

An aerial photograph showing a mix of residential housing and agricultural fields. A red outline highlights a specific plot of land, likely the subject of the development brief. The residential area is on the left, and the agricultural fields are on the right. The text 'L&Q Estates' is overlaid in a white box at the top center.

L&Q Estates

H O M E F A R M

---

# SANDHILLS

DEVELOPMENT BRIEF DOCUMENT





Pegasus Group  
5 The Priory  
Old London Road  
Canwell  
Sutton Coldfield  
B75 5SH  
[www.pegasusgroup.co.uk](http://www.pegasusgroup.co.uk) | T 0121 308 9570 | F 0121 323 2215

Prepared by Pegasus Group  
on behalf of L&Q Estates Ltd.  
August 2020 Project code BIR.4327  
Contact: Neil Cox

COPYRIGHT The contents of this document must not be copied or reproduced in whole or in part without the written consent of Pegasus Planning Group Ltd. Crown copyright. All rights reserved, Licence number 100042093.





PAGE 5

1

INTRODUCTION

PAGE 6

2

PLANNING POLICY

PAGE 9

3

SITE DESCRIPTION AND  
CONTEXT

PAGE 11

4

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL  
CONTEXT

PAGE 15

5

HERITAGE

PAGE 17

6

DESIGN

PAGE 19

7

SUMMARY

THIS DOCUMENT IS DESIGNED TO BE VIEWED AS A3 DOUBLE SIDED







# INTRODUCTION

## PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

- 1.1 This Development Brief document has been prepared on behalf of L&Q Estates in relation to Land at Home Farm, Sandhills. This site is being promoted for residential development through the Black Country Plan Review.
- 1.2 The site was submitted through the original Call For Sites process alongside representations to the Issues and Options document published in July 2017. The purpose of this document is to refresh and update the information previously provided on this site to demonstrate that the site would deliver high-quality residential development which complements and enhances the wider community of Brownhills. The site is highly sustainable and deliverable.
- 1.3 This document brings together assessment work from a number of disciplines undertaken by the project team which comprises a range of specialist consultants. This work has informed an updated Illustrative Masterplan which demonstrates how the site could be developed to accommodate 1,200 dwellings.
- 1.4 Overall, this Development Brief Document demonstrates that there are no overriding physical, environmental or technical constraints which would preclude the development of this site for residential use. Land at Home Farm, Sandhills is suitable, available and deliverable as a housing site to meet the needs of the Black Country.

## STRUCTURE OF THIS DOCUMENT

- 1.5 This document is sub-divided into various sections:
  - Chapter 1 – Introduction
  - Chapter 2 – Planning Policy
  - Chapter 3 – Site Description and Context
  - Chapter 4 – Landscape and Visual
  - Chapter 5 – Heritage
  - Chapter 6 – Design
  - Chapter 7 – Summary

## 2 PLANNING POLICY

2.1 This section summarises the policy context for the site at the time of writing this document.

### NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019 sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides the framework within which locally prepared plans can be produced. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development which applies to plan-making and decision taking. For plan making this means that:

- Plans should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area, and be sufficiently flexible to adapt to rapid change;
- Strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas, unless:
  - The application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution in the plan area; or
  - Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

2.3 Paragraph 59 reiterates the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes and states that it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed.

2.4 Section 13 is concerned with Protecting the Green Belt. Paragraph 134 sets out the five purposes of the Green Belt as follows:

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

2.5 Paragraph 138 sets out that where it has been concluded that it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development, plans should set out ways in which the impact of removing land from the Green Belt can be offset through compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt land. This has been considered as part of the design process and is set out in greater detail in Chapter 4 Landscape and Chapter 6 Design.

2.6 These purposes are considered in greater detail in relation to the site in Chapter 4 Landscape.

2.7 Green Belt boundaries may be amended through Local Plans where exceptional circumstances exist. A high housing need that cannot be met without Green Belt release does constitute exceptional circumstances.



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

### National Planning Policy Framework

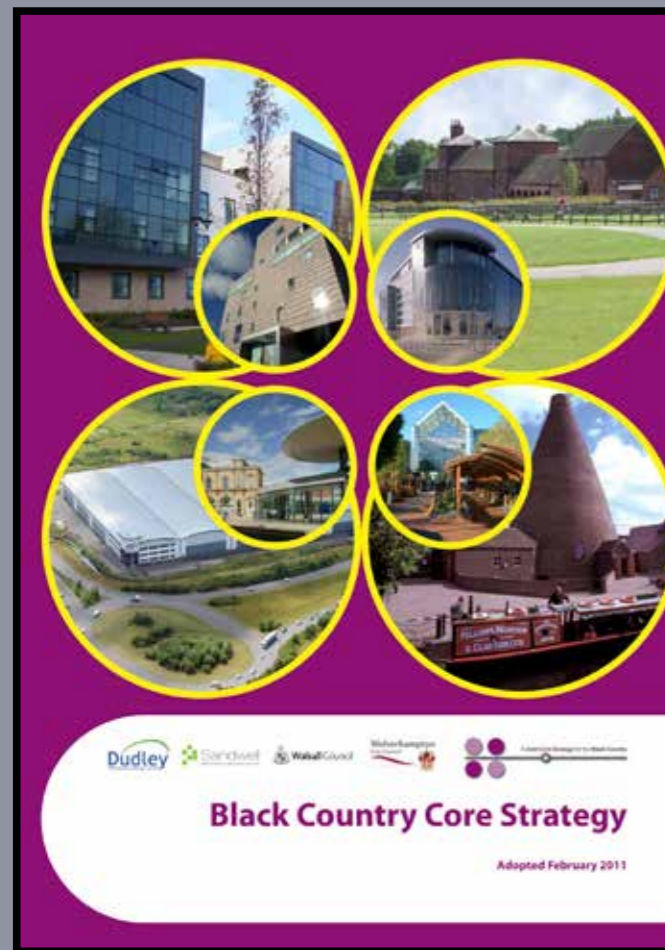
February 2019  
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

## ADOPTED LOCAL PLAN

- 2.8 The current development plan for the site consists of the Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS) adopted in February 2011 and covers the plan period until 2026.
- 2.9 The spatial vision is for the Black Country consists of three major directions of change; sustainable communities, environmental transformation and economic prosperity. Brownhills is identified as a Regeneration Corridor (15) in the BCCS. It notes that the area benefits from good access to the national highways network and potential for enhanced urban transport links.

## EMERGING LOCAL PLAN

- 2.10 This Development Brief Document has been prepared to inform the Black Country Plan Review which is intended to cover the period up to 2036. Once adopted, the emerging Plan will supersede the currently adopted Black Country Core Strategy.
- 2.11 The Issues and Options Document published in June 2017 set out that the Black Country had a total requirement for 24,670 new homes.
- 2.12 It also acknowledged that there would be a need to remove land from the Green Belt to meet emerging development requirements and that a Green Belt Review would be prepared to support the Core Strategy Review. A Green Belt Assessment was published in January 2020 and this is considered further in Chapter 4.







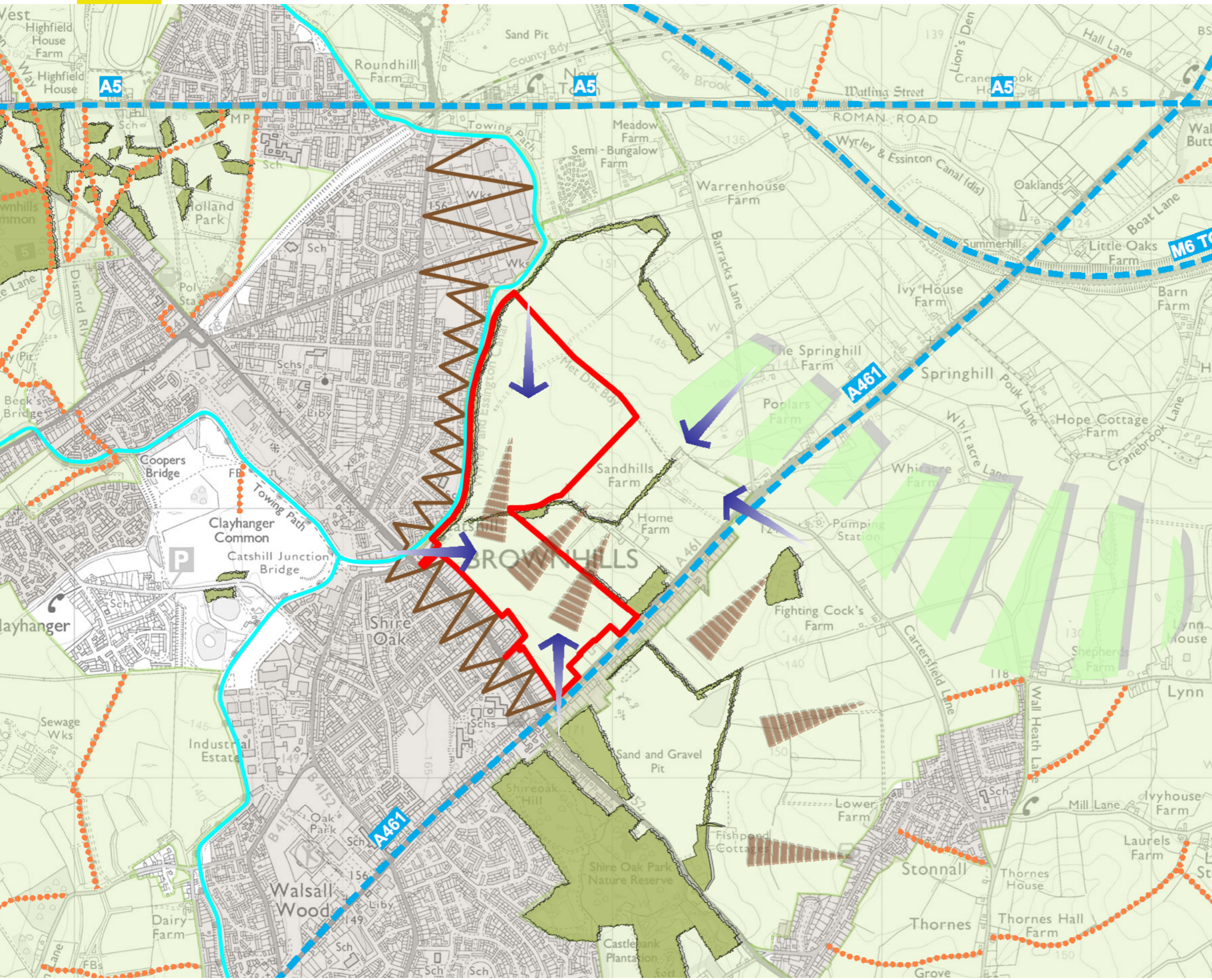


# 3

## SITE DESCRIPTION AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 The site is located on the eastern edge of Brownhills, adjacent to the Wyrley and Essington Canal. It enjoys good access to the High Street (that includes convenience stores, public houses, places of worship and other specialist amenities), which is further along Chester Road where there is a proposed access to and from the site. There are several bus stops located adjacent to the site (on both the A452 Chester Road and A461 Lichfield Road), which are frequented by a number of services that provide access to Birmingham, Lichfield, Cannock and Walsall amongst other locations in the vicinity. The nearest railway stations to the site are Walsall and Shenstone, which are approximately 4.6 miles south east and 2.45 miles east of the site respectively. Brownhills also has access to the Strategic Road Network via the M6 Toll Motorway.
- 3.2 Brownhills historically expanded as a former coal mining town on the edge of the Staffordshire Coalfield, which was the principal industry of the town until the 1950s. Since then the area has experienced economic decline and has subsequently been the focus for regeneration initiatives. The Wyrley and Essington Canal, which forms a boundary to the site, is identified as a key asset to make a substantial contribution to the character of the regeneration corridor and provide opportunities for recreation nature conservation and tourism.
- 3.3 The site is located to the south east of Brownhills, within Sandhills, which is an area that includes Sandhills Farm and existing residential ribbon development that comprises of medium density post war housing.
- 3.4 The site is bounded to the north west by the canal; to the south west by the curtilage of properties along the Chester Road (A452) and to the south east by the Lichfield Road (A461). To the north east the boundary is less well separated but is broadly defined by an increase in the height of the landform to the west of Barracks Lane. The Local Authority boundary between Walsall Council and Lichfield District Council follows a track and field boundary in this location.
- 3.5 Brownhills has a population of c. 12,500 and is connected to other suburban areas such as Pelsall, Shelfield and Aldridge, with Walsall and Sutton Coldfield beyond. The site therefore benefits from a sustainable location.





- KEY**
-  Site boundary
  -  Existing settlement area
  -  Green Belt
  -  Existing vegetation providing containment
  -  Public rights of way
  -  Visually exposed edge of Brownhills
  -  Localised Ridgeline
  -  Sloping landform
  -  Transport corridors
  -  Wyrley and Essington Canal
  -  Local/short distance views across site

 **LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ANALYSIS**  
NOT TO SCALE



## LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

- 4.1 The development framework for the site has been informed by reference to the various landscape and visual constraints and opportunities. The influence of these ensures that the location, scale and character of the proposal responds to the local landscape character and that mitigation is an inherent and iterative part of the masterplanning process.
- 4.2 A robust landscape strategy for the site will provide:
- The creation of a comprehensive open space hierarchy, including a linear park along the canal, and a series of linked open spaces between the development parcels which can accommodate various uses such as allotments, a community orchard; play spaces and sports pitches;
  - The retention of all vegetation across the site (with the exception of some limited vegetation loss likely to facilitate access), with supplementary planting where necessary;
  - The reinstatement of historic field boundaries to provide additional planting infrastructure and help mitigate those areas of hedgerow lost historically to agricultural practices;
  - The creation of a series of new, linked woodland belts that are consistent in character with the existing ones on site and in the local area. These include:
    - New tree planting where appropriate along the A461 frontage to reinforce visual enclosure in this area;
    - New woodland planting along the north-eastern boundary of the site, to create a new robust Green Belt boundary in this location which will help to screen and soften potential views of new built form and reinstate a sense of landscape 'structure'; and
    - New tree planting along the eastern boundary of the site to provide both landscape character and biodiversity connections with the retained triangular woodland copse in the centre of the site and existing hedgerows and trees along the boundaries of the site.

- The provision of safe and easy public access through the series of newly created open spaces;
- The provision of open spaces with drainage features in appropriate locations; and
- The creation of a natural parkland landscape design in the open space that will be created along the canal frontage.

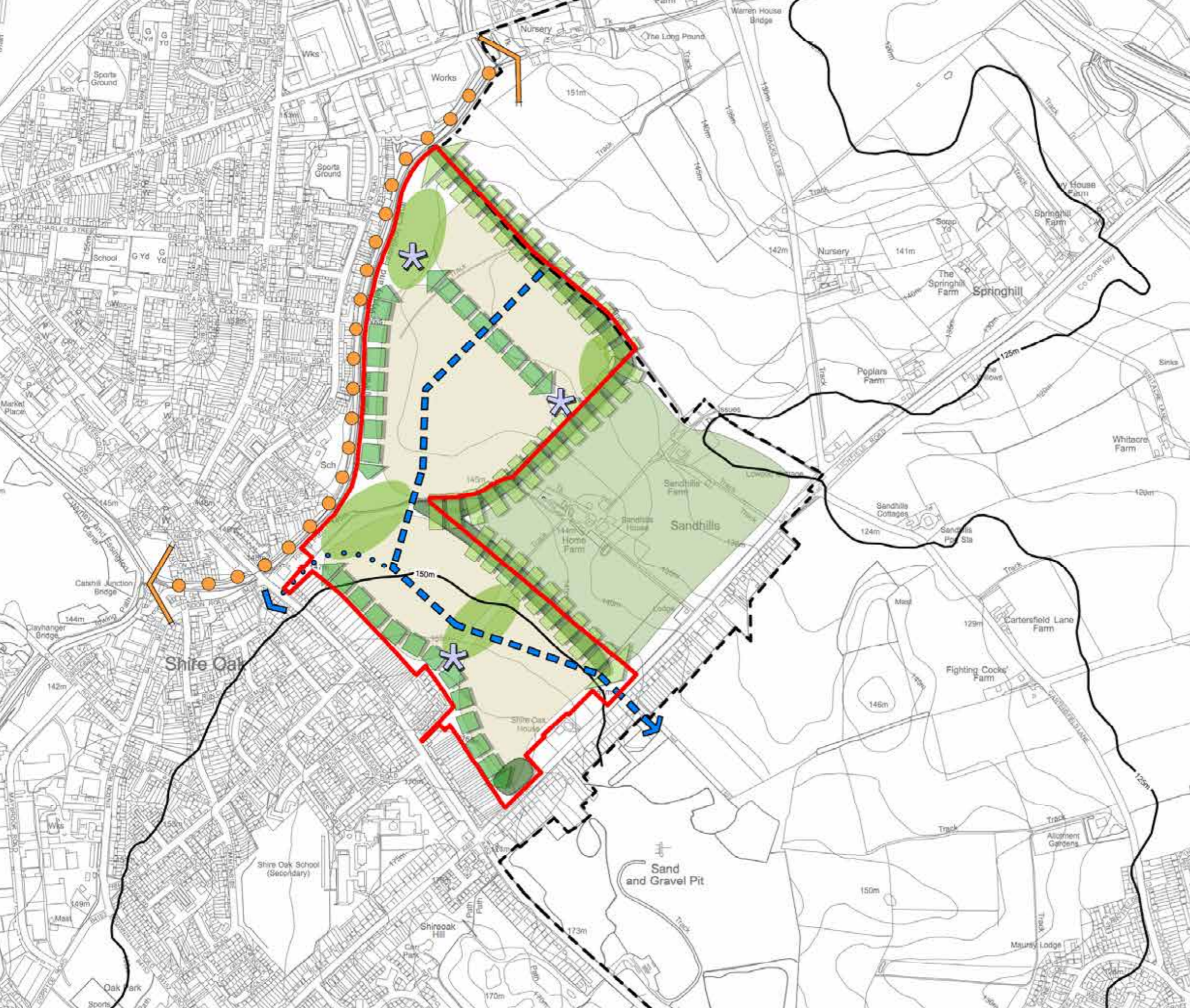
## GREEN BELT STRATEGY

- 4.3 In accordance with the NPPF, Green Belt boundaries should be defined clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.
- 4.4 The preliminary landscape and visual appraisal, and the process of its preparation, have informed emerging proposals for the site. The approach includes incorporated mitigation that addresses the interface between the emerging settlement edge and the wider countryside and how this can influence prospective amendments to the Green Belt boundary. It has also considered the findings of the Black Country Green Belt Study.
- 4.5 Consequently, the use of existing landscape components to guide the landscape strategy and subsequent augmentation of these components can define an appropriate, robust and enduring boundary to the Green Belt.
- 4.6 It is considered that the north-eastern and south-eastern boundaries of the site, in combination with the existing triangular woodland and proposed woodland belts could form a clearly defined Green Belt boundary. The landscape and green infrastructure strategy for the site also proposes new planting throughout and particularly along the south-eastern boundary where there is an interface with the existing ribbon development along the A461 Lichfield Road.
- 4.7 These mitigation measure will help to establish and enhance a robust landscaped edge to the proposed development and provide a definitive new Green Belt boundary that also contains new development and helps assimilate it with the character of the landscape in this location.






## SUMMARY

- 4.8 The potential conflict of proposed development on the site with aspects of Green Belt policy will be limited to the site level. In the wider landscape context development on the site will not conflict with the purpose and function of the Green Belt. This is due to the settlement edge location of the site; the enclosure of the site by existing green infrastructure and built form; and the limited likely landscape and visual impact.
- 4.9 Notwithstanding some conflict with the purposes of Green Belt, the impact of a potential development on the site would be very limited due to the containment of the site by existing and established physical features, including the existing settlement edge as well as other elements such as the road network, landform and green infrastructure.





**KEY**

-  Site boundary
-  Proposed development cells
-  Retained and enhanced woodland with additional proposed infrastructure planting
-  Proposed green infrastructure corridor network
-  Proposed key open spaces
-  Potential location for play areas
-  Proposed main access
-  Potential secondary access
-  Existing Wyrley and Essington Canal towpath
-  Existing contours
-  Proposed new green belt boundary
-  LPA boundary
-  Retained agricultural land

 **GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY**  
NOT TO SCALE











- 5.1 An assessment of the historic environment resource has been carried out by Pegasus Group. Heritage assets, designated and non-designated, were identified within the site boundary and in proximity to the boundary. The results are set out within the Archaeology and Cultural Heritage Chapter of the Technical Compendium.
- 5.2 The Appraisal identified there were no designated assets within the site boundary. Four grade II listed structures are located within 1km of the site, two associated with the Wryley and Essington Canal, the remaining two being Sandhills Pumping Station and Fighting Cocks Farmhouse, both located to the southeast of the site.
- 5.3 The Appraisal identified a number of non-designated assets within the site boundary, including the former line of the Sandhills Branch of the Wryley and Essington Canal and an associated wharf and industrial complex at Home Farm. The branch line is now infilled. Research also identified historic elements of the site, such as the coverage of a large area of the site in the early 20th century with an orchard or tree plantation, mapped as long, linear strips of tree planting across the site. Elements such as this can be used within the Masterplan to create a strong sense of place and provide unique elements within the development to stand it apart.
- 5.4 The conclusions of the Archaeology and Heritage chapter state that it is considered unlikely that development within this site would cause any harm to the significance of the identified designated heritage assets. Recommendations were proposed for inclusion within the Masterplan to provide parameters to try and ensure that no harm would arise and provide suggestions which would enhance the heritage assets and potentially provide heritage benefits arising from the development. In particular, the chapter recommended that the line of the Sandhills branch of the Wryley and Essington Canal be enhanced and brought out within the masterplan proposals either through the creation of swales or a footpath which would demarcate the line of this infilled canal branch on the ground and allow a restoration of the like between this and the extant canal route to the northwest.
- 5.5 Any future planning application should be accompanied by a Heritage Desk-based Assessment which will consider in further detail the below-ground archaeology to ascertain whether fieldwork is required. The HDBA will also be able to assess the finalised masterplan, against the significance of the surrounding heritage assets and will be able to identify heritage benefits as well as potential harm.





**DESIGN CONCEPT**  
NOT TO SCALE



6.1 The updated Illustrative Masterplan reflects the below design considerations:

### ACCESS & MOVEMENT

- Access is proposed in the same locations via Chester Road and Lichfield Road.
- A cycle/pedestrian link has been proposed via Chester Road between 2 Patterson Place and 119 Chester Road.
- Fully permeable pedestrian and cycle routes will aid greener forms of movement while providing a fully circulatory experience for users linking from the existing infrastructure to the newly created "Canalside walk."
- The primary routes have been designed wide enough to accommodate a bus route if needed.
- A full road hierarchy has been designed into the site.

### QUANTUM & DEVELOPMENT

- Total dwellings being proposed is 1,200 at a 40 DPH.
- The development accommodates a 1.2 hectare site for a 2 form primary school.
- A 0.5 hectare site has been shown for community hub uses.

### COMMUNITY USES

- 6.2 A range of community use facilities have been proposed across the Commons to aid leisure and social inclusion, these include:
- Football pitches
  - 3 equipped areas of play
  - 4 areas of natural play
  - Community allotments
  - Community trim trail
  - Community orchard

### LANDSCAPE

- Development cells are punctuated with reinstated historic field boundaries as the site is almost void of any internal vegetation. This has helped to break up development and give the site a patchwork character.
- "Canalside Walk" has been created to be the backbone of the site, providing an appropriate offset to the existing Wyrley and Essington Canal from development. A fully comprehensive cycle/pedestrian movement route has been shown to provide maximum permeability for new and existing residents.
- A series of landscaped spaces called "commons" have been created for recreation and leisure pursuits.
- Three greenways have been formed to act as a conduit between the newly created Canalside Walk and the three central "Common" spaces. The greenways reinforce and enhance the landscape helping to allow ecology and wildlife to move freely, aiding sustainability across the site.
- All existing vegetation has been retained with site low points being used for sustainable urban drainage.

### HERITAGE

- The design demonstrates a swale and footpath connection along the old Sandhills Farm canal. There may be potential for literature to be provided on site on the history of the route and its uses.
- The site to the north historically was used as a plantation, so orchard planting has been reinstated along with a series of structural planting in this location to enhance the sites original character.

### GREEN BELT COMPENSATORY IMPROVEMENTS

- In terms of Green Belt compensatory improvements, the Illustrative Masterplan shows improved pedestrian connectivity throughout the site, particularly along the canalside to improve access to the canal corridor and a wide green infrastructure network across the site.
- The Illustrative Masterplan also provides for biodiversity enhancements, including for example, a community orchard, plantation orchard and ecological gateways to promote connectivity.







# 7

## SUMMARY

- 7.1 This Development Brief document has demonstrated that Land at Home Farm, Sandhills is a highly sustainable and deliverable site which should be released from the Green Belt and allocated for housing as part of the emerging Black Country Plan Review. The site provides the opportunity to deliver circa 1,200 dwellings along with a wide range of community facilities, a local centre and significant green infrastructure. This site will assist in meeting the housing needs of Walsall and the Black Country in a sustainable manner.
- 7.2 L&Q Estates are committed to engaging and working with Walsall Council and the local community to design a high quality residential development.



## OUR OFFICES

### BIRMINGHAM (City)

39 Bennetts Hill  
Birmingham  
B2 5SN

E Birmingham@pegasusgroup.co.uk  
T 0121 308 9570

### BIRMINGHAM (Sutton Coldfield)

5 The Priory  
Old London Road  
Canwell  
Sutton Coldfield  
B75 5SH

E Birmingham@pegasusgroup.co.uk  
T 0121 308 9570

### BRACKNELL

The Columbia Centre  
Station Road  
Bracknell  
Berkshire  
RG12 1LP

E Bracknell@pegasusgroup.co.uk  
T 01344 207 777

### BRISTOL

First Floor, South Wing  
Equinox North  
Great Park Road  
Almondsbury  
Bristol, BS32 4QL

E Bristol@pegasusgroup.co.uk  
T 01454 625 945

### CAMBRIDGE

Suite 4 Pioneer House  
Vision Park  
Histon  
Cambridge  
CB24 9NL

E Cambridge@pegasusgroup.co.uk  
T 01223 202 100

### CIRENCESTER

Pegasus House  
Querns Business Centre  
Whitworth Road  
Cirencester  
GL7 1RT

E Cirencester@pegasusgroup.co.uk  
T 01285 641 717

### DUBLIN

Ormond Building  
31-36 Ormond Quay Upper  
Dublin  
Dublin 7

E enquiries@pegasusgroup.co.uk  
T +353 (0) 1526 6714

### EAST MIDLANDS

4 The Courtyard  
Church Street  
Lockington  
Derbyshire  
DE74 2SL

E EastMidlands@pegasusgroup.co.uk  
T 01509 670 806

### LEEDS

Pavilion Court  
Green Lane  
Garforth  
Leeds  
LS25 2AF

E Leeds@pegasusgroup.co.uk  
T 0113 287 8200

### LIVERPOOL

No. 4 St Paul's Square  
Liverpool  
L3 9SJ

E Liverpool@pegasusgroup.co.uk  
T 0151 317 5220

### LONDON

10 Albemarle Street  
London  
W1S 4HH

E London@pegasusgroup.co.uk  
T 020 3897 1110

### MANCHESTER

Queens House  
Queen Street  
Manchester  
M2 5HT

E Manchester@pegasusgroup.co.uk  
T 0161 393 3399

### NEWCASTLE

The Corner  
26 Mosley Street  
Newcastle upon Tyne  
NE1 1DF

E Newcastle@pegasusgroup.co.uk  
T 0191 917 6700

### PETERBOROUGH

Allia Future Business Centre  
Peterborough United Football Club  
Peterborough  
PE2 8AN

E enquiries@pegasusgroup.co.uk  
T 01733 666600

### GROUP SERVICES

5 The Priory  
Old London Road  
Canwell  
Sutton Coldfield  
B75 5SH

E enquiries@pegasusgroup.co.uk  
T 0333 0160777



DESIGN



ENVIRONMENT



PLANNING



ECONOMICS



HERITAGE

PEGASUSGROUP.CO.UK

Pegasus Group is a trading name of Pegasus Planning Group Limited (07277000) registered in England and Wales  
Registered Office: Pegasus House, Querns Business Centre, Whitworth Road, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 1RT

RIBA  
Royal Institute of  
British Architects

URBAN  
DESIGN  
GROUP  
RECOGNISED  
PRACTITIONER

