

The logo for L&Q Estates, featuring the letters 'L&Q' in a stylized, bold font followed by the word 'Estates' in a clean, sans-serif font. The logo is white and set against a dark blue background.

L&Q Estates



LAND AT BICKENHILL ROAD

MARSTON GREEN

VISION DOCUMENT

CONTENTS

PAGE 05

1

INTRODUCTION

PAGE 06

2

PLANNING POLICY
CONTEXT

PAGE 12

3

SITE ASSESSMENT

PAGE 34

4

EMERGING
PROPOSALS

PAGE 37

5

SITE SELECTION
ASSESSMENT

PAGE 39

6

CONCLUSIONS

NOTE: THIS DOCUMENT IS DESIGNED TO BE VIEWED AS A3 DOUBLE SIDED

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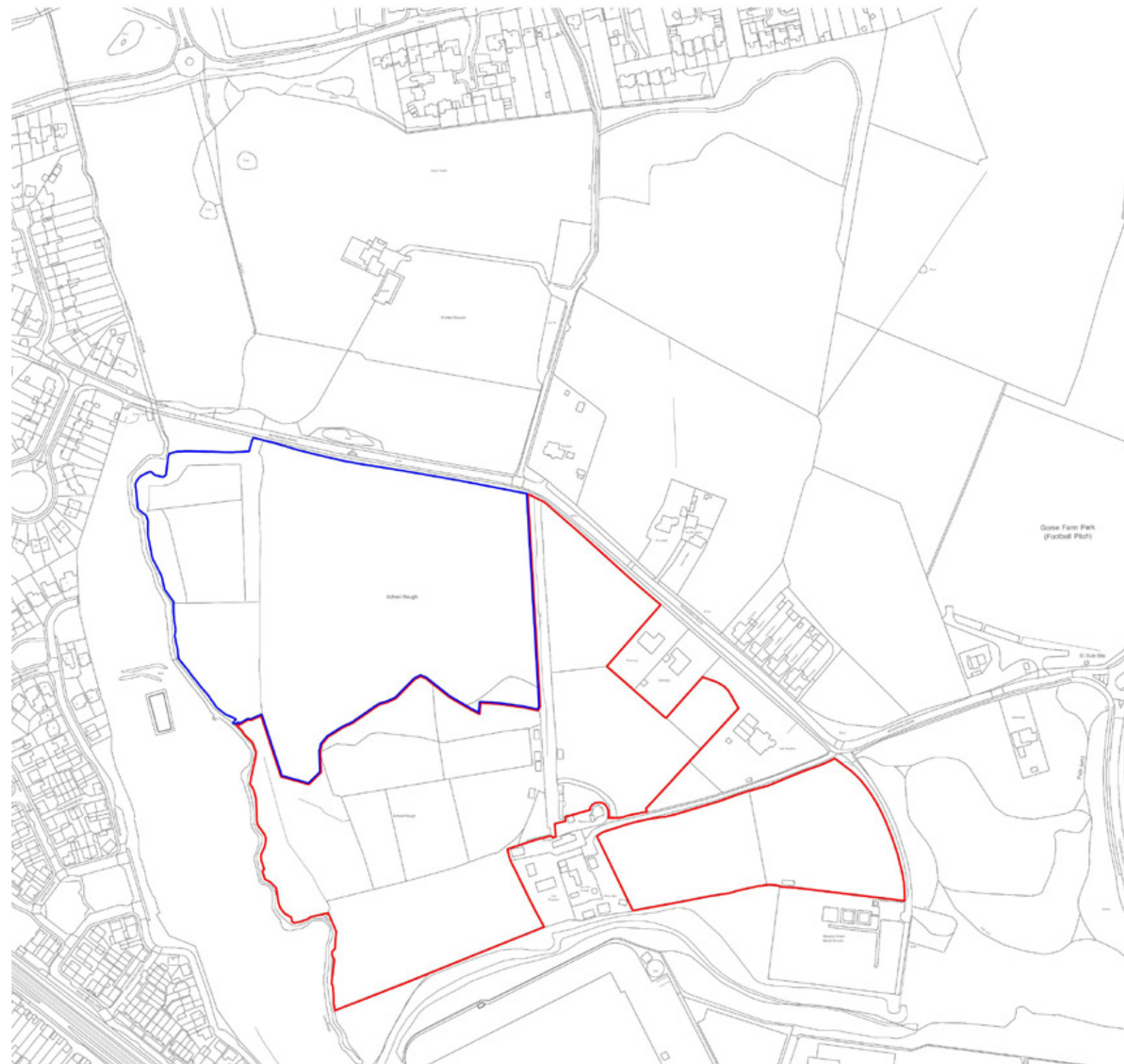
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December 2020. Document Reference BIR.5088_00

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01 | INTRODUCTION



PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

- 1.1 L&Q Estates is promoting land at Bickenhill Road, Marston Green for housing development. Land at Bickenhill Road, as shown by **Fig.1.1** comprises of 7.91 hectares located to the south of Bickenhill Road, with intervening residential development. The sites is located to the southeast of the village of Marston Green where there are a number of existing residential properties. The site could accommodate up to 176 dwellings, the concept plan at **Fig. 4.1** sets out details in terms of the different densities which might be accommodated. It should be noted that previous submissions to the Local Plan process have also included land to the north of Bickenhill Road: this area is no longer being promoted, although some of the technical studies which have been produced do still reference this.
- 1.2 This document has been prepared in response to the Solihull Local Plan Review and provides background information to demonstrate that the site is suitable for residential development. The site has previously been submitted to the Council for their consideration as part of the 'Call for Sites' consultation as well as the Draft Local Plan Consultation (Dec 2016) and the Draft Local Plan Supplementary Consultation (January 2019). This document builds on the work previously undertaken, and provides robust background information to demonstrate how the site is suitable for housing development.

KEY

- LAND PROMOTED FOR DEVELOPMENT
19.55 ACRES / 7.91 HECTARES
- OTHER LAND WITHIN CONTROL OF L&Q
BUT NOT PROMOTED FOR BUILT DEVELOPMENT
14.05 ACRES / 5.49 HECTARES

Fig 1.1. | THE SITE | NOT TO SCALE

- 1.3 This document brings together assessment work from a number of disciplines undertaken by the project team which comprises of a wide range of specialist consultants who are advising on the proposals. The document also sets out the design principles which have informed the proposed masterplan contained at **Fig 4.1**.
- 1.4 This document demonstrates that the site is suitable, available and achievable for residential development. This is particularly important given the need for the Borough to accommodate significantly more housing land than was previously allocated in the adopted Solihull Local Plan (2013).
- 1.5 The Local Plan Review envisages the need to deliver 15,017 additional dwellings in the plan period. As fully detailed within Section 2 of this document, it is clear from the work that has informed the preparation of the Draft Local Plan that to achieve the housing requirement there is a need to release land from the Green Belt. Separate representations are made on behalf of L&Q Estates to the Draft Local Plan which set out that there is a need for Solihull MBC to release more land from the Green Belt than is currently proposed within the Draft Local Plan.
- 1.6 Land at Bickenhill Road, Marston Green benefits from its close proximity to the UK Central Hub Growth Area where significant employment and jobs will be provided. This Document sets out that Land off Bickenhill Road, Marston Green is suitable for residential development and should be considered as a housing allocation.

DOCUMENT FORMAT

- 1.7 Following this introduction, the document sets out the planning policy context for the site and its development potential. This is then followed by an assessment of the site which provides an overview of the technical studies and assessments that have been undertaken to demonstrate the suitability of the site for residential development. The emerging proposals for the site are then set out as shown the Design Concept Plan (**Fig 4.1**). Finally, the document provides an overall assessment of the sites residential potential utilising the Council's Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA).
- 1.8 This document is sub divided into separate sections as follows:

Section 1: Introduction

Section 2: Planning Policy Context

Section 3: Site Assessment:

- The Development Site;
- Landscape and Visual Issues;
- Movement and Access;
- Flood Risk and Drainage;
- Ecology;
- Cultural Heritage;
- Other Matters

Section 4: Emerging Proposals

Section 5: Site Selection Assessment

Section 6: Conclusions

L&Q ESTATES

- 1.1 L&Q Estates, now part of the L&Q Group, is one of the largest strategic land companies in the UK, promoting and developing residential and mixed use schemes in all geographical areas L&Q Estates play a unique role as master developer, taking forward and coordinating all aspects of the development process from initial site assembly through to master planning, planning promotion and Section 106 negotiations before delivering serviced land to the market place.

02 | PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

ADOPTED DEVELOPMENT PLAN Solihull Local Plan 2013

2.1 This Section summarises the adopted and emerging policy context for this site at the time of writing this document. This promotional document has been produced in response to the Draft Local Plan consultation [Draft Submission Plan October 2020]. The current adopted Development Plan for the area is the Solihull Local Plan (December 2013).

2.2 The adopted Local Plan (**Fig.2.1**) sets out the long-term spatial vision for how Solihull's towns, villages and countryside will develop and change over the Plan period (2011-2028). This vision will be delivered through a strategy for promoting, distributing and delivering sustainable development and growth.

2.3 Shortly after adoption, the Local Plan was subject to a successful legal challenge which means that the current Local Plan has no overall housing requirement for the Plan period. As a result, those parts of the Local Plan, that relate to housing numbers for the plan period, are not adopted.

2.4 Two other reasons triggered the need for Solihull to undertake an early review, namely the plans for high speed rail (HS2 Interchange Station known as Arden Cross) and the impact within the Housing Market Area (HMA) relating to Birmingham's inability to meet its own housing requirement within its boundaries with the shortfall needing to be met elsewhere within the HMA. The growth aspirations of UK Central Hub Area, which includes Birmingham Airport, National Exhibition Centre (NEC), Birmingham Business Park and Jaguar Land Rover (JLR), absence of adopted housing policies and housing needs across the HMA have all contributed to a situation where the Council needs to re-examine to undertake a Local Plan Review to ensure that a proper planning framework is in place that addresses these issues.

Proposed Policies Map - Local Plan Review
October 2020

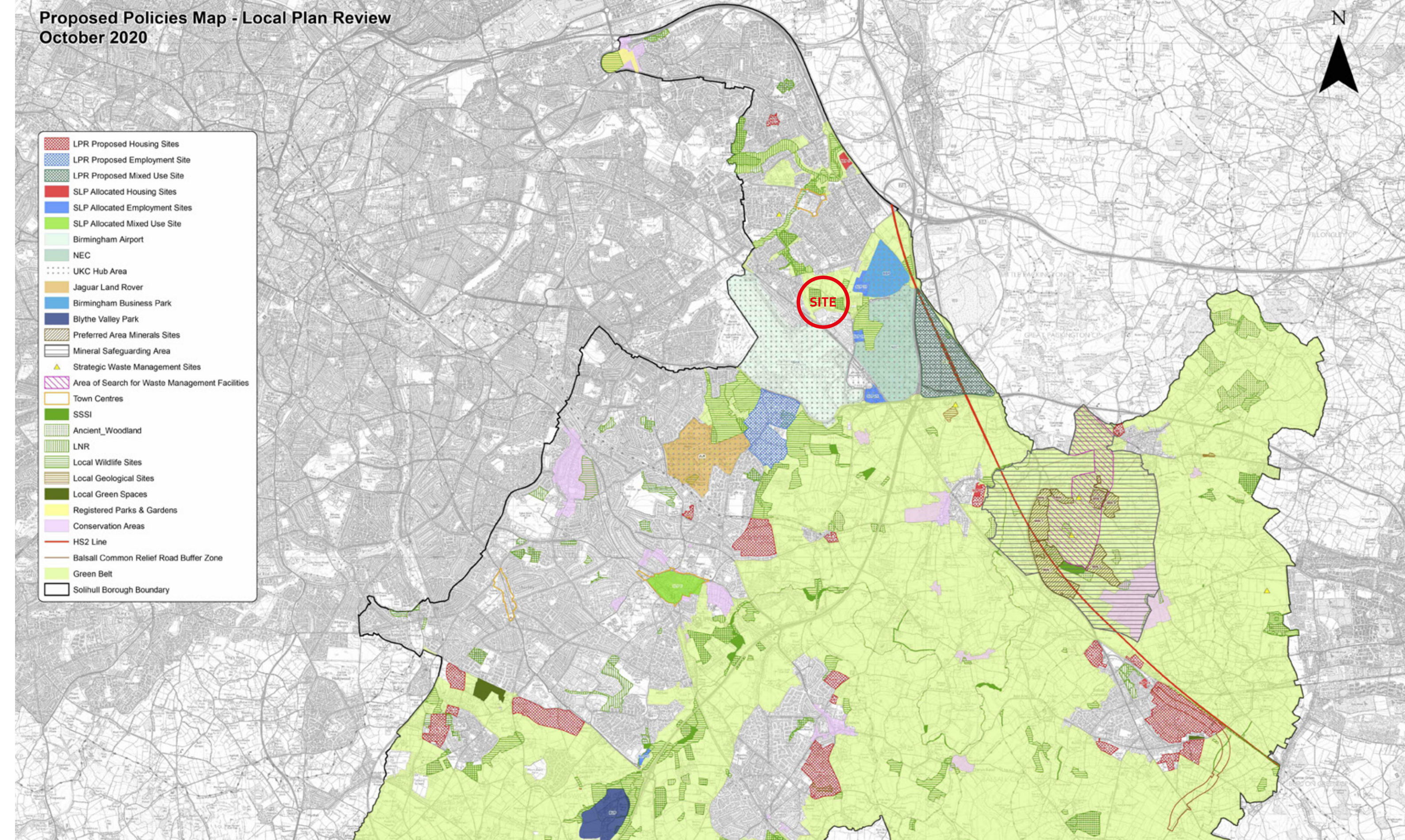
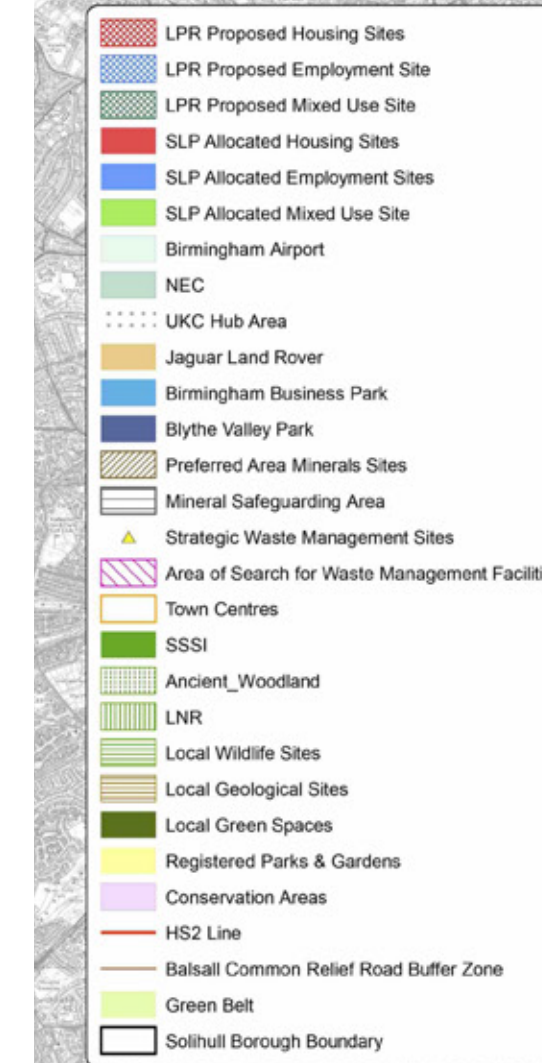


Fig 2.1 | DRAFT SOLIHULL LOCAL PLAN POLICIES MAP OCTOBER 2020 | NOT TO SCALE

EMERGING DEVELOPMENT PLAN

2.5 The Draft Solihull Local Plan was originally published in November 2016, with a supplementary consultation document being published in January 2019, and the Submission Version published in October 2020. The latest iteration covers the period to 2036. The emerging Local Plan sets out the long term vision and objectives with policies that will guide development throughout the plan period.

These include:

Delivering Sustainable Economic Growth through:

- Developing the UK Central Hub Area (Policy P1), which embraces Birmingham Airport, the NEC, Arden Cross, Birmingham Business Park and JLR. This includes:
 - creating Arden Cross – an exemplary international station with new public realm supporting the potential for commercial and residential opportunities;
 - upgrading and refurbishing the NEC - the Council will enable a broad range of developments enhancing visitor offerings, diversifying facilities and increasing international competitiveness;
 - further development of Birmingham Airport – increasing passenger, freight, terminals and transport facilities and capacity, which allows the extended runway to be maximised. The Council will also support a broad range of ancillary and complementary facilities including hotels, administrative offices car parks and other appropriate facilities to serve the airport;
 - expansion of JLR – supporting further success in the global vehicles industry through supporting and encouraging the development of JLR within its boundary defined in the Local Plan and through the release of Green Belt land; and
 - Continuing to support and encourage the development of Birmingham Business Park, within its defined boundary to support its role as a prime employment location in Borough.

- Expanding Blythe Valley Business Park (P1A), including:
 - encouraging the delivery of a major quantity of employment floorspace;
 - upgrading existing and creating new facilities; and
 - attracting investors.
- Maintaining Strong, Competitive Town Centres, which comprises specific focus on:
 - Solihull Town Centre;
 - Shirley Town Centre; and
 - Chelmsley Wood Town Centre.

Requiring Land for Housing (Policy P5):

- Delivering at least 15,017 additional homes between 2020 to 2036;
- Allocation for at least 5,270 net additional homes to ensure sufficient housing supply to deliver 15,017 homes in the period 2020 to 2036;
- Annual housing requirement is 938 net additional homes 2020 to 2036;
- New housing will be supported on windfall sites in accessible locations where they contribute towards meeting borough-wide housing needs and towards enhancing local character and distinctiveness.
- Housing will be provided as a mix of small and larger sites that will ensure a continuous supply of housing provision throughout the Plan period.
- New homes should comply with the nationally described space standards set out by Government.
- The appropriate density of new housing will be based on a number of factors, and measured on the developable area of a site. This will include site plots and estate roads, but exclude land for other development requirements such as open space, SuDS and strategic highway infrastructure. It will take into account the need to maximise the efficient use of land; appropriate mix of housing ; local character and distinctiveness; scale, type and location of development with regard to accessibility of services by sustainable transport modes;.

Providing Homes for All through:

- Delivery of 40% affordable housing (but taking into account site circumstances) on residential sites of major development, where 10 or more homes will be provided, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more (Policy P4A);
- Rural Exception Sites (policy P4B);
- Providing Market Housing, 30% 1 to 2 bedroom, 50% 3 bedroom and 20% 4+ bedroom (Policy P4C);
- Encouraging self and custom housebuilding including 5% of plots on sites of 100 or more to be contributed for self and custom build (subject to individual site circumstances) (Policy P4D);
- Looking favourably on self and custom housebuilding.
- Housing for older and disabled people including all new build housing on major development sites to be built to Category M4(2) (Accessible and Adaptable dwellings) of approved Building Regulations Document M; Volume 1, unless it is built in to M4(3); 5% of housing on major development sites to be wheelchair user dwellings to M4(3) of the Building Regulations and all developments of 300 dwellings or more to provide specialist housing or care bedspaces in accordance with the Council's most up to date statement of need on older person's accommodation (Policy P4E).

2.6 In order to achieve the target of delivering additional dwellings, the Council proposes to allocate 18 Sites through the Draft Local Plan. Marston Green falls within the area categorised as 'North of the Borough', and within this broad area, only one site (for 50 dwellings) is proposed for allocation: this lies within Kingshurst Village Centre. No further allocations are proposed for this area, including Marston Green.

STRATEGIC GREEN BELT ASSESSMENT

- 2.7 Approximately 12,000 hectares of Solihull MBC is designated as Green Belt land, accounting for approximately two thirds (67%) of the Borough's land area (**Fig 2.1**). The Green Belt within Solihull MBC forms an integral part of the Borough. In order to meet the housing requirements of the Borough, there will be a need to release sites from the Green Belt forms an integral part of the West Midlands Green Belt stretching between the Birmingham Conurbation, including Solihull, and the surrounding major urban areas.
- 2.8 As part of the Local Plan Review, Solihull MBC commissioned a Strategic Green Belt Assessment to evaluate the extent to which the land currently designated as Green Belt within the Borough fulfils the essential characteristics and purposes of Green Belt land as set out in Paragraph 134 of the NPPF.
- 2.9 The basis of the Assessment was to provide a 'policy off' approach and consideration of other constraints or the development potential of any of the Green Belt land has not been included in the assessment. The Strategic Green Belt assessment has concluded that a number of refined parcels of Green Belt land in the Borough do not perform against any of the first four purposes of the Green Belt but as set out above does not make any recommendations for amendments to the Green Belt boundary or determine whether land should be removed from the Green Belt.
- 2.10 The site has been assessed within the Council's Green Belt Assessment as located across Refined Parcels 7 and 10. It should be noted that the revised site now only sits within RP10. In the Council's review, Refined Parcels 7 and 10 scored 5 and 4 respectively. It is noted that these two parcels are particularly low on purpose three to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. This is discussed fully within Section 3 – Landscape and Visual Issues. The need for Green Belt release has been accepted by the Borough Council with the majority of the proposed allocations for both residential and both employment allocations being within the designated Green Belt. It is considered that a residential proposal for Land at Bickenhill Road, Marston Green would assist Solihull MBC in providing additional housing for the Borough in a sustainable location.

SOLIHULL STRATEGIC HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT SHELAA

- 2.11 In November 2015 Solihull Council commenced a review of the current Local Plan and launched a Call for Sites exercise alongside the Issues and Options consultation. 247 site submissions were assessed by Peter Brett Associates LLP (PBA), commissioned to undertake a Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA).
- 2.12 A full SHELAA of these sites was published in November 2016 and consulted upon as part of the Draft Local Plan Review. An update has since been published in draft [October 2020] which relates to new submissions or amended sites.
- 2.13 Land at Bickenhill Road, Marston Green has a SHELAA reference of 1012. The assessment of the site concluded that the site performs well against availability and achievability criteria and faces some suitability constraints. The report outlined how the site is within or adjacent to a major urban area, the existing road access is adequate, the site does not include nor is it adjacent to any Listed Buildings, is Grade 5 Agricultural land, has no bad neighbours and is not affected by ground conditions constraints or high pressure gas pipelines. On all of the above suitability criteria the sites considered collectively scored the highest scoring of 5.
- 2.14 The suitability constraints identified relate to flood risk and biodiversity for which a suitability score of 2 was afforded to the sites. Section 3 of this Document details the suitability of the site in relation Flood Risk and Drainage and Ecology as the proposals have been designed to avoid development in the more sensitive areas.
- 2.15 In relation to ecology, the SHELAA set out that 10-24% of the site is within a Local Wildlife Site (LWS). It is however the case that this refers to Heath Corner LWS which does not fall within the red line boundary of the site as it is located to the north of Bickenill Road. Schools Rough, which is an existing area of woodland beyond the site boundary, is an Ecosite, not a LWS. The site had previously been put forward as a potential LWS, this was however rejected by the LWS Panel, the site therefore only has the status of an Ecosite. In any event, as shown on the Design Concept Plan, development is not proposed on the LWS or on the Ecosite, the ancient woodland is to be retained with a 30m buffer to development. There will be no adverse impact on the LWS or non- designated Ecosite. The suitability score of 2 should be updated to reflect that emerging proposals for the site do not propose development on the LWS as shown on **Fig. 1.1**. Ecology matters are discussed in detail within Section 3 of this Document.

SOLIHULL BOROUGH LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT, NOVEMBER 2016

- 2.16 Within the Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment, the site is located within Landscape Character Area (LCA) 10: Urban Green Spaces. LCA10 is sub divided into two areas, the site is located within sub-area 10B, the key characteristics fully detailed within the Landscape Character Assessment. Landscape and Visual Issues are fully considered within Section 3 of this Document which also sets out the proposed landscape strategy for the site taking into account landscape character and the role of the site in the Green Belt.

SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL (SA)

- 2.17 An interim SA was produced in January 2017 and this has been updated in October 2020. This shows that the site is highly sustainably located, but provides an 'amber' score with respect to wildlife and flooding and a 'red' score for loss of agricultural land. The appraisal makes no distinction between those parts being proposed as developable areas, and those which are part of the wider context. Section 5 includes an assessment of the site against the SA criteria proposed to provide the detail required.
- 2.18 The site was only assessed as red on one objective, relating to soil in that the combination of all five sites (as originally proposed) contain more than 20ha of agricultural land of Grade 1-2 or 20ha of agricultural land Grade 1-3b. In relation to flood risk, the assessment sets out that up to 50% of the site is within Flood Zones 2 or 3. In relation to ecology, it is set out that the site overlaps or contains a LWS or records of protected species. The commentary goes on to set out that the site is not of a scale that would be able to deliver strategic improvements to ecological networks and so development would likely lead to loss. In relation to noise, road noise, noise from an adjacent industrial park and resulting from agricultural processes are considered in the SA as potential noise sources.

- 2.19 The proposal would result in some loss of agricultural land however large parts of the site would be not be developed as shown on the Design Concept Plan (**Fig 4.1**). In relation to Flood Risk, Section 3 of this document and the Design Concept Plan demonstrate that the development would be wholly within Flood Zone 1. Ecological Issues are dealt with fully in Section 3 and as shown on the Design Concept Plan, no development is proposed on the smallest site which is designated as a LWS. Development is also offset from the School Rough Ecosite and ancient woodland, and provides an opportunity to enhance this area and the Lowbrook watercourse corridor as set out in Section 3. Noise is not considered to be a constraint to the development of the site and is dealt with further in Section 3 of this Document.

03 | SITE ASSESSMENT

SITE DESCRIPTION AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 L&Q Estates has an interest in land to the south of Bickenhill Road. This comprises of 7.91 hectares of predominantly grassland pasture with intervening residential development. The site is located to the southeast of the village of Marston Green where there are a number of existing residential properties.
- 3.2 The site is located within Solihull Metropolitan Borough and is part of the West Midlands Green Belt. The site is located in close proximity to Birmingham Airport and the National Exhibition Centre (NEC) as well as the proposed location for UK Central (High Speed 2). Agricultural land and sports pitches lie to the north and east; small clusters of residential development borders the sites whilst residential development lies to the west and an existing industrial estate and Marston Green burial ground lies to the south of the site.
- 3.3 The western boundary of the site is Low Brook which flows adjacent to the site from north to south. The northern, eastern and southern boundaries of the site are defined by historic field boundaries, hedgerows, residential development and Bickenhill Road **[Fig 3.1]**

- 3.4 In terms of physical site constraints there is a large wooded area adjacent to the north boundary which is considered to be a priority habitat of deciduous woodland. Additional trees and hedgerows which mark historic fields boundaries. Topographically, the site gradually falls from east to west.
- 3.5 The site is predominantly in Flood Zone 1 however the western fringe lies within Flood Zone 3, adjacent to Low Brook. Flood Risk and Drainage are fully discussed within Section 3 of this Document.
- 3.6 The surrounding area is comprised of residential development to the west and north of the sites of predominantly detached and semi-detached two-story properties. To the south is Birmingham International Airport, Elmdon Trading Estate and the NEC. Also to the south and adjacent to the NEC is land safeguarded for UK Central as part of High Speed 2.

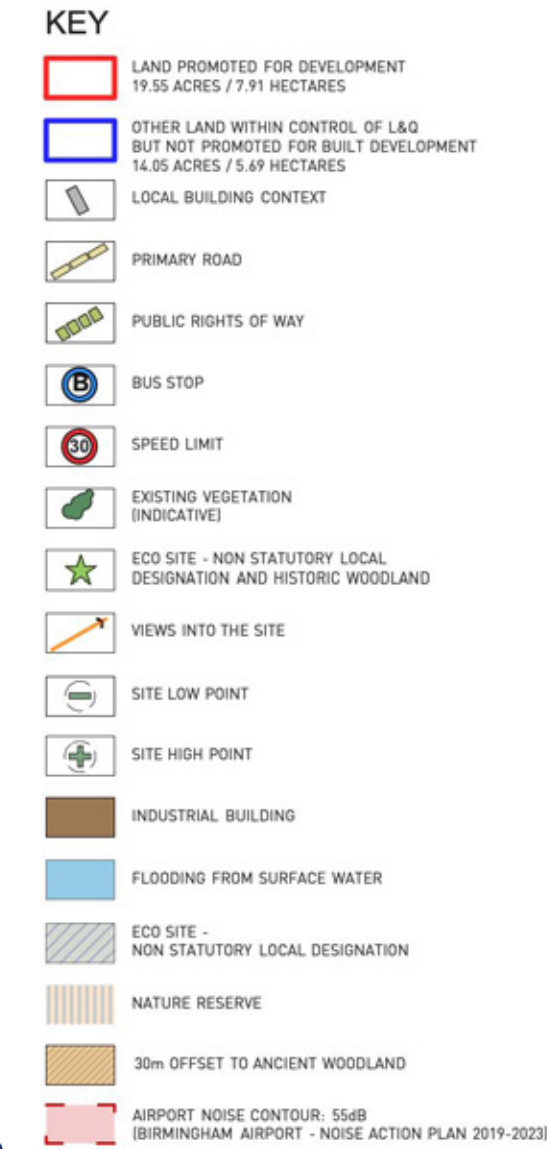


Fig 3.1. SITE AND CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS | NOT TO SCALE



LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL

Policy Context

- 3.7 The Solihull Local Plan: Shaping a Sustainable Future, December 2013 sets out the long term vision, objectives and planning policies for the borough. Those policies relevant to a study of landscape and visual matters include Policy P10: Natural Environment and Policy P17: Countryside and Green Belt.
- 3.8 The Solihull Draft Local Plan (November 2016) explains its policy context in terms of 'Protecting and Enhancing the Environment' at section 9. It notes the borough has a high green and blue infrastructure (GI) as one of its greatest assets, that extends beyond the countryside to include green and blue spaces of the street scene, gardens, ponds, rivers etc. The natural environment is fundamental to Solihull's attractive urban and rural environment (para. 288).
- 3.9 Policy P10 Natural Environment is central to this, and recognises the importance of a healthy natural environment in its own right. The Council will seek to protect, enhance and restore the diverse features of its Arden landscape, and seek to create new habitat and promote local distinctiveness. The policy also seeks to conserve, enhance and restore biodiversity and geodiversity across the Borough, protecting habitat and species, in particular recognised areas such as SSSIs and Local Nature Reserves. Outside designated areas, developers are expected to take full account of nature conservation and geological value, and demonstrate appropriate mitigation where development is permitted.
- 3.10 Policy P11 Water management discusses the need for all new development to have regard to the actions and objectives of the relevant River Basin Management Plan, with the use of sustainable urban drainage systems in the context of all new major development.

- 3.11 Policy P14 Amenity discusses the need to ensure a good standard of amenity of all existing and future occupiers of houses, businesses and other uses. A number of criteria are relevant including:
- High quality design;
 - Visual amenity and minimising visual impact;
 - The scale, character and appearance of new infrastructure elements related to electronic communications;
 - Safeguarding important trees and hedgerows and new planting;
 - Safeguarding areas of countryside with intrinsically dark sky from the impacts of light pollution; and
 - Protect the tranquil and locally distinctive areas in the Borough by guiding new development to locations that will avoid or minimise adverse impacts.

- 3.12 Policy P14 is cross referenced with Policy P15 Securing Design Quality (Section 10: Promoting Quality of Place), which expects all proposals to contribute to, or create, high quality spaces and places that have regard to local distinctiveness. Proposals will be expected to meet a number of key principles:
- Conserve and enhance local character, distinctiveness and streetscape quality (ref. scale, massing, density);
 - Future proofing the design and layout;
 - Provision for water management;
 - Proactive approach to responding to climate change and adoption of low carbon construction principles;
 - Conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity;
 - Respect and enhance landscape quality, including trees, hedgerows and other landscape features of value, and contribute to strategic green infrastructure; and
 - Create attractive, safe, active legible and uncluttered streets and public spaces.

3.13 Clearly there is a balance within these criteria between more 'strategic; design issues, with those at a more schematic and detailed level. All established urban design principles and guidance need to be adhered to, with the design process active at prep-application stage.

3.14 Policy P16 concerns heritage assets, and makes reference again to the Arden landscape, and that all development proposals likely to impact on this character and significance will be expected to demonstrate how this impact has been addressed.

3.15 Policy P17 Countryside and Green belt, advises that inappropriate development will not be permitted in the Solihull Green belt (see below in respect of recent Solihull Strategic Green Belt Assessment).

Landscape Context

- 3.16 At a national level the site is located within the National Character Area Profile 97: Arden as published by Natural England (2012).
- 3.17 Landscape character at a local level is defined by the Solihull Borough Landscape Character (2016). The site is located in Landscape Character Area (LCA) 10: Urban Green Spaces. The key characteristics of this LCA can be summarised as follows:
- Generally flat landform ranging from 80m to 100m AOD;
 - River Cole to the north, Kingshurst Brook and Low Brook to the south;
 - Much of the land within this area is used for recreation;
 - Agriculture, deciduous woodland and cemetery use also exist;
 - Tree cover is extensive large due to the strong presence of woodlands and tree lined waterways especially Low Brook;
 - Hedgerows and scattered trees within the fields are also distributed across the area;
 - The area is contained by the urban edge of Solihull and therefore heavily influenced by its presence;
 - Road infrastructure is a dominant feature specifically in the southern and eastern extent of the area.
 - Strong network of footpaths, possibly due to its location and function as a green space at the edge of an urban area, providing requisite recreational routes and therefore of considerable value;
 - There are four principal parks located here, including Marston Green Recreation Ground.

- 3.18 LCA 10 is sub-divided into two sub-areas, the site is located within sub-area 10B. The key characteristics of sub-area 10B are as follows:
- These include playing fields, school grounds, cemetery and Marston Green Park, which is a Local Nature Reserve;
 - Small to medium scale arable fields of a regular pattern with two active farms;
 - Small pockets of deciduous woodland scattered across the sub-area;
 - Limited public footpaths, although where in existence they are well sign posted;
 - High hedges along the roads with fast moving traffic towards the east;
 - Intimate and enclosed character within the western extent of the sub-area with overhanging trees along some roads;
 - Strong tree cover in general across the sub-area;
 - Poplar shelterbelts add to the character of the area at Marston Green;
 - Constant road and aeroplane noise form background disturbance within the sub-area, which is more prevalent to the eastern extent in contrast to the west.

- 3.19 In relation to landscape sensitivity, the published assessment notes that this sub-area has some attractive areas including Marston Green Park. It states that there are some detractors including road and air traffic noise, electricity pylons and litter specifically around Marston Green. According to the published assessment, the landscape character sensitivity of the sub-area is considered to be medium.
- 3.20 In relation to visual sensitivity, the published assessment states that this sub-area consists of generally short distance views that are wide-framed, shallow and horizontal in orientation. There are some views towards commercial/ employment buildings within the landscape and glimpses of the M42 from some parts of the sub-area. Overall the published assessment considered the visual sensitivity of the sub-area to be low.
- 3.21 The published character assessment states that the value of the sub-area is considered to be medium.
- 3.22 In terms of landscape capacity, the published assessment states that this sub-area would typically have an overall low landscape capacity to accommodate change. It states that the sub-area would be able to accommodate some areas of new development, which would need to be of an appropriate type, scale and form, in keeping with the existing character and local distinctiveness of the area.

1. VIEW FROM PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY , MARSTON GREEN RECREATION GROUND, LOOKING EAST
2. VIEW FROM PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY, MARSTON GREEN BURIAL GROUND, LOOKING WEST
3. VIEW FROM BICKENHILL ROAD, LOOKING NORTH



Visual Context

3.23 The visual envelope is defined broadly as follows:

- from the north, by built form and vegetation along Coleshill Road, in combination with tree cover associated within the sports and recreation grounds;
- from the east by the 'layering' of field boundary and road corridor vegetation;
- from the south by the large scale commercial buildings of Elmdon Trading Estate; and
- from west by the mature woodland of School Rough, the wooded streamline of the Low Brook and the existing urban edge.

3.24 Views towards the various parts of site are generally limited by the mature woodland of School Rough and the patchwork of built form and vegetation along local roads. There are some open views into the areas of the site off Bickenhill Road from the road corridor itself. There are also views into the south-eastern parcel of the site from the public right of way that runs south of Bickenhill Lane towards the cemetery. The public right of way passing through Marston Green recreation ground also allows for views of the northern part of the site.

Landscape and Visual Constraints and Opportunities

3.25 Landscape and visual constraints can be used to guide the development of a proposal in a positive manner, often leading to opportunities and not just creating absolute constraints to development. The constraints are considered to be:

- the limited local PROW network, (providing recreational opportunities for potential high sensitivity visual receptors);
- the location of the site within the Green Belt, which will have some influence on the value of the local landscape; and
- the findings of the Solihull Landscape Character Assessment that identify the LCA within which the site sits as having generally low capacity to accommodate change.

3.26 Landscape and visual opportunities can be summarised as follows:

- Notwithstanding that the site is located within Green Belt, there are no overriding statutory landscape planning designations;
- Existing vegetation and green infrastructure throughout the site, including hedgerows, providing opportunities to enhance this through a comprehensive landscape strategy; and
- The presence of mature vegetation including the mature woodland of School Rough will help to minimise the visual envelope of the site and will contribute to the capacity of the site to accommodate development; and
- The opportunity to propose development within LCA Sub-area 10B in this location which is of an appropriate type, scale and form and in keeping with the existing character and local distinctiveness of the area, as set out in the Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment.

Role of the Site in the Green Belt

3.27 The Solihull Strategic Green Belt Assessment - Assessment Report (July 2016) identifies a number of Broad Areas of Green Belt land. It also identifies a number of Refined Parcels, which adjoin or lie adjacent to built-up areas. The site is located within Refined Parcel RP10 'Land to the north of Birmingham International Park'. The assessment scores each Refined Parcel against four purposes of the Green Belt. RP10 is set out in **Fig.3.2**.

GREEN BELT PURPOSE	RP10 SCORE
1 - CHECK UNRESTRICTED SPRAWL OF LARGE BUILT-UP AREAS	1
2 - PREVENT NEIGHBOURING TOWNS MERGING INTO ONE ANOTHER	2
3 - ASSIST IN SAFEGUARDING THE COUNTRYSIDE FROM ENCROACHMENT	1
4 - PRESERVE THE SETTING AND SPECIAL CHARACTER OF HISTORIC TOWNS	0
TOTAL	4

Fig 3.2 | GREEN BELT REFINED PARCEL RP10 SCORES

Landscape Strategy

3.28 In response to the desktop and fieldwork undertaken, an initial landscape strategy has been identified and the following landscape principles have been applied to the emerging development envelope for the area:

- The overall development envelope is defined by the visual and physical containment provided by School Rough to the west and north, the Bickenhill Road corridor to the north and east, the line of the Low Brook to the west and vegetation along the northern boundary of Elmdon Trading Estate to the south.
- Consideration should be given to the existing vegetation (including trees, hedgerows, hedgerow trees and woodland areas). Where possible these landscape elements should be retained and integrated into the layout of both developable areas and open space.
- The location and extent of green infrastructure and open space within the site should influence the formation and extent of the development envelope. The retained areas of vegetation (as described above) would ensure that the built form of a proposal would be contained in a robust and diverse framework of green infrastructure and open space. A strategy for retaining existing vegetation combined with proposals for new landscape planting would result in a landscape context for future proposals which show a variety of stages of establishment and maturity. This would enhance the quality of a proposal and also help to integrate the site with the local landscape character.

- The layout of proposals for the site should incorporate substantial areas of private garden space as well as the proposed publically accessible areas of green infrastructure as these would have the capacity to hold a substantial number of street and garden trees which will, over time, contribute to a network of green infrastructure and help to integrate the character of the site with the surrounding landscape.
- All landscape mitigation which forms part of a proposal should be subject to a high quality detailed landscape scheme so as to ensure that the functions of the landscape components will be delivered; this would also reflect positively on the design quality of a proposal as a whole.
- In terms of a defensible Green Belt boundary, existing physical features, which include the existing School Rough woodland and course of the Low Brook, as well as the defensible boundary of Bickenhill Road could be combined to form a new Green Belt boundary.

GREEN BELT PURPOSE	CRITERIA	Summary
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.	Is ribbon or other development present? Is other development detached from the existing large built-up area?	There is some ribbon development present in this location, including along Bickenhill Road. Other development is not detached from the existing large built up area, and forms part of the edge of Solihull. The site's existing physical and visual containment and the decision to concentrate proposed development south of a robust new green belt boundary along Bickenhill Road helps to ensure that the site will not result in the unrestricted sprawl of built up areas.
To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.	Does the area represent a 'gap' between major urban areas?	The area does not represent a 'gap' between major urban areas and allows for the retention of land to the north as undeveloped land.
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.	Is the area characterised by countryside? Does the area adjoin areas of countryside? Is ribbon or other development present within the area?	The area is heavily influenced by the existing urban edge, including buildings associated with Elmdon Trading Estate to the south, existing residential development along Bickenhill Road and other urban fringe land uses such as Marston Green burial ground. There are a number of open agricultural fields to the north, however the existing urban edge of Solihull, Birmingham Airport and Birmingham Business Park are all in close proximity. There are some areas of ribbon development. It is considered due to the sites location it would not result in any encroachment into the countryside.
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.	Is the area within or adjoining a Conservation Area within a historic town? Are key landmarks or the historic core visible from within the area? Does the area contribute to the setting of the historic town?	The site lies outside of any Conservation Areas and is not located within a historic town.

Fig 3.3 | ASSESSMENT AGAINST GREEN BELT PURPOSES

Potential Impact on the Green Belt and Creation of a Defensible Green Belt Boundary

3.29 In accordance with the NPPF, Green Belt boundaries should be defined clearly, using physical features that are readily recognised and likely to be permanent. It is considered that a combination of School Rough woodland, the Low Brook, and Bickenhill Road itself could form a clearly defined Green Belt boundary. The landscape and green infrastructure strategy for the site also proposes new planting which will serve to break down the scale of built form and provide further containment. These mitigation measure will help to establish and enhance a robust landscaped edge to the proposed development and a definitive boundary to the future Green Belt.

3.30 **Fig.3.3** sets out a summary of the likely impacts on Green Belt purpose, in landscape and visual terms, using the criteria set out by the Solihull Green Belt Strategic Assessment.

Summary

3.31 Overall the scale and form of proposed development has been influenced by the landscape constraints and opportunities of the site and its context. Furthermore, the proposals for green infrastructure and landscaping will deliver a number of enhancements in terms of the physical landscape and the strengthening of the structure of the landscape to create a new robust, defensible Green Belt boundary to the north of the site.

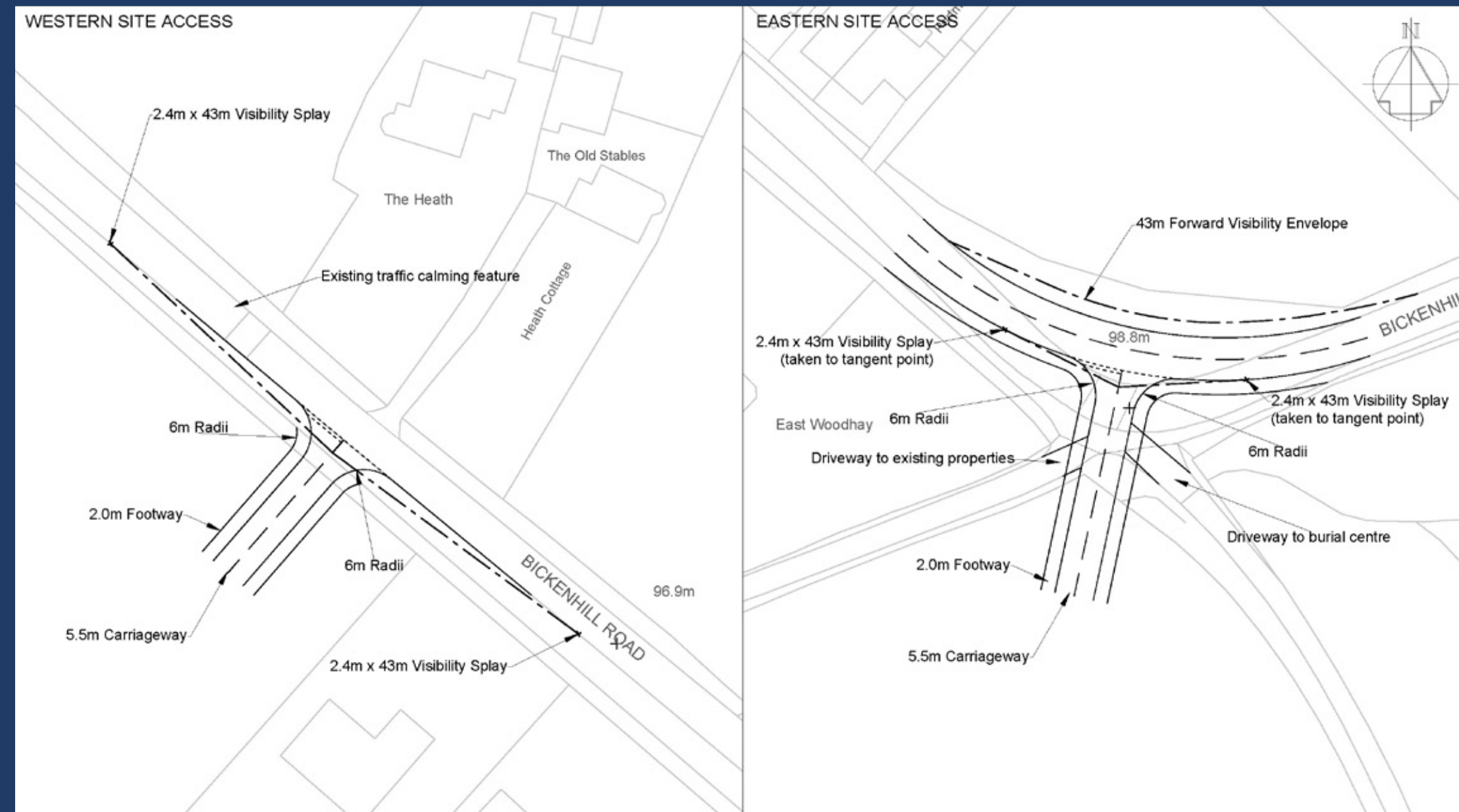


FIG 3.4. | POTENTIAL PROPOSED ACCESS | NOT TO SCALE

MOVEMENT AND ACCESS

Access

- 3.32 Vehicle access to the western site is proposed onto Bickenhill Road adjacent to the existing dwellings. The vehicle access to the eastern site is proposed on the outside of the bend on Bickenhill Road. To provide the access amendments are proposed to the mainline carriageway to provide the access whilst also retaining the existing driveway access and the access to the burial ground.
- 3.33 In line with the SMBC highway design guidance the access has been designed with a 5.5 metres wide carriageway and 6 metres corner radii. Footways 2 metres wide are provided adjacent to the site access road.

- 3.34 Bickenhill Road is subject to a 30mph speed limit and based on the guidance contained within Manual for Streets4 (MFS) visibility splays of 43 metres would be required.
- 3.35 Fig.3.4 shows the proposed potential access arrangements (which would be subject to detailed consideration) and demonstrates that the required visibility splays are achievable from a 2.4 metres setback in each direction from both of the proposed access. The required 43 metres forward visibility envelop would also be provided around the bend in the mainline carriageway at the eastern access.

- 3.36 As shown on the indicative site layout plans (Fig 4.1) pedestrian routes are provided throughout the sites with connections onto Bickenhill Road to connect to the existing footway infrastructure.
- 3.37 Following the audit and recommendations in the LCWIP, to enhance the facilities in the vicinity of the site, consideration could be given to providing a shared use footway/cycleway along the site frontage or to provide traffic calming measures which include cycle facilities. However, any cycle improvement measures would need to be developed in consultation with SMBC to ensure a cohesive cycle route along Bickenhill Lane.

Connectivity

- 3.38 In terms of pedestrian travel the Guidelines for Providing for Journeys on Foot produced by the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation document describes the 'maximum', 'acceptable' and 'desirable' walking distances. It suggests that in terms of commuting, walking to school and recreational journeys; walk distances up to 2,000 metres can be considered, with the 'desirable' and 'acceptable' distances being 500 and 1,000 metres respectively.
- 3.39 For non-commuter journeys, the guidance suggests that a walk distance of up to 1,200 metres can be considered, with the 'desirable' and 'acceptable' distances being 400 metres and 800 metres respectively.
- 3.40 Fig.3.5 summarises the broad walking journey times that can fall under each category.
- 3.41 The map at Fig.3.6 depicts the 2km preferred maximum walking catchment from the development site which also includes the 'desirable', 'acceptable' and 'preferred maximum' distances. This confirms that Marston Green railway station and the surrounding retail facilities are within convenient walking distance of the site. Other available facilities within the isochrone include a health centre, public house, schools, Birmingham Business Park, the Elmdon Trading Estate, the National Exhibition Centre (NEC) and Birmingham International Airport and Railway Station.
- 3.42 As outlined above a footway is provided on the southern side of Bickenhill Road along the site frontage. To the west of the site footways are provided on both sides of the carriageway and which form a continuous link to the facilities located to the west of the site. To the east the footway on Bickenhill Road links to the footways provided adjacent to the connecting roads to provide a convenient link to the employment areas located to the east of the site and the airport and railway station.
- 3.43 With regard to cycling, it is generally accepted that this has the potential to substitute for short car trips, particularly those less than 5km, and to form part of a longer journey on public transport. Fig.3.7 presents the 5km cycling isochrone from the site. It shows that all of Marston Green is within convenient cycling distance of the site. The isochrone also includes key destinations of Birmingham Business Park and Birmingham International Airport and Railway Station and the NEC as well as locations such as Chelmsley Wood, Coleshill, Tile Cross and Bickenhill.

IHT THRESHOLD	DISTANCE (METRES)		WALK TIME (MINUTES)	
	Commuting, walking to school and recreation	Other non-commuter journeys	Commuting, walking to school and recreation	Other non-commuter journeys
Desirable	500	400	6	5
Acceptable	1,000	800	12.5	10
Maximum	2,000	1,200	25	15

Fig 3.5 | WALK JOURNEY DISTANCE AND TIME THRESHOLD

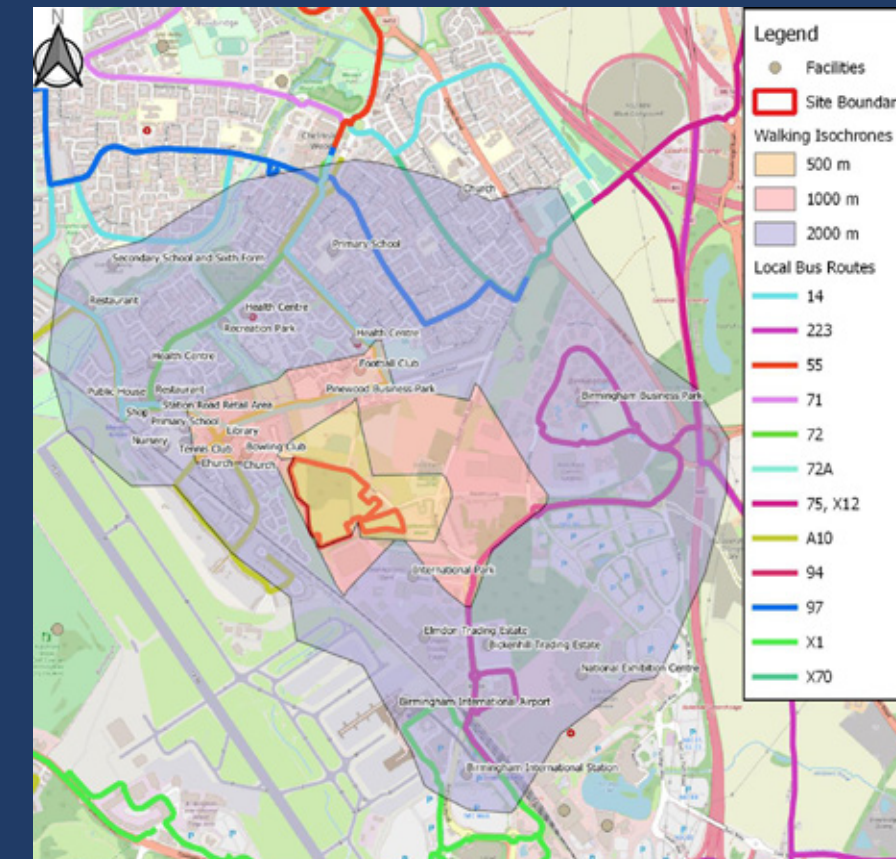


Fig 3.6 | WALKING CATCHMENT | NOT TO SCALE

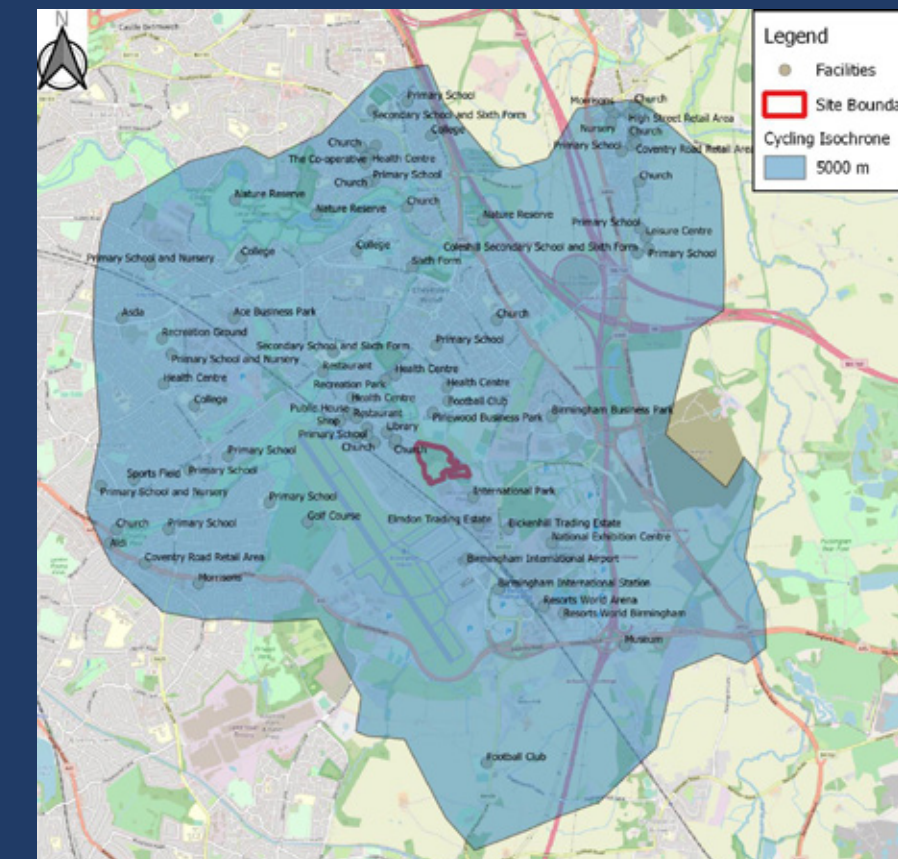


Fig 3.7 | CYCLE CATCHMENT | NOT TO SCALE

- 3.44 Fig.3.8 includes an extract from the SMBC walking and cycling map. This map designates Bickenhill Road as a road suitable for cycling and this provides a cycle link to the railway station. Off-road routes are also available to Chelmsley Wood and Castle Bromwich to the north. To the east a shared footway/cycleway is provided adjacent to Bickenhill Parkway to provide a route into Solihull Business Park and to Birmingham Airport and Birmingham International Railway Station.

- 3.45 To support Solihull's Transport Strategy 'Solihull Connected' SMBC are currently developing a Cycling and Walking Strategy for the borough. The purpose of the strategy is to:
- set the overall vision for cycling and walking in Solihull
 - set a clear standard for cycling and walking infrastructure
 - ensure major developments consider active travel – more sustainable approach to transport
 - embed cycling and walking initiatives into local policy



Fig 3.8 | SMBC WALKING AND CYCLING MAP EXTRACT

3.46 As part of the strategy, SMBC are producing a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). LCWIPs are a new Government approach to identify cycling and walking improvements required at a local level. The analysis within the draft LCWIP (October 2020) identifies the primary cycle corridors which make up the Solihull Cycle Network. The report also includes the recommendation that “For the connection to Marston Green along Bickenhill Road, limited opportunities are provided. Recommendations

include a shared use provision or traffic calming measures if segregation is not possible”.

3.47 With regards to walking the LCWIP identifies that Walking routes audit “semi-rural Bickenhill Road has a narrow footway on one side encumbered by street furniture and trees”. The recommendation is to “construct improved route in the verge or look at a more direct route to the Airport through Elmdon Trading Estate”.

3.48 Fig.3.9 presents a plan extracted from the LCWIP which shows the cycle corridors.

3.49 Relevant to the site are the following cycle corridors:

- Castle Bromwich to NEC/Birmingham Business Park via Chelmsley Wood
- Marston Green to Solihull town centre via Lode Lane

3.50 Improvement to these corridors would enhance the cycle options for local residents and would further enable them to cycle to access employment and retail facilities.

3.51 The Castle Bromwich to NEC/Birmingham Business Park via Chelmsley Wood utilises Bickenhill Road in front of the site. The LCWIP includes an audit of the cycle routes and identifies the following:

3.52 “Currently there is no dedicated cycle provision to link cycle users between the UK Central Area and Marston Green. Bickenhill Road is a narrow lane with potential high traffic speeds. Potential conflicts with motorised vehicles is a possibility and therefore an improved link between Marston Green and UK Central area should be explored”.

3.53 The report also includes the recommendation that “For the connection to Marston Green along Bickenhill Road, limited opportunities are provided. Recommendations include a shared use provision or traffic calming measures if segregation is not possible”.

3.54 With regards to walking the LCWIP identifies that Walking routes audit “semi-rural Bickenhill Road has a narrow footway on one side encumbered by street furniture and trees”. The recommendation is to “construct improved route in the verge or look at a more direct route to the Airport through Elmdon Trading Estate”.

3.55 The SMBC walking and cycling strategy proposals will improve the cycle options for local residents and would further enable them to cycle to access employment and retail facilities and would also further enhance the sustainability of the site.

3.56 In terms of bus travel, the nearest bus stops to the site are located on Station Road approximately 700 metres to the west of the site. These stops are served by the 72A and A10 services. Additionally, the 75 and X12 services are available to the east of the site on Bickenhill Lane. Fig.3.10 provides a summary of the available bus services.

3.57 With regard to train travel, Marston Green railway station is located approximately 1.4km to the west of the site. The station is managed by West Midlands Railway and has two platforms. Platform 1 serves regular southbound services to Birmingham International and onwards to Coventry, Rugby, Northampton, Milton Keynes and London Euston. Platform 2 serves northbound services to Birmingham New Street and local stops such as Lea Hall, Stetchford, Walsall, Cannock and Rugeley.

3.58 Birmingham International Railway Station is located further from the site than Marston Green station but is within walking and cycling distance of the site. This station provides services to a variety of locations including Birmingham, London, Manchester and Glasgow.

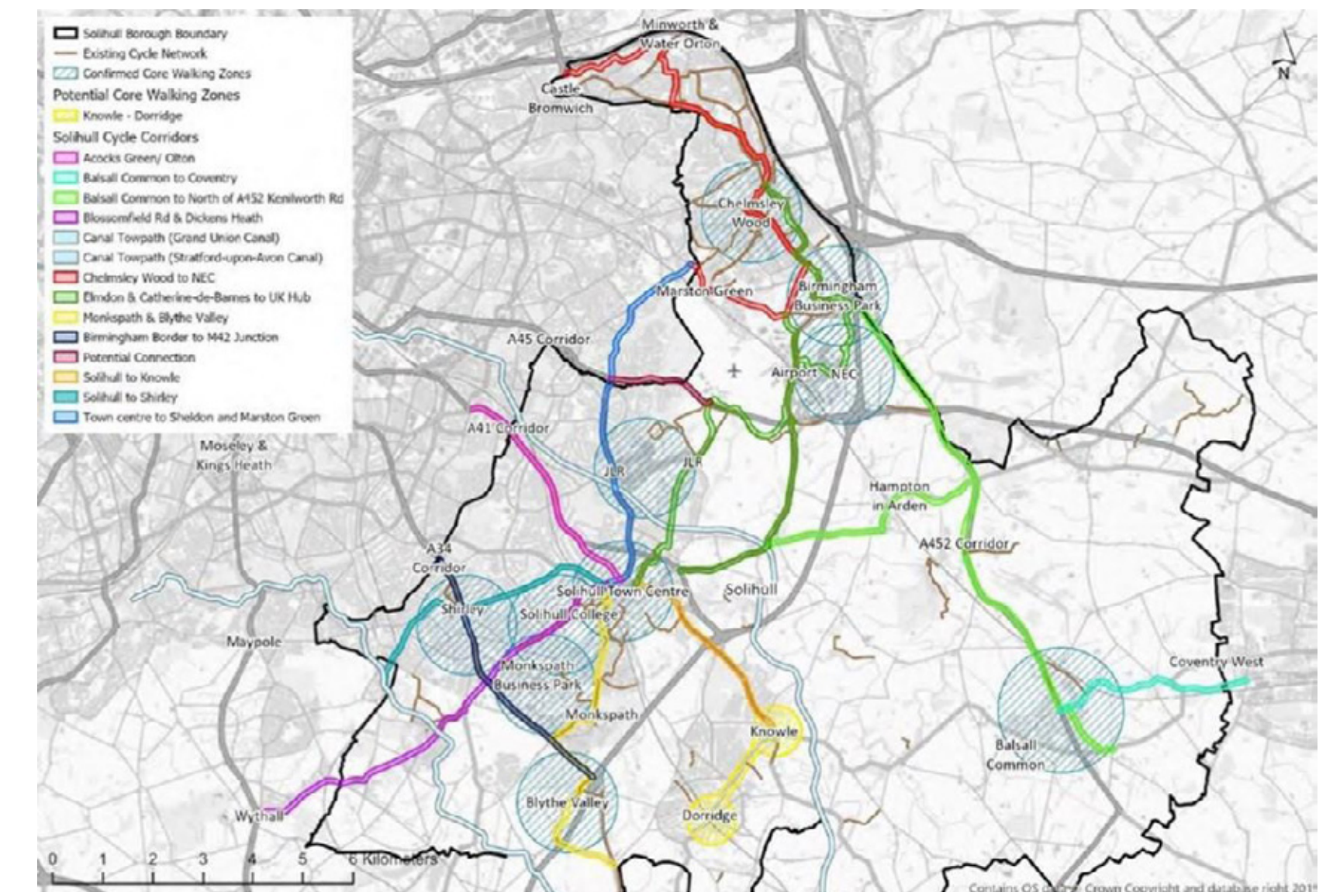


Fig 3.9 | SOLIHULL CYCLE NETWORK PLAN | NOT TO SCALE

SERVICE	ROUTES	SERVICE DETAILS
72A	Chelmsley Wood to Solihull via Marston Green	7 to 8 minute frequency Monday to Friday 8 to 10 minute frequency on a Saturday 20 minute frequency on a Sunday
A10	Solihull to Chelmsley Wood via Sheldon	4 services per day Monday to Friday
75	Birmingham International Station to Sutton Coldfield	5 services per day Monday to Friday 3 services on a Saturday
X12	Birmingham to Solihull via Chelmsley Wood	20 minute frequency Monday to Sunday

Fig 3.10 | BUS SERVICE SUMMARY

3.59 The train stations are likely to be a key destination for residents. The available pedestrian and cycle routes between the site and the stations provide a good opportunity for travel

by these mode of transport. Marston Green station benefits from 15 cycle parking spaces located outside the main entrance to the station, whilst Birmingham International Station has 45 spaces.

Services / Amenities

- 3.60 The site is located within 1200m of Marston Green village centre, which benefits from access to a supermarket, petrol station, ATM, pharmacy and local shops. The nearest primary school is located approximately 1000m west of the proposed site.
- 3.61 The site also benefits from its close proximity to the UK Central Growth Area which embraces existing employment hubs and proposed employment hubs, namely; Birmingham Airport, the NEC, Arden Cross (Proposed HS2 International Station and mixed use development), Birmingham Business Park and Jaguar Land Rover (JLR). This area will experience a significant increase in employment and jobs accordingly Land at Bickenhill Road, Marston Green will assist in providing homes close to jobs. **Fig 3.11** shows the local amenities within 400m, 800m and 1.2km of the site.

FLOOD RISK AND DRAINAGE

Flood Risk

- 3.62 All of the development land lies within Flood Zone 1 and well above flood levels.
- 3.63 The only watercourse in close proximity to the site is Low Brook, which is located beyond the School Rough woodland area.

Drainage

- 3.64 Severn Trent Water (STW) records indicates there is a foul water sewer running along Bickenhill Road. Feeding into this sewer is a rising main, which is in an area of public highway. It is considered that there will be adequate capacity in this sewer to drain the development site.
- 3.65 It is considered that ground conditions on site will support sustainable infiltration. If ground conditions are not suitable across the development parcels in part or whole an alternative options could be to drain surface water runoff to Low Brook with appropriate SuDS features.

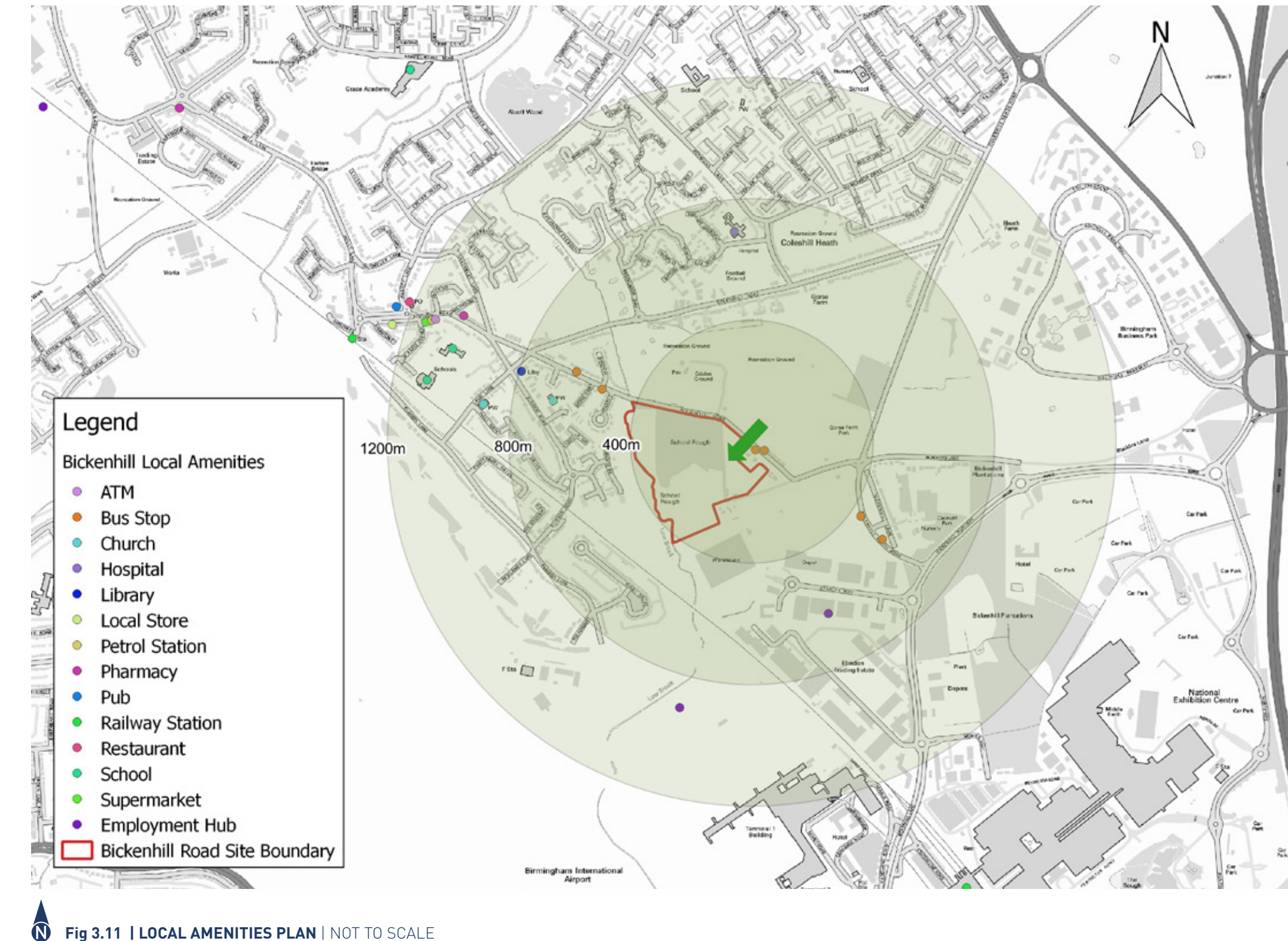


Fig 3.11 | LOCAL AMENITIES PLAN | NOT TO SCALE

ECOLOGY

Introduction

3.66 CSA Environmental have undertaken a site visit and desktop study to identify potential ecological constraints (Fig 3.5) to development, and to inform recommendations for further ecological surveys/assessments necessary to inform the promotion of the Site for future residential development.

3.67 Please note, all ecology survey work relates to the original, wider site to the north and south of Bickenhill Road and the following description reflects this context.

Methods

3.68 An extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey of the Site was undertaken on 31 January 2017, in order to assess the on-site habitats and their potential to support notable and protected species. The survey, encompassing the Site and immediately adjacent habitats that could be viewed, was conducted in wet weather conditions.

3.69 A Desktop Ecological Review was produced by CSA in January 2016 (for further details refer to the review CSA/2821/01 in appendix B). To inform this report, a desktop data search was completed; the Warwickshire Biological Records Centre (WBRC) and Birmingham EcoRecord (BER) were contacted to obtain records of species within 2km radius and details of non-statutory wildlife site designations from a 1km radius from the Site's central grid reference; and, details of statutory designated wildlife sites were retrieved from the Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) online database.

BASELINE ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS

Designated Sites

3.70 There are no international (e.g. SPA, SAC, Ramsar) statutory designated wildlife sites within 10km of the Site. There are two nationally important statutory designated wildlife sites within 3km of the Site (1.6km east and 2.6km south). Nine local statutory designated wildlife sites are present within 3km of the Site: including Marston Green Millennium Wood LNR (adjacent, south-east of the Site) and Marston Green Park LNR (c. 20m north-west from the Site).

3.71 Twelve non-statutory Local Wildlife Site (LWS) designations are present with 1km of the Site: including Schools Rough Ecosite (rejected as an LWS but is classified as Ancient Woodland) and Heaths Corner LWS, which occur on-site, as well as Low Brook and Kingshurst Brook LWS/Ecosite and Bickenhill Parish Burial Ground Ecosite, which occur adjacent to Site boundaries. The remaining eight non-statutory sites occur within 500m.

Habitats and Flora

3.72 The Site (as originally promoted) comprises of five parcels of land centred on Bickenhill Road, the Site is dominated by semi-improved grassland, with approximately 4 hectares of ancient woodland located centrally and the Low Brook watercourse on the western boundary running adjacent to the Site. Please refer to the Habitats Plan (Appendix A) (Fig.3.12) which maps these features.

Semi-improved grassland

3.73 All nine fields on-site comprise of semi-improved grassland, with occurrence of both rough and managed grassland habitat. F5 is a non-statutory designated LWS (semi-improved and acidic grassland) with some known botanical interest such as yellow oat grass *Trisetum flavescens*, sweet vernal grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum*, sheep's fescue *Festuca ovina* and great burnet *Sanguisorba officinalis* for example, although none of these species were recorded at the time of survey. The south-west corner of F8 is poorly drained and has dense clumps of rush *Juncus* sp. present.

Broadleaved woodland

3.74 W2 is mature woodland, recorded on the ancient woodland inventory. It is predominantly mature oak *Quercus* sp. and birch *Betula* sp., with an understory of holly *Ilex aquifolium*, hazel *Corylus avellana*, elder *Sambucus nigra* and bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. scrub. The track on the eastern side of W2 is now completely colonised by mature woodland of the same character. W1 is a small adjacent woodland with a similar composition to W2, although mature oak is dominant.

Scrub and tall ruderal vegetation

3.75 Tall ruderal vegetation is present along the majority of field boundaries and internally in some fields (F1, F2, F3 and F8) with denser patches occurring along the southern boundary of W2. Scattered scrub is present intermittently throughout the Site, predominantly composed of bramble, with continuous scrub running alongside Low Brook at the south-west end of the Site, and large areas of continuous scrub in F1 and F6.

Tree and hedgerows

3.76 There is a variety of hedgerow types on Site; ranging from a tree line with scrub along the western boundary, native out grown hedges, to managed garden hedgerows around residential properties on the eastern side of the Site.

3.77 The site is characterised by the presence of mature trees, largely oak but other species include occasional lime *Tilia* sp. and horse chestnut *Aesculus hippocastanum* amongst others within hedgerows. A significant tree line, of 11 mature oaks runs through F8. At the base of F4 mature individuals of alder *Alnus glutinosa*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and oak can be found.

Ponds

3.78 Two ponds were recorded during the site walkover and upon consulting aerial imagery a further 9 are present within 500m of the Site.



Fig 3.12. HABITATS PLAN | NOT TO SCALE

Fauna

Badgers

3.79 The WBRC provided two records of badger *Meles meles* from the local area from confidential locations over 400m from Site.

3.80 During the Site walkover incidental recordings of signs of badger activity were made such as disused badger setts, snuffle holes and mammal run-throughs. Habitat on-site provides good opportunity for sett building in the woodland area or hedgerow bases. There is also ample opportunity for foraging in grassland and woodland with good connectivity to the wider landscape.

Bats

3.81 The WBRC provided 6 bat records from within the search area, including roosts of an undetermined bat species and brown long-eared *Plecotus auritus*, c. 230m and c. 615m from Site respectively.

3.82 BER provided a further 21 records of common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* and *Nyctalus* sp., the majority of which relate to Sheldon Country Park c. 1.7km west of the Site.

3.83 The ancient woodland on-site and mature standard trees could support roosting features for a number of bat species. Hedgerows, Low Brook corridor to the west of the Site and ancient woodland areas could provide good foraging and commuting habitat for bats.

Dormouse

3.84 No records of dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* have been returned from WBRC or BER. The species is generally considered not to be found in this area and it is therefore unlikely that this species would pose a constraint to proposals, however if works were to significantly impact the hedgerow habitats or woodland on-site this may need to be re-assessed.

Riparian Mammals

3.85 WBRC have provided records of both otter *Lutra lutra* and water vole *Arvicola amphibious* from within the local area. No water courses run through the Site, however the western boundary is adjacent to Low Brook which could support both of these species and has connectivity to a larger watercourses.

Birds

3.86 Local records have been provided of 31 bird species, including red and amber listed species. Species of potential note include Swift *Apus apus* (BOCC Amber), Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* (Amber), Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* (Red), Song thrush *Turdus philomelos* (Red) and Mistle thrush *Turdus viscivorus* (Red). The large range of habitats present on-site is likely to provide good habitat for nesting, sheltering and foraging for a variety of bird species.

Reptiles

3.87 Historic records were provided of common lizard *Zootoca vivipara*, grass snake *Natrix natrix* and slow-worm *Anguis fragilis* over half a kilometre distance from the site. This said, the Site walkover confirmed habitats on-site that could be suitable for reptile species, such as less managed grassland and scrub habitats, hence presence of reptile populations cannot be discounted.

Amphibians

3.88 BER provided four records of common frog *Rana temporaria* but no records of great crested newt *Triturus cristatus*. There are 11 ponds within 500m of the Site, including two on-site and one c. 30m north-east. On-site habitat provides opportunities for great crested newts in their aquatic and terrestrial phases.

Invertebrates

3.89 WBRC returned records of 73 invertebrate species, the closest being of a forester butterfly *Adscita statices* recorded c.10m east of the northern western boundary. The variety of on-site habitats, including grassland, woodland and nearby watercourses is likely to support a large number of invertebrate species and further surveys may be required by the local planning authority to identify any notable assemblages.

Summary of Ecological Constraints and Opportunities

Confirmed Constraints

3.90 Development at this Site will likely require avoidance, mitigation and / or compensation measures in respect to:

- Statutory Designated Wildlife Sites

- There are 9 LNRs within 2.6km of the Site, many designated for botanical reasons, it is not known how many are open for public access. Therefore, it is recommended that further investigation be carried out regarding the potential impact of increased recreational use of these sites and, if need be, consultation with the relevant authorities in order establish any potential requirements.

- Local policy Policy P10 (Natural Environment) 2013 Solihull Local Plan states that, "Development likely to have an adverse effect on a Local Nature Reserve or a Local Wildlife Site will be permitted only if the reasons for the development clearly outweigh the nature conservation value of the site and its contribution to wider biodiversity objectives."

- Non-Statutory Designated sites (Local Wildlife Sites and Ecosites)

- Schools Rough Ecosite (Ecosite 318/18), Heaths Corner LWS (48/18) occur on-site; Low Brook, Kingshurst Brook pLWS/Ecosite (56/18) and Bickenhill Parish Burial Ground Ecosite (46/18) occur adjacent to Site boundaries. The impacts of proposals will need to be carefully considered, with appropriate consultation and buffering to ensure minimal impact.

- Ancient Woodland

- The on-site woodland, Schools Rough is also included in the Ancient Woodland inventory. This area should be retained and enhanced alongside of development proposals with an agreed buffer from the proposed residential development.

- Hedgerows and Trees

- Hedges and their component mature trees are a Habitat of Principal Importance and have intrinsic ecological value. Where possible, these should be retained and enhanced alongside development of the Site, other than necessary access points. It is expected that removal of any sections of hedgerow would require at least equivalent lengths to be replanted.

Potential Constraints

3.91 Avoidance, mitigation and/or compensation measures may be required in respect to the following potential ecological constraints, subject to further surveys/assessment:

- Badgers
 - Evidence of badger activity was observed on-site and large areas of suitable habitat indicate that a full comprehensive badger survey will be necessary (February – April, September – October).
- Bats
 - Woodland and hedgerow on-site, together with adjacent brook corridor habitats provide extensive opportunities for foraging and commuting bats. Hence bat transect and static activity surveys are recommended to identify the level, diversity and distribution of bats at the and near to the Site (April to September).
 - Trees on the Site boundaries and areas of woodland could host roosting features for bats. If significant roosting potential is identified, then further Bat Roost Surveys should be undertaken to determine the presence or likely absence of roosting bats, in order to avoid direct or indirect impacts to this group of species.
- Birds
 - Numerous notable and common bird species have been recorded near to the Site. Due to the diverse habitat available, breeding bird surveys are recommended (March – June).
 - The nests and eggs of all wild birds are subject to legal protection. Any clearance of potential nesting habitat should be undertaken outside of the bird nesting season (March-August inclusive), or immediately following confirmation by a suitably qualified ecologist that no active nests are present.

- Reptiles
 - Large areas of habitat on-site are considered suitable for locally recorded reptile species, consultation on scope of survey is recommended with the local authority; and potentially further surveys to establish presence/absence is recommended in key habitats (April – October).
- Water Vole and Otters
 - Given the proximity of the Site to suitable water bodies to support both water vole and otter. Consultation with the local planning authority is recommended to agree on suitable buffers to avoid impacts and/or ascertain the level of surveys required.
- Great crested newts
 - There are aquatic and terrestrial habitats found at the Site for great crested newts, however no records of this species in the area. However, further pond scoping surveys are recommended, to assess their habitat suitability (any time of year) and consider the need for presence /absence surveys (mid-March to mid-June).

Conclusion

3.92 There are a number of ecological constraints identified at this Site, including those associated with potential impact of increased recreational use often arising with residential development and LNRs. In addition with the non-statutory designated LWS's present on or adjacent to Site.

3.93 Sympathetic masterplan designs should take into account both the need to retain trees, hedgerows and woodland where possible, and provide adequate buffers to sensitive habitats such as streams and ancient woodland, which are likely to support higher levels of biodiversity.

3.94 Further survey work has been recommended for a number of species; this will inform development proposals and highlight any legal constraints, ensuring appropriate mitigation measures are developed. Opportunities will exist to create new habitats and provide other ecological enhancements alongside development.

3.95 Considerations will need to be made regarding Biodiversity Offsetting assessments, which is now a mandatory requirement in all Warwickshire districts, consultation with the local authority and Environment bank may be beneficial.

3.96 Whilst this is a complex site with regard to habitats and land parcel distribution, no overriding constraints to development have been identified. Subject further survey work to assess potential constraints to the proposals, together with implementation of consultation; inclusion of appropriate buffers; and, mitigation measures in respect of confirmed ecological constraints, it is considered that residential development could be successfully accommodated at this Site.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

3.97 An assessment (**Fig 3.13**) has been made of the potential heritage constraints to the development of land at Bickenhill Road for residential usage. This has considered built and below-ground heritage issues.

- The assessment has been informed by the following sources Historic England National Heritage List for information on designated assets comprising Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields and World Heritage Sites
- Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council website for information on Conservation Areas
- Solihull Historic Environment Board
- Historic Ordnance Survey mapping
- Satellite imagery

BUILT HERITAGE

3.98 There are no designated heritage assets located within or immediately adjacent to the site.

3.99 5 Elmdon Road Grade II Listed Building located c. 420m to the west of the site. This building is situated within existing residential development in Marston Green.

3.100 Packington Hall Park and Garden Grade II* Listed Garden located c. 3.5km to the east of the site and beyond the M42 motorway.

ARCHAEOLOGY

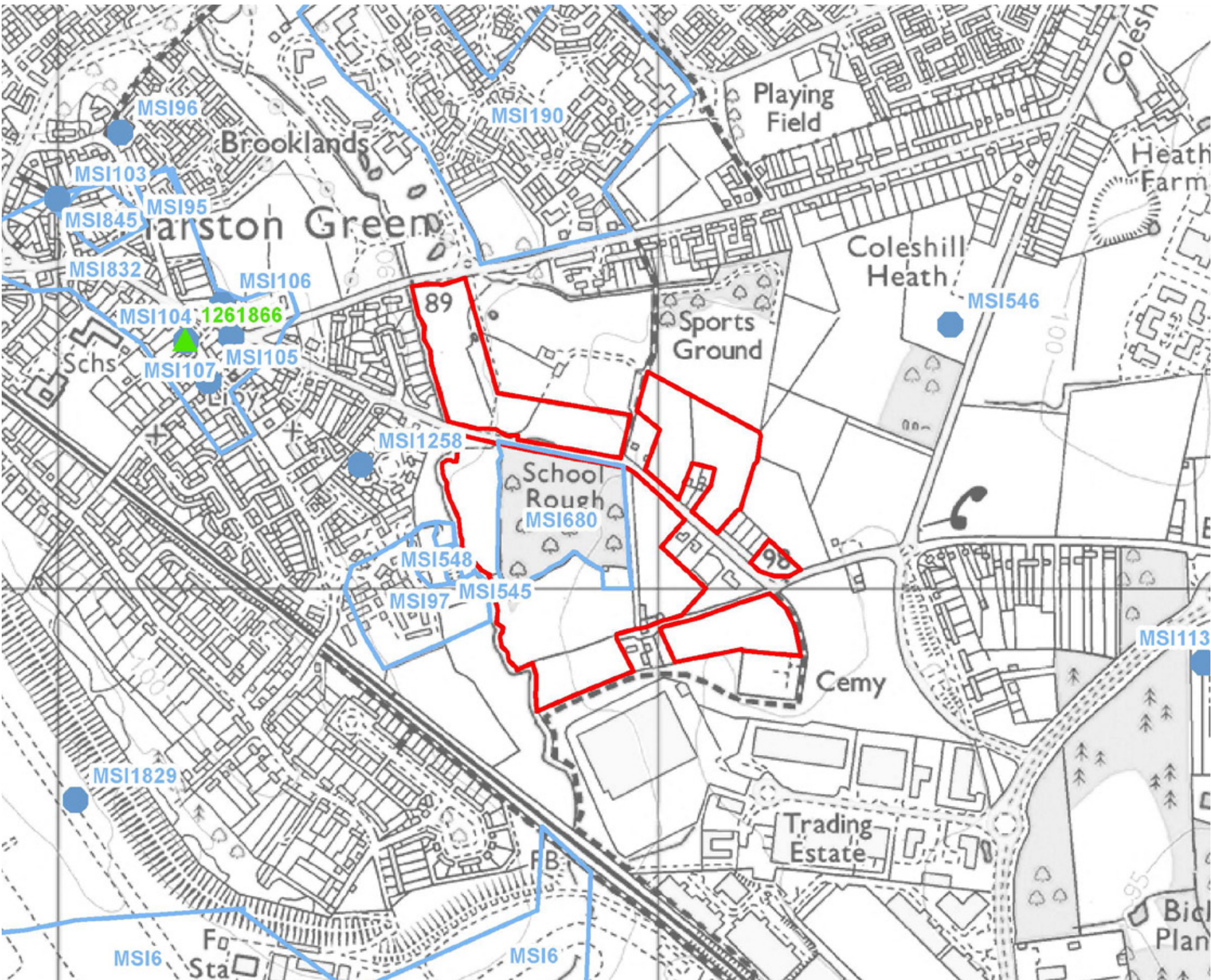
3.101 The findspot of a Thames Pick, a Mesolithic flint axe is recorded in the vicinity of the site, c. 350m east of the site; HER ref.MSI546).

3.102 A possible medieval moated mansion site and fishpond is recorded to the west of the site beyond Low Brook and the line of the historic Sheldon/Coleshill Parish boundary (HER refs.MIS548/545) There is no current evidence to indicate that associated activity extended into the proposed development site. A post-medieval farmhouse is located within the medieval moat.

3.103 Historic cartographic sources indicate that in the later 19th Century the site comprised of agricultural land with an area of woodland known as 'School Rough' (HER ref. MSI1680) located within parcel 1. This situation appears to be unchanged today.

CONCLUSIONS

3.104 Initial assessment of recorded heritage assets within and in the vicinity of the site has not identified any major heritage constraints to development.



- KEY**
- ▲ Listed Building
 - HER data point
 - HER data polygon

Fig 3.13. LISTED BUILDINGS PLAN | NOT TO SCALE

Utility Services

- 3.105 Initial investigations have identified that there are existing electricity, water, telecoms and gas supply infrastructure located within the vicinity of the site at Bickenhill Road. These services run within the local highways supplying local residential properties in the area.
- 3.106 Severn Trent Water operate and maintain the existing public drainage networks serving the surrounding area. The sewer records for the area indicate that there is a 225mm dia foul sewer that runs northwards along Bickenhill Road. It is proposed that the foul flows will be discharged into the existing Severn Trent network.
- 3.107 Severn Trent Water asset plans confirm there is no existing surface water sewers located within the vicinity of the site. It is therefore proposed that surface water flows from the development will be discharged via the use of sustainable urban drainage techniques. It is anticipated that the ground conditions are suitable for infiltration and sustainable urban drainage techniques however this is subject to confirmation by a full ground investigation.
- 3.108 Existing electricity, water and gas supplies, all of which run along Bickenhill Road, will be utilised in order to serve the site.

Noise

- 3.109 A noise and vibration survey will accompany any future planning application on the site. The site is in close proximity to Birmingham Airport, the site is however located outside of the noise contours for the airport, including revised contours for the proposed expansion options. It is considered that road noise and noise from the existing industrial estate are likely to be the main noise source affecting the site. Any future planning application will consider the existing noise and will ensure that the relevant acoustic mitigation measures can be implemented and delivered on site to ensure an appropriate level of amenity can be provided for the proposed residential development.

04 | EMERGING PROPOSALS

DEVELOPMENT AND QUANTUM

- 4.1 The net development area of the proposed residential development is 3.9 hectares (9.64 acres) of the sum 7.91 hectares (19.55 acres). The site includes proposed areas of public open space and attenuation area **(Fig.4.1)**.
- 4.2 Green spaces have been designed to soften the edges of the development envelope while maintaining existing vegetation where possible. Outward facing dwellings are proposed on the fringes of the development to assist in the surveillance of the retained Coppice and existing and proposed public open space.
- 4.3 The current infrastructure showing tree lined verges creates a green vein to run East to West, this will act as a conduit between Heavily wooded Bickenhill Road and the Low Brook planting.
- 4.4 Taking into account the location of the site within the green belt but also its proximity to the urban fringe, a dph of 35-40 has been proposed. This will complement its semi-rural location whilst also taking into account Solihull Council's housing mix policy which sets out a requirement for higher number of 1,2 and 3 bedroom units. With a density of 35-45dph the site will achieve approximately 137-176 units and will provide a mix of housing, sizes and tenures.

- 4.5 Pedestrian footpath links have been proposed to cross a large proportion of the site, these will link back to the surrounding context including existing PROWs, Bickenhill Road and through the proposed natural play space to the North-West as shown on the proposed Design Concept Plan contained as **Fig 4.1**.
- 4.6 All development has been offset from the ancient woodland contained within School Rough Coppice by which has been identified as a non-statutory local Eco Site designation, to ensure an appropriate separation from the existing mature trees.
- 4.7 Development has been proposed to sit outside the latest flood mapping estimates (obtained from the E.A flood maps) as shown on the Design Concept Plan **(Fig 4.1)**.

ACCESS

- 4.8 Vehicle access to the western site is proposed onto Bickenhill Road adjacent to the existing dwellings. The vehicle access to the eastern site is proposed on the outside of the bend on Bickenhill Road. To provide the access amendments are proposed to the mainline carriageway to provide the access whilst also retaining the existing driveway access and the access to the burial ground.
- 4.9 Access drawings are contained within Chapter 3 of this document **(Fig.3.4)**.
- 4.10 A principal tree lined street enters the site via the landscaped frontage which will define the circuitous route. Traffic will continue along a series of defined primary streets which will in turn disburse traffic around the development. The route passes through the most southern and south west parcels and meanders alongside development, mature hedgerows and existing woodlands.
- 4.11 The established primary route will also underpin the hierarchy of streets which includes secondary linked shared surface streets and lanes and tertiary private driveways in accordance with Manual for Streets.
- 4.12 A number of proposed pedestrian links are proposed which improve accessibility to the existing local surrounding facilities, recreation fields and nearby public right of ways.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

- 4.13 A large proportion of the site will be retained as green infrastructure which is a key feature of the proposals. The retained green space incorporates existing trees and hedgerows in addition to new areas of public open space which include incidental open space intended for recreational use and newly created footpath links which will link on to the wider surrounding context.
- 4.14 Interconnected green space corridors around the eastern, southern and western fringes of the development provide an attractive soft edge to compliment the proposed development. The majority of existing vegetation is proposed to be retained where possible although there will be some loss where sections need to be removed for access and internal connectivity.
- 4.15 The site low point to the west will be used for storm water attenuation features associated with sustainable urban drainage. [SuDs].
- 4.16 An appropriate buffer is provided between the proposed residential development and the ancient woodland within School Rough to ensure there will be no adverse impact on the ecological value of the Coppice.
- 4.17 Taking into consideration the location of the site and scale of the proposed development, a proposed equipped area for play is identified within the proposals and indicatively shown centrally within the development between existing residential and proposed development. Informal open areas of green space are proposed to achieve soft development edges.
- 4.18 The proposed open space has been designed to comply with Local Authority standards as shown on the illustrative layout.

05 | SITE SELECTION ASSESSMENT

5.1 Fig.5.1 and Fig.5.2 provide an assessment of Land at Bickenhill Road, Marston Green against Solihull MBC's site selection criteria uses to assess the suitability of sites within the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment, 2016 (SHELAA), and the Interim Sustainability Appraisal Report, January 2017 (SA), and their respective 2020 updates. It is considered that Land at Bickenhill Road would have a low impact when judged against each individual criterion whilst helping to deliver much needed and sustainably located development.

SHELAA SUITABILITY CRITERION	
Access Infrastructure Constraints	Existing road access via Bickenhill Road is adequate.
Contamination Land/Landfill Site	The site does not lie within this constraint.
Ground Conditions	There is no evidence of any contamination on site.
Heritage	
BMV Agricultural Land	The Agricultural Land Classification of the site is Grade 5 agricultural land. Development of this site would not result in the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land
High Pressure Gas Pipeline	The site does not lie within this constraint.
Flood Risk Constraints	The site is predominantly within flood zone 1 with areas of flood zone 3 on the western periphery of the site adjacent to the existing Low Brook. No built development is proposed within the parts of the site that fall within Flood Zone 3.
Bad Neighbour Constraints	The site has no bad neighbours.

FIG 5.1. | SHELAA SUITABILITY CRITERION TABLE

SHELAA SUITABILITY CRITERION	
Biodiversity	The site comprises predominantly agricultural fields adjacent to an area of woodland known as School Rough which is designated as an Ecosite, an Ancient Woodland. There is a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) on the opposite side of Bickenhill Road, beyond the site boundary. The Design Concept Plan (Fig 4.1) has been carefully designed to ensure an appropriate offset of development from the Ancient Woodland. The Design Concept Plan shows that all residential development would be located away from School Rough, LWS and the areas of the site that fall within Flood Zone 3. It is considered that this development would not have an adverse impact on environmental quality of the LWS, School Rough woodland (Ecosite and Ancient Woodland) or the site as a whole.
Suitability of Location Constraints	The site is adjacent to the built up area of Marston Green.
Other Suitability Constraints	N/A

- KEY**
- LAND PROMOTED FOR DEVELOPMENT
19.55 ACRES / 7.91 HECTARES
 - OTHER LAND WITHIN CONTROL OF L&Q BUT NOT PROMOTED FOR BUILT DEVELOPMENT
14.05 ACRES / 5.69 HECTARES
 - NET DEVELOPABLE AREA @
9.44 ACRES / 3.9 HECTARES
@35 DPH = 137 UNITS
@40 DPH = 156 UNITS
@45 DPH = 176 UNITS
 - ★ POTENTIAL SITE ACCESS
 - PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL AREA
 - PROPOSED PRIMARY STREET
 - PROPOSED STREET/ LANES
 - PROPOSED FOOTPATH LINKS
 - EXISTING TREES (INDICATIVE)
 - PROPOSED TREES
 - INFORMAL TREE BUFFERING
 - FEATURE SPACES/ JUNCTURES
 - ★ LOCALLY EQUIPPED AREAS OF PLAY
 - ★ NATURAL PLAY SPACES
 - STORM WATER ATTENUATION
 - PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAYS
 - ★ ECO SITE - NON STATUTORY LOCAL DESIGNATION AND HISTORIC WOODLAND
 - ★ LOCAL WILDLIFE SITE (LWS)

FIG 4.1. DESIGN CONCEPT | NOT TO SCALE



SA SUITABILITY CRITERION	
SA Suitability Criterion	
SA1 Contribution to Regeneration and Economic Development	Development located within the top 10% most deprived
SA2a Distance to Primary School	617m (Marston Green Junior School).
SA2b Distance to Secondary School	1544m (Grace Academy)
SA3a Proximity to Bus & Train services	Within 400m of frequent bus or train service
SA3b Proximity to Principal Road Network	935m
SA4a Soils	Contains less than 20ha of agricultural land 1-2 or >20ha of 1-3b land.
SA4b Minerals	Site outside of minerals safeguarding area
SA7 Flooding	Some of the site is in flood zone 3 – this is proposed to remain undeveloped and will form part of the green infrastructure of the proposed development.
SA9 Enhance Ecological Sites	The LWS lies beyond the site and does not form part of the proposals for development.

FIG 5.2. | SA SUITABILITY CRITERION TABLE

SA SUITABILITY CRITERION	
SA10 Landscape Sensitivity	The site is located in a landscape with medium sensitivity to change. The site adjoins existing residential development that creates a strong Green Belt boundary. The Design Concept Plan (Fig 4.1) has been landscape and visually led with development located away from the more open land to the north of Bickenhill Road. Consideration has been given to existing landscape and where possible existing vegetation is to be retained and integrated into the layout. New planting is also proposed to provide further containment to the proposals. Existing physical features which include the existing School Rough Woodland and course of the Low Brook, as well as the defensible boundary of Bickenhill Road could be combined to form a new Green Belt boundary. Opportunities have also been exploited to implement additional vegetation to ensure the proposed development responds to and integrates with the existing urban fabric and landscape context.
SA11 Enhance Green Infrastructure	2m from >2ha of greenspace and 4243m from >20ha of greenspace. The development envelop lies to the north of the existing woodland of School Rough and away from the LWS. The extent of green infrastructure and open space ensures that the proposed built form will be contained in a robust and diverse framework of green infrastructure and open space.
SA12 Enhance and Protect Historic Assets	Heritage assets are more than 100m from site
SA14 Amenity	Potential sources of noise located to the south of the proposed site. Appropriate mitigation can be provided to ensure acceptable levels of amenity are provided for future occupants.
SA17a Distance to Healthcare	914m
SA17b Access to Leisure Facilities	7 leisure and play facilities within 400m, 10 within 800m and 16 within 1200m. the site is located within 400m of at least two facilities.
SA19a Distance to Key Economic Assets	637m
SA19b Distance to Convenience Stores or Supermarket	298m

06 | SUMMARY

- 6.1 L&Q Estate's emerging proposals for Land off Bickenhill Road, Marston Green are capable of contributing positively to meeting the housing needs of the Borough in a sustainable manner. The site is located within 1200m of Marston Green village centre, which benefits from a supermarket, petrol station, ATM, pharmacy and local shops. The nearest primary school is located approximately 1000m west of the proposed site and as such within walking distance of the site. Public transport provision is readily available with bus stops in close proximity of the site and Marston Green railway station is within 1400m of the site.
- 6.2 As has been set at within this document the site benefits from its close proximity to the UK Central Hub Growth Area which embraces existing and proposed employment hubs namely; Birmingham Airport, the NEC, Arden Cross (proposed HS2 International Station), Birmingham Business Park and Jaguar Land Rover (JLR), the proposals for which will significantly increase employment and jobs in the area.
- 6.3 Residential development on land at Bickenhill Road, Marston Green will assist the Borough in providing homes close to jobs in the main economic growth area in the Borough.
- 6.4 The technical information that has been provided within this Background Document sets out that there are no insurmountable physical constraints to the development of the site for residential development.
- 6.5 The scale and form of development has been landscape and visually led. The proposals fully take account of the presence of mature vegetation including the mature woodland of School Rough to the north and hedgerows throughout the site. The retained areas of vegetation combined with the proposals for new landscape planting will enhance the quality of the proposals. Existing features including the School Rough woodland and the course of the Low Brook and Bickenhill Road will form new defensible Green Belt boundaries.
- 6.6 The development proposals will include the:
- The provision of a range of dwelling types and sizes including affordable housing which would assist in meeting the Borough housing needs in a sustainable location on the edge of Marston Green;
 - The provision of new areas of public open space within the development including informal open space to achieve soft development edges, natural play space, an equipped play area indicatively shown located centrally within the development and new footpaths links which will link to the wider surrounding area as a recreational feature of the proposals;
 - The creation of a development that is well connected, readily understood and easily navigated, promoting a layout which reduces dependence on the car and which links to existing pedestrian networks;
 - The creation of a strong landscape structure, retaining existing hedgerows and providing new tree planting which will integrate the development with the surrounding landscape;
- 6.7 The work that has been undertaken by the project team demonstrates that Land off Bickenhill Road, Marston Green is suitable, achievable and residential development on the site is deliverable. L&Q Estates look forward to engaging with Solihull Council to discuss the site further.

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PLANNING | DESIGN | ENVIRONMENT | ECONOMICS | HERITAGE



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