
Land South of Broad Lane, Hawkhurst: Landscape and Visual Appraisal with Green Belt Review

Prepared on behalf of David Wilson Homes Mercia

22nd April 2020

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Barton Willmore LLP
7 Soho Square
London
W1D 3QB

Tel: [REDACTED]
Fax: [REDACTED]
Email: [REDACTED]

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APPENDICES

Appendix A.1: Extracts from Published Landscape Character Assessments

Appendix A.2: Extracts from Published Green Belt Reviews

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Barton Willmore Landscape Planning and Design (BWLPD) were commissioned by David Wilson Homes Mercia to undertake an initial Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) with Green Belt Review (GBR) and assessment of the opportunities and constraints to development on land south of Broad Lane, to the west of Coventry in Solihull District, (referred to as 'the Site') to inform a robust rationale for the development of a concept masterplan for residential and mixed-use development and associated infrastructure (the 'Proposed Development'). This document contains a robust assessment of the landscape and visual opportunities and constraints, paying particular attention to local planning policy and landscape character guidance.
- 1.2 The extents of the Site are demonstrated as outlined by the red boundary on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan** and **Figure 3: Site Appraisal Plan**. The Study Area corresponds to the area shown on **Figure 1**.
- 1.3 The objectives of this document are to provide a robust background to the identified opportunities and constraints on the site from a landscape and visual perspective and to explain the rationale behind the masterplan in terms of the landscape character of the Site and its surroundings, the landscape and visual qualities of the Site and its function within the wider landscape context (the 'Study Area'). The work undertaken includes an assessment of the existing landscape features, a visual appraisal of the Site and its immediate surroundings and wider context, planning policy context and landscape character baseline.
- 1.4 The document is supported by the following plans:
- Figure 1: Site Context Plan
 - Figure 2: Topographical Features Plan
 - Figure 3: Site Appraisal Plan
 - Figure 4: Landscape Character Plan
 - Figure 5: Visual Appraisal Plan
 - Figure 6: Opportunities and Constraints Plan
 - Site Context Photographs 1-11
- 1.5 At the time of writing, it was not possible to visit the Site due to the Government restrictions on only essential travel being undertaken relating to the COVID-19 outbreak. As a result of both these restrictions and the Landscape Institute's Professional advice to not undertake site visits until advised otherwise and safe to do so, the assessment was undertaken using extensive desktop mapping resources, as well as publicly available photography sources such as Google Streetview and Bing Maps birds eye photography. A site visit would be recommended when

restrictions are lifted to verify the findings of this report and to take photography in accordance with Landscape Institute guidance. However, the quality of the digital resourcing available and our knowledge of the area give rise to a distinct level of robustness in relation to the findings of this report.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

Methodology for Landscape and Visual Appraisal

- 2.1 The methodology employed in carrying out the LVA of the Proposed Development has been drawn from the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment's Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' 3rd Edition¹ (2013) also referred to the 'the GLVIA3'. The aim of these guidelines is to set high-standards for the scope and content of Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments (LVIAs) and to establish certain principles that will help to achieve consistency, credibility, transparency and effectiveness throughout the assessment.
- 2.2 The GLVIA3 sets out the difference between Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) and Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA). The preparation of an LVA has the rigour of the EIA process but looks to identify issues of possible harm that might arise from the development proposal and offset them through change and modification of the proposals before a fix of the final design scheme. This LVA has been used as a tool to identify the baseline conditions of the site from which it can then inform the iterative design process of the scheme layout, rather than undertaking an assessment of a final proposal.
- 2.3 The assessment of landscape and visual effects, in common with any assessment of environmental effects, includes a combination of objective and subjective judgements. It is, therefore, important that a structured and consistent approach is adopted to ensure that the assessment undertaken is as objective as possible.
- 2.4 A landscape appraisal is the systematic description and analysis of the features within the landscape, such as landform, vegetation cover, settlement and transport patterns and land use which create a particular sense of place. A visual appraisal assesses visual receptors, which are the viewers of the landscape, and could include locations such as residential or business properties, public buildings, public open space and Public Rights of Way (PRoW).
- 2.5 A desktop assessment of the Study Area was undertaken, including an assessment of landscape character, landform, landscape features, historic evolution, policy and designations.
- 2.6 The Study Area has been confined to an area approximately 3km from the Site. This distance from the Site was chosen based on existing features such as landform and vegetation,

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

settlement morphology and land use patterns. This is considered a sufficient area to establish the landscape and visual baseline and to allow the appraisal of the Site and its context.

- 2.7 A brief description of the existing land use of the Study Area is provided and includes reference to existing settlement, transport routes and vegetation cover, as well as local landscape designations, elements of cultural and heritage value and local landmarks or tourist destinations. These factors combine to provide an understanding of landscape value and sensitivity, and an indication of key views and viewpoints that are available to visual receptors, which are then considered in the visual appraisal.
- 2.8 The Site has been considered in terms of the following:
- i) Landscape Character
i.e. landform, vegetation cover, land use, scale, state of repair of individual elements, representation of typological character, enclosure pattern, form/line and movement
 - ii) Visual Influence
i.e. landform influences, tree and woodland cover, numbers and types of residents, numbers and types of visitors and scope for mitigating potential for visual impacts
 - iii) Landscape Value
i.e. national designations, local designations, tranquillity / remoteness, scenic beauty and cultural associations

Methodology for Green Belt Review

- 2.9 The Site was assessed against the first four purposes of the Green Belt as set out in the recently published NPPF dated February 2019, Paragraph 134 of the NPPF, which are:
- *"To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.*
 - *To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another.*
 - *To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.*
 - *To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns..."*
- 2.10 The fifth purpose of the Green Belt *"to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land"*, has been scoped out of the assessment as the Council is considering greenfield sites and, therefore, should the Site be brought forward for development, it would not prejudice derelict or other urban land being brought forward for development.

- 2.11 The NPPF states in Paragraph 136 that *"once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of the Local Plan"*.
- 2.12 The NPPF states that the key characteristics of the Green Belt are *"their openness and their permanence"*. In defining new boundaries to the Green Belt, it must be ensured that these characteristics are not diminished for the areas remaining within the Green Belt designation as a direct result of development. An assessment is made of the openness of the Green Belt in the vicinity of the Site and to what extent its removal could have on the perception of openness in the remaining designated area.
- 2.13 In addition, the relationship of the Site to existing elements, such as built form, roads, railways and rivers, as well as visual barriers, such as ridgelines and areas of notable vegetation is set out. This assists in the assessment of the Site in relation to the existing Green Belt and consideration of potential development in relation to the openness of the remaining Green Belt and the permanence of Green Belt boundaries.
- 2.14 Where relevant, these factors, on top of consideration of the contribution of the Site as existing to the Green Belt, are then used to determine the degree of harm to the Green Belt, resulting from the Proposed Development, accounting for the mitigation by design approaches taken (and beneficial uses as set out in paragraph 141 of the NPPF if the Site remains within the Green Belt).

Assessment in relation to the characteristics of the Green Belt

- 2.15 The table below sets out the assessment criteria used within this LVAGBR to assess the contribution that the Site makes to the purposes of the Green Belt.

Table 2.1: Purposes of the Green Belt – Assessment Criteria

Purpose	Criteria
Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	<p>Considerable - Development of the land would be strongly perceived as sprawl, as it is not contained by robust physical features and/or would extend the settlement pattern in an incoherent manner.</p> <p>Some - Development of the land would be perceived as sprawl, as it is partially contained by robust physical features and/or would extend the settlement pattern in a moderately incoherent manner.</p> <p>Limited - Development of the land would be perceived as sprawl to a limited degree, as it is largely contained by robust physical features and/or would extend the settlement pattern in a broadly coherent manner.</p> <p>None - Development of the land would not be perceived as sprawl as it is well contained by robust physical features and/or is entirely set within the existing coherent settlement pattern.</p>

Prevent neighbouring towns from merging	<p>Considerable - Development would result in the physical unification of two (or more) towns</p> <p>Some - Development would substantially reduce the physical or perceived separation between towns</p> <p>Limited - Development would result in a limited reduction in the physical or perceived separation between towns</p> <p>None - Development would not physically or perceptually reduce the separation between towns</p>
Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	<p>Considerable: No built or engineered forms present and perceived as inherently undeveloped and/or rural in character. Development would potentially result in a strong urbanising influence over the wider landscape.</p> <p>Some: Built or engineered forms present but retaining a perception of being predominantly undeveloped and/or rural in character. Development would potentially result in a moderate urbanising influence over the wider landscape.</p> <p>Limited: Built or engineered forms present and a minimal perception of being undeveloped and or rural in character. Development would potentially result in a limited urbanising influence over the wider landscape.</p> <p>None: Built or engineered forms present and perceived as inherently developed and/or urban in character. Development would not result in urbanising influence over the wider landscape.</p>
Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	<p>Considerable: Strong physical and/or visual and/or character connection with the historic part of a town. May be within or adjoining the historic part of a town.</p> <p>Some: Partial physical and/or visual and/or character connection with the historic part of a town, whilst not adjacent to it.</p> <p>Limited: Weak physical and/or visual and/or character connection with the historic part of a town.</p> <p>None: No physical and/or visual and/or character connection with the historic part of a town.</p>

Table 1.2: Definitions

Term	Definition
Brownfield	See 'Previously Developed Land'
Character	A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that differentiates one area from another.
Coalescence	The physical or visual linkage of large built-up areas.
Countryside	In planning terms: land outwith the settlement boundary. In broader terms: the landscape of a rural area (see also rural)
Defensible Boundary	A physical feature that is readily recognisable and likely to be permanent. The NPPF states at Paragraph 139 f that "local authorities should define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent". With regard to physical boundaries, these would include roads, railway lines, rivers, streams, or canals, large woodland or strong tree belts, or significant topographical features.
Encroachment	Advancement of a large built-up area beyond the limits of the existing built-up area into an area perceived as countryside either physically or visually.

	Any development on greenfield sites would inevitably lead to physical encroachment, whether the land is within the Green Belt or not. Encroachment into the countryside takes into consideration the landscape character context, and the urbanising features present as well as the potential visual encroachment into the countryside.
Green Infrastructure	A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.
Greenfield	Land (or a defined site) usually farmland, that has not previously been developed.
Large Built-Up Area	An area that corresponds to the settlements identified in the relevant Local Plan, including those inset from the Green Belt.
Merging	This relates to the physical or visual linkage of large built up areas i.e. the coalescence of settlements or the erosion of the gap between settlements. Interlying physical barriers, intervisibility between towns / settlements and the potential for coalescence are all taken into consideration. (see coalescence)
Neighbouring Town	Refers to settlements identified within the relevant Local Plan and those within the neighbouring authorities' administrative boundary that abut the Green Belt.
Open space	(NPPF definition) All open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity.
Openness	Openness is taken to be the degree to which an area is primarily unaffected by built features, in combination with the consideration of the visual perception of built features. In order to be a robust assessment, this should be considered from first principles, i.e. acknowledging existing structures that occur physically and visually within the area, rather than seeing them as being 'washed over' by the existing Green Belt designation.
Previously Developed Land	(NPPF definition) Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill purposes where provision for restoration has been made through development control procedures; land in built-up areas such as private gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments and land that was previously-developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape in the process of time.
Sprawl	The outward spread of a large built-up area in an incoherent, sporadic, dispersed or irregular way. Unrestricted sprawl could also be defined as areas where large expanses of land are being used for a relatively small amount of development. Sprawl also considers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well the Site relates to the existing built form of the area (how well contained the Site is). • How well the existing boundary performs in containing development. Where strong boundaries are formed by roads, rivers and railway lines, with smaller country lanes performing a more limited role. • The impact of encroachment on the countryside. Where sites that are surrounded on more than one side by development (i.e. where the landscape is less open), this impact is more limited.

3.0 LANDSCAPE CONTEXT AND APPRAISAL

3.1 This appraisal is supported by the following visual material:

- Figure 1: Site Context Plan
- Figure 2: Topographical Features Plan
- Figure 3: Site Appraisal Plan
- Figure 4: Landscape Character Plan
- Figure 5: Visual Appraisal Plan
- Figure 6: Opportunities and Constraints Plan
- Site Context Photographs 1-11

3.2 Due to the current restrictions on site visit relating to the COVID-19 outbreak, it was not possible to visit the Site in person. However, BWLPD is familiar with the area of the Site from assessing other sites in the nearby area. A number of Site Context Photographs have been obtained from digital Google Streetview imagery and serve to illustrate the existing character and features of the Site, as well as its relationship to the surrounding landscape. The locations of the Site Context Photographs are shown on **Figure 5: Visual Appraisal Plan** respectively, and panoramas are included as part of the illustrative material. It is important to note that images taken for Google Streetview are higher than the industry standard eye level of 1.6-1.8m and may show views above hedgerows that would not be possible to obtain by a person at street level. However, they still demonstrate the characteristics of the landscape and the visual openness (or otherwise) of the Site and its surroundings.

Site Description and Location

3.3 As shown on **Figure 1: Site Context Plan**, the Site is located on the western edge of Coventry at the eastern edge of Solihull District. The Site comprises six arable fields (A-F) separated and surrounded by native hedgerows with trees. Field ponds occur throughout the Site and are marked by areas of tree planting. A local stream course separates the two northernmost and smallest fields from the four fields to the south. A central area of land comprises an area of hardstanding that was the historic site of Hawkhurst Moor Farm. An area of hardstanding and a shed with silo is situated inside the centre of the northern boundary. A PRoW extends along the north edge of the two southernmost fields (F5 and F6), separating them from the four smaller fields in the north of the Site (F1-F4). High voltage power lines extend pass north to south through the eastern part of the Site.

3.4 The northern boundary extends along the southern edge of Coventry Road / Broad Lane and is marked by an overgrown native hedgerow with frequent trees. The eastern boundary abuts and extends alongside recent residential development and is marked by a native hedgerow

with trees. A PRoW extends along the eastern boundary of the Site. The southern boundary also extends along a PRoW and is marked by a native hedgerow with trees. The land to the south-east of the Site comprises playing fields. The western boundary is marked by native hedgerow with trees.

Settlement Pattern and Land Uses

- 3.5 The Site is situated at the western edge of Coventry and is immediately adjacent to recent development on Astoria Drive. Until the early 2000s, the land to the east comprised industrial buildings which were later cleared for housing.
- 3.6 Balsall Common is situated 2.4km to the south-west of the Site and the land between is occupied by small settlements and farmsteads.

Access and Rights of Way

- 3.7 The main roads in the Study Area comprise the A45, extending west from Coventry 2.3km to the north of the Site, and the A452 extending northwards, 3.2km to the west of the Site.
- 3.8 The Berkswell to Rugby branch of the West Coast Mainline of the London North West Railway (LNWR) extends east to west 1.6km to the south of the Site. This forks with the Kenilworth to Berkswell branch of the Coventry to Leamington Line of the LNWR 2.1km to the south-west of the Site.
- 3.9 The Coventry Way and Millennium Way Long Distance Paths extend north to south through the Study Area, extending alongside each other. These paths separate 450m to the west of the Site with the Millennium Way extending north-west to Meriden and the Coventry Way extending north and then east to the north-western edge of Coventry. These Long Distance Paths connect to an extensive and dense network of PRoW.

Designations

- 3.10 There are no landscape designations on or in close proximity to the Site. The southern part and northern extents of Rough Close woods, 100m to the south of the Site, are Ancient and Semi Natural Woodland (ASNW).
- 3.11 The closest Conservation Areas are at Berkswell, 1.5km to the west of the Site, and at Meriden, 2km to the north-west. The closest listed buildings are 500m to the north-west at Hill House Farm.

Topography and Hydrology

- 3.12 As shown on **Figure 2: Topographical Features Plan**, the Site is situated on the eastern side of a broad ridge of land extending north to south through the Study area and rising up to over 150mAOD to the east of Meriden. Coventry also sits to the east of the ridge of land and, therefore, the Site is related to the city in topographical terms.
- 3.13 A series of stream valleys extend down the sides of the valley ridge, with one such valley extending east through the northern part of the Site at 120-130mAOD. The Site rises from the stream valley in the north towards the south and west at over 135mAOD.
- 3.14 The Study Area is characterised by small streams extending east towards the River Sherbourne in the centre of Coventry and west towards the River Blythe. Springs and field ponds occur regularly throughout the landscape, with one per field in some areas, including within the Site.

Vegetation and Field Pattern

- 3.15 The landscape is characterised by the small to medium scale field pattern of Arden, marked by a strong network of native hedgerows and frequent hedgerow and field trees, many of which are Oak species. The Site forms somewhat of an anomaly in the area, firstly being comprised of rectilinear fields but also through the noticeable field rationalisation that has occurred as recently as the 1980s according to historic OS mapping.
- 3.16 The density of tree and hedgerow planting, particularly along roads, creates an intimate and small scale character to the landscape.

4.0 LANDSCAPE PLANNING POLICY

National

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019²

4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which was first published in March 2012 has been updated and re-published in July 2018 and again in February 2019. The NPPF promotes a presumption in favour of sustainable development, defined as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”, and providing it is in accordance with the relevant up-to-date Local Plan, and policies set out in the NPPF including those identifying restrictions with regard to designated areas, such as National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Green Belt.

4.2 Paragraph 38 refers to Decision making and states that:

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

4.3 Paragraphs 124-132 focus on achieving well-designed places and seek to promote good design of the built environment. Paragraph 127 states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) ***“Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development.***
- b) ***Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping.***
- c) ***Are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities).***
- d) ***Establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit.***
- e) ***Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks.***

² Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2019) [National Planning Policy Framework](#)

- f) Create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience."**

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

4.5 Chapter 13 is dedicated to issues of Protecting Green Belt land, replacing Planning Policy Guidance note (PPG2). The NPPF states that "the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence" (Para.133). Paragraph 134 then goes on to list the five purposes of Green Belts:

- 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.**

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

4.7 Paragraph 138 states that:

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

- 4.8 Paragraph 141 of the NPPF states that once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.
- 4.9 Paragraph 143 notes that, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in "very special circumstances". Paragraph 144 states that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. "Very special circumstances" will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
- 4.10 Chapter 15 is entitled "Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment". Paragraph 170 notes that the planning system and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
- a) *protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan).***
 - b) *recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystems services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.***
 - c) *maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, whilst improving public access to it where appropriate.***
 - d) *minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.***
 - e) *preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans.***
 - f) *remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.***
- 4.11 Paragraph 171 states that plans should distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure. plan for the

enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.

Planning Practice Guidance

4.1 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) was first published online in March 2014 and provides detailed guidance to support the NPPF. The PPG was last updated on 1st October 2019 and replaces the previous guidance on 'Design: Process and tools' with the National Design Guide, which sets out the characteristics of well-designed places and demonstrates what good design means in practice.

4.2 Under the heading 'Planning for Well-Designed Places', Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 26-001-20191001 of the PPG states that, as set out in paragraph 130 of the NPPF, permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, taking into account any local design standards or style guides in plans or supplementary planning documents. Good design is set out in the National Design Guide under the following 10 characteristics:

- Context (enhances the surroundings).
- Identity (Attractive and distinctive).
- Built form (a coherent pattern of development).
- Movement (accessible and easy to move around).
- Nature (enhanced and optimised).
- Public Spaces (safe, social and inclusive).
- Uses (mixed and integrated).
- Homes and Buildings (Functional, healthy and sustainable).
- Resources (Efficient and resilient).
- Lifespan (made to last).

4.3 Further guidance is outlined within the 10 characteristics in the National Design Guide. Those of relevance to design and townscape/ landscape and visual matters include:

- C1: Understand and relate well to the site, its local and wider context.
- C2: Value heritage, local history and culture.
- I1: Respond to existing local character and identity.
- I2: Well-designed, high quality and attractive.
- I3: Create character and identity.
- B1: Compact form of development.
- B2: Appropriate building types and forms.
- B3: Destinations

- N1: Provide high quality, green open spaces with a variety of landscapes and activities, including play.
- N3: Support rich and varied biodiversity.
- P1: Create well-located, high quality and attractive public spaces.
- P2: Provide well-designed spaces that are safe.
- P3: Make sure public spaces support social interaction.
- L1: Well-managed and maintained.

4.4 The 'Landscape' and 'Green Infrastructure' sections of the PPG were updated in July 2019 with the following:

4.5 Under the heading of 'Green infrastructure', Paragraph 5 focuses on the way in which natural capital green infrastructure can add to communities including, *"...enhanced wellbeing, outdoor recreation and access, enhanced biodiversity and landscapes..."*. This approach to achieving biodiverse communities is enshrined in Paragraph 6, which states:

"Green infrastructure can help in:

- *Achieving well-designed places.*
- *Promoting healthy and safe communities.*
- *Mitigating climate change, flooding and coastal change.*
- *Conserving and enhancing the natural environment."*

4.6 Under the heading of Natural Environment, sub-heading Landscape, Paragraph 37 in the PPG supports the use of Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment to *"demonstrate the likely effects of a proposed development on the landscape"*. The PPG additionally makes reference to Natural England's guidance on undertaking landscape character assessment *"to complement Natural England's National Character Area Profiles"*.

4.7 Under the Heading of Green Belt, Paragraph 001 sets out what may form part of the consideration of the potential impact of development on openness. The PPG sets out that decisions need to be made on a case by case basis.

"By way of example, the courts have identified a number of matters which may need to be taken into account in making this assessment. These include, but are not limited to:

- *openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects – in other words, the visual impact of the proposal may be relevant, as could its volume.*
- *the duration of the development, and its remediability – taking into account any provisions to return land to its original state or to an equivalent (or improved) state of openness.*
- *the degree of activity likely to be generated, such as traffic generation."*

4.8 Paragraph 002 sets out how the impact of removing land from the Green Belt may be compensated, with measures including:

- *"new or enhanced green infrastructure.*
- *woodland planting.*
- *landscape and visual enhancements (beyond those needed to mitigate the immediate impacts of the proposal).*
- *improvements to biodiversity, habitat connectivity and natural capital.*
- *new or enhanced walking and cycle routes.*
- *improved access to new, enhanced or existing recreational and playing field provision."*

District

4.9 The Site is situated within the Metropolitan Borough of Solihull and is adjacent to land within Coventry City Council. The Solihull Local Plan was adopted in December 2013, but a review is currently underway in response to a legal challenge in reference to housing numbers, and the HS2 routes. A summary of the relevant policies from the existing and emerging Local Plans are included below.

Solihull Local Plan: Shaping a Sustainable Future (December 2013)

4.10 The policies of the Local Plan are very similar to those within the Draft Local Plan below and cover the same issues.

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

4.11 The following policies from the submission draft are relevant:

- **P10 Natural Environment:**
 - Protect existing and create new landscape features including woodlands, copses, hedgerows and standard trees.
 - Developers will be expected to incorporate measures to enhance and restore the landscape.
- **P14 Amenity:**
 - Safeguard important trees, hedgerows and woodland, and plant new trees, hedgerows and woodland.
 - Protect dark skies from impacts of light pollution.
- **P15 Security Design Quality:**

- New development will be expected to conserve and enhance local character, distinctiveness and streetscape quality and respect the surrounding natural, built and historic environment.
- New development will be expected to respect and enhance landscape quality, including trees, hedgerows and other landscape features of value and contribute to strategic green infrastructure.
- **P16 Conservation of Heritage Assets and Local Distinctiveness:**
 - The Arden landscape must be protected and restored.
 - Landscape, including woodlands and distinctive fieldscapes should be protected.
- **P17 Countryside and Green Belt:**
 - Development within the Green Belt must not harm the visual amenity of the Green Belt.
- **P18 Health and Wellbeing:**
 - Measures to improve health and wellbeing include the improvement of the quality of and access to the local green infrastructure network.
 - Increasing opportunities for walking.
 - Seek to retain and enhance green spaces and incorporate planting and trees.
- **P20 Provision for Open Space, Children’s Play, Sport, Recreation and Leisure:**
 - Existing facilities that make an important contribution to the quality of the environment or network of green infrastructure will be protected.

Reviewing the Plan for Solihull’s Future: Solihull Local Plan Review Draft Local Plan Supplementary Consultation

4.12 This document was produced as a supplement to the consultation for the Draft Local Plan and is intended to be read in conjunction with the Draft Local Plan document. The document provides an update on housing need, assesses the additional sites that have been submitted since the Draft Local Plan was produced, refines the process for assessing those sites and reassesses them and produces concept masterplans for the main allocations. The document is supplemented by the following additional documents:

- Solihull Local Plan Review Draft Concept Masterplans (January 2019).
- Solihull Local Plan Review Draft Local Plan Supplementary Consultation: Site Assessments (January 2019).

- 4.13 Sites were submitted through the Call for Sites, in response to the Local Plan Consultation and since that time. The document states in paragraph 63 that ***"the vast majority of sites that have been put forward [are] located in the Green Belt"***. A sequential test was devised for each of these sites against a series of criteria to determine their position in the hierarchy of sites. Issues included whether the site was brownfield, accessible or in high performing Green Belt. Sites were then assessed against factors in favour of, or against them, including whether they accord with the spatial strategy, whether they would breach a strong defensible Green Belt barrier or whether they had low landscape capacity.
- 4.14 The eastern approximately half of the Site was identified as Site 426 on page 474 of the accompanying site assessment document. The entire site 426 is described as contaminated land and being crossed by to PRoW. Under the heading of 'Site Selection', the document states that site 426 ***"could be considered as Growth Option G – Urban Extension"***. However, site 426 was assessed as 'red'.

Evidence Base Documents

Solihull SHELAA (2016)

- 4.15 The Site was not included within the 2016 SHELAA.

Solihull's Countryside Strategy: First Review 2010-2020 (6 October 2010)

- 4.16 The Strategy's stated outcomes are to control and guide future change in Solihull's countryside in order to protect and enhance its character whilst managing and developing a prosperous economy. It aims to recognise the distinctive character of the Solihull countryside and provide a framework to new development.
- 4.17 The Strategy identified ten broad character zones, with the Site in Area 8: The Coventry Fringe. On page 29, the document states the following:

"The character of the countryside in this zone is strongly influenced by its closeness to the urban edge of Coventry. Not only are urban developments visible across the area but there are also a number of "urban fringe" features. At the same time, the landscape tends to be more open and large-scale compared to the adjacent Rural Heartland partly due to the removal of hedgerows. There are only limited and small areas of woodland within this zone."

5.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

5.1 Landscape character assessment is a descriptive approach that seeks to identify and define the distinct character of landscapes that make up the country. It also ensures that account is taken of the different roles and character of different areas. The description of each landscape character area is used as a basis for evaluation, in order to make judgements to guide, for example, development or landscape management and as a basis against which to assess the character of the Site. The different layers of character are used to identify areas of land which are not reflective of wider landscape character. The extent of published landscape character areas in the vicinity of the Site are illustrated on **Figure 3: Landscape Character Plan**.

National Character Areas (2014)

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

- *"Well-wooded farmland landscape with rolling landform.*
- *Mature oaks, mostly found within hedgerows, together with ancient woodlands, and plantation woodlands that often date from the time of enclosure. Woodlands include historic coppice bounded by woodbanks.*
- *Narrow, meandering clay river valleys with long river meadows...*
- *Numerous areas of former wood-pasture with large, old, oak trees often associated with isolated remnants of more extensive heathlands...*
- *Diverse field patterns, ranging from well hedged, irregular fields and small woodlands that contrast with larger semi regular fields on former deer park estates...*
- *Complex and contrasting settlement pattern with some densely populated where traditional settlements have amalgamated to form the major West Midlands conurbation whilst some settlements remain distinct and relatively well dispersed.*
- *Shakespeare's 'Forest of Arden', featured in 'As You Like It', is still reflected through the woodland cover, mature oaks, small ancient woodlands and former wood pasture."*

County: Warwickshire Landscape Project (1987)

5.3 The Site is located within the Ancient Arden Landscape Character Area according to the above assessment. The Arden area is described as "*an area of former wood pasture and ancient farmlands*". It is further described as having "*few dramatic physical features*" but as having "*an intimate, historic character with a strong sense of unity*".

5.4 The Arden Pastures are described as *"a small scale farmed landscape with a varied, undulating topography, characterised by an irregular pattern of fields and narrow, winding lanes"*. Characteristic features include:

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

Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2016)

5.5 The Site is situated within Solihull Metropolitan Borough within Landscape Character Area 6: Eastern Fringe within the above document, described as an area of approximately 5.5km² at the easternmost extent of the Borough adjacent to Coventry. The LCA is described as retaining *"a strong sense of rural identity that provides a countryside buffer between Balsall Common and Coventry"*.

5.6 Key characteristics representative of the Site and the Study Area include:

- *"Undulating landform between 120m and 140m AOD.*
- *Agricultural field ditches form the main structure of the drainage pattern within this area which is supplemented with several pools...*
- *Mixed land use is dominant across the area with arable fields interspersed by deciduous woodland and coniferous plantations...*
- *Medium to large sized fields with a distinct regular rectilinear pattern are a common feature to the north of Rough Close... Most of the fields are generally bound by hedgerows.*
- *Woodland cover is largely formed of plantation blocks and deciduous woodland that are scattered across the area. Rough Close in the north, is the largest of these which also includes a camping site.*
- *Strong tree cover prevails within this area including hedgerows, street trees and the occasional standalone trees within fields...*
- *Areas of main settlement are barely noticeable within this character area. The LCA largely comprises converted farms and smaller ribbon development... due to the close proximity of Coventry's western edge...*
- *Electricity pylons, telegraph poles and wires are the main vertical elements in the area...*

- *The Birmingham to Coventry railway line and numerous arterial roads from Coventry to Solihull cross this LCA... The roads closely follow landscape pattern and are not at odds with the landscape.*
- *There are a number of footpaths and bridleways traversing the area, however most run east to west ... Coventry Way and Millennium Way are two long distance trails that cross the area... "*

5.7 Sensitivities and pressures of relevance to the Site and Study Area are described as including the following:

- *"Neglect of woodland management would decrease the long term sustainability of tree cover in this characteristically wooded area.*
- *Views of business parks and their associated facilities detract from the positive rural attributes of this area.*
- *Possible increased pressure for access to open countryside from the edge of Coventry and Balsall Common may impact upon the rural character of the area.*
- *Decline in frequency of hedgerow trees due to neglect and lack of replacement.*
- *The southern half of the area plays an important role in separating Balsall Common from Coventry and is sensitive to development which would result in coalescence.*
- *Pressure for new housing in the attractive countryside due to easy access to Coventry, increasing pressure on the arterial roads. Limited capacity of the area to accept development without impact upon character... "*

5.8 The landscape character sensitivity has been assessed as being 'high' and is described as an attractive landscape with a strong sense of place.

5.9 The visual sensitivity is assessed as being 'medium' and this is described as consisting of mainly medium distance views that are **"generally low level, fragmented and shallow"**. The overall sensitivity has been assessed in the document as being 'high'.

5.10 The landscape value has been assessed as 'medium' as the landscape is locally distinctive whilst in close proximity to Coventry. The overall landscape capacity has been assessed as being 'very low' in accordance with the methodology set out within the document.

5.11 Despite this, the document states that:

"Overall, this area would be able to accommodate very limited areas of new development, which would need to be of an appropriate type, scale and form, in keeping with the existing

character and features of the area. Any new development should not result in the loss of the rural quality of the LCA and should avoid any opportunities for merger between the settlements.”

Site Level Character Assessment

- 5.12 The Site has undergone field rationalisation in the latter quarter of the 20th Century, resulting in comparatively and unusually larger fields in the south. The northern area of the Site retains its smaller character. Where field boundaries remain, these are marked by native hedgerows with trees, retaining the wooded character of the area. The stream is a distinctive feature in the north of the Site, partly due to its unvegetated course. The field ponds form distinct pockets of tree planting, contributing further to the wooded character of the Site and the local area.

Guidance

- 5.13 The following are the key areas of published guidance which should be used to inform the proposed masterplan design.

National Character Area 97: Arden

Strategic Environmental Objectives

- 5.14 SEO 1: Manage and enhance the valuable woodlands, hedgerows, heaths, distinctive field boundaries and enclosure patterns throughout the NCA, retaining the historic contrast between different areas while balancing the needs for timber, biomass production, climate regulation, biodiversity and recreation.
- 5.15 SEO 2: Create new networks of woodlands, heaths and green infrastructure, linking urban areas like Birmingham and Coventry with the wider countryside to increase biodiversity, recreation and the potential for biomass and the regulation of climate.

Landscape opportunities

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

Warwickshire Landscape Project (1987)

- 5.16 The Site is situated within the Ancient Arden landscape character area according to the above document. The document states that maintaining the irregular landscape pattern in the fields and winding lanes is key to conserving the character.
- 5.17 The management strategy for this area is to conserve and restore the ancient irregular pattern of the landscape.
- 5.18 The landscape guidelines include:
- Conserve and restore the irregular pattern of ancient hedgerows.
 - Retain and manage field ponds.
 - Encourage the natural regeneration of oaks.
 - Enhance tree cover through small scale woodland planting.

Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment – LCA 6: Eastern Fringe

- 5.19 The document has set out a series of recommendations for future management of the landscape of LCA6. Those guidelines of relevance to the Site are set out below.

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

- Encourage appropriate management to enhance hedgerow structure and the planting of individual trees along field boundaries particularly in and around Broad Lane. Tree planting, in the form of copses and clumps, in the vicinity of Coventry is important to mitigate large scale uses including sports and industrial facilities and to preserve the setting and rural aspect of the area.
- Resist loss of field boundaries to retain regular field pattern to the north of the area...
- ...Opportunities to improve existing habitats and create new ones should be sought.
- Identify appropriate access points to the countryside and ensure that new facilities, signs and paths are low-key and respect landscape character...
- Resist any development that would risk the character of the wooded boundaries to the fields and their landscape value.

Aim: To integrate the edge of Coventry and other large-scale development in the landscape and reduce its visual impact.

- Structure planting in and amongst any new development must be considered to break up the mass of building in the rural landscape with species of an appropriate scale.
- Consideration must be given to the space between buildings for robust structure planting opportunities to ensure the overall site is unified with its landscape setting.

- All new development proposals for large scale buildings require a landscape scheme as an integral part of a planning application to ensure the impact on landscape character is fully mitigated. Design at the urban edge requires high quality design and the use of appropriate materials, which are appropriate to local character and which maintain and enhance the distinctiveness of the area.

5.20 Aim: To manage access for recreation at the urban edge:

- Promote the enhancement of the footpath network and its contribution to landscape character and appreciation.
- Explore opportunities to improve public enjoyment of the area, through access agreements following appropriate routes, that would cause minimal disturbance.

6.0 VISUAL BASELINE

6.1 At the time of writing this assessment, it was not possible to visit the Site to undertake a full visual appraisal, due to the Government restrictions in relation to the COVID-19 outbreak. A combination of techniques have thus, been used to appraise the potential visibility of the Site and any new development, including the use of photography previously undertaken on site, Google Streetview and Bing birds eye photography. This has been supplemented by the knowledge of the area around the Site having assessed other sites within the locality. A series of **Site Context Photographs (1-11)** have been obtained using digital Streetview photography and these are included within the illustrative material accompanying this LVAGBR. The locations of the **Site Context Photographs** are shown on **Figure 5: Visual Appraisal Plan**.

Visual Context

- 6.2 The local landscape is gently undulating, with the Site on the eastern side of a low ridge of land, to the east of which Coventry is also located. The changes in level are not extreme enough to provide elevated views. The landscape is small in scale, with a tight network of small fields separated by hedgerows with mature trees. Roads also tend to be well-vegetated, creating layers of vegetation that foreshorten views. Gaps in the tree cover allow more open views towards the Site in some locations but, in these cases, vegetation around and nearby the Site tends to prevent permeability into the Site itself.
- 6.3 The gentle nature of the changes in topography, together with the dense layering of vegetation reduces visual permeability significantly. It was not possible to gain visual photography from the footpath network but where paths cross or extend close to the Site, views will be clear in winter with some filtering of views during summer months.

Likely Views

Broad Lane

- 6.4 Views into the north of the Site from Broad Lane are heavily filtered by the dense overgrown hedgerow with trees extending along the northern boundary, as seen in **Site Context Photographs 3, 4 and 5**. During winter months, however, this visual permeability will increase, allowing more views through to the Site interior. **Site Context Photograph 4** demonstrates the location of the existing access into the Site, from where it is possible to see directly into the Site.

Back Lane

- 6.5 Views from Back Lane are heavily filtered by the strong planting along the course of the road and the intervening layers of vegetation, as shown on **Site Context Photographs 1** and **2**. Views from the eastern part of the lane, however, are more open towards the Site due to historic hedgerow and tree loss. This visual permeability will be greater in winter months.
- 6.6 Back Lane meets Coventry Road / Broad Lane by the northern boundary of the Site and traffic approaching this junction from the north will have direct filtered views into the north of the Site, as shown on **Site Context Photograph 3**.

Benton Green Lane

- 6.7 As with Back Lane, parts of Benton Green Lane are heavily vegetated. The dense network of hedgerows in the vicinity of Benton Green Farm creates strong visual barriers in this area. To the south, however, views are more open across the intervening layers of hedgerows, in which there are fewer trees. Views into the Site will likely be possible, albeit filtered, during winter months as shown on **Site Context Photographs 6, 7** and **8**.

Tanners Lane

- 6.8 Views from Tanners Lane to the Site are unlikely due to the distance, the intervening layers of hedgerows and Rough Close Woods.

Housing West of Banner Lane

- 6.9 Some of the estate roads within the recently completed development west of Banner Lane extend to the eastern Site boundary and views into the Site are possible from these locations, see **Site Context Photographs 9** and **10**. The strong planting along the eastern boundary of the site and the intervening layers of built form will reduce visually permeability within a short distance of the Site. However, views along the open space into the south-east of the Site will be possible, albeit filtered, during winter months, as shown on **Site Context Photograph 10**.

Millennium Way / Coventry Way

- 6.10 Where the Long Distance Paths extend close to the western boundary of the Site, filtered views into the west of the Site are likely, particularly during winter months. During summer months, the visibility will reduce quickly with distance from the Site due to the remaining network of field boundaries in this area.

PRoW Crossing Site and Along Eastern and Southern Boundaries

- 6.11 The footpath along the southern boundary lies outside of the Site and the intervening hedgerow will soften views to some extent during summer. Views from the footpath along the eastern boundary and passing through the north of the Site, however, will be open.

Summary of the Visual Appraisal

- 6.12 Due to the characteristic dense network of hedgerows with field trees defining a small-scale pastoral landscape, supplemented by the frequent field trees around ponds, visual permeability drops quickly within a small distance of the Site, particularly during summer months. Views into the Site may be possible from Back Lane, Broad Lane and Benton Green Lane for short stretches during winter months but, in general, views from the surrounding road network are unlikely to be of note. More open views will be possible from Broad Lane due to the proximity.
- 6.13 More open views will also be possible from the Millennium Way / Coventry Way and from the PRoW extending along the southern and eastern boundaries and through the north of the Site.

7.0 GREEN BELT REVIEW

7.1 This chapter includes a summary of the published Green Belt Reviews that include the Site before an assessment of the contribution of the Site to the purposes of the Green Belt as set out within the NPPF, in accordance with the methodology set out in Chapter 2. Extracts of the published Green Belt Reviews are included in Appendix A.2 of this report.

Published Green Belt Reviews

Solihull Green Belt Review (2012)

7.2 This was a high-level document, concentrating on the land on the edge of Solihull around the Cole Valley and Chelmsley Wood. It does not include the area of the Site.

Solihull Strategic Green Belt Assessment (2016)

7.3 The above assessment divided Solihull Metropolitan Borough into a series of Broad Areas and smaller Refined Parcels, the latter being situated adjacent to built-up areas. Each Refined Parcel and Broad Area was assessed against the first four purposes of the Green Belt as set out within the NPPF.

7.4 The Site is located within Refined Parcel RP83, an area of land extending between Coventry Road / Broad Lane in the north, Benton Green Lane in the west, Tile Hill Lane in the south and the edge of Coventry in the east. It therefore comprises an area greater than that of the Site. This area was assessed against the first four purposes of the Green Belt as set out within the NPPF:

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

7.5 Refined Parcels were given a score of 0-3, with a score of 0 meaning the Refined Parcel does not perform against the purpose and 3 meaning the Refined Parcel is higher performing against the purpose. The scores for RP83 'Land to the east of Benton Green Lane' were as follows:

1)	1
2)	2
3)	2
4)	0
Total	5

7.6 The highest scoring criterion was 2, 'preventing towns from merging', and 3, 'Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment'. A score of 5 out of 12 places the Refined Parcel among the lower of the potential scores for Green Belt sites within the Solihull report. As a result, it is considered that the Site does not perform highly against the first 4 purposes of the Green Belt as set out within the NPPF.

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

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

7.8 The strategic review of Green Belt sites was based on the assessment of the performance of the strategic areas against the five purposes of the Green Belt as set out within the NPPF. The strategic areas were assessed as to whether they made a 'principal contribution' or a 'supporting contribution'. Figure 31 on page 181 identifies the area of the Site as being in area SE5 and Figure 36 on page 187 shows the Site as making a principal contribution, rather than a supporting contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt.

7.9 The assessment resulted in the identification of six 'Areas of Search' for new settlements and six for urban extensions, together with three Areas of Search for employment uses. In addition, a number of areas were identified where 'proportionate dispersal' might be appropriate, i.e. small-scale developments of approximately 500-2,500 dwellings. The land between Solihull and Coventry is identified as having a principal contribution of containing sprawl and maintaining separation (see Figure 36 on page 187).

7.10 Chapter 8 of the document sets out the strategic Green Belt Review that was undertaken as part of the overall assessment process. The Site is situated within Green Belt parcel SE5 for the purposes of analysis. This parcel covers all of the land from the A452 in the west to the edge of Coventry in the east and the A45 in the north. The overall study area was divided into six 'sectors' which were also assessed for their landscape character and settlement pattern. Parcel SE5 is situated within the north-eastern corner of the 'South East Sector'.

7.11 Under the heading of 'Green Belt Role', the strategic function of the Green Belt within the sector is described as principally relating to the separation of Birmingham and Coventry, together with the containment of sprawl around the edges of Coventry and Kenilworth. Prevention of encroachment into the countryside is also highlighted in the area to the west of Coventry.

- 7.12 Figure 31 on page 181 shows the majority of SE5 as forming part of the strategic separation of settlements. The eastern edge of SE5, including part of the Site is identified as contributing to the containment of sprawl. The location of the strategic separation on the plan suggests that it is primarily to maintain the separation of Birmingham and Coventry.
- 7.13 Figure 36 on page 187 shows that the area of the Site provides a principal contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt.
- 7.14 The scale of the search and the identified parcels and strategic Areas of Search mean that this assessment cannot be usefully applied to development at a site level.

Coventry Joint Green Belt Study (2009)

- 7.15 The Coventry Joint Green Belt Study identified 73 parcels of land around the edge of Coventry, but the Site was excluded from the assessment.

Coventry Joint Green Belt Study (2015)

- 7.16 This assessment took into account all of the land around Coventry with the exception of land falling within Solihull District and, therefore, excludes the Site.

Contribution of the Site to the Green Belt

- 7.17 Barton Willmore has undertaken their own assessment of the contribution made by the Site to the Green Belt and these findings are summarised within the following table:

Purpose	Critique	Contribution	Contribution using Solihull Methodology
Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	Development within the Site would bring the edge of Coventry as far as a series of field boundaries. These are not notably strong defensible boundaries but could be reinforced through detailed design and layout to make them more robust and defensible in Green Belt terms.	Limited	1
Prevent neighbouring towns from merging	Development within the Site will bring the edge of Coventry further east along Coventry Road / Broad Lane. Balsall Common, however, is located to the south-west and is more than 2.4km away. Development within the Site will not cause the perceptual or physical merger of towns.	None	2

Purpose	Critique	Contribution	Contribution using Solihull Methodology
Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	Development within the Site would bring the edge of Coventry beyond its current extents in this area. The visual envelope of the Site, however, is likely to be limited due to topography and vegetation, limiting the perception and visual encroachment. This can be further reduced by the establishment of strong buffer planting along the western boundary and by the set back of development behind fields F1 and F2 and the stream.	Limited	2
Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	The Site does not relate to a historic settlement	None	0
Overall		Limited	5

- 7.18 As can be seen in the table above, the Site performs a limited role when assessed against the purposes of the Green Belt as set out within the NPPF. The Green Belt is not intended to prevent the merger of local villages but, rather, to keep large settlements from merging. The Site will therefore not cause the merger of these large settlements. Any design of development within the Site should seek to reflect the rural location of the Site.
- 7.19 An assessment of the contribution of the Site to the purposes of the Green Belt utilising the Solihull methodology results in an overall score of 5 out of 12, a moderate score.

8.0 OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

8.1 The opportunities and constraints identified within each chapter been used to underpin a robust rationale for future development and the creation of a landscape strategy for the Site and are identified on **Figure 6: Opportunities and Constraints Plan**. These include the following recommendations.

Landscape Considerations for the Site

- 8.2 The most important features within the Site are the boundary hedgerows with their mature trees and the remaining field ponds and associated trees.
- 8.3 The existing mature trees should be retained, subject to survey, and provision made to add new native tree species, particularly oaks, to create age depth. This is to maintain the historic small-scale pattern of the landscape and the visual filtering created by the layering of the trees.
- 8.4 New hedgerows should be planted where appropriate using native hedgerows with English Oak used instead.
- 8.5 The ponds within the Site should be protected and enhanced as landscape and ecological features. These should be included as part of an integrated green-blue infrastructure network.

Visual Considerations for the Site

- 8.6 The Site is visually well enclosed by emerging residential development to the east. Short distance views will be possible from Broad Lane and from the PRow crossing the Site and nearby.
- 8.7 The protection of a green approach into Coventry from the west should be considered with buildings set back behind the course of the stream, as is the case in the houses to the east.

Opportunities and Constraints Arising from the Landscape and Visual Appraisal

8.8 The following strategy responds to the site landscape features, policy and landscape character guidance:

Landscape Features and Character

- Preserve the intimate landscape pattern through the retention of existing hedgerows where practicable, primarily around the Site boundaries.

- Existing hedgerow trees within the Site should be retained, subject to tree survey, and provision made for the planting of new oaks where appropriate. This is to maintain the visual enclosure of the Arden landscape and to provide an age structure within the tree cover.
- New and historic trees should be given sufficient space as part of any masterplan design in order to allow them to reach maturity without potential harm to either themselves or the surrounding development.
- Situate access points so that impact on hedgerows and trees is kept to the minimum.
- Positive frontages should be encouraged along the PRoW but a setback should be provided from Broad Lane, with development to the south of the stream, in order to preserve a green approach to Coventry from the west and to match the existing development frontage to the east.
- The routes of streams and ditches, and the field ponds, should be incorporated into an integrated green-blue infrastructure network.
- Development should reflect the urban edge location of the Site. Development on the edges should be of lower densities and allow space for canopy trees. Higher densities should be provided within the centre and east of the Site.
- Housing design should reflect the locality and respond to and reinforce local distinctiveness and build upon the local palette of materials and typologies.

Visual Issues

- Particular note should be taken of the visual separation of the new development from the Millennium Way and Coventry Way, and the protection of the countryside from visual encroachment to the west through the greening of the southern and western edge of the Proposed Development.
- Provide further tree planting along the boundary with the PRoWs to reduce the visual and perceptual intrusion of the development.
- Provide a strong area of buffer planting along the western boundary to both provide visual separation from the Millennium Way and Coventry Way and also to create a defensible barrier to the remaining Green Belt to the west.

Green Belt Issues

- Development should be set back behind the stream extending along the southern edges of fields F1 and F2, to maintain a green approach into Coventry from the west and reducing visual encroachment into the remaining Green Belt to the north.
- Dense planting along the western boundary will also help establish a defensible boundary to the remaining Green Belt in this area.

9.0 CONCLUSION

- 9.1 Any development within the Site will need to take account of the distinct Arden landscape present within the Site and the surroundings through the protection and enhancement of the distinctive landscape features, including woodland, trees, hedgerows, field ponds and water courses. Any development proposals should seek to enhance these features and to ensure their protection as part of an integrated and connected green blue infrastructure network. This will both serve to protect the characteristic landscape features of the Site but also to provide visual mitigation to development proposals.
- 9.2 Hedgerows around the boundaries, and the mature trees within and around the Site should be maintained as a priority, subject to tree survey. New trees, primarily oaks, should also be planted along the historic routes of the hedgerows to maintain and enhance the characteristic intimate scale of the landscape and wooded appearance. Both new and existing trees should be given sufficient space within the proposed masterplan design to ensure that they may reach maturity without risk to themselves or the surrounding development.
- 9.3 Consideration should be given to the creation of a green gateway on entering Coventry from the west. This can be achieved through the protection and enhancement of planting along the northern boundary of the Site and the setting of development behind the stream in the north of the Site.
- 9.4 Strong buffer planting and lower density housing should be established in the west of the Site to provide visual and physical separation from the Millennium Way and Coventry Way Long Distance Paths and to establish a defensible boundary to the west.
- 9.5 The Green Belt Reviews of the Site has demonstrated that the Site makes a limited contribution to the purposes of the Green Belt and can accommodate development without compromising the ability of the remaining Green Belt to perform its function.
- 9.6 The Site has the ability to accommodate development which is of a type and scale that reflects the existing development within the surrounding area, and which does not compromise the ability of the remaining Green Belt to serve its purpose.