

**LAND WEST OF
RUMBUSH LANE
TIDBURY GREEN
SOLIHULL**

VISION DOCUMENT | MARCH 2018





Rainier Developments is a privately owned land and development company operating across the UK. With extensive experience within our executive team, chaired by Eric Grove, we work collaboratively with landowners and key stakeholders to bring forward development proposals to benefit all involved.

Our experience and track record is across the whole cycle of the development process from early engagement with the local community through to delivery.

This approach as a land promoter, aided by our carefully selected external consultants, allows us to ensure that each development is brought forward in a sustainable manner with the overriding aim of delivering much needed new housing to help local authorities meet their housing requirements.

The land on the edge of Tidbury Green, adjoining the Bellway Homes scheme currently under construction, is being promoted by Rainier Developments as an extension to the village.

Vision Statement

The Vision for the site is to create a high quality development of new homes, including affordable, that integrate with Tidbury Green and reflect its leafy character.

The scheme will sit amongst the existing trees and hedgerows, which will be retained and strengthened. There will be a tree lined street running through the scheme, tying together the different parcels of land.

Each boundary will front onto vegetation with trees, hedgerows and open space, adding further to its character. The new homes will also have front gardens, again in keeping with the village's character.

The homes are envisaged as having a traditional character with the majority at two storeys high, and pitched roofs. The materials will reflect those elsewhere in the village.

The new homes will connect into their surroundings, including the adjoining Bellway Homes scheme currently under construction, and pedestrian/cycle links into the village centre.

A combined assessment of the landscape character, the local views and the Green Belt has resulted in a new area of woodland planting being established along the north-eastern boundary to retain visual separation of Tidbury Green and Dickens Heath, create a more defensible boundary to the edge of Tidbury Green and create a new area of woodland habitat which will connect to the existing areas of woodland within the site.



Figure 1. Bird's Eye View of Site looking north (land to left is Bellway Homes scheme under construction)

1. Introduction

Background

This Vision Document has been prepared to promote land west of Rumbush Lane, Tidbury Green for residential development. The promotion is in the context of the growing need for homes in the area and the emerging Local Plan Review.

The document has also been prepared to begin the engagement process and to receive feedback regarding the development proposals. These are at a very early stage and the Concept Masterplan has been prepared to show the initial design thinking and to demonstrate the site's suitability in meeting the identified housing needs.

Site Description

Tidbury Green lies to the southeast of Drakes Cross around halfway between the larger villages of Dickens Heath and Wythall (figure 3).

Tidbury Green is a small settlement with a population of 1,130 (2011 Census), with most homes spread out along and within three roads: Norton Lane, Lowbrook Lane and Fulford Hall Road. There are a number of houses along the north side of Norton Lane spreading out eastwards.

The site is located on the eastern side of Tidbury Green, between the back gardens of the houses along Norton Lane and the Cricket Ground/Football Pitch (figure 2). It is L-shaped and extends to 11.18ha (27.64ac). The site comprises part of Big Dickens' Wood, which extends out to the north, and three fields in agricultural use, all enclosed by mature trees and hedgerows.

The eastern boundary is defined by Rumbush Lane beyond which lies mostly fields. There are two houses located around the eastern corner of the site along with a sports club building. To the north lies sports pitches and a cricket ground together with Big Dickens' Wood. Tidbury Green School and Nursery lies to the northeast.

The land to the west of the site is currently being developed for housing. In 2015, Bellway Homes obtained planning permission for 190 dwellings on the site.

The southwestern boundary includes an area of open space proposed as part of the Bellway scheme. The southern boundary is defined by a small wooded area beyond which lies the gardens of the houses along Norton Lane.



Figure 2. Bird's Eye View of site and surroundings

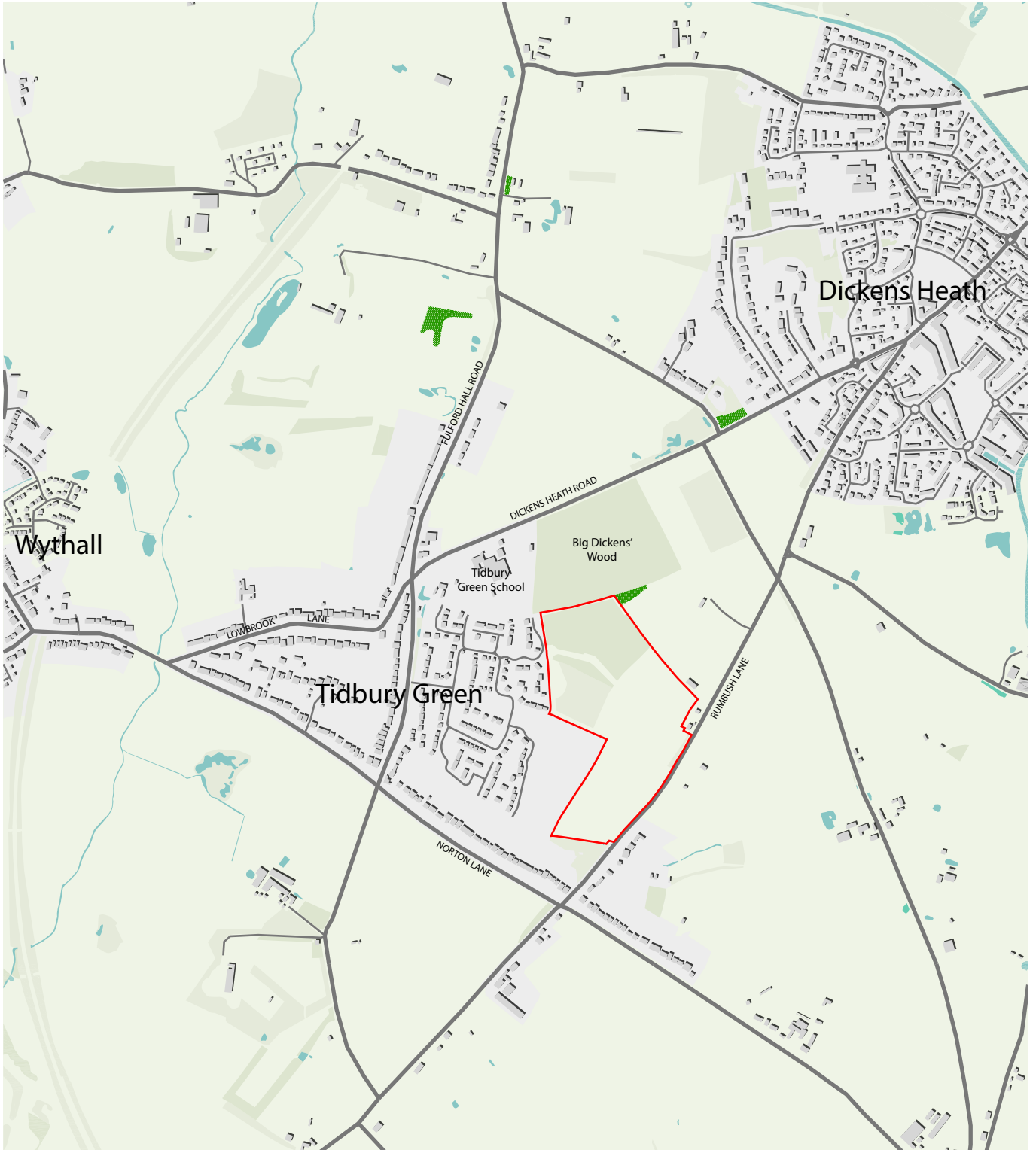


Figure 3. Site Plan

2. Planning Policy Context

Development Plan

With respect to Tidbury Green, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council's Development Plan comprises the Solihull Local Plan (adopted 3rd December 2013). There is no Neighbourhood Plan affecting the site.

The Solihull Local Plan sets out the strategic approach to development within Solihull over the period 2011 to 2028, including the provision of 3,960 net additional homes to deliver 11,000 additional homes overall (500 dwellings per annum).

Shortly after its adoption, the Plan was subject to a successful legal challenge, which also resulted in two sites in Tidbury Green being removed from the Green Belt. Relevant sections of the Plan relating to housing numbers were also deleted and were remitted to the Council. This is the subject to the Local Plan Review.

Within the Plan, Tidbury Green is identified as a Rural Area within the Green Belt, with no specific allocations identified.

In the SHLAA Site Assessments (September 2012), the site was assessed (alongside the Bellway site to the west) as one site (reference 117).

Emerging Policy

SMBC are currently undertaking a Local Plan Review, with the most recent draft having been consulted on in January 2017. Within this, Tidbury Green continues to be identified as a Rural Area, with no additional land released from the Green Belt around the village. There are a number of policies carried forward from the current Plan which are proposed to remain relevant, such as the following:

- P10 - Natural Environment
- P16 - Conservation of Heritage Assets & Local Distinctiveness
- P17 - Countryside and Green Belt

The next stage of the Local Plan has been delayed for a number of reasons, including the timing of the Government's September 2017 consultation on standardised methodology for calculating housing need; and the delay in the publication of the Greater Birmingham Housing Market Area (HMA) - Strategic Growth Study – which has since been released, see below.

The most recent draft Plan identifies a need to allocate land for at least 6,522 net additional homes to ensure the overall housing need of 15,029 additional homes is delivered in the period 2014-2033 (791 dwellings per annum).

The latest evidence on potential housing supply is the November 2016 SHELAA. Within this, 167 sites were assessed for housing (after removing duplicates), which could potentially yield around 31,085 dwellings. Of this theoretical yield, it concludes that the outstanding commitments and windfall sites are unable to meet the dwelling target for the first five years of the plan and it will be necessary for Green Belt sites to be released. The same applies for 10 year and 17 year dwelling requirements. Within the Executive Summary it states:

"It is important to emphasise that 150 of the 167 sites assessed in the SHELAA for housing are either wholly or predominantly contained within the currently designated Green Belt. If theoretical supply from units within the Green Belt is removed from the assessment, only 1,090 units could be delivered from land which is currently not within the Green Belt.

On the basis of our assessment, it will therefore be necessary to release some Green Belt land to meet the Borough's housing requirements. The release of Green Belt land is beyond the scope of a SHELAA however and will need to be considered through the plan preparation process."

Whilst the site does not currently form part of this SHELAA, it will be submitted in March 2018, alongside this Vision Document and the other supporting information.

As established in the appeal decision for the adjacent Bellway site, Solihull's housing need is substantial and their affordable housing need is exceptionally high. It is also now accepted that Green Belt release is needed to meet Solihull's housing needs, as well as the unmet needs from Birmingham. As set out within this document, the site is well located to meet the housing needs of both Tidbury Green, the wider Borough and Birmingham – the dwellings will be just 20 minutes' walk from Wythall train station. The site, with mitigation, can be developed without reducing the ability of the remaining Green Belt to perform its function and without causing undue harm to the landscape. Given the above, and the lack of alternative non-Green Belt sites, we consider there are exceptional circumstances to justify the release of this site from the Green Belt.

The Birmingham HMA Strategic Growth Study provides suggestions on potential ways to increase supply throughout Solihull, including through increasing minimum densities, urban extensions and a potential new settlement around Balsall Common. These options will need to be tested through the Local Plan process, but it is important to note that the lead-in times for both new settlements and urban extensions are significant, and increasing densities will not always be achievable across the Borough. As such, sites such as this will be required to help provide deliverable housing supply within the early years of the Plan.

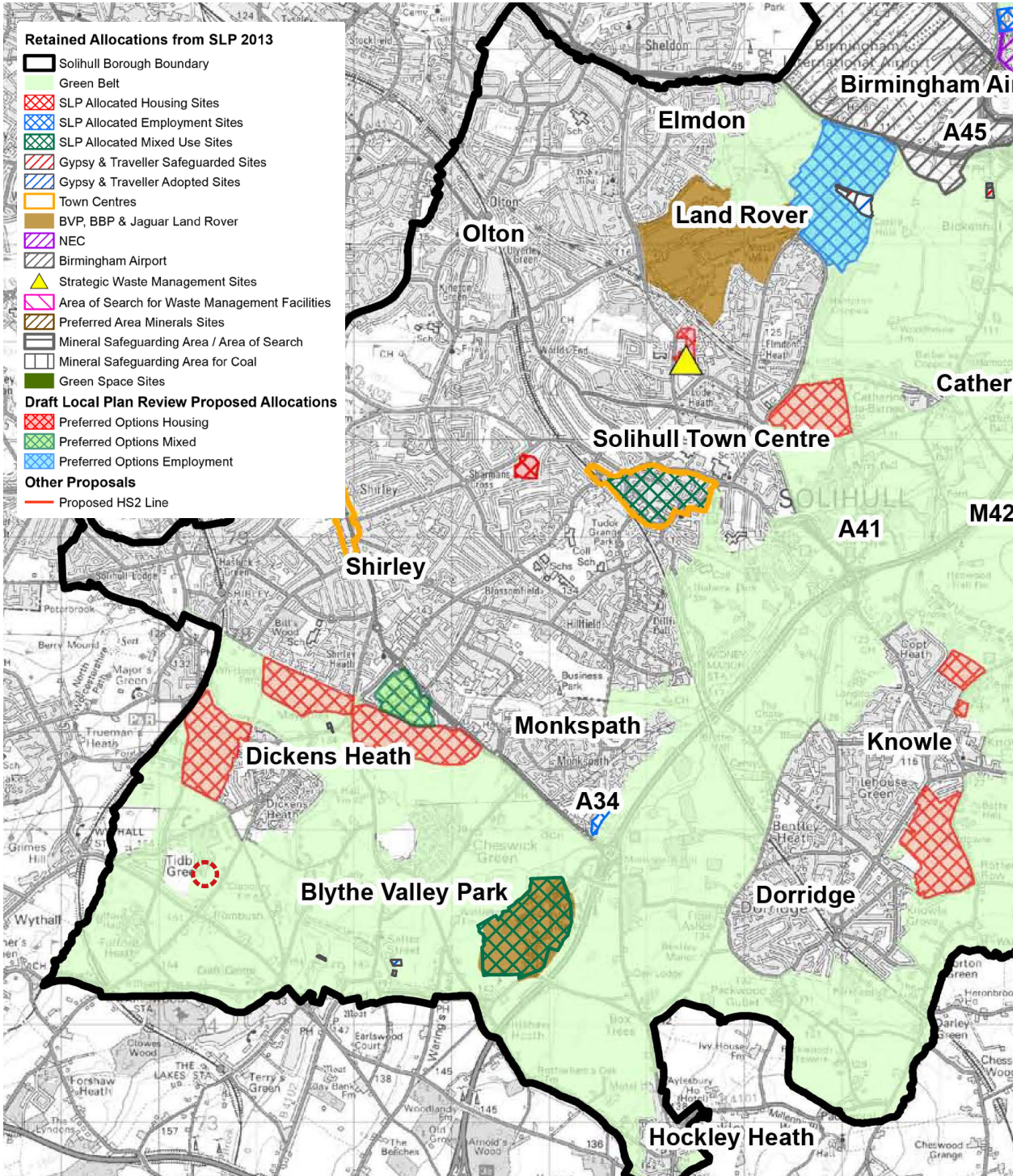


Figure 4. Extract from the Draft Local Plan Review Proposals Map (November 2016) - site shown by dashed red circle

3. Landscape and Visual

Landscape Context Plan

The Site is made up of three fields and an area of young woodland on the eastern edge of Tidbury Green. The woodland is young, dating back to the 1990s, but it is set within the wider structure of historic hedgerows and mature oak trees in the remainder of the Site. Guidance notes set out within the published landscape character assessments that cover the area include part of the historic Arden landscape. The small field pattern and strong network of trees, woodland and hedgerows are distinctive features of this area, as is the enclosed character of the landscape resulting from the vegetation.

The Site is not covered by any landscape designations but forms part of the West Midlands Green Belt. It is separated from the next village, Dickens Heath, by 350m of similar small fields and a cricket training ground and sports pitches.

Landscape Character

The Site is covered by Landscape Character Assessments at a national, regional and local level. Guidance notes for these assessments that cover the Site include:

- Protect the ancient landscape pattern of hedgerows and its wooded character.
- Protect and manage woodlands and create new woodland where possible.
- Create new green infrastructure and associated habitat.
- Protect existing trees and plant new trees where practicable.
- Prevent settlements from merging.
- Protect roadside hedgerows.

Visual Context

The Site is visually enclosed due to the strong sylvan character of the area, including the trees along the frequent roads and the numerous hedgerows with mature oaks. Views from the north are obscured by Big Dickens Wood and the vegetation surrounding Tidbury Green School. Views from the west are obscured by the new development and the existing built form of Tidbury Green. Views from the south are screened by the block of woodland at the southern boundary and the ribbon development along Norton and Rumbush Lanes.

Views into the Site are possible from Rumbush Lane, filtered through the tree belt at the northern end of the south-eastern boundary, and the hedgerow at the southern end. Heavily filtered views from the edge of Dickens Heath may be possible during winter months but there will likely be no intervisibility during summer months due to the layers of hedgerows with trees.

As a result, the Site is generally visually well-enclosed with immediate views possible from the adjacent Rumbush Lane and filtered winter views from the edge of Dickens Heath.

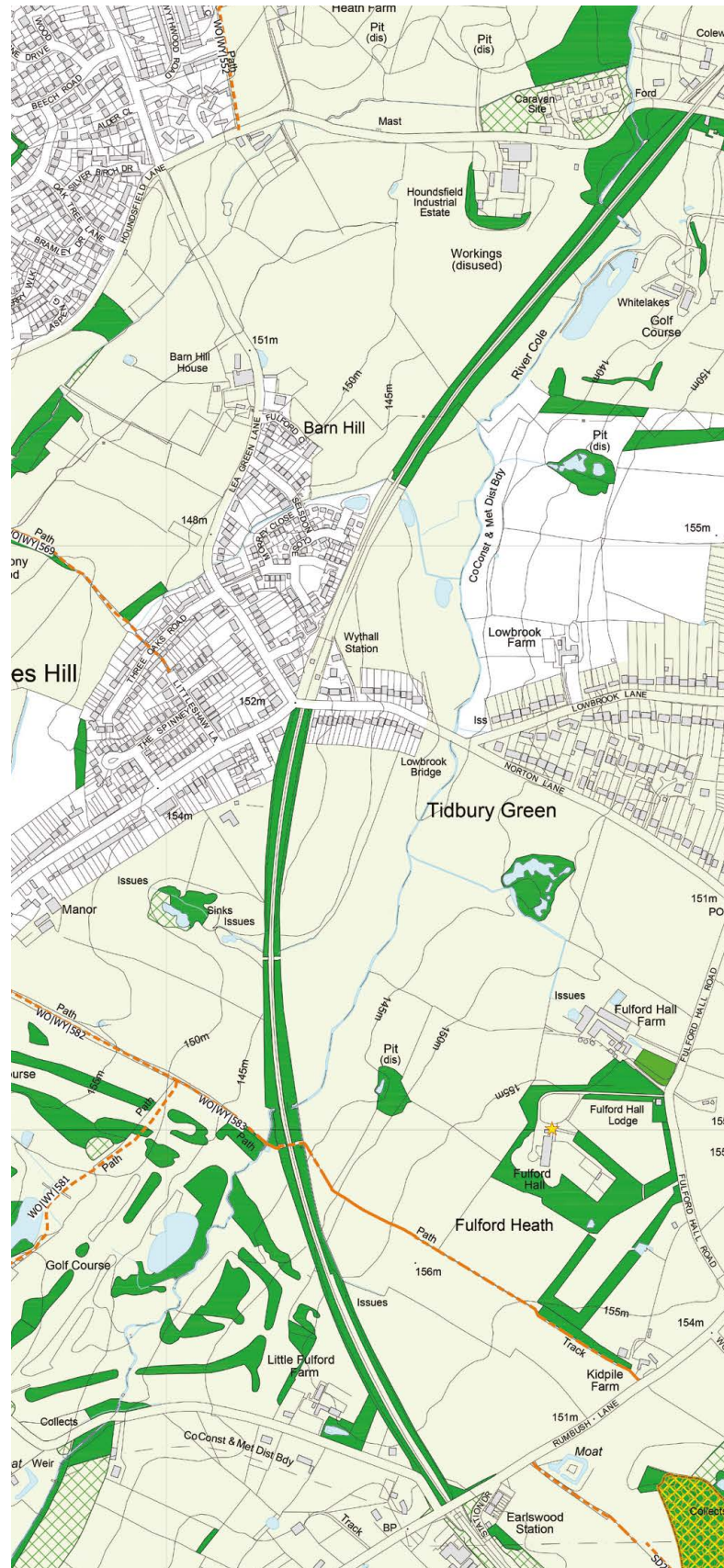


Figure 5. Site Context Plan (from Landscape and Visual Appraisal / Green Belt Review)

4. Local Character Summary

Introduction

Understanding a place is key to delivering integrated and responsive developments. This is not about copying the past, rather it means understanding and interpreting the context of a particular site.

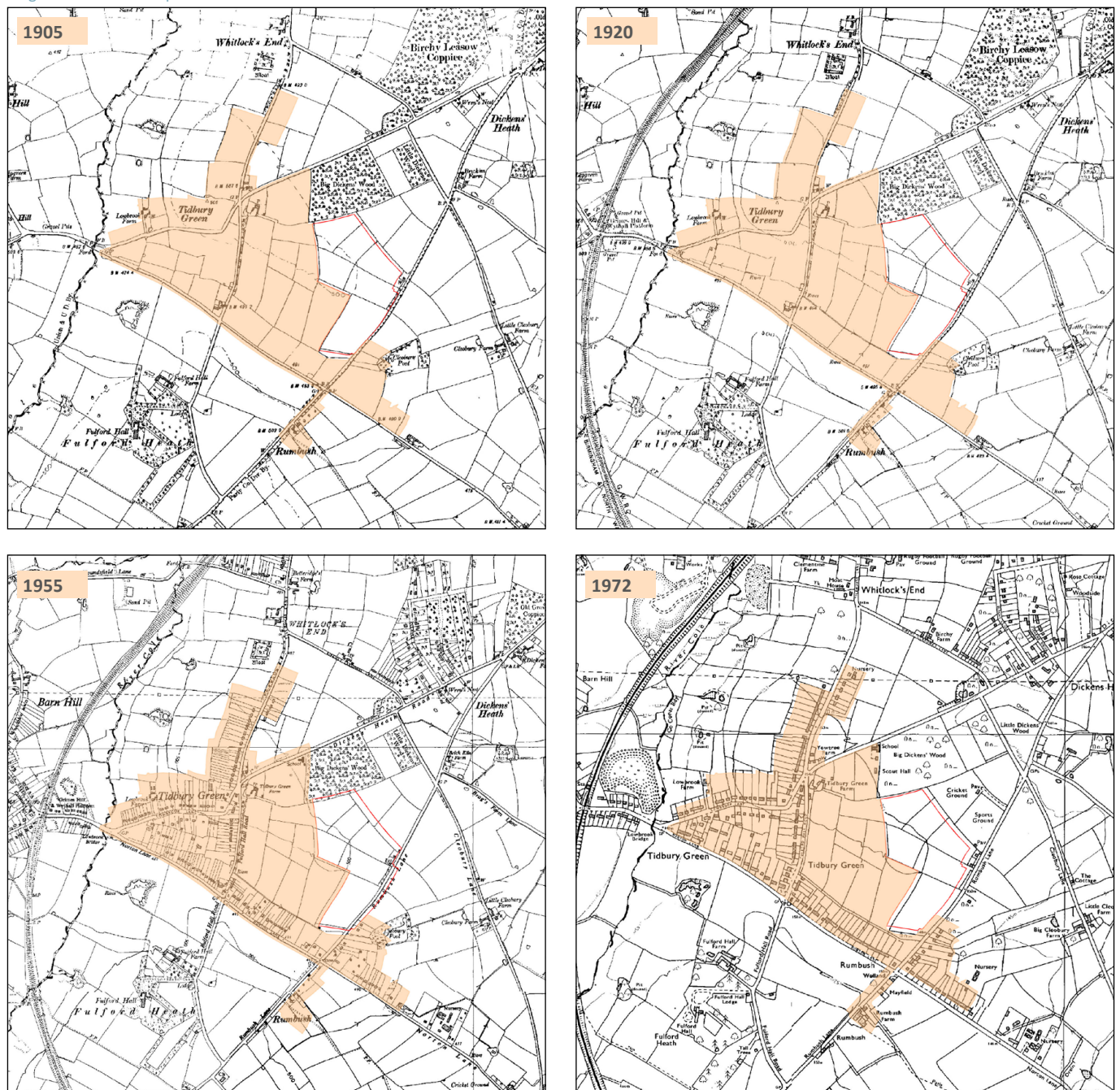
In order to inform the master plan, the historic development and character of Tidbury Green has been analysed. Whilst the results have informed the masterplan, the proposal is still at a very early stage. Further analysis and refinement would be necessary, including discussions with key stakeholders, such as the local planning authority.

Historic Growth

The historic maps below chart the growth of Tidbury Green over the past century. Each of the available maps show how the settlement has changed, including details about key features and place names. The existing settlement boundary has been superimposed on each to provide context.

Up until 1905, Tidbury Green comprised a small hamlet of buildings arranged around a crossroads. Big Dickens' Wood was present as was Fulford Hall to the south and Lowbrook Farm to the west. The historic street network, forming a triangle, still remains today.

Figure 6. Historic Maps



By 1921, the only significant change in the area was the addition of the railway to the west, including a platform (now Wythall Station). During the next 20-30 years, there was a significant amount of new houses built in the area. By 1955, houses extended out along all three sides of the triangle, and in the centre (some of these could be agricultural buildings), along Norton Lane to the east and northwards along Tilehouse Lane. There had also been development around the station and at Dickens Heath.

Only limited growth then took place up to 1972 but, by 2018, Tidbury Green had grown considerably (as had Dickens Heath), including infill development and the recent Bellway Scheme.

Settlement Pattern Today

The final map shows today's position. It is based upon the Ordnance Survey map from 2013 together with the housing currently being built by Bellway Homes.

The historical evolution of Tidbury Green has been influenced by a number of factors, particularly in terms of planning policy. The historic maps, including the one below, shows that the land off Rumbush Lane would be a sensible choice for development, should new homes be needed in the area.

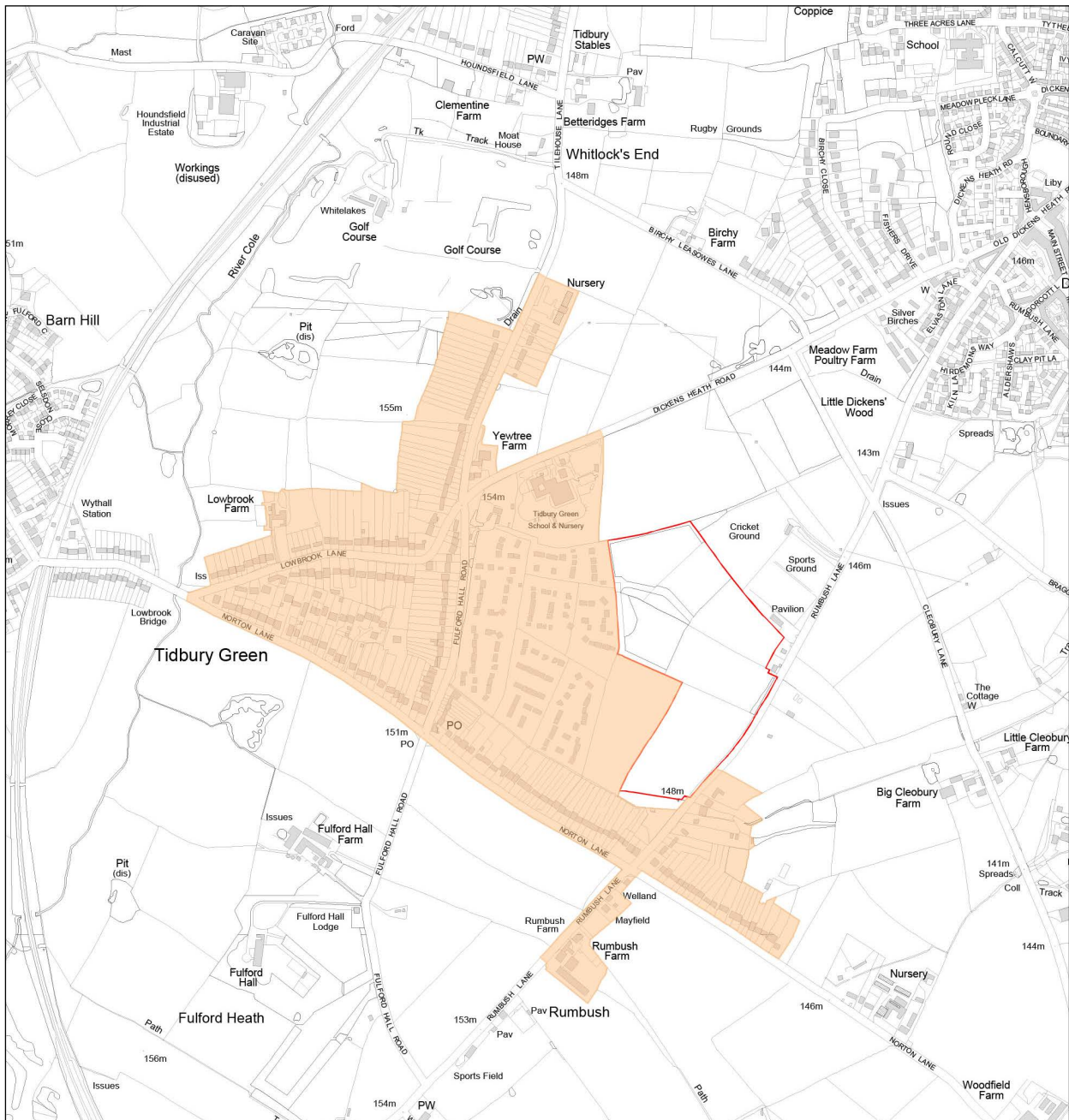


Figure 7. Tidbury Green Today (including Bellway development under construction)

Tidbury Green Today

Tidbury Green is a small, compact settlement with a predominantly leafy character. Buildings are spread out along the main roads with some infilling at the backs of the houses along Norton Lane (figure 8).

The village comprises mostly detached and semi-detached houses most of which are set back from the street with large front gardens. Some of the streets are tree-lined with grass verges. The streets and front gardens make a substantial contribution towards the village's sylvan character.

For the majority of streets, the buildings have consistent set backs with limited gaps between them, and long gardens at the rear (except more recent infill). Some of the original buildings have been altered, extended or rebuilt.

The built form tends to be traditional houses with pitched roofs, some of them hipped. Most are two storey but with some single storey, including bungalows. Details include gables, bay windows and dormers. Common materials include red brick and white render walls, whilst roofs tend to be built from red, brown or dark grey tiles. Doors and windows tend to be white timber or uPVC.

The images on the next page provide examples of the above.

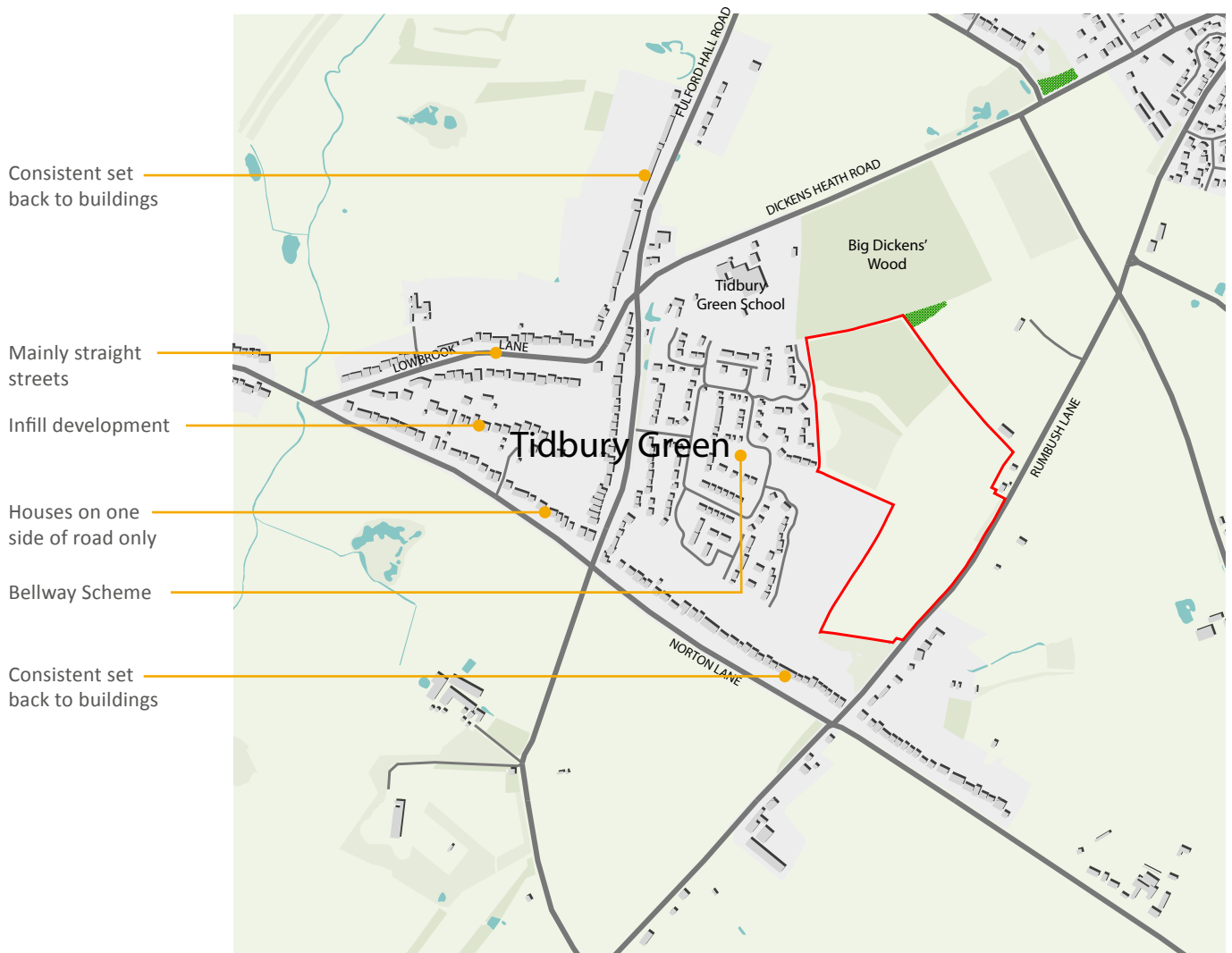


Figure 8. Site Plan of Site Context

STREETS

View west along Norton Lane. The mature trees and hedge along field boundary combine with large front gardens, creating leafy character.



A good example of trees and gardens contributing towards character. Verges are well maintained.



BUILT FORM



The most common form of development, circa 1930s comprising semi-detached houses, bay windows and hipped roofs, one with projecting gables.



Most properties have long front gardens, some of which have been turned into driveways/ parking areas, detracting from the street scene.

MATERIALS



Typical materials of dark red walls, some light render, together with dark grey tiles and white windows and doors.



Houses with more varied roofs, darker orange brick walls and different windows. The homes are still in keeping with the rest of the village.



Example of variety of built form but still set back from street with narrow gaps and attractive front gardens partially screening views and making differences in style less apparent.



Recent infill development along Fulford Hall Road. This shows how it fits into street scene in terms of set back, built form roof style and materials. The garden is more open but no doubt the planting will mature.



Recent example of infill or redevelopment with traditional style and some modern features, such as timber garages and larger dormers.



More recent infill development adopting the character of existing buildings but some more modern features, such as timber cladding and single storey bay windows.

5. Access, Movement and Facilities

Access and Movement

Highways

Rumbush Lane runs along the eastern boundary of the site, connecting with Rumbush/Norton Lane to the south and northwards into Dickens Heath, including its new local centre.

In terms of the strategic network, Norton Lane runs westwards through Wythall before joining the A435, a dual carriageway that connects onto Junction 3 of the M42 further south.

Public Transport

Bus service S3 runs along Fulford Hall Road to the west of the site. This is within an easy walking distance, whether via Rumbush Lane or through the adjoining Bellway development. The service, run by Diamond Buses, runs hourly (Mon-Fri) from Hockley Heath to Inkford Brook. It takes around 4 minutes to reach Dickens Heath and 1/2hr to arrive at Solihull town centre.

There is also a school service (823) operated by National Express West Midlands, which stops along Norton Lane.

Wythall train station is approximately 1.3km from the centre of the site and is within a practical walking or cycling distance. The station, operated by West Midlands Railway, provides direct services to a variety of locations, including stations at Birmingham Snow Hill, Birmingham Moor Street and Stratford-upon-Avon.

Walking and Cycling

Pedestrian links relate to the pavements running alongside one or both sides of the surrounding streets. Rumbush Lane currently has a pavement along part of its length. There could be an opportunity to extend this up to the site entrance, subject to land ownership and local highways standards. The public footpaths nearby are found to the south of Norton Lane and to the east, near the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal.

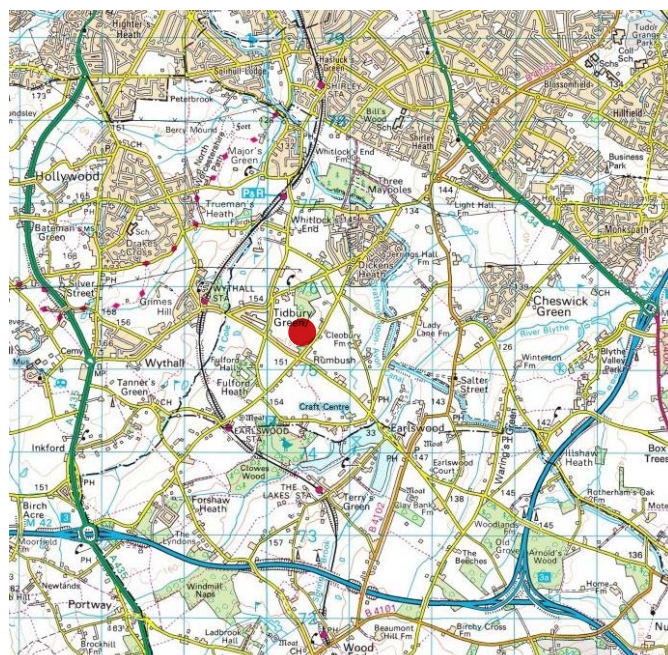


Figure 9. Strategic Network Plan (site location shown as red circle)

Facilities

Retail and Community Facilities

The nearest shops and communities facilities are located in the centre of Dickens Heath to the northeast. This is accessible by driving or cycling along Rumbush Lane, or by walking along Dickens Heath Lane which has a pavement on one side.

The local centre contains shops, including a small supermarket, restaurants, a library, pharmacy, a village hall and other community facilities.

Recreation and Open Space

The nearest sports facilities comprise a football club and cricket ground immediately to the northeast of the site whilst Woodbourne Sports Club lies around 800m away to the south.

Employment

The closest major employment hubs are located in Solihull, Blythe Valley and Fore Business Park and, via the train, in Birmingham city centre.

Education

The nearest primary school is Tidbury Green School and Nursery immediately northwest of the site. Other primary schools are located in Cheswick Green and Dickens Heath. The closest secondary school is Woodrush High School in Wythall. There are also schools and colleges in Solihull.



Tidbury Green School & Nursery

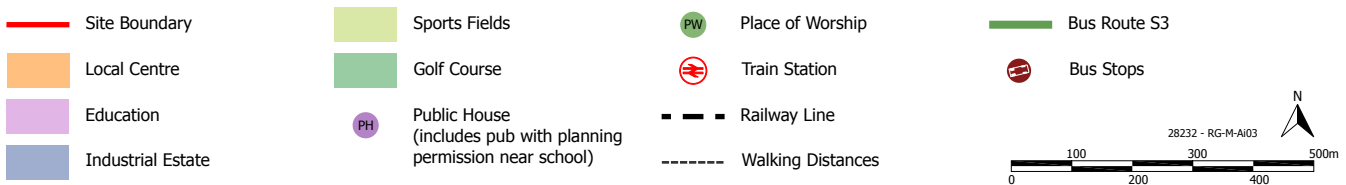
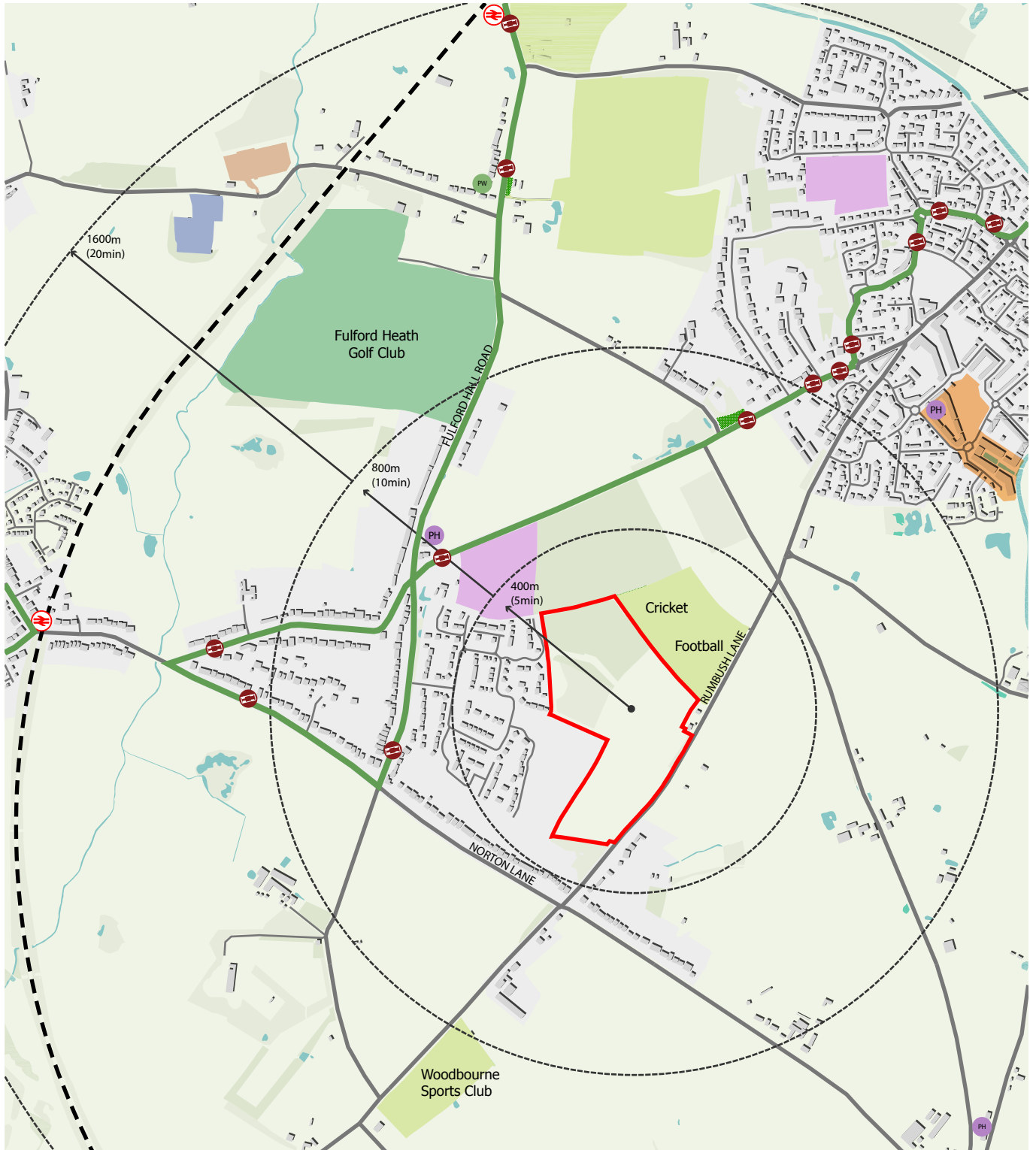


Figure 10. Services and Facilities Nearby

6. Site Analysis

Topography and Hydrology

The local landscape is broadly level, including the site. Gentle stream valleys run through the area but these are barely evident on the ground (figure 11). There is a ditch close to the southern boundary.

Woodland

The northwest part of the site comprises woodland and a more open area of scrubland, with fewer trees. To the north of this area lies Big Dickens' Wood. The development will need to consider the impact upon the woodland, such as a suitable buffer, as well as potentially improving access.

Other Trees and Vegetation

All of the field boundaries contain mature trees and hedges. These should, wherever possible, be protected and additional planting added.

Green Belt

Tidbury Green is washed over by Green Belt, with the exception of the Bellway Homes scheme to the immediate west and a further development site to the north-west of the village. In this area, Green Belt is intended to prevent sprawl, the encroachment of development into the countryside and the merging of towns. The visual analysis has shown that the Site is visually well-enclosed and well-contained by vegetation, meaning that development will not visually encroach into the wider countryside or physically extend the village further to the east than the existing development along Norton Lane.

The development will form a cohesively designed extension to Tidbury Green, contained by existing boundaries, and will, therefore, not comprise sprawl. The development will physically reduce the distance between Tidbury Green and Dickens Heath but these do not constitute 'towns' in the context of the national Green Belt policy. There is the opportunity to extend the existing areas of woodland within the Site to ensure that Tidbury Green remains to be not seen from the edge of Dickens Heath, preventing the visual merger of the two settlements. This, combined with the retention of the planting along Rumbush Lane will reduce the perception of merger of the settlements when travelling along Rumbush Lane.

Footpaths and Public Rights of Way

There are no public rights of way crossing the site or within the immediate surroundings. There is a footpath proposed within the Bellway scheme to the west and there is an opportunity to connect into it, improving links with Fulford Hall Road and the primary school.

Ecology

EDP, an environmental consultancy, has completed a Phase 1 ecological assessment of the site. This reviewed statutory designations (i.e. SACs, SPAs, Ramsar sites) and non-statutory sites (including Local Wildlife Sites, such as Big Dickens' Wood), habitats and species. The report concludes:

'Any planning application for development within the site would need to be accompanied by a full set of updated baseline information, together with an assessment of potential impacts and strategies to avoid, mitigate or compensate for such impacts. However, at this stage it is clear that there are no 'in principle' or other significant development constraints in ecological terms. Furthermore, the relatively low ecological importance attributed to the vast majority of the site presents an opportunity to deliver net biodiversity benefits in accordance with national and local planning policies.'

Surface Water Drainage

According to the Environment Agency website, the site does not lie within the flood plain (i.e. Flood Zones 2 or 3). Any development will need to provide suitable surface water flood attenuation to deal with the changes in surface water run off from the new homes and associated development. This could include swales, attenuation ponds and drainage runs. These would be integrated into the landscape and enhanced for ecological gain. The initial drainage assessment from Jubb informed the site analysis plan and illustrative masterplan.

Heritage

There are listed buildings to the northwest of the site, as highlighted in EDP's Archaeology and Heritage Briefing Note, but they are unlikely to form a constraint to the deliverability or capacity of the site. This is due to the distances involved and development between them and the site's western edge.

Access

There is an existing field access into the site from the southeast corner. The highways consultant has confirmed that the development can be accessed from Rumbush Lane. The proposed location is shown on the Constraints Plan although there is an opportunity to review this position as the design evolves, with input from key stakeholders.

Residential Amenity

Development will need to respect the residential amenity of the adjoining housing. This includes the houses along Rumbush Lane and Norton Lane. The latter have long gardens and are consequently set back further from the site which, in any case is separated from them by a small wood and area of open space.

The proposal will also take account of the Bellway scheme to the west, particularly the area of public open space that forms around half of the western boundary.

Utilities

The utilities in the local area will be assessed as part of the next stage, including any capacity issues. Any shortfalls would be addressed by providing new services or making contributions. At this stage, it is assumed that there are no services crossing the site. The pumping station next to the southeast corner of the site will be taken into account.

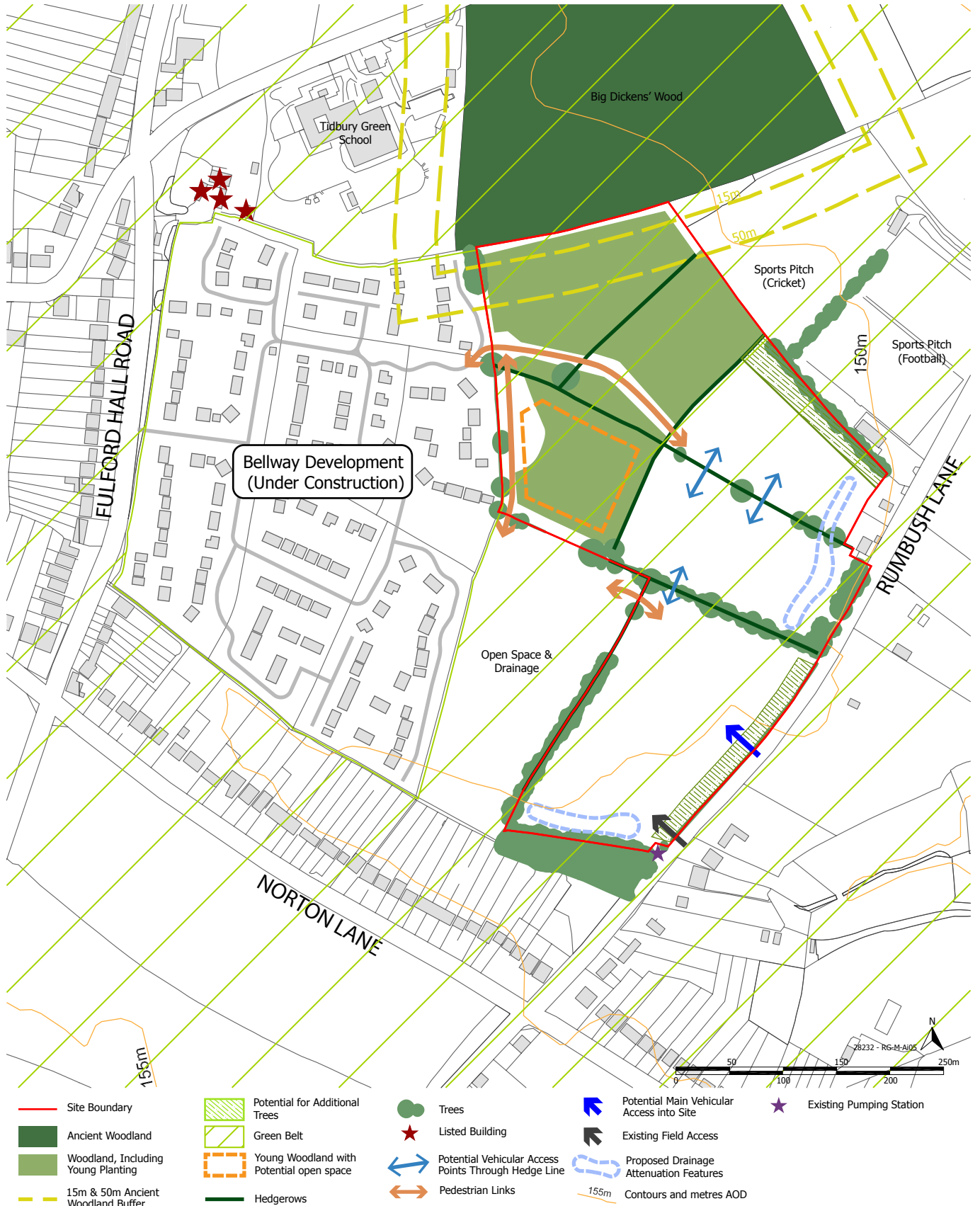


Figure 11. Constraints and Opportunities Plan

Site Features

The photographs on the next page have been taken from the Landscape and Visual Appraisal Assessment. They relate to the locations on the aerial photograph below.

View A shows the gentle fall from west to east across the site. This has implications for the surface water drainage attenuation along Rumbush Lane. There are mature trees in the distance beyond which lies the Bellway development.

View B shows the mature tree belt on the right of the photograph to be retained, apart from where the access is to be provided. The trees in the distance lie on the border with the Bellway scheme.

Whilst these homes will be set back there is still likely to be glimpsed views of them from the site.

Site C shows the boundary with the sports ground on the left and the houses along Rumbush Lane.

View D shows the area of trees, scrubland and open strip of grassland running north-south along the edge of the site. There is potential to use the area in the centre as informal open space and to create new pedestrian links between the site and the Bellway scheme.



Figure 12. Aerial Photo



View A



View B



View C



View D

7. Design Rationale

This section explains the design rationale that underpins the proposal.

Integrate with and improve upon the existing landscape structure

The proposal works within the existing framework of trees, hedges and field boundaries. This results in two parcels of development.

The edges are adjusted further by introducing additional woodland to the north, effectively extending the adjoining woodland, and providing a new trees buffer alongside Rumbush Lane in order to provide screening and help create a more leafy character.

Two attenuation basins are proposed and are positioned along the eastern and southern boundaries in response to the site's topography and probable outfall locations.

Connections, Movement and Legibility

The aim is to create a clear hierarchy to the movement network in order to promote connectivity, improve legibility and add to the overall place making.

There will be a single access point off Rumbush Lane which connects onto a spine road comprising a tree-lined avenue. This then leads onto various secondary and tertiary routes, including a number of private drives designed as shared surfaces in order to reduce the overall hard surfaced character.

There is potential for three new pedestrian links into the Bellway Homes site, improving overall connectivity and links to the school.



Figure 13. Linked Landscape Principles Plan

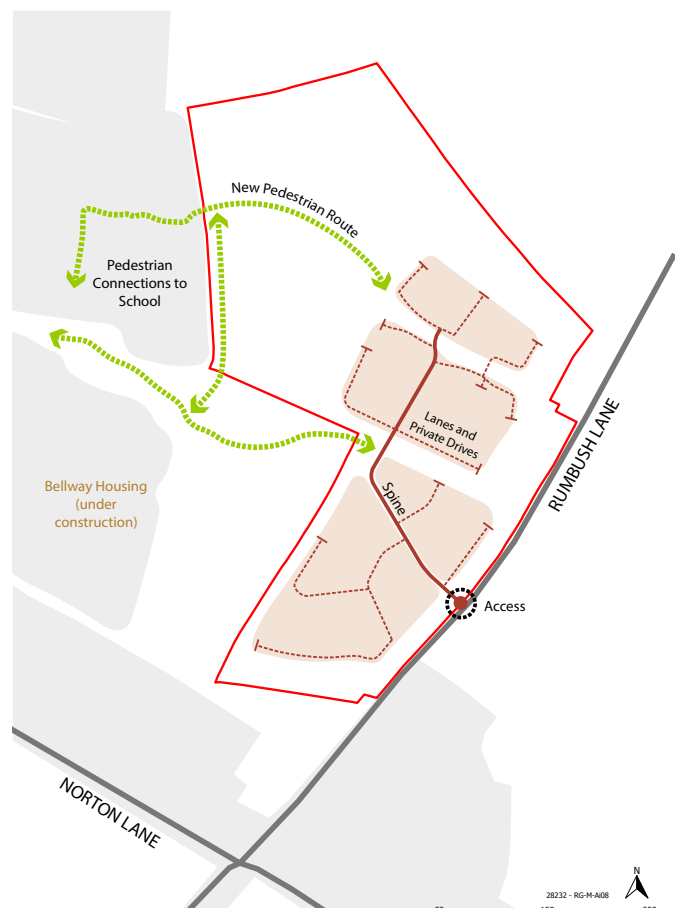


Figure 14. Connections Principles Plan

Emerging Concept Masterplan

The emerging Concept Masterplan below illustrates how the landscape and movement principles underpinning the design approach can come together to create a development that is well contained and assimilated within the wider landscape and Tidbury Green itself. The approach proposes lower density edges, with an informal character as a response to the surrounding landscape.

The linked landscape concept is illustrated by a connected network of open spaces with ‘green fingers’ reaching into the heart of the development. A central Green Spine will provide a linking thread through the development, with a strong landscape emphasis, combining tree planting and grass verges, connecting into all three former fields.

A landscape and visual appraisal was used to identify the features within the Site which contribute to the local Arden landscape character. The existing landscape infrastructure of the Site, including the distinctive oak trees and boundary planting, form the framework of the masterplan, retaining the local field pattern and leafy character. Existing key areas of planting, including the tree belt on Rumbush Lane and the young woodland in the north of the Site will be retained as part of the wider green infrastructure, and will be complemented by a new area of woodland planting along the north-eastern boundary.



Figure 15. Concept Masterplan

8. Proposal

The Illustrative Masterplan below demonstrates the development proposals at this stage. It has been informed by the site and contextual assessments presented in this document to deliver the vision for this site.

The proposal can provide up to 120 dwellings, together with informal open space, an extension to the adjoining woodland, tree planting along Rumbush Lane and two surface water drainage attenuation ponds.

Vehicular access would be off Rumbush Lane, connecting into a tree-line spine road running through the development.

The new homes are envisaged as predominantly two storeys with occasional 2.5 storeys in key locations to aid place making and way-finding objectives. Most of the housing would be detached and semi-detached with some terrace homes along the main spine.



Figure 16. Illustrative Masterplan

9. Summary

This Vision Document explains the design rationale underpinning the proposal and how it takes account of the site's characteristics and the surrounding context.

The proposal is to create an attractive, high quality development that knits into the existing village fabric. Whilst this will involve removing land from the Green Belt, this is considered necessary given the need to deliver the identified housing need in the Local Plan Review.

As explained in the Landscape and Visual Appraisal and Green Belt Review, the site is considered to make a limited contribution towards the purposes of the Green Belt. The scheme would 'round off' the settlement and establish a new defensible boundary comprising Big Dickens' Wood, Little Dickens' Wood, new woodland planting, the adjoining sports pitches and Rumbush Lane (figure 17).

The development will deliver much needed new homes, including a mix of affordable housing. The site lies close to nearby settlements of Dickens Heath and Solihull, and the new residents are able to access these areas using the existing bus services nearby. The site is also close to Wythall train station with regular services into Birmingham Snow Hill station, with a journey time of less than 1/2 hour.

The Vision Document has been prepared to promote the site through the Local Plan Review and to highlight its suitability to deliver sustainable development. Rainier Developments propose to carry out further engagement and technical analysis of the site and its proposals during 2018.



Figure 17. Proposed new buildings shown in the context of the surrounding landscape

