attack. This reflects the Government's strategy for countering terrorism. Applications for development which affect higher risk buildings or spaces such as those that could attract crowds of people, are encouraged to consider the advice provided in the national guidance; Crowded Places: The Planning System and Counter-Terrorism (January 2012).
- 11.2.3 The Borough's high quality environment is fundamental to its success as an attractive place to live, work and invest. As such, the policy strives to create development with the highest standards of design and sustainability, across the Borough. This should be evidenced by an appropriate national standard such as the Code for Sustainable Homes, BREEAM or Building for Life. In particular, there are a cluster of strategic economic assets within the M42 Economic Gateway north of the A45; the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham Airport and Birmingham Business Park, where development will be expected to be of the highest quality to reflect their importance. Development on or near the other strategic assets of Blythe Valley Park and Solihull Town Centre will also be expected to be designed to the highest quality standard to ensure these areas become design exemplars for the Borough and sustainable communities. If the proposal for High Speed 2 (HS2) and the associated station is realised, a master plan will be prepared to guide the development of the area.
- 11.2.4 However, not all parts of the Borough have a high quality environment and a key part of the strategy is to improve the environment in the North Solihull Regeneration Area and parts of the Mature Suburbs. In order to raise the design quality in North Solihull, the North Solihull Design Code will continue to be applied. Development Briefs will also be prepared to guide the design of development on all sites allocated in the Plan and where appropriate, for other significant sites. The briefs will also provide details of physical and

## POLICY P17 Countryside and Green Belt

The Council will safeguard the “best and most versatile” agricultural land in the Borough and encourage the use of the remaining land for farming. Development affecting the “best and most versatile” land will be permitted only if there is an overriding need for the development or new use, and there is insufficient lower grade land available, or available lower grade land has an environmental significance that outweighs the agricultural considerations, or the use of lower grade land would be inconsistent with other sustainability considerations. Development involving farm-based diversification will normally be permitted in order to support farm enterprises and the management of land, providing it is in an appropriate location, of a scale appropriate to its location, and does not harm the Green Belt, conservation or enhancement policies.

The Council will not permit inappropriate development in the Green Belt, except in very special circumstances. In addition to the national policy, the following provisions shall apply to development in the Borough’s Green Belt:

- Development involving the replacement, extension or alteration of buildings in the Green Belt will not be permitted if it will harm the need to retain smaller more affordable housing or the purposes of including land within the Green Belt.
- Limited infilling will not be considered to be inappropriate development within the Green Belt settlements, providing this would not have an adverse effect on the character of the settlements. Limited infilling shall be interpreted as the filling of a small gap within an otherwise built-up frontage with not more than two dwellings.
- The reasonable expansion of established businesses into the Green Belt will be allowed where the proposal would make a significant contribution to the local economy or employment, providing that appropriate mitigation can be secured.
- Where the re-use of buildings or land is proposed, the new use, and any associated use of land surrounding the building, should not conflict with, nor have a materially greater impact on, the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land in it, and the form, bulk and general design of the buildings shall be in keeping with their surroundings.
- Where waste management operations involving inappropriate development are proposed in the Green Belt, the contribution of new capacity towards the treatment gap identified in the Borough may amount to very special circumstances, providing the development accords with the waste management policy of this Plan.

The small settlements of Hampton-in-Arden, Hockley Heath, Meriden and Catherine de Barnes are inset in the Green Belt and are not therefore subject to Green Belt policy. Nevertheless, the Council, in considering applications for development in these settlements, will take into account the importance of their rural setting and of their attributes, such as historic buildings, open space, density of development, landscape and townscape that contribute towards their special character. Immediately beyond the inset boundary, strict Green Belt policies will apply.

### 11.6 Justification

- 11.6.1 Most of the countryside within the Borough is in use for agriculture, and farmers are largely responsible for managing the land. Farmland is generally of good to moderate quality capable of supporting a healthy mixed farming economy. About one fifth of the farmland falls within the ‘best and most versatile’ agricultural land category, which Solihull’s Countryside Strategy 2010-2020 indicates should be protected, as an irreplaceable resource and for its contribution to the rural character of the Borough. The policy provides that development affecting “best and most versatile” farmland will be permitted only if there is an overriding need or development of lower grade land would have adverse sustainability impacts. These might include impacts on the conservation of

## 12. Supporting Local Communities

### 12.1 Introduction

- 12.1.1 The vital role of planning in creating and supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities is well recognised and is a key element in delivering sustainable development.
- 12.1.2 We must ensure that community needs are supported through appropriate physical and social infrastructure, as well as other facilities and services that contribute to improving people's overall quality of life and physical and mental health and well being.
- 12.1.3 Supporting local communities is a theme that cross cuts others in this Local Plan. It is crucial that people have better access to a range of employment opportunities, appropriate housing that meets their needs, access to a range of local services including places to shop and relax, places for exercise, recreation and play. The need to provide and maintain suitable health, education and community facilities as well as opportunities for social interaction is fundamental to ensure people across the Borough enjoy a good quality of life and have equal and positive life chances.
- 12.1.4 The Council will support local communities to ensure that everyone has access to the services and opportunities that allow them to fulfil their potential and enjoy healthier, happier lives.

#### **POLICY P18 Health and Well Being**

The potential for achieving positive health outcomes will be taken into account when considering all development proposals. Where any adverse health impacts are identified, the development will be expected to demonstrate how these will be addressed or mitigated.

The Council will expect new development proposals to promote, support and enhance physical and mental health and well being. Support will be given to proposals which:

- i. Provide opportunities for formal and informal physical activity, exercise opportunities, recreation and play;
- ii. Contribute to a high quality, attractive and safe public realm in accordance with Policy P15 Securing Design Quality, to encourage social interaction and facilitate movement on foot and by cycle;
- iii. Contribute to the development of a high quality, safe and convenient walking and cycling network;
- iv. Improve the quality and quantity of the green infrastructure network in the Borough, particularly in the North Solihull Regeneration Area and in areas where green infrastructure is identified as lacking. The protection and enhancement of physical access, including public rights of way to open space and green infrastructure will also be supported;
- v. Deliver new and improved health services and facilities in areas where they can be accessed by sustainable transport modes. Facilities for primary medical care should be identified and planned for;
- vi. Increase access to healthy food by sustainable transport modes and provide opportunities for growing local produce. The Council will resist the loss of areas which currently enable local produce to be grown;
- vii. Provide additional homes which are designed to meet the needs of older people and those with disabilities, and housing which enables older people to downsize from larger homes; and
- viii. Improve the energy efficiency of housing.

New residential development will be expected to be built to the Lifetime Homes standard in accordance with Policy P15 Securing Design Quality, to ensure that homes are adaptable and enable people to live independently for longer. All developments should maximise internal insulation and opportunities for solar gain and wherever possible, developments should also seek to incorporate private amenity space.

Development proposals should incorporate planting, trees, open spaces and soft surfaces wherever possible in order to secure a variety of spaces for residents, visitors or employees to use and observe.

The loss of community and social infrastructure will be resisted unless it can be demonstrated that:

- It can no longer continue for commercial or operational reasons;
- There are identified benefits of the use being discontinued;
- Adequate alternative provision can be made in a manner which meets the needs of the community affected.

The Council will resist development proposals for hot food takeaways in areas where there is already a high concentration of such uses.

## 12.2 Justification

12.2.1 The Marmot Review (February 2010) highlighted that socio-economic inequalities, including the built environment, have a clear effect on the health outcomes of the population. One of the key policy objectives aimed at reducing the gap in life expectancy between people of lower and higher socio-economic backgrounds, is to “create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities”.

12.2.2 The main elements identified as having significant impacts on health are:

- Pollution: There is evidence of the adverse effects of outdoor air pollution and on cardio-respiratory mortality and morbidity. A reduction in traffic to reduce air pollution, for example, is proven to improve health.



**c) Provision of new indoor sports and leisure facilities:**

The Council will support proposals for new or improved sports and leisure facilities providing that the development:

- i. Addresses any shortfall in provision outlined in the Indoor Sports Facilities Strategy or the adopted Green Spaces Strategy (2006);
- ii. Reflects the 'town centre first' principle outlined in national guidance and is of a scale and size appropriate to the hierarchy of Town Centres as defined in Policies P1 Support Economic Success, P2 Maintain Strong Competitive Town Centres, and P19 Range and Quality of Local Services;
- iii. Is situated within an accessible location as defined in Policy 7 Accessibility, where the development is easily accessible to the local community and is well served, or is capable of being well served, by public transport, walking and cycling; and
- iv. Accords with other Green Belt and Amenity policies in the Plan.

Subject to the above criteria, the Council will support proposals for shared sports facilities at educational centres, where the facility also serves the local area.

**d) Waterways:**

The Council will support proposals that encourage greater recreational and leisure use and enhancement of the river and canal network providing that the development safeguards the historic and natural environment and purposes of the Green Belt, in accordance with Policies P10 Natural Environment, P16 Conservation of Heritage Assets and Local Distinctiveness and P17 Countryside and Green Belt.



## K Protecting and enhancing our natural assets

**Policy P10 Natural Environment**

The Council recognises the importance of a healthy natural environment in its own right, and for the economic and social benefits it provides to the Borough. The full value and benefits of the natural environment will be taken into account in considering all development proposals, including the contribution to the green economy and the health of residents, and the potential for reducing the impacts of climate change. Joint working with neighbouring authorities and partners will be supported, recognising the need for a landscape scale approach to the natural environment and conservation of biodiversity.

**Arden Landscape**

The Council will seek to protect, enhance and restore the diverse landscape features of the Borough and to create characteristic habitats such as new woodlands, copses, hedgerows and standard trees, species-rich grassland and wood pasture. To halt and where possible reverse the degrading of the Arden landscape and promote local distinctiveness.

Development should take full account of national and local guidance on protecting and restoring the landscape and the areas in need of enhancement, including guidance relating to the countryside. Developers will be expected to incorporate measures to protect, enhance and restore the landscape, unless it is demonstrated that it is not feasible, disproportionate or unnecessary.

**Biodiversity and Geodiversity**

The Council will seek to conserve, enhance and restore biodiversity and geodiversity across the Borough. Protection of designated sites, ancient woodland, and priority habitats shall include the establishment of buffers to any new development so that they connect with existing and created green infrastructure assets.

Development should be informed by the latest information on habitats and species, and take full account of national and local guidance on conserving biodiversity, opportunities for biodiversity enhancement and for improving and restoring the Borough's green infrastructure (especially fragmentation of habitats). When appropriate, development should seek to enhance accessibility to the natural environment, especially for disabled people.

**Habitat and species protection and enhancement**

The Council will protect areas of national and local importance for biodiversity and geodiversity, where it is reasonable, proportionate and feasible to do so.

**Sites of Special Scientific Interest:** Development likely to have an adverse effect on a Site of Special Scientific Interest, whether directly or indirectly, will be subject to special scrutiny and will be permitted only if the reasons for the development clearly outweigh the nature conservation value of the site and the national policy to safeguard such sites. Where development may have an adverse effect on a Site of Special Scientific Interest, developers will be expected to incorporate measures to enhance the condition of the site.

**Local Nature Reserve, Local Wildlife Site or Geological Site:** Development likely to have an adverse effect on a Local Nature Reserve will be permitted only if the reasons for the development clearly outweigh the nature conservation or geological value of the site and its contribution to wider biodiversity objectives. Where development would have an adverse effect on a site of local value, developers will be expected to incorporate measures

to enhance the site or to restore the links between sites to improve connectivity in the ecosystem network based on local evidence.

**Outside Designated Sites:** Developers will be expected to take full account of the nature conservation or geological value, and the existence of any habitats or species included in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, national S.41 list, or sites in the Local Geological Action Plan as well as the Wildlife and Countryside Act and EU Directives.

Developers will be required to undertake a full ecological survey and to deliver a net gain or enhancement to biodiversity, unless it is demonstrated that it is not appropriate or feasible. In considering the need for green space improvements associated with new development, developers should have regard for the standards and priorities in the Green Spaces Strategy in relation to accessible natural green space.

#### **Mitigation hierarchy**

Where development is likely to have significant harmful effects on the natural environment, as a result of the development itself, or the cumulative impact of developments, developers must demonstrate that all possible alternatives that would result in less harm have been considered. Where development is permitted, appropriate mitigation of the impacts and compensation where relevant will be required to deliver a net gain in biodiversity, habitat creation, landscape character and local distinctiveness. Enhancements should be undertaken either on the site, or in its vicinity, but where it is demonstrated that this is not possible, offsetting, as a last resort, in alternative strategic locations within the biodiversity or green infrastructure network, to deliver biodiversity or other objectives may be considered.

### **Justification**

294. The Natural Environment White Paper seeks to address concerns about the decline and fragmentation of the natural environment, highlighted in the Lawton Report, through the provision of more, better, bigger and joined spaces for nature. It sets out a national target to halt biodiversity loss by 2020. The Government recognises the economic benefits that are obtained from natural environment resources or natural capital and makes clear that biodiversity loss has important adverse economic and social consequences, as well as environmental ones. In response to these challenges the Council is participating in the Natural Capital planning toolkit pilot. The policy addresses the themes in the White Paper by confirming that the full value of the natural environment will be taken into account in considering development proposals. This should include the potential for the natural environment to improve health, contribute to the multi-functional benefits of green infrastructure, and reduce the impacts of climate change, through urban cooling and the management of surface water flows.



## **Policy B1: New Housing – General Principles**

Where new housing proposals come forward they will be required to address the following criteria:

### **1. Brownfield sites**

The reuse of brownfield sites will be preferred to the loss of greenfield land.

### **2. Layouts and Accessibility**

Where practical, developers should incorporate the following principles into the layout of schemes:

- a. Vehicle access to new development should be from main roads.
- b. Layouts should be designed to help facilitate social cohesion and community security. In the Berkswell Neighbourhood Area context this suggests that larger developments should have character areas of around 250 dwellings and all developments should aim for clusters of around 20 dwellings. Good legibility<sup>5</sup> is required but the security and amenity of the development should not be compromised by excessive through route permeability.
- c. Longer new roads should include grass verges as well as pavements and tree planting wherever possible.
- d. For ease of use and permeability without recourse to motorised transport, access for pedestrians and cyclists should be maximised through provision of attractive and accessible non-vehicular routes linking to the safe routes identified in Section 9 and to local facilities such as shops, Berkswell rail station, schools, community facilities and health centres.
- e. Quality public open and children's play space should be provided in accordance with the Solihull Green Space Strategy Review<sup>6</sup> or the successor document. New open and play spaces should normally be located between new and existing housing to serve the whole community; play spaces should benefit from natural surveillance. Where this location of the open space is not feasible, to help the transition the distance between new and existing dwellings should be toward the upper end of the range

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<sup>5</sup> Note - **Legibility** is the degree to which an area or neighbourhood can be understood or "read" by residents and visitors. Good legibility allows people to understand how an area is organised and to find their way around easily.

<sup>6</sup> SMBC Green Space Strategy Review 2014 (p26)

[http://www.solihull.gov.uk/Portals/0/StrategiesPlansPolicies/LandscapeandEcology/Green\\_Spaces\\_Strategy\\_Review.pdf](http://www.solihull.gov.uk/Portals/0/StrategiesPlansPolicies/LandscapeandEcology/Green_Spaces_Strategy_Review.pdf)

in the Solihull Housing Development Guidelines SPG<sup>7</sup> or successor document ie around 30m.

- f. Schemes should aim to integrate the natural environment into the layout and form of new development through the provision of gardens.
- g. Development schemes should create and maintain safe neighbourhoods by including measures to reduce crime and the fear of crime, and to strengthen the sense of local community. Such measures should incorporate the principles of 'Secured by Design' and be agreed in consultation with the West Midlands Police.

### 3. Landscaping and Drainage

Landscaping schemes should aim to incorporate the following wherever possible:

- a. A site specific survey should identify which mature trees and hedgerows make the most significant contribution to local landscape character and biodiversity and should therefore be retained and protected. New planting to replace losses or enhancing existing planting should use characteristic native species.
- b. All areas of priority habitats (as defined by the NERC [Natural Environment and Rural Communities] Act 2006)<sup>8</sup> as amended should be retained and naturalised to support local wildlife and enhance biodiversity. Such habitats may include existing water courses, field ponds and areas of wet marshy grasslands.
- c. All new development should be located within Flood Zone 1 and where this is not viable, development must be steered to land at the lowest flood risk, following the application of the Sequential Test.
- d. Effective surface water drainage measures should be provided to protect existing and future residential areas from flooding. New development should be designed to maximise the retention of surface water on the development site and to minimise runoff. Sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) should be implemented in accordance with the SuDS hierarchy<sup>9</sup> wherever possible. Hard-

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.solihull.gov.uk/Portals/0/Planning/Housing\\_Development\\_Guidelines.pdf](http://www.solihull.gov.uk/Portals/0/Planning/Housing_Development_Guidelines.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents>

<sup>9</sup> See: Planning System - Guidance - Flood risk and coastal change

'Generally, the aim should be to discharge surface run off as high up the following hierarchy of drainage options as reasonably practicable:

1. into the ground (infiltration);
2. to a surface water body;
3. to a surface water sewer, highway drain, or another drainage system;
4. to a combined sewer.'

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-and-coastal-change>

- standing surface areas should be permeable wherever practical.
- e. Hedgerows, tree lines or other locally appropriate habitats should be provided within development sites as narrow corridors to support a gentle, green transition between built-up areas and the open countryside.

#### **4. Building Design Principles**

New housing designs should incorporate the following wherever possible:

- a. Generally buildings should not exceed 2 1/2 storeys, including rooms in the roof space. However to aid efficient land use some building heights could be varied and 3 storeys may be appropriate provided the buildings are not adjacent to, and do not have an adverse impact on or conflict with existing and surrounding properties and should be appropriate to the position proposed;
- b. Provision of basements for storage or parking is supported to maximise efficient use of land;
- c. Provision should be made per dwelling for electric vehicle charging;
- d. Developments should incorporate principles of sustainable design, maximising energy, water and resource efficiency both in terms of construction methods and for the benefit of future occupants. Where roof mounted solar panels are provided, houses should be orientated to maximise solar gain; and
- e. Suitable provision should be made within curtilages for secure storage and refuse/recycling bin enclosures.

#### **5. Housing Mix**

- a. A suitable mix of housing should be provided, informed by the latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment and / or other local data, for example, Parish Surveys and developers' assessments. Housing mix, having regard to location, site size and scheme viability, should contain a range of types and size of housing needed for different groups in the community such as:
  - those who require affordable housing,
  - families with children,
  - older people,
  - people with disabilities,
  - people who rent their homes, and
  - people wishing to commission or build their own homes.

Overall schemes should have an emphasis on 2- or 3-bedroom properties including some single storey dwellings, smaller units

suitable for starter homes and residents wishing to downsize or resize and some larger houses (4 bedrooms or more) for families or those requiring multi-generational homes.

- b. Residential units which provide live / work accommodation will be supported, provided that residential amenity of surrounding occupiers is protected and any adverse impacts on the surrounding road network are minimised.

#### **6. Natural Environment**

Development should aim to protect and enhance local biodiversity in line with Policy B3.

- a. Where possible new buildings should incorporate wildlife friendly features such as bird boxes and swift bricks.
- b. Layouts should support open spaces for wildlife areas and corridors.

## **Policy B3: Protecting Local Landscape and Built Character**

### **1. Landscape Character**

- a. The location, design and layout of new housing development should respect local character within the Neighbourhood Area as set out in the Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment<sup>14</sup>.
- b. Landscape features of heritage or wildlife value (as identified in the Historic Environment Summary Report<sup>15</sup> and the Preliminary Ecological Report<sup>16</sup>) should be conserved according to their significance. Where mitigation measures are appropriate the evidence based proposals should include for locally-appropriate features such as tree-planting, hedges and ponds.

### **2. Built Character**

- a. Designs should respond positively to the distinctive local and historic character of individual settlements and character areas of the parish.
- b. Scale, massing, density and layout should relate to the surrounding built form.
- c. The use of traditional materials used locally is encouraged such as traditional red brick and render for elevations and tiled roofs.
- d. Innovative design and materials to achieve enhanced environmental performance are encouraged.

### **3. Heritage Assets**

- a. Development proposals that impact upon the character and significance of the parish's heritage assets and their setting will be expected to demonstrate how this impact has been assessed to avoid or minimise conflict with the heritage asset's conservation.
- b. The Parish's heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Proposals will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal as appropriate; it should be demonstrated that all reasonable efforts have been made to sustain the existing use, find new uses, or mitigate the extent of the harm to the significance of the asset; and whether the works proposed are the minimum required to secure the long term use of the asset.

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<sup>14</sup> Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment for Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, December 2016

<http://www.solihull.gov.uk/Portals/0/Planning/LPR/landscapecharacterassessment.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Berkswell Neighbourhood Plan Historic Environment Summary Report, Warwickshire County Council, February 2018

<https://www.berkswellparishcouncil.org.uk/projects/ndp/1st-draft-additional-evidence>

<sup>16</sup> Preliminary Ecological Report Parish Neighbourhood Plan For Berkswell Parish Council, Habitat Biodiversity Audit Partnership for Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Warwickshire Wildlife Trust Ecological Services, Warwickshire County Council, January 2018

<https://www.berkswellparishcouncil.org.uk/projects/ndp/1st-draft-additional-evidence>

- c. All applications that affect the historic environment will be expected to have considered and used, as a minimum, the evidence in the Berkswell Historic Environment Record to inform the principle and design response of the proposal.
  - d. Scheduled monuments and other non-designated archaeological sites of equivalent importance should be preserved in situ. In those cases where this is not justifiable or feasible, provision should be made for excavation and recording with an appropriate assessment and evaluation. The appropriate publication/curation of findings will be expected.
4. Non-Residential Buildings in the Open Countryside
- a. Proposals for large agricultural, commercial, and infrastructure developments in the countryside should be sited, designed and landscaped with sensitivity, taking into account the characteristics of the Arden landscape of the rural area of the parish.
  - b. Prominent, metallic or bright colours should be avoided in buildings or parts of buildings which are highly visible from or located within sensitive landscape areas. Natural and earth colours and materials are preferred wherever possible.
  - c. Boundary treatments should be designed taking into account the Landscape Character design criteria under this Policy and Policy B6, and obtrusive security / palisade type fencing should be avoided.



**Purpose 1: 'to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas'**

<b>Broad Area ID</b>	Is ribbon or other development present within the Broad Area? Is other development detached from the existing large built up areas? <b>0</b> - Broad Area is already developed and/or is within the urban area with no clear boundary ( <i>Area does not perform against the purpose</i> ) <b>1</b> - Ribbon/other development is already present and/or other development is detached from the existing built-up area with no clear boundary ( <i>Area is lower performing</i> ) <b>2</b> - Broad Area boundary is weak but can be identified and there is no development present ( <i>Area is more moderately performing</i> ) <b>3</b> - Broad Area boundary is clearly identifiable/durable and there is no development present ( <i>Area is higher performing</i> )	<b>Score</b>	
	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Commentary</b>	
BA01	2 - Broad Area boundary is weak but can be identified and there is no development present	Broad Area BA01 is more moderately performing against purpose 1. The area boundary is not easily identifiable but does not contain urbanising development. Furthermore, when considered alongside 'Broad Area 6' of the 'West Midlands Joint Green Belt Review Study Stage 2' the Broad Area plays a pivotal role in checking urban sprawl of Solihull to the north and Redditch to the south-west.	2
BA02	2 - Broad Area boundary is weak but can be identified and there is no development present	Broad Area BA02 is more moderately performing against purpose 1. The area boundary is not easily identifiable but can be identified as the B4101 which forms the northern boundary of the area. Furthermore, when considered alongside 'Broad Area 4' of the 'Coventry and Warwickshire Joint Green Belt Study' the Broad Area plays a pivotal role in checking urban sprawl of Solihull to the north and Warwick and Kenilworth to the south-east.	2
BA03	3 - Broad Area boundary is clear identifiable/durable and there is no development present	Broad Area BA03 is higher performing against purpose 1. The area's boundaries are largely clearly defined and robust. The area's boundaries are formed by the M42 motorway to the west, the A452 Kenilworth Road to the east and the A45 Coventry Road to the north. The southern boundary of the area is not as easily identifiable and is formed by the B4101 at its boundary with Broad Area BA02. Furthermore, no development is present within the area and it plays a pivotal role in preventing the urban sprawl of Solihull and Coventry.	3
BA04	3 - Broad Area boundary is clear identifiable/durable and there is no development present	Broad Area BA04 is higher performing against purpose 1. The area's western boundary is clearly identifiable as the A452 Kenilworth Road. The urban area of Coventry to the east forms the eastern edge of the area while the southern and northern boundaries are less clear. Furthermore, no development is present within the area and it plays a pivotal role in preventing the urban sprawl of Coventry to the east.	3
BA05	3 - Broad Area boundary is clear identifiable/durable and there is no development present	Broad Area BA05 is higher performing against purpose 1. The area's eastern boundary is formed by the M42 motorway and is clearly identifiable and durable. The area's other boundaries are less clear. The area is fundamental in checking the urban sprawl of Solihull to the west.	3

**Purpose 2: 'to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another'**

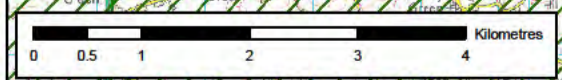
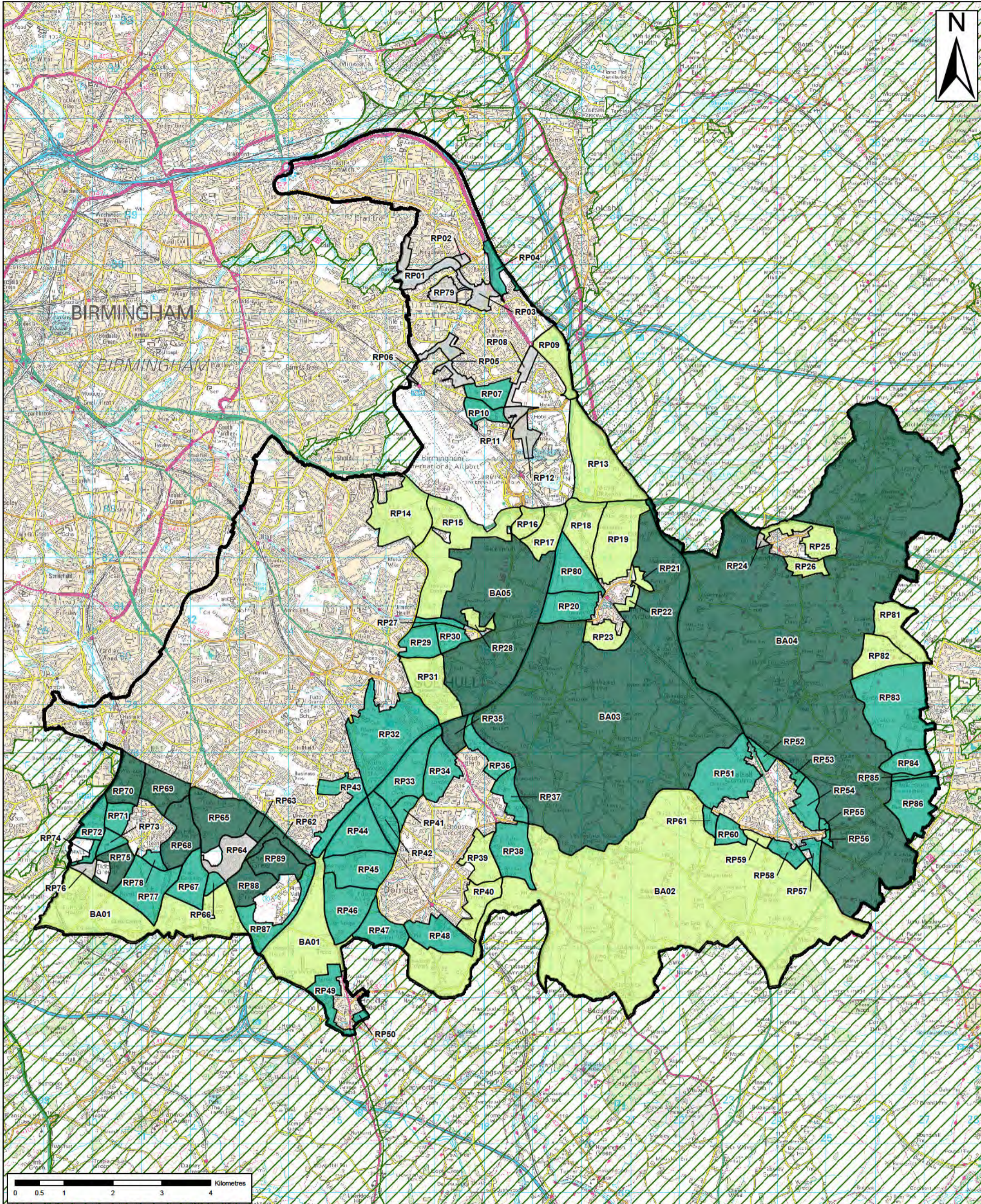
Broad Area ID	Does the Broad Area represent a 'strategic gap' between major urban areas? <b>0</b> - Broad Area does not represent a strategic gap and/or is not between major urban areas or smaller urban areas ( <i>Area does not perform against the purpose</i> ) <b>1</b> - Broad Area is between smaller urban areas but does not represent a strategic gap and is not between major urban areas ( <i>Area is lower performing</i> ) <b>3</b> - Broad Area represents a strategic gap between major urban areas ( <i>Area is higher performing</i> )		Score
	Rating:	Commentary	
BA01	1 - Broad Area is between smaller urban areas but does not represent a strategic gap and is not between major urban areas	BA01 is lower performing against purpose 2. The area is between the smaller urban areas of Dickens Heath to the north, Dorridge to the east and Redditch to the south-west and therefore does not represent a strategic gap.	1
BA02	1 - Broad Area is between smaller urban areas but does not represent a strategic gap and is not between major urban areas	BA02 is lower performing against purpose 2. The area is between the smaller urban areas of Dorridge and Knowle to the west and Balsall Common to the east. The area does not represent a strategic gap and therefore performs less well against the second purpose of Green Belt.	1
BA03	3 - Broad Area represents a strategic gap between major urban areas	Broad Area BA03 is higher performing against purpose 2. The area represents part of the strategic gap (Meriden Gap) between the major urban areas of Birmingham and Solihull to the west, and Coventry to the east.	3
BA04	3 - Broad Area represents a strategic gap between major urban areas	Broad Area BA04 is higher performing against purpose 2. The area represents a fundamental part of the strategic gap (Meriden Gap) between the major urban areas of Birmingham and Solihull to the west and Coventry to the east.	3
BA05	3 - Broad Area represents a strategic gap between major urban areas	Broad Area BA05 is higher performing against purpose 2. The area forms the western edge of the strategic gap between the major urban areas of Birmingham and Solihull to the west and Coventry to the east.	3

**Purpose 3: 'to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment'**

Broad Area ID	Broad Areas by their nature are considered to perform highly against the third purpose of Green Belt and therefore all areas are allocated a score of 3 ( <i>Area is higher performing</i> )		Score
	Rating:	Commentary:	
BA01	3 Area is higher performing	Broad Areas, by their nature, are all considered to perform highly against the third purpose of Green Belt and therefore all areas would score 3 - Area is higher performing	3
BA02	3 Area is higher performing		3
BA03	3 Area is higher performing		3
BA04	3 Area is higher performing		3
BA05	3 Area is higher performing		3

**Purpose 4: 'to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns'**

<b>Broad Area ID</b>	Is the Broad Area within or adjoining a Conservation Area within an historic town? Are key landmarks or the historic core visible from within the Broad Area? Does the Broad Area contribute to the setting of the historic town? <b>0</b> - Broad Area is not within or adjacent to a Conservation Area within a historic town ( <i>Area does not perform against the purpose</i> ) <b>1</b> - Broad Area is adjacent to a Conservation Area within a historic town but has no views of landmarks and/or the historic core ( <i>Area is lower performing</i> ) <b>2</b> - Broad Area is adjacent to a Conservation Area within a historic town and has limited views of landmarks and/or the historic core ( <i>Area is more moderately performing</i> ) <b>3</b> - Broad Area is adjacent to a Conservation Area within a historic town and there are clear views of landmarks and/or the historic core ( <i>Area is higher performing</i> )	<b>Score</b>	
	<b>Select:</b>	<b>Commentary</b>	
BA01	0 - Broad Area is not within or adjacent to a Conservation Area within a historic town	Broad Area BA01 is not within or adjacent to a Conservation Area or historic town.	0
BA02	3 - Broad Area is adjacent to a Conservation Area within a historic town and there are clear views of landmarks and/or the historic core	Broad Area BA02 contains Temple Balsall Conservation Area. There are clear views of Saint Mary's C of E Church and Saint Mary the Virgin Church.	3
BA03	3 - Broad Area is adjacent to a Conservation Area within a historic town and there are clear views of landmarks and/or the historic core	Broad Area BA03 contains Walsal End Lane and Barston Conservation Area. There are clear views of Saint Swithin's Church and village in Barston and Walsal End Lane historic village.	3
BA04	3 - Broad Area is adjacent to a Conservation Area within a historic town and there are clear views of landmarks and/or the historic core	Broad Area BA04 contains Berkswell Conservation Area. There are clear views of Saint John the Baptist parish church, Church of England Primary School, the Bear Inn The Malt House and Village Farm.	3
BA05	2 - Broad Area is adjacent to a Conservation Area within a historic town and has limited views of landmarks and/or the historic core	Broad Area BA05 contains part of Bickenhill Conservation Area but the views are limited.	2



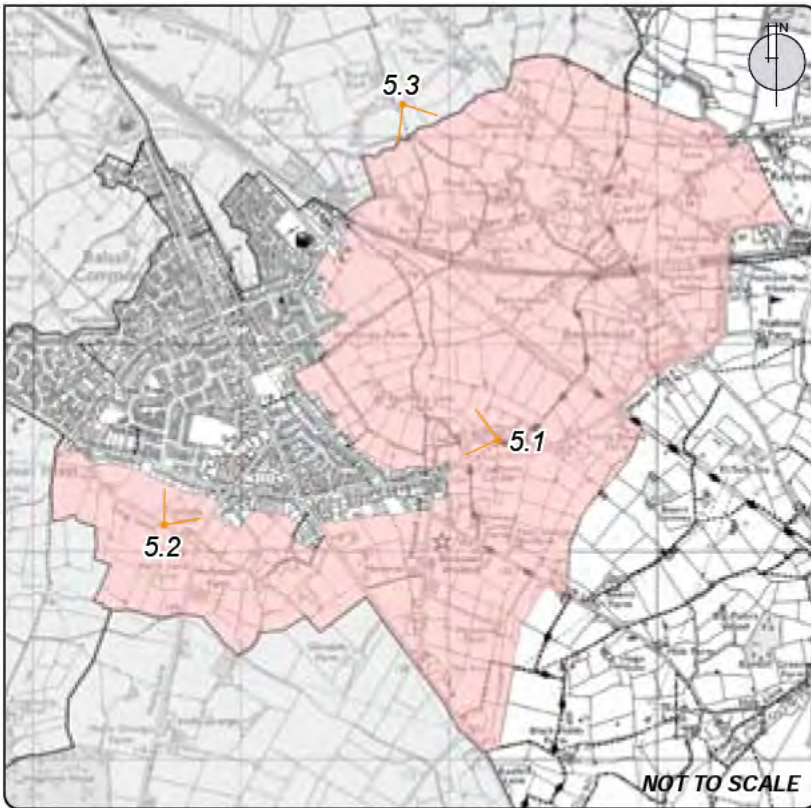
- 0 – Parcel or area does not perform against the purpose
  - 1 – Parcel or area is lower performing
  - 2 – Parcel or area is more moderately performing
  - 3 – Parcel or area is higher performing
  - Solihull Borough Boundary
  - Green Belt
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Atkins Limited ©  
 Consulting Engineers  
 The Hub,  
 500 Park Ave.,  
 Bristol,  
 South Gloucestershire,  
 England,  
 BS32 4RZ

Tel: +44(0)1454 862 000  
 Fax: +44(0)1454 863 333  
 www.atkinsglobal.com

Client Solihull Council	Project Solihull Greenbelt	Title Purpose 2. To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	Drawing Number 5147834-4	Sheet Size A3	Drawn HC	Checked KA	Authorised NDK
				Original Scale 1:70,000	Rev 01	Date 29/06/16	Date 29/06/16



## Balsall Common Eastern Fringe

LCA  
5



**Photograph 5.1:**

Woodland cover is largely absent with trees limited to hedgerows and streets, particularly at the urban edge of Balsall Common.



**Photograph 5.2:**

In places, agricultural fields have given way to recreational purposes at settlement edges, urbanising the once rural setting.



**Photograph 5.3:**

The historic irregular field pattern is evident in some locations. Electricity pylons conspicuously cross the gently undulating landscape, detracting from the rural view.

## Description:

This area is generally flat extending to areas of undulating landscape towards the northern extent of the LCA. The area is located to the west of Balsall Common and spans just under 4.5km<sup>2</sup>.

Being in close proximity to Balsall Common the area therefore is heavily influenced by the settlement bringing in strong elements of suburbia. This is particularly noticeable around Catchems Corner and Carol Green introducing manicured lanes, close mown grass verges, footways and overhead cables. The strong influence of Balsall Common on the rural character of the area has led to the loss of the definitive edge between the urban area and countryside beyond.

Strong tree cover along streets and isolated trees within field boundaries as part of hedgerows create a strong 'sense of place' that adds to the distinctiveness of the area. Even in areas of built development where the rural aspect has been denuded, the tree structure has been retained and remains a dominant influence.

The landform along with the strong hedgerow structure creates short-distance views that are contained within the LCA. The area is easily accessible via a network of roads, footpaths and long distance trails including the Millennium Walk, Coventry Way and Kenilworth Greenway cycle path, which form key recreational routes through the area. The railway line running east to west to Coventry also passes across the character area.

## Key Characteristics:

### Geology, soils and drainage:

Majority of the LCA:

- Slowly permeable clayey soils with varying slightly impeded or impeded drainage.
- Warwickshire Group of Siltstone and Sandstone with Subordinate Mudstone solid geology.
- Triassic Rocks (undifferentiated) of Mudstone, Siltstone and Sandstone solid geology.

### Southwest – south of Basall Common:

- Naturally wet sands, gravels and silts with shallow groundwater.

### Landform and Drainage Pattern:

- Gently undulating landform between 110m and 130m AOD, tending to be largely flat in the southern extent of the area.
- Tributaries of the River Blythe drain the area along with other springs and pools. Agricultural field ditches also form part of the drainage pattern.
- Several natural ponds are present particularly in the area between Balsall Common and the Greenway cycle path.

### Land use, fields, boundaries, trees and wildlife:

- Land managed for arable use with smaller grassland fields around settlements.
- Small sized fields with a distinct field pattern bound by a strong hedgerow structure and some ditches. The fields are historic, most likely post-medieval enclosed fields that may have medieval origins.
- Woodland cover is generally absent and tree cover is largely limited to the hedgerows and streets with occasional scattered individual trees within the fields.
- Oaks and Ash are the two dominating species in the area lending an Arcadian character to the streetscape and includes two veteran trees located in the area south of the urban edge at Balsall Common.
- Presence of ridge and furrow within fields on Old Waste Lane add to the diversity of the landscape.
- Little Beanit Farm Meadows is a Local Wildlife Site.

### Settlement, built environment and communications:

- There are small settlements comprising the cluster of dwellings at Carol Green and linear development at Catchems Corner, which are the main areas of settlement outside of Balsall Common.
- A number of farms scattered across the LCA have been subjected to conversions to residential use.
- There are a number of listed buildings scattered across the LCA, however most are concentrated around Carol Green including the Moat House, a Grade II listed building.
- Although not listed, there are several cottages of note located at Catchems Corner and the Berkswell Windmill is an iconic feature in the LCA.
- Communications masts and electricity pylons are visible vertical elements with overhead cables crisscrossing the landscape near to the settlements.
- Several roads run through the area connecting Balsall Common to Coventry in the east and Meriden in the north.
- A number of public footpaths and bridleways including long distance trails of the Millennium Way and Coventry Way traverse the area mostly running in a north-south direction providing connections between the roads.
- The area adjoining the eastern extent of Balsall Common, is criss-crossed with public footpaths. Being in close proximity to the built edge, the area is well used for recreation and is an important access point to the countryside.
- The disused railway line connecting Balsall Common to the University of Warwick functions as an active recreation cycle path known locally as Kenilworth Greenway which continues outside of the LCA to join up with National Cycle Network 523.

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## Sensitivities and Pressures:

- Possible increased pressure for housing and other urbanising features from edge of Balsall Common, Carol Green and Catchems Corner may impact upon the rural character of the area.
- Neglect and potential loss of veteran trees and ancient woodland associated with development pressure.
- The landscape around contains many scattered buildings and has limited capacity to accept additional built development without detriment to landscape character through coalescence.
- Potential of farmstead sprawl with new large modern buildings and farm diversification that detract from the area. Conversion of field barns and vernacular buildings is also impacting upon landscape character.
- Almost the entire LCA bar the south-western area is a mineral safeguarded area for coal, which could have considerable impact upon the landscape character.
- Pressure from the proposed HS2 route.

## Guidelines:

**Aim: To protect the landscape pattern characteristic of the area.**

- Retain the Arcadian character; preserve openness between dwellings and resist further development.
- Retain and enhance the characteristic tree cover of oak within the area.
- Adhere to the requirements of the Solihull Woodland Strategy.
- Encourage appropriate management to retain strong hedgerow structure and the planting of individual trees along field boundaries. Tree planting in the vicinity of Balsall Common is important to its setting and approaches.
- Resist loss of field boundaries to retain irregular and historic field pattern to south of the area. Discourage amalgamation of fields and promote awareness of the Hedgerow Regulations. Develop a hedgerow register for the character area
- Conserve pastoral character and identify opportunities for conversion of arable land back to grazing land.
- Conserve the diversity of old permanent pastures. Reseeding or ploughing must be avoided and tree/woodland planting is inappropriate in these areas.
- Promote the proactive management of existing trees and planting of new trees to fit with landscape pattern in particular trees at the settlement edge.
- Encourage diversification of Local Wildlife Sites and habitat conservation areas through appropriate landscape and ecology management plans. Opportunities to improve existing habitats and create new ones should be sought.

## Overall Landscape Sensitivity:

### Landscape Character Sensitivity:

- The Landscape Character Sensitivity of this LCA is considered to be **Medium**.
- This is a landscape with a strong 'sense of place', defining landscape features and a characteristic field pattern. The Arcadian character with the oak trees is also a key feature of the area. The suburban influences and the roads within a rural setting creates a slightly unbalanced landscape, although the key elements are in a good condition. The historic field pattern around settlements is an important feature along with the associated tree structure, which contributes to the setting of these settlements in the wider landscape. There are some detracting features within the landscape including pylons and communication masts.

### Visual Sensitivity:

- The Visual Sensitivity of this LCA is considered to be **Medium**.
- The general visibility in this LCA consists of short distance views that are contained, shallow and generally in a horizontal orientation. The oak trees bordering the lanes and roads are a key visual feature in the area. Prevention of coalescence is important particularly where the urban edge has a strong relationship with existing built form.

**Table 21: Overall Sensitivity for LCA 5 – Balsall Common Eastern Fringe: Medium**

		Landscape Character Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Visual Sensitivity	High	High	High	Medium	Low
	Medium	High	Medium	Medium	Low
	Low	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
	Very Low	Low	Low	Low	Very Low/ Negligible



## Landscape Value:

- The value of this character area is considered to be **Medium**.
- This is a locally distinctive landscape containing valued characteristics. The historic field pattern is irreplaceable and considered fundamental to the distinctiveness of the character of the area. Value is increased by the presence of the long distance trails of Millennium Way and Coventry Way.

## Landscape Capacity:

- Consistent with current guidance, it is not possible to establish a definitive baseline sensitivity to change without having details of a given proposal. However, for the purpose of this report a general assessment of the LCA's capacity to accommodate change has been undertaken. This should be used as a guide only, and will need to be re-assessed once details of any proposed development and site location are known.
- This LCA being of *Medium* overall landscape sensitivity and *Medium* landscape value, suggests that the LCA would typically have an overall **Low** landscape capacity to accommodate new development. The LCA is an attractive largely rural landscape with urban influences, being in close proximity to Balsall Common. It is characterised by its historic field pattern and pastoral fields.
- Overall, the area would be able to accommodate only small areas of new development, which would need to be of an appropriate type, scale and form, in keeping with the existing character and features of the landscape. Any new development should not result in the loss of the historical field patterns or facilitate the further expansion of Balsall Common into the countryside.

**Table 22: Landscape Capacity for LCA 5 – Balsall Common Eastern Fringe: Low**

		Overall Landscape Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Landscape Value	High	Very Low/ None	Very Low	Low	Medium
	Medium	Very Low	<b>Low</b>	Low	Medium
	Low	Low	Low	Medium	High
	Very Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High

## C. Schedule of Allocated Sites

432. This is a summary table listing the residential sites to be allocated in the plan<sup>63</sup>.

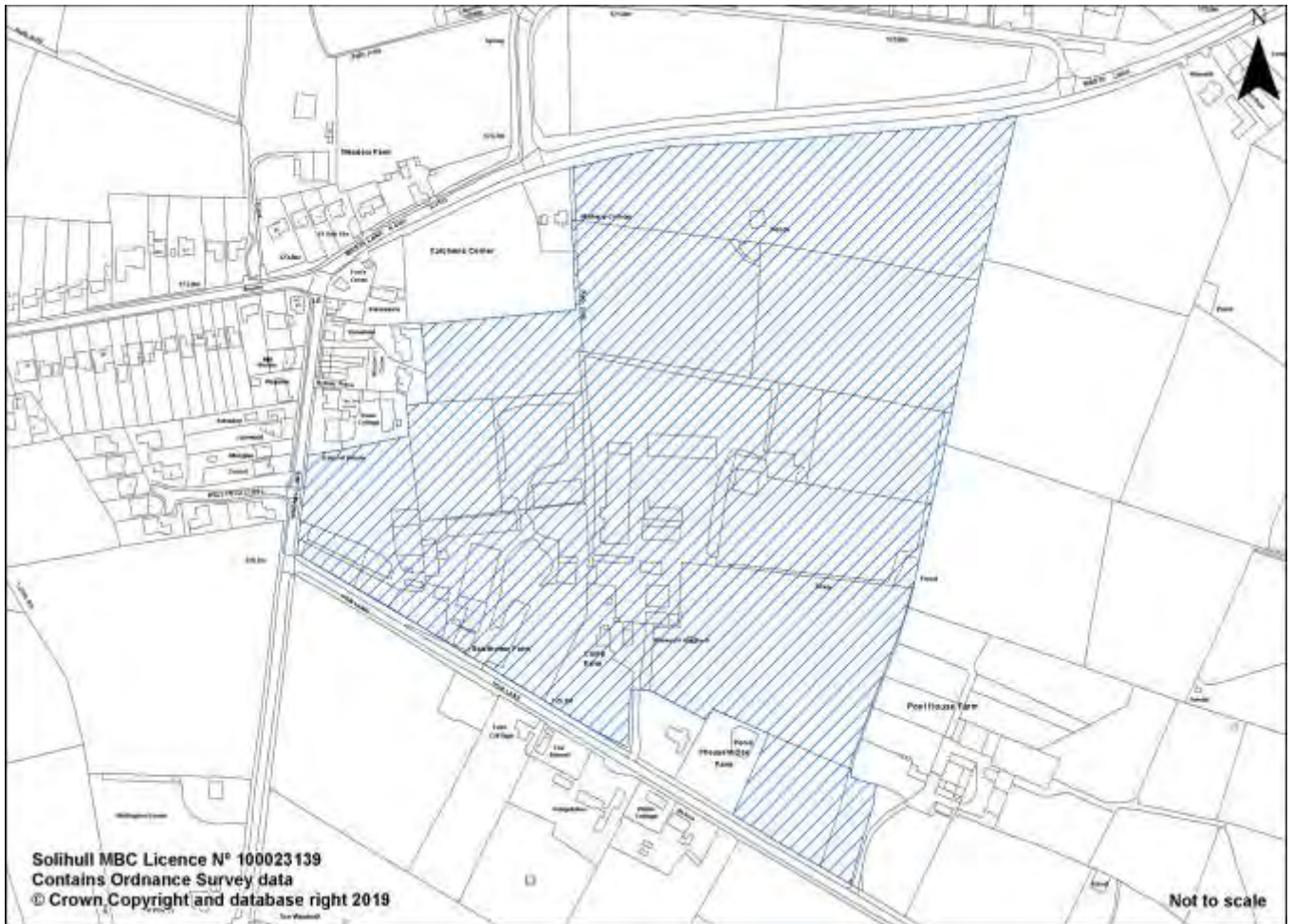
Area <sup>64</sup>	Ref.	Site Name	Green Belt	Site Area (ha)	Indicative Capacity <sup>65</sup>
Balsall Common	1	<b>Barratt's Farm</b>	Yes	93	900
	2	<b>Frog Lane</b>	Yes	6	110
	3	<b>Windmill Lane/Kenilworth Road</b>	Yes	11	220
	21	<b>Lavender Hall Farm</b>	Yes	4	60
	22	<b>Trevallion Stud</b>	Yes	11	300
	23	<b>Pheasant Oak Farm</b>	Yes	12	100
Catherine-de-Barnes	24	<b>Oak Farm</b>	Yes	2	80
Dickens Heath	4	<b>West of Dickens Heath</b> (off Tythe Barn Lane, Tile House Lane and Birchy Leasowes Lane)	Yes	41	350
Hampton in Arden	6	<b>Meriden Road</b>	Yes	7	100
Hockley Heath	25	<b>Land south of School Road</b>	Yes	6	100
Kingshurst	7	<b>Kingshurst Village Centre</b>	No	4	100
Knowle	8	<b>Hampton Road</b>	Yes	13	300
	9	<b>South of Knowle</b> (between Station Road, Warwick Road and Grove Road)	Yes	46	600
Meriden	10	<b>West of Meriden</b> (between Birmingham Road and Maxstoke Lane)	Yes	3	100

<sup>63</sup> In addition to these sites, the 2016 Draft Local Plan also included employment or mixed use allocations as follows: 19 – HS2 Interchange (c140ha) and 20 – Land at Damson Parkway (c94ha).

<sup>64</sup> The area or settlement the allocation is in or adjacent to (not necessarily the ward or parish it falls within).

<sup>65</sup> Number of residential units.

<b>Site Reference</b>	414	<b>Site Name</b>	Land at Hob Lane
<b>Gross Area (Ha)</b>	12.73	<b>Ward</b>	Meriden
<b>Capacity (SHELAA)</b>	298	<b>Parish</b>	Berkswell
<b>Green Belt</b>	100	<b>Greenfield/ Brownfield</b>	Part brownfield, part greenfield



### Constraints

<b>Policy Constraints</b>	Green Belt Mineral safeguarding area for Coal
<b>Hard Constraints</b>	None
<b>Soft constraints</b>	PROW M190 runs through site Hedgerows Adjacent to locally listed building Existing uses on site

## Evidence

<b>SHELAA</b>	Category 2 (some achievability constraints)
<b>Accessibility Study</b>	Primary School: Low Food Store: Low GP Surgery: Very Low Public Transport: Very High (Bus) Overall: Low/Medium Access: No existing footway provision
<b>Green Belt Assessment</b>	Western part within: Lower performing parcel (RP56) overall with a combined score of 4. Moderately performing in terms of purpose 2. Eastern part within: Higher performing broad area (BA04) overall with a combined score of 12. *Highly
<b>Landscape Character Assessment</b>	Within LCA5 Landscape character sensitivity - Medium Visual sensitivity - Medium Landscape value - Medium Landscape capacity to accommodate change - Low
<b>Sustainability Appraisal</b>	Site can be considered with AECOM 55 17 effects: 3 positive (1 significant); 8 neutral; 6 negative (2 significant).

## Site Selection

<b>Spatial Strategy</b>	Growth Option G: Significant expansion of rural villages/settlements
<b>Site Selection Topic Paper</b>	Balsall Common is identified as an area suitable for significant growth. Development should preferably be on land that is more highly accessible, and/or performs least well in Green Belt terms and/or provides strong defensible boundaries.
<b>Site Selection Step 1</b>	3
<b>Commentary</b>	Part brownfield site within high performing parcel in the Green Belt Assessment, and would result in an indefensible boundary. Site has a low to medium level of accessibility, is in an area of medium visual sensitivity with low capacity for change and is deliverable, subject to some constraints. The SA identifies 3 positive and 6 negative effects, of which only the distance to key economic assets and convenience store or supermarket are significant. Settlement is identified for significant growth and its mainly brownfield nature means the site could make a contribution, subject to suitable green belt boundaries
<b>Site Selection Step 2</b>	G

# Site Analysis

The 12 ha site is located to the south of Balsall Common. The site is allocated in the Draft Local Plan (January 2019) to accommodate 100 homes.

The Green Belt site is bounded by Waste Green Lane to the north and Hob Lane to the south. The western boundary is predominately the rear garden boundaries of properties which front onto Windmill Lane.

The principal components of the site are the yard and buildings associates with Pheasant Oak Farm. The non agricultural uses (which are dominated by caravan storage ) are included in the Councils Brownfield Land Register.

The mature hedgerows and trees provide a semi rural setting for any future development.

*A full site appraisal has not yet been carried out for this site.*



-  Fronts of properties
-  Back of properties
-  Listed building
-  Water
-  Bus Stop
-  Trees
-  Footpath

## **SMBC Emerging Concept Masterplan Development Principles: Site 23 Pheasant Oak Farm**

In order to maximise the efficient use of the land. Medium density development is proposed in order to deliver 100 homes .

The alignment of the by-pass will provide the new Green belt boundary to the east of the site.

Based on 100 homes 0.67ha of open space would need to be provide. The development would need to provide doorstep play. Given the level of development in the locality (Site 1 and 3 ) A large play facility which serves all three sites need for Local and Neighbourhood play provision may be appropriate.

Any development of this site should seek to foster place making values using Green Infrastructure and public open space as a means to enhancing legibility around the site and encourage walking and cycling to local amenities.

The rural character of Hobs Lane and Windmill Lane should be safeguarded.

**Site Assessment Details**

<b>SHLAA Reference</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>Site Name</b>	Pheasant Oak Farm	<b>Settlement</b>	Balsall Common
<b>Category:</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Observations</b>	The site comprises agricultural land and various farm buildings. The site is in close proximity to large detached properties but not immediately adjacent to the settlement boundary.		
<b>Yield:</b>	<b>80</b>		Site performs well against suitability, availability and achievability criteria		
<b>Density: (per hectare)</b>	<b>36</b>				

**Suitability Criteria**

Access Infrastructure Constraints	5: Existing road access is adequate
Contaminated Land / Landfill Site	3: Less than 50% of the site is within the constraint
Ground Condition Constraints	5: Treatment not expected to be required
Heritage	5: Site does not include, nor is it adjacent to, a Nationally or Locally Listed Building
BMV Agricultural Land	5: Site is Grade 5 agricultural land
High Pressure Gas Pipeline	5: Site does not lie within this constraint
Flood Risk Constraints	5: Within flood zone 1
Bad Neighbour Constraints	5: Site has no bad neighbours
Biodiversity	5: Site is not within, or adjacent to, a Local Wildlife Site
Suitability of Location Constraints	0: Site does not fall into one of the above categories.
Other Suitability Considerations (if applicable)	

**Availability Criteria**

Availability Details	3: Held by developer / willing owner / public sector, vacant land and buildings or sites with pre-app discussions are taking place
Comments (if applicable)	Site identified through submission process - therefore assume willing owner

**Achievability**

Achievability Details	3: Good marketability and/ or viability (likely to come forward within first five years)
Comments (if applicable)	Predominantly greenfield site in good market value area.

**Appendix EDP 4**  
**Photoviewpoints**  
**(edp5006\_d011c 24 July 2023 GYo/NWa)**



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Approximate extent of site

Old Waste Lane

Millennium Way  
PRow M190

To be viewed at comfortable arm's length



To be viewed at comfortable arm's length