

Land at Smiths Lane
Browns Lane &
Widney Manor Road

BENTLEY HEATH - SOLIHULL

MARCH 2019



ST. PHILIPS

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1. Introduction

Introduction

This document has been prepared on behalf of St Phillips in respect of land north of Bentley Heath as shown in Figures 1 and 2, hereafter referred to as 'the Site'. The purpose of this document is to provide a detailed response to the Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) Local Plan Review Supplementary Update Consultation document. This document is an update to the promotion document originally prepared and submitted in response to the Issues and Options Consultation in January 2016.

This submission demonstrates the opportunity to provide a combination of infrastructure and community benefits while also delivering a balanced amount of housing in response to local housing need. The submission is structured as follows:

- Description of the Site placing it within the context of Bentley Heath;
- An examination of the existing features of the Site, alongside, mitigation measures and strategies; and
- Initial ideas on how the Site could be laid out and positively integrated into the existing settlement to provide benefits to the existing and new community.

Technical studies specifically dealing with landscape, highways, ground conditions, arboriculture and ecology have been undertaken to inform these proposals and a summary of the findings are included in this document.

FIGURE 1 : Site Context

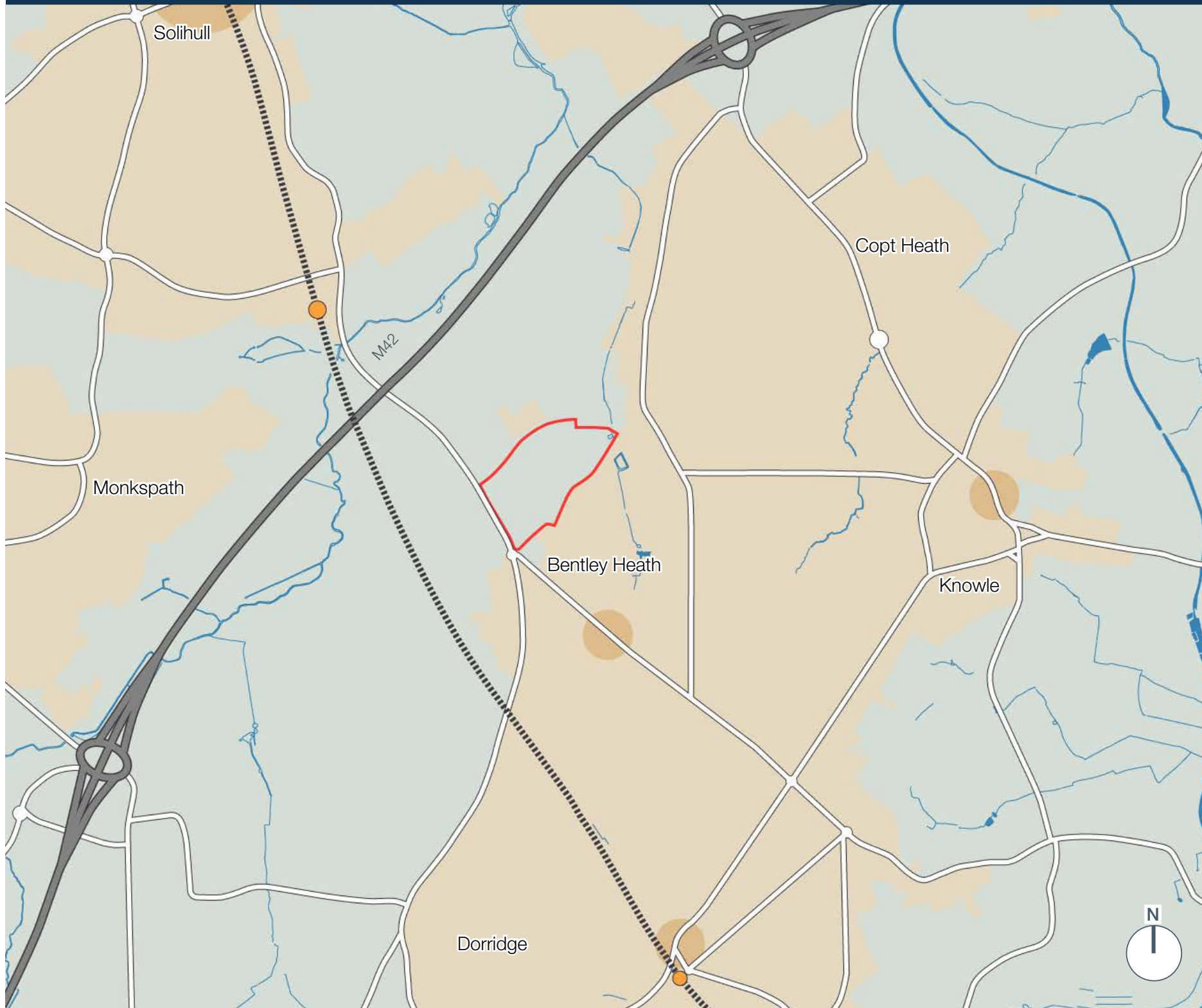
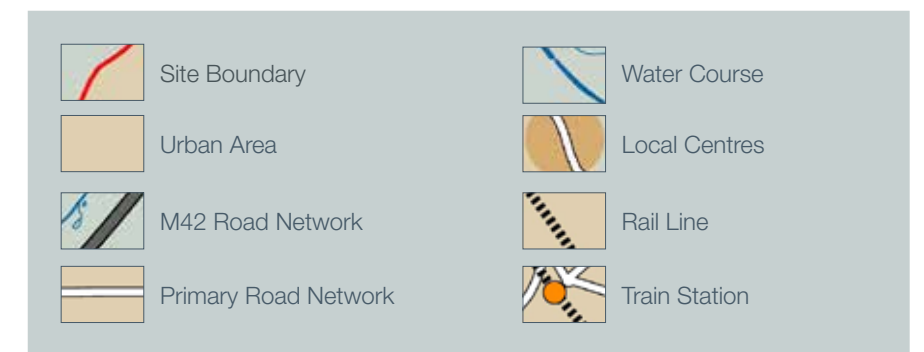


FIGURE 2 : Site Location



2. Context Analysis

Site and Wider Context

The Site is located on the north-western urban edge of Bentley Heath and measures approximately 14.8 Ha in total. It is bound by Smiths Lane, Browns Lane and Widney Manor Road and lies within the Green Belt. Smiths Lane and Browns Lane are both one way roads. The Site comprises agricultural land and is relatively flat.

The M42 motorway lies to the north of the Site but is separated from the Site by a significant section of open fields also designated as Green Belt.

The Site is approximately 2.7km (1.7 miles) to the south of Widney Manor train station and 3km (1.9 miles) to the north of Dorridge train station. There is a bus stop in both directions on Widney Manor Road, accommodating services S2 and S20 providing connections to Dorridge, Stratford upon Avon, Cheswick Green and Solihull (See Figure 6). These stops are located approximately 320m from the centre of the Site, within a 3 - 5 minute walk.

Bentley Heath Primary School is located 480m from the Site and Bentley Heath Neighbourhood Centre is located approximately 650m from the south of the Site. The nearest secondary school is the Arden Academy, which is within walking and cycling distance, less than 2.5km from the Site (Figure 4).

FIGURE 3 : Site in Relation to the Wider Context

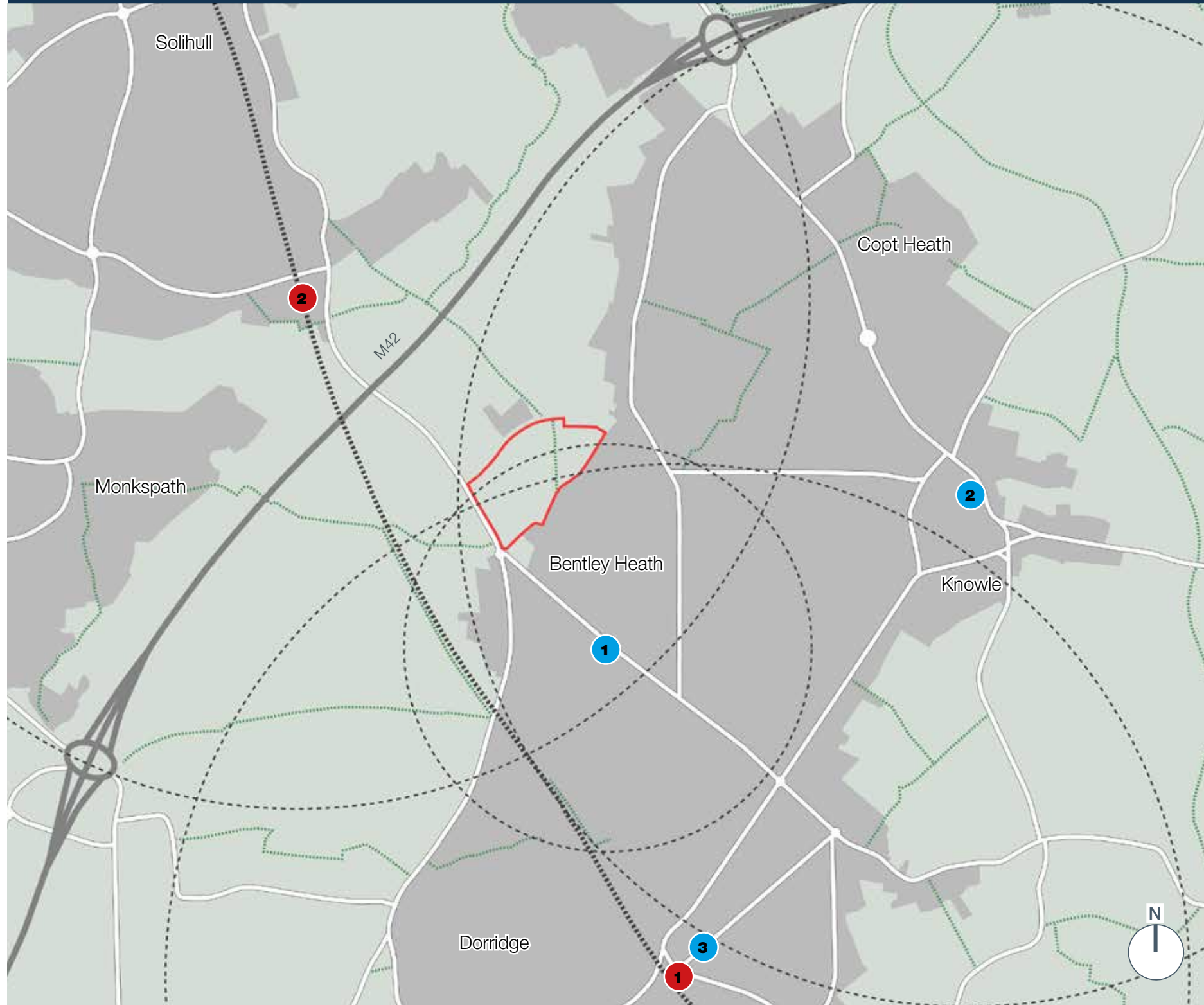
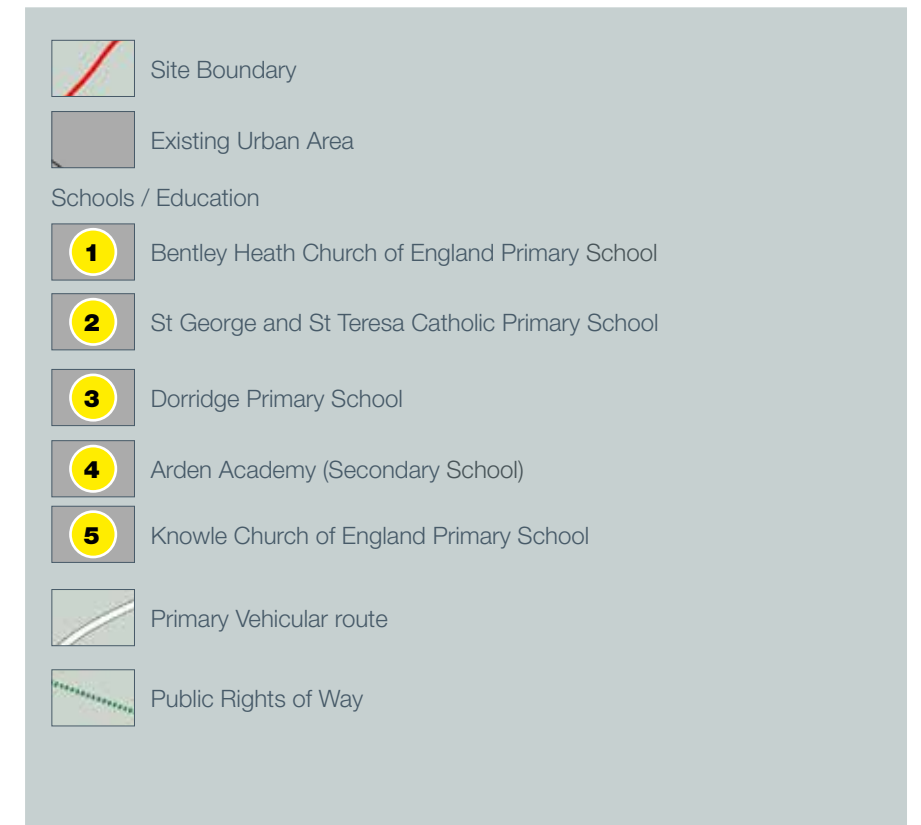
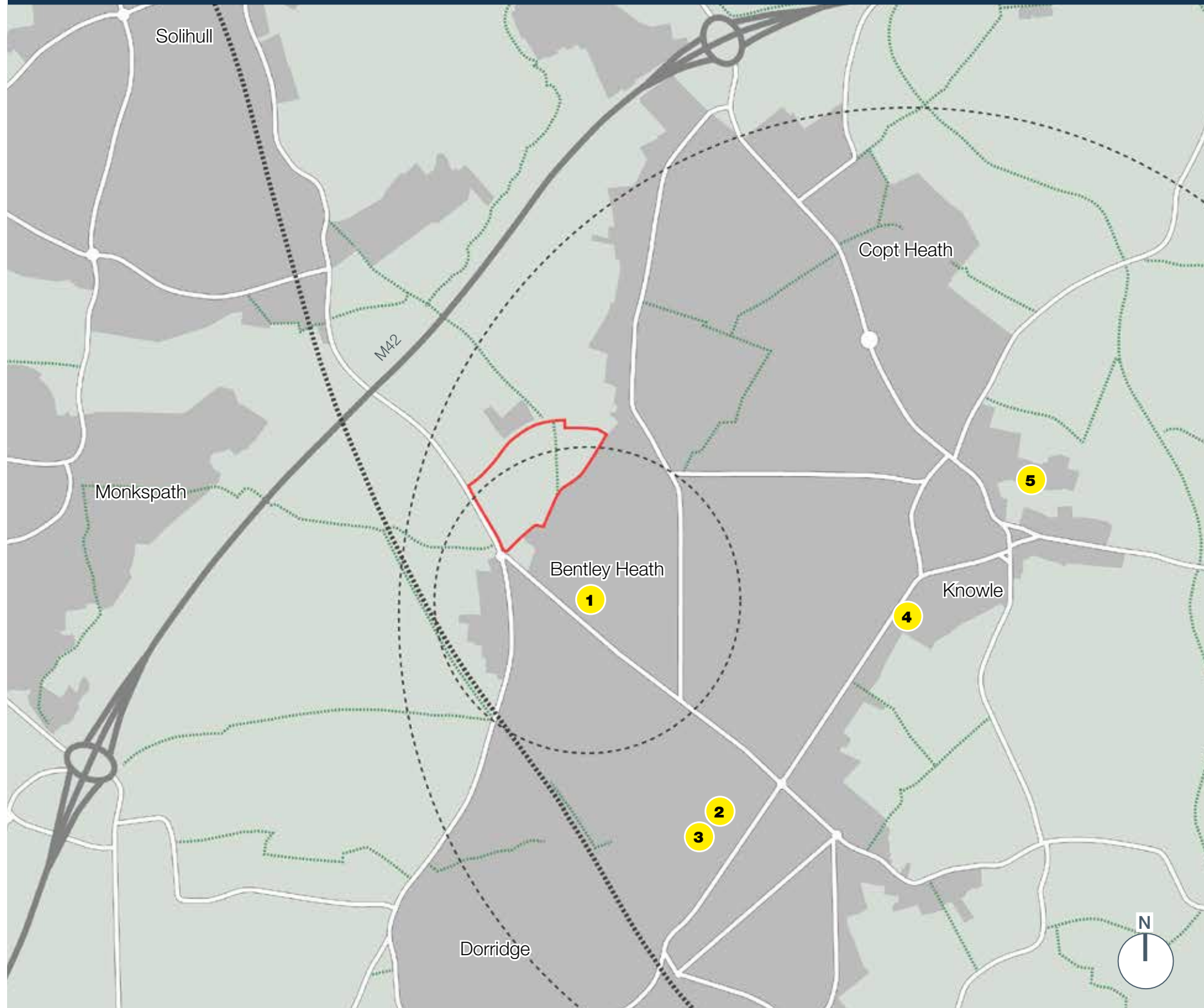


FIGURE 4 : Local Education Provision





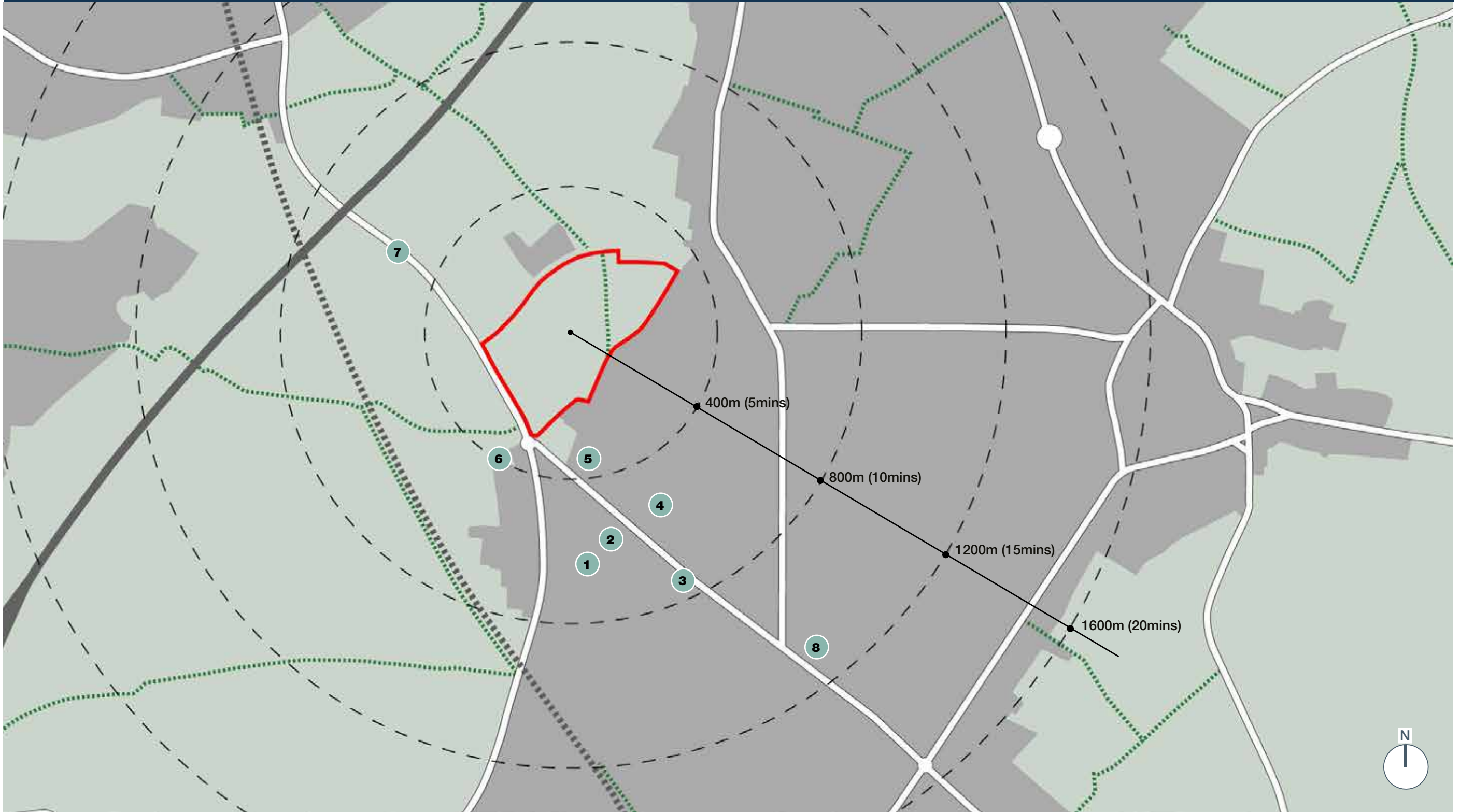
Local Services and Facilities

There are a number of local services and facilities within easy walking distance of the Site (Figures 3, 4 and 5), adding to the sustainable location of the Site. These include:

1. Bentley Heath children's play area
2. Bentley Heath community centre
3. Bentley Heath local centre
4. Bentley Heath Primary School
5. Bentley Heath nursery
6. Widney Manor Cemetery
7. Widney Services (ESSO)
8. Drum & Monkey Public House



FIGURE 5 : Local Facilities and Services and 400m Direct Line Walking Radii



Planning Policy Review

This section sets out the adopted and emerging planning policy context in relation to the Site as well as setting out the exceptional circumstances that exist which are considered to outweigh any harm that could be caused by the release of this Site from the Green Belt for residential development.

SOLIHULL STRATEGIC LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT

The Site was assessed in the SHELAA 2016 (reference 207) as performing well against the suitability, availability and achievability criteria. The two suitability criteria where the Site rated lowest (score 3 / 5) were 'Ground Contamination / Landfill – less than 50% of the Site is within the constraint' and 'Suitability of location – site is within or adjacent to a free standing village'. These are issues that we have addressed with further technical work is set out in this document.

SOLIHULL LOCAL PLAN REVIEW

One of the key issues being addressed in the Solihull Local Plan Review is where the new dwellings should be accommodated within the Borough, particularly given that a large proportion of the Borough is located within the Green Belt.

There is a chapter on the Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath area within the Draft Local Plan Supplementary Consultation document (January 2019). The plan states that there are extremely limited brownfield redevelopment opportunities within this area, therefore Green Belt release is required. There are two allocations proposed in this area, Hampton Road (300 – 350 dwelling capacity) and the Arden Triangle (600 dwelling capacity) both are currently Green Belt sites.

Paragraph 234 of the Plan states that within the Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath area:

“sites that are close to the existing settlement or are / can be well-served by public transport will be preferable, subject to their performance against the purposes of including land in Green Belt as supported in the Green Belt assessment and any other evidence base and constraints”.

The Site is adjacent to the settlement boundary; there are limited suitability constraints (as demonstrated in the Solihull SHLAA 2016); the Site is bound by roads which are a physical feature that could act as a new Green Belt boundary; and the redevelopment of the Site would not compromise the five purposes of the Green Belt (as demonstrated in the Landscape Green Belt Assessment section of this document on page 19).

It is therefore considered that it is a suitable and appropriate Site for release from the Green Belt and could provide a highly sustainable residential allocation within the Local Plan review.

KNOWLE, DORRIDGE AND BENTLEY HEATH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Site is located within the Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath Neighbourhood Plan (NP) Area. The NP has been through Examination and is now expected to be taken to referendum on 14 March 2019.

Some of the key issues identified in the Referendum version of the NP include risk of urbanisation, change of housing needs, poor design and availability of school places.

The Site is bound by roads and therefore the development of this Site will not result in Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath merging with other settlements. We understand that the potential narrowing of the Green Belt gap between Solihull and Bentley Heath. We strongly urge the Council to review its position regarding this matter, following a review of the further Landscape and Green Belt provided evidence provided in pages 17-21 of this submission. The redevelopment of the Site could also assist in providing a mix of high quality housing to meet the needs of the local community. St Phillip's is also proposing to provide land to accommodate a new 3 form entry primary school to address the issue of school place availability in the local area.

EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES FOR THE RELEASE OF GREEN BELT

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (February 2019) is clear that there must be a clear justification for development on Green Belt land, and that “exceptional circumstances” must be demonstrated for development to be permitted, as set out in paragraph 136 of the NPPF. A key paragraph in relation to the consideration of these “exceptional circumstances” is paragraph 136 which states:

“Once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified, through the preparation or updating of plans. Strategic policies should establish the need for any changes to Green Belt boundaries, having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so they can endure beyond the plan period.”

Paragraph 137 of the NPPF states that:

“the strategic policy-making authority should be able to demonstrate that it has examined fully all other reasonable options for meeting its identified need for development. This will be assessed through the examination of its strategic policies, which will take into account the preceding paragraph, and whether the strategy:

- a) makes as much use as possible of suitable brownfield sites and underutilised land;*
- b) optimises the density of development in line with the policies in chapter 11 of this Framework, including whether policies promote a significant uplift in minimum density standards in town and city centres and other locations well served by public transport; and*
- c) has been informed by discussions with neighbouring authorities about whether they could accommodate some of the identified need for development, as demonstrated through the statement of common ground.”*

In light of this, we set out below five exceptional circumstances which we consider outweigh any harm that is considered to be caused to the Green Belt.

1. Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area

The Birmingham Development Plan adopted in January 2017 identified an unmet need of 37,900 dwellings for the plan period 2011-2031. In addition to the Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area (‘GBBCHMA’) shortfall, the Issues and Options version of the BCCS Review suggested that there may be an additional housing shortfall of up to 22,000 dwellings (2016 – 2036). The GBBCHMA commissioned a Strategic Growth Study (February 2018) which identified that the outstanding minimum shortfall was 28,150 homes to 2031 and 60,900 homes to 2036. As this is a minimum shortfall, it is expected that more houses may need to be accommodated across the HMA.

The Strategic Growth Study February 2018 provides justification for the GBBCHMA that there are not enough brownfield sites (NPPF paragraph 137(a)) to accommodate all of the HMA shortfall nor will increasing densities on sites meet the entire shortfall (NPPF paragraph 137(b)).

In accordance with paragraph 24 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), local planning authorities “are under a duty to cooperate with each other, and with other subscribed bodies, on strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries”. In light of this, neighbouring authorities within the GBBCHMA, such as Solihull, will be expected to accommodate additional housing in order to address the housing shortfall. A Statement of Common Ground has yet to be signed but it is understood that the HMA authorities are working together to accommodate the housing shortfall across boundaries (NPPF paragraph 137(c)).

Additionally, the Solihull Local Plan Review document (Supplementary Version January 2019) has confirmed that there are not enough brownfield sites within the Metropolitan Borough to meet the housing need, therefore, SMBC clearly recognise that Green Belt release will be required.

In light of the above, it is therefore considered that there are exceptional circumstances which can justify changes to Green Belt boundaries within Solihull and the other GBBCHMA authorities. We consider that there are exceptional circumstances that justify the release of the Site from the Green Belt.

2. Strategic Direction of Growth

Paragraph 215 of the Local Plan Review (Draft Supplementary Version) states that Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath are one of two rural settlements which provide a good range of shops, services and facilities and is “well placed to accommodate growth in excess of just its own local needs”.

The settlement is also well served by public transport, including Dorridge and Windsor Manor Train Stations, with direct links to Birmingham and London. However, due to the limited opportunities to develop on brownfield land, paragraph 215 of the Local Plan Review states that “in order to accommodate new development, Green Belt release around the settlement will be required”.

Paragraph 234 states that subject to their performance against the purposes of the Green Belt, land that is close to the existing settlement and is / can be well served by public transport will be preferable for release. As set out in the Landscape Section of this document, the development of the Site for residential use would not compromise the five purposes of the Green Belt. In addition, the Site is adjacent to the settlement boundary and is well served by public transport.

Paragraph 235 sets out requirements in relation to sites under various land ownerships being brought forward in a comprehensive manner. Land at Smiths Lane, Browns Lane and Widney Manor Road entirely under the control of St Phillips so there are no issues with land assembly and, therefore, this site is deliverable.

In light of the above, we consider that this Site represents a location which supports the Council’s strategic direction of growth.

3. Affordable Housing

The release of Green Belt for the delivery of housing will also boost the supply of affordable housing. Paragraph 233 of the Local Plan Review (Draft Supplementary Version) states that affordable housing and smaller market homes for young people will be sought within Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath. The Site has the potential to deliver a mix of house types and affordable housing in direct response to the local need.

4. Contribution to Community Facilities

The proposed development at the Site could provide land to accommodate a new 3-form entry primary school to relieve pressure from existing primary schools. The development could also contribute towards local health facilities. Public open space and a contribution towards leisure facilities will also provide further benefits to existing and potential future residents.

5. Economic and Environmental Benefits

Release of the Site from the Green Belt for residential use would provide an increase in population to support the economic vitality and viability of existing shops and services within the urban area. The Site is unconstrained by significant environmental features and will provide a new network of green infrastructure which will improve the environmental quality of the Site.

Exceptional Circumstances

Both individually and cumulatively, we consider these points provide the exceptional circumstances that, when taken together, clearly outweigh the harm by way of inappropriateness. It is concluded that the “Exceptional Circumstances” required by the NPPF in order to approve inappropriate development in the Green Belt exist in this instance and that the proposals accord with Green Belt Policy.

DEFINING GREEN BELT BOUNDARIES

Paragraph 139 of the NPPF sets out guidance when defining Green Belt Boundaries.

- a) *“ensure consistency with the development plan’s strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development;*
- b) *not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open;*
- c) *where necessary, identify areas of safeguarded land between the urban area and the Green Belt, in order to meet longer-term development needs stretching well beyond the plan period;*
- d) *make clear that the safeguarded land is not allocated for development at the present time. Planning permission for the permanent development of safeguarded land should only be granted following an update to a plan which proposes the development;*
- e) *be able to demonstrate that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the plan period; and*
- f) *define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.”*

As demonstrated in the design section of this document, it is considered that Smiths Lane and Widney Manor Road which border the Site could provide a revised permanent Green Belt Boundary if it is released from the Green Belt and allocated for residential use.



Site Photograph.

3. Technical Site Analysis

This section of the document provides a summary of the technical analysis undertaken on the Site in relation to:

- Ecology
- Arboriculture
- Ground Conditions
- Landscape
- Greenbelt
- Highways

This section concludes with a summary of the Issues and the Opportunities for development of the Site.

Ecology

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has been carried out, comprising a Phase 1 Habitat Survey, ecological data search and evaluation of habitats and the notable species that could be supported by the habitats identified.

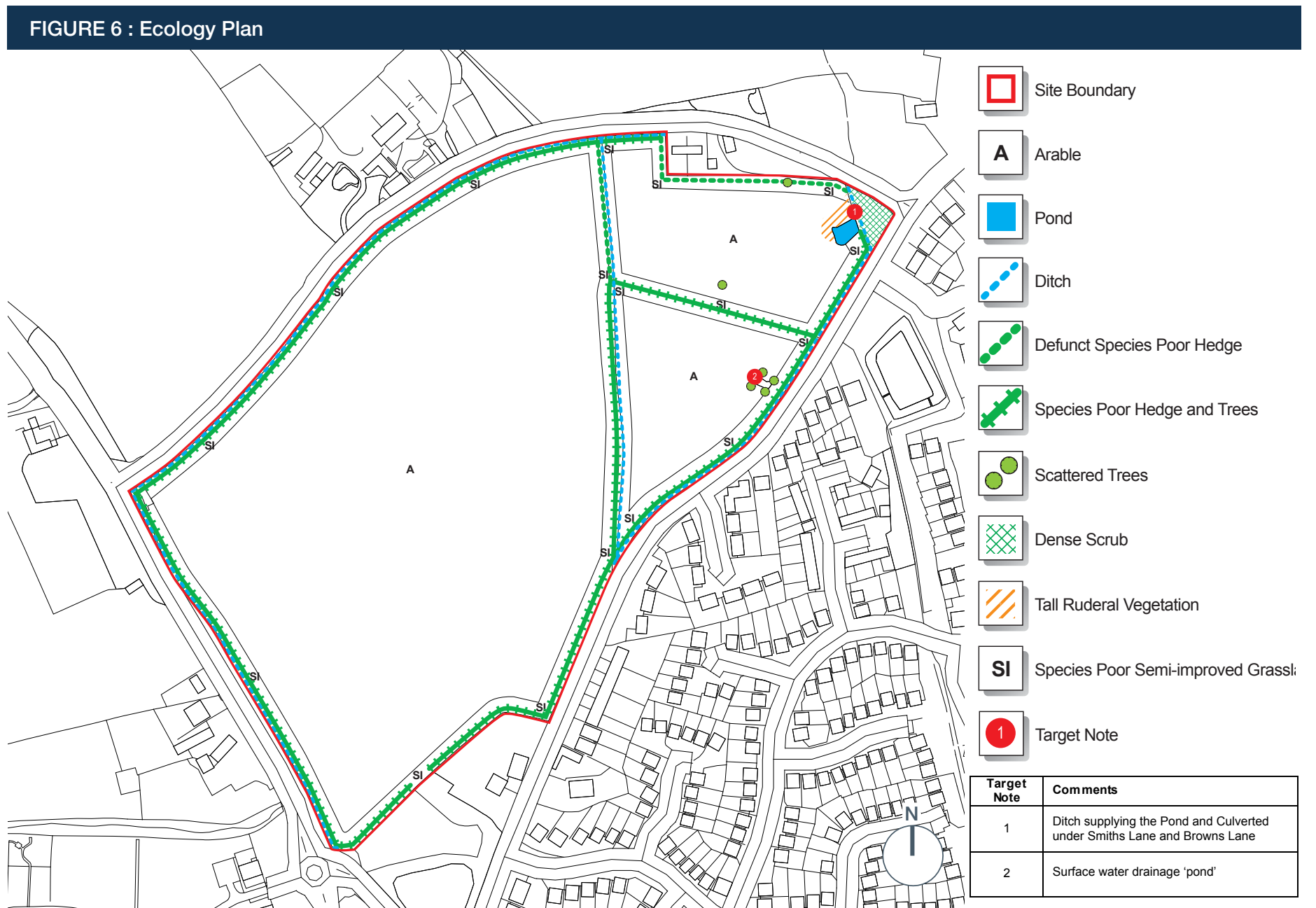
The Site is not subject to any statutory or non-statutory ecological designations. However, it does lie within a SSSI impact risk zone for the River Blythe SSSI. This does not preclude development of the Site.

The majority of the Site comprises arable fields with species-poor hedgerows, trees, field margins and ditches around the boundary. In the east of the Site a pond is present with adjacent areas of scrub and tall ruderal vegetation. These habitats provide opportunities for nesting and foraging common bird species, roosting and foraging bats, reptiles and amphibians.

All habitats are considered to be of ecological value at the Site level only given that they are common and widespread within the locale. Field margins, hedges and ponds are identified as HoPI and LBAP priority habitats, and would be retained in development proposals, where possible.

Given the size of the Site and the location of habitats, it is considered that development of the Site could take place whilst retaining the vast majority of habitats. There is potential for minimal loss of trees, hedgerows and field margins as well as the retention of the pond. There are a number of opportunities for ecological enhancements such as new habitat creation and management of retained habitats that could be secured as part of development proposals.

Based on the information available and with the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures, where necessary, sensitive design and ecological enhancements, it is considered that there are no reasons on ecological grounds that development of the Site could not take place.



Arboriculture

There are no TPOs in place within the Site boundary and the Site is not located within a Conservation Area.

The south-east section of hedgerow along Browns Lane is of landscape and habitat value, providing a strong green corridor linking the open habitat to north-east and south-west of the Site. The southwest boundary of the Site is considered to offer landscape and habitat value, and would also provide screening to any proposed development on the Site from Widney Manor Road.

A belt of trees along the western boundary (Smiths Lane) is considered to offer landscape and habitat value, and would also provide screening to any proposed development on the Site from Smiths Lane.

Cut hedgerows are present in the north-east of the Site and are considered to offer screening value to the residential properties to the north-west of Site. These features would also provide screening to any proposed development on the Site from Smiths Lane.

Groups of trees within the north-east corner are considered to be of landscape value and ecological value to the Site and the surrounding area. A public footpath / right of way follows the internal hedgerow from north to south, between Browns Lane and Smiths Lane. This hedgerow is therefore considered to be of amenity and landscape value to public users of this right of way.

Trees and hedgerows as noted above would be retained in future development proposals, where feasible, especially those forming / located adjacent to the boundary of the Site and those providing habitat and landscape value. This would maintain the landscape, screening and habitat value of these features and allow good integration of the proposed development into the existing landscape context.

The development proposals would offer the opportunity for additional tree and hedgerow planting, providing new landscape features and enhanced wildlife habitats.

FIGURE 7 : Arboricultural Assessmentures Plan



Ground Conditions

In the Solihull SHLAA 2016 the Site (reference 207) performed well against the majority of the suitability criteria apart from 'Ground Contamination / Landfill' and 'Suitability of Location'. In regards to the Ground Contamination Landfill criteria, it was noted in the SHLAA that "less than 50% of the Site is within the constraint".

In light of the above, a Phase 1 Geo-environmental desk-study has been undertaken to assess the current and past uses of the Site, the environmental setting (including geology, mining, hydrology and hydrogeology) and any potential contamination sources along with their associated risk to human health and controlled waters.

BGS Geological mapping shows the ground to be comprised of superficial deposits of clay, silt, sand and gravel, overlying Mercia Mudstone. It is likely that thicknesses of both topsoil and Made Ground are present across the Site.

The Site is currently in use as arable farmland, with historic OS mapping showing no significant features within the Site. A historical landfill site is recorded within the southern part of the Site on Environmental records, for which the waste type and dates of activity have not been recorded. The landfill is likely to pre-date licencing and will require further investigation.

The Environment Agency has classified the underlying solid geology as a Secondary B Aquifer. The Site does not lie within a Source Protection Zone (SPZ).

Risks associated with the past and present use for the Site have been assessed in relation to their associated impacts on human health and controlled waters. The level of risk is considered to be generally low, and locally moderate. Geotechnical hazards are not considered to pose a risk to the Site.

Further investigation works are recommended to determine more accurately the effect of the identified hazards on site, to include intrusive works, chemical analysis of soils, and ground gas monitoring. If any issues relating to potential contamination are identified on Site, appropriate measures can be undertaken to reduce any risk posed to development.

It is therefore considered that the current and historical use of the Site does not represent a risk to the environment and is suitable for the proposed end use of residential and educational development with associated infrastructure.



Site Photograph

Landscape and Visual

The landscape character baseline analysis has identified the following matters to be considered in forming a design response for the Site.

- The overall landscape character is considered to be of medium landscape sensitivity due to the mature trees and hedgerows and enclosed nature of the Site in the wider landscape and its current agricultural character.
- The key sensitivities of the Site include views from the public right of way that runs north / south across the Site, close views from the highway network and adjacent residential properties. Long distance views are screened by existing vegetation and built form.
- Residential development could be accommodated within the Site, incorporating a number of measures to ensure that the development would be in keeping with the surrounding landscape character and visual context.

These measures are illustrated on the landscape opportunities/ mitigation plan (Figure 8) which respond to environmental opportunities for the protection of this character type which include:

- Manage and enhance valuable woodlands, hedgerows, heathland, and distinctive field boundaries and enclosure patterns.
- Create new networks of woodland, heathland and green infrastructure, linking urban areas like Birmingham and Coventry with the wider countryside to increase biodiversity, recreation and the potential for biomass and the regulation of climate.



1. View from Browns Lane looking North west across the Site towards Widney Manor Road and Smiths Lane.



2. View from Browns Lane looking North west across the Site towards Smiths Lane

FIGURE 8 : Landscape Mitigation Plan



Potential Mitigation

The areas of mitigation measures arising from the landscape and visual effects identified are to avoid/ prevent, reduce or offset any significant visual effects. They are as follows:

- Protection of mature trees on site boundaries and within the Site
- Retention of existing hedgerows and reinforcing where necessary
- Setting development away from the Site boundary in order for development to be screened from adjacent highway network.
- Provision of new woodland planting to create a network of improved green infrastructure and to help screen any proposals
- The provision of a green corridor along the public right of way that passes north/south through the Site
- Utilising existing mature trees and woodland copse to add character to development proposals by ensuring they are an integral part of development proposals
- Provision of new open space within the Site and in particular on the lowest part of the Site adjacent to an existing pond on the eastern boundary of the Site.
- Increase biodiversity across the Site by creating different habitats including new woodland, new water bodies as part of a sustainable urban drainage system that could improve the ecology of the Site.

Landscape and Green Belt Assessment

This section sets out an objective assessment of the potential landscape and Green Belt issues in relation to the Site being developed for residential use.

THE NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK AND GREEN BELT

Chapter 13 of the (NPPF, 2019) 'Protecting Green Belt Land' is clear that authorities should direct development away from Green Belt where possible, or where this is unavoidable, direct development away from the most sensitive areas of Green Belt, subject to sustainability and deliverability considerations.

Sites which therefore do not make a strong contribution to the role and function of the Green Belt will be considered for potential release in order to facilitate sensibly planned growth.

The NPPF requires local councils to ensure that they have identified enough land to meet housing demand for five years, including an extra 5% to ensure market choice.

Paragraph 134 of the NPPF states that:

'Green Belt serves five purposes:

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

This document provides an objective assessment of the Site in relation to these five purposes. Consideration of the merits of the Site against each of the NPPF's five purposes of Green Belt is set out below:

A. To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas

The Site is located on the northern edge of Bentley Heath and is bounded to the south by Browns Lane, to the north by Smiths Lane, and to the west by Widney Manor Road.

Widney Manor Road is bordered on both sides by mature trees and hedgerow, with some veteran trees to the north around the junction with Smiths Lane. Smiths Lane is similarly tree lined, with branches forming a canopy over the road. There are a number of veteran oak trees to the eastern site boundary. Browns Road is more open in nature with hedgerow and veteran hedgerow trees forming the boundary. A line of large trees runs along a former hedgerow from the south of the Site to the north. The northern side of the Site faces out onto land forming a gap between Bentley Heath and the town of Solihull. This area of land is known as the 'Meriden Gap'.

The Site is contained by roads on all sides, creating a defined perimeter which prevents the potential for unrestricted sprawl. It is also contained within the landscape, being screened from long distance views by intervening vegetation, including hedgerows and trees. The Site has mature trees and hedgerows to its boundaries, which would allow it to contain development in a manner that minimises its impact on its surroundings.

Fragmented residential development along Widney Manor Road, Smiths Lane and Lady Byron Road give an urban fringe character to the landscape around the Site. If it were removed from the Green Belt, the Site would therefore form a logical extension to the urban area that does not create urban sprawl and would define a robust boundary to the Green Belt, due to its perimeter enclosure by roads.



Browns Lane looking south west



Smiths Lane looking north east

B. To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

The Site is located in an urban fringe location, at the current built up edge of Bentley Heath. To the south of the Site, the merging of surrounding villages has already occurred, as Bentley Heath has coalesced with neighbouring communities at Dorridge, Tilehouse Green and Knowle to create an urban area.

The Green Belt as a whole in this location plays a significant role in preventing settlement coalescence, with the Meriden Gap creating a strategic break in development between the built up areas of Birmingham and Coventry; however in this location, the role this plays is moderated by the presence of the M42 which creates a visual and physical barrier between the Site and any wider settlements to the north that could be considered possible to merge with. This is as a result of topographical changes, with the M42 set within a valley bottom alongside the River Blythe and the lack of inter-visibility between the Site and development to the north including Widney Manor and Hillfield despite the topography rising to this urban edge.

This lack of inter-visibility remains constant as you travel along Widney Manor Road heading south east towards the Site from the M42 motorway bridge and across the open gap between Solihull and the Site. A combination of changes in topography of 5-15m and intervening vegetation and mature trees ensure the Site is well screened from views. It is important to consider this three dimension aspect when assessing the potential for coalescence with neighbouring settlements.

The development of the Site would therefore not worsen the existing position with regard to the ‘merging’ of neighbouring towns, as, although it would constitute the expansion of development beyond existing boundaries, it would not encroach on neighbouring settlements due to the lack of a neighbouring settlement to the non-built boundary, the presence of the M42 and changes in topography.

C. To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

Most Green Belt sites will make a contribution to openness, but being made up of well contained land parcels, enclosed by roads, the Site, as already explained, is well contained within its setting. Views of the Site are only possible in close proximity and in certain locations not possible at all due to the height and nature of boundary treatments. From long distance views the Site is not visible due to intervening landscape and buildings.

It is proposed to retain key landscape features of the Site including significant internal hedgerows and field trees. The development will also work with the natural topography of the Site. Opportunities also exist to provide mitigation planting and ecological enhancements in line with the Site’s landscape character.



View south from pedestrian footbridge over M42. The Site is not visible



View south from edge of Lovelace Avenue. The Site is not visible.



Internal hedgerow along public right of way looking north will be retained.

D. To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

The Site is on the edge of the village of Bentley Heath, which although attractive, is not considered to constitute an historic town; the majority of its development dating from the 20th century. There are no heritage designations within the Site itself, with the closest being a scheduled monument 'Tilehouse Green moated site', approximately 40km to the south of the Site.

The closest listed building is the Church of St John the Baptist, St Lawrence, and St Anne, approximately 1.3km from the Site, with a cluster of listed buildings located around 1.5km away in the village of Knowle. There are further listed buildings mainly centred around the town of Solihull to the north, which is also the closest conservation area to the Site and screened from the Site by significant intervening development.

As such, heritage sensitivities are fairly limited at the Site and development of the Site could not be said to undermine the setting and special character of an historic town.

E. To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

The removal of this Site from the Green Belt would not affect the potential for Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, or other stakeholders, developers and interested parties in the district to facilitate urban regeneration through the recycling of derelict and other land.

Given the growth aspirations of the Council and the acknowledgement of the unmet need for housing, it is clear that Green Belt land must be released in Solihull Metropolitan area to meet housing numbers and housing need. This site is well contained and could be developed in a sustainable way.

Conclusion

The assessment demonstrates that the Site would not compromise the five purposes of the Green Belt in that:

- It would not result in unrestricted sprawl of the built-up area of Bentley Heath as the Site has a clear defensible landscape boundary and includes existing residential development to the north, east and west of the Site.
- The Site would not merge with key neighbouring towns and settlements as the topography and intervening vegetation ensures the Site is well screened from existing residential settlements to the north and west.
- Encroachment into the wider countryside will inherently change the openness of the Site. However, the retention of existing landscape features and additional mitigation and tree planting will ensure the Site fits well into its landscape character.
- There is no impact on the setting or special character of historic towns or as a result of the development of the Site itself. The Site is not within a conservation area or setting of a listed building.
- Development would not prevent or discourage the recycling of derelict or other urban land within the district.

Overall, for a relatively modest loss of Green Belt land in this sustainable location that does not undermine the five tests that are defined in the NPPF it is therefore concluded that the Site is suitable for residential development.



Highways

The Site is strategically located for access to the local and wider highway networks. Solihull is located approximately 3.2km (2 miles) to the north of the Site and is accessible via Widney Manor Road. Junction 5 of the M42 is located within approximately 3.2km to the north east of the Site and provides access to the A41 which links to Solihull and Birmingham in a northbound direction.

Junction 4 of the M42 is located approximately 3.2km miles to the south west of the Site and provides access to Stratford Road which provides a link to Birmingham. In a northbound direction the M42 delivers access to the M6 linking to the M1 and in a southbound direction the M42 connects to the M40. The existing highway network can be seen on Figure 9 & 10.

Origin/destination statistics from Census data provides a useful indication as to where people are likely to travel to/from for work purposes. Census data for the local area (Solihull 28 MSOAs) has been used to calculate the most appropriate route that people would take to/from the Site.

Distribution reveals 60% of people would travel north along Widney Manor Road towards Solihull and Birmingham. 24% northbound along Lady Byron Lane towards junction 5 of the M42, A41 and Birmingham. The remaining 16% would travel southbound towards destinations including Warwick and Stratford-on-Avon.

Routing from the Site to these destinations would likely impact upon the following junctions and further detailed analysis of these junctions would be required to support a planning application. The methodology for this work would be agreed with the respective highway authorities (Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council / Highways England) and submitted within a detailed Transport Assessment:

- Dorridge Road / Blue Lake Road junction;
- Widney Manor Road / Smiths Lane;
- Smiths Lane / Browns Lane;
- Browns Lane / Widney Road;
- Lady Byron Lane / Tilehouse Green Lane / Browns Lane;
- Widney Lane / Lovelace Avenue / Widney Manor Road;
- Widney Manor Road / Widney Road / Four Ashes Road roundabout; and
- A41/M42/A4141 roundabout.

Sustainable Movement

The Site is conveniently located for access to sustainable transport. The nearest bus stops are located on Widney Manor Road and Widney Road within 400m of the Site. Frequent bus services operate from these stops to destinations including Dorridge, Stratford upon Avon, Cheswick Green and Solihull.

Widney Manor Railway station is located approximately 2.7km north of the Site. Widney Manor Station provides frequent services to Dorridge, Stratford-upon-Avon, Birmingham, Leamington Spa and Worcester. Rail services are operated by Chiltern Railways and London Midland. Approximate walking time to Widney Manor

station would be 20 minutes. Dorridge railway station is located approximately 3.2km to the south of the Site. Dorridge provides access to the same destinations as Widney Manor, with the addition of direct services to London.

Journey times from Widney Manor Station to Solihull are approximately 5 minutes, whilst journey times to Birmingham are approximately 15 - 20 minutes. Journey times to London from Dorridge station are approximately 1 hour 40 minutes.

Existing bus and rail services provide a realistic opportunity for future residents of the Site to travel to destinations further afield for employment and leisure opportunities by non-car modes. Current proposals for High Speed 2 (HS2) include the development of Birmingham Interchange a planned HS2 railway station within Solihull expected to open in 2026. The station will provide access to the London-Birmingham HS2 route. The station will be located approximately 12.8km from the Site which equates to a 20 minute journey by car. Journey time via HS2 from Birmingham Interchange to London will be 38 minutes away and Heathrow less than an hour. The future development of HS2 will further improve the connectivity of the local area.

As illustrated at Figure 5, a number of services and facilities are located within the local area, and within walking distance. These include a medical centre, community centre, food stores, schools and post office.

The location of the Site therefore offers a very realistic opportunity for future residents to travel to and from the new development by non-car modes. By doing so, the development would fully accord with the relevant planning policies which emphasise the need to locate developments where there is a realistic and reasonable expectation that services and facilities may be accessed by travel modes other than the private car.

FIGURE 9 : Strategic Movement Network

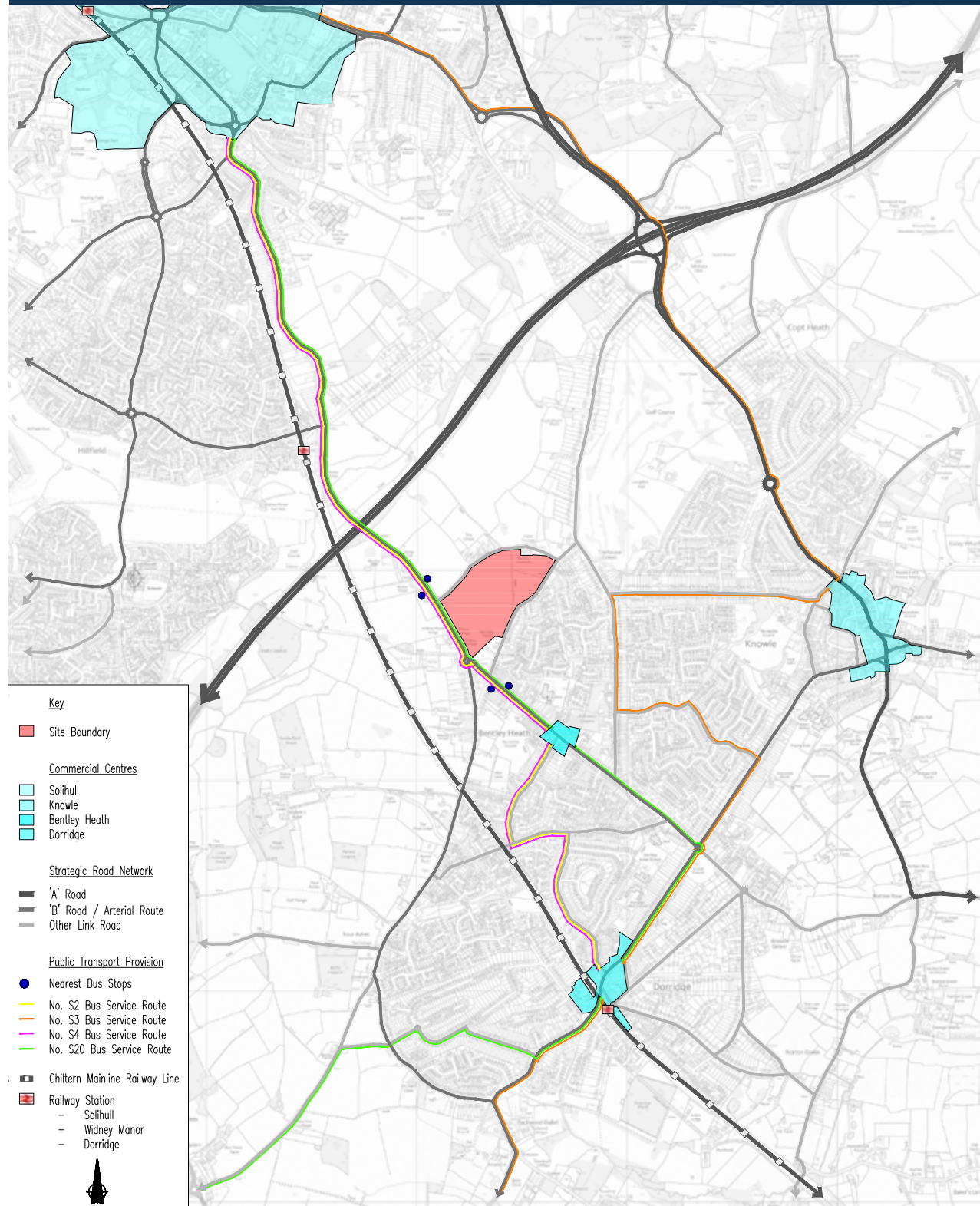
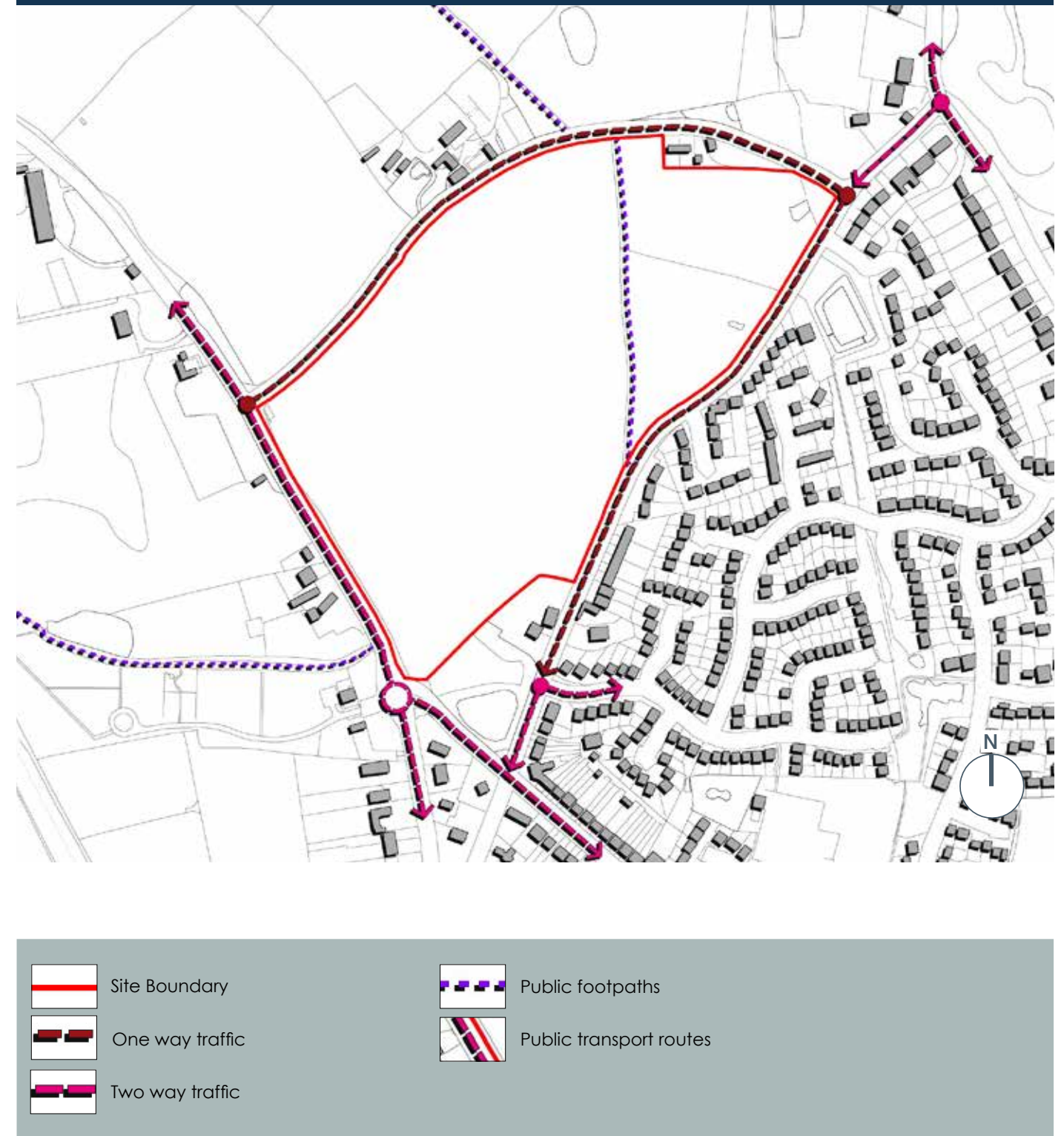


FIGURE 10 : Site Movement Network



Issues and Opportunities

The following constraints and opportunities, together with the technical analysis of the Site have been used to prepare a development concept.

Constraints

- Current configuration of roads around the Site are narrow and one way, which raises safety concerns and impact on the existing amenity of residents.
- Journey times are inefficient due to the nature of the one way system in place.
- The existing junctions and highways configuration.
- Green Belt with significant existing hedgerows and vegetation.
- Limited school places locally.

Opportunities

- Retain existing trees, hedgerows where possible and create new wildlife habitats and corridors.
- Opportunities for enhanced tree planting along the boundary and throughout the Site.
- Provide a new large area of public open space with equipped children's play areas, which could serve both the development and local residents.
- Enhance existing footpath connections with new landscape, and create new pedestrian and cycle links.
- Opportunity to reconfigure Browns Lane and Smiths Lane to benefit local residents.
- Establish a new access road between Widney Manor Road and Browns Lane.
- Potential to provide a new primary school to serve the development and the existing community.
- Provide new open market and affordable housing with associated infrastructure to help meet local needs.
- Provide on-site solutions to store surface water run off produced by the development.
- Ensure the setting of surrounding settlements is respected and enhanced through the design of the layout and landscape.

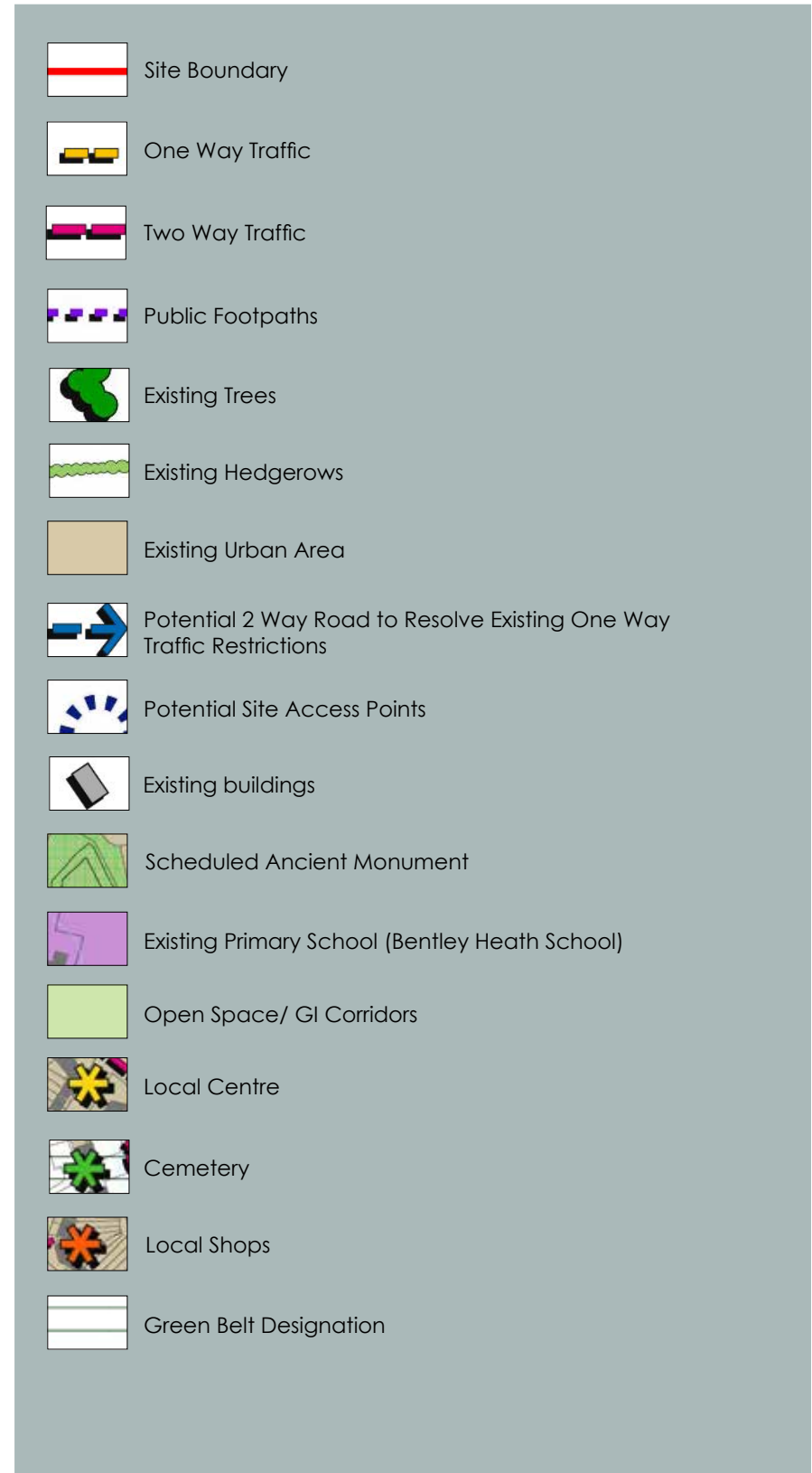


Smiths Lane One Way Traffic Route



Browns Lane One Way Traffic Route

FIGURE 11 : Opportunities and Constraints Plan



4. Development Concept











Design Criteria

Following the initial analysis work carried out the key design criteria proposed are:

- Provide a sympathetic urban extension to Bentley Heath with a new green settlement edge.
- Provide a new two way vehicular link through the Site to reduce existing highway conflicts on one way road network and to improve travel times for local residents.
- Establish a permeable and legible street structure providing access to the surrounding area for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Enhance the existing public right of way across the Site to create a Green corridor linking the development to the surrounding landscape.
- Locate higher densities near to the main vehicular route, with densities decreasing near the rural edge.
- Provide planting to enhance valuable green/ wildlife links, and act as a new physical and visual boundary.
- Establish a series of green corridors across the Site linking the existing on-site habitats and proposed green corridor.
- Provide an easily accessible area of semi natural public open space .
- Provide on-site water storage with wildlife meadow.

FIGURE 12 : Development Concept Plan



	Site Boundary		Existing Hedgerows
	Residential		Proposed Trees
	Potential Primary School		Roads
	Open Space		Public Footpaths
	Existing Trees		On-site Attenuation

Land Use

The development concept could provide around 250 new residential units together with associated infrastructure, public open space with the potential for a new 3 form entry primary school site.

Density

The residential density of the proposed development reflects the density of the surrounding urban area with an average density of 30-35 (dph). Densities will vary across the Site, with generally higher densities around the access road to ensure the residents are in the closet proximity to the existing bus route / stop, and lower densities located around the development's rural edge.

School

The Site has the capacity to accommodate a 3 form entry (FE) primary school site should it be required to meet the needs of the existing and future residents. The provision will be subject to discussions with the local education authority and the council. The location supports the retention of a sense of landscape and openness on the approach into Bentley Heath.

Open Space

The indicative housing numbers shown on the development concept would provide a requirement for approximately 1.9 Ha of open space in accordance with the Council's guidance. The development concept shown would provide the amount of open space required by policy as well as a further 3.6 Ha of structural planting and infrastructure.

FIGURE 13 : Land Use and Indicative Budget Plan



Movement & Access

Movement

Within the development a hierarchy of streets will be created to provide access to the new homes. The hierarchy will be established to assist in way-finding and legibility within the Site and to ensure streets have sufficient capacity for all movement. New pedestrian connections to existing neighbourhoods will also allow for safer connections to surrounding public rights of way and to integrate the new development with existing desire lines.

Access

Two main points of vehicular access will be created to access the new road one from Widney Manor Road and a second off Browns Lane. This will create the opportunity to carry existing traffic around Browns Lane which is currently one way reducing congestion at peak times.

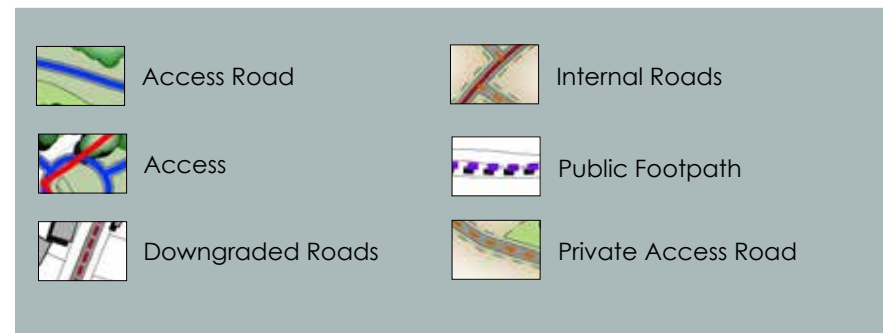
Access Road

The access road provides a route through the development, with the access points becoming gateway features incorporating open space and high quality landscape.

Pedestrian & Cyclists

Existing pedestrian links will be enhanced and additional routes will be provided for pedestrians and cyclists, linking into the wider movement network.

FIGURE 14 : Indicative Movement And Access Strategy

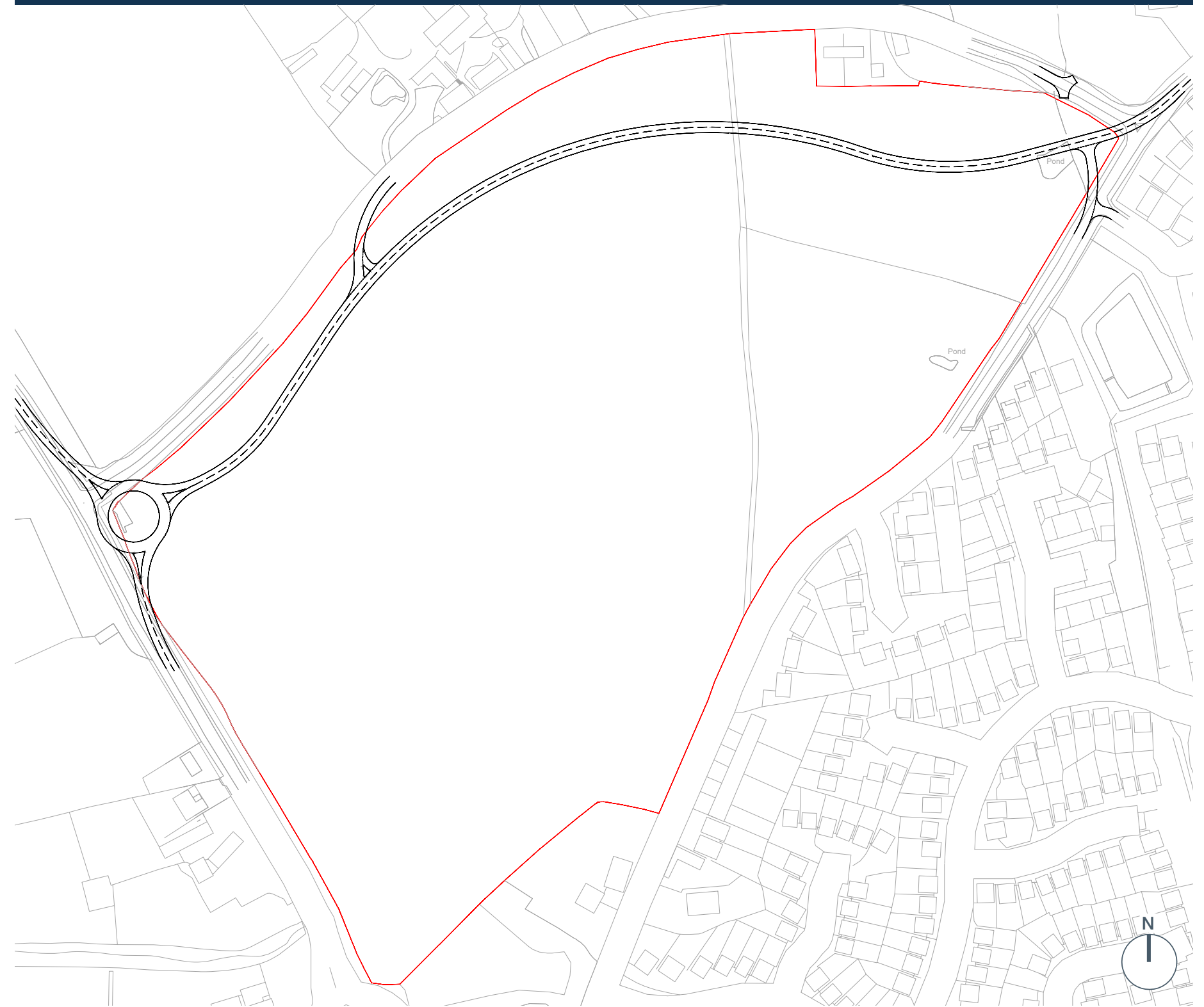


Proposed Link Road & Access

Access to the Site would be taken from a new roundabout junction located in the vicinity of the Widney Manor Road and Smiths Lane junction. As part of the internal layout a new link road would be provided through the Site, running from Widney Manor Road, to the southwest and Browns Lane, to the northeast. The link road would become the primary route for Site traffic and would also seek to alleviate congestion on the wider highway network, particularly at the Browns Lane and Widney Manor Road junction.

The location of the roundabout and alignment of the link road have been designed to allow the route to run parallel to the existing Smiths Lane route, therefore encouraging its utilisation. The combination of the link road and roundabout would increase the capacity for the benefit of local residents and the access proposals would result in the minimal loss of vegetation, therefore retaining the rural aesthetics of the area along both Smiths Lane and Browns Lane.

FIGURE 15 : Proposed Road Alignment



Landscape Strategy / Green Infrastructure

The new open space will be an attractive asset both for existing and proposed residents. It will comprise new formal and informal open space, with a range of new wildlife habitats ensuring that the ecological functions of the landscape are retained and protected.

A key feature of the proposed development will be the enhancement of the existing public footpath linking through to the open country side to the north. Along with ecological enhancement, this provides a real opportunity not only for new residents, but to ensure that existing residents are able to continue to enjoy informal recreation and take advantage of the new connections and linkages to the surrounding countryside. Consideration should also be given to the use of private drives and density on the edge of the Site to further create a softer edge to development. The above mitigation will reduce any impact of proposals on both views close to the Site and from long distance views and help to maintain the function of the greenbelt including avoiding visual coalescence of settlements.

Open Space Corridors

Around the perimeter of the Site open space corridors will also be provided. These will soften the development edge, ensure boundary hedgerows are maintained and provide active surveillance on the existing footpath. The private gardens and the enhanced areas of open space will provide substantial biodiversity enhancements across much of the Site.

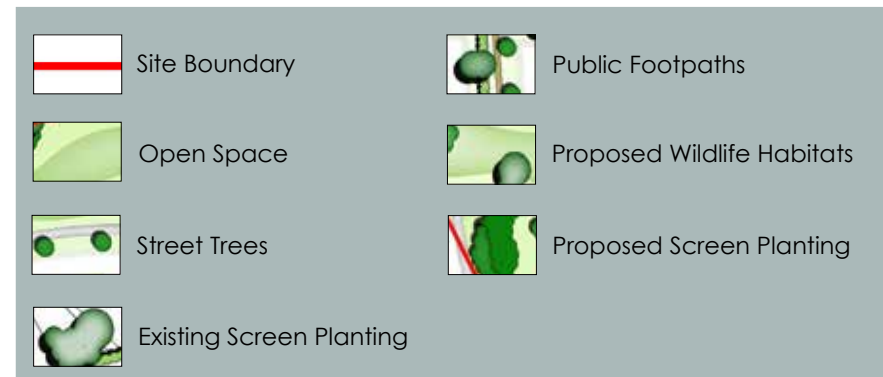


FIGURE 16 : Landscape Strategy



5. Conclusion

Conclusion

These representations are submitted in response to the Local Plan Review (Draft Supplementary Version) Consultation on behalf of St Phillips. The proposals would deliver a sustainable new development, as well as providing a school, public open space for the surrounding community, and enhancing the gateway to Bentley Heath.

The development site would:

- Provide additional housing in the area and increase the choice of homes and provide detached family housing in a high quality environment.
- Integrated with Bentley Heath, connecting the development to existing neighbourhoods, footpaths and cycle routes to encourage walking and cycling, particularly to key facilities such as local shops, existing healthcare facilities, employment sites and leisure amenities.
- Include the potential for new school facilities.
- Promote a viable and sustainable development of approx 250 dwellings adjacent to Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath which is considered to be one of two rural settlements in the Metropolitan Borough which provides a good range of shops, services and facilities (paragraph 215 of the Local Plan Review Draft Supplementary Version).
- Provide the opportunity to create an access road through the development connecting Widney Manor Road to Browns Lane.

- Create a new gateway along Widney Manor Road that will provide a green entrance into Bentley Heath.
- Reinforce existing landscape features with a woodland belt and semi-natural open space.
- Provide a strong landscape framework by preserving and enhancing the important aspects of the existing landscape and providing a variety of new open spaces for recreational space, in addition to creating new wildlife habitats and green corridors.
- Make a welcoming place by creating streets that overlook public spaces where people can meet and socialise.
- Provide integrated and viable transport choices where it is possible to walk, cycle and use public transport to travel, where vehicles are also accommodated.
- Provide an on-site site SuDS network that controls surface water run off, utilising the existing topography, and watercourses.
- Enhance the pedestrian connections between Knowle and Bentley Heath and Widney Manor station making journeys by public transport more attractive.
- Provide a sustainable urban extension to Bentley Heath in close proximity of a range of services and facilities.

In light of the above, we consider that this site offers a sustainable development opportunity for the Council and should be considered for release from the Green Belt and allocation in the Local Plan Review document.

FIGURE 17 : Illustrative Masterplan



	Site Boundary		Existing hedgerows
	Residential		Proposed trees
	Potential School		Roads
	Open space		Public footpaths
	Existing trees		On-site attenuation





ST. PHILIPS