



LAND AT FULFORD HALL, SOLIHULL

GREEN BELT, LANDSCAPE AND MASTERPLANNING REPORT

16TH FEBRUARY 2017

Land at Fulford Hall Farm, Solihull

Green Belt, Landscape and Masterplanning Report
16th February 2017

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This document has been prepared and checked in accordance with ISO 9001:2008.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1. Background and Purpose

LDA Design Consulting Ltd (LDA Design) has been instructed by Summix FHS Developments LLP to undertake a Green Belt and Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) and masterplanning support for land at Fulford Hall Farm, Solihull ('the Site') which is located in the West Midlands Green Belt.

The purpose of the report is to provide written representations in support of the Site's release from the Green Belt and allocation for residential development as part Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council's (SMBC) Local Plan Review.

In particular, the report provides:

- An appraisal of the Site's contribution to the five purposes of the Green Belt and consideration as to whether it can be released without harm to this designation;
- A Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) of the Site including landscape character and visual amenity.
- The capacity of the Site to deliver an appropriate and sustainable development (in the form of an indicative Framework Masterplan) that would contribute to meeting SMBC housing numbers.

1.2. Approach to the Appraisal

SMBC are currently undertaking a review of its local plan, in part due to a deficiency of housing numbers contained within the adopted local plan (2013). The review includes an update of the evidence base which underpins the Solihull Local Plan (SLP) and has prompted a 'Call for Sites' to inform the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA). The deadline for the submission of sites has now passed, however, additional sites can still be submitted to SMBC and will be retained for review as part of any future update to the SHELAA which provides the context for this report.

The original evidence base for the adopted local plan included a review of the North Solihull Green Belt conducted in 2012. The scope of the Green Belt review was deliberately focussed on North Solihull only and did not include the Fulford Hall site and surrounding area. As such it has limited relevance to this report, although there are some lessons to be drawn from the methodology which split the Green Belt into manageable parcels, and assessed each parcel against the five purposes of the Green Belt. A similar approach is used to assess the Site.

A district wide Green Belt Assessment is currently ongoing and is expected to form part of the updated evidence base for the SLP Review, although no details have been released.

The LVA has been prepared in accordance with the guidelines set out in the third edition of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA3). GLVIA3 states in paragraph 1.11 that:

'the principles and processes of LVIA can also be used to assist in the "appraisal" of forms of land use change or development that fall outside the requirements of the EIA Directive and Regulations'

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The approach adopted for this report comprises the following key stages:

Baseline study – a desk based review of documented information including;

- Relevant current national and local planning policy, in respect of Green Belt and landscape and visual matters, for the Site and surrounding areas;
- Nationally and locally designated landscapes for the Site and surrounding areas;
- Existing landscape character assessments for the Site and surrounding areas;
- The production of a Visual Envelope Plan to demonstrate the visibility of the Site in its current use; and
- The identification of potential visual receptors (e.g. people travelling along routes, or within open access land and settlements) within the study area.
- A site visit has been undertaken for familiarisation and understanding of the Site and surrounding landscape; to verify desktop and baseline analysis; and to identify viewpoints and receptors and record representative views. The report is supported by accompanying Figures presented in **Appendix 1**.

Appraisal

The appraisal comprises both desk based and field studies and considers:

- The Site's contribution to the five purposes of the Green Belt; and
- The potential effects to the landscape and visual resource, including
 - Landscape designations;
 - The landscape fabric of the Site;
 - Landscape character; and
 - visual receptors.

Framework Masterplan Design

The Framework Masterplan has been informed by the LVA. In designing all aspects of the Framework Masterplan a landscape led approach has been adopted with the aim of assimilating the development within its context and designing out potential adverse impacts. This includes:

- retention, as far as practicable, of existing vegetation (primarily woodland blocks, mature oak trees and hedgerows);
- retention of existing field boundaries and patterns;
- retention of the existing public right of way within the Site;
- potential layouts and access routes that work with the topography;
- connectivity and integration with existing built form;
- the preference for Sustainable Urban Drainage solutions (SUDs) and working with the natural topography of the Site; and

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- consideration of housing densities in regards to existing built form and the settlement edge location.

1.3. Site Context

The Site context is illustrated in **Figure 1**. The Site is centred at National Grid Reference SP097749 and covers an area of approximately 79.4 ha. It is located on agricultural land to the south of Tidbury Green, Solihull and is bounded by Norton Lane to the north; the River Cole to the west; a public footpath and Wood Lane to the south; and by agricultural fields to the east. Fulford Hall and Fulford Hall Farm are not included within the Site.

The Site is divided into three distinct parcels of land by the existing road network, including Rumbush Lane and Fulford Hall Road. Rumbush Lane is the main road through the Site and connects Earlswood Station to Norton Lane on a south-west by north-east axis. Fulford Hall Road, branches off Rumbush Lane near to the junction with Wood Lane and connects to Norton Lane further west. This creates three distinct parcels of land: to the west of Fulford Hall Road; between Fulford Hall Road and Rumbush Lane; and to the east of Rumbush Lane.

The majority of the Site is comprised of arable farmland consisting of an irregular, small field pattern with well defined boundaries. The field boundaries include well managed hedgerows with mature oak trees regularly spaced along their length and many of the hedgerows have drainage ditches running in parallel. Several woodland blocks are present on the Site, some located in former quarry pits to the west of the Site and also surrounding Fulford Hall. Other land uses include an existing playing field to the east of Rumbush Lane which is used by Woodbourne Sports Club.

There are two Public Rights of Way (PRoW) within the Site; these are located to the west of Rumbush Lane along the southern boundary of the Site connecting to Wythall (beneath the railway embankment); and east of Rumbush Lane connecting Rumbush Farm to Wood Lane.

1.4. The Study Area

The extent of the study area is illustrated on **Figure 2**. The study area for the appraisal has been defined by the extent to which the Site is likely to be visible. This has been informed by field observation and by a desk study of the topography, aerial photography and OS mapping information.

The Site is visually well contained as a result of a gentle topography (**Figure 5**) and the presence of boundary vegetation, vegetation in the wider landscape and by the urban edge of Tidbury Green and Wythall. In light of this a study area of 3km (measured from the edge of the Site) is judged to be appropriate for this study.

1.5. Report Structure

The written representation comprises the following:

- **Section 1:** an introduction to the study, its purpose and adopted methodology;
- **Section 2:** a summary of relevant planning policy;
- **Section 3:** a summary of the landscape and visual baseline conditions;

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- **Section 4:** a consideration of the Site's contribution to the Green Belt designation and an appraisal of the anticipated effects of development within the Site on landscape and visual receptors within the study area;
- **Section 5:** a consideration of the opportunities and constraints of the Site and a possible Framework Masterplan should the site be allocated for development;
- **Section 6:** conclusions of the study; and
- **Appendices**

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2.0 Planning Policy

2.1. National Planning Policy

- 2.1.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in March 2012, provides the overarching planning guidance for England with sustainable development as a 'golden thread running through both plan making and decision taking.'

Paragraph 17 sets out the twelve core land-use planning principles that should underpin plan making and decision-taking. The NPPF states that planning should (inter alia) '*not simply be about scrutiny, but instead be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives*'. In doing so it should '*take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it*'. It adds that planning should '*contribute to conserving the natural environment*' and that allocations of land for development should '*prefer land of lesser environmental value*'. Section 9 of the NPPF is headed '*Protecting Green Belt*'. Paragraph 79 states 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*'. The five purposes of Green Belt are set out in Paragraph 80 as follows:

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

For ease of reference in this report, these purposes are referred to as NPPF Purposes 1 to 5, with the assigned number corresponding to the order in which the purposes appear in the NPPF.

Paragraph 83 of the NPPF states that:

'Local Planning Authorities with Green Belts in their area should establish Green Belt boundaries in their Local Plans which set the framework for Green Belt and settlement policy. Once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of the Local Plan. At that time, authorities should consider the Green Belt boundaries having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so that they should be capable of enduring beyond the plan period'. The planning context is set out in more detail in the planning statement accompanying this report.

Section 11 of the NPPF is headed '*Conserving and enhancing the natural environment*'. Paragraph 109 states the '*planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by [inter alia] protecting and enhancing valued landscapes...'*

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2.2. Local Planning Policy

Local planning policy is set out in the Solihull Local Plan (SLP) which was adopted in 2013 and covers the period 2011 to 2028.

Following adoption, a legal challenge has resulted in the overall housing requirement being treated as not adopted and this aspect of the plan has been remitted back to the Council for reconsideration. The SLP is currently under review and the Solihull Local Plan Review is due to be published in winter 2017.

The Local Development Scheme (LDS) 2016 identifies what documents SMBC has produced, or intends to produce, that will form part of its development plan. It sets out the programme for reviewing the SLP and identifies additional documents that will be provided as part the evidence base. This includes the need for a Green Belt Assessment.

2.2.1. Solihull Local Plan (2013)

The SLP was formally adopted in 2013 and sets out the following policies in relation to protecting and enhancing the environment.

Policy 10 - Natural Environment states 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.*'

Policy 15 – Securing Design Quality states '*all development proposals will be expected to achieve good quality, inclusive and sustainable design. This includes development that conserves and enhances biodiversity, landscape quality and considers the impact on and opportunities for green infrastructure at the earliest opportunity in the design process.*'

2.3. Local Guidance

In addition to the above planning policies, the following guidance documents are of relevance.

2.3.1. Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines 1993

For the purposes of this report the principal published assessment for the LVA is the Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines (WLG). The WLG is a county-wide project which '*provides a set of guidelines designed to offer advice on maintaining diversity and beauty, to conserve the landscape for future generations.*'

The WLG comprises three separate landscape guidelines for Arden, Avon and Dunsmore which have been culminated into a single document published in 1993.

The WLP identifies 7 broad regional character areas across the county: Arden, Dunsmore, Avon Valley, Feldon, Cotswold, High Cross Plateau and Mease Lowlands. These are described as '*distinct landscape regions, often very extensive, where common physical, historical, ecological and cultural associations impart a sense of unity to the landscape.*'

Each of the regional character areas is further subdivided into distinct local landscape character types (LCTs). These are described as '*types of countryside which have a unity of character due to particular combinations of landform and landcover and a consistent pattern*'

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of characteristic features' For each of the LCTs identified, the individual guidelines provide a description of the overall characteristics and qualities, confirm the key characteristic features and provide a management strategy.

2.3.2. Solihull's Countryside Strategy 2010 – 2020

The first review of Solihull's Countryside Strategy (SCS) was published in 2010 and forms part of the evidence base for the adopted SLP. It is intended that the final plan will provide supplementary planning guidance for countryside matters within the Borough.

The aim of the SCS is 'to control and guide future change in Solihull's countryside in order to protect and enhance its character, natural resources and biodiversity, whilst assisting the sustainable management of a diverse and prosperous rural economy, thereby contributing to the overall quality of life within the Borough.'

The document provides an appraisal of Solihull's countryside and divides it into 10 broad zones that reflect the difference in the underlying landscape and nature and extent of urban influences.

The strategy goes on to identify 10 strands which address the key issues facing Solihull's countryside. For each strand the strategy includes an objective, an explanation of the components which make up the topic, and an indication of how SMBC intends to implement the Strategy. Local objectives are provided for each of the 10 zones identified within the countryside appraisal.

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3.0 Baseline Conditions

3.1. Designations

There are no landscape policy designations within the Site or study area.

3.1.1. West Midlands Green Belt

The extent of the West Midlands Green Belt within the study area is shown in **Figure 3**.

The Site is located entirely within the Green Belt designation adjacent to the settlement of Tidbury Green which forms the northern boundary of the Site. The existing built form of Tidbury Green is included within the Green Belt designation, however, two development parcels located to the north of the village (Lowbrook Farm and Tidbury Green Farm) are excluded and have recently gained planning consent. Further north, the Green Belt is fragmented with areas of existing built form at Wythall, Drake's Cross and Dickens Heath which are not included within the Green Belt.

To the south, the Green Belt extends by approximately 6km to the edge of Redditch and to the east it extends approximately 3km to Blythe Valley Park.

3.2. Landscape Character

The Site lies within the National Character Area Profile (NCAP) 97: Arden, the key characteristics of which are:

- *'Well-wooded farmland landscape with rolling landform.'*
- *'Mature oaks, mostly found within hedgerows, together with ancient woodlands, and plantation woodlands that often date from the time of enclosure. Woodlands include historic coppice bounded by woodbanks.'*
- *'Narrow, meandering clay river valleys'*
- *'Numerous areas of former wood-pasture with large, old, oak trees often associated with isolated remnants of more extensive heathlands.'*
- *'Diverse field patterns, ranging from well hedged, irregular fields and small woodlands that contrast with larger semi regular fields on former deer park estates.'*

While the NCAP is helpful in providing an understanding of the broad scale character context of the Site, it does not provide sufficient local or site level detail against which potential effects of a development can be considered.

The Warwickshire Landscapes Project (1993) provides a more detailed understanding of the local character of the Site and its surrounding context. The Site is located entirely within the Arden regional character area and is part of the Arden Pastures LCT, a detailed summary of which is provided below.

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3.2.1. Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines 1993

The Arden landscape guidelines was the first report to be published as part of the WLG in 1990 and has since been incorporated into a combined document published in 1993.

The Arden regional character area is identified as a broad landscape region which covers an extensive area of land between the urban areas of Coventry and Birmingham, and stretching from Tamworth in the north to Stratford upon Avon in the South.

The Arden landscape is described as '*an historic region of former wood pasture and heath characterised by ancient woodlands, mature hedgerow oaks, and a dispersed settlement pattern of brick and half-timbered farmsteads and wayside cottages.*' The Arden guideline identifies 7 distinct landscape character types (LCTs), each of which is characterised by a particular aspect of the wider regional character area. These are Ancient Arden, Arden Pastures, Industrial Arden, Arden Parklands, Wooded Estatelands, Arden River Valleys and River Valley Wetlands.

The Site is located entirely within the Arden Pastures LCT which is described as a '*small scale, enclosed landscape, often pervaded by suburban influences and characterised by small fields, typically bordered by mature hedgerow trees.*'

The description of the Arden Pastures LCT makes reference to considerable expansion of some settlements (including Wythall) over the last thirty years, with much modern 'infill' that '*has resulted in a landscape often pervaded by suburban influences.*'

However, '*despite the densely populated character of this landscape, settlement is not usually a dominant visual element. Instead gently rolling topography and numerous hedgerow trees combine to give a heavily wooded appearance throughout much of the area.*' The text continues:

'It is not uncommon in some areas to find lines of mature oak trees in every hedgerow. The effect of so many trees is to create filtered views and a strong sense of enclosure.'

The LCT summary description states that throughout the area as a whole the general impression is of a strongly unified landscape where to a large extent the impact of new settlement is visually contained.'

The key characteristics of the Arden Pastures LCT which are of relevance to the Site are summarised below:

- '*A gently rolling topography.*'
- '*A well defined pattern of small fields and paddocks.*'
- '*Numerous mature hedgerow oaks.*'
- '*A network of minor lanes often with ribbon development.*'
- The assessment identifies the management strategy for Arden Pastures LCT to '*conserve and enhance the unity and small scale enclosed character of the landscape.*' It identifies the following landscape guidelines:
- '*Maintain the wooded character of mature hedgerow and roadside oaks.*'
- '*Conserve and enhance tree cover through natural regeneration of hedgerow oaks.*'

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- *'Conserve the historic field pattern of small hedged fields.'*
- *'Conserve pastoral character and identify opportunities for conversion of arable land back to permanent pasture.'*
- *'Conserve the diversity and special character of old permanent pastures.'*
- *'Identify opportunities for enhancing landscape character through more creative design of public open space.'*

3.2.2. Solihull's Countryside Strategy 2010 – 2020

The Site is located with the Zone 1: Hockley Heath Parish as identified in the countryside appraisal of Solihull. It is described as follows:

'This zone still retains many of the unique features of Arden Pastureland, typically small scale enclosed landscape, containing a wide variety of natural habitats. At the same time, it is an area where "urban fringe" features are already apparent, including recreational and other mixed uses'

The local objectives for this zone are to:

- *'Minimise the impact of new development on the edge of the countryside'*
- *'Maintain the openness and rural character of the gaps between development'*
- *'Encourage the retention of farming practices which preserve the characteristic features of the Arden landscape'*
- *'Encourage and support the potential of the Stratford-on-Avon canal / Earlswood Lakes as valuable Green / Blue infrastructure assets'*

3.2.3. Landscape Character Baseline

The Site is characterised by a gently rolling landscape with a well defined pattern of small, irregular fields. The River Cole marks the western boundary of the Site and the fields located along this edge form a gentle valley side. The land gradually rises to a high point at Fulford Hall and then falls away towards Earlswood Lakes in the east. Fields are typically bounded by a network of well managed hedgerows which contain numerous mature hedgerow oak trees spaced at regular intervals (refer to **Figure 8**). The trees create filtered views across the Site and a strong sense of enclosure. The presence of small woodland blocks located within the western parcel of the Site, together with Clowes Wood to the south, gives the characteristics of a well wooded landscape.

Three lanes run through the Site and connect to the surrounding local road network. The existing built form of Tidbury Green is located along the northern side of Norton Lane and constitutes ribbon development along this route. The existing built form is clearly visible throughout much of the Site and associates the Site with the settlement edge rather than wider countryside. This is characteristic of a landscape pervaded by '*suburban influence*' as described in the LCT. Overall the Site is representative of the Arden Pastures LCT.

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3.3. Visual Baseline

A site visit was undertaken to determine the visual envelope of the Site and identify a series of viewpoints from publically accessible locations (**Figure 4**) to represent the nature of views of the Site from publically accessible land. The visibility of the Site is primarily a function of the topography which is shown in **Figure 5** and illustrates a gently undulating landform with shallow river valleys in a general north to south orientation.

The extent of the visual envelope and location of the representative viewpoints is shown on **Figure 6** with the accompanying photographs presented on a series of photo panels in **Figure 7**. Illustrative viewpoints are also provided in **Figure 8** for context.

The following appraisal considers the nature of views from publically accessible areas comprising PRow and road network. The visual receptors (people) who experience views of the Site are identified as appropriate.

Views from the North

To the north, views of the Site are limited to the immediate vicinity of the Site along Norton Lane. The Site boundary comprises an almost continuous line of hedgerows along the southern edge of the road. Mature hedgerow oaks are spaced at regular intervals along the hedgerow and together they filter views of the Site from Norton Lane. The hedgerow is largely unbroken, although there are occasional gaps which allow for immediate views of the Site. To the north-east of the Site, the number of hedgerow trees along the northern edge is noticeably less, allowing for more open views of the Site as shown in **Figure 8**. The existing built form of Tidbury Green is located along the northern edge of Norton Lane and prevents views of the Site from extending further north.

Visual receptors likely to experience the views described above comprise local road users on Norton Lane.

Views from the East

To the east, views of the Site are screened by intervening field boundaries comprising numerous hedgerows and mature oak trees. Glimpsed views of the Site may be possible from the PRow north of Wood Lane and across pasture land.

Visual receptors likely to experience views described above are limited to users of the PRow north of Wood Lane.

Views from the South

To the south, views of the Site are typically screened or filtered by intervening field boundaries comprising numerous hedgerows and mature oak trees. Where views of the Site are possible, they are limited to the immediate PRow and the local road network surrounding the Site including Rumbush Lane and Wood Lane.

The southern boundary of the Site is visible from an approximate 500m section of Rumbush Lane, between Earlswood Station and the Site boundary. Views from this location are partially screened by intervening field boundaries and hedgerow trees. The Site boundary is visible on the horizon, identifiable by the trees and hedgerows along its length. Views do not extend beyond the boundary and into the Site. The railway bridge at Earlswood Station and associated lineside vegetation contain wider views of the Site from further to the south-west.

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Wood Lane is located to the east of Rumbush Lane and forms the southern boundary to the eastern half of the Site. From this location, views of the Site are partially screened or filtered by vegetation along Wood Lane including hedgerows and mature oak trees. There are occasional gaps in the hedgerow which allow for immediate views of the Site. Further south, views of the Site are screened by Cowles Wood which is located to the south of Wood Lane.

There is a filtered view of the Site from the PRow east of Rumbush Lane for a short (approximately 50m) section of the route where it crosses open farmland. The remainder of the route is screened by intervening vegetation including Clowes Wood.

A small proportion of the Site may be visible from the PRow west of Rumbush Lane, between Kidpile Farm and the Site boundary. Views from this location are limited to a short (approximately 200m) section of the route and heavily filtered by existing tree belts to the west of Kidpile Farm.

Visual receptors likely to experience the views described above are limited to users of Rumbush Lane, Wood Lane and the PRows linking to Rumbush Lane.

Views from the West

To the west, views of the Site are typically screened or filtered by boundary vegetation, the railway embankment and associated lineside vegetation and by residential properties at the edge of Wythall. There are glimpsed views of the Site from Norton Lane as the road enters the village of Wythall and the land begins to rise. From this location the northern edge of the Site is just visible above the rooftops of existing residential properties on Norton Lane.

The PRow south of Wythall is located within a mature woodland belt for the majority of its length as shown in **Figure 8**. There is little or no opportunity for views of the wider landscape until the PRow emerges from woodland near to the valley floor but from this location views of the Site are intercepted by the railway embankment.

Visual receptors likely to experience views described above comprise local road users on Norton Lane from within Wythall.

Conclusion

The visual baseline appraisal of the Site has established that the area and extent to which the Site is visible is very limited and effectively screened by existing built form, vegetation and topography.

The majority of views are limited to the immediate vicinity of the Site including the local road and PRow network. Views of the Site from the wider landscape are screened by a combination of built form, vegetation and topography.

The Site can be seen in immediate views to the south, but this is limited to within approximately 500m from the Site and filtered by existing field boundary vegetation. The presence of numerous hedgerows and mature oak trees, combined with small blocks of woodland and Clowes Wood, give rise to the characteristics of a wooded landscape and a strong sense of enclosure that contains the view. The existing built form of Wythall and Tidbury Green play an important role in containing views to the north and west and are prominent in views from within the Site itself.

Visual receptors potentially affected by development within the Site would be limited to:

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- The immediate roads which surround the Site;
- Rumbush Lane to the south; and
- PRow linking to Rumbush Lane in the south.

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4.0 Site Appraisal

4.1. Contribution to the West Midlands Green Belt

The following section provides a consideration of the Site's contribution to the five purposes of the Green Belt designation.

For the purposes of this report Purpose 4 and 5 have not been considered. The Site does not serve any function in preserving the setting or special character of an historic town and the purpose of encouraging the recycling of derelict land does not fall within the remit of this report.

- 1) To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas

The Site is located on the southern edge of Tidbury Green, a small settlement to the south of Birmingham. The existing settlement has developed along the northern edge of Norton Lane and constitutes a form of ribbon development. It is not considered to be a large built up area and as such the Site does not contribute to Purpose 1 and its removal from the Green Belt designation would not cause harm in this regard.

- 2) To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

The village of Wythall is located to the west of the Site. At its closest point, the edge of Wythall is located approximately 50m from the Site boundary and 125m from the closest existing building at Tidbury Green. The proposed Site boundary extends beyond the existing built edge of Tidbury Green at this point.

In recognition of this important separation between the two settlements, a substantial green corridor is proposed following the River Cole along the eastern edge of the Site (refer to the Framework Masterplan in **Appendix 2**). The corridor would be allocated for informal public open space and free from built development to maintain the sense of openness and separation of the two settlements.

New built form within the Site would be to the east of the existing edge of Tidbury Green at greater distance from Wythall than the current settlement edge. Consequently, there would be no closure of the gap between Wythall and Tidbury Green as a result of the development.

Terry's Green is located approximately 0.8km to the south-west of the Site. It is separated from the Site boundary by Cowles Wood and Earlswood Lake which form a strong physical feature between the two settlements providing a sense of separation and distance. Development of the Site would not result in Tidbury Green merging with Terry's Green.

There are no other large settlements located to the south of the Site and development of the Site would not result in the merging of towns in this direction.

On this basis, development of the Site would not cause neighbouring towns to merge into one another and removal from the Green Belt would not cause harm in this regard.

- 3) To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

The character of the Site is typical of the Arden Pasture LCT: it is well contained by a number of hedgerows, hedgerow trees and woodlands which filter views and create a strong sense of enclosure.

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This enclosure, coupled with the proximity of the Site to Tidbury Green and its visual connectivity to it, lends the Site's association to the settlement rather than the wider countryside to the south.

In the countryside to the south, the horizon line is defined by rising landform and field boundaries comprising hedgerows and trees.

The Framework Masterplan (**Appendix 2**) proposes the retention and enhancement of the southern boundary and allocation of public open space in this area, creating soft landscape edge to the development and screening views from the countryside to the south.

Beyond the railway to the south and west, the Site is not visible and would not result in encroachment to the countryside. On this basis it is concluded that removal from the Green Belt designation would cause nominal harm, being very limited and localised in extent, to this purpose of the designation.

Figure 9 illustrates a suggested realigned Green Belt boundary that follows existing defined physical features on the ground and represents a permanent and defensible Green Belt boundary should the Site be bought forward for development.

4.2. Effects on landscape character

The Site forms a small area of the Arden Pastures LCT and exhibits many of the landscape characteristics identified by the Warwickshire Landscape Projects. Specifically, this relates to a well defined pattern of small fields, bounded by numerous hedgerow oaks and interlocked with small blocks of woodland which create a strong visual containment of the Site.

These landscape features would be retained and enhanced in any future development proposal in accordance with the land management guidelines identified within the LCA. This includes conservation of the wooded character of the Site including mature hedgerow boundaries and oak trees. Opportunities to enhance tree cover and the landscape character of the Site through new planting and new areas of significant public open space is proposed within the Framework Masterplan, enhancing the landscape fabric of the Site and repairing some of the historical landscape features within Site.

The built form of Tidbury Green and Wythall are visible from across much of the Site and are typical of the suburban influence that is a recognised feature of the LCT. Any future development of the Site would be in the context the existing built form and would not encroach onto the wider countryside character. This includes an appropriate response to the southern edge of the Site which would create a soft landscape edge to the development.

In conclusion, appropriate development of the Site would result in a localised change in character to the Site itself but would not detract from the Arden Pastures LCT or the wider landscape character of the area.

4.3. Visual effects

The extent to which the Site is visible from the surrounding landscape has been established from field based observations and representative viewpoints from publically accessible locations. The appraisal does not consider views from private dwellings or property (this is consistent with GLVIA guidance).

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As described in the visual baseline, the distribution and nature of views of the Site is largely defined by the presence or otherwise of boundary vegetation, existing built form and landform. Available views are typically limited to the immediate Site perimeter, Rumbush Lane to the south and adjoining PRowS.

Locations identified as having potential views of the Site are shown on the Visual Envelope plan (**Figure 6**). To illustrate the views of the Site, six representative views have been identified (**Figure 6**) and shown within the accompanying photopanel (**Figure 7**). Details of the six views is provided in the table below.

Viewpoint	Distance, Direction	Receptor
1. Norton Lane near to junction with Fulford Hall Road	Northern Boundary	Pedestrian and road users
2. Norton Lane near to junction with Rumbush Lane	Northern Boundary	Pedestrian and road users
3. PRow north of Wood Lane	330m, SE	Walkers using the footpath
4. Junction Rumbush Lane and PRow	230m, S	Pedestrian and road users
5. PRow south of Wythall	190m, W	Walkers using the footpath
6. Norton Lane at Wythall	50m, NW	Pedestrian and road users

Each of the viewpoints is a 'sample' of the potential effects, representing a wide range of receptors – including not only those actually at the viewpoint, but also those nearby, at a similar distance or direction.

From these viewpoints it can be seen that:

- Development of the Site would be visible to people using the immediate roads and PRowS that surround the Site, including Norton Lane, Rumbush Lane, Fulford Hall Road and Wood Lane. From these locations, views of the development would be typically screened or filtered by boundary vegetation including hedgerows and trees. The development would be seen in the context of existing built form of Tidbury Green and Wythall and contained by existing trees and woodland which provide an overarching landscape framework to the Site. Internal field boundaries retained and new planting within the Site would further soften built form.
- Effects upon visual receptors beyond the immediate vicinity of the Site to the west, north and east are contained by existing built form, vegetation and the railway embankment.

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- In views from the wider countryside to the south the network of tree and mature hedgerow field boundaries form an effective filter and screen to views limiting them to the close proximity of the Site. The provision of a substantial soft landscape edge along the southern boundary of the Development would further screen and filter potential views.

In conclusion, development of the Site would effect a localised area primarily relating to the local road and footpath network in the immediate vicinity of the Site. Receptors beyond this would experience little, if any, change.

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5.0 Framework Masterplan

The Framework Masterplan (**Appendix 2**) has been developed in coordination with the landscape and visual appraisal to ensure a sensitive landscape led design response to the landscape context of the Site and to aid the assimilation of new built form into the existing context.

The following overarching design concept principles have underpinned the Framework Masterplan:

1) Consolidation of the settlement of Tidbury Green

The Framework Plan seeks to consolidate the ribbon development pattern of Tidbury Green into a more compact and coherent settlement.

2) The creation of a permanent and defensible Green Belt Boundary

A green corridor along the Cole Brook is proposed creating a permanent and defensible physical boundary to the Green Belt and soft edge to the development. The corridor would maintain the sense of separation between Tidbury Green and Wythall. To the south and east the realigned Green Belt boundary would follow existing mature hedgerows and tree belts. The alignment as shown on the Realigned Green Belt Plan (**Figure 9**) allows Fulford Hall and Fulford Hall Farm to remain in the Green Belt without a convoluted Green Belt boundary.

3) The creation of a community focal point for Tidbury Green, linking north to the existing village hall and primary school

New community facilities are proposed to create a community focal point for the development and Tidbury Green. The community focal point would include the school site and new Tidbury Green village green. It could also include other community facilities. The community focal point would link to the existing village hall and school to the north along a main village street to complement, rather than compete, with existing facilities.

4) The protection of the setting of Fulford Hall and Fulford Hall Farm

Development offsets around Fulford Hall (Grade II) and Fulford Hall Farm ensure the setting of these existing buildings is maintained. Generous offset of built form is provided and new tree belt and tree planting proposed as enhancements the buildings' setting.

- In the context of these overarching principles, the following principles have been adopted in formulation of the Framework Masterplan:
- The retention, as far as practicable, of existing vegetation including woodland blocks, tree belts, hedgerows and mature individual trees;
- The retention of existing field boundaries and patterns;
- The retention of the existing public right of way within the Site;
- The provision of substantial new public open space along the River Cole corridor and southern boundary of the Site to create a soft landscape edge to the development;

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- New woodland belt, hedgerow and tree planting within the Site;
- The preference for Sustainable Urban Drainage solutions (SUDs) and working with the natural topography of the Site; and
- The consideration of housing densities in regards to existing built form and the settlement edge location.

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6.0 Conclusion

The Green Belt, Landscape and Masterplanning report has considered the contribution of the Site to the purposes of the Green Belt designation and considered the potential effects to the landscape and visual resource.

Taking account of all five purposes of the Green Belt designation, it is concluded the Site does not contribute to four of the five purposes of the Green Belt designation and plays only a negligible role in the protection of the countryside from encroachment purposes, the Site being more associated with existing settlement at Tidbury Green than countryside. It is concluded the release of the Site from the Green Belt would not result in harm to this designation and a permanent and defensible boundary could be drawn as that shown in **Figure 9**.

The Landscape and Visual Appraisal concludes the Site, in landscape character terms relates closely to settlement rather than countryside. Visually, the Site is well contained as a result of topography, mature vegetation and adjacent built form.

Development within the Site would result in a localised change to the character of the Site but would not adversely affect the character the Arden Pastures Landscape Character Type in which the Site lies. The proposed Framework Masterplan would retain and enhance the key landscape features of the Site, specifically the existing boundary hedgerows, trees and woodland, in accordance with policy objectives and guidelines set out in the Warwickshire Landscapes Project and Solihull Countryside Strategy.

In visual terms, the extent to which the development of the Site would be visible is limited to a very small geographical area primarily relating to the local road and footpath network in the immediate vicinity of the Site. The majority of views would be in the context of the existing built form of Tidbury Green and are contained by existing tree cover and woodland. There are no long distance views of the Site.

The nature of anticipated change to the visual environment is considered to be minimal and would be similar to that of existing views and visual amenity.

A landscape led Framework Masterplan (**Appendix 2**) has been produced informed by the findings of the Green Belt and Landscape and Visual Appraisal analysis. The Framework Masterplan provides an indication of how an appropriate development could be brought forward at the Site in response to the location and context providing a positive contribution to the housing needs of Solihull.

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Appendices

Appendices 1. Figures

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LEGEND

- Site boundary
- Public footpath

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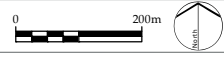
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Figure 1: Site Context

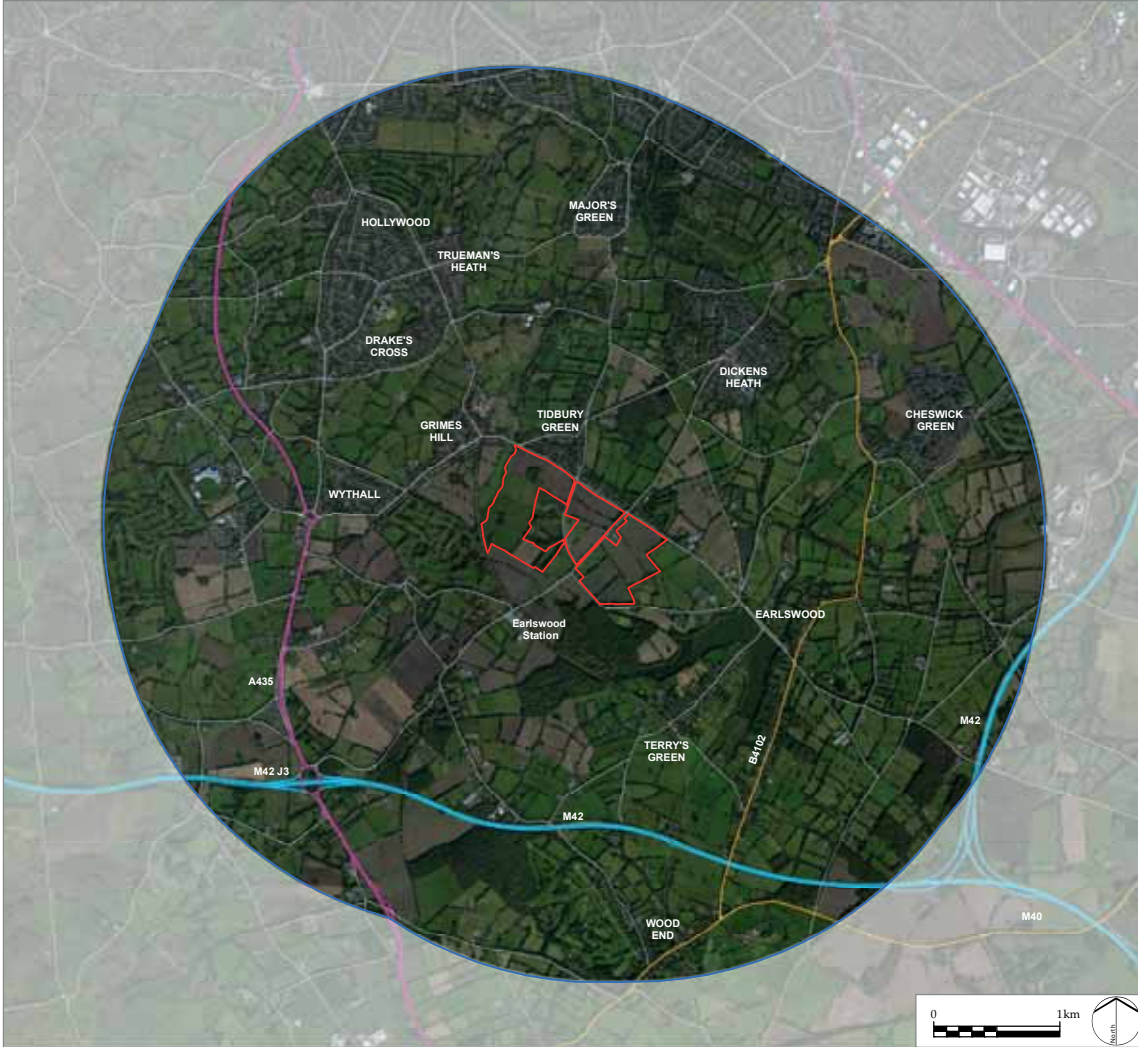
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- LEGEND
- Site boundary
 - 3km study area

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Figure 2: Site Location

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- LEGEND**
- Site boundary
 - 3km study area
 - Local Nature Reserve
 - Ancient Woodland
 - Green Belt

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Figure 3: Landscape Policy and Designations

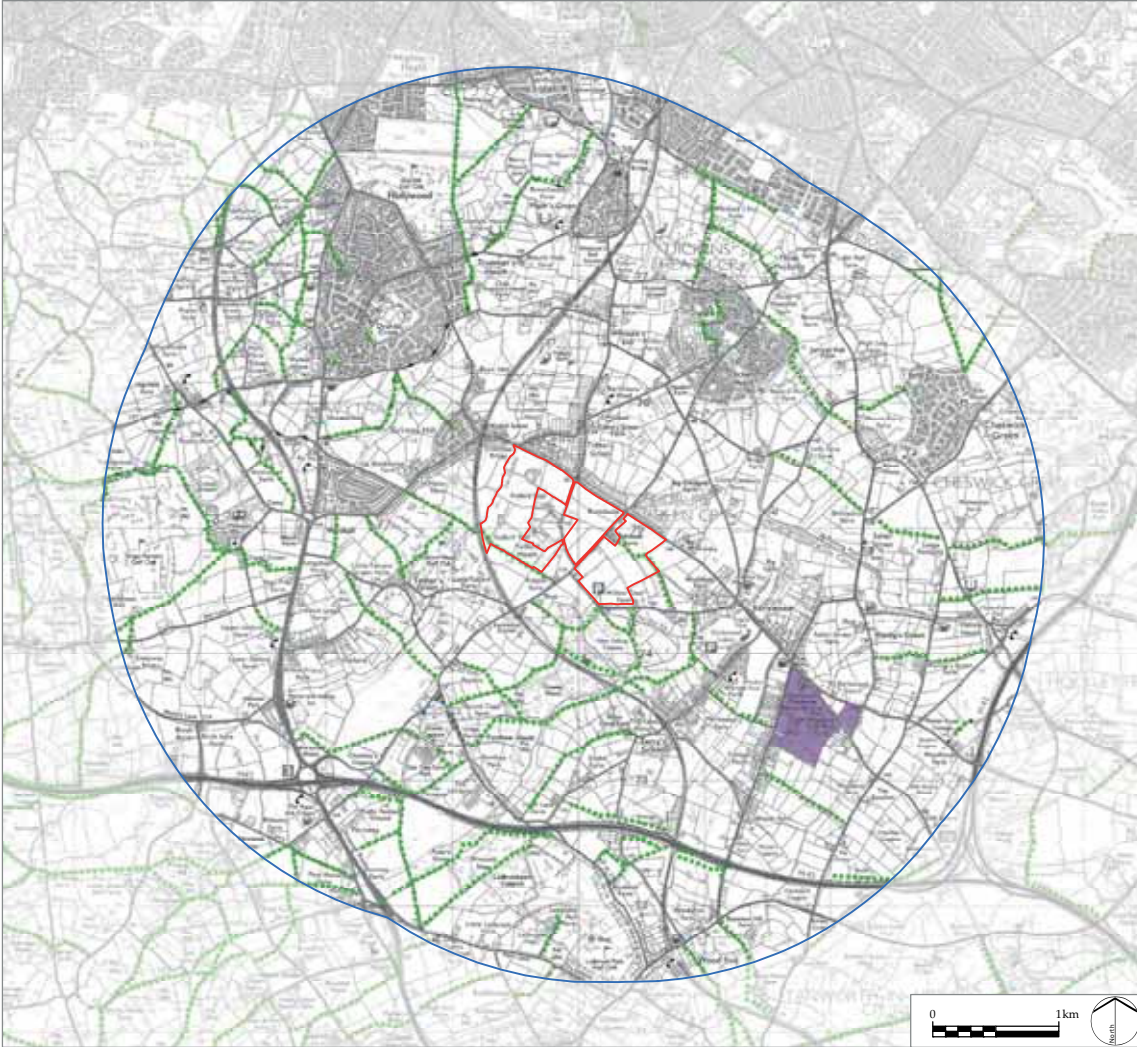
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LEGEND

-  Site boundary
-  3km study area
-  Public Right of Way
-  Open Access Land
-  Registered Common Land
-  National Trust Site

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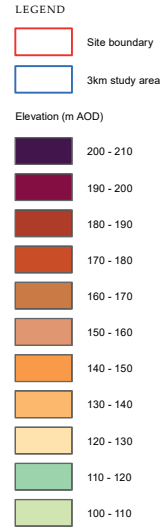
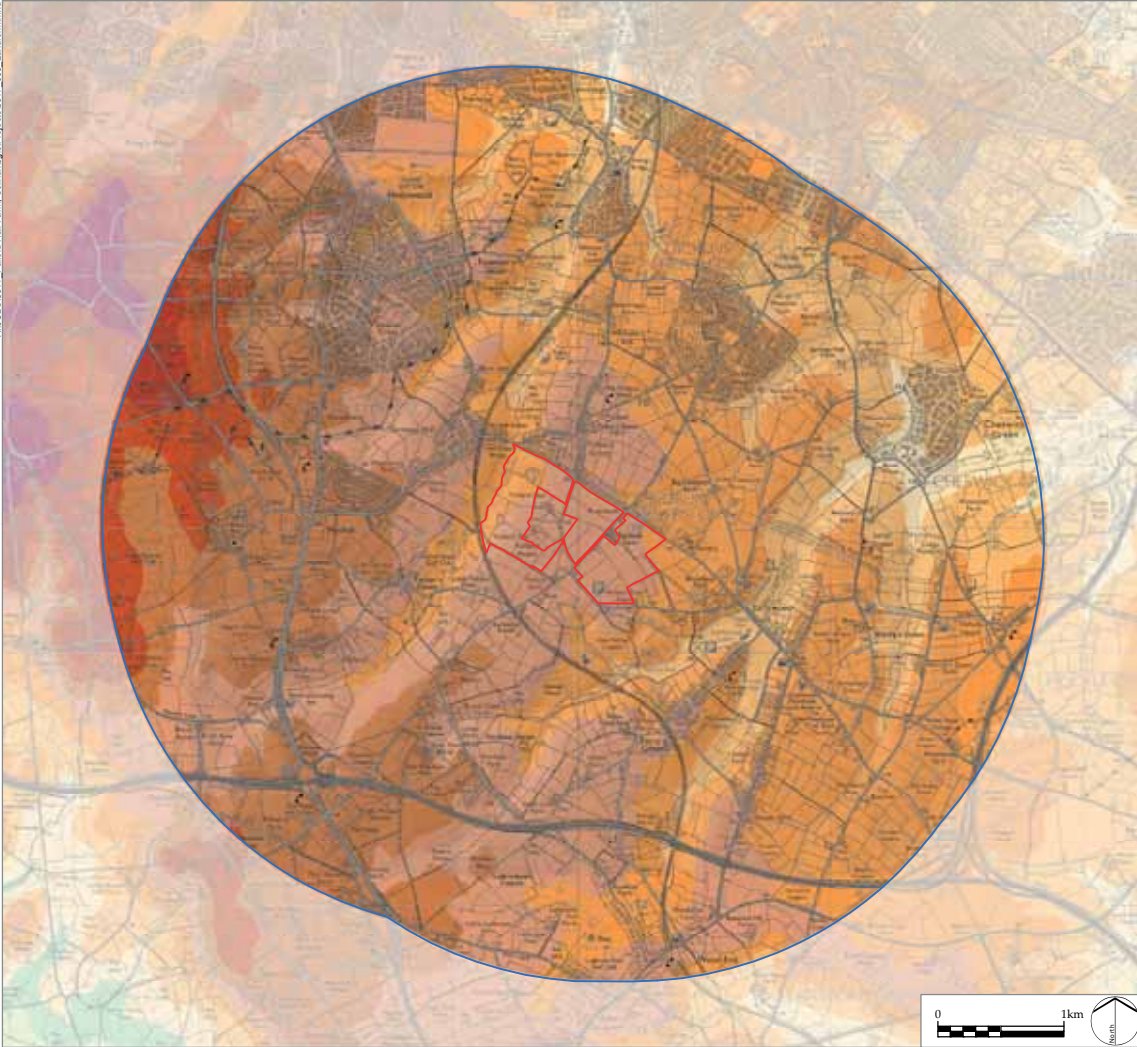
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Figure 4: PRoW and Accessible Land

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Figure 5: Landform

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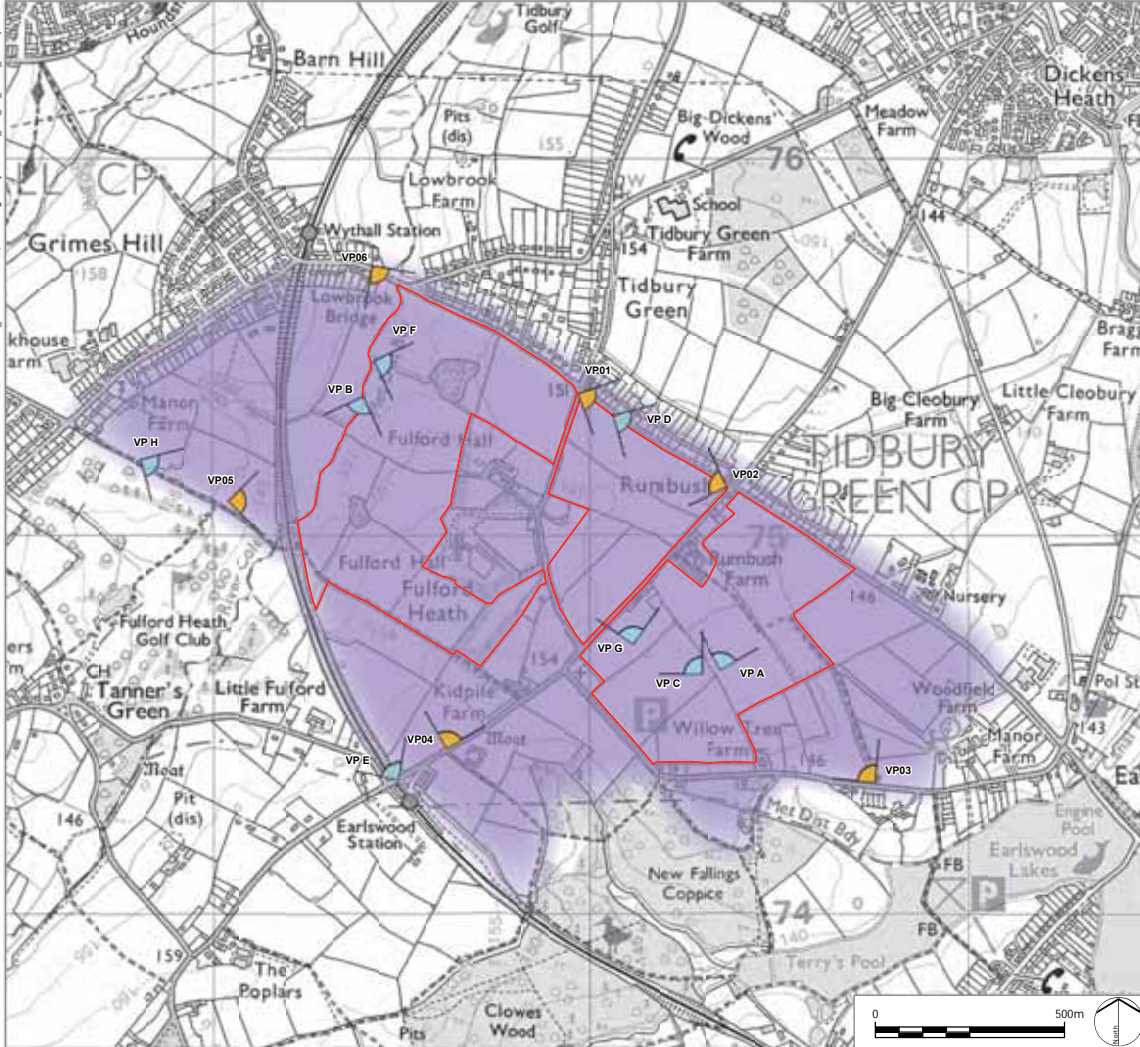
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LEGEND

- Site boundary
- Visual Envelope
- Viewpoint locations
- Illustrative viewpoint locations

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Figure 6: Viewpoint Locations and Visual Envelope

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Representative viewpoint 1: South-west from Norton Lane.

Viewpoint Description

Viewpoint 1 is located at the northern boundary of the Site, near to the junction of Norton Lane and Fulford Hall Road (coordinates x:409968 y:275375).

Visual Context

From this location there are filtered views of the Site through boundary hedgerows and trees along the southern edge of Norton Lane. The hedgerow boundary is unbroken for the majority of its length with occasional gaps that allow for direct views of the Site. There are fewer hedgerow trees along the eastern section of Norton Lane allowing for more open views.

Internal field boundaries and woodland are visible within the Site and contain longer distance views to the south. The existing built form along Norton Lane is a notable feature within views and contains views of the Site northward. There are no long distance views to the wider countryside.



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SOLIHULL**

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**Figure 7
Representative viewpoints**



Representative viewpoint 2: North-west from Norton Lane.

Viewpoint Description

Viewpoint 2 is located at the northern boundary of the Site, near to the junction of Norton Lane and Rumbush Lane (coordinates x:410360 y:275130).

Visual Context

From this location there are filtered views of the Site through boundary hedgerows and trees along the southern edge of Norton Lane. The hedgerow boundary is unbroken for the majority of its length with occasional gaps that allow for direct views of the Site. Mature oak trees are regularly spaced throughout the hedgerow along the western half of this boundary.

Internal field boundaries and woodland are visible within the Site and contain longer distance views to the south. The existing built form along Norton Lane has an open relationship with the adjoining Site and contains views of the Site from extending northward. There are no long distance views to the wider countryside.



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SOLIHULL

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Figure 7
Representative viewpoints



Representative viewpoint 3: West towards the Site from PRoW north of Wood Lane.

Viewpoint Description

Viewpoint 3 is located approximately 330m south-east of the Site on the PRoW north of Wood Lane (coordinates x:410752 y:274350).

Visual Context

From this location views of the Site are screened by intervening field boundaries comprising hedgerows and mature oak trees. Views of the Site in this area beyond the immediate vicinity are screened by the hedgerow network and flat topography.



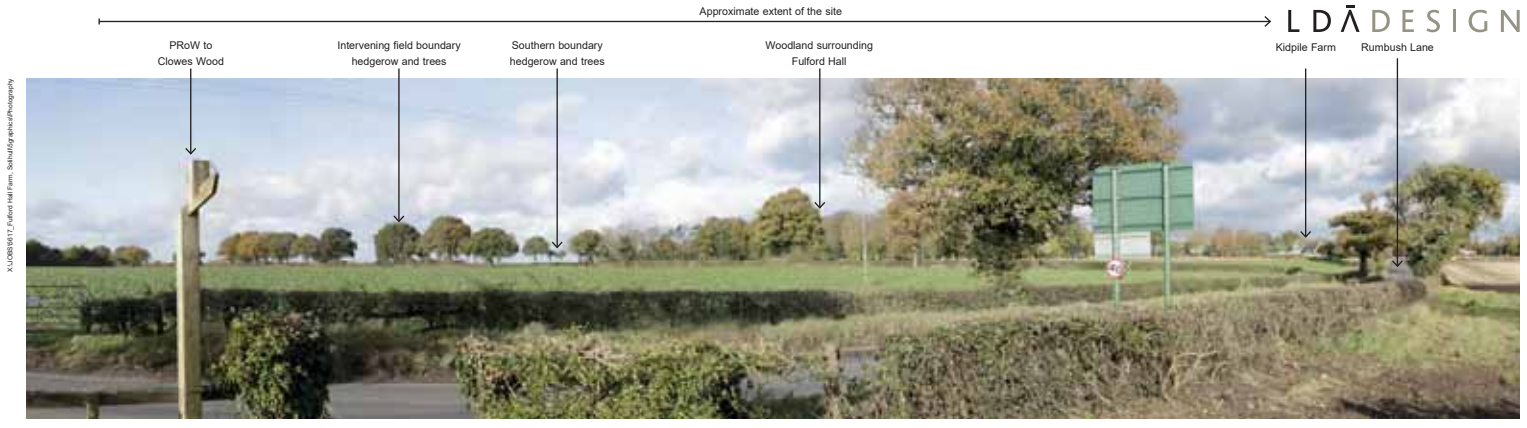
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DRAWING TITLE
**Figure 7
 Representative viewpoints**



Representative viewpoint 4: North towards Site from the junction of Rumbush Lane and the PRoW leading to Cowles Wood.

Viewpoint Description

Viewpoint 4 is located approximately 230m south of the Site at the junction of Rumbush Lane and the PRoW (coordinates x:409617 y:274439).

Visual Context

From this location views of the Site are screened or filtered by intervening field boundaries and woodland. Only vegetation forming the southern boundary of the Site can be seen on the horizon, through intervening vegetation. Views into and across the Site are not possible. Dwellings along Rumbush Lane can also be seen to the right of the view.



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**Figure 7
 Representative viewpoints**

Approximate extent of the site

Railway embankment and
lineside vegetation

Approximate location of
Fulford Hall



Representative viewpoint 5: East towards railway embankment and Fulford Hall.

Viewpoint Description

Viewpoint 5 is located approximately 50m west of the Site where the PRoW emerges from woodland (coordinates x:409040 y:275095).

Visual Context

From this location there are no views of the Site which is screened from view by the raised railway embankment and lineside vegetation.



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DRAWING TITLE
Figure 7
Representative viewpoints



Representative viewpoint 6: South-east towards site from Norton Lane.

Viewpoint Description

Viewpoint 6 is located approximately 80m north-east on Norton Lane as it enters Wythall (coordinates x:409420 y:275717).

Visual Context

From this location there are glimpsed views of the Site between vegetation and built form as the road enters the village of Wythall and begins to rise. Only the north-western section of the Site is visible above the rooftops of existing residential properties on Norton Lane. The view is contained by rising landform and boundary vegetation including the mature tree boundary along Norton Lane. Internal hedgerows and field boundaries further break up the view. There are no long distance views to the wider countryside.



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Figure 7
Representative viewpoints



Illustrative viewpoint A: The Site is visually connected to existing built form along Norton Lane rather than the wider countryside to the south.



Illustrative Viewpoint B: The River Cole is a physical feature forming the western boundary to the Site and screens and filters views from the west.



Illustrative Viewpoint C: Mature trees and hedgerows are typical of field boundaries within the Site and wider landscape.



Illustrative Viewpoint D: Mature hedgerows and trees line Norton Lane with existing built form set back from the road.

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For illustrative viewpoint locations refer to Figure 6.

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DRAWING TITLE
Figure 8
Illustrative viewpoints



Illustrative Viewpoint E: Railway line near to Earlswood Station



Illustrative Viewpoint F: Woodland north of Fulford Hall Farm



Illustrative Viewpoint G: Woodbourne Sports Club playing fields



Illustrative Viewpoint H: PRoW south of Wythall

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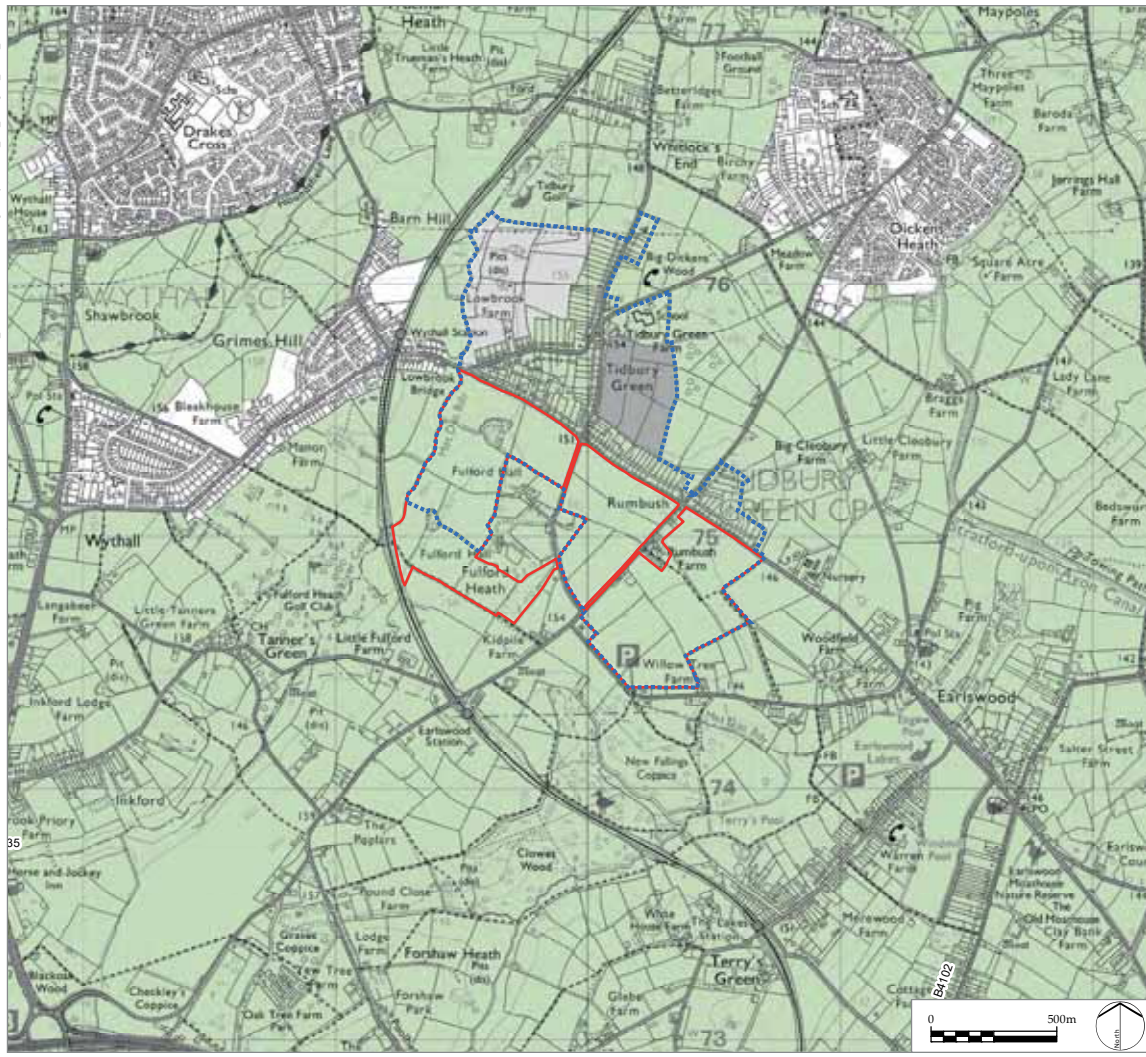
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Figure 8
Illustrative viewpoints

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- LEGEND**
- Site boundary
 - Green Belt
 - Proposed realignment of Green Belt boundary and inseting of Tidbury Green
 - Consented Tidbury Green Farm Application (Ref: APP/Q4625/A/14/222089)
 - Consented Lowbrook Farm Application (Ref: APP/Q4625/13/2192128)

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Figure 9: Realigned Green Belt Boundary

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Appendix 2. Framework Masterplan



- Site boundary
- Existing settlements
- Proposed settlement extensions
- Existing woodlands
- Railway line and stations
- Existing road network
- Public Rights of Way
- Existing hedgerows
- Existing trees
- Existing waterbodies
- Potential pedestrian / cycle links
- Contours at 5m intervals
- New village centre
- Primary school
- Residential development
- Public open space
- Linear greenspace
- Wildlife areas including drainage
- Primary street
- Access
- Woodland belt planting
- Existing buildings of Fulford Hall and immediate surroundings

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Development Framework

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