



ST PHILIPS

*St Philips is the new name for UK
Land Development*

Contents

The Vision	5
1. Introduction	6
2. Planning Policy Context	10
3. Assessing the Setting: Local	18
4. Assessing the Setting: The Site	30
5. Design Principles	50
6. Summary of Aspirations	58

The Vision

The proposals for Little Aston Road, Aldridge will ensure the creation of an exciting **high quality** new residential development that **celebrates** existing landscape assets.

The development will be shaped by an **integrated and multi-functional** green infrastructure that will provide **significant benefits** to both the new and existing community. The proposals will recognise the sites sustainable location of the site and provide new **accessible connections.**

1. Introduction

This vision document has been prepared on behalf of St Philips Ltd to support the proposals for residential development at Little Aston Road, Aldridge.

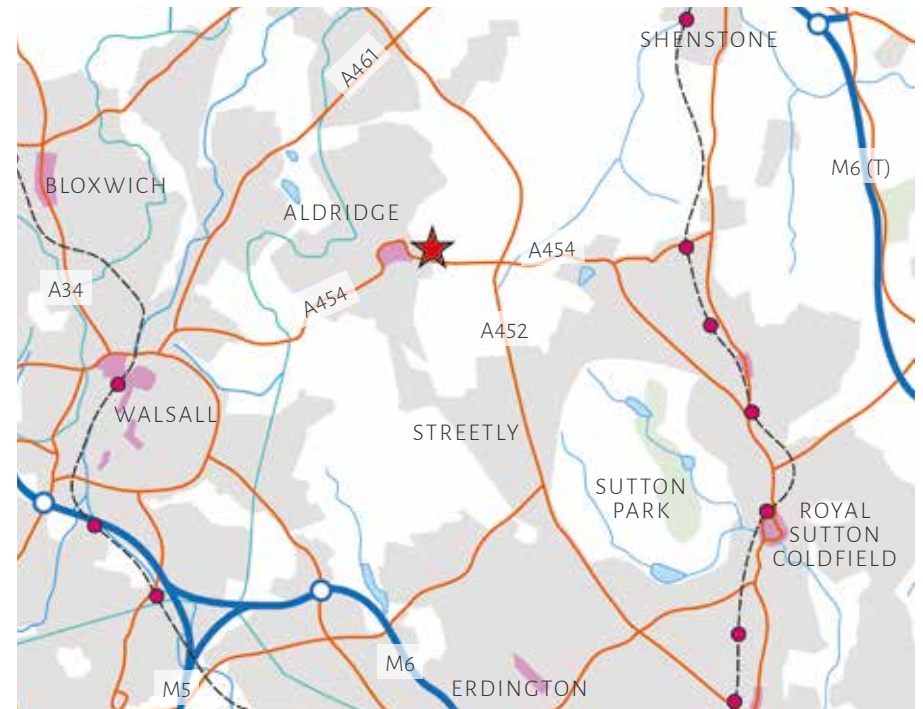
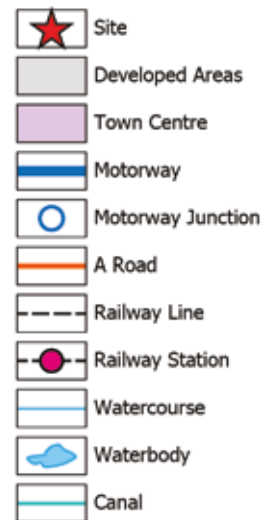
The purpose of this document is to support the promotion of residential development of the site. Key aims and objectives of this document are:

- » To review the site in the context of current Planning and Green Belt policy through the review of the Black Country Authorities Core Strategy;
- » To present an initial understanding of the site within the local context;
- » To provide a summary of current site assessment undertaken to date; and
- » To present the emerging concept masterplan, accompanied by an explanation of the key design principles that have informed it.

THE SITE

The site is located approximately 1 kilometre (km) east of Aldridge town centre, and lies within the Walsall Council administrative area. It is approximately 7.8 hectares (Ha) in size and mostly comprises grassland divided into grazing paddocks, hardstanding with stables located to the east of the site. Mature tree planting is located to the north-west.

The boundaries of the site are defined by tree and hedgerow planting to the east, the A454 and mature planting to the south, a post and wire fence with scrub planting to the north, and a chicken-wire fence to the west.



Wider Site Location Plan



-  Site boundary
-  West Midlands Green Belt
-  Aldridge Conservation Area

2. Planning Policy Context

2.1. LOCAL PLAN

STRATEGIC HOUSING NEEDS STUDY

The Strategic Housing Needs Study was prepared by the 14 local authorities which make up the Greater Birmingham Housing Market Area and which include the four Black Country Councils. The aim of the study was to understand the level of housing need that exists across the Greater Birmingham Area.



The report sets out that:

- » The Greater Birmingham Housing Area, as a whole, has a minimum shortfall of 37,600 over the Plan period to 2031;
- » New housing development is needed within easy reach of Birmingham and to a lesser extent Solihull; and
- » The remainder of the shortfall should be within easy reach of Sandwell and Walsall.

Having analysed the current demand and supply position, the report identifies a number of scenarios by which shortfalls in housing land could be accommodated. It surmises that “to accommodate the strategic housing shortfall the HMA will need to rely on Greenfield sites for most of its strategic housing shortfall. The resulting supply will be additional to the proposals in existing plans, which already maximise brownfield development.”

Of all the options considered, additional urban extensions are recommended. However, the report recognises that “it is unrealistic to assume entirely that new proposals can make a large difference to the strategic housing shortfall by 2031.”

Black Country and South Staffordshire SHMA

The Black Country and South Staffordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (PBA, March 2017) assessed housing need, specifically in the Black Country over the Plan period 2014 – 2036. The report concludes that the Black Country (excluding South Staffordshire) has a housing need of 78,190 dwelling.

The Black Country authorities have confirmed work relating to how housing can be provided and where this will be located is on-going. However, the first stage has involved determining the housing capacity of the Black Country administrative area. This work is detailed in the current Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and is summarised in the Housing Background Paper published by the combined authorities in May 2017. Stage 2 will assess additional capacity to 2036 (BBCS Review Period) and will include any identified windfall sites.

The Black Country Authorities have set out that it is expected that housing completions and the identified land can deliver around 48,815 dwellings leaving a requirement for an additional 30,005 dwellings to meet the identified need. In addition, windfall sites have the potential to deliver 8,335 dwellings reducing the shortfall to 21,670.

It is acknowledged that a key source of supply under the existing spatial strategy will be the release of surplus employment land for housing. This will be a critical decision during the review process and this source of supply is expected to deliver around 10,400 dwellings. This leaves a further shortfall of 11,270 dwellings.

EMERGING EVIDENCE

Greater Birmingham and Black Country HMA Strategic Growth Study (G L Hearn)

The Greater Birmingham and Black Country HMA Strategic Growth Study was commissioned by the 14 Greater Birmingham Housing Market Area Council's and was published on 14 February 2018.

The purpose of the study is as follows:

“The scale of the housing shortfall in the Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area (GBHMA) has been formally acknowledged through the adopted Birmingham Development Plan and the PBA Strategic Housing Needs Study. The purpose of the study is to build on this and other evidence to identify more specific options and broad locations for addressing the shortfall, which can be delivered by the market.”

The outcome from the study identifies a minimum shortfall of 28,150 dwellings for the period 2011–2031 and a minimum shortfall of 60,855 dwelling from 2011–2036,

The figures differ somewhat from those set out in the earlier PBA studies on the basis that the LPA's have identified additional urban capacity since 2015 and given the extended timeframe to 2036.

The G L Hearn study identifies 24 areas of potential search for growth options ranging from potential new settlements to urban extensions. It is clear, however, that the study forms an independent review which the Council's will need to take into account in identifying their options going forward.

It is understood that the study outcomes will help inform how the authorities propose to incorporate the housing land shortfall into their respective Local Plans, rather than forming definitive growth options.

BCCS Review: Issues and Options Report

The first stage of the review, Issues and Options, was consulted on from 03 July 2017 to 08 September 2017. This presented several options that would respond to growth across the four Black Country authorities, including whether the use of employment and Green Belt land is appropriate to accommodate housing developments. The information collated during this process will form the basis for the Preferred Spatial Option report, which is anticipated for publication in September 2018.

The BCCS Review: Issues and Options Report presents the first opportunity for formal consultation on potential development options during the Review process. The extant strategy sets out that development will be directed to the Growth Network, which is made up of Strategic Growth Centres and Regeneration Corridors, as summarised in this table.

Stage	Options	Description
1 – Continuing the role of the Growth Network	1A	Continue and strengthen the Growth Network with some corridors being housing led and other being employment led. Remaining housing and employment land growth to be accommodated in the Green Belt.
	1B	Restructure the existing Growth Network, with some occupied employment land being redeveloped for housing in Regeneration Corridors. Remaining housing and employment land growth, and replacement employment land, to be accommodated in the Green Belt.
2A – Housing Development outside of the Growth Network	H1	Rounding off the Green Belt and meeting housing needs through a large number of small sites.
	H2	Identification of a limited number of large Sustainable Urban Extensions in the Green Belt.

Stage 1 explores the opportunities that currently exist to maximise the growth potential of the urban area by testing how existing land is used within the Growth Network, with a focus on employment land as the main 'variable'. Stage 2A options consider the capacity of new sources of land supply outside the urban area for both housing and employment, identifying possible means to achieve required growth.

Spatial Option H1 comprises identifying a large number of small to medium sites located within the existing Green Belt. It is acknowledged that all land located outside of the settlement boundaries in the Black Country is located within the Green Belt, with some parcels encroaching into urban areas where sufficient services exist. These locations present ideal opportunities for 'rounding off' the urban edge, and would provide new defensible boundaries to the Green Belt.

Spatial Option H2 sets out a more centralised approach by identifying a smaller number of large scale Sustainable Urban Extensions (SUEs). The Strategic Housing Needs Study defines an SUE "as a development on the edge of a settlement which can accommodate up to 500 – 5,000 homes and is of a scale appropriate to the size of the settlement being extended." The Core Strategy sets out that no SUEs are currently being promoted in the Black Country and that at this stage, no size of SUE has been ruled out.

The adopted Core Strategy (2011) sets out a hierarchy of centres. Aldridge is identified as a Town Centre under the Strategic Centre of Walsall. Whilst Policy CEN2 largely relates to the economic growth of centres through investment in retail and other appropriate uses, it gives a clear indication of the town's role in relation to other settlements within the Walsall administrative area and, thus, where development outside Walsall will be directed in the first instance.

With this in mind, it is considered that the land at Little Aston Road in Aldridge aligns with Spatial Option H1 and H2 in meeting future housing growth for Walsall. The site provides an opportunity for a smaller Sustainable Urban Extension to Aldridge which would help accommodate the future growth requirement of Walsall and the town.

2.2. GREEN BELT

The Borough of Walsall does not have sufficient land to meet the quantum of housing targeted for delivery across the plan period, resulting in a need to release Green Belt land for future development and growth.

In order to demonstrate that the site at Little Aston Road is suitable, achievable and deliverable now, we have tested it against the five purposes of the Green Belt as set out in the NPPF (Paragraph 80). These include:

- » To check 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.

TO CHECK UNRESTRICTED SPRAWL OF LARGE BUILT-UP AREAS

Consideration has been given to how well contained the urban area is by the site. The site has clearly defined boundaries that will not need to be altered and that follow clearly defined physical features:

- » The northern boundary is interspersed with woodland that provides a strong well defined limit.
- » The east is bound by the Fairlawns Hotel and Spa.
- » The south is defined by the A454.
- » The west is defined by Aldridge Court Nursing Home.

In this regard, the site is not bordered by any open landscape, typical of more rural Green Belt locations. It is therefore considered that future extensions to development would be restricted due to these limitations. In addition, the site's location between the Fairlawn Hotel and Spa and Aldridge Nursing Home does not act as a significant containment barrier for the urban area of Aldridge. It is concluded that removal of the site from the Green Belt would not result in unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.

TO PREVENT NEIGHBOURING TOWNS MERGING INTO ONE ANOTHER

The Green Belt, in this location, serves to protect against the coalescence of the built up areas of Aldridge and Little Aston/Four Oaks, located to the west of Aldridge.

It is understood that the minimum separation distance between these two settlements is approximately 2.5km. The site therefore sits in a gap of 1-5km between urban areas. Notwithstanding this, the gap is considerably smaller to the south (1.16 km).

It is proposed that the land to east of the development site will be free from development, rather afforded to amenity open space, which will assist in maintaining the existing separation distance from Little Aston/Four Oaks. In addition, the site is not defined as a 'strategic gap' within the Black Country Core Strategy (2011) or within the emerging Issues and Option Document for the Core Strategy Review.

A strong gap would be maintained between the urban areas of Aldridge and Little Aston/Four Oaks, therefore, the removal of the site from the Green Belt would not result in the merging of neighbourhood towns.

TO ASSIST IN SAFEGUARDING THE COUNTRYSIDE FROM ENCROACHMENT

Strong, durable boundaries assist in the protection of the countryside from future development. The site accommodates strong defensible boundaries around the entirety of its boundary. The proposed landscaping and open space to the west, south and east of the site would enhance the existing containment features.

It is acknowledged that the release of the site from the Green Belt would be a natural extension to the urban area of Aldridge and that the site, in its present form, is generally characterised and adjoined by existing countryside. However, this is primarily due to the limited development currently present, including stables and equestrian service buildings. Notwithstanding this, it is considered that development of the site would not adversely impact the remaining open countryside.



View south across the site from PRoW ALD51 adjacent to the northern site boundary.

TO PRESERVE THE SETTING AND SPECIAL CHARACTER OF HISTORIC TOWNS

The site is located adjacent to Aldridge Conservation Area, but has limited views of landmarks and/or the historic core. Existing dense tree planting to the west of the site screens it from the edge of the Conservation Area.

The nearest listed building is located circa. 650m to the west of the site; The Moot House – Grade II. In addition, there is a Grade II Listed Building, The Old Irish Harp Pub, located circa. 700m from the site to the east, however, it is considered that the Fairlawns Hotel and Spa and campsite screen this asset from the development.

The closest Grade II* Listed Building is located circa. 590m to the west of the site at The Green; the Church of St Mary the Virgin. It is considered that there is sufficient development between this building and the development site, resulting in limited harm to the heritage asset.

In addition to the above, a proportion of open space and formal play is proposed to be located to the west of the development site, together with enhanced tree planting and landscaping. This will provide further screening and protection to the identified heritage assets. It is therefore considered that the site's removal of the Green Belt would not adversely impact the setting and special character of Aldridge's Conservation Area and/or historic assets.

TO ASSIST IN URBAN REGENERATION, BY ENCOURAGING THE RECYCLING OF DERELICT AND OTHER URBAN LAND

The BCCS outlines a strategy that emphasises the delivery of homes on previously developed brownfield sites. Notwithstanding this, the Strategic Housing Needs Study acknowledges that such sites are already maximised in existing plans and therefore address a requirement to identify alternative sites, including those located within the Green Belt. This is exacerbated by the Walsall's shortfall, together with undersupply from the wider HMA.

Notwithstanding the above, the site will be appropriately phased so as to ensure that regeneration schemes across the Borough and within the surrounding Black Country Authorities administrative areas are not impacted.

Development of the site would not adversely impact urban regeneration or the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

SUMMARY

In conclusion, it is evident from the above test that the removal of the Land at Little Aston Road, Aldridge from the Green Belt would not comprise the five purposes of the Green Belt and would not, therefore, result in any material harm to the Green Belt in this location. We therefore conclude that the allocation of the proposed development site would present a suitable site at which future growth in Walsall and the Black Country could be accommodated.



View east along the northern site boundary and Footpath ALD51 with Druid's Heath Golf Course on the left.

3. Assessing the Setting: Local

3.1. ACCESS AND MOVEMENT

The site is well connected to public transports services and strategic highways links. The plan opposite shows the location of the site within the context of the local access and movement network.

WALKING

The site is well connected to the existing pedestrian network with a footway located along the southern side of the A454 (Little Aston Road). There is a continuous footway provision between the site and Aldridge town centre where a dense network of pedestrian routes is provided.

Immediately adjacent to the northern site boundary is a footpath (ALD51) linking to the wider Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Little Aston Road is served by a regular bus service providing two services per hour between Walsall and Sutton Coldfield (via Aldridge) during the weekday daytime, with less frequent services on Sundays and evenings.

Blake Street train station is circa 4km east of the site which provides high frequency services to Birmingham New Street. Four Oaks station, although further from the site is on the same line and is accessible via bus as part of a multi-modal journey.



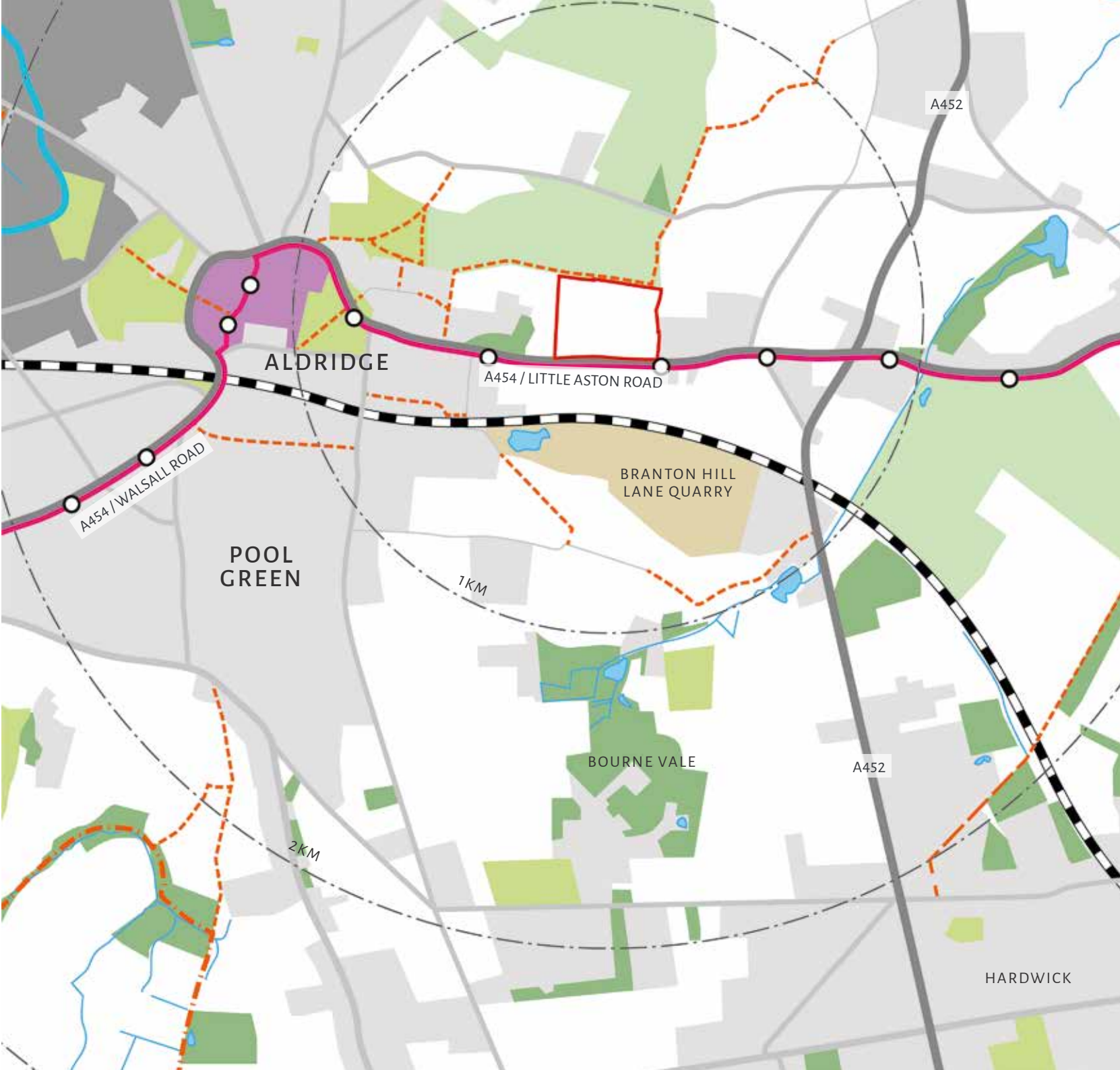
PRoW ALD51 to the northern site boundary.

HIGHWAY NETWORK

The site is well connected to its surroundings via the local highway network. Little Aston Road forms the southern site boundary and provides direct access to Aldridge town centre to the west. Junctions 7 and 10, of the M6, are approximately 7.5km south and 8.5km west respectively of the site, providing access to Birmingham, Stafford and the wider strategic highway network.



Local bus routes are accessible from the site.



- Site
- Developed Areas
- Industrial/ Employment Areas
- Local Centre
- Quarry
- Railway Line
- A Road
- B/ Minor Road
- Existing Bus Stop
- Bus Route 6
- PRoW: Footpath
- PRoW: Bridleway
- PRoW: Long Distance Route
- Green Space
- Golf Course
- Woodland
- Canal
- Watercourse
- Waterbody

3.2. LOCAL FACILITIES

The site is well located in terms of access to local facilities and services, as shown on the plan opposite, which includes indicative journey distance isochrones of 400m (5 minutes' walk), 800m (10 minutes' walk) and 1200m (15 minutes' walk).

Aldridge town centre is located within the preferred maximum walking distance of the site according to LHT guidance.

EDUCATION

Cooper & Jordan C of E School is located approximately 450m west of the site on The Green, whilst Saint Mary of the Angels Catholic primary school is approximately 1.5km south-west of the site.

Secondary education is provided at St Francis of Assisi, which is located approximately 1km south-west of the site.

HEALTH

Anchor Meadow Health Centre, with a doctor's surgery, dental practice and pharmacy, is located 1.2km west of the site, and is accessible via bus services along Little Aston Road, adjacent to the site.

RECREATION

Accessible open space is located at Aldridge Croft, which also features an equipped play area, approximately 600m walk west of the site. Aldridge Stick & Wicket Club provides facilities for cricket, hockey and football, and hosts regular running and fitness clubs.



Fairlawns Hotel and Spa to the east of the site.



Local retail facilities in Aldridge.



- Site
- Local Centre
- Quarry
- A Road
- B/ Minor Road
- Railway Line
- Bus Route and Stops
- PRoW: Footpath
- Nursery
- Primary School
- Secondary School
- Doctors
- Dentist
- Pharmacy
- Post Office
- Library
- Hotel
- Green Space
- Woodland
- Golf Course
- Waterbody
- Watercourse

Local Facilities Plan



View west on Little Aston Road along the southern site boundary, towards Aldridge.



3.3. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER OF THE SETTING

Natural England provide a nationwide classification of landscape character. The regional 'profiles' record landscape as National Character Areas (NCAs) and set out a description of the natural and cultural features that shape the landscapes, how the landscape has changed over time, the current key drivers for ongoing change, and a broad analysis of each area's characteristics and ecosystem services.

NCA 67. CANNOCK CHASE AND CANNOCK WOOD

Aldridge and the Site sit within NCA 67. Cannock Chase and Cank Wood. The large area of the NCA extends north of the Birmingham and Black Country conurbation. It includes higher land consisting of sandstone and the South Staffordshire Coalfield. Natural England state that NCA 67 principally coincides with the historical hunting forest of Cannock Chase, with major remnants surviving within the Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which supports internationally important heathland Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and the Sutton Park National Nature Reserve.

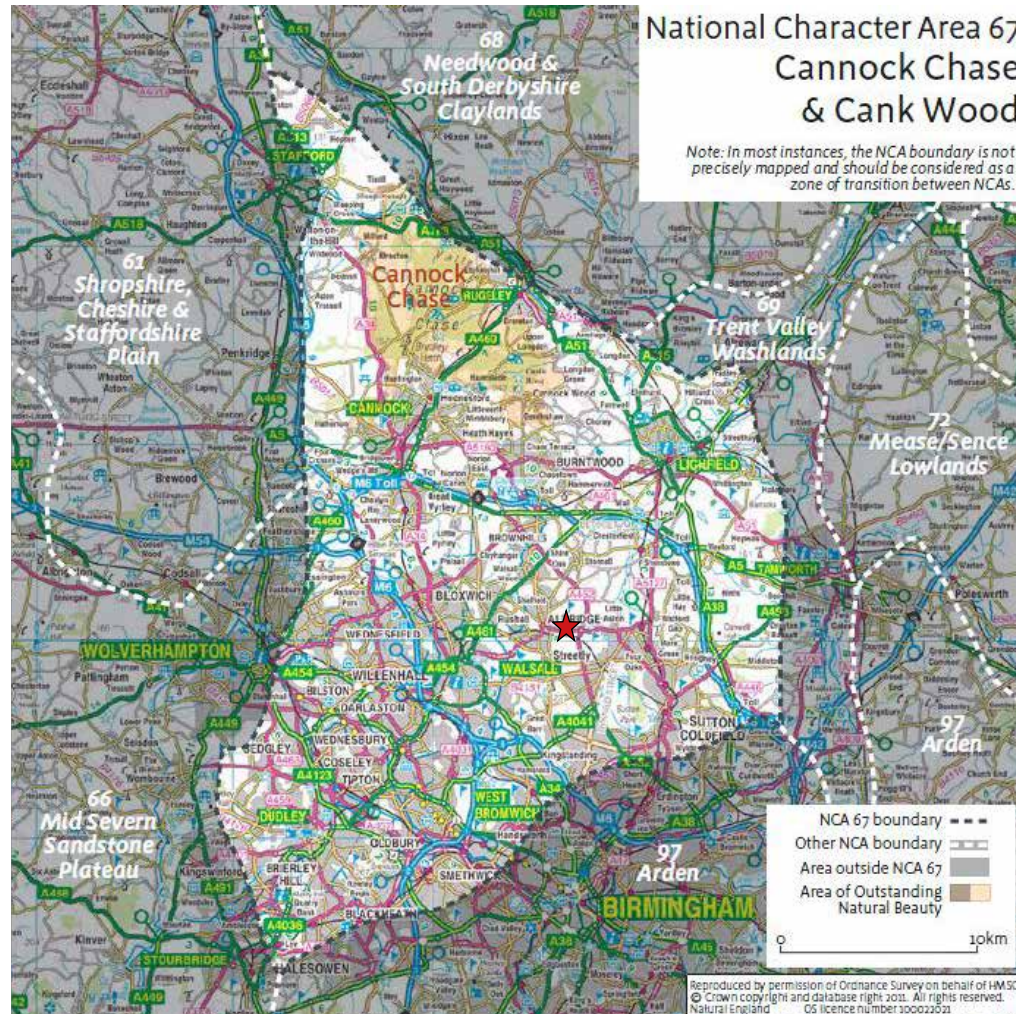
In the south the NCA merges with the Arden NCA within the Birmingham conurbation, and here there are close links through the roads, railways and canals. The immediate setting of the site exhibits some of these characteristic components: the M6 runs through Walsall and Bloxwich to the west of Aldridge, the A454 Little Aston Road runs along the site's southern boundary, the lines of railways: disused and operation are common; and the Daw End Branch of the Essington and Wyrley Canal cuts through Aldridge.

The character of the wider setting is the landscape of NCA 67: it is a varied landscape ranging from the open heathlands and plantations of Cannock Chase, through towns, reclaimed mining sites and new developments, to dense urban areas.



The 'Key Characteristics' of the landscape of the setting, that have particular relevance to the site and recorded by Natural England are:

- » The predominant building material of the 19th and early 20th century buildings is red brick, with more modern structures within the urban areas.
- » The settlement pattern is complex and contrasting, with some areas densely populated and others relatively sparse. The conurbation includes a mosaic of urban areas, former industrial land and patches of farmland, with an extensive urban fringe.
- » The extensive network of canals and railways reflect the industrial history of the area. Major roads include the M6, the M6 Toll and the A5.



★ Site

Natural Character Area profile: 67. Cannock Chase and Cank Wood. Natural England 2015.

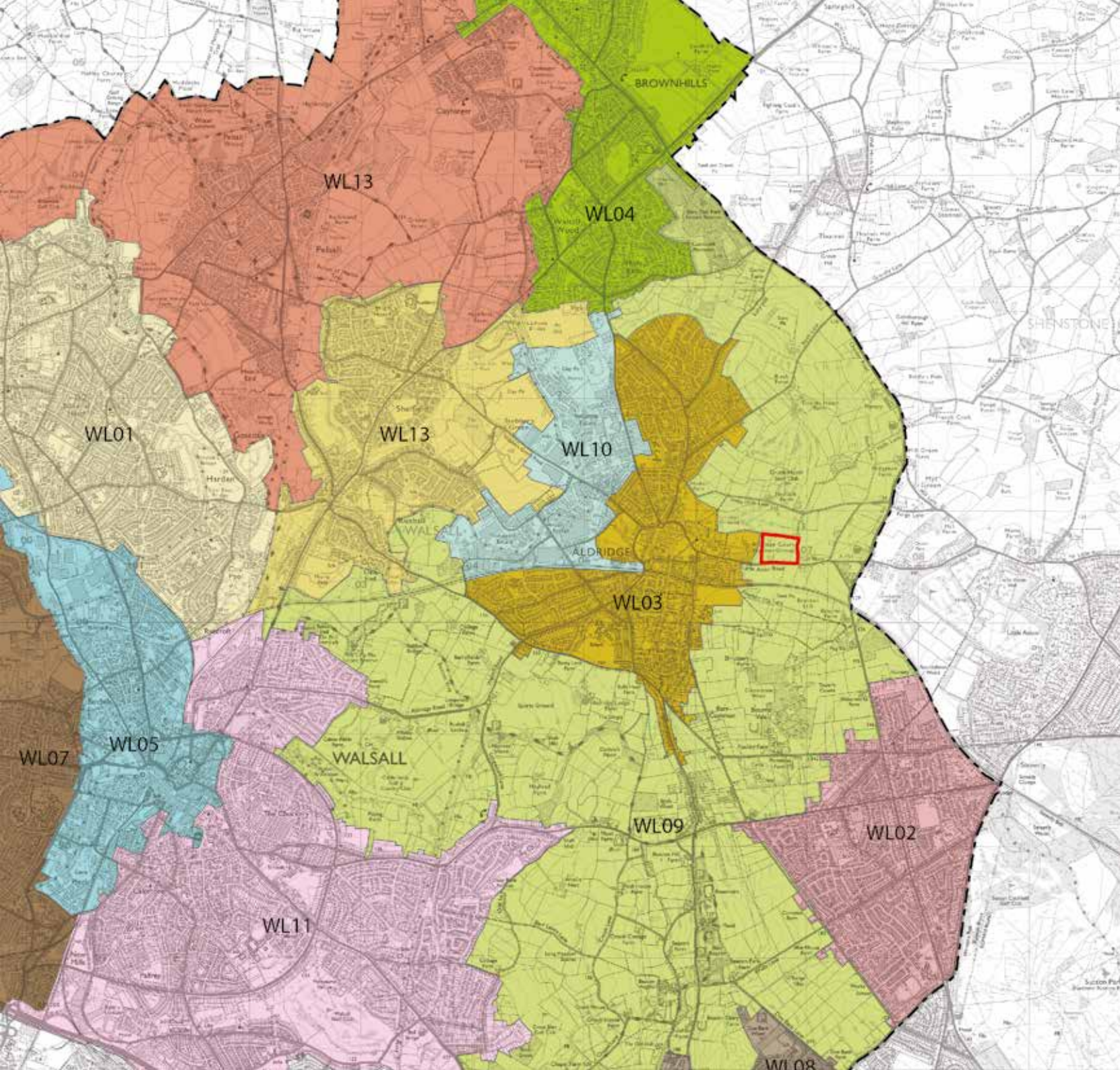
3.4. LOCAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT

At a local level of study Walsall Council has not published landscape character assessments that apply to the site. Wolverhampton City Council, has however and the 'Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation' (published 2009, updated 2010) places the site in the 'Barr Beacon & Aldridge Fields Character Area' (WL09). This is a comparatively large landscape character area and the study makes this summary:

"This area is the most rural landscape in Walsall, with field systems covering more than two thirds of its surface (although recreational land use is also important). Four fifths (80%) of the area dates to before 1900. It is bounded on almost all sides by settlement, and in the north-east and south-east by the boundaries with Staffordshire and Birmingham respectively."

The rural quality of the WL09 area is an important landscape character attribute. The landscape character of the site however is defined by both rural and urban influences. The fields within the site are not deeply rural – they are grazed by horses with some boundaries that are made by hedges that are a characteristic of the immediate setting. The Druids Heath Golf Course to the north is not a farmed, or rural landscape. The presence of Aldridge immediately to the east of Aldridge Court (in combination with the housing along Branton Hill Lane) brings a strong sense of the settlement to the edge of the site, influencing its character at the rural- urban edge. Fairlawns Hotel and Spa and the housing south of the A454 also contribute a suburban character marked further by the A road.





-  Site
-  Walsall Borough Boundary
- Landscape Character Area**
-  WL01 Bloxwich & Blackenhall Heath
-  WL02 Streetly
-  WL03 East Aldridge
-  WL04 Brownhills and Walsall Wood
-  WL05 West Central Walsall
-  WL07 Bentley
-  WL08 Pheasey
-  WL09 Barr Beacon & Aldridge Fields
-  WL10 Aldridge West
-  WL11 South East Walsall
-  WL13 Pelsall
-  WL14 Rushall & Sheffield

Note:
National Character Area 67: Cannock Chase and Cank Wood covers entire plan.

Walsall Landscape
Character Areas



View south west across the site towards Aldridge.



4. Assessing the Setting: The Site

Technical surveys including an Arboricultural Assessment, Ecological Assessment, Landscape and Visual Assessment and a Preliminary Archaeology and Cultural Heritage report have been undertaken to ensure a robust site assessment.

4.1. HYDROLOGY

The Environment Agency Flood Map shows that the entire site is located within EA Flood Zone 1, and as such, there is less than 1 in 1000 chance of fluvial flooding.

The Environment Agency Surface Water Flood Map indicates that the site at 'very low' risk of surface water flooding, with an annual chance of flooding of less than 1 in 1,000.

From a review of the British Geological Survey 'Groundwater Flooding Susceptibility Map' and based on the anticipated geological conditions of the site, there is a potential for groundwater flooding to occur at the surface.

The site is not considered to be at risk of flooding from other sources, such as reservoir, sewer, lakes and canal flooding.

4.2. DRAINAGE

Surface water from the proposed development will be drained by a Sustainable Drainage System (SuD)s scheme.

Considering the geology of the site which is predominantly underlain by sandstone, it is likely that the ground conditions will be suitable for infiltration to discharge surface water into the ground. However, soakaway tests will be completed to confirm the permeability of the site and inform the surface water drainage strategy.

Should the soil be identified as not suitable for infiltration, a positive connection (with a limited discharge rate) to the existing public surface water sewer located within or very close proximity of the southern boundary of the site. For this surface water discharge option, on-site surface water attenuation will be required to limit peak discharge rates to greenfield rates for a 1 in 100 year plus 40% allowance for climate change storm event.

Foul water from the proposed residential development will be drained by a separate foul water drainage system. This foul water drainage system will discharge to the combined sewer located to the south-east of the site, beneath the A454. Considering the topography of the site, it is likely that a gravity connection to this combined sewer is feasible. A pre-development enquiry with Severn Trent Water has been submitted to confirm the peak foul water discharge rate and the connection point.



View south across the site along the eastern site boundary towards the existing site entrance.

4.3. HERITAGE AND ARCHEALOGY

A Preliminary Archaeology and Cultural Heritage report was produced in December 2017. There are no designated heritage assets recorded within the site.

Within a 1km radius of the site there is one Grade II* Listed Building, the Church of St Mary the Virgin (1076396), approximately 590m to the west of the site, ten Grade II listed Buildings, and one Conservation Area. Whilst the Aldridge Conservation Area boundary is contiguous with the sites western boundary, all Listed Buildings are beyond 500m from the site. It is possible that there would be indirect impacts to designated heritage assets, which could be experienced as a consequence of changes within their settings.

Whilst it is anticipated that impacts of ‘substantial harm’ are extremely unlikely, impacts of ‘less than substantial harm’ are possible. However, any forthcoming planning application would be informed by a Heritage Statement in respect to the Conservation Area and Listed Buildings.

In respect to archaeology, there are no non-designated heritage assets recorded within the site. Within the 1km search area, the Staffordshire Heritage Environment Records (HER) records four non-designated heritage assets and the Wolverhampton and Walsall HER records 80. Whilst the presence of unknown archaeological remains within the site cannot be discounted at this stage, it would appear that settlement and funerary activity was focused elsewhere. It is probable that the site has been under agricultural use, certainly from the post medieval period onwards, if not earlier.

It is considered highly unlikely that any remains of high (national) importance would be present which would preclude development, however, any forthcoming planning application would be informed by a full Desk Based Assessment.



View west across the site towards Aldridge Court Nursing Homes

4.4. LANDFORM AND LANDSCAPE

The landform of the site is a key attribute and creates a strong influence on how the site relates to its immediate setting at its boundaries.

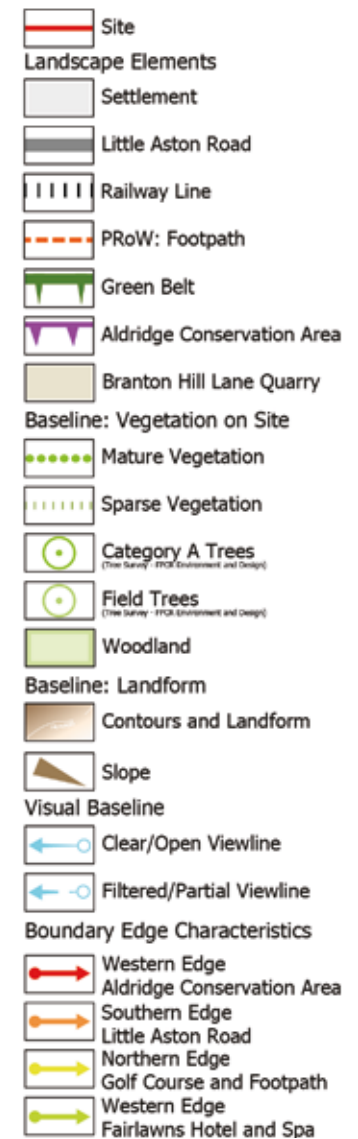
The ground rises progressively from a low area of 136m AOD at the south-east corner at the boundary with the A454 Little Aston Road, at gradients between 1:11 and 1:33), to the high point of 153m AOD in the north-west corner at the boundary with the grounds of Little Aston Hall. The land rises above the site to the north and west, with a high point in Aldridge of 183m AOD. It continues to drop below the site to the east and there is a local low point of 126m AOD on the A452 Chester Road.

The landform of the site sits in an unremarkable pattern of gently rising and falling ground. The site is neither prominently elevated, nor enclosed by low ground: it sits on a broad area of similar gentle undulation.

The landscape exhibits the appearance of an almost 'relict' landscape. The landcover is grazed pasture but the grazing is by horses not livestock. It is not a farmed field in productive agriculture. The boundaries are well defined and exhibit something of the character present in the pattern of enclosure of NCA 67. There are hedgerow trees within the hedges along the boundaries. The tree cover within the site is sparse with relatively prominent individual trees growing on the slightly higher ground to the north-west. These trees give a sense of parkland.

The Aldridge Conservation Area adjoins the western boundary of the site and includes Aldridge Court and Court Farm. Some of buildings in the Conservation Area are visible from the site.

High voltage, over-head power lines cross the south-eastern corner of the site. There is a pylon on site in the far north-east of the site, and the lines of cables and the pylon towers are visible running across the landscape to the south. The cables intrusion over the site, and the presence of the A454 Little Aston Road reduces the tranquillity in the landscape. The landscape of the site is not deeply rural. Disruption is caused by the A road, the over-head cables, the absence of productive agriculture and the proximity of the settlement.



DRUIDS HEATH
GOLF COURSE

COURT FARM

ALDRIDGE COURT

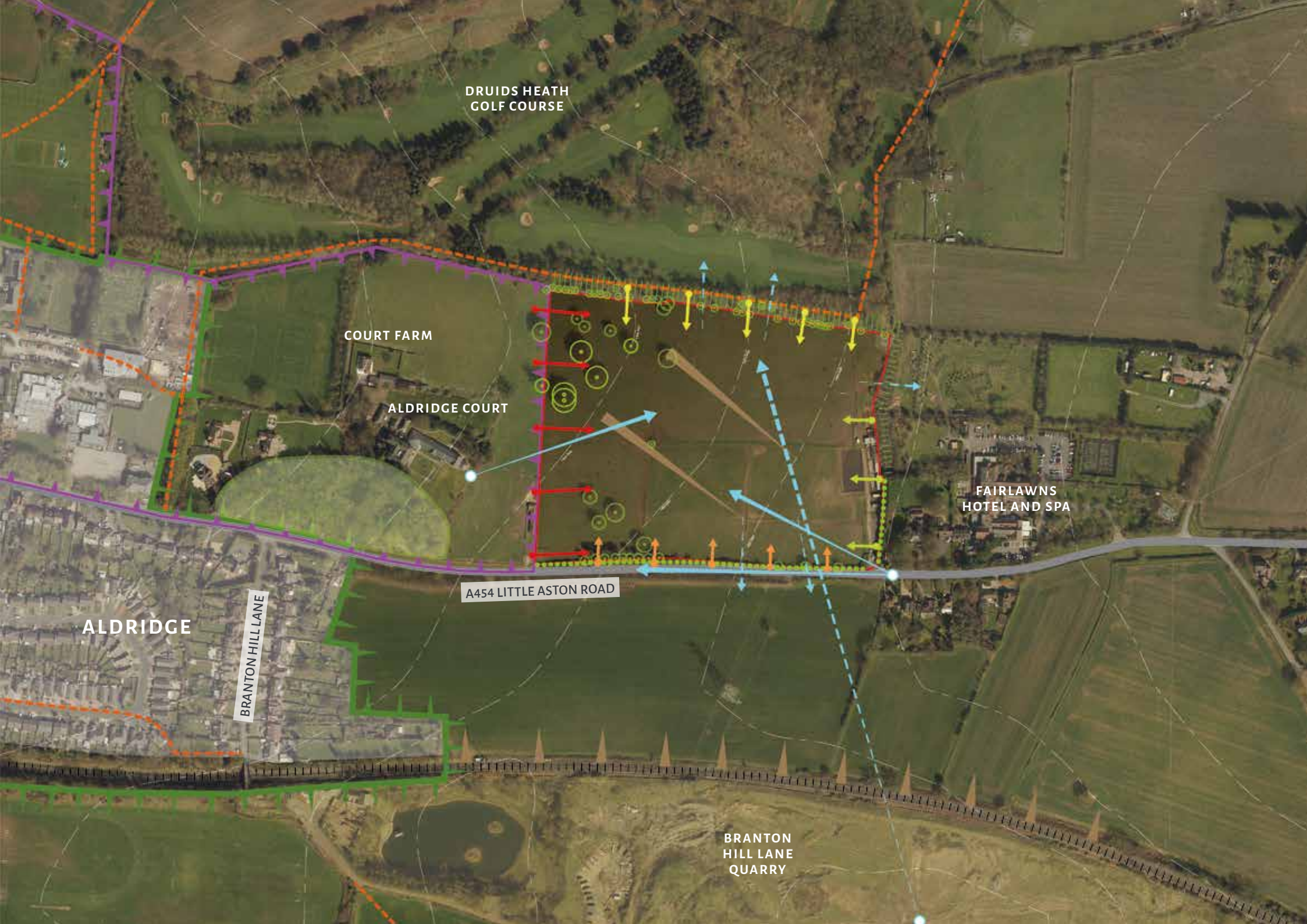
FAIRLAWNS
HOTEL AND SPA

A454 LITTLE ASTON ROAD

ALDRIDGE

BRANTON HILL LANE

BRANTON
HILL LANE
QUARRY





View north east across the site towards northern site boundary and Druids Heath Golf Course.



4.5. ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY

A site walkover was conducted in early 2018 by a fully qualified Ecologist to assess the site for the presence of, quality and potential of habitats to support protected and notable species of flora and fauna.

The county's biological record centre was also consulted; no records of protected species were found within or in close proximity to the site.

The site is currently grazed by horses; therefore, the grassland has a low plant diversity. Mature trees present within the site provided potential roosting features for bats and should be surveyed before development. The stable blocks on-site also provided potential for nesting birds; however, none were observed. The hedgerows, on the eastern and southern boundary, are a notable habitat within the site and are listed as a UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitat. Therefore, they should be retained within a masterplan, with any gaps filled with native species as part of the development. Other boundaries on site, marked by fences could be replaced by species-rich hedgerows.
















There was no evidence of protected or notable species or habitats recorded within the site. This included badger setts; however, the woodland to the northern boundary could support badgers. Tree planting is recommended along the northern boundary and pre-development badger checks should be undertaken to confirm badgers are still absent from the site. A check of freely available online resources also shows that the soils in and around the site are generally freely draining, slightly acidic sandy soils. They are designated as having a low natural fertility.

Development of the site provides an opportunity to enhance existing and plant new hedgerows. This would constitute enhancement as required by national planning policy. There are also opportunities to increase biodiversity and ecological value of the site through planting green buffers and maintaining open space adjacent to notable habitats.



View north west across the site from the existing site entrance.



-  Site boundary
-  Broad-leaved woodland
-  Improved grassland
-  Buildings
-  Hardstanding
-  Bare ground
-  Scrub
-  Fence
-  Species-rich hedgerow
-  Species-poor hedgerow
-  Individual tree
-  High bat roost potential
-  Medium bat roost potential
-  Recommended hedgerow planting
-  Recommended tree/ shrub planting

4.6. ARBORICULTURE

An Arboricultural Assessment has been carried out in accordance with guidance contained within British Standard 5837:2012 'Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction - Recommendations'.

The guidelines set out a structured assessment methodology to assist in determining which trees would be deemed either as being suitable or unsuitable for retention along with recommendations for considering the relationship between existing trees and how those trees may integrate into designs for development.

In summary, the report concludes that:

- » Tree cover is predominately positioned along to the boundaries of the site, 15 mature specimens stand within the paddocks to the west.
- » A mixture of native species is present on site with English Oak, Ash, Hawthorn and Scots Pine being dominant throughout the site along with a number of large sycamore trees.

Across the site a total of nineteen individual trees and six groups of trees were surveyed as part of the Arboricultural Assessment, of which six trees were considered to be high in quality and category A, seven trees and four groups of trees were recorded as moderate quality and category B and the remaining eight trees or groups of trees low in quality and retention category C.

To facilitate the proposed development of the site no significant tree loss will be required for the built form. Existing trees will need to be removed along the southern site boundary, to facilitate the proposed access although the proportion of loss is considered to be low in comparison to the amount of moderate quality being retained within the access arrangements.

The proposed development should be considered an opportunity, in terms of arboriculture, to improve and increase tree cover in the local area without the loss of any arboriculturally significant trees.








View from the western site boundary, south east towards existing Category B trees on site.



DRUIDS HEATH
GOLF COURSE

FAIRLAWNS
HOTEL AND
SPA

A454 / LITTLE ASTON ROAD

-  Site boundary
-  Category A Tree/ Hedgerow Planting
(With Associated RP2's)
-  Category B Tree/ Hedgerow Planting
(With Associated RP2's)
-  Category C Tree/ Hedgerow Planting
(With Associated RP2's)
-  Category U Tree/ Hedgerow Planting

4.7. UTILITIES

An incumbent utilities search has been conducted to identify any existing services across the site.

The search identified a number of constraints within the site, detailed below:

GAS

Cadent Gas (formerly known as National Grid) records show an iron 12-inch, medium pressure (MP) gas main apparatus following the northern site boundary, running in a west/east orientation. This apparatus follows the edge of the site turning at the north-east corner to follow the eastern boundary in a north/south orientation. This apparatus then passes through a valve and becomes 355mm polyethylene (PE) MP apparatus, continuing in a north/south orientation, approximately 12m to the east of the eastern site boundary. The apparatus then turns towards a west/east orientation approximately 100m north of Little Aston Road.

There is a 6-inch cast iron, low pressure (LP) gas main apparatus within Little Aston Road, which is capped at the south-eastern corner of the site. Approximately 150m west along Little Aston Road from the south-west corner of the site, there is another 6-inch capped, spun-iron, LP gas main apparatus which serves the nursing home to the west of the site via 3-inch, steel, LP apparatus.

ELECTRICITY

National Grid – There are 132kV overhead cables which cross the eastern portion of the site in a southwest/northeast orientation, with a pylon in the north-eastern corner of the site.

Western Power Distribution (WPD) – There is an underground, high voltage (11kV) electricity cable running along Little Aston Road, outside of the site boundary.

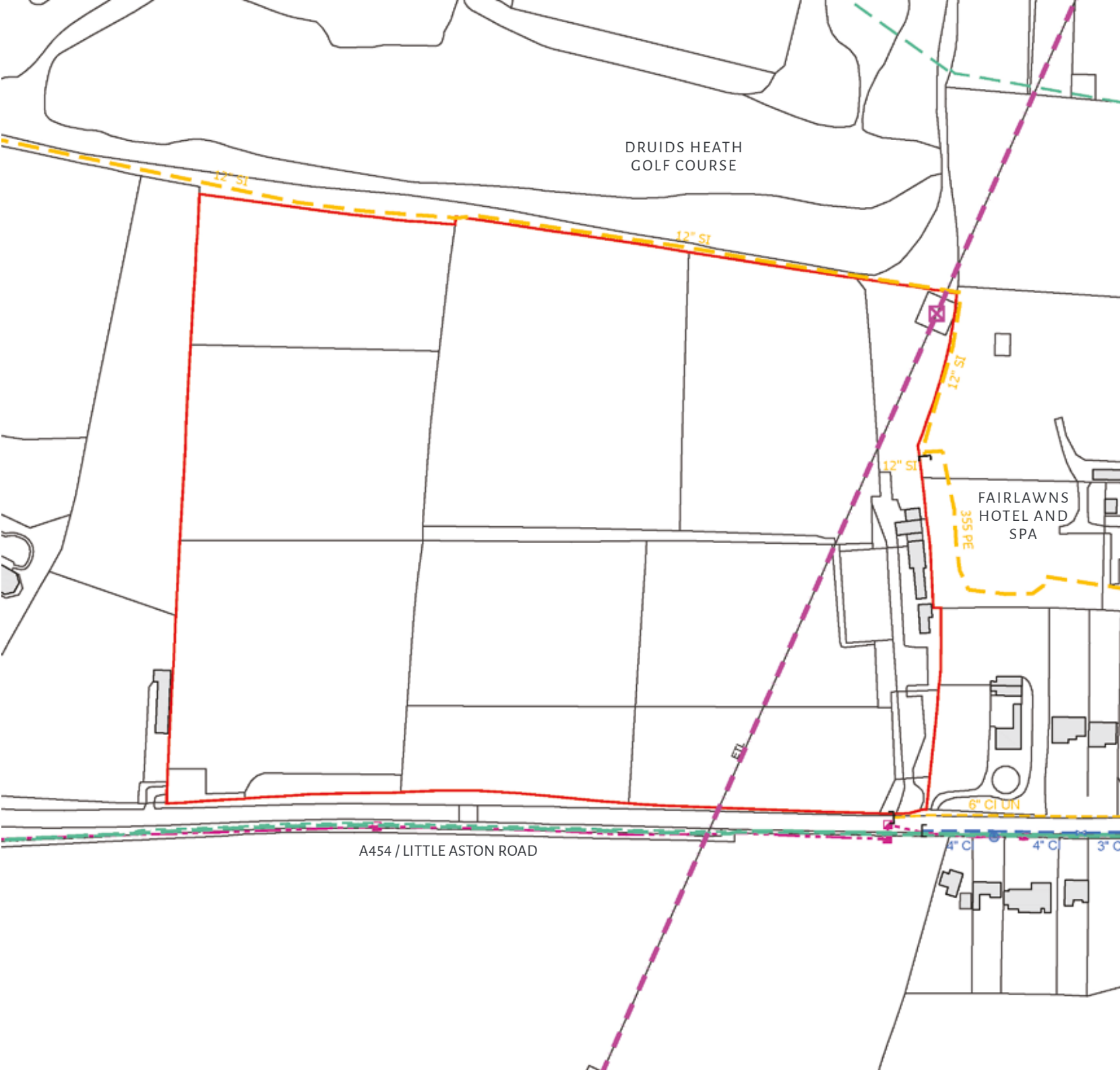
POTABLE WATER



















South Staffs Water records show a 4-inch potable water main capped near the south-eastern corner of the site, in Little Aston Road. Approximately 40m along Little Aston Road from the south-west corner of the site boundary, records show a potable water hydrant which is fed from the west by a 90mm MDPE water main.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

BT Openreach apparatus is shown to exist along Little Aston Road, outside the southern site boundary.

In summary, the existing utilities assessment has identified several assets for various utilities, and based on the obtained records, connection to these networks seems to be feasible. However, capacity enquiries will need to be submitted to the incumbent utilities providers to confirm capacity requirements.



-  Site boundary
-  National Grid 132kV overhead cables
-  National Grid pylon
-  WPD 11kV underground cable
-  WPD LV underground cable
-  WPD decommissioned 6.6 kV underground cable
-  WPD decommissioned LV underground cable
-  WPD pole
-  Cadent Gas low pressure gas pipe
-  Cadent Gas medium pressure gas pipe
-  Cadent Gas gas cap end
-  South Stafs Water potable water main
-  South Stafs Water water valve
-  South Stafs Water potable water hydrant
-  South Stafs Water water cap end
-  BT underground cable
-  BT pole
-  BT joint box

Utilities

4.8. NOISE

An appraisal of noise constraints, including an overnight noise survey, was carried out at the site in early 2018.

This appraisal was undertaken to assess the potential impact of existing noise sources at the proposed sensitive receptors, and the impact of noise from construction phase at existing receptors, in line with current guidance.

Road traffic on Little Aston Road has been identified as the main source of noise to have an impact at the proposed development. Therefore, monitoring was carried out adjacent to Little Aston Road, and near to the identified representative existing sensitive receptor.

Recommendations for noise mitigation have therefore been made so that the internal and external guideline levels can be achieved. This will consist of a stand-off from Little Aston Road and barrier combination to mitigate against the road traffic noise. It is also considered that the net increase in local road traffic due to the proposed development, may result in only a small, imperceptible increase in noise at existing properties. As such, with appropriate design noise levels on site would meet recommended internal and external noise guidelines.



View south towards the A454 (Little Aston Road) and Branton Hill Lane Quarry with Streetly in the distance.

4.9. GEO-ENVIRONMENTAL

A desk based review of geo-environmental information has been undertaken based on available records.

The review aimed to identify potential constraints to development, or the future use of the site related to ground conditions and or contamination. A summary of the pertinent information relating to the Site is provided below. A preliminary risk assessment based on the source-pathway-receptor principal has been undertaken and is outlined below.

PRESENT AND PAST USE

The Site has remained largely unchanged since the date of the earliest reviewed mapping edition. The site is currently in use as paddocks, with several small associated buildings present on the eastern boundary. Overhead electricity cables were noted to cross the eastern half of the site. The risk to future development from past and present uses of the site is considered to be low.

ADJACENT LAND USES

The land adjacent to the Site is noted to have been used predominantly for agricultural purposes. Progressive residential development is recorded to the west of the Site in Aldridge on historic editions of the mapping over the last 50 years. A sand pit excavation was recorded approximately 200m south of the Site since 1955. The risk to both humans and property or the environment associated with adjacent land uses is considered to be low.

ASBESTOS

There is a small possibility of asbestos being present in the buildings on the eastern boundary of the Site. Appropriate surveys of the buildings will be required prior to demolition at the site. However, the risk to future use of the site associated with asbestos contamination is considered to be low.

GEOLOGY AND MINING

There are no records of significant hazards posed from the geological setting or from mining activities within the vicinity of the site.

GROUNDWATER AND SURFACE WATER

The Site lies within a Source Protection Zone III, for a major public groundwater supply 869m southwest of the Site. Future use of the site will need to take account of the risk posed to the underlying aquifer and Source Protection Zone. However, with appropriate measures in place, the future development of the site should not pose a significant risk to the environment.

Based on the desk top review of available sources of information, it is therefore considered that the overall risk to the current and future users of the site and the risk posed by future development to the local environment is considered to be low.

4.10. SUMMARY OF OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

The findings of site and context analysis have been evaluated to identify the key opportunities and constraints relevant to the development of the site. A summary of these findings is set out below.

LAND USE

- » The development will consider existing properties that adjoin the site boundary, and ensure that the privacy and amenity of these dwellings is respected.
- » Opportunity to provide a green infrastructure network, with accessible amenity open space that is integrated with development.

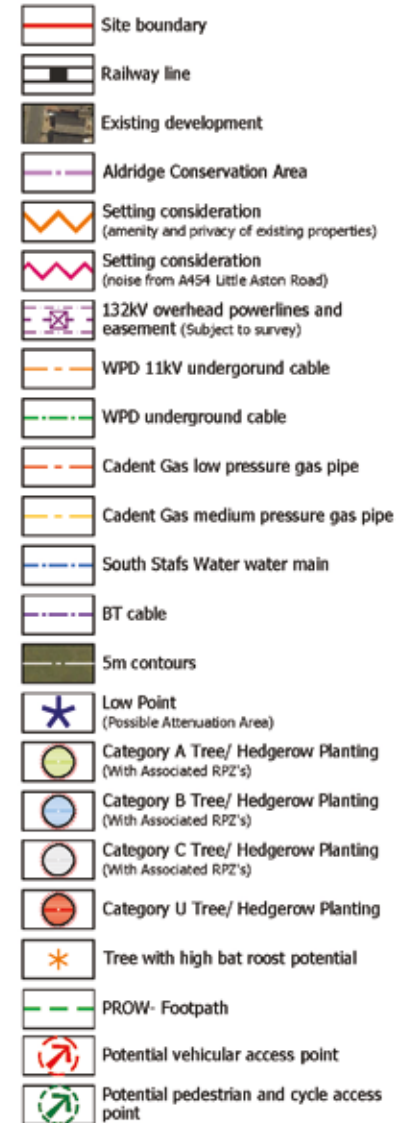
HYDROLOGY AND DRAINAGE

- » The site is wholly located within EA Flood Zone 1, and as such, there is less than 0.1% chance of fluvial flooding. The site is suitable for development due to the minimal level of flood risk identified.

- » The geology of the site is likely to be suitable for infiltration which is the preferred surface water disposal method by the Lead Local Flood Authority.
- » The development will use Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs) to accommodate and manage surface water drainage.
- » There is a public combined sewer located within close proximity of the site. Foul water from the proposed development can be discharged to this sewer, subject to a formal agreement by Severn Trent Water.
- » Due to the site topography, it is likely that a gravity connection to the public sewer is feasible and pumping will not be required.

ACCESS AND MOVEMENT

- » Vehicular access will be taken from the A454 (Little Aston Road) to the south of the site.
- » Opportunity for pedestrian links to the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network to be provided along the northern site boundary, offering an alternative pedestrian route to local facilities and the centre of Aldridge.



DRUIDS HEATH
GOLF COURSE

ALDRIDGE COURT
NURSING HOME

FAIRLAWNS
HOTEL AND
SPA

A454 / LITTLE ASTON ROAD



ECOLOGY

- » Mature trees are present on site that have potential to support roosting bats. These trees should be subject to further surveys if they are required to be removed.
- » Removal of the stables which present potential for nesting birds, should be undertaken outside of typical nesting bird season.
- » Hedgerows are a priority habitat and should be retained within the masterplan. Compensation would be required if any loss of hedgerow is necessary to facilitate the development. To mitigate the impact of development upon notable habitats, hedgerows should be protected by the provision of an open space buffer, of at least 5m from any construction. To enhance the value and biodiversity of existing hedgerows, gaps should be planted up with native species.
- » Boundary fences could be replaced with hedgerow planting to enhance connectivity around the site.

LANDSCAPE AND LANDFORM

- » The site boundaries are well defined, with the opportunity to strengthen them through structural planting.
- » The prominent individual trees give a sense of a parkland setting.

ARBORICULTURE

- » There are six Category A trees within the site boundary, and none of the trees are covered by TPO's.
- » Existing tree and hedgerow planting will be retained and enhanced wherever possible.
- » Opportunity to reinforce and enhance the screening function of existing tree and hedgerow boundaries.

UTILITIES

- » Appropriate easement for the identified utilities will be integrated into the masterplan proposals, including the overhead electricity cables crossing the site.

- » The capacity requirements and new service connections associated with the proposed site will be calculated and appropriate infrastructure provided for the future development.

HERITAGE AND ARCHEAEOLOGY

- » The site is adjacent to the Aldridge Conservation Area, but there are no designated heritage assets within the site.
- » There are no non-designated heritage assets of an archaeological nature within the site. It is considered highly unlikely that any remains of high (national) importance would be present which would preclude development.

NOISE

- » A stand-off from the road and barrier combination have been specified so areas of proposed development will achieve those guideline levels.

GEO-ENVIRONMENTAL

- » The underlying strata comprises a Principal Aquifer with no recorded superficial deposits across the site. It is likely therefore that soakaway drainage would be possible for development at the site.
- » There is a potential for asbestos containing materials within the buildings on site.



View north west towards Category A trees on site.



View south west across the site towards Little Aston Road and the Aldridge Conservation Area.



5. Design Principles

5.1. CONCEPT MASTERPLAN

The Concept Masterplan (presented opposite) has been informed by the vision and technical analysis presented earlier in this Vision Document along with following design principles:

DEVELOPMENT FORM

- » Provision of approximately 3.71 Ha of residential development land, achieving 137 dwellings at an average density of 37 dwellings per hectare (dph). These dwellings will be delivered in a mix of tenures and types.
- » Development will be structured to ensure the creation of a legible and permeable place, with streets and spaces overlooked wherever possible.
- » A minimum 20m offset from the A454 (Little Aston Road) will be accommodated within public open space, to mitigate against potential noise impact.
- » Development has been orientated to ensure that views towards the existing pylon are minimised. An offset between the overhead electrical cables and residential development has been provided.



DRUIDS HEATH
GOLF COURSE

ALDRIDGE COURT
NURSING HOME

FAIRLAWNS
HOTEL AND
SPA

A454 / LITTLE ASTON ROAD



ACCESS AND MOVEMENT

- » Vehicular access will be taken from the A454 (Little Aston Road).
- » A new network of accessible informal pedestrian routes will be established within the site, providing circulatory walks which aim to encourage physical activity.
- » Two potential pedestrian links to the existing PRoW (ALD51 footpath) are proposed, providing easy traffic free access to Aldridge town centre and local facilities.

OPEN SPACE AND LANDSCAPE

- » The proposals promote a generosity of space, through retaining a large area of the site as public open space. This offers the opportunity to significantly benefit both the existing and proposed community, whilst respecting the privacy and amenity of existing properties surrounding the site. Open space will also accommodate areas for attenuation.

- » Existing green capital has guided the location of development within the site; existing tree planting has been retained within public open space wherever possible.
- » The provision of new woodland planting adjacent to the western site boundary will significantly enhance bio-diversity and ecology, whilst providing a landscaped corridor which responds to the setting of Aldridge Conservation Area.
- » Formal play facilities are proposed, comprising a woodland play trail located within the western area of POS.
- » The provision of a centrally located area of public open space will provide a key focal view point from the primary movement route. Accessible and visible from the surrounding residential development, its central location will benefit from natural surveillance and activity.





View from the northern site boundary looking south west towards Aldridge Court Nursing Home.

5.2. THE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

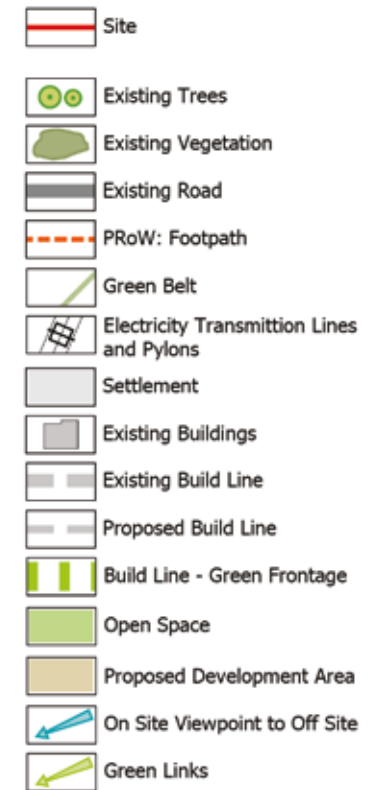
The objective of the Landscape Strategy is the delivery of a sustainable, attractive, planted and green framework that is informed by the existing attributes and character of the site and its place in the setting. The new landscape will form the structure of the development and the Landscape Strategy will be founded on a robust and well-connected Green Infrastructure (GI) network. The connectivity between settlement and country is central to the design response to the site and the setting. The early identification of key existing assets: the landform, the inherited 'green capital' in the hedgerows and trees; and the views over the Staffordshire countryside, has already fed into the initial concepts in this Vision Document. The design response to the character of the setting is being made in a manner that compliments the landscape and is part of the GI Strategy for the development.

Green Infrastructure is:

"...the network of natural and semi natural features, green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect villages, towns and cities. Individually these elements are GI assets, and the roles that these assets play are GI functions. When appropriately planned, designed and managed, the assets and functions have the potential to deliver a wide range of benefits – from providing sustainable transport links to mitigating and adapting the effects of climate change."

(‘Green Infrastructure: an integrated approach to land use’. Landscape Institute. 2013)

The Green Infrastructure Strategy will realise the maximum potential of the key components in the landscape of the site and the immediate setting. Retention, protection, enhancement and management will be sub-strategies that will focus on the existing character defining attributes. The objective is to weave these existing attributes with the new buildings and the new green spaces in a manner that makes a sympathetic and successful fit in the landscape.

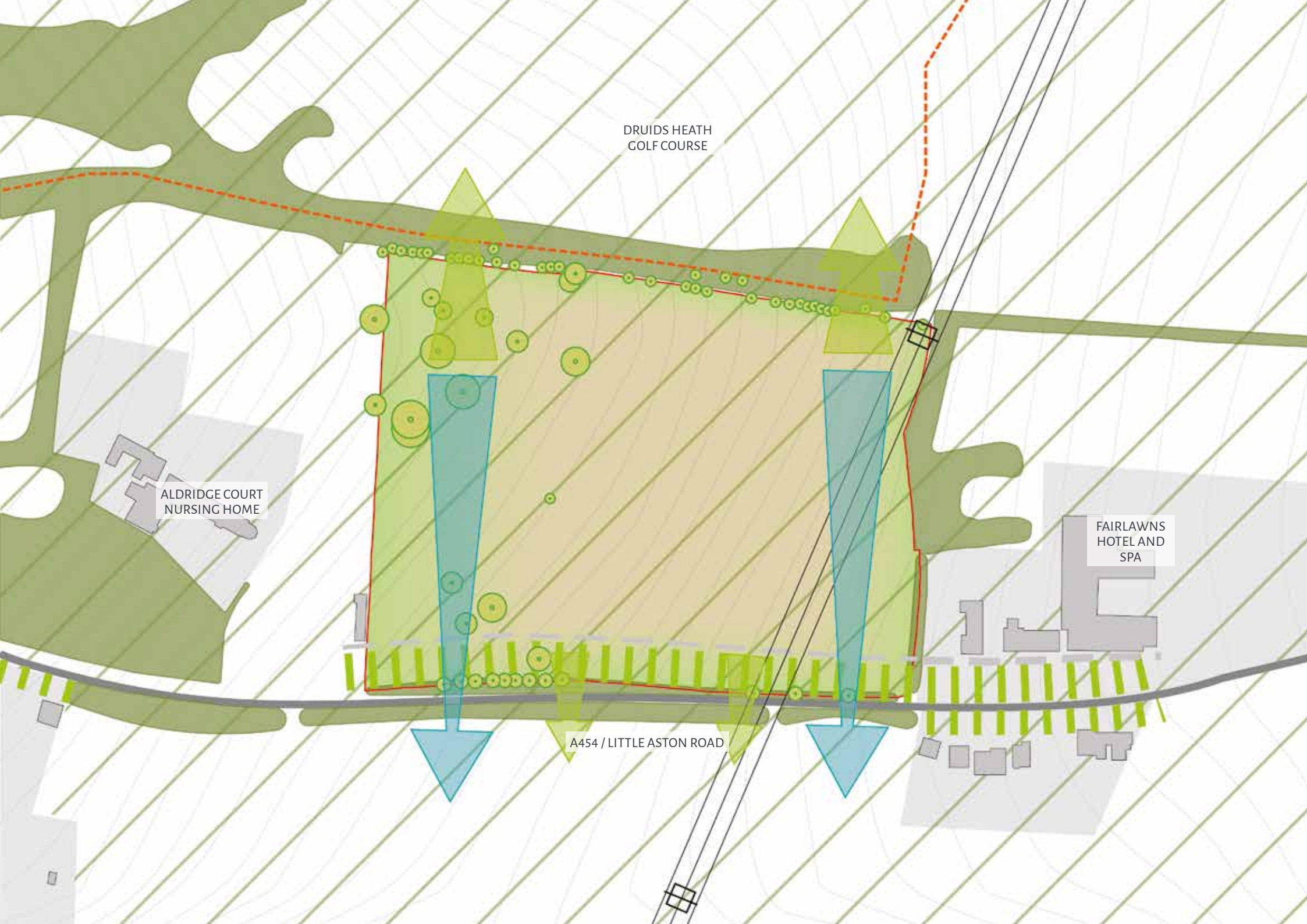


DRUIDS HEATH
GOLF COURSE

ALDRIDGE COURT
NURSING HOME

FAIRLAWNS
HOTEL AND
SPA

A454 / LITTLE ASTON ROAD



Strategies will be created that look to accommodate water management and habitat creation within the scheme in a manner that integrates the amenity and life-style benefits of these components with the design and style of the public open space: the new parkland. The appreciation of the landform, hedgerow pattern and watercourses and the views, will act as prompts and key drivers within the GI Strategy. The result will be public spaces that are welcoming, safe and highly attractive and have a strong sense of place and a responsibility for the role of the development as the edge of the settlement.

The GI strategy within the Landscape Masterplan looks to take best advantage of those habitats already present in the landscape of the site. These habitats will be taken into the new landscape, making connections in the wider network. This approach will realise the potential of both individual components as well as the greater network gains through a strategy of connection.

Development is to sit back from the site edges, behind new green spaces. The landscape of the future development will make a sympathetic and successful fit in the setting. It will deliver a strengthening of the existing elements at its boundaries, defining a strong and responsive edge of the scheme.

The aim is to deliver a scheme that endures and becomes a cherished place:

“People want to be reconnected with nature and they want to transform underused land to produce clean air and clean water, good micro-climates and good food. They recognise the urgent need to capture carbon and to create landscapes teeming with wildlife. At the same time, they want to be protected from flooding and they want access to land for health and wellbeing.”

(‘Green Infrastructure: an integrated approach to land use’ (Landscape Institute. 2013))



Illustrative landscape strategy features:

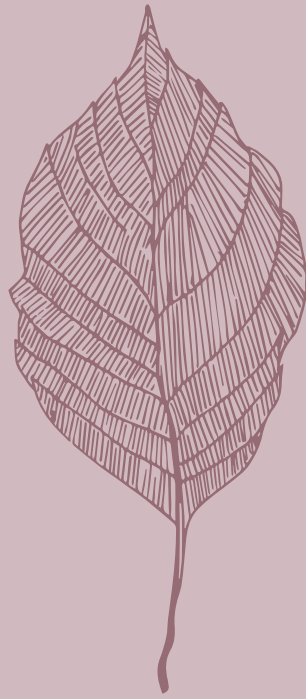
1. Parkland tree planting and bulbs
2. Public parkland
3. Native wildflower meadow planting
4. Informal seating set in meadow grassland
5. Natural material seating
6. Planted parkland with informal pedestrian routes

6. Summary of Aspirations

This document has set out a vision, current site assessment undertaken to date and the emerging concept proposals for Little Aston Road, Aldridge.

In summary the proposals will deliver the following key benefits and qualities:

- » A high quality and attractive residential development that can deliver up to 137 new dwellings.
- » An accessible development in a sustainable location that benefits from easy pedestrian links to key facilities, including Cooper and Jordan Primary School and Aldridge town centre.
- » A development shaped by existing landscape assets and the provision of significant areas of new accessible public open space, providing the opportunity for new formal play facilities and habitat creation.
- » A new cohesive and vibrant community formed by the creation of an attractive, safe and legible place, based on best practice urban design principles.





ST PHILIPS