

Landscape and Visual Appraisal with Green Belt Review

Part 1 of 3

Meriden: Landscape and Visual Appraisal with Green Belt Review

Prepared on behalf of IM Land

March 2019

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Barton Willmore Landscape Planning and Design (BWLPD) were commissioned by IM Land to undertake a Landscape and Visual Appraisal with Green Belt Review (LVA GBR) and assessment of the opportunities and constraints to development on land south-east of Meriden (referred to as 'the Site') for a residential development of up to 100 dwellings (the 'Proposed Development') as part of the Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) Local Plan Review process. The SMBC Draft Local Plan (DLP) consultation has undergone two stages in November 2015 and November 2016, which initially included site allocations deemed to be contentious. As a result, SMBC have decided to postpone the move to the next plan stage and instead have introduced a DLP Supplementary Consultation (January 2019). As a consequence of the delay the plan period now extends from 2018 to 2035.
- 1.2 Barton Willmore LLP, based on the initial LVAGBR advice, produced a revised masterplan in December 2018 for the Site based on 100 dwellings and green infrastructure on a reduced area of land, which avoids development on the more elevated landform within the Site. This was submitted to Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) and is assessed as Site 420 in the additional call for sites submissions with the assessment outcome listed as Red following the second stage of planning assessment.
- 1.3 There are no further site allocations in Meriden however, the current Proposed Allocation Site 10 has seen its capacity increased from 50 to 100 dwellings.
- 1.4 The extents of the Site are as outlined by the red boundary on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan** and **Figure 4: Site Appraisal Plan**. In order to gain a robust understanding of the area south-east of Meriden, this LVA GBR considers the wider Study Area, which corresponds to the full area shown on **Figure 1**. The boundary of Proposed Allocation Site 10 is also displayed on **Figure 1** and a high-level landscape and visual appraisal of Site 10 is set out within section 7.0 of this report.
- 1.5 The objectives of this document are to provide a robust background to the identified opportunities and constraints to development of the Site and to explain the rationale behind the revised masterplan in terms of the landscape character of the Site and its surroundings, the landscape and visual qualities of the Site and its function within the wider landscape context (the 'Study Area'), together with a justification for the revised Green belt boundary along its eastern boundary edge. The work undertaken to justify the rationale for the concept masterplan and Green Infrastructure and Green Belt Strategy Plan includes an assessment of the existing landscape features, a visual appraisal of the Site and its context, planning policy and evidence base and landscape character baseline.

1.6 The objectives of the Landscape and Visual Appraisal and Green Belt Review are:

- To assess the landscape character of the Site and its context and the function of the Site within the wider landscape, particularly in relation to existing landscape designations and policies;
- To appraise the visibility of the Site and the nature and quality of existing views towards the Site;
- To assess the potential of the Site and its landscape context to accommodate potential development in terms of landscape and visual opportunities and constraints;
- To consider the opportunities and constraints for absorbing potential development within the landscape and the provision of a robust network of green infrastructure;
- Propose development design principles to guide the scheme to responding sympathetically and sensitively to its surroundings;
- To consider the policy basis for the underlying Green Belt designation which applies to the Study Area, as defined on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**; and
- To assess the contribution of the Site in response to its Green Belt function and potential for the Green Belt boundary to be amended.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Landscape and Visual Appraisals (LVA) and Green Belt Reviews (GBR) are separate assessments. However, the information ascertained through the LVA is used to aid the assessment of the contribution that the Site makes to the purposes of the Green Belt, such as through the assessment of the relationship of the Site with the existing built form, the identification of defensible boundaries that may prevent sprawl, the physical and visual encroachment into the countryside and the physical and visual merging of settlements.

Methodology for Landscape and Visual Appraisal

2.2 The methodology employed in carrying out the LVA has been drawn from the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment's Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' 3rd Edition¹ (2013) also referred to as 'the GLVIA3'. The aim of these guidelines is to set high-standards for the scope and content of Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs) and to establish certain principles that will help to achieve consistency, credibility, transparency and effectiveness throughout the assessment.

2.3 The GLVIA3 sets out the difference between Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) and Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA). The preparation of an LVA has the rigour of the EIA process but looks to identify issues of possible harm that might arise from the development proposal and offset them through change and modification of the proposals before a fix of the final design scheme. This LVA has been used as a tool to inform the design process, rather than an assessment of a final proposal.

2.4 The assessment of landscape and visual effects, in common with any assessment of environmental effects, includes a combination of objective and subjective judgements. It is, therefore, important that a structured and consistent approach is adopted to ensure that the assessment undertaken is as objective as possible.

2.5 A landscape appraisal is the systematic description and analysis of the features within the landscape, such as landform, vegetation cover, settlement and transport patterns and land use that create a particular sense of place. A visual appraisal assesses visual receptors, which are the viewers of the landscape, and could include people using locations such as residential or business properties, public buildings, public open space and Public Rights of Way (PRoW).

¹ Landscape Institute and Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment (2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition

- 2.6 A desktop assessment of the Study Area was undertaken, including an assessment of landscape character, landform, landscape features, historic evolution, policy and designations. This information was used as a basis against which to compare the findings of the Site assessment.
- 2.7 The Study Area has been confined to that shown on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**. This distance from the Site was chosen based on existing features such as landform and vegetation; settlement morphology and land use patterns. This is considered a sufficient area to establish the landscape and visual baseline and to allow the appraisal of the Site and its context, and to inform the development of masterplan proposals.
- 2.8 A brief description of the existing land use of the Study Area is provided and includes reference to existing settlement, transport routes and vegetation cover, as well as local landscape designations, elements of cultural and heritage value and local landmarks or tourist destinations. These factors combine to provide an understanding of landscape value and sensitivity, and an indication of key views and viewpoints that are available to visual receptors, which are then considered in the visual appraisal.
- 2.9 The Site has been considered in terms of the following:
- i) Landscape Character
i.e. land form, vegetation cover, land use, scale, state of repair of individual elements, representation of typological character, enclosure pattern, form/line and movement
 - ii) Visual Influence
i.e. land form influences, tree and woodland cover, numbers and types of residents, numbers and types of visitors and scope for mitigating potential for visual impacts
 - iii) Landscape Value
i.e. national designations, local designations, tranquillity / remoteness, scenic beauty and cultural associations

Methodology for Green Belt Review

- 2.10 The Site was assessed against the first four purposes of the Green Belt as set out in Paragraph 134 of the NPPF, which are:
- ***"To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;***
 - ***To prevent neighbouring towns from merging in to one another;***
 - ***To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; and***
 - ***To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns..."***

- 2.11 The fifth purpose of the Green Belt ***"to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land"***, has been scoped out of the assessment as the Council is considering greenfield sites and, therefore, should the Site be brought forward for development, it would not prejudice derelict or other urban land being brought forward for development.
- 2.12 The NPPF states in Paragraph 136 that ***"once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified, through the preparation or updating of plans"***. Paragraph 139 f) states that Green belt Boundaries should ***"define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent."***
- 2.13 The NPPF seeks to align Green Belt boundary reviews with sustainable patterns of development, as set out in Paragraph 138, with Local Planning Authorities encouraged to ***"consider the consequences for sustainable development of channelling development towards urban areas inside the Green Belt boundary, towards towns and villages inset within the Green Belt or towards locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary"***.
- 2.14 Paragraph 141 sets out principles for the beneficial use of the Green Belt:

"Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance their beneficial use, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land."

Assessment in relation to the purposes of the Green Belt

- 2.15 The criteria used to assess the contribution made by the Site as existing to the first four purposes of the Green Belt are set out in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Purposes of the Green Belt - Assessment Criteria

Purpose	Criteria
Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.	<p>Considerable - Development of the land would be strongly perceived as sprawl, as it is not contained by robust physical features and/or would extend the settlement pattern in an incoherent manner.</p> <p>Some - Development of the land would be perceived as sprawl, as it is partially contained by robust physical features and/or would extend the settlement pattern in a moderately incoherent manner.</p> <p>Limited - Development of the land would be perceived as sprawl to a limited degree, as it is largely contained by robust physical features and/or would extend the settlement pattern in a broadly coherent manner.</p> <p>None - Development of the land would not be perceived as sprawl as it is well contained by robust physical features and/or is entirely set within the existing coherent settlement pattern.</p>
Prevent neighbouring towns from merging.	<p>Considerable - Development would result in the physical unification of two (or more) towns</p> <p>Some - Development would substantially reduce the physical or perceived separation between towns</p> <p>Limited - Development would result in a limited reduction in the physical or perceived separation between towns</p> <p>None - Development would not physically or perceptually reduce the separation between towns</p>
Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.	<p>Considerable: No built or engineered forms present and perceived as inherently undeveloped and/or rural in character. Development would potentially result in a strong urbanising influence over the wider landscape.</p> <p>Some: Built or engineered forms present but retaining a perception of being predominantly undeveloped and/or rural in character. Development would potentially result in a moderate urbanising influence over the wider landscape.</p> <p>Limited: Built or engineered forms present and a minimal perception of being undeveloped and or rural in character. Development would potentially result in a limited urbanising influence over the wider landscape.</p> <p>None: Built or engineered forms present and perceived as inherently developed and/or urban in character. Development would not result in an urbanising influence over the wider landscape.</p>
Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.	<p>Considerable: Strong physical and/or visual and/or character connection with the historic part of a town. May be within or adjoining the historic part of a town.</p> <p>Some: Partial physical and/or visual and/or character connection with the historic part of a town, whilst not adjacent to it.</p> <p>Limited: Weak physical and/or visual and/or character connection with the historic part of a town.</p> <p>None: No physical and/or visual and/or character connection with the historic part of a town.</p>

2.16 The NPPF states that the key characteristics of the Green Belt are ***"their openness and their permanence"***. In defining new boundaries to the Green Belt, it must be ensured that these characteristics are not diminished for the areas remaining within the Green Belt designation as a direct result of development. An assessment is made of the openness of the Green Belt in

the vicinity of the Site and to what extent its removal could have on the perception of openness in the remaining designated area.

- 2.17 In addition, the relationship of the Site to existing elements, such as built form, roads, railways and rivers, as well as visual barriers, such as ridgelines and areas of notable vegetation is set out. This assists in the assessment of the Site in relation to the existing Green Belt and consideration of potential development in relation to the openness of the remaining Green Belt and the permanence of Green Belt boundaries.
- 2.18 Where relevant, these factors, on top of consideration of the contribution of the Site as existing to the Green Belt, are then used to determine the degree of harm to the Green Belt, resulting from the Proposed Development, accounting for the mitigation by design approaches taken (and beneficial uses as set out in paragraph 141 of the NPPF if the Site remains within the Green Belt).

Table 2.2: Definitions

Term	Definition
Brownfield	See 'Previously Developed Land'
Character	A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that differentiates one area from another.
Coalescence	The physical or visual linkage of large built-up areas.
Countryside	In planning terms: land outwith the settlement boundary. In broader terms: the landscape of a rural area (see also rural)
Defensible Boundary	A physical feature that is readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.
Encroachment	Advancement of a large built-up area beyond the limits of the existing built-up area into an area perceived as countryside.
Green Infrastructure	A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.
Greenfield	Land (or a defined site) usually farmland, that has not previously been developed.
Large Built-Up Area	An area that corresponds to the settlements identified in the relevant Local Plan, including those inset from the Green Belt.
Merging	(see coalescence)
Neighbouring Town	Refers to settlements identified within the relevant Local Plan and those within the neighbouring authorities' administrative boundary that abut the Green Belt.
Open space	(NPPF definition) All open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity.
Openness	Openness is taken to be the degree to which an area is primarily unaffected by built features, in combination with the consideration of the visual perception of built features. In order to be a robust assessment, this should be considered from first

	principles, i.e. acknowledging existing structures that occur physically and visually within the area, rather than seeing them as being 'washed over' by the existing Green Belt designation.
Previously Developed Land	(NPPF definition) Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill purposes where provision for restoration has been made through development control procedures; land in built-up areas such as private gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments and land that was previously-developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape in the process of time.
Sprawl	The outward spread of a large built-up area in an incoherent, sporadic, dispersed or irregular way

3.0 LANDSCAPE CONTEXT AND SITE APPRAISAL

- 3.1 This section provides a landscape and visual appraisal of the Site, determining its potential capacity to accommodate residential development from a landscape and visual perspective. The Site and the surrounding environment were visited in February 2019. **Figure 4** and **Site Appraisal Photographs A - I** illustrate the existing features and characteristics of the Site. The locations from which the Site Appraisal Photographs were taken are shown on **Figure 4**. Site Context Photographs are referenced where necessary in order to establish a comprehensive appraisal of the Site and its setting in the landscape with further narrative on the Site Context Photographs set out within section 6.0 of this report.
- 3.2 A landscape and visual appraisal has been undertaken to ascertain the existing character of the Site and to determine the relationship of the Site to its surroundings. This is accomplished through recording and analysing the existing features and characteristics, the way the landscape is experienced and the value or importance of the landscape and visual resources in the vicinity of the Site. The elements of the landscape that contribute to landscape character include the built and natural form, the pattern of features, detailing, scale, planting, land use and human perception. In this regard, landscape character is derived as a result of the perception of, and action and interaction between natural and human factors.

Site Description

- 3.3 The Site is situated on the eastern edge of Meriden in the Metropolitan Borough of Solihull, as shown on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**. It comprises part of four arable fields, an area of amenity land and an area of allotments, as shown on **Figure 4: Site Appraisal Plan**. It is bordered to the north by existing residential development on Fillongley Road, to the west by existing residential development on Leys Lane and to the south by residential and commercial development (including Manor Hotel) on the B4104 Main Road and Old Road. The northern part of the eastern boundary is marked by the existing boundaries to the allotments (**Site Appraisal Photograph G and H**) and the amenity land. The eastern boundary of the remainder of the Site is essentially unmarked although remnant boundary hedgerows extend along limited stretches (**Site Appraisal Photograph B and E**).

Land Use and Settlement

- 3.4 The Site is situated immediately adjacent to existing residential development in Meriden on three sides (**Site Appraisal Photograph A, B and F**). Meriden is a large village, primarily comprising post-war development. Development extends east from Meriden along the B4104 and Old Road along the southern boundary of the Site and along Fillongley Road to the north of the Site, as shown on **Figure 1**. The Meriden Hill Conservation Area is situated 600m to the

south-east of the Site on a local area of high ground and this contains the Grade I Listed Church of St Lawrence, Meriden House and a number of other historic buildings. This area has a distinct historic village character separate from Meriden proper.

- 3.5 There are large areas of minerals extraction, particularly to the west and south-west of Meriden, resulting in large open pits and degraded landscapes.
- 3.6 The Site and the area to the east comprises an arable landscape with isolated farmsteads and rural dwellings.

Topography and Hydrology

- 3.7 The topography of the Study Area and Site is demonstrated on **Figure 2: Topographical Features Plan**.
- 3.8 The landform falls from the north-eastern corner of the Study Area with a high point of 180m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD), 1.5km to the north of the Site. The land falls to the south to around 125mAOD and further towards the west at 85mAOD. Meriden is situated on land that generally falls towards the south and south-west.
- 3.9 The Site ranges from over 130mAOD in the north, to 115mAOD in the south and south-east (see **Site Context Photographs 5 and 8**). The land rises again to the south of the B4104 to over 140mAOD in the Conservation Area, 600m to the south-east, and 130mAOD around Berry Fields Farm, 500m to the south where there is a localised ridgeline. The land falls away to the north of Fillongley Road and to the west of the Site.

Vegetation and Field Pattern

- 3.10 The landscape of the Study Area is generally well vegetated with frequent hedgerows and hedgerow trees, blocks of woodland and further tree planting along the routes of streams, as shown on **Figures 1 and 4** and **Site Context Photographs 4, 6, 7, 8 and 11**. The field pattern is irregular and medium to large in scale, particularly where field rationalisation has occurred. The area east of Meriden, between the settlement edge and Walsh Lane, and to the south-east of Meriden have suffered notable hedgerow and tree loss, resulting in uncharacteristic open landscapes (**Site Context Photograph 7, 11 and 12**).
- 3.11 The route of the A45 is heavily planted but this forms a notable and uncharacteristically straight linear feature cutting across the landscape.
- 3.12 The Site itself contains remnant field boundaries with mature oak trees in the south-west (**Site Appraisal Photographs D and E**), and greater vegetation around Highfield House in the

north of the Site. The area to the east of the Site, as far as Walsh Lane, has been denuded of much of its boundary vegetation and tree planting, resulting in an open landscape.

Access and Rights of Way

- 3.13 The Heart of England Way, Millennium Way and Coventry Way Long Distance Trails pass around the southern edge of Meriden, converging at various points and passing through the Meriden Hill Conservation Area. These connect to a wider and dense network of PRoW, with fewer routes west of Meriden, as shown on **Figure 1**.
- 3.14 PRoW cross the south-eastern corner of the Site, with one route extending north to Fillongley Road and one extending east to Walsh Lane. A further PRoW joins Walsh Lane to the Fillongley Road to the north-east of the Site.

Designations

- 3.15 There are no national landscape designations within the Study Area, as shown on **Figure 1**. The entire Study Area is within the Green Belt. Large areas of Ancient and Semi Natural Woodland occur to the north and north-east, separated from the Site by the route of the A45. Meriden Hill Conservation Area is situated 600m to the south-east of the Site. No Local Wildlife Sites are proposed, potential or designated within the Site.

Landscape Context and Site Appraisal Summary

- 3.16 In summary, the Site comprises four irregular arable fields F1-F4, amenity land and an area of allotment gardens all situated immediately adjacent to the existing built form of the settlement of Meriden. The landform of the Site broadly rises from the southern boundary at an elevation of 115m AOD to the northern boundary which lies at an elevation of 130m AOD. There is an additional localised ridge of elevated land, which rises along the eastern and north-east boundaries of the Site to an elevation of 125m AOD, which creates an area of visual sensitivity within the Site. Along the eastern boundary of the Site, hedgerow degradation has resulted in a weaker existing defensible boundary, however it does form a distinct landscape feature bounded by a drainage channel.
- 3.17 Built form and the allotments along the western and northern boundaries of the Site have a strong suburbanising influence, which detract from the character otherwise experienced further to the east within the Site. The proximity of the transport corridors of the B4104 to the southern boundary and Birmingham Road further to the north of the Site also detract from the sense of tranquillity.

4.0 LANDSCAPE POLICY CONTEXT

- 4.1 Policy of relevance to landscape and visual considerations has been published at a national and local level. These policies are described in greater detail in **Appendix A.1** with extracts from relevant evidence base documents set out in **Appendix A.2**. A summary of the policies of particular relevance to the Site and Proposed Development are provided below.
- 4.2 At a national level, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), updated in February 2019, includes focus, among other points, on: protecting and enhancing the natural and built environment (paragraph 8); creating a strong sense of place sympathetic to local character and optimising the potential of the Site to accommodate development, including green space (paragraph 127); recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside (paragraph 170); and developing green infrastructure networks. Chapter 13 of the NPPF covers Protecting Green Belt Land with further examination of Green Belt matters undertaken within Section 8.0 of this report.
- 4.3 At a borough level, the adopted SMBC Local Plan (December 2013) is currently being reviewed following a legal challenge on housing allocations and HS2, although policies P10 (Natural Environment), P14 (Amenity), P15 (Securing Design Quality), P16 (Conservation of Heritage Assets and Local Distinctiveness), P17 (Countryside and Green Belt) and P18 (Health and Well-Being) are still relevant to landscape and visual matters. SMBC published their Reviewing the Plan for Solihull's Future: Solihull Local Plan Review Draft Local Plan (November 2016), which contains draft policies similar to those set out in the 2013 SMBC Local Plan.
- 4.4 SMBC are presently engaged in a DLP Supplementary Consultation (January 2019), which is seeking to assess additional sites identified in the latest round of call for sites as well as reassessing all proposed sites for appropriateness in light of up to date evidence base. The following DLP Supplementary Consultation documents are relevant to this LVAGBR report:
- Reviewing the Plan for Solihull's Future, Solihull Local Plan Review, Draft Local Plan Supplementary Consultation (January 2019)
 - Reviewing the Plan for Solihull's Future, Solihull Local Plan Review Site Assessments (January 2019)
 - Solihull Local Plan Review Draft Concept Masterplans (January 2019)
 - Solihull Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal Site Options Assessment (Prepared by AECOM, January 2019)
- 4.5 Reviewing the Plan for Solihull's Future, Solihull Local Plan Review, Draft Local Plan Supplementary Consultation (January 2019) sets out a series of key questions as part of the

consultation of which Questions 2, 30, 37 and 39 are relevant to the Site and Proposed Allocation Site 10.

4.6 Other relevant evidence base documents include:

- SHELAA (2016, updated 2018)
- Green Infrastructure Study (2012)
- Countryside Strategy (2010)
- Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Green Infrastructure Habitat Biodiversity Audit (2015)

4.7 At a neighbourhood level, Meriden Parish Council made an application for the designation of a Neighbourhood Area in November 2014. A Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared but no drafts have, at present, been published for consultation. Meriden Parish Council published the Meriden Parish Design Statement in 2011, which sets out the characteristics and qualities local people value in the parish and its surroundings as well as issues and concerns about enhancing the local environment. The design statement also separates the village of Meriden into 14 distinct character areas, but the character area assessments do not consider sensitivity or susceptibility to different development typologies although do set out several development guidance notes. The Site falls outside of the village character areas but immediately abuts areas 4, 5 and 6. Proposed Allocation Site 10 is partially included within areas 2 and 3.

5.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER CONTEXT

- 5.1 The landscape character of the Site and Study Area is described within published Landscape Character Assessments at different scales, from national to district. These are supplemented by an assessment of the character of the Site. A comparison of the character of the Site and its surroundings aids the understanding of the contribution that the Site makes to the wider landscape character and value. This, in turn, aids the assessment of the sensitivity to, and the ability to accommodate, new development.
- 5.2 This chapter identifies the Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) in which the Site and its surroundings are located. The geographical extent of the LCAs and LCTs is shown on **Figure 3: Landscape Character**. Full extracts of the published LCAs relevant to the Site are contained within **Appendix A.3**. The key characteristics of each of these landscape character areas and types are summarised below. Landscape guidance for each of the identified character areas is set out at the end of this chapter.

Published Landscape Character Assessment

National Character Area 97: Arden

- 5.3 At a national level, the Site is situated within National Character Area (NCA) 97: Arden², described by Natural England as **"farmland and former wood-pasture lying to the south and east of Birmingham"**. Key characteristics relevant to the Site and Study Area are as follows:

- ***"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 with long river meadows...***
- ***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...***
- ***Complex and contrasting settlement pattern with some densely populated where traditional settlements have amalgamated to form the major West Midlands conurbation whilst some settlements remain distinct and relatively well dispersed.***

² Natural England (2014) [National Character Area Profile 97: Arden](#)

- ***Shakespeare's 'Forest of Arden', featured in 'As You Like It', is still reflected through the woodland cover, mature oaks, small ancient woodlands and former wood pasture."***

Warwickshire Landscape Project (1987)

- 5.4 The Site is located within the Arden Pastures Landscape Character Area. The Arden area is described as ***"an area of former wood pasture and ancient farmlands"***. It is further described as having ***"few dramatic physical features"*** but as having ***"an intimate, historic character with a strong sense of unity"***.
- 5.5 The Arden Pastures are described as ***"a small scale, enclosed landscape, often pervaded by suburban influences and characterised by small fields, typically bordered by mature hedgerow trees"***. Characteristic features include:
- ***"A gently rolling topography;***
 - ***A well-defined pattern of small fields and paddocks;***
 - ***Numerous mature hedgerow oaks;***
 - ***Permanent pasture often grazed by horses;***
 - ***A network of minor lanes often with ribbon development;***
 - ***Many place names ending in Heath."***

Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2016)

- 5.6 The Site is situated within Landscape Character Area (LCA) 7: Northern Upland according to the Solihull Landscape Character Assessment³. This area covers 8.15km² to the east and north-east of Meriden. The landscape is described as ***"generally undulating and higher than the neighbouring character areas, allowing long views out to both the cities of Coventry and Birmingham"***. The area is described as having a strong hedgerow structure and narrow roads with good examples of green lanes including Walsh Lane to the east of the Site. Extensive woodland provides the backdrop to many views and is an important local feature.
- 5.7 Key characteristics include:
- Undulating upland plateau ranging from 180 to 110m AOD;
 - High point at the northern extent sloping down towards the south-east and south-west.
 - Pickford Brook, reservoirs and numerous field ponds, which are characteristic of the area;
 - Predominantly agricultural landscape interspersed by woodland blocks;
 - Presence of horsiculture;
 - Irregular medium to large-scale field pattern;

³ Waterman (2016) Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment for Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

- Strong hedgerow structure although some open field boundaries exist, resulting in the amalgamation of fields which is described as impacting negatively on the area;
- Extensive woodland cover, dominating the skyline;
- Good tree cover in fields and hedgerows;
- Meriden Hill Conservation Area is a key feature and the setting of the moat at Marlbrook Hill Farm and the Churchyard Cross at St Lawrence's Church are of importance;
- The A45 is a noticeable feature in the landscape;
- Narrow single track roads with high hedgerows are a feature.

5.8 Sensitivities and pressures are described as including:

- Neglect and potential loss of ancient woodland;
- The uncharacteristically straight nature of the A45;
- Limited capacity for additional built development without risk of coalescence;
- Loss of biodiversity through intensive farming; and
- Decline in frequency of hedgerow trees.

5.9 The landscape character sensitivity of LCA 7 is assessed as 'high' with the following justification for the rating:

- ***"This is an attractive landscape with a strong 'sense of place', distinct landscape features including extensive woodland cover, narrow lanes and high hedgebanks that create a harmonious and unified landscape. Overall, the landscape is in very good condition. There are a few detracting features such as communication masts and the caravan park at Eaves Green" (p.53).***

5.10 Visual sensitivity is assessed as 'medium' due to the long to medium distance views with the following justification:

- ***"The general visibility in this LCA consists of long to medium distance views that are elevated, fragmented and contained, in parts shallow with a horizontal orientation. Strong tree cover forms the backdrop in many views across the area. Views to the cities of Coventry and Birmingham are a key feature of this area. There is a strong relationship with the Conservation Area at Meriden Hill to the south of the LCA" (p.53).***

5.11 Overall sensitivity for LCA 7 was assessed as being 'high' based on a combination of high landscape character sensitivity and medium visual sensitivity.

5.12 Landscape value was assessed as 'medium' with the following justification:

- ***"This is a locally distinctive landscape containing valued characteristics. The Meriden Hill Conservation Area along with several listed buildings provide historical and cultural associations within the area. Local Wildlife Sites, ancient woodlands along with the unique landform contribute towards the local distinctiveness of this area. The value of the area is increased by the presence of the two long distance trails passing through the centre of the LCA"*** (p.53).

5.13 Landscape capacity was assessed as being 'very low' with the following commentary:

- ***"The LCA covers large areas of ancient woodland and local wildlife sites. It is an area that is distinctly rural with limited development. This area would be able to accommodate new development but only in very restricted areas, which would need to be of an appropriate type, of small scale and form, in be keeping with the existing character and features of the area"*** (p.53).

5.14 However, the SMBC assessment acknowledges that:

- ***"This assessment therefore will only be able to suggest a general assessment of the 'Landscape Capacity' based on the matrix set out in Table A.5. This general scoring will need to be reviewed when details of specific development proposals are known for specific sites"*** (p.viii, Appendix A).

Assessment of the Site against Solihull Landscape Character Assessment Methodology

5.15 The Site occupies approximately 9.36ha of land east of the village of Meriden within LCA7: Northern Upland, which covers an area of 8.15km². Considering that LCA7 represents a significantly larger area than the Site, Barton Willmore LLP has conducted a site-specific assessment utilising the Solihull Character Assessment methodology (referenced in **Appendix A.3**) and the assessment findings are set out in the following table below.

Table 5.1: Assessment of Site against Solihull Landscape Character Assessment Methodology

Criteria	SMBC Landscape Character Assessment for LCA7	Barton Willmore LLP Site Specific Assessment
Landscape Character Sensitivity	High - This is an attractive landscape with a strong 'sense of place', distinct landscape features including extensive woodland cover, narrow lanes and high hedged banks that create a harmonious and unified landscape. Overall, the landscape is in very good condition. There are a few detracting features such as communication masts and the caravan park at Eaves Green.	The Site is considered to exhibit a 'Low-Medium' landscape character sensitivity. This is due to several factors. Hedgerow degradation particularly within the east area of the Site contributes to fragmentation of the existing field pattern however, the general landscape structure and pattern is obvious. The suburbanising influence of the existing built form and domestic features e.g. garden

		allotments to the south, west and north-west of the Site lessen the perception of rural character and demonstrate mixed land use within the Site with adjacent built form not unsympathetic in scale in the context of Meriden.
Visual Sensitivity	Medium - The general visibility in this LCA consists of long to medium distance views that are elevated, fragmented and contained, in parts shallow with a horizontal orientation. Strong tree cover forms the backdrop in many views across the area. Views to the cities of Coventry and Birmingham are a key feature of this area. There is a strong relationship with the Conservation Area at Meriden Hill to the south of the LCA.	The Site is considered to exhibit a 'Medium' visual sensitivity . The proximity of built form, which wraps around the Site to the south, west and north, creates a strong relationship between the Site and existing urban built form. The Site does not form an important feature in the prevention of coalescence, performing only a minor role, due to the 1.7km separation between the Site and nearest settlement at Millison's Wood to the east. It is noted that existing built form already extends further east along the B4104 than the Site. The relatively elevated north and north-eastern areas of the Site are more visible from further afield to the south and south-west, however the intervening topography and existing vegetation in the wider landscape prevent longer-range views to and from the Site.
Overall Landscape Sensitivity	High	Based on the findings of both the landscape character sensitivity and visual sensitivity it can be considered that the Site exhibits a 'Medium' overall landscape sensitivity .
Landscape Value	Medium - This is a locally distinctive landscape containing valued characteristics. The Meriden Hill Conservation Area along with several listed buildings provide historical and cultural associations within the area. Local Wildlife Sites, ancient woodlands along with the unique landform contribute towards the local distinctiveness of this area. The value of the area is increased by the presence of the two long distance trails passing through the centre of the LCA.	The Site is considered to be of a 'Low' landscape value . The Site is not covered by any statutory national or local landscape designations. There are no Local Wildlife Sites within the Site. The landscape features within the Site are generally of a degraded state as a result of field enlargement from modern farming practices and there exists a high potential for landscape improvements to reinstate characteristic landscape features. It is noted that the northern area of the Site is currently formed of garden allotments thus has a value to local residents, however the remaining Site is not accessible by the public apart from the PRow along the eastern boundary and comprises arable land. In the context of the wider LCA7 area the Site demonstrates common landscape features e.g. undulating arable land with evidence of hedgerow degradation so is not considered to be rare.
Landscape Capacity	Very Low - The LCA covers large areas of ancient woodland and local wildlife sites. It is	In line with the Solihull Landscape Character Assessment (2016), the

	<p>an area that is distinctly rural with limited development. This area would be able to accommodate new development but only in very restricted areas, which would need to be of an appropriate type, of small scale and form, in keeping with the existing character and features of the area.</p>	<p>landscape capacity of the Site has been derived from the combination of overall landscape sensitivity and landscape value thus based solely on the general matrix table the Site has a 'Low' landscape capacity.</p> <p>However, on balance at a site specific level and considering a low-medium landscape character sensitivity, medium visual sensitivity and low landscape value, as per the justification set out above, as well as the scale, nature and sensitive landscape strategy associated with the Proposed Development, the Site has a 'Medium' landscape capacity to the development typology proposed.</p>
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Natural England Historic Landscape Characterisation (2019)

- 5.16 Natural England have published a merged dataset comprising regional HLCs at a resolution of 250m-scale grid covering England.
- 5.17 The Site falls within the dominant broad type of Enclosed Agriculture of the post-war era. The on-site photographic study conducted in February 2019 indicates that hedgerow degradation and boundary fragmentation has resulted in a reduction in enclosure within the Site and its immediate surroundings particularly to the east towards Walsh Lane.

Management and Guidance

- 5.18 Advice and recommendations contained in the Published Landscape Character Assessments are set out within **Appendix A.3** and points relevant to the Site are summarised below.

National Character Area 97: Arden

Strategic Environmental Objectives

- 5.19 The NCA sets out Strategic Environmental Objectives for the character area, of which the following are relevant:
- SEO 1: Manage and enhance the valuable woodlands, hedgerows, heaths, distinctive field boundaries and enclosure patterns throughout the NCA, retaining the historic contrast between different areas while balancing the needs for timber, biomass production, climate regulation, biodiversity and recreation.
 - SEO 2: Create new networks of woodlands, heaths and green infrastructure, linking urban areas like Birmingham and Coventry with the wider countryside to increase biodiversity, recreation and the potential for biomass and the regulation of climate.

Landscape opportunities

- Conserve, enhance and restore the area's ancient landscape pattern of field boundaries, historic (including farm) buildings, moated sites, parkland and pasture and reinforce its well wooded character.
- Protect and manage woodlands particularly ancient woodlands and wood pasture to maintain the character of Arden.
- Manage and restore hedgerows and restore parkland, ancient trees and stream side trees plus manage and replace hedgerow trees.
- Create new green infrastructure with associated habitat creation and new public access on former mining sites and close to urban populations in the West Midlands Green Belt.

Warwickshire Landscape Project (1987)

5.20 The Site is situated within the Arden Pastures landscape character area. A key feature of this landscape type is described as ***"the sense of enclosure provided by the abundance of mature hedgerow trees. The density of trees reflects the generally intact pattern of small pastoral fields"***.

5.21 The management strategy for this area is to conserve and enhance the small-scale enclosed character of the landscape.

5.22 The landscape guidelines are as follows:

- Maintain the wooded character of mature hedgerow and roadside oaks;
- Conserve and enhance tree cover through natural regeneration of hedgerow oaks;
- Conserve historic pattern of small hedged fields.

Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment – LCA 7: Northern Upland

5.23 Guidelines of relevance for this LCA are set out as follows:

- Manage hedgerows to retain the strong hedgerow structure and plant individual trees along field boundaries particularly close to the A45. Tree planting in the vicinity of Meriden is also important to its setting and approaches.
- Resist further field boundary loss and discourage field amalgamation.
- Promote proactive management of existing woodlands and create links between existing woodlands using green lanes and footpaths.
- Protect long views out towards Coventry and Birmingham.
- Protect the setting of Meriden Hill Conservation Area.
- Aim to further reduce the visual impact of the A45.

- Promote the management of native roadside tree planting and links with woodland in the wider countryside.
- Design at the settlement edge will require a high quality approach and the use of appropriate materials to reinforce local distinctiveness.
- Enhance the footpath network and its contribution to landscape character.
- Explore opportunities to increase public access.

Landscape Character Summary

- 5.24 The Site is situated within the context of post-war development to the north, south and west. It is only partially visible from the northern boundary of the churchyard of the Church of St Lawrence on the northern edge of the Meriden Hill Conservation Area, but the two areas are notably distinct, partially separated by the intervening road and modern development and intervening vegetation. The Site has been subject to field rationalisation and neglect of hedgerows. Some mature oak hedgerow trees remain, and these are important characteristic features, together with the remnant hedgerows which still provide a structure to the existing field boundaries. To the immediate east, the landscape is more open with hedgerow removal and field rationalisation evident. The courses of the streams to the east of the Site are unvegetated and the landscape generally denuded of vegetation as far east as Walsh Lane. With the exception of the rolling landscape and the few remaining trees and hedgerows, the Site makes only a partial contribution to landscape character as part of the wider landscape pattern.
- 5.25 The landscape character sensitivity of LCA 7, within the SMBC assessment, is 'high' and described as an attractive landscape with a strong sense of place. Visual sensitivity is assessed as medium due to the long to medium distance views. Overall sensitivity for LCA 7 was assessed as being 'high'. Landscape value was assessed as 'medium' and landscape capacity was assessed as being 'very low'. However, the assessment acknowledges that the scoring will need to be reviewed when the specific details of the proposed development are known.
- 5.26 The Solihull Landscape Character Assessment describes long distance views towards Birmingham and Coventry, but these are not evident within the Site. The visual envelope of the Site is described further later in this LVAGBR report.
- 5.27 The Barton Willmore LLP Site-Specific Assessment (**Table 5.1**) utilising the Solihull Landscape Character Assessment (2016) Methodology determined that the Site exhibits a 'Low-Medium' landscape character sensitivity, 'Medium' visual sensitivity and thus a 'Medium' overall landscape sensitivity. The landscape value of the Site was considered to be 'Low'. Combining overall landscape sensitivity and landscape value gives the Site, based on the SMBC general matrix table, a 'Low' landscape capacity rating. However, based on the

considered strategy for locating built form on the lower lying slopes tied into the western built up edge of Meriden as well as the scale, and sensitive landscape strategy associated with the Proposed Development, which would provide a robust strengthened Green Infrastructure to the Site and biodiversity and amenity enhancements, it is considered that the Site has a 'Medium' landscape capacity to the development typology proposed.

6.0 VISUAL APPRAISAL

- 6.1 A site visit was undertaken in February 2019, and 12 **Site Context Photographs** taken to represent views towards the Site. Photographs were taken from a range of directions and distances, taking into account the topography and designated areas, under winter conditions, where the potential visibility of the Site is at its greatest in line with guidance set out in GLVIA 3. The location of the viewpoints are demonstrated on **Figure 6: Visual Appraisal Plan** and copies of the photographs are included within the Illustrative Material which accompanies this document.
- 6.2 The visual appraisal was undertaken to determine the relationship of the site with its surroundings and its approximate extent of visibility within the wider landscape from publicly accessible viewpoints, primarily roads, footpaths and open spaces, to determine the approximate extent of the area from which the Site is visible from the eye level of a person standing on the ground. The visibility of the Site is predominantly influenced by landform and the extent and type of vegetation cover and built elements within the surrounding landscape. Baseline studies of these features enabled the identification of the potential visibility of the Site from the surrounding area, to be tested through fieldwork.

Visual Context

- 6.3 The topography within the immediate area of the Site slopes southwards from the north-east, in the region of the A45, towards the B4104, before rising again to the south of the B4104 towards the Meriden Hill Conservation Area and Berry Fields Farm, with views obtained towards the Site from the northern boundary grounds of St Lawrence's Church and from the PRoW which extends east – west north of Berry Fields Farm. The landscape to the east of the Site has been denuded of vegetation, resulting in medium distance views from the local PRoW, as far east as Walsh Lane. Existing development within Meriden reduces views from the north-west and immediate south.

Site Context Photographs

- 6.4 **Site Context Photograph 1** is taken from Old Road to the immediate south-east of the Site. It demonstrates the modern residential development along the southern boundary of the Site, with the northern areas of the Site rising up beyond the hedgerow in the foreground.
- 6.5 **Site Context Photograph 2** is taken from the PRoW to the east of the Site, extending from Old Road to Fillongley Road. It demonstrates the remnant hedgerow and mature tree structure on the eastern boundary of the Site as well as existing built form to the north and south of the Site with the land rising up towards the vegetated skyline east of Leys Lane.

- 6.6 **Site Context Photograph 3** is taken from Mons Avenue immediately to the west of the Site. It demonstrates the close proximity of existing built form adjacent to the west of the Site and the rising land within the northern area of the Site. It demonstrates the vegetative cover to the western boundary of the Site and where less dense filtered views across the Site to the east are available. It is also possible to see the land rising up beyond the Site to the east to form a tree lined skyline.
- 6.7 **Site Context Photograph 4** demonstrates the view south from the PRoW which extends north-south from Fillongley Road to the B4104. From this point the majority of the Site is screened by the curve in the landform and the vegetation to the north-east. However, the south-eastern boundary defined by remnant hedgerow and mature hedgerow trees is clear to see. It is also possible to see the elevated landform rolling towards the east towards the route of the A45 and the rise in the land towards the Conservation Area to the south-east.
- 6.8 **Site Context Photograph 5** demonstrates how the Site is screened from views from this part of Fillongley Road due to the topography and intervening layers of vegetation.
- 6.9 **Site Context Photograph 6** is taken from a footpath that extends from Church Lane to the B4104 looking northwards towards the Site. Existing residential properties can be seen extending east-west along the B4104 with the landform rising to the north to meet the vegetated skyline.
- 6.10 **Site Context Photograph 7** is taken from the Heart of England Way and Coventry Way Long Distance Trails where they pass through the northern boundary of the churchyard of St Lawrence's Church. It is possible to see the northern and central areas of the Site with the existing built up edge of Meriden to the north, south and west visible. The view demonstrates how the remnant hedgerows and mature groups and individual trees break up the Site within the view.
- 6.11 **Site Context Photographs 8 and 9** are taken from the footpath on the localised ridgeline of rising land south of the B4104. It is evident that the most open views towards the Site are from the eastern end of the PRoW, closer to the Conservation Area. From this point, the central area of the Site is visible rising beyond the existing development along the B4104. The strong vegetation in the vicinity of the Site provides strong enclosure to the south-western areas of the Site during summer months and the southern and south-eastern areas are screened behind the existing development along Old Road and the vegetation along Church Lane. The photos demonstrate the screening effects of the existing vegetation during the winter months. From the western end of the footpath, in the region of **Site Context Photograph 9**, the Site is mainly screened behind the existing development along the B4014 and the strong vegetation along the eastern edge of Meriden.

- 6.12 **Site Context Photograph 10** is taken from the junction of the B4104 and Old Lane as it descends Meriden Hill towards Meriden. Whilst the majority of the Site is screened by the intervening vegetation it is still possible to see a small part of the centre of the Site behind the buildings in the foreground.
- 6.13 **Site Context Photographs 11** is taken from the PRoW crossing the fields to the north-east of the Site, from where it is possible to see the centre of the Site, set back against the vegetated skyline and to the right of the existing development on Old Road. This view demonstrates the denuded nature of the landscape to the east of the Site and the way in which the trees and hedgerows within the south-western part of the Site create a filtering effect to views.
- 6.14 **Site Context Photograph 12** demonstrates the views west from Walsh Lane towards the Site, which is foreshortened within the view due to the topography. This view demonstrates the denuded nature of the landscape east of the Site and the loss of hedgerows along Walsh Lane. It is also possible to see the existing development within Meriden to the south, west and north of the Site.

Visual Appraisal Summary

- 6.15 The most open views towards the Site are medium-distance views from the east, south and south-east, from the local PRoW and isolated locations on the edge of the Meriden Hill Conservation Area, albeit through intervening vegetation. However, from these viewpoints, the Site is generally seen in the context of existing development to the north, south and west within Meriden and the strongly vegetated skyline. The existing trees and hedgerows within the Site would break up the massing of the houses as seen within these views to an extent in any event.

7.0 PROPOSED ALLOCATION SITE 10 CONTEXT AND APPRAISAL

7.1 As previously identified earlier in this report, Proposed Allocation Site 10 represents SMBC's current preferred location for housing in Meriden. Site 10 was visited in February 2019 in order to conduct a baseline landscape and visual appraisal. **Figure 5: Proposed Allocation Site 10 Appraisal Plan** and **Proposed Allocation Site 10 Appraisal Photographs J - O** illustrate the existing character and features of the Site. The locations from which the Site Appraisal Photographs were taken are shown on **Figure 5**, which indicate that the photographic study was conducted from publicly accessible roads and pavements surrounding Site 10.

Proposed Allocation Site 10 Context

7.2 The Site is situated on the western approach to Meriden in the Metropolitan Borough of Solihull, as shown on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**. It comprises grassland, scrub and broadleaf woodland in addition to existing 2 storey block of apartments (The Firs) and a previously used caravan park as shown on **Figure 5**. It is bordered to the north, west and east by Maxstoke Lane, and Birmingham Road to the south. Dense vegetation and canopy trees within the site immediately abut the roads that border Site 10. Existing residential properties along Wyatt Close, Maxstoke Close and Letitia Avenue sit immediately to the east (**Photographs J and O**). In terms of topographical variation, Site 10 is broadly level at an average elevation of 109m AOD. Maxstoke Lane to the north of Site 10 sits at a raised elevation of 116m AOD with views of the existing built form within Site 10 (The Firs) visible on the approach to Meriden from the A45 (**Photograph M**). There are no PRoWs within the site boundary or immediately adjacent to it. However, a private track does run parallel to its eastern boundary. In terms of hydrology a small drainage channel extends along the northern boundary with a small pond located on the western boundary to Maxstoke Lane. A sand and gravel pit is situated approximately 250m to the south-west with large areas filled with water ingress.

7.3 There are no statutory landscape designations covering Site 10, however it is wholly within the Green Belt. The Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull – Green Infrastructure Habitat Biodiversity Audit⁴ identifies Site 10 as being partially proposed as a potential Local Wildlife Site (Ref. SP28G4). This is consistent with what is identified within the 2012 SHLAA in that under the heading 'Suitability for Housing' and under 'physical problems and limitations', Local Wildlife Site and potential local wildlife site (2/3rds of site) is mentioned. There are no listed buildings within Site 10. However, a Grade II listed building (The Laurels) sits immediately to the south

⁴ Source: Warwickshire Habitat Biodiversity Audit (2015), (<http://maps.warwickshire.gov.uk/greeninfrastructure/>), Accessed 21/02/19

along Birmingham Road. Packington Hall Registered Park and Garden sits approximately 850m north-west of Site 10 and abuts the A45.

Proposed Allocation Site 10 Appraisal

- 7.4 Site 10 is situated on the western approach to Meriden surrounded by road infrastructure and comprises grassland, scrub and broadleaf woodland with existing built form (The Firs) set within the vegetation. The former caravan site within the south-east of Site 10 is currently scrub and grassland having formerly been industrial land. Maxstoke Lane forms a main transport corridor into Meriden with an exit slip road from the A45 joining near to the northern boundary of Site 10, which sits at a raised elevation, facilitating filtered views into Site 10. Currently, views from Maxstoke Lane and Birmingham Road show Site 10 as well vegetated and forming part of the green gateway to Meriden. Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment LCA7: Northern Upland identifies under its landscape management guidelines that; ***"Tree planting in the vicinity of Meriden is also important to its setting and approaches"***.
- 7.5 It is considered that the well vegetated nature of Site 10 forms an important part of the green infrastructure setting and approach to Meriden. Development within this parcel of land on the approach to Meriden would be uncharacteristic and loss of vegetation to facilitate development would run contrary to the guidelines highlighted in the LCA. It would also lead to the suburbanisation of Maxstoke Lane and lessen the perceived sense of its ***"rural / village feel"***, which would stand contrary to the Meriden Parish Design Statement as discussed under section 4.0 of this report.

8.0 GREEN BELT REVIEW

8.1 The Site is identified as sitting within the 'Meriden Gap' east of Solihull and part of the West Midlands Green Belt that surrounds Birmingham and Coventry.

Published Green Belt Reviews

8.2 Extracts from the relevant Green Belt Reviews are included in **Appendix A.3** of this report.

*Solihull Strategic Green Belt Assessment (2016)*⁵

8.3 The Site is located within Refined Parcel (RP) 25 in the above document, a larger area of land wrapping around the north and east of Meriden, extending as far as Walsh Lane. This area was assessed against the first four purposes of the Green Belt as set out within the NPPF:

- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; and
- To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.

8.4 Refined Parcels were given a score of 0-3, with a score of 0 meaning the Refined Parcel does not perform against the purpose and 3 meaning the Refined Parcel is higher performing against the purpose. RP25 was scored as follows:

- 1) 3
- 2) 1
- 3) 1
- 4) 0

Total. 5

8.5 The Refined Parcel was assessed as making the greatest contribution to checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas. A score of 5 makes RP25 relatively low scoring in comparison to other RPs and Broad Areas.

8.6 In relation to how the boundaries of Refined Parcels were determined the assessment states:

- ***"The Refined Parcels and Broad Areas were delineated on OS Mastermap using strong permanent physical features which are easily identifiable, in line with the requirements of Paragraph 85 of the NPPF: When defining boundaries, local planning authorities should (...) define boundaries***

⁵ Atkins (2016) [Solihull Strategic Green Belt Assessment](#)

clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent. The physical features used in defining boundaries for the purposes of this Assessment included:

- ***Roads (motorways, A and B roads);***
- ***Rail and other permanent infrastructure;***
- ***Watercourses;***
- ***Areas of woodland, established hedgerows and treelines; and***
- ***Established field patterns”*** (p.5).

8.7 Under the Assessment Criteria Table (p.6) the assessment goes on to state that:

- ***“Durable permanent boundaries are considered to be motorways and A roads, other infrastructure, and permanent natural features such as watercourses etc. Less durable boundaries are considered to be established field boundaries, hedgerows and treelines. Whilst easily identifiable these features are less durable”.***

8.8 Within the SMBC DLP Supplementary Consultation Site Assessments (2019) document, SMBC consider that in terms of Green Belt and Site 420 (the ‘Site’):

- ***“Site is within moderately performing parcel in the Green Belt Assessment, although it would result in indefensible boundaries to the east and north”.***

Greater Birmingham Housing Market Area (HMA) Strategic Growth Study: Greater Birmingham and the Black Country (February 2018)

8.9 This document⁶ comprises a four-stage process to identify potential housing land supply to meet the identified demand. These stages comprise: attempts to increase density through use of policy, identification of non-Green Belt land, identification of previously developed Green Belt land and, should a shortfall still remain, undertake a strategic Green Belt Review of all of the land within the HMA to identify further sites.

8.10 The strategic review of Green Belt sites was based on the assessment of the performance of the strategic areas against the five purposes of the Green Belt as set out within the NPPF. The strategic areas were assessed as to whether they made a ‘principal contribution’ or a ‘supporting contribution’. Figure 6 of this document identifies the area of the Site as making a principal contribution, rather than a supporting contribution.

⁶ GL Hearn (2018) Greater Birmingham HMA Strategic Growth Study

- 8.11 The assessment resulted in the identification of six 'Areas of Search' for new settlements and six for urban extensions, together with three Areas of Search for employment uses, as demonstrated by Figure 7 of this document. In addition, a number of areas were identified where 'proportionate dispersal' might be appropriate, i.e. small-scale developments of approximately 500-2,500 dwellings. The Site was not situated within or near one of these areas.
- 8.12 Chapter 8 of the document sets out the strategic Green Belt Review that was undertaken as part of the overall assessment process. The Site is situated within Green Belt parcel SE5 for the purposes of analysis. This parcel covers all of the land from the A452, the A45 and the western edge of Coventry. The overall study area was divided into six 'sectors' which were also assessed for their landscape character and settlement pattern. Parcel SE5 is situated within the north of the 'South East Sector'.
- 8.13 The analysis of the sector notes that:
- "the settlement pattern away from the conurbation and main settlements remains relatively dispersed, typified by small nucleated villages and scattered farmsteads. Smaller settlements of Balsall Common, Hampton in Arden and Meriden remain relatively distinct and well-dispersed."***
- 8.14 Under the heading of 'Green Belt Role', the strategic function of the Green Belt within the sector is described as principally relating to the strategic separation of Birmingham and Coventry, as well as containing sprawl along the western edge of Coventry and Kenilworth. It goes on to state:
- "Prevention of encroachment into open countryside, either through evidence of past change or potential for future change, is particularly apparent in the vicinity of Dorridge, Catherine-de-Barnes, Balsall Common, Hampton-in-Arden, Meriden and Allesley to the west of Coventry." (Paragraph 8.70)***
- 8.15 Figure 31 on page 181 shows the majority of S5 as contributing to the strategic separation of settlements with the area of the Site being identified as 'safeguarding from encroachment'. The location of the strategic separation on the plan suggests that it is primarily to maintain the separation of Birmingham and Coventry.
- 8.16 Figure 36 shows that the area of the Site provides a principal contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt.
- 8.17 The scale of the search and the identified parcels and strategic Areas of Search mean that this assessment cannot be usefully applied to development at a site level. The contribution of the

area including SE5 relates to the strategic separation of Birmingham and Coventry, to which the Site effectively makes no contribution.

Contribution of the Site to the Green Belt

- 8.18 Barton Willmore has undertaken their own assessment of the contribution made by the Site to the Green Belt, focussing on the Site itself.
- 8.19 The Site is situated on the eastern edge of Meriden on land that falls away to the east and south, before rising to the south of the B4104. The countryside to the east has been denuded of vegetation, resulting in an uncharacteristically open character as far as Walsh Lane. The Site is contained from views immediately adjacent to the north and west due to the existing built edge, and is limited to medium distance views from Walsh Lane to the east, the rising land immediately south of the B4104 to the south and from isolated locations within the northern boundary of St Lawrence's Church to the south-east.
- 8.20 The findings of the review are set out below:

Purpose	Critique	Contribution	Contribution Using Solihull Methodology
Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	The Site lacks a defensible boundary to the east due to the removal of hedgerow boundaries and the unvegetated character of the watercourses. Walsh Lane to the east forms the most defensible boundary. However there exists the opportunity to define and establish a defensible boundary utilising the current readily recognisable physical line of the remnant hedgerow and ditch along the eastern boundary of the Site and strengthening and reinforcing this boundary with native woodland and hedgerow planting.	Some	2
Prevent neighbouring towns from merging	The Site is surrounded by existing development within Meriden to the north, west and south. Development within the Site would be physically and visually separated from the nearest town to the east, which is Coventry, the edge of which is over 4km away. The nearest settlement to the east, although not a town in terms of the NPPF, is Millisons Wood, 1.5km to the east. Development within the Site would not cause the perceptual or physical merging of settlements.	None-Limited	1
Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Development within any Green Belt site will result in physical encroachment. However, the Site is surrounded on three sides by existing residential development and would not result in Meriden extending further to the east than is currently the case along Fillongley Road and the B4104.	Limited	1

Purpose	Critique	Contribution	Contribution Using Solihull Methodology
	<p>Development within the Site would be visible from medium distance views to the south of the B4104, from the open fields west of Walsh Lane and from isolated locations in the Meriden Hill Conservation Area. In these views, the development would mainly be seen in the context of existing development within Meriden, particularly when viewed from the south, and would be broken up by the existing field boundaries within the Site. As a result, there will be some visual encroachment, particularly from the east.</p> <p>This visual encroachment and perception of encroachment would be mitigated by the proposed Green Infrastructure Strategy which includes robust structural planting within and on the eastern boundaries of the Site.</p>		
Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	Meriden is not a historic town, although the Meriden Hill Conservation Area is situated to the south-east. The centre of the Site is visible in medium-distance views from isolated locations within the Conservation Area, primarily on the northern edge. In these views, the Site is seen within the context of the existing development along the B4104. Once planting is established within and along the eastern boundary of the Site, this perception of development will reduce further.	None	0
Overall		Some to Limited	4

Green Belt Review Summary

- 8.21 As can be seen in the table above, the greatest contribution the Site makes is in terms of preventing sprawl. This is due to the lack of a strong defensible boundary to the east, resulting from field rationalisation and loss of landscape features.
- 8.22 In total, the Site makes 'Some to a Limited' contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt, reducing as mitigation measures are implemented.
- 8.23 The adjustment of the site boundary to take into consideration the existing remnant hedgerow boundary to the east and reinforce this with substantial native woodland planting would establish a new strong defensible Green Belt boundary, in line with Para. 139 of the 2019 NPPF, which would be easily identifiable and also respond sympathetically to the landscape management guidelines set out in the LCA. The establishment of the native woodland planting following the existing field boundary would also aid in lessening any residual perceived visual encroachment of the scheme. The application of this appropriate and considered mitigation

measure would result in the scheme being seen as a contiguous, well-integrated element of the existing built form that extends around the Site presently, that would also positively reinforce locally characteristic landscape features.

- 8.24 In terms of the Solihull methodology, the Site results in a score of 4, which would place it in the lower end of the scale.
- 8.25 In terms of Para. 138 of the NPPF and Question 37 of the SMBC DLP Supplementary Consultation (2019) relating to compensatory provision, the new defensible Green Belt boundary would support accessibility to Green Belt land east of the Site, through providing a green corridor and local community park together with improvements to the PRoWs that extend north-south and east-west from the Site towards Fillongley Road and Walsh Lane respectively. Further native hedgerow and hedgerow tree planting could be achieved within the wider land holding between the eastern boundary of the Site and Walsh Lane, which would contribute to the enhancement of environmental quality in the Green Belt.

9.0 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

Landscape and Visual Opportunities and Constraints

9.1 A robust analysis of the landscape, visual and Green Belt baseline of the Site and Area of Search has highlighted the following opportunities and constraints to development that would be considered as part of the masterplan process for the Site:

- Existing landscape features within the Site would be retained and enhanced, primarily the existing trees and hedgerows.
- New hedgerows and oak trees would be established along the eastern boundaries of the Site as well as a substantial native woodland block to establish a strong new defensible Green Belt boundary.
- A longer-term strategy to create a green corridor along the route of the footpath and stream to the east of the Site would also be considered.
- Development would reflect the context of Meriden in terms of scale, massing and typology.
- Development would respond sensitively to the land that rises to the north of the Site, which creates an area of visual sensitivity and focus areas of development to the west and south-west of the Site on lower lying areas relative to the adjacent existing built form.
- Materials and typologies would reflect the distinctive local character, seeking to restore the character of this part of Meriden.

Green Infrastructure Strategy

9.2 Green Infrastructure as defined by Natural England and also set out in the SMBC Green Infrastructure Study (2012) can be considered as follows:

- ***"Green Infrastructure includes established green spaces and new sites and should thread through and surround the built environment and connect the urban area to its wider rural hinterland. Consequently, it needs to be delivered at all spatial scales from sub-regional to local neighbourhood levels, accommodating both accessible natural green spaces within local communities and often much larger sites in the urban fringe and wider countryside"*** (p.5).

9.3 Creating a sustainable, well-connected green infrastructure network, which contributes to social, environmental and economic benefits within the borough is a key part of SMBC planning policy. The Proposed Development will respond to the need to deliver green infrastructure improvements through the following measures:

- Delivery of 5.85ha of multifunctional public open space through biodiverse open spaces, community gardens and community parkland.
- Creation of a green gateway to Meriden with improved links to the surrounding countryside.
- Substantial native hedgerow and canopy tree planting throughout the Site linking into existing local green infrastructure network. Existing vegetation to be enhanced and retained as part of the native planting improvements.
- Native tree and hedgerow planting will contribute to improvements in hedgerow and deciduous woodland habitats of principal importance within the local area.
- Incorporating SuDS features such as swales and seasonally wet meadows.
- Green Infrastructure improvements will reflect and positively contribute to the character of Meriden and the wider Arden landscape through increased native hedgerow and woodland block planting and provide biodiversity enhancements.
- Creation of green streets, specifically planting a range of street trees, will positively contribute to the wider green network, local sense of place and climate change mitigation.

Development Design Principles

9.4 Based on the opportunities and constraints and green infrastructure strategy highlighted above, several development design principles would be incorporated into the scheme as part of the design evolution process:

- Create a key open space gateway to respond to key views and topography and provide a generosity of space within the site that is in keeping with the village character of Meriden and responds positively to the LCA management guidelines and Meriden Parish Design Statement.
- Create safe and attractive pedestrian and cycle routes running through the centre of the development, which utilise green corridors.
- Retain existing pedestrian access points to the site linking Meriden and the existing PROW network.
- Development should be structured to ensure the creation of permeable, legible and safe streets and spaces.
- Retain, reinforce and enhance existing green capital wherever possible to shape a connected and multifunctional green infrastructure network.
- New areas of open space to accommodate new community/recreation facilities within the Site and Proposed Development.

- The creation of a new parkland landscape within the eastern part of the Site contained and enclosed by strategic planting which will provide a long term defensible Green Belt boundary.
- Provision for a community garden and allotments for local food production facilities.

Development Proposals Summary

- 9.5 By implementing the mitigation and development design principles highlighted above, the Site would respond positively to its local landscape setting and become a well-integrated contiguous element of the existing settlement of Meriden whilst also acting as a key green gateway from the east through substantial native woodland and hedgerow planting. Additionally, by responding to the visual sensitivity of the raised land to the north through implementation of native planting and large areas of open space the Site would also contribute to the provision of 5.85ha of public open space to service not only the Site but the wider community of Meriden. These principles would also be underpinned by a robust and holistic landscape and biodiversity management strategy, in accordance with the NPPF, to ensure the long-term establishment and sustainability of the landscape features and the new defensible Green Belt boundary.
- 9.6 Creating a sustainable, well-connected green infrastructure network is a core element of the Proposed Development, which will establish a green gateway to Meriden that also connects to the wider countryside, provides for local benefits in terms of local community park and substantial Green Infrastructure benefits and would reflect the wider Arden landscape.

10.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Summary

- 10.1 The Site is situated on the eastern edge of Meriden in Solihull District. It comprises a series of arable fields, an area of amenity land in the north and an area of allotments, surrounded to the west, north and south by existing residential development associated with Meriden. The Site is situated within the Green Belt.

Landscape Context and Site Appraisal

- 10.2 The Site comprises arable fields on the edge of Meriden, separated by remnant native hedgerows containing mature oaks. To the immediate east, the landscape has been denuded of vegetation, resulting in an uncharacteristically open landscape as far east as Walsh Lane. The Site is surrounded on three sides by existing residential development and the Meriden Hill Conservation Area is situated 500m to the south-east.

- 10.3 The topography slopes southwards towards the south and east, before rising south of the B4104 to a further localised ridgeline. As a result, the Site is contained from the north and west but is more open to medium distance views to the south and east.

Landscape Character

- 10.4 The Site is situated within the Arden landscape at a national and county level. This is an ancient landscape characterised by a small field pattern and frequent hedgerow oaks. At a local level, the Site is situated within the Northern Upland, described as an undulating area with a strong hedgerow structure and narrow roads.
- 10.5 The Site and, in particular, the area to the immediate east as far as Walsh Lane, has been denuded of vegetation and is not reflective of the local landscape character. It also does not demonstrate the long-distance views towards Birmingham and Coventry identified within the published landscape character assessments.
- 10.6 The western and northern edges of the Site are strongly influenced by the suburbanising elements of existing built form along Leys Lane and the allotment gardens, which lessen the perception of rural character and instead emphasise a stronger connection to the settlement edge.
- 10.7 The landscape character sensitivity of LCA 7, within the SMBC assessment, is 'high' and described as an attractive landscape with a strong sense of place. Visual sensitivity is assessed as medium due to the long to medium distance views obtained. Overall sensitivity for LCA 7 is

assessed as being 'high'. Landscape value is assessed as 'medium' and landscape capacity is assessed as being 'very low'. However, the assessment acknowledges that the scoring will need to be reviewed when the specific details of the proposed development are known.

- 10.8 The Solihull Landscape Character Assessment describes long distance views towards Birmingham and Coventry, but these are not evident within the Site. The visual envelope of the Site is described further later in this LVAGBR report.
- 10.9 The Barton Willmore LLP Site-Specific Assessment (**Table 5.1**) utilising the Solihull Landscape Character Assessment (2016) Methodology determined that the Site exhibits a 'Low-Medium' landscape character sensitivity, 'Medium' visual sensitivity thus a 'Medium' overall landscape sensitivity. The landscape value of the Site is considered to be 'Low'. Combining overall landscape sensitivity and landscape value gives the Site, based on the SMBC general matrix table, a 'Low' landscape capacity rating. However, based on the considered strategy for locating built form on the lower lying slopes tied into the western built up edge of Meriden as well as the scale, and sensitive landscape strategy associated with the Proposed Development, which would provide a robust strengthened Green Infrastructure to the Site and biodiversity and amenity enhancements, it is considered that the Site has a 'Medium' landscape capacity to the development typology proposed.
- 10.10 As part of the SMBC DLP Supplementary Consultation (2019) individual sites were assessed in further detail and Site 420 (the 'Site') was assessed in terms of landscape and visual matters as; "Within LCA7 Landscape character sensitivity - High Visual sensitivity – Medium Landscape value - Medium Landscape capacity to accommodate change - Very Low". The assessment does not provide further narrative on the justification for these ratings.
- 10.11 The Barton Willmore LLP Site Specific Assessment is based on both desktop and site visit data with the transparent narrative and justification set out within Table 5.1. The differences between the Barton Willmore LLP Site Specific Assessment and Landscape Character Assessment for Site 420 (the 'Site') set out within the SMBC DLP Supplementary Consultation Site Assessments document (2019), relating to landscape character sensitivity, landscape value and landscape capacity, can be considered against the same narrative justification set out in Table 5.1 as it is more refined and site specific. Both the Barton Willmore and SMBC site assessment agree that the Site exhibits 'Medium' visual sensitivity.
- 10.12 In relation to Question 2 from the SMBC DLP Supplementary Consultation (2019), relating to the site selection process, it is our opinion that in terms of landscape matters, the methodology employed by SMBC is not transparent and demonstrates inconsistencies that are not sufficiently explained within the documentation publicly available. The DLP Supplementary Consultation Site Assessment document (2019) appears to upgrade the landscape capacity of the Site from

'Very Low' to 'Low' in the commentary between Stages 1 and 2 from the landscape character assessment in the evidence section of the same document, although this is not expanded upon further.

Visual Appraisal

- 10.13 The undulating topography of the area results in the Site being visually enclosed from the north and west, with the exception of immediate views. The land falls away to the east with medium distance views possible from Walsh Lane and the footpaths between Walsh Lane and the Site. Medium distance views are also possible from the southern side of the valley of the B4104 and from isolated locations within the Meriden Hill Conservation Area. There are no long distance views towards the Site. Long distance views towards the area of the Site are possible from an isolated area of high ground to the north from the PRoW in the vicinity of Sparrows Grove Ancient woodland and Lodge Green, but the Site was not visible in this view.

Policy and Evidence Base

- 10.14 Key policy relevant to the Site relates to the protection and enhancement of the character of the countryside, including the protection and enhancement of landscape features such as trees and hedgerows.
- 10.15 The Site was identified as being within the Meriden Gap within the Countryside Strategy, an area being of particular importance in maintaining the separation of Birmingham and Coventry.
- 10.16 In relation to the recently published DLP Supplementary Consultation evidence base the Site, assessed as Site 420, is currently rated as Red whereas the Proposed Allocation Site 10, comprising Sites 137 and 119, is rated as Green under SMBC Site Assessment RAG scoring at Stage 2. The planning judgement commentary that sits between Stages 1 and 2 indicates that the Site (Site 420) is in an area of medium visual sensitivity whereas Proposed Allocation Site 10 (Sites 137 and 119) are stated as falling within areas of high visual sensitivity. The commentary also considers capacity for change stating the Site (Site 420) has a low capacity for change whereas Proposed Allocation Site 10 has a very low capacity for change.

Development Proposals

- 10.17 It can be considered that by implementing the mitigation and development design principles highlighted in section 9.0 of this report, the Site would respond positively to its local landscape setting and become a well-integrated contiguous element of the existing settlement of Meriden whilst also acting as a key green gateway from the east through substantial Green Infrastructure including native woodland and hedgerow planting. Additionally, by responding to the visual sensitivity of the more elevated land to the north through implementation of

native planting and large areas of open space, the Site would also contribute to the provision of more than 5ha of public open space to service not only the Site but the wider community of Meriden in terms of local community park.

- 10.18 Creating a sustainable, well-connected Green Infrastructure network is a core element of the Proposed Development, which will establish a green gateway to Meriden that also connects to the wider countryside and reflects the wider Arden landscape.

Green Belt Review

- 10.19 The Site was assessed as being contained within Refined Parcel 25 (RP25) in the 2016 Solihull Green Belt Review, with RP25 being assessed with a score of 5 out of 12. This resulted in RP25 being lower scoring in terms of its contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt. The 2018 Birmingham HMA Strategic Growth Study assessed the Site as being located in an area important to the separation of Birmingham from Coventry.
- 10.20 Barton Willmore's analysis of the contribution the Site makes itself to the purposes of the Green Belt as set out within the NPPF, assessed the Site as making Some to a Limited contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt. It was assessed as making the greatest contribution to the prevention of sprawl, due to the lack of strongly defensible boundaries to the immediate east. The Site is visually and physically separated from both Birmingham and Coventry, the latter by 4.5km and, therefore, development within the Site would not cause the perceptual or physical merging of towns. This last consideration is in contradiction to the wider published Green Belt Reviews due to the comparative scale of the areas assessed.
- 10.21 Adjustment of the site boundary to take into consideration the existing remnant hedgerow boundary to the east and reinforce this with substantial structural native woodland planting would establish a strong defensible Green Belt boundary, in line with Para. 85 (139) of the NPPF, which would be easily identifiable and also respond sympathetically to the landscape management guidelines set out in the LCA. The strengthening and positively managed establishment of both existing and proposed hedgerow, tree and woodland vegetation together with the proposed blue infrastructure would provide enhancements and biodiversity benefits in accordance with the Framework.
- 10.22 The proposed treatment of native woodland planting extending along the existing eastern field boundary would also provide a robust Green Belt boundary and provide containment and enclosure to the proposed local community parkland and reduce the opportunity for any perceived visual encroachment of the scheme into the wider landscape. This would result in the scheme being seen as a contiguous, well-integrated element of the existing built form that extends around the Site presently that would positively reinforce locally characteristic landscape features.

Conclusion

- 10.23 The Site comprises an area of weakened landscape on the eastern edge of Meriden surrounded on three sides by existing development. The visual envelope is generally limited to medium distance views from the south and east, from where it is viewed within the context of other development within Meriden. There is the potential to mitigate many of the visual effects and to reduce the impact upon the Green Belt through the establishment of a new strong defensible boundary utilising the existing hedgerow and drainage channel to the east by restoring and enhancing key landscape features, planting of a substantial native woodland block to the eastern boundary as well as creating a positive green space in terms of local community park for the scheme and wider community of Meriden.
- 10.24 The Site is identified as being within the 'Meriden Gap', an area important to the strategic separation of Birmingham and Coventry. The Site is separated from Coventry by 4.5km of intervening landform and vegetation and from the edge of Birmingham by 8km of intervening landform, vegetation and the built form of Meriden. Development within the Site would have no impact upon the separation, physical or perceptual, of Birmingham and Coventry and would cause limited impacts upon the wider Green Belt, particularly with a robust landscape mitigation and enhancement strategy.

APPENDIX A.1: LANDSCAPE POLICY CONTEXT

National

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019

10.25 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which was first published in March 2012 has been updated and re-published in February 2019. The NPPF promotes a presumption in favour of sustainable development, defined as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”, and providing it is in accordance with the relevant up-to-date Local Plan, and policies set out in the NPPF including those identifying restrictions with regard to designated areas, such as National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Green Belt.

10.26 Paragraph 38 refers to Decision making and states that:

“Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.”

10.27 Paragraphs 124-132 focus on achieving well-designed places and seek to promote good design of the built environment. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) ***“Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;***
- b) ***Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;***
- c) ***Are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);***
- d) ***Establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;***
- e) ***Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and***
- f) ***Create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.”***

10.28 Paragraph 130 states that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, taking into account any local design standards or style guides in plans or supplementary planning documents. Conversely, where the design of a development accords with clear expectations in plan policies, design should not be used by the decision maker as a valid reason to object to development.

10.29 Chapter 13 is dedicated to issues of Protecting Green Belt land, replacing Planning Policy Guidance note (PPG2). The NPPF states that "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" (Para. 133). Paragraph 134 then goes on to list the five purposes of Green Belts:

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

10.30 The NPPF states that when defining Green Belt boundaries, that they should be clear, "using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent" (Para. 139 f).

10.31 Paragraph 138 states that:

"when drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries, the need to promote sustainable patterns of development should be taken into account. Strategic policy-making authorities should consider the consequences for sustainable development of channelling development towards urban areas inside the Green Belt boundary, towards towns and villages inset within the Green Belt or towards locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary. Where it has been concluded that it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development, plans should give first consideration to land which has been previously -developed and /or is well served by public transport. They should also set out ways in which the impact of removing land from the Green Belt can be offset through compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt land."

10.32 Paragraph 139 states that:

“When defining Green Belt boundaries, plans should (amongst others):

b) not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open; and

f) define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.

10.33 Paragraph 141 of the NPPF states that once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.

10.34 Paragraph 143 notes that, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in “very special circumstances”. Paragraph 144 states that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. “Very special circumstances” will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

10.35 Chapter 15 is entitled “Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment”. Paragraph 170 notes that the planning system and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);**
- b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystems services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;**
- c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, whilst improving public access to it where appropriate;**
- d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;**
- e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and**
- f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.**

10.36 Paragraph 171 states that plans should distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.

Planning Practice Guidance

- 10.37 To support the policies of the NPPF, the Government provides Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), which covers a number of topics.
- 10.38 Under the heading of Natural Environment, sub-heading Landscape⁷, Paragraph 1, the PPG supports the use of landscape character assessment as a tool for understanding the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape and identifying the features that give it a sense of place, as a means to informing, planning and managing change. PPG makes reference to Natural England guidance on landscape character assessment.
- 10.39 Under the heading Design⁸, Paragraph 7, the PPG states that Planning should promote local character (including landscape setting) "by responding to and reinforcing locally distinctive patterns of development, local man-made and natural heritage and culture, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation". The paragraph goes on to state:

"When thinking about new development the site's land form should be taken into account. Natural features and local heritage resources can help give shape to a development and integrate it into the wider area, reinforce and sustain local distinctiveness, reduce its impact on nature and contribute to a sense of place. Views into and out of larger sites should also be carefully considered from the start of the design process"

Solihull

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council Local Plan 2011: Shaping a Sustainable Future (December 2013)

10.40 Key issues for the Borough include:

- ***"Sustaining the attractiveness of the Borough for people who live, work and invest in Solihull;***

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment#landscape>

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/design>

- ***Protecting key gaps between urban areas and settlements;***
- ***Protecting and enhancing our natural assets."***

10.41 Spatial objectives for the Borough include:

- ***"Ensure high quality design and development which integrates with its surroundings and creates safer, inclusive, adaptable and sustainable places which make a positive contribution to the Borough's sense of place, attractiveness and to people's quality of life;***
- ***Conserve and enhance the qualities of the built, natural and historic environment that contribute to character and local distinctiveness and the attractiveness of the mature residential suburbs and the rural area;***
- ***Maintain the Green Belt in Solihull, to prevent unrestricted expansion of the major urban area;***
- ***Promote a landscape scale approach to protecting and restoring the landscape of the Borough and its characteristic features."***

10.42 The following policies and extracts of policies are relevant:

- P10: Natural Environment – ***"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 (...) 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."***
- P14: Amenity – ***"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."***
- P15: Securing Design Quality – ***"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 (...) Conserves and enhances biodiversity, landscape quality and considers the impact on and opportunities for green infrastructure at the earliest opportunity in the design process (...) 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."***
- P16: Conservation of Heritage Assets and Local Distinctiveness – ***"The Council considers the following characteristics make a significant contribution to the local character and distinctiveness of the Borough (...) Parks, gardens and landscape including common, woodland, heathland and distinctive fieldscapes as defined in the Warwickshire Historic Landscape Characterisation."***

- 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 (...) The Council will not permit inappropriate development in the Green Belt, except in very special circumstances."*
- P18: Health and Well Being – *"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 (...) Contribute to the development of a high quality, safe and convenient walking and cycling network".*

Reviewing the Plan for Solihull's Future: Solihull Local Plan Review Draft Local Plan (November 2016)

10.43 The following policies from the submission draft are relevant:

- **P10 Natural Environment:**
 - Protect existing and create new landscape features including woodlands, copses, hedgerows and standard trees.
 - Developers will be expected to incorporate measures to enhance and restore the landscape.
- **P14 Amenity:**
 - Safeguard important trees, hedgerows and woodland, and plant new trees, hedgerows and woodland.
 - Protect dark skies from impacts of light pollution.
- **P15 Security Design Quality:**
 - New development will be expected to conserve and enhance local character, distinctiveness and streetscape quality and respect the surrounding natural, built and historic environment.
 - New development will be expected to respect and enhance landscape quality, including trees, hedgerows and other landscape features of value and contribute to strategic green infrastructure.
- **P16 Conservation of Heritage Assets and Local Distinctiveness:**
 - The Arden landscape must be protected and restored.
 - Landscape, including woodlands and distinctive fieldsapes should be protected.
- **P17 Countryside and Green Belt:**

- Development within the Green Belt must not harm the visual amenity of the Green Belt.
- **P18 Health and Wellbeing:**
 - Measures to improve health and wellbeing include the improvement of the quality of and access to the local green infrastructure network.
 - Increasing opportunities for walking.
 - Seek to retain and enhance green spaces and incorporate planting and trees.
- **P20 Provision for Open Space, Children’s Play, Sport, Recreation and Leisure:**
 - Existing facilities that make an important contribution to the quality of the environment or network of green infrastructure will be protected.

Reviewing the Plan for Solihull’s Future, Solihull Local Plan Review, Draft Local Plan Supplementary Consultation (January 2019)

10.44 The DLP Supplementary Consultation does not include any updated policies from the DLP (2016) but instead considers site allocations and sets out a series of questions on key issues. The following questions are of relevance to the Site and Proposed Allocation Site 10:

- ***“Question 2: Do you agree with the methodology of the site selection process, if not why not and what alternative/amendment would you suggest?”***
- ***Question 30: Do you believe that Site 10 west of Meriden should be included as allocated site, if not why not? Do you have any comments on the draft concept masterplan for the site?”***
- ***Question 37: What compensatory provision should be made for land being removed from the Green Belt? Where relevant please give examples that are specific to individual sites proposed for allocation.***
- ***Question 39: Are there any red sites omitted which you believe should be included; if so which one(s) and why?”.***

Reviewing the Plan for Solihull’s Future, Solihull Local Plan Review Site Assessments (January 2019)

10.45 As part of the DLP Supplementary Consultation Process, SMBC undertook an assessment of the proposed site allocations in which the Site was assessed as Site 420. The assessment sheets set out commentary between Site Selection Steps 1 and 2, which contains the planning judgement for any changes between Stages 1 and 2. In terms of the Site (Site 420), which is currently rated Red at Stage 2, the planning commentary states:

- ***"Site is within moderately performing parcel in the Green Belt Assessment, although it would result in indefensible boundaries to the east and north. Site has a very high level of accessibility, is in an area of medium visual sensitivity with low capacity for change and is deliverable. The SA identifies 7 positive and 5 negative effects. Settlement identified as suitable for limited expansion, but the site lacks defensible green belt boundaries".***

10.46 The Landscape Character Assessment within the evidence section of the assessment states:

- ***"Within LCA7 Landscape character sensitivity - High Visual sensitivity – Medium Landscape value - Medium Landscape capacity to accommodate change - Very Low".***

10.47 The assessment also considers Proposed Allocation Site 10, which comprises both Sites 137 and 119 with a total SHELAA capacity of 68 dwellings. Both Sites 137 and 119 are assessed as Green at Stage 2 with the following commentary:

- ***Site 137 – "Site is within a moderately performing parcel in the Green Belt Assessment and would result in an indefensible boundary to the south-west. Site has a high level of accessibility, is in an area of high visual sensitivity with very low capacity for change and is deliverable. The SA identifies 6 positive and 6 negative effects. Settlement is identified for limited expansion and site is well related to the centre of the village";***
- ***Site 119 – "Site is partly within a moderately performing parcel and a parcel that makes no contribution in the Green Belt Assessment and would result in an indefensible boundary to the north-east. Site has a high level of accessibility, is in an area of high visual sensitivity with very low capacity for change and is deliverable. The SA identifies 6 positive and 6 negative effects. Settlement is identified for limited expansion and site is well related to the centre of the village".***

Solihull Local Plan Review Draft Concept Masterplans (January 2019)

10.48 As part of the DLP Supplementary Consultation Process SMBC have produced emerging concept masterplans as part of the rationale for site allocation revisions. The Site (Site 420) is not proposed for allocation thus do not feature in the document. However, Proposed Allocation Site 10 does feature in the document, which sets out the rationale for increasing dwelling numbers from 50 to 100 at a density of 40 DPH, specifically stating that the site; "provides an opportunity to create a gateway development into Meriden" (p.78). Additionally, the rationale states that; "the highest density of development on the corner of Maxstoke Lane and Birmingham Road, where development up to 3 storeys could be appropriate subject to design". The masterplan also provides for 1ha of public open space (POS) within the concept layout based around the pond and tree group to the centre of the site.

Solihull Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal Site Options Assessment (Prepared by AECOM, January 2019)

- 10.49 As part of the DLP Supplementary Consultation Process SMBC commissioned AECOM to undertake a sustainability appraisal on the local plan site options assessment. The appraisal considers the Site as Site 420 (referred to as AECOM153) however it does not list Proposed Allocations Site 10, which according to the SMBC DLP Site Assessment document is site AECOM100 although it does not provide a document reference. The appraisal scores sites against a series of eighteen criteria using an adapted RAG process with Dark Green equalling significant positive effects likely through to Red equalling significant negative effects likely.
- 10.50 Site 420 scores as follows against the eighteen criteria; 7 positive (5 significant); 7 neutral; 4 negative.
- 10.51 Criteria SA.10 refers specifically to landscape and visual matters where the categories reference the Solihull Landscape Character Assessment (2016), which is discussed in further detail under section 5.0 of this report. In relation to SA.10 the Site (Site 420) is scored as Amber, which equates to a **medium-high** sensitivity to change.

Meriden Neighbourhood Plan

- 10.52 Meriden Parish Council made an application for the designation of a Neighbourhood Area in November 2014. A Neighbourhood Plan is being prepared but no drafts have, at present, been published for consultation. This would supersede the existing Meriden Parish Plan, which was published in 2009 however, this document does not contain any relevant guidance or policies to landscape and visual matters.

Meriden Parish Design Statement (2011)

- 10.53 Meriden Parish Council commissioned a Parish Design Statement in 2009, which was completed in 2011 and sets out the characteristics and qualities local people value in the parish and its surroundings as well as issues and concerns about enhancing the local environment.
- 10.54 The design statement sets out the following guidance of relevance to landscape and visual matters:

- ***"Public footpaths, bridleways and lanes form important parts of the Parish's character and amenity (...)***
- ***Mature hedges should be preserved and the creation of new hedgerows to delineate boundaries with typical indigenous species should be encouraged (...);***
- ***Careful consideration should be given to the impact of any new development on the views from public rights of way,***

particularly with regard to height, size, design, colour, boundary and landscaping” (p.10).

10.55 In relation to the built environment the design statement considers that:

- ***“Any future developments should be congruous, harmonise with their environs and be in keeping with the character of neighbouring properties;***
- ***Future developments more than two storeys high should not generally be acceptable (...);***
- ***Any development which requires the removal of trees or hedgerows should require replacement appropriate to the particular location;***
- ***Property boundaries adjoining public roads, lanes and spaces should complement the general character of the area in terms of materials and should avoid runs of contrasting styles and height. Encourage a preference for hedges, particularly in certain roads” (p.11).***

10.56 The design statement also separates Meriden into 14 distinct character areas however, the Site falls outside of this settlement character assessment. Character Areas 4 (Fillongley Road), 5 (Main Road) and 6 (Leys Lane) immediately abut the Site. The character area assessments do not consider sensitivity or susceptibility to different development typologies but do set out development guidance notes.

10.57 Proposed Allocation Site 10 is partially covered by CA3 (Maxstoke Lane/Maxstoke Close), which sets out the following development guidance:

- “Any future developments in this area need to sensitively respect and enhance its village character.
- The pressure on Maxstoke Lane from the new housing development must not lead to its suburbanisation. It must retain its rural / village feel” (p.18).

10.58 Proposed Allocation Site 10 is also partially covered within the southern area of the site by CA2 (Birmingham Road, Hampton Grange and Hampton Lane), which sets out the following development guidance:

- “A well-designed and attractive development should be allowed on the north side of Birmingham Road to improve the appearance of this gateway to the village.
- Birmingham Road should be narrowed to make it more in scale with its village setting, with better parking provision and protection to verges etc” (p.17).

SHLAA (2012)

- 10.59 In the 2012 SHLAA, the allotment Site was submitted as site 130, the southern part of the Site and some of the land to the east was submitted under sites 5, 128 and 148 and land in the south of the Site was submitted under reference 233.
- 10.60 Site 130 was identified as containing TPOs and hedgerows, as well as being within the Meriden Gap and contributing to the purposes of the Green Belt, including safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, and preventing coalescence. It was assessed as being poorly related to existing development, despite being surrounded by existing development on at least two sides. This site was not considered further for allocation or included within the SHLAA.
- 10.61 Site 5/128/148 was identified as being within the 'Meriden Gap' and as contributing to the purposes of the Green Belt, safeguarding the countryside from encroachments and helping prevent coalescence. The land was assessed as being poorly related to the existing built form and as setting a precedent for further development within the area. It was further assessed that development would be **"visible from the countryside due to land levels"**. This site was not considered for allocation and was not included within the final SHLAA.
- 10.62 Site 233 was assessed, as with the above sites, as being within the Meriden Gap and as contributing to the protection of the countryside from encroachment and preventing coalescence. This land was not considered further.

SHELAA (2016, updated 2018)

- 10.63 The area of the allotments in the north of the Site was submitted to the SHELAA under reference 186, with an area of 0.91ha. The area of amenity land around Highfield House, to the immediate south of the allotments, was submitted under reference 187, with an area of 1.27ha. All of the land including the Site and extending as far north as the A35 and as far east as Walsh Lane was submitted under reference 211, with an area of 29.95ha. All of these sites were also submitted under an amalgamated site 1014, comprising 31.64ha.
- 10.64 Sites 186, 187 and 211 were assessed as having suitability, availability and achievability scores of 3 out of 3 and were assessed as being Category A sites, i.e. deliverable. There is no assessment within the SHELAA relating to the Site's landscape or visual attributes.

Solihull's Countryside Strategy: First Review 2010-2020

- 10.65 The Strategy's stated outcomes are to control and guide future change in Solihull's countryside in order to protect and enhance its character whilst managing and developing a prosperous economy. It aims to recognise the distinctive character of the Solihull countryside and provide a framework to new development.

10.66 The Strategy identified ten broad character zones, with the Site being situated within Zone 5 – The Rural Heartland. This zone is described as containing the most rural parts of Solihull and as acting as a link to the Arden landscape. It goes on to state:

"It is the openness of this area, the preservation of its Arden landscape and rural quality, and the limited urban influence that play a key role in maintaining the Meriden Gap between the Birmingham conurbation and Coventry."

10.67 The document describes the Meriden Gap in the following terms:

"The countryside between Birmingham and Coventry, known as the Meriden Gap, is of particular important in preventing the two cities from merging. A major challenge involves developing the potential of the positive uses of the Green Belt, to enhance its protection, whilst recognising the pressures from development."

10.68 The Strategy goes onto highlight strategies for the future including maintaining the rural character, protect and enhance green infrastructure and maintaining local distinctiveness. Local objectives for The Rural Heartland include (inter alia):

- ***"Protection of rural character from development;***
- ***Enhance the effect of wooded enclosure;***
- ***Increase opportunities for access within the countryside;***
- ***Protect and enhance important ecological features, including the River Blythe corridor."***

APPENDIX A.2: EXTRACTS FROM EVIDENCE BASE DOCUMENTS

SMBC DLP Supplementary Consultation Site Assessments (Sites 420, 137 and 119)

AECOM Sustainability Appraisal Interim SA Site 420

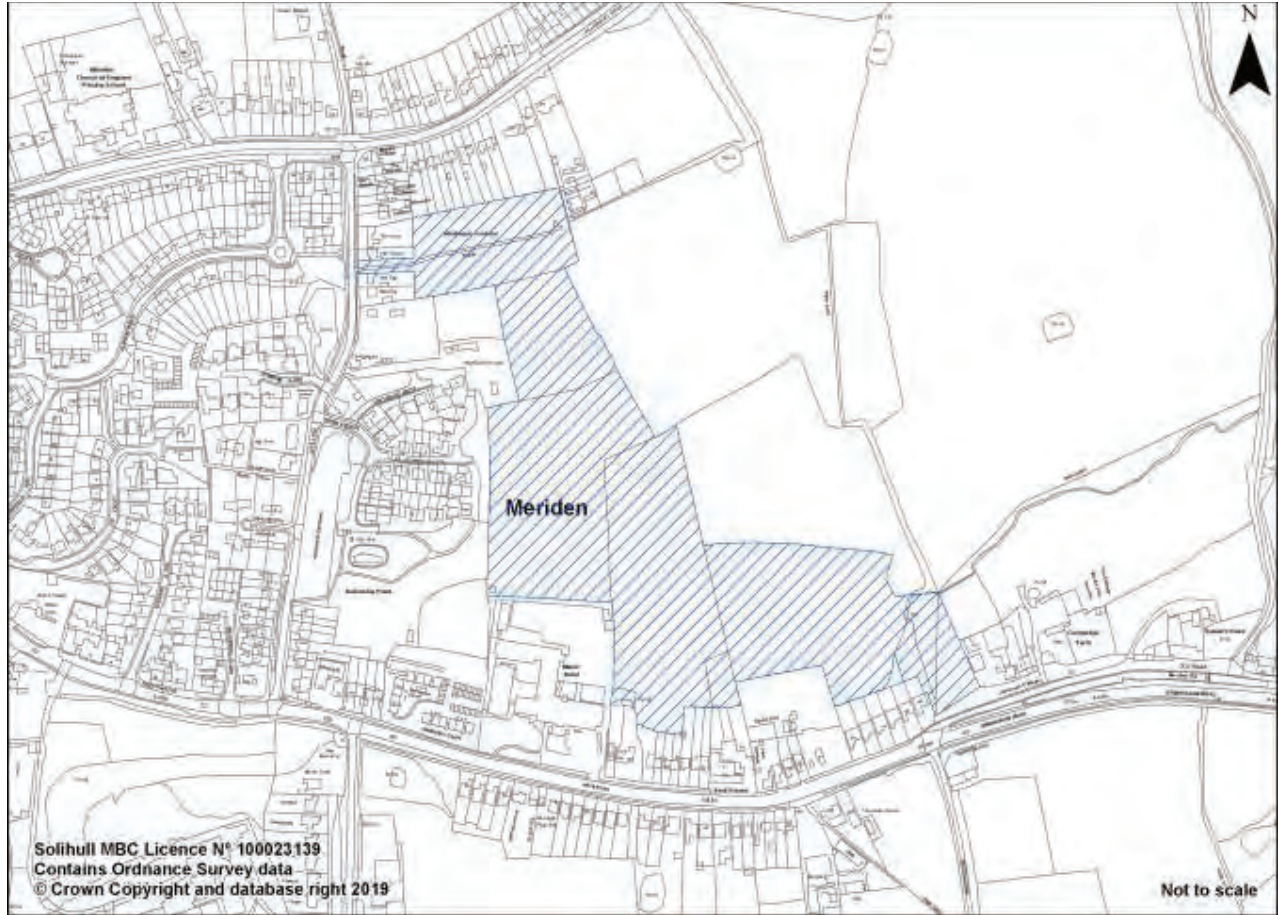
SMBC Local Plan Review Draft Concept Masterplan Site 10

Warwickshire Habitat Biodiversity Audit

Meriden Parish Design Statement Landscape Guidance and Character Areas 2 & 3

Solihull Strategic Green Belt Assessment (2016)

Site Reference	420	Site Name	Land at Meriden - IM Land
Gross Area (Ha)	7.27	Ward	Meriden
Capacity (SHELAA)	170	Parish	Meriden
Green Belt	99	Greenfield/ Brownfield	Greenfield



Constraints

Policy Constraints	Green Belt Mineral Safeguarding Area for Coal
Hard Constraints	TPO on boundary of site
Soft constraints	Allotments Proximity to locally listed buildings PROWs M265 and M267

Evidence

SHELAA

Category 1

Accessibility Study

Primary School: Very High Food Store: Very High GP Surgery: Very High Public Transport: Very High Overall: Very High Access: Existing footway

Green Belt Assessment

Lower performing parcel (RP25) overall with a combined score of 5. *Highly performing in terms of purpose 1.

Landscape Character Assessment

Within LCA7 Landscape character sensitivity - High Visual sensitivity - Medium Landscape value - Medium Landscape capacity to accommodate change - Very Low

Sustainability Appraisal

Jan 2019 Draft AECOM 153 18 effects: 7 positive (5 significant); 7 neutral; 4 negative

Site Selection

Spatial Strategy

Growth Option F/G: Limited/Significant expansion of rural villages/settlements

Site Selection Topic Paper

Meriden village is identified as suitable for limited expansion.

Site Selection Step 1

5

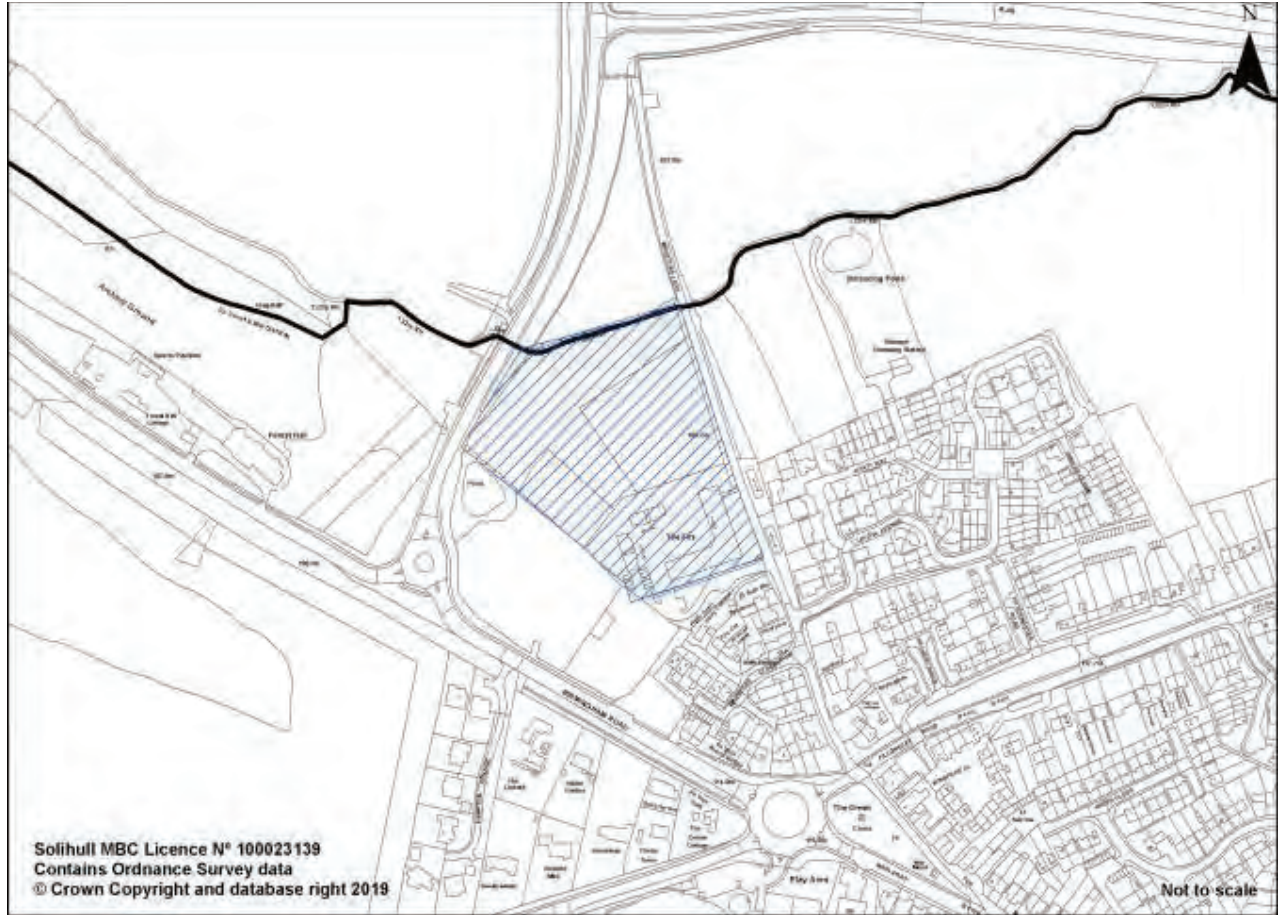
Commentary

Site is within moderately performing parcel in the Green Belt Assessment, although it would result in indefensible boundaries to the east and north. Site has a very high level of accessibility, is in an area of medium visual sensitivity with low capacity for change and is deliverable. The SA identifies 7 positive and 5 negative effects. Settlement identified as suitable for limited expansion, but the site lacks defensible green belt boundaries

Site Selection Step 2

R

Site Reference	137	Site Name	The Firs, Meriden
Gross Area (Ha)	2.24	Ward	Meriden
Capacity (SHELAA)	38	Parish	Meriden
Green Belt	100	Greenfield/ Brownfield	Part greenfield, part brownfield



Constraints

Policy Constraints	Green Belt
Hard Constraints	TPOs on site
Soft constraints	Existing properties and uses on site Trees on site

Evidence

SHELAA

Category 1

Accessibility Study

Primary School: Very High Food Store: Very High GP Surgery: Low/Medium Public Transport: Very High (Bus) Overall: High Access: No existing footway provision

Green Belt Assessment

Lower performing parcel (RP25) overall with a combined score of 5. *Highly performing in terms of purpose 1.

Landscape Character Assessment

Within LCA7 Landscape character sensitivity - High Visual sensitivity - Medium Landscape value - Medium Landscape capacity to accommodate change - Very Low

Sustainability Appraisal

AECOM 100 17 effects: 6 positive (3 significant); 5 neutral; 6 negative.

Site Selection

Spatial Strategy

Growth Option F: Limited expansion of rural villages/settlements

Site Selection Topic Paper

Meriden village is identified as suitable for limited expansion. Site is part greenfield/part brownfield, adjacent to the existing settlement and in an accessible location.

Site Selection Step 1

5

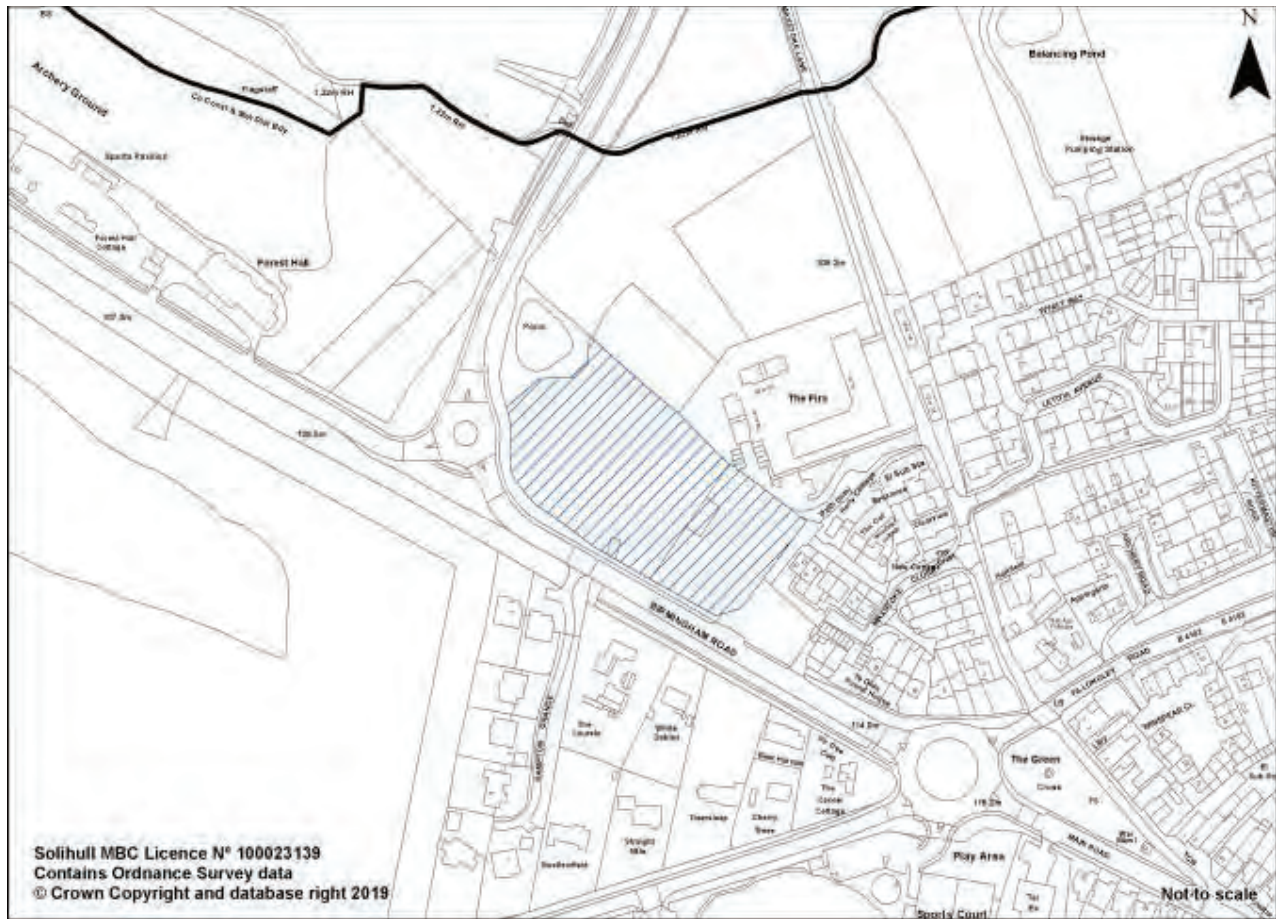
Commentary

Site is within a moderately performing parcel in the Green Belt Assessment and would result in an indefensible boundary to the south-west. Site has a high level of accessibility, is in an area of high visual sensitivity with very low capacity for change and is deliverable. The SA identifies 6 positive and 6 negative effects. Settlement is identified for limited expansion and site is well related to the centre of the village

Site Selection Step 2

G

Site Reference	119	Site Name	Land at Birmingham Road, Meriden
Gross Area (Ha)	1.02	Ward	Meriden
Capacity (SHELAA)	30	Parish	Meriden
Green Belt	100	Greenfield/ Brownfield	Predominantly Greenfield



Constraints

Policy Constraints	Green Belt Mineral safeguarding area/ Area of search
Hard Constraints	TPOs on boundary of site Adjacent to Listed building
Soft constraints	Contaminated land on greater part of site Existing uses on site

Evidence

SHELAA	Category 2 (some suitability constraints)
Accessibility Study	Primary School: Very High Food Store: Very High GP Surgery: Low/Medium Public Transport: Very High (Bus) Overall: High Access: Existing footway
Green Belt Assessment	Partly within: Parcel (RP24) scores 0 and does not perform against the Green Belt purposes 1, 2, 3 or 4. Partly within: Lower performing parcel (RP25) overall with a combined score of 5. *Highly performing in terms of purpose 1.
Landscape Character Assessment	Within LCA7 Landscape character sensitivity - High Visual sensitivity - Medium Landscape value - Medium Landscape capacity to accommodate change - Very Low
Sustainability Appraisal	AECOM 100 17 effects: 6 positive (3 significant); 5 neutral; 6 negative.

Site Selection

Spatial Strategy	Growth Option F: Limited expansion of rural villages/settlements
Site Selection Topic Paper	Meriden village is identified as suitable for limited expansion.
Site Selection Step 1	5
Commentary	Site is partly within a moderately performing parcel and a parcel that makes no contribution in the Green Belt Assessment and would result in an indefensible boundary to the north-east. Site has a high level of accessibility, is in an area of high visual sensitivity with very low capacity for change and is deliverable. The SA identifies 6 positive and 6 negative effects. Settlement is identified for limited expansion and site is well related to the centre of the village
Site Selection Step 2	G

Solihull Local Plan

Sustainability Appraisal: Interim SA Report

Site options assessment

January, 2019

The site assessment framework below was established to appraise site options. The framework is based largely upon objective criteria and thresholds that allow for a consistent and fair comparison of site options. Mitigation measures have not been taken into account at this stage as this information is not available for each site option. Therefore, constraints identified at this stage do not necessarily mean that potential negative effects cannot be mitigated. The site appraisal process is intended to be one of several factors that are taken into account in the decision making process on which sites to allocate or not.

The scores will be determined through a series of criteria and set thresholds as follows:

Colour code	Symbol	Significance of effects
Dark green	✓✓	Significant positive effects more likely
Light green	✓	Positive effects likely
Grey	-	Neutral effects
Amber	*	Negative effects likely / mitigation necessary
Red	**	Significant negative effects likely / mitigation essential

SA Topics and corresponding SA Objectives	Site appraisal criteria and thresholds	Assumptions and rationale
<p>Deprivation and equality</p> <p>SA1: To contribute to regeneration and economic development initiatives that benefit the Borough's communities; especially those identified as deprived.</p> <p>SA15. Reduce social exclusion and disparities within the Borough</p>	<p>Development located within top 10% most deprived ✓✓</p> <p>Located within top 20% most deprived ✓</p> <p>Located within top 40% most deprived -</p> <p>Located within 60% least deprived *</p>	<p>Development can have positive effects upon communities through the creation of accessible jobs, affordable housing and improved environments. Consequently, a positive effect would be expected where development is located nearby to communities recorded as having multiple indicators of deprivation.</p>
<p>2. To reduce the number of people experiencing difficulties in accessing employment, education and training opportunities.</p>	<p>Access to primary school</p> <p><400m</p> <p><800m</p> <p>800-1200m</p> <p>1.2km - 3km</p> <p>>3km</p> <p>Access to secondary school</p> <p><1200m</p> <p>1200m – 5km</p> <p>>5km</p>	<p>According to the CIHT (2000) 'Providing for Journeys by foot', <1200m is considered a reasonable walking distance. Therefore, distances below this are considered to be beneficial. Whilst residents beyond 1200m may be capable and willing to</p> <p>Development which is in closer proximity to services is considered to be more beneficial for a wider range of people as it is more likely that residents will be willing (and able) to walk to services.</p>
<p>3. To ensure that the location of development can be accommodated by existing and/or planned use of existing physical infrastructure and reduces the need to travel.</p>	<p>Proximity to bus and train services</p> <p>Within 400m of a frequent bus or train service (more than three bus services or 2 train services per hour)</p>	<p>According to the CIHT (2000) 'Providing for Journeys by foot', <1200m is considered a reasonable walking distance to public transport. Stops. Therefore, distances below this are considered to be beneficial.</p>

SA Topics and corresponding SA Objectives	Site appraisal criteria and thresholds	Assumptions and rationale
	<p>Within 400m of an infrequent bus or train service (less than 3 bus services or 2 train services per hour)</p> <p>Within 800m of a frequent bus or train service</p> <p>Within 800m, of an infrequent bus or train service</p> <p>Within 1400 m of an infrequent bus or train service</p> <p>More than 1400m of a bus stop or train station</p> <p>Proximity to principal road network for employment sites</p> <p>Less than 1km</p> <p>Less than 3km</p> <p>More than 3km</p>	
<p>4. Minimise the use of natural resources such as land, water and minerals, and minimise waste, whilst increasing reuse and recycling.</p>	<p>Soil</p> <p>Does not contain any agricultural land Grade 1-3b</p> <p>Contains less than 10 ha of agricultural land 1-3b</p> <p>Contains more than 10 ha of agricultural land 1-2 or >20ha of 1-3b land.</p> <p>Contains more than 20ha of agricultural land 1-2 or >50ha 1-3b</p> <p>Minerals</p> <p>Site within minerals safeguard area</p> <p>Site outside of minerals safeguard area</p>	<p>Although there is little guidance, the loss of 20 hectares triggers consultation with DEFRA/Natural England, which can be considered significant.</p> <p>Development within areas safeguarded for mineral reserves could potentially lead to sterilisation of minerals (though further exploration would be necessary to confirm).</p>
<p>5. Minimise greenhouse gas emissions, reduce energy use, encourage energy efficiency and renewable energy generation</p>	<p>Development within proximity of heat demand / anchor loads</p> <p>Development not within proximity of heat demand / anchor loads</p>	<p>Development in close proximity to areas of heat demand and / or anchor loads could present opportunities to plug in to or help contribute towards the establishment of district heat networks. However, due to a lack of objective data, this criteria has not been included as part of the appraisal at this stage.</p>
<p>SA6. To assist businesses in the adaptation they need to become more resource efficient and resilient to the effects of a changing climate.</p>	<p>Design features will play a more important role than location in the achievement of this objective. Therefore, no criteria have been established.</p>	

SA Topics and corresponding SA Objectives	Site appraisal criteria and thresholds	Assumptions and rationale
SA8. To ensure that development provides for adaptation to urban heating, the effects of high winds and assists in promoting positive behaviour change.		
SA7. Manage, maintain and where necessary improve the drainage network to reduce the effects of flooding on communities and businesses.	<p>Flood risk</p> <p>Site is located entirely within Flood Zone 1 and / or Surface water flooding 1000 years</p> <p>Some of the site is in Flood Zones 2 or 3 (up to 50%) and / or Surface water flooding 100 years</p> <p>Most of the site is in Flood Zones 2 or 3 (more than 50%) and / or surface water flooding 30 years</p>	<p>Provided that a site is not wholly within a flood zone 2/3 it should be possible to avoid and/or mitigate impacts.</p> <p>However, proximity to zone 1 is preferable as it reduces the risk and potential cost of mitigation.</p> <p>Sites wholly within zones 2 and 3 should be sieved out.</p> <p>However, for those sites where it is considered mitigation could still be implemented a 'red' categorization is given.</p>
SA9. Protect the integrity and connectivity of ecological sites and ensure that enhancement for habitats and species are not prejudiced.	<p>Overlaps or contains a local wildlife site and / or records of priority species and habitats. Site not of the scale to avoid sensitive habitats or to deliver strategic improvements to ecological networks and so development would likely lead to loss.</p> <p>Site does not contain local wildlife sites and .or records of LBAP priority habitats and species</p> <p>Overlaps or contains a local wildlife site and / or records of priority species and habitats. Site is of strategic scale to enhance ecological networks.</p>	<p>An element of qualitative analysis will need to be taken to determine whether sites are likely to lead to loss or mitigation would be probable. For example, a small site that is 80% covered by woodland may be more likely to require tree felling that a large site that presents plenty area for a viable development without needing to encroach onto wooded areas. Equally, a site may species and habitats throughout the site that are difficult to avoid, whilst other sites may only contain features to the edge of a site (e.g. hedgerows) which could be more easily avoided and mitigated / enhanced.</p>
SA10. To manage the landscape effects of development in recognition of the European Landscape Convention as well as the risks and opportunities associated with measures to address climate change.	<p>Landscape with low or low medium sensitivity to change</p> <p>Landscape with medium sensitivity to change</p> <p>Medium - high sensitivity to change</p> <p>Landscape with high sensitivity to change</p>	<p>The categories correspond to the overall landscape sensitivity classifications as set out in the Solihull Landscape Character Assessment (November 2016).</p>

SA Topics and corresponding SA Objectives	Site appraisal criteria and thresholds	Assumptions and rationale
SA11: To facilitate the delivery and enhance the quality of areas providing green infrastructure.	<p>Access to greenspace (amenity open space, natural open space)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 400m from public open space or natural greenspace of at least 2ha in size 2km from public open space or natural greenspace of at least 20 ha in size <p>Meets both standards Meets one standard Meets neither standard</p>	<p>A negative impact is scored where standards are not met as it would require further consideration of mitigation measures. In some instances development could enhance provision, but this is not assumed at this stage (to ensure consistency in appraisal).</p> <p>ANGST is considered a useful measure of the sustainability of locations, and is endorsed by Natural England.</p>
SA12. To enhance, conserve and protect buildings, sites and the setting of historic assets as part of development projects	<p>Proximity to heritage assets and impact upon Setting</p> <p><i>Heritage asset (listed building, ancient monument, registered parks and gardens, historic parkland, building of local interest) on site and likely to be lost as part of development. Development is likely to result in substantial harm to a designated heritage asset (NPPF, Paragraph 132 & PPG 01-7) arising as a result of the loss of a heritage asset or a considerable impact on its importance.</i></p> <p><u>Heritage assets within 100m of site:</u></p>	
SA13. To deliver improvements in townscape and enhance local distinctiveness.	<p>Development is likely to result in less than substantial harm to a heritage asset including its setting. The level of harm is likely to be affected by the proximity and likely compatibility of future development.</p> <p>Setting less likely to be adversely affected as the site is well screened / Heritage assets more than 100m from site and not likely to have a substantial effect upon the setting of a heritage asset.</p> <p>Development is unlikely to affect the significance of a heritage asset or provides a positive opportunity to enhance or better reveal that significance</p>	
SA14. Minimise air, soil, water, light and noise pollution.	<p>Amenity</p> <p>Sources of noise adjacent to site that could affect amenity (A/B road, industrial park, agricultural processes).</p> <p>No sources of noise adjacent to site</p>	<p>Undertaken using site visits, desktop analysis of mapping imagery and professional opinion.</p>
SA16. Improve the supply and affordability of housing (particularly in the areas of greatest need) <i>Housing sites only</i>	<p>Housing site deliverable within 0-5 years Deliverable within the plan period Deliverability uncertain</p>	<p>Provision of a higher level of development would contribute more significantly to the Borough's housing targets and would achieve economies of scale.</p> <p>It is important to recognise that availability may change over time.</p>

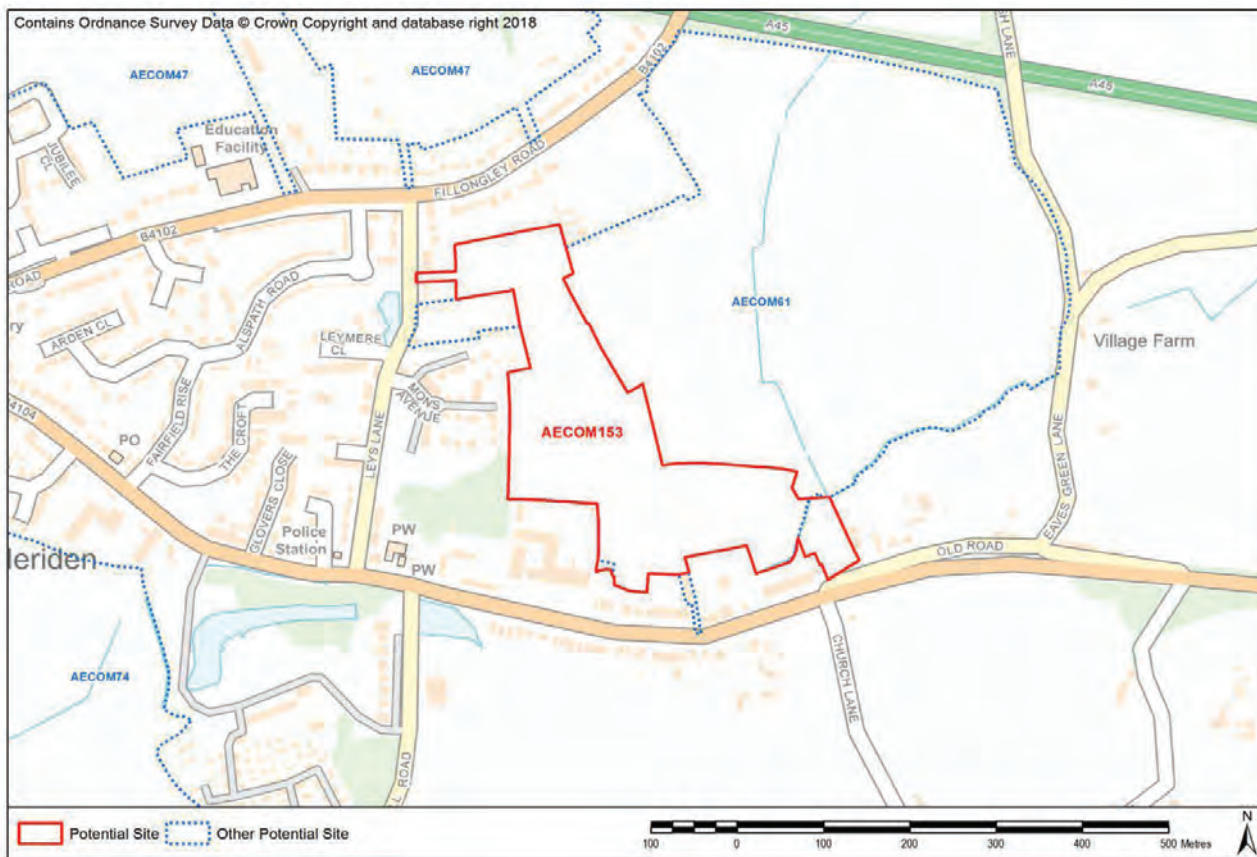
SA Topics and corresponding SA Objectives	Site appraisal criteria and thresholds	Assumptions and rationale
<p>SA17. To fully integrate the planning, transport, housing, cultural, recreational, environmental and health systems to address the social determinants of health in each locality to reduce health inequalities and promote healthy lifestyles.</p>	<p>Access to healthcare</p> <p>Within 400m of a GP or health centre Within 1200m of a GP or health centre Within 2.5km of a GP or health centre Within 5km of a GP or health centre More than 5km from a GP</p> <p>Access to leisure and play facilities (<i>allotments, parks, sports centres, play areas, cycle routes</i>)</p> <p>Within 400m of at least two facilities Within 400m of at least one facility Within 800m of at least two facilities Within 800m of at least one facility Within 1200m of at least two facilities Within 1200m of at least one facility More than 1200m of any facilities</p>	<p>The Manual for Streets suggests that 'walkable neighbourhoods' will typically have access to a range of services and facilities within 800m, with 1200m being the 'maximum reasonable walking distance'.</p>
<p>SA18. Reduce crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.</p>	<p>Development in any location can be designed so as to effectively reduce crime and the fear of crime. Therefore, it is not proposed to include this as a criterion for comparing site options.</p> <p>However, development on derelict sites or open space that is a known target of fly-tipping or antisocial behaviour could help to tackle such issues. If consistent information is available for all sites we could establish if there are any such issues on site options. Due to a lack of objective information, this criterion has not been part of the site appraisal at this stage.</p>	

SA Topics and corresponding SA Objectives	Site appraisal criteria and thresholds	Assumptions and rationale
<p>SA19. Encourage development with a better balance between jobs, housing and services, and provide easy and equitable access to opportunities, basic services and amenities for all.</p>	<p>Access to jobs (<i>key economic assets</i>)</p> <p><1200m <2.5km <5km <7.5km >7.5km</p> <p>Access to local convenience store or supermarket</p> <p><400m <800m 800-1200m 1.2km - 3km >3km</p>	

APPENDIX B: SITE PROFORMAS

AECOM ID AECOM153
Site Name Birmingham Road, Meriden
Site Type Housing

SMBC Reference 420
Area (Ha) 7.27



SA1: To contribute to regeneration and economic development initiatives targeted towards specific community groups.
SA15: Reduce social exclusion and disparities within the Borough

Located within 60% least deprived

SA2: To reduce the number of people experiencing difficulties in accessing employment, education and training opportunities.

Nearest Primary School 309m (Meriden Church of England Primary School)

Nearest Secondary School 6256m (Heart of England School)

SA3: To ensure that the location of development makes efficient use of existing physical infrastructure and reduces the need to travel.

Proximity to bus and train services Within 400m of a frequent bus or train service (more than three bus services per hour)

Proximity to principal road network for employment sites 417m

SA4: Minimise the use of natural resources such as land, water and minerals, and minimise waste, whilst increasing reuse and recycling.

Soils Contains less than 20 ha of agricultural land 1-3b

Minerals Site within minerals safeguard area

SA7: Manage, maintain and where necessary improve the drainage network to reduce economic losses from flooding.

Environment Agency Flood Zones Site is located entirely within Flood Zone 1

SA9: To enhance the connectivity of ecological sites and enhance LBAP priority habitats and species

Site does not contain local wildlife sites and / or records of LBAP priority habitats and species

SA10: To manage the landscape effects of development in recognition of the European Landscape Convention as well as the risks and opportunities associated with measures to address climate change

Landscape with medium/high sensitivity to change

SA11: To facilitate the delivery and enhance the quality of areas providing green infrastructure.

Distance to Greenspace >2ha (Road/Footpath/Cycle) 654 m
Distance to Greenspace >20ha (Road/Footpath/Cycle) 8456 m

Criteria Met? Meets neither standard

SA12: To enhance, conserve and protect buildings, sites and the setting of historic assets as part of development projects

SA13: To deliver improvements in townscape and enhance local distinctiveness.

Heritage assets more than 100m from site

SA14: Minimise air, soil, water, light and noise pollution.

Amenity No immediate effects

SA16: Housing deliverability

Within 0-10 years

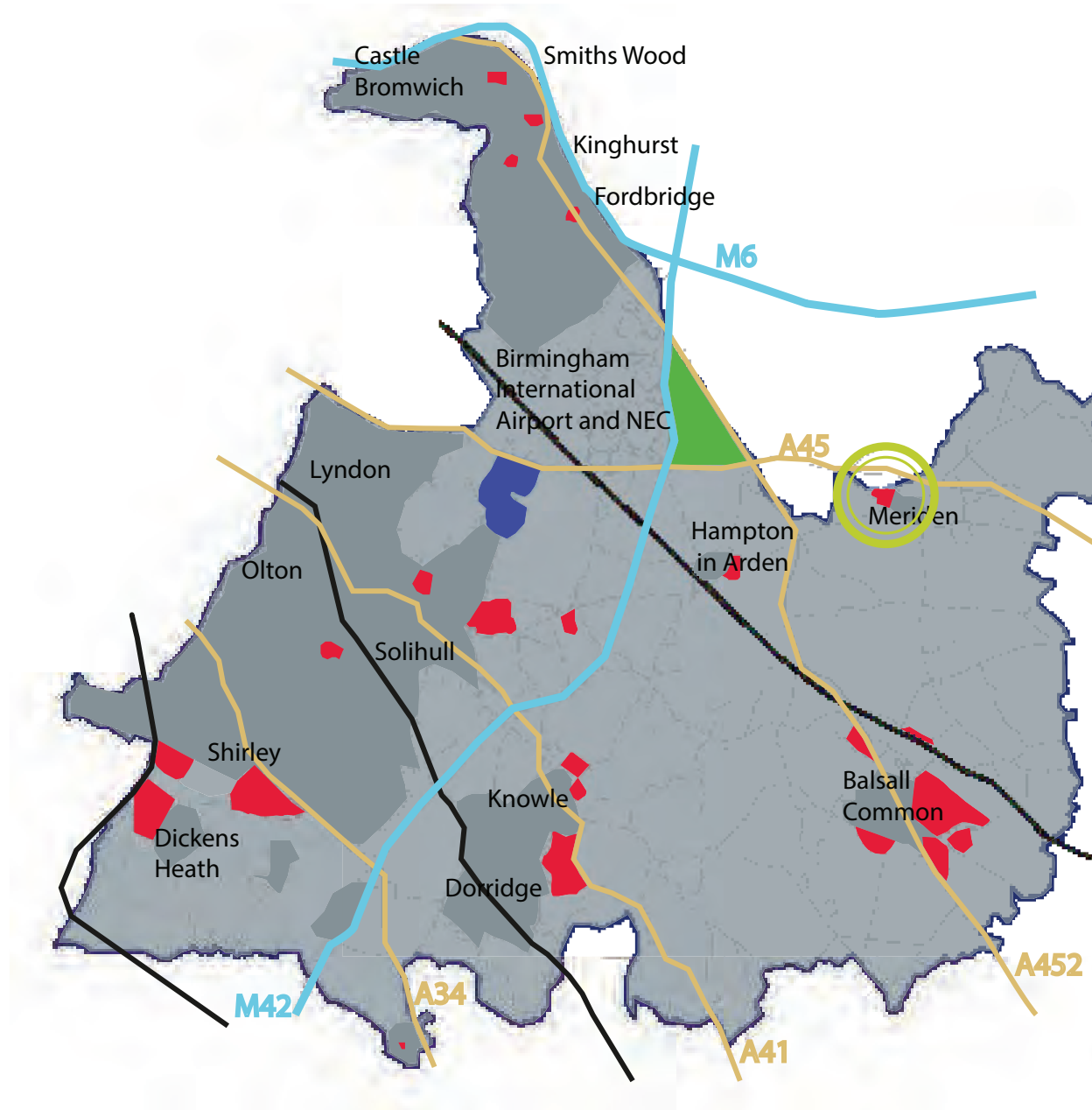
SA17: To fully integrate the planning, transport, housing, cultural, recreational, environmental and health systems to address the social determinants of health in each locality to reduce health inequalities and promote healthy lifestyles.

Distance to Healthcare (Road/Footpath/Cycle) 145m
No. of leisure & play facilities within 400m (Road/Footpath/Cycle) 2
No. of leisure & play facilities within 800m (Road/Footpath/Cycle) 4
No. of leisure & play facilities within 1200m (Road/Footpath/Cycle) 5
Access to Leisure and play facilities criteria met? Within 400m of at least two facilities

SA19: Encourage development with a better balance between jobs, housing and services, and provide easy and equitable access to opportunities, basic services and amenities for all.

Distance to jobs (Key Economic Assets) (Road only) 5167m
Distance to local convenience stores or supermarket (Road/Footpath/Cycle) 633m

Site 10: West of Meriden



Site Analysis








Site 10, West of Meriden is a 3ha site within easy walking distance of Meriden village centre. The site is currently allocated in the Draft Solihull Local Plan to deliver 50 homes.

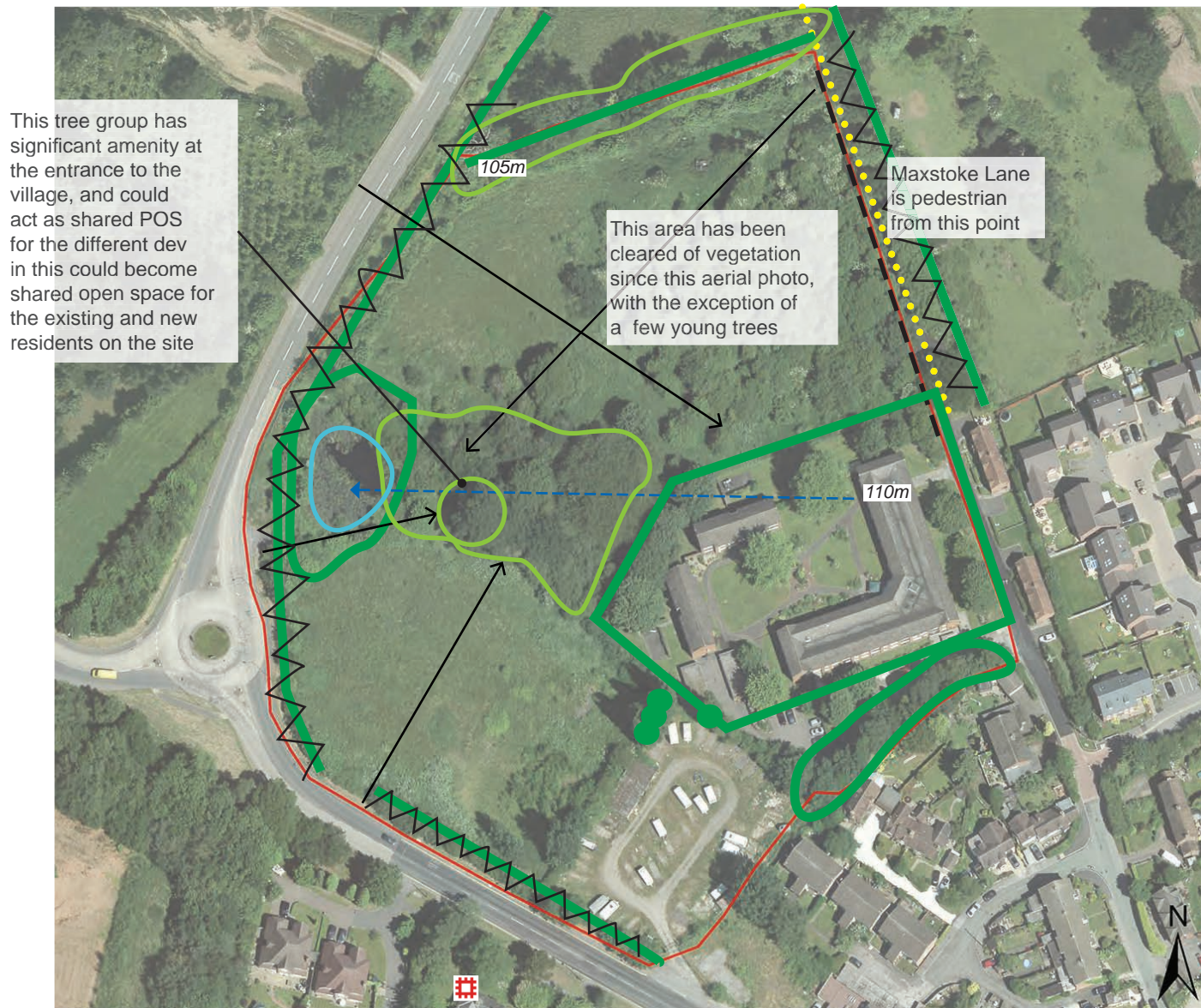
The Firs is a 2-storey Housing and Communities Agency (HCA) housing development within the site is to remain in its current use. To the east of the site is the new Maxstoke Lane development, where buildings are up to 2.5 storeys. The narrow road to access the development and Firs is 'leafy' in character.

Maxstoke Lane to the north west is a busy road which is elevated as it crosses the A45; it provides the north western boundary to this site.
















Houses along Birmingham Road are large detached 2-storey houses set back from the road.

-  Fronts of properties
-  Bus stops
-  Pond
-  Existing hedgerow
-  Existing Trees

Landscape Assessment



Landscape constraints and opportunities

-  Site boundary
-  PRoWs/Paths
-  Pond/water body
-  Historic hedgerows (as marked on OS Map 1887)
-  TPO trees
-  TPO trees
-  Significant Trees / tree groups
-  Green Infrastructure
-  Listed building/ heritage asset
-  Slope direction
-  ^{105m} Low point
-  ^{110m} High point
-  Views
-  Patchy and visibly permeable boundary
-  Strong landscape boundary

Applicant Site Proposal

At a meeting with the landowners, Stone Water Housing, owners of the eastern part of the site, tabled their preferred option to expand the offer of the Firs development.

The planning agents for the western part of the site shared their client's current interest for a McCarthy and Stone development option.

All parties agreed a central area of public open space was desirable as it would serve both development parcels and help to integrate the two developments.

The site landowner with the smallest parcel on the site was not present at the meeting, and it was reported that they were currently not interested in investing in consultant/design fees for the site until it was formally allocated in the Local Plan.



McCarthy and Stone layout, as submitted for pre-application advice



The current Firs Development, Stone Water

SMBC Illustrative Emerging Concept Masterplan: Site 10 West of Meriden












Illustrative Masterplan

The site can accommodate 100 homes at a density 40 + dph, with the highest density of development on the corner of Maxstoke Lane and Birmingham Road, where development up to 3 storeys could be appropriate subject to design.

This site provides an opportunity to create a gateway development into Meriden. The proposed layout promotes perimeter block development to maximise natural surveillance and encourage active streets.

100 dwellings would require 0.66 hectares of Public open space (POS). This should be provided around the pond and the group of significant trees within the centre of the site. This layout provides 1 ha of POS in the centre of the site, this protects the habitats and provides a place-making feature to the site.

Trees and hedgerows across the site should be retained to ensure that the mature character of the site is safeguarded.

- | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|---|-------------------|
|  | Future Access |  | Existing pond |
|  | Road |  | Public Open Space |
|  | Medium/High density housing |  | New tree planting |
|  | Existing hedgerow |  | Bus stops |
|  | Existing trees | | |

Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull - Green Infrastructure

Layers

1 : 5000

Search

- Current Maps
 - Ordnance Survey - Neutral Style
 - Ordnance Survey - Web style
 - Ordnance Survey - Rasters
 - Aerial Photography - 2012/13
 - None
- Administration Boundaries
- Key Sites
 - Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)
 - Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS)
- Phase 1 - Habitat Connectivity
 - Connectivity: Hedgerow / Other
 - Connectivity: Grassland
 - Connectivity: Wetland
 - Connectivity: Woodland
- Phase 1 - Habitat Distinctiveness
 - Distinctiveness: Hedgerow / Other
 - Distinctiveness: Habitat
- Strategic Areas
 - Strategic Grassland
 - Strategic Woodland
- Ecological Flow Maps (Condatis)
 - Grassland Flow (GB/2km/E-W)
 - Grassland Flow (GB/2km/S-N)
 - Woodland Flow (GB/2km/E-W)
 - Woodland Flow (GB/2km/S-N)



Legend

Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)

-  1: Deferred Site
-  2: Destroyed Site
-  3: Local Wildlife Site (LWS)
-  4: Potential Site
-  5: Rejected Site

Legal Disclaimer

Copyright of the data remains the property of the Habitat Biodiversity Audit. While every effort has been made to ensure the data is accurate in accordance with Phase 1 habitat survey standards and the Local Wildlife Sites project, we cannot guarantee its accuracy or accept responsibility for any changes to land use that may have occurred since the surveys were undertaken.

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MERIDEN

Parish Design Statement 2011

IN REMEMBRANCE
OF THOSE
CYCLISTS
WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES
IN WORLD WAR II
1939 - 1945



Meriden Parish Council
the centre of england

Putting the heart into the Centre of England

Landscape setting and important views



Meriden lies in a rural setting at the heart of the “Meriden Gap” – the narrowest part of the West Midlands Green Belt between Solihull and Coventry. This photo, taken from Meriden Hill, shows the NEC and Airport in the middle distance, and Birmingham city centre on the horizon.

Meriden Hill marks the watershed between the rivers Severn and Trent. Rain falling on Millison’s Wood, though to the east, drains into the Severn, while in the Village and most of the rest of the Parish it drains to the Trent. From the top, at Kinwalsey Lane at around 180m above sea level, to River Blythe valley at around 90m, the general fall of the land is north east to south west.

The surrounding countryside is a mix of high quality farm land, some extensive and very attractive woodland and sand and gravel extraction to the west.

Away from the main roads, the agricultural landscape is largely unchanged from Victorian times with a particularly distinctive feature being the lanes with high banks and ancient hedgerows. Within the village both Church Lane and Leys Lane still have these same characteristics, which must be retained. Millison’s Wood, Meriden Shafts and the extensive woodlands at the top end of Fillongley Road are all parts of the former Forest of Arden and form an essential characteristic of the parish and the wider landscape and a haven for all types of wildlife.



The hills within the village are an attractive feature. Church Lane offer views over the rest of the village and extensive views to the west over Birmingham and as far as the Lickey Hills. Meriden Parish is well served by footpaths and bridleways and is at the centre of two important walking trails – the Heart of England Way and the Coventry Way. These offer very attractive views of the village as well as further afield. The views from roads within the village are more restricted by development and by trees, but of particular note are the views on the approach from the east over Meriden Hill and the views from the Fillongley Road on descending from Shaft Lane towards Lodge Green Lane and Walsh Lane.



The large sand and gravel quarries to the west of the village are being backfilled and restored to farmland when exhausted. In this ‘hidden’ landscape, large lakes have been formed between extraction and backfilling that are developing naturally into havens for birds and other wildlife. The triangular area between Hampton Lane, Birmingham Road and Somers Road is currently nearing the completion of extraction and consideration should be given to creating a wildlife reserve in partnership with British Coal, Tarmac, the Packington Estate and the RSPB.

Within the village the urban landscape is very mixed. The duck pond is particularly valued, especially by Meriden's children. The Green is also valued highly by residents, as is the conservation area around St. Laurence Church. Other features, such as the avenue of magnificent trees at the lower end of Fillongley Road and the stretch of Main Road between the Bulls Head and Waterfall Cottages, with its willow tree have also been identified as of particular character and merit. Leys Lane, Church Lane and Old Road have a real 'village' feel and exemplify what residents said in the Household Survey 2008 – *'what most people like about living in Meriden is the feeling of it being a real village in a countryside environment, yet near employment centres and transport links'*.

The value of Meriden's landscape is recognised in published landscape character assessments, notably Natural England's National Character Area 97: Arden and Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines: Arden. The latter (adopted by Solihull MBC), divides Arden into seven distinct landscape types. Meriden lies within 'Ancient Arden'. For Ancient Arden the strategy is summarised as *'conserve and restore the ancient irregular landscape pattern'*; and the countryside around Meriden has been identified as an 'enhancement zone'.

Solihull MBC's Countryside Strategy (adopted and published in October 2010) reinforces the case to protect and enhance the landscape of the Meriden Gap.

Commentary:

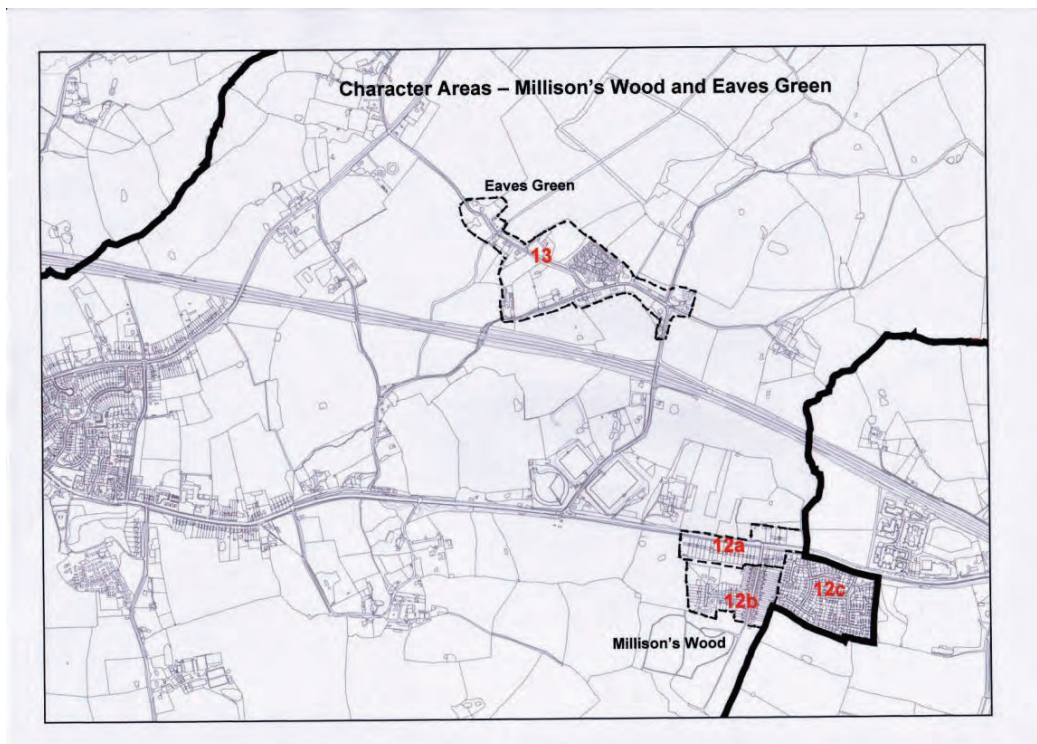
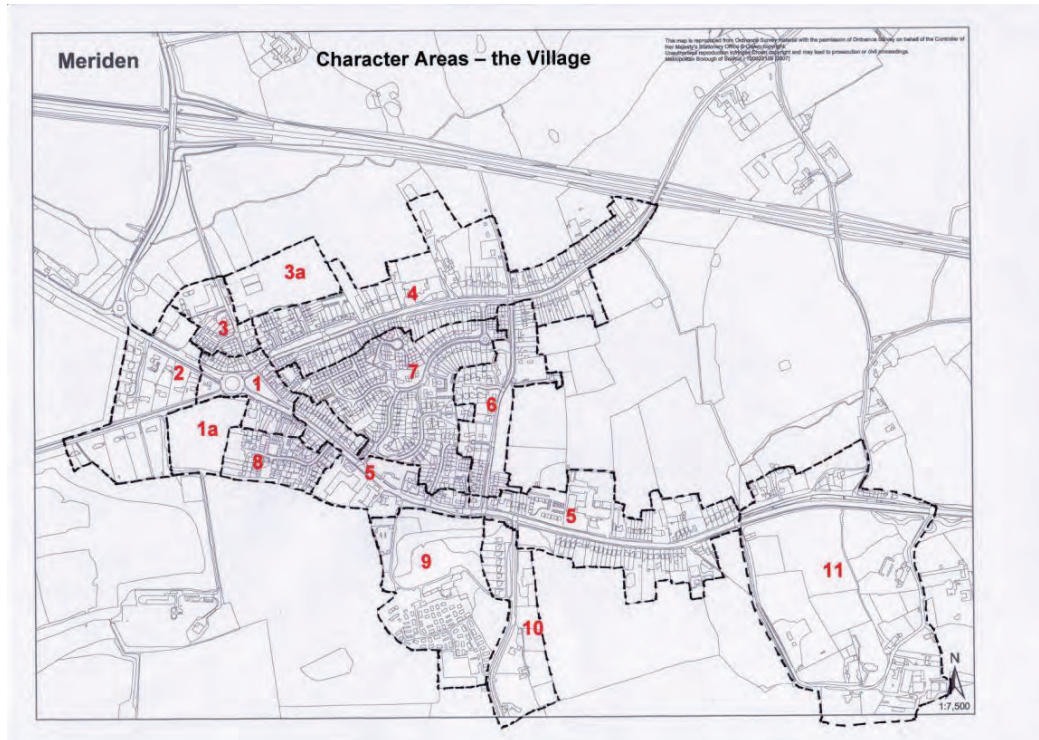
- Parish residents are passionately concerned to preserve the Green Belt, to reinforce the defensible green belt boundary around the Meriden village and Millison's Wood and to ensure that only very tightly regulated, appropriate development occurs elsewhere in the Parish.
- Residents of Meriden and from the surrounding conurbations value highly the quality of the landscape and the footpaths, bridleways and lanes of the Parish. Meriden is of national importance to cyclists with the National Cyclists Memorial and is a popular centre and destination.
- The urban landscape could be considerably improved in places by sensitive treatment of the public realm and reducing the impact of traffic, the narrowing of main roads and selective tree planting and landscaping. (See the later section on the public realm).

Guidance:

- *Public footpaths, bridleways and lanes form important parts of the Parish's character and amenity. They should be preserved and maintained and the lanes should be protected against any alterations that might spoil their peaceful nature and endanger their surrounding flora.*
- *To this end, Solihull Borough Council should designate the narrow rural lanes in the Parish as 'Quiet Lanes' under The Quiet Lanes and Home Zones (England) Regulations 2006 (Department of Transport Circular 02/2006). These should include Church Lane, Walsh Lane, Eaves Green Lane, Lodge Green Lane, Harvest Hill Lane, Becks Lane, Shaft Lane and Kinwalsey Lane.*
- *Mature hedges should be preserved and the creation of new hedgerows to delineate boundaries with typical indigenous species should be encouraged.*
- *Wildlife habitats and biodiversity should be protected and enhanced in accordance with the strategies set out in Solihull MBC's Nature Conservation Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan.*
- *Consideration should be given to creating a permanent wetland site on the current sand/gravel pit to the west of the village between Hampton Lane and Birmingham Road.*
- *Careful consideration should be given to the impact of any new development on the views from public rights of way, particularly with regard to height, size, design, colour, boundary and landscaping.*
- *Farm development which increases commercial or recreational activity should be encouraged provided there is no significant increase in any kind of pollution (including noise, traffic and light pollution), and the impact on the environment is kept to a minimum.*

The character areas of the village and parish

The Parish has 14 distinct 'character areas'. A description of each of these, together with a note on the concerns of residents about planning, development and public realm issues specific to each of these character areas follows. The character areas are delineated on the map and described below, with concerns expressed by residents and guidance particular to those areas where appropriate. They have been delineated on the basis of the visual environment – what you can see when travelling along a road or walking an area – and how residents identify their locality within the Parish.



2. Birmingham Road, Hampton Grange and Hampton Lane

This area contains mainly large detached houses in substantial grounds, facing Hampton Lane, the south side of Birmingham Road and in Hampton Grange, a gated cul-de-sac off the Birmingham Road. It is in the Green Belt.

The land to the north side of Birmingham Road contains a caravan storage park and the site of a former garage. As this road forms one of the main 'gateways' to the village, its appearance is particularly important, yet at present the north side is very scrappy and unattractive. There is existing planning approval for housing on the former garage site and serious consideration should be given to designating the adjacent land for housing purposes with a small attractive development and landscaping. This would be complemented by narrowing of the road, landscaping of the public space and better management of the wildlife habitat (see the Public Realm Guidance p14).

Concerns:

- To improve the appearance of the north side of Birmingham Road and slow down traffic on both Birmingham Road and Hampton Lane.
- To improve the control of parking and protect grass verges.

Guidance:

- *A well-designed and attractive development should be allowed on the north side of Birmingham Road to improve the appearance of this gateway to the village.*
- *Birmingham Road should be narrowed to make it more in scale with its village setting, with better parking provision and protection to verges etc*



3. Maxstoke Lane / Maxstoke Close



This currently forms a cul de sac area of the village, very close to the Green. It will be impacted substantially by the new housing development on the former playing field site (3a). In particular there are well-founded concerns about the volume of traffic in Maxstoke Lane and the difficulty of exiting the area onto Fillongley Road.



It is a characterful area with a variety of housing styles and ages with a real village feel. It includes a mixed tenure older persons' development (The Firs).

Concerns:

- The pressure that this area will be under after completion of the housing development and during its construction.
- The traffic and safety problems at the junction of Maxstoke Lane and Fillongley Road.
- The condition of the pavement, pavement parking and the safety of pedestrians, particularly the elderly, in Maxstoke Lane.



Guidance:

- *Any future developments in this area need to sensitively respect and enhance its village character.*
- *The pressure on Maxstoke Lane from the new housing development must not lead to its 'suburbanisation'. It must retain its rural / village feel.*
- *The footpath link directly to the Birmingham Road should be reinstated.*





Solihull Strategic Green Belt Assessment

Assessment Report

JULY 2016

03 | Assessment Methodology

In order to ensure a robust and consistent approach to the Assessment, the methodology has been informed by the key relevant requirements of the NPPF, whilst also having regard to the work undertaken within the draft 'Shared Principles for undertaking Green Belt Reviews across the Greater Birmingham Housing Market Area (GBHMA). Although still in draft, these principles set out the joint approach of the GBHMA authorities to Green Belt reviews, and therefore provided a sound basis from which the methodology for this Assessment was developed.

An initial Draft Methodology Statement was issued for consultation to the GBHMA authorities in March 2016. The feedback received was taken into consideration and is reflected in the methodology which forms the basis of this Assessment.

Defining Assessment Areas

In order to ensure the Assessment is reflective of the five purposes of Green Belt, as defined by the NPPF, and the varying character of the Green Belt in SMBC, two distinct categories of assessment area have been utilised:

- Refined Parcels; and
- Broad Areas

Refined Parcels of Green Belt land adjoining or adjacent to built-up areas, including inset villages were defined. Refined Parcels were also defined along the eastern borough boundary where the built-up area of Coventry adjoins. The wider rural areas were divided into Broad Areas which were defined as Green Belt land that is not located on the edge of, or adjacent to, large built up areas within SMBC or those within adjoining authorities, for example Coventry to the east.

The definition of Refined Parcels and Broad Areas reflects the varying character and role of Green Belt land across the borough. Green Belt land immediately adjoining the urban areas performs a different role to those areas of Green Belt within the more rural areas of the borough. Furthermore, the definition of assessment areas within these two categories enables a focused assessment of the performance of the Green Belt

The Refined Parcels and Broad Areas were delineated on OS Mastermap using strong permanent physical features which are easily identifiable, in line with the requirements of Paragraph 85 of the NPPF:

85. When defining boundaries, local planning authorities should...define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.'

The physical features used in defining boundaries for the purposes of this Assessment included:

- Roads (motorways, A and B roads);
- Rail and other permanent infrastructure;
- Watercourses;
- Areas of woodland, established hedgerows and treelines; and
- Established field patterns.

The Green Belt land within the defined Broad Areas and Refined Parcels does not necessarily respect authority boundaries. For example, Broad Areas of Green Belt land in the south-west of the borough stretch beyond the authority boundary where it adjoins Stratford-on-Avon to the south and Bromsgrove to the west. Therefore, in order to ensure a cohesive approach to the definition of assessment areas, care has been taken to reflect Land Parcels or Broad Areas which have previously been identified within the adjoining authorities of Stratford-on-Avon, Coventry, Warwick and North Warwickshire in the 'Coventry and Warwickshire Joint Green Belt Study'. Land Parcels identified as part the Joint Green Belt Study straddle the borough boundary at its border with Coventry, therefore particular attention has been paid to the definition of assessment area boundaries in this area. Figure XX illustrates the interaction between adjoining authority studies.

Assessment

As set out in Section 1 this Assessment has been carried out using a 'policy off' approach. Consideration has not therefore been given to the Refined Parcel or Broad Area's role in the context of any other constraints, policies, strategies or its development potential. It is the role of future stages of Green Belt review to consider the wider constraints or

opportunities of land designated as Green Belt within SMBC using this Assessment as the basis.

Each Refined Parcel and Broad Area has been subject to an assessment against the first four purposes of Green Belt, all of which have equal weight, in line with the criteria set out in Table 1 below, and assigned a score for the extent to which it performs against each purpose.

- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; and
- To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.

Refined Parcels and Broad Areas were not assessed against the fifth purpose of Green Belt 'to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land'. By virtue of its designation, all Green Belt land makes an equal contribution to this purpose and therefore inclusion of this purpose would add no value to the Assessment.

The Assessment was carried out using the criteria set out in Table 1 and the numerical scoring system identified below. Where applicable, each Refined Parcel and Broad Area was assigned a score of 0, 1, 2 or 3 for each of the first four purposes of Green Belt. Broad Areas were defined based on their countryside character and therefore perform highly against the third purpose of Green Belt ('Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment'). Each Broad Area was assigned a score of 3 against the third purpose of Green Belt and this score checked during the initial desk based assessment and site visits.

0	Refined Parcel/Broad Area does not perform against the purpose;
1	Refined Parcel/Broad Area is lower performing against the purpose;
2	Refined Parcel/Broad Area is more moderately performing against the purpose;
3	Refined Parcel/Broad Area is higher performing against the purpose.

Table 1 - Assessment Criteria

Green Belt purpose	Broad Area Criteria and Scoring	Refined Parcel Criteria and Scoring	Considerations
<p>1. To check unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas</p>	<p>Is ribbon or other development present within the Refined Parcel or Broad Area?</p> <p>Is other development detached from the existing large built-up area?</p> <p>Scoring</p> <p>Broad Area or Refined Parcel is already developed and/or is within the urban area with no clear boundary = 0 Parcel or Area does not perform against the purpose</p> <p>Ribbon/other development is already present and/or other development is detached from the existing built-up area with no clear boundary = 1 Parcel or Area is lower performing</p> <p>Refined Parcel or Broad Area boundary is weak but can be identified and there is no development present = 2 Parcel or Area is more moderately performing</p> <p>'Refined Parcel or Broad Area boundary is clearly identifiable/ durable and there is no development present = 3 Parcel or Area is higher performing</p>		<p>Consideration should be given to how well contained the urban area is by the Refined Parcel or Broad Area. Ribbon and other development that is detached from the existing built up area is an indication that the Green Belt is lower performing.</p> <p>Durable permanent boundaries are considered to be motorways and A roads, other infrastructure, and permanent natural features such as watercourses etc. Less durable boundaries are considered to be established field boundaries, hedgerows and treelines. Whilst easily identifiable these features are less durable</p>
<p>2. To Prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another</p>	<p>Does the Broad Area represent a 'strategic gap' between major urban areas?</p> <p>Scoring</p> <p>Broad Area does not represent a strategic gap and/or is not between major urban or smaller urban areas = 0 Area does not perform against the purpose</p> <p>Broad Area is between smaller urban areas but does not represent a strategic gap and is not between major urban areas. = 1 Area is lower performing</p> <p>Broad Area represents a strategic gap between major urban areas = 3 Area is higher performing</p>	<p>Does the Refined Parcel represent a 'gap' between urban areas?</p> <p>Is the Refined Parcel within an existing urban area?</p> <p>Scoring</p> <p>Refined Parcel is within an existing urban area and does not represent a gap between neighbouring towns = 0 <i>Parcel does not perform against the purpose</i></p> <p>Refined Parcel represents a gap of more than 5 kilometres between urban areas = 1 <i>Parcel is lower performing</i></p> <p>Refined Parcel represents a gap of between 1 and 5 kilometres between urban areas = 2 <i>Parcel is more moderately performing</i></p> <p>Refined Parcel represents a gap of less than 1 kilometres between urban areas = 3 <i>Parcel is higher performing</i></p>	<p>Strategic gaps are considered to be those areas that separate major urban areas/cities e.g. Birmingham and Coventry.</p> <p>Merging can reasonably be expected if a gap of less than 1 kilometre is identified. Refined Parcels representing gaps of less than 1 kilometre play an essential role in preventing the merging of urban areas.</p> <p>Refined Parcels which are entirely contained within the urban area are considered not to play a role in preventing neighbouring towns merging.</p>

Green Belt purpose	Broad Area Criteria and Scoring	Refined Parcel Criteria and Scoring	Considerations
3. To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Broad Areas, by their nature, are considered to perform highly against the third purpose of Green Belt and therefore all areas are assigned a score of 3 <i>Area is higher performing</i>	<p>Is the Refined Parcel characterised by countryside?</p> <p>Does Refined Parcel adjoin areas of countryside?</p> <p>Is ribbon or other development present within the Refined Parcel?</p> <p>Scoring</p> <p>Refined Parcel is not characterised by countryside, does not adjoin countryside and/or has been developed = 0 <i>Parcel does not perform against the purpose</i></p> <p>Refined Parcel is adjoined by countryside and has development present = 1 <i>Parcel is lower performing</i></p> <p>Refined Parcel is generally characterised by countryside, is adjoined by countryside and/or has limited development present = 2 <i>Parcel is more moderately performing</i></p> <p>Refined Parcel is characterised by countryside, adjoins countryside and does not contain any development = 3 <i>Parcel is higher performing</i></p>	Countryside is considered to be land which is rural and open in nature including farmland. Associated agricultural buildings are not considered to be development for the purposes of assessing the encroachment of urban development.
4. To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	<p>Is the Refined Parcel or Broad Area within or adjoining a Conservation Area within an historic town?</p> <p>Are key landmarks or the historic core visible from within the Refined Parcel or Broad Area?</p> <p>Does the Refined Parcel or Broad Area contribute to the setting of the historic town?</p> <p>Scoring</p> <p>Refined Parcel or Broad Area is not within or adjacent to a Conservation Area within a historic town = 0 <i>Parcel or Area does not perform against the purpose</i></p> <p>Refined Parcel or Broad Area is adjacent to a Conservation Area within a historic town but has no views of landmarks and/or the historic core = 1 <i>Parcel or Area is lower performing</i></p> <p>Refined Parcel or Broad Area is adjacent to a Conservation Area within a historic town and/or has limited views of landmarks and/or the historic core = 2 <i>Parcel or Area is more moderately performing</i></p> <p>Refined Parcel or Broad Area is adjacent to a Conservation Area within a historic town and there are clear views of landmarks and/or the historic core = 3 <i>Parcel or Area is higher performing</i></p>		An assessment of topography, intervening features and site visits have been used to assess the performance of the Refined Parcels and Broad Areas against this purpose.

Refined Parcels

Refined Parcels were defined adjoining or adjacent to built-up areas, including inset villages and the area of Solihull along the eastern boundary of the borough where the built-up areas of Coventry adjoins. Table 3 below identifies the scoring of each Refined Parcel against the Green Belt purposes. The performance of the Refined Parcels is described in further detail below and scores for each included in Table 3 alongside a total and highest score. The inclusion of a total and highest score for each parcel has not been used to rank parcels, these have been included for illustrative purposes only.

Purpose 1

Refined Parcels which perform highly against purpose 1 to 'Check unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas' are those parcels which adjoin strong defensible permanent boundaries. Such parcels include those adjoining the M6 and M42 motorways, the A45 and the railway line (RP04, RP15, RP16 and RP80) where the presence of permanent infrastructure supports the restriction of urban sprawl. Refined Parcels RP25 and RP82 also perform highly against purpose 1 as an integral part of the Meriden Gap.

Parcels which perform more moderately against purpose 1 include parcels which aren't immediately adjacent to the built up area of Solihull and stretch into the more rural areas where boundaries are weak and not easily identifiable e.g. parcels RP19 and RP46. However, these parcels do not contain urbanising or ribbon development and therefore continue to perform a role in preventing urban sprawl.

Refined Parcels which are lower performing against purpose 1 include parcels which are to the east of and immediately adjacent to the built up areas of Solihull. The boundaries of most of these parcels are weak and not easily identifiable where they meet the urban area and ribbon development is evident e.g. RP31 and RP32 between the built up area of Solihull and the M42 motorway. Some parcels which have clear and robust boundaries have also scored lower against purpose 1 due to the presence of ribbon or other development which is detached from the main urban area. These parcels include, for example, RP33 and RP34 where the M42 motorway and the A3400 form strong definitive boundaries but ribbon development is present along Lady Byron Lane.

Broad Area ID	Description	Purpose Scores					Highest Score
		1	2	3	4	Total	
BA01	Broad Area BA01 is located in the south-west corner of Solihull MBC adjoining Stratford-on-Avon DC to the south, Warwick to the south east and Bromsgrove to the west.	2	1	3	0	6	3 (Purpose 3)
BA02	Broad Area BA02 is located along the southern edge of Solihull MBC at its boundary with Stratford-on-Avon DC.	2	1	3	3	9	2 (Purpose 3 and 4)
BA03	Broad Area BA03 is located within the central portion of Solihull MBC between Birmingham and Solihull to the west and Coventry to the east.	3	3	3	3	12	3 (All)
BA04	Broad Area BA04 forms the eastern portion of Solihull MBC at its boundary with Coventry to the east and North Warwickshire BC to the north	3	3	3	3	12	3 (All)
BA05	Broad Area BA05 is located immediately to the east of the urban area of Solihull south of Birmingham International Airport.	3	3	3	2	11	3 (Purpose 1,2 and 3)

Table 2 - Broad Area Scoring

Refined Parcels which do not perform against purpose 1 include those parcels which are developed or entirely constrained by the urban area for example parcels RP11 and RP79 respectively. Parcel RP64 is entirely formed of Cheswick Green and is developed as is RP76 which is formed of land between Lowbrook Lane and Norton Lane in the south west of the borough at Tidbury Green.

Purpose 2

Refined Parcels which perform highly against purpose 2 to 'Prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another' are those parcels within the south west corner of the borough which form the gap separating the urban area of Solihull from the nearby settlements of Cheswick Green and Dickens Heath. For example, parcels RP62 and RP63 form a gap of less than 1 kilometre between the Monkspath area of Solihull and Cheswick Green to the south. Likewise, parcels RP65 and RP69 form a gap of less than 1 kilometre between the Shirley area of Solihull to the north and Dickens Heath to the south.

Parcels which are more moderately performing against purpose 2 include those which form a gap of between 1 and 5 kilometres between urban areas, particularly the areas of Green Belt land which separate the western edges of the built-up area of Solihull from Dorridge and Knowle to the east i.e. parcels RP32, RP33, RP43 and RP44. In addition, those parcels which adjoin the borough boundary with Coventry in the east perform moderately against purpose 2, forming a gap of approximately 3 kilometres between Coventry and Balsall Common.

Lower performing parcels include those areas of Green Belt land to the extreme south of the borough which form part of a gap of more than 5 kilometres between settlements. Refined parcels which immediately adjoin the A45 to the south are also lower performing against purpose 2 as they form part of the wider strategic Meriden Gap between Solihull and Coventry.

Refined parcels which do not perform against purpose 2 include those parcels which are entirely contained by the urban area and therefore do not form a gap.

These parcels include those within Kingshurst and Marston Green in the north of the borough and parcel RP64 which is entirely formed of Cheswick Green. Parcels RP01 – RP03 form part of Babbs Mill Park and Meriden Park which are surrounded by urban development and therefore do not perform against purpose 2.

Purpose 3

Refined Parcels which perform highly against purpose 3 to 'Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment' are generally those contained areas of Green Belt land which adjoin the Broad Areas in the more rural parts of the borough away from the main built-up areas. Those parcels within the centre of the borough, detached from the main urban areas, which form part of the Meriden Gap perform highly i.e. parcels RP21, RP23 and RP80 which are characterised by countryside with no ribbon or other urbanising development present.

Parcels which are more moderately performing against purpose 3 are largely those which immediately adjoin the built up areas of Solihull, Dorridge, Knowle and Coventry. Although adjacent to urban areas, these parcels are mainly characterised by countryside and do not contain development.

Lower performing parcels include those which are within the urban areas or which contain ribbon or other urbanising development. These parcels include RP07 and RP10 in the north of the borough which are largely contained by the urban area but which are formed of agricultural land. Parcels which do not perform against the purpose are also largely contained within the north of the borough where they form Babbs Mill Park and areas of open space within the urban areas of Kingshurst and Marston Green.

Purpose 4

Refined Parcels which perform highly against purpose 4 to 'Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns' are entirely contained in the central part of the borough where they adjoin the Hampton in Arden, Bickenhill and Knowle Conservation Areas. Parcels RP16 and RP17 provide clear views of Bickenhill Church whilst parcels RP20 and RP23 have clear views to and from the historic core of Hampton in Arden. Parcels RP37 and RP38 benefit from clear views of the Church of St John the Baptist and lie immediately adjacent to the Knowle Conservation Area.

Refined Parcel RP32 is the only parcel to perform more moderately against purpose 2. The parcel is immediately adjacent to the Solihull Conservation Area but benefits from only limited views. Likewise parcels RP18 and RP39 are adjacent to Hampton in Arden and Knowle Conservation Areas respectively but have no views of the historic core and therefore are considered as lower performing against the purpose.

Table 3 - Refined Parcel Scoring

Refined Parcel	Description	Purpose Scores					Highest Score
		1	2	3	4	Total	
RP01	Babbs Mill Park	2	0	0	0	2	2 (Purpose 1)
RP02	Land at Fordbridge Road and Cooks Lane	0	0	0	0	0	0
RP03	Land at and north of Meriden Park	2	0	0	0	2	2 (Purpose 1)
RP04	Land between M6 and A452 north of Chelmonds Cross	3	2	2	0	7	3 (Purpose 3)
RP05	Land between Moorend Avenue and Coleshill Road	2	0	0	0	2	2 (Purpose 1)
RP06	Land south of Grace Academy and Alcott Wood	2	0	0	0	2	2 (Purpose 1)
RP07	Land to the south of Coleshill Road	2	2	1	0	5	2 (Purpose 1 and 2)
RP08	Land immediately east of Birmingham Business Park	2	0	1	0	3	2 (Purpose 1)
RP09	Land to the east of Birmingham Business Park	3	1	2	0	6	3 (Purpose 1)
RP10	Land to the north of Birmingham International Park	1	2	1	0	4	2 (Purpose 2)
RP11	Land at Coleshill Heath Road and Bickenhill Parkway	0	0	0	0	0	0
RP12	Land to the north-west of National Exhibition Centre	3	0	0	0	3	3 (Purpose 1)
RP13	Land north of A45 between M42 and A452 Chester Road	1	1	2	0	4	2 (Purpose 3)
RP14	Land north east of Land Rover (south of A45)	1	1	2	0	4	2 (Purpose 3)
RP15	Land to the south of A45 west of Bickenhill	3	1	2	0	6	2 (Purpose 1 and 3)
RP16	Land between Catherine de Barnes Lane and Church Lane	3	1	1	3	8	3 (Purpose 1 and 4)
RP17	Land immediately west of M42 at junction with A45 Coventry Road	1	1	2	3	7	3 (Purpose 4)
RP18	Land to the north west of Hampton in Arden	1	1	1	1	4	1 (All)
RP19	Land to the north of Hampton in Arden, south of A45 Coventry Road	2	1	1	0	4	2 (Purpose 1)
RP20	Land immediately west of Hampton in Arden	1	2	2	3	8	3 (Purpose 4)
RP21	Land at junction of B4102 Meriden Road and Diddington Lane	2	1	3	0	6	3 (Purpose 3)
RP22	Land to the east of Lapwing Drive, south of B4102 Meriden Road	2	1	2	0	5	2 (Purpose 1 and 3)
RP23	Land to the south and west of Marsh Lane	2	1	3	3	9	3 (Purpose 3 and 4)
RP24	Land at junction of B4104 Birmingham Road and B4102 Hampton Lane, Meriden	0	0	0	0	0	0
RP25	Land to the north and east of Meriden	3	1	1	0	5	3 (Purpose 1)
RP26	Land south of Main Road Meriden	1	1	1	0	3	1 (Purpose 1, 2, and 3)
RP27	Land between Grand Union Canal and Lugtrout Lane	1	2	1	0	4	2 (Purpose 2)
RP28	Land immediately north of Catherine de Barnes	2	1	2	0	5	2 (Purpose 1 and 3)
RP29	Land between B4102 Hampton Lane and Lugtrout Lane to the west of Field Lane	1	2	1	0	4	2 (Purpose 2)
RP30	Land between B4102 Hampton Lane and Lugtrout Lane to the east of Field Lane	1	2	1	0	4	2 (Purpose 2)
RP31	Land between M42 and B4102 Hampton Lane, east of A41 Solihull By-Pass	1	1	2	0	4	2 (Purpose 3)
RP32	Land to the west of M42 at Brueton Park	1	2	1	2	6	2 (Purpose 2 and 4)
RP33	Land between M42 and Lady Bryon Lane	1	2	2	0	5	2 (Purpose 2 and 3)
RP34	Land east of Lady Byron Lane including Copt Heath Golf Course	1	2	0	0	3	2 (Purpose 2)

APPENDIX A.3: EXTRACTS FROM PUBLISHED
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENTS

National Character Area 97: Arden

Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines: Arden

Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment: LCA7 Northern Upland



Summary

Arden comprises farmland and former wood-pasture lying to the south and east of Birmingham, including part of the West Midlands conurbation. Traditionally regarded as the land lying between the River Tame and the River Avon in Warwickshire, the Arden landscape also extends into north Worcestershire to abut the Severn and Avon Vales. To the north and north-east it drops down to the open landscape of the Mease/Sence Lowlands. The eastern part of the NCA abuts and surrounds Coventry, with the fringes of Warwick and Stratford-upon-Avon to the south. This NCA has higher ground to the west, the Clent and Lickey Hills and to the east, the Nuneaton ridge. The landscape of the lower lying central area is gently rolling with small fragmented semi-natural and ancient woodlands. Mature oaks set in hedgerows, distinctive field boundaries, historic parklands and narrow river corridors are key features, all on the doorstep of a heavily urbanised area.

Land use throughout the area is mainly, residential, agricultural and industrial including coal mining, which is still active in the north-east of the NCA. Numerous transport corridors; road, rail, air and canal run through the area. There is likely to be increased development and greater pressure upon the existing infrastructure, particularly around Birmingham, Coventry and the main towns. This pressure could lead to the creation of new green infrastructure linking the urban areas out into the more rural areas. This NCA is among the most geologically diverse. This has had a strong impact on the landscape's character and development and is further reflected in the range of locally and nationally important geological assets across the NCA. There are also many local biodiversity assets and strong cultural links with William Shakespeare and his 'Forest of Arden'.

Statements of Environmental Opportunity

- **SEO 1:** Manage and enhance the valuable woodlands, hedgerows, heaths, distinctive field boundaries and enclosure patterns throughout the NCA, retaining the historic contrast between different areas while balancing the needs for timber, biomass production, climate regulation, biodiversity and recreation.
- **SEO 2:** Create new networks of woodlands, heaths and green infrastructure, linking urban areas like Birmingham and Coventry with the wider countryside to increase biodiversity, recreation and the potential for biomass and the regulation of climate.
- **SEO 3:** Conserve and enhance Arden's strong geological, industrial, and cultural resource, to increase public access, enjoyment, recreation and to retain a sense of place and history.
- **SEO 4:** Enhance the value of Arden's aquatic features such as the characteristic river valleys, meadows and standing water areas like Bittell Reservoirs, to increase resource protection such as regulating soil erosion, soil quality and water quality.

Click map to enlarge; click again to reduce.

Description

Physical and functional links to other National Character Areas

To the north-west of Arden is the Mid Severn Sandstone Plateau NCA on the edges of Hagley Park. The Birmingham conurbation then links Arden with Cannock Chase and Cank Wood NCA. These National Character Areas, along with Arden, form the Natural Area referred to as 'The Midlands Plateau'.

In the north-east, the M42 transport corridor links the Mease/Sence Lowlands NCA and a sliver of the Trent Valley Washlands with Arden along the edge of Tamworth. On the eastern edge, the Warwickshire landscape flows into the Leicestershire Vales. In the central section of Arden the River Arrow starts its journey south and then merges into the River Avon near Bidford on Avon in the Severn and Avon Vales. Moving south, the River Avon flows into Dunsmore and Feldon then on into Severn and Avon Vales in the south-west.

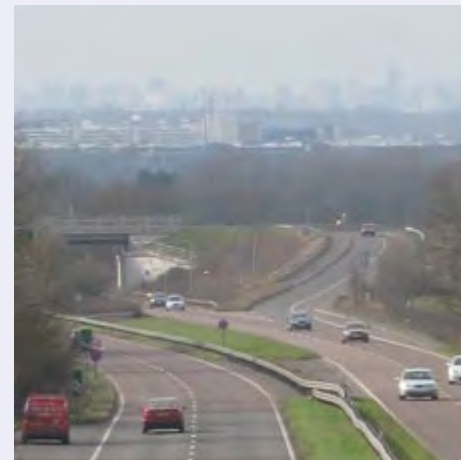
From the highest point in Arden (Walton Hill, in the Clent Hill range), there are views from the summit looking south-west into the Shropshire Hills, Malvern Hills, Teme Valley and south into the Cotswolds. There are also views across the NCA taking in the southern fringes of Birmingham from the Heart of England Way near Meriden.



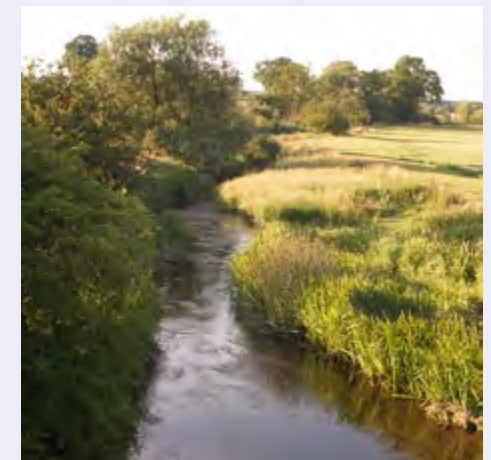
The eastern slopes of Walton Hill, the highest point in the NCA.

Key characteristics

- Well-wooded farmland landscape with rolling landform.
- Geologically diverse with rocks ranging from the Precambrian to the Jurassic and overlain by superficial Quaternary deposits.
- 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 with long river meadows; the River Blythe SSSI lying between the cities of Coventry and Birmingham is a good example of this.
- Numerous areas of former wood-pasture with large, old, oak trees often associated with isolated remnants of more extensive heathlands. Village greens/commons have a strong association with remnant lowland heath. Fragmented heathland persists on poorer soils in central and northern areas.
- Diverse field patterns, ranging from well hedged, irregular fields and small woodlands that contrast with larger semi regular fields on former deer park estates, such as, Packington Hall and Stoneleigh Park.
- Complex and contrasting settlement pattern with some densely populated where traditional settlements have amalgamated to form the major West Midlands conurbation while some settlements remain distinct and relatively well dispersed.
- North-eastern industrial area based around former Warwickshire coalfield, with distinctive colliery settlements. North-western area dominated by urban development and associated urban edge landscapes such as managed greenspace, for example allotments, gardens, parks, golf courses (rough areas) and public open spaces; playing fields, churchyards, cemeteries and institutional grounds (schools, hospitals).
- Transport infrastructure, the M42, M40, M6 and M5 are major transport corridors that sit within the landscape of this NCA.
- Shakespeare's 'Forest of Arden', featured in 'As You Like It', is still reflected through the woodland cover, mature oaks, small ancient woodlands and former wood pasture.



Demonstrating the undulating landscape between Coventry and Birmingham - looking west along A45, near to Meriden.



An example of the meandering clay river valleys with long river meadows typical of the Arden landscape.

Arden today

Arden is a true mix of urban and rural with the heavily urbanised centres of Birmingham, Coventry, Redditch, Nuneaton and Tamworth set within and around a landscape of farmland, parkland and former wood pasture. Traditionally known as the land lying between the River Tame, Birmingham and the River Avon in Warwickshire, it also extends into north Worcestershire where some of the highest ground can be found. Mining and post industrial urbanisation is prominent in the landscape to the north-east between Nuneaton and Tamworth.

This is Shakespeare's 'Forest of Arden', historically a region of woodlands and heaths, which today remains one of the more wooded parts of the region. There

are many mature hedgerow oaks, numerous patches of ancient woodland and parks containing remnants of wood-pasture. The association with former common and heathland also imparts a strong unity, reflected by the widespread occurrence of heathland vegetation and roadside bracken. The larger commons have been enclosed within a rectilinear pattern of larger fields, straight roads and hedges, but there are still smaller commons as well as extensive areas of farmland, characterised by small, irregular fields, dense, thick hedges, winding lanes and trackways. Brick and timber are common building materials throughout the area. Common oaks are still the dominant tree species and can be found both within towns and villages and as part of the hedgerow systems. The woods themselves range from 20th century plantations to species-rich ancient woodlands. Some of the woodlands contain important populations of lichens and fungi. Oak and ash wood with bracken, bramble and dog's mercury are also particularly distinctive.

Light, sandy soils predominate in the north of the NCA. Heavier clay soils and loams occur extensively in central and southern Arden. The poorer sandy soils are acidic and, when cleared of woodland, often became leached, giving rise to heathland vegetation. The area is drained to the south by the rivers Arrow, Alne and Avon, and to the north by the rivers Tame/Blythe and Anker. The River Tame joins with the River Rea to create a wide, shallow valley to the east of Birmingham. Threading through the landscape, the river valleys are more fertile and enclosed. They are typically rather narrow and meandering water bodies, with long river meadows on the floodplain, riverside trees such as alder are frequently pollarded, and blocks of scrub as well as the remains of mills, pools and leats remain as features within the landscape. Arable farmland extends into the more fertile southern river valleys. Purple moor grass, meadowsweet and soft rush are some of the plant species that dominate the marshy grassland. Heron and yellow wagtail are among the bird species that can often be seen here. Relatively abundant surface water in the NCA has been managed through the creation of dammed fishponds and millponds and their leats.



Many of the modern towns and cities in Arden still retain a historic core.



Many of Arden's parklands are studded with ancient oaks .

The heartland of the area is made up of a landscape of hedged, irregular fields and small woodlands. Narrow, often sunken lanes link scattered farms and there is a real sense of being closed in with restricted views. This contrasts with the more open views, gentle rolling pasture and regular, rectilinear fields around the southern edge of Birmingham. Deer parks were once common in the area and there is still an ancient wooded appearance to these sites. Veteran trees provide valuable habitats for invertebrates, noble chafer (green beetle) lichens and bats. Areas with a distinct parkland character can be found between Wroxall and Stoneleigh.

The landscape through time

Arden is on the south-easterly portion of the Midlands plateau and is geologically diverse possessing rocks from the Precambrian to the Jurassic periods. Physically and geologically, Arden has three constituent parts. The largest area, the Knowle basin, is relatively low lying and separates the higher ground of the Warwickshire

coalfield in the east and the eastern edge of the South Staffordshire (Black Country) coalfield to the west.

The predominant bedrock of the Knowle basin is the Triassic Mercia Mudstone Group, which has been extensively used as a source of brickclay. This is overlain by extensive superficial deposits of till and glacio-fluvial sands and gravels from the last ice age. It is an area of gently rolling country with the only features arising from thin intermittent sandstone layers, within the mudstones, known as 'skerries'. In the upper part of the sequence, the Arden Sandstone gives rise to the higher ground between Warwick, Redditch and Solihull and around Inkberrow and Alcester.

Lower members of the Triassic, the Sherwood Sandstone Group, comprise predominantly hard sandstones and conglomerates and give rise to prominent ridges and hills on the north-western side of Birmingham and between Hagley and Bromsgrove. The Bromsgrove Formation has been used for building stone locally and is found in very characteristic churches, walls and older houses.

The western side of Arden is elevated by faulting and is an extension of the South Staffordshire coalfield which dominates the adjoining Cannock Chase and Cank Wood NCA. Complex folding and faulting has produced the striking series of hills including the Lickey Hills and Clent Hills, dominated by late Carboniferous and Permian rocks with small, but important, elements of Silurian, Ordovician and Precambrian.

The Warwickshire coalfield in the east creates a distinct high ground and pronounced edge to the Knowle basin and is characterised by harder red sandstones (locally used for building) of Carboniferous - Permian age overlying the productive coal seams of the Warwickshire coalfield. Folding and faulting has given rise to a complex sequence of older Cambrian sediments with Ordovician and Precambrian igneous rocks which form the Nuneaton ridge.

Ice age deposits are found over most of the area but are mostly concentrated in the Knowle basin where they have been extensively worked for sands and gravel. Alluvium and river terrace deposits as well as the harder Silurian, Ordovician, Cambrian and Precambrian rocks found in the west and east (around Nuneaton) have also provided important sources of aggregates.

Arden holds a number of prehistoric sites. Many of these are buried remains but there are some visible prehistoric features including several burnt mounds, Hob Ditch earthwork and hillforts such as Barnmoor (Claverdon).

Roman roads whose lines are followed by modern roads are also a prominent feature. Roman field systems are evident in places like Kings Norton where hedges still follow the old Roman boundaries. Livestock rearing was important in the Roman period along with the woodland resource being used for the tile and pottery industries.

The 10th century saw the development of market towns such as Warwick with its medieval castle, sitting on the River Avon. Kenilworth Castle, one of the great ruinous castles of England, was established around 1125.

Extensive woodland cover probably remained over the area into the Anglo-Saxon period perhaps as late as the 11th century. Many manorial deer parks were established in the 12th and 14th centuries and this continued into the 15th century, the remains of which can be seen as ancient wood pasture landscape today.

Enclosure began in the south of the area in the 18th century. In the Blythe Valley, which traditionally had open fields, enclosure was not completed until the 19th century. Extensive tracts of planned enclosure can be found in areas that were until this time common or heath. It can also be found on the plateau summits where the heavy clay soils made cultivation difficult.



Kenilworth Castle, built using local stone.



Arden has an extensive canal network that makes a link between the urban and rural areas of this NCA.

Birmingham and Coventry started out as medieval towns that, due to the presence of the raw materials in the natural resources such as the coal of the Warwickshire coalfields as well as the associated Carboniferous ironstones, developed to be at the centre of the Industrial Revolution. Birmingham had a broad economic base with a variety of highly skilled trades such as glass making, jewellery, gun smiths, pin making and car industries. Coventry also became famed for its car industries and its earlier ribbon making, watch, clock, bicycle and sewing machine manufacturing.

The 19th century also saw growth in the coal mining industries. The north-eastern side of the area saw the landscape impact of this industry with the development of mining villages, which continued into the 20th century. There was also great change in the landscape with the urban development of Birmingham and extensively the canal network. Birmingham developed in a fairly compact way from its original medieval centre and small-scale medieval industries. A ring of encircling suburbs began to emerge after the arrival of the railways and this pattern of concentric development continued through the 20th century. The result is a rich variety of suburban types from the model village of Bournville to tower blocks.

Today there are a number of changes in the character of the area with many historic Arden farmsteads converted into wealthy residences and the land being used for grazing, hobby farming and equestrian use. The pressure of development also continues with new transport schemes continuing to impact upon the landscape, along with the expansion of smaller villages, towns, Birmingham and Coventry.

Ecosystem services

The following section seeks to identify the services offered by the landscape. A more expansive list of ecosystem services associated with this NCA is included in the Analysis section.

The Arden NCA provides a wide range of benefits to society. Each are derived from the attributes and processes (both natural and cultural features) within the area. These benefits are known collectively as 'ecosystem services'. The predominant services are summarised below (under the constituent headings) Further information on ecosystem services provided in the Arden NCA is contained in the 'Analysis' section of this document.

Provisioning services (food, fibre and water supply)

- **Food provision:** Light, sandy soils predominate in the north with heavier clay soils and loams occurring extensively in central and southern Arden. The majority of the soil is grade 3. In 2009, over 30 per cent of Arden's holdings were lowland grazing livestock. Farms classified as 'other' (which will include smallholdings) 27 per cent; cereal farms 20 per cent; mixed farms 6.9 per cent. The area produces dairy and arable food crops alongside vegetables, pork, poultry and eggs but not on a large scale.
- **Timber provision:** The NCA contains 11,876 ha of woodland (8 per cent of the total area). 3,770 ha (3 per cent of the NCA) is broadleaved woodland.
- **Water availability:** Water provision comes from three sources in this NCA, reservoirs, major aquifers and rivers. One of the two main aquifers is currently over abstracted and the other is over licensed and has no further water available for abstraction. The River Arrow and River Avon have no water available for further abstraction and the River Sowe and the River Blythe are over licensed. However, the River Cole has water available.

Regulating services (water purification, air quality maintenance and climate regulation)

- **Climate regulation:** The majority of the NCA has a low soil carbon content of 0 to 5 per cent; however, around Birmingham, carbon content increases to 5 to 10 per cent. Carbon content is likely to be higher under the more than 11,800 ha of woodland within the NCA, as well as under the more than 1,000 ha of grazing marsh, grassland, fen, reedbeds, and heathland.
- **Regulating water quality:** In the south of the NCA, surface water is generally of 'moderate' ecological status although there are some reaches of 'poor' quality around Birmingham and Coventry. Also in the south of the NCA there are some river lengths with 'good' chemical status. The chemical status of the groundwater sources is 'good' in the south but 'poor' again around Birmingham and Coventry.



There is an opportunity at the old mine and quarry sites to develop them for nature conservation and recreational use.

- **Regulating water flow:** Tamworth is at risk of flooding from the rivers Tame, Anker and Bourne Brook. In Birmingham, flood risk from the rivers Tame and Rea is high. In Coventry there is a relatively high risk of flooding from the rivers Sowe and Sherbourne.
- **Regulating soil quality:** The slowly permeable, seasonally wet, slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils (36 per cent) of the NCA may suffer compaction and or capping as they are easily damaged when wet. Also the slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage (26 per cent) of the NCA are easily poached by livestock and compacted by machinery when wet.
- **Regulating soil erosion:** Nearly 60 per cent of the NCA is considered to be at low risk of soil erosion. About 14 per cent of the NCA has high risk of soil erosion; this is associated with the moderately or steeply sloping land where cultivated or bare soil is exposed and where organic matter levels are low following continuous arable cultivation or where soils have become compacted.

Cultural services (inspiration, education and wellbeing)

- **Recreation:** Most of the recreational opportunity in Arden is formalised with numerous urban parks and golf courses. There is less than 1 per cent of open access land and a network of rights of way density of 1.35 per km. There is public access to numerous small woodlands and the canals, rivers and reservoirs offer opportunities for walking, cycling and water sports. The network of lanes is frequently used by horseriders and cyclists.
- **Sense of place/inspiration:** Associations with Shakespeare's 'Forest of Arden', featured in 'As You Like It' are still notable through the woodland cover, hedgerow oaks, small ancient woodlands and former wood pasture. The Elizabethan connection has been emphasised by Sir Walter Scott's novel

Kenilworth. In a more recent period, at the western edge of the area, Hagley and Leasowes at Halesowen are historic parks which have formed a focus for writers and designers, such as William Shenstone at Leasowes and James Thompson at Hagley. North Arden features strongly in George Eliot's novels. Tolkien's home at Hall Green is reflected in the fantasy landscape of his books.

- **Tranquillity:** Despite the major road and motorway network, a sense of tranquillity can still be found in the woodlands, sunken lanes, narrow river valleys and enclosed urban landscapes.
- **Sense of history:** Manorial deer parks, remnants of wood pasture, ancient oak woodland, historic field patterns, historic farm buildings, medieval moated sites, parkland landscapes, distinctive mining villages and former colliery sites all reflect the history of the landscape. Warwick Castle and Kenilworth Castle are also dominate features, built using locally found building materials, in the south of the NCA.
- **Biodiversity:** The internationally designated site in the NCA, Ensor's Pool SAC (4 ha) in Nuneaton, is designated for supporting a very large population of white-clawed crayfish. There are 56 SSSI, totalling less than 1 per cent of the NCA area. The majority of these (87 per cent) are in favourable or recovering condition; 12 per cent are in unfavourable condition. There are 1,126 Local Wildlife Sites in Arden, covering 10,863 ha, which is 7.6 per cent of the NCA.
- **Geodiversity:** There are 15 nationally designated geological sites within the NCA and 68 local sites, which are of great value for education and research. Many of the nationally designated sites are quarry or gravel pits. The geological diversity of this NCA gives a strong sense of place (higher ground to the west (Lickey and Clent) and east (Nuneaton)) and the rolling landscape of the central basin which is dominated by Triassic rocks.



Over hedge and cornfield with Daw Mill Colliery in the background.

Statements of Environmental Opportunity

SEO 1: Manage and enhance the valuable woodlands, hedgerows, heathlands, distinctive field boundaries and enclosure patterns throughout the NCA, retaining the historic contrast between different areas while balancing the needs for timber, biomass production, climate regulation, biodiversity and recreation.

For example, by:

- Managing small woodlands, semi-natural woodland and ancient woodland to maintain pockets of tranquillity and enhance biodiversity value and where appropriate re-plant new locally characteristic woodlands for wood fuel/biomass.
- Managing and maintaining the existing resource of 'big historic trees' in urban areas and support schemes to expand urban tree planting to support urban biodiversity and increase sense of place and history.
- Managing hedgerows in traditional local style to enhance landscape character and improve biodiversity value.
- Improving existing fragmented heathlands in southern Arden and Arden Parklands.

SEO 2: Create new networks of woodlands, heathlands and green infrastructure, linking urban areas like Birmingham and Coventry with the wider countryside to increase biodiversity, recreation and the potential for biomass and the regulation of climate.

For example, by:

- Expansion of urban tree planting to support urban biodiversity, landscape character and sense of place and history.
- Targeting expansion of woodland for the benefit of biodiversity and landscape, particularly where it can link isolated woodland blocks and increase habitat connectivity.
- Ensuring that the right type of tree is planted in the right location to maximise the benefits for water quality, climate regulation, soil erosion control, tranquillity and sense of place.
- Planting new hedgerows, especially in the north-eastern part of the NCA, using species of local provenance, planting standard hedgerow trees primarily oak, to maintain the distinctive character of the area. Maintain associated grassland buffer strips and improve habitat connectivity, particularly where this can assist in regulating soil erosion.
- Planning and creating new and improved links between urban areas, green belt and the wider countryside or major open spaces within and/or near the conurbation especially in and around Birmingham, Coventry and north Solihull.
- Enhance urban areas and fringes through sympathetic building and landscape design.
- Creating new green infrastructure with associated habitat creation and new public access especially around old mining and quarry sites in the central and north-east areas of the NCA.
- Maintaining and improving the existing rights of way network such as the Heart of England Way, cycle routes and access land.
- Improving links to or within the wider network of canal towpaths such as the Grand Union and Avon Canal walks and cycle routes.

SEO 3: Conserve and enhance Arden's strong geological, industrial, and cultural resource, to increase public access, enjoyment, recreation and to retain a sense of place and history.

For example, by:

- Conserving, enhancing and making accessible the network of geological sites, ensuring the importance of the man-made sites such as disused quarries, road, rail and canal cuttings.
- Widening the understanding of the role of geodiversity in the NCA, in particular, its connection with biodiversity, landscape character, industrial and cultural heritage.
- Conserving and enhancing archaeological features such as moated sites and archaeology associated with the manufacturing and mining industries particularly in relation to the Warwickshire coalfield and the canal network; promote access and awareness.
- Protecting and managing historic wood pasture, parklands and urban parks to conserve significant historic landscapes and important features and habitats such as veteran and urban trees and the associated invertebrate populations.
- Conserving historic farmsteads, the buildings and their surrounding landscapes particularly where new uses are being considered.
- Capitalising on the links made in literature to the Arden landscape, such as links with Shakespear, using this as a tool to promote the conservation and enhancement of the landscape described.

SEO 4: Enhance the value of Arden's aquatic features such as the characteristic river valleys, meadows and standing water areas like Bittell Reservoirs to increase resource protection, such as regulating soil erosion, soil quality and water quality.

For example, by:

- Managing and restoring habitats including floodplain grazing marsh associated with river valleys, particularly the Tame, Blyth and Arrow.
- Reducing sources of diffuse pollution into rivers, particularly in catchments of the Trent, Tame and Blythe and standing open water habitats such as Bittell Reservoirs.
- Continuing to develop the growing nature conservation and recreational resource of old mine and quarry sites such as Hartshill and Alvecote wetlands.

Supporting document 2: Landscape change

Recent changes and trends

Trees and woodlands

- The character of the resource has been maintained, or is strengthening slowly but there has been a general lack of woodland management in many places.
- Across rural parts of this NCA and into neighbouring NCAs, there is an ambitious, programme to purchase land and create an extensive forest landscape, the “Forest of Dennis”. This project has created over 400 ha of new woodland and aims to eventually create a further 4 to 8,000 ha.

Boundary features

- There has been loss and deterioration of hedges and hedgerow trees, the former particularly as a result of field amalgamation. Many hedgerows have fallen into disrepair through poor and or lack of management. The number of hedgerow trees has declined and there has been a failure to nurture new generations. However, recent stewardship schemes have led to some positive management of hedgerows and improvement in hedgerow quality.

Agriculture

- In 2009, over 30 per cent of farms were lowland grazing livestock holdings; Farms classified as ‘other’ (which include smallholdings) 27 per cent; cereal farms 20 per cent; mixed farms (7 per cent). Trends between 2000 and 2009 show a decrease in the total number of holdings from 1,898 to 1,577 (a 17 per cent decrease). Trends also show a significant decrease in dairy farms (down

from 112 to 56, a decrease of 50 per cent), and mixed farming (down from 124 to 81, a decrease of 35 per cent). Lowland grazing livestock has increased slightly (9 per cent).

Settlement and development

- There is development pressure throughout the area. The majority of the NCA falls within the southern half of the West Midlands Green Belt, which extends around Coventry and Redditch and south to Stratford. Growth proposals seem to be focussed around the east of Birmingham and north Solihull. Coventry is an area previously designated as a growth point and there has been consideration of sustainable urban extensions into the green belt.

Semi-natural habitat

- Semi-natural habitats are limited in this NCA with less than 1 per cent designated for nature conservation. There is little evidence to show that there are agri-environment agreements for heathland management and restoration. The most extensive annual agri-environment agreements in 2003 were for lowland pastures on neutral/acid soils (487 ha) and regeneration of grassland/semi-natural vegetation (236 ha). Given the size of the area, this suggests the resource remains weakened.

Historic features

- In 1918 about 3 per cent of the Arden area was historic parkland, but by 1995 it is estimated that 54 per cent of that had been lost. Less than half of the remaining parkland is covered by a Historic Parkland Grant and only 12 per cent is included within an agri-environmental scheme. This suggests some neglect of an important resource.

- It should also be noted that only about 58 per cent of historic farm buildings remain unconverted of which the majority are intact structurally.

Rivers

- This area is drained to the south by the rivers Arrow and Alne. Laying within the River Severn catchment area, these rivers flow into the River Avon. Draining to the north, the rivers Tame, Blythe and Anker sit within the River Humber catchment. The River Tame joins with the River Rea to create a wide, shallow valley to the east of Birmingham.

Drivers of change

Climate change

Climate change is likely to result in:

- Periods of heavy rain that may destabilise slopes and adversely affect riparian habitats.
- Species migration out of Arden and loss of small or isolated habitats.
- Changes to the way the landscape looks, eg. different tree species/crops.
- Increased demand for renewable energy installations and cropping.
- Summer droughts leading to continued over abstraction from local rivers and the potential loss of the iconic hedgerow and mature oak trees.
- Increased risk of localised flooding.
- Agricultural change with the potential for new crops.

Other key drivers

- There is likely to be increased demand for food production in the future as a result of a national drive for greater self-sufficiency in food.
- Continuing development pressure in and around the Birmingham and Coventry conurbations and outlying towns. Opportunities for good, sustainable design reflecting local settlement patterns, green infrastructure and local character reflected in design and materials.
- Potential for new transport infrastructure including railways. There may be an opportunity to manage proposals to ensure best outcomes for the environment.
- Associated potential for new green infrastructure building upon the network of sites in the urban fringe.
- Continued demand for sand and clay from existing quarries, and possible planning applications for expansion.
- Increased demand for waste disposal and recreational facilities around the edge of the conurbation.
- Further agriculture change with the possibility of increased area under intense arable production to meet food production needs.
- Potential for an increase in biomass production.

Landscape opportunities

- Conserve, enhance and restore the area's ancient landscape pattern of field boundaries, historic (including farm) buildings, moated sites, parkland and pasture and reinforce its well wooded character.
- Protect and manage woodlands particularly ancient woodlands and wood pasture to maintain the character of Arden.
- Manage and restore hedgerows especially in the north-eastern part of the area (enclosure patterns) and restore parkland, ancient trees and stream side trees plus manage and replace in-field trees and hedgerow trees.
- Maintain and restore areas of heathland particularly in southern Arden, Arden Parklands and Birmingham Hills, lowland meadows and pastures and floodplain grazing marshes.
- Manage arable cultivation to encourage rare arable plants and range-restricted farmland birds and mammals, following appropriate management options under Entry Level Stewardship.
- Restore habitats associated with river valleys particularly the Blythe and Tame.
- Create new green infrastructure with associated habitat creation and new public access on former mining sites and close to urban populations in the West Midlands Green Belt.



Frequent hedgerow oaks are a typical feature of the Arden landscape.

Photo credits

Front cover: Dandy's Farm across cornfield to colliery among trees, the north eastern industrial landscape can be quite rural in character, with pockets of farmland often surrounded by urban development © Rob Cousins/Natural England

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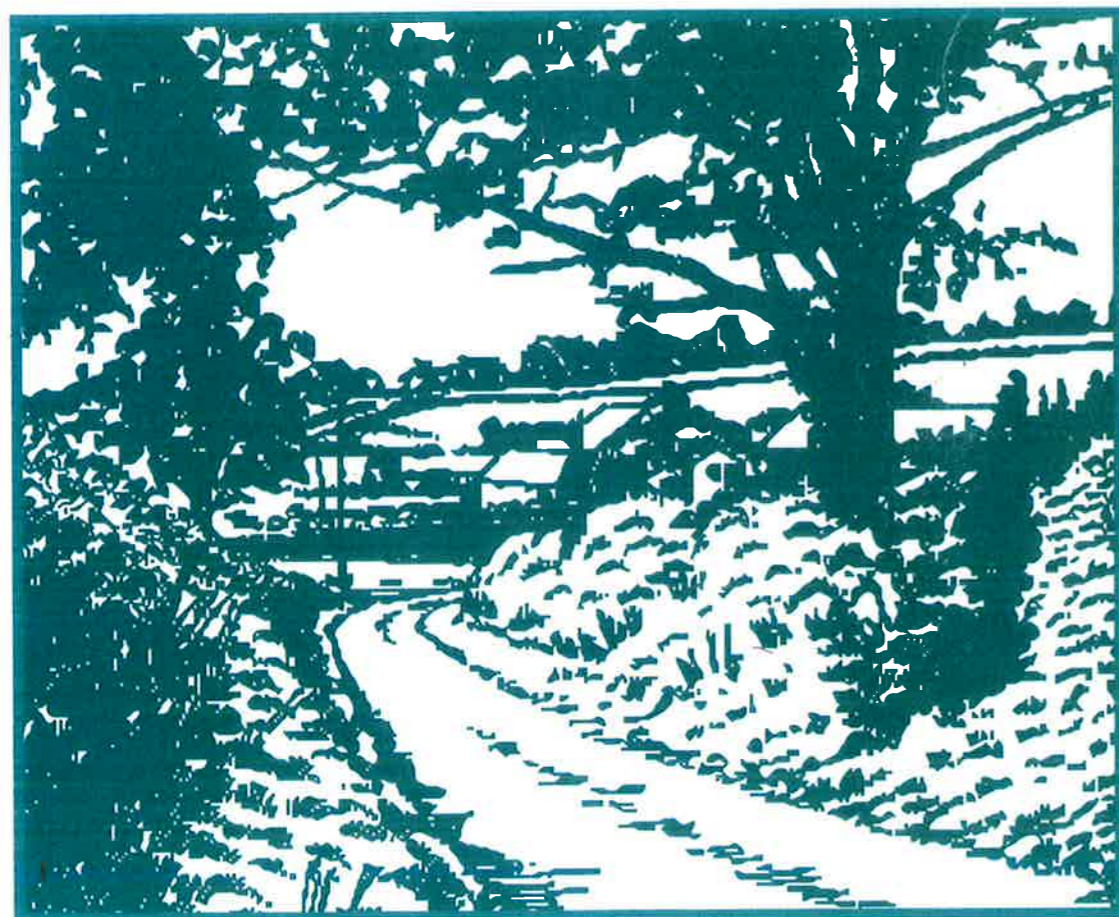
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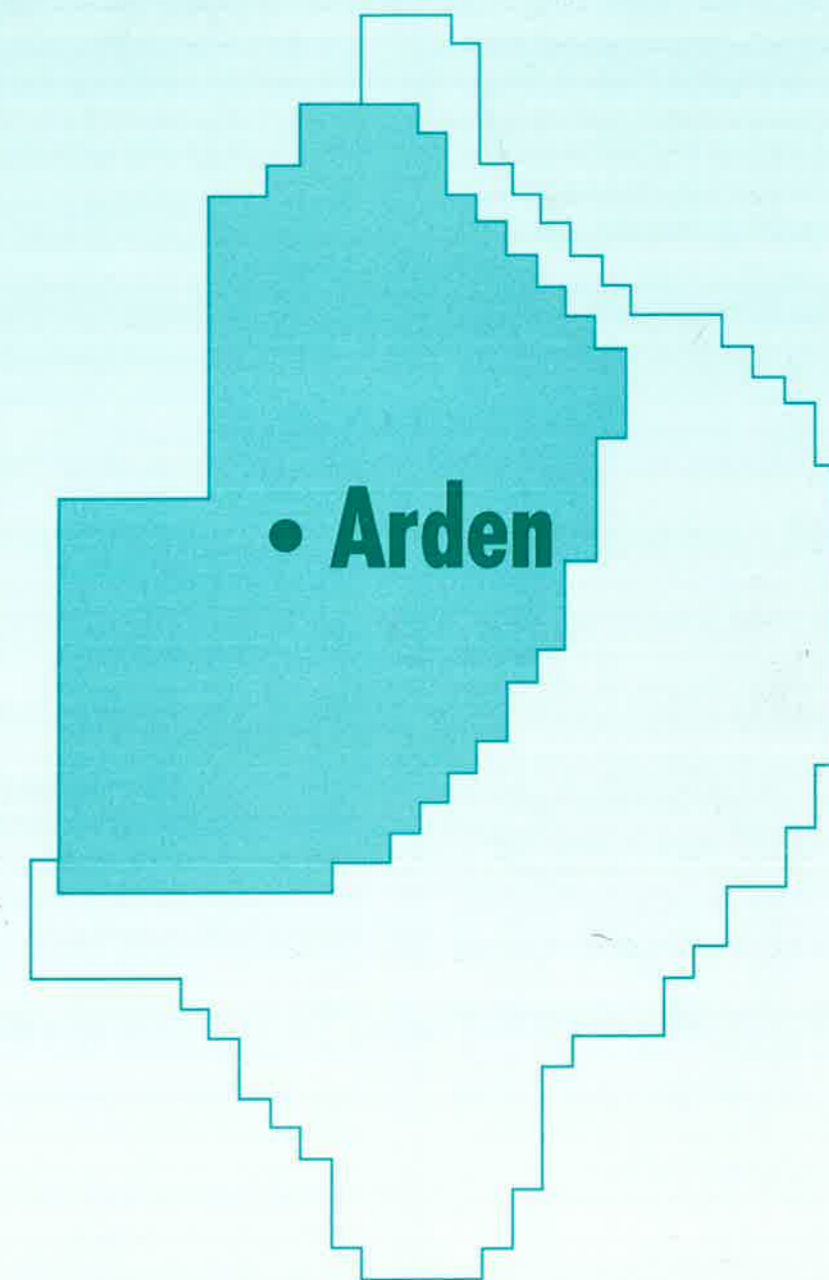
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Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines

• Arden



Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines



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This booklet is one of a series of three covering the whole of Warwickshire

Landscape guidelines are also available for:

Avon Valley – Feldon – Cotswolds Dunsmore – High Cross Plateau – Mease Lowlands

floodplains, wooded estatelands and ancient farmlands. The same landscape types are often found in different regional character areas, but they are distinguished by regional influences.

Regional character areas have provided a regional framework on which the more detailed county-wide assessment of the landscape has been based. Such a framework is much more meaningful than using administrative boundaries as a basis for landscape assessment.

Regional character areas have also proved to be the best level at which to tackle settlement and general development issues. Guidelines for land use, field boundaries and trees and woodlands, on the other hand, are generally specific to individual landscape types and it was at this level that these land management issues were tackled.

Regional character areas in Warwickshire

The first level of assessment identified a total of ten regional character areas within and around the fringes of the county. Only four of these, Arden, Dunsmore, Avon Valley and Feldon, can be truly described as Warwickshire landscapes. The others show characteristics more typically associated with surrounding counties. This is especially true of the Cotswolds, the Ironstone Wolds and the High Cross Plateau. The true character of each of these regions is more fully represented in Gloucestershire, Staffordshire, Northamptonshire and Leicestershire. Nonetheless, they form a distinct upland fringe along the southern and eastern edge of the county. Similarly, the Mease Lowlands is another marginal Warwickshire region, while the area to the east of the river Tame is transitional between Arden and Cannock Forest. For convenience some of these transitional areas around the fringes of the

county have been treated as part of the adjoining Warwickshire regions. As a result the county has been divided into seven broad regional character areas (Map 1). These are:

(1) Arden – an historic region of former wood pasture and heath characterised by a dispersed settlement pattern, ancient woodlands and mature hedgerow oaks.

(2) Dunsmore – a well wooded, and in places urbanised region characterised by low glacial plateaus, sandy soils and remnant heathy vegetation.

(3) Avon Valley – a prosperous agricultural and market gardening region closely associated with the river Avon and characterised by historic market towns, nucleated villages and orchards.

(4) Feldon – a lowland agricultural region strongly influenced by Tudor and later parliamentary enclosures and characterised by heavy clay soils, large geometric fields and a nucleated settlement pattern of small rural villages.

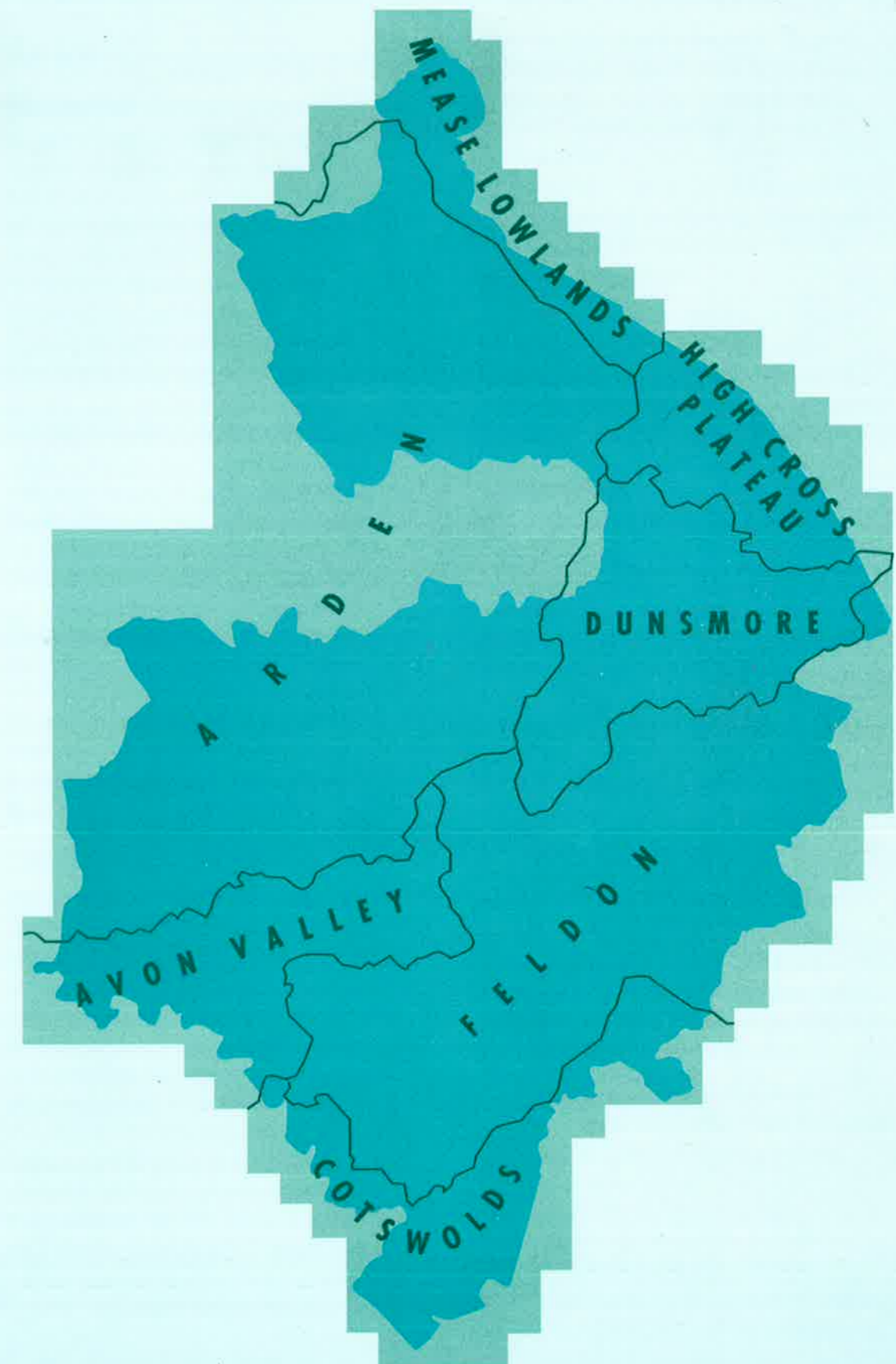
(5) Cotswolds – a sparsely populated region of limestone and ironstone uplands characterised by open wolds, large walled fields and distinctive stone villages.

(6) High Cross Plateau – a rural agricultural region characterised by open clay wolds and small nucleated villages.

(7) Mease Lowlands – a rural agricultural region of large country estates and small nucleated villages characterised by tall church spires.

The regional character area lying in the west of the county is described in this booklet: Arden. The booklet should be read in conjunction with the accompanying coloured map, which shows the area and its component landscape types.

Regional character areas



LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT
PART ONE

Part one Landscape assessment

Arden

Introduction The region known as Arden is an area of former wood pasture and ancient farmlands lying on the eastern side of the Birmingham plateau. Traditionally regarded as the land between the river Tame and the river Avon in Warwickshire, Arden type landscapes also extend into north Worcestershire.

Although there are few dramatic physical features, the Arden countryside has an intimate, historic character with a strong sense of unity. Brick and timber are the chief building materials throughout the area and the many farmsteads and hamlets blend subtly with their surroundings. This is Shakespeare's 'Forest of Arden', historically a region of woodlands and 'waste' which remains today one of the more wooded parts of the Midlands.

Physical influences The name Arden is derived from the old British word 'Ardu' meaning 'high land'. This relates primarily to the northern and central parts of the region which lie across the main Severn-Trent watershed on the eastern side of the Birmingham plateau. In the wider context of the West Midlands, the Birmingham plateau consists of two uplifted units of older Palaeozoic strata – the South Staffordshire and East Warwickshire plateaus – separated by an area of Triassic rocks covered for the most part by glacial drift. This central plateau is lower lying than the adjoining Palaeozoic areas and in Warwickshire it is largely underlain by Mercia mudstones with a covering of glacial sands and gravels or boulder clay. This gives the plateau a flat to gently rolling character, finely cut by the River Blythe and its tributary streams which flow northwards to join the Tame at Hams Hall. The Blythe is a slow-moving meandering river with countless minor tributary streams trickling in from every side. Many of these tributary valleys

are badly drained and occupied by sluggish, braided streams. Indeed, some of the place names, such as Fen End, Sedgemoor and Bradnock's Marsh, suggest that the area retained its marshy character until comparatively recent times. The Tame valley is wider than that of the Blythe and has a much more developed floodplain with at least two associated gravel terraces.

The East Warwickshire plateau is a dissected upland plateau closely associated with a spindle-shaped horst of Carboniferous and older rocks, which rise to just over 180 metres near Corley. The major part of the plateau is occupied by the Upper Coal Measures, consisting mainly of red marls and sandstones and characterised by red, free draining soils. These are fringed on the north and north-east by the Middle (Productive) Coal Measures with which the Warwickshire coalfield is associated. A narrow band of Cambrian and pre-Cambrian rocks also outcrop along the north-eastern edge of the plateau, between Atherstone and Nuneaton. These older rocks, mainly consisting of hard diorite and quartzite, are faulted against the adjoining Triassic mudstones and present a steep scarp slope towards the Mease Lowlands to the north-east. The Carboniferous rocks are also cut off on the west by a major boundary fault which forms a pronounced edge to the plateau along the Blythe and Tame valleys. South and eastwards, where glacial drift deposits flatten the landform, the plateau slopes gradually into the valleys of the Avon and the Sowe.

To the south of the main Severn-Trent watershed lie the river basins of the Arrow and the Alne which drain southwards into the Avon valley below Alcester. This area, underlain mainly by Mercia mudstones, has a varied undulating topography characterised by outcrops of Arden sandstone which form a series of prominent escarpments. Steep slopes are also found along the Lias escarpment to

Arden

the east of Haselor, while a series of narrow parallel ridges of glacial origin are a feature of the area between Wootten Wawen and Snitterfield. To the west along the county boundary is the Ridgeway, a flat-topped ridge also of glacial origin which once marked the watershed of the old Avon-Soar river system. The tributaries of the Arrow and the Alne, in contrast to those of the Blythe, are frequently swift flowing and often enclosed in steep sided valleys. Narrow alluvial floodplains are associated with the lower parts of both rivers while terrace deposits occur only along the Arrow, where they form areas of flatter land adjoining the river corridor.

Human influences The historical development of Arden is a major factor influencing the character of the present day landscape. In a region with few dramatic physical features it is these subtle human influences, developed over many centuries, which have created the man-made landscapes and special features which clearly distinguish Arden from other areas of the county.

Agriculturally Arden may have originally served as an area of seasonal pasture for the more intensively developed Feldon estates to the south. However, permanent pastoral settlements were established at an early date. The resulting clearances were farmed as small hedged enclosures or 'closes' which created a characteristic pattern of small irregular fields. These were particularly representative of the areas between Tanworth and Rowington and from Allesley to Fillongley.

In contrast open field agriculture was only represented to any degree in the Blythe valley, the lower Arrow and Alne valleys and the areas around Bearley and Norton Lindsey. Generally this was closely associated with nucleated villages. Piecemeal enclosure began relatively early in the southern part of the region with most fields being enclosed before the 18th

century. Here the rolling topography and gradual enclosure produced a characteristic pattern of medium sized fields. In the Blythe valley full enclosure was not completed until the 19th century resulting in a more regular pattern of larger fields. Elsewhere enclosure into large semi-regular fields is a feature of former deerparks. Examples are the Warwick and Kenilworth Castle parklands, which were enclosed between the 16th and 18th centuries.

Extensive woodland cover remained until the Norman Conquest, with the most heavily wooded manors recorded in the Domesday Survey. This registered over 50 square miles of woodland and wood pasture. Subsequently much woodland was cleared and enclosed for arable and stock. Between the 12th and 14th centuries, numerous manorial deer parks were created which probably helped conserve woodland cover. Most have left little impression upon the modern landscape, though good examples survive at Packington and Stoneleigh. Parks continued to be enclosed from the 15th century onwards and it is these, for example Merevale, Arbury and Berkswell, which are most prominent today.

As late as 1540 Leland wrote that ".....the ground in Arden is much enclosyd, plentiful of gres and woode". However, by 1822 C & J Greenwoods' one inch County map showed only small remnants of woodland. Little further shrinkage occurred during the 19th Century as maps show only slightly more woodland than is found today. Minor additions resulted from the Enclosure movement of this period with the planting of many small woods and coverts. These are uniform in size and shape and lack the irregular sinuous boundaries and woodbanks of ancient woods. Often they are named as 'coverts', 'gorses' or 'spinneys'.

Commons were a feature of areas of remnant woodland and many were wooded until

Arden

relatively recent times. A typical wood pasture common was grassland or heather with thickly scattered trees and bushes. Other commons represented areas of heathland on poorer soils and the numerous 'Heath' names indicate those cleared of woodland at a relatively early date. Commons did not disappear completely until the last stages of enclosure in the early 19th century. The largest occurred at Sambourne and Shrewley, the latter extending nearly 10 miles from Rowington to Balsall Common. Commons have left little impression upon the present landscape, except that they can often be identified as areas with a geometric pattern of fields and lanes within a surrounding irregular or semi-regular pattern.

Commons attracted settlement by landless labourers and poorer sections of the community. These formed the basis of many Arden hamlets, especially those known as 'End' or 'Green'. An allied settlement type is the wayside cottage established on a roadside verge and taking in a long linear garden.

The dispersed settlement pattern more generally found in Arden was closely related to agricultural development. The typical expression of woodland assarting and heathland enclosure was a pattern of scattered farmsteads and hamlets. This dispersed pattern is reflected in a maze of narrow lanes, trackways and footpaths which grew up to serve outlying farms and hamlets. A land-owning peasantry gave rise to a wealthy class of yeoman farmers by the late medieval period. As a result many substantial brick and timber farmhouses were built in the 16th and 17th centuries, often on earlier moated sites.

A more recent and very distinct settlement type is associated with the pit villages of the coal mining industry. Extensive coal exploitation began in north Warwickshire in the 19th century, shortly after the start of the Industrial Revolution. This has had a

profound effect on the landscape of this part of Warwickshire. Mining villages contain much early 20th century terraced housing, often situated on hill tops and with a very distinctive 'northern' character. Some of these were new villages built to house mining families, while others were older villages relocated as a colliery expanded.

The presence of coalmines attracted secondary industry which relied on coal for power. Hams Hall power station was built to produce electricity directly from coal. Other industrial plants sprung up to convert coal to coke and other products. Railways and roads were also built to transport the coal to other areas of the country. The effects of the mines therefore spread far beyond the colliery gates, and have made the north eastern part of Arden, between Tamworth and Nuneaton, an industrial landscape unlike any other in the county.

Ecological influences The natural vegetation of Arden is thought to have consisted of dense broadleaved woodland, dominated by oak on the light sandy soils and lime on the heavier clays and loams. Woodland clearance, from earliest times, resulted in the development of grassland and wood pasture over much of the area with heathland on the poorer, leached soils. Marshland occurred in low lying areas along rivers and streams. All of these habitats have been greatly influenced by land-use history and no large areas have survived. The sites of greatest ecological interest today are those that retain remnants of these ancient vegetation types. They reflect the underlying geology and soils and make an important contribution to landscape character. Some, particularly woodlands, also form prominent visual features.

ancient woodland Scattered blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland occur throughout Arden but are most common in the parishes of

Arden

Tanworth and Bentley where Clowes Wood and Bentley Park Wood are fine examples. Although none retain the climax species composition of the original wildwood, some on the sandy soils on the North Warwickshire plateau can still be classified as oak dominated woodlands. The rest are now best described, as a result of frequent disturbance by man, as oak-birch woodlands. On the clay loams of central and southern Arden there are only one or two small areas left of lime dominated woodland, since lime was managed 'out' of woodlands in favour of the more useful oak. These woodlands are now typically oak-ash or oak-birch, though in places small-leaved lime is still a significant component, reflecting the woodlands' ancient origin.

Many woods, although on the ancient woodlands register, have been substantially replanted in modern times and are reduced in their conservation value. However, their rich ground flora and fauna built up over centuries is often still present, particularly along rides and around the edge of the woodland. This makes them superior wildlife sites to more recent plantation woodlands, and high priorities for conversion back to a semi-natural species mix. Ancient woodbanks, not found in recent woodland, add additional historical interest to many ancient woodlands.

heathland Heathland and commons, now rare and greatly diminished in area, were historically associated with wood pasture and waste. Yarningale Common, Kenilworth Common, Baddesley and Grendon Commons are the most significant areas now remaining. Elsewhere fragments of heathy grassland survive at Packington, Earlswood and along some roadside and railway banks. Although all three heather species exist, true heathland in Arden is characterised by ling heather with bilberry, purple moor-grass, heath bedstraw and wavy hair-grass. Where management has

ceased, gorse, bracken and silver birch start to colonise. Bracken is perhaps the most obvious 'heathy' indicator and is a common feature of many woods and roadside verges, especially in the central and northern parts of the region.

hedgerows Ancient, mixed hedgerows, often more than two metres wide, are a special feature of Arden, and some may represent remnants of the original wildwood as it was cleared and converted into small hedged fields by assarting. The hedges were assimilated from shrubs found along the previous woodland edge, or from the seed bank in the soil, and the species mix therefore reflects that from the woodland itself. A wide variety of woody species are typically present, often dominated by hazel, but with dogwood, field maple, hawthorn, blackthorn and holly also common. Holly is associated particularly with the lighter soils of the East Warwickshire plateau. Where hedge banks complement ancient hedges, these often support a diverse flora with many woodland plant species.

unimproved grassland Permanent grassland is still in feature of the more pastoral Arden landscapes, and where this remains unimproved it can be rich in flowering plant species. Many sites which existed up to the second world war have now been destroyed or damaged as a result of agricultural intensification, but many areas remain, particularly on marginal land. The best remaining sites are found on steep hillsides as rough, often scrub grassland; on high canal and roadside embankments; on disused railway cuttings; or as isolated groups of hedged fields.

field ponds Field ponds, often fringed by scrub and trees, are found throughout Arden and are associated with its history of stock-rearing. Where they are managed to avoid silting up and overshadowing by surrounding

Arden

scrub vegetation, they can be valuable wildlife habitats. Although many ponds have been lost as a result of agricultural intensification and neglect they are still an important feature of the region, and are particularly abundant in Fillongley and Meriden parishes.

river wetlands Historically river floodplains were managed as wet meadowland. These were floristically very rich and of great nature conservation value. The Alne river and the Blythe (the latter a Site of Special Scientific Interest) remain relatively unspoilt, retaining a good variety of marginal vegetation, wet grassland, riverside trees and scrub. Some areas of particular interest include the marsh, reedbed and floodland on the Arrow at Alcester; the wet meadows at Kinwarton and Haselor; the osiers at Pettiford on the Alne and the water meadows along the Blythe at Hampton in Arden.

Visual character of the landscape

Arden is characterised by a wide range of historical and ecological features, which create a landscape of intimacy and a strong 'sense of place'. Most significantly it remains a wooded landscape with mature hedgerow oaks, ancient woodlands and historic parklands. The association with former common and heath

imparts a strong sense of unity and is reflected in the widespread occurrence of heathy vegetation, particularly roadside bracken. A number of remnant commons still survive but most of the larger areas have been enclosed and are today characterised by a geometric pattern of roads and small fields. The landscape retains many ancient features, in particular a pattern of irregular fields defined by thick hedgerows; a network of narrow, winding and often sunken lanes and trackways; a dispersed settlement pattern of farmsteads and hamlets; and a wealth of antiquities including castles, fishponds and moated sites. These features are woven within a farmed landscape which in places still retains a strong rural character.

The above features define Arden as a broad landscape region. Within this area seven distinct types of landscape can be identified, each of which is characterised by a particular aspect of the wider regional character:

- Ancient Arden
- Arden pastures
- Industrial Arden
- Arden parklands
- Wooded estatelands
- Arden river valleys
- River valley wetlands



wayside cottages

Arden

Ancient Arden This is the most extensive Arden landscape and forms the core of ancient countryside in Warwickshire. It is located in two main areas: the northern section covers the eastern half of the North Warwickshire plateau, while the southern section forms the undulating countryside between Hatton and Redditch. It is a small scale, intricate landscape with many low rounded hills, steep scarps and small incised valleys. Landform is rarely dominant but in places it is emphasised by hilltop woodlands and wooded scarps. Within the area landform relates intimately with tree cover and field pattern to form a strong sense of enclosure. Views are restricted by thick roadside hedgerows and are often short, overlooking two or three fields to a wooded skyline. Occasional distant views are afforded from hilltops and ridgelines revealing a varied, wooded topography.

The farmed landscape is characterised by a well defined small to medium sized irregular field pattern, complemented by an irregular pattern of narrow lanes. Most lanes and trackways are tightly defined by thick hedgerows often on hedgebanks. Pockets of permanent pasture are closely associated with small scale field patterns around hamlets and lanes. These form the treasured, undisturbed Arden landscapes where a combination of ancient hedgerows, unimproved pasture and grazing animals creates a strong sense of place and a peaceful reminder of times past. The intimacy of the landscape is often reinforced by the presence of sunken trackways and old field ponds which provide the finishing touches to tranquil, typically English rural scenes.

Throughout much of the area the landscape has a well wooded character formed by a mixture of woodlands, hedgerow trees, small parks and strongly wooded streamlines. Woodlands are particularly prominent on higher ground on the North Warwickshire plateau between

Meriden and New Arley. The majority of woodlands are less than 5 hectares in size, although several such as Close Wood and Birchley Hays Wood just north east of Meriden are considerably larger. Most are oak dominated, but a substantial proportion particularly of larger woods have been replanted with mixed broadleaved and coniferous species. The irregular shape of most woodlands reflects the large number that have ancient origins. Hedgerow trees are mainly associated with pastoral landscapes, such as those found around Tanworth-in-Arden. Free standing field trees and groups of trees around field ponds are also locally important. Elsewhere trees are more scattered, but in combination with thick hedgerows they often maintain a semblance of wooded character.

An integral element of the landscape is the dispersed settlement pattern of hamlets and farmsteads. Many historic brick and timber farmhouses and parish churches are particularly prominent. Modern houses are found on the edges of most hamlets and along roadsides, but in north and south Arden these do not markedly detract from traditional settlement character. In central Arden however, in the parishes of Allesley, Berkswell, Corley and Meriden, urban influences give a suburban feel to the landscape.



Arden



Ancient Arden

Overall character and qualities

An small scale farmed landscape with a varied, undulating topography, characterised by an irregular pattern of fields and narrow, winding lanes.

Characteristic features

- A varied undulating topography.
- A network of winding lanes and trackways often confined by tall hedgebanks.
- An ancient irregular pattern of small to medium sized fields.
- Hedgerow and roadside oaks.
- Field ponds associated with permanent pasture.
- Many place names ending in Green or End.

STRATEGIES & GUIDELINES
PART TWO

Part two Strategies and guidelines

Introduction Part two of this report examines recent changes which have affected the landscape in Arden and the current issues which are likely to influence change in the future. From this a series of management strategies set out the direction which is required in order to maintain and enhance regional character and local distinctiveness. These strategies are supported by a comprehensive set of landscape guidelines which provide detailed advice for farmers, foresters, developers and highway engineers. Responsibility is also placed on planners to encourage higher standards, using persuasion, planning conditions or enforcement as necessary. The same principles apply to other organisations who play a part in managing the landscape.

The guidelines show how landscape character should be conserved, restored or enhanced. They have been grouped into five topics reflecting the user groups at which they are aimed. Each topic is depicted by a stylised symbol:

- settlement & buildings 
- highways 
- land management 
- field boundaries 
- trees & woodlands 

Nature conservation is treated as an integral component within each of these topics. The guidelines are presented in the form of a short statement, supported by a summary outlining the issue in question

and the reasons why a particular course of action has been recommended.

The guidelines should be used in conjunction with the fold out map accompanying this booklet. This shows the location of the seven landscape types identified within Arden. The map also highlights areas within each landscape type where the structure and character of the landscape are in decline. These areas, termed 'enhancement zones', are indicated by hatching on the map. They represent priority areas where resources for landscape and habitat restoration should be targeted.

Landscape change and current trends

There have been dramatic changes to the Warwickshire landscape in the last half-century as a result of agricultural intensification, urban expansion and the suburbanisation of the countryside. The impact of these changes has been compounded by neglect and natural disasters, in particular Dutch elm disease, which has highlighted the environmental decline of the countryside. The result has been a gradual erosion of local character and sense of place.

agricultural intensification Major agricultural changes have taken place since the 1940s with an increase in arable land at the expense of permanent pasture. This has been most marked on the North Warwickshire plateau where in 1946 approximately 75% of the farmland was pastoral with dairying as the major land use. By the late 1980s this had declined to approximately 30% of the farmed area. Though not as marked, similar trends can be seen elsewhere in Arden, while on the

Landscape change and current trends

plateau area to the south of Birmingham many smallholdings are now farmed part-time or given over to pony paddocks.

In parallel there have been changes in grassland character with the making of silage rather than hay. This has resulted in many traditional pastures being reseeded or improved by chemicals and herbicides, which has greatly diminished their floristic interest. There are now very few grasslands which retain their original nature conservation interest.

The intensification of agriculture has in places resulted in the wholesale removal of hedgerows and trees creating open fragmented landscapes. This has been particularly marked in the north of the region where the historic pattern of small irregular fields has been completely swept away in some areas. The features that remain often appear out of scale with their surroundings. In particular isolated field trees and remnant gappy hedgerows reinforce the impression of a landscape in decline.

Land drainage has severely affected the character of many river landscapes. This has resulted in a loss of wetland habitats and the conversion of former flood meadows to arable production. Wetland habitats have also been cleared during river channel management. The River Arrow in particular has lost much of its marginal vegetation and associated wet grassland, and is only slowly recovering. Similarly, with the demise of working mills many mill leats and islands have been lost.

Although further agricultural expansion is now less likely, declining incomes and continued uncertainty in the short term may result in intensification of production on existing land. This could lead to continued 'improvement' of older grasslands and further loss of hedgerows.

In the longer term new incentives may encourage more environmentally sensitive

farming, with perhaps a return to more traditional mixed farming regimes. Priority areas for returning to pasture might include Ancient Arden landscapes, river floodplains and areas of former park and heath. Surplus arable land could also be targeted for other uses such as new woodlands.

trees and woodlands Since the 1950's 16% of ancient woodland sites have been partly cleared, largely for agriculture but also for urban development and mineral extraction. In addition there has been a distinct change in woodland character with 42% of ancient sites replanted with a mixture of native and exotic species. Most notably there has been a demise in oak as the final timber crop. Many small planting schemes have also favoured quick growing non-indigenous species, often to provide cover for game or shelter around buildings.

Although a dominant element in the landscape, many small woods have been neglected, resulting in unmanaged, even-aged stands. Likewise hedgerow oaks and parkland trees are for the most part mature and in many places there are few young trees coming on to replace them. Excessive trimming of hedges exacerbates this problem by suppressing the natural regeneration of hedgerow trees. Without urgent action there is likely to be a continued decline in the wooded character of the landscape.

In the future it is likely that there will be continued incentives for landowners to plant trees through government planting schemes. Provided that new planting complements existing landscape character and avoids damaging historical or ecological features, it should be encouraged. To maintain the essence of Arden, however, oak must remain the dominant tree species.

Landscape change and current trends

pressures for new development Urban expansion has been a major influence affecting the Arden landscape and in places both the ancient settlement pattern and rural character have been eroded. Some hamlets have expanded into larger residential centres, ribbon development has taken place along the Coventry urban fringe and new houses have been built throughout the area, with many conversions of redundant farm buildings. These influences are having a subtle cumulative impact on the landscape by bringing social change and a new appearance of affluence.

Urban influences are especially dominant in central Arden between Birmingham and Coventry and they have imprinted a suburban character on the landscape. To help control their expansion most of Arden was designated as Green Belt after approval of the original County Structure Plan in 1973. In the future however, Arden will continue to be a popular place in which to live and work and if rural integrity is to be retained, it will be important to restrict the spread of suburban influences. This is particularly the case in south Arden following the opening of the M40 motorway.

Locally mineral extraction has also had an impact on the landscape with coal mining on the North Warwickshire plateau and sand and gravel workings in central Arden. Though only having a limited lifespan these workings are often visibly intrusive.

highway improvements Road construction has had a major impact on the Arden landscape. New roads, particularly motorways (M6, M45, M40, A45), cut through existing landscape patterns. In places this has led to field rationalisation along the road corridor resulting in a loss of hedgerows and trees which makes the road more visible and intrusive. Traffic movement and noise has

had a particularly deleterious effect on many formerly peaceful rural landscapes.

Improvements to existing roads can also effect landscape character as road widening and realignment have resulted in the removal of hedgerows, ancient hedgerows and fords.

General development guidelines

One of the key determinants of landscape character is whether built development intrudes on the landscape or integrates with it. With the diverse means available, through planning policy and related planning and highways legislation, a significant influence can be exercised in mitigating any adverse effects of development and in harnessing its many potentially enhancing effects. The general development guidelines set out below are designed to achieve those ends. These guidelines should be regarded as a good practice guide to be applied to all new development wherever it may occur. More specific design guidance to conserve and strengthen local settlement character can be found within the strategy and overall guidelines section.



Due to its ancient landscape character Arden retains a wealth of antiquities and historic buildings. Many of these are scheduled as ancient monuments or listed buildings, but there are many others unprotected by official designations. These features provide strong social and cultural links with the past and add considerably to landscape detail at a local level. They are also part of our heritage and it is important to conserve all sites of archaeological and historical significance.

- **Conserve all sites of archaeological and historical importance**



The suburbanising influences associated with new development are an increasing pressure on the traditional character of settlements, and are having a subtle, cumulative impact. Examples include the external modernisation of buildings, the erection of illuminated and corporate plastic roadside signs, the replacement of roadside hedges with quick growing ornamental screens, the increased use of security fencing, and even standardised landscaping schemes. Standardised planning and highway design criteria also often necessitate the replacement or modernisation of existing features and tend to result in rather bland and characterless developments. Much more discretion is needed when applying design standards in rural landscapes. In particular, original features such as walls, roadside hedges and mature trees should be retained, moved or replaced. Where this is not possible consideration should be given to moving or replacing such features.

- **Conserve the character of rural settlements by retaining existing features and local patterns in all development schemes**



The interface between new development and the surrounding landscape can often appear sharp and stark. Tree planting within and around new development is one of the best ways to soften hard edges. Integration can best be achieved by allowing established trees to run into a development site and designing new planting to break up their densely built appearance. At least 10% of the site should be allocated for tree and woodland planting and resources should be provided for the ongoing management of these features. Opportunities should also be sought, perhaps through planning gain, for offsite woodland planting to help link the development into the wider landscape pattern. The aim should not necessarily be to hide buildings, but rather to integrate them into the landscape, using locally occurring native species. Ornamental species planted as quick growing screens, particularly 'leylandii', should be avoided.

- **Soften hard built edges through increased tree planting within and around new development**

General development guidelines



Traditional farm buildings constructed from local materials often have a distinctive regional identity. This identity is being eroded by the construction of modern farm buildings, which often look out of place and visually intrusive. Many new buildings are necessarily large, particularly the roof areas which can be a dominant feature. Siting and design are therefore very important and no amount of 'landscaping' will conceal a building that is fundamentally badly designed. Big buildings can sit well in an open landscape if they are well sited in relation to other features such as landform and tree cover. Use of shadows, different textures and careful selection of building materials can add interest and break up the mass of a large building. Similarly, the choice of colours should complement those in existing buildings and in the surrounding landscape. Darker, matt colours are generally less obtrusive than light, shiny colours. The surroundings of new buildings are also very important but often given inadequate consideration. Locally occurring trees should be used in a positive way to strengthen the overall farm landscape, rather than as an afterthought in an attempt to hide an ugly building.



The construction of new roads and the widening or re-alignment of existing roads can have a major impact on the character of the landscape. The visual impact can often be considerably reduced through careful route selection and it is important that landscape considerations are thoroughly assessed at the inception of all such schemes. No amount of landscaping will ameliorate the impact of a badly chosen route. A landscape assessment should be undertaken prior to carrying out improvements to existing roads as well as for new ones.



Country roads are an important component of the rural landscape. Improvements to meet modern highway standards can have a detrimental impact on the character of the roadside environment by introducing suburban influences into the rural landscape. Of particular concern are treatments such as concrete kerbing, galvanised railings, new or replacement street lighting and standardised road signs. These features, which are often visually intrusive, are also alien in a rural setting, and should be used only where absolutely necessary. Opportunities should also be sought for using more traditional materials such as stone setts for kerbing, or reverting to the use of locally distinctive road signs.

- **New agricultural buildings should be sited, designed and landscaped to blend with the surrounding farmed landscape**

- **Landscape assessment should be a major consideration at the inception of all road schemes**

- **Conserve rural character by limiting standardised treatments during highway improvement schemes**

General development guidelines



A characteristic feature of Arden is its irregular road network which reflects the ancient landscape pattern. Features are many and varied, including thick roadside hedgerows, narrow sunken lanes and trackways, irregularly shaped verges, hedgebanks, fords and mature roadside oaks. Wherever possible these features should be retained. When improvements need to be made they should reflect the irregular landscape pattern, trying to avoid straight lines and looking to replace historic features. Guidance should be sought to enable a preliminary landscape assessment to identify key features that should be retained, moved or reinstated.



Landscaping along new roads can greatly improve the immediate highway environment, but is often insufficient to maintain the integrity of the adjoining landscape. Greater attention should be given to landscape enhancement within a wide road corridor, perhaps up to a half kilometre either side of the carriageway. Sufficient space should be allowed to enable embankments and cuttings to be shaped to reflect the surrounding landform. Geometric slope profiles should be avoided. Within the wider corridor priority should be given to linking highway landscaping into the surrounding landscape pattern. Local authorities could play an active role here by coordinating and promoting landscape initiatives.



Arden has a variety of mineral deposits which have been worked for many years. These include coal, hard rock aggregate and sand and gravel for the construction industry. Restoration proposals accompanying mineral applications often show little appreciation of how an extraction site relates to the wider landscape, which can result in landscaping schemes that do not reflect this wider context. Detailed landscaping schemes should be based upon an assessment of landscape character. Such an assessment should be submitted with the planning application, to inform a decision as to whether reinstating the original landscape, or creating a new landscape is most appropriate. Consideration must also be given to the long term management of new landscape features.

- **Protect and conserve the irregular pattern and characteristic features of roads and lanes**

- **Highway landscaping should be strongly linked to the surrounding landscape pattern**

- **Restoration proposals for mineral workings should be based upon an assessment of landscape character**

Arden

The overall strategy and guidelines for Arden set out below provide the framework for conserving and enhancing the character and unity of the region. The seven landscape types which make up the region, however, have their own distinctive characteristics and for each of these there is a separate strategy and set of management guidelines. These are specific to the individual landscape types, but should be read in conjunction with the overall strategy and guidelines for the region.

Internationally, Arden is famous for its historical and cultural associations as being 'Shakespeare's Arden'. The wooded character of the landscape also has direct historical links with the ancient Forest of Arden. It is the most densely wooded part of Warwickshire (8%), which is well above the county average (3%). Of particular significance is the high proportion of ancient woodland sites and the association with oak as the dominant tree species. Equally important are the many built and other historic features and antiquities which impart an 'ancient' landscape character. Together, these associations are an important part of our national heritage and they distinguish Arden from the later 'planned' countryside found elsewhere in Warwickshire.



In contrast to the rest of Warwickshire, Arden is characterised by a dispersed settlement pattern of scattered farmsteads and hamlets – the latter often no more than a loose cluster of wayside cottages. Ribbon development and more recent infill development have overwhelmed this historic pattern in many areas while barn conversions are eroding the rural character of undeveloped lanes. Where new housing is necessary in the countryside it should be located in loose clusters to form new hamlets. This would reflect the scale and pattern of existing settlement. Equally, it is important that new development should not be permitted along lanes that are presently undeveloped.



A characteristic feature of the Arden landscape is the wealth of brick built farmsteads and country houses which date from the 16th and 17th centuries. These give the area a strong and coherent building style which should be conserved. A trend in recent years has been the conversion of redundant barns into dwellings. This often results in modifications to the external appearance of a building. If the existing character is to be maintained consideration must be given to retaining traditional style and features. New housing should also harmonise with the vernacular style, with particular attention being given to scale, building materials and the incorporation of traditional features.

Management strategy

- **Conserve the historic, well-wooded character of the region**

Overall guidelines

- **Maintain the historic dispersed settlement pattern of hamlets and scattered farmsteads**
- **Conserve the built character of Arden by ensuring that new development reflects the vernacular style**

Arden



Mature oaks are a characteristic feature of the Arden landscape. Through their size and antiquity individual trees can contribute greatly to landscape character. They are also ecologically important as they support many species of insects and birds. Wherever possible these old trees should be retained as their heritage value far outweighs any economic value. Management agreements could be used to help preserve these trees for future generations.



Ancient woodland sites are those which have had continuous woodland cover since at least 1600. Over 70% of the woodlands in Arden are of ancient origin. These sites represent the final core of woodlands which retain a link with the ancient Forest of Arden. Following losses this century there is now a presumption against further woodland clearance and conservation of all ancient woodlands must be given the highest priority. These sites usually have a very high nature conservation interest with a diverse flora and fauna. Oak is usually the dominant tree species but small leaved lime is also locally important. To maintain species diversity management should favour small scale felling coupes and natural regeneration. Where vigorous regrowth can be obtained through coppice and regeneration this would be a suitable management option.



Plantation ancient woodlands are those which have been replanted often with non-indigenous broadleaves or conifers. Though reduced in their interest these woods are frequently of much higher nature conservation value than recently established woodlands. Much of their ecological interest can be enhanced through sympathetic management. On sites where indigenous species survive, natural regeneration of native broadleaves should be encouraged. Only where species interest is greatly diminished should replanting be undertaken, favouring indigenous broadleaves where possible.



Small woodlands are a feature of many Arden farms. Historically they were managed for timber and firewood. A shift towards intensive agriculture, coupled with reduced farm labour and a demise in management practices such as coppicing, have resulted in many of these woods being left unmanaged. As landscape and wildlife features many are now in decline and in urgent need of management. Government incentives now favour the diversification of farm enterprises including the management of small woods for timber, fuel, game, wildlife, landscape and recreation. These woods would be suited to long rotation coppicing and should be targeted for management grants. Coppice management would be especially sensitive to both the landscape and nature conservation value of these sites.

- **Conserve the high heritage and ecological value of individual ancient oaks**

- **Conserve all ancient woodland sites and restock with locally occurring native species**

- **Restocking of plantation ancient woods should favour native broadleaved species preferably through natural regeneration**

- **Promote long rotation coppicing as a management tool for neglected small woods**



There is considerable scope for enhancing regional character through new woodland planting. The location and scale of all new planting, however, must reflect the character and scale of the different landscapes in Arden. The size and shape of new woodlands should complement the surrounding landscape pattern. Small woods are likely to be most suitable where the field pattern is still intact, while large woods may be more appropriate where the structure of the landscape has become fragmented. All new planting should avoid sites of ecological or historical interest.



The use of appropriate species in well-designed mixes is an important factor to consider in determining how well new planting will fit into the landscape. Selection of species will need to reflect a wide range of considerations, including the balance to be struck between nature conservation, landscape enhancement, recreation and timber production. Most Arden woodlands are of ancient origin and are predominantly broadleaved in character. New planting should reflect this where possible, and where schemes include non-indigenous species, oak should be included in the mix and favoured as the final hardwood crop. Species selection for amenity woodland should favour locally occurring associations of native trees and shrubs, including small-leaved lime as a co-dominant species with oak.



Hedgerows are prominent landscape features and frequently define roads, bridleways, footpaths and parish boundaries. Lanes and trackways are emphasised in many places by double hedgerows. These are historic features in their own right and form important wildlife corridors within the overall field pattern. In open landscapes they are often the only remaining features and are valuable as a basis for rebuilding the structure of the landscape. It is important to avoid further fragmentation of the landscape through hedgerow removal, particularly those along highways and parish boundaries. Hedgerows along woodland edges are often associated with ancient banks and ditches, and even where a woodland has been cleared these features may still survive and should be conserved.



The general condition of hedgerows in Arden is very variable. Roadside hedges are usually well maintained, but many field hedgerows are closely trimmed or gappy, and would benefit from being managed more positively as landscape features. This would include allowing them to grow thicker and taller (up to two metres in height) and replanting those that are gappy. Existing incentives for replanting should be more actively promoted. Where possible management should avoid excessively tidy low cut hedges, and should favour trimming at three yearly intervals to improve wildlife interest. Consideration should be given to traditional hedgelaying, or coppicing where hedges have grown spindly or become gappy at the base.

- **The design of all new woodland planting should complement the shape and scale of the surrounding landscape pattern**

- **New woodland planting should be broadleaved in character and favour oak as the major tree species**

- **Avoid the removal of hedgerows, especially along footpaths, bridleways, parish boundaries and woodland edges**

- **Promote the management of hedgerows and landscape features**



Heathland was once a common feature of the Arden landscape but following losses to agriculture and urban development it is now rare and very restricted. Those sites where heather survives have particularly important nature conservation interest. Elsewhere remnant heathy vegetation remains a characteristic feature with bracken and gorse particularly common along roads and in ancient woods. In all cases open heathland is in decline due to encroachment of trees and lack of management. Priority should be given to removal of trees and the regeneration of heather and other heathland flora. This can be most effectively carried out through the reinstatement of grazing with cattle or sheep.



Heaths are now very restricted and rare, but many of the associated plant species still survive along roadside verges. Species such as bracken and gorse are especially evident and provide historic links with former commons and waste. They also create interest and diversity along the roadside environment. Management of existing verges should seek to maintain and enhance this diversity. In road improvement schemes opportunities may also arise for habitat creation. In such cases the exposed subsoil is ideal for establishing heathy vegetation, but topsoiling must be avoided. This approach would provide a more interesting alternative to amenity tree planting.



Increasing leisure time has resulted in greater demands for sport and recreational facilities in the countryside, especially around the fringes of the larger urban centres. This type of development should be avoided in most rural areas. In some, however, particularly the more wooded estate landscapes such as Arden parklands and Wooded estatelands, such facilities can be more readily assimilated into the landscape. Golf courses, for example, could be designed to take on the appearance of modern day parklands as they mature. The selection of appropriate tree species is an important consideration, and the planting of longer lived trees such as oak, lime and sweet chestnut should be favoured over quick growing or smaller amenity species. There should also be opportunities for creating new wildlife habitats including heathlands, meadowlands and wetlands.

- **Promote the regeneration and management of heathland flora on all remnant heathy areas**

- **Diversify roadside character through the creation and management of heathy vegetation on highway verges**

- **The design of recreational facilities, such as golf courses, should seek to reflect the character of existing landscape features**

Ancient Arden

This landscape is especially significant as it is the only area of ancient countryside in Warwickshire. The irregular landscape pattern reflected in the shape of fields and the network of narrow winding lanes is the essential structural element. Maintaining this pattern is the key to conserving the ancient landscape character. The pastoral character of the landscape is also important. Though now fragmented, this creates visual unity where it survives and contributes to Ancient Arden's distinct sense of place.



Field pattern is defined by thick boundary hedgerows and these are a key feature of Ancient Arden. Most are of medieval age and are distinguished by their size, irregular pattern and diversity of hedgerow species. They form the essential fabric of the landscape and once lost this unique combination is very difficult to replace. It is important in landscape and historical terms to conserve what is left, and where hedgerows have been removed consideration should be given to replacement planting.



New hedgerow planting should be encouraged in those areas where field pattern has become fragmented. Where practical priority should be given to reinstating ancient hedgerow patterns. New planting should complement the irregular shapes of existing fields and a regular geometric pattern should be avoided. Hedges should be planted in double rows with a mixture of locally occurring species. Hedgerow trees should also be incorporated at irregular spacings, with oak as the dominant species.



Ancient Arden has traditionally been a pastoral landscape and still retains this character in many places. Some of the older pastures are floristically diverse and often they are associated with areas of more steeply undulating ground. These are Arden's landscape gems where a peaceful, undisturbed character creates a strong sense of place and link with the past. Many formerly pastoral landscapes have been converted to arable, however, resulting in a loss of landscape features and fragmentation of the ancient field pattern. Where opportunities arise restoration of pastoral character should be encouraged, especially where this is part of a scheme to restore the historic field pattern. It is likely that this would have to involve government incentives to encourage more environmentally sensitive farming.

Management strategy

- **Conserve and restore the ancient irregular landscape pattern**

Landscape guidelines

- **Conserve and restore the irregular pattern of ancient hedgerows**

- **New hedge planting should reflect the irregular field pattern and include only mixed native species**

- **Conserve pastoral character and identify opportunities for conversion of arable land back to permanent pasture**

Ancient Arden



Field ponds are important features in pastoral landscapes where historically they were used for watering livestock. They remain common in most parishes. In arable areas their function is now redundant but fringing scrub and trees often form important landscape features. Retention of ponds should be a priority in pastoral areas where they have greater wildlife potential in association with permanent grassland. Many of these ponds are now badly silted and shaded and management is needed to improve their wildlife and landscape interest. Management allows ponds to be retained as landscape features as well as providing a valuable source of water for livestock. Allowing limited access to livestock also adds diversity to the wetland habitat.



Mature oaks are a characteristic feature of field and roadside hedgerows in Ancient Arden. These create variety and give filtered views through the landscape. Tree cover should be enhanced through the natural regeneration of hedgerow oaks. Most hedgerows have seedlings which at little cost can be selected and left to grow. Replanting need only be undertaken where few hedgerow trees remain and the seed source has diminished.



Woodland cover in Ancient Arden is varied and consists of both large and small woods. The shape of most woodlands is characterised by an irregular outline created by early woodland clearance. This ancient pattern is reflected in the layout of fields and lanes. New planting should complement this irregular pattern, avoiding geometric shapes and straight edges. Woodlands up to field size would be most appropriate, but where field pattern is fragmented larger areas of planting may be acceptable.



Although close to Birmingham and Coventry Ancient Arden retains a rural character throughout much of its area. This is being steadily eroded however, by the gradual change of agricultural land to other uses, such as sport and leisure facilities. Such changes are imprinting a suburban character on the landscape. In these ancient landscapes conservation of rural character should be given a high priority and all new development should be tightly restrained.

- **Retain and manage field ponds in areas of permanent pasture**

- **Encourage the natural regeneration of hedgerow oaks**

- **Enhance tree cover through small scale woodland planting**

- **Conserve rural character by restricting changes in the use of rural land**

River valley wetlands

The River valley wetlands is a fragmented, often degraded landscape with little sense of unity. The character of the landscape has been extensively modified and the original River meadowlands largely replaced by a chaotic mix of industrial, new wetland and restored agricultural landscapes. There are considerable opportunities for landscape enhancement and reconstruction but these need to be part of an overall scheme to strengthen the structure and unity of the landscape throughout the valley. Such a scheme should enhance the wetland character that has been created, through positive habitat creation and management.



The Tame Valley has been extensively worked for sand and gravel. This has resulted in the creation of a series of large lakes. Where these have developed a fringe of willow and alder scrub, the impact of these man-made features is much reduced. The visual impact, however, increases with size and regularity of shape. Opportunities should be sought in both old and new workings to create a more varied wetland landscape of smaller lakes and ponds with areas of reedbed and marsh. The aim should be to achieve a better balance between 'wetland' and open water.



The River Tame has been extensively modified by river drainage works. The channel has been canalised and typically has a uniform cross-section with steep banks to improve the flow of water. Flood banks have also been erected in places, further emphasising that the river is little more than a large drain. Opportunities should be sought to restore river channel diversity by creating a more varied bank profile and introducing new features such as marginal shallows and backwaters. Where flood banks are needed these should be kept as far back from the river as possible. Such measures would considerably enhance the visual and ecological importance of the river environment, particularly if they were combined with a water quality improvement programme.



Riverside trees and scrub are important features contributing to the visual continuity of the river channel. They also provide cover and nesting places for a variety of animals. Tree cover is generally fragmented in the River valley wetlands and improvements to the river channel have resulted in the loss of most riverside trees. Where it does not conflict with drainage requirements, consideration should be given to enhancing the unity of tree cover throughout this landscape. This may involve new tree and shrub planting, or allowing natural regeneration to take place. Large scale woodland planting should be avoided, and locally occurring native trees and shrub species should be used wherever possible.

Management strategy

- Enhance the unity and wetland character of the landscape through habitat creation and management

Landscape guidelines

- Opportunities should be sought creating more diverse wetland habitats during restoration of sand and gravel workings

- Enhance river channel diversity and create new habitats for marginal vegetation

- Enhance the continuity and wooded character of the river corridor

Species lists – Arden

The following is a list of those tree and shrub species which are common and characteristic to the Arden, and which contribute to its regional identity. Other native tree species may also be appropriate to individual sites – professional advice is recommended and is available from the sources listed at the back of this report.

Main soil types – clay loams and sandy soils

- Dominant species
- Other appropriate species

		WOODLANDS		HEDGES AND HEDGEROW TREES	WET AREAS AND RIVERSIDES
		Clay Loams	Sandy Soils		
Trees					
Field maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>	○			
Common alder	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>	○			●
Silver birch	<i>Betula pendula</i>	○	●		
Downy birch	<i>Betula pubescens</i>	○			
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	●			○
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	○	○		
Crab apple	<i>Malus sylvestris</i>	○	○		
Aspen	<i>Populus tremula</i>	○	○		○
Wild cherry	<i>Prunus avium</i>	○			
Sessile oak	<i>Quercus petraea</i>		●	●	
Pedunculate oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>	●	●	●	
White willow	<i>Salix alba</i>				●
Crack willow	<i>Salix fragilis</i>				●
Rowan	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>		○		
Small leaved lime	<i>Tilia cordata</i>	○			
Shrubs					
Field maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>			○	
Dogwood	<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>	○		○	
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>	●		●	
Midland hawthorn	<i>Crataegus laevigata</i>	○	○	○	
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	○	○	●	
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>			○	
Wild privet	<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>	○		○	
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	○		○	
Goat willow	<i>Salix caprea</i>	○	○		○
Guelder rose	<i>Viburnum opulus</i>	○		○	○

Planting should contain at least 80% of dominant species

Semi-natural habitats

A number of exciting and increasingly threatened semi-natural habitats are associated with Arden. True heathland characterised by ling heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), with bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) and purple moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) on the acid sands is a rare but important habitat. Its re-creation is practical on suitable sites, and is often best achieved through natural colonisation, but specialist advice should always be sought.

Summary of landscape guidelines

MANAGEMENT OPTION	ANCIENT ARDEN	ARDEN PASTURES	INDUSTRIAL ARDEN	ARDEN PARKLANDS
Settlement & buildings				
Conservation of rural character	●	○	○	○
Conservation of settlement pattern	●	○	●	○
Conservation of vernacular character	●	○	●	●
Land management				
Conservation of historic features	●	○	●	●
Conservation of pastoral character	●	●	●	○
Maintenance of field ponds	●	○	○	○
Management of field margins	○	○	○	○
Restoration of permanent pasture	○	●	○	●
Management of river and stream corridors	○	○	○	○
Management of roadside vegetation	○	●	○	●
Management of semi-natural habitats	○	○	●	○
Habitat creation	○	●	●	●
Field boundaries				
Conservation of historic field pattern	●	●	●	○
Conservation of primary field boundaries	●	●	●	●
Hedgerow replanting and management	●	○	●	○
Trees & woodlands				
Conservation of mature trees	●	●	○	●
Regeneration of hedgerow tree cover	●	●	●	○
Management of primary boundary trees	○	○	○	●
Amenity tree planting	○	○	●	○
Parkland management	○	○	-	●
Woodland management	●	○	●	●
Small scale woodland planting	●	○	●	●
Large scale woodland planting	○	×	×	○

● High priority ○ Low priority × Inappropriate - Not applicable

Summary of landscape guidelines

MANAGEMENT OPTION	WOODED ESTATELANDS	ARDEN RIVER VALLEYS	RIVER VALLEY WETLANDS
Settlement & buildings			
Conservation of rural character	●	●	○
Conservation of settlement pattern	●	-	-
Conservation of vernacular character	●	●	-
Land management			
Conservation of historic features	○	●	○
Conservation of pastoral character	○	●	○
Maintenance of field ponds	○	-	-
Management of field margins	●	○	-
Restoration of permanent pasture	×	●	○
Management of river and stream corridors	●	●	●
Management of roadside vegetation	○	-	-
Management of semi-natural habitats	○	●	●
Habitat creation	○	●	●
Field boundaries			
Conservation of historic field pattern	○	-	-
Conservation of primary field boundaries	●	●	-
Hedgerow replanting and management	○	○	○
Trees & woodlands			
Conservation of mature trees	●	○	○
Regeneration of hedgerow tree cover	○	-	-
Management of primary boundary trees	●	●	●
Amenity tree planting	×	○	●
Parkland management	○	-	-
Woodland management	●	-	-
Small scale woodland planting	○	×	×
Large scale woodland planting	●	×	×

● High priority ○ Low priority × Inappropriate - Not applicable

Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment

for

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council



December 2016

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Figures:

- Figure 1: Terrain Analysis
- Figure 2: Solihull Borough Landscape Character Area Map

Landform and topography:

4.8. The Solihull countryside in particular has a generally undulating topography with wooded areas including mature hedgerows, remnants of ancient semi natural woodland and historic parklands.

4.9. The Borough is located within an upland catchment of the River Trent and River Severn (via the River Avon). A review of The Ordnance Survey (OS) Open Data indicates that the general topography of the Borough generally slopes northwards and elevations range from between approximately 180m AOD (metres Above Ordnance Datum) in the eastern area of Solihull down to 80m AOD in the northern area of the Borough.

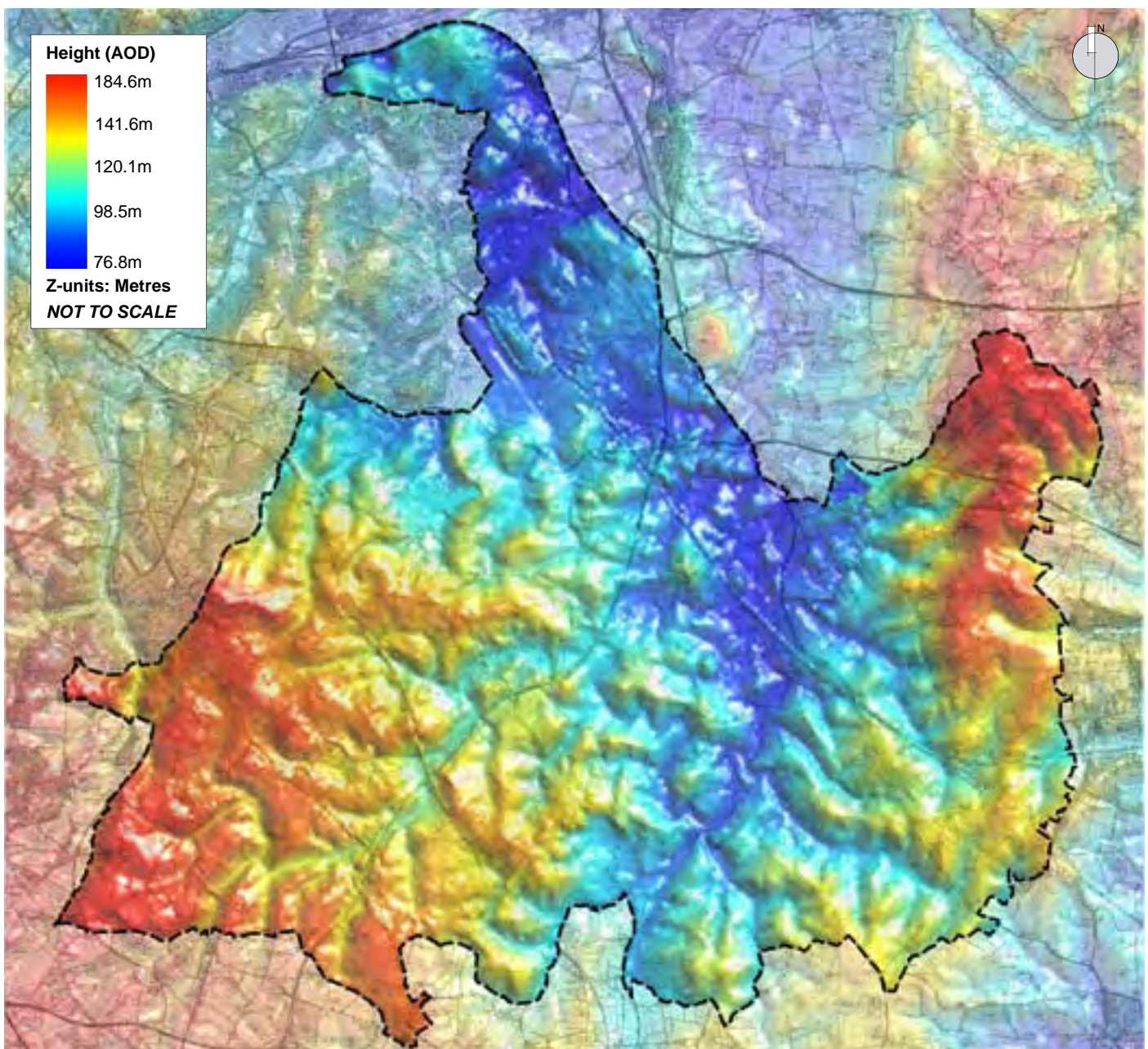


Figure 1: Terrain Analysis

Land Use Pattern:

- 4.10. Solihull became a borough in 1965 comprising Solihull Town and 12 parish Councils. The Borough covers an area of approximately 178 sq. km to the south east of Birmingham, where the northern and western parts of the area support predominantly urban areas including Solihull Town Centre, Birmingham International Airport and the National Exhibition Centre. In contrast, the eastern and southern areas of the Borough contain the countryside that occupies a substantial proportion of the land use. Within these countryside areas the M42 corridor forms the separation between the urban areas to the west and the more rural areas to the east.
- 4.11. The Borough is diverse in its land use and land quality. Land outside of the urban areas ranges from very good to poor land quality with most of the land being designated Grade 3 (good to moderate) agricultural land. Small areas of Grade 2 (very good) agricultural land is present mostly along the Berkswell and Meriden Road corridors.
- 4.12. Within the River Blythe corridor and around Cheswick Green and Dickens Heath, pastureland and meadows dominate, due to the poor agricultural soil quality found in these areas.
- 4.13. The River Blythe valley to the north of the Borough, due to its geology is an area of mineral deposit and therefore mineral extraction and quarrying is the main land use here. Although through time as quarrying has ceased, the land has been restored to form recreational areas some comprising golf courses and angling lakes.

Settlement and Infrastructure:

- 4.14. Settlement in the Borough comprises Solihull Town Centre, the National Exhibition Centre and the Solihull urban fringes to the south and east of the town centre. The main villages in the Borough include Dickens Heath, Cheswick Green, Knowle, Dorridge, Balsall Common, Hampton in Arden, there are also many isolated residential property and farmsteads with the rural eastern extent of the Borough.
- 4.15. Birmingham International Airport is a major transport hub location in the north west of the Borough. The M6 Motorway runs west to east on the northern boundary of the Borough and the M42 is a major transport corridor that runs north south through the centre of the Borough. Other major roads in the Borough include the A34, A45, A41 and A452. The Rugby-Birmingham-Stafford Railway Line, a loop off the West Coast Main Line runs north west to south east through the Borough, with several stations including Birmingham International, Hampton in Arden and Berkswell. Other rail lines traversing the Borough are the Chiltern line from Birmingham to London and the Birmingham to Stratford upon Avon line. There are also two canals that flow through Solihull; the Grand Union Canal that runs through the centre of Solihull, and the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal which crosses the south-western corner of the Borough. Canals have left features in the landscape including flights of locks, embankments, cuttings, lock cottages and bridges.

Sustainability:

- 4.16. Within in the Borough there is currently a high demand for new housing developments due to the employment opportunities within the Borough, the proximity to Birmingham and public transportation links to London, this is particularly evident within the Solihull urban fringes and the M42 corridor. The demand for new development currently puts pressure on landscape and agricultural land with the Borough. Policy set out in the Local Plan 2013 is underpinned by the theme of sustainability through promoting economic and job growth and new housing to meet the Borough's needs whilst conserving and improving the character and quality of the environment, an important component of the Borough's attractiveness.

5. Borough Wide Landscape Guidelines

Context:

- 5.1. As a result of physical processes and human activities, landscape character is constantly changing. Changes associated with social and political evolution through time result in the development of various land ownership and management regimes that influence landscape character.
- 5.2. Landscape change in the Borough has occurred in both the rural and urban areas as a result of physical processes, development and changes in land management. The development of Solihull was highly influenced by the 20th Century expansion of Birmingham south-eastwards. The Borough was predominantly rural with small historic towns and villages at Solihull, Meriden, Berkswell, Barston, Hampton-in-Arden, Knowle and Bickenhill until the end of the 19th Century, when Birmingham began to expand into rural Olton, with houses overlooking Olton Mere. The rural area once formed part of a huge area of wood pasture and ancient farm lands known as Arden with evidence of previous woodland, commons and heaths.
- 5.3. Large settlement expansion from Birmingham into Solihull occurred between 1900 and 1955, particularly during the inter-war period. This resulted in the development of large housing estates at Lyndon, Olton, Elmdon and Shirley stretching towards Solihull and at Castle Bromwich. Government and European policy have influenced land management changes and development considerably since the end of the Second World War. The emphasis has been on increased production. Now the focus is changing towards the environment, wildlife and biodiversity.
- 5.4. This section of the LCA sets out general landscape guidelines to manage landscape change related to the pressures which are Borough wide. The guidelines will support planning policy and help to manage landscape change when used in conjunction with the area specific guidelines contained within this document.

Industry and Business Parks:

- 5.5. There are development pressures resulting from a need for employment opportunities within the Borough that are likely to continue. UK Central (previously known as the M42 Economic Gateway) is a major economic growth driver within the Greater Birmingham. The economic assets within the UK Central include Birmingham International Airport, The National Exhibition Centre, Jaguar Land Rover, Birmingham and Blythe Valley Business Parks and Solihull Town Centre.
- 5.6. Continued expansion of employment sites on the urban edge and within rural locations also has the potential to impart a negative effect on landscape character. Noise, traffic and lighting as associated with new development could also impact on landscape character; the historic environment, the setting of settlements and people's experience of the landscape.

Guidelines

- New industrial and business developments should aim to respect and enhance the Character Area within which they are proposed, particularly in rural areas.
- New development should conserve and enhance biodiversity, landscape quality and consider the impact on and opportunities for green infrastructure at the earliest opportunity in the design process.
- Development within existing employment areas and business parks should maintain the attractiveness of the area to investors and protect and enhance the surroundings including the natural environment.
- Large buildings should be well-sited in relation to other features including tree cover and landform. The use of different textures and building materials can add interest and break up the massing of larger buildings.
- Proposals for industry and business park uses should consider landscape implications at the design stages and an appropriate landscape schemes should be submitted with planning applications.

Residential Development:

- 5.7. The Solihull Local Plan (2013) and Local Plan Review (2016) sets out the policies and proposals to enable the Borough to grow and develop.
- 5.8. There is considerable demand for housing in the Borough resulting in development pressure for new residential areas. The area has strong economic assets, strategic transport infrastructure and a high quality environment making the Borough a desirable place in which to live, work and invest. As a result, there is continued development pressure on in the Borough particularly within the M42 Corridor, the Solihull urban fringes, villages in rural areas and the Green Belt.
- 5.9. In rural areas mature oak trees add a distinct quality to the landscape character of the area where they often form tree-lined streets in the mature suburb areas. Large front gardens also contribute to the leafy and Arcadian nature of some of these areas.
- 5.10. Building styles are a contributing factor to the landscape character and local distinctiveness between areas with varied styles that often impact positively on overall character. In contrast, modern buildings in rural villages and open countryside can sometimes appear incongruous.

Guidelines

- Housing location, design and layout should respect local character.
- New development should conserve and enhance local character in terms of its distinctiveness and streetscape quality to ensure the scale, massing, density, layout, materials and landscape of development respects the surrounding natural, built and historic environment.
- Development should aim to retain existing landscape features which help define the character of areas, such as hedgerows, hedgerow trees, parkland trees and field patterns.
- It is beneficial for landscape works for new development sites to be considered in the early stages of design, to help integrate the development with its setting.
- Buildings should be well sited in relation to other features including tree cover and landform.

- New development should integrate the natural environment through the provision of gardens, quality open space and green infrastructure.
- Villages and settlement in the Borough have a distinct identity as a result of their historic origins and setting.
- It is important to maintain the identity of existing settlement and to avoid breaching the well-defined settlement edges.
- Careful selection of building materials utilising different textures and colour can add interest and break up the mass of larger buildings.
- Where new buildings are required they should be located in association with existing farmsteads and settlement across the area and located so as not to require new access arrangements.

Lighting:

- 5.11. Inappropriate lighting in the countryside can impact considerably on landscape character and experience of the landscape. Lighting in the countryside can be disruptive to residents and ecology. The NPPG includes guidance on light pollution and notes that artificial light has the potential to become what is termed 'light pollution' or 'obtrusive light' and not all modern lighting is suitable in all locations.

Guidelines

- Lighting for new developments should be assessed and considered where appropriate particularly when submitting landscape proposals in support of planning applications.
- Areas of the countryside in the Borough that retain a dark sky from the impacts of light pollution should be protected.
- Limiting the hours lighting is used, the use of down lights and minimising output should be considered as part of the landscape scheme.
- Lighting schemes should be designed to the safe minimum requirements for the purposes of the development.
- Care should be taken when designing lighting schemes to ensure that appropriate products are chosen and that their location to reduce spill light and glare has been fully considered.

- Restoration plans should aim to provide new and enhanced habitats and enhance and restore features characteristic of the Warwickshire Arden landscape.

Recreational Activities:

- 5.17. Solihull's countryside plays a role in providing access and recreational activities for both people living in and outside of the Borough. There are a variety of opportunities for people to enjoy Solihull's countryside through the existing network of footpaths, towpaths and bridleways. The National Exhibition Centre (NEC) is important to the local and regional economy and is the UK's largest exhibitions centre and has become a major event, tourism and leisure venue, serving both business and leisure markets and contributing significantly to Solihull's and the Region's visitor economy.
- 5.18. Sporting activities that are pursued in the countryside are wide ranging.

Guidelines

- Development of high quality and accessible public realm, green spaces and green infrastructure.
- Planting proposals must integrate recreational developments within the surrounding countryside and pay regard to their wider setting.
- New development should protect and enhance physical access, including public rights of way to open space, green infrastructure and historical assets. Promotion of the use of footpaths will help maintain their presence and importance in the landscape including the associated benefits of health and well-being.

Agriculture:

- 5.19. In the rural areas of the Borough the prevailing land use is agriculture, which contributes to the diverse landscape character and distinctive features of the area. In recent years there has been an increasing emphasis on the diversification of farmland including rural tourism, retail (farm shop and tea rooms) and solar farms.

Guidelines

- Conserve the pastoral character of the borough and identify opportunities for the conversion of arable land back to permanent pasture in traditionally pastoral areas.

- Resist loss of field boundaries to retain irregular field patterns. Discourage amalgamation of fields and promote awareness of the Hedgerow Regulations.

Forestry and Woodland:

- 5.20. Historically, the Solihull countryside formed part of a huge area (Arden) of wood pasture, from the thirteenth century this comprised the deliberate preservation of woodland in Arden for cropping. It is also known that pollarding was used to prevent animals grazing the land. The Domesday Book indicates that 19% of Warwickshire was covered by woodland and that it was predominantly found in areas to the north of the county. Much of the woodland has now been cleared and the landscape character is predominantly agricultural across the Borough.
- 5.21. Today there are many mature hedgerow oaks, patches of ancient woodland and parks containing the remnants of wood pasture. The woodlands themselves range from 20th century plantations to species-rich ancient woodlands. Some of the woodlands contain important populations of lichens and fungi. Oak and ash wood with bracken, bramble and dog's mercury are also particularly distinctive.

Guidelines

- Individual oaks, veteran trees and ancient woodland should be preserved.
- New woodland planting should be compliant in design with the pattern and scale of the surrounding landscape.
- Broadleaved planting should be encouraged within new plantations and favour oak as the primary tree species.
- The removal of hedgerows, including those along footpaths, bridleways and woodland edges should be avoided and the management of hedgerows should be promoted.

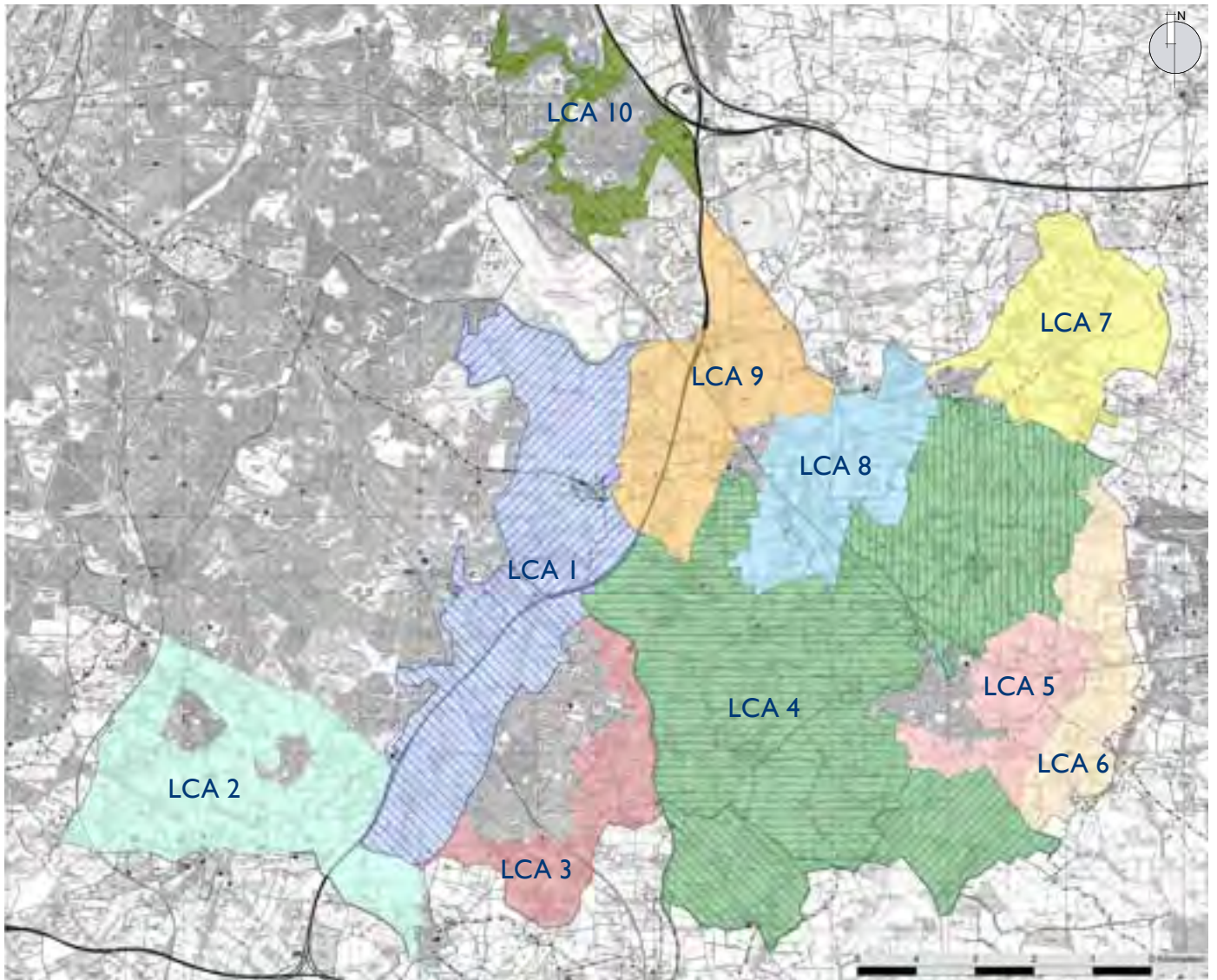
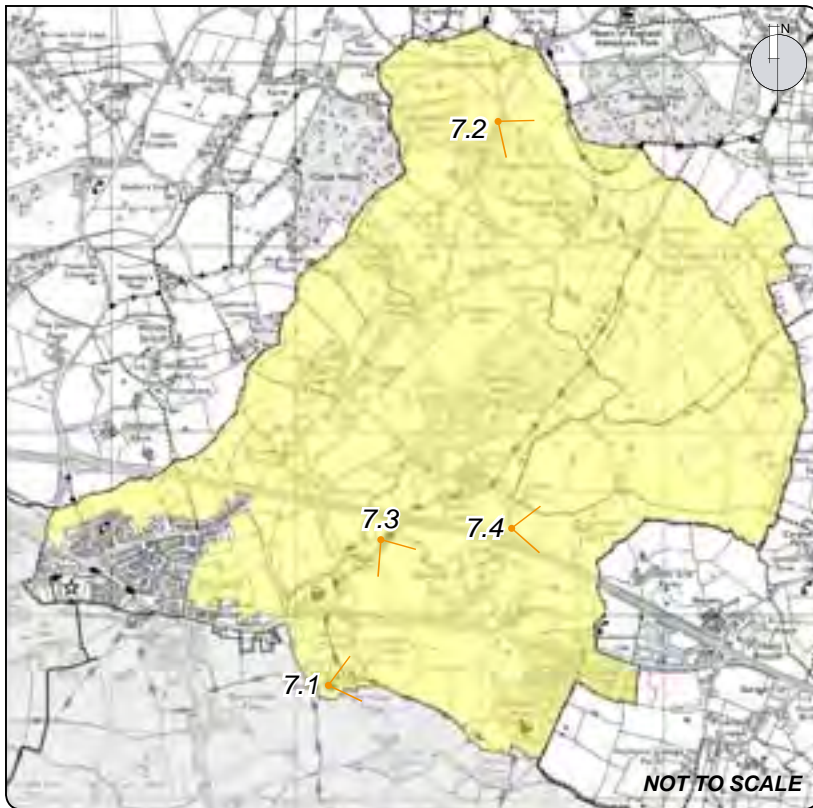


Figure 2: Solihull Borough Landscape Character Areas Map (Refer to Appendix D for a full-sized map.)



LCA
7

Northern Upland



Photograph 7.1:
The setting of Church Farm and St Laurence Church is an important part of the area's historic character.



Photograph 7.2:
Large woodland cover is common throughout and adds to the rural and wooded character.



Photograph 7.3:
The agricultural landscape comprises medium to large scale fields of an irregular pattern. Weak hedgerow structure is common despite a good contingent of mature trees.

Description:

This LCA covers an area of 8.15km² in the north east of the Borough, to the east of the village of Meriden. The landform is generally undulating and higher than the neighbouring character areas, allowing long views out to both the cities of Coventry and Birmingham.

Land use in the area is predominantly agricultural with some residential interspersed with large areas covered by woodland. Horticulture is also evident within this LCA with the presence of riding schools that serve the high demand for recreation in the area. Strong hedgerow structure and narrow roads are characteristic with high hedgerows bordering single track lanes. Good examples of green lanes can be found in the area such as Walsh Lane to the south-west of the area. The extensive woodland cover forms the backdrop of most views across the area and is an important landscape feature.

This area contains the Meriden Hill Conservation Area, the setting of which is particularly distinct and plays an important role in contributing to the wider character of the surrounding countryside. This area is relatively quieter than other northern parts of the Borough, however it isn't exempt from some road noise as the A45 traverses the area.

The main settlements in the area are the eastern edge of Meriden and Millisons Wood. A static caravan park is also present at Eaves Green in addition to a number of individual farmsteads that have not undergone residential conversion. Majority of the character area, with the exception of the two fields at the south-western edge, is designated as a mineral safeguard area for coal. A number of public footpaths including the long distance trails such the Heart of England and Coventry Way are present within this character area.

Key Characteristics:

Geology, soils and drainage:

- Slowly permeable clayey soils with slightly impeded drainage.
- Warwickshire Group of Siltstone and Sandstone with Subordinate Mudstone solid geology.

Landform and Drainage Pattern:

- This is an upland area forming a plateau ranging from 180m to 110m AOD.
- High point situated in the northern extent of the LCA near Meighs Wood/ Wood End Farm. Sloping towards the south-east and south-west. This area is comparatively higher than the surrounding Borough.
- Pickford Brook and reservoirs drain the LCA. Numerous field ponds are also present and considered to be characteristic of this area.

Land use, fields, boundaries, trees and wildlife:

- Land use is predominantly agriculture and residential interspersed by woodland blocks. The presence of horseculture is evident in this area through riding schools, bridleways and horse paddocks.
- Irregular field pattern ranges from medium to large scale fields.
- A strong hedgerow structure is present with most field boundaries being formed of hedgerows. However, open boundaries exist giving rise to the amalgamation of the fields which impacts negatively on the character of the area.
- Extensive woodland cover is present within this area. Meriden Shafts is the largest woodland located in the central extent of the LCA. The woodlands dominate the skyline in many views across the area.
- This is an area of good tree cover extending from hedgerow trees to woodlands and some scattered individual trees.
- There are three Local Wildlife Sites comprising Peastockings, Eaves Green Lane Hedgerow and Millison's Wood, which is also an ancient woodland and a Local Nature Reserve.

Settlement, built environment and communications:

- Millison's Wood is the main settlement in this area. However, though Meriden does lie within the area, it adjoins the boundary of the LCA to the south-west. A static caravan park is also present at Eaves Green. Individual farmsteads are also scattered across the area.
- Northern part predominantly wooded & was more wooded, surrounding fields are assarts with enclosures dating to late medieval period.
- The Meriden Hill Conservation Area, located at the southern boundary is a key feature. The Moated site at Marlbrook Hall Farm and Churchyard Cross in St Laurence's are both Scheduled Monuments and the setting of these are important to the character of the surrounding landscape.
- A majority of the listed buildings are concentrated within the Meriden Hill Conservation Area and also across the western extent of the LCA including Walsh Hall, a Grade II* listing.
- The wider landscape setting of Church Farm is distinct and marked by its tranquil nature, red boundary walls and single track lanes.
- The A45 cuts across the area from east to west just north of Meriden and is noticeable in the landscape due to road noise particularly around Eaves Green.
- Eaves Green caravan park is a detracting feature in some views across the area.
- Narrow single track roads with high bracken hedgerows are characteristic of this area. Views from these minor roads are generally short and contained.
- Red brick and render buildings with tiled roofs are the dominant vernacular features of the area.
- Long views are afforded across the LCA towards Coventry and Birmingham from Fillongley Road.
- This area is subject to air traffic noise from the Birmingham International Airport situated further to the west.
- A number of public footpaths exist in the LCA including long distance trails forming part of the Heart of England and Coventry Way.

Sensitivities and Pressures:

- Neglect and potential loss of ancient woodland will impact the character of the area.
- The straight edges of the A45 corridor to the north of the LCA are insensitive to the irregular field pattern of the area.
- The landscape contains many scattered buildings and has limited capacity to accept additional built development without detriment to landscape character through coalescence.
- Pressure for barn conversions, increasing domestic influence, development of modern farm buildings and additional farm dwellings are evident in this area.
- Loss of biodiversity through intensive farming and land management.
- Decline in frequency of hedgerow trees due to neglect and lack of replacement.
- Pressure for mineral search.

**Photograph 7.4:**

The area is predominantly agricultural with woodland blocks and field boundary trees. From Showell Lane there are long distance views towards Coventry. Elsewhere within the LCA, Birmingham can be seen on the distant horizon.

Guidelines:

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

- Encourage appropriate management to retain the strong hedgerow structure and the planting of individual trees along field boundaries particularly in close proximity to the A45. Tree planting in the vicinity of Meriden is also important to its setting and approaches.
- Resist further loss of field boundaries to retain the irregular field pattern in the north west of the area. Discourage the amalgamation of fields and promote awareness of the Hedgerow Regulations. Refer to the Habitat Biodiversity Audit for further detail.
- Promote proactive management of existing woodland in accordance with the Solihull Woodland Strategy.
- Create links between existing woodland following green lanes and footpaths and enhance nature conservation assets to fit with the Solihull Green Infrastructure Study.
- Where new buildings are required they should be located in association with existing farmsteads and settlement across the area and located so as not to require new access arrangements and subject to no adverse effect on the historic character.
- Protect the long views out towards Coventry and Birmingham.
- Conserve pastoral character and identify opportunities for conversion of arable land back to pasture.

Aim: To promote understanding of the heritage features in the area and their contribution to landscape character.

- Protect the landscape setting of the Meriden Hill Conservation Area and the Meriden Green Conservation Area and resist development that would impact upon the character of the scattered farmsteads and listed buildings across the LCA.
- Protect ancient woodland and develop strategy for proactive management and enhancement in accordance with the Solihull Woodland Strategy.
- Protect the landscape setting of the River Blythe, which is a key feature of the area.
- Identify further historic and archaeological features suitable for scheduling and explore the potential to use as an

educational resource.

Aim: To integrate the A45 corridor and other large scale development in the landscape and reduce its visual impact.

- Support planting along the corridor of native species appropriate to the character of the area. Linear planting along its length should be avoided that would accentuate the roads presence in the landscape.
- Promote the management of roadside tree planting and links with woodland in the surrounding countryside to improve integration of the A45 corridor in the landscape.
- Design at the settlement edge requires high quality approach and the use of appropriate materials to maintain the distinctiveness of the area.
- New development should avoid large scale encroachment to respect the scattered nature of settlement beyond the edge of Meriden.

Aim: To manage access for recreation at the settlement edge:

- Survey how walkers use the area to improve the safety and enjoyment of the countryside particularly around Eaves Green.
- Promote the enhancement of the footpath network and its contribution to landscape character and appreciation.
- Explore opportunities to improve public enjoyment of the

area, through access agreements following appropriate routes, that would cause minimal disturbance.

Overall Landscape Sensitivity:

Landscape Character Sensitivity:

- The Landscape Character Sensitivity of this LCA is considered to be **High**.
- This is an attractive landscape with a strong 'sense of place', distinct landscape features including extensive woodland cover, narrow lanes and high hedgerows that create a harmonious and unified landscape. Overall, the landscape is in very good condition. There are a few detracting features such as communication masts and the caravan park at Eaves Green.

Visual Sensitivity:

- The Visual Sensitivity of this LCA is considered to be **Medium**.
- The general visibility in this LCA consists of long to medium distance views that are elevated, fragmented and contained, in parts shallow with a horizontal orientation. Strong tree cover forms the backdrop in many views across the area.

Views to the cities of Coventry and Birmingham are a key feature of this area. There is a strong relationship with the Conservation Area at Meriden Hill to the south of the LCA.

Table 25: Overall Sensitivity for LCA 7 – Northern Upland: High

Landscape Character Sensitivity
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		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

woodlands along with the unique landform contribute towards the local distinctiveness of this area. The value of the area is increased by the presence of the two long distance trails passing through the centre of the LCA.

Landscape Capacity:

- Consistent with current guidance, it is not possible to establish a definitive baseline sensitivity to change without having details of a given development 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.
- Being of *High* overall landscape sensitivity and *Medium* landscape value, this suggests that the LCA would typically have an overall **Very Low** landscape capacity to accommodate new development.
- The LCA covers large areas of ancient woodland and local wildlife sites. It is an area that is distinctly rural with limited development.
- This area would be able to accommodate new development but only in very restricted areas, which would need to be of an appropriate type, of small scale and form, in keeping with the existing character and features of the area. Any

Landscape Value:

- The value of this character area is considered to be **Medium**.
- This is a locally distinctive landscape containing valued characteristics. The Meriden Hill Conservation Area along with several listed buildings provide historical and cultural associations within the area. Local Wildlife Sites, ancient

Assessment of Overall Landscape Sensitivity and Landscape Value

- A.17. Following the identification of the Landscape Character Areas and noting the description of existing elements, features, characteristics, character and quality within the study area, a further analysis of each LCA was undertaken to determine the following:
- Overall Landscape Sensitivity – derived from combining Landscape Character Sensitivity and Visual Sensitivity;
 - Landscape Value – derived largely from designated landscape or features and local associations; and
 - Landscape Capacity – derived from combining the results of the Overall Landscape Sensitivity with the defined Landscape Value.

Overall Landscape Sensitivity

- A.18. Overall Landscape Sensitivity is defined as the sensitivity of the landscape and does not take into account or represent any type of change that may be under consideration. Overall Landscape Sensitivity is made up of essentially two components:
- Landscape Character Sensitivity; and
 - Visual Sensitivity.

Landscape Character Sensitivity

- A.19. Landscape Character Sensitivity is defined as the sensitivity of the landscape resource which includes individual elements/ features contributing to the character and the character as a whole. Landscape Character Sensitivity is judged on certain factors including:
- Natural Factors;
 - Cultural Factors;
 - Landscape Quality; and
 - Aesthetic Factors.
- A.20. Criteria used to assess the Landscape Character Sensitivity is set out in Table A.1.

Table A. I: Landscape Character Sensitivity Criteria

Landscape Character Sensitivity	Classification Criteria	
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attractive landscape with a sense of place and national/ regional recognition or strong local connection to place. • Distinctive structure, characteristic patterns, harmonious relationship between landform and land cover. • Unified landscape promotes social interaction with high levels of activity and few conflicts between traffic and pedestrian movements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate land management with limited scope to improve and in very good landscape condition. • Evident use of good quality locally characteristic materials and detailing. • Distinct features worthy of conservation. • A few detracting features.
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typical and unremarkable landscape, however with local connection to place. • Obvious structure, characteristic patterns, balanced combination of landform and land cover. • Opportunities for social interaction limited to specific 'community' locations leading to an interrupted landscape. • Traffic circulation often controls pedestrian movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope to improve land management. • Good landscape condition. • Some areas of local distinctiveness, elsewhere widespread use of standard materials and detailing. • Remnant distinctive features may no longer be in context. • Some detracting features.
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monotonous / uniform landscape in poor condition or decline with little or no obvious local connection to place. • Indistinct structure and characteristic patterns often masked by mixed land use creating an unbalanced relationship between landform and land cover. • Fragmented landscape with poor boundary definition and arbitrary 'disowned' space. • Development is often unsympathetic in scale. • Few opportunities for social interaction, unwelcoming or even threatening. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport infrastructure may inhibit or severely constrain pedestrian movement. • Lack of management has resulted in degradation. • Fair landscape condition. • Derelict land requiring treatment. • Inappropriate use of materials, poorly located infrastructure or use of materials with a limited life span. • Several detracting features.
Very Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broken and degraded landscape in poor condition with no sense of place. • Degraded structure/ characteristic patterns masked by mixed land use. • Unbalanced relationship between landform and land cover. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of land management has resulted in degradation and in poor landscape condition. • Many detracting features.

Visual Sensitivity

A.21. Visual Sensitivity is the assessment of a combination of factors including the type and nature of the view, visibility, the number and nature of people (visual receptors) who may experience the landscape visually.

A.22. The classification criteria for Visual Sensitivity is set out in Table A.2:

Table A.2: Visual Sensitivity Criteria

Visual Sensitivity	Classification Criteria
High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationship with existing urban built form: <i>Very strong</i> Prevention of coalescence: <i>Very important</i> Scope to mitigate development: <i>Wide range of opportunities</i> Openness to public & private views: <i>Long distance; Elevated/ high level/ panoramic (360 degrees); Wide (180 degrees); Deep; Downwards.</i>
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationship with existing urban built form: <i>Strong</i> Prevention of coalescence: <i>Important</i> Scope to mitigate development: <i>Some opportunities</i> Openness to public & private views: <i>Medium distance; Medium level; Framed (90 degrees); Contained (45 degrees); Shallow; Horizontal.</i>
Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationship with existing urban built form: <i>Weak</i> Prevention of coalescence: <i>Minor role</i> Scope to mitigate development: <i>Little opportunity</i> Openness to public & private views: <i>Short distance; Low level; Fragmented; Upwards.</i>
Very Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationship with existing urban built form: <i>None</i> Prevention of coalescence: <i>Not important</i> Scope to mitigate development: <i>No opportunity</i> Openness to public & private views: <i>Limited or no view.</i>

Overall Landscape Sensitivity

A.23. The two principal criteria, Landscape Character Sensitivity and Visual Sensitivity, are combined and set out within Table A.3 which is used to establish the classification of the Overall Landscape Sensitivity of each Landscape Character Area.

Table A.3: Overall Landscape Sensitivity Criteria

		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

A.24. The likely value of the character areas is based on which users may value the areas, and where relevant, any statutory, non-statutory or local plan designations.

A.25. Landscape value is associated with a recognisable and demonstrable use, and can relate not only to historic and cultural importance, but also social, recreational and community value. The presence of combinations of attributes along with scale of importance should be considered when ascribing the landscape value.

A.26. The factors and criteria influencing the value of the landscape are set out in Table A.4

Table A.4: Landscape Value

Landscape Value	Geographical Scale of Importance	Classification Criteria	Typical Example
High	National / Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landscape or element therein of distinctive value, rich cultural associations and a recognised high level of importance. Limited potential for substitution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Parks Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Listed Buildings Scheduled Monuments
Medium	Regional / District / Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locally distinctive landscape or element therein of moderately valued characteristics, or moderately valued components. Some potential for substitution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designated areas by local authorities e.g. special landscape areas and Conservation Areas Undesignated but value expressed through historical or cultural associations or through demonstrable use.
Low	District / Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landscape or element therein similar to many other areas with little remaining indication of local distinctiveness. Low importance and rarity. High potential for improvements/substitution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remnant landscape features may remain but are degraded or out of context. Potential for enhancement. Commercial, industrial or disused area providing little value to the community or residents
Very Low	Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landscape or element therein of very low importance, which may include damaged or derelict landscape. Would benefit from improvements/substitution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Areas identified for recovery, often vandalised and rarely used by the community.

Landscape Capacity

- A.27. Landscape Capacity is defined as the ability of a landscape to accommodate varying amounts of change or development of a specific type without changing or having significant effects on the overall character and visual amenity of the area. It is generally derived from combining the levels assigned to each area for Overall Landscape Sensitivity and for Landscape Value, with a consideration as to the type of development.
- A.28. The implication of the definition outlined above, and in line with current guidance, capacity studies must be site and development specific in order to be relevant and of use within development planning. The ability of the individual landscape character areas to accommodate change (sensitivity to change and landscape capacity) requires a more detailed assessment focused on site allocations and descriptions of expected development types.
- A.29. The distinct characteristics or features of an area can have a varying sensitivity to change. This will depend on the nature of the change proposed and in particular, how suitable or characteristic the proposed change is compared to the receiving landscape. This assessment therefore will only be able to suggest a general assessment of the 'Landscape Capacity' based on the matrix set out in Table A.5. This general scoring will need to be reviewed when details of specific development proposals are known for specific sites.

Table A.5: Landscape Capacity Rating

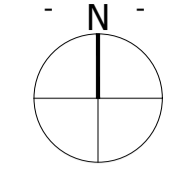
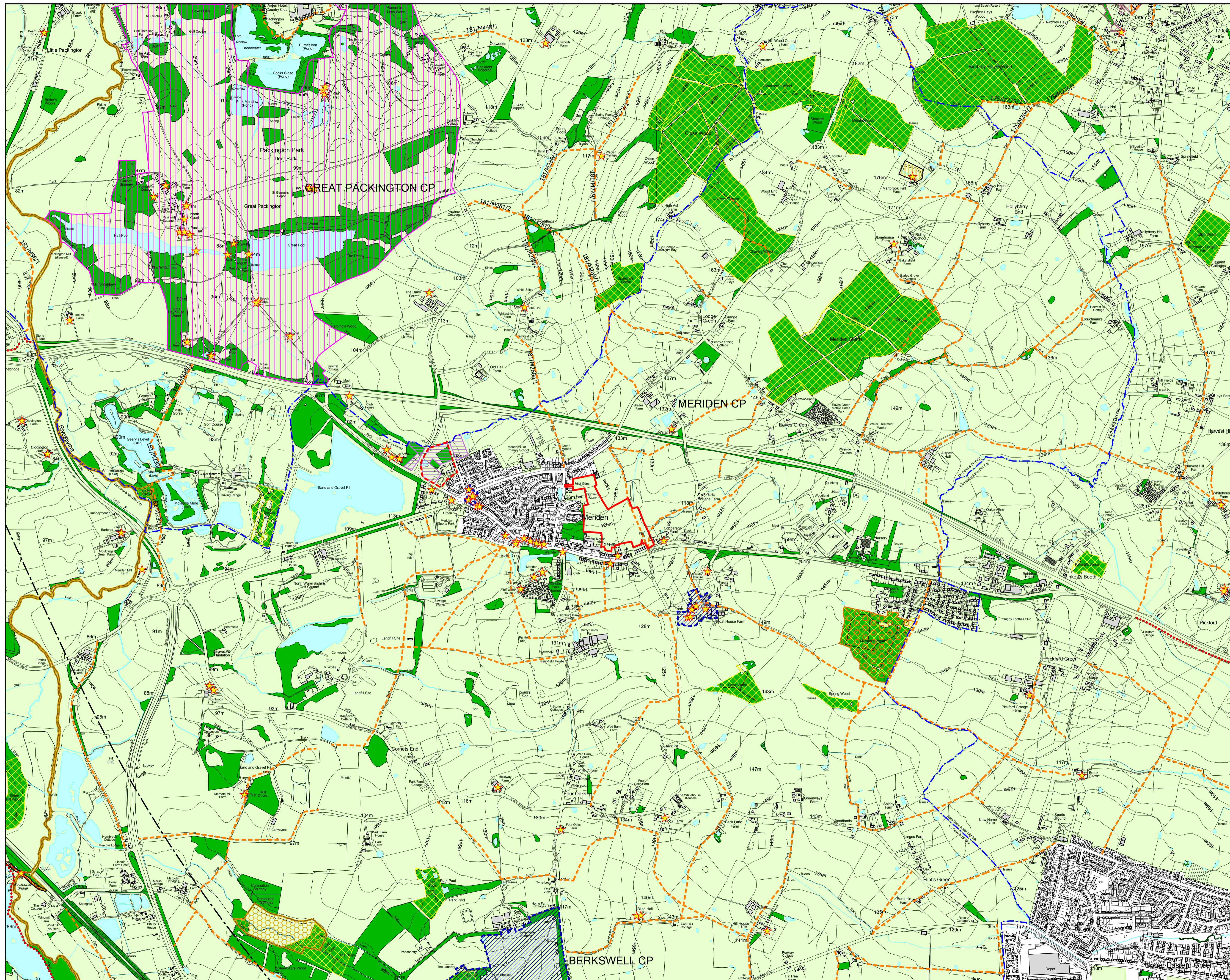
		Overall Landscape Sensitivity			
		High	Medium	Low	Very Low
Landscape Value	High	Very Low/ None	Very Low	Low	Medium
	Medium	Very Low	Low	Low	Medium
	Low	Low	Low	Medium	High
	Very Low	Medium	Medium	Medium	High

Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment

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Prepared by





Legend

- Site Boundary
- Proposed Allocation Site 10
- Ancient Woodland #
- Existing Woodlands, Copses and Tree Belts ^
- Existing Water Courses and Features ^
- Contours/Spot Heights (Metres AOD) ^
- Public Rights of Way **/***
- ★ Listed Buildings ~
- Conservation Area ~~~
- Registered Parks and Gardens ~
- Scheduled Monument ~
- Green Belt ^^
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest #
- Local Nature Reserve #
- HS2 Proposed Route ++
- Local Planning Authority Boundary
- Potential Local Wildlife Site (SP28G4 Fields) ##

Sources:
 * GIS Mapping
 # Natural England GIS Data Set
 - Historic England National Monument Record GIS Data Set
 + Worcestershire County Council Historic GIS Data and Spatial Metropolitan Borough Council Walking and Cycling Map
 ~ GIS Engineers
 + Sustrans National Cycle Network GIS Data
 Department for Communities and Local Government GIS Data
 ++ High Speed Two (HS2) Limited GIS Data
 --- Southall Metropolitan Borough Council Online Maps
 ## Worcestershire, Coventry and Southall Green Infrastructure Interactive Map

Data collated for constraints and analysis mapping is based on publicly available sources at the time of preparation inserted using the British National Grid and may itself not be accurate. Barton Willmore shall not be liable for the accuracy of data derived from external sources.

FIGURE 1

Project
**Land North of Main Road
 Meriden**

Drawing Title
Site Context Plan

Date	Scale	Drawn by	Check by
25.02.2019	1:10,000 @A1 1:20,000 @A3	SS	MDC-DM
Project No	Drawing No	Revision	
27878	LN-LP-101	-	



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