

14<sup>th</sup> December 2020

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Dear Sir/ Madam

**Response to Solihull Local Plan Review (Regulation 19) Consultation**

I write on behalf of my client Spitfire Bespoke Homes in relation to the above consultation. As you will be aware, we have previously submitted representations to the Draft Local Plan Review Consultation in January 2017 and the Local Plan Supplementary consultation in March 2019.

Spitfire Bespoke Homes are a forward thinking, modern, privately owned property development company specialising in the construction of sustainable, high-quality bespoke residential dwellings. Spitfire is an award-winning house builder, and in 2018 won a total of 7 national awards for design excellence including Silver for Best Medium Housebuilder at the Whathouse Awards, Gold for Best Development at the Whathouse Awards and Best Medium Housebuilder at the Housebuilder Awards 2018

Spitfire have a varied range of development sites ranging between 3 dwellings in Henley-on-Thames to 13 new homes on Previously Developed Land near Knowle in the Solihull Green Belt to 125 new homes in Broadway within the AONB, which includes affordable housing extra care provision.

This submission relates to Land at Old Waste Lane, Balsall Common and should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Vision Document prepared by Turleys
- Environmental Appraisal prepared by EDP

Having reviewed, the consultation documents we wish to make the following representations:

**Policy P20 Provision for Open Space, Childrens Play, Sport, Recreation and Leisure**

***This policy is not considered to be legally compliant or sound for the following reasons.***

It is acknowledged and appreciated that a general requirement of the Local Plan will be a policy relating to open space. My client does not have any significant concerns with the majority of the policy, apart from part 6 which states:

*6. In this plan the following sites (as shown on the policies plan) are designated as Local Green Spaces:*

- I. Land between Old Waste lane and Waste Lane, Balsall Common*
- II. Land south of Shirley*

The supporting text to this draft policy states at paragraph 474 that *"The importance of these sites has been highlighted through their proximity to sites being allocated for development, or previously considered for such. This list will be kept open and there is opportunity for future plan reviews to include other sites (including those areas of open space being provided within site allocations), or for Neighbourhood Plans to identify such sites. Any proposals for development of these sites will be judged by the Green Belt policies of the NPPF and Policy P20 of this plan in accordance with paragraph 101 of the NPPF"*.

The site my client is interested in is Land between Old Waste Lane and Waste Lane, Balsall Common.

As you will be aware, paragraph 100 of the NPPF states that *"The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:*

- a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;*
- b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and*
- c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land."*

There is little justification for the designation of these Local Green Spaces, other than that set out in paragraph 474 of the Draft Submission Plan and paragraph 91 of the Open Space Topic Paper which simply states two sites are designated as Local Green Space. In light of this, further clarification has been sought from the Council and a response from the Planning Policy Team Leader (dated 27<sup>th</sup> November) stated the following in relation to land at Old Waste Lane this site *"is in the proximity of proposed Site BC1, Barretts Farm. The openness of the land contributes to the rural, tranquil character at this entrance to Balsall Common, which is of benefit in ensuring an attractive gateway to the settlement as well as being of benefit as a recreational green space to existing surrounding residents and future residents. It is proposed in the Plan that the land will be removed from the Green Belt as a consequence of the proposed housing allocation at Site BC1 Barrett's Farm & BC4 Pheasant Oak Farm. Designation will ensure continuation of protection for this green area, if and when the Green Belt boundary is amended."*

In light of this, the justification provided by the Council must be considered against the requirements for designation set out in paragraph 100 of the NPPF:

*a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;*

It is not entirely clear what community, this designation serves, presently the site is surrounded by existing fields with a handful of properties located along the norther boundary. The land is detached and some distance from the main settlement of Balsall Common. There has been no indication in the supporting documentation from the Council as to what community this land is seen to serve. The proposal therefore fails to meet criteria 1 of the requirements for Local Green Space Designation.

*b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and*

The Council within the draft submission plan and in their further email response provide no further justification or reasoning as to why it meets any of the above criteria. They appear to suggest that the land is important as the gateway to Balsall Common, and as recreational value. The site is in private ownership and whilst there is a public footpath which runs through the site (which would be retained as part of any future development of the site), it provides no further recreational value. The proposal therefore fails to meet criteria 2 of the requirements for Local Green Space Designation.

*c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.*

It is agreed that the site is not an extensive tract of land, however no justification has been provided as to why the land is local in character. The proposal therefore fails to meet criteria 3 of the requirements for Local Green Space Designation.

It is clear from the supporting text in the draft submission plan and the Councils response that this land is being designated as Local Green Space simply because it is proposed to be removed from the Green Belt and it is close to sites being allocated for development. The Council is well aware that this site has been promoted for development and that should it be removed from the Green Belt; it is likely to come forward subject to compliance with all other planning policies. Whilst it is acknowledged that the site is not an extensive tract of land, the NPPG is clear that *"blanket designation of open countryside adjacent to settlements will not be appropriate. In particular, designation should not be proposed as a 'back door' way to try to achieve what would amount to a new area of Green Belt by another name."* (ID ref: 37-015-20140306). This designation is clearly a way to prevent development on the site.

Furthermore, it must be noted that the site is located in Berkswell Parish and was not allocated as Local Green Space as part of their Neighbourhood Plan. The Parish would have been aware of the forthcoming allocations in the Draft Submission Plan and the removal of the Old Waste Lane site from the Green Belt yet felt no need to allocate

this land as Local Green Space. The PPG is clear that Local Green Space can be allocated on Green Belt land if there is considered to be any additional local benefit to its designation as Local Green Space (ref ID: 37-010-20140306). There is clearly no local significance of this land to the local community.

Finally it must be acknowledged that the PPG is clear that the Local Planning Authority should make contact with landowners at an early stage about proposals to designate any part of their land as Local Green Space (ref ID: 37-019-20140306). To date, and despite this site being actively promoted through the Local Plan process the Council have failed to notify the promotor or landowner of the proposed designation.

***Modifications required to make the plan legally compliant and sound***

In order to make this policy sound and legally compliant the Land between Old Waste Lane and Waste Lane, Balsall Common should not be designated as Local Green Space for the reasons set out in detail above.

***Appearing at the Examination***

I can confirm that we would wish to appear at the examination in respect of Policy P20 for the reasons set out above.

**Policy BC1 Barratt's Farm, Balsall Common**

***This policy is not considered to be sound for the following reasons.***

It is noted that the proposed allocation at Barratt's Farm, Balsall Common has been reduced from 900 dwellings at the Draft Local Plan Supplementary Consultation to 875 dwellings (albeit a further 300 could come forward following the completion of HS2), and yet still does not look to include land at Old Waste Lane (site 101 in the Site Assessment October 2020) which borders the southern boundaries of the proposed allocation. As has been set out previously Spitfire do not object to the principle of an allocation in this location, however questions have been raised over the number of dwellings that can actually be accommodated on the site having regard to the site constraints including designated heritage assets, ecology and potential areas of floor risk. There also appears to be a significant number of landowners which raises further questions over the deliverability of the scheme. This matter is raised at paragraph 541 of the Draft Submission Plan.

Since the time of the original representations, further work has been undertaken to produce a Vision Document and Environmental Appraisal relating to the site identified as Land at Old Waste Lane/ Waste Lane (site 101 in the Site Assessment October 2020)

As is set out in paragraph 536 of the Draft Submission Plan, Balsall Common is identified for significant housing growth and as part of this significant infrastructure improvements are also proposed for the settlement. These are detailed in paragraphs 527-535 of the Draft Submission Plan and include a relief road, enhanced centre, station parking, improved public transport, new primary school, and improvements to the existing secondary school. As such the settlement is going to change significantly over the plan period and is able to take additional growth over and above that already proposed in the Local Plan.

It is acknowledged that Land at Old Waste Lane/Waste Lane (Site 101) is proposed to be designated as Local Green Space. As has been set out in detail above within this representation, this designation does not accord with the requirements for Local Green Space and should therefore the site should be considered as a logical extension/rounding off of the Barratt's Farm proposal. As part of this submission, an Environmental Appraisal has been prepared by EDP and accompanies this submission. As is proposed within the Draft Submission Plan, the site is to be removed from the Green Belt. The assessment carried out by EDP agrees with this conclusion with their review concluding that the site as it currently stands makes a limited assessment to the Green Belt. Given this is a relatively small parcel of land, its removal from the Green Belt would not have an impact on the purposes of the Green Belt. Furthermore, the conclusions reached by EDP are that the site can be development in accordance with sound master planning principles without harm to the integrity of the Green Belt overall.

Accompanying this submission is a vision document which demonstrates how development can be accommodated on the site having regard to the identified site constraints. The vision document identifies the site as strategic infill, which forms part of the wider strategic proposals for Balsall Common. In addition, the proposal looks to provide sustainable connections. The masterplan presents an opportunity for an improved footpath link through the site which forms part of the Millennium Way and provides wider connections to the centre of Balsall Common. The site as it currently stands is bounded by mature hedgerows and trees. The masterplan allows the scheme to integrate within its existing landscape setting. Equally the proposals allow for ecological enhancements, and the opportunity to provide an area of play for residents.

Land at Old Waste Lane is available immediately and is being actively promoted by Spitfire Homes. There are no known constraints for which would prevent delivery. The site is adjacent to existing development and the proposed allocation at Barratts Farm. Development of this site already surrounded by existing residential dwellings would represent a logical rounding off of the Barratts Farm allocation. As there are questions over the land holdings at Barratt's Farm, this site can easily be delivered within the next five years providing much needed housing in Balsall Common in the short term.

***Modifications required to make the plan sound***

In order to make this policy sound, the allocation should be extended to include sites identified as Land at Old Waste Lane/ Waste Lane (site 101 in the Site Assessment October 2020).

***Appearing at the Examination***

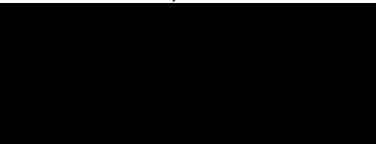
I can confirm that we would wish to appear at the examination in respect of Policy BC1 for the reasons set out above

**Concluding Comments**

As is set out above, a number of modifications need to be made in order to make the plan sound. This includes the inclusion of land at Old waste Lane for residential development.

I trust the above comments will be taken into consideration. If you require any further information or clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me on the number at the head of this letter.

Yours faithfully



**Guy Wakefield MRTPI**

**Partner**

**For Ridge and Partners LLP**

Enc.

Vision Document prepared by Turleys

Environmental Appraisal prepared by EDP

# OLD WASTE LANE

Balsall Common

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Vision Document

December 2020

A large, stylized graphic of a plant with several long, pointed leaves, rendered in a light gray outline, occupies the bottom right portion of the page.

**Turley** SPITFIRE  
bespoke homes



**Contact**

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**Date of issue**

December 2020

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# INTRODUCTION

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This vision document has been prepared by Turley on behalf of Spitfire Bespoke Homes. It supports the vision for residential development on land at Old Waste Lane, Balsall Common. The document demonstrates the availability and suitability of the site in order to help deliver new housing in a sustainable location.

Balsall Common is located in the Borough of Solihull and serves as a key settlement to the nearby urban areas of Solihull, Birmingham and Coventry. The village extents are encompassed by the Green Belt.

Balsall Common is a popular place to live, with local facilities and services within the village and readily available connections to Coventry, Warwick and Birmingham via bus, rail, cycle and car.

The vision for Old Waste Lane is to deliver a high quality residential development, and create an area of accessible public open space and amenity, set within close proximity to existing facilities and services, as well as sustainable transport modes.

The site is proposed to be removed from the Green Belt as part of the Draft Submission Local Plan. Therefore the site presents an opportunity to be an infill scheme to the adjacent development along Old Waste Lane. Whilst it is proposed to designate the land as Local Green Space the justification for this is contested on the basis that it has not been shown to be demonstrably special to the local community nor does it hold a particular local significance. It therefore meets the requirements of paragraph 100 of the NPPF.

An illustrative masterplan will demonstrate the sites suitability and deliverability for development in response to wider and site specific considerations.



Figure 1: Illustrative visual showing development overlooking proposed green space



# SPITFIRE BESPOKE HOMES

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## WHO WE ARE

Spitfire Bespoke Homes are committed to delivering high quality homes for the Land at Old Waste Lane, Balsall Common. We are a forward thinking, modern, privately owned property development company specialising in the construction of sustainable, high – quality bespoke residential dwellings. Backed by its parent company IM Group Limited, Spitfire has a fantastic platform in the housing development industry; IM Properties portfolio is currently valued in excess of £1bn and benefits from its geographical diversity across the UK, Germany and the USA.

Spitfire is passionate about design, sustainability and quality of construction, their bespoke approach towards design has resulted in beautifully designed homes with a real sense of individuality. As a company we have a wealth of skills, experience and creative flair to make not just houses but homes for communities.

Recognition for Spitfire’s approach to design has resulted in winning the Silver ‘Housebuilder of the Year’ award at the Insider Residential Property Awards 2017. In 2018, Spitfire was also awarded a Highly Commended for ‘Best Family Home’ at the Evening Standard New Homes ceremony; ‘Best Medium Housebuilder’ and ‘Best Design’ at the Housebuilder Awards; as well as winning in the ‘Best Medium Housebuilder’ (Silver) and ‘Best Development’ (Gold) categories at the WhatHouse? Awards.

At the Evening Standard New Homes Awards 2019 Spitfire won Best Small Development for Haseley Manor.







# ASSESSMENT

## SITE LOCATION

The site is located to the south east Balsall Common and is within the Solihull administrative boundary. It serves as a key village for Birmingham and Coventry.

Balsall Common has key connections to Solihull approximately 10.5km and Birmingham 23km to the west. Coventry is approximately 12km to the east, and Warwick and Leamington Spa are located approximately 13km to the south.

The village is accessible to the M40, M42 and M6, allowing for wider strategic connections to other regions of the UK.

The site is situated in between two existing site allocations, BC1: Barratts Farm to the north and BC4: Pheasant Oak Farm, immediately south, and therefore provides and appropriate infill development for new homes.

## SITE DESCRIPTION

The site is approximately 1.64 ha in size and constitutes two relatively flat open fields divided by existing trees and hedgerow.

There is a Public Right of way that Crosses the site and forms part of Millennium Way: Burton Green and Beechwood Circular Walk.

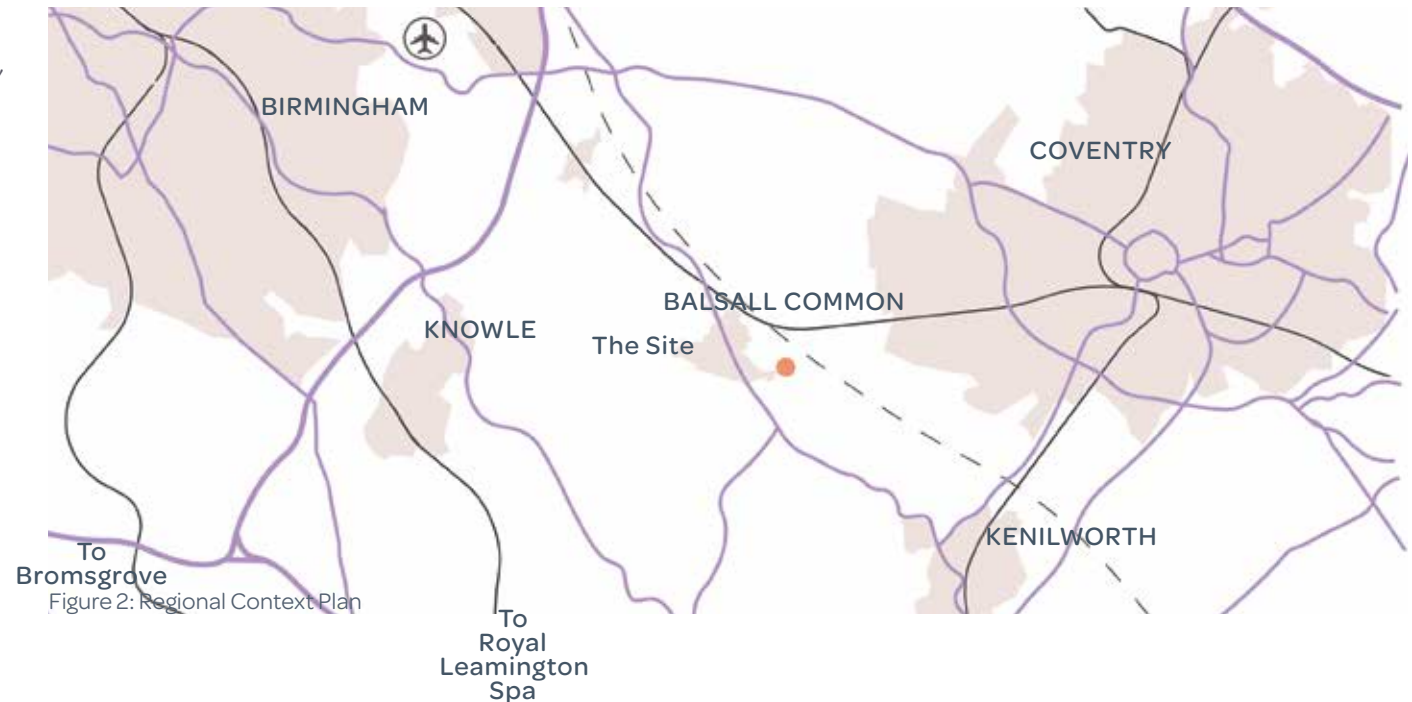
All of the boundaries are lined by existing trees and hedgerow with thicker areas of vegetation located on the eastern and western boundaries. An existing ditch runs

east to west along the length of the northern boundary sited adjacent to the hedgerow.

Old Waste Lane abuts the north east and western boundaries, with a single sided residential development block faces the road along the north.

The southern boundary faces the B4101 Waste Lane, providing access into Balsall Common and Coventry.

There is an existing private orchard that abuts the western boundary.







Site Allocation BC1:  
Barratts Farm

Old Waste Lane

Old Waste Lane

Old Waste Lane

B4101 Waste Lane

The Site

B4101 Waste Lane

Site Allocation BC4:  
Pheasant Oak Farm

Site Boundary

Public Right of Way

Open Fields

Existing Hedgerow and Trees

Existing Private Orchard

Existing Ditch

Site Allocations

Figure 3: Site Location Plan



# PLANNING POLICY OVERVIEW

## Local Plan - Balsall Common

The emerging Local Plan Review reflects the potential for settlements such as Balsall Common to accommodate housing growth. This is illustrated by the fact that Balsall Common has over recent years been the subject of allocated and committed housing development, and continues to be identified as a location for growth through the allocations within the Draft Local Plan.

The Draft Local Plan currently identifies 1,615 dwellings will be delivered at Balsall Common across 6 sites. These sites are;

- Frog Lane (Richborough Estates)
- Windmill Lane (Catesby Estates)
- Barratts Farm (Greenlight Landholdings)
- Pheasant Oak Farm (Privately Owned)
- Trevallion stud (predominantly Council owned)
- Lavender Hall Farm (predominantly Council owned)

In order to establish the degree of robustness and deliverability of the proposed allocations high level analysis and concept masterplans for each of the site allocations in the local plan have been developed (Solihull Local Plan Concept Masterplans - October 2020).

## Solihull Local Plan - Draft Submission Plan

The Solihull Local Plan - Draft Submission Plan (October 2020) identifies Balsall Common as within the Borough's rural area. The Local Plan Review acknowledges that Balsall Common is a large post-war suburban village, characterised by low density residential areas with open plan, cul-de-sac style layouts. The village is identified as having a thriving local centre and accessibility to Berkswell railway station to the north-east of the village provides access to London, Birmingham and Coventry.

Draft Policy P5 'Provision of Land for Housing' establishes that the Council will allocate sufficient land to deliver 15,017 dwellings (938 net dwellings per annum) during the period 2020-2036. The Policy establishes that new housing will be supported on identified sites in accessible locations where they contribute towards meeting borough-wide housing needs and towards enhancing local character and distinctiveness. New housing developments will be required to make the most efficient use of land whilst providing an appropriate mix and maintaining character and local distinctiveness.





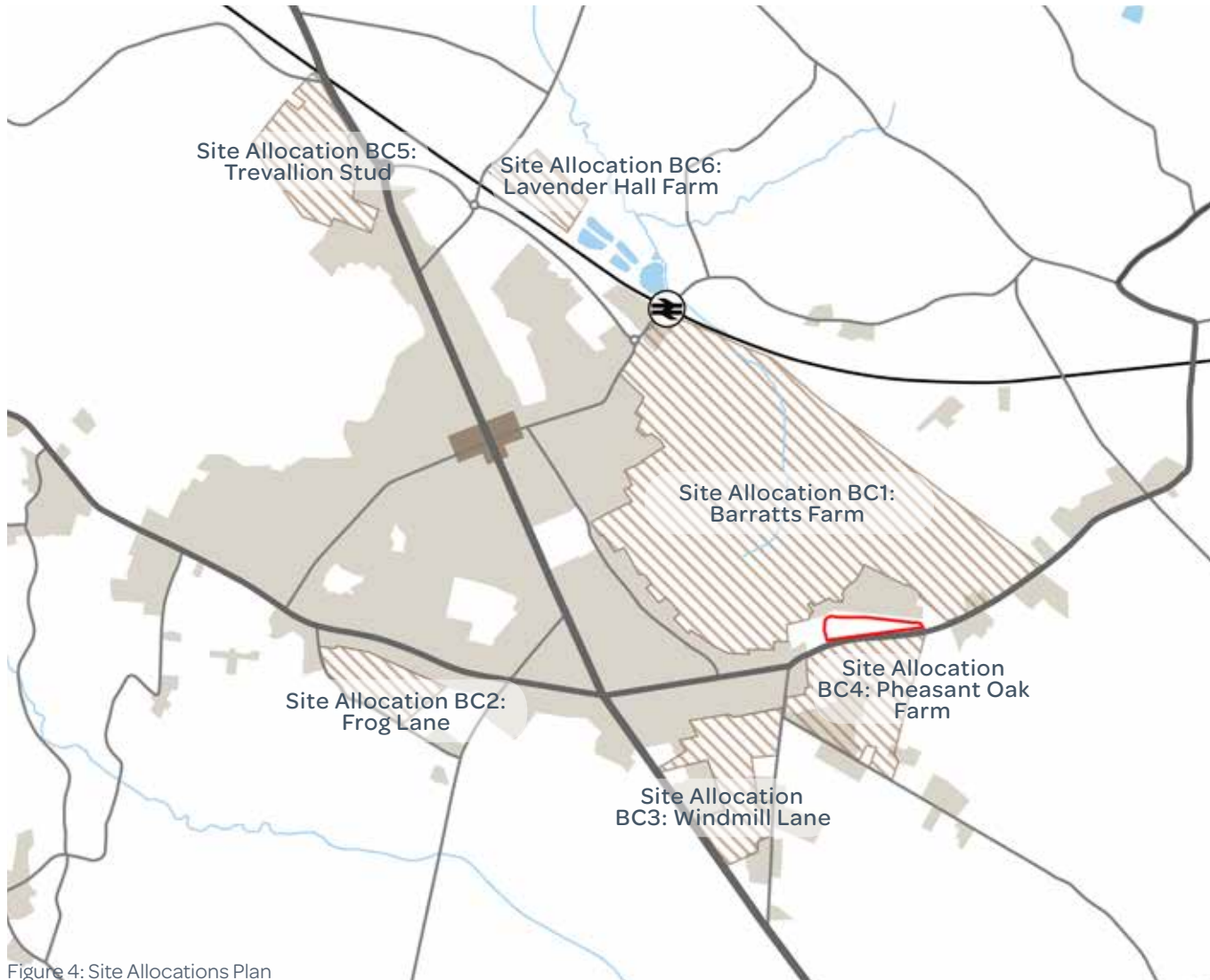


Figure 4: Site Allocations Plan



## ACCESS & MOVEMENT

### Vehicular

The site lies to the north of the B4101 Waste Lane and to the south of Old Waste Lane. It will be proposed that a main access into the site will be gained from Old Waste Lane.

The B4101 Waste Lane provides access to the A452. This provides connections to into Birmingham to the North and Warwick and Leamington Spar to the south (via A4177).

The A452 allows for connections to the M40, M42 and M6, that provide connection to other regions of the UK.

Access into Coventry can be gained via B4101 via public transport.

### Public Transport

There are a number of bus stops located close to the site. The nearest is within 5 minutes walk of the site and is located on the B4101 Waste Lane. Buses 87 and 87A serve the stops approximately every hour and the 89, providing connections to Balsall Common Village Centre, Solihull and Coventry.

Berkswell train station is located to the north of the site and is approximately a 15 minute walk. This provides access into Birmingham Northampton and London. These stations also allow for wider connections in the UK.














The Planned route for the HS2 runs to the east of Balsall Common. The site does not fall within 300m of the consultation zone.

### PRoW Network

There is a Public Right of way that Crosses the site and forms part of the Millennium way Promoted route (Millennium Way: Burton Green and Beechwood Circular Walk). This is a national trail that links Pershore to Middleston Cheney, and will be retained and incorporated into the proposals for the site.

### International

The site is closely located to Birmingham Airport, approximately 12.5km north of the site and can be accessed by the A452. There is also a direct train to the Airport. The sites close proximity allows for international travel.

-  Site Boundary
-  Extents of Balsall Common
-  Village Centre
-  Site Allocations
-  A Roads
-  B Roads
-  Local Roads
-  Railway Track
-  Proposed HS2 Route
-  Indicative Bypass
-  Public Rights of Way
-  Bus Stops
-  Railway Station

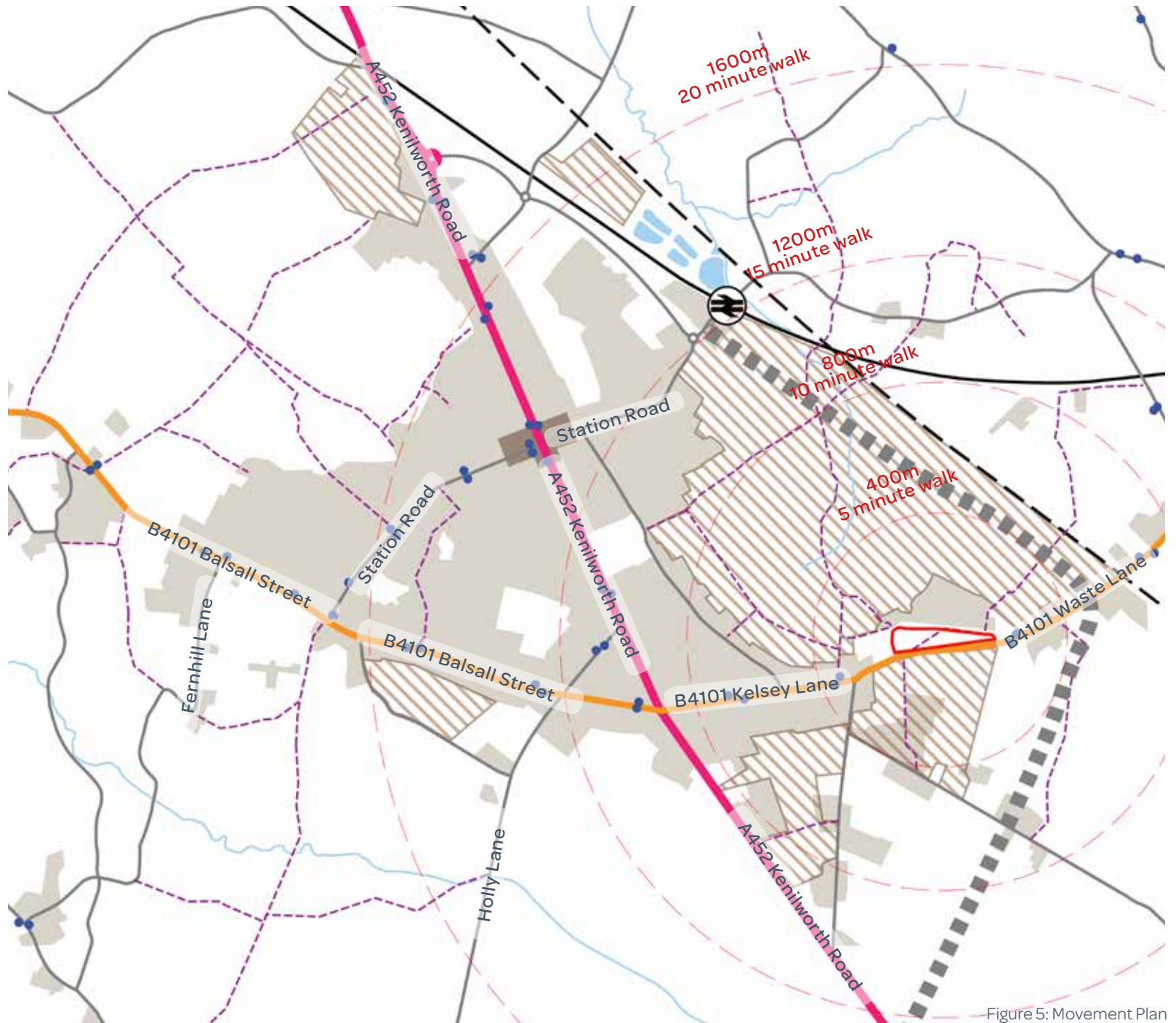


Figure 5: Movement Plan

## FACILITIES & SERVICES

The site is well situated in close proximity to a range of facilities and services, with most being no more than a 20 minute walk. There is a concentration of facilities and services such as local restaurants and food shops within the village centre. The key facilities and services include;

- Tesco Express
- Costa Coffee
- Balsall Common Post Office
- One Stop
- Balsall Common Library

Other food shops within the village include a co-operative food, Sainsbury's Local and Oakes Farm Shop.

### Education

There are two schools located within Balsall Common and are no more than 1.4km from the site. These are;

- Heart of England Secondary School & Sixth Form
- Balsall Common Primary School

Warwick, Coventry and various Birmingham universities are easily accessible by public transport.

### Health

Balsall Common Health Centre is located approximately 1.3km to the north of the site. Balsall Common Dental Practice is also located within the Village Centre along the A452 and is within a 20 minute walk of the site.

### Open Space and Leisure

There are a number of amenity and leisure facilities located close to the site, being no more than 25 minutes walk from the site. These include;

- Willow Park
- Berkswell & Balsall Common Sports Association
- Balsall Common Badminton Club
- Lavender Hall Park
- Lavender Hall Fishery
- The Lant Trust playing Field/ Berkswell & Balsall Common Sports Association

There are additional facilities and services in the nearby cities, allowing for wider opportunities, as well as access to a greater range of open space and leisure facilities. These can be easily accessed via sustainable public transport modes.



- Site Boundary
  - Extents of Balsall Common
  - Village Centre
  - Green Space/Amenity
  - Site Allocations
1. Oakes Farm Shop
  2. Fernhill Court Business Park
  3. Playing Field
  4. Balsall Common Primary School
  5. Heart of England School
  6. The White Horse Pub
  7. The Lant Trust Playing Field/  
Berkswell & Balsall Common Sports  
Association
  8. The medical Advisory Centre
  9. Meeting House Lane Park
  10. Bengal Brasserie
  11. Village Hall
  12. McKees Brasserie
  13. Willow Park
  14. Ye Olde Saracens Head Pub
  15. Lavender Hall Park
  16. Balsall Common Health Centre
  17. Balsall Common Dental Care
  18. The Brickmakers Arms Pub
  19. The Royal British Legion Pub
  20. Co-Operative Food
  21. George in the Tree Beefeater
  22. The Lavender Cafe/Lavender Hall  
Fishery

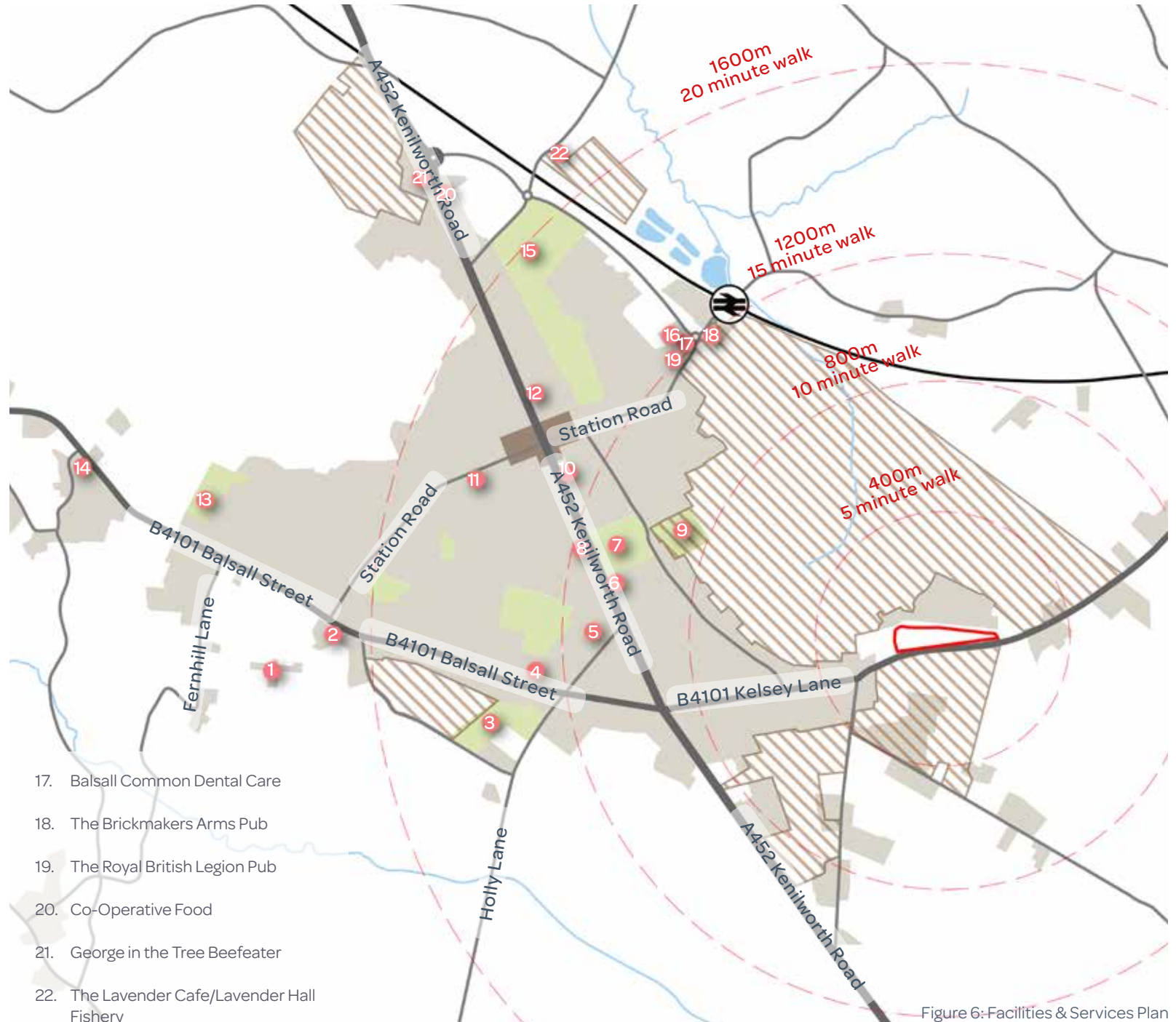


Figure 6: Facilities & Services Plan

# LANDSCAPE & VIEWS

## Landscape Overview

The site is currently set within the Solihull Metropolitan Green Belt. . The village itself does not lie within the Green Belt.

The site does not contain any other identified designations but does however fall within 3km of;

- Ancient Woodlands
- A number of Grade II\* and Grade II listed buildings

The Millennium Way Promoted Route crosses the western parcel of the site.

## Green Belt

An assessment has been undertaken in relation to the site and how its features contribute to the towards the key 'purposes' of the Green Belt.

The site is proposed to be removed from the Green Belt without significant adverse effects to the designation. Masterplanning principles will be designed to work harmoniously with the existing landscape context and promote a scheme that responds positively to the surrounding landscape and built context.

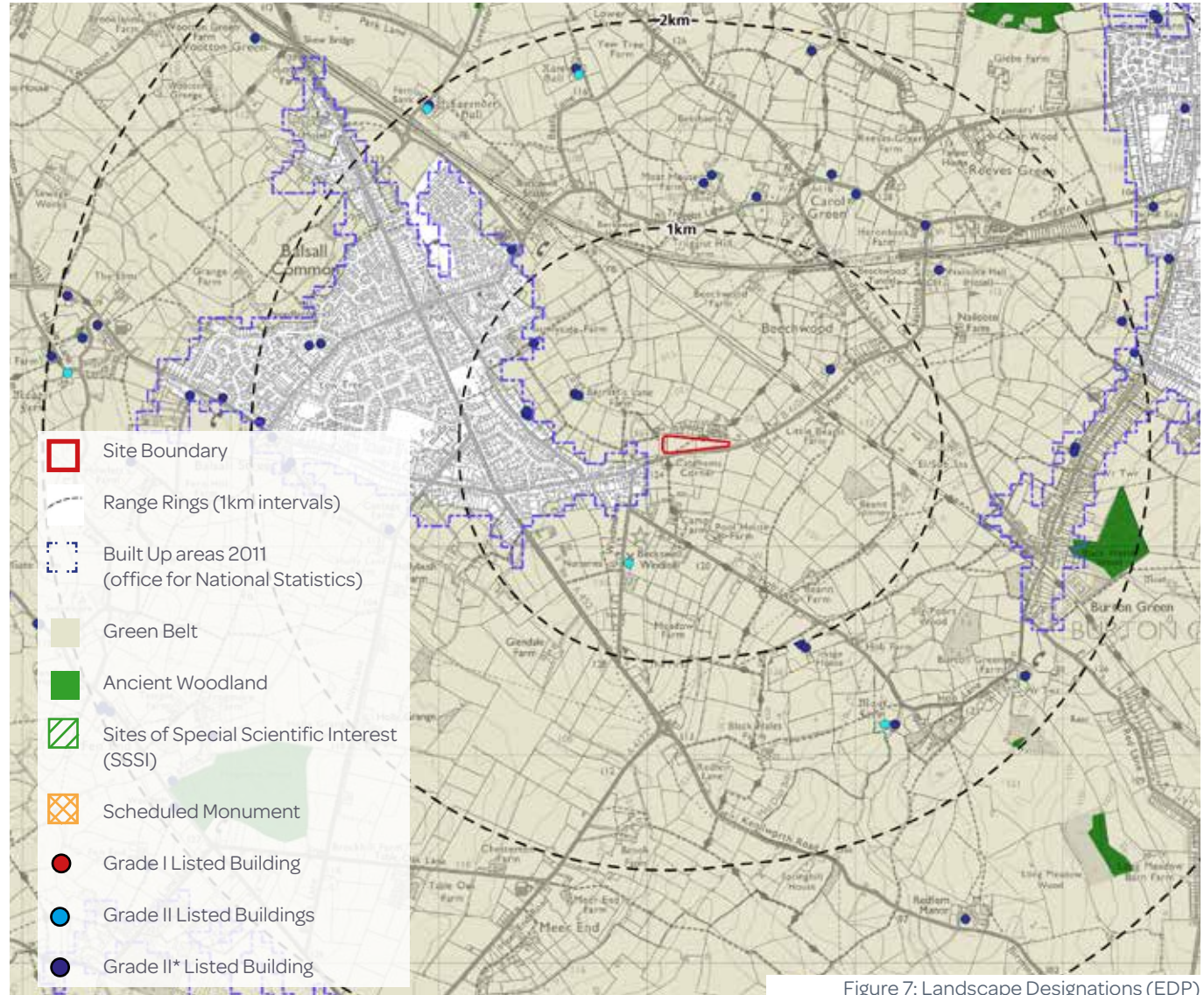


Figure 7: Landscape Designations (EDP)



## Landscape Setting & Views

The site is within the NCA 97 'Arden' which can be described as gently rolling with small fragmented semi-natural and ancient woodlands.

The site falls within LCA 5 'Balsall Common Eastern Fringe' which is outlined in the 'Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment'. The local area is identified by 'dominant' influence of trees and hedgerows and narrow, sunken lanes.

The site is well contained with existing mature trees and hedgerow screening the visibility of the site to its surrounding context.

The site currently has a strong-semi-urban character and is influenced by the B4101 Waste Lane to the south and the character of the existing residential properties to the north.

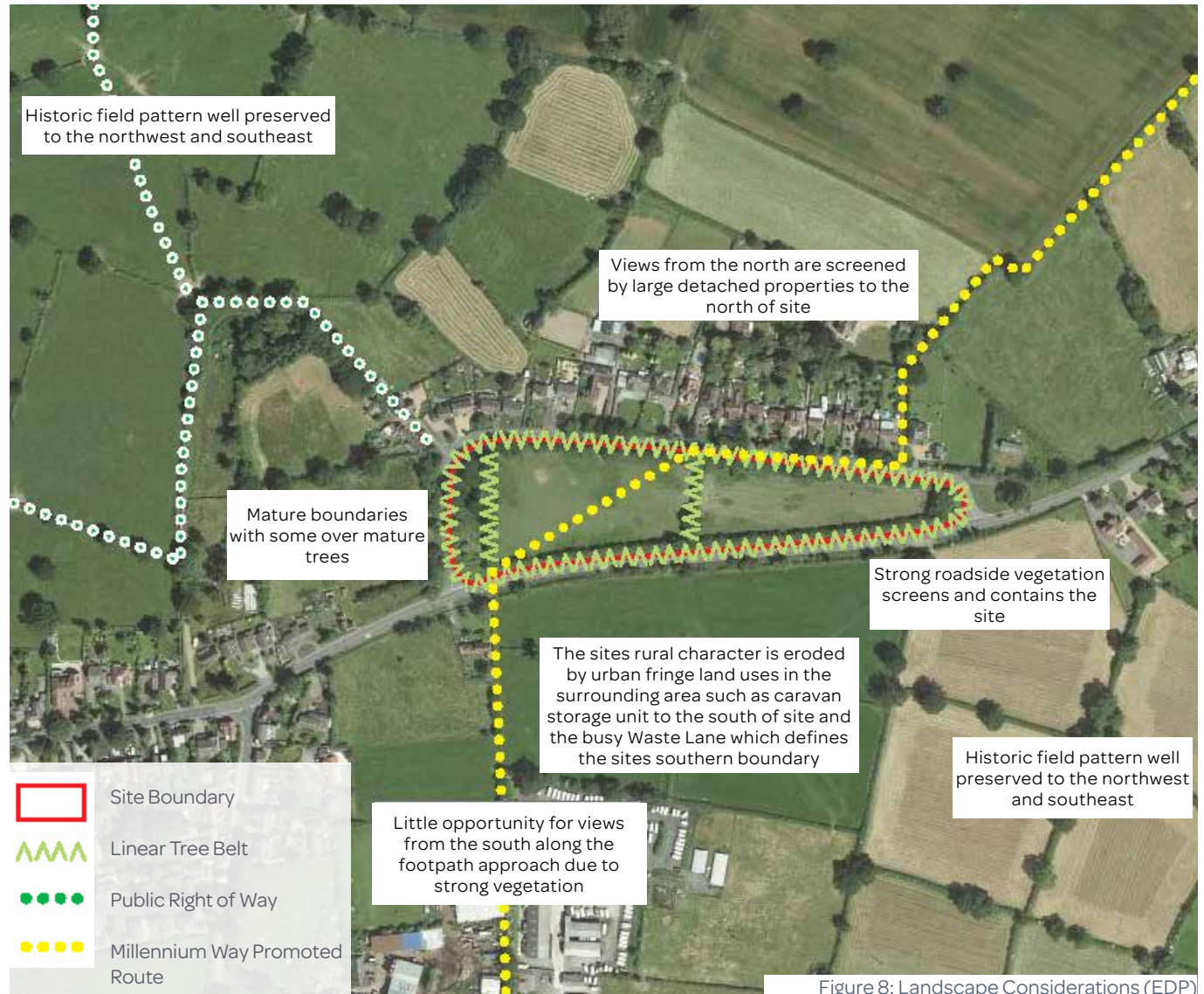


Figure 8: Landscape Considerations (EDP)

## URBAN MORPHOLOGY

The development of Balsall Common has occurred gradually over time. Originally the area consisted of smaller hamlets up until the early 1900s, and were focussed along the key routes of Kennilworth Road, Balsall Street and Station Road.

From the 1950's, development has predominantly been infill projects in between key routes. The result of urban sprawl led to the merging of these smaller areas into one conurbation.



Figure 9: Historic Development Plan



## Heritage & Local Character

No listed buildings are within the immediate context of the site.

As part of the design process, a context character appraisal will be undertaken to analyse the existing built and urban form, to ensure that the proposed development is sympathetic to its local context, but also identifiable as its own place.



Figure 10: Properties on Catchems Corner



Figure 11: Properties on Old Waste Lane



Figure 12: Properties on Old Waste Lane



# CONSTRAINTS & OPPORTUNITIES

## Boundaries

All of the boundaries are lined by thick vegetation including trees or hedgerow. The north east and southern boundaries have verges that abut Old Waste Lane to the north and east, and the B4101 Waste Lane to the south. There is an existing private orchard immediately adjacent to the west of the site.

## Topography

The site is relatively flat in nature falling from east to west. The proposals would seek to work with the existing topography to create a scheme that will blend in with the surrounding environment.

## Landscape & Views

The site is well enclosed by the existing vegetation located along the boundaries of the site. This limits the potential views both into and out of the site.

There is opportunity for the masterplan to integrate the existing landscape features into the masterplan to ensure there is minimal impact to the existing landscape context.

## Trees & Hedgerow

There are existing trees and hedgerow that line all of the boundaries of the site as well as an internal hedgerow that defines a field parcel.

There is opportunity to incorporate the sites existing vegetation into the masterplan proposals as well as provide additional planting to help create a pleasant environment to live in and integrate the scheme within the landscape context.

## Ecology

The sites existing trees and hedgerow are likely to provide potential habitats for certain species. The proposed development will to preserve, where possible, and enhance existing ecological features and provide new enhanced habitats increase ecological value.

## Flood Risk & Drainage

The site is situated within Flood Zone 1, meaning that it is at low risk of flooding from rivers or the sea. Nor is the site subject to surface water flooding. The site is not subject to surface water flooding either. Development proposals for the site will promote sustainable drainage methods to prevent any adverse impact from flooding.

The existing ditch along the northern boundary of the site is the most viable surface water outfall location and surface water attenuation can be facilitated within the proposed public open space. The discharge rates from the site will be restricted to greenfield run-off rates. This will ensure that drainage for any proposed development will be managed on site thus ensuring there is no flood risk created that would affect the existing area around the site of the proposed development itself. Suitable planting within the attenuation basin would enhance the site's biodiversity with wet habitats for species.

## Access

There is currently an existing gate access into the site. This could be retained as a pedestrian access into the site. The main vehicular access points are proposed to be taken from Old Waste Lane. There is opportunity for direct access to plots from Old Waste Lane.

There is an existing Public Right of Way that crosses the site and forms part of the Millennium Way promotional route. This will be incorporated and integrated within the masterplan proposals.

## Heritage & Local Character

The site does not lie near any heritage assets. However there is a strong sense of character along Old Waste Lane. There is opportunity for the masterplan to respond positively through high quality and distinctive design.

## Utilities




















Potable water, gas, electric and telecoms mains are all readily available within Old Waste Lane. There is also existing public foul sewers within Old Waste Lane. Some minor diversions will be required to overhead telecoms cabling, but otherwise the site is well served with existing utilities that could supply any proposed development.



Figure 13: View looking north towards Old Waste Lane

## KEY DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

- The site has opportunity to become an infill scheme connecting the existing residential area to the B4101 Waste Lane. The site is currently set back from the main road and is separated by a verge and trees and hedgerow.
- The site has opportunity to reroute and integrate the Millennium Way promotional route within the design and create a key point within the circular route.
- The site will respond positively to the existing character of Old Waste Lane, helping to create a more cohesive setting for the urban area.
- The proposals will retain, where possible, the sites existing green infrastructure and enhance, with species rich planting. This will help to enhance the sites existing ecological value.

	Site Boundary
	Public Right of Way (Millennium Way Circular Route)
	Proposed Site Access
	Existing Pedestrian Access
	Bus Stops
	Existing Ditch
	Existing Trees and/or Hedgerow (subject to further assessment)
	High Voltage Line (Overhead)
	Low Voltage Line (Overhead)
	Low Voltage Line (Underground)
	Low Pressure Gas Line
	Telecomms Line (Overhead)
	Telecomms Line (Underground)
	Waster Water (Foul)
	Waste Water (Foul Rising Main)
	Clean Water Supply
	Potential Noise Risk from B4101 Waste Lane
	Key Frontage
	Site Allocations





Site Allocation BC1:  
Barratts Farm

Old Waste Lane

Old Waste Lane

Old Waste Lane

Private Orchard

B4101 Waste Lane

B4101 Waste Lane

Site Allocation BC4:  
Pheasant Oak Farm

Figure 14: Site Constraints Plan

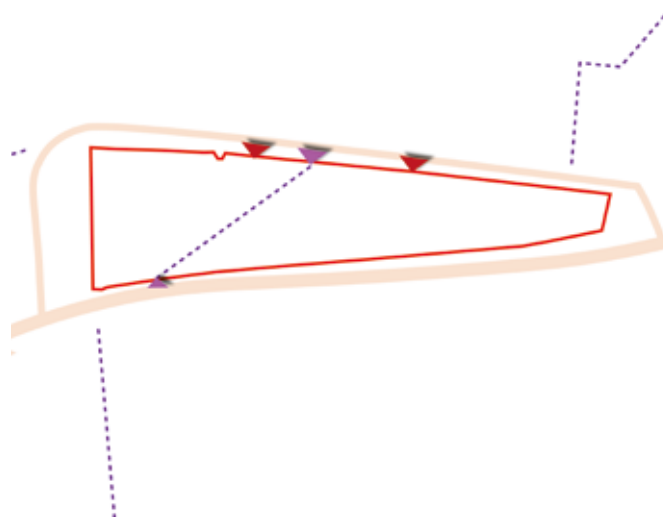


## DESIGN PRINCIPLES



### Green Infrastructure

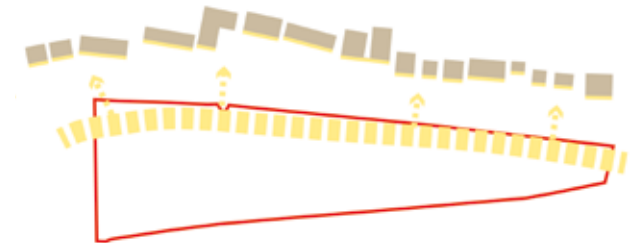
There is a strong Green Infrastructure (GI) network along all of the boundaries of the site and running centrally, splitting the site in two. The masterplan proposals should see to retain the sites existing GI, where possible and enhance them. The GI will have a degree of ecological value too, these habitats should seek to be enhanced to increase the amount of biodiversity within the site.



### Connections

The site lies to the north of the B4101 Waste Lane and to the south of Old Waste Lane. There is opportunity to have development fronting directly onto Old Waste Lane, with a new access point located this road too.

There is an existing PRow that crosses the site and forms part of the promoted Millennium Way National Trail. This footpath will be integrated into the masterplan as part of the proposals



### Existing Character

There is a strong sense of character along Old Waste Lane. The masterplan will respond positively to this existing character and generate housetypes that are informed by a context character appraisal.

## MASTERPLAN CONCEPT

The illustrative sketch to the right demonstrates the indicative net developable area. The masterplan takes into account the various site specific constraints and in response, will propose key frontage facing Old Waste Lane. Two access points to private drives will be taken from Old Waste Lane, to which frontage will face the proposed public open space. The existing PRoW will be integrated into the high quality open space and will form part of the Millennium Way promotional route.



Figure 15: Illustrative Masterplan Concept



# THE DESIGN

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## THE PROPOSALS

- The masterplan demonstrates how development could be delivered on the site, taking into consideration the technical assessments that have been undertaken.
- The proposed scheme is reflective of the existing character of Old Waste Lane, in terms of massing and scale. Spitfire Bespoke Homes will dedicate themselves to providing high quality homes, with a range of tenure and type, to help address housing need.
- The masterplan takes into consideration the existing Millennium Way route, and redirects the footpath through public open space. The will be designed with a comprehensive landscape strategy.
- The design principles will retain and enhance where possible all of the existing trees and hedgerow. Additional planting will be provided within the public open space as well as surface water drainage attenuation features.
- Key frontage, reflective of the existing character, will face Old Waste Lane, where direct access to on plot parking will be provided. There will be a primary access point into the site which will serve some of the development. The remainder of the site will be accessed via private drives.
- The green space within the site will be enhanced to provide added ecological value, and encourage wildlife to use the site. A play space could also be provided within the green amenity area.

- 1 Primary access point taken from Old Waste Lane
- 2 Primary road
- 3 Key frontage and lower density development
- 4 Public open space with additional planting and surface water attenuation features
- 5 Realigned Public Right of Way
- 6 Existing Public Right of Way
- 7 Proposed pedestrian connections
- 8 Retained hedgerow and trees
- 9 Potential for Nature Play
- 10 A break in the hedgerow to create connectivity between east and west development parcels
- 11 Proposed Pond





Old Waste Lane

Old Waste Lane

B4101 Waste Lane

B4101 Waste Lane

Figure 16: Concept Masterplan

## MASTERPLAN STRATEGIES



### A Strategic Infill

The masterplan lies to the south of existing residential development, as well as between two site allocations. The site therefore forms part of an infill scheme to the existing residential development to the north.



### Providing Sustainable Connections

The masterplan will utilise Old Waste Lane to gain access to the properties within the masterplan. Two separate roads will also be provided.

The masterplan has incorporated the existing Public Right of Way within the masterplan which forms part of the Millennium Way promotional route and allows for connection into Balsall Common



### Enhanced Green Infrastructure

The masterplan seeks to retain existing trees and hedgerow where possible, allowing for the scheme to integrate within its existing landscape setting. Additional planting is provided within public open space, to help create a more pleasant environment.





### **Ecological Enhancements**

The masterplan provides landscape enhancements throughout the public open space. It also retains and enhances the sites existing vegetation, where possible. The retention and enhancement will ensure there is a sufficient increase in ecological value set within the masterplan.



### **Amenity & Play**

The masterplan seeks to provide an area of play for residents and families that may be using the Millennium Way promotional route, allowing for the masterplan to behave as an informal break point in the circular route.



### **Overall Strategy**

The overall masterplan will provide a comprehensive scheme that responds to the existing site constraints that have been identified within this document.

## LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

There will be a green space located centrally within the masterplan, which will have additional planting as well as a space for recreational activity for residents that use the site.

The public open space will be enhanced through the retention of the sites existing vegetation, where possible, as well as new native planting located within the public open space. The public open space will be enhanced through the retention of the sites existing vegetation, where possible, as well as new native planting located within the public open space. A new surface water attenuation feature will also be incorporated within the public open space and planted as a wet habitat.

The existing PRoW will be realigned through this public open space. The ambitions for the site are to create an enhanced landscape setting that connects to a wider pedestrian network, to encourage walking and/or cycling.

The additional planting will have a degree of ecological value. The landscape proposals will promote ecological enhancement to encourage biodiversity within the site. This will be done by providing native tree planting as well as species-rich flora, to encourage wildlife to use the site.





- 1 Public open space situated in the heart of the site
- 2 Existing vegetation to be retained and enhanced
- 3 Lower density housing facing public open space
- 4 Key frontage responding positively to existing character of Old Waste Lane
- 5 Proposed public open space to have additional planting and other landscape features to increase the sites overall ecological value
- 6 Public Right of Way to be realigned to create a safer entrance from the B4101 Waste Lane



Figure 17: Concept Plan

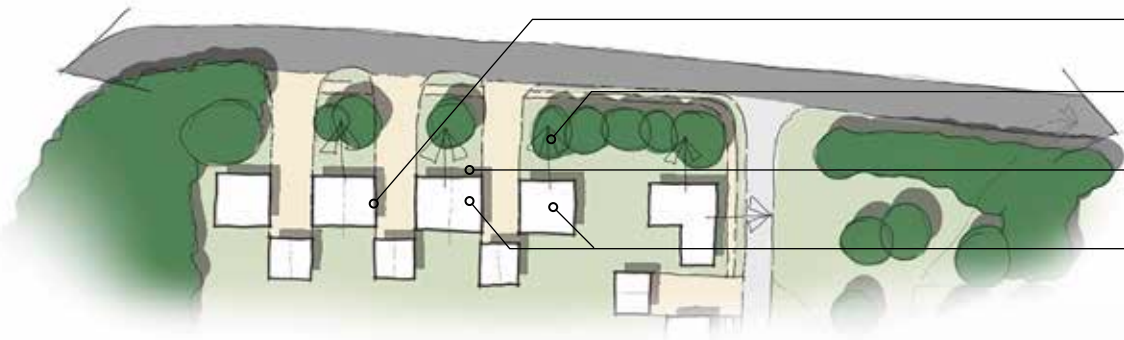
## CHARACTER AREAS

### Fronting Old Waste Lane

The scheme will propose a number of units facing directly onto Old Waste Lane. The units will have key frontage that responds positively to the existing rural character of the area.

There will be additional planting, as well as a grass verge proposed, to reflect the existing rural qualities of the sites context.





Key frontage facing Old Waste Lane

Retained and enhanced planting

Generous front gardens

Mix of semi-detached or detached dwellings



## Primary Road & Private Drives

There will be two new access points proposed within the layout, leading into the development parcels. Units will face out towards public open space.

Dwellings will generally be larger detached units. A grass verge could be proposed to help create a more rural feel to the development.

The public open space will be located centrally within the development where the realigned PRow will be located. This opens opportunity for connectivity through the whole development and connection to the wider context. A gap will be created within the existing hedgerow to increase connectivity between the east and west parcels.

Additional planting and landscaping will be provided within the open space to help increase the level of biodiversity.

A formal play area could be introduced for younger people.







# RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE

## Background

The special report on Global Warming of 1.5°C from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published in October 2018 set out that human activities are estimated to have caused approximately 1.0°C of global warming and this is likely to increase to reach 1.5°C between 2030 and 2052 at its current rate. Limiting warming to 1.5°C requires major and immediate action.

The Climate Change Act 2008 is the basis for the UK's approach to tackling and responding to climate change. It requires that emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are reduced and that climate change risks are prepared for.

In May 2019, the UK Government declared a climate emergency and in June 2019 the Government amended the Act to set a new legally binding target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050, the world's first major economy to do so. In relation to this, SMBC also declared a climate emergency in order to demonstrate its commitment to taking action on climate change.

## Balsall Common Adaptation and Mitigation

It is evident there is a need for the development to consider measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Our Client is committed to delivering a resilient low carbon development and aims to deliver an ambitious strategy to mitigate the effects of climate change through reducing carbon emissions of Land at Old Waste Lane.

The following section outlines how the development will aim to incorporate a range of measures to adapt to and mitigate the impact of climate change.

## Passive Design

As a result of climate change, summer maximum temperatures are predicted to increase; during the design of Land at Old Waste Lane, a Cooling Hierarchy will be considered. Measures may include:

- Appropriate orientation of homes and buildings;
- Reduced window area to balance daylighting and overheating risk;
- External shading;
- High albedo materials;
- Window overhangs;

- Glazing design with openable windows to encourage cross ventilation to reduce mechanical cooling demand;
- Passive cooling; and
- Passive ventilation.
- Energy Use

The built environment contributes around 40% of the UK's total carbon footprint. In order to reduce the carbon footprint of buildings at Old Waste Lane, the scheme will aim to:

- Be lean: use less energy and manage demand during operation through fabric and servicing improvements and the incorporation of flexibility measures;
- Be clean: supply energy efficiently and cleanly where appropriate;
- Be green: maximise opportunities for renewable energy by producing, storing and using renewable energy on-site where appropriate

## Green Space and Biodiversity

Even small changes in temperatures and rainfall amounts can negatively impact biodiversity. Land at Old Waste Lane will incorporate a landscape strategy that aims to:

Deliver a net gain in biodiversity, making use of climate tolerant native species to minimise the risk of climate change effects on site habitats and species, enhancing and protecting the site in the long term.

The masterplan will incorporate a series of green and blue infrastructure that can help mitigate the effects of high temperatures and overheating. These spaces will:

Help cool down the local area, clean the air, filter water and in general promote improved emotional wellbeing for local residents.

## Water Provision & Flooding

Decreasing summer rainfall, could result in reduced mains water availability. There is a need therefore to reduce the water consumption of the development.

The Scheme will aim to set water efficiency targets for both residential and non-residential buildings.

Increasing winter rainfall could increase the risk of flooding:

- SuDS will be throughout the development.
- Drainage systems will be designed to include an appropriate allowance for climate change.

## Connectivity

There are opportunities for the development to provide pedestrian, cycle and vehicular connections to B4101 Waste Lane to the south via Old Waste Lane along with access to the existing public rights of way network located to the north and south of the site. The B4101 Waste Lane allows for access into the village centre as well as access to the A452 connecting into Birmingham & Solihull to the North and Warwick and Leamington Spa to the south (via A4177). The A452 allows for connections to the M40, M42 and M6, that provide connection to other regions of the UK.

The internal site layout will provide for internal streets that are well connected and will encourage access by walking and cycling. The proposed development site is well connected and in a sustainable location that is well positioned to integrate into the existing infrastructure. The site also boasts opportunity to form part of a wider infill scheme for the surrounding draft allocations in Balsall Common, which will further increase the level of connectivity around the village.





# SUMMARY

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This vision document demonstrates how Land at Old Waste Lane, Balsall common has the potential for the delivery of new high quality homes, situated in a sustainable location, near sustainable transport modes and numerous facilities and services.

The site is to the east of Balsall Common and lies to the south of existing development. The site offers a strategic development opportunity for existing development characteristics of Balsall Common.

The site is closely located to nearby bus services that gain access into the village centre as well as Birmingham and Coventry. The train station is located within a 20 minute walk and allows for access to wider regions of the UK.

There is opportunity to bring forward, as part of the development proposals. The amenity space will tie in within the existing Millennium Way route and provides a green point within the circular route. This green amenity will also generate ecological value, with the creation of a new green space area, as part of the development proposals.

## Benefits at a Glance

- **A strategic fit to Balsall Common** - The site is a strategic infill scheme to the adjacent residential development.
- **Sustainable and well connected location** - The site is closely located to an abundance of sustainable transport modes, as well as facilities and services, closely located to the site. Birmingham and Coventry are easily accessible. Balsall Common is also in close proximity to Birmingham Airport.
- **High quality green amenity** - There is opportunity to retain and enhance the sites existing green infrastructure network and incorporate it with the Millennium Way promotional route that crosses the site. The space could act as an area of green space within the circular route.
- **Responsive design** - The design will respond positively to the existing character of Old Waste Lane. A context character appraisal will be undertaken as part of a future design process.



**Turley**

**SPITFIRE**  
bespoke homes





**Old Waste Lane,  
Balsall Common**

**Environmental  
Appraisal**

Prepared by:  
**The Environmental  
Dimension  
Partnership Ltd**

On behalf of:  
**Spitfire Bespoke  
Homes Ltd**

December 2020  
Report Reference  
**edp3778\_r002a**

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## Appendices

<b>Appendix EDP 1</b>	Draft Local Plan Proposals Map
<b>Appendix EDP 2</b>	Assessment Methodology and Criteria
<b>Appendix EDP 3</b>	Green Belt Analysis

## Plans

<b>Plan EDP 1</b>	Environmental Planning Context (edp3778_d002b 14 December 2020 AL/WG)
<b>Plan EDP 2</b>	Landscape Character and Context (edp3778_d001b 14 December 2020 AL/WG)

*This version is intended for electronic viewing only*

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## **Section 1**

### **Introduction**

- 1.1 Spitfire Bespoke Homes Ltd has appointed The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP) to undertake landscape, ecology and heritage studies in relation to Old Waste Lane, Balsall Common (the site).
- 1.2 EDP is an independent environmental consultancy providing advice to landowner and property development clients in the public and private sectors in the fields of landscape, ecology, heritage, arboriculture and masterplanning. The Practice operates throughout the UK from offices in Cardiff, Cirencester and Cheltenham. Details of the Practice can be obtained at [www.edp-uk.co.uk](http://www.edp-uk.co.uk).
- 1.3 This document provides an overview of EDP's desk-top and field appraisals in relation to landscape matters (**Section 2**), ecology matters (**Section 3**), and heritage matters (**Section 4**). A summary of the findings for each can found at **Section 5**.



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## Section 2 Landscape

### Introduction

- 2.1 This briefing paper has been prepared on behalf of Spitfire Bespoke Homes Ltd by EDP, to provide an overview of the landscape and visual aspects of the site.
- 2.2 The purpose of EDP's work is to advance the current understanding of the landscape and visual considerations and provide evidence of the suitability of the site for sustainable development in this regard.
- 2.3 EDP is an independent environmental consultancy providing advice to landowner and property development clients in the public and private sectors in the fields of landscape, ecology, heritage, arboriculture and masterplanning. The company operates throughout the UK from offices in Cirencester, Cardiff and Cheltenham. Details can be obtained at [www.edp-uk.co.uk](http://www.edp-uk.co.uk).
- 2.4 This preliminary landscape and visual appraisal has been informed by a desk study and a brief site walkover, undertaken during December 2016. The information derived is discussed below.

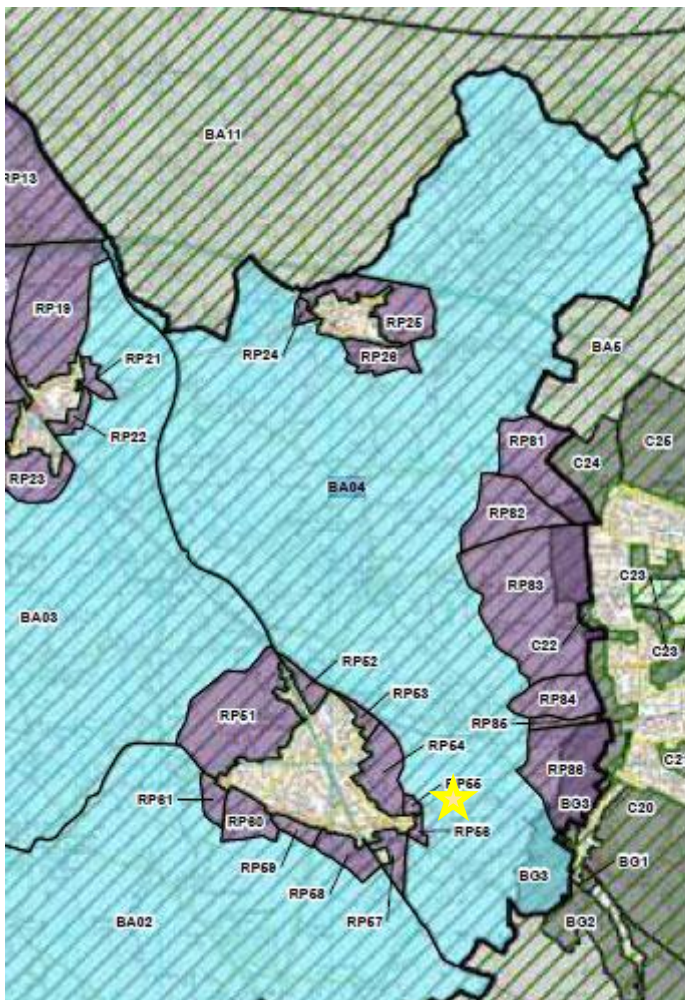
### The Site

- 2.5 The site boundary as defined on **Plan EDP 1** identifies the area of land that is currently within Spitfire Bespoke Homes Ltd control.
- 2.6 The site lies within the historic hamlet of Catchems Corner at the eastern edge of Balsall Common in the Solihull Metropolitan District. Although historically Catchems Corner and Balsall Street to the west were separate settlements, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century development focused at Balsall Common in combination with 20<sup>th</sup> century ribbon development along Balsall Street (B4101) and the Kenilworth Road (A452) has resulted in complete coalescence.
- 2.7 The site comprises two land parcels and is enclosed between Waste Lane (B4101) and Old Waste Lane. Land use within the site is predominantly pasture with a small area of scrub at the far western edge of the site. The east and west parcels are divided by a well-established hedgerow.
- 2.8 The site is encircled by transport routes, residential dwellings to the north and strong vegetated boundaries on all sides. Old Waste Lane runs along the northern, eastern and western boundaries of the site while Waste Lane (B4101) runs along the southern boundary. The mature densely vegetated periphery contains the site and affords little to no intervisibility.

- 2.9 The character of the site is influenced by both settlement, transport routes and the land use of the site itself.

### Planning Background

- 2.10 Atkins Limited was commissioned by Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) to carry out a strategic review of the Green Belt in Solihull in preparation of the emerging local plan (Draft Local Plan Issued November 2016). The site was considered in the Solihull Strategic Green Belt Assessment (July 2016) as part of the area BA04. **Figure EDP 2.1** indicates the approximate site location within BA04. It is clear that the site is considerably smaller than BA04, which warrants further assessment specifically of the site against the purposes of the Green Belt.



**Figure EDP 2.1:** Approximate location of site (yellow star) within Atkins parcel BA04.

- 2.11 The Atkins review assessed the extent to which land designated as Green Belt in Solihull performs against the purposes of Green Belt as set out from paragraph 133 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and is intended to form the basis for a future, more detailed assessment. In relation to the very broad area of BA04 which forms the eastern

portion of SMBC at its boundary with Coventry to the east and North Warwickshire to the north, the document concludes that the Green Belt is higher performing in all purposes and therefore:

*“...boundary is clearly identifiable/durable and there is no development present;*

*...represents a strategic gap between major urban areas;*

*...perform highly against the third purpose of Green Belt and therefore all areas; and*

*...is adjacent to a Conservation Area within a historic town and there are clear views of landmarks and/or the historic core”.*

- 2.12 The purpose of this assessment, undertaken by a Chartered Landscape Architect is to advance the current understanding of the performance in landscape and visual terms of the site against the five purposes of the Green Belt and provide a commentary on the suitability of the site for sustainable development in this regard.

### **Landscape Related Designations and Policy**

- 2.13 Landscape related designations are shown on **Plan EDP 1**.

- The site falls within the Solihull Metropolitan Green Belt;
- There are 2 Ancient Woodland Sites within the 3km search area of the site;
- There are a number of Grade II and II\* listed buildings within the 3km search area, however, none reside within the immediate context; and
- The Millennium Way Promoted Route crosses the western field parcel.

### **National Designations**

- 2.14 The site lies within the Solihull Metropolitan Green Belt, where the Green Belt boundary meets the eastern settlement edge of Balsall Common. Balsall Common itself is not ‘washed over’ by the Green Belt and the settlement currently falls outside the designation.

#### *Green Belt*

- 2.15 The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The essential characteristics of Green Belts are openness and permanence. As such, Green Belt is a planning policy designation rather than a landscape designation based on landscape character and value.



- 2.16 The NPPF paragraph 134 sets out five purposes of the Green Belt, which are listed below:
- “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; and
  - To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.”
- 2.17 The NPPF sets out guidelines for local planning authorities in relation to Green Belts including: the desire to plan positively to enhance their beneficial use, looking for opportunities to provide access, outdoor sport, and recreation; and to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity, and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.
- 2.18 Guidance in paragraphs 138 and 139 makes clear that, when reviewing Green Belt boundaries, local planning authorities (LPAs) should take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development; they should consider the consequences for sustainable development of channelling development towards urban areas, towns, and villages within the Green Belt or towards locations outside the Green Belt boundary. This will be considered further in the Planning Statement accompanying the consultation response.
- 2.19 Also of relevance to this report is guidance in paragraph 139 with regard to defining boundaries, which states that local authorities should *inter alia*:
- Not include land that it is unnecessary to keep permanently open; and
  - Define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.

### **Interim Conclusions**

- 2.20 The site does not fall within or contain a national landscape designation. However, the site does lie within the designated area of Green Belt. One Public Right of Way (PRoW) which is also a nationally promoted route (Millennium Way) crosses the western field parcel.
- 2.21 There are no ‘in principle’ constraints on ecological grounds. There are no statutory designations within the site, nor any within the site’s likely Zone of Influence (Zoi), that would be adversely affected as a result of the proposed development. The site has the potential to contain a range of protected species for which surveys will be required. It is anticipated that any protected species populations can be readily accommodated within an appropriate layout and associated green infrastructure.

### **Local Policy**

2.22 Local landscape policy of relevance to the site is contained within Solihull Local Plan 2011 to 2028 (Adopted 2013). Policies relevant to this site are noted below:

- POLICY P5 – Provision of Land for Housing;
- POLICY P10 – Natural Environment;
- POLICY P14 – Amenity;
- POLICY P15 – Securing Design Quality;
- POLICY P17 – Countryside and Green Belt;
- POLICY P18 – Health and Well Being; and
- POLICY P20 – Provision for Open Space, Children’s Play, Sport, Recreation and Leisure.

### *Policy Discussion*

2.23 As described above, the whole of the site lies within the designated Green Belt. This is a long-standing and well-established development control tool which is embodied within the current Solihull Local Plan (Adopted 2013) at Policy P17:

*“The Council will not permit inappropriate development in the Green Belt, except in very special circumstances. In addition to the national policy, the following provisions shall apply to development in the Borough’s Green Belt:*

- *Development involving the replacement, extension or alteration of buildings in the Green Belt will not be permitted if it will harm the need to retain smaller more affordable housing or the purposes of including land within the Green Belt;*
- *Limited infilling will not be considered to be inappropriate development within the Green Belt settlements, providing this would not have an adverse effect on the character of the settlements. Limited infilling shall be interpreted as the filling of a small gap within an otherwise built-up frontage with not more than two dwellings;*
- *The reasonable expansion of established businesses into the Green Belt will be allowed where the proposal would make a significant contribution to the local economy or employment, providing that appropriate mitigation can be secured; and*
- *Where the re-use of buildings or land is proposed, the new use, and any associated use of land surrounding the building, should not conflict with, nor have a materially greater impact on, the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land*

*in it, and the form, bulk and general design of the buildings shall be in keeping with their surroundings.”*

- 2.24 The Solihull Local Plan (Adopted 2013) recognises the need to use Green Belt to meet the housing shortfall. The draft Solihull Local Plan – Draft Submission Plan proposes the release of Green Belt land on the Old Waste Lane and subsequent designation as Local Open Space within the policy Provision for Open Space, Children’s Play, Sport, Recreation and Leisure found at Policy P20:

*“5. The Council supports the principle of designating land as Local Green Space, including designation within Neighbourhood Plans. Where designation would be appropriate, necessary and where the open space meets the criteria outlined in national guidance.*

*6. In this plan the following sites (as shown on the policies plan) are designated as Local Green Spaces:*

- i. Land between Old Waste lane and Waste Lane, Balsall Common*
- ii. Land south of Shirley”.*

- 2.25 The Solihull Local Plan Review, Draft Local Plan (November 2016) document is clear that it is not possible to sustainably accommodate all the borough’s growth entirely outside the Green Belt and thus some development will need to take place within. This report therefore assesses the site against the five purposes of the Green Belt from a landscape and visual perspective, to provide guidance on the appropriateness of the site for Green Belt Release. This assessment is summarised in **Section 5** and has been considered both against the current planning baseline and in context of the proposed site allocation and Green Belt Release indicated in the Draft Local Plan Proposals Map (**Appendix EDP 1**).

- 2.26 The Spatial Strategy (paragraph 58-70) of the Solihull Local Plan – Draft Submission Plan recognises that housing targets have not been met and the consent for the HS2 proposals in April 2020 has resulted in an increase in growth and in housing. The Solihull Local Plan – Draft Submission Plan makes it clear that developing Green Belt and expanding rural settlements is an option in accommodating growth. The Spatial Strategy identifies 7 options for development opportunities on Green Belt. The site falls within “*Growth Option F – Limited Expansion of Rural Villages/Settlements*” and sits within “*Land north, south and south east of Balsall Common.*”

- 2.27 A Solihull Local Plan Concept Masterplan (October 2020) has been published alongside the Solihull Local Plan – Draft Submission Plan to help set out the vision and spatial strategy for the Borough up until 2036. The plan identifies sites for potential development in 20 potential allocations to deliver the housing needs. The first site identifies the area east of Balsall Common (Policy BC1: Barretts Farm, Balsall Common). The development is located north of the site and proposes 875 housing units.

- 2.28 It should be noted that neither the adopted nor the draft local plan proposals map define settlement boundaries. For the purposes of the assessment and discussion below this

report has considered the Office for National Statistics 'Built up Areas' dataset and is presented on **Plan EDP 1**. Census data outputs for built-up areas (previously called urban areas) have been produced from the 2011 Census. The methodology follows a 'bricks and mortar' approach, areas defined as built-up have a minimum area of 20 hectares (ha) and settlements within 200 metres of each other are linked. The coarseness of the data shown on **Plan EDP 1** is due to the methodology, which takes as its starting point a 50m grid to classify land cover information for each of the features within each cell.

## **Landscape Character and Visual Considerations**

### ***National Character***

2.29 The site falls within Natural England's National Character Area (NCA) No 97 'Arden' which is briefly described as "gently rolling with small fragmented semi-natural and ancient woodlands. Mature oaks set in hedgerows, distinctive field boundaries, historic parklands and narrow river corridors are key features, all on the doorstep of a heavily urbanised area". The key characteristics of this NCA, of relevance to the site, are:

- *"Well-wooded farmland landscape with rolling landform;*
- *Diverse field patterns, ranging from well hedged, irregular fields and small woodlands that contrast with larger semi regular fields;*
- *The area is dominated by urban development and associated urban edge landscapes;*
- *Common oaks are still the dominant tree species and can be found both within towns and villages and as part of the hedgerow systems;*
- *The area is made up of a landscape of hedged, irregular fields and small woodlands. Narrow, often sunken lanes link scattered farms and there is a real sense of being closed in with restricted views; and*
- *The Knowle basin, is relatively low lying and separates the higher ground of the Warwickshire coalfield in the east and the eastern edge of the South Staffordshire (Black Country) coalfield to the west."*

### ***Warwickshire Landscape Guidelines (November 1993)***

2.30 The Warwickshire landscape guidelines locate and characterise the site within the 'Arden Pastures'. The guidelines note the overall character and qualities of the area as a 'small scale, enclosed landscape, often pervaded by suburban influences and characterised by small fields, typically bordered by mature hedgerow trees. Character features include:

- "A gently rolling topography;



- A well-defined pattern of small fields and paddocks;
- Numerous mature hedgerow oaks;
- Permanent pasture often grazed by horses;
- A network of minor lanes often with ribbon development; and
- Many place names ending in Heath”.

#### *Solihull Borough Landscape Character Assessment*

- 2.31 This Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) was commissioned by SMBC in July 2016 and forms part of the evidence for the emerging local plan. It has been prepared by Waterman Infrastructure & Environment Ltd.
- 2.32 The site falls entirely within LCA 5 ‘Balsall Common Eastern Fringe’ which arcs around the settlements eastern and southern boundaries. The key characteristics of this area relevant to the site are:
- *“... close proximity to Balsall Common the area therefore is heavily influenced by the settlement bringing in strong elements of suburbia. This is particularly noticeable around Catchems Corner and Carol Green introducing manicured lanes, close mown grass verges, footways and overhead cables. The strong influence of Balsall Common on the rural character of the area has led to the loss of the definitive edge between the urban area and countryside beyond...;*
  - *Strong tree cover along streets and isolated trees within field boundaries as part of hedgerows create a strong ‘sense of place’ that adds to the distinctiveness of the area...;*
  - *The area is easily accessible via a network of roads, footpaths and long distance trails including the Millennium Walk...;*
  - *Land managed for arable use with smaller grassland fields around settlements...;*
  - *Several roads run through the area connecting Balsall Common to Coventry in the east and Meriden in the north; and*
  - *A number of public footpaths and bridleways including long distance trails of the Millennium Way...traverse the area mostly running in a north-south direction providing connections between the roads.”*

### Sensitivities and Pressures

2.33 The following sensitivities and pressures within the landscape of the 'Balsall Common Eastern Fringe' relevant to the site include:

- *“Possible increased pressure for housing and other urbanising features from edge of Balsall Common, Carol Green and Catchems Corner may impact upon the rural character of the area;*
- *Neglect and potential loss of veteran trees and ancient woodland associated with development pressure; and*
- *The landscape around contains many scattered buildings and has limited capacity to accept additional built development without detriment to landscape character through coalescence.”*

### Sensitivity and Capacity

2.34 The assessment considers the visual sensitivity of the area to be medium, due to the relative visual containment. Importance is placed upon frequent mature oak trees which border lanes across the area and the areas role in preventing further coalescence is seen as very important. Landscape value is assessed as medium due to the presence of strong landscape fabric and features which give rise to a 'sense of place'. The assessment does acknowledge however that suburban influence and roads within the area creates a somewhat unbalanced landscape. Overall, the assessment considers that the landscape could accommodate only small areas of new development of an appropriate type, scale, form and vernacular. Furthermore, development should not erode further the historic field pattern nor facilitate the further expansion of Balsall Common into the countryside.

### ***EDP Site Character and Visual Assessment***

2.35 The character of the site and its immediate surroundings is generally consistent with published assessments, outlined above, particularly in relation to the 'dominant influence' of trees and hedgerows and 'Narrow, often sunken lanes... a real sense of being closed in with restricted views'. The densely vegetated boundaries of the site almost completely limits intervisibility between the site and its immediate context (**Photograph EDP 1**). Old Waste Lane appears overshadowed by the site's peripheral hedgerow, large detached adjoining properties to the north and characteristic mature trees (**Photograph EDP 2**).



**Photograph EDP 1:** Illustrating visual containment of the site. Taken from the western edge of the site facing southeast.



**Photograph EDP 2:** Illustrating character of Old Waste Lane. Taken from the northern site boundary facing approximate eastwards.

- 2.36 There is some sense of unity between the two parcels within the site, although divided by an outgrown and relatively impermeable hedgerow, both parcels exhibit similar characteristics of a mature pasture landscape (**Photograph EDP 3**).





**Photograph EDP 3:** Illustrating outgrown hedgerow and trees which separate the two mature pasture parcels. Taken from the western parcel facing east.

- 2.37 The site is also characterised by Waste Lane (B4101), which comprises one of the main transport routes into Balsall Common. Traffic produces a degree of audible effect which reiterates the urban character found in close proximity to the west (**Photograph EDP 4**).



**Photograph EDP 4:** Illustrating visual containment of the site from the southern boundary and the character of Waste Lane (B4101). Taken adjacent to the south eastern entrance to Old Waste Lane facing northwest.



- 2.38 The published assessment also recognises the ‘gentle rolling pasture and regular, rectilinear fields’ that feature within the surrounding context of the site. Historic field patterns appear well preserved to both the northwest and southeast (**Photograph EDP 5**) and characteristic mature hedgerow trees are well represented. However, this is not reflected in the character of the site itself which comprises a remnant field parcel formed by the creation of new Waste Lane.



**Photograph EDP 5:** Illustrating characteristic historic field and mature hedgerow trees within the wider landscape to the north, east and south of the site. Taken from a public footpath to the north of Kelsey Lane facing northwards.

- 2.39 In visual terms, the site is well-contained by vegetation along all of the boundary. There is limited cohesion between the site and the surrounding landscape due to the lack of intervisibility. Views from the north towards the site are screened by large detached residential properties (**Photograph EDP 6**) along Old Waste Lane.



**Photograph EDP 6:** Illustrating visual containment of the site. Taken from the Public Right of Way to the north of properties along Old Waste Lane, facing south west.

- 2.40 The Millennium Way promoted route which runs from the south through the site to the north offers little opportunity for views from the path to the wider landscape due to strong vegetation field boundaries. Any development however would need to accommodate an appropriate realignment and seek to protect and enhance its character with generous green infrastructure. To the south the route and surrounding landscape is perceptually urbanised due to the close proximity of Balsall Common to the west and the extensive caravan storage and other commercial units to the south between Waste and Hob Lane. **(Photograph EDP 7).**



**Photograph EDP 7:** Illustrating character of caravan storage and commercial units to the south of the site. Taken from the Millennium Way south of Waste Lane facing south.

- 2.41 The site's environmental planning constraints, landscape context and character have been identified by EDP following a site visit and data trawl and are presented on **Plans EDP 1** and **2**. The findings are broadly consistent with the above published character assessments and the further discussion below.
- 2.42 While the site may be regarded as 'open countryside' for planning purposes, its current land use and visual character (**Photograph EDP 2**) is such that it does not form part of the more functionally intact agricultural landscape to the north (**Photograph EDP 5**), east and south. In addition, the busy Waste Lane to the south acts to separate the site from the wider agricultural landscape and exerts a further urbanising influence on the site's character.
- 2.43 It should be noted that it is not necessary to hide new development in this landscape context; built development (including housing) is already an established and frequent component of the visual character of the area, so new development will not be inappropriate, unexpected or discordant as part of the views.
- 2.44 In summary, in visual terms, the site is almost entirely contained vegetation. Overall, there is limited cohesion between the site and the surrounding landscape due to containment by transport route, residential dwellings and strong vegetation which surrounds the site.

### **Green Belt Assessment**

- 2.45 The approach is to undertake the assessment in two stages. First, to assess the site against the Atkins methodology. This will allow for a direct comparison to be made with the much

larger BA04. Secondly, to assess the site against the EDP methodology outlined further below. This asks more questions of the site in order to develop a further detailed understanding of the contribution the site makes to the five purposes. The Green Belt Assessment has been undertaken by a Chartered Landscape Architect.

- 2.46 The scoring between the EDP and Atkins methodology is not comparative; the Atkins methodology asks four questions against four of the five purposes resulting in a maximum score of 12 if each purpose was to be strongly met. No contribution is given a score of '0'. The EDP methodology asks eight questions against all five purposes but no contribution is given a score of '1', resulting in a maximum score of 21 if each purpose was to be strongly met. The Atkins methodology does not score sites against their inclusion within the Green Belt, the reasoning being that all land within their review is within the Green Belt. However, for completeness, the EDP methodology does score sites for their inclusion within the Green Belt.

### **Assessment Criteria**

- 2.47 As noted in the NPPF, paragraph 133 and above, the Green Belt serves five purposes. For each NPPF purpose, criteria have been determined that allows for a more comprehensive analysis to be undertaken, in landscape and visual terms, of the contribution the site makes to the function of the Green Belt in this location. The criteria for each purpose are described in more detail below.

#### *Purpose 1: To Check the Unrestricted Sprawl of Large Built-up Areas*

- 2.48 This is a test that considers whether any built form is contained within the site or if the site prohibits further development. Commonly this is ribbon development, but may also be piecemeal development in isolated areas or along settlement edges. A site may have already been compromised by some form of development, in which case it is relevant to consider the extent to which that development has eroded the sense of openness.
- 2.49 Sprawl may also be discouraged by defensible boundaries that are either natural (e.g. topography, woodland, water course) or man-made features such as a road, railway line, or settlement edge. These may be within the site or share a boundary with it. Sites that do not contain defensible boundaries contribute towards greater openness.

#### *Purpose 2: To Prevent Neighbouring Towns Merging into One Another*

- 2.50 The wording of the NPPF refers to 'towns', but in the context of this assessment study area, the Green Belt affects a considerably smaller geographical scale, in which it is more relevant to consider the potential for merging of neighbouring settlement edges as well as distinct settlement areas which might be defined as towns. In essence, the purpose seeks to avoid coalescence of built form. This can be perceived in either plan view or 'on the ground' by intervening natural or man-made features.
- 2.51 The interpretation of 'merging', in terms of geographic distances, differs according to the study area. Whilst a review of distinct towns might need to account for distances over



several kilometres, when considering gaps between smaller settlements, the range can be much smaller with distances reducing to as little as 100m in some cases. It is of note that susceptibility to 'merging' depends on the extent of openness between two settlements and each situation needs to be reviewed in relation to the local landscape and visual context.

*Purpose 3: To Assist in Safeguarding the Countryside from Encroachment*

- 2.52 In terms of Green Belt, the 'countryside' is the landscape outside of the current development limits, and which is generally defined by key characteristics such as hedgerow networks, varying field patterns, presence/absence of woodland, downland character, topographical features or open space, etc. Countryside is likely to be undeveloped land that is typically rural and often managed for agriculture or forestry, or simply kept as an open natural or semi-natural landscape. It may, however, contain man-made features such as historic landmarks or isolated properties, or even larger areas of settlement.
- 2.53 This assessment is based on the key landscape characteristics of the site and its surroundings as well as the visual context as described above.
- 2.54 Sites that are highly representative of the key landscape characteristics, and exhibit them in good condition, make a stronger contribution towards safeguarding the countryside than land that is less representative of the landscape character area or contains features that are in poorer condition. This allows a relative and qualitative 'value' element to be applied to landscapes.
- 2.55 The matter of 'encroachment' is also a judgement that considers whether or not built form (such as residential development and/or related urbanising features such as street lighting, road signs, road infrastructure, etc.) is found in the site or affects it and also the degree to which it has preserved the key characteristics or severed them from the wider countryside. A site which has limited or no urbanising influences has a stronger role in safeguarding countryside.
- 2.56 Finally, encroachment can also be prohibited by the presence or absence of particular natural or man-made features that separate existing settlement edges from the wider countryside. Typically, it is large man-made features such as dual carriageways, or motorways. Natural features might include woodland, large water bodies such as lakes and rivers or deep, steeply sloped valleys. Such features may border a site or be contained wholly or partially within it.
- 2.57 However, natural features in particular, including woodland, rivers or ridgelines, may suffer a loss of their integrity as prominent features within the landscape if development is progressed upon, or near, them. These features should therefore be safeguarded.

*Purpose 4: To Preserve the Setting and Special Character of Historic Towns*

- 2.58 The subject of setting and special character in the context of historic towns should be examined on a site by site basis, by specialist heritage consultants. However, the

conservation area local heritage designation allows the assessment to acknowledge that historic cores exist.

*Purpose 5: To Assist in Urban Regeneration, by Encouraging the Recycling of Derelict and Other Urban Land.*

- 2.59 The consultation exercise considers sites within the Green Belt as well as the redevelopment of urban land with the presumption in favour of development opportunities outside the Green Belt.

### **Assessment Against Atkins Methodology**

- 2.60 EDP have assessed the site against the Atkins methodology contained in the Solihull Strategic Green Belt Assessment (July 2016). A summary of the findings is presented below, in **Table EDP 2.1**. Cells shaded orange represent a difference in scores using the same Atkins methodology. Where there is a difference, this is briefly explained below the table, whilst the EDP assessment expands on this analysis.

**Table EDP 2.1:** EDP Assessment using Atkins Methodology

Refined Parcel	Description	Purpose Scores					Highest Score
		1	2	3	4	Total	
BA04	Broad Area BA04 forms the eastern portion of SMBC at its boundary with Coventry to the east and North Warwickshire Borough Council to the north	3	3	3	3	12	3 (All)
EDP Assessment Site		1	0	2	0	3	3 (Purpose 3)

*Purpose 1: To Check the Unrestricted Sprawl of Large Built-up Areas*

- 2.61 The site is overlooked by development along Old Waste Lane which forms part of fragmented ribbon development extending from Kelsey Lane to the west to where it re-joins Waste Lane to the east.

*Purpose 2: To Prevent Neighbouring Towns Merging into One Another*

- 2.62 It is not considered that this site has any function in preventing coalescence. Development would not for example bring the settlement edge of Balsall Common any closer to Coventry as the site does not extend further east than the existing properties to the north of Old Waste Lane.

*Purpose 3: To Assist in Safeguarding the Countryside from Encroachment*

- 2.63 The site is abutted by existing residential development to the north and contained to the west and south by Waste Lane (B4101). It does however feature thick hedgerows and

hedgerow trees and has an aspect to countryside to the south. A degree of separation with Balsall Common could be eroded by development of the site.

*Purpose 4: To Preserve the Setting and Special Character of Historic Towns*

2.64 The site is so far removed from the historic centres of any towns or cities in the area that it can have no function in relation to this purpose.

**Methodology**

2.65 EDP have developed a methodology for Green Belt Assessment, which is based on landscape and visual assessment methodology with regard to the purposes of the Green Belt and our experience of Green Belt reviews.

2.66 The site is scored against the criteria listed for each purpose as shown in **Appendix EDP 2**, with criteria scoring set out in **Table EDP 2.2** below.

**Table EDP 2.2:** Scoring

Criteria Score	Contribution to the Green Belt Purpose
1	No contribution
2	Limited contribution
3	Strong contribution

2.67 The grading of overall scores reflects the contribution the site makes towards meeting the purposes of the Green Belt. This ensures that, whilst the NPPF does not require all five purposes, or tests, to be met simultaneously, the extent to which a site contributes to the criterion of a specific purpose will better inform the decision for it to be removed from the Green Belt, or retained within it.

2.68 The findings are presented in the Green Belt Assessment Table in **Appendix EDP 3**.

2.69 This assessment does not include consideration of the potential of the site to address all NPPF paragraphs relating to the Green Belt. This is, however, provided as part of the planning statement supporting the information submitted to the LPA.

2.70 The findings demonstrate that, out of a maximum score of 21, which would indicate that a site would be performing a strong role in achieving all Green Belt purposes, and a minimum score of 7, the site scores 13 against the current baseline, which can be described as making a limited contribution.

2.71 A summary discussion of the findings in relation to each of the purposes is provided below.

*Purpose 1: To Check the Unrestricted Sprawl of Large Built-up Areas*

2.72 The site is overlooked by development along Old Waste Lane that forms part of fragmented ribbon development extending from Kelsey Lane to the west to where it re-joins Waste Lane to the east.

- 2.73 This assessment also considers how the site and its features contribute towards the openness of the Green Belt and the potential to create a permanent boundary, should it be taken out of the designation. Development of the site would contribute towards increasing the built form and therefore reduce further any perception of rural character in this area. However, the site includes a stronger southern boundary alongside Waste Lane, with the potential to be reinforced with further hedgerow and tree planting. Together these would create a defensible boundary to this part of the Green Belt.

*Purpose 2: To Prevent Neighbouring Towns Merging into One Another*

- 2.74 It is not considered that these land parcels have any function in preventing coalescence. Development would not for example bring the settlement edge of Balsall Common any closer to Coventry as the site does not extend further east than the existing properties to the north of Old Waste Lane.

- 2.75 It is therefore considered that development of the site will not contribute to 'unrestricted sprawl' or 'the merging of neighbouring towns'.

*Purpose 3: To Assist in Safeguarding the Countryside from Encroachment*

- 2.76 The site is abutted by existing residential development to the north and contained to the west and south by Waste Lane (B4101) – the latter also separating the site from the wider open countryside to the south. There is however a degree of separation from the main urban area of Balsall Common to the west which could be eroded by development of this site.

- 2.77 In landscape character terms, the site comprises two large, heavily grazed fields bounded by thick hedgerows and scattered hedgerow trees. A further, much smaller field forms the western portion of the site and features mature broadleaf trees around much of its boundary. Due to the Millennium Way passing through the site, the site provides recreational connectivity with the wider open countryside to the north and south.

*Purpose 4: To Preserve the Setting and Special Character of Historic Towns*

- 2.78 The site is so far removed from the historic centres of any towns or cities in the area that it can have no function in relation to this purpose.

*Purpose 5: To Assist in Urban Regeneration, by encouraging the Recycling of Derelict and Other Urban Land*

- 2.79 The site is entirely contained within the Green Belt and does therefore perform positively against this function. However, as demonstrated above, with the identified need for some development within the Green Belt, some development can occur in this location.

- 2.80 It is considered that the site could reasonably be removed from the Green Belt and developed in accordance with sound masterplanning principles without harm to the integrity of the Green Belt overall.



## Conclusions

- 2.81 This briefing paper has provided an overview of the landscape and visual aspects of the site, which lies within the Green Belt, and provided landscape evidence of the suitability of the site for sustainable development in this regard. The conclusions in respect of these matters is summarised below.
- 2.82 The site contains no designated environmental assets other than the promoted route of Millennium Way. There is no intervisibility with any Conservation Areas. There is very little potential for medium or long distance intervisibility with the wider landscape due the site's containment. Development would be visible from residential receptors along Old Waste Lane. Consideration should also be given to the realignment and treatment of the Millennium Way promoted route which transects the western field parcel. These receptors will need careful consideration in the masterplan process to ensure a sensitive approach. With appropriate strategies in place development at the site could comply with all relevant policy and guidance at local and national level.
- 2.83 This preliminary landscape and visual appraisal finds that the character of the site is more heavily influenced by the settlement edge than the surrounding countryside.
- 2.84 The landscape and visual based assessment of how the site and its features contribute towards the purposes of the Green Belt is summarised below:
- Purpose 1 – the site currently contains no built development, but it does have clear defensible boundaries on all sides;
  - Purpose 2 – development of the site would not bring the settlement of Balsall Common any closer to Coventry;
  - Purpose 3 – in landscape character terms, the site currently has a strong semi-urban character; and is influenced by Waste Lane (B4101) to the south and the properties and character of Old Waste Lane to the north. Considered masterplanning would safeguard any encroachment into the countryside;
  - Purpose 4 – there is no proximity or intervisibility with the historic core of a town and thus the area does not perform against this function; and
  - Purpose 5 – The site is entirely contained within the Green Belt and does therefore perform positively against this function. However, as demonstrated above, with the identified need for some development within the Green Belt, some development can occur in this location while, preventing merging of settlements, encroachment and unrestricted sprawl.
- 2.85 Thus, it is considered that the site could reasonably be removed from the Green Belt and developed in accordance with the sound masterplanning principles without harm to the integrity of the Green Belt overall.

***Updates in the Draft Local Plan***

- 2.86 The Solihull Local Plan – Draft Submission Plan and the Solihull Local Plan Concept Masterplan identifies land to the south for residential development:
- In spatial, character and visual terms, development to the south of the site would be logical and complementary to development within it;
  - With regards to purpose 1 and 3 of the Green Belt Assessment, the proposed development to the south would further reduce the sites scoring for these criteria; and
  - The Draft Local Plan has removed the site from Green Belt and reclassified it as Local Open Space. It is unclear what functional role this land would have, furthermore, development could retain and enhance the promoted route which crosses the site.
- 2.87 The new proposals in the Draft Local Plan would help support the conclusions made in within this report.

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## Section 3 Ecology

- 3.1 This preliminary ecological statement has been informed by a desk-based assessment using web-based environmental records, aerial mapping and planning policy information.

### Preliminary Ecological Baseline

#### Designated Sites

- 3.2 Statutory designations represent the most significant ecological receptors, being of recognised importance at an international and/or national level. Statutory designations of International/European value include Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Ramsar sites. Statutory designations of national value include Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and National Nature Reserves (NNRs). Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) are also statutory, with their level of value typically considered at county level or less.
- 3.3 The site itself is not covered by any statutory designations, however, three SSSIs and one LNR occur within the site's potential Zol<sup>1</sup>, detailed in **Table EDP 3.1** below.

**Table EDP 3.1:** Statutory Sites of Nature Conservation Importance within the Site's Potential Zol

Site Name	Size (ha)	Approx. Distance from Site	Interest Feature(s)
<b>SSSIs</b>			
Tilehill Wood	29.5	3.2km NE	One of the largest areas of semi-natural woodland remaining in the county. Fluctuating water-levels due to impeded drainage have influenced the overlying vegetation. This has resulted in small acidic pools and mires which add interest.
River Blythe	39km	3.6km W	River with a wide range of natural structural features and substrate types. The structure is very variable and its importance is increased because of the rarity of such examples in lowland Britain. The diverse physical features of the Blythe are mirrored by its diverse plant communities. The mean number of plant species found in any 1km stretch is above average for a lowland river, as is the number of species recorded for the whole length of the river.

<sup>1</sup> Zone of Influence - the areas and resources that may be affected by the proposed development. International designations = 15km, national designations = 5km and local designations = 2km.



Site Name	Size (ha)	Approx. Distance from Site	Interest Feature(s)
<b>SSSIs</b>			
Berkswell Marsh	8.0	3.7km NW	An area of fen meadow bisected by a tributary of the River Blythe and two blocks of wet woodland. Forms the largest known example of fen meadow in the West Midlands county.
<b>LNR</b>			
Lavender Hall Park	10.9	1.2km NW	LNR and green flag park.

3.4 There is no direct terrestrial or hydrological connectivity between these designated sites and the site. In addition, the site does not fall into an Impact Risk Zone<sup>2</sup> for which residential developments are required to consult with Natural England as to their impacts on any SSSIs. Whilst there may be an increase in recreational impact on the LNR as a result of development at the site, this LNR is well managed for visitors and recreation is encouraged. As such any increase in recreational pressure arising from the proposed development of the site is unlikely to result in any significant harm to this LNR.

3.5 No information has been obtained on non-statutory designations at this stage however, mapping within the Solihull Nature Conservation Strategy (2010 – 2014) shows there is one Local Wildlife Site and one potential Local Wildlife Site within the potential ZoI.

### Habitats

3.6 Using aerial imagery, the site appears to consist of two grazed field parcels bounded by defunct hedgerows with trees and a small area of scrub and tall ruderal vegetation at the western end of the site.

### Protected and Notable Species

3.7 Limited information or records of protected and notable species has been gathered at this stage. However, based on the nature of the habitats likely to be present within the site, and the immediate surroundings, there is potential to support the following assemblages of protected and notable (species considered to be locally rare or listed as being of conservation concern at a local or national level) species.

<sup>2</sup> The Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) are a GIS tool developed by Natural England to make a rapid initial assessment of the potential risks posed by development proposals to: Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites. They define zones around each site which reflect the particular sensitivities of the features for which it is notified and indicate the types of development proposal which could potentially have adverse impacts.

### **Birds**

- 3.8 There is the potential for a small number of breeding birds associated with open fields and farmland to be present. In addition, the hedgerows, scrub and mature trees within the site are likely to support birds associated with these habitats.

### **Bats**

- 3.9 The trees and hedgerows within the site and the area of scrub are likely to provide foraging and commuting habitat for bats.
- 3.10 The mature trees within the site and on the boundaries may also potentially support roosting bats. There are European Protected Species (EPS) licences granted for both common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and brown long eared bat (*Plectous auritus*) roosts in the area.

### **Amphibians**

- 3.11 An overview of Ordnance Survey (OS) mapping shows that within 250m of the site there are three ponds to the north and three ponds to the south. These ponds are not separated from the site by anything that would be a significant barrier to dispersal of amphibian species such as great crested newt (*Tritus cristatus*) and common toad (*Bufo bufo*). Great crested newts, and their breeding/resting places, are fully protected under UK and EU law. In addition, both of these species are local biodiversity action plan (LBAP) species<sup>3</sup> and the habitats on site are likely to provide suitable terrestrial habitat for them. There are EPS licences granted for great crested newts within 300m of the site.

### **Reptiles**

- 3.12 There is some potential for the grassland and scrub within the site to support reptiles and grass snake (*Natrix natrix*), slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*) and common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*) are all LBAP species<sup>3</sup>.

### **Badgers and Other Notable Mammals**

- 3.13 The hedgerows and scrub area within the site do potentially provide suitable sett building habitat for badgers (*Meles meles*) and breeding habitat for hedgehogs (*Erinaceous europaeus*). The areas of grassland potentially provide suitable foraging habitat for badgers, hedgehogs and brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*).

### **Key Constraints and Opportunities**

- 3.14 On the basis of this initial desk-based assessment, it is considered that there are likely to be no 'in principle' constraints to development of the site. However, impacts on some

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<sup>3</sup> Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, Solihull Nature Conservation Strategy 2010 - 2014

potentially valuable habitats and protected species pose some limited constraints to any development and will need further consideration and possible mitigation as discussed below.

3.15 The likely key constraints (to be confirmed through appropriate survey and further desk-based assessment) associated with the site are as follows:

- The presence of non-statutory sites with potential connectivity to the site via the hedgerows;
- Hedgerows with potential for enhancement which form ecological corridors to the wider area; and
- Protected species whose presence will need to be confirmed through specific 'Phase 2' surveys (scope to be agreed via consultation with the LPA), may potentially include great crested newts, breeding birds, bats (roosting and foraging), reptiles, hedgehogs and badgers.

3.16 It is considered the majority of impacts on habitats and protected species (if present) can be avoided/mitigated/compensated for through the retention and enhancement of key features within the site as per the following:

- Retention/buffering, where possible, of the hedgerows and mature trees;
- Enhancement of existing hedgerow network, where retained, through selective 'gap' planting with native hedgerow species of local provenance and long-term management for the benefit of wildlife;
- Creation of areas of species-rich wildflower grassland within any areas of retained informal green open space;
- Incorporation of a range of bat and bird boxes on retained trees and/or on new buildings to provide new roosting and nesting opportunities;
- Wildlife-sensitive lighting scheme to minimise the effects of artificial lighting on commuting and foraging bats and other nocturnal wildlife; and
- Provision of Sustainable urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) features designed to benefit biodiversity through appropriate design, planting and management of surrounding green open spaces.

3.17 It is considered that the habitat creation and enhancement recommendations mentioned previously would provide a net gain in biodiversity in line with the objectives of local and national planning policy.

## **Section 4 Heritage**

- 4.1 This preliminary heritage statement has been informed by a desk-based appraisal using web-based records and information on the LPA's website.

### **Designated Heritage Assets**

- 4.2 The site does not include any designated heritage assets, as defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF, where there would be a presumption in favour of their retention. The closest such assets are the Grade II listed Barratt's Lane Farmhouse (List ID: 1045801) and barn (List ID: 1075970), c.450m to the northwest of the site.
- 4.3 The farmhouse comprises a 17<sup>th</sup> century timber framed building, with whitewashed brick nogging and a machine tiled roof. The barn is also timber framed with brick nogging and is of similar age, being late 17<sup>th</sup>/early 18<sup>th</sup> century. These listed buildings appear to derive the majority of their significance from their historic and architectural interests, as early post-medieval structures reflecting building techniques and styles of that time. There is no identified artistic interest, given their simplistic form and lack of decorative embellishments. Similarly, given their limited phasing, there is no archaeological interest identified either.
- 4.4 The farmhouse and barn form a historic core to the still functioning farm complex, with modern large-scale barns immediately to the north. Otherwise, they are surrounded by fields to the east, south and west. Their group value and association with the surrounding fields are considered to contribute positively to their significance.
- 4.5 By comparison, the site is distant from the farmhouse and barn, and there is no known historic or functional relationship between them. As such, it is unlikely that the quantity and type of development for which the site is promoted would have any effect on the significance of these listed buildings.
- 4.6 Similarly, those designated heritage assets in the wider area are also distant from the site and have no known connections, and therefore their significance is unlikely to be affected by the development of the site.

### **Non-designated Heritage Assets**

- 4.7 A review of online sources for archaeological information, such as the Archaeological Data Service and the results of desk-based assessments for nearby planning applications, has not identified any previously known buried remains within the site.



- 4.8 Historic cartographic sources were consulted to inform this statement. The earliest reviewed map was the Berkeswell Tithe Map of 1841, which shows the site as divided into three fields of arable and pasture use.
- 4.9 Thereafter, OS Maps from 1888 to 1986 shows the westernmost field having been converted to woodland between 1841 and 1888, but otherwise a continuation in the layout until 1986. At that point Waste Lane was built, forming the southern edge of the site.
- 4.10 Whilst it is recognised that in due course a full archaeological assessment will be required to support any future planning application, based on the current evidence there is no indication that the site would contain significant archaeological remains.
- 4.11 Otherwise, there is a locally listed building c.10m to the south of the site. This comprises Mulberry Cottage, which is described in the Historic Environment Record (HER) as a brick 17<sup>th</sup> century house, albeit “*much altered*”, with a machine tiled roof and a modern lean-to in front. The cottage is not considered to be of more than low significance, which derives mostly from its very limited historical and – to a lesser extent – architectural interest. The cottage has no known archaeological or artistic interest.
- 4.12 Mulberry Cottage is located within private gardens, which is broadly reflective of its historic setting, as shown on historic cartographic sources. These gardens have a functional and historical association with the building and are therefore considered to be a positive contribution to the asset’s significance. Beyond the private gardens, the immediate fieldscape around the building is only considered to make a very limited contribution to its significance by reflecting its broad historic setting.
- 4.13 The construction of Waste Lane to the north of Mulberry Cottage in the 20<sup>th</sup> century separated the building from the fields to the north, including the site. The Berkeswell Tithe Map of 1841 suggests a former historic connection between the northwest corner of the site (now woodland) and the cottage, as they were at that time in the ownership of David Edkins. There is nothing in the form of the site or Mulberry Cottage today that demonstrates any such temporary links, which today are entirely intangible and not considered to contribute to the significance of the locally listed building.
- 4.14 As such, the site, particularly the southwest corner (being closest to the cottage), is considered to make no more than a negligible contribution to the significance of this locally listed building, which itself is considered to only have ‘very limited’ heritage significance. Therefore, there is no reason to believe that the development of the site would have an unacceptable effect on this locally listed building, which could be reduced through careful mastplanning, such as provision of landscaping and offsetting of built form.

## **Section 5 Conclusion**

- 5.1 Spitfire Bespoke Homes Ltd appointed EDP to undertake landscape, ecology and heritage studies in relation to Old Waste Lane, Balsall Common.
- 5.2 This document considers the context of the site in relation landscape, ecological and heritage matters.

### **Landscape**

- 5.3 The site is not constrained by any landscape designation. It is proposed for release from the Green Belt in the emerging local plan. Considered development of the site alongside that of the proposed allocation to the south is considered entirely appropriate in landscape and visual terms. Development of the site should consider the settlement approach, the character of the Millennium Way and seek to retain the landscape fabric which contains the site.

### **Ecology**

- 5.4 This briefing note provides an initial high-level assessment of the site with respect to identifying key ecological constraints and opportunities to inform a wider assessment of its potential to support future residential development. The desk-based assessment has identified the following potentially valuable ecological features within and adjacent to the site:
- The presence of non-statutory sites with potential connectivity to the site via the hedgerows;
  - Hedgerows with potential for enhancement which form ecological corridors to the wider area; and
  - Protected species whose presence will need to be confirmed through specific 'Phase 2' surveys (scope to be agreed via consultation with the LPA), may potentially include great crested newts, breeding birds, bats (roosting and foraging) reptiles, hedgehogs and badgers.
- 5.5 However, there are no obvious 'in principle' (significant) ecological constraints that would preclude development, and which cannot be avoided by good design.

## **Heritage**

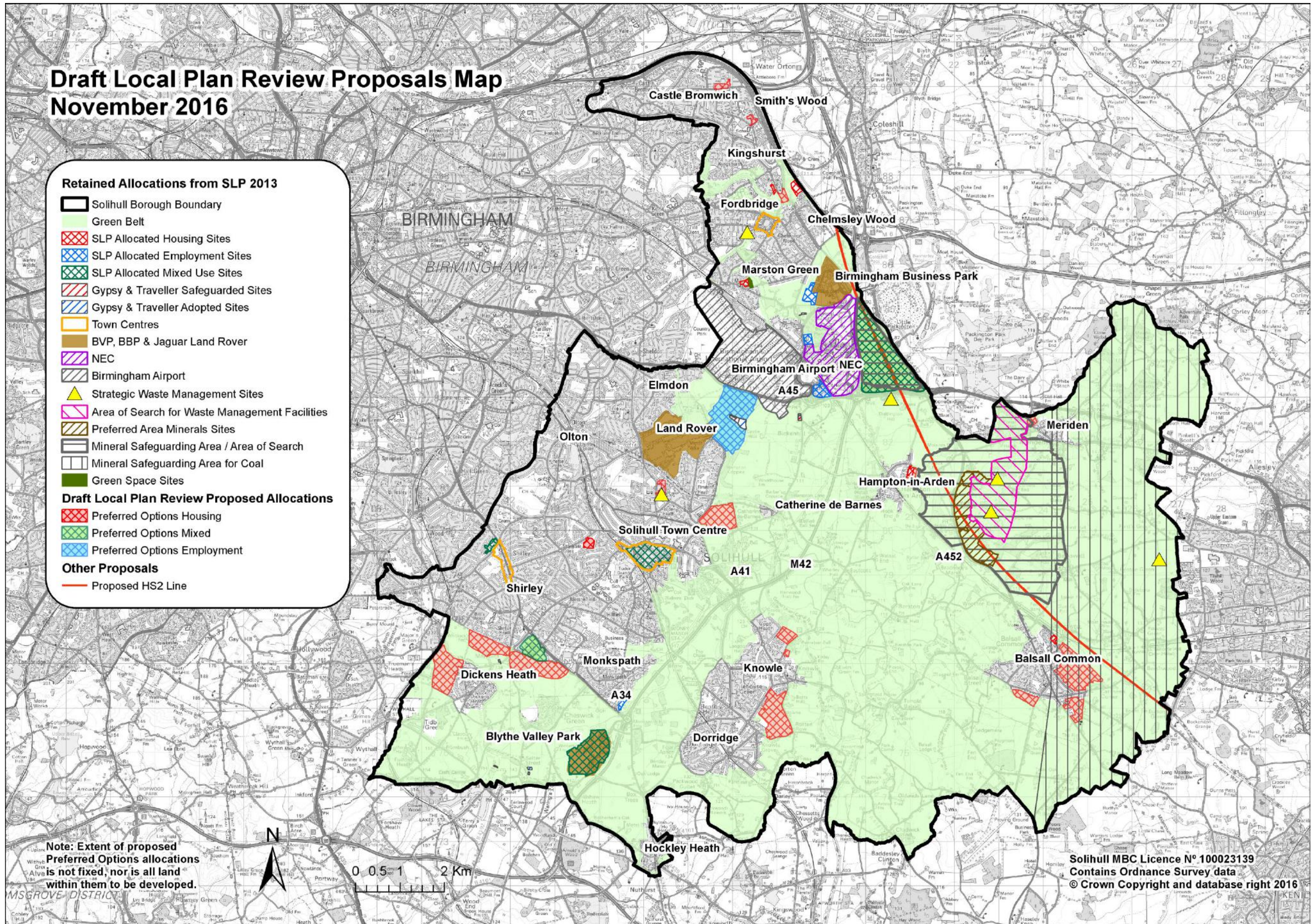
- 5.6 The development of the site is unlikely to result in harm to any designated heritage assets in the surrounding area, and they are therefore considered unlikely to influence future residential proposals. Based on current evidence, it also appears unlikely that the site contains archaeological remains of such significance and extent as to form a constraint to development.
- 5.7 With regard the nearby Mulberry Cottage, which is a locally listed building, this is considered to draw a negligible level of significance from the site. There is no reason to believe that the development of the site would lead to an unacceptable level of effect on this building (which is considered to only have a 'very limited' level of significance), such that would compromise its deliverability.
- 5.8 Therefore, in terms of heritage, there is no current reason to believe that there are any constraints to the development of the site, such that could influence its deliverability or capacity.

**Appendix EDP 1**  
**Draft Local Plan Proposals Map**

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**D. Proposals Map**





## Appendix EDP 2

### Assessment Methodology and Criteria

<b>NPPF Paragraph 80 Green Belt Purpose</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Application of Criteria to Site and Criteria Score</b>
<b><u>Purpose 1</u> To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas</b>	Creates a clear, recognisable distinction between urban fringe and open countryside.	<p>Does the site form a contiguous open buffer between the existing settlement edge and the wider countryside?</p> <p>a. Yes, the site is free of development and associated influences and strongly contributes to the openness of the Green Belt (score: 3);</p> <p>b. There is an absence of development within the site, but it is overlooked by adjacent/nearby development (score: 2); and</p> <p>c. No, the site contains development and/or does not clearly define a distinction between the settlement edge and the open countryside (score: 1).</p>
	Defensible boundaries have a role in limiting unrestricted sprawl as they create the boundaries to Green Belt parcels. These may be within the site or form part of its boundary. Such boundaries can be permanent, such as roads, steep topography, woodland or require additional reinforcement such as hedgerows and streams. Fences do not form defensible boundaries.	<p>Does the site have a defensible boundary which can prevent sprawl?</p> <p>a. The site does not have a defensible boundary and therefore openness is greater (score: 3);</p> <p>b. The site has a defensible boundary/-boundaries, which would need additional reinforcement (score: 2); and</p> <p>c. The site has a defensible boundary/-boundaries, which do not require additional reinforcement (score: 1).</p>
<b><u>Purpose 2</u> To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another</b>	Settlements maintain a clear and sinuous edge.	<p>Is the site well associated with the existing settlement edge?</p> <p>a. The site is isolated from the settlement boundary and appears divorced from it (score: 3);</p> <p>b. The site abuts one settlement boundary but is not divorced from it (score: 2); and</p> <p>c. The site abuts two or more settlement boundaries and therefore forms part of an indent (score: 1).</p>

<b>NPPF Paragraph 80 Green Belt Purpose</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Application of Criteria to Site and Criteria Score</b>
	<p>Prevent loss or noticeable reduction in distance between towns/settlement edges; this may also be affected by agricultural land use or topography: a larger distance or more prominent topographical change would be better capable of accommodating change than a narrow gap.</p> <p>The gaps may contain different elements, be it natural (e.g. topography, woodland, agricultural land or large open spaces) or man-made features, which prevent merging.</p>	<p>Given the distance between the whole of the site and next nearest settlement edge, what is the effect of the perceived and actual intervisibility or potential for coalescence?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Immediate and clear intervisibility with next nearest settlement edge (score: 3);</li> <li>Partial visual association with next nearest settlement edges (score: 2); and</li> <li>Limited or no visual association with next nearest settlement edges (score: 1).</li> </ol>
<p><b>Purpose 3</b>  <b>To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment</b></p>	<p>The countryside comprises 'key characteristics' which define the landscape and the way it is perceived, both visually and physically.</p>	<p>To what extent does the site represent the key characteristics of the countryside?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The site is strongly representative of the key characteristics and clearly connects with off-site key characteristics (score: 3);</li> <li>The site comprises some representative key characteristics but there are few connections with off-site characteristics (score: 2); and</li> <li>The site comprises little or no key characteristics and there is limited or no connection with off-site characteristics (score: 1).</li> </ol>
	<p>Encroachment: features such as speed signage and street lighting affect the extent to which the countryside changes from rural to urban.</p>	<p>To what extent is the site urbanised, either by on-site or off-site features?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are no urbanising features within the site or directly influencing it (score: 3);</li> <li>There are several urbanising features affecting the site (score: 2); and</li> <li>There are many urbanising features affecting the site, which reduces its representativeness of the countryside (score: 1).</li> </ol>

<b>NPPF          Paragraph 80          Green Belt          Purpose</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Application of Criteria to Site and Criteria Score</b>
<b><u>Purpose 4</u>            To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns</b>	In the absence of professional judgement on setting and special character on a site-by-site basis by heritage consultants, the criteria considers the proximity of the site to the historic core of a town.	What is the spatial and visual relationship between the site and the historic core of the nearest towns?  a. The site shares a boundary with the historic core of the town, is partially or wholly within it or has clear intervisibility with the historic core (score: 2);  b. The site does not share a boundary with the town and/or there is no intervisibility with its historic core (score: 1).
<b><u>Purpose 5</u>            To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.</b>	By association with the Green Belt designation, would assist in urban regeneration by directing development away from it.	a. The site is in the Green Belt (score: 2)  b. The site is not in the Green Belt (score: 1)

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## Appendix EDP 3 Green Belt Analysis

NPPF Paragraph 80 Green Belt Test	Application of Criteria	Assessment	Criteria Score
<b>Purpose 1: To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas</b>	Does the site form a contiguous open buffer between the existing settlement edge and the other settlement areas/wider countryside?	The site is visually contained. Existing residential development to the north and the busy Waste Lane to the south reduces the perceptual and physical connectivity to the wider countryside. The Millennium Way does provide a north-south recreational connection.	<b>2</b>
	Are there any defensible boundaries?	<i><b>The site boundary follows strong defensible features such as roads, hedge lines and trees, it is unlikely that boundary reinforcement would need to be carried out to further assimilate or screen the development within its setting.</b></i>	1
<b>Purpose 2: To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another</b>	Is the site well-associated with the existing settlement edge?	The site lies adjacent to the eastern settlement edge of Balsall Common within the proximity of the historic hamlet of Catchems Corner and is bordered to the north by residential properties on Old Waste Lane.	2
	What is the intervisibility with the next nearest settlement edge?	The site is subject to visual containment and as such there is no intervisibility with Coventry to the east.	1
<b>Purpose 3: To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;</b>	How representative is the site of the key characteristics of the countryside?	The site currently has a suburban character with surrounding urban fringe land uses. It is also subject to urban influences from the adjacent residential development along Old Waste Lane and Waste Lane to the south. There is also some deterioration of landscape fabric due to a lack of management. Key landscape is restricted to the site boundary and could be retained within any development proposals.	2

<b>NPPF Paragraph 80 Green Belt Test</b>	<b>Application of Criteria</b>	<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Criteria Score</b>
	What is the influence of urbanising features?	The influence of urbanising features surround the site. Waste lane to the south is audible and legible. Old Waste Lane and the properties to the north give a suburban character. As it stands the site is already physically and visually separated from the wider open countryside to the north, south and east.	2
<b>Purpose 4: To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns</b>	What is the nature of the spatial and visual relationship between the site and the historic core of the nearest town?	There is no proximity or intervisibility with the historic core of a town and thus the site does not perform against this function.	1
<b>Purpose 5: To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land</b>	Is the land within the Green Belt?	The site is entirely within the Green Belt	2
			13

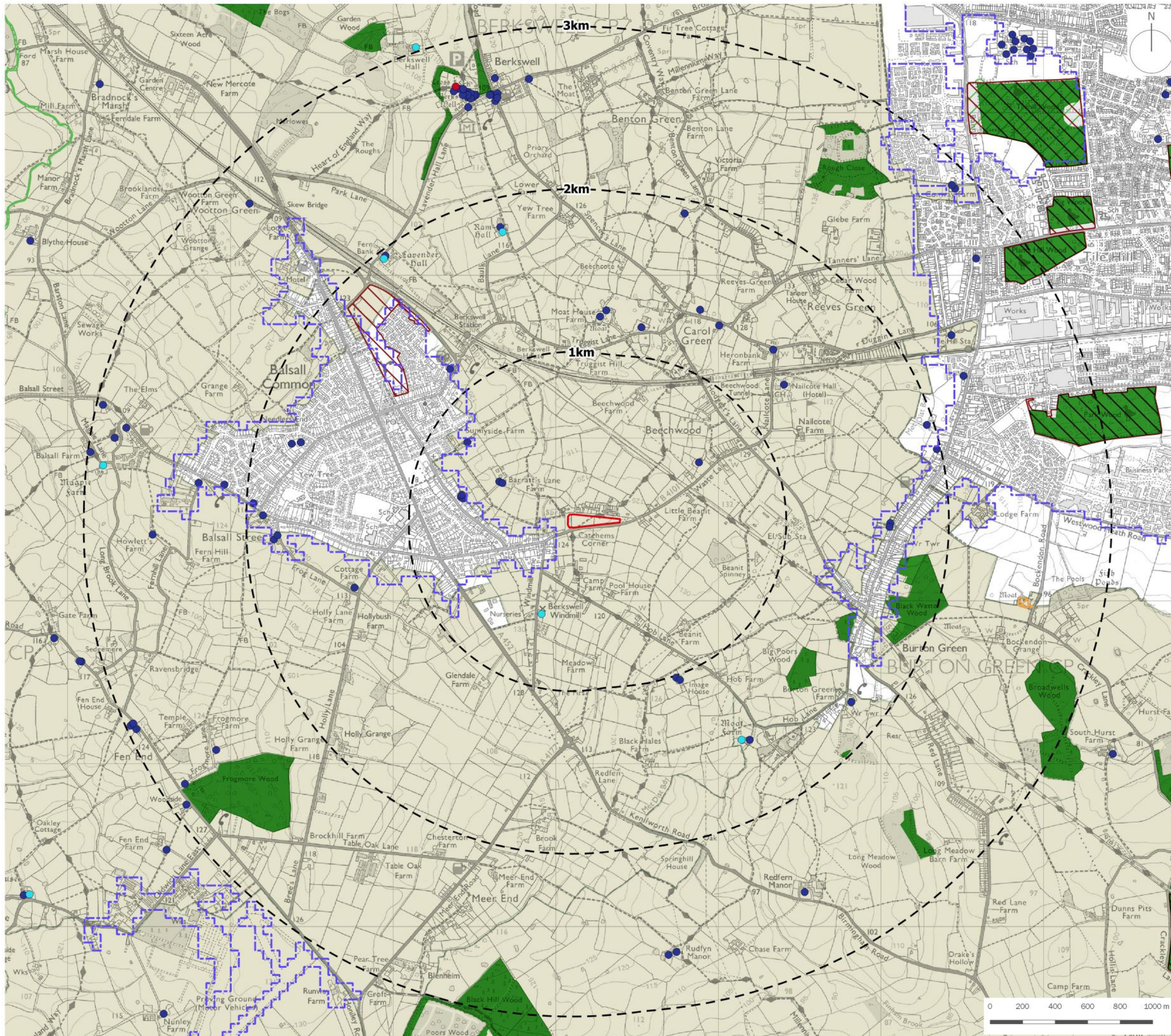
## **Plans**

**Plan EDP 1** Environmental Planning Context  
(edp3778\_d002b 14 December 2020 AL/WG)

**Plan EDP 2** Landscape Character and Context  
(edp3778\_d001b 14 December 2020 AL/WG)

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- Site Boundary
- Range Rings (at 1km intervals)
- Built up Areas 2011 (Office for National Statistics)
- Landscape**
- Green Belt
- Ancient Woodland
- Ecology**
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Local Nature Reserve
- Heritage**
- Grade I Listed Building
- Grade II\* Listed Building
- Grade II Listed Building

client

**Spitfire Bespoke Homes Ltd**

project title

**Old Waste Lane, Balsall Common**

drawing title

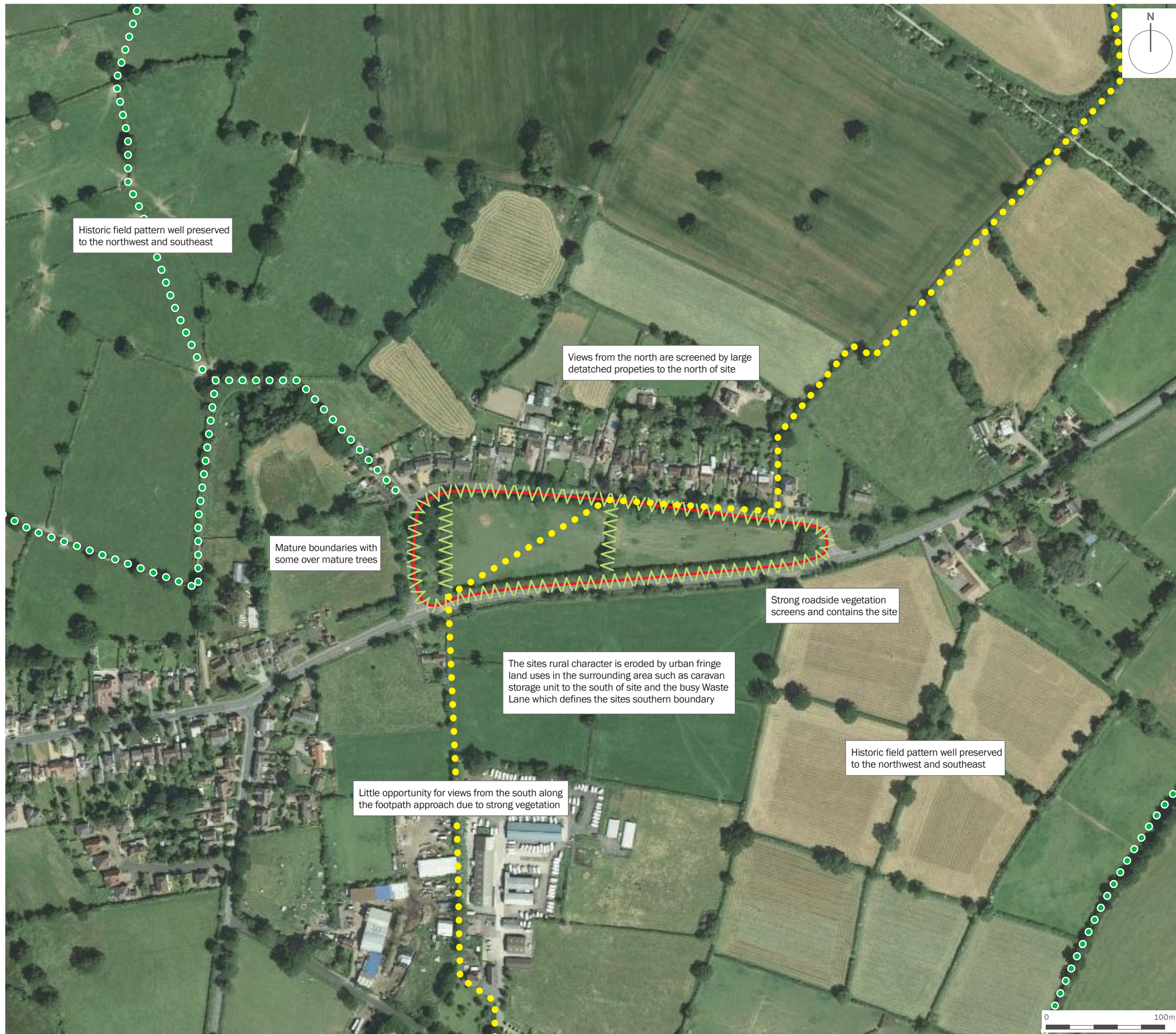
**Plan EDP 1: Environmental Planning Context**

date	14 DECEMBER 2020	drawn by	AL
drawing number	edp3778_d002b	checked	WG
scale	Refer to scale bar	QA	JTF



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Historic field pattern well preserved to the northwest and southeast

Views from the north are screened by large detached properties to the north of site

Mature boundaries with some over mature trees

Strong roadside vegetation screens and contains the site

The sites rural character is eroded by urban fringe land uses in the surrounding area such as caravan storage unit to the south of site and the busy Waste Lane which defines the sites southern boundary

Historic field pattern well preserved to the northwest and southeast

Little opportunity for views from the south along the footpath approach due to strong vegetation

- Site Boundary
- ^ ^ ^ Linear Tree Belt
- ● ● Public Right of Way
- ● ● Millenium Way Promoted Route

client	<b>Spitfire Bespoke Homes Ltd</b>		
project title	<b>Old Waste Lane, Balsall Common</b>		
drawing title	<b>Plan EDP 2: Landscape Character and Context</b>		
date	14 DECEMBER 2020	drawn by	AL
drawing number	edp3778_d001b	checked	WG
scale	Refer to scale bar	QA	JTF



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